

# **HINDUTVA AND ZIONISM**

## **A Comparative Study of Identity, Governance, and Exclusion**

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*This report examines the historical origins, governance mechanisms, and social impact of Hindutva in India and Zionism in Israel/Palestine. It explores how these ideologies shape national identity, citizenship, and belonging, and how they produce, sustain, and justify exclusion.*

**Important Note: This report is advocacy-oriented and intentionally critical. It highlights systemic injustice, historical grievances, and the experiences of marginalized communities. The language is deliberately strong, and the focus is on moral and political analysis rather than neutral description. Readers are encouraged to engage with the evidence and interpretation critically.**

# 1. Introduction

India's soil is layered with memory. It remembers the loot of empires and the footfall of refugees, the Sanskrit chants from temple courtyards and the azaan from mosque minarets, the clatter of markets where languages braided into each other without permission. For centuries, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, and Christians shared the subcontinent.

And yet, in the early decades of the 20th century, a new imagination took shape, one that wanted to tidy up the mess of history, to scrape away its sediment and declare the land singular, Hindu.

Vinayak Damodar Savarkar called it Hindutva—not a religion, but a nation carved out of blood, ancestry, and devotion to a mythical Hindu civilization. In his 1923 *The Essentials of Hindutva*<sup>1</sup>, he argued that being Hindu was not about gods or prayers but about ancestry, territory, and culture. India, he wrote, was fatherland (pitrbhu) and sacred land (punyabhū) only for Hindus, extending reluctantly to Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs while explicitly excluding Muslims and Christians whose holy lands, he spat, lay elsewhere. In a single stroke, Hindutva turned millions into strangers in their own homes.

Savarkar's imprisonment in the Andaman Islands hardened this creed. From his cell he seethed at the privileges granted to Muslim inmates—religious texts, communal prayers—while Hindus were denied the same. To him, this was not just prison politics; it was proof of an eternal conspiracy. Out of these resentments he fashioned a theology of revenge, sharpened in later works like *Six Glorious Epochs of Indian History* and *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?*<sup>2</sup> His writings sanctified violence, dressed up grievance as destiny, and suggested that cruelty was not only permitted but necessary. In *Six Glorious Epochs*, he even mourned that Hindus, when invaded by Muslim rulers, had failed to mirror the barbarity of rape, conversion, or slaughter inflicted on them with equal fervor. In Savarkar's arithmetic, brutality was not a shame but a debt, unpaid and therefore overdue.

A century later, his words are no longer pamphlets on dusty bookshelves. They are policy. They are pogrom. They are lynching videos passed around on WhatsApp. In 2015, Mohammad Akhlaq<sup>3</sup> was killed in Dadri over rumors of beef in his fridge. In 2017, Junaid Khan<sup>4</sup>, fifteen years old, was stabbed to death on a train after being called a “beef-eater” and “Pakistani.” Dairy farmer Pehlu Khan<sup>5</sup> was lynched in Rajasthan despite his papers proving his cattle were legal. Rakbar Khan<sup>6</sup> died as police delayed his medical care. Tabrez Ansari<sup>7</sup> was beaten

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<sup>1</sup> “Essentials of Hindutva,” BJP e-Library, accessed 25 February 2026, <https://library.bjp.org/jspui/handle/123456789/284>

<sup>2</sup> Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, **6 Glorious Epochs of Indian History**, accessed 25 February 2026, [https://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/6\\_Glorious\\_Epochs\\_of\\_Indian\\_History.pdf](https://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/6_Glorious_Epochs_of_Indian_History.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> BBC News, “Why India Man Was Lynched Over Beef Rumours,” accessed **25 February 2026**, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-34409354>

<sup>4</sup> “India: Hate crimes against Muslims and rising Islamophobia must be condemned,” Amnesty International Netherlands, accessed **25 February 2026**, <https://www.amnesty.nl/actueel/india-hate-crimes-against-muslims-and-rising-islamophobia-must-be-condemned>

<sup>5</sup> “Pehlu Khan lynching: ‘We have lost faith in law,’ says victim’s son after acquittal of accused,” Scroll.in, accessed **25 February 2026**, <https://scroll.in/latest/933979/pehlu-khan-lynching-we-have-lost-faith-in-law-says-victims-son-after-acquittal-of-accused>.

