

A Case Study on Ideological Difference between Indian Right Wing and Left Wing

Tushar Gauswami¹, Hetanshi Limbad^{2*}, Jignesh Vidani³

LJ University

Corresponding Author: Tushar Gauswami, Hetanshi Limbad

TusharGauswami26@outlook.com

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ABSTRACT

This study examines ideological difference between left wing and right wing political ideologies in India. Our research contains historical development, core Principles and how ideologies work in Indian politics. The Research methodology we use here is secondary study which is on existing scholarly literature, historical records, and case studies for the conclusion. The key findings from this research are that right-wing ideology is associated with Hindu nationalism, market-oriented economic policies and a strong government and the left-wing ideology is associated with secularism, social justice and state intervention in economic matters. This case study explores the differences between these ideologies, focusing on their historical developments, theoretical underpinnings, and implications for modern-day India

INTRODUCTION

A political ideology is a set of beliefs and values that guide governance, policymaking, and societal priorities. (Vidani, 2015) It often draws from a combination of elements found in both left-wing and right-wing ideologies, as people seek a balance between diverse perspectives. (Vidani& Solanki, 2015) For example, individuals may support government intervention to ensure equality and social welfare—characteristic of left-wing ideologies—while also valuing personal responsibility, economic freedom, and limited government, which align with right-wing principles. (Solanki &Vidani, 2016)

Right-wing ideology emphasizes conservatism, cultural nationalism, and market-driven policies. (Vidani, 2016) It prioritizes traditional values, self-reliance, and economic liberalization, favoring minimal state interference in economic activities. (Niyati&Vidani, 2016)In India, the right-wing has often championed Hindu cultural identity and policies that reinforce national pride and sovereignty. (Pradhan, Tshogay, &Vidani, 2016)

The focus of the left-wing ideology was on social justice, equality, and redistributive resources. (Modi, Harkani, Radadiya, &Vidani, 2016) In this way, it favored a more activist state role in terms of education, healthcare, and welfare. (Singh, Vidani, &Nagoria, 2016) These were sectors left-wing politics aimed to transform India, for it has long held secularism and labor rights alongside progressive reformist agendas in countering inequality. (Mala, Vidani, & Solanki, 2016)

Most individuals and systems aim to integrate the features of both the ideologies supporting a mix of social justice with economic liberalism or a mix of government intervention and free-market solutions. (Dhere, Vidani, & Solanki, 2016) Understanding the differences of these ideological orientations provides very significant insight into the impact that each has had upon India's political landscape and governance. (Singh &Vidani, 2016)

Relevance in Indian Socio-Political Context

Disparities between Indian right-wing and Left-wing ideologies: India's political landscape is characterized by a plethora of ideologies, each based on the complex historical, social, and cultural realities of the nation. The ideological difference between the Indian right-wing and left-wing represents two starkly different visions of governance, nationalism, and social justice. These two factions, while co-existing within the same political system, often present opposing narratives on what constitutes the future of the nation.

At the heart of the Indian right-wing is Hindu nationalism, articulated most notably by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its associated organizations, such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). These right-wing groups envision India as a primarily Hindu nation, positioning Hindu culture and religious identity as central to the nation's progress.

On the other hand, the Indian left-wing ideology, which is based on socialism, secularism, and social justice, focuses on equality, secular governance, and state intervention to address economic inequality.

This ideological difference is not only a matter of political philosophy but has also become a tool for mobilizing masses and influencing governance in India. Through a detailed exploration of these ideologies, this research paper seeks to illustrate the ongoing conflict between right-wing and left-wing factions in India, their impact on society, and the challenges they present for future governance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Indian political scenario has been considerably influenced by the development of right-wing and left-wing ideologies, which have their origins in its colonial past and global influences. These ideologies not only reflect India's struggle for independence but also its journey toward socio-economic reforms and nation-building in the post-colonial era. Origin of Right-Wing Ideology in India In India, right-wing elements have been associated more with cultural nationalism and with traditional values. It arises out of the socio-political tumult at the turn of the last century in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This period had much to do with a resounding reaction against colonialism and perceived threats to Indian culture and identity. The roots: Organizations such as the Arya Samaj and Brahmo Samaj were formed in the late

