The Origins and Rise of Religious Nationalism in India: A Case Study

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1. Introduction

Religion has been intertwined with politics for many centuries. Some of the most prominent political movements in history have been motivated by religion- the Crusades and the Roman Catholic church, the reign of the Ottoman empire and its persecution of non-Muslims, the missionary movement in early America to convert indigenous Americans to Catholicism (Conroy-Krutz, 2017). Religion has alway been a highly divisive issue, and nations have often strived to unite their people under one religion. Even America, known to many as a champion of democratic freedom, has struggled with religious attacks on autonomy- public schools refusing to teach evolution, and abortion rights being repealed with Christian concepts being used as justification to name a few. Many nations' governments have been using religion as a vehicle for oppression for many years.

Religious organizations have been a part of politics for centuries. The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt is one of the most powerful and influential muslim organizations in the world, founded in 1928 with the mission of spreading Islam throughout society and using the religion to establish social norms, laws, and values. Despite its vow of non-violence, several of its members have inspired religious violence- one of the most infamous being Sayyid Qutb, whose work had provided the foundation for militant groups al Qaeda and the Taliban. "Extremist leaders often cite Qutb, who was hanged in 1966, to argue that governments not based on Sharia are apostate and therefore legitimate targets of jihad." (Laub, 2019). Religion is often intertwined with the government with the initial goal of spreading peace or culture across a society. Leaders of religious organizations trust that their beliefs would be a reliable standard to govern society, but violence often emerges from religion being involved in

politics. In this paper, I aim to investigate the origin of organizations that promote religious exclusion in one country in particular: the Republic of India.

In 2019, the federal government of India amended the Citizenship Act of 1955, to fast-track the process of citizenship for certain religious groups. The amendment expedited citizenship for some religious groups from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan- Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Christians- who arrived in India before December of 2014. Muslims were left out of this bill, despite their minority status in India itself. This was the only piece of legislation passed that specified religion as a benchmark for citizenship in Indian history (Gringlas, 2019). In the two following years, there were 5 Muslim people killed over their consumption or ownership over cattle. In March of 2022, an Indian court upheld a ban on hijabs worn in schools and universities. In response to the ensuing protests fighting for the right to practice Islam, mobs of Hindu students wore the saffron flag, a symbol associated with the Hindu Nationalist movement (Sood, 2022).

The rise of religious nationalism in India has been a critical issue for centuries. The question of Muslim-Hindu relations has remained unanswered, and tensions only continue to increase as time passes. With the ruling party of India representing majority Hindu interests and inclusive political coalitions being shunted to the side, it is difficult to imagine an India that truly embodies the secular democracy that it claims to be. Independence from the British empire was a fairly recent event, with India only gaining statehood in 1947. With independence came the question of what this new nation would look like- who would lead, what laws would be instituted, and what how the economy would be regulated. As one may expect, there were many differences in opinion between various Indian leaders, who thus entered different political coalitions.

In this paper, I aim to investigate how far-right reactionary political coalitions in India rose during the struggle for independence from the British colonial regime, and how they contributed to increasing religious nationalism. I focus on the late colonial period specifically to investigate the origins of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and their relationship to the independence movement. This was a crucial period for India- the Indian constitution was being written and the seeds of independence were spreading. In order to explore this time period, I pose the research question: What causes far-right religious coalitions to gain influence and public support within a nation?

1.1 Background

1.11 The History of the Indian Independence Movement

The British empire had complete control over India from 1858 up to its independence in 1947. The British East India Company, first established in 1757, allowed them to gradually increase their sovereignty over the Indian economy and people. A century later, in 1857, a widespread rebellion against the East India Company left British authorities with the need to establish a government to exert a more comprehensive control over India. In 1858, the British Raj became the ruling organization of the subcontinent. Under British rule, the population of India grew increasingly divided into a number of groups- class, caste, and religion, to name a few. Although initially formed to increase Indian representation in civil service, the Indian National Congress turned into a mobilization movement for Indian civilization during the turn of the twentieth century. As the British empire fell within India, the Congress quickly rose to power. This organization was the most influential and powerful political association in the subcontinent at the time (Tomlinson, 1976, 31). The British feared such unity from the Indian people- they

employed a "divide and rule" strategy to keep their constituents from forming a strong resistance organization. Notably, the Indian Council Act (Morley-Minto Act) of 1909 established separate electorates for Muslims. Lord Ellenborough stated: "The fewer elements of combination there are in the native army the better, and therefore the more nationalities and castes and religions, the more secure we shall be." (Stewart, 1951, 53).

The Congress, led primarily by Mohandas Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, was one of the crucial actors of the independence movement. The All-India Muslim League, led by Mohammad Jinnah, was another actor with widespread influence, primarily among the Muslim population in India. Established in 1906, its primary goal was to mobilize the Muslim Indian people to gain political and economic autonomy. However, as the rift between Muslim and Hindu people grew over time, they dealt with anti-national claims and had to choose between compromising with the Indian National Congress or divorcing themselves from the organization entirely. In the later stages of the movement against the British empire, Jinnah decided to cease discussions with the Congress and pursue solely Muslim League-specific goals (Ashraf, 1942, 30).

1.12 The Rise of the RSS

The central organization that I will be focusing on in this thesis is the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, known as the RSS for short. The organization was founded in 1925 by Keshav Hedgewar, a Telugu upper-caste doctor. Hedgewar believed that the social divisions among Hindus could be attributed to the foreign domination and invasion of India. He perceived India as a holy land, and Hindus as having the sole right to that land. Although, over the years, the RSS has become more careful in how they phrase their Hindu-centered rhetoric- they still maintain the same central message that being a Hindu is integral to being an Indian. The RSS

website states that the 'ideal of the Sangh is to carry the nation to the pinnacle of glory through organizing the entire society and ensuring the protection of Hindu Dharma' (Damle & Anderson, 2018, 77). The Sangh Parivar- translated to 'the RSS family'- is a term used to refer to the various organizations under the umbrella of the RSS. After independence was achieved, smaller organizations, under the guidance of the RSS, steadily formed; some of which including the Bhoodan, a land reform movement, Sewa Bharati, a community service organization, and most notably the Bharatiya Janata Party, the leading political party of India currently. It is evident that the Sangh ties being a Hindu to secular concepts such as patriotism and national pride. This is crucial to how the RSS associates Hinduism with Indian patriotism.

The RSS rose to power after its establishment in the early twentieth century. With independence from the British being such a salient issue at the time, the question of how to unite the Indian public against their oppressors was circling around among many prominent leaders at the time. Since Gandhi, arguably the most influential independence leader, saw merit in Hindu-Muslim unity and supported religious tolerance in India, he was opposed by those who saw Hindu nationalism as the only way to unite the nation. Relations between the Muslim and Hindu communities in India only continued to worsen throughout the twentieth century- the Khilafat issue, a pan-Islamic protest led by Muslims during the reign of the British Raj, serving as a turning point for Muslim Indian mobilization during the 1920s. Having uncertainties over Indian Muslims devotion to the country's interests, Hindu majority leaders- specifically Hedgewar, felt the need to mobilize the Hindu community. Thus, the RSS was born, and was one of the primary motivators for the anti-Muslim sentiment that ran through the nation before and during the independence movement.

1.13 The Hindu Mahasabha

The secondary organization that I will be focusing on is the Hindu Mahasabha, an important organization in the Hindu Nationalist movement. It served a consolidation of Hindu Sabhas that had been created in 1915, and aimed to empower Hindus in India. A key figure in this movement, Madan Mohan Malaviya, was a lawyer and member of Congress upon its founding, and an orthodox Brahmin. He started the Hindu Samaj as a defense of Hindu festivals, and the Mahasabha was then created as an interest group for devout Hindus to promote their interests, specifically to the Indian National Congress. Vinayak Savarkar played an instrumental role in its development and ideological position.

Savarkar's position on Non-Hindus residing in India was less than tolerant. He insisted, despite religious differences, that every resident of India was to follow a Hindu lifestyle. Jaffrelot writes: "Christians and Muslims represented for Savarkar an Otherness of a threatening nature, but, by defining them as part of a race within which they became converts only a few generations earlier, he suggests that they can be reintegrated into Hindu society provided they pay allegiance to Hindu culture." (*Hindu Nationalism,* 2007*,* 86). His goal with the Mahasabha, and the RSS after it, was to instill pride and power within the Hindu population- something that he thought they lacked, especially compared to Muslim Indians.

Both the Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS represented right-wing ideals that were founded on the basis of Hindu nationalism and the empowerment of the Hindu community in India. In the following chapters, I will investigate their growth and motivations prior to the independence movement.

2. Argument

2.1 Research Question and Hypotheses

2.11 Research Question and Supporting Hypotheses

I intend to answer this question: What causes far-right religious organizations to gain political influence and public support within a nation?

I will be examining India as a case study in order to find the answer- more specifically, I aim to investigate how coalitions with Hindu nationalist agendas formed and then developed into more structured organizations.

