

## Hindutva led Communal Repression by BJP: Mobilized Muslim Minority in India

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### Abstract

India, under Hindutva led BJP government, is becoming a hotpot for ethnic tensions between Hindus and Muslims. Muslims as a minority communal group, have been facing socio-economic, cultural/perceptual, structural and political discrimination in India that has amounted up to the persisting sense of collective grievance among the members of community. Research explains how erosion of democratic apparatus of state; has rendered Muslim minority with the only available option of violent political action. It has deployed a theoretical construct of Ethnic Security dilemma as well as Ted Robert Gurr's model of minorities rebellion. It has explained that state repression provokes minorities to go violent. However, in India, owing to the lack of Group-cohesion and mobilization potential, Muslims have not yet transcended towards de-legitimization of state apparatus, or Rebellion. Future of the Conflict depends upon the State policies as well as the potential of the group, If the state keeps on launching autocratic Anti-Muslim communal violence, leaving no democratic way out, Muslims can resort to Rebellion as the only way out. **Key Words:**

Hindutva, Muslim Communal Group, Ethnic Security Dilemma, Socio-Economic deprivation, violent political action, rebellion.

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## 1- Introduction

In April 2022, a group of 100 Retired Civil Servants of India, publicly wrote a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In the letter they demonstrated their concerns about growing communal violence in India that is striking fear among the minorities. Threatened minorities can prove to be a threat to state as well, as maintained by Ted Robert Gurr in his thesis “Why minorities Rebel?”. In the same context, this research aims at exploring the impact of state repression launched by Hindutva backed BJP government, on the Muslim minority in India. It describes the economic, political, sociocultural and structural state of Muslims; and how persistent deprivation has facilitated development of Ethnic Security Dilemma between Hindus and Muslims. Lastly, it evaluates the response of Muslim Community; to understand the level of escalation of the ethnic differences between Hindus and Muslims under the BJP government.

Considering the sensitivity of the issue, existing literature is extremely polarized. It either provides the Hindutva oriented picture of the conflict; using the justification of Islamophobia, or covers the state-repression element alone to criticize the current regime. It lacks explanation on the response coming from Muslim community, level of antagonism building between Hindus and Muslims in India and what does it project for the state and minority? Therefore, the research holds academic significance, as it tends to bridge this literature gap.

In order to meet the identified objectives, the research has been based the theory of Ethnic Security Dilemma to assess the level of ethnic tension between Hindus and Muslims. It has further deployed Ted Robert Gur’s Model explaining why minorities rebel. The research will first take into account brief over view of Muslims in India, as a communal group. It will then proceed towards the discussion of persistent grievances that the Muslims have been facing since inception

of the state. Afterwards, it will take into account the contemporary state of affair under the current BJP government, to find out how Hindu-Muslim tensions have escalated in India ruled by Hindutva led BJP. The indicators deployed to assess the violent political action, are retrieved from Gur's model. However, research has been flexible enough to incorporate independent variable of persistent grievances (Socio-Economic, Political, Cultural, and Structural) and the intervening variable of the Ethnic Security dilemma that is giving rise to violent political action.

## 2- Literature Review

India under BJP, with its claim to be world's largest secular democracy, is at odds with this very claim. Gurharpal Singh, in his book "*Ethnic Conflict in India*" (Singh, 2000) has not only conceptualized the phenomena of Ethnic conflict but he has also highlighted the case of Indian politics as a tool. However, the book dwells upon the case of Sikhs in Indian Punjab as the victim, and it lacks explanation on the Muslim cause.

Sanjal Sahstri has argued an increase in rise of communal violence under BJP, in the article "*Communal Violence in twenty-first century India: Moving beyond the Hindi Heartland*" (Shastri, 2020). The article has taken into account Karnatka and West Bengal, since establishment of BJP rule in these areas. Indicators of rise in Hindu nationalism, caste politics and decline of opposition parties has indicated an explicit increase in the communal tensions.

In India, communal politics have been around for a while. However, it has reached new heights under the Modi administration and open Islamophobia is now a component of official government policies (Babar & Akhtar, 2021). This article highlights the existence of Islamophobia in the Savarkar's idea of the self and the other serves as the foundation for the Hindutva mission.

Since their inception, these notions of a homogeneous "self" and the Muslim "other" have been applied for political ends. Because of this, Hindutva fundamentalists will always view Muslims as an outsider and a threat. Muslims in India have been portrayed as an internal enemy in the anti-Islamic discourses examined above, aiming to destabilize India from within and standing in the way of Hindu dominance. As a result, Hindutva fundamentalists will always view Muslims as the outsiders and a danger. Muslims in India have been represented as an internal adversary who are trying to weaken India from within and are a barrier to Hindu dominance through the use of islamophobia discourses.

The BJP's victory in 2014 made a big contribution to the resurgence of strong anti-Muslim Hindutva policies. A new nationalist rhetoric was started by Hindutva organizations and certain BJP-supporting media (Ahmed, 2022). Every facet of Muslims' social and cultural existence in India has been distorted into an unresolvable struggle between Hinduism and Islam. Lynching, molestation, and even rape against Muslims were the result of this forceful propaganda. Muslims in Muslim neighborhoods did not participate in any anti-Hindutva counter mobilization despite this hostile anti-Muslim sentiment. Muslim pressure group, their organization, and leading Muslims political figures (with the exception of a few) didn't compelled them for a widespread uprising among Muslims.

### **Gaps in the Literature**

Considering the sensitivity of the issue, existing literature is extremely polarized. It either provides the Hindutva oriented picture of the conflict; using the justification of Islamophobia, or covers the state-repression element alone to criticize the current regime. It lacks explanation on the response coming from Muslim community, level of antagonism building between Hindus and

Muslims in India and what does it project for the state and minority? Therefore, the research holds academic significance, as it tends to bridge this literature gap.

### **3- Hypothesis**

The potential for political mobilization of Muslim Communal group, varies directly with the extent of anti-Muslim repression launched by undemocratic state apparatus of India under BJP; provoking ethnic security dilemma.

