



## THE INFLUENCE OF ISLAMOPHOBIA ON VIOLENCE AGAINST MUSLIMS IN INDIA

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**Abstract:** Following the 9/11 attacks, there has been an increase in Islamophobia. The wave of Islamophobia is not only found in European countries but also grows in Asian countries, including India. India has long been the location of a great, developing world civilization. The Hindu-Muslim conflict shaped India's rise to independence. Since the election of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2014, India has indicated that it will become a Hindu-centric country that increasingly marginalizes Muslim minorities. The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of Islamophobia on violence against Muslims in India during the reign of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and to understand the form of multidimensional violence and the causes of the development of Islamophobia. This study shows that there is an influence of Islamophobia on the continuity of violence in Indian society, especially involving Hindu and Muslim groups. Islamophobia is also manifested through multidimensional violence, such as direct violence, structural violence, and cultural violence. The presence of Hindutva ideology, the influence of right-wing groups, and Indian media all contribute to the growth of Islamophobia in India.

**Keywords:** Islamophobia, Hindutva, India, Narendra Modi, Violence against Muslims

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### Introduction

ISLAM, as one of the minority religions in India, has significantly influenced the country's development and history. The presence of Islam and its civilization has shaped societal dynamics, contributing to both cultural enrichment and conflicts. The escalation of violent disputes often stems from differing perspectives and underlying religious and ideological tensions, including animosity towards Islam and its adherents, Muslims. This growing hostility can result in exclusion, violence, prejudice,

and discrimination against the Muslim community, a phenomenon commonly referred to as "Islamophobia." The term itself was coined in 1925 by Etienne Dinet and Slima Ben Ibrahim in their book "Accès de Délire Islamophobe." Its usage gained traction following a report by the Runnymede Trust, which examined the history of Muslim communities in Britain, identified factors fueling prejudice against Muslims in the media, and highlighted social exclusion contributing to the perception of Muslims as 'foreign' and 'other'.<sup>1</sup>

According to a survey by the Pew Research Center on social and religious hostility, India ranks among the countries with a high index of social hostility among religious groups globally. The Pew Research Center identified India, along with Russia, Egypt, Pakistan, and Nigeria, as countries with the highest levels of restrictions and social hostility involving religion in 2015.<sup>2</sup>

Tensions and conflicts in India are targeted by the government towards minority groups based on religion and ethnicity. Communal conflicts and disputes among religious communities in India have long characterized the history of the nation, home to approximately 1.09 billion Hindus.<sup>3</sup> Religious conflicts in India have persisted since the introduction of Islam to the Indian subcontinent. Following the partition of British India in 1947, separating India and Pakistan, the intensification of conflicts and violence between Hindu and Muslim communities worsened. The historical repercussions of the India-Pakistan partition significantly contributed to the proliferation of disputes and conflicts between Hindu and Muslim communities<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Nihaya Jaber, "Islamophobia: Definition, History, and Aspects," *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 5, no. 2 (2022): 327–38, <https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v5i2.1991>.

<sup>2</sup> Pew Research Center, "Among the Most Populous Countries, Russia, Egypt, India, Pakistan and Nigeria Had Highest Overall Restrictions on Religion in 2015 | Pew Research Center," [pewresearch.org](https://www.pewresearch.org), April 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Samirah Majumdar, "5 Facts about Religion in India," Pew Research Center, 2018; Viva Budy Kusnandar and Anissa Mutia, "Pemeluk Agama Hindu Indonesia Terbesar Ke-4 Di Dunia Pada 2020," Databoks, October 2021.

<sup>4</sup> Mushtaq Ul Haq Ahmad Sikander, "Islamophobia in India," *Journal of the Contemporary Study of Islam* 2, no. 2 (2021): 180–93.

According to the Pew Research Center in 2011, Hindus constitute 79.8% of the population, Muslims 14.2%, Christians 2.3%, Sikhs 1.7%, Buddhists 0.7%, and Jains 0.4%, with other religious groups holding the lowest proportions<sup>5</sup>. India, often referred to as Hindu-stan, meaning "Land of Hindus," is characterized by its diverse and heterogeneous population, boasting a rich history of civilization and cultural heritage evident in historical landmarks such as the Taj Mahal in Agra, Hawa Mahal in Jaipur, the Golden Temple in Amritsar, the Brihadeeswarar Temple in Thanjavur, among others.

Islam holds the second-largest religious following in India, following Hinduism, yet Muslims constitute a minority in terms of quantity. Five states, including Lakshadweep, Jammu and Kashmir, Assam, West Bengal, and Kerala, have the highest Muslim populations among the 28 states.<sup>6</sup> According to the Pew Research Center's projection for 2060, India is expected to become the country with the world's largest Muslim population.<sup>7</sup>

Since India's independence, the Muslim community has faced various forms of discrimination, prejudice, and violence. Tensions involving Muslims and Hindus in India are indicated to be influenced by Islamophobia, defined as a form of dislike, hatred, and prejudice towards Islam or Muslims.<sup>8</sup> Islamophobia manifests through verbal and physical attacks, harassment, discrimination, hate speech, intimidation, marginalization, and media manipulation. The anti-Islam phenomenon is inseparable from perceptions and assumptions regarding Islam as a threat within certain societal groups. Consequently, Islamophobia poses a global challenge, particularly for Muslims worldwide, including in India. The surge in anti-Islam sentiments in India has been particularly notable since the election of Narendra Modi as Prime Minister in 2014.

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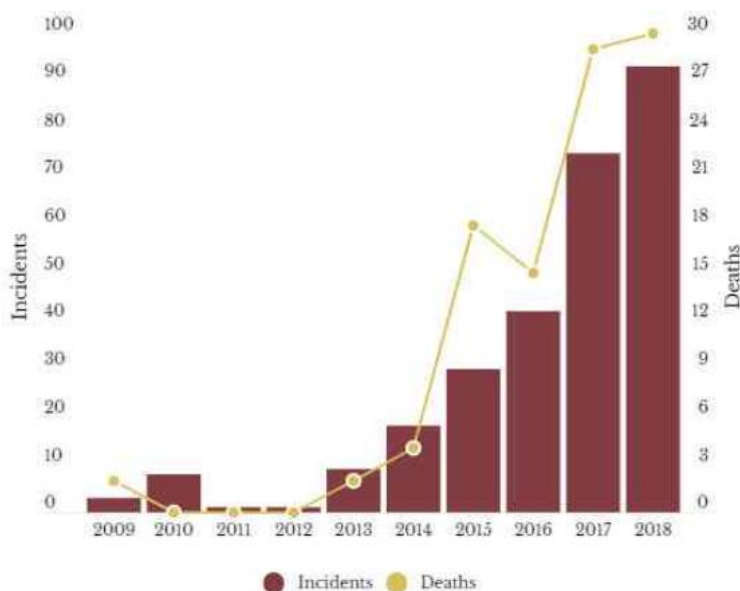
<sup>5</sup> Stephanie Kramer, "The Religious Composition of India," Pew Research Center, 2021.

<sup>6</sup> "Muslim Religion in India 2011," census2011.co.in, 2011.

<sup>7</sup> Auvry Abeyasa, "Sejarah Perkembangan Islam Di India: Populasi Dan Kondisi Terkini," Tirto.Id, 2022.

<sup>8</sup> Dictionary.com, "Islamophobia Definition & Meaning," Dictionary.com, n.d.

Narendra Damodardas Modi, the 14th Prime Minister of India, is known as a leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a Hindu nationalist party affiliated with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a Hindu group in India with fascist leanings. This organization serves as the parent body of Hindu supremacy, known as Hindutva, wherein 'Hindu' is defined not by religious affiliation but by nationality, culture, and race.<sup>9</sup> Hindu nationalists believe that India is the holy land of Hindus, viewing minority Muslims and Christians as not integral to India because their sacred lands lie outside its borders. According to Hate Crime Watch, crimes involving religion in India have significantly increased since Narendra Modi assumed leadership in 2014.<sup>10</sup>



**Picture 1.** *Religion-Motivated Hate Crime in India (2009-2018)*<sup>11</sup>

Propaganda against Muslims is orchestrated by policymakers with the support of media. Evidence shows that Indian media

<sup>9</sup> CNN Indonesia, "Sentimen Anti-Islam Menguat Di India Di Era Narendra Modi," CNN Indonesia, June 2022.

