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THE HINDU RIGHT AND INDIA'S RELIGIOUS DIPLOMACY

By Ian Hall

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

India is investing more in religious diplomacy, arguing that the world might learn lessons from that country's extraordinary repository of philosophical and spiritual traditions. This diplomacy has an increasingly Hindu character, reflecting the present government's conviction that India is essentially a Hindu civilization. This paper examines the drivers of India's contemporary religious diplomacy, its target audiences, its practitioners within and outside the government, and its likely influence.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- In general, India's religious diplomacy has assumed a markedly more Hindu character since Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party took power in 2014.
- However, the messages of India's religious diplomacy vary depending on the audience at which it is aimed.
- Much of India's religious diplomacy is both practiced by unofficial diplomats, including sections of India's diaspora, and aimed at other Indians both at home and overseas.
- It is not clear that India's religious diplomacy is ameliorating concerns about religious freedom or the condition of minorities within the country.



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INTRODUCTION

The Indian subcontinent is the birthplace of four religions—Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, and Sikhism—and a major center for several others, including Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, and the Bahá'í Faith. The modern state of India is also an inheritor of an extraordinary collection of philosophical and spiritual traditions.

Indian leaders have long suggested that insights can be found in this rich inheritance that might help humanity manage some of the challenges we face. India's current prime minister and leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party ("Indian People's Party" or BJP), Narendra Modi, is no different. Since coming to power in 2014, Modi has repeatedly argued that his country has much to teach the world.¹

The lessons the Modi government would like the world to learn are, however, different from those promoted by most previous Indian governments. The BJP and its allies are committed to transforming India's culture, society, economy, law, and governance to reflect what they take to be the intrinsic *Hindutva* or "Hindu-ness" of Indian civilization.² In parallel, they want to infuse the character and conduct of India's international relations with a Hindu nationalist interpretation of Hindu ideas and values.³

Today, as a result, India's religious diplomacy is increasingly Hindu nationalist in character. It is conducted by the prime minister himself, leading members of Modi's government, and Indian officials. It is amplified by the broader Hindu right inside and outside India, which includes bodies affiliated with the BJP, non-governmental organizations run by prominent Hindu religious figures, and Indian diaspora groups spread throughout the world.⁴

This paper explores the reasons why the Modi government and the Hindu right invest effort in religious diplomacy and what they hope to achieve, how they practice this diplomacy, who is involved, and whether this work is succeeding. It observes that much of India's religious diplomacy—somewhat

paradoxically—is directed inward, at domestic audiences, or at India's diaspora communities.

The paper also observes that India's religious diplomacy aimed at foreign audiences tends to be less exclusively Hindu in character. The Modi government recognizes—at least tacitly—that the idea of *Hindutva* and the project of transforming India to reflect what Hindu nationalists consider its fundamental "Hindu-ness" are controversial inside and outside the country. To try to assuage concerns about Hindu majoritarianism, when addressing foreign audiences the prime minister and other BJP leaders tend to emphasize "softer" Hindu principles or practices, such as yoga or environmental consciousness, and to assert that their government values religious and cultural "diversity."⁵

VISHWAGURU INDIA

The idea that India is destined to lead the world into a better future is deeply rooted in modern Indian society. The notion emerged in the nineteenth century in the Hindu revivalist and secular nationalist responses to European critiques of Indian ideas, beliefs, and practices.⁶ The revivalists and nationalists argued that the critics were wrong to portray India and its religious traditions—especially Hinduism—as backward, degraded, superstitious, or even cruel.⁷ They presented a different account, insisting that India's culture in general and Hinduism in particular contained much worth preserving and promoting, including ideas and practices that could benefit the rest of the world.

