

POLITICAL DYNAMICS OF FUNDAMENTALISM: A CASE STUDY OF INDIA AND THE US

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Abstract

The inculcation of religion in politics traditionally creates a dogmatic society. The religious divides have become evident due to the influence of religious convictions on politics. Fascism and Communism were the essential products of such political practices where religious motivation was exploited to attain power. In the past few years, the re-emergence of such conduct has taken place in the largest democratic secular nations of India and the US. Therefore, a deeper understanding of the link between modern religious fundamentalism and political dynamics is essential to determine the motivation behind such political practices. The findings based on the discourse analysis suggest that violent religious interpretations have close ties to the political dynamics of these nations, consequently, promoting hate towards minorities and other religious factions. The Hindutva Ideology in India and White Supremacist or Alt-Right movement in the US are a direct consequence of the union of extreme religious beliefs and politics.

Keywords: Religious Fundamentalism, Hindutva Ideology, Ku Klux Klan, White Supremacist, Alt-Right Movement.

Introduction

There is something, evidently happening on the horizon of modernity. It is hard to untangle the rope of religious fundamentalism with politics, but it is essential to realize the consequences of certain actions toward religious fundamentalism in the modern world. When religious fundamentalists feel threatened, they are more likely to go at extremes. A western Sociologist, Durkheim, foresaw the demise of religious beliefs back in 1950. He stipulated that when people will discover consumerism, they will start to lose interest in the traditional values that promoted humanistic grounds. Religions that promote peace and humanitarian values would be disappeared, which will leave no space for deeper interpretation.

Time has witnessed whenever civilization goes at its peak, it takes away humanity altogether. Moreover, the system that passes on the traditional humanistic values starts to collapse in the chase of power because there is a growing threat regarding public identities. When religion and power hunger are tied together, they do not produce policy victories.¹

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According to Karen Armstrong, fundamentalism is a concept of the West, which is misunderstood. She observed that most of the fundamentalists are non-violent. Fundamentalism in all religions shows a deep fear of “annihilation”, which is often exploited by the modern secularists. In the West, the relation between politics and religion has been very violent and even the century could not sort out.² She eloquently illustrates the relationship between fundamentalism, tradition, and modernism as:

*Fundamentalism is not simply a way of using religion for a political end. These are essentially rebellions against the secularist exclusion of the divine from public life and a frequently desperate attempt to make spiritual values prevail in the modern world. Nevertheless, the desperation and fear that fuel fundamentalists tend to distract the religious tradition and to make more prominent its more aggressive aspects at the expense of those that preach toleration and reconciliation.*³

Today, the term ‘fundamentalism’ associates with a wide religious and political view. Most disturbingly, it is connected with different forms of religious extremism and, thus, religiously focused on violent extremism. It is the religious modalities of violent terrorism that have taken a central stage in the global political and social context. Fundamentalism focuses on the status of mind which advocates and believes that all the group members should return to the specific ideal from which they have strayed away. Fundamentalists reject a variety of opinions and cannot tolerate any difference of opinions. They believe only on their own interpreted definition of religions.⁴ Religious fundamentalism divides people. It focuses more on the differences in mankind; it encourages a kind of xenophobia, i.e., fear against members of different religious groups or foreigners. The modern era is an example of the rise of fundamentalism.⁵

*Fundamentalism is a modern phenomenon; its inception started after the 1880s, which means after mass-consciousness and mass-communication. The most used and misused medium of mass-communication is social media. Therefore, accepting and believing an easy and facile understanding of religion has become more convenient than obtaining a deeper understanding of it. This is why modern religious fundamentalism is supported by the radical interpretation of religion [due to facile understanding] that leads to extremists’ mindsets.*⁶

Rise of Religious Fundamentalism: A Radical Truth of Modernity

The rise of religious fundamentalism is a radical truth of modernity that is based on religious nationalism. Religious fundamentalists claim for power by making religion-based exclusive ideologies. They aim religious freedom and claim for peace for their own conformed members, which provide justification and use of state-based non-democratic force to fulfill its goals. This phenomenon often projects militant violence against minorities to a certain achievement of power. Modern religious fundamentalists also use contemporary means to make a modern modification of traditional religions and world views. Fundamentalism has essentially led to the theological crisis of the modern world.