19th century, aiming to reform Hindu society with emphasis on cultural pride. They laid the groundwork for later development of right-wing thought. There were figures like Bal Gangadhar Tilak who worked for Swaraj, or self-rule, with the revival of Hindu cultural symbols that further galvanized nationalist sentiments. Formation of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS): The RSS, established in 1925 by Keshav Baliram

Hedgewar, became a leading advocate of Hindutva, or Hinduness, as conceptualized by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar. The organization aimed to integrate Hindus and instill cultural pride with an emphasis on discipline and self-reliance. The RSS's influence grew over the decades, particularly in the political sphere through its ideological offspring, such as the Bharatiya Jana Sangh and later the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Key Ideological Tenets: India's cultural unity and national identity must be nurtured from the Hindu cultural stream. Strong national identity that resists outside influences and internal division must be encouraged. Policies seen as appeasement policies of minority communities at the expense of the majority must be resisted. Impact on Indian Politics: Right-wing ideology, after India's independence, was crucial in forming the debates over secularism, minority rights, and national identity. Late 20th

century saw the upsurge of the BJP as a mainstream party rightwing politics, eventually translated into a spectacular electoral success in the first decades of the 21st century. Emergence of Left-Wing Ideology in India The left-wing ideology in India has been influenced by the larger socialist and communist movement of the world. This movement focuses on social justice, labor rights, and economic equality. It had its emergence in India because of the socio-economic differences created due to colonial exploitation. Global Socialist Thought: The ideas of Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin, and other socialist thinkers had an affinity with Indian intellectuals and activists in the early 20th century. The success of the Russian Revolution in 1917 inspired many Indian leaders to take socialism as a solution to the socio-economic problems of India. Establishment of the Communist Party of India (CPI): CPI was formed in 1925, which formally initiated organized left-wing politics in India. It was to organize the workers and peasants against feudal exploitation and colonial rule. The party had a focus on land reforms, labor rights, and anti-imperialism, which found support among many sections of marginalized society. Role in Labor Movements: The left-wing organized trade unions and peasant movements all over the country. The All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) kind of organizations became the ones to advocate for workers' rights and resist exploitative practices. Socialist Role within Indian National Congress: Within the freedom movement, socialist influences occurred within Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose. Nehru envisioned a planned economy and an integrated, state-led industrial process of India post-independence through such influence of the left within national policy. Fragmentation and Development: The Indian left wing movement has diversified into different groups over the years, including CPI (Marxist) as well as other regionalist Left parties. Despite these schisms, the left-wing remained a strong advocate for poverty, inequality, and social justice policies. Key Movements and Milestones Right-Wing Movements and Milestones: Hindu Mahasabha: Established in 1915, it worked towards protecting Hindu interests and building a unified Hindu identity. Cow Protection Movements: Represented the right-wing's focus on cultural and religious values. Ram Janmabhoomi Movement: Aimed at reclaiming the site of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya as the birthplace of Lord Rama. This movement became a rallying point for Hindu nationalist sentiments in the late 20th century. Left-Wing Movements and Milestones: Telangana Rebellion (1946-1951): A peasant uprising in Hyderabad state led by the CPI against feudal landlords and the Nizam's oppressive regime. Land Reform Movements: It focused on redistributing land to the landless and reducing exploitation of tenant farmers. Naxalite Movement: This movement came into existence in the 1960s as a radical left-wing insurgency for revolutionary change to address rural poverty and inequality. Global Influence

on Indian Political Thought Right-Wing Influences: Nationalism in Europe, mainly the ideas of cultural unity and ethnic identity, inspired Indian right-wing thought. Thinkers like Savarkar adapted these ideas to the Indian context, emphasizing Hindutva as a unifying cultural force. Left-Wing Influences: The Russian Revolution and the global communist movement provided ideological inspiration for Indian leftists. International solidarity among socialist and communist movements facilitated the exchange of ideas and strategies.

METHODOLOGY

Core Principles of Right-Wing Politics

The Indian right-wing political ideology is deeply rooted in the principles of conservatism, nationalism, and market-oriented policies. These principles not only reflect India's socio-political history but also influence the contemporary political discourse.

