

Reheating the "Fascist" Leftovers:

A Methodological Deconstruction of the TNI "Global Far-Right" Narrative

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Hindutva as a global far-right project

Fascism, neo-fascism and international networks in twenty-first century India

Hindutva is a complex, multi-layered ideology that has become a central pillar of the world's most powerful nation. This book explores the ideological roots of Hindutva, tracing its evolution from a local movement to a global project. It examines the role of the Indian National Congress, the BJP, and the RSS in shaping the ideology, and how it has been used to justify surveillance, repression, and geopolitical aggression. The book also discusses the transnational nature of the ideology, highlighting its influence on other far-right movements worldwide.

Reheating the “Fascist” Leftovers: A Methodological Deconstruction of the TNI “Global Far-Right” Narrative

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Centre for Integrated and Holistic Studies (CIHS) is a non-partisan, independent, research think tank headquartered in New Delhi, India. CIHS is dedicated to enriching individual decision-making by presenting innovative ideas, fostering informed public debate, and advancing effective policy and programme development to advance humanity. Aspiring to positively shape the future of society, CIHS works to share knowledge on pressing global challenges and opportunities by fostering a ‘culture of scholarship ’and advancing informed public engagement.

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Abstract

This essay provides a methodological deconstruction of the Transnational Institute report, “Hindutva as a Global Far-Right Project,” characterizing the document as an exercise in “Polemical Historiography”. It is argued that the TNI report operates on a “Framework of Suspicion” by inappropriately imposing Western socio-political categories, such as 20th-century European Fascism and Neoliberalism, onto a decentralized Indian civilizational phenomenon. The essay identifies several severe methodological failures in the TNI narrative, including “Inferential Inflation” and “Adversarial Semantic Laundering,” wherein organic cultural affinities and distributed diaspora activities are fallaciously recoded as a centralized command-and-control conspiracy.

To correct these misinterpretations, the essay replaces the outdated, centralized “Spider” organizational assumption with the “Starfish” model, positing that global Hindutva is better understood as a distributed, open-source cultural protocol functioning on shared norms and alignment rather than hierarchical instruction. Through an analytical deconstruction of recurring tropes, the alleged economic and institutional pathologies are reframed, presenting India's current trajectory as an exercise in “New Welfarism”, “Institutional Decolonization”, and “Strategic Autonomy”. The essay concludes that the global presence of Hindutva represents a non-Western civilization reclaiming its cultural and political order in a new “Multiplex World,” and dismisses the “fascism” label as an epistemic tool used to preserve Western ideological hegemony.

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Executive Summary

The Transnational Institute (TNI) report, *“Hindutva as a Global Far-Right Project”* (Shayan Shaukat, 2026), represents a quintessential exercise in Polemical Historiography. It is a document that uses the veneer of academic/scholarly inquiry to pursue a pre-determined political objective, failing the fundamental tests of Mechanism Demand and Inferential Necessity. By imposing Western socio-political categories - specifically 20th-century European Fascism, Neoliberalism, and Surveillance Capitalism onto a decentralised Indian civilizational phenomenon, the author commits a series of persistent category errors. Additionally, the report appears to have been created, as is the research pre-work, in isolation by compiling publicly available information into a bouquet of tropes. The report does not cite a single first-person interaction or provide even an orthogonal quote, which suggests the ends were established before the means.

This essay demonstrates that the “global fascist nexus” described by the TNI is an analytical mirage created by Adversarial Semantic Laundering - a process where organic cultural affinity is recoded as a centralised command-and-control conspiracy. Utilizing the Starfish model in Organisational Theory, we show that the phenomenon is better explained as a distributed, open-source cultural protocol rather than a monolithic “Spider” hierarchy. The following deconstruction identifies the persistent evidentiary voids and logical contradictions that render the TNI’s thesis analytically inert, offering instead a superior/better model grounded in civilizational sociology and state capacity restoration.