Modern psychology brands this religious fundamentalism as the dark religion. Almost everyone in the world is being subject to this process in one way or the other starting from families to consultation rooms to temples to churches to mosques and even at the political level.⁷ The examples of the dark religion exist in the rise of Hindu fundamentalism as well as Christian fundamentalism.

Philosophy behind Religious Fundamentalism in Political Dynamics

The modern world has witnessed the rise of religious fundamentalism in politics more than any other era before. India and the US both are considered as secular nations, however, the recent political sphere is suggestive of promoting an extreme right-wing violent religious ideology. Hindu far-right and Evangelical or Alt-Right Christians largely supported a candidate, who was using religion as a driving force for their campaigns while undermining the rights of other religious minorities. It has been observed at multiple instances over the past few years where minorities were discriminated against violently beaten and even murdered without the government taking any stand for the victims. This behavior is, therefore, encouraged in such political dynamics and both countries (India and the US) now find themselves amid a concrete divide of left versus right, liberalism versus conservatism and majority religion versus other religions. Although it might be perplexing to understand the link between far-right and alt-right, both groups have a long history dated back to the Aryan race identity which was one of the core ideologies of Nazism. The followers of Hindutva and White Supremacist ideologies believe that they have all come from a pure race, therefore, all the rest of the races are impure and do not deserve the same social status. This study, therefore, critically analyzes and discusses the political dynamics of Hindu fundamentalism (Hindutva ideology) and Christian fundamentalism, respectively.

Hindu Fundamentalism

There has been an increase in Hindu fundamentalism in today's era. The major manifestation of Hindu fundamentalism exists in the movement against "external influences" in India – the Hindu fundamentalist party Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Political opportunism is obvious in RSS because it has a very slight empathy towards the minorities. Also, it was one of the RSS members who assassinated Gandhi in 1947. According to the claim of RSS, Gandhi was very affectionate towards Muslim minorities; there are many examples evidently present in the history and modernism, where this religious fundamentalist party has driven the minorities to death. However, it is a beneficial slogan for them as it encourages a tribal memory of Hindus which allows them to manipulate Hindu doubts about Indian-Muslims.

The Hindu Political Discourse

The main crisis of the political discourse in Hindu fundamentalism is Hindutva Ideology. Hindutva ideology is a blend of Hindu fundamentalism and Hindu radical nationalism. It also claims to be deeply religious, profoundly aggressive, and distinctively political form of militant nationalism. From the earliest gleaming of

its beginning, its factors have combined complexities with compromise, hostility, and contradictory elements as tactical devices for achieving overriding power. Hindutva ideology has also imposed radical Hindu nationalism upon entire India. The term 'Hindutva' suggests the concept of 'one State' under the umbrella of one culture, one religion and one language. This concept was established in the name of their Lord Rama, which states a single 'Hindu Nation' for an entire Indian Continent has obligations that it must be led by the doctrine of *Arya Dharm*.⁸

Hindu fundamentalism together with Hindu nationalism is a tied force with Modi's political ideology. As a politico-ideological force, it originated from the manifestation of religious sects under the colonial rule of government. The reversal and acceptance of such colonial identities by Hindu revivalist movements of the early 20th century and Vinayak Damodar Savarkar's expansion of Hindutva in *Constituents of Hindutva* (1922) have supplied the ideological foundations of Hindu Nationalism.⁹ It was primitively conceptualized as the idea of a religious and social movement that happened to get connected with their political ideology, the consequences were the institutionalization of Hindu fundamentalists with the creation of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) which created nothing but radical shocks to the minorities.¹⁰

However, in the late 1980s, Hindu nationalism never gained the political leverage and advantage of BJP. It was created after a reorganizing of the major political institutions keeping Hindu fundamentalism along with Hindu nationalism; the BJP got a rise to power at an extraordinary pace. In 1984, BJP only had two seats in the Lok Sabha (the lower house) of the Indian parliament. By 1991, it succeeded to attain 119 seats which show the extraordinary upsurge of Hindu nationalism with the course of time.¹¹ The swift increase of support for BJP has been open to investigation by a broad display of social scientists. At the broad level, explanations were under consideration in the political and social situations, which made BJP a more attractive voting choice by Indian voters to gain their political leverage based on religious fundamentalism.

