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HINDUTVA: A THREAT TO REGIONAL STABILITY

by

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&

Dr Khurram Abbas



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Preface

Hindutva has emerged as a dominant creed in India. It has perilously altered the secular nationalism enshrined in the Indian constitution. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's (RSS) exclusivist ideology has captured the main ideological turf elbowing out the syncretic inclusivism of the Indian secularism through social and political instruments of coercion. These include discriminatory practices against the minorities in the shape of Citizen Amendment Act and implementation of National Register of Citizens (NRC) in states like Assam to target the Bengali migrant community. The influence of RSS ideology, which thrives on hate and exclusion, has manifested itself in bizarre form like, "Ghar Wapsi" (Return to roots) campaign to convert the minorities to Hindu faith, mob-lynching for cow slaughter and altering the demographic and political realities of the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).

The RSS domination of the national politics through its political front i.e Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), has spawned a culture of divisiveness in India. It once prided itself on celebrating unity in diversity. The BJP leadership's pandering to big business and military industrial complex has not only widened domestic cleavages but has also vitiated the regional security environment. India's revocation of Article 370 and 35

A in flagrant violation of the United Nations Resolutions and the border clash with China over the Line of Actual Control in Ladakh, indicate the dangers posed by the *Hindutva* inspired foreign policy.

In order to highlight the nature and character of this extremist creed, an attempt has been made by the IPRI research team comprising Brig (retd) Raashid Wali Janjua and Dr Khurram Abbas, to develop a primer on *Hindutva* and its implications for regional security. This publication showcases the organization and reach of the militant muscle of *Hindutva* in social, political and epistemic spaces. The perils to regional security and its possible redressal has also been discussed in the paper.



Shamsa Nawaz
Editor IPRI

Foreword

While India has always been a Hindu state, its founding fathers consciously decided to keep the country secular; at least, it is mentioned in the Indian Constitution. According to the Fundamental Rights section of the Indian Constitution, secularism is reflected in Article 25 to 28. It states that every citizen has the freedom of conscience, the right to profess any religion of their choice, the right to practice and propagate any religion. This is not anymore in the *Hindutva* led dispensation, which has tightened its grip ever since Mr Narendra Modi was elected as the Prime Minister of India in 2014.

Brig Raashid Wali Janjua and Dr Khurram Abbas have undertaken an extensive study to highlight various facets of *Hindutva* majoritarianism rooted in the suppression of minorities in the country, especially Muslims. They have assiduously traced the history of the birth and ideology of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the fountainhead of *Hindutva* rule across India. By doing so, the authors, with extensive research about the Indian society and politics, have exposed the chauvinistic facets of the *Hindutva* mindset, which thrives on casteism within the Hindu society (Samaj) and hatred against non-Hindus to deprive them of equal status as citizens of India.

By implementing the Citizens' Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizen (NRC), minorities, especially Muslims, are deprived of citizenship. Already over 1.9 million Indian Muslims have been de-notified in Assam as Bangladeshi citizens. On the contrary, non-Muslim immigrants are granted citizenship under these discriminatory laws. Such measures are a complete negation of the Indian constitution and international conventions.

After coming into power, Prime Minister Modi, considered an icon of *Hindutva* ideology, has faithfully implemented the RSS agenda. The foremost victims of the RSS agenda are the minorities belonging to the Sikh, Christian, Dalit and Muslim communities. Not only that, Mr Modi, fulfilling the promises made in the BJP's manifesto, has completely disregarded the international norms governing the bilateral relations and illegally merged the disputed state of Jammu and Kashmir into India. Thus RSS-led *Hindutva* dispensation has set a dangerous precedent in South Asia by illegally swallowing the Jammu and Kashmir state without a reference to the United Nations.

Today's India is not safe for the objective Hindu commentators who sincerely want a secular polity and equal rights for the country's citizens. Those commentators are not only ostracized but are physically threatened. Most of the Indian electronic

and print media have virtually become the surrogates of the RSS, which, apart from toeing the *Hindutva* ideology, are also spreading xenophobia in the country. In 2019, the US International Commission on Religious Freedom (USCIRF) had gravely expressed its concern over the plight of minorities, particularly Muslims. It had recommended sanctions against Home Minister Amit Shah and other top leaders of India. However, Trump and Biden's administrations have conveniently ignored USCIRF's concerns due to multi-billion dollar weapon deals that the US military-industrial complex was looking for in India.

The study exposes the true visage of Indian democracy and opens up the duplicitous agenda that the RSS is selling to the world. It also compares with Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy, which spelt disaster for the world due to political expediency and appeasement displayed by the major powers. Hopefully, the study would be a valuable addition to the ongoing research on *Hindutva* and Hindu majoritarian pursuit meant for regional hegemony.

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Acronyms

ABKM	Akhil Bharatiya Karyakari Mandal
ABPS	Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha
ABVKA	Akhil Bharatiya Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram
AJ&K	Azad Jammu & Kashmir
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
BD	Bajrang Dal
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
BMS	Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh
CAA	Citizen Amendment Act
CASA	Central Asia South Asia
CPEC	China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
EU	European Union
FATA	Federal Administered Tribal Areas
FISI	Friends of India Society
GB	Gilgit-Baltistan
GR	Gau Rakshak
GST	Goods and Services Tax
HSS	Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh
IDRF	India Development and Relief Fund
IINS	International Institute of Nonaligned Studies
IIOJK	Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir
JS	Jana Sangh
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
LAC	Line of Actual Control
LOC	Line of Control
MRM	Muslim Rashtriya Manch
NDA	National Democratic Alliance
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRC	National Register of Citizen
OFBJP	Overseas Friend of BJP
OIC	Organization of Islamic Conference
PKM	Prantiya Karyakari Mandal
RSS	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
SJM	Swadeshi Jagran Manch
TAPI	Turkmenistan Afghanistan Pakistan India

UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations Human Rights Council
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
USA	United States of America
VHP	Vishwa Hindu Parishad
VOA	Voice of America
WESTT	Women's Economic and Social Think Tank

Evolution of Hindutva

Chapter 1

Evolution of *Hindutva*

*“No matter what the Hindus say,
Hinduism is a menace to liberty, equality and fraternity.”
(Ambedkar)*

INTRODUCTION

There is a need to distinguish between Hinduism and *Hindutva*. While the former is associated with religious identity, the latter is an ideology seeking to establish the hegemony of Hindus and the Hindu way of life based on ostracism and religious discrimination. The *Hindutva* slogan nullifies the Indian claim of secularism. It is tantamount to the annulment of India's decades-old pretense of being the world's largest democracy. Secularism's essence is in safeguarding the interests of various segments of the society and protecting the life, property and honor of every citizen without racial and religious discrimination. Contrary to above, the *Hindutva* ideology of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and its political front, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) aggressively espouses genocide, plunder and persecution of non-Hindus living in India, especially the Muslim community. Before discussing the impact of *Hindutva* on regional security, it is important to understand the nature and evolution of *Hindutva* and its ideological godfather i.e., Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

Evolution of *Hindutva*

Though some ascribe the Hindu political awakening to the rise of Shivaji, a leader of Bhonsle Maratha clan – who rose against the Mughal rule in the 17th century, it is, in fact a 19th century phenomenon.¹ Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Dwarkanath Tagore, (father of Noble Laureate Rabindranath Tagore) are credited with igniting the somnolent Hindu political consciousness in the nineteenth century. They started with a campaign to reform Hindu religion and introduced a syncretic version of Hinduism, known as Brahma Samaj. It aimed at the reformation of “social evils of Hinduism: including *satti*, child marriage, property rights for women, polygamy, the caste system, idol worship and even the concept of *karma*.”² Even Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, a Muslim reformer, tried to bridge the two perspectives of Hindu and Muslim reformers together in a positive spirit of mutual accommodation. However, the seeds of a permanent communal rift were sown when Brahma Samaj like reformist movements were taken over by the organizations with an extremist and intolerant bent of mind such as Hindu Mahasabha in early nineteenth century.³ Madan Mohan Malaviya a Hindu nationalist, founded Hindu Sabha in 1905. It was a right-wing Hindu nationalist party that morphed into Hindu Mahasabha in 1921, with a saffron identity of a flag. Malaviya went on to

¹ Savarkar, *Essentials of Hindutva*, http://library.bjp.org/jspui/bitstream/123456789/284/3/essentials_of_hindutva.v001.pdf, 23.

² Pervez Mehmood, Fridaytimes, October 4, 2019, <https://www.thefridaytimes.com/hindu-nationalism-and-the-two-nation-theory/> (accessed September 17, 2021)

³ Ibid.

establish Banaras Hindu University, which was established with the express purpose of converting Muslims to Hinduism. Mahasabha ultimately subsumed extremist elements like Damodar Savarkar, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, K. B. Hedgewar and M.S. Golwalkar. Though the Mahasabha remained marginal in national politics, it inspired Hedgewar to establish the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in 1925,⁴ the ideological patron of today's ruling party in India. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar was the main ideologue that inspired *Hindutva* philosophy while "the oppressed looked upon him as an Avatar and a Saviour."⁵ RSS was an organization to which Nathuram Godse belonged who murdered Mahatma Gandhi. Congress Party, that was formed to safeguard Hindu interests, had split into two dominant streams since 1885. One representing Nehruvian secular nationalism, which celebrated cultural diversity as an essential component of the Indian nationalism and another, a traditional nationalism based on the notion of religious nationalism. That religious nationalism integrates all ethno-religious communities under the fold of the Indian nationalism, a euphemistic term for Hindu nationalism.⁶

Pant, a Congress leader, while addressing the Muslim community said, "Your safety lies in making yourselves an integral part of the organic whole that forms the genuine

⁴ Pervez Mehmood, Fridaytimes, October 4, 2019, <https://www.thefridaytimes.com/hindu-nationalism-and-the-two-nation-theory/> (accessed September 17, 2021)

⁵ Savarkar, *Essentials of Hindutva*, http://library.bjp.org/jspui/bitstream/123456789/284/3/essentials_of_hindutva.v001.pdf, 23.

⁶ Christophe Jaffrelot, *Religion, Caste, and Politics in India* (Oxford University Press:),⁷

state.”⁷ In his more virulent speech on August 27, 1947, Sardar Patel cautioned that if Muslims wanted peace, they should undo the partition and live in a single India.⁸ The notion of Hindu nationalism based on the cultural hegemony of Hindu culture, was sedulously nurtured after the departure of Gandhi and Nehru. It resulted in a slow ebbing away of civic nationalism of Nehru and traditional unity based narrative of Gandhi. A new sinister exclusivist and misanthropic creed called Hindutva, which considered all other religions, especially non-indigenous religions like Islam, Christianity, and Judaism as outliers, got ascendancy and offered a choice to other religions either to enter Hindu religion or face extinction.⁹

Envisaged by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar in 1923, as an 'ethno-nationalist majoritarian ideological project', *Hindutva* is a political philosophy, styled after European fascism of the early 20th century that classifies people in categories of common nation, common race and common culture. It considers Hindus only as the bonafide inhabitants of India. They are considered as the only inhabitants of India. The exclusionary nature of the *Hindutva* creed was highlighted by scholars and peace activists like, T.M Krishna, Raja Bhattar and Sunita Viswanath in a conference on Global Dismantling of *Hindutva* in September 2021.¹⁰ It expressed concern over

⁷ Christophe Jaffrelot, *Religion, Caste, and Politics in India* (Oxford University Press :), 7.

⁸ Ibid, 9.

⁹ Ibid.39.

¹⁰ T.M. Krishna, Raja Bhattar and Sunita Vishwanath in an online conference on “Global Dismantling of Hindutva”, 10-12 September, 2021.
<https://dismantlinghindutva.com/> (20 September 2021)

the conflation of *Hindutva* with Hinduism by RSS activists. In their opinion, they have embarked upon an insidious campaign to mask their xenophobic creed by the narrative of Hindu victimhood. However, it is unlikely for any discerning person to comply with the spurious claim of victimhood.

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)

RSS was founded by Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, a Brahmin in 1925. By profession, he was a medical doctor from the central Indian city of Nagpur. His core ideology was ‘the revival of Hindu supremacy in India,’ which got lost due to a thousand years of foreign occupation.¹¹ Initially, Dr. Hedgewar was an active member of the Indian National Congress. However, he was a staunch critic of Gandhi over his stance on the Indian Muslim Khilafat issue.¹² He had serious concerns over the fact that the ‘cow protection’ was not on the Congress agenda. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Bajrang Dal – two affiliated extremist organizations of RSS are practical manifestations of Dr. Hedgewar’s ideology. The RSS headquarters is in Nagpur since its establishment. Historically, the RSS’s roller coaster rise can be divided into three major phases. The first phase starts from 1925 and ends in 1948, during which the organization primarily kept itself focused on spiritual training of Hindu youth. The second phase starts in 1948 and ends in 1980, during

¹¹ Walter Andersen, “The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh: Early Concerns”, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 7 Issue 11, pp. 589–597

¹² Ibid, 591-592

which, the RSS experienced its darkest period of history. It faced a nationwide ban by the Congress government due to the assassination of Gandhi by a former RSS member, Nathuram Godse.

During this phase, the RSS faced problems of fund-raising, lack of popularity among masses and a perpetual threat of being proscribed by the Congress government. The third phase started in 1980 till-to-date when the RSS witnessed a rise in popularity among masses, increasing funding channels and extending political presence in the Indian parliament, ending thereby its perpetual fear of being proscribed by the government. The RSS that was dubbed as a fascist organization, by no less than Nehru, established a political front called, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). BJP began as Bharatiya Jana Singh which opposed Indira Gandhi. It later changed into Janata Party coalition and eventually into BJP. It achieved electoral success in 1989-91 through an active support of RSS and its affiliates like VHP.¹³ Today, in its operational capacity, the RSS of the 21st century is radically different from the RSS of the 20th century.¹⁴ In fact, the RSS of today is much stronger

¹³ Christophe Jeffreot, "*The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics*", 1925-94: *Social and Political Realities* (C Hurst and Co, 1996), 20.