<sup>10</sup> Scroll.in, "In 2018, India Had the Most Religious Hate Crimes in a Decade, Says Hate Crime Watch," Scroll.in, December 2018.

<sup>11</sup> Scroll.in.

significantly contributes to anti-Muslim propaganda, often aligning with the ruling BJP and its Hindutva ideology. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, some Indian media outlets falsely accused Muslims of deliberately spreading the virus through the "Tablighi Jamaat incident," leading to widespread stigmatization and violence against Muslims. Additionally, social media platforms like Facebook have been criticized for allowing hate speech and misinformation to proliferate, such as inflammatory posts by BJP-affiliated groups that incite violence against Muslims. International critics, including Al Jazeera, highlight these practices as part of a broader strategy to marginalize Muslim communities and deepen communal divides in India.<sup>12</sup>

In addition, the situation has deteriorated with the endorsement and implementation of discriminatory laws and policies targeting the Muslim minority. The constitutional foundation of India, amended in 1976 as the 'Forty-second Amendment of the Constitution of India,' explicitly declares India as a secular state.<sup>13</sup> However, the earlier inclusion in the 1956 Constitution Amendment, Article 290, acknowledging the separation of religion and state in India, serves as evidence that since its independence, India has strived to establish a secular governance structure.<sup>14</sup> Secularism in Western countries typically emphasizes the separation of religion and state, while in India, it is more focused on tolerance (equal treatment/respect) for all religions, known as "sarva dharma sambhava".<sup>15</sup> The term sarva dharma sambhava was popularized by Mahatma Gandhi during

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<sup>12</sup> Osborne, P. (2022, October 6). *Facebook in India; Why is it still allowing hate speech against Muslims?* Retrieved from <https://www.middleeasteye.net/big-story/facebook-meta-india-muslims-allow-hate-speeches>

<sup>13</sup> Government of India, "THE CONSTITUTION (FORTY-SECOND AMENDMENT) ACT, 1976," Government of India, n.d.

<sup>14</sup> Swarna Rajagopalan, "The Secular and the Sacred: Nation, Religion and Politics," in *The Secular and the Sacred: Nation, Religion and Politics*, ed. William Safran (Routledge, 2004), 280.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Pantham, "Indian Secularism and Its Critics: Some Reflections," *The Review of Politics* 59, no. 3 (1997): 523–40, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034670500027704>.

India's struggle for independence against British rule to promote interfaith harmony.<sup>16</sup>

Under the leadership of Narendra Modi, an amendment to the Citizenship Act, known as The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), was enacted, considered contradictory to the secular principles of India. The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) was approved by the Indian Parliament on December 11, 2019, marking the first instance where religion was made a criterion for citizenship in India. The CAA 2019 facilitates the citizenship transition for non-Muslim immigrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan. This provision is deemed discriminatory, particularly against the Muslim community, the most significant minority in India, leading to widespread protests and demonstrations in several states. According to *The Washington Post*, protests against The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) 2019 occurred in New Delhi. The controversy surrounding the citizenship law amendment also drew reactions from external entities, including the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom and the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, condemning it as deviating from the constitutional statement on equality (secularism) in India.<sup>17</sup>

The historical occurrence of communal riots between Islam and Hindu communities in South Asia is not a novel phenomenon. It has been a catalyst for the separation of India and Pakistan in 1947 and the formation of Bangladesh in 1971. Since Prime Minister Narendra Modi assumed power, discriminatory measures against the Muslim community have intensified. Examples include Muslims and Dalits becoming targets of attacks and killings by Hindu activists in the name of cow protection, a longstanding concern of Hindu nationalists. Additionally, the riots and violence in New Delhi in February 2020 originated from protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> PTI, "'Sarva Dharma Sambhava' at Shaheen Bagh amidst CAA Stir," *Deccan Herald*, January 2020.

<sup>17</sup> Joanna Slater, "India Citizenship Law Protests: Here's What You Need to Know," *The Washington Post*, December 2019.

<sup>18</sup> Randy Wirayudha, "Konflik Muslim-Hindu India Dari Masa Ke Masa," *Historia*, February 2020.

The escalating issue of Islamophobia, which discriminates against and marginalizes the Muslim population, is a specific focus of this research. Approximately 200 million Muslims in India are targeted by right-wing groups seeking to establish India as a Hindu supremacist state and adhere to 'Hindutva.' Through this research, the author endeavors to analyze the influence of Islamophobia on violence against Muslims in India during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's tenure.

### **The Emergence of Islamophobia in India**

Islamophobia, a form of phobia or fear concerning all things related to Islam, is a recognized phenomenon. To gauge the Islamophobia that contributes to violence against Muslims in India, it is essential to understand how Islamophobia manifests in Indian society. In the preceding section, the author has described the grand civilization of the Indian subcontinent and India's history as a sovereign nation, also known as Hindustan.

The dynamics of interreligious conflict, particularly between Hindus and Muslims, in India have evolved. This evolution is influenced by numerous factors beyond what has been discussed in previous subsections. Therefore, in this subsection, the author will elucidate the Islamophobia that has developed from the traces of conflicts that have occurred in India. The explanation commences with the emergence of the Hindutva ideology, which has become inseparable from the development of Islamophobia in India, mainly since Prime Minister Narendra Modi assumed power. The existence of right-wing groups or organizations with nationalist leanings accompanies the presence of the Hindutva ideology. The following are factors contributing to the phenomenon of Islamophobia in India.

#### *Islamophobia in General and the Context of India*

Islamophobia is a term encapsulating the psychosocial phenomenon of fear, hatred, and anxiety towards anything associated with Islam and Muslims. In this subsection, the author presents an overview of Islamophobia in general and Islamophobia in the context of India. According to the United Nations (U.N.), Islamophobia is defined as:

"A fear, prejudice, and hatred of Muslims or non-Muslim individuals that lead to provocation, hostility, and intolerance using threatening, harassment, abuse, incitement and intimidation of Muslims and non-Muslims, both in the online and offline world. Motivated by institutional, ideological, political and religious hostility that transcends into structural and cultural racism which targets the symbols and markers of a being a Muslim".<sup>19</sup>

Thus, Islamophobia is the fear, prejudice, and hatred towards Muslims or non-Muslims that incite provocation, hostility, and intolerance, interpreted as threats, disruptions, harassment, incitement, and intimidation towards both Muslims and non-Muslims, whether occurring online or offline. Islamophobia is driven by hostilities in institutional, ideological, political, and religious realms disseminated through structural and cultural racism targeting symbols and identifiers (identities) of a Muslim individual.

The wave of Islamophobia has been growing since the events of September 11, 2001. The Runnymede Trust adopted the conceptualization of Islamophobia, a commission focusing on studies of racism and xenophobia in Britain. Islamophobia is described through eight components, namely: Islam being viewed as a static block unresponsive to change; Islam being perceived as "other" and "alien," devoid of shared values with other cultures and inferior to the West; Islam and Muslims being seen as primitive and supportive of terrorism; as a political ideology; hostility towards Islam justifying discrimination and marginalization of Muslims; and hostility towards individual Muslims being considered normal or acceptable.<sup>20</sup>

Moordiningsih, in her work entitled "Islamophobia and Strategies to Overcome It," explains that the phenomenon of Islamophobia can be examined through several approaches, namely individual, cognitive, intergroup, and socio-cultural approaches. Based on the individual approach, prejudice towards others arises from an individual's feelings of inferiority. In the cognitive approach, prejudice emerges when errors or closed-

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<sup>19</sup> Imran Awan and Irene Zempi, "A Working Definition of Islamophobia," no. November (2020).

