



Hindu Nationalists and the Cold War

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It is generally accepted that during the Cold War divergences between “hope and reality” rendered India and America “estranged democracies.”¹ The precise nature of the Indo-American relationship during these decades remains a subject of fruitful study. For instance, Rudra Chaudhuri has argued that the Cold War’s many crises actually prompted India and the United States to “forge” a more nuanced relationship than scholars have realized.² This chapter does not join this discussion. It examines a different side of the story. Rather than study the workings of the Congress Party–affiliated political and bureaucratic elite in power during the Cold War, it focuses on the principal Opposition — the ideas and policies of the Hindu Mahasabha, the Jan Sangh, and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which have championed the cause of Hindu nationalism. The Cold War–era policies of these parties have not been studied carefully thus far. A common assumption is that these parties had little to say about international affairs or that, to the extent that they had something to say, their outlook was resolutely militant. This chapter corrects this misperception. It shows that these parties’ policies alternated between being attracted to and being repulsed by the West. Distaste for communism and commitment to democracy drove them to seek friendship with the West, while resentment at U.S. efforts to contain India as well as fears about materialism and Westernization prompted them to demand that the West be kept at a safe distance.

Surprisingly little has been written about the diversity of Indian views on international relations in the Cold War era. The conventional view is that there was at the start of the Cold War a “Nehruvian consensus” on the ends and means of Indian diplomacy.³ This consensus, ostensibly crafted by Jawaharlal Nehru, committed India to furthering peaceful coexistence by means of anti-imperialism, nuclear disarmament, and above all nonalignment. These means, the former president of the Congress Party J. B. Kripalani declared in 1959, were “generally accepted by the country and are in keeping with the genius of our people.”⁴

However, as Ankit Panda and I have shown, there was little consensus on this front — not even within the Congress.⁵ For instance, when the Constituent Assembly considered whether India ought to remain in the Commonwealth, a number of important figures insisted that India ought to side with the West. This stance owed partly to the belief that such an alliance would be profitable. For example, Kameshwar Singh, the ruler of Darbhanga and a long-serving member of the Council of State, argued that India could only “ensure the peace of the world” if the country became militarily and economically “strong.” “She can be made so,” he asserted, “by the co-operation of the Commonwealth countries and America.”⁶ Others voiced a more fundamental objection. Balkrishna Sharma, a leading member of the Congress Party’s conservative wing, spoke for many when he forcefully declared that “going Red” was not in India’s interest because it was self-evident that in the communist bloc “before the Ogre of the State the individual is being sacrificed every minute of his existence.”⁷

A more sustained critique came from outside the Congress, initially from the Hindu Mahasabha and later the Jan Sangh, which quickly emerged as the principal Opposition. Cold War-era observers typically overlooked this critique. They claimed that because internal problems were “overwhelming” during the Cold War years, opposition parties devoted “rather little attention to matters of foreign policy.”⁸ To the extent that observers considered the role cultural values played in shaping public policy, they took seriously the view, popularized by Mahatma Gandhi, that India’s religious heritage counseled nonviolence. So when discussing “a renewed interest in the value of Hindu philosophy as a guide to the formulation of national policies,” the example that observers often cited was Nehru’s proto-Buddhist Panchsheel doctrine of peaceful coexistence.⁹

More recently, the BJP’s post-Cold War rise has motivated scholars to

take the Hindu nationalist worldview more seriously.¹⁰ Unfortunately, this worldview has all too often been described in dire terms.¹¹ Chris Ogden, for example, characterizes it as embodying a “strong, assertive, and militaristic nationalism” that seeks to challenge “effeminate idealism and morality.”¹² Similarly, Kanti Bajpai claims that Hindu nationalists subscribe to a “hard-bitten” ethic.¹³ For instance, whereas “nuclear weapons are seen by many Westerners as a tragic necessity,” he writes, “political Hinduism embraces them.”¹⁴ The implication here is that Hindu nationalists’ “stance on international relations and the use of violence is not a particularly prudential one.”¹⁵

Such claims seriously misjudge Hindu nationalism, especially as it took shape in the Cold War period. In particular, they overlook its moral dimension, represented most visibly by the doctrine of integral humanism, which still constitutes the BJP’s “basic philosophy.”¹⁶ Coined by Deendayal Upadhyaya, the Jan Sangh’s foremost intellectual, this doctrine expresses a holistic worldview stemming from the late nineteenth-century Hindu renaissance. As we shall see, in the Cold War era this doctrine led Hindu nationalists to champion a number of idealistic foreign and economic policies at some remove from the militant image typically ascribed to them. Some of these policies—such as a commitment to religious freedom—prompted them to call for closer relations with the West, while others—such as their skepticism about the market economy—brought them into deep conflict with it. This complicated history casts grave doubt on contemporary rhetoric about India and the United States being “natural allies.”¹⁷ Before discussing these policies, let me briefly outline the worldviews that informed Hindu nationalism during this period.

BEFORE INDEPENDENCE

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, socially prominent Hindus made two divergent discoveries: the profusion of Orientalist scholarship brought their past grandeur into focus, while the post-1857 consolidation of British rule exposed their present weakness. This embarrassing contrast spurred reform movements centered on Bengal, Bombay, and the Punjab. These movements took the view that India’s subjection owed to cultural perversions such as the caste system that had undermined the unity and vitality of Hindu society. A return to purer forms of Hinduism described in the ancient scriptures would, they argued, unify and uplift Hindu society.