¹⁴ Mr. Asghar Ali Shad, Senior Expert on Indian Political Affairs and former Senior .Research Fellow (SRF) at IPRI in discussion with the authors on June 15, 2020.

with the presence of its active members in the Indian civil and military bureaucracy.¹⁵

The presence of greater numbers from amongst the educated Indian diaspora, within influential world fora and think tanks, has contributed to a false image of Hinduism outside the South Asia. It is considered as a pacifist religious creed that adheres to a cyclical notion of multiple life incarnations over time. Packaged as a creed in which good deeds are rewarded by a noble birth whereas bad deeds result in an ignoble birth, it presents itself as a sophisticated religious ideology pandering to the notions of divine justice.¹⁶ In actual practice, the human inequality is inbuilt within a system of social beliefs that justifies exploitation and persecution of lower castes based on religious grounds. In contrast to the Abrahamic faiths of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, Hinduism believes in an immanent god that manifests itself in temporal forms. The highest caste, the Brahmins, are a manifestation of that immanence and, therefore, above the rest; particularly, the lower castes whose birth within the hierarchy has determined their lifetime of low servitude.¹⁷ Hinduism does not, however, follow one standardized set of rituals due to its indefinable

¹⁵ Mr. Asghar Ali Shad, Senior Expert on Indian Political Affairs and former Senior .Research Fellow (SRF) at IPRI in discussion with the authors on June 15, 2020.

¹⁶ Raashid Wali Janjua, "Rise in Indian Nationalism obstacle for regional peace," *The .Brussels Times*, August 5, 2020.

¹⁷ Ibid.

iconography. Therefore, a common culture is equated with the religion. This indefiniteness, within the structural context of foreign rule, gave rise in the 17th century to the militant Hindu nationalism, exemplified by the legendary exploits of Maharaja Shivaji against the Mughal rule. This notion of nationalism stresses solidarity through the sharing of culture instead of participation in common rituals.

The *Hindutva* as a cultural construct, according to the founders of Hindu nationalism, essentially means common heroes, common mythology, common attire, common dietary habits, common acceptance of a social system based on caste and common agreement on threats to the community. The term further signifies a deeper concept of adopting a way of life that is culturally Hindu. Anyone that does not follow the *Hindutva* creed in its most narrow sense is deemed to have apostatized his or her Indian roots. Though, politically the Hindu Mahasabha remained a fringe party after partition, as compared to the secular Congress party, it eventually fostered militancy within the RSS as the precursor of the current BJP-led Hindu leadership. Unlike other pre-partition political parties, the RSS already had avowed extremist aims to fight minority groups and not colonial bondage right from the time it was established in 1925. That is why the RSS never actively participated in struggle for independence, nor did it engage in advocacy for peace between Hindus and Muslims. Therefore, the rise of a

man like Narendra Modi who cut his political teeth under the exclusionist RSS ideology over three long decades before becoming the prime minister, is a gloomy prognosis for regional peace.

Main Ideologues and their Ideology

Since the creation of RSS, the *Hindutva* (academically known as Hindu fundamentalism) has remained the core ideology of the RSS consistently propagating the supremacy of the Hindu religion in India. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, who defined and elaborated the *Hindutva* ideology in his book, 'Essentials of *Hindutva*' in 1922, provided the ideological foundations of the RSS.¹⁸ While introducing the new concept of *Hindutva*, Savarkar defined three pillars of a Hindu Nation in his book i.e., a common holy ground, a common blood and a common culture. It is also noteworthy to mention that while the Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs were included in RSS's *Hindutva* creed, Savarkar excluded Muslims from this Hindu culture based fraternity.¹⁹ Not only Muslims but other faiths and nationalities were also targeted by his exclusivist ideology.

¹⁸ Anuja Bose, "Hindutva and the Politicization of Religious Identity in India", *Journal of Peace, Conflict and Development*, Issue 13, (February 2009), www.peacestudiesjournal.org.uk/ (accessed 22 June 2020)

¹⁹ Guenter Levy, "Militant Hindu Nationalism: The Early Phase" (research project, University of Massachusetts, 1967), <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/654932.pdf> (accessed 14 June, 2020)

Regarding an American adopting Indian citizenship, he says,

“An American may become a citizen of India. He would be certainly entitled, if bona fide, to be treated as our Bharatiya or Hindu, a countryman and a fellow citizen of ours. But as long as in addition to our country, he has not adopted our culture and our history, inherited our blood and has come to look upon our land not only as the land of his love but even of his worship, he cannot get himself incorporated into the Hindu fold.”²⁰

According to his world view, only those who accept Hindu culture (actually religion) could be given Indian citizenship. Savarkar who was a suspect in the murder of Gandhi, and who narrowly escaped conviction, was truly the founder of Hindu fascism.²¹ This ‘cultural nationalism’, akin with BJP’s *Hindutva* creed, was also propounded in another *Hindutva* ideologue i.e., Golwalker’s book, *Bunch of Thoughts*.²² His ideas had many parallels with the ‘Rassenideologie’ of the Nazis in Germany.²³ That is why the RSS leaders admired Adolf

²⁰ Savarkar, *Essentials of Hindutva*

²¹ Jawed Naqvi, “A damaging debate on Savarkar,” *DAWN*, November 16, 2021

²² Ahmed Noorani, *Dangerous Credo*, *Dawn*, October 25, 2014.

²³ Guenter Levy, “Militant Hindu Nationalism: The Early Phase”

Hitler during the World War-II.²⁴ The second head of RSS i.e., Golwalkar, (known as Guruji), had been inspired by Hitler's ideology of 'racial purity.'²⁵ Therefore, it is safe to claim that the foundation of RSS ideology is primarily based on misanthropically fascistic approach, threatening both the minorities as well as the Indian notion of secularism.

The RSS has constantly faced criticism over non-participation in the Indian freedom struggle. In 1942, Golwalkar is said to have forbidden RSS volunteers from taking part in the Gandhi-led Quit India Movement.²⁶ In fact, the RSS before and even after the partition of India, wholeheartedly tried to create a 'Hindu State.'²⁷ The definition of 'Hindu State' is highly controversial and damaging for the inter faith as well as inter racial peace and harmony. For religious minorities, it is especially threatening because in a Hindu State, only Hindus would be the citizens of the state while other religious minorities would be considered as foreigners until they accepted Hindu religion. The threat for the regional peace and

²⁴ Stephen E. Atkins, "*Encyclopedia of modern worldwide extremists and extremist groups*", (Greenwood Publishing Group 2004) 264

²⁵ Ibid; Derek Gregory and Allan Richard Pred, "*Violent Geographies: Fear, Terror, and Political Violence*", (CRC Press 2007) 158–159.

²⁶ Revathi Krishnan, "MS Golwalkar, the RSS chief who remains 'Guruji' to some, a 'bigot' to others", *The Print*, June 5, 2019 <https://theprint.in/theprint-profile/ms-golwalkar-the-rss-chief-who-remains-guruji-to-some-a-bigot-to-others/245534/> (accessed 22 June 2020)

²⁷ Mr. Asghar Ali Shad, Senior Expert on Indian Political Affairs and former Senior Research Fellow (SRF) at IPRI in discussion with the authors on June 15, 2020.

security emanates from the claims over the borders of a Hindu State. Hindu Fundamentalists believe that the ‘Divine Motherland’ has been stretched from Tibet in the north to Sri Lanka in the south, from Malay Peninsula in the east to the Iranian border in the west.²⁸ The recent defence and foreign policies of BJP are a glimpse of this fundamentalist and fascist ideology of RSS and Hindu establishment.

This common ideological thread of denial of diversity is observed in all earlier phases of its growth, spanning 1925 to 2020. Before the partition, from 1925 to 1947, the *Hindutva* ideology was exclusively owned by RSS, which was a political non-entity in that phase. In phase two, from 1947-1980, this ideology remained dormant but struggled to survive with the ownership of several communal and religious organizations. In phase three, from 1980 to 2020, this ideology saw two climaxes. The first high point was the transition of the ownership of *Hindutva* ideology from a non-political RSS to a strong and politically aligned RSS. The second rise can be observed after the rise of Narendra Modi as the Prime Minister of India. He is the RSS’s longtime hardcore member and a strong adherent of the *Hindutva* ideology.

At the domestic level, RSS espouses a strong quota centered system. The quota system encourages

²⁸ Asghar Ali Shad, Senior Expert on Indian Political Affairs and former Senior Research Fellow (SRF) at IPRI in discussion with the authors on June 15, 2020.

communalism and is seen as an impediment towards mainstreaming and integration of diverse communities inhabiting India. Its leadership and followers argue that quota system only benefits the elite from the minorities at the expense of the under-privileged from minority groups. Similarly, despite opposing caste related discriminatory rituals, it opposes quota system for Dalit and other scheduled castes. Similarly, RSS perceives quota system as an impediment in the creation of a homogenous Hindu nation.²⁹ On economy, the RSS holds a protectionist view of the economy often at the cost of impoverished masses. An example is its opposition of royalties on genetically modified cotton seeds from a multinational company, Monsanto, which would have benefitted the marginalized communities.

²⁹ Mr. Asghar Ali Shad, Senior Expert on Indian Political Affairs and former Senior Research Fellow (SRF) at IPRI in discussion with the authors on June 15, 2020.

Chapter 2

Mapping the Reach and Expanse of RSS Ideology in India

The RSS since the early 1990s, has grown into one of the world's largest non-government associations. It has an estimated 1.5-2 million regular participants (referred to as *Shakhas*) in its nearly 57000 local daily meetings held across 36,293 nationwide offices.³⁰ In fact, no one can thoroughly understand today's Indian political and security behaviour without understanding the RSS. It is important to understand the factors that contributed towards the rise of RSS, its impact on the Indian political culture and its linkage with and influence on BJP.

The RSS has established 36 (thirty six) organizations, which take care of various segments of the Indian society besides managing perceptions in favour of RSS and BJP. The combination of these RSS affiliates is called '*Sangh Parivar*.' These thirty six groups span a broad spectrum of interests, including politics, agriculture, public health, education, veteran affairs, religion, entrepreneurship and tribal welfare. For example, Akhil Bharatiya Vanvasi

³⁰ Figures from the RSS general secretary's annual 2017 report, Figures available at, <http://rss.org//Encyc/2017/3/23/rss-Annual-Report-2017-English.html> (accessed 16 June 2020).

Kalyan Ashram (ABVKA) is meant for the tribals, the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) for Hindus in the world, Bajrang Dal for the Hindu religious establishment, and Muslim Rashtriya Manch (MRM) for the Muslims. Majority of these organizations have been working for those social groups among which the RSS was previously not popular. Resultantly, it has established a deep footprint in all spheres of the Indian society which has contributed to its popularity and wider acceptability amongst the Indian masses.

The RSS range of social services mostly in areas of health and education, expanded at a rapid pace from 5,000 service projects in 1989 to 165,000 in 2015.³¹ The RSS's 'Swayamsevaks' (volunteer workers) remain involved in various social development activities. They also work parallel to government during the flood season.³² These social and developmental activities are usually meant to create goodwill for the RSS and its affiliates. Resultantly, the poor classes get attracted towards the organization. Likewise, the organization targets every community's interests and tries to find ways and means to resolve their problems at the community level. For instance, the BJP's success in getting votes from the Muslim women is owed to the government's campaign against instant divorce by

³¹ Sewa Kunj, "2015: An Insight into Sewa Activities", (New Delhi: Aravali Printers and Publishers, 2015), p. 5.

³² Shreerang Godbole, 'Service and Social Harmony: An Enlightened Reformist', *Organiser*, 2017, <http://www.hvk.org/2017/0417/13.html> (accessed 15 June 2020).

decree (triple *talaq*) and the provision of free cooking gas cylinders.³³

The RSS has used education as a tool for its wider and long-term outreach. Vidya Bharati, the national coordination body of RSS-affiliated schools is now the largest non-government school system in India, ranging from the elementary to college level.³⁴ It has 12,364 schools, 146,643 teachers, and 3,452,615 students. In general, the curriculum and history of India in particular, has been re-transcribed in the Vidya Bharati scholastic system. The RSS has changed the texts in history books; lauding the Hindu gods and castigating non-Hindus.³⁵

The footprints of RSS in education have not only widened its public outreach but also strengthened the organization in every part of the Indian Territory.³⁶ Dinanath Batra, a former General Secretary of Vidya Bharati, the educational wing of RSS, had also once described the mission of the organization to fight the alien education culture imposed upon India by the likes of Macaulay, Marx, and *Madrasah* *advisers*. A more virulently

³³ Surya Rao, 'This Theory Explains Why BJP Won in Muslim Dominated Areas', *RightLog*, 12 March 2017, <https://rightlog.in/2017/03/muslim-bjp-area-win/> (accessed 17 June 2020).

³⁴ Vidyabharti, see the website for its national publication at, <http://www.vidyabharti.net/organization.php> (accessed 19 June 2020).

³⁵ Mridula Mukherjee and Aditya Mukherjee, "Communalisation of Education the History Textbook Controversy: An overview," *South Asia Citizens*, December 17, 2001, <http://www.sacw.net/HateEducation/MridulaAditya122001.html> (accessed 16 June 2020)

³⁶ Col (R) Muhammad Hanif, Indian Foreign and Domestic Policy Expert and former Research Fellow at IPRI in discussion with the author on 20 June 2020;

xenophobic sentiment was echoed by Mr. Murli Manohar Lal Joshi, former President of Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) and a minister in BJP's government in 2001, who said that the country faced two kinds of terrorism, the first being the cross border terrorism and the other as intellectual terrorism by left leaning political parties. As per him though both forms of terrorism were dangerous, but the intellectual terrorism was more dangerous.³⁷ As a result of this cultural atavism, several history text books of class 6th, 7th and 11th were purged of the so-called objectionable passages written by internationally-acclaimed and credible historians such as Romilla Thapar.³⁸

Hindutva votaries have sedulously played on emotional and religious sentiment, pointing to the masses that Hindus and their way of life is under threat. The power to instill fear is a useful tool which is used by claiming that their religion, customs, sacred sites, and heritage are under threat. In the US in particular, several Hindu organizations have embraced the Hindu nationalist agenda with gusto and have made deliberate attempts to equate the fascist *Hindutva* ideology with Hinduism. Commonalities between *Hindutva* practitioners and Zionist settler class Jews in occupied Palestine were highlighted in a Global Dismantling of *Hindutva* conference organized by 58 universities featuring 44

³⁷ Rajnayaran Chandravarkar, *Historians and the nation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 198.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 199.

speakers. During the conference, Akanksha Mehta and Meena Kandasamy focused on the affinities between women activists of *Hindutva* and Jewish settler women.³⁹ They argued that both *Hindutva* and Zionism perpetuated social and gender inequities. Meena Kandasamy also agreed with the point that *Hindutva* triggered the oppression of women. She made reference to the philosophies and teachings of Mahatma Jyotirao Phule, Dr. Ambedkar and Thirumavalvan, all of whom viewed the Hindu social order as a combination of caste inequality and male chauvinism. The speakers pointed out the plight of renowned women scholars belonging to the Hindu faith such as Arundhati Roy. They have become soft targets of the *Hindutva* brigade. Arundhati Roy's only fault was speaking truth about the repressive policies of the Modi regime.