<sup>20</sup> Runnymede Trust, "Islamophobia: Still a Challenge for Us All (A 20th-Anniversary Report)" (London, 2017).



mindedness in information processing begin with negative stereotypes. Meanwhile, in the intergroup approach, prejudice is part of the group process (subjective understanding within social groups). Whereas, in the socio-cultural approach, prejudice arises from the existence of specific goals and interests (interests) that can be constructed through the language used thus language influences the actions of the perceiver.<sup>21</sup>

Islamophobia in India, as previously discussed, is exacerbated by longstanding interreligious conflicts dating back to pre-independence times. India's fear of Muslims is, despite being deeply rooted in historical tensions, perpetuated by various contemporary factors. Events like the Babri Masjid Demolition in 1992 and the Gujarat Riots in 2002 have exacerbated communal violence and deepened mistrust between Hindus and Muslims.<sup>22</sup> These conflicts between Hindus and Muslims, furthermore, have often resulted in violence and have been further fueled by right-wing groups, politicians, and media. The psychosocial phenomenon of fear towards the Muslim community is influenced by political agendas and ideologies, as well as the media's role in disseminating hate speech. Despite India's constitutional commitment to secularism, which ensures freedom of religion and belief, hate speech against Muslims persists through policies and social media. This environment of Islamophobia, characterized by discriminatory laws and targeted violence, indicates a systemic issue that perpetuates hostility towards Indian Muslims.

### *The Hindutva Ideology and Its Influence on Islamophobia in India*

Vinayak Damodar Savarkar introduced Hindutva in the 19th century. V.D. Savarkar was a writer, poet, and politician. He articulated his ideas in the book titled "Hindutva: Who is Hindu" (1923), which has now become one of the triggers for the massacres of Muslims in India.<sup>23</sup> Through his book, Savarkar

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<sup>21</sup> Moordiningsih, "Islamophobia Dan Strategi Mengatasinya," *Buletin Psikologi* 12, no. 2 (2004): 73–84.

<sup>22</sup> Violette Graff and Juliette Galonnier, "Hindu-Muslim Communal Riots in India I (1947-1986)," *Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence*, no. July (2013): 49.

<sup>23</sup> Felix Nathaniel, "Hindutva Dan Politik Kekerasan Terhadap Umat Islam Di India," *Tirto.id*, March 2020.

expounded on the ideological constructs and characteristics of identity that define Hindus as descendants of the first Aryan people to inhabit the land of India. Savarkar even claimed that Hindus have the blood of mighty ancestors within them, referring to a race linked to their forefathers.<sup>24</sup> The emergence of thoughts regarding India as the holy land of Hindus and the identification of ideological traits initiated by Savarkar has led to extensive discussions on how Hindu society perceives themselves and members of other religions residing in India.

The creed of "Hindutva" promotes Hindu religious values as integral parts of Indian society and culture. According to Savarkar, Muslim minorities in India can practice their religion privately while acknowledging and prioritizing Hinduism as the cultural foundation of India. Hindutva, as a nationalist cultural ideology, leans more towards political power than religion. The nationalist ideology pioneered by Savarkar outlines the threats faced in implementing the Hindutva ideology. These threats are not only external, such as the colonization by the British of India but also internal threats perceived to weaken Hindustan. The internal threats referred to are minority groups such as Christians and Muslims. Savarkar himself believed that minority communities should strive to align their Hindu identity with Indian nationalism.<sup>25</sup>

The pan-Islamist tendencies within Indian Muslim society largely influenced the emergence of Hindu nationalist ideology. This tendency can be seen in events such as the Partition of Bengal by the British in 1905, viewed by some Hindu nationalists as a deliberate attempt to weaken Hindu influence by creating a Muslim-majority province, sparked protests among Hindus, and fueled Hindu nationalist sentiment. This peaked when Indian Muslim communities mobilized to defend the Constantinople Caliphate in 1919, during negotiations for peace following World

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<sup>24</sup> Christophe Jaffrelot and Cynthia Schoch, *Modi's India: Hindu Nationalism and The Rise of Ethnic Democracy* (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2021).

<sup>25</sup> Anum Babur and Shaheen Akhtar, "Hindutva and Islamophobia," *Strategic Studies* 41, no. 4 (February 2021): 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.53532/SS.041.04.0041>.

War I when the Ottoman Empire was threatened with dissolution. In addition, communal riots, such as the Moplah Rebellion in 1921 and the Noakhali riots in 1946, contributed to the polarization of communities along religious lines, reinforcing Hindu nationalist narratives of Hindu insecurity and the necessity for assertive Hindu identity politics. Among Hindu religious leaders, this situation instilled a sense of inferiority complex, given that Hindus constituted over 70 percent of the population according to the 1911 census. This sense of inferiority stemmed from colonial stereotypes of Hindus as a weak race and impacted caste and sectarian divisions. Consequently, there arose a fear of the decline in the Hindu population, evidenced by a decrease from 74.3 percent in 1881 to 68.2 percent in 1931, according to population censuses. Hindu nationalist ideology depicted their group as a threatened or "dying race".<sup>26</sup> This is evidenced by the dissemination of pamphlets titled "Hindu: A Dying Race," containing messages of threat and fear that Hindu society would become a minority while Muslims would become the majority in India.<sup>27</sup>

#### *The Existence of Right-Wing Groups (Hindu Nationalists)*

A prominent organization known for adopting and promoting Hindutva is the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), also known as the Rashtriya Seva Sangh. This organization was established approximately a century ago, on September 27, 1925. Its founder, Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, was a follower of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, a Hindu nationalist ideologue. Hedgewar was greatly influenced by Savarkar's writings and adopted much of his rhetoric regarding creating a "Hindu nation." Initially, Hedgewar established a movement in Nagpur, which later became known as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).<sup>28</sup> The RSS, primarily composed of Brahmin caste members, is dedicated to the freedom and protection of Hindu political, cultural, and religious interests.

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<sup>26</sup> Jaffrelot and Schoch, *Modi's India: Hindu Nationalism and The Rise of Ethnic Democracy*.

<sup>27</sup> Yantina Debora, "Minoritas Muslim Dan Kristen Korban Hindu Nasionalis Di India," Tirto.id, 2017.

<sup>28</sup> Jaffrelot and Schoch, *Modi's India: Hindu Nationalism and The Rise of Ethnic Democracy*.

Following Hedge war's passing, the leadership of the group was assumed by Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar and continued by Madhukar Dattatray Deoras.<sup>29</sup>

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a major political party in India, is affiliated with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). The RSS acknowledges that Prime Minister Modi is a member of their organization. Several influential figures in India have been members or have been associated with the RSS.<sup>30</sup> In its mission to preserve and propagate Hindu teachings and Hindutva ideology, the RSS serves as the principal organization within the Sangh Parivar. The Sangh Parivar is an umbrella group of Hindutva organizations comprising religious leaders, students, politicians, and militant organizations with shared ideological objectives.

As an ultra-nationalist group, the RSS supports India as a Hindu nation (Hindustan), advocating for the preservation and reverence of Hindu culture as an integral part of Indian society. According to the RSS, their primary mission as a large organization is to protect India as the holy land of Hindus. The RSS drew inspiration from fascist movements in Europe, particularly the Nazi party, which advocated for ethnic and racial purity. This fascist influence has led the RSS and its affiliated parties, such as the BJP, to hold strong views regarding Hindutva ideology. Besides the RSS, other right-wing extremist groups supporting Hindutva include the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Bajrang Dal, and Hindu Mahasabha.

The role of ultra-nationalist groups influences the growing narrative of Hindutva in Indian society. Consequently, it is imperative to analyze how ultra-nationalist groups, such as right-wing factions, perceive Islam and Indian Muslim society. Attitudes towards a particular subject influence individual and group behavior. The phenomenon of Islamophobia is inseparable from how the conflicting parties perceive Islam (and Muslims) themselves. Abdel-Hady (2004) categorized views on Islam and

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<sup>29</sup> The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh," Britannica, October 2022.

<sup>30</sup> CNN Indonesia, "Tentang Kelompok Hindu Sayap Kanan India RSS Yang Diundang Di R20 Bali," CNN, September 2022.