<sup>6</sup> BBC News, “India ‘cow lynching’: Police accused of delaying help,” accessed **25 February 2026**, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-44882776>

<sup>7</sup> BBC News, “Jai Shri Ram: the Hindu chant that became a murder cry,” accessed **25 February 2026**, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-48882053>

for hours in Jharkhand, forced to chant Hindu slogans until his body gave out. They are not isolated crimes or accidents; they are the enactments of Hindutva's script. They are warnings written on the bodies of Muslims.

Beyond the mobs, Hindutva has crept into law, schoolbooks, television anchors' throats, and judges' verdicts. Anti-conversion laws, advertised as cultural protection, are weaponized to harass and humiliate. Textbooks are airbrushed, Muslim emperors turned to dust while Hindu kings glow in nationalist halos. The news vomits conspiracy theories about "love jihad." Police file cases against victims. Courts stall or shrug. The state no longer merely tolerates Hindutva—it has become its skeleton.

What began as a cultural and political theory now masquerades as common sense, shaping citizenship, policing food, love, prayer, history. Hindutva does not just govern India; it colonizes imagination itself.

## 2. Palestine: Memory, Exile, and the Birth of Zionism

Across the world, in Palestine, history was already ancient when Europe decided to redraw it. Ottoman rule had mapped its provinces, Crusaders had marched and fallen, empires had come and gone, but the land remained stitched together by villages, markets, olive groves, and prayer. Muslims, Christians, and Jews lived as neighbors—sometimes quarrelsome, sometimes close, always entangled in the ordinary rhythms of farming, trade, and worship. Palestine was not a blank canvas; it was a manuscript written and rewritten across centuries.

In the late 19th century, Jewish communities in Europe—trapped in ghettos, ravaged by pogroms<sup>8</sup> in Russia, Poland, Ukraine—lived in a continent that treated them as parasites and scapegoats. They fled, but borders followed them. America turned them away. The Holocaust had not yet happened, but its shadow was already gathering.

Responses diverged. The General Jewish Labour Bund<sup>9</sup> insisted on fighting for dignity where people already lived, in the languages of solidarity and class struggle. Others, like Theodor Herzl<sup>10</sup>, Menachem Ussishkin<sup>11</sup>, and Vladimir Jabotinsky<sup>12</sup>, conjured another answer: flight to Palestine. Herzl sought imperial patrons<sup>13</sup>, Ussishkin argued Palestinians must be removed<sup>14</sup>, and Jabotinsky declared that only force could secure survival. Alongside this, Chaim Weizmann polished Zionism for diplomats, winning over Britain, while institutions like the Jewish National Fund and Histadrut laid the groundwork by buying land, fencing it, and forbidding Palestinian labor.

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<sup>8</sup> "Pogroms," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), accessed **25 February 2026**, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/pogroms>

<sup>9</sup> "The forgotten history of the Polish Bund, the Jewish socialist organization that resisted the Nazis," *Le Monde*, accessed **25 February 2026**, [https://www.lemonde.fr/en/europe/article/2023/04/25/the-forgotten-history-of-the-polish-bund-the-jewish-socialist-organization-that-resisted-the-nazis\\_6024161\\_143.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/europe/article/2023/04/25/the-forgotten-history-of-the-polish-bund-the-jewish-socialist-organization-that-resisted-the-nazis_6024161_143.html)

<sup>10</sup> Theodor Herzl, *The Jewish State* (1896), Project Gutenberg, accessed 25 February 2026, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/25282/25282-h/25282-h.htm>

<sup>11</sup> Menachem Ussishkin, "Our Program," Open Library, accessed **25 February 2026**, [https://openlibrary.org/works/OL10719577W/Our\\_program](https://openlibrary.org/works/OL10719577W/Our_program)