Likewise, recognizing the growing power of social media, Manmohan Vaidya, the former RSS *prachar pramukh* (chief spokesperson) started a training programme in 2015 to teach RSS workers how to utilize social media more effectively and how to answer interview questions coherently and persuasively in televised debates.⁴⁰ In 2016, the RSS added a course on debate techniques to its

³⁹ Akanksha Mehta and Meena Kandasamy, "Global Dismantling of Hindutva Online Conference", 10-12 September 2021. <https://dismantlinghindutva.com/>

⁴⁰ Walter Anderson and Shridhar Damle, *Messenger of Hindu Nationalism: How the RSS Reshaped India* (Hurst & Company, London: 2019) 26

third year training camp in Nagpur.⁴¹ This is why the RSS and BJP have a strong and active presence on social media, which has often been effectively utilized for perception management.

The RSS's education, training and propaganda strategy consistently conflates Hinduism with patriotism through a well-organized epistemic campaign. Today, Muslims and Christians can possibly be 'anti-national' or potential threat to the Indian interests, while Hindus are widely considered patriotic and loyal to the Indian national interests. This biased approach has further divided India on communal lines. The RSS has successfully confused educated and relatively more secular communities in major cities over the issue of Indian and Hindu fundamentalism. For RSS, conflation of the Hindu nationalism with the Indian nationalism has allowed hardline elements in the government, intelligentsia, judiciary, and the intelligence communities to develop a moral justification, for ostracization of ethnic and religious communities like Christians, Muslims, and Buddhists. For the Indian nationalists who strongly believe that India as a nation has not found its rightful place in the world community despite New Delhi's potential,⁴² the RSS offers a magical solution i.e., *Hindu*

⁴¹ Walter Anderson and Shridhar Damle, *Messenger of Hindu Nationalism: How the RSS Reshaped India* (Hurst & Company, London: 2019) 26

⁴² Alyssa Ayres, "*Our Time Has Come: How India is making its place in the world?*", (New York, Oxford University Press: 2018), 5.



Revivalism, which would lead to the emergence of a potent nation too strong to be ignored by the world.

Impact of the RSS's Rise on Indian Politics and Society

Today, the RSS without doubt is the most influential non-government organization in the Indian decision-making circles. In fact, the RSS chief, Mohan Bhagwat's annual speech, which usually takes place in September every year, is considered a policy document for the BJP and other RSS affiliates. For instance, Bhagwat's speech of September 30, 2017 that emphasized the importance of small industries, tradesmen and the self-employed who were facing hardships due to Goods and Services Tax (GST), led towards significant revisions of GST in November 2017, by the Modi-led BJP Government.⁴³

It is because of RSS and its affiliates that the Indian religious minorities are living in a perpetual fear. The RSS has divided the Indian society on communal lines, which would have a long-term impact on the Indian national security. The organization has also regularly attempted to divide the Muslim community on sectarian fault lines by overwhelmingly supporting Shiites and neglecting Deobandi and Bareilvi sects. Apparently, the Muslims

⁴³ Col (R) Muhammad Hanif, Indian Foreign and Domestic Policy Expert and former Research Fellow at IPRI in discussion with the author on 20 June 2020; Soumya Gupta, 'What the Revision in GST Rates Means for Consumers', LiveMint, 12 November 2017 <http://www.livemint.com/Companies/6yNnNILs0kTeseNGKmhINO/Whatthe-revision-in-GST-rates-means-for-consumers.html> (accessed 19 June 2020).

Rashtriya Manch (MRM) was created by RSS to bridge the gap between the Muslim and Hindu communities in India.⁴⁴ However, the RSS has appointed mostly Shiite Muslims at the helm of affairs of MRM. These MRM leaders and their sympathizers often trigger sectarian controversies that create differences within the Indian Muslim community. For instance, Minority Affairs Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, the Muslim poster boy of BJP, dubbed Tableeghi Jamaat's role in spreading COVID-19 as a 'crime', which stirred controversy within the Indian Muslim community.⁴⁵ Among Muslim demography, BJP's political support has seen sharp rise from Bohra and Shia Muslim community. BJP has also constituted the Indian Shia Awami League to shore up its support from Shia community. The prime motives include commitments for better education and job opportunities for the Muslim women. Scholars also attribute the rise in the Muslim vote bank due to the support from the Shia community. Modi has forged close ties particularly with the business and religious leadership of Bohra Muslim community, which forms a significant part of the Muslim community in his

⁴⁴ Muslims Rashtriya Manch (MRM) Official Website, <http://muslimsrashtriyamanch.org/Encyc/2016/1/13/About-us.aspx> (accessed June 20, 2020)

⁴⁵ Web Desk, "Entire Muslim community can't be held responsible for one group's 'crime': Naqvi on Tablighi Jamaat row", *Indian Express*, April 23, 2020. <https://stopcensoring.me/index.php?q=oavXqKRuZJHY2q9ipsqqz9GdoZfSnKyl2Juml16Z1dJopcSsmqOjkZOTamRnxqPYkmtrZcmlqJ7Ym2DRpanSzqZkxqeeoarQytexYZvGodqQm51jzJygmZOomNegpdTYopnPnV6apNSO0qaZZcy11dipq2PHqZ2iy2OhxaGsz5KopZCskpahy8jLoWGixqDHxK1laJVqaGeZZZH MpKPS> (accessed June 17, 2020)

home state Gujarat.⁴⁶ The division of the Indian Muslim community on sectarian lines has helped BJP to win seats in the Muslim majority areas during the 2014 and 2019 general elections. The division has also weakened Muslims politically, socially and economically, rendering them highly vulnerable to RSS's affiliates such as VHP and Bajrang Dal.

The RSS's success within the Indian masses and its ultra-nationalistic slogans have also vitiated the Indian political culture. Political parties and their leaders are now highly conscious of burnishing their patriotic credentials as loyal political forces working for the projection of the Indian interests. The upshot of that has been "*New Nationalism in India*,"⁴⁷ which has compelled the Congress and other relatively liberal political parties to adopt tougher approach on regional security matters especially against Pakistan and China.⁴⁸ The RSS and BJP have developed an

⁴⁶ Web Desk, "Entire Muslim community can't be held responsible for one group's 'crime': Naqvi on Tablighi Jamaat row", *Indian Express*, April 23, 2020. <https://stopcensoring.me/index.php?q=oavXqKRuZJHY2q9ipsqqz9GdoZfSnKyl2JumI16Z1dJopcSsmqOjkZOTamRnxqPYkmtrZcmIqJ7Ym2DRpanSzqZkxqeeoarQytexYZvGodqQm51jzJygmZOomNegpdTYopnPnV6apNSO0qaZZcy11dipq2PHqZ2iy2OhxaGsz5KopZCskpahy8jLoWGixqDHxK1laJVqaGeZZ2H MpKPS> (accessed June 17, 2020).

⁴⁷ The term refers to a populist approach by majority Hindu Indians who demand surgical strikes against Pakistan whenever there is a terrorist attack happens in India.

⁴⁸ Web Desk, "The opposition party also demanded an apology from the ruling BJP for "doing cheap politics" on the issue", *Economic Times*, August 28, 2019. <https://stopcensoring.me/index.php?q=oavXqKRuZJHGxqeip9KcydeipZvXZZ2jyp-U2JmJy9hnmKIYKka2dSSqKOkzqfPxqxll9KbYaPHqpzTnmXJ1Kee1Z2kp2L.VzcSlp2XVINHMrKyX0mSapNhl9aRnc3Op56QqpKcqs6OypminM2c2ZCnm aPJZJ2jk6aY2Jmqz9SnZNCnp5mZj8rRZammlJTY16KbosmqnKTdZWqUaG2dnXFrkZuep3TI09KlcaXJpQ> (accessed June 23, 2020)

environment in which no political party or political leader dares to talk about a dialogue with Pakistan for the resolution of all disputes due to a fear of political alienation in the Indian society. This culture has minimized the chances of regional peace and enhanced the risks of the Indian intervention against Pakistan or any other Indian neighbour.

Nexus with BJP

The RSS's influence on BJP and its linkage with it is undeniably a client-patron relationship. The overwhelming majority of BJP's leadership and its members is affiliated with the RSS. Modi was nominated by RSS as a candidate for the Indian premiership which reflects the influence of RSS on BJP. Not only Modi but the former Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee was also a member of the RSS as well as the chief editor of RSS propaganda Magazine *Panchjanya*.⁴⁹ Likewise, former BJP President L.K Advani served as an assistant editor of RSS Magazine '*Organizer*' for a long time to prove his loyalty to the RSS.⁵⁰ The RSS also appoints the political and administrative leadership of BJP.

After independence from the British rule, the RSS had been initially reluctant to enter into politics until it experienced a countrywide ban in 1948-49 by the Congress government. The nationwide proscription

⁴⁹ Walter Anderson and Shridhar Damle, *Messenger of Hindu Nationalism: How the RSS Reshaped India*,

⁵⁰ Ibid.

injected a serious desire to find political power to avoid any possible future ban. After a brief period of support to Jana Sangh (JS) and its later version Janata Party, the RSS got Jana Sangh faction separated from the Janata Party and established BJP in 1980, keeping in mind its desire to implement its ideology in India through political means. Thenceforth, the RSS attached all its hopes to BJP's government to fulfill its long awaited motives as mentioned in Article 3 of RSS's constitution. As Dattatreya Hosabale, the RSS's joint general secretary publically stated that RSS would want the BJP to win elections because only then can significant social, political and cultural changes take place in this country, and the 2014 election victory should be seen as the starting point of that long-term mission.⁵¹

Due to its massive public outreach, the RSS carries a significant knowledge of the Indian public behaviour, popular trends and public aspirations. Therefore, the RSS not only actively supports BJP but also serves its political interests by providing information on public priorities and popular slogans that fascinate voters. For instance, during the Lok Sabha elections of 2019, the RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat had given a call for 100 per cent voting turnout. According to D.K Singh, "it increases voting

⁵¹ Rupam Jain Nair et al., 'Special Report: Battling for India's Soul, State by State', *Reuters*, 13 October 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-india-rss-specialreport/special-report-battling-forindias-soul-state-by-state-idUSKCN0S700A20151013> (accessed 18 June 2020).

percentage and make voters aware about voting on the basis of national issues, the Sangh's Swayamsevaks (volunteers) too, were involved in Jan Jagran Abhiyan (public awareness mission).⁵²

Compared to Vajpayee government, the Modi government has shown a greater willingness to discuss the policy concerns of RSS affiliates. This is evident from frequent meetings of BJP officials and ministers with the RSS officials. For instance, in September 2015, RSS organized a 'coordination' meeting of dozens of its affiliates in New Delhi with Prime Minister Modi and his ministers, where the RSS affiliates shared their concerns, hopes and policy recommendations.⁵³ Hence, the RSS plays the role of eyes and ears of BJP, while the BJP serves RSS's political interests by formulating or amending the Indian laws according to latter's ideology.

RSS's Organizational Structure and its Outreach

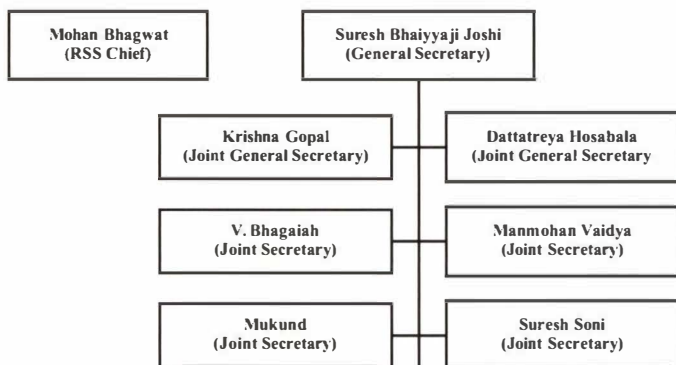
In terms of leadership, Figure 1 explains the current leadership of RSS in different domains. There are seven functional departments. Each headed by senior *parcharak*, including physical education, intellectuals,

⁵² D.K. Singh, "Why RSS has chosen to remind Modi-Shah of its key role in BJP's big election wins", *The Print*, July 15, 2019, <https://theprint.in/opinion/why-rss-has-chosen-to-remind-modi-shah-of-its-key-role-in-bjps-big-election-wins/262928/> (accessed June 18, 2020)

⁵³ Web Desk, "Top BJP Minister Attend RSS Meet, Opposition Questions Govt's Accountability", *The Indian Express*, September 03, 2015 <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/rss-bjp-meet-opposition-parties-slam-saffron-outfitsinterference-in-governance/> (accessed 14 June 2020)

general management, services, public relations, media, *parcharak* management.

Figure-1: RSS Organizational Leadership Chart⁵⁴



RSS has established its presence in different countries, including the United States. It is believed that the RSS has presence in nearly 150 countries, with almost 60 branches known as *Shakhas* in the United Kingdom alone, while the VHP has become the central organisation representing the *Hindutva* in the entire Hindu world. The VHP has twelve branches in the UK, twenty-five in the US, two in Canada, and six in different European

⁵⁴ "These are the eight leaders who call the shots in RSS," *The Print*, March 20, 2021, <https://theprint.in/india/these-are-the-eight-leaders-who-call-the-shots-in-rss/625174/> (accessed on Nov 23, 2021)

countries.⁵⁵ Its affiliates hold *Shakhas*, the morning marching-and-meditation sessions, in about thirty nine countries.⁵⁶ RSS does not accept funding other than its own members, as it is not registered as a charity based organization. However, different organizations in the US, registered as charitable organizations, are closely affiliated with different wings of the RSS to provide indirect funding to the group. Each of the above-mentioned organizations has a US equivalent sister organization, mentioned in the Figure 2 as following:

- a. Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS) mirrors the RSS with the Friends of India Society (FISI) functioning as its public arm.
- b. Overseas Friend of BJP (OFBJP) runs the affairs of BJP in the US.
- c. Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America, equivalent to VHP.
- d. India Development and Relief Fund (IDRF), US-based organization, equivalent to Seva Vibhag
- e. Sewa International, coordinates all international funds and service programs.

