Identity Politics and Political Parties in India

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Abstract

India is the country with the largest Hindu majority in the world. Since the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came to power, the leadership model in India has been directed at implementing the teachings of Hindu nationalism, which considers it essential to protect Indian Hindu culture from the attacks of Western liberal ideology. This research aims to provide an overview of how Hindu identity politics is implemented in India under the rule of the BJP and what kind of political strategies and policies have been created by the Indian government, influenced by the ideology of Hindu hypernationalism. This qualitative research uses literature review data analysis techniques. The data sources used are secondary data from journals, books, and websites related to the research theme. Source triangulation is used for data validity, namely by verifying different data sources to obtain valid results. This research found that the identity politics implemented by the BJP utilizes the belief system/ideology of Indian Hindus through Hindutva teachings. The political strategy is carried out by embracing as many radical Hindu groups as possible and creating various policies that discredit minority groups in India. Additionally, during campaigns, the BJP often uses Hindu symbols to gain political support.

Keywords: Identity Politics, BJP Party, Hindutva Ideology, the State of India

INTRODUCTION

India is one of the largest democratic countries in the world. Based on data from the Economic Intelligence Unit (EIU) and the UN Population Division, India is ranked first as a democratic country, followed by the United States and Indonesia (Zulfikar, 2024). The country of India has a population of 1.4 billion (Zulfikar, 2024), of which the majority of the population is Hindu 79%, Muslim 14%, Christian 3%, Buddhist 1%, Sikh 1.7%, and Jain 0.4% (Taqiyya, 2022). India's demographic conditions greatly influence the existing power system. Historically, India has experienced polarization of political parties based on Hindu and Islamic values. The existence of religious-based political parties cannot be eliminated from political life in India. Even based on Bader's opinion that only a few constitutions prohibit the operation of a religious-based political party (Bader, 2017). According to (Sahoo, 2020), the polarization that is currently occurring in India is considered to be more toxic compared to the last few decades and does not even show any signs of ending/subduing. Religious political parties do have a unique appeal for most Indian people. It is not uncommon for the symbolic value carried by political parties to influence significantly the political preferences of Indian society to this day.

The history of political parties in India cannot be separated from the two large parties that have always dominated the power constellation in India. The Congress Party is one of the major parties that has been in power for a long time. This party was founded in 1885 by Mahatma Gandhi with the spirit of anti-colonialism. Mahatma Gandhi himself is well known as a figure in the struggle of the Indian people against British colonialism (Putri, 2021). This party tends to lead to a system of liberalism and state secularism. The Congress Party was the party that was the driving force for India's independence against British colonialism. The spirit of the Congress Party's struggle is to promote the values of equality, which does not have ethnicity, religion, race, and inter-group or racism nuances. The secular policy implemented by this party is equal opportunities in the fields of education, health, and employment. In the economic field, the Congress Party implemented an economic policy based on privatization and liberalization. Meanwhile, in the political field under Nehru's leadership, there was a regulation under Article 123 of the 1951 Representation of the People Act, which prohibited politicians from conducting campaigns on religious issues (Jaffrelot, 2019).

The Congress Party's rule lasted for quite a long time since India's independence from Britain; where six Indian prime ministers came from this party, two of whom were Jawaharlal Nehru (1947 to 1964) and the last was Manmohan Singh (2004 to 2014). Prime Minister Singh's leadership marked the end of the Congress Party's domination of power. The decline in power of the Congress Party was caused by various issues of inflation, slow economic growth, and corruption scandals (Voaindonesia, 2014). There were even strong protests in 2011 which revealed cases of corruption carried out by the Gandhi family, and in 2014 Modi succeeded in controlling government power in India (TRIPATHY, 2022, p. 186). Finally, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) emerged as a political party that replaced the current power of the Congress Party. Rajnath Singh, a nationalist party, chairs the BJP party in India. The system of power, which initially prioritized the principles of liberalism and egalitarianism, turned into nationalism. The BJP party gained success after the 2014 election because of several things, such as implementing a strategy of religious polarization, strengthening nationalism, and utilizing Modi's charisma (Biswas, 2020). India under Modi's leadership has achieved great political and economic success (Goyal, 2022, p. 50). This is what made Modi able to defeat his competitors in the 2014 election.