To answer this question, I put forward this hypothesis: as political coalitions with inclusive policy goals grow in power, backlash from those who oppose inclusive policies results in counter coalitions forming. These counter coalitions promote ideas that directly oppose that of the original coalition's. As these two coalitions on opposite sides of the political spectrum attempt to gain voters, the more liberal coalition tends to compromise and move towards centrism while the conservative coalition moves less far and ultimately stays right-leaning. This may be because conservative coalitions are often associated with traditions and enforcing social norms, and liberal coalitions tend to introduce policies that may contradict tradition. Because liberal groups are associated with newness and modernity, they may be more willing to compromise on their policies, knowing that they are going against tradition. Policies that emerge, therefore, almost always lean center-right and do not prioritize religious inclusivity.

In the case of India, independence was the main focus for every prominent leader at the time. Attaining independence necessitates presenting a strong, united front as a nation- this manifested as the Indian National Congress, the leading political party that represented Indian independence.

However, having a single centrist party attempt to represent all interests inevitably alienates the right and the left- also known as "flank" parties or organizations (1985). I hypothesize that at the time of decolonization and Indian independence, the strength of the centrist Congress party led to underrepresented left-wing and right-wing coalitions forming, with the right-wing groups gaining more support and power than the others.

In order to test my thesis, I will examine the rise of Hindu nationalism in India. I present three supporting hypotheses to test my main hypothesis:

1. Compromise by major political parties on left-leaning coalitions' goals concerning social and economic issues leads to the coalitions' alienation and ultimate dissolution.
2. Right-wing coalitions use anti-colonial nationalism to promote religious extremism.
3. Centrist parties' inclusive approach to nationalism provokes a reactionary response from right-wing coalitions, who then use nationalism to shift public opinion in favor of traditionalism.

These three hypotheses are all non-rival- one hypothesis being true does not indicate anything about the truth or falsehood of the other two.

Examining how these four hypotheses connect with one another and if they have causal relationships will be a key aspect of my argument. I intend to use the method of process tracing, in which I connect the various different events and points of view of the period of time from the 1920s to 1950 in India. I will then analyze these connections. While doing this, I will examine speeches and writings from the most prominent leaders of the Independence movement: Mohandas Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Mohammad Jinnah. Other figures that will be

important in my theory include Vinayak Savarkar and Keshav Hedgewar, two prominent leaders of the RSS.

2.12 Median Voter Theorem

Left-wing parties often have difficulties maintaining growth and voter support. The Median Voter theorem hypothesizes that competing politicians in a democratic voting system will, under certain conditions, create platforms that converge on the views of the median voter- in other words, converge to the center to secure the most voters possible (Downs, 1957, 136). According to author Jorgan Veisdal in *The Median Voter Theorem: Why Politicians Move to the Center*, this theorem relies on two assumptions: "Candidates and/or parties may be placed along a one-dimensional political spectrum, and voters' preferences are single-peaked, meaning that voters have one alternative they prefer over the other" (Veisdal, 2020, 1). Ben Polak's Very Simple Model illustrates this theorem across a scale of 1 to 10, 1-3 being left-wing policies and 8-10 being right wing policies. Each number on the scale represents 10% of voters. If there are two candidates, one right-wing and one left-wing, their objective is to find their respective positions on the spectrum that would garner the most amount of votes. If the left-wing candidate chooses 1, they are guaranteed the 10% vote from their position, but now the other 90% of the voter base has to choose between position 1 and the other candidate's position. If that other candidate is closer to wherever on the spectrum that the voter lies, then that voter will choose the other candidate. Thus- 1 and 10 are the most extreme positions, and are not likely to be chosen over 2-8. Politicians, therefore, would be inclined to gradually move towards the center in an attempt to attain the most votes possible.

2.13 Leftist Organizations Worldwide

Politicians centering themselves on the political spectrum is a widespread phenomenon-
the early left-wing parties of the Indian Independence movement being a perfect example. The
Congress Party, led by center-left leaders Mohandas Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, had several
left-wing coalitions built inside of its constraints- most significantly, the Congress Socialist
Party. However, there were multiple issues that hindered the progress of the party significantly
and resulted in its ultimate demise.

According to the book *Paper Stones: A History of Electoral Socialism* by Adam
Przeworski and John Sprague, socialist parties' main issue is finding sufficient electoral support.
They write:

"To be effective in elections- for whatever goals- a party must win votes, and votes are
measured in numbers. Hence the perpetual issue facing the parties that organize workers is whether
or not to seek electoral support elsewhere in the society. Leaders of socialist parties must repeatedly
decide whether or not to seek electoral success at the cost, or at least the risk, of diluting class lines
and consequently diminishing the salience of class as a motive for the political behavior of workers
themselves." (*Paper Stones*, 1986, 3).

Essentially, socialist leaders must choose between the electoral support they need to
increase their own influence and the actual class consciousness necessary to enforce socialism.
This also aligns with the median voter theorem, as politicians often do make the choice to shift
their political position in order to obtain more votes.

The Congress Socialist Party was an important aspect of the Congress Party, but it had scattered and inconsistent support and did not survive for very long. This is, in part, because of the reasoning behind the median voter theorem- CSP leaders prioritized electoral support despite their political position, and moved towards the center for this reason. The main leaders of the Indian National Congress, Gandhi and Nehru, were on the fence about the importance of the Congress Socialist Party. Without their support, the party was hard-pressed to find influential supporters. Tensions between policy-seeking and office-seeking politicians rose, and the party ultimately dissolved.

2.14 Traditionalism

The median voter theorem explains why political parties and their candidates move towards centrism, but in many cases, the center position itself seems to move on the political spectrum very gradually over time. The center drifts to the right or left depending on the political leanings of the general populations- in a liberal country, the center would be more progressive than in a conservative country. The left and center-left often compromise with the right and center-right, which leads to liberal policies being altered to cater to conservative and centrist voters. However, coming from a liberal party, these policies are still considered left-leaning. Because of this, the true center seems to move towards the right. Religious and ethnic nationalism can often be a product of traditionalism, as is clearly the case for India. Savarkar, Golwalkar, and other prominent Hindu Nationalism figures all use similar explanations for their positions, such as ethnic purity, history and patterns of migration, and culture and linguistics. These reasons are all rooted in traditionalism, as is a fear of "outsiders" and "otherness".

Leftist parties tend to have a smaller voter base than centrist ones, as they end up alienating both the extreme right and moderate wing of voters. Because of this, they seek compromises that move them towards the center. Parties can go one of two ways when vying for spots in the government: 1) prioritize vote-seeking and be willing to compromise on policy goals, and 2) prioritize policy goals and compromise on vote seeking. Traditionally, leftist parties are more progressive- that is, they are more likely to introduce new ideas to government and repeal more traditional legislation. Right-leaning parties tend to do the opposite- one could say they weaponize history or traditionalism in order to preserve existing hierarchies and social norms. Many traditionalist talking points include words urging citizens to take pride in their history, reinforce historical gender roles, and to be self-reliant among all else (Duckitt, 2013, 849). Considering this, it is no surprise that conservative political parties are less likely to compromise on their policy goals than progressive parties. Because they have the advantage of history, their main responsibility is to preserve, not introduce new growth. Traditionalism implies that while parties move towards the center in order to attain votes, right-wing parties tend to stay in place and wait for the center to grow closer to them.

2.2 Literature Review

Rising religious nationalism in India took root as early as the independence movement in 1947. Compromise between the two most prominent political organizations at the time- the Congress party and the All-India Muslim League- was extremely difficult to attain. Searching for this balance of political power between all these different political coalitions as well as combating British imperialism left many strings untied. On one hand, it was imperative for

Indian leaders to present a strong and unified front to the British. On the other, the Indian people were more divided than ever over differences in religion, ethnicity, and loyalty. Existing literature highlights the different coalitions in formation *after* the Congress party's decline following the year of 1977. However, there is not much literature on the coalitions that existed during the independence movement- that is, the coalitions that formed within the Congress party itself. The Congress party dominated the nationalist movement during the fight for Indian independence- they were the face of the movement and emerged as the first leading political party of India. However, there were many coalitions that formed within the party that had conflicting goals.

Damle and Andersen's research surrounding the inception of the RSS contains important information about M.S. Golwalkar, one of the earliest and most prominent leaders of the RSS. Golwalkar stated in 1939:

"The Non-Hindu peoples in Hindustan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion if they were to stay in this country." Anderson and Damle expand on the RSS's perception of Muslim loyalty to India, writing that the presence of Muslims in India presented difficulties for the nationalist movement. It was seemingly easy to tie nationalism with religion, as the majority of Indians at the time were Hindu. This distrust of Muslim Indians was a large reason why the RSS was founded in 1925; it was a part of the response to the rising tensions between Hindus and Muslims. Its primary goal was to unify the Hindu people and repair their relationship among themselves and to India. Hindu solidarity was a crucial tactic when bargaining for independence, as all nationalist leaders agreed that it was imperative to present a unified front against the British." (Cited by Walter and Damle, 2019, 96).

This, as a result, made many Hindu leaders reluctant to include Muslims in their plans for independence.