⁵⁵ Catarina Kinnvall and Ted Svensson, "Hindu Nationalism, Diaspora Politics and Nation Building in India," *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 64 (2010): 274-292

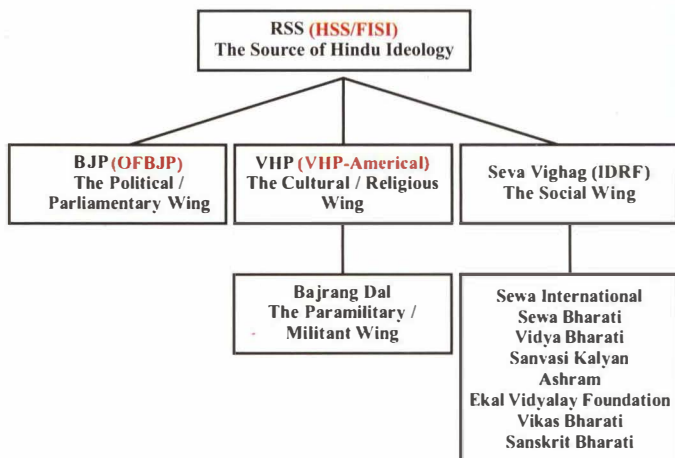
⁵⁶ Anahita Mukherji, "Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh 'shakha' spreads its wings to 39 countries," *Times of India*, December 21, 2015, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Rashtriya-Swayamsevak-Sangh-shakha-spreads-its-wings-to-39-countries/articleshow/50260517.cms>. (accessed July 4, 2020)

Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS) is a UK-based affiliate of RSS that has branches in 39 countries including USA. In all these countries HSS runs Shakhas regularly. The outreach of HSS has now exceeded that of Vishwa Hindu Prasad (VHP). It is a fascist organization with a proper regimented structure and a Nazi brown shirts patterned uniform of black pants and a white shirt. Like a Nazi salute HSS has a chant i.e., “Vishwa Dharma Ki Jai.” HSS is one of the international arms of RSS that is operating mainly from UK with a large presence in Bradford, Birmingham and Leicestershire. The real objective of HSS is to win more adherents for Hindu fascism and gather funds by establishing linkages with charity organizations like Sewa. Sewa is an aid organization that collects charity from UK in the name of India’s poor but funnels it to militant organizations in India. The funds collected by Sewa through HSS’s efforts in UK have in the past been given to Hindu institutions like **Kalyam Ashram** that were later found to be involved in killings and arson against Muslims.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ “Jonathan Millers, Sewa International Planning Violence,” YouTube video, posted by Channel Four News UK, November 16, 2021, www.youtube.com, Hindu Nationalism in Britain - SEWA International investigation - Channel Four News - YouTube



Figure-2: RSS Organizational Chart⁵⁸
(its US equivalents)



Negative Effects of RSS Penetration inside India

The RSS's influence can now be seen in national policies affecting everything from education to commerce and food. It helps shape India's public school curriculum, which in some BJP-led states teaches Hindu scripture as

⁵⁸ "The Foreign Exchange of Hate: IDRF and the American Funding of Hindutva," *Sabrang Communications Ltd. And the South Asia Citizens Web*, 2002, https://www.sabrang.com/hnfund/sacw/downloads/sabrang_sacw.pdf. (accessed July 4, 2020)

historical fact.⁵⁹ Through its affiliates, it has been able to scuttle the legislation not liked by it.⁶⁰ It pressurizes the Indian government to be more protectionist when it comes to big multinational companies entering the country. The RSS also opposed the privatization of some of the state assets, including the national airline. Modi's government had long planned to sell off a part of Air India, but the deal was stalled for months because a RSS-affiliated trade union opposed it.⁶¹ The RSS chief was quoted as saying that if Air India is sold, it should be run by an Indian firm, not a foreign airline.⁶²

A reflection of the reach of the RSS can be seen in the manner it has earned success in the parliamentary elections. In Lok Sabha elections, BJP's success in 2014 and 2019 is due to RSS's penetration across the Indian society. The efforts of RSS in helping BJP in the election outreach and work were evident in ensuring high voter

⁵⁹ Mandakini Gahlot, "India's new school textbooks favor Hindu nationalist themes, making minorities uneasy," *The Washington Post*, March 19, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/religion/indias-new-school-textbooks-favor-hindu-nationalist-themes-making-minorities-uneasy/2015/03/19/30b5dad6-ce4a-11e4-8730-4f473416e759_story.html.

⁶⁰ Elizabeth Roche, "Land bill push hits RSS group roadblock," *Live Mint*, July 1, 2015, <https://www.livemint.com/Politics/NXnf5UDFTdBupR9xBQtbzN/Land-bill-push-hits-RSS-group-roadblock.html>.

⁶¹ Mohua Chatterjee, "RSS-affiliated Trade Union Opposes Air India Privatization," *Times of India*, July 4, 2017, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/rss-affiliated-trade-union-opposes-air-india-privatisation/articleshow/59433070.cms>.

⁶² Pavan Burugula, "Air India should be run by an Indian firm, says RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat," *Business-Standard*, April 17, 2018, https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/rss-chief-s-dig-at-govt-s-policies-india-can-never-be-a-cashless-economy-118041601052_1.html.

turnout in BJP's favor. The number of *Shakhas* in 2012 was over 40,000 and by 2014, it grew into almost 43,000 and by 2016 that number touched almost 58,000 (see Figure 3).⁶³ A correlation may also be drawn between the rise in *Shakhas* and the seats secured by BJP during 2014 and 2019 elections.⁶⁴ A positive correlation may exist in the quantitative inquiry between the rise in the number of *Shakhas* and BJP's victory in elections. Compared to 2008, when BJP secured 116 seats, it secured 282 seats in 2014 elections and 303 seats in 2019 elections. Since 2014 elections, BJP's electoral performance kept rising and so did the expansion of RSS across India as well as rest of the world.⁶⁵ There are also over 500 social groups that had wanted to see the victory of Modi in the parliamentary elections. By 2019, it was reported by RSS that there was 32 per cent rise in the daily gatherings of RSS across India.⁶⁶

⁶³ See Figure 3 on Parliamentary Performance of BJS/BJP.

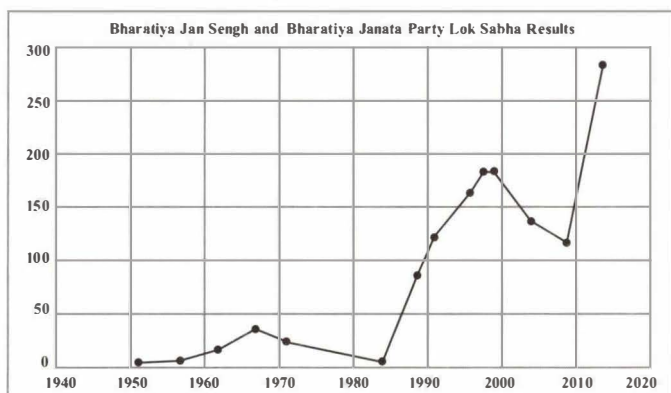
⁶⁴ "Inside India's RSS: The Secretive Group of Hardcore Hindus Dedicated to Narendra Modi's re-election," *South China Morning Post*, April 12, 2019, <https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/south-asia/article/3005840/inside-indias-rss-secretive-group-hardcore-hindus-dedicated>

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

Figure 3

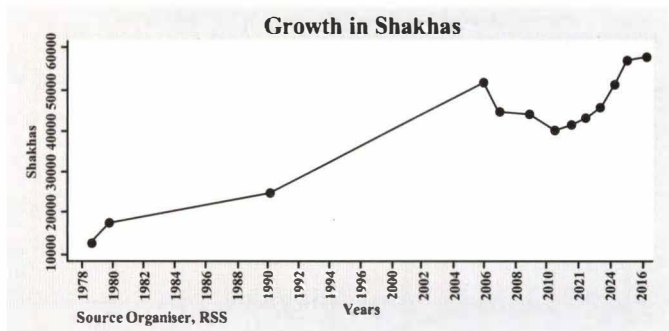
Parliamentary Performance of BJS/BJP



Source: Election Commission of India cited in *Messengers of Hindu Nationalism* on Page 269.

As per Walter and Shridar who quote RSS's weekly magazine *Organiser*, the numbers of *Shakhas* (branches) are on the surge for over two decades now. In 2012, the numbers of *Shakhas* were over 40,000, and by 2016, this number has surged to over 55,000 *Shakhas* across the world. *Shakhas* are the basic unit of the RSS. They are autonomous in the management of their administration and finances.⁶⁷ The *Shakhas* are responsible for hosting, holding and organizing a host of activities other than recruiting and propagating the values of RSS.

⁶⁷ Damle and Shridher "Appendix IX: The RSS Constitution" in *Messengers of Hindu Nationalism*", (Hurst and Co. Ltd, 2019), 273-283.

Figure 4**Growth in the Number of Shakhas**

Amount the last ten years, the above graph doesn't have data for 2008 and 2010

Source: RSS's *Organiser* Magazine cited in *Messengers of Hindu Nationalism*
Page 260

Chapter 3

The RSS and BJP's Designs against Minorities Especially Muslims

The RSS is the parent organization of the right wing BJP with many of its senior leadership consisting of former *Pracharaks* or *Karsevaks* such as, the current Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi.⁶⁸ Their policies on Muslims and Pakistan must be viewed in light of retrospective analysis of the extensive training, indoctrination and preconceived notions, which have been imparted for generations by the RSS to its cadres. The RSS's design towards both the Muslims and Pakistan is similar to the BJP but, both the RSS and the BJP have had a complicated relationship, particularly with the latter assuming power as a political party.⁶⁹ The BJP government allows violence against minorities with impunity and tolerates hate speech and incitement to violence. It employs the digital platforms especially Facebook to create a virtual constituency for legal and policy maneuvers such as, abrogating the Articles 370 and 35-A, introducing Citizenship Amendment Act, etc. The

⁶⁸ Walter Andersen, "Evolution of a Hindu- oriented Political Party." *SAIS Review of International Affairs*, Volume 37, Number 1, Supplement 2017, 5.

⁶⁹ Milan Vaishnav et al., "The BJP in Power: Indian Democracy and Religious Nationalism." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, (Washington D.C. 2019) 2.

BJP-led *Hindutva* groups on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are actively calling for the abolition of secularism and openly supporting mob lynching of the Muslims. The Facebook groups of BJP-led *Hindutva* ideology persuade public that Hinduism is under attack from the Muslim ideology. History is being used as a weapon that provides fertile ground for the arguments that Hindus are not only being exterminated by the anti-national elements such as liberals and communists, but also by invaders including Mughals, British and Muslims.⁷⁰

Despite the presence of a Muslim wing within its ranks, the RSS has historically adopted a hardline approach towards the Muslim minority since its foundation in 1925. The ideals of M.S. Golwalkar and Keshav Baliram Hedgewar are considered as central tenets of its ideology and doctrine.⁷¹ Both the leaders considered a Hindu *Rashtra* or a Hindu-dominated India to be the core objective of their creed. Hindu chauvinism and supremacy is considered to be inviolable and the organization has established close links in the Hindu-dominated Indian polity with various leaders such as, L.K. Advani, Atal Bihari Vajpayee and the current Prime

⁷⁰ Dheepa Sundaram, "Hindutva Propaganda and the Digital Ecosystem" paper presented at the *Dismantling Global Hindutva: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, 12 September 2021.

⁷¹ Ibid. 9-11.

Minister Narendra Modi helping the BJP function as its political wing.

Through its outreach programs and dissemination of the propaganda, the RSS has been largely successful in appealing to its majority Hindu support base at the expense of the Indian Muslim minority by targeting corporate elites, influential figures and the youth.⁷² Through the distribution of the material which glorifies Hindu civilization, the RSS has attempted to demonize the Indian Muslims as an outside community, despite Muslims constituting approximately 14.2 percent of the Indian population and India being home to the third largest Muslim population in the world.⁷³ Hence, incidents such as the burning of the 2002 Godhra train have acted as a catalyst for the RSS to appeal to the wider Hindu society and in the process, orchestrate violent attacks against the Indian Muslims based on the ideological and historical grounds.

A closer examination of the literature used by the RSS clearly shows how the Indian Muslim community is projected as progeny of Mughal invaders who had subjugated Hindus throughout their rule and hence must

⁷² Venugopal Vasudha, "RSS ropes in professionals from top business schools to lure youth." *The Economic Times*, August 20, 2016 <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/rss-ropes-in-professionals-from-top-business-schools-to-lure-youth/articleshow/53778694.cms?from=mdr> (accessed 23 June 2020)

⁷³ Nandini Sundar, "Teaching to Hate: RSS' Pedagogical Programme." *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 39, No. 16 (April 17-23, 2004), pp. 1605-1612

be subjugated for the noble goal of preserving Hindu culture and society.⁷⁴ This predilection has compelled the Hindu majority to view Muslims with suspicion and prevent them from playing a more dominant role in what is essentially a 'Hindu' nation in the eyes of the organization. The scariest part of *Hindutva* ideology is violence towards women who marry outside the Hindu faith, especially with Muslims. The RSS has also invoked the 'demographic' card by promoting alarmist arguments regarding the Muslim population growth in India, especially with campaigns such as banning 'Love Jihad' or the act of Muslims supposedly wooing Hindu women for the purpose of conversion and growth of their communities.⁷⁵ *Love Jihad* related riots and cow lynching have become more ubiquitous in India since the inception of the Narendra Modi-led BJP government, which often encourages the RSS to carry out their activities with impunity. The terminology of *Love Jihad* is being used to not only compel women to stop mingling with Muslim boys, but also inciting Hindu youth to target women and Muslim boys at public places. *Hindutva* affiliated media outlets are raising questions and discussions about the declining rate of population of Hindus in Bangladesh and Pakistan along with a concomitant increase in the rate of

⁷⁴ Nandini Sundar, "Teaching to Hate: RSS' Pedagogical Programme." *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 39, No. 16 (April 17-23, 2004), pp. 1605-1612

⁷⁵ David James Strohl, "Love jihad in India's moral imaginaries: religion, kinship, and citizenship in late liberalism." *Contemporary South Asia*, Vol. 27, Issue.1, 2019, pp.1

Muslims in India. They link the increasing ratio of Muslim population in India as a conspiracy of Muslims against Hindu religion. Internationally acclaimed Indian women scholars such as Arundhati Roy and others are soft targets of *Hindutva* brigade. Love Jihad is being fetishized too. According to a Washington Post report a hate preaching movie, “Sooryavanshi” is ruling the box office in India. The movie is depicting Muslim men as predators who seduce Hindu women for marriage and conversion to Muslim faith.⁷⁶ The RSS and BJP have developed an ability to disseminate propaganda quickly and widely not only within India but also beyond Indian borders.⁷⁷

Another strategy used effectively by the RSS which has adversely impacted the Indian Muslims is the systematic rewriting of textbooks with attempts to celebrate Hindu history targeting the minds of younger segments of Hindu society. The appointment of RSS ideologue, Dinanath Batra in 2014, as the head of the state panel tasked with the responsibility of revamping education in Gujarat is a prime example, where as per the federal government’s directive, six of his books were to be made a part of the

⁷⁶ Rana Ayyub, “Opinion: Why an Indian film’s success at the box office should worry us all,” The Washington Post, November 15, 2021. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/11/15/why-an-indian-films-success-box-office-should-worry-us-all/>

⁷⁷ Salil Tripathi, “Hinduism and Hindutva” paper presented at the *Dismantling Global Hindutva: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, 12 September 2021.

educational curriculum of the state.⁷⁸ Many of his publications contain revisionist arguments pertaining to Hindu civilization while demonizing Islamic history in India with the primary aim of influencing the minds of Hindu students. Much of the material used as part of state curriculum has a unique identity connotation, which promotes racial and nationalistic pride by highlighting concepts such as '*Akhand Bharat*' or a '*United India*.' BJP and *Hindutva* brigades of RSS have been pressurizing print media outlets through various means to push *Hindutva* agenda and propagate *Hindutva* ideology while silencing anti-*Hindutva* voices. Editors, reporters and journalists who refuse to publish or report *Hindutva*-driven agenda of BJP and RSS have been frequently harassed, while editors and journalists who propagate nationalist narrative and *Hindutva* ideology have been consistently incentivized through monetary and other social and political benefits. This is why, the RSS's ideology-driven articles get more space in the Indian newspapers and magazines as compared to liberal or anti-*Hindutva* articles.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Gaikwad, Rahi, "Dinanath Batra's books are a must-read in Gujarat schools." *The Hindu*, July 25.2014, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/dinanath-batra-man-behind-pulping-of-wendy-donigers-book-is-mustread-in-gujarat-schools/article6249539.ece> (accessed 22 June 2020)

⁷⁹ Cyril Sam, "Hindutva Propaganda and the Digital Ecosystem" paper presented at the *Dismantling Global Hindutva: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, 12 September 2021.

