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Article Title

A Critical Constructivist Analysis of Global Media Framing of Hindutva Narratives and Their Impact on Indian Muslims

Abstract

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Keywords: Hindutva, Narendra Modi, Indian Muslims, global media framing, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Constructivism, Secularism, Democracy, Religious Nationalism, Minority Rights.

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Title

A Critical Constructivist Analysis of Global Media Framing of Hindutva Narratives and Their Impact on Indian Muslims

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Contents

Abstract

The current research analyzes how global media frames Hindutva ideology, the political tactics of the BJP, and their influence on Indian Muslims. Employing a Critical Constructivist framework that combines Fairclough's (1992) Three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis(CDA) with Wendt's(1992) Constructivist theory of International Relations, the study analyzes video coverage by BBC, Al Jazeera, and ABC News, 2024. Through text, discursive, and social-practice analysis, the research uncovers how global narratives produce Modi as both a democratic reformer and authoritarian nationalist, commonly equating Hindu cultural identity with state power. The analysis illustrates that international media are not mere observers but active agents in shaping India's global identity and perceptions of its democratic integrity. The critical analysis of language, representation, and ideology highlights how media discourse legitimizes or resists political majoritarianism. The implications focus on the global media's framing of domestic ideologies and call for more critical literacy to decode international news narratives.

Introduction

The rise of Hindutva as the ideological foundation of India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has led to transformations in India's political, social, and foreign policy trajectories. India, which was formerly celebrated as the world's largest secular democracy, now faces pervasive fears of democratic erosion, majoritarianism, and religious communalization. Hindutva, coined by V.D. Savarkar, is a dream of exclusionary Indian nationalism grounded in Hindu superiority and

cultural uniformity, wherein non-Hindus, particularly Muslims and Christians, are thought to be outside the envisioned Hindu Rashtra (Rafi & Mehkri, 2021). While past studies (Kaul, 2017; Waikar, 2018; Malji, 2018; Leidig, 2020; Ramachandran, 2020; Ejaz & Ilyas, 2021; Ahmed, 2022; Syed, 2023; Xiaolian et al., 2024) have extensively examined the internal dynamics of Hindutva, including its ideological underpinnings, legislative articulations, and regional consequences, scant attention has been paid to how global media frame and construct this phenomenon. This research fills the void by exploring how international media sources like BBC, 2024, ABC, and Al Jazeera rhetorically construct Hindutva ideology, BJP rule, and their socio-political consequences for Indian Muslims.

Scholars such as Mehdi and Mirza argue that Hindutva survives on an imagined sense of divine chosenness, historical grievance, and future glory—a syndrome they account for using the Chosenness-Myth-Trauma (CMT) framework (26–30). This ideology powers communal binaries, especially the "us versus them" dichotomy between Hindus and Muslims, justifying state policies such as the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), National Register of Citizens (NRC), and the repeal of Article 370, all of which systematically exclude Muslims (Rafi & Mehkri, 2021; Babar, 2023). These measures have not only intensified religious polarization but have also reconstituted India's foreign policy, particularly its belligerent posturing against Pakistan and attempts to stall regional cooperation, such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (Kallimullah and Mahmood 80–81).

Scholars (Waikar, 2018; Kinnvall, 2019; Singh & Winter, 2023; Mehdi & Mirza, 2024) further highlight how Hindutva becomes institutionalized in cultural and educational reforms. Textbook updates presenting Hindu rulers in a heroic light and eliminating Muslim achievements, the political exploitation of cow protectionism, and anti-intermarriage campaigns all attest to a grand project of Hindu identity formation (Mehdi & Mirza, 2024). These internal developments are synchronized by increased anxieties over India's global image, primarily how international media treat these ideological changes. Despite Narendra Modi's past being marred by accusations of complicity in the 2002 Gujarat pogrom, he has been embraced internationally as a democratic leader, highlighting a disjuncture between domestic realities and international representations (Kaul, 2017).