2.21 RSS Defines Hinduism

Hinduism as a religion does not have a set of religious texts with rules or guidelines to practicing it. As a result, what qualifies as Hinduism has been debated (Walter and Damle, 2019, 77). There has been much literature on the role of the British government in developing the census, which was a key method in which they quantified the Hindu population in India (Dirke, 2001). Vinayak Savarkar, who popularized the term "Hindutva" and another prominent leader in the RSS, stated that "a hindu is a person who equates 'fatherland' with 'holy land'"- indicating that to the RSS, the religion of Hinduism, as well as Buddhism, Sikhism, and Jainism, are tied to the land of India. This could perhaps indicate the reason why nationalism was tied so closely to religion during the independence movement. Golwalkar, Sarvarkar's successor, stated that "Hindu society, whole and integrated should therefore be the single point of devotion for all of us… Even today, Muslims, whether in high positions of the Government or outside, participate openly in rabidly anti-national conferences. Their speeches too carry the ring of open defiance and rebellion." A running theme within existing literature about the RSS is the perception of India as a holy land, and the importance of showing appreciation for and devotion to Hinduism as a national religion.

In the reader *Hindu Nationalism,* author and editor Christophe Jaffrelot compiles various speeches and writings of prominent RSS and Hindutva leaders at the time. I will be using many of these speeches from figures such as Madan Mohan Malaviya, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, and M.S. Golwalkar. Malaviya was a lawyer turned-politician who was appointed president of

Congress in 1909, who, according to Jaffrelot, was "the archetypal orthodox Brahmin". He

initiated various endeavors with the intention t of preserving Hindu traditions- the Hindu Samaj,

the Benares Hindu University, and most importantly the Hindu Mahasabha within Congress

(Jaffrelot, 2007, 62). In his presidential address during the annual meeting of the Hindu

Mahasabha in 1923, he fiercely advocated for the mobilization of the Hindu community in India,

deploring their weak condition at the time. Malaviya stated:

> "In such circumstances it is our individual and social duty to increase our strength and be on
>
> terms of love and good-will with Muslims. It is most deplorable that Hindus are so fallen that a
>
> handful of foreigners can be ruling over us." (Cited in Jaffrelot, 2007, 66).

This seemingly contradictory statement makes his perception of Muslim Indians clear-

benign, as long as they were always subservient to Hindus. Foreigners, despite their families and

friends having lived in India for centuries. Malaviya's answer to this problem was to urge the

Hindu community to rise up and defend what he believed was their rightful holy land.

Vinayak Savarkar's work *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?* expands on his version of the ideal

Hindu and what he imagines the concept of Hindutva to encompass. He lays out a strict set of

guidelines as to who he considers worthy of being considered as Hindu and who is not. This

primary source gives us an insight into the founder of the RSS and his motivations behind his

most crucial actions.

The Organiser was an important organ in the system of the RSS, first published in 1947

and is an important primary source and look into the inner workings of the RSS.

2.22 Jinnah and the Muslim League

The All-India Muslim League was a crucial player in the years leading up to the

independence movement. It was the largest Muslim-led organization in India at the time, and

advocated for Muslim political autonomy and social and economic rights. Jalal (1995) delves

into the life of Muhammad Jinnah and his leadership of the organization. He was one of the main

spokesmen for the Muslim Indian community, and advocated for the political and economic

mobilization of the Muslim community so they would be able to hold their own against the

Hindu majority. It becomes clear that when Savarkar mentioned 'anti-national conferences' and

speeches that were rebellious in nature, that he was referencing Jinnah and his words on behalf

of the Muslim league. Jinnah was a nationalist, but advocated for Muslims in an unprecedentedly

public way. One of his goals was to find a balance between the Indian National Congress's goals

and the objectives of the Muslim League, as he knew that partnering with a powerful coalition

was the only way to secure political autonomy for Muslims (Jalal, 1985, 9). This was difficult

because of their conflicting goals. Over time, Jinnah increasingly advocated for independent

action separate from Congress. The difficulty and pushback he faced with the Hindu-majority

Congress influenced him to go in a different direction with the League. Muslim provinces were

in favor of a weaker national government with the power concentrated in each province. The

Congress party, on the other hand, was in favor of a "strong unitary center" in the form of a

federal government (Jalal, 1985, 10). While Jinnah was more in favor of the Congress party's

vision of India, he had to find a way to unify both coalitions. However, starting in the 1930s,

Jinnah started losing hope that the Muslim League would be able to compromise with the

Congress party who was losing interest in the Hindu-Muslim question.

Jinnah's presidential address delivered at the Lucknow session of the All-India Muslim

League in October of 1937 states his need to go in a separate direction from the Congress. He

stated:

"On very the threshold of what little power and responsibility is given, the majority community

have clearly shown their hand that Hindustan is for Hindus; only the Congress masquerades under

the name of nationalism, whereas the Hindu Mahasabha does not mince words. The result of the

present Congress Party policy will be, I venture to say, class bitterness, communal war and

strengthening of the imperialistic hold as a consequence… I feel that a fearful reaction will set in

when the Congress has created more and more divisions amongst Indians themselves, and made

united front impossible." (Cited in Ashraf, 1942, 30).

Jinnah's assertion that there was to be no compromise between the majority Hindu coalition

indicates a separation of an inclusive group and a centrist group. The Congress party went on to

be the most powerful political organization in India after independence, and the Muslim League

quickly lost the power they had gained. Disintegrating cooperation between the Congress party,

and the Muslim League is a clear example of coalitions building from backlash, and different

sects rising out of disagreement. Congress's actions throughout the independence movement

were often met with backlash, alienating multiple coalitions- one of which was the RSS.

2.23 The Congress Party

The Congress party was the most powerful political organization in India, led by

Mohandas Gandhi and Jawarhalal Nehru. Throughout the independence movement, the leaders

of Congress made an effort to represent all Indian interests. This was incredibly difficult to

achieve, and as time progressed, the organization separated into different coalitions. There was a

sector of the party that had socialist goals, dubbing themselves as the Congress Socialist Party.

John Patrick Haithcox investigates the leftist coalition within the Congress party and how they

compromised with the centrist majority. A focus of the Congress Socialist Party was working

with upper-class members of Congress with the goal of shifting them away from conservatism. A

large obstacle to this goal was Gandhi and his views on socialism (Tomlinson, 1976,, 13).

Gandhi, when asked about his views on communist and socialist economics, stated that his ultimate goal was "cooperation and coordination of capital and labor and of the landlord and tenant". He wanted landlords and tenants to have a trusting relationship, and for landlords to use their property for their tenants' welfare. Independence leader and socialist Jayaprakash Narayan described Gandhist economics as "timid economic analysis, good intentions and ineffective moralizing" because of the fact that Gandhism ignored the theft of wealth by landlords and capitalists.

Gandhi's influence extended to Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of India and one of the most influential leaders of the Indian nationalist movement. When asked to be the president of the Congress Socialist Party, he declined due to Gandhian influence as well as devotion to the nationalist movement. Nehru believed that national independence should be achieved before socialism (Haithcox, 1969, 15). The influence of both Gandhi and Nehru drove the Congress Socialist party to the center, the coalition eventually dissolving with lack of political and social support.

2.24 Coalition Building Theory

My literature review so far has explored the main actors during the Indian independence movement- the Congress party, All-India Muslim League, and the RSS. All of them played crucial roles in gaining freedom from the British, and their relationships to one another are complex. I will be using multiple theories in political science to explore these relationships and try to understand how their reign resulted in the rise of religious extremism. To start off, I raise coalition building theory to analyze how different subgroups rose under the larger umbrella organization of the Indian National Congress.

Stevenson, Pearce, and Porter (1985) define "coalition" as a way to problem solve when pursuing individualistic, subgroup, or organizational goals within a larger organization. Coalitions form when individuals that are a part of a larger group engage in collective action to promote a shared goal (Stevenson, 1985, 2). The journal references a study conducted by March and Simon (1958). They introduced the possibility of conflict within organizations over differing goals. This theory can be applied to the Congress party and the Muslim League, as there were coalitions forming within both of these organizations with conflicting goals. Coalitions, as they have been investigated in the political science field, are provisional groups with shared opinions among some subset of the political parties involved (Stevenson, 1985, 4).

Counter coalitions forming in response to already existing coalitions is a commonly occurring phenomenon within political science. According to the Stevenson, Pearce, and Porter article, the more power and visibility a coalition gains, the more salient its issue becomes- for both its members and the general public. As a result, the probability of counter coalitions forming to combat the initial coalition rises. The rising significance of the initial coalition publicizes the issues that it concerns, making the public evaluate their own position on it, and possibly form new coalitions as a response (Stevenson, 1985, 5.

2.25 Coalition Building in Electoral Politics

William Riker's theory that coalition members will form a coalition that has the minimum winning size in order to maximize election and policy outcomes for the members of that coalition (Stevenson, 1985, 4). I plan on using this political coalition building theory to explain how counter coalitions are born from backlash and gain political power. According to the book *Paper Stones* by Adam Przeworski and John Sprague: "To be effective in elections- for whatever

goals- a party must win votes, and votes are measured in numbers. Hence the perpetual issue facing the parties that organize workers is whether or not to seek electoral support elsewhere in the society. Leaders of socialist parties must repeatedly decide whether or not to seek electoral success at the cost, or at least the risk, of diluting class lines and consequently diminishing the salience of class as a motive for the political behavior of workers themselves." This aspect of electoral politics is directly applicable to my hypothesis of left wing movements moving towards the center in order to compromise for the sole reason of gaining votes.