A key example here is Raj Narain Bose’s *The Superiority of Hinduism to Other Existing Religions* (1882). The name “Hindu,” Bose counseled, “pos-

sesses magical power” because “by means of this name all Hindus will be bound by the tie of brotherhood.” And when “the aspirations of all will be the same,” he continued, “they will all make united effort for the attainment of all kinds of freedom.” For Bose, unity was desirable because it would allow Hindus to defend their civilization and advance humanity more generally—power and riches were not the objective. “Religious and moral civilization is true civilization,” Bose argued, but “that civilization has not yet dawned upon the earth.” However, one could “reasonably hope that the Hindu nation, by re-attaining its ancient religious and moral civilization . . . will stand as the best and the foremost of all nations on the earth.”¹⁸

A contrasting view came from Bankim Chandra Chatterji. Chatterji rejected the idea that “true” Hinduism was “rooted in the Hindu scriptures.”¹⁹ In his view, much of what these scriptures prescribed was outmoded or inconclusive.²⁰ Sorely needed, then, was a basis on which Hindus could evaluate their scriptures and customs. This basis, he thought, ought to be social utility. In his words: “That which protects people and contributes to human welfare is *dharma*.”²¹ Chatterji was well aware of how radical this claim was. “Some are likely to consider this,” he acknowledged, “an extremely utilitarian reading of *dharma*.”²² It certainly seemed so to Bose, who declared Chatterji’s “New Religious Opinion” the work of “an atheist.”²³

Chatterji agreed with his contemporaries that India’s “long servitude” owed to a “lack of a sense of nationalism.”²⁴ Hence, in his view, *dharma* commanded fostering a culture of patriotism. But Chatterji discerned that patriotism had to have a martial aspect because “[a] strong people is always ready to fall upon the weaker ones.”²⁵ Hence, whereas reformers like Bose expected a reinvigorated Hindu nation to be a beacon of spirituality, Chatterji counseled Hindus to also cultivate their physical faculties—for instance, they ought to learn to wrestle and swim, to use weapons and withstand the cold, and to drink wine and eat beef.²⁶ Chatterji did not glorify violence, though. Only a defensive form of patriotism is justified, he argued, because Hinduism enjoins loving the world.²⁷

By the close of the nineteenth century, then, there were at least two distinct accounts of the Hindu nation in circulation—one oriented toward moral exceptionalism, the other toward political necessity. These differences sharpened at the turn of the twentieth century, as Hindu nationalists were either repelled or impressed by muscular forms of nationalism emerging in Europe and Asia (in Japan and China in particular).

The former view was championed most notably by Narendranath Datta—better known as Swami Vivekananda. Europe, Vivekananda ob-

served at the turn of the twentieth century, was trying to understand “how much more power a man can possess by hook or by crook.” But this approach was flawed because history showed “nations rising and falling almost every century — starting up from nothingness, making vicious play for a few days, and then melting.”²⁸ Far preferable, then, were “mildness, gentleness, forbearance, toleration, sympathy, and brotherhood,” as these qualities would permit national differences to be worked out peacefully.²⁹ But these qualities could only come to the fore, Vivekananda emphasized, if nations learnt to renounce. “Giving up the senses,” he asserted, is what “makes a nation survive.”³⁰ And this was where Hinduism excelled: “The cause of India’s greatness,” he declared, was that “we have never conquered. That is our glory.”³¹ As a consequence of its unique history, Vivekananda argued, it became India’s duty to “spiritualize” the world by spreading the message of love and unworldliness. “Let foreigners come and flood the land with their armies, never mind,” he told his listeners, “up, India, and conquer the world with your spirituality.”³²

Chatterji’s realism was championed most notably by Aurobindo Ghosh. Ghosh urged his countrymen to meditate on Japan’s modernization, which had “enabled the little island empire to wield the stupendous weapons of western knowledge and science.”³³ A “nation must develop military and political greatness and activity, intellectual and aesthetic greatness and activity, commercial greatness and activity, moral sanity and vigour,” he warned, for “it cannot sacrifice any of these functions of the organism without making itself unfit for the struggle for life and finally succumbing and perishing under the pressure of more highly organised nations.”³⁴ This was the lesson of history, which showed that “purely aesthetic and intellectual state[s] like the Greek colonies in Italy . . . are blotted out of existence in the clash with ruder but more vigorous and many-sided organisms.”³⁵

Ghosh was also clear about religion’s role in cultivating such power. Chatterji, he noted, had discerned that the “moral strength” needed to undergird “physical strength” could come only from “the religion of patriotism” — or “the infusion of religious feeling into patriotic work.”³⁶ Consequently, Ghosh followed Chatterji in seeking to convince Hindus that their religion did not condemn violence. “A certain class of minds shrink from aggressiveness as if it were a sin,” he wrote in “The Morality of Boycott.” Their cry is to “heal hate by love” and to “slay sin by righteousness.” But political action, he argued, ought to be governed not by “the Brahmanical duty of saintly sufferance” but rather by the “morality of the Kshatriya.”³⁷

In the decades before 1947, the worldviews described above resonated

in the speeches and writings of Mahatma Gandhi and Vinayak Savarkar, respectively. Gandhi challenged the view that Hindus had been subdued due to their failure to distinguish between personal and political morality. "There seems to be no historical warrant for the belief," he declared in his famous essay "Ahimsa," "that an exaggerated practice of *ahimsa* synchronized with our becoming bereft of manly virtues."³⁸ On the contrary, "our civilization tells us with daring certainty that a proper and perfect cultivation of the quality of *ahimsa*, which in its active form means purest love and pity, brings the whole world to our feet."³⁹ Hence, calls for the use of violence were actually "a foreign growth" since Hinduism enjoined "abstention from *himsa*."⁴⁰ And so, "to arm India on a large scale," he said, would be to "Europeanise it."⁴¹