People, who discriminate Hindutva against Muslims, are the huge voters of BJP but still, India declares itself a secular country. There is an emphasis on some essential transformed structure in the Indian political prospect as the origin of this dominance to power. Varshney regards the most significant rise of transformation of dominant political structure is basically the declination of the Congress Party in the late 1980s. He explains the Congress Party as one of the most powerful organizations, which was associated with the establishment of a nation that has got rusted, clay footed, and colossus.¹²

Hindu Fundamentalism

Statistically, Hinduism and Polytheistic religions are considered to be inclusive for the other religious practices and groups. However, the assumption that such religions, especially Hinduism, does not have a problem with extremism, would be utterly incorrect and ill-advised.¹³ Today's Indian society does not see their children

having any compromise between the old ways and the modern society. They see the majority of them choosing a life that steers away from the traditional concepts that used to define a “good life.” It is being recognized by the Indian society that modernity is the ruling ideology. Whereas, religion and faith in a traditional sense are “pushed to the corner.”¹⁴

Political Cohesion and BJP

Political cohesion is a sensitive act between religion and ethnic groups. It is the harmonizing act between different ethnic and religious groups. The incident of September 11, 2001, has created Islamophobia in the West. However, there are also major violent trends in Hindu extremism that are being ignored by the world, specifically the US. Hindu extremists in India are hyperactive and completely aligned with the BJP government. This racist and extremist mentality can be traced back to the days when the *Sangh Parivar* was brought into conflict with other forms of Hinduism, especially the teachings of Gandhi. He was accused by Hindu nationalists being responsible for the partition of the Subcontinent. This conflict eventually led to the assassination of Gandhi by Nathuram Godse, a former RSS member, and Savarkar's associate.¹⁵

Pierre Van Den Berghe in the article “Multicultural Democracy: Can it work?” proposes India as being a functional ‘multicultural democracy’. He states that democracy in India has many political and religious groups that are organizing to be recognized. These groups try to obtain special rights regarding the defense of their collective interests.¹⁶ Pierre further states, this predicament “generated a spiral of escalating stridency and frequent violence. India has become the country where caste and communal violence are the most routine, institutionalized order of the day.”¹⁷

In 1952, monogamy was implemented on Hindus and flexibility in its implementation was removed as a criterion of social reform by Article 25 of Indian Constitution, which declared “that the state may interfere with the right of a citizen freely to profess, practice and propagate religion to legislate social reforms.”¹⁸ However, the implementation of this article led Hindus to sense the discrimination. This fire was further fueled by BJP, not letting other Indian communities to keep their decrees because these laws were seen as a threat to what it meant to be an Indian citizen from the Hindu standpoint. This fabricated threat was tactfully used by BJP which then allowed them to politicize the issue under religion, hence, leading to its heavy religious role in Indian politics today.

Mandal Commission (Mandalization)

Furthering this fear around what Indian citizenship should entail, in the 1990s, V. P. Singh implemented the suggestions and recommendations of the Mandal Commission. India, since its inception in 1947, has always supported discrimination as a means to repress minorities and lower castes. The Mandal Commission was created in 1978 by a non-congressional entity to formulate a policy that would hinder religious and

lower caste discrimination. They suggested that the government positions and university quotas for these populations to be increased from 27 percent to 49.5 percent.¹⁹

Mandalization refers to the execution of Mandal Commission recommendations in which the lower and poor class population can claim their rights as citizens of India against the tyrannical rules exerted by the upper castes.²⁰ Such rights being granted to the lower caste left a bad taste for the upper caste as well as middle class communities. This led to many anti-reservation movements in many areas of India with protests that even led to the self-sacrifice by upper-caste college students.²¹

Uprising of BJP

Upper castes in India had long enjoyed the security, status, and stability, which came by just as belonging to a certain caste. However, this all seemed to have been collapsing by the Mandal Commission's recommendations. This led them to have a sense of exposure that they did not experience before. BJP set its sights on these vulnerabilities and formulating its rhetoric that echoed with the upper class and the extreme Hindu fundamentalists. They suggested a "cultural purification mantra" and a reinstatement of the superiority of the caste system in order to safeguard their own social and political interests.