Muslims, which are described as characteristics of Islamophobia, as follows:<sup>31</sup>

- a. Islam is seen as a monolithic, static block unresponsive to change.
- b. Islam is perceived as separate/different and foreign.
- c. Islam is considered inferior to the West.
- d. Islam is viewed as aggressive, threatening, supportive of terrorism, and in conflict with civilization.
- e. Islam is seen as a political ideology used for political and military purposes.
- f. Criticism of Islam from the Western world is rejected.
- g. Hostility towards Islam is used to justify discriminatory actions and to distance Muslims from society.
- h. Hostility (anti-Muslim sentiment) is accepted as natural and normal.

As cited by Mander (2019) in the article "Fight, Die, and If Required Kill": Hindu Nationalism, Misinformation, and Islamophobia in India by Amarnath Amarasingam, Sanobar Umar, and Shweta Desai, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) consistently portray Islam and Muslims as internal enemies of Hindus through propaganda, fear-mongering, and manipulation.<sup>32</sup>

The social power within Indian society is influenced by its political system, culture, and political affiliations. Ideological affiliations within society impact individuals' propensity to affiliate with specific groups. Therefore, it is expected to find individuals in certain professions with backgrounds as ideological affiliates of a particular party/group. Further, the power of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) as a Hindu nationalist party began during the elections held from April 27 to May 7, 1996. The BJP won the election, securing 114 seats. Several factors contributed to the BJP's increasing power, including its exploitation of

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<sup>31</sup> Z. Abdel-Hady, "Islamophobia...A Threat....A Challenge!," in *Conference On Muslim and Islam in 21st Century: Image and Reality* (Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University of Malaysia, 2004).

<sup>32</sup> Amarnath Amarasingam, Sanobar Umar, and Shweta Desai, "'Fight, Die, and If Required Kill': Hindu Nationalism, Misinformation, and Islamophobia in India," *Religions* 13, no. 5 (2022): 1–33, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13050380>.

communalism, primordialism, and situational economic-political issues.<sup>33</sup>

### *Development of Islamophobia through Indian Media*

Propaganda is a deliberate effort to influence the opinions, perspectives, or actions of others, essentially controlling opinions. One party that plays a significant role in the development of Islamophobia in India is the media. Stigma, as defined by the Cambridge Dictionary, refers to a feeling of disapproval held by most people in society about something, especially when perceived as unfair. Stigma also denotes a lack of respect for an individual or group of people or negative opinions formed about them due to actions disapproved of or disliked by society. Islamophobia itself is closely related to stigma and develops through propaganda.

The article "Islamophobia, Indian Media, and Covid-19 Pandemic: A Critical Discourse Analysis" elucidates how Indian media continually and periodically constructs stigma directed at Muslims. During the COVID-19 pandemic, several Indian media outlets acted as tools of political elites to achieve their interests, which in this case involved marginalizing minority groups, particularly Muslims.<sup>34</sup> Indian media has been proven to play a role in the development of Islamophobia, which is susceptible to government influence. They also influence public opinion formation, especially regarding communal issues and the disclosure of truth.<sup>35</sup>

Indian media (television, newspapers, and social media) play a crucial role in creating discourses targeting Muslims. Muslims are portrayed as the root cause of every aspect of life's problems, with

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<sup>33</sup> Dhurorudin Mashad, *Agama Dalam Kemelut Politik: Dilema Sekularisme Di India* (Jakarta: Pustaka Cidesindo, 1999).

<sup>34</sup> Andi Farid Baharuddin and A. Zamakhsyari Baharuddin, "Islamophobia, Indian Media, and Covid-19 Pandemic: A Critical Discourse Analysis," *Islam Realitas: Journal of Islamic and Social Studies* 8, no. 1 (July 13, 2022): 53–67, [https://doi.org/10.30983/islam\\_realitas.v8i1.5352](https://doi.org/10.30983/islam_realitas.v8i1.5352).

<sup>35</sup> Usharani Narayana and Priti Kapur, "Indian Media Framing of the Image of Muslims," *Media Asia* 38, no. 3 (2011): 153–62, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01296612.2011.11726895>.

examples such as a Muslim child being born perceived as a threat to the Hindu population; education pursued by Muslims is seen as a symbol of separatism; Muslims consuming beef is deemed uncommon for Hindus (as cows are considered sacred in Hinduism); marriage among Muslim couples is considered a social crime due to the belief in 'triple talaq,' which allows Muslim men to divorce their wives in minutes; and the death of Muslims is seen as an anti-national act because Muslims use land considered valuable for burial grounds.<sup>36</sup>

The development of Islamophobia in media framing has intensified during the Covid-19 pandemic. Reporting targeting the Jamaat Tabligh group sparked controversy across India. The Jamaat Tabligh was suspected as the primary cause of the spread of the Covid-19 virus. Consequently, the narrative presented also inevitably involved accusations against Muslims. During the COVID-19 pandemic in India, more than 8.5 million cases were recorded, with 100,000 deaths leading to a sharp increase in xenophobia and predictably bigotry. Researchers Soundarya Iyer from the French Institute of Pondicherry and Shoibal Chakravarty from the Divecha Centre for Climate Change analyzed media reports about the Jamaat Tabligh from March 20 to April 27, finding 11,074 stories published from 271 media sources using the keyword "Jamaat Tabligh." Similarly, an analysis conducted by the Indian Journalism Review showed that Dainik Jagran, a national Hindi-language daily newspaper, consistently produced Islamophobic content, including 156 stories, eight editorials, and five cartoons.<sup>37</sup>

The wave of Islamophobia spreading to social media has attracted significant attention from various parties. This issue escalated to diplomatic tensions between India, Arab countries, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). The OIC

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<sup>36</sup> Hilal Ahmed, "Why Minorities Feel Alienated in India," *The Hindu*, June 2019.

<sup>37</sup> Vedika Inamdar and Pooja George, "The Indian Media Is Blaming Muslims for the Coronavirus Pandemic," Public Seminar, November 2020.

issued a statement urging India to halt the wave of Islamophobia.<sup>38</sup>

As society attempts to understand the ongoing global crisis, it is also inundated with the spread of fake news, conspiracy theories, unverified claims, and extreme narratives, which have increased on WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok. The COVID-19 pandemic has provided a platform for Hindu right-wing groups to exploit the fears of the majority population to incite hatred and violence against Muslims through social media.<sup>39</sup> Accusations against Muslims for spreading the pandemic have morphed into conspiracy theories. The "Coronavirus Jihad" phenomenon is characterized by the spread of conspiracy theories alleging that Muslims intentionally spread the Covid-19 virus as a biological weapon in India by Hindu nationalist groups.<sup>40</sup>

The media should ideally serve as a pillar of democracy. However, what is currently happening in India has undermined democracy and the country's image of diversity. The reporting and narratives presented can often diverge significantly from the truth. Each side can easily be driven by ideology. Various propaganda and stigmatization against minority Muslims not only lead to the creation of irrational hatred and fear but also erode the fulfillment of basic rights for every Muslim in India.<sup>41</sup>

Prior to the Jamaat Tabligh case, the escalation of Islamophobia within the media sphere had been observed in the everyday lives of Indian society. In the report "WhatsApp Vigilantes: An Exploration of Citizen Reception and Circulation of WhatsApp Misinformation Linked to Mob Violence in India," research was conducted on the role of WhatsApp in fuelling conflicts and mob violence in India from November 2018 to August 2019. The report also revealed that misinformation spread

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<sup>38</sup> Bilal Kuchay, "Why Arabs Are Speaking out against Islamophobia in India," *Al Jazeera*, April 2020.

<sup>39</sup> Amarasingam, Umar, and Desai, "'Fight, Die, and If Required Kill': Hindu Nationalism, Misinformation, and Islamophobia in India."

<sup>40</sup> Hannah Rose, "Pandemic Hate: COVID-Related Antisemitism and Islamophobia, and the Role of Social Media," 2021.