Equally vigorous was Gandhi's assault on elements of modernity that militant Hindu nationalists viewed as essential for national power. "Modern civilization," Gandhi famously argued, "occupies itself in the investigation of the laws of matter and employs the human ingenuity in inventing or discovering means of production and weapons of destruction." Hindu civilization, by contrast, had historically been "chiefly occupied in exploring spiritual laws."⁴² The latter called for the "limitation of activities promoting wealth" because "economic progress" was invariably "antagonistic to real progress."⁴³ This was borne out, Gandhi argued, by the ill effects of mechanization, which rendered workers dependent on employers and encouraged consumers to chase artificial desires.⁴⁴ Europe's various social stresses revealed that modern "civilisation is such that one has only to be patient and it will be self-destroyed."⁴⁵

On the opposite side stood Savarkar. Savarkar thought—in large part because of the horrors of World War I—that political life was scarred by a "terrible struggle for existence" that made "survival of the fittest . . . the rule."⁴⁶ Hence, like Chatterji and Ghosh, he advocated for a corporate identity that would motivate Hindus to rally in opposition to external aggression. "As long as other communities . . . are busy in organizing offensive and defensive alliances and combinations on entirely narrow racial or religious or national basis," he warned Hindus, "strengthen . . . those subtle bonds that like nerve threads bind you in one organic social being."⁴⁷

The same concern for survival also led Savarkar to advocate a martial ethic. "We denounce your doctrine of absolute non-violence not because we are less saintly but because we are more sensible than you are," he thundered in response to Gandhi.⁴⁸ Equally important, in his view, was pragmatism in international relations. "The sanest policy for us," he asserted, "is to

befriend those who are likely to serve our country's interests in spite of any 'ism' they follow for themselves and to befriend only so long as it serves our purpose."⁴⁹

Like Ghosh, Savarkar appreciated the link between political power and material capability. History's lesson, he observed, is "that nations which, other things equal, are superior in military strength are bound to survive, flourish and dominate while those which are militarily weak shall be politically subjected or cease to exist at all."⁵⁰ Thus, in deliberate contrast to Gandhi, Savarkar insisted that "national production" ought to be on "the biggest possible machine scale" because the world was now in "a Machine age."⁵¹

AFTER INDEPENDENCE

We have seen that between the late nineteenth century and the mid-twentieth century, two views of the Hindu nation took shape — one oriented toward moral exceptionalism, the other toward political necessity. The Cold War-era policies of the Hindu Mahasabha, the Jan Sangh, and the BJP can be traced to the commingling of these streams.

A central figure in this story is Syama Prasad Mookherjee, who succeeded Savarkar as president of the Hindu Mahasabha before breaking away to form the Jan Sangh. Mookherjee carried into the new era three of Savarkar's core beliefs. First, foreign policy must be "realistic" — in other words, "every country must settle its attitude towards . . . other nations primarily in relation to its own problems and interests."⁵² Second, military capabilities are irreplaceable because "in the modern age freedom cannot be maintained by any nation even for a single day unless there is an adequate armed strength available at its disposal."⁵³ Third, the importance of industrial capability for defense made it essential "to guard against . . . the future economic penetration of India by any foreign country."⁵⁴ At the same time, unlike the resolutely tough-minded Savarkar, Mookherjee voiced support for an idea hitherto championed by Vivekananda and Gandhi, to wit, that the West's "failure of spirit," as evidenced by the cataclysmic wars of the twentieth century, implied that India's "spiritual fervour" made it uniquely qualified to guide efforts to establish a "permanent peace in the world."⁵⁵

The commingling took on a further dimension over the following decade. Key here is K. R. Malkani's visionary 1951 pamphlet *Principles for a New Political Party*, for which Mookherjee wrote a glowing introduction. Malkani, then the editor of *Organiser*, the influential weekly affiliated with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), and later a key figure in the BJP, under-

scored Savarkar's continuing influence when he declared that since the world "is ruled by the law of jungle," India's foreign policy ought to be "wise, not philosophic."⁵⁶ In the context of the Cold War this implied that nonalignment, though useful because it kept India out of "the fray," was ultimately insufficient because "strength" was required to "persevere in the policy of peace."⁵⁷ And here, Malkani declared, "the failure of the government to build up the industrial potential — the only source of military might — of the country stands out as gross error of omission."⁵⁸

But having said this, Malkani then turned around to adopt a Gandhian perspective on the question of industrialization. In his view, an appropriate economic policy — a *Bharatiya*, or social economics — was one centered on social and human well-being.⁵⁹ In his words: "Industry must not dwarf man. Machine must not be allowed to master Man. It must not dehumanise him."⁶⁰ A parallel contradiction arose on the question of foreign economic relations. On one hand, Malkani welcomed foreign capital as helpful to industrialization; on the other, he recommended autarky so as to lessen India's "dependence on foreign countries."⁶¹ What Malkani left unanswered was how India might develop military power without large-scale industrialization and how large-scale industrialization could occur in a poor country without foreign investment.

Malkani's fellow travelers only muddied the waters. A crucial figure in these decades was Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar, the long-serving leader of the RSS. Golwalkar reaffirmed Savarkar's focus on social cohesiveness: Europe's strength stemmed, he insisted, from its cherishing and fostering of "correct national consciousness."⁶² Golwalkar was equally clear about the nature of international relations: "friendship or hostility between nations," he commented, "is decided according as their national interests coalesce or clash with one another."⁶³ Hence, he supported, albeit somewhat reluctantly, the acquisition of nuclear weapons. At the same time, like Malkani, Golwalkar questioned the value of industrialization. "The Western theory of creating multiplicity of wants, more machinery to meet them," he emphasized, "will only result in making man the slave of machine."⁶⁴ Far preferable, in his view, were decentralized "small scale and home industries."⁶⁵

The aforementioned commingling reached its apogee in the thought of Deendayal Upadhyaya, who moved from the RSS to become the general secretary (and subsequently president) of the Jan Sangh. Like his contemporaries, Upadhyaya underscored the importance of interests and capabilities in the conduct of international relations. "The foreign policy of a country," he declared, "should be framed with the sole objective of securing the en-

lightened self-interests of the nation. It has to be realistic and should take into account the mundane nature of the world.”⁶⁶ At the same time, those who assumed that India “can be defended simply by clever manipulations of foreign policy” were “living in a world of unreality.” If “the government continues to neglect the military build-up of the country can any one,” he asked, “assure that there would be no aggression, or if there is one, it would be successfully repelled?”⁶⁷

