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Knowledge Infrastructure and Civilizational Development: Evaluating the Ayodhya Model through the Lens of Bharat Niti

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ABSTRACT

Purpose

This paper will be evaluating the civilizational development in the Global South based on the empirical evaluation of Ayodhya Model in the concept of Bharat Niti. Basing on the discussion on civilizational states, multiple modernities and the post-liberal world order, the research will determine whether the Ayodhya Model is a symbolic nationalist project or a developmental paradigm that has wider implications on the Global South.

Methodology

The research follows a case study design which is qualitative; it uses secondary quantitative development indicators. It is based on an analysis of policy documents, infrastructure statistics, tourism data, and comparative discourse analysis to consider the Ayodhya Model in the period of 2014-2025.

Findings

The results indicate that Ayodhya Model is a sort of a hybrid civic-development model that combines the cultural revitalization, infrastructural modernization, and strategic diplomacy. It strengthens the image of India as a civilizational state and imparts soft power throughout the

Global South. Nonetheless, it is effective when the symbolical legitimacy is balanced with objective socio-economic results.

Limitations

The research is based on the secondary information and emerging policy evidence, restricting the longitudinal assessment and quantitative generalization.

Novelty

This is one of the earliest systematic empirical assessments of the Ayodhya Model considering it in a wider context of civilizational development process with Bharat Niti being traced to Global South transformation discussions.

Keywords: Civilizational State; Global South; Bharat Niti; Ayodhya Model; Civilizational Development; Post-Liberal Order; Populism; Multipolarity

1. Introduction

Civilizational discourse has resurfaced in the recent years as a potent prism through which global politics can be viewed and argued over. Instead of defining the international order only in the context of liberal institutionalism or power politics, the scholars are starting to focus on the importance of the historical-cultural identities, moral cosmologies, and the long-term civilizational paths. According to (Buzan and Zhang, 2024), the modern international system entails many modernities, in which various civilizational traditions express alternative visions of the international system. Equally, (Mawdsley, 2023) emphasize the appearance of states, especially of India, that do not only consider themselves nation-states, but as civilizational states as well. This change is an indication of a reorganization of legitimacy: authority is becoming more based on deep historical continuity, and not necessarily on contemporary constitutional arrangements.

It is through this larger change that India has been able to present a unique discourse of civilizational revival. The civilizational state idea makes India one of those polities whose identity is not limited to colonial borders or post-1947 institutional structures. It focuses on ancient philosophical traditions, myriad spiritual traditions and a coexistence and morally centered worldview. This repositioning is meant to bring India back in the international hierarchy not merely as an emerging force but a civilizational agent of a multipolar world.

Closely associated with this framing of civilization is the emerging doctrine that is commonly referred to as Bharat Niti. Bharat Niti is an attempt to combine the revitalization of the domestic cultural effort with the active interaction with the foreign policy, especially in relation to the Global South. It combines identity formation, growth aspiration and diplomatic engagement into a rational normative image. Domestically, it anticipates heritage restoration and symbolic reconstruction; externally, it promotes collaboration, interconnectedness, and other avenues of

development other than the Western liberal prescriptions.

The so-called Ayodhya Model is one of the practical manifestations of this orientation. It is a synthesis of ideological civilizational renewal and material urban renovation, as well as infrastructural growth. Being a sacred geography and a redeveloped urban centre, Ayodhya is a representation of the cross-section of cultural memory, modernization of the economy, and global branding. In this respect it can be regarded to be a prototype of the process of civilization development- where the identity, growth, and diplomacy meet.

Although the literature on civilizational states and populist internationalism is expanding, it is still underdeveloped with little empirical foundation on how such accounts are converted into tangible developmental results. The analysis of discourse, ideology, or comparative rhetoric has become a large literature, whereas less analyzed studies have a systematic evaluation of the material and institutional consequences of civilizational projects in the Global South. This paper tries to respond to that gap by empirically testing Ayodhya Model using the analytical prism of Bharat Niti.

The main research questions that will be used in this study are: (1) To what degree is the Ayodhya Model a consistent civilizational development model? (2) To what extent does it concur with other discourses on alternative modernities in the Global South? (3) Is it substantive developmental paradigm or just a symbolic political project?

The paper continues in the following manner. Section 2 outlines the research design and methodology. Section 3 elaborates the theoretical background on civilizational state theory and Global South development. Section 4 examines the Ayodhya Model in practice. There is a comparative civilizational analysis in Section 5. Implications are addressed in the last sections, and the conclusion is made on the reflections on the development of civilization in the changing world order.