The Bengali monk Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) famously made this argument at a meeting of the Parliament of the World's Religions held during Chicago's World Fair in 1893. India was unusual, Vivekananda insisted, in being a nation that had "sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth." In his view, this was because Hinduism taught "both tolerance and universal acceptance."⁸ For these reasons, he promised both Western and Indian

audiences that India would soon be recognized as a *vishwaguru*, a world or universal guru, that would lead the world towards peace and mutual respect.⁹

This idea was eagerly received within India, especially by Vivekananda's fellow Hindu revivalists and later by the Hindu right. It still resonates today. Vivekananda's promise is regularly recalled, for example, by Narendra Modi. During Modi's first speech to mark India's Independence Day on August 15, 2014, he recalled Vivekananda's predication that "Mother India would [one day] be seated as a World Guru."¹⁰

The conviction that India should be a *vishwaguru*, shared by a sizable proportion of Hindu nationalists who believe it is destined to become one, drives much of the Modi government's use of religious diplomacy.¹¹ The idea helps to explain what that diplomacy does in its efforts to communicate the "truths" of Hinduism to others and to demonstrate the value of interreligious dialogue. Its ostensible aim is not just to promote understanding, but to bring about a more lasting and just peace in the world by revealing commonalities between belief systems and devotional practices.

However, the *vishwaguru* idea does not fully explain what India does or why it does it. The Modi government's religious diplomacy has limits, some imposed by a lack of resources—explored in more detail below—and some by ideological constraints. For example, a deeply ingrained fear among Hindu nationalists about the appeal of Christianity to Indians holds back the present government and its proxies from engaging Christian interlocutors.¹² The considerable effort India's official and unofficial religious diplomats put into dialogues with Buddhist, Hindu, and some Muslim constituencies contrasts with their relative lack of interaction with Christian leaders. Modi's visit to the Vatican in October 2021 and the as-yet-unfulfilled invitation extended to Pope Francis to visit India are rare exceptions to this rule.¹³

Aims

Exactly what *vishwaguru* India should teach is also contested. Vivekananda favored the promotion of elements of the Advaita Vedanta tradition of Hinduism, especially the notions that god and creation are one unity, all religions are simply different pathways to the same truth, and the rational and material must be balanced by the spiritual. He argued that the universal acceptance of these ideas would eventually bring about global social harmony.¹⁴

Vivekananda's agenda was and remains influential, but others have also been advanced. Mahatma Gandhi offered an alternative partly shaped by Advaitism, but shaped too by his reading of Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and modern secular philosophies. He emphasized nonviolence, *satyagraha* ("truth force"), and *sarvodaya* (literally "uplift of all"), advocating social and political arrangements that he believed would deliver peace, justice, and social welfare.¹⁵ For his part, Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister, preferred a more secular vision of the lessons India might offer the world. But his advocacy of a new internationalism also regularly appealed to the ancient Mauryan emperor Ashoka, a convert to Buddhism who advocated tolerance and peaceful co-existence, as well as to Gandhi and other spiritual leaders.¹⁶

The present Indian government steers closer to Vivekananda's agenda than the alternatives, with some points of divergence. This is understandable: the BJP's political philosophy builds on Vivekananda's thought, as well as the ideas of Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950) and the Hindu nationalist ideologues Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1883-1966), Madhav Sadashivrao Golwalkar (1906-1973), and Deendayal Upadhyaya (1916-1968).¹⁷ It blends elements of Vivekananda's concept of India as model of tolerance and harmony with Savarkar, Golwalkar, and Upadhyaya's insistence that it should become a Hindu *rashtra*—a polity guided by Hindu dharma

or cosmic law, as they interpret it—in which Hindu culture dominates.¹⁸ In their view—and indeed perhaps also in Vivekananda’s view—Hinduism is superior to other religions and should prevail at home and indeed in the world.¹⁹

Audiences

The Modi government’s public and religious diplomacy advances different accounts of India to different audiences, including the domestic electorate and diaspora, which commonly respond positively to potential signs that the country—and Hinduism—is respected abroad.