Philosophy of Hindu Fundamentalism

The Hindu nationalist agenda between the 1980s and 1990s was heavily marketed by using mass media outlets. This is also an excellent example of religious communities conforming to the spread of their agenda utilizing the changing atmosphere of technology and mass media, which created a level of outreach to the general public which was never before imagined by these organizations. The utilization of media technological advances and selective segregation of India into the global economy are prominent examples of Hindu nationalism to maneuver modernization and spread its tentacles of influence. Moreover, there are certain facets of modernization which played an important role in the spread of Hindu nationalism. Consequently, it became clear that religious identity was able to acquire the imaginative hold over Hindus in India to accommodate and conform to the processes of modernization. Hindu fundamentalists have had many political victories because they were able to place their leaders into government from 1999 to 2004.²²

Modernity has seen the trend of religious fundamentalism as a rising force. A film covering many incidences of communal violence was not just shown in only one district Gujrat but in other cities as well.²³ This film displayed an incident that happened in 2015 where the mob of 1000 Hindu activists attacked an innocent Muslim family because of the rumor that they had slaughtered a cow. Vigilantes from 'Save the Cow' movement directed a mob to appear on site, encouraging the rumors of slaughtering a cow and placing blame on the Muslim family. As a result, the Muslim family was badly beaten; the elder of the house was beaten to death and his son was

severely injured. Indian media also got involved and it was explained that 'Save the Cow' movement was a mandatory religious duty as Hindus to guard their cows, religiously holy to them. Meanwhile, a BJP politician defended the violent mob by saying that it was a failure on the part of local police to react effectively.²⁴

Assessment on Hindu Fundamentalism

It is noted that Hindu fundamentalism has become a part of today's Hindu politics. Likewise, Hindu political leaders encourage spreading the violent aspect of Hindutva ideology, such as BJP that plays a significant role in spreading Hindu fundamentalism and violence within the society. Politicians in India must represent all citizens encompassing all religious beliefs and cultures. Indian communities are being depressingly affected by religious fundamentalism that is taking rise in recent times due to spread of Hindutva ideology by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "The Modi government has gradually but surely weakened the values that any democratic polity should fiercely protect."²⁵

Christian Fundamentalism and Dynamics of US Politics

The idea of modern religious fundamentalism was presented with the publication of "The Fundamentals", a variety of essays that published between 1909 and 1920. This publication fascinated Christians to believe in definite religious doctrines of Christianity. The term 'fundamentalist' has also been used to describe a faction of Protestant Christians who had an extremely separatist position in regards to modernity. Later on, this term became more associated with extremists of every religion of the world.

For example, the two competing parties in US politics fundamentally differ in various aspects like policies, strategies, and social issues. In 1960, when John F. Kennedy, a Roman Catholic, was elected president, it sparked a wave of major division of ideologies amongst the nation. The liberal ideologies and religion created a far-right movement of the Klu Klux Klan. Similarly, in 2016-elections where religion yet again was center stage, white Christian (Evangelicals) heavily voted for Donald Trump which further perpetuated white supremacy, racism, and nationalism. This far-right movement and openly discriminatory behavior led to mass shootings and extremism within the US against minorities. Christian fundamentalism has been, therefore, a growing issue in the US which is leading towards the modern form of extremism.²⁶ In contemporary era, Christian institutions are the West's most powerful campaigners against LGBT equality, family planning, and gender equality. Such differences lead to Christians perpetuating acts of violent extremism against people who differ in ideology or who are going against the teachings of their own religion.²⁷

Christian Fundamentalism in US Political Discourse

A flow of fundamentalism was experienced by three Abrahamic religions in the 20th century. Christian fundamentalism took a rise between 1910 to 1915 when 90 essays

were published by the Bible Institute of Los Angeles. This set of 90 essays is called "The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth." This rise in Christian fundamentalism was further followed by the rise of Evangelical Christians in the US from the 1940s to the 1970s. Later in the 20th century, a new force was given to Christian fundamentalists in the US by religious figures including Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell.²⁸

The label 'fundamentalist' had its roots in American Protestantism.²⁹ Like its religious counterpart, the phrase "secular fundamentalist" is used to identify an individual or institution as an extreme fanatic and dogmatic. As discussed above, religious fundamentalism can be stated as a kind of religious interpretation that strictly adheres to the sacred-scripture text, such as the Bible, as a source of absolute, plain, and consistent truth. Christian fundamentalism is one of the several processes of biblical interpretation. Secular documents also encompass interpretation and if a document holds normative implications, there may be various issues with its interpretations. For example, the US political system and its constitution, which is a normative document, have tied together with religion due to the similarity between constitutional interpretation and Biblical interpretation.³⁰