<sup>12</sup> Vladimir Jabotinsky, "The Iron Wall (We and the Arabs)" (1923), Marxists.org, accessed **25 February 2026**, <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/document/mideast/ironwall/ironwall.htm>

<sup>13</sup> "Zionism in the Service of Imperialism," *People's World*, accessed 26 February 2026, <https://www.peoplesworld.org/article/zionism-in-the-service-of-imperialism/>

<sup>14</sup> Chaim Simons, *A Historical Survey of Proposals to Transfer Palestinians from Palestine 1895–1947* (unspecified publisher, scanned edition), accessed via archive compilation, "Arab Transfer" PDF, *nnty.fun* (download page), <https://nnty.fun/downloads/books/cdn.preterhuman.net/texts/unsorted/arabtransfer.pdf>

In 1917, Britain issued the Balfour Declaration<sup>15</sup>, a colonial promissory note promising Palestine as a “national home for the Jewish people” without consulting a single Palestinian.

Between 1920 and 1947, waves of Jewish immigrants arrived under British protection<sup>16</sup>. As settlements expanded, Palestinian farmers were displaced, and resistance committees—like the Arab Higher Committee<sup>17</sup>—were dismissed as nuisances by the imperial office. The land was quietly being prepared for dispossession.

During 1941–1945, the Holocaust ravaged Europe. Six million Jews were exterminated in camps and forests, leaving survivors staggering into the ruins of the world with nothing. For many, Palestine became not just a homeland but the only imaginable refuge. Zionism was fertilized by ashes—part survival instinct, part colonial opportunity, part imperial convenience.

In 1947, the UN Partition Plan (Resolution 181) carved Palestine into fragments, granting the Jewish minority most of the land while ignoring Palestinian opposition entirely.<sup>18</sup> The ink was hardly dry before the war erupted.<sup>19</sup> What began as civil conflict between Jewish and Arab communities in Mandatory Palestine quickly escalated into a regional war following the declaration of the State of Israel in May 1948. By the time armistice agreements were signed in 1949, an estimated 5,000 to 13,000 Palestinians had been killed, alongside approximately 6,000 Jewish/Israeli deaths, and Israel emerged controlling roughly 78% of the territory of Mandatory Palestine — far more than had been allocated under the UN plan. No Palestinian state was established.

In 1948, the Nakba began.<sup>20</sup> About 800,000 Palestinians were expelled and over 400 villages were erased as olive groves were left abandoned and families carried the keys to homes they thought they would one day return to. Exile calcified into permanence.

Zionism, scholars argue, was not mere nationalism but settler colonialism.<sup>21</sup> Patrick Wolfe called it the “logic of elimination.”<sup>22</sup> The slogan “a land without a people for a people without a land” performed two genocides in one sentence: erasing Palestinians from memory, and making Jewish settlement appear inevitable. By 1982, in Sabra

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<sup>15</sup> *The Balfour Declaration*, 2 November 1917, Avalon Project, Yale Law School, accessed **25 February 2026**, [https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/balfour.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/balfour.asp)

<sup>16</sup> *Report of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry Regarding the Problems of European Jewry and Palestine* (1946), Avalon Project, Yale Law School, accessed 25 February 2026, [https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/anglo.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/anglo.asp)

<sup>17</sup> Matthew Hughes, *Britain’s Pacification of Palestine: The British Army, the Colonial State, and the Arab Revolt, 1936–1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), accessed 25 February 2026, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/britains-pacification-of-palestine/>

<sup>18</sup> United Nations General Assembly Resolution 181, 29 November 1947, United Nations Digital Library, accessed **25 February 2026**, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/209054>

<sup>19</sup> Rashid Khalidi, *The Hundred Years’ War on Palestine: A History of Settler Colonialism and Resistance, 1917–2017* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2020).