### **4- Research Question**

How the communal state-repression launched by BJP is impacting Muslims as a communal group in India, and how are they responding to it?

### **5- Theoretical Framework**

Two theoretical frameworks are employed in this paper. The first one is Ted Robert Gur's model which he introduced in his work on ethnic conflict: *Why Minorities Rebel: A Global Analysis of Communal Mobilization and Conflict Since 1945* and the second one is *Ethnic Security Dilemma* by Barry Posen.

Ted Robert Gur's model classifies identities into different categories. According to this model, all group identities which include both communal and national identities are subject to change and are situational in nature (Gurr, 1993). National identities are generally ascribed to a larger group that are the inhabitants of a geographically recognized sovereign country.

Communal identities are however more distinctively defined. It refers to the members of a group who ascribe to a collective identity that is based on culture and also some other ascriptive traits that are of collective importance to them (Gurr, 1993). As it is relevant to this research and also an element of primary focus of Gur's model, conflict constitutes to be a derivative of communal protest and rebellion. Communal and national identities inwardly become more cohesive and rise in prominence when faced with external challenges. On the other hand, they tend to dilute when the utility of accession to larger communities arise. Such identities then formulate on political lines if one or both of the following conditions: a group faces systematic discrimination or suffers collectively vis-à-vis other groups or that a group takes the center stage in a political mobilization in the pursuit of its promoted interests.

Gur provides a general model of communal mobilization for political action. It posits that at the both communal protest and rebellion are exacerbated by deep-seated grievances that relates to the group status and by the group's pursuit of political interests which are expressed by the group leaders. This model takes into consideration other theoretical perspectives also. Two such perspectives are of relative deprivation and group mobilization. Relative deprivation deals with the factors which are ensued due to unjust deprivation that acts as a fundamental motivational force for political action. Group mobilization emphasizes on proportionate and calculated mobilization of group resources when faced with evolving political opportunities (Gurr, 1993). There also some determinants of group mobilization. Collective action undertaken by groups emanate from three factors; organization, shared interests, and opportunities.

Apart from this, Gur's model has defined some variables. In this research the relevant variables have been considered. The core variables in Gur's model are Political Action, Grievances, and Mobilization. Political action signifies the actions undertaken by group members

on behalf of their group for the pursuit of their group's interests. These are directed against or to put on state authorities. Grievances or active grievances are the intervening variables between the on ground objective conditions and the political action (Gurr, 1993). Other set of variables to which Gur refers are predisposing variables which constitute Group Status and Identity. These two variables are the sources of potential political mobilization and also of the persisting grievances. Group Identity varies in importance. Isolated indigenous groups have heightened sense of group identity. In this regard it connotes to primordial understanding of identity. One of the functions that relates to group status is Repressive Control by a Dominant Group. If a group is subordinated by a dominant group then that leads to nurturing grievances against the dominant group.

Another theoretical framework employed in this research is *Ethnic Security Dilemma*. The idea of Ethnic Security Dilemma was popularized by Barry Posen. He drew a comparison between ethnic relations within the state and the prevailing international system from the realist perspective (Posen, 1993). According to Posen, ethnic groups conduct themselves in a manner as if they are states without security assurances by the state to which they belong, therefore the dilemma that emanates is in spirit similar to those between international states. Therefore, the inability between offense and defense makes the circumstances conducive to preemptive action. Ethnic Security Dilemma also deals with the question that what constitutes societal security. In broader terms it relates to the preservation of group identity including religious practices, customs and language. Furthermore, this theory deliberates upon the conditions that lead to an ethnic conflict. In this regard it proposes the idea of *Strategic Interaction* (Posen, 1993). That is to say, that the fundamental causes of ethnic conflict are strategic interactions between and within groups. Within strategic interaction, there are some strategic dilemmas that results in the eruption of violence: problems of credible commitment, and incentives to use force preemptively. Other than this, in

relation to intergroup dynamics, ethnic activists may make appealing attempts in order to mobilize group members which may lead to further polarization.

Within this framework of Ethnic Security Dilemma, Posen has discussed the concept of *Logic of Consequentiality*. It posits that, the security of one group or state is perceived as a direct threat to the security of other group or state (Posen, 1993). In all levels of analysis, anarchy is an established belief which translates into the dilemma that onus of a group's or state's security is on its own self. This dilemma then provides the opportunity to groups or states to utilize pre-emptive use of violence.

## **6- Muslims in India**

Since India's independence, Muslims have faced segregation, bias, and violence, in spite. India is home to more than two hundred million Muslims, one of the world's biggest Muslim populaces yet a minority in India. 14.2 % of the total population of India is Muslim and the state in which the Muslim majority live is Uttar Pradesh. Other states in which Muslim population is there are Assam, West Bengal, Kerala, Lakshadweep, Gujarat, and Andhra Pradesh (*RGI Releases Census 2011 Data on Population by Religious Communities*, 2015).

As the minority population in India, the Muslim representation in India face number of challenges, injustice, and discrimination in various aspects. However, the Hindutva dominated politics in India has led to the more under representation of Muslims and so the Muslim political parties are facing more change. The Muslim political parties in India in contemporary times have slightly changed their nature as they are now more inclined towards the secularism. The shift toward secularism in the approach of some Muslim political parties in India is an evolving political strategy and response to the changing socio-political landscape to support the oppressed



communities under BJP-ruled India. The need for the political parties is because of the rising discrimination of the marginalized population. These scenarios demand representation of Muslims in political position. The parties which are now active as unit or some in their alliance-based structure are as follow. However, the main point here is that objectively the dominant and leading party is BJP which is pursuing its power in the region through the prominent majority-based seats.