2. Research Design and Methodology

The approach to be used in this research is qualitative case study methodology to discuss the Ayodhya Model as a civilizational development model in Bharat Niti. The use of a case study approach can be justified by the fact that it allows studying a modern policy model in detail in the context of its actual institutional and geopolitical environment.

2.1 Research Approach

This study combines qualitative interpretive analysis with secondary quantitative data. The qualitative component examines civic discourse, policy formulation, and diplomatic narratives. The quantitative element looks into quantifiable development indicators such as tourism growth, infrastructure investment, the growth of connectivity, and urban transformation indicators.

2.2 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis is the redevelopment of Ayodhya as a civilizational urban project between 2014 and 2025.

2.3 Data Sources

Data were derived from:

- City development reports by the government.
- Tourism statistics of the Ministry of Tourism.
- Budget allocation on infrastructure.
- Diplomatic speeches and policy speeches.
- Peer-reviewed academic literature.

2.4 Analytical Framework

The Ayodhya Model is evaluated across five dimensions:

- Cultural revitalization
- Infrastructure modernization
- Tourism-led economic growth
- Transformation of urban governance systems.
- Soft power projection in terms of civilization.

These dimensions are evaluated to see whether the model is an indicator of symbolic nationalism or real developmental change.

3. Theoretical Framework: Civilizational States and Global South Development

The revival of the civilizational discourse in the international politics is indicative of a larger change in the normative and structural basis of the world order. Instead of thinking about modernity as a single, west-derived, process, new scholarship is more willing to recognize diversity of historical trajectories, different epistemologies, and developmental imaginaries specific to their regions. This part places the Ayodhya Model and Bharat Niti in this broader intellectual context by relying on the civilizational state theory, alternative civilizational orders and post-development views emanating in the Global South.

The theory of civilizational state is centered on civilizational states, which, as previously mentioned, constitute the primary units of stability in the international system.

3.1 Civilizational State Theory.

The theory of civilizational state questions the presupposition that the nation-state is the definitive political subject. According to (Buzan and Zhang, 2024), Multiple Modernities in Civilizational Perspective, the global politics is more aptly seen as a negotiation between historically rooted

civilizations all of which present unique conceptions of order, power, and development. Their multiple modernities construct proposes that modernization does not involve Westernization, but rather that societies re-create modern institutions in terms of civilizations.

In this discourse, India has been more and more conditioned in terms of a civilizational state. (Mawdsley, 2023) emphasizes the way in which the state is being redefined in the Indian discourse today to be not only a postcolonial polity, but the political manifestation of a long history of civilization. In the same way, (Volodin, 2022) theorizes the Indian world as a civilizational formation whose historical continuity allows taking up a specific normative voice in world governance. It is in this framing that the Bharat Niti comes out as an eighteen-century old and twenty first century new India, spiritual and developing.

But there is one more danger in the way of hierarchies in the production of civilizational narratives. (Theilen, 2025) explains that, in the past, the hierarchies of civilization have organized the discourse of the European law, and generated implicit orders in terms of which cultures and political systems are superior to others. This understanding, when applied to the contemporary politics, gives a warning that the claims of civilization can be used to create exclusionary or stratified global imaginaries. In this way, the theory of the civilizational state offers a tool of analysis and a critical point of view on whether the Ayodhya Model is the inclusive pluralism or the hierarchical differentiation.

3.2 Civilizational Orders in Competition.

The civilizational positioning of India is played out in a competitive international setting whereby other actors promote alternative order models. Chinese Tianxia tradition expresses a vision of the world order that is based on cultural centrality and moral hierarchy. Instead of the sovereign equality, Tianxia envisions the relational authority that is organized on the basis of civilizational gravity. Although modern interpretations differ, the framework highlights the fact that the non-Western actors rely on historical cosmologies to justify the contemporary geopolitical desires.

Another variation of it is civilizational populism in Turkey. Through the lens of mobilization of the civilizational identity as the means of consolidating domestic legitimacy and extending influence in the part of Turkey, (Yilmaz and Morieson, 2023) explain how Turkish foreign policy mobilizes the identity of civilization in the course of international expansion. This form of civilizational rhetoric is closely bound up with populist discourses that represent the state as the true representative of an ethical community against the external liberal pressures.

