

# A Comparative Study of European Christian Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in India: The Birth of Hindu Democracy

**NIRAV MEHTA**  
Swarthmore College

Mentor: Dr. Julia Lynch, Professor of Political Science, University of Pennsylvania

## **Introduction: An Unusual Symmetry**

There is a most remarkable symmetry observable in the political development of Christian Democratic movements in the 19th and early 20th centuries with that of Hindu nationalist political movement in India. The first characteristic shared by both movements is in the party and organizational formation stages – both the Christian Democracy movement and the Hindu nationalist political movement were shaped and driven by varying degrees of coordination and coalition-building between religious authorities, conservative political parties, and mass organizations. In both instances, the political coalition of conservatives and religious institutions was subsumed in importance by mass organizations that redefined and drove the growth and rise to power of political parties explicitly embodying the principles of Christian Democracy and Hindu nationalism. This symmetry was further confirmed by the second observable characteristic, which is the creation of a structurally identical political economy by both movements. In European nations governed by Christian Democratic political parties in the late 19th century and with the arrival of the present Hindu nationalist government in India in the 21st century, a corporate welfare state model was conceived and implemented that

preserved the traditional socioeconomic stratification and emphasized social values traditional to Roman Catholicism and Hinduism, while contrasting the universalism and egalitarianism advocated by social democratic models.

To be sure, the proposed comparison is not perfect. While Christian Democracy has largely secularized and democratized, Hindu nationalism remains deeply influenced by religious extremism and has an authoritarian tendency. However, the observed symmetries of formation and outcomes become more interesting when one considers how dissimilar India is from the European countries such as Germany and Austria, where Christian Democracy took hold. The theological principles and leadership structures of Hinduism and Roman Catholicism are also distinct. As a result, developing a theoretical explanation and mechanism that can explain the symmetrical rise of Christian Democracy and Hindu nationalism may prove significant as it may shed light on some of the common mechanisms driving political systems in an increasingly globalized world. A comparative study of European and Indian political systems may also assist in clarifying some longstanding disputes between the primacy of rational action and ideological essentialism in explaining political development.

Using a comparative historical approach, this paper traces the structural and ideational forces that shaped the rise of Christian Democracy and Hindu nationalism, and studies their impact on party formation, identity formation, and the construction and implementation of their respective sociopolitical agendas. This paper qualitatively analyzes how ideational systems affect the development of structural cleavages and how both ideational and structural forces shape political decision-making and policy outcomes.

### **Theory - Ideational Replication of Structures and Cleavages**

Lipset and Rokkan (1967) identify the phenomenon of the “National Revolution,” which produces two significant cleavages; the

first being “the conflict between the central nation-building culture and the increasing resistance of the ethnically, linguistically, or religiously distinct subject populations in the provinces and the peripheries,” and the second being “the conflict between the centralizing, standardizing, and mobilizing nation-state and the historically established corporate privileges” of religious institutions.<sup>1</sup> It is the second cleavage that presents an essential clue to the solution of our problem.

This paper contends that the ideational systems produced by structural cleavages may in turn create similar structural cleavages when those ideational systems are exported and implemented in states experiencing formative events such as independence, unification, and democratization. These transplanted ideational systems and structural cleavages continue to exercise strong influences on party formation and the decision-making of political actors. As Lipset and Rokkan note, the assertion of control by the nation-state over social policy such as education reflected “a systematic effort to create direct links of influence and control between the nation-state and the individual citizen.”<sup>2</sup> This emerged as a major cleavage countries with religious diversity as such policy “came into direct conflict with the established rights” of the dominant religious orders, which saw themselves as being responsible for the nurturing and salvation of society.<sup>3</sup> The religious response mobilized into “broad mass movements after the introduction of manhood suffrage and were able to claim the loyalties of remarkably high proportions.”<sup>4</sup> The adaptation of liberalism, which prioritized nation-state building at the expense of the corporate rights of religious systems, may trigger the state-religion cleavage in countries experiencing formative events and instigate

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1. Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan, “Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments.” In Mair, Peter, ed., *The West European Party System*. (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 101.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 102-103.

3. Lipset and Rokkan, p. 102-103.

4. *Ibid.*

the creation of religious democratic politics as a response to its own liberal-secular democratic policies and politics.

In Germany, the second cleavage emerged during the *Kulturkampf* (Cultural Struggle) era (1872 – 1878), when the Bismarck regime sought to wrest control of education from the Roman Catholic Church. The Catholic counter-mobilization that emerged in response went on to become the Christian Democratic political movement. Competition with social democracy and liberalism further prompted the Christian Democratic movement to develop its own political economy and welfare-state model that preserved traditional social hierarchies and emphasized the centrality of the traditional family to society. In India, the second cleavage was created by the establishment of India as a constitutionally secular and liberal democratic state in 1950, followed by the liberalization of Hindu civil law and the establishment of affirmative action reservation policies for backward castes by the Nehru government, which challenged traditional Hindu conceptions of family, caste and society and modernized personal law. In response, the movement identified as “Hindu nationalist” began its transition to what this research paper proposes to term the “Hindu Democracy” movement, pursuing mass mobilization, undergoing democratization, and developing its own welfare-state model that reinforced traditional hierarchies of caste and class. The essential difference that this research paper does observe between the Christian Democratic movement and the Hindu nationalist movement is while the Christian Democratic movement began to undergo secularization after the end of the *Kulturkampf*, Hindu nationalism has not yet undergone the process of secularization, as its arrival to political power is relatively recent and it has not completed the implementation of such policies that negate the perceived “anti-Hindu” impact of liberal and social democratic policies implemented in India in the past. Furthermore, Hindu nationalism remains strongly associ-

ated with authoritarianism, which is not the case with Christian Democracy.

In both Germany and India, the cleavages were not the direct result of structural events such as the revolution experienced by France but were created by the implementation of the ideologies that emerged out of the French Revolution. In a newly-unified Germany, the liberal policies implemented by the government of Chancellor Otto von Bismarck were aimed at reining in the power of the Roman Catholic Church, primarily to foster a national culture and overcome the problem of “dual loyalty” that Bismarck feared would divide Germans. In India, the authors of the Constitution understood that the survival of political freedom and democracy in India was dependent upon the achievement of social and economic freedom, which the Nehru government attempted to achieve through liberalism and social democracy.<sup>5</sup> The implementation of liberalism in Germany and India produced the symmetrical response in the elites of their predominant religions, which saw no alternative but to develop and promote a competing political and socioeconomic model that defended religious rights and sought to preserve society along religious and traditional lines. This research paper asserts that ideologies can be both the result of sociopolitical cleavages as well as the creators of cleavages in structurally dissimilar societies.

