**[Changing India](https://www.dawn.com/news/1809995/changing-india)**

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TWO critical developments are radically transforming India, with far-reaching implications for its minorities, the region, and the world at large.

The first and foremost is the transformation of a secular India, as envisioned by its founding fathers, into a Hindu rashtra driven by Hindutva. The second development is the rapid economic growth of India over the past three decades, which has catapulted its economy to the fifth position at the global level.

The growing sway of Hindutva in India under the leadership of the Modi-led BJP, which is closely allied with RSS, gives shrinking political and social space to non-Hindu religious minorities, which are facing increasing difficulties in leading their lives according to their own social and religious customs, besides discrimination generally.

This is not surprising if one looks at the philosophy of RSS as defined by its founder, V.D. Savarkar, and his successors. For instance, M.S. Golwalkar, the second RSS supreme leader, stressed that non-Hindu minorities “must cease to be foreigners, or may stay in the country wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment — not even citizens’ rights”.

The statements and policy decisions of the Modi-led BJP government and its leaders clearly reflect this policy of Hindutva in action.

There have been frequent reports of mob attacks on Muslims and their persecution; in some cases, there has been a tragic loss of lives with the connivance of local officials. As chief minister of Gujarat, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was implicated in the deadly anti-Muslim attacks.

The [official consecration](https://www.dawn.com/news/1808034) of the Ram temple on the site of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya under Modi’s leadership is the latest example of the continued implementation of the Hindutva agenda. BJP activists are agitating to replace mosques with temples at many other sites.

The growing sway of Hindutva in India is not only bad news for the Muslims and other minorities in the country, it is also the harbinger of a belligerent approach by New Delhi towards its neighbours in pursuit of its hegemonic designs in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region. Under Modi, one can expect India to pursue a hard-line policy in handling its relations with Pakistan.

The [annexation](https://www.dawn.com/news/1498227) of occupied Kashmir by India in August 2019, in violation of UN Security Council resolutions, was a clear example of this belligerent approach, as was the earlier Indian air attack on Balakot.

Indian support to terrorist groups in Balochistan and its nefarious designs against Pakistan’s security were established by the arrest of Indian agent [Kulbhushan Jadhav](https://www.dawn.com/news/1326117) in March 2016. India has also been following a long-term policy of weakening Pakistan’s friendly relations with Iran by attempting to exploit Pakistan-Iran policy differences on Afghanistan, cross-border terrorism, and sectarian issues.

Hindutva’s sway is a harbinger of a belligerent approach globally.

It is unfortunate that both Iran and Pakistan in the past failed to come to grips with the machinations of India and some non-regional powers in exacerbating their bilateral tensions on account of the issue of cross-border terrorism as reflected by the recent exchange of air strikes between them.

Hopefully, the recent visit of the Iranian foreign minister to Islamabad would lead to the strengthening of Pakistan-Iran cooperation in combating cross-border terrorism as announced by the foreign ministers of the two countries.

India’s rapid economic growth provides it with the resources for the build-up of its military might and the realisation of its hegemonic designs in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region.

According to IMF estimates, India’s GDP was estimated to be $3.73 trillion in 2023 as against $341 billion only for Pakistan. This enabled India to increase its defence budget to $81.4bn as against $10.3bn for Pakistan in 2022, according to the research institute Sipri. The huge and growing difference between the power potential of the two countries could have serious consequences for Pakistan’s security.

Pakistan, therefore, cannot afford to lower its guard in the management of its relations with India. We should avoid the mistakes of the two extremes of appeasement, which will merely embolden India, and a high-risk and adventurist policy which will prove to be counterproductive as our Kargil experience shows.

Instead, Pakistan should adopt a long-term approach for the realisation of its own strategic goals based on the synthesis of the political, economic, diplomatic, and military dimensions of policy in facing the enduring threat to its security emanating from India.

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