Civilizational politics is even complicated by the more general connection between populism and foreign policy. According to (Destradi et al., 2022), populism politicizes foreign policy by redefining international interaction as an identity struggle location. Similarly, (Puthan Purayil and

Puthan Purayil, 2026) demonstrates that populist discourse is transforming the priorities in diplomacy and institutionalized orientation. These lessons indicate that the civilizational discourse of the state can swing between pluralist development and identity-based opposition of the liberal order. In the case of India, it is the difficulty of making Bharat Niti sound like a developmental form of civilizational alternative and not a form of exclusionary exceptionalism.

3.3 Global South and Post-Development Idea.

Critiques of modernization by the Global South have to be read through the civilizational development, as well. (Escobar, 2015) develops a post-development view, which doubts universalizing Western growth paradigms. He proposes pluriversal design that is based on local epistemological and community agency. Such view is consistent with civilizational discourse as much as they both object to homogenizing modernity but it places more emphasis on the agency of the grassroots compared to that of the state.

Likewise, (Moleka, 2025) discusses post-growth communities as moral and ritual societies that are dealing with the post-extractive-capitalist transitions. The development here is gauged not just with reference to infrastructure but also to value systems and shared meaning. Simultaneously, an intercivilizational conceptualizational stance that anticipates dialogue over hierarchy that considers Global Asia as the place of intercivilizational encounters.

Combined, the above strands hint at the fact that Global South development cannot be diminished to economic measures. It entails identity reconstruction, epistemic autonomy, and other forms of moral economies. In the light of this theoretical prism, the Ayodhya Model can be discussed as something more than a project in an infrastructural field: it can be defined as a project aimed to combine sacred geography, modernization of the developmental field, and placing into the civilizational-based framework.

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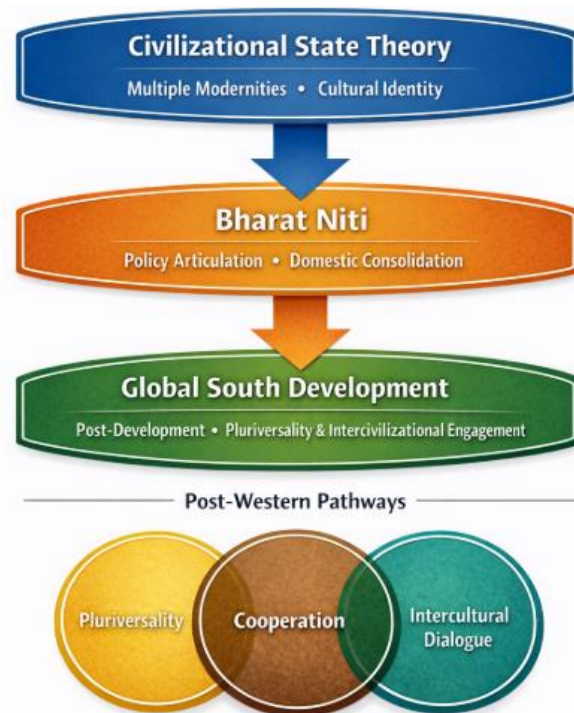


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework Integrating Civilizational State Theory, Bharat Niti, and Global South Development Paradigms

Source: Author's conceptual framework developed using (Microsoft Visio, 2026), based on (Buzan and Zhang, 2024; Escobar, 2015; Mawdsley, 2023).

Figure 1 presents a multilayered conceptual framework illustrating the theoretical and policy linkages between Civilizational State Theory, Bharat Niti, and Global South development trajectories. The first layer emphasizes civilizational identity, historical continuity, and the notion of multiple modernities. The second layer reflects Bharat Niti as a strategic policy articulation that translates civilizational values into domestic governance and institutional consolidation. The third layer highlights Global South development through post-development perspectives, pluriversal knowledge systems, and intercivilizational engagement. The framework demonstrates how civilizational narratives can inform national policy orientation and contribute to alternative development pathways beyond Western-centric paradigms.

4. Bharat Niti and the Ayodhya Model

4.1 Defining Bharat Niti

Bharat Niti, by a wider meaning, can be a set of tools of governance and civilizational policy based on the historical, cultural, and philosophical spirit of India. As opposed to a traditional policy paradigm, Bharat Niti focuses on a civilizational policy form in which there is a

correspondence between policy formulation, not just in terms of economic or political interests, but also in terms of cultural identity, moral economy, and continuity in history. Instead, Bharat Niti is simply a means of identity creation, which creates an impression of India, both domestically and internationally, as a civilizational state. The model incorporates cultural heritage of the nation with current governance requirements and, thus, encourages the policy that is in line with local knowledge systems, ritualistic practices, and ethical governance principles.