This paper seeks to analyze, through a Critical Constructivist framework, how international media frame Hindutva narratives, BJP policies, and their impact on Indian Muslims. Using Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the research examines the linguistic choices and narrative patterns used by global media in representing Hindutva. It also examines the consequences of such frames in informing global discourses on democracy, minority rights, and India's self-declared secular identity. As Tharoor points out, Hindutva is not a prolongation of Hinduism but a try to "semitize" it for political mobilization (qtd. in Rafi & Mehkri, 2021, p. 9). Therefore, analyzing how these dynamics are mediated internationally can uncover how ideological narratives move, change, and gain legitimacy across borders.

Significance of the Study

The present research offers theoretical and practical contributions to the existing literature in International Relations and Linguistics. Theoretically, it combines Constructivist International Relations and Critical Discourse Analysis to investigate how state identity, public opinion, and ideological legitimacy are represented and constructed by language across national borders. It contributes to the study of International Relations, political communication, and media studies by demonstrating that global media coverage of Hindutva works to determine its place in world political discourse. Practically, the study points to the role of international media coverage in shaping perceptions about India's democracy in the world, namely the erosion of secularism and systematized othering of Indian Muslims. Thus, the study underscores that the struggle for the definition of Hindutva is not confined to India but is a global battle of discourse, legitimacy, and identity, and one of the real consequences for international diplomacy, minority rights, and the future of pluralist democracies.

Research Objectives

- To analyze how global media news sources

- (BBC, ABC, Al Jazeera) construct Hindutva ideology, BJP tactics, and their socio-political influence over Indian Muslims.
- To investigate how global media narratives of Hindutva intersect with broader discourses on democracy, secularism, and minority rights in India.

Research Questions

1. How do global media news sources (BBC, ABC, Al Jazeera) employ rhetorical strategies to frame the BJP's tactics for constructing Hindu identity?
2. What implicit or explicit connections do these international narratives make between Hindutva's rise and the socio-political marginalization of Indian Muslims?

Literature Review

The resurgence of Hindutva ideology under the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has significantly shifted India's domestic and international policies with long-term implications for Indian Muslims and relations between India and Pakistan. The ideological change has attracted scholars' interest since they examined its rhetorical, legislative, and geopolitical articulations regarding historical, sociopolitical, and international visions. Essentially, Hindutva, or Hinduness, is a cultural-national politics meant to reaffirm Hindu dominance in India. Drawn from the writings of V.D. Savarkar and the organizational principles of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Hindutva imagines India as a Hindu country, at the cost of exclusion of Muslims and other minorities (Xiaolian et al., 2024). This ideology enjoys ideological affinities with European fascism, particularly in the appeal to ethnonationalist purity and majoritarian dominance (Syed, 2023). Scholars highlight how this ideological framework has become the BJP's political centerpiece, particularly in electoral politics. The party has used polarizing narratives to mobilize Hindu voters and scapegoat Muslims as security threats and destabilizers of national unity (Xiaolian et al., 2024).

Such political rhetoric is not merely discursive but operationalized by policy interventions and state practices. One of the most visible expressions of Hindutva's influence is the revocation of Articles 370 and 35A, which took away the special status accorded to Jammu and Kashmir (Ejaz & Ilyas, 2021). This parliamentary decision is also commonly seen as expressive of the BJP leadership's bent toward exerting hegemony over Muslim-majority regions and silencing dissent through militarization and juridical exclusions (Syed, 2023; Xiaolian et al., 2024). Several authors argue that the removal of constitutional protections from Kashmiris is not only an internal articulation of Hindu nationalism but also a geopolitical action to exercise Indian sovereignty and power, particularly against Pakistan (Ahmed, 2022). The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) of 2019 has further exposed the exclusionary rationale of Hindutva. By actively discriminating in favor of non-Muslim refugees from adjacent countries, the Act is generally considered to be a legal instrument of religious discrimination (Syed, 2023). Critics point out how such policies construct Indian Muslims as perpetual outsiders, de facto delegitimizing their citizenship and belonging. This legal climate, combined with increasing hate crimes and the normalization of anti-Muslim discourses, has led to a sociopolitical environment characterized by Islamophobia, communal violence, and democratic retreats (Reddy, 2011; Malji, 2018).