The political ideologies developed in the religious response are deeply rooted and driven by pre-existing theological and social doctrines that represented the Catholic and Hindu religious worldview and social order. In both the cases of Germany and India, the Roman Catholic and Hindu religions enjoyed extensive control of societal institutions until the formation of the unified nation-state.

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5. Anand Kumar, “The Welfare State System in India,” in Vivekanandan, B. and Kurian, Nimmi, eds., *Welfare States and the Future*. (New York, N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 338-339.

In colonial India, the British Raj did implement some reforms such as banning the practice of *sati* (widow-burning), but it largely left Hindu personal law and other customs untouched and regulated by local Hindu clergy and orthodox caste leaders. The arrival of the unified nation-state, of liberal constitutionalism and of democratization challenges the religious order by separating the state from the dominant religion, by emphasizing the individual against the social and religious organism and materialism against spiritualism. However, democratization creates an ideational space for the religious response and prompts religion to inspire a religion-centric political ideology and identity. In the case of Christian Democracy, its political solutions and identity were shaped by Catholic social thought, while with Hindu nationalism, the traditional caste-based structuring of society serves as the ideational foundation. As a result, while these ideologies are modified and nuanced according to the specific circumstances and issues of host societies, their superstructure and path-dependence mechanisms remain identical.

While the cleavage persists, this religious-ideational model limits the possible pathways for actors to make rational choices that attempt to achieve electoral successes by ideational compromise. Indeed, electoral success is unlikely if actors attempt to violate or transcend the ideology. However, the religion-ideology evolves when the political and economic systems of the nation-state undergo structural modifications and transitions. It is only when the crisis of the cleavage is overcome or neutralized that the ideational movement can be substantially transformed beyond its religious foundations, as has been witnessed with the secularization of the Christian Democratic political parties in Europe.

## **Evaluation of Literature and Methodological Approaches**

A potential investigation for the observed symmetrical development lies in the purely historical legacy of colonialism, which facilitated the transposition of European political ideas and institutions into India. For almost two hundred years, the British Raj established Western-style educational institutions, legal and administrative institutions and initiated economic industrialization. The British actively cultivated a new class of Indian professionals educated in Western institutions in order to aid the British in the administration of India and to facilitate the ‘gradual’ transition to self-governance. At this point, the politics of European colonial powers directly affected their Asian and African colonies. Thus, it would certainly not be unusual that European political ideologies and political institutions would directly and deeply impact the emerging Indian intelligentsia and affect the development of both the left-wing and the right-wing of Indian politics. Indeed, there was a great deal of Indian interaction not only with British politics but with Italian and German political organizations and ideologies. Early leaders of the nascent Hindu nationalist movement modeled their paramilitary organizations on the Italian fascist Brown Shirts and openly admired the racialist policies of German National Socialism. However, there are serious problems in considering this approach. The symmetries are between Hindu nationalism and Christian Democracy, not Italian fascism or German National Socialism, and they are symmetries of formation and outcomes, which cannot be accounted for by some accounts of mutual admiration. A historical analysis of British colonialism in India does not yield any path-dependence mechanism to explain the symmetries of formation and outcomes.

The second potential approach lies in the rational choice and actor theory, which may facilitate the argument that both the Christian Democratic and Hindu nationalist political movements were shaped by the strategies adopted by rational actors seeking to

maximize electoral success and fulfill their objectives. Stathis Kalyvas argues that the Christian Democratic political movement was unplanned and unintended result of choices made by the Roman Catholic Church such as entering into political coalitions with conservative parties and promoting the creation of lay Catholic organizations that soon asserted independence from Church control. Kalyvas argues that the Catholic political identity was created by the mobilization of lay Catholics and was different from the Catholic religious or social identity. In the case of the Hindu nationalist movement in India, the rational actor theory is developed in the work of political scientist Tariq Thachil and historian Christophe Jaffrelot, both of whom argue that the Hindu nationalist movement expanded its organizational tent and designed its socioeconomic agenda based on strategies seeking to maximize electoral success without entirely sacrificing core ideology. However, while the rational choice and actor theory does not extend to explaining the similarities in party formation and identity formation that are part of the observable symmetry between Christian Democracy and Hindu nationalism.

### **Structural Cleavage and Party Formation**

Our story begins at the point of the creation of the nation-state-church structural cleavage. On January 18<sup>th</sup>, 1871, Germany emerged as a unified nation-state when the princes of German states gathered in Versailles to proclaim William I, King of Prussia as the first German Emperor. German statesman Otto von Bismarck, the architect of Germany's unification and its victory over France, became its first Chancellor. On August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1947 India became a self-governing dominion within the British Empire, and Jawaharlal Nehru, the leader of the Indian National Congress, became its first Prime Minister. Upon the promulgation of the Constitution of India by its Constituent Assembly, India became an independent republic on January 26<sup>th</sup>, 1950.



As part of his efforts to build and assert a unified Germany national identity and loyalty, Bismarck adopted a number of liberal policies, collectively remembered as the *Kulturkampf*, to diminish the role and influence of transnational Roman Catholic Church in German life, the most important of which was establishing centralized state control of educational institutions. Under the new nation-state institutions, the Catholic Church had been “increasingly deprived of its traditional privileged access to governments.”<sup>6</sup> As a result, the church was compelled to develop new strategies and revisit its aversion to democratic politics. Although it officially remained out of politics, the Church formed coalitions with conservative parties charged with protecting its interests and sponsored the creation of mass organizations to mobilize and organize Catholics both socially and politically.<sup>7</sup>

From 1947 to the mid-1950s in India, the Nehru government implemented extensive liberal reforms that challenge the foundations of Hindu religious and social traditions. The first measure was the Hindu Code Bill, which created a liberalized civil code to replace the traditional body of Hindu personal law, which although had been amended a few times before, it had largely been left untouched by the British Raj.<sup>8</sup> When presented to the Constituent Assembly on April 9<sup>th</sup>, 1948, the Hindu Code Bill received sharp criticism both from Hindu nationalists and Hindu traditionalist members of Nehru’s own Congress party. The Bill also provoked the entry into politics of religious leaders such as Swami Karpatriji, the leader of the Dandi order, who established a new political party in 1948 called the Akhil Bharatiya Ram Rajya Parishad (All India Council of the Kingdom of Ram), which organized demonstrations that attracted as many as 15,000 people.<sup>9</sup> As a result of in-

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6. Stathis Kalyvas, *The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 22.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

8. Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics – 1925 to the 1990s: Strategies of Identity-Building, Implantation and Mobilisation* (Kolkata: Penguin Books India, 1999).

9. *Ibid.*

tense opposition, Nehru temporarily withdrew the bill.

