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Analysis of the impact of Hindutva Ideology on India's position towards the Gaza crisis

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Abstract

The Gaza crisis that has been going on since October 2023 has been the most complex, longest, and most destructive crisis of its kind between the Zionist regime and the Palestinian resistance. For this reason, this crisis had a wide resonance worldwide. Some countries, especially the United States and Britain, sided with Israel, and some countries, such as South Africa, stood with Palestine, and went so far as to take Israel's case to the Hague Court for genocide. The position of the Indian government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the Gaza crisis was also unique in its kind. Contrary to the tradition of the country's independence leaders, who usually supported the Palestinian cause, the Indian government stood with Israel. India's first stance on the Gaza crisis was taken by its Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Coincidentally, this stance was taken earlier than many of Israel's allies and even the United States.

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Modi, as one of the ideologues of Hindutva, wrote on his Twitter account: "India condemns the Hamas attack and stands firmly with Israel in this difficult hour". He then took the same position in contact with Netanyahu. At the UN, the Indian ambassador also called the Hamas attack shocking and condemned it. India was even among the 44 countries that abstained from voting on the proposed resolution at the UN for a ceasefire. The Hindu nationalist chief minister of the Muslim-majority state of Uttar Pradesh also issued orders to crack down on Palestinian supporters in the state. However, shortly after, the Indian foreign minister, under pressure from public opinion, was forced to adjust India's position and spoke of the need to implement UN resolutions, including the "two-state plan", and a short while later, India voted in favor of Palestine's membership in the UN. This stance led to the question of why the Modi government has taken such a stance? Usually, two environments influence the foreign policy of countries: the internal environment and the external environment. In each of these two environments, there are various factors that in turn influence the foreign policy of countries. For example, in the external environment, anarchy, polarity, international political order, etc. affect the foreign policy of countries. In the internal environment, the type of political, economic, cultural structures, size and population, military capability, ideology, etc. also affect the foreign policy of countries. This article emphasizes the internal environment and, among the internal factors, the factor of ideology. Ideology shapes the leaders' understanding of the world and the global order and, as a result, affects the preferences and interests that a politician should pursue in the foreign arena. In other words, ideology, as a set of beliefs, is the guiding light of foreign policy.

In India, Hindutva is an ideology that has led to the rise of the extreme right in this country, and the current government in power in this country is also fed by this ideology. This ideology presents a narrow interpretation of nationalism in India, the center of which is Hinduism, and other religions and sects have no place in it. Thus, this ideology seeks to form a pure nation in India under the name of "Rashtra". Hence, any other ideology in the world that pursues such a method and goal can be a suitable counterpart to this thinking. This is where Hindutva is linked to ideologies such as Nazism and Zionism.

One of the cases where this ideology has shown its effects on India's foreign policy is the Gaza crisis. The biased stance of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in supporting Israel and opposing Hamas reflects the influence of Hindutva on the attitude of the leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party in making foreign policy decisions of this country. Hence, the main question of this article is how has the ideology of Hindutva influenced the direction of India's foreign policy

towards the Gaza crisis? The hypothesis of the article, which is examined in a descriptive-analytical manner, is that the ideology of Hindutva, which is closely related to the ideology of Zionism, forced the right-wing government of India to support Israel against Hamas. In this article, Andrew Moravcsik's theory on the structure of decision-making in countries is used to explain the issue in more depth. Moravcsik, within the framework of the theory of the specific actor (as opposed to the theory of the general actor), believes that the foreign policy of countries is the result of the perspective of the political current in which countries have seized power and not the entire society of a country. Muravčik's view on the foreign policy of countries should be placed under the category of theories called "specific actor theory" (Hudson, 2005). The specific actor theory itself falls under the liberalism theory, which is in competition with the realism theory, which speaks of the "general actor". In the same way that the realist theory sees the general actor state as a unified identity, the liberalist theory of the specific actor sees the state as a unit that is composed of different components and considers a decision in foreign policy to be the product and outcome of the different components of a state. Meanwhile, while the realist theory of the general actor considers states to be rational actors that act based on the calculation of profit and loss and that this calculation is also accurate, the liberalist theory of the specific actor believes that the rationality of states is not absolute and ideal, but rather limited and circumscribed because various factors and conditions affect decision-making, and these factors and conditions are not always constant. Finally, while the general actor realist theory considers the national interests of countries to be clear and presupposed, the specific actor liberal theory considers national interests not only subject to processes and trends but also under the influence of political currents that seize power in a country. Moravcsik, as a specific actor theorist, considers the factors influencing the foreign policy of countries to be influenced by both internal and external environments. From his perspective, in the internal environment, the state is a representative institution that is constantly subject to capture and recapture or to construction and reconstruction by a coalition of social actors. Therefore, understanding which group of society the state represents is very important in understanding what goals and interests the state pursues in foreign policy. In other words, the state represents a part of society. This representation may change from time to time. At one time, one party with its own views takes power, and at another time, another party with different views takes power. Therefore, from Muravčik's perspective, in order to understand the nature of a country's foreign policy, one must see who governs the country on behalf of which spectrum. Given this

perspective, this article assumes that since the Bharatiya Janata Party is largely composed of extreme nationalist forces influenced by the Hindutva ideology, its stance on the Gaza crisis is merely the stance of a spectrum of the Indian community and not the entire Indian society. From this perspective, India's foreign policy towards the Gaza crisis is the policy of extremist Hindus who have shown themselves in the form of the dominance of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and not the entire Indian society.

Key words: Hindutva Zionism, Gaza crisis, extreme right, foreign policy.