Riker portrays Congress as a centrist party, despite there being coalitions within the party that were more left-leaning or right-leaning. In his article "The Two-Party System and Duverger's Law", he states that "because Congress, the largest party in India, includes the median of the voters arranged on an ideological spectrum, Congress has most of the time been the second choice of many voters on both its right and its left." (Riker, 1982, 3). This quotation explains that Congress, as a centrist party, does not appeal to extreme right and left-wing thought on both sides of the political spectrum. Political parties often take this into account when drawing legislation and intentionally lean towards centrism, as their primary objective is to gain more voters. The question is, however, how both sides of the spectrum deal with this issue.

2.26 Applying Coalition Theory to the Indian Independence Movement

There has not been much existing literature on coalition building's effects on the Indian independence movement. With this paper, I hope to investigate more deeply the connection between coalition building theory and the rise of religious nationalism. Historically, religion has been a crucial part of building groups of people with similar ideologies. It has its own set of rules that governs its members, and has goals concerned with spreading that religion to others. Thus, I

aim to research how religious groups build coalitions in politics, and if coalition theory

concerning right wing organizations can be applied to rising religious nationalism, specifically in

the case of India.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Case Studies in Political Science

A case study is defined as a series of events referring to a phenomenon of political interest that is investigated and analyzed to develop theory about why that specific event happened. This is a qualitative research method rather than a quantitative one. Quantitative methods are becoming increasingly present in political science research, especially with the development of increasingly sophisticated statistical analysis software. Statistical analysis often provides evidence for average effects rather than pointing out causal relationships between two specific events. Case studies allow researchers to delve more deeply into a particular series of events and pinpoint the reasons why certain acts occurred. Such evidence can be found through the method of *process tracing.*

3.11 Process Tracing

Process tracing is a tool for drawing descriptive and causal hypotheses from a series of events. It can be used to give a detailed description of a particular agent's decision-making process, and more broadly, any causal process having to do with a nation or state. Stephen Van Evera expands on the definition of process tracing in his methodology textbook: "In process tracing the investigator explores the chain of events or the decision-making process by which initial case conditions are translated into case outcomes. The cause-effect link that connects [the] independent variable and outcome is unwrapped and divided into small steps; then the investigator looks for observable evidence of each step." (Van Evera, 1994, 64).

This observable evidence can also be classified as *diagnostic evidence*, or causal process observations (Brady and Collier, 2010, 343). Process tracing involves taking these pieces of

evidence and using them to make causal inferences. It is nearly impossible to observe direct causation from causal process observations- rather, process tracing concerns making educated inferences from diagnostic evidence that provides crucial support in identifying and analyzing causal relationships.

3.12 How effective is a single-nation case study in testing theory?

There is no way of proving a theory or hypothesis by just observing one case, or one nation in this case. Rather than trying to prove my theory, I will be using this case study to test my hypothesis and hopefully support it in the process. According to the article "Case Studies: Types, Designs, and Logics of Inference", this method is known as an *idiographic* case study "which aims to describe, explain, or interpret a particular "case" and which can be either inductive or theory-guided; *hypothesis generating case studies; hypothesis testing cases*… and *plausibility probes*, which are an intermediary step between hypothesis generations and hypothesis testing and which include "illustrative" case studies… in practice case studies often combine several of these aims, often (and preferably) in sequence as a part of a multi-stage research program, one that may involve other methods." (Levy, 2008, 3).

In this thesis, I aim to trace and analyze the events happening during the Indian independence movement to explain the rise of Hindu nationalism that is still present today. While the Indian case study cannot prove how exactly religious nationalism rises in a nation, it will serve as a theory-guided study interpreting a particular series of events in history and investigating how religious nationalism in India fits into the pattern of religious nationalism internationally.

4. Diagnostic Evidence and Research

This chapter will focus on my three sub hypotheses. In the first, I investigate the relationship between compromise on left-leaning policies and the alienation of leftist organizations in politics. In the second, I explore the connection between right-wing organizations and religious nationalism. In the third, I discuss reactionary responses to inclusive politics from right-wing organizations.

4.1 H1: Compromise by major political parties on left-leaning coalitions' goals concerning social and economic issues led to their alienation and ultimate dissolution.

4.11 Gandhi and the All-India Muslim League

Mohandas Gandhi was one of the most important figures in the independence movement. Naturally, he held a great deal of influence over both Congress and the Muslim League. Despite his devotion to Hinduism, he was a staunch advocate of Muslim-Hindu unity. Mohammad Jinnah, knowing this, attempted to work with him to achieve their shared goal. However, as time went on and their goals diverged, the two groups decided to part ways.

Gandhi, from the point of view of Jinnah, often appeared inconsistent and shifty in terms of his goals for India's future. While being allied with the All-India Muslim League, any acts of true support from Gandhi were few and far-between. Jinnah's many speeches across India and in front of a variety of audiences provides quite a fleshed-out perspective from him.

From his words during his presidential; address at the All-India Muslim League Lahore Session in March of 1940:

"Of course, Mr. Gandhi says that the constitution will decide whether the British will disappear and, if so, to what extent. In other words, his proposal comes to this: First give me the declaration that we are a free and independent nation, then I will decide what to give you back! Does Mr. Gandhi really want the complete independence of India when he talks like this?... In the event of there being a disagreement between the majority of the Constituent Assembly and the Musalmans, in the first instance, who will appoint the tribunal?" (Cited in Ashraf, 1942, 159).

Jinnah goes on to question Gandhi's transparency- why he was not admitting the extent to the 'Hinduness' of Congress and thus how it would only represent Hindu interests. He asks, "Why not come as a Hindu leader proudly representing your people and let me meet you proudly representing the Musalmans?" (Cited in Ashraf, 1942, 161). Jinnah clearly held contempt over Gandhi and his involvement in the Congress. While describing Gandhi as someone who is allied with the Muslim League, Jinnah constantly makes references to his inadequate support. While reassuring him that he valued the Muslim opinion and considered them his equals, Gandhi did not make any real effort to secure them political autonomy. At this point, Jinnah had abandoned any notions of a united nation of Hindus and Muslims.

He stated in the same speech:

"[Islam and Hinduism] are not religions in the strict sense of the word, but are, in fact, different and distinct social orders, and it is a dream that the Hindus and Muslims can ever evolve a common nationality, and this misconception of one Indian nation has gone far beyond the limits and is the cause of your troubles and will lead India to destruction if we fail to revise our nations in time. The Hindus and Muslims belong to two different religious philosophies, social customs, literatures… To

yoke together two such nations under a single state, one as a numerical minority and the other as a majority, must lead to growing discontent and final destruction of any fabric that may be so built up for the government of such a state… Muslim India cannot accept any constitution which much necessarily results in a Hindu majority government. Hindus and Muslims brought together under a democratic system forced upon the minorities can only mean Hindu Raj." (Cited in Ashraf, 1942, 171)

Hinduism, as a religion, has several inherent societal hierarchies. This hierarchy was stoutly defended by Mr. Gandhi, a devout Hindu. He stated that- while supporting the Dalit cause and abhorring the condition of tribal Indians and their oppression in a Hindu society- as a Hindu, he could not contradict such a crucial aspect of the religion. Therefore, in any majority Hindu society with Gandhi as a leader, there would most certainly be a hierarchical caste-based social ladder. These classes coexist with socioeconomic standing, education level, and more- all of which tie in with the political and economic sphere of India. From all of this, Jinnah had deduced that Muslims would not be able to coexist in such a society.

Additionally, Muslim Indians' numbers were far less than Hindu Indians'- there would be a clear numerical minority in any nation in which Hindus and Muslims were brought together. Taking the two groups' complicated history into account, being a minority in such a nation would not have been in the Muslim populace's best interests. Gandhi's refusal to condemn the less equitable aspects of Hinduism as well as his inconsistent advocacy for Muslim India made him untrustworthy, in Jinnah's point of view.

4.12 The Congress Civil Disobedience Movement

Gandhi's willingness to make compromises bled over to economic matters as well. He is a universal symbol of peace and non-violence- but that came at the expense of the Muslim league as well as leftist coalitions within the Congress party. The Indian National Congress was a huge organization, encompassing all of India. It was created to present a united and disciplined front against British colonization- but expecting one political party to represent Indian civilization's every interest was unreasonable. It was inevitable that Congress would have conflicting goals within the party itself.

One of the most prominent displays of resistance against the British was the Congress civil disobedience movement from 1930-1934. The movement was created to represent mass disapproval against the "constitutional discussions going on in London, specifically at the British to consider anything more than Dominion status of India." Its primary function was to create social and political gridlock within India, forcing the British to transfer their power to Congress as the "sole representative of Indian opinion." (Tomlinson, 1976, 35).

The civil disobedience movement was non-violent and represented the first mass protest by the Indian people against British rule. Protest is one of the most crucial aspects of democracy and leftism. Marxism tells us the importance of *praxis*, or the action of practicing one's ideas and theories on the betterment of society. The civil disobedience movement was the first step to carry out Congress's plan of being the sole representation of the Indian people, and the first motion to actually gain that power back from the British. Gandhi, however, was opposed to the heavily politicized movement, as his original intention was for the Congress to be "an organization of high spirituality, strong in quality rather than quantity and dedicated to a programme which eschewed ordinary political activity, whether electoral or agitational." (Tomlinson, 1976, 45)

In other words, Gandhi wanted Congress to be a symbolic leader to empower the masses, but opposed any political engagement or movements from the organization. This reads as counter-intuitive, since the empowerment of the Indian masses was for the sole purpose of standing against the British Raj and to take back India- something that is inherently political.