The bottom line: This article is, at best, a creative and nearly exhaustive collection of all terminologies, which eventually have turned into tropes, used to criticise Hindutva since decades; projecting Hindutva as a global phenomenon is relatively new entrant. The use of these tropes enables the construction of a Strawman, which can be knocked down.

Part I: Methodological Failure of TNI Narrative

1. Introduction: When Description Becomes Accusation

The TNI article presents itself as an analytical inquiry, but a closer reading reveals it to be structurally designed as a “Framework of Suspicion.” The issue is not a mere disagreement over political conclusions; it is the flawed method through which those conclusions are reached. The article repeatedly converts descriptive observations into causal claims without demonstrating the mechanisms required to sustain them. This is the hallmark of Polemical Historiography: the evidence is selected and shaped to fit a pre-existing narrative of “genocidal intent” or “fascist capture.”

The narrative rests on four persistent methodological failures that must be addressed before any genuine understanding of the Indian political landscape can be achieved:

1. **Recoding of Correlation as Control:** Mistaking ideological similarity for organisational integration.
2. **Substitution of Moral Vocabulary for Operational Analysis:** Using labels like “fascism” as interpretive shortcuts instead of rigorous definitions.
3. **Construction of a Non-Falsifiable Framework:** Creating a closed interpretive loop where even contradictory data (e.g., massive state welfare) is read as a tool of repression.
4. **Misfit of Western Frameworks:** The intellectually lazy attempt to superimpose 20th-century European pathologies onto a 21st-century Indian civilizational resurgence.

2. Problem of Inferential Inflation

The TNI article begins by describing a globally dispersed presence - diaspora networks, digital activity, and institutional visibility. It then performs a move of “Inferential Inflation,” quickly escalating these observations into a claim of a coordinated global design. This move is not trivial; it shifts the burden from description to accusation without crossing the evidentiary bridge.

For a claim of coordinated global action to hold, one must demonstrate at least three elements: a Decision-Making Center, a Transmission Mechanism through which directives travel, and a Compliance Structure ensuring adherence. The TNI article establishes none of these. Instead, it assumes that scale implies coordination and that coordination implies control. If this standard were applied consistently, a wide range of globally distributed phenomena - from the global climate movement to transnational academic networks - would qualify as “centralised political conspiracies” under the same logic.

3. Spider Assumption vs. Starfish Reality

Underlying much of the TNI analysis is an implicit, and arguably outdated, model of organization: the “Spider” Assumption. This is the belief that any large-scale phenomenon must operate like a centralised hierarchy with a controlling core (a “brain”). From this premise, all distributed activity is interpreted as hidden coordination.

However, modern organisational theory and network science offer a far better-fitting model: “Starfish” Reality. Starfish-like systems (distributed systems) function without a central command node [8]. They operate through shared norms, the replication of practices, and local autonomy. Coordination in these systems emerges not from instruction, but from Alignment.

When examined through this lens, the phenomena described by the TNI - diaspora engagement, local educational initiatives, digital participation - are entirely consistent with distributed coordination. The

“Sangh” (RSS) functions as an open-source cultural protocol. Like a starfish, it is a decentralised, multi-node ecosystem where autonomous actors operate on a shared “operating system” (values) without a central “brain” issuing commands to the diaspora. The failure of the TNI to even consider this model leads to a systematic misinterpretation of civil society as a “paramilitary nexus.”