The BJP party is a Hindu nationalist party founded in 1980 by Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, a leader of the pro-Hindu Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh group. The BJP party was formed as a counter against the liberal ideology of the Congress Party. The BJP party wants the Indian government system to breathe Hindu ideology and Indian culture. This party has a fairly large membership, where initially its membership was filled by high caste groups in India and then they expanded their influence to lower castes in India. The BJP Party views that the lower castes in India are still an important part of Hindu society, and the BJP Party took this opportunity to declare the idea of a national identity as Hindus (Alder, 2017). It is not uncommon for political positions in India to be filled by lower caste groups who join the political alliance of the BJP Party. Membership in the BJP Party itself also contains dalit (lower caste) groups, even dalit leader Ram Nath Kovind

was successfully elected as the 14th President of India in 2017 because of support from the BJP Party.

The power held by the BJP Party has influenced the political direction of the Indian state which is based on the ideology of hypernationalism, and the political power possessed by the BJP Party has colored the dynamics of power in India to this day. The Hindu nationalist ideology that is the political basis of the BJP Party is often associated with acts of political extremism. The BJP party is a party that has changed the political direction of leaders in India, where identity politics based on ethnicity, religion, race and intergroup has become an important political modality for political elites in India in gaining political support from society.

Identity politics in India cannot be separated from the history of the conflict between India and Pakistan. The conflict between India and Pakistan was triggered by various unrest and tensions that occurred between Hindus and Muslims. Apart from that, this conflict was infiltrated by British political interests who wanted to divide the Indian country during the era of colonialism. Tensions between India and Pakistan are getting stronger following a dispute over ownership of the Kashmir region. The conflict between Hindus and Muslims is still felt today, and for certain interest groups it is used for practical political purposes. There are several factors that cause religious conflict, the first is an attitude that is too aggressive towards other religions, the second is misunderstood concept of God, and the third is intervention of economic and political interests in religion itself (Zainuddin, 2013).

The Hindu nationalist ideology championed by the BJP Party is a Hindutva Hindu ideology. This ideology believes that Hindu culture must be maintained and involved in state life. Hindutva itself must be understood as a political ideology that leads to Hindu fundamentalism (Sharma, 2020). Hindutva ideology is a doctrine that aims to affirm Hindu identity in India as a unity of state, nation and region (Chacko, 2023, p. 556). The BJP Party leader wants the formation of a Hindu state caliphate, which gives the main position to Hindus in India. This ideology also believes that Hindutva is part of the history of Hindustani people. This ideology wants India to become a Hindu country and all acts of discrimination against minority groups are legalized by the state (Agustin, 2020). If this ideology is abolished, it will be the same as destroying Hindu civilization. Membership of the BJP Party is increasing day by day, with the number of BJP Party members recorded at 180 million, more than followers of the Congress Party, which only has 20 million members (Nalarpolitik, 2021). This makes the current government in power easily mobilize the networks they have to maintain power in the land of Hindustan.

Several previous studies discussing identity politics can be found in a study by (Chipato, 2023) which explains identity politics played by political parties in African countries based on the ideology of Pan-Africanism which emphasizes the value of solidarity and unity of African society in voicing the spirit of anti-colonialism. Study from (Taufik and Pratiwi, 2021) explains the identity politics used in Donald Trump's campaign in the 2016 presidential election based on the ideology of America First: Make America Great Again, which emphasizes national security issues, such as terrorism and

immigrants. Furthermore, a study from (Djuyandi and Ramadhani, 2019) explains the identity politics played by Islamic community organizations in Indonesia which are based on Islamic ideology in voicing the spirit of Muslim morality.

These previous studies emphasize identity politics based on the ideology of Pan-Africanism in fighting for the spirit of anti-colonialism, identity politics based on the ideology of American nationalism in fighting for the spirit of national security, and identity politics based on Islamic ideology fighting for the spirit of Muslim morality. Meanwhile, this study explains the identity politics in India, which is based on Hindutva ideology in fighting for the spirit of Indian Hindu nationalism. This research offers novelty in understanding the study of identity politics, especially identity politics based on Hindutva ideology, which discusses political strategies and government policies that are influenced by the symbols and values of Indian Hindu beliefs. And understanding political strategies and policies based on Hindutva ideology has never been discussed before.