Mainly to Western publics, New Delhi projects a benign vision of India as a source of ancient ideas and practices like yoga, Ayurvedic medicine, or environmental consciousness; as the birthplace of Gandhi; and, of course, as a vibrant democracy and an economic opportunity. The Modi government’s successful campaign at the United Nations General Assembly for an International Day of Yoga, now held every June 21, is emblematic of this approach.²⁰ In this context, the religious or Hindu dimensions of ideas and practices are often downplayed or even absent, even when concepts like *vasudhaiva kutumbakam* (“the world is one family”)—the Sanskrit phrase from the Upanishads used as the slogan for India’s G20 Presidency—are front and center.²¹

Where Hinduism features more prominently in religious diplomacy for Western publics, it tends to be presented in Vivekanandan terms: as an inclusive philosophy, accepting of all faiths and creeds. The huge and controversial World Culture Festival convened outside Delhi by the guru Ravi Shankar’s Art of Living Foundation in March 2016—with political and financial support from the Modi government—was a case in point.²² Under the Vivekanandan theme of “unity in diversity,” that event was targeted to both European and Middle Eastern audiences, featuring a former French prime minister and a crown prince from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), as well as to local constituencies.²³ One purpose

of the festival was to promote the notion that Hinduism can bring other faiths and traditions together, playing a reconciling role both politically and philosophically.²⁴

Other visions are presented to Asian audiences to the east and west of India. Commonly, they have more overtly religious—but often not Hindu—components. They often emphasize India’s Buddhist inheritance and occasionally involve some engagement with prominent Muslim traditions that have flourished in the country. They highlight India’s past and present cultural and intellectual influence in the wider region, point to shared ideas and languages that might catalyze stronger relationships, and advertise sites for pilgrimage and religious tourism, like Bodh Gaya or Nalanda in Bihar. To those ends, India has hosted many events, including a series of Hindu-Buddhist dialogues, a World Sufi Forum in March 2016, and a Global Buddhist Summit in April 2023.²⁵

A final vision—a more overtly Hindu and Hindu nationalist one—is targeted at domestic and diasporic audiences. Modi’s visits to Hindu temples, including sites in Bangladesh, Malaysia, Nepal, Singapore, Sri Lanka, and the UAE signal solidarity with communities overseas and provide opportunities to promote the claim that the BJP is standing up for Hindus and Hinduism worldwide. Repeated prime ministerial statements at domestic political rallies and diaspora gatherings about “Mother India” (*Bharat Mata*) emerging as a *vishwaguru* connect directly to the Hindu revivalism of Vivekananda and are intended to boost national pride.²⁶

Modi’s insistence that Indians abroad should think of themselves as *rashtradoots* goes further. The word can be translated as “national ambassador,” but conventionally Hindi speakers would use the term *rajdoot* for “ambassador.” Modi’s choice of *rashtradoot* may imply that the BJP consider the diaspora ambassadors for something more than the existing Indian state: ambassadors for a Hindu nationalist *rashtra*.²⁷

Official Religious Diplomats

As Modi's comments about the diaspora suggest, India's religious diplomacy is conducted by a mix of official and unofficial diplomats. In part, this is simply a function of the limited capacity of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)—the smallest foreign ministry of any major state—and the Indian Foreign Service (IFS).²⁸ But in part, too, this approach is likely deliberate: mobilizing BJP workers and activists from the Hindu nationalist Sangh Parivar (loosely, Family of Organizations) as *rashtradoots* costs the state little or nothing, provides greater latitude, and offers some plausible deniability if they misstep. Using religious leaders, gurus, and so-called “godmen” from inside and outside India fulfils similar purposes in similar ways. Finally, involving the diaspora in religious diplomacy is not just parsimonious, but also politically useful, because it helps to bind them into India's domestic politics as organizers, donors, and influencers.²⁹

In India, there is established official infrastructure for public diplomacy, encompassing cultural and religious diplomacy, albeit underfunded.³⁰ Aside from the prime minister and his office, the MEA plays the lead role, despite its limited capacity, with dedicated structures. The MEA formed a Public Diplomacy Division in 2006, later reorganized and rebranded under an additional secretary as the External Publicity and Public Diplomacy Division (known as XPD). The additional secretary (XPD) serves as the ministry's spokesperson at regular press conferences and a point of contact for domestic and foreign media.³¹

In parallel, two other organizations support the MEA: the Indian Council on World Affairs, dedicated to public understanding and international exchange, founded in 1943; and especially the Indian Council on Cultural Relations, which manages cultural exchanges, created in 1950. One further organization—the Ministry of Non-Resident Indian Affairs

