Subhas Chandra Bose's Political Philosophy and Its Relevance in Twenty-First Century India

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Abstract:

Subhas Chandra Bose's political philosophy, forged during India's struggle for independence, focused on nationalism, self-reliance, and strong centralized leadership. His approach, which included advocating for armed resistance, economic autonomy, and unity among India's diverse communities, was shaped by global political ideologies such as socialism, fascism, and anti-colonial nationalism. This study examines Bose's political philosophy within the context of India's freedom struggle, analyzing its core principles and leadership views. It also explores the influence of global political movements on his thinking and assesses the continuing relevance of his ideas in the twenty-first century. The conclusions highlight Bose's emphasis on strong leadership and economic self-sufficiency as key takeaways for modern India, offering insights into governance, national unity, and the challenges of post-colonial development.

1. Introduction:

Subhas Chandra Bose occupies a distinctive place in Indian political thought as a nationalist leader whose political philosophy diverged sharply from the dominant non-violent and constitutional approaches of the freedom struggle. His ideas were rooted in an uncompromising commitment to complete independence, strong leadership, and radical methods to dismantle colonial rule. Bose viewed colonialism not merely as political domination but as a comprehensive system of economic exploitation, cultural subjugation, and psychological control. Consequently, he argued that India's liberation required decisive action, centralized authority, and mass mobilization under disciplined leadership. From a political science perspective, Bose's philosophy represents a form of radical nationalism that challenged liberal-democratic gradualism and offered an alternative vision of nationhood and state power (Bose, 1935; Gordon, 1990).

Bose's political philosophy was deeply influenced by global political developments of the early twentieth century, including socialist thought, anti-imperialist movements, and models of strong state organization. He believed that democracy, while valuable, could not be immediately effective in a society emerging from colonial rule and deep socio-economic inequalities. Bose therefore advocated a transitional phase of strong governance after independence, during which the state would focus on national unity, economic reconstruction, and social justice. His emphasis on socialism, planning, and state intervention anticipated

many features of India's post-independence development strategy and continues to inform political debates on the role of the state in economic and social transformation (Bose, 1947; Chandra et al., 2008).

In twenty-first century India, Bose's political philosophy retains significant relevance as the nation grapples with questions of governance, leadership, nationalism, and development in a rapidly changing global environment. Contemporary political discourse increasingly engages with themes central to Bose's thought, such as strong executive leadership, national sovereignty, internal security, and economic self-reliance. While his methods and historical context differ from present realities, Bose's emphasis on decisive leadership, inclusive nationalism, and ethical commitment to national interest offers important insights for understanding current debates on state authority and democratic governance. Thus, examining Subhas Chandra Bose's political philosophy through a political science lens not only enriches the study of Indian nationalism but also provides a critical framework for analyzing its continuing influence on contemporary political thought in India (Austin, 1999; Sarkar, 2014).

1.1. The Statement of the Problem:

The statement of the problem seeks to explore Subhas Chandra Bose's political philosophy and its continued relevance in the context of modern India. This study aims to examine the core principles of Bose's thought, particularly within the framework of India's freedom struggle, and to highlight how his perspectives on leadership played a pivotal role in shaping his political ideology. Additionally, the analysis assessed the impact of global political ideologies on the development of Bose's political philosophy, offering a comprehensive understanding of how these ideas have shaped both his actions during the struggle for independence and their potential application in twenty-first century India. The objective is to determine the lasting significance of Bose's vision in contemporary political discourse.

1.2. The Significance of the Study:

The significance of this study lies in its potential to offer a deeper understanding of Subhas Chandra Bose's political philosophy and its relevance in the current political landscape of India. By examining the core principles of Bose's thought, this research will contribute to the appreciation of his leadership vision, especially in the context of India's freedom struggle, and highlight how his ideas on governance, nationalism, and leadership remain pertinent today. Moreover, analyzing the influence of global political ideologies on his philosophy will offer insights into the cross-cultural and international dimensions of his thought, shedding light on the intersection of Indian independence movements and global political currents. In the twenty-first century, where India faces complex political and social challenges, revisiting Bose's ideas could inspire modern leaders and citizens to address issues of governance, national identity, and social justice, making this study both timely and impactful.