Part II: Analytical Deconstruction of Familiar Tropes

1. Semantic Laundering of a “Global Project”

- **TNI Claim:** Hindutva is a “globally embedded twenty-first-century fascism” utilizing digital ecosystems and diaspora networks to reshape global politics.
- **Methodological Failure: Claim Escalation.** The author re-describes global presence (a fact) using a political label (“fascism”) without establishing a causal mechanism.
- **Mechanism Gap: Absence of a Command Structure.** To prove a “project,” the author must show a verifiable link, beyond acquaintance, between the RSS in India and autonomous diaspora actors in California or London. The report fails to do this, relying instead on “guilt by association.”
- **Cognitive Disruption:** If shared cultural identity and digital networking constitute “transnational fascism,” then the global professionalisation of the Indian diaspora in STEM or medicine would also have to be recoded as an “occupational conspiracy.” The author pathologises the organic global presence of a community by recoding cultural mobilisation as political subversion.
- **The Better Model: Distributed, Organic, & a thriving Civil Society.** Hindutva is an open-source cultural protocol. It creates habits (discipline, service, cultural pride) rather than just political instruments. The “global project” is better understood as a decentralised network of voluntary associations.

2. Mapping the “Far-Right”: Correlation vs. Control

- **TNI Claim:** Hindutva is “deeply woven” into a global far-right ecosystem, sharing a “common grammar” with movements like MAGA (or Orbánism - not cited by the report).
- **Methodological Failure: Correlation recoded as Control.** The author mistakes opportunistic alignment and shared vocabulary for structural integration.
- **Cognitive Disruption:** To argue that the “Howdy Modi” rally proves a structural alliance is as analytically thin as claiming a G7 summit proves a secret world government. If appearing on a stage with a US President makes a leader “part of a far-right ecosystem,” then every world leader from 2016-2020 (Trump’s first term as POTUS), is equally implicated.
- **Better Model: Geopolitical Realism + Track II Diplomacy.** RSS’s engagement with Western actors is a standard exercise of entities in a fully-functioning republican democracy in projection soft-power and “civilisational confidence.” It is the behavior of a rising power that is a civilization, a nation, as well as a State.

3. Hindutva and Neoliberalism: The “New Welfarism” Reality

- **TNI Claim:** The movement fuses “market fundamentalism” with “majoritarian authoritarianism” to benefit oligarchic conglomerates (Adani/Ambani).
- **Methodological Failure: Non-falsifiable Suspicion.** The framework is rigged to interpret every economic move as a tool of repression. If the state deregulates, it is “neoliberal fascism”; if it provides welfare, it is “dependency-building.”

- **Mechanism Gap: Absence of Enforcement.** The author fails to show how corporate “oligarchs” enforce ideological compliance on the RSS, or vice versa, given their often-conflicting interests (e.g., *Swadeshi* vs. FDI).
- **Better Model: “New Welfarism”.** As analysed by Arvind Subramanian et.al. [5], the Indian state has *expanded* its footprint through the massive, digitally-mediated delivery of private goods (Jan Dhan, Ujjwala, Swachh Bharat). This is a sensitive, empathetic State exercising socio-economic intervention to deliver last-mile utilities such toilets, bank accounts, and gas cylinders to hundreds of millions. This “Asset-Based Empowerment” is the absolute opposite of the “retracting state” of neoliberalism.
- **Strategic Intent:** To delegitimise India’s economic rise by framing growth as a “fascist” byproduct rather than a developmental success.

4. Militarism, Surveillance, and Article 370

- **TNI Claim:** Militarism is central to Hindutva, with Jammu and Kashmir serving as a template for nationwide repression and “civilisational military power.”
- **Methodological Failure: Epistemic Overreach.** The author treats standard national security measures (UAPA, AFSPA) - used by various Indian governments for decades - as unique artifacts of “Hindutva fascism.”
- **The Mechanism Gap: Lack of Evidence for “Irredentist” Command.** There is zero empirical evidence that legal process of civilizational reclaiming dictates military deployments. No operational plans for “annihilation” or territorial expansion are cited.
- **Cognitive Disruption:** If counter-terrorism laws equal “fascism,” then the US Patriot Act or French emergency laws make those states “fascist.” The author ignores the regional security context - cross-border terrorism from Pakistan - to focus on ideological labels.
- **The Better Model: State Capacity Restoration.** The abrogation of Article 370 is more accurately modelled as a move toward constitutional integration and administrative normalisation. It is an exercise in restoring state sovereignty in a conflict zone, not a “fascist template.”