(later the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs), formed in 2004 to manage relations with the diaspora—also played a minor role in public diplomacy for about a decade, but it has since been merged into the MEA.³²

Given that the IFS is very small, only a few officers outside the XPD in New Delhi are dedicated to public diplomacy in all its forms. For instance, the large Indian mission in Washington, DC, has only one officer dedicated to culture and education.³³ The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) plays a key role, however, in supporting this work. India's embassy in Tokyo has an active ICCR-funded Vivekananda Cultural Center which engages in cultural exchanges and holds events with Indian gurus and yoga practitioners.³⁴ That center was opened by Narendra Modi during his first visit to Japan in September 2014.³⁵ In total, the ICCR presently runs 37 cultural centers abroad—more than half named in honor of Vivekananda—with 20 located in Asian or Indian Ocean cities.³⁶ It also sponsors 51 academic chairs, mostly but not exclusively in Indian studies and mostly based at Asian or European universities, as well as scholarships and visiting fellowships.³⁷ In India, the ICCR promotes mostly Hindu cultural forms and practices but does highlight India's Buddhist heritage, and it also maintains a significant collection of material in Arabic, Persian, and Urdu bequeathed by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the institute's first president.³⁸

Unofficial Religious Diplomats

Beyond these official activities, many are conducted unofficially. Prominent interreligious dialogues like the Samvad Global Hindu Buddhist Initiative, for example, are convened not by the MEA or ICCR—despite receiving government funding and overt political support—but by think tanks close to the BJP. For example, the Samvad series is run by the Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF), launched in 2009 under the leadership of Ajit Doval,

now Modi's national security advisor.³⁹ Parts of the wider Sangh Parivar are also involved in unofficial public, cultural, and religious diplomacy, just as the BJP's Foreign Affairs Department and the BJP's overseas affiliates organize dialogues with foreign political parties and mobilize the diaspora, working in parallel with Indian diplomats.⁴⁰ Groups connected to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (National Volunteers' Organization or RSS) and Vishva Hindu Parishad (World Council of Hindus or VHP) are especially active.

The RSS sits at the core of the Sangh Parivar and behind the BJP, supplying many leaders, including Modi, who joined the organization as a teenager.⁴¹ Founded in 1925 to train, indoctrinate, and defend Hindus and their interests, the RSS is estimated to have up to 600,000 active volunteers. It also has an extensive overseas network in the diaspora, including the so-called Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (Hindu Volunteers' Organization or HSS) formed in 1940. Media reports suggest that today the HSS is active in about 40 countries, especially in the United Kingdom and United States where there are large and active Indian-origin communities, but also in Africa, Asia, Australia, and elsewhere.⁴²

HSS branches hold regular meetings—known as *shakhas* after ancient Vedic schools—and raise funds for the RSS and BJP. They also run public campaigns to uphold what it sees as Hindu and Indian interests and lobby local governments to change policies that affect Hindu communities. In 2005, for example, the Hindu Educational Foundation, a group affiliated with the U.S. branch of the HSS,⁴³ worked to revise school textbooks used in California, Virginia, and Texas, urging changes be made to passages describing India and Hinduism considered inaccurate or offensive.⁴⁴ The HSS and its affiliates have been pivotal, too, in providing platforms for both BJP and Sangh Parivar leaders on foreign visits. These have included figures like RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat, who visited

the United States in 2018 and addressed the World Hindu Congress, held that year in Chicago, an event organized by members of the HSS and the VHP's American branches.⁴⁵

Similarly, the VHP has a large—and likely growing—presence outside India.⁴⁶ Created in 1964, it has a more narrowly religious focus. The RSS aims to revive Hindu culture, as it conceives it, but the VHP aims to advance Hinduism—or at least its version of Hinduism—and to defend it, especially from Christianity.⁴⁷ Outside India, however, the VHP is probably best known for its prominent role in the demolition of the sixteenth-century Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, in December 1992, and its campaign to replace the mosque with a Hindu temple dedicated to Ram.