<sup>20</sup> Rashid Khalidi, *The Hundred Years’ War on Palestine: A History of Settler Colonialism and Resistance, 1917–2017* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2020).

<sup>21</sup> Rashid Khalidi, *The Hundred Years’ War on Palestine: A History of Settler Colonialism and Resistance, 1917–2017* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2020).

Nur Masalha, *Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of “Transfer” in Zionist Political Thought, 1882–1948* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992).

Fayez Sayegh, *Zionist Colonialism in Palestine* (Beirut: Research Center, Palestine Liberation Organization, 1965).

<sup>22</sup> Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387–409.

and Shatila refugee camps, that logic reached another crescendo with thousands of Palestinians massacred by militias under Israeli watch, showing that even exile did not guarantee safety.<sup>23</sup>

In 1975, UN General Assembly Resolution 3379 labeled Zionism as a form of racism.<sup>24</sup> The designation was later revoked during the Oslo years, reflecting the deep political and conceptual ambiguity surrounding Zionism itself. For Jews, it can represent a national liberation movement, a refuge from persecution, and the hope of survival after the Holocaust. For Palestinians, it has been experienced as a settler-colonial project, a system of displacement, and a source of dispossession. And for the international community, its meaning has shifted with diplomacy, ideology, and realpolitik, sometimes valorized, sometimes condemned. Oslo (1993–95) did not resolve this complexity—it created a labyrinth of split authority, with Gaza fenced off and the West Bank carved into checkpoints and cantons. Settlements spread faster than ever, and the so-called “peace process” became a process without peace, scattering Palestinians into pieces.

International law circled but did not bite. UNSCR 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) called for withdrawal, for negotiation. But the U.S. armed Israel, vetoed resolutions, and turned international consensus into dead letters. The world nodded and looked away.

It is crucial to remember that Zionism was never the unanimous voice of Jews. Bundists, Reform Jews, and entire strands of Jewish life opposed it.<sup>25</sup> They argued that their survival did not require dispossession. But history, written in Europe’s blood and Palestine’s soil, flattened their voices.

### 3. Governance: When Ideas Become State

If Zionism and Hindutva were only ideologies, they might have remained dangerous fantasies. But both found states to inhabit, bureaucracies to command, and armies to enforce their logic. Once ideas seize institutions, they stop being debates and become daily life measured in checkpoints, laws, censuses, and corpses. Amidst this formalization lies their kinship, as Hindutva and Zionism are not merely parallel projects but mirrors finding legitimacy in the other, each learning from the other how to make myth into statecraft.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Amnesty International, *Lebanon: The Sabra and Shatila Massacre* (London: Amnesty International, 1982).

Human Rights Watch (then Middle East Watch), *Israel’s Role in the 1982 Sabra and Shatila Massacre* (New York: HRW, 1983).

<sup>24</sup> **United Nations General Assembly**, *Elimination of all forms of racial discrimination: Zionism*, A/RES/3379 (XXX), 10 November 1975, United Nations Digital Library, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/189598>

<sup>25</sup> “An Exploration of the Long History of American Jewish Opposition to Zionism,” *American Council for Judaism*,

<https://acjna.org/articles/an-exploration-of-the-long-history-of-american-jewish-opposition-to-zionism/>

Central Conference of American Rabbis, “Reform Judaism and Zionism: The Centenary Platform,”

<https://www.ccarnet.org/rabbinic-voice/platforms/article-reform-judaism-zionism-centenary-platform/>

Thomas A. Kolsky, *Jews Against Zionism: The American Council for Judaism, 1942–1948* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), <https://www.bibliovault.org/BV.book.epl?ISBN=9781566390095>

American Jewish Archives, “American Council for Judaism Records,”

<https://collections.americanjewisharchives.org/ms/ms0763/ms0763.003.012.pdf>

“The International Jewish Labor Bund and the State of Israel,” *Verso Books*, <https://www.versobooks.com/en-gb/blogs/news/the-international-jewish-labor-bund-and-the-state-of-israel-1>

“General Jewish Workers’ Bund,” in *The Cambridge History of Socialism*, Cambridge University Press,

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/cambridge-history-of-socialism/general-jewish-workers-bund/F7A5813780EF528BAB1F4F361BECC1BB>

“Anti-Zionism Among Jews,” *Jewish Virtual Library*, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/anti-zionism-among-jews>

<sup>26</sup> Vinayak Chaturvedi, *Hindutva and Zionism: History, Legitimacy, and Statecraft* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2025).