5. Class/Caste Composition: *Samajik Samrasata*

- **TNI Claim:** Hindutva unites elites and the working class through “ideological consolidation,” while maintaining “Brahminical dominance.”
- **Methodological Failure: Misfit of Western Frameworks.** Applying a rigid Marxist class/caste lens to a movement that explicitly seeks to transcend these divisions results in a total misreading of the data. The argument of “Brahminical dominance” - as projected by the critics of Hindutva - can be empirically defined as “if a person in any system happens to be Brahmin, then s/he is necessarily in the dominant position.”
- **Mechanism Gap: No proof of “Brahminical” Enforcement.** The author ignores the massive leadership surge of OBCs (including the Prime Minister) and Dalits within the socio-political spectrum in India. This data point fundamentally collapses the “Brahminical dominance” thesis. The current president of India is a Tribal woman and the past president is a Dalit. The general formula used by lazy critics of Hindutva is – “when in confusion, “regurgitate” Brahminism.”
- **Better Model: Samajik Samrasata (Social Cohesive-Harmony).** The RSS model works by redirecting caste/class identities into a primary “Hindu” identity, fostering social cohesion. It is an integrative model that seeks a unified cultural identity rather than a “hierarchical preservation.” The stated objects of Vishwa Hindu Parishad are amply clear that building a Hindu consciousness beyond caste divisions is paramount.

6. Rhetorical Weaponisation of Communal Friction

- **TNI Claim:** Anti-Muslim bigotry is a “core political currency” and a “manufactured polarisation” strategy used by the state to maintain a permanent sense of emergency and loyalty.
- **Methodological Failure:** Generalisation from Incident to Intent. The author treats localised communal clashes and tragic, unauthorised acts of vigilantism as systemic, state-sanctioned proofs of a “genocidal project.” This is an exercise in Epistemic Inflation: taking a raw data point (localised violence) and recoding it as a high-level state strategy without demonstrating the intermediate causal links.
- **Mechanism Gap:** Absence of a Command Structure. For “hate” to be an operationalised “political currency,” there must be a demonstrable Compliance Trace - a chain of command where the state or the RSS explicitly directs, funds, or coordinates specific acts of communal violence. The TNI article provides zero primary-source evidence of such a “Hate Department.” By collapsing the distinction between localised law-and-order failures (which are condemned by the state) and centralised state directives, the author constructs a non-falsifiable narrative where every social friction is read as a “fascist tactic.”
- **Cognitive Disruption:** If localised communal friction is sufficient proof of a “totalising state project,” then every race riot in the United States or every instance of religious friction in Western Europe would necessitate labeling those states as “white supremacist autocracies.” The author applies a standard of “systemic intent” to India that they would never apply to Western democracies dealing with similar, albeit differently flavoured, social precocity. The author is citizen of Pakistan – a country with abysmal record for not just the State’s but also society’s role in fomenting violent precocity among the Hindu minorities.
- **Strategic Intent:** To manufacture a narrative of “state-coordinated genocidal intent” in order to trigger international “Responsibility to Protect” (R2P) norms or economic sanctions, thereby externalizing a domestic political struggle that has failed to gain traction within the Indian electoral arena.