<sup>41</sup> Sikander, "Islamophobia in Indian Media," 2021, <https://doi.org/10.13169/islastudj.6.2.0120>.



through messages sent and received by WhatsApp users. This misinformation was categorized into several types, including overwhelming content, nationalism/ethno-religious bigotry, gender, and miscellaneous. Through the given categories, keywords such as anti-Pakistan, anti-Kashmiri, anti-Muslim, pro-Hindu, pro-BJP, pro-Modi, anti-meat-eating, Hindutva/Hinduism, and Islam were produced via WhatsApp media. The misinformation messages were described in the form of text, memes, images, infographics, and videos. Messages functioning as triggers for conflict were systematically produced and disseminated to generate affective conditions that made the public tend to agree, participate, or witness and legitimize violence against certain targets as legitimate.<sup>42</sup>

Several other cases where social media also served as a tool for spreading rumors, fake news, and hate crimes against minority Muslims include the Delhi riots in 2020 and the "love jihad" law. Protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act initially triggered the Delhi riots. The Wire discovered a WhatsApp group called Kattar Hindut Ekta. The group has changed names several times, with names related to "Hindu Unity." Hundreds of group conversations on the WhatsApp platform were sent from February 25 to March 8, 2020. Users used these messages to mobilize crowds (read: riots), target Muslims, and share weapons and ammunition.<sup>43</sup>

Furthermore, the "love jihad" law originated from a case in the Kerala High Court in 2009, where Hindu women were found to be forcibly married to Muslim men, resulting in the Hindu women also becoming Muslims. The term "love jihad" spread even a decade after the case, disseminated through the speeches of politicians and Hindu nationalist activists, and social media,

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<sup>42</sup> Shakuntala Banaji and Ramnath Bhat, "WhatsApp Vigilantes: An Exploration of Citizen Reception and Circulation of WhatsApp Misinformation Linked to Mob Violence in India," *LSE Media and Communication* 2 (2020): 1–14.

<sup>43</sup> Ismat Ara, "'Tear Them Apart': How Hindutva WhatsApp Group Demanded Murder, Rape of Muslims in Delhi Riots," *The Wire*, July 2020.

especially WhatsApp<sup>44</sup>. The "love jihad" conspiracy, where Hindu nationalist groups claim that Muslim men deliberately marry Hindu women to convert them to Islam, has also become a threat and has triggered even greater violence against Muslims.

The events previously discussed serve as evidence of the manifestation of the increasingly rampant Islamophobia in the Indian media, which is also inseparable from the role of right-wing groups. The media serves as an instrument to marginalize Muslims through violent conflicts, hate speech, and the promotion of Hindu nationalism.

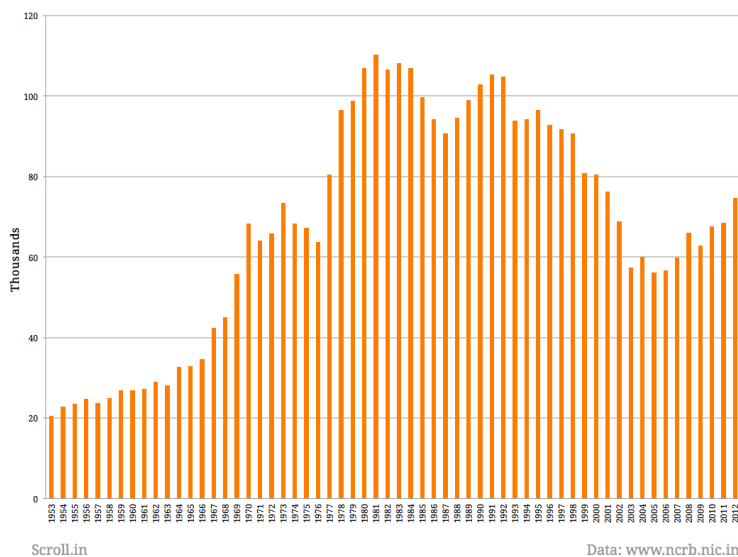
### **Indications of Islamophobia in the Pre-Prime Minister Narendra Modi Era**

Based on the previous explanation, the wave of anti-Muslim sentiment in India existed even before Narendra Modi was appointed as the Prime Minister of India in 2014. The Hindu-Muslim conflict, which also gave rise to anti-Islamic sentiments in Indian society, emerged even before the pre-independence era of India, specifically during the development of Islamic kingdoms and the period of British colonial rule in India. Throughout the post-independence period from 1953 to 2011, various incidents of riots in Indian society continued to occur at a high rate (not only Hindu-Muslim riot incidents). According to data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) managed by Scroll, several experts believe that the electoral process influences the increase in riot incidents.

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<sup>44</sup> Laura Dudley Jenkins, "India's Ruling Party, the BJP, Charges That the Netflix-BBC Series 'A Suitable Boy' Has a 'Love Jihad' Plot. What Does That Mean?," *The Washington Post*, December 2020.

Rioting incidents (total), 1953-2011

**Picture 1. Graph of riot incidents from 1953-2011 in India<sup>45</sup>**

After the independence of India and Pakistan, it did not mean that the conflict and tension between Hindus and Muslims were resolved. Several riots and conflicts continued to occur. Since the early 1960s, anti-Muslim riots have sharply increased. In 1960, twenty-six incidents of violence were recorded, followed by ninety-two incidents in 1961, sixty cases in 1963, and two hundred twenty cases in 1967. By 1968, the number of riots had reached three hundred twenty-seven cases. This number continued to rise, and from 1977 to 1978, it reached 547 cases. Some of the post-independence Hindu-Muslim communal violence cases in India include the Kolkata riots (1964), the Gujarat riots (1969), the Bhiwandi riots (1970), the Nellie massacre (1983), the Hashimpura massacre (1987), and the Bhagalpur violence (1989). The record number of Hindu-Muslim conflict cases continued to peak, as evidenced by the destruction of the Babri Masjid Ayodhya at the end of 1992, also known as the Bombay riots.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Shivam Vij, "Riot after Riot: The Manmohan Years Were the Most Peaceful, Data Shows," Scroll.in, August 2014.

<sup>46</sup> Mashad, *Agama Dalam Kemelut Politik: Dilema Sekularisme Di India*.

The Ayodhya case began when Hindus believed that the land where the Babri Masjid stood was a site built to honor the birthplace of Lord Rama. In December 1949, Hindus actively claimed the site as theirs. The Babri Masjid is located in the city of Ayodhya, in the Uttar Pradesh province. The construction of the Babri Masjid occurred during the reign of the first king of the Mughal Dynasty, Babur. The Babri Masjid dispute peaked in 1949 when the Bharatiya Janata Party won the elections in the Uttar Pradesh province in 1991. The Babri Masjid was demolished by around 150,000 people, who were Hindu nationalists.<sup>47</sup>

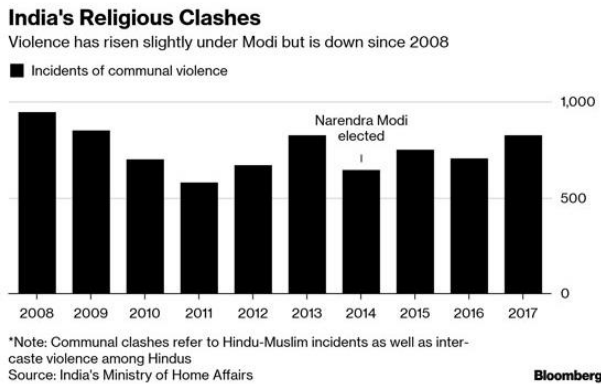
Through its ruling, the Supreme Court declared that the Muslim community should be given land or compensation totaling two hectares to build a new mosque in Ayodhya. This land dispute has been one of the most volatile issues in India, culminating in sectarian riots on December 6, 1992, which claimed over 2,000 lives. The bench acknowledged that the destruction of the Babri Masjid in 1992 violated the court-ordered status quo. No punishment was meted out to the perpetrators, but the bench declared that the Hindu claim regarding the birthplace of Lord Rama was "undeniable." This decision further bolstered the impression of the Narendra Modi government as it fulfilled the promise to return the Babri Masjid land to Hindus for constructing a new temple.<sup>48</sup>

According to data obtained from Bloomberg via The Economic Times website, incidents of communal violence involving Hindu and Muslim communities in India have shown fluctuating figures. However, the numbers in the graph tend to rise after Modi was elected as the Prime Minister of India in 2014.

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<sup>47</sup> Petrik Matanasi, "Amarah Dan Kebencian Kepada Agama Lain Menghancurkan Masjid Babri," *Tirto.id*, December 2020.