Philosophy behind Religious Fundamentalism in US Politics

In the 1960s, the US Supreme Court prohibited prayer and Bible readings in public schools, which was a huge problem for Christian fundamentalists in the US. Fundamental religious conservatives, massed heavily in the South, began shifting toward the Republican Party in the 1960s over the race issue. Religious sentiments reinforced that shift and religious conservatives became an ever-larger voice in the Republican Party, which encouraged white supremacists and racism. In the US, the current political strategy on religion since the 1960s has been shaped by the Republican Party. Their strategy is very conservative concerning abortion and same-sex marriages because of their (more conservative) interpretation of the religion of their constituents.³¹

During the 1960s, religious fundamentalism dominated the political field in the West. The fast-paced ever-changing nature of democracies, which is still present today, has created a strong divide between ethnicities, races, gender, and religion. This manifested into a stark contrast of political parties. It can be said that the initial trigger for heavily Evangelical-based Republican Party was the potential of racial equality. The influx of people from different cultures created a sense of unity between those already settled. This made these groups threatened about their socio-economic superiority due to equal rights and opportunities as given to the minorities. Thus, the strategy was to establish norms and values that only original Southerners and Americans alike would have been privy too, which led to the development of racial polarization. For example, the Ku Klux Klan remerged basing their values on religion after previously being abhorred and deemed violent. These values relied heavily on the dislike of gays and lesbians as well as blacks, Jews, and other immigrants.

On the other hand, the Democratic Party found solace in grouping the original outcasts or those who generally did not fit into a popular category in the Republican

Party. The Christian left became focused on activism and political change, which generally went against the principles preached by the political right. This activism gradually developed into secularism and, thus, they were understood as liberal. In US politics, most Americans, who do not identify with any religion, have increased in the last decades, tend to support the Democratic Party.³²

Exclusionary Source of Divinity in US Politics

Secular fundamentalists may take a provisional and practical view of explanation; ironically, it is an exclusionary source of divinity which functions on the basis of their fabricated interpretations, i.e., as opposed to the divine truth. Secular fundamentalists blind their minds off to the actual religious knowledge, hence, rejecting the actual religious prospects that serve humanistic traditional values at an individual or national level. They seek binary vision which often leads them to extremism. According to Reinhold Niebuhr, fanaticism can originate from secularism creating false views of life, which are solely conditional.³³

Modern society is based on a binary vision. It diverts itself from the basic teachings of religion, and it is built on the denial of transcendence. It is more focused on violence obsessed strategies for the hegemony. These strategies are often backed up by the sense of revenge, the fear of unknown, the feeling of superiority on the basis of race and color, and also, the devastating interpretation of scriptures by false clerics.³⁴

Religious fundamentalism plays a very important role in shaping US politics. It has deep roots in Christian fundamentalism, which has now become evident in the current political scenario that has given rise to white supremacy and racism in the US.³⁵ Donald Trump during his electoral campaign even raised the issue of racism, which became a captivating voting point for white Evangelicals and conservative Christians who rejected the fact of globalization. Hence, secular fundamentalism apprehended the rise of political liberalism and embraced a strictly literal understanding of religion as a foundation of mysticism in the social sphere.³⁶

Assessment on US Fundamentalism

The power of citizens is evident from the broad direction of government policies rather than over a particular policy decision. Representative ways in which ordinary citizens have exerted influence are granting the voting right to women and abolition of slavery, etc. Influence by citizens has been achieved through their participation in political movements that contributed to changes in the US society. Citizens can also exert influence through public opinion polls; the latter shows the direction and the degree that citizen's opinions can influence public officials. To better understand this sort of influence, the US Social Security Program has such overwhelming public support that it is protected across the political spectrum from wholesale revision. Citizens' opinions admittedly drive issues, such as abortion, immigration, same-sex marriage, etc.