Alongside textbooks and the dissemination of propaganda, the RSS considers the partition of India as a historical blunder, which has had a devastating impact on India's united character for which loyalty of the Indian Muslims must constantly be questioned and open to scrutiny. This has resulted in an increased monitoring of the activities of the Muslim communities, attempts at unearthing *Jihadist* activity and undertaking rogue measures such as violently attacking Muslim localities on the premise of defending *Hindutva*.⁸⁰ The 1992 Ayodhya Mosque demolition, the subsequent 1993 Mumbai riots, the 2002 Gujarat riots and various cow lynching incidents across the country are examples of how violence has been employed as an operational technique by the RSS for pursuing the wider political agenda against Muslims on ideological grounds.⁸¹

Much of the RSS's activities against Muslims which includes killings, lynching, mob violence, boycotts and campaigns are also conducted by foot soldiers of the RSS, including members of the VHP, the Hindu Sena, the Bajrang Dal and Gau Rakshak vigilantes (protectors of Cow) groups which continue to act as proxies for promoting the RSS's socially exclusionist agenda against the Indian Muslim community. On November 15, 2021, in New Delhi Muslim Friday prayers service was obstructed

⁸⁰ Kalim Siddiqui, "A Critical Study of Hindu Nationalism in India", *Journal of Business and Economic Policy*, Vol. 3, No. 2; June 2016, pp. 16-23.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

by RSS goons who after dispersing Muslims organized a grand Hindu prayer service under the patronage of a leader of the ruling BJP.⁸²

The Maoist freedom struggle that began in 1946 is considered one of the oldest freedom struggles against the Indian Union. The movement has been a source of security concern for various Indian governments in the past. The BJP-led *Hindutva* ideology has taken a more violent approach to counter this movement. From 2014-2018, the year BJP came into power, as many as 1546 fatalities have been reported from the Maoist dominating areas. These fatalities include 509 noncombatant civilians and 720 Maoist/Naxalites, especially through torture and abductions by the Indian security forces.⁸³ According to Gautam Navlakha, the Sweden-based Indian critic, “despite declarations of unilateral ceasefire by the Maoists, the Indian government has shown absolutely no willingness to work towards peace.”⁸⁴ This tendency shows the aggressive and self-righteous mindset embedded in *Hindutva* ideology.

⁸² Rana Ayyub, “Opinion: Why an Indian film’s success at the box office should worry us all,” *The Washington Post*, November 15, 2021. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/11/15/why-an-indian-films-success-box-office-should-worry-us-all/>

⁸³ Niranjana Sahoo, “From Bihar to Andhra, how India fought, and won, its 50-yr war with Left-wing extremism”, *The Print*, June 26, 2019. <https://theprint.in/opinion/from-bihar-to-andhra-how-india-fought-and-won-its-50-yr-war-with-left-wing-extremism/254462/> (accessed August 29, 2021)

⁸⁴ Siddhartha Roy, “Half a Century of India’s Maoist Insurgency”, *The Diplomat*, September 21, 2017. <https://thediplomat.com/2017/09/half-a-century-of-indias-maoist-insurgency/> (accessed August 29, 2021)

The Hindu supremacist approach of BJP-led *Hindutva* ideology has sidelined the centrists, liberals, communists, Dalits, Muslims, feminists and leftists, which is a gross violation of the pluralist democratic norms. The most notorious approach adopted by the BJP-led government is the onslaught on Modi's critics through death squads.⁸⁵ Killing of Gauri Lankesh, a journalist and Modi's critic from Bangalore, is widely attributed to state's policy of silencing the voices of those who are considered as sympathizers of Maoists. Prior to his election as Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi was in favour of 'zero tolerance' to Naxalites and often dubbed them as terrorists.⁸⁶

Shiv Sena, the extremist wing of *Hindutva* ideology, too dubbed Naxalites as terrorists during BJP's government while Modi's administration ignored such incitement against Naxalites.⁸⁷ Shiv Sena is also a Savarkar loving Hindu organization that has currently developed some political differences with BJP and hence is partnering with secular Congress Party in the state of Maharashtra.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Siddhartha, "Half a Century of India's Maoist Insurgency".

⁸⁶ Web Desk, "Narendra Modi calls for zero tolerance towards Naxalism", *Economic Times*, May 26, 2013. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/narendra-modi-calls-for-zero-tolerance-towards-naxalism/articleshow/20277362.cms?from=mdr> (accessed August 30, 2021)

⁸⁷ Web Desk, "Hindus directly being dubbed 'terrorists', those with Naxal links 'purported supporters': Shiv Sena", *Economic Times*, August 30, 2018. <https://m.economictimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/hindus-directly-being-dubbed-terrorists-those-with-naxal-links-purported-supporters-shiv-sena/articleshow/65608931.cms> (accessed August 30, 2021)

⁸⁸ Jawed Naqvi, "A damaging debate on Savarkar," *DAWN*, November 16, 2021.

Despite this aggressive posture of the BJP-led Hindu supremacist state and central governments, seven states including Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha, Bihar, and Maharashtra remain highly influenced by the Maoists/Naxalites ideology while creating an existential threat to the Indian Union. However, these aggressive policies of 'zero tolerance' and dubbing its own citizens as 'terrorists' indicate that BJP-led Hindu supremacist government is not willing to accept pluralism in the Indian society. Resultantly, this mindset puts the Indian minorities in grave danger, including Muslims and Naxalites. The anti-Muslim animus has now reached northeastern Indian states Tripura also. In October 2021, the Hindu extremists vandalized mosques and homes of Muslim community in Tripura and when that activity was reported on social media by conscientious objectors about 102 Twitter accounts of journalists, activists and lawyers were blocked through a police report.⁸⁹

The Bharatiya Janata Party's Anti-Pakistan Role

The Bharatiya Janata Party is the political front of the RSS. It is a rightwing political party that subscribes to the official ideology of '*Hindutva*' or '*Hinduness*.' The RSS has also largely fractured its' relationship with the Muslims

⁸⁹ Rana Ayyub, "Opinion: Why an Indian film's success at the box office should worry us all," The Washington Post, November 15, 2021. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/11/15/why-an-indian-films-success-box-office-should-worry-us-all/>

and Pakistan since its establishment. The hostility and animus against the Indian Muslim community is largely due to the fact that much of the party's senior leadership consists of RSS *Karsevaks* or *Pracharaks* who view the Muslim community with considerable suspicion in a Hindu-dominated country. Yet, unlike its parent organization, the BJP has adopted and continues to adopt a far more nuanced and calculated approach towards its policies on the Muslim community.

The political strategy against the Indian Muslims centers on raising contentious issues, such as building of temples on controversial religious sites, passing or strengthening of existing legislation pertaining to the preservation of cows and giving controversial Hindu fringe elements a platform in the Lok Sabha. In its political manifesto prior to being elected in 2014, the BJP considered the building of the Ram temple in Ayodhya to be a national priority with some sitting MLA's pushing for the building of the temple in the city, which was the site of some of the worst rioting in India.⁹⁰ Such strategies, however, considerably vary, depending on the leadership at the center, with the Narendra Modi-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA), adopting a more hardline approach in terms of legislating on such controversial matters as compared to the

⁹⁰ BJP Electoral Manifesto 2014, "Details the pledge of exploring possibilities with the framework of the Indian constitution to construction the Ram Temple in Ayodhya", pp. 41 https://www.thehindu.com/multimedia/archive/01830/BJP_election_manif_1830927a.pdf (accessed June 22, 2020)

predecessors such as Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Such political initiatives are often sanctioned by the majority in the parliament which allows the BJP government to cater to its constituencies that harbor anti-Muslim sentiments. A prime example is the manner in which the BJP had implemented counter-terror legislation, referring to the ineptness of the opposition Indian National Congress in adopting policies which tackle homegrown and externally inspired extremism effectively. The legislation's explanation was a clear enough reference to the Muslim community.

The domestic policy of the BJP towards Muslims cannot be viewed in isolation from the grass roots level movement of the RSS from which it draws its ideological sustenance. Since the Modi-led BJP came into power, Hindu fringe elements/extremists such as the *Bajrang Dal* and the VHP have attacked Muslims on the allegations of threatening Hindu culture or slaughtering cows. This has largely received a muted response from the Modi government.⁹¹ The Muslim community which continues to be largely impoverished in the country with the exception of a small but politically powerful elite, often struggles in the aftermath of the domestic communal unrest in pursuit of justice, indicating a clear institutional bias.

⁹¹ K. Alan Kronstadt, "India: Religious Freedom Issues." *Congressional Research Service*, R45303, updated August 30, 2019 <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R45303/4> (accessed 23 June 2020)

As per Pritam Singh, the secular nature of the Indian constitution has been tainted by the implacable assault on the constitution by the institutionalized communalism embedded in the state and societal institutions.”⁹² The poison of communalism and *Hindutva* ideology has permeated the judiciary too. The infamous judgment on Babri Mosque, a historical place of worship for the Muslim community, dating back to the sixteenth century, by the Supreme Court judge Ranjan Gogoi, is emblematic of the deep-seated malaise in the courts too. The judge had given the possession of the mosque's land to a Hindu litigant in a grotesque travesty of justice. The same judge was later inducted in the parliament by Prime Minister Modi, as a recompense for his services rendered in the cause of *Hindutva* ideology in the shape of the unjust judgment.⁹³ As per R.N. Bhaskar, the Indian judicial system is in a mess with key appointments withheld and done selectively to induct pliable judges. Under such a system, the people especially the minorities, have no hope of justice.⁹⁴ The US government funded

⁹² Pritam Singh, “Hindu Bias in the India's Secular Constitution: probing flaws in the instruments of governance,” *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 6, 2005, 909.

⁹³ Rana Ayub, “Opinion: The destruction of India's judicial independence is almost complete,” *Washington Post*, March 24, 2020, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/03/24/destruction-indias-judicial-independence-is-almost-complete/\(accessed on September 20, 2021\)](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/03/24/destruction-indias-judicial-independence-is-almost-complete/(accessed%20on%20September%20,2021)).

⁹⁴ R.N. Bhaskar, “Judiciary: Is India a democracy?” *The Free Press Journal*, March 22, 2021, <https://www.freepressjournal.in/analysis/judiciary-is-india-a-democracy> (accessed on September 20, 2021)

human rights watch organization *Freedom House* has downgraded the Indian democracy's status from free to partly free, precisely because of the Modi government's abuses human rights against the minorities.⁹⁵ According to Sweden's *VDem* Institute's report, India was not a democracy but an "electoral autocracy".⁹⁶

At the economic level, the BJP has banked upon free market policies for engineering India's economic growth and assuming the status of a great power, which has historically stood in stark contrast to the socialist economic policies pursued by the initial leadership of the Indian National Congress. As per the BJP's electoral manifesto of 2014, removing bureaucratic hurdles, promoting ease of doing business, attracting foreign investment and creating jobs for the future generations are key priorities for the Modi-led NDA government. These policies, nevertheless, have a direct bearing on the Muslim community, which continues to be underrepresented in the corporate elite sector and suffer from higher levels of poverty, malnutrition and illiteracy

⁹⁵ Freedom House, "India downgrades from free to partly free democracy", <https://www.google.com/search?q=Freedom+House+downgrades+Indian+dempracy+from+free+to+partly+free&nfpr=1&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwizjJnkv43zAhWJHhQKHxgKAqwQvgUoAXoECAEQL> (accessed on September 20, 2021)

⁹⁶ India is no longer a democracy but an electoral autocracy, *The Wire*, March 1, 2021, <https://thewire.in/rights/india-no-longer-democracy-electoral-autocracy-v-dem-institute-report-bjp-narendra-modi> (accessed on September 19, 2021).

then the national average.⁹⁷

Much of the BJP's economic policies have supported India's influential companies which are Hindu-dominated resulting in a rise in regional disparity and contributing to the income divide in the country along the communal lines. The economic turmoil that India finds itself in is a result of the policies followed by the BJP government. In 2019, the BJP government passed a constitutional amendment to lift the cap on reservations in education and public sector jobs from 50 to 60 percent.⁹⁸ The amendment has been made to corner Dalits and other backward classes systematically and garner conducive environment for upper caste classes.⁹⁹ These measures reflect the intentions of BJP-led *Hindutva* ideology of making India a country conducive to upper caste Hindus only.