<sup>48</sup> DW, "Kasus Masjid Babri Bebani Hubungan Hindu Dan Muslim Di India," DW, 2019.



Picture 2. Graph of Religious Clashes in India from 2008 to 2017<sup>49</sup>

During his political career, before assuming the office of Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi served as a Minister in Gujarat. One of the largest communal conflicts in Indian history occurred during Modi's tenure as Minister of Gujarat. The communal conflict that erupted in February 2002 peaked and was categorized as genocide. The Gujarat riots of 2002 began when the Sabarmati Express train carrying pilgrims from Ayodhya stopped near Godhra (a city in the state of Gujarat), where they were met by a Hindu nationalist mob supporting the construction of a temple on the site of the demolished Babri Masjid in 1992. Godhra itself was known for several records of heated conflicts between Hindus and Muslims. On February 27, 2002, two coaches of the Sabarmati Express train were set on fire, resulting in the deaths of 58 Hindu pilgrims. The following day, February 28, 2002, Hindu-Muslim riots broke out. Hindu mobs began blaming the Muslim community for the deaths of the pilgrims. The mobs unleashed rapes, looting, and murders, targeting every Muslim they encountered. The violence lasted for over two months.<sup>50</sup>

The 2002 Gujarat riots are claimed to be riots in which Modi himself did not make efforts to control or stop the violence. These riots are also referred to as anti-Muslim violence because most of

<sup>49</sup> Iain Marlow, "Cow Vigilantes in India Killed at Least 44 People, Report Finds," Bloomberg, February 2019.

<sup>50</sup> Tarushi Aswani, "'They Burnt My Parents Alive': Gujarat Riots Still Haunt Victims," The Diplomat, April 2022.

the victims were Muslims. It is estimated that around 1000 lives, mostly Muslims, were killed, at least 20,000 homes of Muslim residents were destroyed, and 150,000 people were displaced.<sup>51</sup>

The subsequent incident that erupted between Hindu-Muslim groups was the Muzaffarnagar riots in August-September 2013. Muzaffarnagar is a district in the state of Uttar Pradesh. There are two debated opinions about the triggering reasons for the bloody riots. First, the incident was caused by a traffic accident involving several youths. Second, it occurred because a Hindu Jat girl (Jat is one of the largest ethnic groups in the Indian subcontinent) was allegedly mistreated by a Muslim youth in the village of Kawal, leading to the killing of the Muslim youth in retaliation.<sup>52</sup>

### **The Influence of Islamophobia on Muslim Violence in India during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Tenure.**

The emergence of ultra-nationalist sentiments among the Hindu community, which constitutes the majority of India's population, perceives the Muslim community as a threat. Narendra Damodardas Modi, the Prime Minister of India since 2014, is a politician hailing from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). His track record influences his role as a politician in the party, which has raised his profile. Various policies implemented during his leadership are seen as anti-Muslim sentiments. Modi is a Hindu from the middle caste. He was born in Vadnagar, now known as Gujarat. Before his tenure as Prime Minister of India, Modi served as a Member of the Gujarat Legislative Assembly (2002–2014) and as Chief Minister of Gujarat (2001–2014).

As explained in the previous section, conflicts between Hindu and Muslim communities have existed even before Narendra Modi was appointed as Prime Minister of India. Various violent conflicts have occurred involving Hindu and Muslim communities. India itself has established secular laws, but secularism, as referred to in Indian law, has a somewhat different meaning from secularism in the West. India's ideal as a democratic

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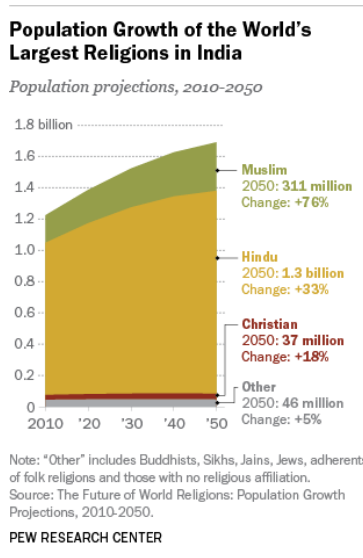
<sup>51</sup> Tarushi Aswani.

<sup>52</sup> CNN, "Deret Insiden Umat Hindu-Muslim Hingga Kebijakan Bias Islam Di India," CNN Indonesia, February 2022.

nation is reflected in its laws regarding secularism. Indian secularism grants freedom to every religious adherent to practice and develop their religious teachings.

*Hindu-Muslim Conflict (2014-2022) as Muslim Violence in India.*

The increasing population growth of the Muslim community in India is not only due to birth rates but also because of the conversion of some Harijans to Islam. Harijan or Dalit is a term used for a group classified as the lowest caste (untouchable caste) in the Hindu social hierarchy. Although the government has made efforts to eliminate and prohibit the caste system, in everyday life, society still views the untouchable caste as a group unequal to the upper caste community.<sup>53</sup>



**Picture 6. The growth of the largest religious population in India<sup>54</sup>**

The growth of the Muslim population in India is projected to reach 311 million Muslims by 2050 (11% of the global total), making it the country with the largest Muslim population in the world. Currently, Indonesia has the largest Muslim population

<sup>53</sup> Mashad, *Agama Dalam Kemelut Politik: Dilema Sekularisme Di India*.

<sup>54</sup> Conrad Hackett, "By 2050, India to Have World's Largest Populations of Hindus and Muslims," Pew Research Center, April 2015.

globally. As articulated by Dr. A.L. Sharada, Director of Population First India, there is a growing paranoia that the increasing Muslim population is driving the agenda of the right wing to suppress the population.<sup>55</sup> Right-wing groups in India affiliated with majority parties like the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) may have interests in garnering votes from the Hindu majority populace to perpetuate their power.

Based on Johan Galtung's conceptualization of conflict, conflicts arise from contradictions, attitudes, and behaviors. Thus, conflicts are closely related to the parties involved. Various conflicts and a series of issues are perceived as anti-Muslim sentiments that have occurred since Prime Minister Modi took office. Attitudes are demonstrated by the perceptions and assumptions held by the Hindu majority and right-wing groups in India. Behavior constitutes actions stemming from attitudes; in this case, right-wing groups view Muslims as a threat, leading to behavior indicative of hostility. Based on existing attitudes and behaviors, contradictions arise with the understanding that the attitudes of right-wing groups in India, as part of the majority (i.e., Hindu community), are marked by negative perceptions, biases, perspectives, and stigmas against the Muslim community (Islamophobia). Consequently, the behavior exhibited is non-cooperative with the Muslim community, leading to a potentially conflicting and violent situation.

Violence is an action or effort resulting in harm to the victim. In this case, violence is directed towards the minority group, the Muslim community in India. The categorization of forms of violence reveals that violence is not only tangible but also intangible. Therefore, according to Johan Galtung's perspective, invisible and intangible violence is referred to as structural violence and cultural violence. Specific social structures within society cause structural violence.

Structural violence in the context of Islamophobia in Indian society is evident in how power relations among political elites, majority parties in government, and officials are used to maintain

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<sup>55</sup> Kunal Purohit, "The Islamophobic Roots of Population Control Efforts in India," *Al Jazeera*, August 2019.



the voices of the Hindu community as the majority. The power held by Narendra Modi's government as prime minister is utilized to widen the gap and segment Hindu and minority communities in India, particularly the Muslim community. Islamophobia, according to Stephen Sheehi, is an ideological phenomenon aimed at promoting political and economic goals, both domestically and internationally.<sup>56</sup> Modi, as part of the Bharatiya Janata Party, promotes himself as having a background in the ultra-nationalist right-wing majority party. The interests pursued by Modi and the Bharatiya Janata Party tend to lean towards the Hindutva ideology, which supports India becoming a Hindu supremacist state.