The Indian Constitution of 1950 continued the erosion of traditional religious authority in India when it recognized not religious communities (who had been privileged during British colonial era), but individuals, who were guaranteed “freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess, practice and propagate religion.”<sup>10</sup> According to historian Christophe Jaffrelot, “this ideal concept of religion as a private matter implied a reduction in its sphere of influence through the impact of the state in its capacity as the agent of ‘modernization.’”<sup>11</sup> It also made another significant structural change – it promulgated the universal adult suffrage, according the right to all Indian citizens aged 21 and above the right to vote, irrespective of sex, class or caste.

The outbreak of the political battle over reforming Hindu society induced orthodox Hindu and conservative leaders to enter democratic politics. We already have noted the creation of the All-India Ram Rajya Parishad in 1948. At the same time, the long-standing Hindu conservative party, the Hindu Mahasabha (Great Assembly of Hindus) reached a crossroads. On February 6<sup>th</sup>, 1948, its parliamentary leader, S.P. Mookerjee sought to compel the party either to adapt to the new liberal, democratic system or withdraw from politics altogether – “to break with its political activities and limit itself to social, cultural and religious problems’, and, on the other, to ‘abandon its communalist composition [...] and open its doors to every citizen, regardless of religion, who was ready to accept its economic and political programme.’”<sup>12</sup> Mookerjee sought to purge the Mahasabha of its extremist and ultra-conservative elements, one of whom, the activist Nathuram Godse, had assassinated Mahatma Gandhi only a week before, on January 30, 1948. Although initially resolving to restrict itself to socio-cultural work, the old

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10. Jaffrelot, p. 103.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid., p. 91.

guard of the Mahasabha forced a recantation upon the outbreak of the Hindu Code Bill controversy, deciding “instead to renew its political activities, thus opting for the second alternative proposed by Mookerjee... without envisaging the admission of non-Hindus to the party.”<sup>13</sup> Consequently, Mookerjee resigned from the Mahasabha on November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1948.

From 1948 until 1951, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (National Volunteers Union), which considered itself as exclusively a socioreligious organization, debated whether to enter politics. Those R.S.S. leaders who advocated entry justified their position as ideological necessity. In an article published in the R.S.S. publication, *The Organiser*, Balraj Madhok wrote developing a national character authentic to Indian culture now required a “political and economic” solution that the R.S.S. had traditionally avoided.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, the R.S.S. decided to sponsor the creation of a new lay political party to represent and defend Hindu interests. According to the new R.S.S. consensus, “India needed not only Bharatiya culture and religion but, in order for these to flourish, a Bharatiya political and economic system as well. The true guardian of Bharatiya culture was the RSS. The opponents of the RSS were “anti-Dharmic” [Anti-religious]... The “only way to restore dharma” was “by putting the shoulder to the political wheel.”<sup>15</sup> In 1951, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (Indian People’s Union) was formed, with the former Hindu Mahasabha leader, Shyama Prasad Mookerjee as its first president and a senior R.S.S. office-bearer, Deendayal Upadhyaya, as its general secretary.

Following the first Indian general election of 1951-1952, Nehru reintroduced the Hindu Code legislation as separate, specialized bills; firstly, the Hindu Marriage Bill, which outlawed

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13. Ibid.

14. Balraj Madhok, *Organiser*, III: 3, September 6th, 1949.

15. Craig Baxter, *The Jana Sangh: A Biography of an Indian Political Party* (Philadelphia, P.A.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1969), p. 55.

polygamy, liberalized divorce and legalized inter-caste marriages; the Hindu Succession Bill, which granted inheritance rights to widows and daughters equal to male family members.<sup>16</sup> Although B.J.S. leader Shyama Prasad Mookerjee protested against what was considered “a threat to the stability and integrity of traditional forms of marriage and the family in Hindu society,” Nehru’s Congress had a commanding majority and Nehru had ensured fewer traditionalists and more liberal and secularist members received election tickets, resulting in the construction of a new liberal-secular parliamentary party that approved both legislations.

With the emergence of the state-church cleavage in both Germany and India, the Catholic Church and orthodox Hindu leaders made rational decisions to enter democratic politics in the defense of religious interests. While the Lipset-Rokkan model predicts these events as an “automatic consequence of the conflict between the state and the church,” Kalyvas’s theory emphasizes that “conflicts and cleavages, even mass mobilization, need not translate into parties, and the organization of politics in terms of confession is not inevitable.”<sup>17</sup> Instead, Kalyvas emphasizes “the process of party formation, ignores its micro-foundations, loses track of agency, and does not specify how and by whom parties are formed” as being important determinants of outcomes.<sup>18</sup> However, the Kalyvas theory actively disregards the fact that at each stage, the precise choices presented to rational actors were determined by the modifications of political structures, which were in turn shaped by ideational forces. Both the emergent German and Indian States were constructed under a liberal framework that formulated their respective constitutions, institutions and democracies. Further, they used the democratic process to challenge the privileges of religious authorities. Pre-liberal, traditional power structures had been effec-

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16. Ibid.

17. Kalyvas, p. 14.

18. Ibid.

tively dissolved, which left the Church and Hindu religious leaders no rational choice but to participate in democratic processes in order to protect their interests. To decline to do so, would mean dissolution of all political relevance and importance as well as the end of their social and religious authority, for the liberal State would emerge undisputed as the arbiter of institutions and practices traditionally guided by religion.

One of the implications of Kalyvas's theory is that Christian Democratic mass organizations and their political parties made a rational choice to distance themselves from the Church and secularize their agenda and appeal. However, Kimberley Cowell's critique of Kalyvas points out that "only when the threat of *Kulturkampf* legislation disappeared (in part through the strength of Catholic resistance) could the party consider alternative formulations and coalitions. Only when anti-Catholicism lost its political power could a secular party take shape."<sup>19</sup> Cowell points out that it is after the *Zenstrumpartie* (Center Party) began to achieve electoral success at the expense of the Liberal Party, and through its successful lobbying and pressure strategies that Bismarck was compelled to abandon the *Kulturkampf* measures.<sup>20</sup> To attempt to deviate or alter ideational foundations before the cleavage crisis is resolved invites a greater risk of failure. By the 1970s, the Jana Sangh party leadership sought to transform the party into one representing "the common man," adapting leftist economic ideas in challenging inflation, unemployment and corruption. As Walter Anderson and Shridhar Damle record, Jana Sangh leader Atal Bihari Vajpayee wanted the party to represent "landless labour, small peasants, Harijans, workers, and employees in mills and offices, youths – particularly students, artisans, and small-scale entrepreneurs."<sup>21</sup> To do so, however, the Jana Sangh chose to ally with so-

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19. Kimberley Cowell, "The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe by Stathis N. Kalyvas (Review)," *The Catholic Historical Review*, Vol. 84, No. 1 (January 1998), pp. 141-142.