The VHP is now present in more than 20 countries around the world,⁴⁸ where it runs schools and youth camps for local Indian communities. But it is also engaged in various kinds of informal diplomacy. Like the HSS, the VHP lobbies governments and networks with politicians. In the last Australian election campaign, for example, both the leaders of the major parties were photographed at community events wearing VHP scarves.⁴⁹ The organization runs outreach programs, like the “Dharma Ambassador” programs designed to educate students about Hinduism, delivered in American and Australian public schools.⁵⁰

Aside from the RSS and VHP, many other organizations inside and outside India also promote Hinduism in various forms or philosophies derived from Hinduism in ways that may be useful to Indian governments, and some advance clearly Hindu nationalist political agendas. Long-established entities like Ravi Shankar's Art of Living Foundation (founded in 1981), which plans to hold another World Culture Festival in 2023, this time on the National Mall in Washington, DC, fall into the first category. The latter group includes bodies like the U.S.-based Infinity Foundation run by the activist Rajiv Malhotra, whose 2011 book *Being Different:*

An Indian Challenge to Western Universalism received an endorsement from Modi, then chief minister of Gujarat.⁵¹

CONCLUSION

It is difficult to assess the influence of India's religious diplomacy under the Modi government. Its target audiences are many and varied: Western and Asian parties; faith groups, including some Buddhist and Muslim organizations; the Indian diaspora, especially in the West; and Hindu nationalist constituencies at home. Different messages are conveyed to these groups using different instruments, from cultural exchange programs to interreligious dialogues, involving Indian officials and an array of unofficial "diplomats," up to and including Modi's diaspora *rashtradoots*.

Over the past decade, it seems that the effects of their work have been patchy. Some initiatives—such as the Hindu-Buddhist dialogues—appear to be well-received in some parts of Asia, such as Japan, with support from leading politicians.⁵² Others have done less well. India's yoga diplomacy directed at the West has arguably done little or nothing to allay concerns about Hindu nationalism and the circumstances in which India's roughly 170 million Muslims and its other religious minorities find themselves.

Indeed, there is evidence that India's reputation has declined in the eyes of Western governments and thinktanks. The U.S. Department of State Office of International Religious Freedom's recent assessments of India are highly critical of both new laws deemed discriminatory and the violence allegedly directed especially at Christians and Muslims.⁵³ In 2023, the independent U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom recommended that the State Department designate India as a country of particular concern for "engaging in systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom, as defined by the International Religious Freedom Act."⁵⁴ Similar concerns

have been expressed in recent reports by European thinktanks.⁵⁵ These critiques are widely discussed by both Indian and international media outlets, often provoking angry responses from New Delhi.⁵⁶

It is harder to discern foreign publics' views of India's religious diplomacy and the Modi government's claim that the country is emerging as a *vishwaguru*. What polling data we have suggests that Americans are lukewarm about India in general—and that this view has not changed a great deal in recent years.⁵⁷ The data on American views of Hinduism are patchier still. They also suggest ambivalence but were gathered before the BJP took office.⁵⁸

It is likely that India's religious diplomacy has the biggest positive impact at home and among the diaspora. One recent survey conducted in India found that 64% of respondents agreed that one had to be Hindu to be "truly" Indian.⁵⁹ The notion that India might one day be a *vishwaguru* probably appeals to such constituencies. It is possible, too, that parts of the diaspora also find the idea attractive. Certainly, a recent survey for the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace found a majority of Indian Americans support Modi, even if a significant proportion—around 10%—suggest that "religious [i.e. Hindu] majoritarianism" is actually the biggest challenge facing contemporary India.⁶⁰ At the same time, there is evidence that the growing prominence of Indian religious diplomacy and Hindu nationalist activism in the West is dividing and unsettling parts of the diaspora. For that reason, a recent report commissioned for the British government recommended that London be "attentive to the possibility of [Hindu] nationalist movements exploiting religious rhetoric to incite prejudicial views that may destabilise British society."⁶¹

Finally, it must be noted that India's stronger emphasis on religious diplomacy has run in parallel with an apparent increase in complaints of "Hinduphobia" and calls to challenge its supposed proponents in