In India, the RSS and its political offspring, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), slipped from the margins into the center, carrying with them the dream of a Hindu Rashtra. In 2014, Narendra Modi—whose tenure as Chief Minister of Gujarat was soaked in the blood of the 2002 genocidal massacres<sup>27</sup>—was sworn in as Prime Minister. Under him, Hindutva ceased to be a whisper; it became state policy. Vigilante mobs lynched Muslims accused of eating beef. Courts looked away. Police filed charges against victims instead of attackers. The state was no longer a referee; it had picked its side.

In Israel, Zionism was baptized as a state in 1948. The “Jewish and democratic” contradiction hardened into law as Palestinians inside the borders became “Arab Israelis,” citizens in name, suspects in practice. The Occupation of 1967 extended Zionism’s reach from a state into an empire—Gaza, the West Bank, East Jerusalem. Settlements rose like fortresses, checkpoints like veins of a new anatomy of control. The Occupied Territories became laboratories for perfecting domination: ID cards, permits, curfews, collective punishment.

Both governments weaponized law. India’s Citizenship Amendment Act (2019)<sup>28</sup> opened doors for every refugee except Muslims, slicing citizenship along religious lines. Israel’s Nation-State Law (2018)<sup>29</sup> declared that only Jews had the right to self-determination, reducing Palestinians to permanent squatters in their own homeland. These were not policies; they were declarations of intent.

Governance turned faith into surveillance. In India, the National Register of Citizens rendered Muslims in Assam stateless overnight, their names missing from lists that decided who belonged.<sup>30</sup> In Israel, family reunification laws forbade Palestinians in the West Bank or Gaza from marrying those inside the ’48 borders, splitting families with military precision.<sup>31</sup> Both states spoke of “security.” Both meant erasure.

Even landscapes were conscripted. In India, mosques were demolished, their sites claimed as temples. In Israel, olive groves were uprooted to make way for bypass roads and separation walls, the soil itself punished for

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“Religious-national identity, civilisational revival: Hindutva and Zionism are ideological cousins,” *Scroll.in*, <https://scroll.in/article/1068970/religious-national-identity-civilisational-revival-hindutva-and-zionism-are-ideological-cousins>

“Hindutva and its relationship with Zionism,” *Hindutva Watch* (Daraja Press), <https://www.hindutvawatch.org/hindutva-and-its-relationship-with-zionism-daraja-press/>

<sup>27</sup> **Genocide Watch**, “The 2002 Gujarat Genocidal Massacres,” *Genocide Watch*, 2 August 2023 (updated 1 August 2024), <https://www.genocidewatch.com/single-post/the-2002-gujarat-genocidal-massacres>

<sup>28</sup> **The Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019**, No. 47 of 2019, Government of India, Ministry of Law and Justice, 12 December 2019, <https://www.mha.gov.in/en/divisionofmha/foreigners-division/acts-rules-and-regulations-pertaining-foreigners-division#18>

<sup>29</sup> **Basic Law: Israel – The Nation-State of the Jewish People** (2018), unofficial English translation (Knesset), <https://main.knesset.gov.il/EN/activity/documents/BasicLawsPDF/BasicLawNationState.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> **Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)**, “India: UN experts urge review of Assam NRC process amid risk of statelessness,” 4 September 2019, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2019/09/india-un-experts-urge-review-assam-nrc-process-amid-risk-statelessness>

**Human Rights Watch**, “India: Assam’s NRC Could Leave Millions Stateless,” 15 August 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/08/15/india-assams-nrc-could-leave-millions-stateless>