Moreover, Bharat Niti is an example of the practical use of civilizational exceptionalism, which claims the uniqueness of India in world hierarchies of civilization. According to (Haug and Roychoudhury, 2023), the concept of civilization exceptionalism places India not only as a nation-state, which is reacting to the norms of other countries but as a civilization that shapes the discourse in the world. In this prism, India has been using the continuity of history, the profundity of its philosophy and its cultural dominance to present a different model of development, one registering dissent to the universalistic assumptions of Western liberalism and providing alternative ways of modernizing and engaging with the world.

In reality, the Bharat Niti is applied in the policies, education, urban planning, and culture diplomacy. It is a both national road map to government and a tool of soft power internationally. By contextualizing the policy decisions made by India into the context of a civilizational framework, Bharat Niti enables the policymakers to incorporate the element of moral, spiritual and cultural aspects into strategic decision-making, which is not possible under more technocratic or market-driven approaches.

4.2 Ayodhya as a prototype of Civilization Development.

The Ayodhya Model is the practical form of Bharat Niti, representing the transfer of ideals of civilizational values to a tangible and institutional form. The core of this model is the cultural revival that involves preservation of the heritage as well as urban development (Sharma and Behera, 2024). As a location of both religious and historical importance, Ayodhya has been the centre of activity by those interested in the restoration of sacred geography, the rejuvenation of local practices and the integration of cultural identity into urban space. This strategy goes hand in hand with the overall goal of the civilizational development where symbolic and material reconstruction strengthens the national identity and continuity (McIntosh, 2016; Hay et al., 2025)

The Ayodhya Model is also used as a tool of religious diplomacy besides the cultural revival (Shashwat et al., 2025). By emphasizing on the civilization in India, it establishes the country as a pioneer in terms of fostering cross-culture communication, spiritual tourism and a morally sound government. Heritage projects and pilgrimage sites are transformed into tools of soft power, which draw the attention of people all over the world and promote interaction with the Global

South (Sharma and Behera,2025). According to (McIntosh, 2016), through the combination of sacred geography and diplomacy, India is able to exert its influence without necessarily having to use military or economic power, but rather using the instruments of cultural legitimacy and historical appeal.

Ayodhya Model is also a reflective example of strategic soft power projection. In addition to the religious and cultural aspects, the model enhances infrastructure development, education programs, and economic growth through tourism and this is an indication that the model is holistic in civilizational development (Shinde, 2026). The Ayodhya Model is an example of the way in which principles of civilization can be used to support local development and international positioning (Sharma and Behera,2024). The paradigm is appealing to the Global South countries that are in search of alternative development paradigms and it can be seen as a model where identity, morality and culture guide policy making and produce an actual economic and social payoff.

Table 1: Core Dimensions of the Ayodhya Model

Dimension	Description
Cultural	Preservation of heritage, sacred geography, ritualistic practices
Economic	Tourism development, local employment, infrastructure-led growth
Diplomatic	Religious diplomacy, civilizational engagement, Global South partnerships
Infrastructural	Urban redevelopment, connectivity, public amenities
Ideational	Promotion of civilizational narratives, moral economy, identity construction

Table 1 highlights the multidimensional nature of the Ayodhya Model, emphasizing its integration of cultural, economic, diplomatic, infrastructural, and ideational factors. Together, these dimensions illustrate how Bharat Niti operationalizes civilizational principles into a concrete developmental model, offering both theoretical and practical insights into India's approach to civilizational governance and Global South engagement.

5. Empirical Assessment: Ayodhya Model in Practice

This section will empirically analyze the Ayodhya Model, in terms of its domestication in India and the externalization in the Global South. This evaluation, through the infrastructural, cultural, and diplomatic aspects, offers an overall picture of how the identity of civilizations can be translated into the development and geopolitical aspect.

5.1 Indicators of Domestic Development.

The Ayodhya Model is an expression of concrete domestic development as a basis of civilizational legitimacy. This is manifested in three key dimensions and they include the growth of infrastructure, tourism growth and urban transformation.