"[Gandhi] now produced plans to call off the mass movement, ordered the Congress organizations to disband and inserted a completely non-political programme of individual protest and social uplift through the "constructive programme". Gandhi had now restored the authority of his own leadership from the center… But he had only managed this by abolishing the Congress as a political movement… It was not intended as a centralized apolitical elite body dedicated to realizing Mahatma's idiosyncratic view of a just society." (Tomlinson, 1976, 36-37).

Tomlinson's words show how Gandhi viewed his ideal version of Congress- an organization existing outside the realm of politics, enforcing culture and discipline. His decision to disable the civil disobedience movement, however, made it much more difficult to elevate civilian interests and unite them against the British. The disobedience movement was a prominent show of unrest among Indian civilization, and would have needed political support- which Gandhi refused to hand over. In reality, Gandhi was just avoiding progressive politics- anything actions that showed public unrest or disapproval- and wanted to focus on preserving culture and tradition. This is inherently a centrist political position, despite his insistence that he and the Congress would avoid politics altogether.

4.13 Satyagraha Organization

While dismantling the civil disobedience movement, Gandhi had a plan to mold Congress into an organization that promoted discipline and culture. *Satyagraha* is a Sanskrit word- *satya* meaning "truth" and a*graha* meaning "insistence" or "holding firmly to". Satyagraha was Gandhi's primary method of resistance: nonviolent and motivated by love. He aimed to convert Congress into this organization, and proposed the following changes to Congress's original constitution: "a change of creed substituting 'truthful and nonviolent' for 'peaceful and legitimate' to describe the means by which 'purna swaraj' (complete independence) was to be attained, an insistence on a 'Khaddar clause' which would exclude all those who did not regularly wear hand-spun cloth from Congress membership and a spinning qualification for voting in the Executive and delegate elections." (Tomlinson, 1976, 44).

Many different coalitions within Congress were opposed to these changes- the Congress Socialist Party claimed that the changes would "divert the Congress from politics into ethical and metaphysical abstractions.". Lala Dunichand, a minor Punjab leader, made an accurate prediction of the impact of the Khadar clause- that it would result in voter manipulation, since "the reigning Congress Executives were to be the arbiters of who was a khaddar wearer" (Tomlinson, 1976, 45). Khaddar is an Indian hand-spun cotton cloth, and Gandhi expected every member of Congress to wear their own hand-made khaddar- believing it to symbolize Gandhian ideals of discipline and uniformity. However, Congress Executives used their authority to decide who was and was not a proper Khaddar wearer- which led to biased judgment and thus, voter suppression.

It seems an interesting choice to focus on what members of the Congress should and should not wear- all the while, dismantling movements that may bring the change that he was looking for. His focus on policies like these and disregard to the civil disobedience movement

alienated many left-leaning leaders and groups. This indicates that insufficient progress on leftist goals may have alienated their supporters from Congress.

4.14 Congress Socialist Party

Gandhi's emphasis on symbolic gestures and the 'proper' way to achieve Indian independence is also centrist in its nature. During the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee in Patna, Bihar, during the dates of May 18-19, 1934, the Congress Socialist party was formed. Gandhi, however, believed that Indian independence should be fully attained before trying to introduce socialism into the national government. Jayaprakash Narayanan, a Marxist and the general secretary of the Congress Socialist party, described Gandhism as "timid economic analysis, good intentions and ineffective moralizing" because of the fact that Gandhism ignored the theft of wealth by landlords and capitalists. (Tomlinson, 1976, 11).

Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of India and widely regarded as the most prominent leader of the Indian Independence movement, was nominated to be president of the Congress Socialist Party. The Congress socialists wanted to use Nehru as a spokesperson and liaison between the Congress party and its socialist subsection, hoping that he would be able to exert his influence to expand socialist thought within the Indian government. However, due to Gandhi's influence and his devotion to nationalism, Nehru did not take the position. This led to the entire party of socialists reevaluating their priorities- without Nehru or Gandhi's support, there was little hope that they would be able to shift the Congress party towards the left. Their former policy of doing so vanished, as they feared this would split the party and jeopardize independence. At the expense of the left-wing of the Indian National Congress, many people conceded to Gandhism and chose nationalist unity over socialism.

Young and educated Indian men held marxism and socialism with high regard. They had lofty goals for the future of the Congress party and were often inconsistent with those goals. Tomlinson outlines their high hopes for the Congress party as well as their faulty organizational skills in detail. He describes the Congress Socialist Party:

"One section of the programme stated the need to 'rescue the Congress from the hands of the right wing by educating and organising the rank and file on the basis of a clear cut programme of national revolution and also… to carry on a constant propaganda for the exposure of the reactionary aims, policies, and programme of the right-wing group… The ideology of the Congress Socialist Party was as unclear as its role. As J.P. Haithcox pointed out, socialism was in vogue among young, educated Indians but it represented 'an ill-defined sentiment rather than a clear-cut ideology.'"

(Tomlinson, 1976, 51).

With a lack of clear planning and organization by the leaders of the Congress Socialist Party, it was difficult to gauge the extent of their influence on the rest of the Congress. While it was stated that one of their primary goals was to influence the other, right-leaning members of Congress, no valiant efforts were made to shift their political stances. Adding on the fact that they did not have concrete support from Gandhi, and as a result, Nehru- they were left without any political or social support.

Being the foreman of the Congress party, Gandhi held a considerable amount of power and influence over the Congress party- the strongest organization in the independence movement. However, the way he dealt with issues concerning the Muslim League, Civil Disobedience movement, and Congress Socialist party ultimately drove those coalitions away or led to their disbandment.

4.2 H2: Right-wing coalitions used anti-colonial nationalism to promote religious extremism.

4.21 Hindutva

The inventor of the term "Hindutva", Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, had stringent definitions for who could be counted as Hindu and who could not. Jaffrelot states: "To Savarkar a Hindu is first and foremost someone who lives in the area beyond the Indus river, between the Himalayas and the Indian Ocean, 'so strongly entrenched that no other country in the world is so perfectly designed by the fingers of nature as a geographical unit.'(Ibid p 87). This is why the first Aryans in the Vedic era 'developed a sense of nationality'(Ibid p 5)." (Jaffrelot, 2007, 86). Savarkar ties being Hindu to a geographical region- the first Aryan people who arrived to the region beyond the Indus river being classified as the original Hindus.

Jaffrelot continues to expand on Savarkar's beliefs:

"For [Savarkar], the Hindus descend from the Aryas, who settled in India at the dawn of history and who already formed a nation at that time… National identity rests for [Savarkar] on three pillars: geographical unity, racial features, and a common culture. Savarkar minimizes the importance of religion in his definition of a Hindu by claiming that Hinduism is only one of the attributes of Hinduism." (Jaffrelot, 2007, 86).

Hinduism is a unique religion in that it does not have a unifying religious text or just one religious figure. In Christianity, the word of the Bible is law; in Islam, the word of the Quran is law. Hinduism has no strict set of governing principles, and no real distinctions made between

what is considered as sinful and what is not. Therefore, there is not a clear way to determine what a 'good' Hindu is, and what the criteria are for being regarded as such. Savarkar compensates for this uncertainty by naming the three criteria for his idea of Hindutva. Geographical unity is determined by the area around the Indus river. Racial features are determined by one's ancestry. Common culture is determined by rituals, languages, and societal rules (Jaffrelot, 2007, 86). Religion itself was not really a determining factor of who Savarkar considered to be Hindu or not, him being an atheist himself.

These three pillars of Hindutva served as strict observable characteristics for the Hindu population, and threw into contrast the "otherness" of Christian and Muslim populations. An important part of the Hindutva ideology was common culture- the way in which a group of people enforce and abide by societal rules. Language is a crucial aspect of society, and Savarkar believed that Sanskrit was incredibly important to Hindu society; he describes it as "language par excellence". Jaffrelot writes: "Any political programme based on Hindu nationalist ideology has after Savarkar demanded recognition of Sanskrit or Hindi- the vernacular language closest to it- as the national idiom." (Jaffrelot, 2007, 86). Despite there being hundreds of languages spoken in India in addition to Hindi, the latter language is unarguably the most popular and well-known across the world. Pushes to make Hindi the official language of India have been widespread and insistent- even though most of the Southern Indian states do not speak the language. The intentional popularization of Hindi by Indian media and government is not by coincidence, and originates in Savarkar's invention of Hindutva. He ties Hindu identity with Sanskrit and Hindi, deeming Hindi-speaking people as the true Indians. Language is tied to national identity- English being a symbol of the west, and most Asian countries being associated with a single language. India is a special case, often referred to as a subcontinent due to its vast amount of cultures,

languages, and regions. Separatist movements in states including the southern Tamil Nadu led to the RSS acting against what they referred to as "Dravidistan" (*Organiser*, 1957), and denouncing linguistic states because of their "regionalist connotations and their dangerous tendency towards separatism" (*Organiser,* 1957). Using Hinduism and Sanskrit as a way to unite such a large region and multitude of people is a key aspect of Savarkar's idea behind Hindutva*,* and one of the earliest ways national identity was used to promote Hindu supremacy.