These domestic shifts have also resonated internationally within India's external policy, particularly towards Pakistan. The construction of Pakistan as a Muslim enemy reinforces the BJP's account of India as a Hindu Rashtra under threat. Several scholars underscore how Modi's Hindutva policy has emboldened hardline stances, diminished diplomatic engagement, and curtailed confidence-building measures (CBMS) between the two countries (Kaul, 2017). For instance, India's revocation of Pakistan's Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status after the Pulwama attack and its emphasis on surgical strikes reflect a preference for militarized and symbolic nationalism over sustained dialogue (Ramachandran, 2020). The Kashmir conflict has also been a central theme in Hindutva ideology, used to legitimize state violence and de-legitimate Muslim identity in Kashmir. It is contended that human rights violations, including enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, and communication shutdowns, have increased since the BJP came to power (Syed, 2023). These actions are part of a broader endeavor to muzzle

opposition and redefine the region's history to fit the RSS's vision of "Akhand Bharat"—one Hindu nation dominating South Asia (Xiaolian et al., 2024, p. 3).

Beyond India and Pakistan, the Hindutva ideology informs India's regional strategic orientation, most notably through economic partnerships such as the Chabahar port development. Researchers propose that India's relations with Iran are motivated by economic pragmatism as well as by an interest in countering Pakistan-China collaboration through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), thereby projecting Hindu nationalist influence geopolitically (Babr, 2023; Xiaolin et al., 2024). This nationalist ideology even seeped into cultural organizations and educational change. Stories focus on attempts at revising the curriculum for teaching history, renaming towns, and fostering intermarriages between religious affiliations intended for "correction" of demographical imbalance—a practice denounced as demographic engineering (Syed, 2023, p. 6). All these amount to symbolic violence since they impose Hindu norms at the expense of marginalized Muslim traditions and identities. Constructivist scholars believe that the emergence of Hindutva is not just an outcome of domestic political forces but also a discursive construction of national identity in reaction to international trends. As Sahgal indicates, Hindu nationalism is a historic revisionism targeted at unifying a monolithic identity by selective amnesia and active forgetfulness. This aligns with the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which focuses on how language practice, law practices, and mass media practices organize social realities and generate power hierarchies (Fairclough, 1992).

The existing literature provides a nuanced understanding of the historical and ideological formation of Hindutva and its destructive influence on Indian Muslims and South Asian stability. Reddy (2011) and Rafi and Mehkri (2021) highlight how Hindutva's rise has broken India's secular heritage by bringing religion as a key force in politics, practically sidelining Muslims through measures such as the CAA, NRC, and the revocation of Article 370. They contend that such actions signal a conscious demographic engineering of Kashmir, making it open to Hindu

settlers and removing indigenous Muslims of autonomy and rights. Based on Paxton's theory of fascism, the authors define Hindutva as religious-based fascism facilitated by state and judicial complicity. Similarly, Mehdi and Mirza (2024) examine Hindutva using the Chosenness-Myth-Trauma (CMT) Syndrome lens to describe how historical trauma, mythologized invasions, and divine chosenness are marshaled to produce a majoritarian Hindu identity. This identity, once established, functions as the justification for targeting Muslims through exclusionary policies, violence, and structural discrimination. They trace how the RSS-BJP complex exploited incidents such as the destruction of the Babri Masjid and the Gujarat carnages to fuel communal animosity and create a unifying, anti-Muslim Hindu nationalism. Furthermore, the authors point to educational reforms, media discourses, and economic fears as means for Hindu identity formation, especially among the younger generation. The rewriting of textbooks to celebrate Hindu emperors and suppress Muslim achievements further consolidates a one-dimensional national history. Together, these works demonstrate how Hindutva ideology converts India's diverse democracy into an ethnoreligious state where minorities are "othered" and democracy is stripped of majority rule (Kinnvall, 2019, p. 283).