### **Indian National Congress**

The dominance of BJP in India and the rise of Hindu nationalism has put Muslims in India far behind in the political representation. The secular tradition dominated by Hindu nationalism. The rise of polarization and Hindu nationalism during the 1980s set the stage for subsequent developments and influenced the political dynamics that continue to shape the present-day concerns of the Muslim community in India. The rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, which aimed to build a temple at the site of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, period witnessed increased polarization along religious lines, which had an impact on the political dynamics in the country. Muslim representation in Indian politics has been a concern for many years, and the limited political representation of Muslims has contributed to their backwardness in certain areas. As the cause of Muslim backwardness is the less Muslim representation in politics as well as the socioeconomic factors, discrimination, and communal polarization. However, the already existing secular party in India, which was supported by Indian Muslims also lose its effectiveness due to the poor leadership in terms of disconnect between party and the segment of population. For instance, CAA passed in 2019, grants expedited citizenship to

non-Muslim immigrants from neighboring countries who entered India before 2014 (Thukral, 2019). This legislation was criticized by members of the Muslim community, for being discriminatory and exclusionary towards Muslims. The concerns of Indian Muslims were compromised either due to the pressure of BJP or due to the range of factors including socio-economic disparities, historical factors, inter-community relations, and the need for inclusive and representative governance. Congress is one of the political party which was supported by Muslims minority in India. Under BJP, secular party as Congress is seen as Hindutva to some extent and pursued Soft-Hindutva vision. Congress began to participate in BJP led campaign themes. Congress did so to get rid of the BJP stance of portraying Congress as a Muslim party. The Congress Party has sought to appeal to a wider range of voters and participated in campaigns and initiatives that promote a broader agenda. including different aspects of governance, economy, agriculture, education, healthcare, and social welfare. (Sarangi, 2021). Over the years congress has preserved its secular image by the tendency of nominating Muslims in certain states and providing Muslims socioeconomic security (JAFFRELOT, 2019).

## **AIMIM**

In the Muslim majority areas, the Muslim political party named AIMIM has gain prominence by countering the opposition party ideology. The marginalized population and Muslim rights were advocated by AIMIM. The congress manifesto has created a sense of betrayal in Muslim community. For instance, in the state of Uttar Pradesh, which has a significant Muslim population, the Congress Party has faced criticism for its limited electoral success and perceived inability to effectively address pressing issues faced by the Muslim community. This has

contributed to a perception among some members of the Muslim community that the party has not adequately addressed their concerns. The All India Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen emerged as vocal Muslim party in India. It has been known to raise issues of injustice faced by Muslims and advocate for their rights. The electoral performance of AIMIM indeed reflect the extent to which the party's message resonates with Muslim voters (Ahmed, 2022). In Bihar elections, AIMIM joined other parties which represent marginalized castes and minorities other than Muslims. These parties in Bihar include Bahujan Samaj Party and Rastriya Lok Samta Party. With Dalit party in Maharashtra in 2019, the party won a parliamentary seat first time. However, the party is vocal, but recent election of 2022 in Gujarat shows its minimal impact on the results as the party fails to hold its position practically. The vote share of this party is seen less than 0.3%. However, the party is active, but the practical representation of Muslim hasn't improved much. The Congress also criticize AIMIM for this reason that it has divided the Muslim votes only and is unable to made any improvement (Zaffar, 2020).

### **All India Democratic Front (AIUDF)**

All India Democratic Front currently is an active political organization in Indian state of Assam. The party currently holds the view that by combining the minority supporting political parties, AIUDF can defeat BJP at national level in 2024 elections of Lok Sabha (Sircar, 2022). The party opposing views about the CAA and the belief in Assam accord are the things which are common among the other anti-BJP parties. On the basis of these grand alliance against BJP is expected (2018).

### **Welfare party of India (WPI)**

The welfare party of India came into being in 2011 with a motto of bringing like-minded people together for issue-based and welfare politics. The party is currently headed by Qassim Rasool Ilays. The party contested for two seats in 2019 elections and got approximately 24,000 votes. The party has also been attributed to working for the welfare of Muslims in the state and the alleged involvement of the party leaders in incidents like Prayagraj violence can also be seen. The party talks about morality and ethical values in politics, establishment of democracy, the concept of federalism that covers the cultural federalism along with geographic and linguistic federalism. The party is putting conscious effort to distance itself from the Jamaat. The party wants to position itself as one which has the welfare of all marginalized and backward sections as its main agenda (Correspondent, 2022).

### **Social Democratic party of India (SDPI)**

Social democratic party of India is the wing of parent Party named popular front of India. The PFI has been banned but its wing SDPI has not allowed the ban to hurdle its activities. The party is involved in the contemporary protests, campaigns against issues such as drugs, price rise, as well as the campaigns against Sangh Parivar agenda. The increase in vote share by SDPI is seen as recent development and the party is seen as the prominent political party in the mainstream politics of India (*PFI Ban Leaves SDPI, Its Political Arm, Free to Push Its Agenda*, 2022).

## **Peace Party (PP)**

Peace party was founded in 2008 and it claims to represents people who are striving for betterment of downtrodden people of India via political cognizance and participation in governance. PP approach seems to be secular & inclusive. PP claims that it's far a forum for the most backward lessons and now not just Muslims. However, the peace party failed to gain a single seat in 2017 elections. (Assembly Polls: Peace Party & RUC join hands to 'stop Muslim votes' split', 2022). The party views Muslims as the slaves and it aims to free Muslims and the marginalized communities in India. This party has also announced to conduct next elections collectively with Rastriya Ulema Council under the banner of democratic united alliance. Recently, Peace party has The reservation of the communities Dalits, Muslims, Christians has been abolished, they have grown to be economically and politically very backward. The party says that the Congress has completed injustice to Dalits, Muslims and Christians via abolishing the reservation on the idea of religion. If the ban isn't always removed, the Peace Party will move towards the court. It is in the constitution that these communities have reservation, but injustice has been generated by Congress (*Peace Party for Removal of Ban on Reservation of Muslims, Dalits & Christians – Kashmir Media Service, 2022*).