Western academia, the media, and political life. The Hindu American Foundation, for example, provides information about how to spot “Hinduphobia,” lists of individuals and organizations alleged to be engaged in it, and how to report it if detected.⁶² While it is impossible to assess how widespread concern about “Hinduphobia” may be within diaspora groups, it is possible that demands to push back against it will grow, pressuring New Delhi—and other governments—to respond.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- There is a clear need for a thorough map of India’s religious diplomacy and the many organizations involved in promoting Hindu nationalist agendas worldwide.
- There is a need, too, for better data on the impact of India’s religious diplomacy and Hindu right activism on both diaspora communities and foreign public opinion.
- Last, there is a need for governments, particularly in Europe and North America, to establish strategies for managing and engaging with India’s religious diplomacy and Hindu nationalist activism. Currently, governments in Asia and the Middle East are markedly more supportive of dialogue with Indian and Hindu nationalist interlocutors. Given long-standing Indian and Hindu nationalist suspicion of Western motives and interests, some form of dialogue in this area might address concerns and misunderstandings on both sides.

NOTES

1. Amitabh Sinha, “PM Modi’s message on Teacher’s Day: Teaching is a divine responsibility,” *India Today*, September 5, 2014, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/pm-modi-message-on-teachers-day-207259-2014-09-04>.
2. The word *Hindutva*, best translated as “Hindu-ness,” is most closely associated with the Hindu nationalist ideologue and activist Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1883-1966), who developed the idea in a book *Essentials of Hindutva* (1923; retitled and republished as *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?* in 1928). Savarkar used the concept of *Hindutva* to outline a new cultural nationalism, arguing that the nation of India, which he called *Bharatvarsha* and which included all the inhabitants of the subcontinent regardless of their religion, was suffused and defined by Hindu-ness. For Savarkar, it followed that an independent India should be governed according to what he considered Hindu principles. For a useful summary of Savarkar’s views, see Chetan Bhatt, *Hindu Nationalism: Origins, Ideologies and Modern Myths* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2001), 77-112.
3. Kira Hujū, “Saffronizing diplomacy: the Indian Foreign Service under Hindu nationalist rule,” *International Affairs* 98, no. 2 (March 2022): 423-441.
4. The term “Hindu right” encompasses the BJP and the Sangh Parivar (“Family of Organizations”) that sits behind that party, as well as other political parties and activist groups, some allied to the BJP and some not, such as Shiv Sena (“Army of Shiva”) in Maharashtra.
5. Press Trust of India, “India Has Shown It’s Possible For Harmony To Exist Amid Diversity: PM Modi,” NDTV, July 13, 2023, <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/pm-narendra-modi-says-india-has-shown-its-possible-for-harmony-to-exist-amid-diversity-4204046>.
6. See *inter alia* Swapan Dasgupta, *Awakening Bharat Mata: The Political Beliefs of the Hindu Right* (Gurgaon: Penguin Viking, 2019).
7. See especially John Stuart Mill’s notorious *History of British India*, first published in 1817, written without knowledge of any Indian language or firsthand knowledge of India, which Mill never visited.
8. Swami Vivekananda, “On Hinduism at the Parliament of Religions,” in *The Nationalistic and Religious Lectures of Swami Vivekananda*, ed. Swami Tapasyananda (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1990), 1.
9. Ruth Harris, *Guru to the World: The Life and Legacy of Vivekananda* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 2022).
10. “Narendra Modi’s first Independence Day speech: Full text,” *India Today*, September 17, 2016, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/narendra-modi-independence-day-speech-full-text-red-fort-204216-2014-08-15>.
11. Kate Sullivan de Estrada, “What is a *vishwaguru*? Indian civilizational pedagogy as a transformative global imperative,” *International Affairs* 99, no. 2 (March 2023): 433-455.
12. Chetan Bhatt, *Hindu Nationalism: Origins, Ideologies and Modern Myths* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2001), 198-202.