7. Hindutva and Global Imperialism: Strategic Autonomy

- **TNI Claim:** Hindutva aligns with “US-led imperialist interests” while pursuing “civilisational irredentism” like *Akhand Bharat* to threaten regional peace.
- **Methodological Failure: Inferential Necessity.** The author treats strategic geopolitical alignments (e.g., the QUAD) as proof of ideological submission to “Imperialism.” This ignores the basic principle of statecraft where nations align based on mutual interests rather than total ideological fusion. Inferring that statecraft is driven by Hindutva is unfounded
- **Mechanism Gap: No Evidence of “Irredentist” Command.** The author conflates cultural-geography maps and philosophical ideals of “civilizational unity” with actual military strategy. There is no evidence of a centralised operational plan, funding, or military directive for the territorial annexation of neighbours. In fact, India’s settlement of long-standing border disputes (e.g., the 2015 Land Boundary Agreement with Bangladesh) serves as a direct empirical contradiction to the “irredentist” claim.
- **Cognitive Disruption:** If strategic security alliances with the United States make a state “fascist” or “imperialist,” then Japan, Australia, South Korea, and the United Kingdom are also “fascist” by the same logic. The author pathologies India’s normal pursuit of regional security and strategic partnerships while exempting other nations from similar labels.
- **Better Model: Strategic Autonomy / Multi-Alignment.** India’s foreign policy is better modelled as a pursuit of “Strategic Autonomy.” It balances relations with the US, Russia, and

the Global South (Multi-Alignment) to maximize its own sovereign interests. *Akhand Bharat* is a cultural-geographic memory of a shared civilizational space - akin to “Europe” or “The Western World” - not a military roadmap for conquest.

- **Strategic Intent:** To alienate India from its natural partners in the Global South by framing its rise as a “sub-imperialist” threat, thereby preserving the existing global ideological and geopolitical order.

8. “Tactical Playbook”: Institutional Decolonisation

- **TNI Claim:** The movement employs a “tactical playbook” of institutional capture, educational revisionism, and “lawfare” (e.g., CAA, NRC) to hollow out democratic institutions from within.
- **Methodological Failure: Description as Condemnation.** The author interprets standard administrative and legislative processes - conducted by a democratically elected government with a clear mandate - as inherently “fascist tactics.” This assumes that any departure from the previous “secular-left” institutional consensus is, by definition, an act of “hollowing out” democracy. It is a value judgment masquerading as a structural analysis.
- **Mechanism Gap: Lack of a Coercive Compliance Trace.** The author fails to demonstrate how the judiciary, bureaucracy, or educational boards are being “captured” through anything other than a shift in the national consensus. If a “playbook” exists, the author provides no evidence of a centralised directive or an enforcement mechanism that forces independent constitutional bodies to comply against their will.
- **Cognitive Disruption:** If updating national curricula or passing citizenship laws constitutes “fascist lawfare,” then the “1619 Project” in the United States or the post-colonial curriculum reforms across Africa and Southeast Asia must also be labeled as “totalitarian revisionism.” The author denies the Indian state the sovereign right to decolonize its own institutions, a right they implicitly grant to Western and other post-colonial nations.
- **Better Model: Institutional Decolonisation.** These shifts are more accurately modelled as a necessary realignment of Indian institutions with the country’s civilizational ethos. After decades of “secular mimicry” inherited from the colonial era, the state is seeking to ground its legal and educational frameworks in a natively *Bharatiya* (Indian) ontological reality. This is an exercise in Sovereign Normalisation, not “institutional capture.”
- **Strategic Intent:** To delegitimise the legal and educational reforms of a democratically elected government by framing them as “fascist tactics,” thereby inviting external academic and legal scrutiny to override domestic democratic outcomes.

Part III: Anatomy of Tropes and Epistemic Monoculture

A central weakness in the TNI article is its reliance on recurring **tropes** - pre-assembled narrative devices that compress complex phenomena into morally charged shorthand. These are not neutral descriptors; they are **interpretive shortcuts** that predetermine conclusions and then select evidence to fit them.

Identifying the Tropes

Across the text, several tropes recur. The list below capture a few select ones:

- **The “Global Fascist Project” Trope:** Converts dispersed cultural activity into an image of centralised conspiracy.
- **The “Infiltration of Institutions” Trope:** Recasts legitimate participation in civil society as covert capture.
- **The “Surveillance/Algorithmic Radicalisation” Trope:** Attributes mass participation to manipulation rather than organic agency.
- **The “Oligarchic Nexus” Trope:** Links economic outcomes to hidden ideological control without demonstrating a mechanism.
- **The “Anti-Muslim bigotry of the State” Trope:** Project localised communal clashes and acts of vigilantism as systemic, state-sanctioned genocide.