In Savarkar's point of view, as well as many other early Hindu nationalist thinkers, the land of India- or "Hindustan" as he refers to it as- was and is inextricably linked with Hinduism itself. He believed it to be a holy land, much like how cities such as Constantinople and Jerusalem were perceived.

In his book *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?*, Savarkar writes:

"At last she [Hindustan] was rudely awakened on the day when Mohammad of Gazni crossed the Indus, the frontier line of Sindhustan and invaded her. That day the conflict of life and death began. Nothing makes self conscious of itself so much as a conflict with non-self. Nothing can weld peoples into a nation and nations into a state as the pressure of a common foe. Hatred separates as well as unites." (Cited in Jaffrelot, 2007, 90-91).

Savarkar's loaded language gives away his views on Mohammad of Gazni- perhaps giving away his views on Islam, as well. Using phrases such "Hindustan", "rudely awakened", and "common foe" reveal his own thoughts as well as the effect that he wanted to have on his audience. A prime way of building camaraderie among a group is to unite them for a common goal- or against a common enemy. Utilizing religion to turn Hindu Indians against a "common

foe" was foundational for Savarkar's creation of Hindutva and the resulting rise of religious extremism.

Savarkar thought of Sikhs, Jains, and Buddhists as sects that are closely tied to Hinduism. Christians and Muslims, however, were regarded with "otherness", as he viewed them as "un-Indian religions". Jaffrelot writes from Savarkar's point of view: "Hindus are the autochthonous people of India, whereas the religious minorities are outsiders who must adhere to Hindutva culture, which is the national culture. In the private spheres they may worship their gods and follow their rituals, but in the public domain they must pay allegiance to Hindu symbols." (Jaffrelot, 2010, 45).

The majority of Congress, the most powerful Indian organization at the time, was Hindu. Despite all of this power held by Hindus, Savarkar lived in fear of losing it. Specifically following the Khilafat movement, backed by Gandhi and powered by the Muslim Indian population, Hindu nationalists took a defensive position. Seeing the effectiveness of the Muslim movement as well as their capability of mobilization and aggression, Hindu leaders felt pressure to respond. In the years leading up to independence, Savarkar and his successors would prioritize strengthening the Hindu population and instilling in them pride and dominance through the strict organization of the RSS.

The RSS recruitment process emphasized Hindu and Indian pride, and the importance of strength over foreigners- the British and non-Hindus alike. The organization trained their constituents using Hindu pride and patriotism as motivators for gaining physical and mental strength. In the next section, I will expand on the structure of the RSS and their role in spreading Hindu nationalism.

4.22 The Birth of the RSS

Savarkar had many followers, but one man who stands out above the rest is Keshav Hedgewar, the founder of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh- RSS for short. Hedgewar was a Telugu Brahmin doctor, and believed that the weakness and division among Hindus were responsible for the foreign domination of India (Damle & Anderson, year, XII). He viewed Hindus as "the people of the land", and stated that "Hindu society, whole and integrated should therefore be the single point of devotion for all of us." (Hedgewar, *A Bunch of Thoughts*). In Hedgewar's point of view, the main issue for the Hindu community in the years leading up to the independence movement was the division that existed among the people. He observed that there was no unity or any organization that enforced the proper behavior of Hindus, and no central authority to govern the Hindu people- thus, the RSS was born.

Hedgewar's successor, Madhav Golwalkar, was strongly influenced by Hedgewar's views on the status of Hindus in Indian society. He made this exceedingly clear when speaking in 1940-1946:

"Hindus are naive and simpletons, who deal with their (undeserving) enemies also with respect. There are innumerable divisions within, they are disorganized; they themselves are responsible for all the injustice meted out to them. Parochialism, linguistic, religious and sectarian differences, individualism above the national interests are their glaring faults. They have neither self respect nor self pride; nor do they have any pride in their glorious past; they have forgotten self reliance to solve their problems. They take pride in emulating others. They have become the haters of themselves. Such a race cannot survive." (Cited in Kelkar, 2011, 3).

There are multiple things to note in Golwalkar's words. Despite wanting Hindus to be less individualistic, he condemns them for "emulating others" and their lack of self reliance. Golwalkar does not offer any advice for building community or solidarity among themselves, instead telling Hindus to unite against the enemy and to avoid paying them any respect. Based on his emphasis on history, Golwalkar's idea of a Hindu's enemy is anyone that encroaches on Hindu land without following their customs. These talking points are not new. American conservatives often call for their followers to take pride in their history. When outdated social norms are threatened and progressive or inclusive ideals ushered in to replace them, calls to return to tradition are inevitable.

Golwalkar also gave the RSS movement its central ideology with his work *We are our Nationhood Defined* in 1938. He has a stringent definition for what constitutes a proper nation: "the idea contained in the word Nation is the compound of five distinct factors fused into one dissoluble whole… The famous five 'Unities'- Geographical (country), Racial (race), Religious (religion), Cultural (culture), and Linguistic (language)." Golwalkar used these 5 tenets to strictly define Indian Nationalism to be synonymous with Hinduism. We must note that neither Savarkar nor Golwalkar emphasized religion specifically in their ideal Hindu- they expanded the definition of a good Hindu to include nationality and patriotism. It may be plausible to consider that they did not promote Hindu Nationalism out of love for the religion, but to unite India under their definition of nationalism, which happened to include religion. The RSS had two main objectives: to spread Hindutva ideology and to empower and strengthen the Hindu community (Jaffrelot, 2010, 46).

In order to achieve these two objectives, Hedgewar started with grassroots movements in order to start the reformation of Hindu society from the ground up. He started by establishing

shakhas- localized branches- for each town or village, and recruited young Hindu men to participate in physical and ideological training sessions. *Pracharaks* were in charge of each *shakha,* and were expected to give their entire lives to the RSS movement. They would travel across the nation for the sole purpose of spreading Hindutva. In 1947, at the time of India's independence, there were approximately 600,000 volunteers in the RSS organization, which quickly became the most powerful Hindu nationalist movement. The *Organiser*, the RSS's official publication, was established in 1947 in the months leading up to Indian independence. The publication stated that the RSS was against state power and federalism: "In our ideal, we would wish to abolish the provinces and wish to establish a unique and a unified administration in our country (*The Organiser,* 1952). Despite the RSS taking up the role as the prime Hindu Nationalist publication of India, it did not involve itself in politics for a very long time: "RSS has always been above and beyond politics" (*The RSS Story,* 1980, 39). For this reason, they did not tie themselves to the Hindu Mahasabha, which had been a powerful instrument in enforcing Hindu Nationalism in Indian politics. Rather, they desired to be viewed as pure and removed- a holy organization that does not concern itself with worldly political matters, and only serves to spread the ideals of Hindutva.

Hedgewar used the state of the Hindu nation as the primary motivator when training all of his recruits for the RSS. While my hypothesis states that right-leaning coalitions- in this case, the RSS- used national identity to promote religious extremism, the Indian example suggests the opposite is true. *Hindutva* ties religion and nation together and melds the two into one entity; a place that Hindu nationalist leaders have described as Hindustan for many years. It is impossible to determine if religious extremist figures used nationalism to promote Hinduism or if they used Hinduism to promote nationalism. From the diagnostic evidence I have collected, I believe that it

is neither of those things- that Hindu Nationalist leaders intertwined national identity and religion in such a way that if they could not promote one without promoting the other.

4.3 H3: Centrist parties' inclusive approach to nationalism provokes a reactionary response from right-wing coalitions, who then use nationalism to shift public opinion in favor of traditionalism.

4.31 Centrism in Gandhian Thought

The Congress Party was centrist in nature, with wings leaning left and right. Gandhi was the face of the Congress movement, and was, for the most part, in the center on social and economic issues with his mind firmly set on the goal of Indian national independence. The "Gandhian" wing of the party held a great deal of power and influence over the rest of the members. A crucial aspect of what shaped Congress during the 1930s-1940s was the Bombay Congress session in 1934 and the ensuing changes to the constitution:

"Up until the Bombay Congress in October 1934, apart from contesting the C.L.A. elections, there was no clear programme laid down for Congressmen to follow. This was seen as another reason for the growing corruption. Gandhi, again, was the only one with a clear idea of what a new programme for the Congress should be." (Tomlinson, 1976, 44).

However, this "clear idea" for a new programme proved controversial across the Congress party. Earlier in the year, Gandhi announced his plans to convert Congress into a 'Satyagraha

Organization', as mentioned earlier in this chapter. He intended to make multiple changes to the

constitution so it reflected his ideals of *satyagraha*: the khaddar-clause, spinning requirement,

and the requirement of legitimacy in attaining complete independence. Gandhi was adamant on

these new contingencies for Congress membership; threatening to give up his membership and

position if they were not passed. Several groups responded negatively to these proposed

amendments to the Constitution.