20. *Ibid.*

21. Walter Anderson and Shridhar Damle, *The Brotherhood in Saffron: The Rashtriya Swayamsevak*

cialist political parties and supplied cadre to support the “Total Revolution” program of socialist Jayaprakash Narayan in late 1974.<sup>22</sup> Before the 1977 general election, the Jana Sangh extended its alliance to the degree of unifying organizationally with socialist parties to form the Janata Party, making what could be argued was a rational choice of unifying opposition parties in order to defeat the long-ruling Congress party. While the Janata Party did defeat the Congress, by 1979, Jana Sangh members of the Janata Party were forced to resign as the non-Jana Sangh leaders demanded that the Jana Sangh disavow its ideological patron, the R.S.S. Following the collapse of the Janata Party in the 1980 general election, the leadership and cadre of the erstwhile Jana Sangh formed a new successor political party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). However, when the new party attempted again to dilute its ideological roots, professing “slogans such as ‘Gandhian socialism’ and ‘positive secularism’,” it immediately lost the ability to differentiate itself from the ruling Congress and opposition Socialists and won only 2 seats in the 1984 general election. After this disastrous debut, R.S.S. stalwart Lal Krishna Advani assumed the party presidency and steered the BJP towards Hindu political causes such as the campaign to construct a temple dedicated to the Hindu god Ram in Ayodhya, on the premises of a medieval mosque.<sup>23</sup> This shift, completed by 1989, paid better electoral dividends, with the BJP winning 88 seats in the 1989 election and 116 seats in the 1991 election, emerging as the largest opposition party in Indian politics.

In his work, Kalyvas uses the ‘thin’ definition of rationality, where “actors are seen as rational in the sense that they choose a course of action that is likely to produce the best outcome for them.”<sup>24</sup> However, as demonstrated above, the choice that was

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Sangh and Hindu Revivalism (Delhi: Penguin Random House India, 1987), p. 185-187.

22. Ibid.

23. Christophe Jaffrelot, ed. Hindu Nationalism: A Reader (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007).

likeliest to produce the “best outcome” was consistently linked with the ideational movement. Neither the Christian Democratic nor Hindu nationalist political parties could successfully venture outside the ideational foundation before the ideational crisis that instigated their creation was resolved. In the German case, this was achieved largely with the repeal of the *Kulturkampf* measures by 1878, while the Indian crisis may be arriving at a resolution during the second term of the Narendra Modi-led BJP government, which is passing ideationally-driven legislation undoing the liberal constitutional framework established by the Nehru-led Congress government. Although Kalyvas recognizes the “structural constraints that limit [the actor’s] possibilities of action,” his employed definition does not credit the *ideational constraints* that are also formidable forces shaping the choices available to actors.<sup>25</sup>

### **Ideational and Identity Formation**

The contest between the ideational forces of liberalism and religious-conservatism that produced the state-church cleavage also results in the creation of “Catholic” and “Hindu” political ideologies and “Catholic” and “Hindu” political identities. While these new ideologies and identities are articulated by political parties, they are founded in pre-existing theological and philosophical roots that have traditionally existed in the social and religious domain.

### **Ideational Transition to Democracy**

In his work, Stathis Kalyvas credits the “formation of new identities and organizations” to the strategy of mass mobilization promoted by the Church, which unintentionally created, “for the first time, lay Catholics *qua* Catholics, creating a Catholic political (as opposed to a religious or social) identity... They redefined the

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24. Kalyvas, p. 16.

25. *Ibid.*

meaning of Catholicism for politics, increased their distance from the church, and became autonomous political organizations.”<sup>26</sup> However, Kalyvas’s model ignores the ideational arguments that had existed and persisted before in the course of history, of which the Christian Democratic and Hindu nationalist movements are new *avatars*. Both Roman Catholicism and Hinduism had extensive social doctrines that guided the lives of their respective communities. Until the arrival of democracy, which conferred political agency to the masses, there was no need to develop a political doctrine as there was no need to organize religious communities to contest for political power. With the advent, and firm establishment of democracy, however, political power and control of the state is now only achievable by those political forces that can best organize and galvanize popular support.

The adaptation of Catholic and Hindu religious leadership to democracy was gradual and shaped by their ideational competition with liberalism. The Roman Catholic Church came out firmly against democracy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but this opposition can be understood by recognizing that democracy was not firmly established in Europe until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and thus remained contestable as an idea. Traditionalist Catholic conservative parties struggled continuously as democracy expanded. As Kees van Kersbergen observes in the case of Austria, “the [Christlich-Soziale Partei] CSP [of Austria] never fully accepted democratic principles, was strongly influenced by a Romantic longing for an idealized past and aimed at the establishment of a corporatist social and political order that was to resemble a society of far-off days.”<sup>27</sup> As a result, it never evolved beyond being “a class-based, clerico-fascist” party.<sup>28</sup> The ultra-conservative and orthodox Hindu Mahasabha shared a similar fate. Democracy was gradually introduced

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26. Kalyvas, p. 25.

27. Kees van Kersbergen, *Social Capitalism: A Study of Christian Democracy and the Welfare State*. Routledge, 1995, p. 34.

28. *Ibid.*



in colonial India in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, with the British Raj first enabling voting for propertied and male Indians in local councils, then to a set proportion of seats in central and provincial councils. While Hindu conservatives formed the Hindu Mahasabha initially as a pressure group to lobby both the British authorities and the Indian National Congress, they resisted the establishment of liberal democracy by periodically advocating proposals based on religious and social ideas to deny the suffrage to Muslims and representation to lower caste Hindus. As suffrage was gradually expanded on liberal terms in both Germany and India, the impetus for political action and the ability to construct political ideology and identity inevitably passed from antidemocratic and hierarchical organizations that had functioned well in monarchical and imperial systems to grassroots lay organizations that had arisen along with democratization and had more *democratic power* on account of their mass membership in a democracy. The political fortunes of the Hindu Mahasabha and the clergy-driven All India Ram Rajya Parishad declined sharply once universal suffrage arrived with the Constitution and the first general elections of 1951-1952. The Hindu parties that proved more successful and resilient were the Jana Sangh and its successor, the BJP, both founded by the lay mass organization, the RSS.