METHOD AND THEORY

This research uses a qualitative approach based on literature studies. Literature studies have the function of explaining a phenomenon based on several relevant literatures. The type of data used is secondary data in the form of journals, books, online articles, and online newspapers which are relevant to the research topic. The data validity technique used is source triangulation. Source triangulation is obtained through the process of verifying different data, which comes from literature studies such as journals, book, and official websites. Finding different data will produce new views (insights) regarding the phenomenon studied (Pradistya, 2021). This new view will produce an increase in knowledge, which is helpful in obtaining reliable information (Pradistya, 2021). The validity of the data is obtained by verifying the data used in order to obtain valid results.

The theory used in this research is the identity politics theory of Manuel Castells. Castells' theory essentially wants to explain the occurrence of social movements based on shared identity. Castells believes that the global social movements that are taking place in various parts of the world are based on the desire to gain recognition and equal justice in various fields. Castell uses the terminology of "in victory and in defeat" to refer to the situation of how a social movement is able to change values and institutions in society (Watson, 1997, p. 133). In Castells' view, there are three types of identity that influence people's lives: legitimizing identity, resistance identity, and project identity.

Legitimizing identity is an identity that is formed through institutions in society, such as political parties, labor organizations, or churches (Calabrese, 1999, p. 176). The existence of this group is usually referred to as a civil society group, where this group is able to influence the running of government without resorting to violence (Calabrese, 1999, p. 176). Resistance identity is a form of shared identity caused by conditions of devaluation and domination by the existing system (Calabrese, 1999, p. 177). Resistance to conditions of oppression often goes against existing rules in society. Meanwhile, project identity is a condition when an individual redefines his position in society which is linked

to culture, and the results of this social reconstruction can lead to a transformation of the structure that exists in society (Calabrese, 1999, p. 177).

Castell's thought is also understood as a concept of shared identity that is formed due to the meaning that an individual makes of his position in society. Human individuals carry out social reconstruction of what has been a fact in society, after that the individual will interpret the existing reality, and try to change structures that have not been profitable for him. Social reconstruction carried out by individuals involves historical and cultural values that have been implemented by society.

Political identity in political activities plays an important role for a politician in gaining power. Identity politics played by a group of people based on certain religious, ethnic or racial issues is capable of mobilizing groups that have the same identity as them. Ties based on religion, culture and race have a tendency towards national disintegration. In elections, identity politics is able to influence voters' political preferences, and even influence the results of the election itself (Anisa, Azizah and Wijaya, 2023, p. 69).

According to Porter (Zaini, Sumirat and Ridho, 2023, p. 139), identity politics itself is an attempt to politicize a shared identity, using extreme issues. Identity politics can cause division and communal conflict. In several developing countries, identity politics causes government-run democratic systems to become chaotic, and extreme religious-based groups commit human rights violations by discriminating against minority groups, even committing violence against them. As happened in India, Hindu extremist groups often commit violence and harassment against minority Christian and Muslim communities. The democratic system implemented in India is still a hope rather than a reality.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Hindu Nationalism in India

The political landscape in India is currently controlled by the ruling party, namely the BJP Party, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The BJP party itself has the political direction of Hindu nationalism, which wants the creation of a Hindu Indian state. The BJP party strongly rejects the secular values offered by the Congress Party. The definition of secularism in the Cambridge Dictionary itself is defined as the belief that religion should not be involved in political and social activities (Musni et al., 2023, p. 146). Secular values are seen as being able to eliminate the sacred traditions believed in by Indian Hindus, as secularism is influenced by liberal values originating from Western civilization. The BJP government has reaped the pros and cons in Indian society. The power of this party is often associated with various riots between Hindu-Muslims in India. It is not uncommon for this party leader to be suspected of being an actor who intends to expel Muslims from Hindu areas, and those who criticize Modi's leadership are asked to move to Pakistan (Cnnindonesia, 2022).