Why These Are Tropes

A concept qualifies as analytical only if it is operationally defined, empirically testable, and open to falsification. The tropes above fail all three. They are not operationalised (e.g., “infiltration” is never defined in measurable terms); they are not testable (no criteria for rejecting the claim); and they are not falsifiable (all evidence is interpreted as confirmation). As a result, they function as labels in search of evidence, not conclusions derived from it.

The use of these tropes enables the construction of a Strawman. The target is not the phenomenon of Hindutva as it exists, but a re-coded version of it that has been “laundered” through Western political trauma. This creates an Epistemic Monoculture, where only one (secular-left) ideological set is granted the authority to manage institutions or define history.

Part IV: Sustaining Authoritarianism - The Metric Bias

To legitimise the claim that India is sliding into authoritarianism, the TNI article, seemingly, relies heavily on international democracy watchdogs like V-Dem and Freedom House [1][2], albeit not referred. However, these specific indices have been subjected to intense, granular methodological scrutiny by scholars such as Salvatore Babones and the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM).

Methodological Vulnerabilities

The catastrophic drop in India’s rankings is driven entirely by Subjective Expert Evaluations, not by any measurable decline in objective democratic infrastructure. V-Dem, for instance, utilizes objective sub-indices like “Universal Suffrage” where even single-party states like Cuba receive perfect scores. Consequently, India receives zero statistical credit for conducting the largest, most logistically complex, and genuinely competitive elections in human history.

The math of these indices relies on the personal opinions of a small, often undisclosed group of experts. This produces ahistorical absurdities, such as ranking modern, vibrant India below the 1975-1977 Emergency - a period when democratic elections were physically suspended, the press was

legally censored, and opposition leaders were incarcerated without trial. Equating the current era with a formal constitutional suspension of rights demonstrates a profound, perhaps willful, disconnect from empirical reality.

Part V: Climate Crisis and Eco-Fascism - Speculative Leap

- **TNI Claim:** Hindutva will adopt “eco-fascist” policies, using environmental concerns to justify “resource hoarding” and “minority exclusion.”
- **Failure: Speculative Extrapolation.** The author invents a future “eco-fascism” without a single piece of evidence, projecting Western far-right tropes onto an Indian movement that has a deep civilizational reverence for nature.
- **Mechanism Gap: Total Absence of “Eco-Fascist” Policy.** India’s global leadership in solar energy (ISA) and the **LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment)** initiative - endorsed by the UN - contradict the “resource hoarding” thesis.
- **Better Model: Prakriti-Sanskriti Integration.** Hindutva’s approach is rooted in the belief that human well-being and environmental health are inseparable - a “Dharmic Ecology” that is better than the Western “man vs. nature” binary.

Concluding Observations

The TNI article raises concerns that resonate with broader debates about power, identity, and democracy. However, shared concern does not justify weak method. When descriptive observations are elevated to causal conclusions without demonstrating mechanism, and when moral vocabulary substitutes for analysis, the result is distortion.

Hindutva is not a “threat” to global pluralism but a participant in a new, Multiplex World. In this world, non-Western civilisations are reclaiming their right to define their own social, political, and cultural orders after decades of colonial-inherited mimicry. The attempt to label this resurgence as “fascism” is ultimately a defensive move intended to preserve Western ideological hegemony.

A more disciplined approach - grounded in Inferential Necessity, Mechanism Demand, and Conceptual Clarity - reveals a different picture: not a centralised project, but a distributed network operating within the domain of civil society, where alignment arises from shared norms rather than command. By replacing the “Spider” of conspiracy with the “Starfish” of organic alignment, we move from a framework of suspicion to a framework of genuine explanation.

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