Infrastructure Development: There has been a huge focus on building and development of transport systems, civic amenities and heritage sites in and around Ayodhya. Improvement of roads, railways and air connectivity has not just improved the mobility in the region, but also incorporated Ayodhya into the national economic corridors. The initiatives described by (McIntosh, 2016 and Mawdsley, 2023) show that the symbolism of religions-cultures is strategically connected with national development goals, uniting the city into a civilizational center (Sharma and Behera,2025).

Tourism Growth: The city has recorded a significant growth in the domestic and international visitors. The Ayodhya has also been reinforced as a living site of civilization by pilgrimage tourism, cultural festivals and heritage tourism programs (McIntosh, 2016; Ahmad, 2023; Sharma and Behera,2025). This development leads to a local income production, creation of job, and sustainable service economy (Choudhari and Srivastava, 2026). The Ayodhya Model uses religious tourism as a tool of social integration and economic empowerment, which supports the civilizational discourse at the national level.

Metrics of Urban Transformation: The interventions of urban planning in Ayodhya shows how innovative and traditional infrastructure can be combined. The bigger civilizational branding strategy is in line with smart city initiatives, sanitation programs and housing schemes. The measures of urban transformation such as land-use optimization, development of the public space, and environmental management are indicative of a model of civilizational modernity integrated with the elements of traditionalism and modern governance (Volodin, 2022; Escobar, 2015; Sharma and Behera,2026).

These domestic indicators taken together form a consistent model in which the civilizational symbolism acts as a basis of quantifiable results in development, which legitimize the society and politics.

5.2 External Projection in the Global South.

In addition to domestic unification, the Ayodhya Model serves as the means of the Indian civilizational identity projection on the global scale. This external presentation is explained in two broad avenues, India-EU-Africa co-operation, and comparative involvement with African countries in comparison with other civilizational states.

India-Europe-Africa Co-operation: India has developed foreign policy through the Ayodhya

civilizational symbolism to develop partnership relationships in the Global South and specifically in Africa. The focus of civilizational diplomacy is on common historical, cultural and religious links, which provide an arena of cooperation in the areas of infrastructure, education, and health. Such efforts are in coordination with the larger developmental goals but they enhance the image of India as a civilizational player that can shape up the multipolar governance systems.

Comparative Africa Engagement: In comparison to Turkey and China, the approach of India towards engaging has focused on ideational and symbolic soft power in addition to conventional developmental aid. The Ayodhya Model adds to this prognosis, as it connects the domestic civilizational success with the foreign accounts of responsible leadership and common cultural affinities. This combined strategy of amalgamating material assistance with civilizational discourse is what makes the India model appear unlike the transactional or dictatorial models found in other Global South participants.

Table 2: Comparative Civilizational Outreach Strategies (India, Turkey, China)

Narrative	Instruments	Regions	Development Framing	Political Orientation
India	Cultural diplomacy, heritage tours, educational programs	Africa, EU	Civilizational soft power, developmental partnerships	Democratic, pluralist
Turkey	Religious soft power, Islamic institutions, bilateral aid	Africa, Middle East	Civilizational alignment, ideological outreach	Authoritarian populist
China	Infrastructure projects (Belt & Road), trade investments	Africa, Asia	Material-driven civilizational influence	Authoritarian, state-led

Table 2 illustrates how India's civilizational outreach, grounded in domestic symbolic achievements like Ayodhya, contrasts with other models by emphasizing ideational soft power rather than purely material influence.



Figure 2. Operational Architecture of the Ayodhya Development Model

Source: Developed by the author using (Microsoft PowerPoint, 2026), based on secondary policy data and infrastructure reports.

Figure 2 illustrates the operational architecture underlying the Ayodhya development model, highlighting the interaction between cultural heritage revitalization, infrastructure modernization, environmental sustainability, and socio-economic transformation. The framework demonstrates how religious tourism, policy interventions, and urban planning mechanisms converge to generate inclusive growth, livelihood opportunities, and regional development. It further emphasizes institutional coordination and stakeholder engagement as key drivers in translating cultural capital into sustainable development outcomes. The figure illustrates the logic of this Ayodhya Model of operation where there are three stages:

1. Domestic Consolidation: Infrastructure, city building, and cultural renewal enhance civilizational legitimacy.

2. Civilization Branding: Marketing Ayodhya as an internal and external living cultural-political symbol.

3. Global South Projection: Capitalizing on symbolic legitimacy to build diplomatic, cultural and development associations abroad.