Policies created by the government also tend to discredit the position of Indian Muslims, such as prohibitions on the slaughtering of cows, attacks on women who dress

too freely, and harassment of couples celebrating the Valentine's holiday (Cnnindonesia, 2021). In India, the phenomenon of Islamophobia has emerged which has the argument that Hinduism cannot live side by side with Islam, and these two beliefs have no common ground so they must clash (SIKANDER, 2021, p. 182). Islamophobic conditions, which resulted in the arrest of a BJP youth leader who was deemed to have made an anti-Muslim post (Arbar, 2022), have become a benchmark for the quality of leadership under the control of the BJP Party. Efforts to distance themselves from secularism can be seen in the appointment of Hindu radicals as chief ministers of the largest state in India. Apart from that, the BJP Party is also considered to be involved in several cases of violence against minorities in India. Therefore, the BJP Party's claim that India is the largest democracy in the world is inversely proportional to this claim (Shaikh et al., 2023, p. 79).

In 2020, the conflict between Muslims and Hindus in India flared again after the passing of a new citizenship law, which was considered to be more detrimental to Muslims in India. Muslims who do not have official documents are at risk of having their Indian citizenship revoked, especially Muslims who live in border areas (Haryono, 2024). Ultimately, this rule forced those without complete citizenship documents to leave India. The citizenship law in India has long been a subject of controversy, and the law is even seen as anti-Muslim because it only provides citizenship status to non-Muslim migrants. Apart from that, in 2022, the conflict between these two groups continued, with Hindu hardline groups destroying dozens of shops owned by Muslims in the state of Madya Pradesh. What's worse, according to the data from Human Rights Watch, in 2022 (Yunariono, 2023, p. 221), there was a protest action using anti-Muslim slogans voiced by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Bajrang Dal groups in several mosques in India.

The religious radicalism that occurs in India cannot be separated from the history of the existence of the hardline RSS group. This group is a militant organization that wants the creation of a Hindu state. Several important figures in India, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, have been RSS volunteers. RSS organizations even claim that Modi is theirs (Joshi, 2014) and expect government policies to reflect the wishes of the RSS organization. The relationship between the RSS and the BJP Party has been likened to that of a parent and child. RSS has produced many influential political figures in India, including Modi. The victory obtained by the BJP Party over several periods cannot be separated from the ideology they offer to society.

The identity politics that the BJP Party also carries out is by claiming that they are descendants of the Aryan nation. The Aryan race is a racial group of Indo-European descent that emerged in the early 19th century to the mid-20th century (Teknopedia.teknokrat, no date). The Aryan race is often referred to as the race that founded Indian civilization and is also considered a superhuman race. Hitler popularized the Aryan race as ubermensch, which means it is the superior race among other races in this world (Waluyanti, 2021). The BJP Party's claim to Aryan identity is the basis for the party's massive expansion in recruiting members. The BJP party wants the establishment of a Hindutva Hindu caliphate controlled by Hindus. This ideology will later lead to religious radicalism and the elimination of non-Hindu and secular groups in India. In maintaining its power, the BJP Party also recruited members from major Hindu figures

in India. Their role is needed to provide ideological influence to society regarding the importance of establishing a Hindutva Hindu state, which originates in Hindu culture and which is the lifeblood of Hindustani society.