1.3. The Objectives of the Study:

O1: To examine the core principles of Subhas Chandra Bose's political philosophy within the context of India's freedom struggle.

O2: To analyze Bose's views on leadership as key components of his political thought.

O3: To assess the influence of global political ideologies on the development of Bose's political philosophy.

1.4. The Review of Related Literature:

Raza, S. M. G., &Vidyarthi, A. (2025). Subhash Chandra Bose: An analysis of his contribution in the Indian freedom struggle and its contemporary relevance. This research employs a narrative literature review

to analyze Bose's leadership strategies, with a specific focus on the period of 1939–1941. The authors argue that Bose's political philosophy was an "ideological synthesis" of Marxist and nationalist principles tailored for Indian soil. The paper explores his contemporary relevance by linking his "strong state" philosophy to India's current pursuit of strategic autonomy in international relations. It concludes that Bose's insistence on Hindu-Muslim unity within the Indian National Army (INA) serves as an essential template for maintaining social cohesion in 21st-century secular India.

Faculty of Pen & Prosperity. (2025, November). Subhas Chandra Bose: The pioneering designer of an independent India. *Pen & Prosperity, 1*(1), 94–98.This paper evaluates Bose as a systemic planner rather than just a revolutionary soldier. By reviewing his role in the 1938 National Planning Committee, the study highlights how his vision of state-led heavy industrialization and scientific modernization predated India's post-independence Five-Year Plans. The authors draw a direct parallel between Bose's "self-reliance" doctrine and the modern *Aatmanirbhar Bharat* (Self-Reliant India) initiative. Furthermore, it discusses his progressive stance on gender, citing the Rani of Jhansi Regiment as the 20th-century foundation for the modern integration of women in the Indian Armed Forces' combat roles.

KUEY Editorial Yield. (2024). The politics of economic justice: Subhas Chandra Bose's vision for a postcolonial India. Focusing on the doctrine of **Samyavada** (the doctrine of synthesis), this paper examines Bose's rejection of both unbridled capitalism and orthodox communism. The abstract emphasizes Bose's belief that freedom is incomplete without "social revolution" and the removal of wealth inequalities. In the context of the 21st century, the paper suggests that Bose's model of cooperative farming and state-supported "mother industries" offers a viable alternative to neoliberal developmental models. It argues that his "inclusive nationalism" is the primary ideological antidote to modern communal polarization.

International Organization of Scientific Research. (2023). Economic ideology of Subhash Chandra Bose: Its relevance in India and this contemporary era. This research article addresses the "limited visibility" of Bose's economic thought in mainstream history. The study reviews Bose's advocacy for rapid industrialization to absorb surplus agricultural labor—a challenge that remains central to India's 21st-century job market. The author argues that Bose's "Tripartite Plan" (State-Labor-Capital cooperation) for industrial relations provides a roadmap for modern labor reforms. It concludes that Bose's focus on technical and scientific education is the historical precursor to India's current "Skill India" mission.

Sharma, P. (2021). Contemporary political ideologies and NetajiSubhash Chandra Bose. This study reviews the evolution of Bose's ideology from "spiritual idealism" (influenced by Swami Vivekananda) to "political realism." It investigates Bose's controversial "synthesis of communism and fascism," clarifying that his intent was to build a disciplined, egalitarian state rather than an oppressive one. The paper evaluates his relevance in the 21st century by analyzing his rejection of the caste system and his vision of a "casteless, classless society." The author notes that Bose's leadership style—unifying diverse religious and linguistic groups—remains the gold standard for Indian national integration