The figure reflects an internally consistent approach in which internal success strengthens external power indicating a feedback mechanism between internal and international civilizational projection.

Summary:

The empirical evaluation highlights the fact that Ayodhya Model is not a symbol or a religious project but an organized civilizational development model. Domestically, cultural legitimacy is consolidated through infrastructure, tourism and urban transformation, on an international dimension, India is using Indian cultural legitimacy to exert influence in the Global South. The contrastive comparison with Turkey and China shows that India is unique with ideational soft power and this puts the Ayodhya Model in a rather delicate position between domestic development and international relations.

6. Comparative Analysis: Civilizational Development Models

The analysis of the models of civilizational development gives an idea of how states in the Global South use historical, cultural and political legacies to form the domestic and international agenda. India, China and Turkey all offer different strategies that show different meanings of what is meant by civilizational statehood and indeed continuous projection of soft and hard power.

6.1 India vs China: Tianxia Model.

The model of Indian civilization, such as the Ayodhya Model that was implemented by Bharat Niti, focuses on the interconnection of the cultural heritage, domestic growth, and the strategic expansion to the Global South. This is in contrast to the concept of China that views global order as being embedded on a hierarchical, Sinocentric system based on historical tributary systems (Callahan, 2008). When India constructs its civilizational identity in terms of pluralism and rooted in dharmic values (Volodin, 2022; Mawdsley, 2023), the Chinese model is focused on centralization and harmonization of the system through the Communist Party, which supports normative legitimacy through the economic and diplomatic networks. The approach of India towards soft power and cultural diplomacy and multi-polar interaction can offer a less strict hierarchy and, therefore, the flexibility of relations with other actors in the Global South. However, on the other hand, Tianxia model believes in an organized impact on the globe which

would be restrictive to the adaptive collaboration.

6.2 India vs Turkey: Authoritarian Populism vs Plural Civilizational.

Another point of contrast is civilizational populism of Turkey. Within the scope of its authoritarian populist governments, Turkey focuses on the cultural-religious discourses to justify its domestic policies and foreign impact on Africa and Eurasia (Yilmaz and Morieson, 2023; Destradi et al., 2022). Whereas Turkey is a centralized and populist country, India still has a balance between cultural symbolism and developmental pragmatism in the Ayodhya Model. The plural civilizationalism in India promotes inclusive accounts that enable the accommodation of internal diversity and the Turkish model of plural civilization projects a unifying identity that could marginalize the views of the minority both at home and abroad. This contrast depicts the strategic and normative consequences of civilizational framing on the behaviour of the state.

6.3 Dangers of the Hierarchy of Civilizations.

Civilization hierarchy encourages domestic and international risks. Hierarchical structures can reproduce the inequalities, support the exclusionary identities, and excuse interventionist foreign policies (Theilen, 2025; Ahmad, 2023). The pluralistic civilizational discourse of India is aimed at these risks alleviation, the use of inclusive development policies and soft power interaction in the Global South. Nevertheless, the symbolic centralization especially with high profile projects such as Ayodhya might unwillingly create the perceptions of hierarchy among domestic or foreign participants, and the issue of cultural affirmation and political neutrality may be challenged.

6.4 Liberal Order Contestation

India and other emerging civilizational states disagree with certain parts of the liberal international order but at differentiated levels (Aydin- Düzgit, 2023). The civilizational model of India has opposed the liberal universalism and advocated multipolarity, focusing on regional collaboration and South-South unity. In contrast to the authoritarian populist strategies that strongly depend on the mechanisms of coercion or positional dominance, India uses the cultural and developmental discourse to exercise influence, thus providing a less aggressive mode of liberal order contestation. The strategies emphasize the plurality of the civilizational strategies in the Global South, and the manifestation of the cultural legitimacy, historical narrative, and policy design as an influential determinant of international engagement in addition to material capacity.



Figure 3. Typology of Civilizational Development Models in the Global South

Source: Author’s comparative typology constructed using (Draw.io, 2026), based on (Callahan, 2008; Yilmaz and Morieson, 2023; Aydın-Düzgit, 2023).

- **X-axis:** State Actors (India, China, Turkey).
- **Y-axis:** Characteristics of the Model (Hierarchy vs Pluralism; Soft Power vs Centralized Authority; Domestic vs External Emphasis)
- **Visualization:** Bubble or matrix of the relative placement of each model on the hierarchy dimension, pluralism dimension, soft power projection dimension and international engagement dimension.