Hindutva fascism resembling that of Nazi Germany has threatened the future of democracy in India. The BJP party is a party that adheres to the Hindutva ideology in running the government. The political strategy used by the BJP Party to maintain its power is to recruit massively members of radical Hindu groups in India. This radical group became the strength of the BJP Party when it was hit by various forces who wanted to take over its power, such as recruiting a radical Hindu figure, namely Yogi Adityanath, to maintain its power in the Uttar Pradesh area. Yogi Adityanath is the chief minister of the state of Uttar Pradesh, and also a Hindu figure who is greatly admired in India, and is often considered the reincarnation of a God and God's representative in the world (Pandey, 2022). Hindutva ideology itself has socio-political impacts, in particular giving rise to extremist politics and a tendency to commit violence (extremism) against Muslims.
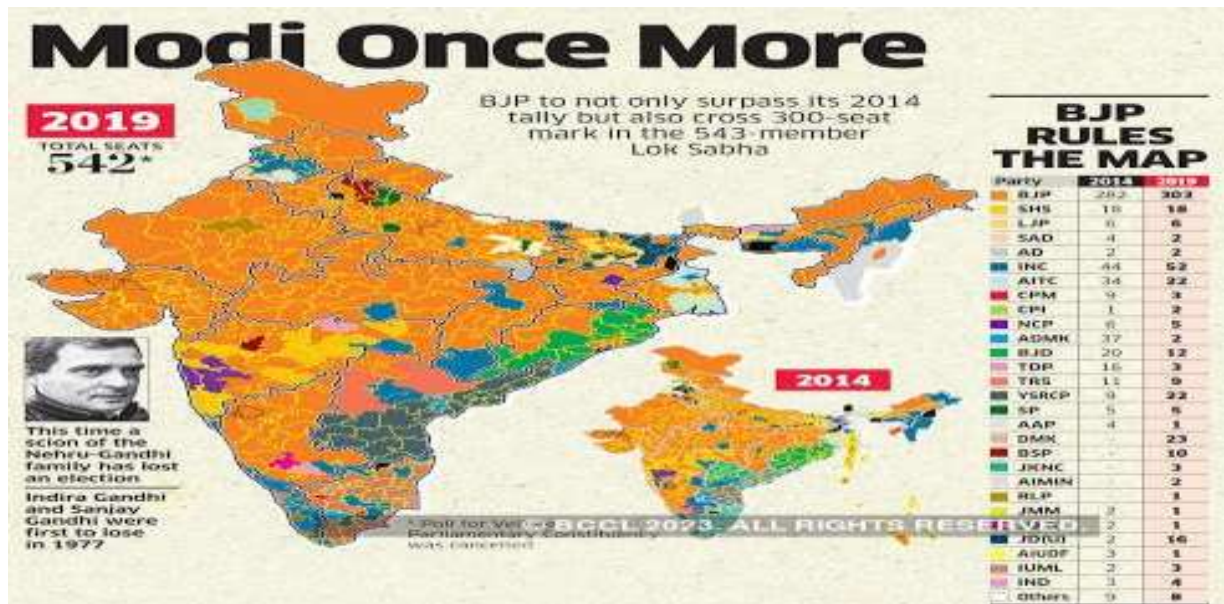
Hindu nationalism in India can also be understood as a reflection of a primordial bond. According to Geertz, a primordial bond is a bond of a nature-given, believed by a group of people to be something that is proper and natural (Rozi, 2019, pp. 18–19). This primordial bond usually arises because of a feeling of belonging to the same race, religion, language, region, and customs (Rozi, 2019, p. 19). In the case of India, ties based on religion and race strengthen ties between fellow Indian Hindus. This primordial bond is sometimes difficult to understand logically because it involves elements of faith and belief in divine values. Primordial societies usually find it difficult to accept groups that are not the same as them. It is not uncommon for this primordial bond to lead to ethnocentrism, which views the group's culture as much better than the culture of other groups.

A political ideology that breathes Hindutva philosophy is what sometimes underlies the policy products of governments in power. The ruling government realizes that to maintain political supremacy in India, one has to use religious instruments. This religious instrument is important in influencing society's political ideology. The population of Indian society is mostly made up of Hindus. Therefore, the political elite will use various methods, including the use of religious symbols, to gain political support. The power of the BJP Party during each leadership period is relatively stable, with this party winning several elections in the Lok Sabha (People's Council). Victory in the Lok Sabha is a reflection of the political power a party has in India. The following is a map of the political strength of the BJP Party in winning Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2019.

Figure 1 provides an explanation of the dominance of power that the BJP Party has in several regions of India. In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, supported by the BJP Party, won the majority of votes in areas previously controlled by the Congress Party. The Lok Sabha elections are also an indication of the weakening political influence of the Nehru-Gandhi family. India's political map cannot be separated from the historical and cultural values of its people. The ideology of the Indian state itself still provides space for Hindu nationalist ideology to coexist with society. Attempts to eradicate this ideology would be tantamount to changing Indian civilization itself.