BJP as the veritable political arm of the RSS leverages the digital and social media tools very effectively for its political proselytization efforts. The target of such epistemic efforts is a

⁹⁷ Maria Thomas, "India's growth story is leaving out its Muslim minority," *Quartz India*, 24 September 2018, <https://qz.com/india/1399537/indian-muslims-have-the-least-chances-of-escaping-poverty/> (accessed 23 June 2020)

⁹⁸ Alf Gunvald Nilsen, "Is the BJP really concerned about India's poor?", *Al-Jazeera*, January 13, 2019. <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2019/1/13/is-the-bjp-really-concerned-about-indias-poor> (accessed September 20, 2021)

⁹⁹ Ajaz Ashraf, "Modi's 10% upper caste quota is a political gamble that may backfire (just like demonetisation)", *Scroll*, January 09, 2019. <https://scroll.in/article/908705/modis-10-upper-caste-quota-is-a-political-gamble-that-may-backfire-just-like-demonetisation> (accessed September 20, 2021)

large cohort of 581.5 million Internet users.¹⁰⁰ The public opinion is swayed in its favour by BJP through political adventurism using social media apps and proxies. The total number of ads employed by Facebook proxies like *Bharat Ke Mann Ki Baat*, *Nation with NaMo* and *My First Vote for Modi* had run 14,000 ads since February 2019 to influence the general elections.¹⁰¹ The above indicates BJP's clever strategy of influencing public opinion by using funds gathered in the name of charity by its ideological mentor i.e., RSS.

¹⁰⁰ Nalin Mehta, "Digital Politics in India's 2019 General Elections," *Economic and Political Weekly* 54, no. 51 (December 2019), <https://www.epw.in/engage/article/digital-politics-2019-election-spending-strategies>

¹⁰¹ Maroosha Muzaffar, "The Hidden Facebook Rules Modi Is Using to Create an Image of Invincibility," *OZY*, last modified September 16, 2020, <https://www.ozy.com/html/the-new-and-the-next/the-hidden-facebook-rules-modiis-using-to-create-an-image-of-invincibility/316627/>.

Chapter 4

Impact on Regional Security

Pakistan

On the subject of Pakistan, successive BJP-led governments have pursued political, economic and military policies which have been largely consistent in negativity with the notable exception of the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government's rapprochement towards the Nawaz Sharif's government from 1998-1999.¹⁰² The Narendra Modi-led NDA has especially adopted a far more aggressive posture, the most important example being the 2019 illegal annexation of the Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir and revocation of its special status under Article 370 of the Indian Constitution. It has immensely vitiated the diplomatic environment, leading towards the souring of bilateral relations between the two countries. Domestically and internationally, the BJP has been active in deploying anti-Pakistan rhetoric and labeling Islamabad as a state sponsor of terrorism. On the international front, the BJP's strategy on Pakistan has been to isolate Islamabad diplomatically by reaching out to states such as the United Arab Emirates and

¹⁰² The Lahore Declaration was signed between the PML N and BJP governments which focused on an array of confidence building measures in 1998.
https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/IN%20PK_990221_The%20Lahore%20Declaration.pdf (accessed 23 June 2020)

Bangladesh.¹⁰³ By vilifying Pakistan and its security establishment, and using a continual bellicose rhetoric against Islamabad, the Modi-led BJP has followed a policy of isolating Pakistan on international and multilateral fora through epistemic warfare, disinformation tactics and negative lobbying. Modi burnished his credentials of an inveterate Pakistan hater in line with his *Hindutva* ideology by violating Pakistan's airspace on February 26, 2019, after Pulwama attacks on the Indian CRPF's bus in IIOJK by Kashmir-based militants. The Indian air foray in Balakot area of Pakistan did not achieve any worthwhile objective except inviting a retaliatory strike by the Pakistan Air Force and downing of an Indian Air Force MIG 21 Bison in an air combat, leading to a perilous showdown between the two nuclear countries.¹⁰⁴ The incident was reflective of the rash decision made by the Indian government under the influence of their self-created false narrative of making Pakistan a scapegoat for their own mishandling of the situation in the disputed IIOJK state. According to Rohan Mukherji, an Indian author, "Balakot moved both countries one rung up the escalation ladder (Herman Kahn's 44 rung escalation ladder) which is both closer to making a nuclear war

¹⁰³ Shrikant Bedekar, "Look Where Bangladesh Has Reached and What Has Happened To Pakistan- PM Modi." *The Eurasian Times*, 18 March 2020, <https://eurasianimes.com/modi-heaps-praise-on-bangladesh-slams-pakistan/> (accessed 23 June 2020)

¹⁰⁴ Air Cmdre Jamal Husain, "The Balakot Raid and its Aftermath" *Defence Journal*, Karachi Vol. 22, Iss. 9, (Apr 2019): 12-15

possible”.¹⁰⁵ Balakot incident, therefore, shows the virulence of *Hindutva* that can plunge the two nuclear countries in a nuclear showdown imperiling the regional, as well as global peace.

A country that once prided itself on Nehruvian secularism and non-aligned foreign policy has mired itself in the morass of exclusivist politics driven by the RSS. Prime Minister Modi, heading the political front of a fascist RSS organization, espousing ‘*Hindutva*’ is the exemplar of a majoritarian polity drawing strength from caste-ism and xenophobia. The economic fate of South Asia would have been different if regional organizations such as, SAARC, the ECO and SCO had functioned as vehicles for economic integration for the benefit of South Asia, which has 24.89 percent of the global population. Instead, we have a regional hegemon privileging divisive geopolitics over geo-economics. The latest manifestation of the above proclivity is the Indian attempts at the annexation of its held portion of the disputed State of Jammu and Kashmir and use of laws like the Citizen Amendment Act (CAA) and National Register of Citizen (NRC) to deny citizenship rights to the minorities.¹⁰⁶

The Citizen Amendment Act (CAA) 2019 passed by India’s parliament grants amnesty to non-Muslim illegal

¹⁰⁵ Rohan Mukherjee, “Climbing the escalation ladder: India and the Balakot crisis,” *Texas National Security Review*, October 2, 2019, <https://warontherocks.com/2019/10/climbing-the-escalation-ladder-india-and-the-balakot-crisis/> (accessed on September 20, 2021)

¹⁰⁶ Raashid Wali Janjua, “What a Waste”, *The News*, December 23, 2020.

immigrants from three neighbouring countries i.e., Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. CAA 2019 has amended the 64 -year-old Indian Citizenship Act that prohibited illegal migrants from becoming Indian citizens. The Act makes exceptions for members of six religious minority communities i.e., Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christians from three countries i.e Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh.¹⁰⁷ The Amended Act clearly discriminates against Muslims on the basis of faith and should attract the attention of International Human Rights Watch and US Commission on International Religious Freedom. The discriminatory Citizen Amendment Act has resulted in protests in India by minorities, including some Afghan nationals that sought asylum in India after Taliban takeover.¹⁰⁸

India unfortunately has morphed into a predator, bent upon the destabilization of a smaller neighbor. This bullying attitude is certainly an anachronism in this era of global interdependence and regional cooperation. The cerebral and pacific archetype of the Indian identity has been overtaken by viscerally misanthropic *Hindutva* votaries who are slowly digging the country deeper into

¹⁰⁷ Citizenship Amendment Bill: India's new anti-Muslim law explained, December 11, 2019, BILAL SARWARY on Twitter: "#AFG Former members of ANDSF, NDS, Afghan special forces and intelligence feel abandoned in New Delhi, India. Most were in hospitals for treatment or had come for training courses when the Afghan government collapsed. They appealed for help in front of the US Embassy in Delhi. <https://t.co/Wq3QvLxLs9>" / Twitter.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

the pit of a communal hatred. Trade connectivity and its economic bonanza is being sacrificed at the altar of confrontational politics and territorial aggrandizement. Evidence of the above destabilizing influence is the epistemic war and a full-fledged attack on Pakistan in the information domain through a sedulously orchestrated disinformation campaign. The recent disclosures by Brussels-based NGO EU **DisinfoLab** about a network of fake news sites, web domains, and websites, working in concert with India's largest news agency ANI, targeting Pakistan through vicious propaganda and artifices is a shocking indictment of a country subverting EU and the UN officials' opinions against Pakistan. The **DisinfoLab** report is a portrayal of India's sponsorship of a 15-year-old media campaign against Pakistan through fake news and propaganda, a process that was already in motion before the BJP government but was given added impetus by it. The network operated from Brussels where the EU Disinformation Task Force unearthed the website of a fake magazine for the European Parliament, called '**EP Today**'.¹⁰⁹

The magazine was publishing negative stories about Pakistan and was managed by the Indian stakeholders linked with a large number of spurious companies, think tanks, and NGOs belonging to Delhi-based Srivastava Group. The group's IP address also hosted online media –

¹⁰⁹ Raashid Wali Janjua, "What a Waste", *The News*, December 23, 2020.

'*New Delhi Times*' and '*International Institute of Nonaligned Studies*' (IINS). The IINS also invited 27 EU members of the parliament on a private visit to Kashmir to meet PM Modi which was later projected on the media as an official visit. The visit was sponsored by Modi Sharma, an Indian national, heading the *Women's Economic and Social Think Tank (WESTT)*. *EP Today* and the IINS network were linked with another spurious magazine, *Times of Geneva*. Both these magazines in turn were linked to the Srivastava Group in India. *EP Today* and *Times of Geneva* both used content syndication with *Voice of America* and *Russia Today* to enhance their reach and credibility. It was also found that both Geneva and Brussels-based disinformation networks were linked with a number of fake websites, think tanks and NGOs that were being managed by the Srivastava Group.

The investigations found additional 265 websites in 65 countries named after extinct newspapers or spoof media outlets. These fake websites covered anti-Pakistan and pro-India content besides republishing similar content. The techniques used for the insidious purpose varied. There were zombie news sites resurrecting dead newspapers and new inventions. Professor of international law Louis Sohn, who had died in 2006, was being projected as Louis Shon, the president of an NGO called CSOP, attending a function in 2011, five years after his death. And then there were misleading sites that used

fake domains. For example, ‘**The Albany Democrat**’ at **albany dailydemocrat.com** – whereas the real website was ‘The Albany Democrat Herald’ at **democrat herald.com**. Out of 261 media outlets, 164 were zombies, 87 new and 10 in misleading categories. Geographically, 66 were in the US, 20 in Canada, 18 in the UK, 12 in Switzerland, 9 in Australia, 8 in China, 6 in India and 5 in Russia. From the above, it is clear that a network of disinformation was being operated from Geneva and Brussels with global links with NGOs and think tanks. All of the above outlets are centrally controlled from India. (See Annexure D-1/D-2) The objective of these fake media outlets was to act as a global echo chamber for anti-Pakistan and pro-Indian themes to influence the UN and EU institutions like the EU Parliament and UN Human Rights Council. That a country like India that presents to the international community an image of pacifism should indulge in such a massive calumny is a *Hindutva*-driven paradox that threatens regional peace. Indian sponsorship of fake news websites and their dissemination network is a veritable crime against the UN

Charter that prohibits subversion of peace to destabilize a UN member country.¹¹⁰

Economically, the BJP has eschewed protectionism in favor of free market principles while focusing on ‘*Swadeshi*’ or promotion of indigenous industries. Yet, doing so has had little impact on its economic relationship with Pakistan, where trading ties continue to be held hostage to deterioration in overall relations with mostly limited to essential perishable goods. Trade as of January 2020, stands at US\$16.8 million from Pakistan to India. The trade balance is slightly skewed in favor of India.¹¹¹ The BJP has not specifically targeted Pakistan by lobbying for the economic sanctions however, it continues to have reservations over projects such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is an integral economic lifeline for Pakistan from China. India considers it having illegal investments in the disputed territories of Gilgit and Baltistan (GB).

Militarily, the BJP with the government of Narendra Modi, has designed a policy aimed at thwarting what it perceives is Pakistan’s unconditional support for those

¹¹⁰ Raashid Wali Janjua, “What a Waste”, *The News*, December 23, 2020; Article 2(3) of United Nations Charter, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text> (accessed September 5, 2021). It states that “All Members shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security, and justice, are not endangered.” However, Indian sponsorship to fake news is an explicit attempt of destabilization of a UN member state and a threat to regional and international peace.

¹¹¹ Dawn Business news report on trade statistics, “Indo- Pak trade plunges in six months.” *Dawn*, 23 January 2020, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1530016> (accessed 23 June 2020)

terrorist groups that attacked the Indian soil. The BJP government has responded to the events such as the Pulwama attack with retaliatory airstrikes in Balakot on Pakistani soil on February 26, 2019. This eventually escalated tensions between the two nuclear armed rivals as Pakistan also retaliated.¹¹² Escalation of war rhetoric has continued from security advisors, yet a war has been avoided due to the realities of the conventional as well as strategic military balance between the two countries. Considerable investments in India's space program and the submarine leg of its nuclear triad, however, have strengthened India's deterrence capabilities; yet, the ability to deter what India considers are Pakistani-based insurgents, has been missing.¹¹³ Nonetheless, surgical strikes and the 2019 episode are an evidence of the BJP's objective of taking offensive measures against Pakistan on spurious grounds. India's unilateral act of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir's (IIOJK) annexation on August 05, 2019, is a complete disregard for the UN resolutions and bilateral agreements regarding the disputed region. The revocation of Article 370 and 35A followed by continual attempts at encroaching on the disputed state's territorial as well as political integrity displays a rash *Hindutva* mentality that cocks a snook at

¹¹² Frank O'Donnell, "Stabilizing Nuclear Southern Asia", *Asian Security*, DOI: 10.1080/14799855.2019.1620207 (accessed 23 June 2020)

¹¹³ Indian Naval Indigenization Plan (INIP) 2015-2020, <https://www.aviation-defence-universe.com/wp-content/themes/defence/pdf/inip.pdf> (accessed 23 June 2020)

promises made to international community in the shape of UN Security Council Resolutions. In line with *Hindutva* creed's rejection of diversity, the BJP government under Modi has continually been trying to alter the demographic and political identity of IIOJK to bring a disputed region under the Indian fold illegally.