The power of ordinary citizens is less than the influence over a particular policy decision than of influence over the general direction of government policy. One example is political movements, such as civil rights and women's rights movements. These movements are not driven by elites or business lobbies but by ordinary people seeking a fair share. And, once they succeed, they bring about substantial changes in society and policy. Public opinion also affects policy, particularly, in those cases where it is intense and unmistakable as in support of social security. The power of people was also apparent when they handed Republicans a huge victory in 2010-midterm elections, thereby, ending Democrats' control of both the Presidency and Congress; a development that changed the national policy agenda. Citizens' power can also be seen in party realignments, which involve large and permanent changes in the party coalitions and platforms, as in the case of the New Deal realignment of the 1930s. It is the movement of voter support between the parties that fuels a realignment and it is the continuing attachment of these voters to the party of their choice that sustains a realignment. Another example of the power of people is constituency influence in Congress. Members of Congress are inordinately attentive to constituency opinion given the fact that they depend on their constituents for reelection.

Conclusion

Extremism does not belong to a religion. In fact, it is the use of religious misinterpretation for the gain of violent nationalist and religious agenda.³⁷ Religion has existed since the origin of humanity. However, the inception of religious fundamentalism is thought to be in the 1800s after the dawn of mass consciousness, therefore, religious fundamentalism is a modern phenomenon. Modernism and theology have a flawed relationship. The absolutists exhibit beliefs that are extremely rigid and unrelenting, and such beliefs have led to religious fundamentalism. The blanket understanding of secular fundamentalism paints a clear picture of religious fundamentalism. This wave of modern religious fundamentalism in politics is thought of being both shielded and impulsive in competing. With every passing year, it has been observed that religion is slip knot with the politics, however, extremism is more thriving in the secular states, such as India and the US.

The US Constitution mentions the separation of church and states explicitly, which makes the US a secular state. The 42nd Amendment of 1976-Act declared India as a secular state. The discussion about the relationship between religion and politics in these secular states has always been neglected since their inception. Massive right-wing extremist movements in the politics of these states have significantly influenced the political elites to make policy decisions based on religion. The manifestation of religious fundamentalism has finally appeared in the political domain explicitly with the rise of extreme right-wing political ideology succeeding in the electoral process; BJP winning in India and Republican Party with an extremely conservative ideology of Donald Trump, winning in the US. Consequently, these political dynamics have given rise to right-wing fundamentalism and open corridors to further discrimination of minorities.

Many incidents of such discrimination and violent acts towards minorities have been observed and some of which have been mentioned above. Open discrimination and violence against Muslims in India have been widely documented. One of such incidents in the recent recorded history was the cow slaughtering incident, in which a Muslim family was wrongfully accused over a rumor of slaughtering a cow and the family was beaten to death by a hate charged crowd. Many other incidents have been reported where destruction of places of worship and violence towards minorities have taken place in India without any consequence to the perpetrators. Furthermore, a similar situation exists in the US; in 2019, over 500 attacks on Muslims have been documented.³⁸

It is a matter of a personal choice to believe in the divinity and true theological spirit. However, religious fundamentalism in the era of modernity lacks the public importance, hence, strictly adhering to the literal meaning which is often being fused with politics and self-interest of the leaders and philosophers. In the public sphere, logic prevails. On questions of morality and ethics, modern rationalism is handling the choices that deny the humanistic values and significance of moral values. It promotes the rise of religious fundamentalism which has also produced many clanks in the political discourse.

The crisis of the modern world and its manifestations have started to exist more in terms of religious fundamentalism and its interwoven association with politics has given birth to hatred towards the other communities (religious, national, and race), particularly, in the US and India. More importantly, it has a growing base of violence and rejection of humanistic values. It is crucial to appreciate the consequences of certain actions toward religious fundamentalism in the modern world. When religious fundamentalists feel threatened, they are more likely to go to extremes. There are many examples available in history as well as modernism where the religious fundamentalists have perpetuated fatal violence against minorities. Analytically, the crisis of modernity is a consequence of the systemic failure of government and authorities to ensure that true equality exists in all sectors of society. This contemporary system corrupted with the strict adherence to the fabricated religious interpretation; suits the ideologies and interests of elites.

First, the crisis of modernism is escalating due to the misemployment of religion in the social and political spheres. The influence of religion on politics in these secular states (India and USA) has led to the rise of extremism. Secondly, there is a clear homogenizing factor in the ideological power of religious nationalism, whose trajectory will apparently permit no particular culture or way life to hold any differentiation that goes deeper than the expression of public concern.