**Amnesty International**, “Designed to Exclude: How India’s courts are allowing foreigners tribunals to render people stateless in Assam,” 2019, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa20/1004/2019/en/>

<sup>31</sup> **Human Rights Watch**, “A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution,” 27 April 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/27/threshold-crossed/israeli-authorities-and-crimes-apartheid-and-persecution>

**Amnesty International**, “Israel’s Apartheid Against Palestinians,” 1 February 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/5141/2022/en/>

belonging to the wrong people. The built environment became scripture: temples for one faith, settlements for another.

This is governance as theology. Not secular law, but sacred decree enforced by drones and data. Not democracy, but majoritarianism dressed as destiny. Hindutva and Zionism do not just govern bodies; they govern memory, space, even time—deciding who has a past worth keeping, who has a future worth living.

## 4. The Enemy

Every empire, every supremacist project, needs its shadow.<sup>32</sup> For Hindutva and Zionism, survival depends on conjuring an eternal enemy—always present, never defeated, forever justifying violence. This is their deepest kinship: the invention of the Other.

In India, that Other is the Muslim. Not simply a neighbor, not simply another citizen, but the ghost of Mughal rule, painted as the eternal invader even after seven decades of independence. Schoolbooks are rewritten so that centuries of coexistence shrink into a story of conquest and humiliation.<sup>33</sup> From Babri Masjid to Aurangzeb's tomb, the past is not history—it is weaponry. Pogroms in Gujarat, lynchings over beef, riots in Delhi: each is narrated not as aggression but as self-defense against a permanent threat.

In Israel, the Palestinian is the eternal enemy. A refugee child in Gaza, a farmer in Hebron, a student in Jerusalem—all are collapsed into the single figure of “terrorist.” The state does not distinguish between armed resistance and existence itself. A child throwing a stone, a grandmother keeping the keys to her demolished house, a poet writing of return: all are made into security threats. This flattening is what allows bombs to fall on refugee camps and be called counterterrorism.

The enemy is not only killed—it is made ungrievable. Judith Butler calls it the “differential allocation of grief”: some deaths are mourned, others are statistics.<sup>34</sup> When a Hindu mob lynches a Muslim man in India, the news cycle frames it as “communal tension.” When an Israeli airstrike buries a Palestinian family, it is “collateral damage.” Language does the clean-up work of massacre.

Both projects depend on siege mentality. Hindutva insists that 200 million Muslims are an internal army, waiting to divide the nation. Zionism insists that six million Palestinians are an existential threat to the Middle East's nuclear power. In this logic, numbers do not matter; even a starving child is cast as a danger to the state.

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<sup>32</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

<sup>33</sup> Romila Thapar, *Communalism and the Writing of Indian History* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1969).

Bipan Chandra et al., *Communalism in Modern India* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1984).

Amnesty International, “India 2023,” in *Amnesty International Report 2023/24: The State of the World's Human Rights*, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-asia/india/report-india/>

Human Rights Watch, “India: Events of 2023,” in *World Report 2024*, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/india>

Audrey Truschke, *Aurangzeb: The Man and the Myth* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017).

<sup>34</sup> Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2009).

And yet, the enemy is also necessary. Without the Muslim, Hindutva loses its fuel. Without the Palestinian, Zionism loses its justification. The enemy is the scaffolding that holds the edifice of supremacy upright. This is why peace is impossible: peace would dissolve the enemy, and without the enemy, the project collapses.

## 5. Citizenship, Belonging, and Exile

Hindutva and Zionism both understand that to truly exile someone, you do not only drive them from land—you strip them of belonging itself. You turn them into ghosts in their own country.

In India, this work sharpened with the Citizenship Amendment Act (2019). It opened the door to Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Christians fleeing persecution—but slammed it shut on Muslims. The law was not about refugees; it was about declaring who could never be “of the nation.” Coupled with the National Register of Citizens, millions of Muslims in Assam were rendered stateless overnight, their names missing from government lists that decided who was “real.” Their lives shrank into piles of documents: ration cards, voter slips, land deeds. A missing piece of paper could erase generations.