These pragmatic statements were accompanied, however, by deep concern for the upholding of an authentic Hindu morality. Upadhyaya voiced dismay at contemporary India’s “thoughtless imitation of the West.”⁶⁸ The West had, to be sure, birthed a number of “good ideals,” including nationalism, democracy, socialism, and pacifism.⁶⁹ But modern history showed that the West had repeatedly failed to reconcile these ideals, invariably pursuing one or the other to an inhumane extreme. This meant that the West was in no position to offer others guidance on how to live well. The question worth pondering was whether India could “contribute something” to the ethical dilemma confronting the world—to wit, the dilemma of pluralism or the challenge of reconciling conflicting human needs and aspirations.⁷⁰

What Hinduism brought to the table, Upadhyaya contended, was its ability to synthesize. Its accumulated wisdom taught that the good life is the “integrated life”—a life that fulfills the plurality of human needs and aspirations.⁷¹ From this perspective, the prevalence of unhappiness in a materialistic, consumerist West was not surprising—it owed to the failure to appreciate humankind’s spiritual needs. Seeking to avoid replicating such an unhealthy imbalance, Upadhyaya called for an economic system “which does not make us slaves of its own grinding wheels” but instead “helps in the development of our humane qualities.”⁷² This recommended an economic policy centered on, among other things, ecological preservation, basic social protection, guaranteed employment, and decentralized industry featuring limited mechanization. In his words: “Our machines must not only be tailored for our specific economic needs, but also must, at least, avoid conflict with our sociopolitical and cultural objectives.”⁷³

THE HINDU MAHASABHA

Having briefly surveyed the worldviews that informed Hindu nationalism during the Cold War period, we are now in a better position to analyze and appreciate the policies of the Hindu Mahasabha, the Jan Sangh, and the BJP. What we will see is that their policies featured paradoxical elements, veer-

ing between shrewd pragmatism and high idealism. This is hardly surprising, since these policies stemmed from a commingling of otherwise opposed worldviews.

In the period immediately following independence, the principal Hindu nationalist organization remained the Mahasabha. Contrary to what Cold War-era observers claimed, the Mahasabha did in fact have fairly worked out positions of foreign policy. For instance, its leaders expressed hostility to foreign interference with respect to Kashmir on the grounds of national sovereignty as well as skepticism about the United Nations' impartiality.⁷⁴ They also expressed strong support for Israel. This stance owed both to their admiration for the Jewish peoples' "tenacious" struggle and to their dislike for what they saw as the Arab states' religiously motivated support for Pakistan.⁷⁵ The Mahasabha consistently expressed support for persons of Indian origin, especially those subject to racial discrimination, with South Africa being a particular cause of concern.⁷⁶ It also called for closer ties with East and Southeast Asia, built on the "tremendous amount of good-will" generated by the fact that these countries looked on India as their "cultural and spiritual home-land."⁷⁷

The Mahasabha had even more to say about relations with the United States and the Soviet Union. Here the Mahasabha encountered a serious difficulty: it strongly desired closer relations between India and the West because it opposed communism, which it saw as collectivist, materialist, and irreligious. But in practice, it was confronted with growing estrangement between India and the West (for reasons outlined at the start of this chapter).

The Mahasabha's response was two-pronged. It criticized nonalignment as ineffectual, especially in view of the paucity of support at the United Nations for India's position on Kashmir. It was, as N. B. Khare, the president of the Mahasabha, declared in 1951, "high time that India realises that international affinities and hostilities do not come about by mere pious wishes, but are dependent upon our inner strength and needs of the countries concerned." At the same time, Khare criticized the United States for allying with Pakistan, claiming that the "interests of the democracies demand that India with its vast resources in men and materials should be with them in the world politics."⁷⁸

What explained this preference for the United States? N. C. Chatterjee's 1954 presidential address provides the clearest exposition. Responding to widespread revulsion at the United States' recently announced defense pact with Pakistan, Chatterjee called for a "sober and balanced perspective," warning that those "who in anger and passion of the moment call for alliance

with the Soviet Bloc and call for Military aid from Moscow should realise the price that India may have to pay—the ultimate destruction of the heritage, culture and religion of India and the installation of a system which will lead to the regimentation of life and the suppression of the individual.”⁷⁹

As a result, Chatterjee persisted in the strategy of appealing to the West. “We warn the United States of America,” he thundered, “that this unstatesmanlike act on their part in giving aid to a country whose leaders have hostile designs on India is bound to weaken the cause of democracy in the world” because “India may be ultimately driven to accept help for the sake of her self-preservation from those very forces which the United States is anxious to combat by giving aid to Pakistan.”⁸⁰

Even as Chatterjee was voicing this angst, he was simultaneously stressing the idea that Hinduism rather than the West had a distinctive answer to the question of the good life. Quoting Vivekananda, Chatterjee called on the Mahasabha to take abroad the “certain eternal truths for which India has stood.”⁸¹ The flip side of this pride in Indian culture was concern about the role of foreign missionaries, which was soon to become a recurring theme and a cause of increasing anxiety about the religious and social impact of deepening relations with the West.⁸²

Toward the end of the 1950s, the Mahasabha turned a corner. It continued to complain about India’s growing proximity to the Soviet Union, which was evidenced by the country’s reserved stance on events in Hungary.⁸³ But now, disillusioned by the United States’ continued support for Pakistan, the Mahasabha’s 1957 manifesto reemphasized Savarkar’s message about the importance of capabilities: “The Mahasabha had always stood for the principle—the Militarisation of the Indian Nation. The world will laugh at us if we base our foreign policy on mere idealism. . . . [We must provide] our Army, Navy and Air Forces with the latest equipment capable of resisting attack and aggression from any quarter and then only Panch-Shila will work and India shall command respect and prestige in the comity of nations.”⁸⁴