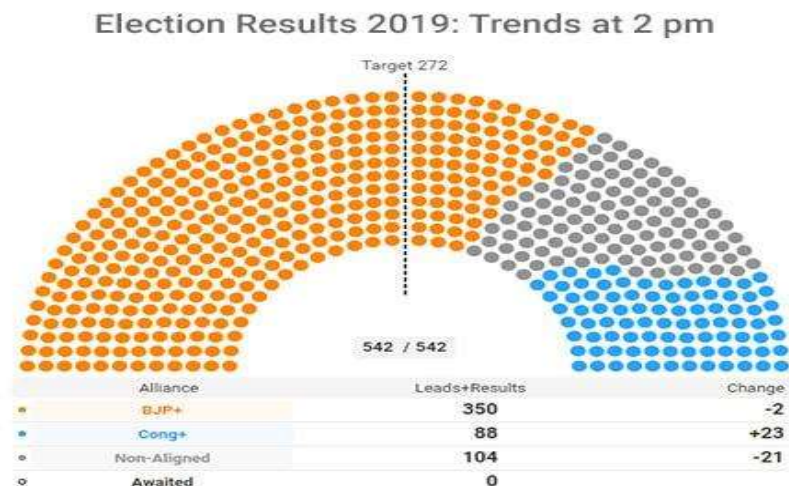Figure 1. The BJP Party's Dominance of Power in the Lok Sabha in 2019

Source: (Economictimes.indiatimes, 2019)

The competition between India's two influential political parties cannot simply be eliminated. The BJP and Congress parties always compete to win votes in several core regions in India. Historically, the Congress Party is quite an influential party and has several important cadres, one of which is Jawarhalal Nehru who once served as prime minister. The ideology of the Congress Party is anti-colonialism, liberalism, and prioritizing secular values in government politics. However, the dominance of the Congress Party did not last long and was replaced by the dominance of the BJP Party, which was based on Hindu nationalist ideology. The following diagram shows the political competition between the BJP Party and the Congress Party in the 2019 elections.

Figure 2. Results of the BJP Party and Congress Party Seats in the City Council

Source: (Ndtv, 2019)

Figure 2 above explains the results of the seats obtained by the BJP Party and the Congress Party in the City Council in the 2019 elections. This data shows the political dominance of the BJP Party, which controls more than half of the seats in the City Council, indicating a large portion of the BJP Party nominating the prime minister from their party. If a party can control the votes in the City Council, the candidate for prime minister they propose will automatically be elected. The BJP Party's control of the Indian parliament is quite strong because of the various political propaganda they have created to influence society's political ideology. The central issue that is usually an instrument of influence for the BJP Party is the issue concerning Hindu values which tend to discriminate against minority groups in India. The propaganda expressed by the BJP Party greatly influences people's political preferences when choosing a prime minister.

Identity Politics through Hindu Symbols

The BJP party has become one of the most influential parties in India due to its ability to use Hindu religious symbols to build political power. The BJP party has a political strategy that also uses caste politics. The caste politics carried out by the BJP Party is to embrace all caste groups in India. The caste groups targeted by the BJP Party come from high castes and low castes. These caste politics aims to consolidate the power of all Hindus in India. This caste politics is often implemented with discriminatory actions against non-Hindu groups.

The ideology used by the BJP Party is Hindutva, which believes that Hindus in India are one group of one nation and must unite to establish a Hindu caliphate state (Nalarpolitik, 2021). Hindutva ideology is also reflected in the policies pioneered by the BJP Party, such as the cow protection policy (Alder, 2017). Cows are animals that are considered sacred by Indian Hindus. The cow protection policy is considered a way to discredit Muslims in India. The manifestation of Hindutva ideology is also associated with long-term projects created by the Modi government to eliminate democratic rights such as suppressing protests and dissent from the Muslim minority in India (SIDDIQUI, 2022, p. 95). Apart from that, when campaigning in India's most populous state, Uttar Pradesh, the BJP Party promised to pass a law that would end the existence of rivers of cow, ox, and buffalo blood (Alder, 2017). Apart from that, the government also imposed bans and harsh measures on slaughterhouses, which were mostly owned by Muslims (Alder, 2017). Apart from implementing a ban on beef slaughter, sometimes there are acts of violence committed against people who still eat or slaughter beef (Alder, 2017). This act of violence was carried out by certain individuals in the name of a Hindu organization.