In Israel, the work had been underway for decades. The Law of Return (1950) granted every Jew in the world the automatic right to citizenship, even those who had never set foot in Palestine. Palestinians expelled in 1948, meanwhile, were forbidden to return to their homes. In 2018, the Nation-State Law stripped away the pretense: only Jews, it declared, had the right to self-determination. Palestinians became permanent residents in their own homeland, citizens without citizenship, tolerated but never equal.

Both states stage belonging as a test. In India, Muslims are asked to prove loyalty daily: to chant “Bharat Mata ki Jai,” to accept their mosques rebuilt as temples, to bear suspicion in silence. In Israel, Palestinians are asked to accept their dispossession as democracy, to prove they are not terrorists by living invisibly. Citizenship becomes conditional, always under review.

This is not law—it is theology written in bureaucratic ink. It is the state saying: your birth does not entitle you, your history does not anchor you, your very existence is provisional. It is the slow violence of paperwork, the quiet terror of never being able to prove that you belong.

## 6. Culture as Battlefield

If citizenship decides who belongs on paper, culture decides who belongs in memory. And here, too, Hindutva and Zionism walk hand in hand—rewriting, erasing, renaming, demolishing.

In India, history is rewritten with saffron ink. Textbooks quietly drop Mughal emperors, gloss over Partition, exalt myth as fact. Temples rise where mosques once stood. The Babri Masjid—torn down brick by brick in 1992—now replaced by a gleaming Ram temple, is less about faith than about conquest, about telling an entire people: your memory is rubble, ours is marble.

In Israel, the story is uncannily familiar. Palestinian villages destroyed in 1948 are replanted with European pine forests, their Arabic names stripped from maps, their ruins buried under parks and settlements. Mosques are shuttered, churches monitored, streets renamed. The Nakba itself is outlawed from classrooms, forbidden to be spoken of—an erasure as methodical as the dispossession that made it necessary.

Both projects share an obsession: to monopolize the past in order to control the future. Every defaced shrine, every demolished home, every rewritten textbook whispers the same message: not only do you not belong here—you never did.

This is why the battle is not just over land or law but over imagination itself. It is about who gets to dream, who gets to tell stories, who gets to say “this was ours.” Hindutva and Zionism know that memory is resistance. So they seek to confiscate it, to police it, to bomb it out of existence.

Culture, then, becomes the front line. Not only in the clash of monuments and curricula but in kitchens, in lullabies, in prayers whispered under siege. It is here, in these quiet acts of remembering, that Hindutva and Zionism face their most dangerous enemy: the refusal to forget.

## 7. Fear and Narrative

Fear is the scaffolding of these states. Hindutva and Zionism understand that violence is only half the work; the rest is in the mind. The other must not only be contained—they must be imagined as omnipresent, omniscient, omnithreatening. Fear becomes habit, ritual, doctrine.

In India, Muslims are cast as conspirators, secessionists, invaders dressed in local skin. Mob violence, legal harassment, and social media propaganda coalesce into the same pulse: you are not safe here.

In Israel, Palestinians are reduced to statistics before they are people. The child throwing stones, the mother planting a garden in Gaza, the grandfather clinging to the keys of a lost home—each is framed as a hazard. Checkpoints, ID cards, airstrikes, settler patrols: all operate under the rubric of “security,” a euphemism that conceals dispossession.

Both regimes weaponize history. Past humiliation becomes present entitlement. For Hindutva, centuries of “Muslim rule” justify lynching and law. For Zionism, European anti-Semitism justifies occupation, settlement, and siege. Victimhood becomes license; trauma is spun into supremacy.

And yet the other is stubbornly human. Every demolished mosque, every lynched Muslim, every bombed school, every uprooted olive grove represents a life that refuses to vanish quietly. Their existence, their grief, their memory—these are the cracks in the fortress of fear.