By the end of the decade, with China now firmly ensconced in Tibet, the Mahasabha adopted a starker position. Ram Singh, the president at the 1959 annual meeting, warned that “strict neutrality is an impossibility in this closely knit present world” because “whatever act you do is bound to have an effect on the other nations of the world.”⁸⁵ This implied that “there is no such thing as foreign policy, as [a] strong military is the only guarantee of a respectable position of a nation among the comity of nations.” And on this front, he continued, “Are we so silly that we cannot hope to make [a] hydrogen bomb some day? Where there is will, there is way.”⁸⁶

Yet even as the Mahasabha was arguing for greater realism on matters of foreign and defense policy, its economic policies evidenced a lack of realism about how the country might secure the requisite means. A good example is V. G. Deshpande's RSS-inspired call in his 1960 presidential address for the pursuit of "Hindu Socialism," a doctrine of anti-Marxist "spiritualistic collectivism" that cashed out as proposals for collective farming, a planned economy, and market intervention "to suppress with iron hand the profiteering and exploiting tendencies of the capitalists."⁸⁷ How an economy organized along these lines would generate the "thousands of crores" Deshpande wanted to spend on militarization was left unexplained.⁸⁸

THE JAN SANGH

By the close of the decade, the Hindu Mahasabha was a spent force, having been rapidly overtaken by the Jan Sangh. Established in 1951 by Mookherjee in conjunction with the RSS, the Jan Sangh early on adopted positions that bore some resemblance to the Mahasabha's. For instance, like the Mahasabha, the Jan Sangh questioned the United Nations' legitimacy, called for "special attention" to be given to the countries of Southeast Asia,⁸⁹ and criticized Nehru's "callous policy of indifference" toward Indians abroad, especially in Ceylon, Burma, and South Africa.⁹⁰ The Jan Sangh also quickly made clear its distaste for communism, declaring in 1952 that "the spirit of India is fundamentally opposed to totalitarianism" and that India must therefore "stand for the development of freedom and democracy in the world."⁹¹

The above notwithstanding, the Jan Sangh went its own way in two important respects. First, it called for nonalignment to be understood as "neutrality" and "non-involvement."⁹² India's objective, it declared, "should be to avoid involvement in the power-blocs"⁹³ lest the country become a "cockpit."⁹⁴ Equally, India should "try to win friends and cooperation of all countries by avoiding involvements in such international conflicts and issues as do not directly concern India."⁹⁵ Nehru had failed on both counts, the Jan Sangh alleged, because by leaning toward the Soviet bloc and by involving India in arbitrating the Korean conflict, he had needlessly strained relations with the West.

Second, in contrast to the Mahasabha's more militant tone, the Jan Sangh followed Mookherjee in stressing that "true to traditions of *Bharat*," it will "work for the maintenance of world peace and mutual understanding."⁹⁶ Here the Jan Sangh's operating premise was that "world peace cannot be permanently assured so long as political subjugation, economic exploitation,

and prejudices based on colour continue in the world.”⁹⁷ From this premise flowed three major commitments — anticolonialism, hostility to foreign interference, and universal nuclear disarmament — that, contrary to the Jan Sangh’s calls for India to exhibit “aloofness,” actually led it in practice to rail against the superpowers (for instance, against U.S. intervention in Cambodia and Vietnam and against Soviet intervention in Eastern Europe).⁹⁸

At the start of the next decade, however, the Jan Sangh’s posture underwent a noticeable transformation. In the face of the long-drawn-out border tensions with China, its outlook became more confrontational. It fiercely criticized Nehru for being “indifferent to the imperative concomitant . . . of non-alignment, namely, the building up of adequate military strength.”⁹⁹ An immediate policy implication was that though the Jan Sangh had previously called for universal nuclear disarmament to save the world from “catastrophe,”¹⁰⁰ from 1963 onward it began to demand, ever more stridently, that India develop a nuclear deterrent to counter China.¹⁰¹

Before long, the Jan Sangh was questioning nonalignment itself. China’s actions revealed, it argued, that the world was now multipolar rather than bipolar. In the event, the “forging of a new alignment aimed at containing and rolling back Peking’s threat has become imperative,” it declared in 1963.¹⁰² To this end, the Jan Sangh now urged closer relations with countries in Southeast Asia, Israel, Australia, Japan, and the United States in particular.¹⁰³

By the middle of the 1960s, influenced by its new president, the arch-realist Balraj Madhok, the Jan Sangh stepped up the assault on the status quo. Continued U.S. and British support for Pakistan during the 1965 Indo-Pakistan War was “sorely disappointing,” the Jan Sangh said.¹⁰⁴ Enough “with platitudes like world-peace and coexistence and with clichés and catchwords like non-alignment”¹⁰⁵ that had “ceased to be relevant.”¹⁰⁶ Henceforth India’s foreign policy ought to be “independent” and based on “reciprocity.”¹⁰⁷

Over the following decade, the Jan Sangh had a number of opportunities to translate this principle into policy, starting with the 1971 Indo-Pakistan war. Confronted with U.S. support for West Pakistan in spite of its genocidal behavior in East Pakistan, and with U.S. “gun-boat-diplomacy” in the form of the U.S.S. *Enterprise*,¹⁰⁸ the Jan Sangh strongly condemned the United States, observing that its actions “clearly proved that there is no place for any principles, charity or morality in international relations.”¹⁰⁹ At the same time, it criticized the 1971 Indo-Soviet Treaty for effectively allying India with the Soviet bloc. A more appropriate policy, it argued, would be to “broad-base” India’s diplomacy by signing such “friendship treaties” with multiple countries, including Indonesia and Japan.¹¹⁰