The formation of mass organizations occurred as argued by the Lipset-Rokkan theory, with democratization. In Germany, Catholic mass organizations began proliferating in the 1870s during the *Kulturkampf* years. The same phenomenon is observable with the progression of democracy in India. During the limited democracy under British rule and in the pre-Constitution years of independent India, the Hindu Mahasabha, a conservative group, sufficed to represent Hindu interests. The first Hindu mass organization, the RSS, was formed in 1925, exactly 2 years after the first direct elections for provincial and central councils. As democracy progressed in

both Germany and India, the electoral cooperation between orthodox religious authorities and conservative parties proved less and less effective and the center of gravity in terms of political action and the forging of political identities transferred to lay Catholic and Hindu organizations, who distanced themselves from religious authorities.

### **Construction of Political Ideology from Religious Influences**

The impetus to construct ideologies and identities transitioned as well to lay organizations and were shaped and reshaped in response to structural changes. However, these evolving ideational constructs were built on the pre-existing socio-religious ideational foundations of Roman Catholicism and Hinduism and shaped by the pressures of competition from liberalism, socialism and capitalism.

To be sure, the theological foundations of Roman Catholicism and Hinduism are absolutely distinct. Catholic thought begins with the Biblical principle of Original Sin, and regards human beings as “fallen” beings, with suffering being “the lot of humanity.”<sup>29</sup> It is due to the fallen nature of humanity that the Pope argued for the “recognition of inequality as the normal and natural condition of society,” and only because of inequality can “society function properly.”<sup>30</sup> Kersbergen explains that this religious view rationalizes “the world as inhabited by men whose natural inequalities necessarily beget social inequalities.”<sup>31</sup> Thus, in the Catholic view, any political and social ideology that contends to eradicate suffering and inequality is leading the world towards “the fool’s paradise” and is doomed to failure.<sup>32</sup> The most optimistic social doctrine is to make the unequal socioeconomic hierarchy function as cooperatively as possible in order to minimize suffering. The

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29. Kersbergen, p. 223.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.

corporatist vision of Hindu sociopolitical thought is influenced in part by the four-tier caste system established by the *Vedas* and the *Manusmriti*. In the Hindu conception, society is occupationally divided between the *Brahmins* (priestly caste), the *Kshatriyas* (warrior and princely caste), the *Vaishyas* (trading and mercantile caste) and the *Sudras* (laboring and farming caste), creating a complex caste and class hierarchical organization. It is only when the peoples of the four castes work cooperatively, accepting their respective stations and duties, that society functions harmoniously.

In transmuting religious ideas into social and political ideas, there emerges a strong resonant structural similarity. Kersbergen's following description of the Catholic social ethos echoes strongly the ideals of Hindu social doctrine: "All parts of the natural order of society have specific tasks that are necessary for the stability of the larger whole. According to the theory of 'subsidiarity' it is nevertheless the state's function to guarantee and facilitate the steady and orderly proficiency of the lower social organs up to a point where these components can operate independently of political arbitration."<sup>33</sup> Both Christian Democracy and Hindu nationalism regard society as an "organic" whole, constituted of distinct parts that are mutually dependent and contributive towards the health and well-being of the whole. This philosophical vision stands in stark contrast to the emphasis on the individual that liberalism creates and yields a completely distinctive social agenda. As Kees van Kersbergen observes, Christian democracy is ideationally structured to promote a "concept of social citizenship that departs significantly from the individualist... Christian democrats stress duties rather than rights, the family and the social group rather than the individual, society rather than the state, and distributional justice rather than social justice."<sup>34</sup> In its attitude towards the state, Christian democracy "attempted to minimize the state's control

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33. Kersbergen, p. 181.

34. Kersbergen, p. 178.

over the administration and execution of policies.”<sup>35</sup>. Similarly, Hindu ideologue and RSS leader Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar never prioritized the state, which was only one part of an organic whole. According to Golwalkar, “the ultimate vision of our work... is a perfectly organised state of society wherein each individual has been moulded into a model of ideal Hindu manhood and made into the living limb of the corporate personality of society.”<sup>36</sup>.

In both Christian Democracy and Hindu nationalism, there may be different classes but instead of class warfare as envisioned by socialism or individualistic competition advocated by capitalism, cooperation and contribution is emphasized. Kersbergen notes “with a typical Catholic metaphor one could say that one cannot transfer part of the brain, which thinks, plans and directs, to the hands that do the work, whether via the markets or in the home.”<sup>37</sup>. Surprisingly, this Catholic metaphor resonates directly with a defense of the Hindu caste system offered by a Hindu nationalist politician, Giriraj Kishore, in an interview given to Tariq Thachil: “The caste system... provided for job reservation. Every caste was given reservation in a particular job. A mason could not do a carpenter’s job and a carpenter could not do a sweeper’s job.”<sup>38</sup>. The social thought of both religious systems regarded the best functioning social model to be organic and socio-economically compartmentalized into units with distinct functions and contributions towards the whole.

### **Integral Humanism**

An important historical ideational intersection between Catholic social thought and Hindu sociopolitical thought occurs in the development of the 1965 treatise *Integral Humanism* by Deendayal

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35. Kersbergen, p. 176.

36. Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts* (Bangalore: Vikrama Prakashan, 1966), p. 88.

37. Kersbergen, p. 189.

38. Tariq Thachil, *Elite Parties, Poor Voters: How Social Services Win Votes in India* (New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

Upadhyaya, an RSS veteran and leader of the Jana Sangh. The title itself was inspired by the 1936 work, *Integral Humanism* by French Catholic social philosopher, Jacques Maritain. In his work, Maritain critiques the development of totalitarian political systems as the inevitable product of the humanist and rationalist philosophies and advocates for the “integration of spiritual and material concerns.”<sup>39</sup> Maritain criticized both capitalism and communism for being unable to “facilitate the full actualization of an individual’s humanity.”<sup>40</sup> Maritain’s thinking was part of the *New Humanism* literary movement that “sought to refocus the study of literature onto moral questions and the human will against the prevailing literary methods that emphasized materialism and naturalism.”<sup>41</sup> Maritain’s work deeply influenced the Indian communist intellectual M.N. Roy, who sought to emphasize the “autonomy of the individual under an alternative social order of decentralized local democracies,” which was a doctrine that in turn influenced Upadhyaya.<sup>42</sup> Researcher John Abraham argues that Upadhyaya’s own proposals were a “selective synthesis” of Maritain and Roy’s works, which were reframed in the “conceptual vernacular of Vedanta” by drawing on a third stream of religious thought in the works of neo-Vedantist Aurobindo Ghosh.<sup>43</sup>

Hindu nationalist organizations describe Maritain as an ‘interlocutor’ and are reluctant to concede any direct impact of Maritain’s thought on Upadhyaya.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, Upadhyaya spends a considerable portion of his text criticizing the Christian conception of original sin as having debased humankind and made it more reliant on external mechanisms rather than the human spirit. Neither are the specific issues at the heart of Hindu social thought the same

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39. John Abraham, “In Search of Dharma: Integral Humanism and the Political Economy of Hindu Nationalism,” *Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol. 42, Issue 1 (February 2019), pp. 18-19.