Conservatism

Conservatism in Indian politics focuses on preserving traditional values, culture, and societal structures. According to Mohan (2018), the right-wing ideology in India is strongly tied to the cultural ethos propagated by organizations like the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and its affiliate bodies. Conservatism here often manifests in the defense of religious traditions, family systems, and hierarchical social norms. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), India's prominent right-wing political party, frequently echoes these sentiments in its policies and rhetoric.

Nationalism

Indian right-wing nationalism is often called cultural nationalism, as its central focus is on the idea of a unified national identity based on the cultural and historical heritage of India. This form of nationalism is discussed at length in the works of Savarkar (1923), who popularized the concept of Hindutva as the cultural essence of Indian identity. Exclusivism within Nationalism under the right-wing: It is exclusionary in some contexts. They demand integration of minorities into cultural mainstream but emphasize the interests of the majority community.

Market-Oriented Policies

The liberalization of the Indian economy in 1991 started the right-wing economic orientation that emphasizes market-oriented policies. This perspective promotes minimal state control over the economy, privatization, and free-market capitalism. According to Bhagwati and Panagariya (2013), the market-oriented reforms have substantially contributed to Indian economic growth and are close to the right-wing approach of self-reliance and entrepreneurship.

Core Principles of Left-Wing

The left-wing ideology in India has a focus on socialism, secularism, and state intervention. These principles are deeply embedded in the country's constitutional framework and have historically influenced its political and economic policies.

Socialism

Socialism in India has its roots in the early nationalist movement and the influence of leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and B. R. Ambedkar. Nehru's vision of a mixed economy, as outlined in the First Five-Year Plan (1951), aimed to balance industrial growth with social equity. According to Chatterjee (2008), Indian socialism seeks to address economic disparities through wealth redistribution, land reforms, and social welfare programs.

Secularism

Indian secularism, in the words of the Constitution, is quite different from Western secularism. It propagates equal respect for all religions and asserts that the state is neutral in religious matters. Madan (1997) says that Indian secularism is more accommodative, with an objective of promoting harmony in a multi-religious society. The left-wing often advocates secular policies to check religious majoritarianism and safeguard the interests of minorities.

State Intervention

The left-wing can be seen to emphasize state intervention in the argument that it supports the government's control over sectors such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure. According to Dreze and Sen (2013), state intervention is necessary for the eradication of systemic inequalities and equitable development. This approach is usually set against the right-wing preference for market-driven solutions.

Comparative Analysis

The ideological division between the right-wing and left-wing politics in India gives birth to a complex interplay of competing visions for India's future. A comparative analysis reveals convergence and divergence in their approaches toward governance, economy, and social issues.

Governance

Right-wing governance emphasizes strong leadership, national security, and cultural integration. It tends to use a centralized approach to decision-making, as is evident in the policies of the BJP-led government. Left-wing governance, on the other hand, focuses on decentralization, participatory democracy, and social justice. The left's approach is consistent with the Gandhian philosophy of "Gram Swaraj" or village self-governance, which encourages grassroots participation in decision-making (Gandhi, 1942).

Economic Policies

The right wing believes in market-oriented policies which emphasize liberalization, foreign investment, and entrepreneurship growth. The left wing criticizes this because it increases income inequality and neglects the welfare of marginalized communities. Left wing economic policies focus on redistribution of wealth, social welfare, and public sector dominance. According to Kumar, 2014, left wing economic model aims at balancing growth with equity; however, it often gets marred in its execution.

Social Issues

The right-wing is known to be on the social issues with the emphasis on cultural nationalism and traditional values. This has been argued to create religious polarization and undermine pluralism. On the other hand, left-wing politics supports progressive social policies, gender equality, and rights of minorities. According to Banerjee (2010), left-wing politics is the only way through which social hierarchies are challenged and inclusivity is fostered.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Key Ideological Differences

Ideological differences between right-wing and left-wing politics in India are vivid, especially in religion and culture, economic policies, nationalism, and social policies. These differences shape the political landscape and influence governance approaches of their respective proponents.

