Upon achieving independence in 1947 after nearly two centuries of British colonial rule, the new nation of India strived to unite a vastly diverse population of people. With social cleavages based on caste, religion, language, and ethnicity, the Indian constitution was created with an effort to name India as a secular state that protects religious freedom and ethnic diversity. However in recent years, the election of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has promoted a dramatic rise of Hindu nationalism that contradicts the notion of secularization. This ideological wave has weakened secularization in India by expanding the growth of xenophobic nationalism and threats to religious minorities. The aim of this research is to explore the nature of the downward trend of the fundamental pillars of the Indian constitution: democracy, secularization, and minority rights.

Research Question: Are the fundamental pillars of democracy, secularization, and the protection of minority rights in India dwindling as a direct result of the Bharatiya Janata Party’s rise to power and the rise of Hindu nationalism?

FINDINGS

1. The constitutional design and legal regime concurrently formalize the Indian democratic and secular state, while giving privileges to the interests of the Hindu majority as well, undermining all three pillars.
2. Due to the election of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 2014, the promotion and tolerance of attacks on women, Muslims, Christians, and Dalits has increased by members of the BJP, the legal regime, and civil society organizations.
3. The leader of the BJP, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has taken action through the promotion of Hindu Nationalist ideology to strengthen the executive branch, undermining the strength and autonomy of political institutions and giving more rise to militant Hindu nationalist organizations.
4. Although India classifies itself as a secular and democratic nation, several constitutional provisions and laws, including anti-conversion and cow protection legislation, incite anti-minority sentiment.
5. As Hindu nationalism rivals secular nationalism, Hindu nationalism supercedes the notions of pluralism and diversity with a uniformity of majority identity and ideology.

ANALYSIS

Although largely improved, India still holds onto the flaws that were present at its conception as a nation. As Hindu nationalism has grown, so has its targets. These targets are no longer Muslims and Christians, but women, Dalits, and critics of the ideology altogether. To further tolerate the injustices faced by these minority communities is an act of promise to only protect the privileges and interests of Hindus and not all of India’s population. If India is to continue to classify itself as a democratic and secular nation, it must recognize the struggles of all communities, not just the community that furthers the most political interest.