## **Rastriya Ulema Council (RUC)**

Rastriya Ulema Council (RUC) came into existence in 2008 and became called Ulama Council. The instantaneous reason for establishment of Ulama Council changed into to provide a

shielding shield to the natives of Uttar Pradesh. Ulama Council become converted into Rastriya Ulama Council, a complete-fledged political party. In 2017 elections, the party was supported by Muslims significantly in Azamgarh Lok Sabha Constituency, and its support with BSP led to the winning of four seats (Ulama Council Backs BSP Candidate in Azamgarh, 2022).

## 7- Persistent Grievances

The research has utilized Ted Gurr's model to analyze how relative deprivation arouses grievances that results in intergroup violence. As marginalization of ethnic groups is a substantial conflict risk as it is likely to unfold as a causal chain that runs from objective discrimination to persistent grievances and as they are not addressed timely, so they have a probability of turning into full blown conflict or mobilization. In this perspective, discrimination against Indian Muslims have developed persistent grievances in the community. Persistent grievances are the complaints or concerns of particular segment of society such as an ethnic minority that remain consistent over a period of time because they largely remain unaddressed. These discrimination and successive grievances take different shapes and all the time leads to violence (Basedau et al., 2017). This section highlights the persistent grievances of Muslims in face of BJP's repressive policies by using four variable and their respective indicators.

### 7.1. Socio-Economic Deprivations

The socio-economic variable will be utilized to analyze grievances through three indicators. Firstly, the **discriminatory culture** against Muslims is quite evident as Muslims have encountered discrimination in socio-economic sectors such as employment, education and

housing. According to Oxfam's India Discrimination Report 2022, total percentage of unemployment rose to 17% among Muslims. The bigotry in accessing salaried jobs has brought rural Muslim unemployment rate to 31.4%. Only 15.6% of urban Muslims over the age of 15 have regular salary employment and reports also indicates that prejudices against Muslims have risen over 9% from 59.3% since 2005 (Job Discrimination against Indian Muslims Rises by 9% in 16 Years, 2022). The second indicator highlights policy of **preferential development** adopted by state under BJP as state-led initiatives have also affected the educational standing of Muslims in India. Indian Muslims - the largest minority community - are below other minority groups when it comes to human development indicators such as education, living standard and financial stability. All the state led research and surveys indicate that Muslims are the most backward community when it comes to education (Khan, 2020). The SCR report indicate that Muslims' literacy rates are significantly lower than the national average, and the disparity is wider in urban areas and for women (Robinson, 2007). The impoverished condition of Muslims has hampered them to get education, as those Muslims who make a living through labor and small businesses, obtaining an education is very difficult. Thus, the ratio of Muslims on all levels of education (primary, secondary, higher) remains poor. Government schools, colleges and madrassa are the only options available for hard-working marginalized class (Khan, 2020). Besides, government has taken no initiative to improve economic and educational standing of Muslims. Instead, government under BJP altered syllabus by including Hindu holy books and speeches of RSS leaders in syllabus to equip next generation with Hindutva ideology. The third indicator of **redistribution** highlights Muslim grievances in accessing housing. Hindutva is so deeply rooted in society that Hindu community members do not allow Muslims to reside in their areas. Muslims also place importance on security in face of violence a prefer culturally aligned neighborhood, the

residential segregation along religious lines suggests that Muslim majority areas tend to have worse standards of education, health and emotional well-being leading to increased crime rates, and lowering economic standards as resources are distributed to Hindu majority areas and Muslims are confined to backward corners of cities (ALAM BHAT & ALI LONE, 2021).

## 7.2. Cultural/Perceptual Deprivations

The cultural grievances will be highlighted by use of following indicators. Firstly, **religious grievances** prevailed in Indian Muslims for a long time. Destruction of Babri mosque in 1992 by Hindu nationalists, succeeding communal violence, and protracted court case that ended with the verdict of building Hindu temple in 2019 is a relevant case study to address the rising religious grievances (Prusty, Muhantay, and Bhardwaj, 2019). Additionally, with the arrival of BJP to power, leaders have frequently passed anti-Muslimism statements which gave a free hand to political supporters to incite violent attacks on Muslims. At various instances, right of Muslims to exercise religious freedom have been violated by Hindus. Government biases are evident in discriminatory laws such as National Register of Citizens. Its implementation in the state of Assam has excluded 2 million people, mostly Bengali Muslims who migrated to India in 1947. This also raised concerns for similar abuses that will be replicated in rest of the Muslim owned provinces. Besides, religion has for the first time become a factor for citizenship as evident in the Citizenship Amendment Bill passed in 2019 gave way to illegal migrants from Buddhism, Hindu, Sikh, Christianity, Parsi communities to take citizenship of India (Citizenship Amendment Bill: India's new 'anti-Muslim' law explained, 2019). This attempt at polarization among religious lines and provision of citizenship to non-Muslims have intensified reservations of Muslims over



amendments in citizenship act 1955. They have brought up the fallacy of "love jihad," to label Muslim men involved in luring Hindu women into marriage in order to convert them to Islam ("Shoot the Traitors": Discrimination Against Muslims under India's New Citizenship Policy | HRW, 2020).

Besides, cultural grievances are evident in **dress code** issue that arose after Amit Shah, a BJP member and India's minister of home affairs, said that Muslims should not be permitted to wear the hijab to school and that all Indians should respect the school's dress code (Gupta,2021). In response, many Muslim pupils in Karnataka started a petition, which led to hostilities between Hindus and Muslims. The hijab is a sign of religious freedom for Muslim women and a question of personal preference. Limiting the wearing of the hijab violates the religious beliefs and freedom of expression of Muslim schoolchildren (Wong, 2022). In addition, the Indian courts verdict to uphold the ban by asserting it a non-essential religious practice of Islam has further deepened the ethnic fault lines between Hindus and Muslims (Saaliq, 2022).