13. "Indian PM Narendra Modi invites Pope for visit," *BBC News*, October 31, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-59103657>.
14. Swami Tapasyananda, ed., *Nationalistic and Religious Lectures of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1990), 12-18.
15. Anthony Parel, *Pax Gandhiana: The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).
16. Jawaharlal Nehru, *India's Foreign Policy: Selected Speeches, September 1946-April 1961* (New Delhi: Government of India, 1961), 99-102.
17. Jyotirmaya Sharma, *Hindutva: Exploring the Idea of Hindu Nationalism* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2006).
18. Giorgio Shani, "Towards a Hindu Rashtra: Hindutva, religion, and nationalism in India," *Religion, State and Society* 49, no. 3 (2021): 264-280.
19. Ibid.
20. Arijit Mazumdar, "India's soft power diplomacy under the Modi administration: Buddhism, diaspora and yoga," *Asian Affairs* 49, no. 3 (2018): 468-491.
21. It should be observed that the concept of *vasudhaiva kutumbakam* was used by earlier governments, including Manmohan Singh's Congress-led coalition, which ruled from 2004 until 2014.
22. The festival was controversial partly because of the damage it did to areas of environmental sensitivity. See Maseeh Rahman, "Environmental and safety fears cloud start of huge Delhi festival," *Guardian*, March 11, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/11/environmental-safety-fears-start-huge-delhi-world-culture-festival>.
23. Ian Hall, "India's New Religious Diplomacy," *International Studies Perspectives* 20 (2019): 12.
24. See the World Culture Festival program: <https://www.artofliving.org/world-culture-festival/festival>.
25. For some background, see Shantanu Kishwar, "The rising role of Buddhism in India's soft power strategy," *Observer Research Foundation Issue Brief* 228 (2018), https://orfonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/ORF-IssueBrief_228_Buddhism.pdf.
26. See, for example, "Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speech in Sydney: Full transcript," *India Today*, November 17, 2014, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/narendra-modi-sydney-pm-in-oz-australia-visit-allphones-arena-227519-2014-11-17>.
27. "Indian diaspora are our 'Rashtradoots,' says PM Modi at Pravasi Bharatiya Divas event," *Times of India*, January 9, 2023, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/indian-diaspora-are-our-ambassadors-says-pm-modi-at-pravasi-bharatiya-divas-event/articleshow/96849722.cms>.
28. Long underfunded, the IFS is growing but remains very small: about 1,000 so-called grade A diplomats officers supported by another 2,000 officers, some in administrative or technical roles, and some seconded from other ministries. See Kanti Bajpai and Byron Chong, "India's Foreign Policy Capacity," *Policy Design and Practice* 2, no. 2 (2019): 137-162.
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30. Ian Hall, "India's New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power and the Limits of Government Action," *Asian Survey* 52, no. 6 (2012): 1089-1110.
31. Arijit Mazumdar, "India's public diplomacy in the twenty-first century: components, objectives and challenges," *India Quarterly* 76, no. 1 (2020): 24-39.
32. "Government to merge overseas Indian affairs ministry with MEA," *Times of India*, January 8, 2016, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/government-to-merge-overseas-indian-affairs-ministry-with-mea/articleshow/50491031.cms>.
33. "List of Officers," Embassy of India, Washington, DC, USA, accessed May 10, 2023, <https://www.indianembassyusa.gov.in/pages/MTQ>.
34. "Vivekananda Cultural Centre, Tokyo, Japan," Indian Council for Cultural Relations, accessed May 10, 2023, <https://www.iccr.gov.in/indianculturalcenter/vivekananda-cultural-centre-tokyo-japan>.
35. "PM inaugurates Vivekananda Cultural Centre at Indian Embassy in Tokyo," Narendra Modi, September 2, 2014, <https://www.narendramodi.in/pm-inaugurates-vivekananda-cultural-centre-at-indian-embassy-in-tokyo-6538>.
36. Out of 37 centers, 20 are in Asia and the Indian Ocean region; six in Europe; five in the Americas, three in Africa, two in Oceania, and one in the Middle East. See "Indian Cultural Centers Abroad List View," Indian Council for Cultural Relations, accessed May 10, 2023, <https://iccr.gov.in/indian-cultural-center-map-list-view?page=1>.
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About the Author



Ian Hall is a professor of international relations at the Griffith Asia Institute at Griffith University, Queensland, Australia. He is also an academic fellow of the Australia India Institute at the University of Melbourne. His research focuses on India's international relations. His more recent book is *Modi and the Reinvention of Indian Foreign Policy* (2019).