1.5. The Research Gap:

The extensive literature linking Subhas Chandra Bose's socio-economic planning to modern initiatives like *Aatmanirbhar Bharat* and *Skill India*, there remains a significant academic void in synthesizing his leadership psychology and synthetic political ideologies with the complexities of 21st-century digital governance and non-traditional security. Current studies focus heavily on Bose's historical role in the freedom struggle and his industrial vision, yet they largely overlook how his philosophy of a "strong state" and "total mobilization" would translate into the era of cyber-sovereignty and algorithmic bias. There is a specific gap in research regarding how Bose's "spiritual realism"—which fused Indian values with global pragmatic politics—can offer a theoretical framework for India's current multi-aligned foreign policy in a

polarized digital world. Furthermore, while his "Tripartite Plan" for labor is noted, its application to the modern gig economy and the ethical implications of AI-driven statecraft remain unexplored, leaving a disconnect between his mid-20th-century systemic planning and the technological imperatives of the current century.

2. The Methodology of Study:

Content analysis is a research methodology used to systematically analyze and interpret the content of various forms of communication, such as text, audio, visual media, or social media. It involves coding and categorizing textual or media data to identify patterns, themes, and trends, often to understand the underlying messages, ideologies, or social contexts within the content. This methodology is both qualitative and quantitative, as it allows researchers to quantify the frequency of certain words or themes while also interpreting the meaning behind these patterns. Content analysis is widely applied in fields such as media studies, communication, sociology, and political science, offering valuable insights into how information is presented and perceived, as well as the societal implications of media and discourse.

3. The Analysis and Interpretation:

O1: To examine the core principles of Subhas Chandra Bose's political philosophy within the context of India's freedom struggle.

Subhas Chandra Bose's political philosophy during India's freedom struggle was shaped by his firm belief in nationalism, self-reliance, and the necessity of armed struggle to achieve independence. Bose's political thought evolved in response to the limitations of non-violent resistance, which he considered ineffective in the face of British imperialism. Central to his ideology was the idea of "complete independence" (PurnaSwaraj), which he strongly advocated as opposed to the gradual autonomy promoted by the Indian National Congress under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership (Bose, 1942). He believed that India's struggle for freedom required a more aggressive and militant approach, which was evident in his formation of the Azad Hind Fauj (Indian National Army), aimed at directly challenging British colonial forces.

Bose's emphasis on self-reliance was also reflected in his economic policies. He envisioned an independent India that was economically self-sufficient, rejecting the colonial system of exploiting India's resources. He promoted the idea of "Swadeshi," encouraging the use of Indian-made goods and the development of indigenous industries (Chandra, 1990). His economic thought, though rooted in nationalism, also drew from global ideas of socialism and anti-imperialism, reflecting his engagement with international political ideologies, particularly those of fascism and socialism, which he hoped could offer India a stronger path toward independence.

In terms of governance, Bose envisioned a dynamic and strong leadership structure, advocating for a government that could decisively act in the interest of the nation's welfare. He was a strong proponent of centralization, believing that a powerful state was necessary to steer India out of colonial exploitation and into a future of prosperity (Bose, 1938). His leadership philosophy contrasted with the more democratic ideals of other independence leaders, such as Gandhi, who favoured decentralization and self-rule at the village level (Kochanek, 1980). This centralized governance would ensure effective decision-making, particularly during periods of crisis, like the struggle against colonial forces.

Bose's political vision was also aligned with the need for unity among India's diverse population. He sought to transcend regional, religious, and caste divisions in order to create a unified front against the British. This was evident in his approach to the Indian National Congress, where he initially advocated for a more inclusive and representative party structure (Bose, 1944). However, his growing differences with Gandhi's

methods led him to form the Forward Bloc, a faction within the Congress that sought to unite leftist and nationalist forces (Rai, 2004).

Overall, Bose's political philosophy was deeply rooted in a pragmatic approach to securing India's freedom, advocating for a mix of militant resistance, self-reliance, and strong centralized leadership, all while seeking to harmonize the diverse political and social fabric of the nation. His thought continues to influence contemporary discussions in political science regarding nationalism, governance, and the role of leadership in periods of national struggle.

O2: To analyze Bose's views on leadership as key components of his political thought.