Another instance of cultural grievances among Muslims community is evident in the strict policies introduced by BJP by forming a **national commission for cow protection** in February 2019. According to Human Rights Watch, these actions, individuals are accused of illegal cow slaughter and were subjected to the National Security Act, a restrictive regulation that allows imprisonment without trial for up to a year ("India," 2019). Attempts have been made by groups like the RSS, the VHP, and the BD to portray Muslims as sacrilegious people who eat cows, a sacred animal in Hinduism, this otherization of Muslims has occurred. Due to the ongoing reinforcement of the Muslim identity as "beef-eaters," the ethnic violence is particularly pronounced. Even though India is the world's fifth-biggest consumer of beef and the world's largest

exporter of beef, the majority of the criticism is directed at a specific community (Siyech & Narain, 2018).

Similarly, conflict also arose due to **language** as majority of Muslim communities in the north of India speak Urdu. The cultural or perceptual aspect of grievances rose in 1989 when Muslims demanded the recognition of Urdu as the official language of India along with Hindi. This led to confrontation between Hindu and Muslim students in Uttar Pradesh, resulting in 23 fatalities (Muslims, 2015). After a leading firm, Fabindia, used the words "jashn-e-rivaj" from the Urdu language in one of its advertisements, Hindu right-wing forces and BJP alleged the company of "hurting" Hindus' religious sentiments. This is because the Hindutva project considers Urdu to be a "Muslim" language. Additionally, the greater effort to marginalize the Muslim community includes obscuring Urdu. Despite the fact that Hindi is one of the 22 languages recognized by the Indian constitution, there are reservations that Urdu speakers might have declared Hindi as their mother tongue in the 2021 census due to fear of being labeled as Muslims although Urdu is not a language of Muslims (Kuchay, 2021).

### **7.3. Political Deprivations**

Political systems consisting of government and excluded members seeking to maximize their power represent potential challenges. However, many grieved groups don't rebel against government but if they began to consider the government as illegitimate, they will support rebellion due to political deprivations. In this background, these grievances are evident in **discriminatory institutions** of India as despite having sizable Muslim population, Muslims are significantly underrepresented in the government, particularly the military, judicial and

administrative systems and higher education institutions. The lack of educational access, insufficient educational background and widespread issue of a sizable Muslim population lacking the necessary skills to compete equally with Hindus is a factor for their underrepresentation (Muslims, 2015). Muslims have limited access to government employment, e.g. bureaucracy, military, police and other domains of politics. Self-employment to maintain their sustenance is seen as viable option. In this regard, their representation in government is insufficient and they are usually employed at low level in the government sector. Despite making up 14.2% of the population, Muslims have historically been significantly underrepresented in legislative bodies, such as the national parliament and state assemblies, with their representation in parliament historically varying between 2 and 10%. In 2019, political parties nominated 12% of Muslim candidates independently or in alliance reflecting the decline of nomination to 168 in 2019 (Majid & Farooq, 2019).

Inability to form Muslim-led parties to advance their interests is a result of the dispersed Muslim population's settlement in India and the lack of quotas. Despite having the highest minority population, Muslims have had a steady participation in parliament since 1989 through the 2014 elections. The BJP's ideological concentration of the Hindu right wing resulted in subsequent drop in Muslim representation in the Lokh Sabha. The lowest representation of the Muslim community in the Lokh Sabha since 1952 was represented by the election of 2019 when only 22 Muslims were elected in Lokh Sabha (Muslim Representation Increases to 27 From its Lowest Margin in previous Lok Sabha, 2019). Political parties' unwillingness to nominate Muslim candidates out of concern for alienating other voters is one factor contributing to their underrepresentation. Nationalist rhetoric, such as cases of lynching over cow slaughter, campaigns against Friday public prayer, opposition to interfaith marriages, branding of activists speaking up for religious minorities as

terrorist sympathizers, renaming of cities and streets with Muslim-sounding names, and a vehement opposition to interfaith marriages, among other things, heavily influenced the BJP's election campaign agenda and reflects exclusionary nationalist ideology (Farooqui, 2020).

#### 7.4. Structural Deprivations

The conflict over state power in ethnic politics is between various ethnic organizations. India can be compared to a **weak state** because its ethnic elites and their supporters control the government, this provides marginalized groups have a favorable environment to confront it. Particularly the poorest Muslim communities in India experience some of the worst forms of social marginalization. Due to India's lax implementation of legislation protecting minorities' rights and the country's continued use of discriminatory policies, this situation is reflected in their access to jobs, healthcare, and education. Because Muslims (as well as Christians) are underrepresented in affirmative action programs, even the poorest Indian Muslims have not been able to benefit from them. The criminal justice system exemplifies the BJP's anti-minority policies by shielding its supporters while repressing those who belong to minority groups. In some instances, police did nothing when BJP-affiliated gangs attacked protesters in response to the government's citizenship policy of 2019, which provoked widespread demonstrations. In cases where Muslim people were arrested, Human Rights Watch found that the police failed to comply with a number of criminal code requirements, including those requiring them to produce an arrest warrant, inform the person's family of the arrest and provide them with a copy of the FIR, and ensure that those who are detained have access to legal counsel ("India," 2021).

In terms of **ethnic geography**, majority of Muslims live in the Indian states of Bihar, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh. Muslims predominate only in Lakshadweep and the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir (J&K). Assam, Telangana, and Kerala are the other three states, and they all have sizable Muslim populations. This reflects dispersion of Muslims as a minority community in the majority of Indian states, and leads to underrepresentation in other social groups. This dispersion provides basis for their ethnic exploitation. Compared to southern and eastern India, where Hindu nationalist movements have minimal influence, where communal violence is less prevalent, Muslims are more insecure and dispersed in cities like Ahmedabad and Mumbai. Recently, BJP infiltration strategies began to appear in Muslim majority areas as well such as abrogation of special status of Jammu and Kashmir to alter demography of region by issuing 300,000 domiciles to non-Kashmiris and infiltration of Indian troops in region as a part of genocide strategy to materialize Hindutva lead concept of cohesive Hindu community (Kirmani, 2016). The systematic marginalization of Muslims is turning into exclusion as evident in socio economic, political, structural and cultural domain. This is an attempt at sowing seeds for further mobilizations in future. As people turn to violence when they realize that they no longer have stakes in politics and society.