Identity politics with radical nuances can also be seen in the efforts of certain groups to voice the ethos of Hindu culture itself. The Hindu cultural ethos is reflected in the prohibition of alcohol consumption and corruption, which is contrary to Hindu morality (Alder, 2017). The use of symbols associated with religious morals often becomes a political instrument used by political parties to seek support for certain groups of society. Caste symbols, cow protection politics, prohibition on wearing free clothing, discrimination against Muslims, and the prohibition on celebrating Valentine's Day become everyday

politics in India. Hindus are the majority group that inhabits India, and almost 80% of the people come from this group. The rest are Muslim and Catholic. Frictions sometimes occur between Hindu extremist groups and Muslims in India, which cannot be eliminated because the government often creates policy products that tend to discredit non-Hindu communities.

The case in India can be explained in terms of legitimizing identity concepts by Castells, which are where identity is formed and institutionalized in political organizations such as political parties. The BJP party identifies itself as an ideological Hindutva group. This political group claims to be the custodian of Hindu culture in India and is highly critical of liberal policies originating in the West. This institutionalized identity is expressed in government policies that benefit the Hindus in India. These policies were implemented in the form of prohibiting eating beef, closing slaughterhouses, harassing Indian people who dressed too freely, and carrying out anarchic actions against minority groups. Extreme identity politics dramatically influences the quality of government leadership. A government will not be objective and tend to be based on subjective values in managing the country. Subjective leadership based on shared religious, ethnic, or group identities will lead to discriminatory practices against certain groups.

Identity politics carried out by political parties in India will lead to clashes between civilizations, especially Hindu and Muslim civilizations in India. Samuel Huntington's book titled "The Class of Civilization and The Remaking of World Order" explained that trends in relations between countries are ultimately determined by the shared identity of a country, especially those based on the same civilization, culture and religion. In his thesis, Huntington emphasized various assumptions originating from Western scientists who viewed Islam as aggression and hostility (aggression and threats) (Fitria, 2009, p. 48). Apart from that, he also stated that after the Cold War, the ideology of communism would be replaced by a liberal ideology that would apply globally. The liberal ideology in question is democracy, which emphasizes the principles of freedom and respect for human rights. Huntington identified nine important civilizations in the world: Islamic, Hindu, Chinese, Latin American, Japanese, Buddhist, Orthodox Christian, Western, and African civilizations. Huntington explained that the core of relations between countries is determined by elements of civilization, which contain culture and religion. The conflict with religious nuances originates from the historical origins of the very different Hindu and Islamic civilizations. These differences in civilization will give birth to different perspectives, ways of thinking, and ways of living, and these differences can lead to anarchic conditions if there is no sincerity on the part of each party to accept these differences.

Identity politics in India is also able to explain that the world is currently vulnerable to cultural conflicts, where culture is related to historical values, religious values, and belief values which sometimes cannot be explained logically. A community that lives in a region or country will have strong ties with communities in other regions or countries due to the similarities in culture and religion, which act as a unifier between these nations. The BJP Party's claim to be a party with a Hindu ideology does not always reflect the

spirit or proper Hindu values. The principles of mutual respect and cooperation were not really demonstrated during the BJP Party's rule. Some members of the BJP Party tend to direct their activities towards anarchist actions that corner minority groups. In India itself, the practice of discrimination against certain religions is quite high, sometimes also impacting the employment sector. Caste politics also occurs in India, where the tendency is for higher castes to consolidate political power to support certain political parties.

The cultural system also influences the political behavior of society in India. The caste system in India is still strongly adopted by its people. The caste system in India is said to be the gap between high-caste and low-caste groups. Social inequality due to caste differences is very strong in India. The lowest caste in India is the Dalit (sudra). This caste group is often not treated appropriately and tends to be rejected in social life. This caste system influences all aspects of Indian society's life, starting from the marriage system, work, and naming. The caste system used in India affects access to education and the economy for certain castes, and this causes access to certain resources to be limited and of course will lead to economic inequality (Alam et al., 2023, p. 136). Everything is adjusted to the caste group. It is not uncommon for certain individuals to politicize caste differences to make it easier to achieve political office.