Structural violence is reflected in the passing of The Citizenship Amendment Act 2019, which discriminates against Muslim communities seeking Indian citizenship. Furthermore, there will be a ban on Muslim students wearing hijab in the state of Karnataka in late 2021. The Karnataka court decided to uphold the ban, deeming the use of hijab in schools non-essential. Meanwhile, cultural violence serves to legitimize structural violence and direct violence through culture.<sup>57</sup>

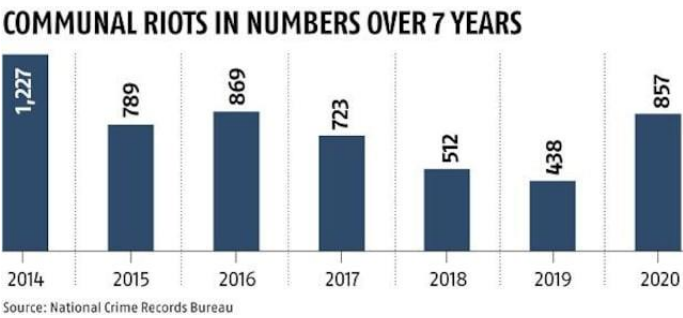
Cultural violence is closely related to the symbolic realm of humans. Islamophobia is a form of fear or hatred towards Islam and Muslims. This fear or phobia arises from feelings of hatred and paranoia. Cultural violence falls within the realm of Islamophobia in the interpretation of fear and hatred by outsiders towards objects related to Islam and Muslims. Cultural violence is not physically visible but can be felt. Islamophobia, like structural violence and cultural violence, occurs when Muslim communities become victims of social discrimination, hate speech, or exclusion. Similarly, according to the Runnymede Trust, Islamophobia takes on four forms: exclusion, violence, prejudice, and discrimination. Cultural violence and structural violence lead to direct violence.

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<sup>56</sup> S Sheehi, "Islamophobia: The Ideological Campaign Against Muslims," 2010.

<sup>57</sup> Johan Galtung, "VIOLENCE, PEACE, AND PEACE RESEARCH\*," *Journal of Peace Research* 6, no. 3 (1969): 167–91.

Direct violence is a form of violence experienced physically by the parties involved.<sup>58</sup>



Picture 7. Communal Riots in India (2014-2020) <sup>59</sup>

A JUMP IN NUMBERS			
OFFENCES	2019	2020	% increase
Communal riots	438	857	96%
Caste riots	492	736	50%
Agrarian riots	1,579	2,188	38%
Andolan/Morcha riots	1,442	1,905	33%
Promoting Enmity Between Groups	1,058	1,804	70%
TOTAL RIOTS (including other causes)	45,985	51,606	12%
Offences Against The State decreased by 27%, but UP only major state where they increased			
Source: NCRB			

Picture 8. NCRB data on Riots that occurred in 2019 and 2020 in India <sup>60</sup>

The graph shown in Figure 7 represents the incidence of communal riots in India from 2014 when Narendra Modi was elected as the Prime Minister of India until 2020. Figure 8 illustrates a significant increase in riots between 2019 and 2020. Communal riots in Indian society increased by 96%. Both sets of

<sup>58</sup> Mufti Makarim, “MEMAKNAI ‘KEKERASAN,’” *ELSAM*, 2014.  
<sup>59</sup> Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, “No ‘Major Communal Riot in Seven/Eight Years’? Not Quite, Says Data,” *Business Standard News*, May 2022.  
<sup>60</sup> Deeptiman Tiwary, “NCRB Data: Crime down, Clashes up in Year of Lockdown, Delhi Riots, Protests,” *The Indian Express*, 2021.

data were obtained from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), which serves as a repository of information on crime and is linked to the national police in India. Several acts of violence and unrest, such as direct violence, have occurred since Narendra Modi was elected Prime Minister in 2014.

*Firstly*, the unrest due to the enactment of the Citizenship Amendment Act in 2019, which is described as a racist and discriminatory policy against Muslims. Under this law, a person can obtain Indian citizenship if they meet the criteria that they are not Muslim. *Secondly*, the Delhi riots in 2020. According to the BBC, there were 30 fatalities in these riots. The riots began as protests against the new Citizenship Amendment Act. This event also destroyed mosques in Delhi.<sup>61</sup> *Thirdly*, there is a ban on the slaughter and consumption of cows in several states. India itself has also banned the export trade of beef. *Fourthly*, there is a conspiracy regarding the spread of the Covid-19 virus under the hashtag #CoronaJihad on social media. Since 2020, the COVID-19 virus has spread worldwide, including in India. The conspiracy regarding the spread of the COVID-19 virus began when the Tablighi Jamaat group returned to India. The uproar over the #CoronaJihad hashtag on social media has led to the spread of hate speech involving the Muslim community. *Fifthly*, the ban on the hijab for Muslim schoolgirls in Karnataka. Karnataka is a state located in southwest India. Since early 2022, this discriminatory policy has reignited the issue of Islamophobia in India. *Sixthly*, the insult to Prophet Muhammad by BJP politician Nupur Sharma. Riots and condemnations from several Islamic countries arose after Sharma insulted the religion of Islam. Leaders from Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Oman, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan demanded an apology from the Indian government and summoned diplomats to protest statements that were contrary to Islam. Boycotts of Indian products have also been initiated in several countries. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) stated that the insult had been systematically ongoing due to the increasing hatred

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<sup>61</sup> BBC, "Kerusuhan Delhi: Apa Di Balik Kerusuhan Yang Berujung Pada Konflik Antara Hindu Dan Muslim?," BBC News Indonesia, 2020.

towards Islam in India.<sup>62</sup> Based on the description above, Galtung's six dimensions of violence, namely physical and psychological violence, positive and negative influences, the existence of objects and subjects, intentionality, and the visibility of violence itself, are encapsulated within it.<sup>63</sup>

*Islamophobia during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Tenure.*

Essentially, Islamophobia is a condition experienced by individuals characterized by prejudice, exclusion, violence, or discrimination against things related to Islam and Muslims. This phenomenon is associated with situations where individuals are confronted with triggers, whether they be objects or situations that evoke fear. Since the focus of this study is on the Muslim community, anything related to prejudice, exclusion, violence, or discrimination directed towards Muslims can be categorized as Islamophobia.

According to Smelser (1971), as cited in "Violence and the Fear of Violence," acts of violence arise due to at least four factors. *Firstly*, actions oriented towards values mobilized on behalf of shared beliefs to desire or seek the reformulation of values. *Secondly*, actions are oriented towards common norms or beliefs that desire or seek to reformulate values. *Thirdly*, actions arise from an explosion of hatred. *Fourthly*, actions arising from anxiety or panic.<sup>64</sup> Based on these factors, the religiously-based conflicts and violence experienced by the Muslim community in India can be justified as a phenomenon of Islamophobia because the Hindu majority perceives Muslims as a threat and as objects of fear.

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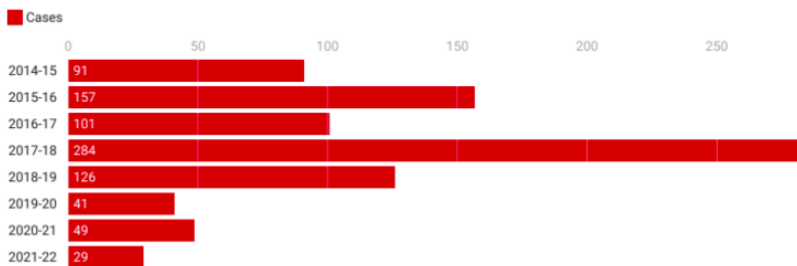
<sup>62</sup> Thea Fathanah Arbar, "Heboh Hina Nabi Muhammad Di India, Nupur Sharma Bakal Dibui," CNBC Indonesia, June 2022.

<sup>63</sup> Darmin Tuwu, *Konflik, Kekerasan, Dan Perdamaian*, ed. Literacy Institute (Kendari, 2018).

<sup>64</sup> Suparman Marzuki, "Kekerasan Dan Ketakutan Pada Kekerasan," *Unisia* 29, no. 61 (September 2006): 317–30, <https://doi.org/10.20885/UNISIA.VOL29.ISS61.ART7>.

### Rising Cases of Hate Speech and Hate Crime in India against Muslims and Christians: 2014-22

In eight years the total count of 'hate speech and hate crime' against Muslims (646) and Christians (232) has risen.