Fear is distributed through words, through laws, through media narratives. Citizenship, surveillance, and curriculum work together: the state tells the majority “you are besieged,” the minority “you are disposable.” The story is rehearsed endlessly, until it is accepted as fact: the nation survives only by imagining danger at every turn.

But fear has its limits. It may govern bodies, but it cannot govern memory, imagination, or solidarity. For every act of exclusion, every act of terror, there are lives insisting on visibility. Palestinians, Muslims, Christians, Dalits—they do not disappear. They speak, they resist, they remember. And in that stubborn insistence, the narrative of fear begins to crack.

## 8. Resistance and Recognition

For every ideology that conjures the Other, there is resistance. For every state that demands obedience, there are lives that refuse it. Hindutva and Zionism may wield armies, laws, and textbooks—but the human spirit bends neither to propaganda nor to fear.

In Palestine, resistance is woven into the very fabric of daily life. Children fly kites over rubble-strewn neighborhoods, their strings defying drones. Families clutch the keys to homes bulldozed in 1948, passing the memory of those houses down through generations. Prayers are offered under checkpoints; poets and musicians transform mourning into song, grief into global witness. Even in the shadow of siege, Palestinians refuse erasure simply by existing, by naming the villages, by insisting the Nakba is not a footnote but a living wound.

In India, resistance takes its own forms. Women of Shaheen Bagh sat through the winter of 2019, Constitution in one hand, hope in the other, turning protest into pedagogy. Students at Jamia Millia Islamia and Aligarh raised their voices even as police batons fell, reclaiming public space through song, speech, and silent defiance.

Resistance is not only survival—it is creation. Counter-histories are written in exile; counter-spaces are carved out in occupied lands; counter-dreams are stitched from scraps of stolen memory. Each act, each chant, each poem, each carefully tended olive tree insists that plurality, justice, and belonging are not concessions from the state—they are rights. They exist independently of recognition.

Resistance and recognition are two sides of the same coin. To resist is to declare one exists; to recognize is to honor that existence. Hindutva and Zionism may write laws, redraw borders, and destroy buildings—but they cannot exorcise memory, nor silence the lives that insist on being seen.

## 9. The Future

And yet, the story is not over. Every empire, every ideology, imagines its own eternity. Zionism dreams of a secure, Jewish-only homeland, walled and surveilled, where Palestinians are contained or erased. Hindutva dreams of a Hindu-first India, cleansed not by armies alone but by law, education, and memory itself. Both envision a world where the majority is permanent, the other provisional, where democracy is a costume stitched over supremacy.

The consequences of realizing these visions are stark. Democracy hollowed out, reduced to a game for those who fit the prescribed identity. Minority rights erased, subject to the whims of majoritarian law. Neighboring states watch militarized borders, populations excluded, resentment festering into cycles of violence and migration. The dream of a “pure” nation, achieved, is not triumph—it is a warning that the machinery of fear, exclusion, and myth-making can succeed, but at a cost measured in lives, liberty, and the conscience of the world.

This darkness is not inevitable. History is not a line but a braid: memory, resistance, imagination, and solidarity intertwine. If the humanity of others is cradled like a secret flame, a different world is possible. One where fear does not dictate who belongs, where plurality is celebrated rather than erased, where law protects rather than weaponizes, where memory is honored rather than bulldozed.

And so, the future waits in balance. It is written in the keys Palestinians keep to homes that no longer exist. It is sung in the Urdu couplets and the kites of Gaza, whispered in the protests of Shaheen Bagh and Jamia. It is carved

in the olive trees and mosques ruins, in the lullabies and lessons that refuse to vanish. The erased write themselves into existence every day. The future may yet be a page unburned, a place where cruelty is not the only story.

Zionism and Hindutva may imagine themselves as permanent, unchallengeable, inevitable—but humanity persists. And it is in that persistence, in that stubborn refusal to be erased, that the true story of the land, of the people, and of history lives on.