### **8- Response of the Muslim Communal Group**

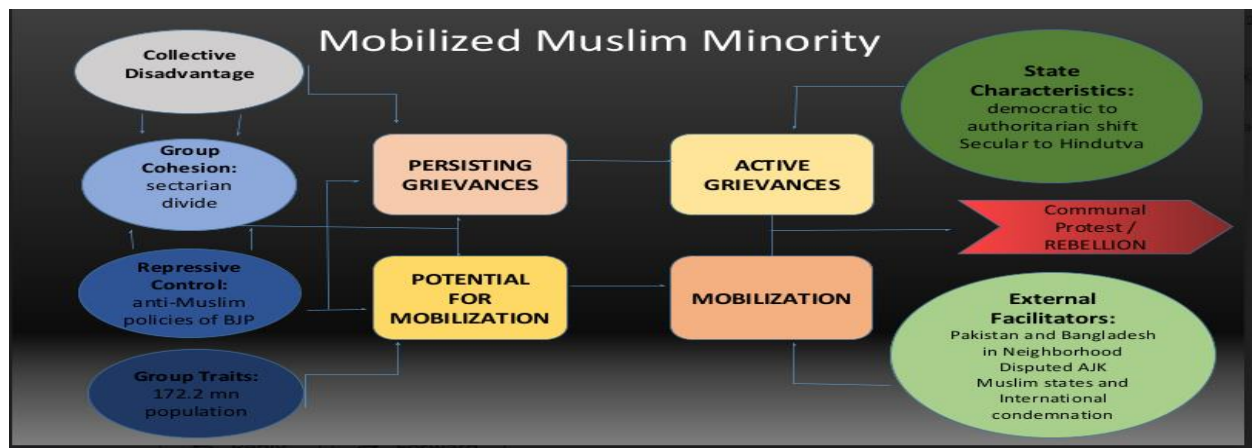
In April 2022, a group of 100 Retired Civil Servants of India, publicly wrote a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi (“Retired Bureaucrats Urge PM to Call for an End to ‘Politics of Hate,’” 2022). In the letter they demonstrated their concerns about growing communal violence in India

that is striking fear among the minorities. Threatened minorities can prove to be a threat to state as well, as maintained by Ted Robert Gurr in his thesis “Why minorities Rebel?”.

**8.1. Active Grievances and Political Action:**

In the face of long standing underlying discrimination, proximate events of state repression have activated the grievances and triggered political action from Muslims as well. Since 2014, with BJP in office, Muslim population of India has been targeted more often with an explicit political agenda.

Figure-1: Ted Robert Gurr’s Model of why minorities Rebel



(Gurr, 1993).

The communal violence launched by the state, has instilled sense of collective grievance among the Muslim minority of India, stirring Ethnic Security Dilemma in the air, which is a prerequisite for provoking them to take political action.

Ted Robert Gurr explains that the tendency of any communal group to go violent depends upon two key factors; firstly, the capability of the group to mobilize itself as a single unit, based

upon its identity (Gurr, 1993). This capability depends upon the internal cohesion of the group, political representation or leadership of the group as well as the support coming from the outside world. Secondly, the nature of political apparatus or statecraft as well determines the action of communal group. Democratic apparatus has the tendency to incorporate pluralist ideologies, and hence it will find a mechanism to address the grievances of the group. Authoritarian setup, however, will tend to repress the voice of that communal group, activating their already persisting grievances and provoking them to take political action. In the case of India, Muslims even though a minority, have recognized themselves with the state since 1947. History holds many instances of communal repression launched against Indian Muslims.

## **8.2. BJP and Communal Violence**

On October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022 a heart wrenching breach of Human Rights Law and Human morality, took place in Gujarat, India ("Govt Rapped for Silence on Custodial Violence in Gujarat," 2023). A video started trending on the social media platform, in which a Muslim man was tied against a pole and police constable was blatantly hitting him, in the presence of other police officials as well as Hindu crowd cheering for him. Human rights watch took account of the situation and alarmed the world against the Muslim genocide being planned in India. South Asian director of Human Rights Watch has declared that under the BJP government, state officials are explicitly targeting Muslims and normalizing the anti-Muslim narrative to target them.

Table-1: Level of manifestation of the Conflict (Ted Robert Gurr's explanation of Political Action)