\*The numbers pertaining to hate speech and hate crime has been filtered from ANHAD's document  
Source: ANHAD - Created with Datawrapper

**Picture 9. The increase in cases of hate speech and hate crimes in India from 2014 to 2022 (according to data from ANHAD) <sup>65</sup>**

An organization focusing on socio-cultural issues in Delhi, Act Now for Harmony and Democracy (ANHAD), released a report concerning the escalation of hate speech and hate crimes in India, featured in the book "Hate Grips the Nation." This indicates that cases of anti-minority sentiment have grown at an alarming rate throughout India, mainly targeting Muslim and Christian groups. Hate speech and fear-mongering have proliferated in Indian society, continuously directed towards Muslims, resulting in the erosion of dialogue space and legitimizing violence against Indian Muslims.<sup>66</sup>

The escalation of violent conflicts among religious groups in India stems from deeply ingrained historical conflicts. A history of conflict has made society somewhat accustomed to being confronted with violent disputes. However, this predisposition carries the potential for detrimental and unhealthy societal consequences. Ghazala Jamil, a professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University, contends that Muslim communities, as minorities, face not only discrimination but also direct violence, injustice, and threats to their fundamental right to life due to citizenship issues and communal violence agendas affecting them.<sup>67</sup> Casualties,

<sup>65</sup> Jayant Pankaj and Deshdeep Dhankhar, "From Speech to Crime to Genocide, It's Clear to See How Hate Travels," *The Wire*, April 2022.

<sup>66</sup> Jayant Pankaj and Deshdeep Dhankhar.

<sup>67</sup> Ghazala Jamil, "Lived Secularism," *Indian Express*, 2018.

injuries, displacement, and material damage evidence the direct violence experienced by Indian Muslim communities. Structural violence is a form of violence that results from the formation of social structures within society. The violent conflicts arising in this context are influenced by societal constructs and the values of the ruling authorities (under PM Modi's governance). The principles of Hindutva ideology and the vision of India as a Hindu supremacist state have marginalized Muslim communities. Meanwhile, cultural violence is depicted through hate speech, discriminatory policies, and prohibitions related to Islam.

In a webinar hosted by the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs at Georgetown University discussing the rise of anti-Muslim discrimination in India titled "India and the Rise of Islamophobia: Why and Why Now?" on November 21, 2022, panelists Jocelyne Cesari and Kalpana Jain stated that, despite the perennial religious tensions in India, the power of the BJP represented by Narendra Modi as Prime Minister has exacerbated the situation of anti-Muslim discrimination. Hindu nationalist groups seek to portray Islam as a cultural threat to Hinduism in India. Doctrines are also disseminated, suggesting that if Islam were to take over India, Hindus would have no land left for them.

Islamophobia in the context of India (as elaborated by the author in sub-section 4.2) has further developed due to factors such as Hindutva ideology, the presence of right-wing (ultra-nationalist) groups within Prime Minister Modi's government, and the role of Indian media. These three factors legitimize the psychosocial phenomenon of Islamophobia. During PM Modi's administration, the existence of Islamophobia is evidenced by a series of policies and increased hate speech against Muslims. Through his decision in the Citizenship Amendment Act of 2019, PM Modi, as a member of the ultra-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), imposed provisions that excluded Muslims from acquiring citizenship rights. Additionally, the intended hate speech is reflected in how Indian media frames the Muslim community as a threat to India.

In contemporary times, the escalation of multidimensional violent conflicts affecting India's Muslim minorities during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's tenure is a manifestation of the

phenomenon of Islamophobia. The emergence of Islamophobia is a consequence of violent conflicts that have grown within Indian society since time immemorial (even before India's independence), particularly between Hindu and Muslim communities. Islamophobia is a psychosocial phenomenon arising from feelings of fear or anxiety about the existence of Muslim communities. In Indian society, Islamophobia is evidenced by the increasing cases of violence against Muslim communities, involving multidimensional violence, namely direct violence, structural violence, and cultural violence.

Muslim minorities in India experience discrimination, exclusion, oppression, and threats to their fundamental rights to live according to their beliefs, which are forms of cultural violence. Discriminatory policies targeting Muslims, such as the Citizenship Amendment Act and the ban on hijabs for Muslim schoolgirls in the state of Karnataka, represent forms of structural violence. The presence of cultural violence and structural violence leads to direct violence, reflected in various communal conflicts where the majority of victims are Muslim communities. The formation of divisions between majority and minority groups, as well as biased and discriminatory policies in Indian society, as described by the author, are influenced by the ideology of right-wing groups with ultranationalist leanings. The presence of Hindutva ideology and the role of right-wing groups in upholding it contributes to further segregating (forming segmentation) between the Hindu majority and minority communities, mainly Muslim communities.

Nevertheless, in response to Islamophobia in India, the Indian Muslim community has been actively engaged in various efforts aimed at combating discrimination and advocating for their rights. Grassroots organizations and civil society groups within the Muslim community have mobilized to raise awareness and challenge discriminatory policies, such as the Citizenship Amendment Act and the ban on hijabs for Muslim schoolgirls in Karnataka. Through protests, campaigns, and legal challenges, they strive to highlight the systemic injustices faced by Muslims and demand equal treatment under the law. Additionally, Indian Muslim leaders and scholars have undertaken initiatives to promote interfaith dialogue and foster understanding among

different religious communities, countering divisive narratives propagated by extremist groups. Emphasizing education and empowerment, the community invests in initiatives to challenge stereotypes and enhance socio-economic opportunities, empowering individuals to resist discrimination and prejudice. These multifaceted efforts underscore the Indian Muslim community's commitment to confronting Islamophobia and promoting inclusivity and social cohesion in Indian society.<sup>68</sup>

## Conclusion

Issues and conflicts are unavoidable aspects of social life, including tensions involving religious groups. India is a South Asian country and one of the world's most populous countries. Great civilizations have also developed in India. The country with a majority Hindu population is categorized among nations with a history of religiously motivated violence. Islam has rapidly grown in India, with a total population of around 1.4 billion people, where Muslims rank second in population after Hindus, at approximately 14%. Muslim communities, as minorities, have a long history of violent conflicts with Hindu communities.

Since 2014, when Narendra Modi from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was elected Prime Minister of India, the issue of Islamophobia has been increasingly accompanied by the escalation of various violent conflicts. The factors behind the rise of Islamophobia in India are influenced by pre-independence Hindu-Muslim tensions and the emergence of Hindutva ideology adopted and enforced by right-wing groups. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) itself has been affiliated with the ultranationalist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Consequently, this has impacted the Modi government's administration because the majority of officials in parliament are members of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The presence of Hindutva ideology is also

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<sup>68</sup> Ayesha Fakhar Naeem and Esha Momena Yousaf, "Case Study: The Concept of 'Religious Tolerance' in the Socio-Religious Construction of Islamic Schools in India," *Idarah (Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Kependidikan)* 7, no. 2 (2023): 149–64, <https://doi.org/10.47766/idarrah.v7i2.1773>.



followed by the aspiration of Hindu nationalism to make India a Hindu state (Hindu-rashtra).

In the case of India, several Hindu-Muslim conflicts systematically occurring within society can be explained through Johan Galtung's concept of violence and the concept of Islamophobia. Conflict arises from incongruities in conditions and goals (contradictions) within a system where Hindu nationalist aspirations cannot be realized as long as there is a threat from the presence and growing population of Muslims. Therefore, the occurrence of violence is inevitable. Islamophobia is a form of fear or anxiety about the existence of Muslim communities. In the context of India, Islamophobia can be seen through Hindu-Muslim violent conflicts. Islamophobia further develops due to factors such as Hindutva ideology, the existence of right-wing (ultranationalist) groups in Prime Minister Modi's government, and the role of Indian media. Islamophobia, as a result of the increased violence against Muslims, is manifested through multidimensional violence in the form of direct violence, structural violence, and cultural violence occurring in Indian society. The occurrence of religiously motivated violent conflicts contradicts the ideals and principles of secularism enshrined in the Indian constitution. This is due to the rampant promotion of Hindutva ideology in society and the perception of Muslims as a threat in India due to the significant and continuous growth of the Muslim population.

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