The advent of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) provided another opportunity to showcase what an independent stance implied in practice. “It is obvious,” the Jan Sangh’s response went, that neither the United States nor the Soviet Union “wishes to see us come up.” Their objective in pushing India to accede to the treaty was to ensure that it could be “blackmailed and brow-beaten” at a later date in order to secure their interests.¹¹¹ Under such circumstances, it declared, India ought to go nuclear “without delay” and its defense strength ought to be “doubled”¹¹² with a view to allowing the country to become an “independent power centre.”¹¹³

The most important opportunity the Jan Sangh received to elaborate its worldview was when it briefly came to power in 1977 as part of the socialist Janata Party, allowing Atal Bihari Vajpayee to become foreign minister. Though observers expected the Jan Sangh, on the basis of Hindu nationalists’ long-standing hostility toward communism, to push for a closer relationship with the United States, Vajpayee pursued “genuine non-alignment,” which translated into only “downgrading” Indira Gandhi’s perceived “tilt” toward the Soviet Union.¹¹⁴ Beyond this, however, Vajpayee chose not to follow the Jan Sangh’s script. Instead of pursuing an activist foreign policy directed at building a coalition against China and Pakistan, he trumpeted India’s civilizational commitment to “genuine co-existence.”¹¹⁵ This became the basis for his efforts to normalize relations with India’s neighbors by making concessions that his colleagues in the Jan Sangh had previously criticized as naive — for instance, visiting China in spite of the ongoing border dispute and renouncing the development of nuclear weapons.¹¹⁶ These moves surprised contemporary observers, who had failed to discern that Mookherjee’s successors were influenced not only by the tough-minded realism promoted by Savarkar but also by civilizational ideals of mutual accommodation emanating from Vivekananda.

Gandhi’s influence, meanwhile, was apparent in the economic sphere. Though the Jan Sangh claimed it wanted to make India an “independent power centre,”¹¹⁷ and hence called for 10 percent growth, its economic philosophy — summarized as “growth in production, equity in distribution, and restraint in consumption” — prioritized social and moral objectives.¹¹⁸ For example, given its discomfort with “conspicuous consumption,”¹¹⁹ the Jan Sangh proposed reducing income inequality by capping maximum expendable income to ten times the minimum income.¹²⁰ Given its fixation on developing “technology to suit Indian conditions,”¹²¹ it proposed to achieve self-sufficiency in consumer goods through decentralization and reservation of production to village and small-scale industries, and the imposition of

controls on the import and consumption of consumer goods.¹²² Given its emphasis on national control, it proposed to “revive the spirit of *Swadeshi*,” by seeking to “discourage the use of foreign goods” and challenging foreign ownership of industries, promising to “progressively Indianise them in their capital, ownership and personnel.”¹²³ Like Malkani and Golwalkar before it, the Jan Sangh failed to explain (or perhaps even to consider) how such economic policies would permit India to generate the surpluses needed to pursue a truly independent foreign policy.

THE BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY

In 1980, with the Janata Party experiment having failed, members of the erstwhile Jan Sangh formed the BJP. Led by Vajpayee, the BJP started out advocating the less militant of the Jan Sangh’s ideals. Recall that although the Jan Sangh had declared nonalignment irrelevant, Vajpayee had deviated from the script by calling for “genuine” nonalignment. The BJP now ratified Vajpayee’s position, affirming nonalignment’s continued “relevance.”¹²⁴ The immediate motive was countering Indira Gandhi’s “tilt” toward the Soviet Union, whose intervention in Afghanistan the BJP denounced. But the BJP was also genuinely concerned about U.S. intentions—the American presence in Diego Garcia, for instance, was viewed as militarizing the Indian Ocean.

Having affirmed nonalignment, the BJP spent the 1980s elaborating the concept’s “moral content.” At heart, it declared, the concept emerged from “the rejection of domination in all its forms.”¹²⁵ This insight prompted the adoption of four key policies. First, the BJP stressed the importance of being a “good neighbour” so as to deny the superpowers an opportunity to interfere in the South (or at least in South Asia).¹²⁶ Second, it took up the cause of inequality, calling for “a more equitable world order,” through “South-South cooperation” if necessary.¹²⁷ On this front, it vigorously challenged the West-sponsored emergent global trading order and demanded instead the creation of a “new international economic order.”¹²⁸ Third, it championed the cause of regional peace, calling for the transformation of South Asia into a “zone of peace” and for the normalization of relations with Pakistan and China.¹²⁹ It followed the early Jan Sangh in calling for universal nuclear disarmament. Contrast present assertions about the BJP’s “militarism” with this 1981 declaration: “The search for mutually assured destruction leads the world towards nuclear holocaust. This mad race for armaments makes the world spend over 150 million dollars daily on armaments whilst the ma-

majority of mankind goes hungry, shelterless and deprived of other essentials. A search for a more equitable world order becomes meaningless in the face of larger and more potent instruments of death.”¹³⁰ Fourth, the BJP became far more vocal about “foreign domination,”¹³¹ stressing the “inviolability of the sovereignty and territory of nations.”¹³² Here it announced its “rejection of the self-adopted role as a ‘world policeman’ by the U.S.A.”¹³³ Even long-admired Israel did not escape criticism: “Israel certainly has a right to exist,” the BJP declared, “but not as an expanding regional power, with freedom to define its own concept of secure frontiers.”¹³⁴

Not unlike how the 1962 war had prompted the Jan Sangh to move in a more realist direction, the end of the Cold War prompted the BJP to revise its worldview. The impetus was fear of American hegemony. As the BJP explained in 1992:

The post-cold war world lacks a balanced power structure. This is inherently bad for the world because untrammelled power in the hands of one country or a group of countries with ideological similarity would inevitably lead to a resurgence of hegemonic attitudes. Even today hegemonistic [*sic*] tendencies abound. The treatment meted out to the countries of the Third World by a group of powerful countries clearly violates a fundamental principle of international relations viz. the principle of sovereign equality of nations. They exert pressure openly on the countries of the third world to follow their philosophy and their political and economic models.¹³⁵

The BJP responded to this threat in a number of ways. First, it revived the Jan Sangh’s policy of “active” bilateralism and “strict reciprocity,”¹³⁶ calling on the Rajiv Gandhi government to “maximise the number of our friends abroad,” encouraging it to deepen ties with Israel and Japan in particular.¹³⁷ Having deemed the nonaligned movement “the foundation” of its “policy plank” as recently as 1984,¹³⁸ the BJP now declared in 1991 that non-alignment had “lost its relevance.”¹³⁹ Second, having previously been vocal on nuclear disarmament, it now wheeled around to demand that, in view of American unilateralism in the Persian Gulf and continued U.S. and Chinese support for Pakistani nuclear proliferation, India must give its defense forces “Nuclear Teeth.”¹⁴⁰ Confronted subsequently with pressure for India to accede to the “discriminatory” Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the NPT, the BJP urged that the country “immediately manufacture and deploy” nuclear weapons.¹⁴¹ Third, in view of the growing threat of external

intervention, and seeking to make India an “autonomous power center,” it called for the United Nations to be reformed and for India to be accorded a seat at the Security Council.¹⁴²

So far, we have seen that in foreign policy the BJP made much the same somersault that the Jan Sangh did—initially calling for nonalignment or aloofness from power politics and then subsequently, in the face of setbacks, emphasizing bilateralism and reciprocity. In the economic sphere, however, the BJP remained fully wedded to the Jan Sangh’s call for nationalism and humanism. These commitments remained in place even after the end of the Cold War, only evolving in the mid-1990s. Strikingly, not once during this period did the BJP openly question whether its idiosyncratic combination of Gandhian socialism, austerity, and autarky might conflict with its desire to see India become one of the poles of a multipolar system.

In the first half of the 1980s, the BJP focused its attention on India’s growing balance of payments problem, which had prompted Indira Gandhi, under pressure from the International Monetary Fund, to take small steps toward liberalizing the economy. The BJP viewed these steps—which included de-reserving the small-scale sector and permitting technological imports—as “detrimental” and “humiliating” because they detracted from “self-reliance”¹⁴³ and caused “distortion in favour of exports and large industrial units.”¹⁴⁴ Subsequent measures—which included devaluation of the rupee, efforts to attract foreign investment, and the raising of dollar loans—were described as a “wilful surrender to international economic imperialism”¹⁴⁵ and the start of a slide into “a veritable death-trap of international financial barons.”¹⁴⁶ The path to true economic recovery, the BJP claimed in 1984, was not to import “fancy equipment” and to permit foreign funds to “take over well run industries in India” but instead to revive the “spirit of ‘swadeshi’” and to direct scarce credit toward agriculture and small and cottage industries.¹⁴⁷

In the second half of the 1980s, the BJP targeted Rajiv Gandhi’s New Economic Policy, which emphasized technological advance. If the country was to escape its “dependence on foreign . . . know how and the strangle hold” of multinational corporations, the BJP argued, it needed to “evolve a technology appropriate” to its needs and resources because “high technology is not an unmixed boon.”¹⁴⁸ So opposed was the BJP to the policy of “the computer boys”¹⁴⁹ that by the late 1980s it was calling on the government to halt “indiscriminate computerisation,” arguing that such technologies would increase unemployment and hence should be used only “where they are extremely necessary.”¹⁵⁰

Following the end of the Cold War, the BJP redoubled its opposition to foreign investment. In 1990, it resolved that though “the total reversal of the axioms underlying the economic model of the socialist block” necessitated a rethink of India’s economic policy, “technology should [nonetheless] not be allowed to degrade man and reduce him to being just another input in the Gross National Product. Man must be the focus of our developmental policies.”¹⁵¹ Even as late as 1992, it continued to express preference for “import substitution in every possible sphere” and fiercely questioned the utility of foreign investment,¹⁵² especially in consumer industries. “We need modern technology urgently but not in the production of Pepsi Cola, Potato chips, soaps and Talcum powders,”¹⁵³ the BJP claimed, as this would render India’s cooperatives “sick.”¹⁵⁴

CONCLUSION

This chapter has traced how the Hindu Mahasabha, the Jan Sangh, and the BJP reacted to the Cold War and to the United States in particular. Contrary to the widely held belief that these parties either had little to say about international affairs or that what they had to say was resolutely militant in nature, we have seen that Hindu nationalists initially expressed a clear preference for the West. But over time this became a guarded preference because Hindu nationalists came to doubt U.S. willingness to countenance India’s rise and because they fretted about the consequences of materialism and Westernization. The end of the Cold War, we have seen, brought this subterranean anxiety to the surface.

The foregoing analysis reveals a deep dilemma at the heart of Cold War-era Hindu nationalism. Hindu nationalists understood that weakness invites aggression, and they recognized that strength depends on modernization. Yet because they worried about the moral and cultural consequences of modernization, they were unwilling to commit to this project, even though they considered it essential. And so it came to be that, because they commingled realist and humanist traditions, the Hindu nationalists’ pursuit of interests and capabilities confounded, and was confounded by, their desire to realize certain values and morals. Fortunately for them, because they were in the Opposition for nearly the entire Cold War period, they were never really compelled to address this awkward tension between interests and values — that is, they were never actually forced to choose between security and modernization on one hand and moral and cultural integrity on the other.