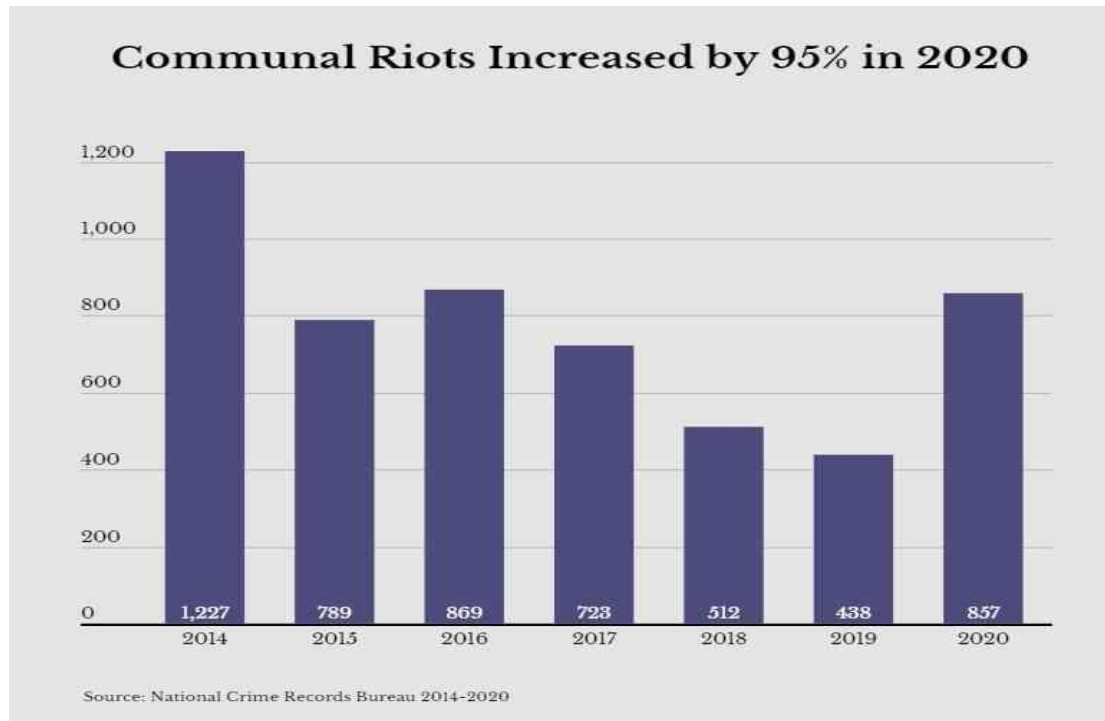
VARIABLES	INDICATORS						
Non-Violent Political Actions	0 = None Reported	1 = Verbal Opposition	2 = Political Organization Activity on a substantial scale	3 = A few Protests	4 = No. of Protests (below 100,000 participants)	5 = Protests (100,000+ Participants)	6 = Other (Voting Patterns)
Violent Political Actions	0 = None Reported	1 = Scattered acts of sabotage	2 = Limited Riots (1-2)	3 = Substantial Rioting	4 = Serious and widespread Riots	5 = Local Rebellion (Armed attempts)	6 = Other
Rebellion	0 = None Reported	1 = Political Bandit, sporadic terrorism, unsuccessful coup	2 = Campaigns of terrorism/successful coups	3 = Small scale guerrilla activity	4 = Large scale guerrilla activity	5 = Protracted Civil War	6 = Other

(Gurr, 1993)

On legal grounds, abrogation of article 370 of Indian constitution, to revoke the special status provided to the Indian Occupied Kashmir, and the Citizenship Amendment Act, by the BJP government has won her nationalist support. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, successfully defended his seat for the second term in 2021, based upon the same anti-Muslim political manifesto (Mallapur, 2018). Indian Ministry of Home affairs and National Crime Investigation Bureau released a report indicating a fluctuating trend in the rise and fall of communal violence. According to the report, 5,415 incidents of communal violence took place between 2014-2020; although on average there is a decline at large with 1,227 cases in 2014 and 857 cases in 2020, but the year 2019-20 alone has witnessed a sudden surge of 95.6% (Nidhi Jacob, 2022)

Figure-2: Trend of Communal Riots in India





(Nidhi Jacob, 2022)

This section covers the chronology of events of communal violence from 2014-2022, so as to determine the scale of communal violence launch under the government of BJP and the response of Muslims in the form of Political Action. In accordance with Gur’s model, there are three variables to classify Political Action; Non-violent political action, violent political action and the rebellion. Each of these variables have been operationalized on a scale of 1-6, through indicators, in order to determine the level of escalation.

### 8.3. Violent Political Action by the Muslims:

#### Nadia Riots-2015

On 5<sup>th</sup> of May, 2015 a communal clash between Hindu Scheduled Caste and Muslims of the Nadia District of the West Bengal, took place. In the Kaliganj block, a Hindu procession for

annual Dharamraj, was passing by a Mosque. An agitated encounter took place, as the Muslims considered it a disturbance to Adhan and Namaz. Clash went violent, resulting in the loss of 4 lives, in addition to 8 injuries and damage of infrastructure. It is proclaimed by the Indian sources that Imam of the mosque, is affiliated with forbidden organizations beyond the borders, responsible for creating instability in the region (*Nadia Riots: Scale of Destruction Immense as Police Study Pattern - One India News*, 2015).

### **Kaliachak Riots-2016**

On January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2016 Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasaba Leader, Kamlesh Tiwari delivered blasphemous remarks against the Prophet (PBUH). In opposition to which, Muslim organization Ahl-e-sunnat wal jamaat arranged a procession of 3 lacs in Kalaichak (*Why Did the Media Ignore the Malda Communal Violence?2016*). When the masses reached in front of the Kalaichak police-station, as soon as they tried to burn the effigy of Kamlesh Tiwari, the protest went violent. According the Muslim side of story, they were being lathi-charged, the police however convicts the Muslim masses of the offence of burning down the police-station, vehicles, houses and shooting people down.

### **Coimbatore Riots-2016**

On September 22, 2016, Hindu Munnani leader Sasikumar was murdered in Coimbatore. On the occasion of his funeral on 24<sup>th</sup> of September, the Hindu Munnani mob got agitated and started targeting buses, shops and properties of Muslims (*In Coimbatore, a Murder and Mob Action Expose the Hate Politics of Fringe Religious Groups*, 2016). Hindu Munnani group

emerged in 1980s, as a result of mass conversions of local population to Islam. They are anti-Muslim, and therefore convicted Muslims to be responsible of the murder of Sasikumar. The conflict, immediately got escalated in the nearby villages as well, when Muslims started targeting BJP leaders.

### **Dhalugan Riots-2016**

In December of 2016, the Milaad un Nabi procession of Muslims was interrupted at Annapurna Club in Dhalugan, which is a local landmark of BJP (Nidhi Jacob, 2016). The encounter of Hindus and Muslim went violent, resulting in a damage of 8-10 houses were bombed and 2 shops were burned. Local Hindus claimed that Muslims destroyed the temple and their houses. The conflict in Dhalugan has political roots, in 1990s RSS securitized the Muslim presence in the region as “Dhalugan is turning into Pakistan” this narrative building has polarized the politics in the religion based upon religious grounds. As the locals proclaim that in Dhalugan “Hindu means BJP”, the politics played along religious identities and otherization of Muslims has instilled element of security dilemma in the region, resulting in violence.