40. *Ibid.*

41. Abraham, p. 19-20.

42. *Ibid.*

43. *Ibid.*

44. Abraham, p. 18-19.

as those that concern Catholic thought. However, both Maritain and Upadhyaya were engaged with the task of refuting the materialist and humanist foundations of capitalism and communism, both of which posed a threat to the Christian Democratic and Hindu political movements. There is no doubt then that Maritain's work functioned to provide an *exoskeleton* to Upadhyaya's own reinvention of Hindu political thought. Both Maritain and Upadhyaya are agreed that the best sociopolitical doctrine shall regard society as an organic whole constructed by divinity and emphasize the importance of addressing spiritual as well as material needs. Upadhyaya makes the doctrine of "integration" the heart of his treatise, declaring that "the first characteristic of Bharatiya [Indian] culture is that it looks upon life as an integrated whole. It has an integrated viewpoint... We do admit there is diversity and plurality in life, but we have always attempted to discover the unity behind them."<sup>45</sup> Like Maritain, Upadhyaya goes on to denounce the divisive qualities of capitalism and communism as disrupting the organic whole: "We believe in neither capitalism nor communism, we believe in integral humanism. We believe in oneness and unity... People in the West give primary importance to demonic and destructive practices. They put self before everything else. On the contrary, we have accorded primary importance to selflessness and selfless good deeds."<sup>46</sup> According to researcher John Abraham, Upadhyaya situates his *Integral Humanism* in orientation within the "Vedantic taxonomy of human aspirations or purushartha: *dharma* (order), *artha* (wealth), *kama* (desire) and *moksha* (salvation). In setting out his system, Upadhyaya explicitly appealed to this framework, even alluding to the Vedic analogy between microcosm and macrocosm."<sup>47</sup> In a clear critique of rationalism and materialism, Upadhyaya argues that Hindus are "a God-centric people. That which is not visible is the center of our gaze... Moving towards it,

45. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya, *Integral Humanism* (New Delhi: Bharatiya Jana Sangh, 1965), p. 18-39.

46. *Ibid.*

47. Abraham, p. 19-20.

we get ever closer to the center... That's why we believe that soul resides in all."<sup>48</sup> Contrast Upadhyaya's approach with Maritain's desire to facilitate the "rehabilitation of the creature in God, which I see as characterizing a new age of Christendom and a new humanism."<sup>49</sup> Where Upadhyaya seeks to "re-center" society's orientation towards God, Maritain aims to "return" society's orientation into God. However, both ideations articulate both the fountainhead and objective of social endeavors to be God.

While substantially varied in their specific proposals, this intersection between Catholic social philosophy and Hindu philosophy is revealing of the innovations and fusions made possible due to the competitive ideational pressures of communism, liberalism and capitalism. Neither the Christian Democratic movement nor the Hindu movement could resort to tactical piecemeal innovations to counter political challenges. They were compelled to construct comprehensive ideational alternatives to propel their respective movements.

### **Endurance**

The endurance of the religious and moral framework of both Christian Democracy in Germany and Hindu nationalism in India can be explained by understanding that both nation-states underwent similar historical moments in their experiences of industrialization and modernization. Kees van Kersbergen points out that "up until the 1860s the Industrial Revolution in Germany was occurring at a rather slow pace. The social question was hardly a problem of proletarianized industrial workers. It was rather a rural problem."<sup>50</sup> The first decade of unified Germany was marked with accelerating industrialization but also the arrival of the *Kulturkampf*, which forced Catholic politicians and ideologues into a "de-

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48. Upadhyaya, p. 18-39.

49. Jacques Maritain, *Integral Humanism: Temporal and Spiritual Problems of a New Christendom*, translated by Joseph W. Evans (New York, N.Y.: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968), p. 76.

50. Kersbergen, p. 214-215.

fensive position” that “did not permit straightforward substantial alterations of the basic doctrines, however, outworn the old dogma might have been;” instead, social doctrine became an essential weapon to fight the *Kulturkampf* measures.<sup>51</sup> At independence, India experienced a similar historical moment, in that industrialization had been very slow and the country remained a predominantly rural society. Indeed, Upadhyaya’s advocacy of “democratic decentralization” in *Integral Humanism* harkens to the rural ethos of empowering “village democracy.” To accelerate India’s industrialization in the 1950s, Prime Minister Nehru relied upon “a large measure of socialism – not doctrinaire socialism but practical, pragmatic socialism” while simultaneously pursuing what we have described as an Indian *Kulturkampf* in his efforts to reform Hindu laws.<sup>52</sup> As a result, the traditionalist Hindu social doctrines continued to resonate politically for many decades after India’s independence, and these doctrines were politically weaponized by the resistance to the Hindu reform legislation.

### **Comparative Political Economy**

The design of the political economies created by Christian Democratic movement in Germany and the Hindu nationalist movement in India reflects their core ideational priorities: the preservation of socioeconomic stratification based on religious conceptions of society and the pursuit of distributive justice, rather than social justice through redistribution.

The construction of a viable welfare state was an early political priority in both Germany and India. In *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, Gøsta Esping-Andersen identifies the emergence of conservative political economy in the “reaction to the French Revolution and the Paris Commune. It was avowedly nationalistic and anti-revolutionary, and sought to arrest the democratic im-

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51. Kersbergen, p. 214-215.

52. Kumar, p. 337.



pulse.”<sup>53</sup>. In India, the construction of a welfare state was prioritized in the Constitution, whose Article 38 “defined the aim as follows: ‘The State shall strive to promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may a social order in which justice, social, economic and political shall inform all the institutions of the national life.’”<sup>54</sup>. The authors of India’s constitution “were very clear in their minds that without social and economic democracy, political democracy had no meaning in a poor country like India.”<sup>55</sup>. This was a sentiment echoed in Germany in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, where “the development of social rights... [was] mainly understood as the consequence of trying to make rights actually work, i.e. of removing the barriers that block the full and equal exercise of civil and political rights.”<sup>56</sup>.

However, the advent of unbridled capitalism and industrialization “tended to reduce the social meaning of these rights to mere formal capacities, a contradiction that created the foundations of and necessity for social policy.”<sup>57</sup>. The championing of individual freedom and rights under the capitalist economic system was weakening social rights and duties, and thus, conservative and religious political forces felt compelled to develop an ideational alternative. Esping-Andersen points out that the welfare state is not just a “mechanism that intervenes in, and possibly corrects, the structure of inequality; it is, in its own right, a system of stratification.”<sup>58</sup>. In Germany, the Bismarck regime implemented a “social-insurance” welfare-state model that was designed to “consolidate divisions among wage-earners by legislating distinct programs for different class and status groups, each with its own conspicuously unique set of rights and privileges which was de-

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53. Gøsta Esping-Andersen, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 10.