Subhas Chandra Bose's views on leadership were integral to his political thought and strategy, particularly during the Indian freedom struggle. Bose believed that leadership in times of national struggle required both vision and decisiveness, with a focus on achieving a singular goal—complete independence for India. He argued that leadership should not merely be symbolic or representative but must possess the strength to make hard decisions, inspire followers, and lead by action rather than rhetoric. Bose's leadership philosophy was shaped by his interactions with both Indian and international political figures and ideologies, which led him to advocate for a centralized, authoritarian form of governance, especially during times of war or national crisis (Rai, 2004).

Bose's concept of leadership was grounded in his admiration for strong, decisive leadership, which he believed was necessary for India to break free from British colonialism. His view of leadership was both pragmatic and militaristic, as he saw the struggle for freedom as one that demanded not just political strategies but also military discipline and unity. This was evident in his formation of the Azad Hind Fauj (Indian National Army), where he envisioned himself as a military leader capable of rallying the masses and leading them in a direct confrontation with the British (Chandra, 1990). For Bose, effective leadership involved the ability to mobilize and unify diverse sections of society, overcoming the factionalism that plagued many Indian political groups at the time.

Furthermore, Bose emphasized the importance of the "cult of personality" in leadership. He believed that leaders should serve as symbols of national unity and strength, capable of inspiring masses to follow them unconditionally. This was reflected in his own leadership style, which involved extensive travel, mass mobilization, and the use of propaganda to instill a sense of nationalism among the people. Bose's leadership approach was in stark contrast to the democratic and non-authoritarian leadership style championed by Mahatma Gandhi, who prioritized non-violence and decentralized leadership through local self-governance (Kochanek, 1980). Bose's preference for centralized leadership was rooted in his belief that only a strong, disciplined state could ensure the success of India's independence struggle.

Bose's leadership philosophy was also informed by his views on the role of the state and governance. He recognized that India's post-independence governance would require strong leadership structures to maintain order and pursue national development. He argued for a government that could enact policies swiftly and decisively, particularly in areas of defense, economic growth, and social reform (Bose, 1942). His leadership style was deeply connected to his political ideology, which advocated for a powerful and centralized state capable of meeting the challenges of both colonial rule and post-colonial governance.

In addition, Bose's views on leadership were influenced by his understanding of international politics and the global struggle against imperialism. He sought to position himself as part of a global anti-colonial movement and believed that India's leadership should align with the broader struggle for freedom in Asia

and Africa. This global perspective was reflected in his interactions with Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan during World War II, as he sought international support for the Indian independence movement through his leadership of the Indian National Army (Rai, 2004).

Overall, Subhas Chandra Bose's views on leadership were central to his political philosophy. His leadership was rooted in the belief that strong, centralized, and decisive action was necessary to achieve India's independence. This leadership vision not only guided his approach to the struggle against colonial rule but also shaped his broader ideas about governance and national unity.

O3: To assess the influence of global political ideologies on the development of Bose's political philosophy.

Subhas Chandra Bose's political philosophy was significantly influenced by global political ideologies, which shaped his vision of leadership, governance, and India's struggle for independence. His engagement with ideologies such as socialism, fascism, and nationalism played a critical role in the evolution of his political thought, reflecting his pragmatic and global perspective on anti-colonial resistance and state-building. Bose's interactions with global political movements are pivotal to understanding his ideologies, as he sought to align India's freedom struggle with broader international trends, including the rising anti-colonial sentiments of the 20th century.

One of the most profound influences on Bose's political thought was socialism, particularly the Soviet model of governance. His early encounters with Marxist thought during his studies in Europe had a lasting impact on his worldview. Bose was drawn to the Soviet Union's emphasis on centralized governance, economic self-sufficiency, and the state's role in orchestrating industrial development. His admiration for the Soviet Union led him to advocate for a socialist framework in post-independence India, where the state would control key sectors of the economy, ensuring equitable development and a more just society (Chandra, 1990). This aspect of Bose's political thought is reflected in his emphasis on centralization of power, which was seen as necessary to maintain national unity and drive economic growth. He saw India's struggle for freedom as intrinsically tied to the larger global movement for socialist transformation and economic self-reliance, aligning himself with those who believed that true independence meant economic and political autonomy, free from imperialist exploitation (Rai, 2004).