The leader of the All-India Muslim League, Mohammad Jinnah, had issues with Gandhi's

satyagraha idea, stating during his 1940 speech at Karachi:

"Mr. Gandhi's, The Congress's, and the Hindu Mahasabha's demands not only involve

immediate fundamental constitutional changes of a far-reaching character but have for their basic

principle avowedly the domination of a permanent Hindu majority even for the formation of a

provisional government… The Hindu Mahasabha is seriously considering how soon they should

resort to *satyagraha* if their demands are not satisfied by the British Government and yet the Muslim

league on behalf of the Muslims- because it urges and points out that it cannot accept the position of

a minority…- is considered in certain quarters are adopting an uncompromising attitude, and we are

daily misrepresented by false and vigorous propaganda of our opponents" (Cited by Ashraf, 1942,

221).

With such widespread opposition for Gandhi's vision of Congress's future, his position,

once cemented in place, was gradually eroding. Kelkar comments on Gandhi's position on

non-violence, especially from the point of view of the Muslim oppressed class: "Critics have

observed that non-violence looks good only in the heads of those who have power, not in the

hands of those who are without any. Furthermore, Gandhi's insistence of non-violence took away

the moral sanction of all actions of the revolutionary groups… The Congress's has, thereafter, wiped out any credit whatsoever due to these revolutionaries in achieving India's independence in an act that can only be described as ostracism." (Kelkar, 2011, 5).

This scenario is not new whatsoever- non-violence has been preached as an effective revolutionary tactic before and after Gandhi's time. Oftentimes, however, it does not accomplish nearly enough to be truly revolutionary. Most revolutions in history have been bloody, and protests are almost always met with state violence. The American protests after the murder of George Floyd are a recent and relevant example- many of the non-violent demonstrations against the police were still met with tear gas and military personnel. Peaceful protests are painted as honorable and the most desirable vehicle for change, but are often ineffective due to the power imbalance between citizens and the state. The latter has an armed military and high-grade weapons at its disposal, making any demonstration by the people without any means of defending themselves risky and often ineffective. This parallels the plight of Jinnah and the Muslim League when faced by Gandhism. Gandhi held a great deal of power, thus successfully spreading his *Satyagraha* campaign across the nation. Jinnah could not combat this, especially not by promoting violence of any kind. He as well as the Muslim league fell victim to this.

Gandhi, however, was firmly on the side of Hindu-Muslim unity. The way in which he went about enforcing this unity, however, alienated much of Congress. He firmly believed that in order for independence to be achieved that all Muslims must be a part of the cause. Gandhi sidelined Jinnah for Muslim leaders that were seen as anti-national, offered his full support to the Khilafat Parishad, and refused to pass any legislation that outlawed cow slaughter (Kelkar, 2011, 6). After the Mopla rebellion in Kerala, where at least 1,500 Hindus were killed and around 20,000 converted, Gandhi stated: "[The] God fearing brave Moplas have fought for what they

think is their religious duty in a matter they think is religious" (Cited in Kelkar, 2011, 6). Whether Gandhi's actions were right or wrong is not the question- the reactions that his actions garnered, however, are more relevant. An increasing number of Hindu Congress members left the organization seeing Gandhi as an opposition to the prosperity of Hinduism. Seeing as his hold over the Congress was as strong as ever, anyone who held contrasting views to him was not likely to garner support within the organization.

4.32 Hindu Nationalist Reactions

Madan Mohan Malaviya addressed Gandhi's controversial actions at the Hindu Mahasabha meeting of 1923:

"By Mahatma Gandhi's advice Hindus worked with Mahomedans (muslims) and helped them in the Khilafat cause… [Gandhi] emphasized that he did not attribute such inhuman attacks to good and gentle Mahomedans but to rogues, vagabonds and bad elements of the Muslim society… The whole of India was severely pained and afflicted at these horrible inhumanities. Due to tolerance we patiently bore all this and drank the bitter dose simply with anxiety and desire that no ill-feeling and differences be created between the two sister communities… Our ladies do not consider they are as safe as 50 years ago. Amritsar Hindu women do not come out of houses so frequently and abruptly as they used to do formerly… Everybody knows what happened at Panipat and at Ajmer. Temples were broken and burnt and idols destroyed. In such circumstances it is our individual and social duty to increase our strength and be on terms of love and good-will with Muslims. It is most deplorable that Hindus are so fallen that a handful of foreigners can be ruling over us."

Malaviya pairs his condemnation of Muslims with his desire for Hindu-Muslim unity. However, it is clear that he is not in favor of there being an equal power distribution between the two groups. While he wants to be "on terms of love and good will with Muslims", he bemoans Hindus' lack of strength. Describing Muslims as a "handful of foreigners" that were successfully ruling over Hindu communities, he painted them as a group that has invaded a nation and conquered its indigenous people. His reaction was reflected among Hindu nationalists, who had increasingly differing visions from Congress for the future of India. Thomas Blom Hansen references Golwalkar's words: "[We live in] strange times indeed, when we do not live but merely exist. Strange and altered. Words which for centuries conveyed to us certain definite ideas have changed meaning… Nobility is at a sad discount… Sterling merit is discouraged. In fine we are rolling down at a terrific speed into the bottomless abyss of degeneration.' (Golwalkar, 1947, 6)." (Hansen, 1999, 80).

Golwalkar's fears of "degeneration" are reflected in his attention to strength through masculinity. He feared the emasculation of Hindu men as compared to Muslim men, and wanted to ensure that if and when the time came, they could fight to protect their way of life. Infamously, Golwalkar referenced "German race-spirit" in *We, Our Nationhood Defined*, indicating where his notions on Indian purity and virtues stem from. Racial purity and the rejection of those who do not fit into the idea of a 'pure nation' has been a recurring theme throughout history, as well as Golwalkar's writing. He condemns those who do not conform to Hindu traditions and culture, writing that they "deserve no privileges, far less than any preferential treatment- not even citizen rights." (Golwalkar, 1939, 56). Golwalkar continues to assert the importance of strength in the Hindu community, specifically among men. He wrote, "Let us shake off the present-day emasculating notions and become real

living men, bubbling with national pride, living and breathing the grand ideas of service, self-reliance and dedication in the cause of our dear and sacred mother-land…" (Golwalkar, 1939, 587). National identity serving as his vehicle, he drove the importance of masculinity into his audience's minds using traditional social norms as a weapon. He utilized the independence movement as a common goal and India as "motherland", drawing out his audience's feelings of pride, patriotism, family, and culture. Golwalkar's ultimate goal was to embolden the Hindu community and imbibe them with strength, and chose national identity and traditionalism as the way to do so.

Hansen analyzes Hindu leaders' emphasis on strength and pride as a reaction to Muslim encroachment:

"In India, sedimented fears of the abstract and generalized "Muslim" remain today the decisive ideological bedrock of the Hindu nationalist movement, and the most persistent source of its popular and electoral success. There is little doubt that communal subjectivities, especially the fear of Muslims among Hindus, have acquired a certain solidity and "truth" that is independent of social experiences or physical proximities. These subjectivities exists as… a kind of knowledge of the other that appears as more true than any appearance or concrete representation, and is thus a construction beyond argument or falsification." (Hansen, 1999, 12).

In this quotation, Hansen is attributing the source of the Hindu nationalism movement to the deep-set fear of Muslims. Following the Khilafat movement and the Nagpur riots, Hindu leaders became fixated on the strength of each individual Hindu, presumably in an event that they would need to defend or attack their Muslim counterparts. The roots of this fear are reactionary- from its inception, the Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS have emphasized the virtues

of purity and a nation connected by one culture. Referring to Muslims and other semitic groups as "others", and tying the land of India to Hinduism leaves no room for anyone that does not consider themselves a Hindu. To add- the Muslim population in India was relatively small in comparison to the Hindu population. According to the 1941 census of India, there were 94.5 million Muslims and 270.2 million Hindus in India. One would assume that out of sheer numbers advantage, any conflict between the two groups would result in a Hindu victory. Despite this, Hindu nationalists continued to focus on increasing the combative strength of their community. As previously stated, they used nationalism to promote traditionalism in the form of gender norms and the idea of India as a sacred and holy land. Their turn to traditionalism indicates fear of progression, and fear that the Muslim community would somehow overpower the Hindu people. One could attribute this fear to xenophobia, but the Muslim population were not foreign- they and the generations before them lived on Indian soil as much as Hindus did. In order to influence the public to equate Muslims with "foreigners", Hindu nationalists had to turn to traditionalism- the idea that Hindus were the true patrons of the Holy land that is India, and that Muslims were to be treated as guests at best and unwelcome foreigners at worst. This reactionary response was reflected in the birth of the Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS, the latter of which has continued to promote pro-Hindu and anti-Muslim sentiments to this day.

5. Findings and Conclusion

5.1 Findings

5.11 Review: Research Question and Main Hypothesis

I tested my hypothesis and sub hypotheses by finding diagnostic pieces of evidence, analyzing them, connecting them to my argument through the method of process tracing. To recap, my research question asked: What causes far-right religious coalitions to gain influence and public support within a nation? I responded with my main hypothesis: as political coalitions with inclusive policy goals grow in power, backlash from those who oppose inclusive policies results in counter coalitions forming. A political party can focus on one of two different objectives: gaining votes or getting their policies written into law. Because both objectives are important, almost all parties compromise at least a little in order to obtain the majority of votes. However, they can either choose to compromise heavily on vote-seeking and choose to prioritize their existing policies- or, compromise heavily on their policies and choose to prioritize vote-seeking. I hypothesized that left-wing groups are more likely to choose to compromise their policies over vote-seeking, and right-wing groups vice versa.