Though the existing literature presents a strong critique of Hindutva's intellectual origins, domestic political consequences, and exclusion of Indian Muslims, there is a lack of focused research on how international media represent these trends. Much of the scholarship focuses on India's internal processes or bilateral affairs with Pakistan, with little discussion of how global media narratives produce, critique, or legitimize Hindutva's rise. This gap is important, given that international media framing not only creates a global understanding of Indian democracy but also affects diplomatic rhetoric and geopolitical orientations. Therefore, a critical constructivist examination of the global media framing of Hindutva is necessary to comprehend the interplay of ideology, discourse, and power in the global context.

Hence, an overview of the existing scholarship explains that there is a growing academic consensus that Hindutva is not just a religious movement but a multifaceted political endeavor

with domestic and international implications. Its institutionalization in state policy, public opinion, and foreign diplomacy has left visible imprints on Indian Muslims, Indo-Pakistani relations, and regional security in South Asia. By comparative and critical approaches such as constructivism and CDA, the present study seeks to uncover how media narratives, transnational institutions, and global civil society react to or emulate Hindutva's ideational imperatives.

Research Methodology

This study employs a Critical Constructivist approach to examine how global media frame Hindutva ideology, BJP policies, and their socio-political implications on Indian Muslims. The study design combines Fairclough's (1992) Three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Wendt's (1992) Constructivist theory of International Relations (IR) to facilitate a multidimensional analysis of how discourse constructs political identity and international perspectives and attitudes. It seeks to examine media portrayals and critically analyze how global stories assist in the construction, legitimation, or subversion of Hindutva as a political and ideological movement. This twofold approach ensures that language (CDA) and identity construction at the global level are kept at the center of the analysis.

Data Collection

The primary data for this research are video transcripts from major global media sources such as BBC News, ABC News, and Al Jazeera. Specifically, four detailed video reports were selected that directly cover Narendra Modi's leadership, the BJP's political strategies, the framing of Indian secularism and Hindu nationalism, and their socio-political implications. Media outlets were chosen based on their international reach, worldwide reputation for covering international news, and influence on shaping global views of Indian human rights and democracy.

Theoretical Framework

The study employs an Integrated Critical Constructivist approach, drawing on Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model, which underpins textual and contextual analysis, and Wendt's Constructivism, which emphasizes that state identities and norms are socially constructed and not ontologically given. Fairclough (1992) examines discourse at three levels: a text, a discursive practice (the way the text is produced and read), and a social practice (the way the text interacts with wider social and power structures). This model allows researchers to connect micro-level linguistic features with macro-level societal dynamics, revealing how language reflects and shapes power relations. For example, textual analysis explores linguistic aspects like word selection, metaphors, attributions of agency, and narrative framing in the transcripts. Discursive practice investigates how international media create, filter, and disseminate narratives; how news sources are valued or excluded; and how interviews and statistics are intertwined to form cohesive frames. Social practice bridges textual and discursive structures to wider socio-political formations, such as the emergence of Hindu nationalism, the breakdown of Indian secularism, and India's global repositioning as a "strongman democracy." Similarly, Alexander Wendt's (1992) Constructivism posits that the most important structures of the international system are socially constructed and not solely material; common ideas, norms, and interactions construct state identities and interests. Wendt famously asserts that "anarchy is what states make of it," highlighting that international facts rely on how states understand and construct them through social processes. Hence, Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis and Wendt's Constructivism highlight that social realities are not essential but are constructed through interaction and language. Fairclough uncovers how discourse reflects and shapes societal power relations, while Wendt contends that international structures, like anarchy and state identities, are produced by shared ideas and communicative practice. Together, their theories suggest language is a natural instrument in constructing domestic political orders and international realities.