### **Baduria Riots-2017**

On 2<sup>nd</sup> July, 2017 a boy of class 11<sup>th</sup> posted a caricature of Prophet (PBUH), that became a source of Muslim resentment. The culprit was a resident of Basirhat, in west Bengal (*A Facebook Post Broke the Decades-Long Communal Peace of Basirhat, a Town in West Bengal*, 2017). Muslims held a protest of around 3000 people, demanding the boy to be arrested. Police agreed to the demands and arrested the boy, but the masses still went violent started attacking Hindu Majority areas in west Bengal, that provoked retaliation from Hindus and it flared up the conflict.

### **Bihar Riots-2018**

In March 2018, conflict erupted in Bhagalpur, when the supporters of BJP, RSS and Junta Dal lead processions without administrative permission. The conflict that erupted owing to the heated up encounter between Muslims and Hindus, immediately spread into 9 neighboring districts. Hindus claim that Muslims vandalized the idol of Hanuman, in the ongoing crisis, which is a matter of symbolic significance.

### **Delhi Riots-2020**

In February 2020, one of the most ruthless riots of Indian history took place, imprints of which are still prevalent. With the placement of Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) in place, Delhi witnessed massive protests from Muslims denied the right of citizenship. The demonstrations also involved social organizations and civil services groups, supporting basic human rights of the minorities. The demonstration against a valid cause, turned into a bloody riot when government officials and BJP followers started waging violence against the Muslim protesters, who had been voicing their cause peacefully for a month. The riots resulted in a death of 53 people, two of them were Hindus, and rest of them all Muslims. Human Rights Watch has released a report in September 2022, indicating that to make it even worse, BJP government has not only falsely convicted the social activists and protesters, but has kept them detained as well (*India Terror Law Haunts Muslims Jailed since 2020 for Delhi Riots | Islamophobia News | Al Jazeera*, 2020). Human rights watch has demanded that the state should investigate the cause and allegations against the BJP officials, to charge the actual culprits.

### **Banglore Riots-2020**

In August 2020, an anonymous person posted derogatory remarks on social media against Islam and its key beliefs. The blasphemy triggered the sentiments of the Muslim minority of the state, and they started gathering and pelting stones at the KG Halli and DG Halli police station and residence of politicians. Violent clashes took place between police and masses, resulting in the injury of 50 people (“Bengaluru,” 2020).

### **Assam Eviction 2021**

After the citizenship amendment act (CAA), government started eviction of the acclaimed government owned property owned by people in Assam. Government troops and agencies started demolishing houses, snatching shelter from above the heads of around 300 families. Government justified the cause by stating that state is only responsible to provide shelter to its citizens, and since CAA has excluded Assamese (Muslims in particular) from citizenship charter, they no longer hold the responsibility to provide them refuge. As result of this eviction, protest broke out among the Muslim masses that were brutally suppressed by the state. Clashes between police and protesters resulted in death of two Muslims (Zaman, 2022).

### **Kanpur Violence 2022**

In June 2022, a BJP party member Nurpur Sharma posted blasphemous remarks against the Prophet (PBUH), as a result of which Muslim community all across the world got infuriated. Muslims in India as well, started demonstrations, in Kanpur district Muslim leader of the Maulana Muhammad Ali Jauhar Fan-club, Hayat Zafar Hashmi announced protest that resulted into violent

encounter between police and the protesters. To justify the violence launched over the protesters, police has made a conviction against Hayat Zafar Hashmi (Kumar, 2022) is plotting mutiny against the state to mobilize masses and take over the control. He has also been convicted of having foreign support and finances. Judiciary has paid heed to the police report and taken charge against the Muslim protesters along with Hayat Zafar Hashmi.

### **Ranchi Violence 2022**

In addition to Kanpur, violent also erupted in Ranchi on 10<sup>th</sup> of June, after Friday prayer. After the violent exchange between the two communal groups at Saraswati puja idol immersion, at Hazirbagh a girl died and vehicles were disrupted. Internet services were immediately suspended in the region and police took charge. 24 people have been arrested, all of them belong to the Muslim Community (*Ranchi: Two Allegedly Killed, over 18 Injured as Protests Over Remarks on Prophet Turn Violent*, 2022).

### **8.4. Level of Manifestation of the Conflict**

Considering the description of Hindu-Muslim riots, it can be assessed that the tension between Hindus and Muslims in India is not latent anymore. It has manifested itself in the form of physical clashes, however, it is hard to anticipate at this stage, if the conflict will take up the form of a rebellion or not? Two major factors are responsible for relatively limited violent political action from Muslims; firstly, the undemocratic state of affair on the one hand is provoking the persistent grievances of the Muslims. Whereas, on the other hand, it has also minimized the political avenues for emergence of Muslim representative organizations, political parties or

leaders. Therefore, that group lacks the effective leadership that can coordinate their efforts towards a full blown rebellion. Second factor, that is not a prerequisite for the conflict, but it can serve as a facilitator, is the presence of Muslim population in the proximal state. If Pakistan, Bangladesh or Afghanistan start extending support to the Muslim communal group in India, then the prospects for the conflict to go violent are higher.

## **9- Conclusion**

India, under Hindutva led BJP government, is becoming a hotpot for ethnic tensions between Hindus and Muslims. Muslims as a minority communal group, have been facing socio-economic, cultural/perceptual, structural and political discrimination in India that has amounted up to the persisting sense of collective grievance among the members of community. Erosion of democratic apparatus of state; has rendered Muslim minority with the only available option of violent political action. However, owing to the lack of Group-cohesion and mobilization potential, Muslims have not yet transcended towards de-legitimization of state apparatus, or Rebellion. Future of the Conflict depends upon the State policies as well as the potential of the group, If the state keeps on launching autocratic Anti-Muslim communal violence, leaving no democratic way out, Muslims can resort to Rebellion as the only way out.

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