54. Kumar, p. 339-340.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 338-339.

56. Kersbergen, p. 179.

57. *Ibid.*

58. Esping-Andersen, p. 23.

signed to accentuate the individual's appropriate station in life."<sup>59</sup> The second objective of the Bismarck system, however, was "to tie the loyalties of the individual directly to the monarchy or the central state authority," which varied considerably from the Catholic social vision.<sup>60</sup> The Christian Democratic movement modified the German welfare-state to neutralize the second objective, replacing the emphasis on individual-state relations with an emphasis on the "preservation of traditional family-hood" and innovating the principle of *subsidiarity*, which "serves to emphasize that the state will only interfere when the family's capacity to service its members is exhausted."<sup>61</sup> This Christian Democratic-corporatist welfare state model represents the principle of "distributive justice," which "accords to each and every class what is its due" and resists the social-democratic notion of redistribution of wealth to combat socioeconomic inequality.<sup>62</sup> In the Christian Democratic view, the purpose of "social policy is not to alter status, but to reproduce it."<sup>63</sup>

One could be forgiven for mistaking Kersbergen's description of the Christian Democratic social ethic that "members of a class and of vocational groups, therefore, have a right to be treated in accordance with their status" as a description of a Hindu corporatist distributive policy.<sup>64</sup> It certainly would serve to describe the stratifying effects of the BJP government's welfare policies that have been steadily implemented since 2014. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the BJP won decisive majorities in both the 2014 and 2019 general elections, and as a result, made no ideational compromises with non-ideological political partners in its policy creation and implementation. Thus, it would be fair to identify the welfare-state policies of the Modi government as a uniquely "Hindu Demo-

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59. Esping-Anderson, p. 24.

60. Ibid.

61. Ibid., p. 27.

62. Kersbergen, p. 189.

63. Ibid.

64. Ibid.

cratic political economy.” Several welfare schemes implemented by the Modi government have exemplified the principle of the state intervening only “when the family’s capacity is exhausted.”<sup>65</sup>

These include the *Ujjwala* scheme of providing poor families with free natural gas cylinders, ending their traditional reliance upon burning firewood and charcoal to cook meals.<sup>66</sup> As India experiences the rise of one of the largest middle-classes in the world, this specific intervention is certainly timed to provide relief to families that remained at the end of the socio-economic ladder. The *Ujjwala* scheme was particularly directed at women, appealing to, and reinforcing their traditional role as homemakers, and as a result, won the BJP more political support from women in the 2019 election.<sup>67</sup> A major policy of the Modi government was the *Ayushman Bharat* (Blessed India) health-care program, which was promoted as India’s first step towards a universal health-care system. However, in practice, this program is actually a means-tested health-care program that makes available private insurance to the poorest Indians by offering a government-funded annual cover of INR 500,000 for household medical expenses.<sup>68</sup> The beneficiaries of this scheme are automatically identified and enrolled through the socioeconomic and caste census, which ensures that the poorest and the most disadvantaged caste groups are benefitted.<sup>69</sup> As a result, class and caste metrics serve as important determinants of benefits within the political economy.

A most poignant case of the Modi government’s shift towards “distributive justice” rather than “social justice” comes from its reform of India’s affirmative action policy of providing reserved

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65. Ibid.

66. Vibha Atri and Anurag Jain, “Post-poll survey: when schemes translate into votes,” *The Hindu*, May 27, 2019, <https://www.thehindu.com/elections/lok-sabha-2019/when-schemes-translate-into-votes/article27256139.ece>.

67. Ibid.

68. H. Bakshi, R. Sharma, and P. Kumar, “Ayushman Bharat Initiative (2018): What We Stand to Gain or Lose” *Indian Journal of Community Medicine*, Vol. 43, No. 2, pp 63–66.

69. Ibid.

quotas in public sector employment and educational institutions to the most disadvantaged and backward caste communities. This “reservation” policy was originally incorporated into India’s Constitution as an intervention to rectify the historic discrimination and exclusion experienced by the lowest Hindu castes. However, the RSS strongly criticized the reservation policy, arguing that “if castes have a vested interest in their caste identity because of the benefits to them from reservation,” they will work to preserve divisions and obstruct the “harmonious collaboration of all limbs of society,” which was the objective of Hindu nationalist social thought.<sup>70</sup> Although the reservations policy bred discontent amongst upper-castes for decades, the Jana Sangh and later the BJP were reluctant to argue for their abolition as such a policy would be interpreted as antagonistic to lower castes. However, the issue came to a head when on August 7<sup>th</sup>, 1990, Prime Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh of the Janata Dal socialist alliance announced that it would implement the recommendations of the Mandal Commission, “which meant that 27 percent of central administration posts would be reserved for Other Backward Classes (OBCs, the list of which was in fact a list of low castes).”<sup>71</sup> The RSS publication *Organiser* attacked this positive discrimination policy from “an organicist angle: ‘The havoc the politics of reservation is playing with the social fabric is unimaginable. It provides a premium for mediocrity, encourages brain-drain and sharpens caste-divide.’”<sup>72</sup> This new extension of the reservation policy has been deeply criticized by upper caste Hindus for excluding them from employment and educational opportunities. This progressive policy was regarded as “punitive” towards upper-caste communities and assisted the BJP’s rise to power through the 1990s.

To rectify the perceived error of this policy, the BJP manifesto

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70. Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalism: A Reader*, p. 256.

71. *Ibid.*

72. *Ibid.*

“announced a 10 per cent reservation on the basis of economic criteria to all economically weaker sections of society, apart from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and OBCs.”<sup>73</sup> This policy innovation established the *distributive justice* heart of Hindu political economy. As journalist Snigdha Poonam’s interview of an upper-caste Hindu youth reveals a deep and ingrained resentment of social-democratic parties like the Congress, which “was the embodiment of everything that was holding back a country on the brink of awesomeness.”<sup>74</sup> The social-democratic model of providing “subsidies to the poor... employment and education ‘quotas’ for the backward castes” was described as a “politics of cowardice” by the upper-caste respondent.<sup>75</sup> Most poignantly, Poonam’s interviewee “often brought up a feudal estate in Uttar Pradesh his grandparents had had to give up as part of the newly independent India’s socialist move to redistribute land.”<sup>76</sup> This reflects the traditional resentment that upper-caste Hindus have harbored for the egalitarian ideals that drove the Congress’s social-democratic welfare policies, and which moved them steadily into the column of the Jana Sangh and later the BJP. Incorporating this *restorative* impulse into a program of *distributive* justice, the Modi government amended the Indian Constitution in January 2019 to provide a 10% reservation in public sector employment and educational institutions for those experiencing “economic backwardness,” which was immediately translated into providing reservations for upper-caste Hindus experiencing economic disadvantages.<sup>77</sup> The policy proved immensely popular with India’s upper-castes that had long resented egalitarianism-driven interventionism on behalf of lower caste

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73. Ibid, p. 257.