In this study, bringing together Fairclough and Wendt allows the researchers to examine how global media discourse about Hindutva simultaneously shapes how India's domestic identity and place in the international community are perceived. In addition, the study critically

analyzes how international media constructed India's identity during Modi's regime—a robust democracy, an emerging authoritarian state, or a Hindu nationalist state. It explores how discursive construction by the BBC, ABC, and Al Jazeera constructs global perceptions of Indian democracy, secularism, and minority rights. It also queries the international consequences of the normalization of Hindutva on geopolitics, soft power, and human rights discourses. By combining CDA and Constructivism, the research encompasses media representation's micro-level (textual decisions) and macro-level (global norm-construction) dimensions. Through this stringent and multilayered approach, the research seeks to uncover how global media frame Hindutva not just as an Indian phenomenon but as a global ideological force with profound implications.

Analysis and Discussion:

BBC's Framing of Modi and Hindutva

The selected video report (March 2, 2024) titled "India election: Could PM Narendra Modi win another term?" from BBC News offers a rich case for analyzing the global media's discursive framing of Hindutva and its socio-political implications for Indian Muslims. Drawing on Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model—textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice—alongside Constructivism, this analysis reveals how the narrative constructs, legitimizes or challenges ideological power structures in Modi's India.

The BBC report uses a combination of celebratory, critical, and emotive language at the textual level. It begins with assertions such as "Modi has awakened Hinduism. India was always a Hindu state and will always be" (BBC News 0:11-0:17). These are not narrator attributions but quoted supporters, thus creating a veneer of neutrality while highlighting a majoritarian account that places Hinduism in line with Indian national identity—exactly what Hindutva ideology advocates. The repetition of the term "Ram" in Modi's speech, "Ram is the faith of India. Ram is the foundation of India. Ram is the thought of India. Ram is the constitution of India" (BBC News 0:48-0:58) conflates religion and national law, subtly eroding secularism. The narrator then counterpoints this with, "Those were the words by the prime minister of a secular country" (ibid. 1:01-

1:03), an instant of ideological dissonance that creates critical skepticism regarding India's democratic values. Moreover, Modi's relationship with the RSS is explicitly mentioned: "Mr Modi does not just respect the RSS—he became a member in his teens" (1:33-1:37) establishing ideological continuity between Modi's leadership and a Hindu nationalist paramilitary organization linked to historical violence, including the demolition of the Babri Masjid.

Discursively, the BBC interweaves state rhetoric, public voice, and journalistic discourse. The juxtaposition of victorious Hindu voices with grieving and resentful Muslim citizens, "we have been praying there for 50 years" (2:24 2:27), creates a binary framework of dominance and marginalization, which corroborates Constructivist conceptions of identity politics and the "othering" of Muslims. The tea stall interview, in which a journalist's identity is challenged, "Are you Hindu or Muslim?" (2:48), illustrates the ubiquitous communal framework under which political allegiance and citizenship are increasingly understood. This causal probing of identity is symptomatic of how Hindutva has reshaped cultural mores and erased civic boundaries, as also highlighted by Mehdi and Mirza. Moreover, the framing of welfare schemes as personal gifts from Modi rather than institutional entitlements, "everything coming not from the government, not from the Department, not from any other person, it's all coming from Pradhan Mantri" (4:50-4:58) illustrates narrative personalization, constructing Modi as a benevolent patriarch. This aligns with the literature's observations of Modi's cult of personality, aided by media centralization and political branding as noted by Rafi and Mehkri and Mehdi and Mirza.

From a social practice point of view, BBC News criticizes the way in which Hindutva ideology has been institutionalized as state policy with the help of institutional tools such as the judiciary, welfare, and the media. The rhetorical conflation of religion and state "Ram is the constitution of India" (0:58) and the deafening silence of mainstream media, "you have 500 news channels, you have 60 websites, all saying the same thing" (5:40-5:47) expose how democratic institutions are being instrumentalized in order to normalize Hindu dominance. Moreover, constructivist theory underscores how state

identity is created not just internally by politics but also externally by narratives and international reception. The BBC, being a Western media organization, implicitly challenges India's self-perception as a secular democracy by pointing out its ideological inconsistency. This concurs with Kallimullah and Mahmood's argument that Indian foreign policy is increasingly influenced by Hindutva-tainted nationalism, which impacts regional peace and its global reputation. The absence of government accountability and the centralization of Modi's image reflect a shift toward charismatic authority, characteristic of populist and authoritarian regimes. Modi's image on COVID certificates and billboards signifies his transcendence from a political leader to an ideological symbol—an embodiment of Hindutva nationalism.