Threat to China

Indians, under the sway of RSS inspired foreign policy, have forged a strategic relationship with the USA by acquiescing to the role of a regional Gendarme. The putative status as a countervailing force to China invests India with a strategic leverage and diplomatic clout. USA has given her a *carte blanche* to promote its hegemonic pursuits in the South Asian region. The RSS indoctrinated and diehard *Hindutva* votaries like Ajit Doval, have been the open proponents of an asymmetric war with Pakistan on all fronts. Doval is on record as having explained that asymmetric war as, "a low cost sustainable offensive with high deniability aimed to bleed the enemy to submission."¹¹⁴ He is also on record for having remarked that the Indian national identity is under threat from dangers like "Bangladeshi demographic invasion and anti-national forces masquerading as human rights groups."¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Falak Jawad, "Militant Hindutva and Pakistan," *Center for Strategic and Contemporary Research* " September 17, 2016, <https://cscr.pk/explore/themes/defense-security/militant-hindutva-pakistan/>. (Accessed June 27, 2020)

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

Indian hauteur, due to strategic relationship with the USA, has resulted in strained relations with China. The illegal annexation of Kashmir and crude attempts to change its demographic character has landed India in trouble with Beijing due to claims on the Chinese land in Aksai Chin as an Indian territory. India's standoff with China was not thought through by the RSS Gurus, especially when Article 370/35A was revoked and the new map published by the Indian government incorporating whole of J&K as part of India. To add insult to injury, Home Minister Amit Shah's Declaration in the Lok Sabha that "every inch of Aksai Chin would be recovered from China" was enough provocation for the Chinese to take action in the Galwan Valley."¹⁶ The Indian government, instead of embracing a cooperative paradigm of economic engagement, has preferred to be pressed into the service of a global power as a regional surrogate, which compels it to confront Beijing. Unfortunately, India is paying the price for its myopic approach of its leaders. At a time when ASEAN-RCEP free trade initiatives have been launched with countries like Australia, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand, India has decided to opt out. For a state which values the macro-economic benefits in this age of global geo-economics, the decision does not make

¹¹⁶ Web Desk, "PoK and Aksai Chin are also part of Jammu and Kashmir: Amit Shah", *Economic Times*, August 06, 2019. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/pok-and-aksai-chin-are-also-part-of-jammu-and-kashmir-amit-shah/articleshow/70548871.cms?from=mdr> (accessed June 29, 2020)

economic sense. So, what is driving India into this destabilizing proclivity, pulling itself and its neighbours down? It is, in fact, a misguided notion of revanchism and irredentism born out of *Hindutva* ideology that drives the country, ignoring the current regional realities and economic potentialities. The negative policies that are being followed by India vis-a-vis China in flagrant disregard of all economic and strategic benefits of the peace dividends defy rationality.

The anti-CPEC Indian designs fit in well with its strategic allies who view the project as an important strand of the Chinese “Belt and Road Initiative” that has to be scuttled or delayed in order to get even with both China and Pakistan. The fomenting of uprising and discontent in Gilgit-Baltistan, especially after the revocation of the special status of Kashmir, is a part of above anti-CPEC strategy. The Indo-China border clashes in Ladakh are also a result of the Indian continual push forward in the Line of Actual Control (LAC) to stake a claim to Aksai Chin and other disputed areas. With Pakistan, the Indians are expected to keep the LOC active through ceasefire violations and sporadic acts of fire raids and possible re-enactment of Balakot raid, raising the spectre of another Pulwama like incident. RSS-BJP combine is likely to bring international pressure on Pakistan through Financial Action Task Force (FATF). By pushing Pakistan into FATF’s black list, India would strive to financially strangle Pakistan’s economy.

Threat to Nepal

Till 2008 Nepal was the only Hindu state in the world as according to Hindu Manusmirti the executive power in a Hindu state has to flow from Hindu rulers. With the end of Chettri dynasty and transition of Nepal from a Kingdom to Republic that distinction also ended.¹¹⁷ Nepal has been a victim of Indian irredentist claims on its territory besides being a target of an irrational Hindutva inspired covetousness that seeks to subsume Nepal's identity into Indian Union as part of Akhand Bharat/Greater India. Since the BJP came into power, Indian interference into Nepal's internal affairs has substantially increased. In 2015, Nepal promulgated a new constitution. To pressurize Nepal, the BJP government used coercive means to cripple Nepal's economy and blocked India-Nepal border, the only land route of supply chain of goods for Nepal.¹¹⁸ The people of Nepal witnessed a humanitarian crisis due to unavailability of necessary goods hurting Nepal's economy. This episode was seen as an unprecedented act of Indian interference into Nepal's internal affairs. As already pointed out the Indian covetousness of Nepal is based on the RSS ideology of Akhand Bharat or Greater India, which considers some

¹¹⁷ Aaker Patel, "What is Hindu Rashtra," *Deccan Chronicle*, November 12, 2021, <https://www.deccanchronicle.com/140831/commentary-op-ed/article/what-hindu-rashtra> (accessed November 12, 2021)

¹¹⁸ Hemant Ojha, "The India-Nepal Crisis", *The Diplomat*, November 27, 2015. <https://thediplomat.com/2015/11/the-india-nepal-crisis/> (accessed November 12, 2021)

areas of Nepal as part of India. Therefore, BJP after coming to power has started raising border issues aggressively besides trying to influence Nepal's foreign policy through these coercive tactics. Since BJP came into helm of affairs, Modi has refused to sit with Nepal's authorities to discuss border dispute. That is the main reason for escalation of the boundary dispute between the two countries ever since BJP took the reins of power in India.

In 2019, India published its political map showing Kalapani, Lipulekh, and Limpiyadhura (*See Annexure E*) as Indian territories.¹¹⁹ This was an attempt to undermine Nepal's sovereignty and territorial integrity. It also showed expansionist approach of BJP-led RSS ideology, which was obviously based on Hindutva ideology's favourite concept of Akhand Bharat or Greater India. When Nepal rightly responded with the issuance of its own political map it soured the bilateral relationship between the two countries.¹²⁰ To promote its concept of Hindu Rashtra (State based on Hindu religion) the BJP has time and again hinted that they would support Nepali

¹¹⁹ Arun Budhathoki, "India's Updated Political Map Sparks Controversy in Nepal", *The Diplomat*, November 11, 2019. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/11/indias-updated-political-map-sparks-controversy-in-nepal/> (accessed November 12, 2021)

¹²⁰ Kallol Bhattacharjee, "Nepal's new political map claims India's territories", *The Hindu*, May 20, 2020. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/nepals-new-political-map-claims-indias-territories/article31632033.ece> (accessed November 12, 2021)

leaders who would align with their pro-Hindu agenda in Nepal. In meetings, BJP leaders are reportedly asking Nepali leaders to take measures to protect Hindu culture.¹²¹ This approach is meant to use religion as a tool to further influence the internal politics of Nepal. This approach of RSS and BJP which has managed to brow beat all minorities in India is being replicated in its foreign policy vis a vis smaller countries like Nepal whom it desires to turn into vassal states in its quest for regional hegemony.

Threat to Bangladesh

The Hindutva driven chauvinist policies of BJP have complicated bilateral relationship between Bangladesh and India. The divisive politics of BJP has augmented ethnic and communal hatred along the Bangladesh border. In recent elections, BJP has obtained a land-slide victory by winning 75 out of 126 seats in Assam. The BJP's victory is widely linked with its introduction of Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) in 2019 that helped BJP to garner support from various segments of society of

¹²¹ Kamal Dev Bhattarai, "Nepal's New PM Deuba Seeks Better Ties With India", The Diplomat, November 5, 2020. <https://thediplomat.com/2021/11/nepals-new-pm-deuba-seeks-better-ties-with-india/> (accessed November 12, 2021)

Assam, including upper caste Hindus and tea workers, etc.¹²²

Assam and Mizoram share nearly 263 km and 318 km border respectively with Bangladesh. Over the years, India has accused Bangladesh of infiltrating illegal immigrants and also harbouring militant groups of Naxalites and Marxists such as United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) in Bangladesh. The border between Assam and Bangladesh had also been used by India in the 1971 war against Pakistan to foment uprising in then East Pakistan. It is important to note that despite having anti-Pakistan rhetoric, Sheikh Hasina's government had voiced concerns over CAA and National Register of Citizens (NRC).¹²³ Bangladesh maintains that implementation of CAA and NRC may lead to an exodus of migrants back to Bangladesh that could trigger a humanitarian, as well as a political crisis. Despite these concerns the Indian leadership seems committed to a quick implementation of CAA and NRC.

The domino effect of communal riots under BJP government has been increasing significantly. In October

¹²² Web Desk, "Assam Election Results 2021 Highlights: BJP-led NDA inches closer to victory; state Cong chief resigns", Indian Express, May 3, 2021. <https://indianexpress.com/elections/assam-assembly-election-results-2021-live-updates-bjp-congress-seats-sarbananda-sonowal-7298521/> (November 12, 2021)

¹²³ Nayanima Basu, "Bangladesh wants 'written' assurance from India that it won't send immigrants after CAA", The Print, December 30, 2019. <https://theprint.in/diplomacy/bangladesh-wants-written-assurance-from-india-that-it-wont-send-immigrants-after-caa/342579/> (accessed November 12, 2021)

2021, communal riots in Bangladesh erupted that killed six people while injured more than a dozen.¹²⁴ However, the rightwing Hindu group Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) an offshoot of RSS, initiated anti-Muslim riots in state of Tripura, India. During this anti-Muslim campaign approximately 16 mosques were vandalized, while four were set alight.¹²⁵ Moreover, the BJP government, while setting aside all diplomatic protocols displayed its blatantly partisan approach based on religious particularism while religiously criticizing Bangladeshi government for these incidents in Bangladesh.¹²⁶ These incidents are glaring examples of BJP-led Hindutva ideology's focus on expansionism and interventionism in neighbouring countries like Nepal and Bangladesh.

¹²⁴ Editorial, "Trouble in Bangladesh: On attacks against Hindus", The Hindu, October 20, 2021. https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/trouble-in-bangladesh-on-attacks-against-hindus/article37079639.ece?__cf_chl_captcha_tk__=DQqXHW4YxnE.KpRwsZw8CVyt_G4509uG.y0BD7va7qk-1636701066-0-gaNycGzNG6U (accessed November 12, 2021)

¹²⁵ Hannah Ellis-Petersen and Redwan Ahmed, "Hindu-Muslim violence crosses border from Bangladesh to India", The Guardian, October 31, 2021. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/oct/31/hindu-muslim-violence-crosses-border-from-bangladesh-to-india> (accessed November 12, 2021)

¹²⁶ Editorial, "Trouble in Bangladesh: On attacks against Hindus".

Chapter 5

Possible Challenges to *Hindutva* Agenda of RSS and Impact on Pakistan

There are certain challenges that the RSS and Sangh Parivar are likely to encounter in their attempts to impose the *Hindutva* creed on entire South Asia. The first challenge would be to bring the caste-ridden social system of India in sync with a homogenized version of Hindu nationalism. The upper castes would resent and block the ingress of lower castes and new converts in the mainstream power channels, which would fan conflict between several factions of RSS. The second challenge would be of reconciling the conflict between the secular constitution of the country and the *Hindutva* agenda. The center of gravity of the Indian federation has been a secular polity so far that has kept a polyglot country of diverse nationalities together. The RSS-BJP team has always aspired to alter the secular character of the Indian Constitution. The slow march towards desired objective continues as the Indian society gets closer to *Hindutva* ideals. When and if that happens, the Indian federation would come under severe strain of ethno-religious polarization.

The third challenge is the integration of the Muslim and Christian communities that constitute 14.2 percent and

2.3 percent of the Indian population, respectively.¹²⁷ These are the only two communities that gave more votes to Congress and “since the leadership of Madhukar Deoras, the RSS has a cultural nationalist view that now includes Muslims and Christians.”¹²⁸ The alienation of *Kashmiri* Muslims through the revocation of the special status of the state of Jammu and Kashmir would also complicate IIOJ&K and New Delhi’s relations in future putting strain on the federation. The fourth challenge would be a conflict between the cultural and economic preferences of a large number of RSS affiliates, like the Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM) and Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) with left of center economic orientation, and the BJP government’s neo-liberal embrace of globalization. The populist and pro-farmer factions would certainly clash with the pro-business BJP policies leading to political infighting and possible splits in the party.¹²⁹

RSS’s strong anti-China and pro-Tibet views, due to a belief amongst hard core VHP cadres that Buddhism and Hinduism have the same roots, have often resulted in problems between China and India. The invitation to Dalai Lama at the inauguration ceremony of the World Hindu Congress in 2014 raised serious objections from

¹²⁷ Anderson and Shridhar Damle, *Messenger of Hindu Nationalism: How the RSS Reshaped India*, 242.

¹²⁸ Ibid, 243.

¹²⁹ Ibid, 130.

China.¹³⁰ The RSS's influence has resulted in the Indian forward policy on LAC and has whipped up national fervor based on RSS's militant nationalism. The failure of India vis-a-vis China on LAC has wounded the Indian ego. Modi's government might try to vent its anger on Pakistan through some adventure on the Line of Control (LOC), creating a dangerous standoff between the two nuclear states.

The challenges like homogenization of the caste-ridden Indian society, estrangement of Muslim and Christian communities, internal rifts amongst RSS affiliates, and hardline stance against China prognosticate internal conflicts, polarization, and external conflicts while posing serious challenges to India's internal stability. As a result of above, the Indian ability to contribute positively towards regional peace gets seriously compromised. The border clash at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh and Galwan Valley is one of the manifestations of above dangers.

Effect of Hindutva on Religious Minorities

The effects of RSS on the Indian politics, religious minorities and regional countries include an implacable wave of the intolerance riding roughshod over all established conventions and even international laws. The intolerance of heterogeneity of beliefs and interference in

¹³⁰ Anderson and Shridhar Damle, *Messenger of Hindu Nationalism: How the RSS Reshaped India*, 130.

the legislative and governance factors imparts RSS and its *Hindutva* creed with a virulence that threatens both the internal cohesion of India as well as the regional peace. The proclivity to shape India in its own image makes RSS a catalyst and the BJP a driver for the destabilization of the South Asian peace. The RSS's propensity to erase all cultural symbols and identity markers of ethnicities and religions that originated outside India, threatens the peaceful coexistence of Hindus with these communities both within and outside the Indian Union. The result is a constant expansionism and attempts at making the neighboring countries as unctuous surrogates. RSS's chief Mohan Bhagwat's inflammatory statement about undoing the partition of India is a clear example of Hindutva mindset being a 'toxic mix of extremist ideology and expansionism'.¹³¹ Pakistan's Foreign Office took cognizance of above statement by issuing a statement that this attitude posed "an existential threat to India's neighbours".¹³² RSS is aiming to forge a polity which, in the name of *Hindutva*, is aimed at creating a new identity for India. Against the grain of Hindu religion, which is based on caste system, RSS has been trying to create a quasi-monolith by attracting low castes to the main

¹³¹ Pakistan condemns RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat's 'provocative, irresponsible' remarks, The News, November 27, 2021, Pakistan condemns RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat's 'provocative, irresponsible' remarks (thenews.com.pk)

¹³² Ibid.

stream. However, since the RSS ideology is based on discrimination against the minorities, it would surely face resistance and discontent from Hindu extremists. The resulting friction could be detrimental for India in the long run since it claims to be a secular society with constitutional guarantees.