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118. Atal Behari Vajpayee, "Foreword," in Bharatiya Jana Sangh, *Party Documents, 1951–1972*, vol. 2, *Resolutions on Economic Affairs* (New Delhi: Bharatiya Jana Sangh, 1973), iv. An important influence during this period was one of Upadhyaya's comrades, Dattopant B. Thengadi; see D. B. Thengadi, *The Perspective* (Bangalore: Sahitya Sindhu, 1971), chap. 17.
119. "Planning," in Bharatiya Jana Sangh, *Party Documents, 1951–1972*, vol. 2, 3.
120. Vajpayee, "Foreword," vii.
121. *Ibid.*, vii.
122. "1951 Manifesto," 286–90.
123. "1954 Manifesto," in Bharatiya Jana Sangh, *Policies and Manifestoes*, 272–74.
124. "Resolution Adopted at the National Executive Meeting Held at Cochin on April 23, 1981," in Bharatiya Janata Party, *Foreign Policy Resolutions and Statements, 1980–1999* (New Delhi: Bharatiya Janata Party, 1999), 5.
125. *Ibid.*, 5.
126. "Resolution Adopted at the National Executive Meeting Held at New Delhi on September 5, 1980," in Bharatiya Janata Party, *Foreign Policy Resolutions and Statements*, 3.
127. "Resolution Adopted at the National Executive Meeting Held at New Delhi on April 13–14, 1981," in Bharatiya Janata Party, *Foreign Policy Resolutions and Statements*, 12.
128. "Election Manifesto 1984," in Bharatiya Janata Party, *Election Manifestoes: Party Documents*, vol. 1 (New Delhi: Bharatiya Janata Party, 2005), 417.
129. "Resolution Adopted at the National Executive Meeting Held at New Delhi on April 13–14, 1981," 13–14.
130. *Ibid.*, 11.
131. *Ibid.*, 15.
132. "Resolution Adopted at the National Executive Meeting Held at New Delhi on September 5, 1980," 4.
133. "Resolution Adopted at the National Executive Meeting Held at Cochin on April 23, 1981," 5.
134. "Resolution Adopted at the National Executive Meeting Held at New Delhi on April 13–14, 1981," 15.
135. "Resolution Adopted at the National Council Meeting Held at Gandhinagar on June 2, 1992," in Bharatiya Janata Party, *Foreign Policy Resolutions and Statements*, 34.
136. "Resolution Adopted at the National Executive Meeting Held at Bhuvaneshwar on November 7, 1992," in Bharatiya Janata Party, *Foreign Policy Resolutions and Statements*, 48.
137. "Resolution Adopted at the National Executive Meeting Held at Thiruvananthapuram on September 30, 1991," in Bharatiya Janata Party, *Foreign Policy Resolutions and Statements*, 31–33.
138. "Election Manifesto 1984," 416.
139. "Foreign Affairs Section of BJP's Election Manifesto 1991," in Bharatiya Janata Party, *Foreign Policy Resolutions and Statements*, 25.
140. "Election Manifesto 1991," in Bharatiya Janata Party, *Election Manifestoes*, 352.
141. "Resolution Adopted at the National Executive Meeting Held at Bhuvaneshwar

on November 7, 1992,” 46–47. See also “Resolution Adopted at the National Executive Meeting Held at Vadodra on June 9, 1994,” in Bharatiya Janata Party, *Foreign Policy Resolutions and Statements*, 51–52.

142. “Foreign Affairs Section of BJP’s Election Manifesto 1991,” 27.

143. “Resolution of the National Executive, New Delhi, 4–6 Dec 1981,” in Bharatiya Janata Party, *BJP Resolutions: Economic, 1980–1999* (New Delhi: Bharatiya Janata Party, 1999), 9–10; see also 8.

144. “Resolution of the National Executive, Bhubaneshwar, 12–14 Feb 1982,” in Bharatiya Janata Party, *BJP Resolutions*, 14; see also 13, 15.

145. “Resolution of the National Council, Surat, 4–6 Jun 1982,” in Bharatiya Janata Party, *BJP Resolutions*, 17, see also 19.

146. “Resolution of the National Executive, Bangalore, 28–30.08.1982,” in Bharatiya Janata Party, *BJP Resolutions*, 21. See also “Resolution of the National Council, New Delhi, 15–17 Apr 1983,” in *ibid.*, 27; “Resolution of the National Executive, Lucknow, 21–23 Oct 1983,” in *ibid.*, 36.

147. “Resolution of the National Executive, Indore, 6–8 Jan 1984,” in Bharatiya Janata Party, *BJP Resolutions*, 47–48. See also “Resolution of the National Council, Pune, 1–4 Oct 1984,” in *ibid.*, 57–59.

148. “Resolution of the National Executive, Bhopal, 19–21 Jul 1985,” in Bharatiya Janata Party, *BJP Resolutions*, 60.

149. “Resolution of the National Executive, Bhopal, 19–21 July, 1985,” in Bharatiya Janata Party, *Economic Resolutions: Party Document*, vol. 6, 1980–2005 (New Delhi: Bharatiya Janata Party, 2005), 276.

150. “Resolution of the National Executive, Jamshedpur, 01–03 July, 1988,” in Bharatiya Janata Party, *Economic Resolutions: Party Document*, 230. See also D. B. Thengadi, *Our National Renaissance: Its Directions and Destination* (Bangalore: Sahitya Sindhu, 1980), 9–12, 18–20.

151. “Resolution of the National Executive, Madras, 21–23 July, 1990,” in Bharatiya Janata Party, *Economic Resolutions: Party Document*, 208.

152. “Resolution of the National Executive, Ernakulam, 1–3 January, 1988,” in Bharatiya Janata Party, *Economic Resolutions: Party Document*, 223.

153. “Resolution of the National Executive, Madras, 21–23 July, 1990,” 209.

154. “Resolution of the National Executive, Ahmedabad, 07–09 October, 1988,” in Bharatiya Janata Party, *Economic Resolutions: Party Document*, 233.