In order to stop the expansion of such extremist ideas and further worsening the human condition, there must be countermeasures in place to eliminate the thought process that is causing the eradication of humanistic values. First and foremost, the advent of social media in conjunction with traditional mass media is leading to doubt and uncertainty regarding the different others in the population across the world. In these times of information overload, it is hard to determine the authenticity of the

information being consumed and even harder to anticipate the consequences of such information or misinformation. Recent times are evidence enough that there is a massive amount of misinformation leading to a certain political ideology. Consequently, it has led to an extreme narrative towards minorities and other religious groups. These strategies have been widely successful for political elites in winning elections and furthering their political agenda. The media outlets work that spread such hate and misinformation continue to do so without any consequences. The responsibility of oversight of the media lies upon the governing body of that particular nation so that the right information is always divulged to the public. This would be the first step towards possible re-education of the masses which can potentially lead to minimizing extremist behavior and mentality.

Behavior modification techniques and in some cases psychological help is also imperative to course correction of the masses. A strong behavioral health program can establish and promote tolerating behavior among the masses. The lack of behavioral help is abundant at an international level, even in the first world countries that have all the resources and funding to provide such help. Throughout the centuries, psychological help has been neglected due to the fact that it portrays a certain stereotype of a weak individual and stigmatizes them as mentally incapable of flourishing in the community. There must be a push to normalize the acceptance of the need for psychological help in order to remove religious and cultural stereotypes that lead to extremist ideologies and hate crimes. Again, governing bodies of the nation must be heavily involved in the restructuring of the behavioral health program of the communities most vulnerable to such extremist behaviors.

Lastly, misguided and fabricated interpretations of religion are directly related to altered psychological health and growing intolerance among the masses. Media of all kinds has been implicated in promoting such miseducation and consequently, leading to extreme behaviors in vulnerable international society. The role of religious leaders in all communities is extremely important to counter such miseducation. It is the role of the governing bodies to establish religious studies guidelines that must be followed by all religious educators so that the miseducation and utilization of religion for political gain can be minimized or eventually, eradicated completely.

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- ²⁹ George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism: 1870-1925* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).
- ³⁰ The fact that a term has a negative connotation does not necessarily mean that it should be abandoned. Perhaps the negative connotation is in some way deserved. But this depends on the particular meaning that the term is designed to convey.
- ³¹ Jennifer Jefferis, *Armed for life: The Army of God and anti-abortion terror in the United States* (Santa Barbara: Calif: Praeger, 2011).
- ³² Martin Wattenberg, "The Democratic candidates are unabashedly liberal. Is that what Democratic voters want?," September 13, 2019 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/09/13/democratic-candidates-are-unabashedly-liberal-is-that-what-democratic-voters-want-hear/>.
- ³³ Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Nature and Destiny of Man: Human Destiny 238 ", 1964 (originally published 1943). see *Thomas C. Berg, Church State Relations and the Social Ethics of Reinhold Niebuhr*, 73 NC L Rev 1567, 1603-06 (1995)
- ³⁴ Dr. Muhammad Faghfoory (Professor of Religion and Politics, George Washington University, USA), interviewed by the author, GWU, USA. May 2018.
- ³⁵ Robert Burrowes, "A Non-Violent Strategy to End War," (Sep 2019 April 2019). Why Violence? <http://tinyurl.com/whyviolence> and Fearless Psychology and Fearful Psychology: Principles and Practice <http://anitackone.wordpress.com/articles-2/fearless-and-fearful-psychology/>.
- ³⁶ At least one political candidate has used the phrase "secular fundamentalism" in this way. See John Marelius, *Huffington Issues Spiritual Call to Arms*, San Diego Union Tribune 8 (Oct 12, 1994) (quoting United States Senate candidate Michael Huffington as decrying the "secular fundamentalists" who believe that "God should ... be kept in the closet and under wraps" and that religion should not be brought to bear on public issues).
- ³⁷ Umer Farooq (Former President, National Defence University, Islamabad), interviewed by the author. April 2018.
- ³⁸ Kelly Weill, *More Than 500 Attacks on Muslims This Year* (May 2019), <https://www.thedailybeast.com/more-than-500-attacks-on-muslims-in-america-this-year?ref=scroll>.