Religion and Culture: Hindutva vs. Secularism

One of the most significant ideological differences is that of approach toward religion and culture. The Hindutva ideology of the right wing underlines the priority of Hindu culture as the foundation of Indian identity. According to Savarkar (1923), Hindutva is not merely a religious construct but rather a cultural one, bringing together India's majority community under a single cultural banner. Critics point out that such an approach marginalizes the minority religions and fosters a majoritarian ethos.

In contrast, the left-wing champions secularism, advocating equal respect for all religions and the separation of religion from state affairs. Madan (1997) argues that Indian secularism's inclusive framework is essential for maintaining harmony in a pluralistic society. This ideological difference often manifests in policy debates and public discourse, with the right-wing accused of communal polarization and the left-wing criticized for appeasement politics.

Economic Policies: Market-Driven vs. Welfare-Oriented

Economic policy is another major area of divergence. The right wing believes in market-driven approach and thus economic liberalization, privatization, and foreign investment. Bhagwati and Panagariya (2013) argue that such policies have stimulated growth and given room for entrepreneurship.

Critics point out that the approach is worsening income inequalities and ignores the welfare of marginalized communities.

The economic model of the left-wing is welfare-oriented, with a focus on redistributive wealth, dominance of the public sector, and social welfare programs. Chatterjee (2008) further states that left-wing policies are aimed at reducing economic inequalities and promoting inclusive growth. This approach, however, is confronted with inefficiency, corruption, and fiscal constraints, which generally constrain its effectiveness.

Nationalism vs. Internationalism

Nationalism is the bedrock of right-wing ideology in India. It supports sovereignty, self-reliance, and cultural pride, which gives the party its strong stand on national security, border control, and economic protectionism. This is epitomized by the "Atmanirbhar Bharat" or self-reliant India slogan adopted by the BJP.

Internationalism on the other hand leans towards left-wing politics where they advocate for global solidarity and cooperation and compliance with international standards. According to Dreze and Sen (2013), left-wing internationalism tries to balance national interest and international responsibility in issues such as climate change, human rights, and poverty reduction at an international level.

Social Policies: Conservatism vs. Progressivism

Social policies are another area of ideological conflict. The right-wing is primarily conservative in its approach to protect the traditional family structure, cultural values, and social hierarchy. According to Mohan (2018), this view often conflicts with progressive movements that seek gender equality, LGBTQ+ rights, and caste-based affirmative action.

On the other hand, left-wing politics is for progressivism and advocates social reforms that challenge entrenched hierarchies and promote inclusivity. According to Banerjee (2010), left-wing social policies are critical in addressing systemic inequalities and fostering social justice. However, such policies often meet resistance from conservative sections of society, thus leading to contentious debates and slow progress.

Comparative Analysis

The ideological divide between the right-wing and left-wing political forces in India has a highly complex interplay of visions for the country's future. A comparative analysis brings out convergence as well as divergence in the approaches to governance, economy, and social issues.

Governance

Right-wing governance relies mainly on leadership, national security, and cultural integration. Its governing style often has a highly centralized decision-making system because of the policy decisions given by the BJP-led administration. In contrast, the left approaches governance with emphasis on decentralization, participatory democracy, and social justice. There is also a left approach towards Gandhian philosophy: "Gram Swaraj," village self-governance. A Gandhian belief focused on grassroots involvement in governmental decision-making processes (Gandhi, 1942).

Problems with and Against

Both right-wing and left-wing ideologies face great challenges in the Indian context. The right wing, with its emphasis on nationalism and traditionalism, can alienate minority communities and hinder social cohesion. Similarly, the left wing, relying on state intervention and redistributive policies, often leads to inefficiencies and bureaucratic hurdles. Moreover, the polarization between these ideologies often results in political gridlock, which hampers effective governance.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The theoretical framework of Indian politics highlights the dynamic interplay between right-wing and left-wing ideologies. While the right-wing focuses on conservatism, nationalism, and market-oriented policies, the left-wing emphasizes socialism, secularism, and state intervention. Understanding these ideological principles and their implications is essential for analyzing the complexities of Indian politics and envisioning a balanced approach to governance and development.

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