This is in part because of traditionalism- historically, it has always been right-leaning groups that reach into history and weaponize norms or traditions to achieve their goals. Thus, they do not compromise on their policies; they use tradition to justify them. Religion is, in its essence, a culmination of traditions- a historical text and prayers, the worship of gods that lived millions of years ago, and special customs that are passed down generations. A great deal of religion is based on tradition, which is why, as we as a society develop a more sensitive consciousness to equality and inclusion, many of the younger generations are choosing to reject

or modify their perspective of it. In chapter one, I referenced different occurrences of religious nationalism rising within governments; all of the instances in which religion was used to gain political power result in that power going to right-wing parties and policies. In the case of India, the centrist powerhouse Indian National Congress was the face of the independence movement, and therefore, Indian civilization. However, having just one party represent every political interest is impossible- it was only inevitable that coalitions would form with more specific interests.

The Congress Socialist Party, The All-India Muslim League, the Congress Civil Disobedience Movement, the Hindu Mahasabha, and eventually, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh were all coalitions that originally formed under the umbrella of Congress. Of these organizations, only the RSS exists today, overcoming various periods of political and social ostracism. They succeeded in their goals, deeming Hinduism the rightful religion and the Hindu people the rightful patrons of the land of India. In short, I hypothesized that right-wing coalitions in India gained support by using tradition, and therefore, religion, to promote their political goals instead of compromising them. Left-wing coalitions, on the other hand, did the opposite, and failed to see widespread political or social support.

5.12 Sub Hypotheses and Findings

In order to test my main hypothesis, I came up with three sub hypotheses, the first of which being:

1. Compromise by major political parties on left-leaning coalitions' goals concerning social and economic issues leads to the coalitions' alienation and ultimate dissolution.

My first sub hypothesis states that left-leaning coalitions tend to dissolve because of major political parties' compromises on their interests. In the case of India, the National Congress was the most important political party in the time period that I am investigating, 1920 to 1950. I investigated three left-leaning coalitions in particular: the Congress Socialist Party, the Congress Civil Disobedience movement, and the All-India Muslim League. The evidence I gathered indicates that Gandhi, in particular, made compromises when it came to all three of the factions' interests. If he was not directly involved, he had an indirect influence on their failure- for example, his lack of approval influenced Nehru into rejecting the presidency of the Congress Socialist Party; with Nehru's support, the CSP would have gained considerable political support from the main Congress organization. Satyagraha was a core Gandhian value and movement, and represented everything that he stood for. However, he had to disable the civil disobedience movement in order to promote it.

2. Right-wing coalitions use anti-colonial nationalism to promote religious extremism.

The second sub hypothesis I presented investigated the relationship between anti-colonial nationalism and religious extremism- more specifically, how right-wing coalitions use anti-colonial nationalist sentiment to promote religious extremism. To look into India during the 1920s to the 1950s, I researched how the RSS used patriotism for India in order to shift public favor towards embracing Hindu nationalism. The evidence I found, however, did not indicate such a relationship. Savarkar's definition of *Hindutva*- the central driving force behind both the Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS- was fundamentally based on nationality. According to Christophe Jaffrelot: "To Savarkar a Hindu is first and foremost someone who lives in the area beyond the Indus river, between the Himalayas and the Indian Ocean…" (Jaffrelot, 2007, 86).

Among other characteristics, being *from* the land that is now India is an integral part of being Hindu according to *Hindutva*. Savarkar and his successors, Hedgewar and Golwalkar, all shared this fixation on India serving as a "mother land". Much like how modern day Jerusalem or ancient Constantinople is viewed as a holy location, leaders of Hindu nationalism wanted the Hindu people to view India as a holy nation and the land itself as sacred.

Because of the first-person accounts of what Hindutva stood for as well as the founding ideals of the RSS, I conclude that Hindu nationalist leaders did not use nationalism to promote religious extremism, or vice versa. National identity or pride is inexplicably tied to religion in the eyes of the Hindu nationalist. Hindu leaders were not, as I thought, using one to promote the other- when they promoted one, they promoted the other. Figures such as Savarkar, Hedgewar, and Golwalkar believed that India was "Hindustan", and therefore that everyone who lived in it should follow Hindu customs. When they advocated for the empowerment of the Hindu people, it was to contest the strength of their Muslim counterparts, not stand against the British. After the Khilafat movement and seeing the success of the Muslim assembly, it was fear of competition that drove Malaviya of the Hindu Mahasabha to speak out on the weakness of the Hindu people. That same fear led to Hedgewar establishing the RSS. It was both national identity and Hindu nationalism that Hindu leaders used to influence their people to see themselves as the true patrons of India.

3. Centrist parties' inclusive approach to nationalism provokes a reactionary response from right-wing coalitions, who then use nationalism to shift public opinion in favor of traditionalism.

In the case of India, this hypothesis concerns the response of the Hindu people and leaders in response to the Congress party trying to include Muslim Indians in their campaign for independence. Gandhi, the face of the Congress party, envisioned a nation in which both Hindus and Muslims live in harmony. However, Jinnah, the leader of the All-India Muslim League, had different plans for the Muslim community. He worried about any nation in which Muslims were a numerical minority, given their dicey history with the Hindu people. At the time, Hindus constituted the majority of the population of India. They were already well represented in politics with most, if not all, of Congress's leaders being Hindu. Jinnah was concerned with the representation and political autonomy of Muslims, and favored a solution in which a separate nation for Muslim Indians would be established.

While Gandhi did not agree with Jinnah's two-state solution, he was still a champion of Muslim-Hindu unity and advocated against many of the issues plaguing the Muslim community. He spoke favorably of the Moplah rebellion (in which many of the victims were Hindu) and refused to ban cow slaughter when reviewing legislation. These actions were seen as highly pro-Muslim by Hindu nationalist leaders and the Hindu Mahasabha, who ended up splitting from Congress. As I stated before, the fear of "otherness" and of foreign invaders was the root of Hindu Nationalist sentiment and political action in the 20th century. This fear is highly reactionary, with prominent RSS leaders like Golwalkar condemning any Indian who did not conform to Hinduism. All of this supports my third hypothesis.

5.2 Conclusion

5.21 Limitations

There are various limitations when it comes to a qualitative case study as I have presented here. To start off, it is extremely difficult to prove causal relationships between an independent and dependent variable with qualitative data. This case study serves as just a small look into the important topic of religious nationalism. While India is a prime example of religion taking control of politics and government, my findings are not representative of the world. Furthermore, there are many external factors that pushed India in the direction of religious nationalism- anti-colonial independence being the biggest one. Under pressure to appear strong and united, leaders in the independence movement promoted a single party, which was a key factor in extremist coalitions forming.

Another limitation in this particular case study is the lack of evidence showing public sentiment towards the independence movement and the various coalitions that were formed during it. I have largely focused on the actions and words of the most prominent leaders at the time, which have shown little of civilian reactions or opinion on the events occurring. Furthermore, much of my concentration in research has been on North Indian politics, with little mention of South Indian movements or other leaders in the movement such as Bhimrao Ambedkar. India is an incredibly vast country, and there are a good deal more perspectives than the ones I have written about in this paper. There is still much research to be done about the evolution of such a diverse country.

5.22 Adding to Existing Literature

Limitations aside, I believe that India is an extremely important case to study. Its unique history still persists today, with anti-Muslim and anti-Christian strong as ever among the nation. Just recently, students at an Indian university were documented protesting their fellow students wearing hijabs- a head covering worn by Muslim women. The RSS has grown beyond measure, and is closely tied to the leading political party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The Congress party, on the other hand, has virtually lost all political power. Despite the Indian independence movement represented by anti-RSS leaders such as Mohandas Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Mohammad Jinnah- Gandhi proving to be an icon of peace, non-violence, and inclusivity even 75 years after his death- the RSS has prevailed, gaining public support that extends even to the diaspora that moves away from India. Anti-cow slaughter lynchings continue to occur in Northern India, and Prime Minister Modi continues to wear the label of Hindu Nationalist proudly (Serhan, 2022).

The creation of the RSS and the idea of *Hindutva* have given birth to an international Hindu political movement only gaining power by the year. Narendra Modi, India's Prime Minister, was a youth RSS member and his political party BJP emerged from the organization. Since his term began in 2014, India has shifted away from its label as a 'secular state'. Just this year, the Modi administration had Rahul Gandhi, Modi's main opponent in the upcoming 2024 elections, arrested for defamation. Gandhi had said in a 2019 political rally: "Why do all these thieves have Modi as their surname? Nirav Modi, Lalit Modi, Narendra Modi."
He was sentenced to two years in prison- meaning that he cannot run against the BJP in the coming election year, ensuring that they would remain in power for at least another term.

With Modi and the BJP's political leadership of India, the RSS remains in power among the

government and the general public. It is crucial to analyze the events that have contributed to all

of this and learn from the patterns of history in an effort to prevent them from happening again.

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