Hence, the analysis of the BBC report, through Fairclough's model and Constructivist theory, reveals how global media frame Modi's Hindutva not only as an internal religious movement but as a geopolitical force reshaping India's identity. The researchers have minutely examined the rhetoric of Hindu victimhood, secular betrayal, and Muslim othering, showing how international outlets subtly critique Hindutva's ideological hegemony. This focus on framing answers the research's main questions regarding global media's reporting on the BJP's solidification of Hindu identity, and representing its socio-political impacts on Indian Muslims.

Al Jazeera's Framing of Modi and Hindutva

The analysis of the selected video "Why India's election is such a big deal" by Al Jazeera (April 8, 2024) provides insight into how global media frame Narendra Modi and Hindutva. Emphasis is placed on discourse, constructing both India's internal political identity and external perception as a democracy or an emerging illiberal state.

At the textual level, the video establishes a powerful contrast between Modi's projected strength and underlying democratic decay. Positive framings such as "most popular leader in the world" (Al Jazeera 0:30) ", India's booming economy" (0:39) ", and rockstar welcome" (5:19) construct Modi as a charismatic, almost mythic figure, aligning with populist strongman tropes. Simultaneously, negative discursive markers such

as "authoritarian state" (0:55), "threatens minorities, especially Muslims" (1:00), and "press freedom in crisis" (8:53-8:55) flag deep structural concerns about India's democratic health. These lexical choices distinguish between Hinduism as a personal faith and Hindutva as a political project. Terms like "platforming Hinduism," (7:29), "imagining India as a Hindu state" (7:04), and "controversial citizenship laws" (10:03) link Modi's policies to institutionalized religious nationalism rather than cultural religiosity, reinforcing critiques from Mehdi and Mirza regarding Hindutva's ideological goals. Additionally, causal connections between Modi's actions and their effects on society are made using constructions such as "violence against Muslims has worsened" and "mainstream media corroded by government." This pattern of text is consistent with Fairclough's (1992) insight that discourses make realities through the attribution of agency and responsibility.

The discursive pattern of the reporting alternates between glamorizing Modi's achievements and revealing democratic decline. The chronology of events—beginning with India's economic emergence and ending with anxiety about Hindutva and censorship—reflects a spiral construction that invites the audience to Modi's appeal and then critically dissects its impact. Such a strategy captures what Fairclough refers to as "interdiscursivity", which refers to the overlap of several discourses, such as economic prosperity, religious nationalism, and critique of human rights, within a single narrative. Source selection reinforces the frame: experts, activists, and international organizations like Reporters Without Borders are cited to validate concerns about democracy and press freedom, while Modi's defenders are largely absent except through paraphrased official rebuttals, "Now the government rejects this saying the law is about protecting persecuted religious minorities from neighboring countries" (10:31-10:38). Thus, the media subtly position themselves within critical international norms on human rights and democracy. In Al Jazeera's reporting, protests, anti-Muslim violence, and legal discrimination (e.g., CAA) are foregrounded, indicating the construction of Hindutva as an international issue, rather than a domestic political agenda.

On the social practice level, the reporting presents India's domestic changes as having a deep impression on its foreign identity. From Wendt's Constructivist perspective, states' international identities are shaped in interaction with the international environment; therefore, India's representation as an "economic powerhouse" and a "threatened democracy" constructs a twin identity within world discourse. By narrating Modi's rise alongside the degradation of secular and democratic institutions, the video suggests that India's global image as the world's largest democracy is increasingly at odds with its internal ideological shifts. This aligns with Rafi and Mehkri's findings that Hindutva seeks external validation while hollowing out internal pluralism (Rafi and Mehkri 6–7). The explicit articulation of Hindutva's political agenda such as imagining India as a "Hindu state in the way that Pakistan is for example a state for Muslims" (7:04-7:07) illuminates the international implications of Hindutva's normalization, aligning with Mehdi and Mirza's critique of ideological manipulation of democracy (30–36). In addition, the video's focus on declining media freedom, judicial abuse, and minority victimization parallels Wendt's notion that international legitimacy is socially constructed: if these are the defining stories of internationalism, India's international identity as a secular democracy may be eroded.