74. Snigdha Poonam, *Dreamers: How Young Indians Are Changing Their World* (Gurgaon: Penguin Random House India, 2018), p. 118-119.

75. Ibid.

76. Ibid.

77. Staff Report, “Bill on 10% reservation for upper caste poor passes Parliament test: 10 things to know,” *Business Today*, January 10, 2019, <https://www.businesstoday.in/current/economy-politics/bill-on-10pc-reservation-for-upper-caste-poor-passes-parliament-test-10-things-to-know/story/308641.html>. Accessed on 12-16-2019.

Hindus and religious minorities. As a result, even opposition political parties such as the Congress voted for Modi's amendment.

The BJP's strategy is rooted in Upadhyaya's *Integral Humanism*, which "does not seek to create rifts and schisms between various sections of society but aims at removing social and economic disparities that have resulted in denial of a share in power, impoverishment and erosion of human dignity."<sup>78</sup> Thus, the service-based and caste-accommodative strategies serve to induct backward caste communities into the *Hindu Whole*, strengthening them to contribute towards the greater good of society. The BJP's strategic service-and-caste-based innovations were taking place at an important ideational and structure juncture in Indian history. In the early 1990s, the Congress-led Indian government had adopted pro-market economic liberalization policies in order to revive a stagnant national economy. This was a significant departure from the post-independence socialist consensus that had guided India's socioeconomic policies for more than forty years. The historian Bipan Chandra records that in the 1990s, the "inspiration and ideological-political structuring provided by the national liberation struggle are increasingly receding," with the Congress Party being left ideologically "directionless and in shambles" and other "secular opposition parties and groups unable to cohere."<sup>79</sup> In this moment in India's ideational history, the Left was "dissipated and bereft of any fresh ideas."<sup>80</sup> This new-found respectability of the BJP was based not, however, on simply its "communal" message, but because it was rapidly constructing the ideational socioeconomic alternative to the now exhausted socialist consensus. The BJP's Hindu political economy was emerging to serve a transformed India that was rapidly urbanizing and industrializing, with a new middle-class emerging but still retaining the sociocultural values of

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78. Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalism: A Reader*, p. 263-264.

79. Bipan Chandra, *Essays on Contemporary India* (New Delhi: Har-Anand, 1993), p. 49.

80. *Ibid.*

rural India. The Hindu nationalist ideational model emerged as a competitive alternative amidst the ideational exhaustion and erosion of the socialist consensus, driving the BJP's political expansion across Indian states and finally into power in the central government as the first non-Congress political party to win consecutive majorities.

The 2019 general election in India can be described as having pivoted on the argument between the Hindu-corporatist welfare state model developed by the BJP and the social-democratic alternative promoted by the Congress. During the campaign, the Congress announced that if voted into power, it would implement the "NYAY" policy, under which low-income households would receive an annual stipend of INR 72,000 from the central government, benefiting an estimated 250 million people.<sup>81</sup> This policy was hailed as one of the first practical proposals embodying the universal basic income concept, albeit it was reserved for the poor. In contrast, the Modi-led BJP ran on its implementation of the *Ujjwala* and *Ayushman Bharat* schemes. The outcome was a resounding and larger parliamentary majority for the BJP. Speaking after the election defeat, Congress leader Shashi Tharoor stated that Congress's message about the NYAY scheme had been decisively opposed by voters in "urban areas and among professional classes, who would be paying for the scheme, rather than the bottom 20 percent, mainly in rural India, who would become beneficiaries."<sup>82</sup> Post-poll surveys demonstrated that welfare schemes such as *Ujjwala* had helped the BJP increase their vote tally from women from 29% in 2014 to 36% in 2019, at the expense of the Congress.<sup>83</sup> This election verdict reinforced the effectiveness of

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81. Divyanshu Dutta Roy, ed., "Congress's Minimum Income Guarantee Scheme "NYAY" Explained in 10 Points," NDTV India, March 26, 2019, <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/congress-nyay-nyuntam-aay-yojana-scheme-minimum-income-guarantee-proposal-explained-2012735>.

82. Press Trust of India, "BJP marketed 'product Modi' well, built 'extraordinary personality cult': Shashi Tharoor," Economic Times, May 29, 2019, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/bjp-marketed-product-modi-well-built-extraordinary-personality-cult-shashi-tharoor/articleshow/69556582.cms>.

the Hindu welfare model, which prioritized traditional gender roles in both service delivery and political messaging, in contrast to the more universalistic appeal of the Congress's NYAY scheme.

### **Conclusion – from Hindu Nationalism to Hindu Democracy**

The symmetries between the Christian Democratic movement in Germany and the Hindu nationalist movement in India demonstrate that structural cleavages that produced rival ideational movements can in turn influence the creation of similar structural cleavages when those ideational products enter a new political system at a formative historical juncture. The original crisis of the French Revolution may reproduce itself in countries across ethnic, cultural, economic, and religious boundaries. Secondly, while ideational systems shall be adapted to the specificities and cultural nuances of national political systems and to the characteristics of the historical period in question, their ideational and political superstructure may be more symmetrical. Although German Christian democracy varies considerably in specific policies and issues from Hindu nationalism, their interactions, organizations and political and policy outcomes shall bear a superstructural symmetry. Thirdly, it is observable that the rational choice and action theory experiences two specific constraints – one being structural and the other being ideational.

These conclusions have a direct impact on the study of the Hindu nationalist movement in India. Firstly, it will be recognized that Hindu politics has expanded beyond “Hindu nationalism” and towards constructing a “Hindu Democracy” in India. Contemporary Hindu politics are not limited in pursuing the construction of a Hindu national solidarity but seek to respond to the assertive liberal-secularist constitutional regime as well as to the challenges of



industrialization, globalization, and economic liberalization. Hindu nationalist politics aspire to create not only a competitive constitutional reinterpretation of India as a Hindu majoritarian state but are overseeing the development of a Hindu political economy as a competitive response to Indian social democratic political economy. However, it must be noted that while Christian Democracy has largely secularized and democratized in nature, the development of Hindu nationalism remains significantly affected by religious extremism, jingoism, and authoritarianism. These factors may ultimately deny a potential secularization of Hindu politics and lead the Hindu nationalist movement towards a different future than contemporary Christian Democracy.

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