While Bose was influenced by socialism, his later interactions with fascist ideologies, particularly during World War II, reflected a more complex aspect of his political philosophy. His engagement with Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan in seeking military assistance to liberate India from British colonial rule has been a subject of debate. Though Bose never fully subscribed to fascism, he was influenced by the discipline, leadership, and unity that fascist regimes represented. He admired leaders like Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler for their ability to unite their nations under strong centralized leadership and direct action (Bose, 1942). Bose's approach to leadership mirrored these fascist ideals, advocating for a strong, authoritarian state capable of acting decisively to address national crises. This is evident in his leadership of the Indian National Army (INA), where he centralized authority, built a disciplined military force, and sought to mobilize the masses against colonial rule. His belief in the necessity of centralized, assertive leadership contrasted sharply with the decentralized approach to governance espoused by Mahatma Gandhi (Kochanek, 1980).

Bose's interaction with these global political ideologies also shaped his views on nation-building and the role of leadership in post-independence India. His experience with European authoritarian regimes reinforced his belief that post-colonial India would need strong, centralized leadership to overcome the challenges of governance, economic development, and national unity. For Bose, a leader had to be decisive

and capable of taking bold steps to steer the country through difficult times, particularly in the aftermath of colonial rule. He envisioned a government that would act swiftly to address national problems, especially in terms of defense, economic policies, and social reforms (Chandra, 1990). These views on governance were influenced by the global experience of decolonization, where many newly independent nations sought to build strong centralized states to foster unity and stability.

Bose's exposure to anti-colonial nationalist movements also had a profound impact on his political thought. Inspired by the nationalist struggles in Asia and Africa, he believed that India's fight for independence was part of a broader, global struggle against imperialism. He saw the success of movements in Egypt, Vietnam, and China as indicative of the potential for colonized nations to assert their sovereignty through armed struggle, diplomacy, and unity (Bose, 1944). His belief in the importance of international solidarity led him to seek alliances with Axis powers during World War II, seeing them as potential partners in India's bid for freedom. However, despite this alignment, Bose's ultimate vision for India was based on the ideals of national self-determination, rejecting foreign domination whether by Britain or any other power.

The global ideological influence on Bose's political thought was also shaped by significant international events, such as the rise of fascist regimes in Europe, the spread of communist movements, and the decline of colonial powers. These events provided both a context and a blueprint for Bose's vision of a free and self-reliant India. His leadership of the Indian National Army (INA) and the formation of the Azad Hind government in exile were direct responses to these global shifts, reflecting his belief that India's independence was inextricably linked to global struggles for sovereignty (Chandra, 1990).

Subhas Chandra Bose's political philosophy was deeply shaped by the global political ideologies of socialism, fascism, and anti-colonial nationalism. His pragmatic engagement with these ideologies helped him to develop a vision of strong, centralized leadership, economic self-reliance, and a resolute commitment to India's independence. Bose's political philosophy was a product of both national imperatives and global political developments, demonstrating how India's freedom struggle was not isolated but was part of a larger, interconnected global movement for justice and self-determination.

4. Conclusion:

In conclusion, Subhas Chandra Bose's political philosophy, characterized by his emphasis on strong, centralized leadership, nationalism, and self-reliance, holds significant relevance in twenty-first century India. Bose's call for decisive leadership and a powerful state capable of tackling national crises resonates with contemporary discussions on governance and national unity, especially in a rapidly evolving global and regional political landscape. His advocacy for economic self-sufficiency and independence remains pertinent in today's context, as India continues to strive for economic growth and political autonomy on the world stage. Furthermore, Bose's emphasis on overcoming social divisions to foster a unified national identity is crucial as India grapples with internal challenges of diversity and inequality. Though his methods of leadership may seem controversial by modern democratic standards, the core principles of his political thought—strong leadership, unity, and self-reliance—offer valuable lessons for addressing the complex political, economic, and social issues India faces today.

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