Hence, the selected video reporting by Al Jazeera represents Narendra Modi as a contradictory figure: embodying national pride and economic power, while also being a force for democratic retrogression and religious exclusion. Through Fairclough's CDA lens, the researchers observe the way linguistic and narrative decisions project both populist charm and authoritarian risk. Through Wendt's Constructivism, international media portrayals are actively restructuring India's world identity, not only situating Hindutva as a movement within India but as one with real international implications. Therefore, this analysis strengthens the study's central argument: global media discourse critically constructs the understanding of Hindutva's rise and influence on Indian Muslims and democratic norms.

ABC News' Framing of Modi and Hindutva

ABC News video (June 5, 2024) titled "How Hindu nationalism lingered in the lead-up to Narendra Modi's election win" offers a highly textured narrative of India's 2024 elections, framing Narendra Modi's leadership within the tension between populist consolidation and democratic resilience. Using Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model and Wendt's Constructivism, this analysis unpacks how global media discourse simultaneously constructs Modi's enduring strength and the limits imposed by India's pluralistic democratic fabric.

The language in the video displays a critical shift, unlike previous narratives that emphasized Modi's uncontested dominance; here, terms like "clipping Modi's wings," (ABC News 3:10-3:14) "unbridled power," (3:14-3:17) and "democracy reigning in invincibility" (6:11) foreground the voter's agency in checking authoritarian drift. The key lexical field revolves around containment, restraint, and democratic assertion, suggesting that Modi's charismatic leadership is subjected to new structural limitations. Notably, the report distinguishes between Nationalism (acceptable) and Religious majoritarianism (Hindutva, presented as problematic). The speaker observes that although voters "applaud Modi for tough nationalist stances vis-a-vis external adversaries" (2:03-2:09), they become uneasy when "200 million Muslims are othered" (video 2:14–2:18). This parallels Fairclough's observation of semantic bifurcation, whereby apparently equivalent discourses (national pride vs. religious nationalism) are strategically distinguished for critical focus. The use of metaphors like "David versus Goliath" (6:03) and "drawn a boundary around Modi's power" (6:23-6:27) humanizes the underdog narrative, casting ordinary voters as the defenders of India's complex, diverse democratic ethos—a sharp counter to Hindutva's majoritarian vision.

Discursively, the ABC video privileges voter testimonies, journalistic observations, and election results as the primary evidence base, minimizing political rhetoric. The sequencing moves from personal anecdotes (the young unemployed man wanting opportunity) to broader political currents (Modi requiring allies to form a coalition), to meditations on India's irrepressible democratic ethos. This bottom-up narrative building is in stark contrast to previous global media presentations, which frequently revolved around elite political

drama, thereby repositioning Indian voters as the principal actors. By pointing out that even BJP supporters expressed unease with "Hindu-Muslim divisiveness" (1:02-1:05), the media implies that religious polarization has political constraints—a crucial finding pertinent to the research questions regarding global narratives connecting Hindutva's rise to the socio-political exclusion of Muslims. In addition, the speaker emphasizes India's multiplicity: "There is no single language, religion, or leader that holds India together" (7:58-8:01). This interferes with the homogenizing narrative of Hindutva and coheres with Mehdi and Mirza's caution regarding Hindutva's drive to destroy India's pluralist foundations.