Figure 3 presents a comparative typology of civilizational development models emerging across Global South contexts, categorizing them according to their foundational philosophies, governance orientations, and development pathways. The framework highlights how historical identity, cultural values, and indigenous knowledge systems interact with state policy and modernization strategies to produce diverse development trajectories beyond Western-centric

paradigms. It further illustrates the role of civilizational narratives in shaping institutional priorities, socio-economic transformation, and international engagement.

7. Discussion

The Ayodhya Model represents an important example of post-liberal civilizational state development when the state-based policies are combined with the cultural heritage, socio-economic planning, and internationalization. This contrasts with the old liberal development paradigms where the primary emphasis lies on universalist norms, market-driven developments, and technocratic governance whereby the Ayodhya Model previews civilizational identity as a concept and a mode of operation. India is a prime example of a development that is both material and ideational by integrating cultural symbolism into infrastructural, tourism, and urban planning approaches, which reflects the idea of post-development transitions (Escobar, 2015; Sharma and Behera, 2025).

The model involves tension between symbolism and development, which form the interpretive evaluation of the model. Some critics can state that Ayodhya projects are dangerously close to prioritizing narrative and ritual instead of quantifiable development consequences. Nevertheless, such empirical signs as increased urbanization of infrastructure, the expansion of regional connectivity, and the projection of soft power imply that symbolism, as well as material development, does not exclude each other but reinforces each other. Using the influence of culture stories, the model can mobilize populations, draw investment in tourism, and enhance civilizational legitimacy of India in the world (McIntosh, 2016; Mawdsley, 2023; Sharma and Behera, 2025).

The civilizational agency of the Global South is also shown in the model. India exercises normative control through projects such as Ayodhya, without relying on the Western-centric models of development, to focus on pluralistic and historically-informed idea of progress. In contrast to more hierarchical models like the Tianxia system in China (Callahan, 2008) or authoritarian populist approaches like those in Turkey (Yilmaz and Morieson, 2023), India does not presuppose such a solution: it is foreseen to be more collaborative and relational in the context of South-South relations. This supports a wider post-liberal agenda when the Global South can create contextually specific directions of development and confront the universalist beliefs of Western liberalism (Aydin- Düzgit, 2023; Volodin, 2022).

The Ayodhya Model has normative implications of importance. India is playing an important role in the diversification of world development strategies by making culturally based development strategies legitimate, which leaves room to civilizationally informed policy experimentation.

Nevertheless, even such approaches need a delicate balancing act so that all countries could avoid being left out at home or misunderstood by overseas countries as a civilizational narrative in the form of hegemonic or hierarchical (Theilen, 2025; Ahmad, 2023). Finally, the model illustrates the idea that civilizational identity may be a dynamic tool not only of domestic solidarity and integration but also of international outreach, which can be useful to policymakers that need to find a compromise between tradition, development, and international influence.

8. Conclusion

This study provides a discursive evaluation of the Ayodhya Model within the framework of Bharat Niti to assess its contribution to post-liberal civilizational development. As per the analysis, the Indian approach is a combination of symbolic, cultural, and material aspects of development, which has made it generate a framework that can not only change the Indians, but also resonate with the whole world. The model can have an impact on the Global South by challenging traditional liberal paradigms and locating India as a normative actor who can influence developmental discourse.

The empirical work is in proving the mechanism of operation of culturally based initiatives like urban revival, infrastructure development, and strategic outreach working together in supporting the civilizational legitimacy in India. In comparison to Tianxia system in China and authoritarian populism in Turkey, it is possible to identify the individuality of the Indian system of pluralistic and soft-power orientation, which focuses on flexibility of relations and inclusive narratives as its strong points. The results build upon existing research in the area of civilizational states and multipolarity as well as post-liberal development paradigms.

Theoretically, the study mediates between the civilizational theory and empirical research, demonstrating the intersection of ideas of historical continuity, moral legitimacy, and cultural symbolism and the development policy. It also highlights the significance of plural civilizationalism as an alternative avenue through which players of Global South seek to overcome the challenges of modernity and tradition as well as international pressure.

Such studies as longitudinal evaluation of the outcomes of civilizational development, comparison across nations in the Global South, and further examination of normative and ethical aspects of a civilizational policy are all possible directions of future research. This research might hone intuitions of how post-liberal models such as the Ayodhya Model can help in sustainable and culturally congruent and internationally engaged developmental policies.

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