Identity politics is also often linked to issues of political morality. The quality of the power system exercised by state officials or politicians is also determined by the narrative or message conveyed by politicians when campaigning. In general, identity politics is used by marginalized groups whose aim is to fight injustice (GP, 2022). These marginalized groups will be united by similarities in ethnicity, religion, race, gender and certain groups. Identity politics can also arise as a result of a system that tends to oppress and judge certain groups. Identity politics itself has both positive and negative contents. Positive identity politics is able to protect the interests of marginalized groups. Meanwhile, negative identity politics will lead the country toward disintegration. The disintegration of this country will create divisions, loss of solidarity between nations, and fatally give rise to very anarchic physical conflicts. The Indian political constellation cannot be separated from the issue of religious, ethnic or racism. This issue is the instrument that is considered the most effective in influencing people's behavior. Racism-based politics often beats program-based politics. Racism politics influences people's political ideology when choosing leaders, especially in elections.

The chaos of politics in India due to racism politics is explained in Khushwant Singh's book titled "The End of India". In the book, Singh stated that India has a bleak future and is heading towards an apocalypse (Fasya, 2023). Hindu fundamentalism in India is increasingly showing its aggressiveness. Political parties based on radical ideology, discriminatory political leaders, and policies that discredit minority groups are indicators of India's decline in the political context. Political parties are sometimes the actors behind acts of violence against Muslims in India. India, which is said to be one of the largest democratic countries in Asia, is slowly experiencing setbacks in upholding democratic values in the lives of its people. The principles of freedom and justice tend to decline along with the rise of religious-based radical actions. Groups who want the formation of a Hindu state caliphate try to eliminate and expel those who have different

backgrounds. When the Congress Party was in power, the values of democracy, state secularism, and the principles of justice were upheld. However, after the BJP came to power, all political moral values were ignored. Political decline in India can also be judged by the government's inconsistency in upholding democratic values.

Political dynamics in India are still facing various polemics, especially the struggle for influence between the two major parties in India, namely the BJP Party and the Congress Party. The two parties have very different political ideologies; where the BJP Party has a Hindu nationalist ideology, while the Congress Party has a liberal ideology. According to Lyengar and Vecchi, political polarization can occur due to divisions between groups of society who have ideological differences and differences in identity, where these groups compete to obtain resources and power (MUKRIMIN, 2023, p. 115). These ideological differences greatly influence the leadership model and policies adopted by the Indian government. The BJP party, as the ruling government party, is very aggressive in implementing Hindu nationalist policies which often discriminate against Muslim and Christian minorities in India. The Indian constitution itself explicitly states the principles of egalitarianism which upholds equality for all its people, and even the government system in India is required to implement the principle of secularism, by not bringing religious matters into the political life of the government. And for several periods of government, the Congress Party under the leadership of Gandhi and Nehru firmly rejected religious discrimination and highly upheld democratic values. Even the Modi government has begun efforts to change the image of its leadership by protecting victims of religious radicalism, but still pressure from various interest groups often overpowers existing authorities. The policy that was created seemed to want to get rid of minority groups out of India. India, which is seen as one of the largest democratic countries in the world, is apparently unable to implement democratic principles based on the values of freedom, justice, and equality in the lives of its people.

CONCLUSION

The political style displayed in India currently is based on issues of tribe, religion, race, inter-group or racism, which is based on the ideology of Hindu nationalism. Hindu nationalist ideology wants the formation of a Hindu state caliphate which aims to protect Hindu culture in India. The BJP party is a ruling party that consistently applies Hindu values as a basis for carrying out leadership in India. This party uses identity issues as a strategy to consolidate political power from the radical Hindu groups. Hindutva Ideology is an ideology that seeks to fight for and protect Hindu culture from various attacks by liberal ideologies originating from the West. Identity politics based on the values/spirit of Hindu teachings are implemented in Indian government policy products, which often discredit minority groups. Identity politics, based on Hindu nationalist ideology, occupies a superior position, while other political ideologies are seen as inferior. Political parties in India use this Hindu ideology as a political instrument that is able to provide opportunities for their elites to consolidate their political power during elections.

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