At the level of social practice, the narrator positions the 2024 election as a reaffirmation of India's originating pluralism against the centralized tendencies of Hindutva. This aligns with Constructivist theory as Indian international identity is not merely articulated by state discourses (India's global profile under Modi) but also constructed by domestic societal practices, as indicated by democratic citizen voting behavior. By voting to restrict, not reject, Modi's power, Indian citizens signal that Hindutva's project, while potent, faces social limits within India's political identity construction. The broader implication suggests that India remains an electoral democracy despite illiberal pressures—a crucial nuance often missing from international narratives of democratic decline. Also, the requirement for Modi to now cobble together a coalition government with leaders who back opposing ideological stances (e.g., pro-Muslim affirmative action by Chandra Babu Naidu) indicates that Hindutva cannot be naturally mainstreamed unless it undergoes political compromise, negotiation, and dilution. Thus, the global framing shifts subtly: though authoritarianism and majoritarianism loom, India's pluralist democratic institutions continue to exert powerful countervailing pressure—an observation directly applicable to the present study's focus on media framing.

ABC News puts India's political development into the larger context of democratic resilience in opposition to populist forces, undermining simple stories of inexorable Hindutva-based authoritarian consolidation. The media framing reminds us that while Modi and the BJP remain dominant forces,

their ambitions must factor into India's enduring pluralist traditions. It employs critical textual tactics, multivocal discursive tactics, and observations of society's heterogeneity. Synthesizing Fairclough's CDA and Wendt's Constructivism demonstrates that India's identity is discursively constructed as a process of negotiation, contest, and dynamism in which ordinary citizens, state officials, and world observers are central. The study thus demonstrates that international media, while not directly complicit, can reproduce Hindutva's ideological discourse through framing choices and discursive patterns. This reiterates the significance of constructivist critique and critical media literacy in deconstructing how global narratives shape our understanding of local ideological developments.

Conclusion

This study sought to investigate how international media frames the rise of Hindutva, the ideological position of the BJP, and its socio-political implications for Indian Muslims. Utilizing a Critical Constructivist approach that combined Fairclough's (1992) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with Wendt's (1992) Constructivist International Relations theory, this study has unveiled how international news media such as BBC, ABC News, and Al Jazeera frame and interpret the complex ideological transformations in contemporary India. The findings reveal that international media reports are not merely descriptive or observational but reflexively make India what it comes to be in the world's imagination—either an endangered secular democracy, an emergent authoritarian state, or a Hindu nationalist state. Textually, news sources engage in paradoxical discursive maneuvers, balancing the portrayal of Narendra Modi as a charismatic reformer with charges of his complicity in weakening democratic institutions and marginalizing minorities. The repeated use of terms like "Ram is the constitution," "clipping Modi's wings," and "Hindu state" not only reflects ideological framing but also serves to question the compatibility of Hindutva with India's constitutional secularism. At the discursive level, the sourcing of narratives—from public testimonies to civil society critiques—highlights how media outlets construct legitimacy and dissent through selective inclusion and exclusion. At the social

practice level, meanwhile, the discourse demonstrates how global media calls India's international self-representation into question by highlighting contradictions between Indian Hindutva politics and India's global assertions of democracy, pluralism, and human rights.

Through the examination of three major video reports, it was discovered that although every media platform criticizes the BJP's Hindu majoritarian politics to some extent, there is also a tendency, particularly through aesthetic glorification or political neutrality, to normalize or legitimize Hindutva's core claims unintentionally. This shows a discursive tension within global media: between democratic advocacy and representational complicity. Also, the research demonstrates that international identity is co-constructed not just by state actors but also by transnational discursive agents such as media, who construct the way regimes, ideologies, and minority groups are perceived worldwide. Furthermore, the research explains how ideological projects such as Hindutva acquire transnational resonance and legitimacy via global media narratives. It emphasizes the necessity of critical media literacy, intersectional discourse theory, and transnational critique for a world where authoritarian populism becomes increasingly dependent on networked communication structures. Through the interdisciplinary integration of linguistics, political theory, and international relations, this research provides a model for analyzing the global life of domestic ideologies—and how such ideologies, reciprocally, rewrite the meanings of democracy, citizenship, and human rights on a global stage. Based on the outcome, the researchers recommend that future studies analyze regional differences in global media framing to determine how geopolitical interests shape narrative construction. International news agencies also need to embrace more reflexive and ethically conscious reporting practices that counter the normalization of exclusionary ideologies such as Hindutva.

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