Countries standing up to Indian designs of regional hegemony would certainly face constant pressure to fall in line or face the aggression. The renege of the Indian pledge for self-determination and autonomy of the occupied state of Jammu and Kashmir and its annexation through revocation of Articles 370 and 35A reflects the longstanding desire to expand the Indian frontier till the mythical *Akhand Bharat's* fabled frontiers, described in the RSS texts. Pakistan would continue to be branded as a state sponsoring terrorism through clever propaganda, which reinforces the already prevalent negative stereotype opinions about Pakistan's behavior. Pakistan's moral and diplomatic support to Kashmir cause is already conflated with the state-sponsored terrorism. The negative and scurrilous Indian propaganda is being facilitated by the foreign version of RSS i.e., VHP as well as local RSS propaganda *Pracharaks* having strong linkages with the Indian diaspora. The clearly articulated threats by the Indian NSA Ajit Doval should be taken seriously as Indian intelligence apparatus would be fully utilized to target Pakistan's vulnerabilities in Ex-

FATA/KP, Balochistan and other soft spots such as urban Sindh, AJ&K and GB.

Moreover, the *Ghar Wapsi* (return to the roots) attempts of RSS are aimed at cultural violence. The RSS's cultural homogenization design as "*Ghar Wapsi*" vis-a-vis Muslims and Christians is in line with age-old political maxim of cultural imperialism i.e "Divide et Impera."¹³³ According to Johan Galtung, cultural violence is "any aspect of a culture that can be used to legitimize violence in its direct or structural forms."¹³⁴ The RSS leaders openly brag that the Muslims can only survive in India as followers of *Hindutva* creed. The de-socialization from their Islamic culture and re-socialization into the *Hindutva* creed is a direct evidence of classic cultural violence that sanctions atrocities and pressure tactics against minorities, especially Muslims, in India. Attempts are being openly made on the penetration of the core beliefs of the Muslims, followed by segmentation, cultural isolation, and marginalization and cultural exclusion - all core tenets of classic cultural violence.¹³⁵

The designs of RSS vis-a-vis its non-Hindu minorities are very clear. It is a policy of cultural homogenization and forcible conversion of non-Hindus to their Hindu roots. The notion of civic nationalism is opposed to *Hindutva*-

¹³³ Johan Galtung, "A Structural Theory of Imperialism," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 8, no. 2(1971) 90.

¹³⁴ Johan Galtung, "Cultural Violence," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 27, no. 3 (Aug, 1998) 291-292.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

driven nationalism and is being shunned by BJP-RSS combine. The sectarian differences between *Shia* and *Sunni* communities are being exploited to coopt one sect and harass another. The laws like Citizen Amendment Act (CAA) and National Register of Citizens (NRC) are deemed discriminatory for Muslims and are being implemented to force Muslims to either migrate or renounce religion.

The RSS's animus against minorities has permeated the social consciousness of the Indian population. The masses have become mirror images of their RSS ideologues either out of a misguided sense of racial pride and xenophobic nationalism or the fear of being branded unpatriotic. Even the ultra-liberal fringe of minorities who have considered themselves as culturally closer to Hinduism are not being spared the venom of a cultural apartheid. The pockets of liberal resistance in the Indian academia, journalism, civil society and film industry are being hounded blatantly by RSS fascism. The example of the Indian film icon Shah Rukh Khan's son's arrest on flimsy charges of drug abuse is a case in point.¹³⁶ Another recent example is of three Kashmiri students in Agra who were booked for sedition and arrested on charges of celebrating Pakistan's victory.¹³⁷ The ludicrous charges of sedition for applauding a sport's victory indicate the depth of hatred

¹³⁶ Jawed Naqvi, "Learning curve for Aryan Khan," *Dawn*, November 2, 2021.

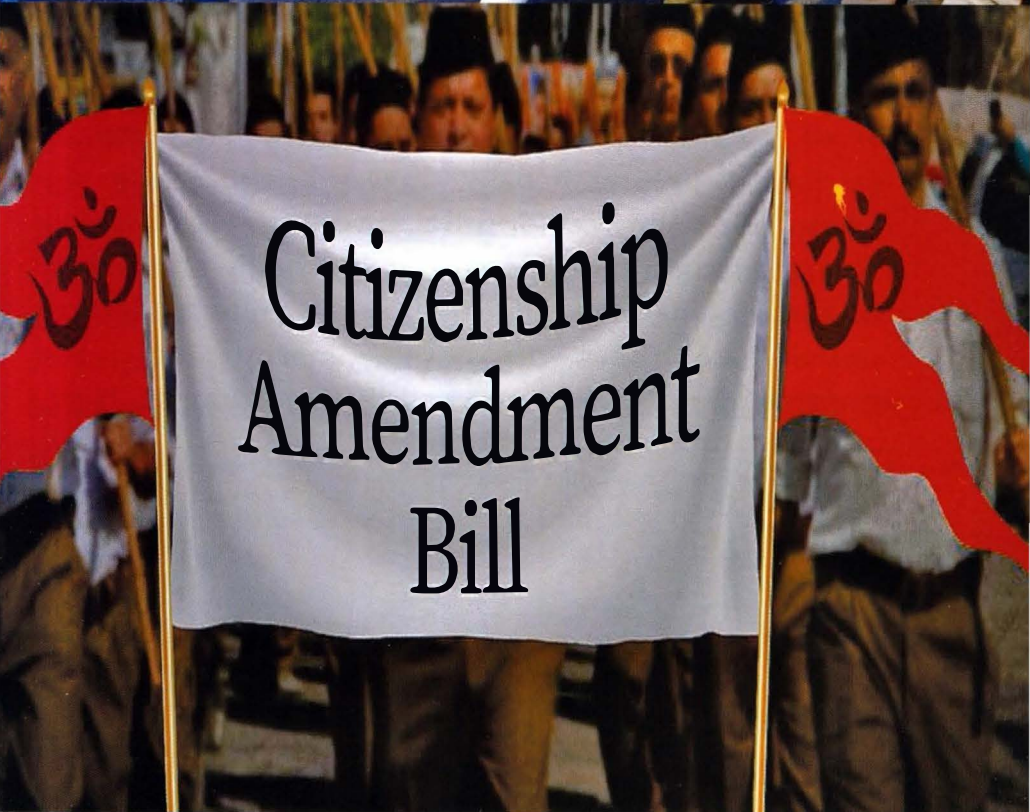
¹³⁷ Ibid.

fueling anti-Muslim sentiment of *Hindutva* cadres. The worst part of the above atrocity was the refusal of lawyer's association in Agra to defend the innocent students in a court of law.¹³⁸ The incident of refusal of jail authorities to allow an 84 years old Christian religious figure Father Stan Swamy the use of a sipping straw is another example of *Hindutva* repression. The COVID-stricken Christian cleric died of weakness in jail as he was too ill to hold a glass of water for drinking.¹³⁹ Another example is that of 59 year-old human rights lawyer, Sudha Bharadwaj who has been in pretrial detention since 2018, after being arrested under the draconian Unlawful Activities Prevention Action (UAPA) for alleged links with Maoist organisations. The rapid *Hindutva* extremism was evident after the loss of T-20 match by India in October 2021, at Dubai. The Muslim member of the Indian cricket team Muhammad Shami was subjected to a well-orchestrated campaign of online abuse as a traitor by Hindu zealots after losing match to Pakistan. The Indian cricket captain Virat Kohli was also subjected to online harassment after he showed solidarity with the Muslim cricketer Muhammad Shami.

The viscerally hateful and intolerant reaction towards minorities on Indian social media under active patronage of PM Modi and his RSS supporters has made India a

¹³⁸ Jawed Naqvi, "Learning curve for Aryan Khan," *Dawn*, November 2, 2021.

¹³⁹ Ibid.



laughing stock in the international community. A few examples would illustrate the irrational hatred and its puerile manifestation in the shape of online abuse against Indian brands. Clothes and furniture retailer Fab India and wellness firm Dabur had to pull advertisements ahead of Diwali for using the Urdu term, “Jashan-e-Diwaali¹⁴⁰.” Urdu, which is one of the 22 official languages of India, uses a Persian-Arabic script and is considered a Muslim language despite its origin in India¹⁴¹. Several devout Hindus protested against these advertisements because of Urdu script and pictures of Hindu women without sign of “bindi” as a symbol of Hinduism on their fore-heads. After Dabur pulled the advertisement after online trolling a Twitter hate peddler Milind Risbud proudly gloated about, “the power of United Hindus! Well done Hindus!”¹⁴² The famous Indian jewellery brand Tanishq, owned by the Tata conglomerate, was last year forced to withdraw an advertisement showing an interfaith couple at a baby shower organized for the Hindu bride by her Muslim in-laws¹⁴³. The above examples indicate a diseased mindset badly affected by the virus of hatred that encourages Hindu zealots to commit hate crimes against the minorities under the annoying glance of RSS propped BJP government. Hate,

¹⁴⁰ “Top Indian brands baulk after threats by Hindu hardliners,” *Dawn*, November 3, 2021.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*.

¹⁴² *Ibid*.

¹⁴³ *Ibid*.

zealotry and blind prejudice of RSS cadres imposes a Hindu majoritarianism over minorities besides externalizing the homegrown extremism. Therein lies the danger for regional countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Nepal and even Sri Lanka. The export of *Hindutva* extremism in the shape of destabilizing proxy warfare is in line with *Hindutva* ideology that with each passing day is emerging as a clear and present danger to the regional peace.

The old RSS dream of promulgating the **Manusmriti** as a fundamental law of the country got impetus in 2004 when Uma Bharti banned cow slaughter.”¹⁴⁴ Similarly, such vice like hold of the RSS religious beliefs is also evident in the shape of regressive **Laws of Manu** embraced as a religious credo by Hindus, especially by the upper classes. One of those laws says, “one occupation only the lord prescribed to the Sudras, to serve meekly even these three castes (I/91).”¹⁴⁵

The **Prathana** (prayer) and **Pratigya** (oath) as prescribed in the *Shakas* of the RSS are against the secular character of the Indian constitution.¹⁴⁶ It is alarming that all Indian prime ministers elected on BJP’s platform such as Vajpayee and Narendra Modi had taken oath as per **Laws of Manu**. The texts of prayer (Annex A) and oath

¹⁴⁴ Shams ul Islam, *RSS Primer: Based on Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (New Delhi: Pharos Media and Publishing Pvt Ltd, 2010), 13.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

(Annex B) indicate the depth of the religious fervor the BJP leaders have to swear on.

The RSS leadership's definition of Hindus has been broadened in a clever attempt to subtly woo Christians and Muslims as long as they subscribe to what "Upadhyaya in Integral Humanism described as national soul.¹⁴⁷ Hindu national soul is a nebulous concept and is used for the reconversion of non-Hindus to Hindus. Minorities such as Christians and Muslims are reportedly opposed to the BJP government and "a CSDS survey has shown that Dalit support for BJP has declined from 33% in May 2017 to 22% in May 2018."¹⁴⁸

When religion starts driving national policies and that too a religion steeped in myths, prejudices, and notions of human inequality, the policies take a jingoistic flavor resulting in conflict and violence both within and out of a nation embracing retrogressive ideology. On the subject of Indian Muslims and Pakistan, the BJP continues to take lead from its parent organization, the RSS, which views Pakistan as an illegitimate and rogue state, responsible for Islamizing what is predominantly a Hindu nation. Pakistan and the Indian Muslim population are viewed with considerable hostility and suspicion by both the RSS and the BJP. The trend is largely consistent with the current political arrangement in India and bodes ill for

¹⁴⁷ Anderson and Shridhar Damle, *Messenger of Hindu Nationalism: How the RSS Reshaped ...India*, 238.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 240.



K. S. Sudarshan is the 6th Sarsanghchalak of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, a Hindu Nationalist and cultural organisation based in India. He was chosen as the successor to K. S. Sudarshan in March 2009.

any future reconciliation prospects between the two nuclear armed neighbors or the Hindu and Muslim communities in India, which is detrimental for sustainable peace in South Asia.

The nefarious designs of the RSS-BJP combine against Pakistan are also very clear. The RSS ideologues have not forgotten the irredentist claims of their forbears on Pakistan and therefore treat it as an historical aberration. The 1971 dismemberment is a constant reminder to them that Pakistan can be undone through intrigues and violence. Ajit Doval's strategy to bleed Pakistan through a thousand cuts is being implemented through a hybrid warfare. Pakistan is being attacked through an insidious campaign that combines internal destabilization with external coercion and defamation. While Indian intelligence agencies such as RAW are all out to destabilize Pakistan through the support of insurgencies and terrorism in KP/Ex-FATA and Balochistan, their sleeper cells are frequently activated to destabilize urban Sindh and Gilgit-Baltistan also. The main Indian design is to make Pakistan an economically insolvent nation by exercising a reflexive control on it in the sphere of arms spending. The strategic relationship with the USA and Sino-US rivalry feeds into the Indian obduracy that uses its relationship with the USA as a shield to destabilize the regional peace. The Indian attempts at keeping Pakistan's former FATA region and Balochistan province destabilized through covert financial and logistic support

to TTP, BLA, and BRP are well known tactics partly acknowledged by NSA Ajit Doval.

The dossier containing Indian destabilizing tactics that clearly showed 21 terrorist training camps on Pakistan-India border and 66 such camps on Pakistan-Afghanistan border is a concrete manifestation of Indian destabilization strategy.¹⁴⁹ **(See Annexure F)**

The large presence of Indian diaspora in influential think spaces abroad also benefits RSS/BJP's narrative. As compared to Pakistan, a substantive number of the Indian origin intellectuals, financial experts, company CEOs are visible in North American and European think tanks and universities, financial institutions and multi-national companies, and are making a difference in shaping up those countries outlook towards India and Pakistan. Contrary to popular notion, international opinion is not shaped through strategic communications alone but through soft power and convergence of strategic interests. The soft power of a nation is the ability to persuade the other nations to emulate its example besides embracing the values that appeal to them. As per Nye, American soft power emanated through culture, international institutions, and multinationals.¹⁵⁰ Indians clearly outpace Pakistan on above score. India uses its

¹⁴⁹ 'Irrefutable evidence': Dossier on India's sponsorship of state terrorism in Pakistan presented, Naveed Siddiqui, *Dawn* November 14, 2020. 'Irrefutable evidence': Dossier on India's sponsorship of state terrorism in Pakistan presented - DAWN.COM

¹⁵⁰ Nye, Joseph S. "Soft Power." *Foreign Policy*, no. 80 (1990): 156.

diaspora for political, economic and diplomatic advantages.¹⁵¹ The RSS and its affiliates have tried to weave a cobweb of narratives to attract the Indian populace to its manifesto and have succeeded so far. Nevertheless, the path ahead is strewn with multi-faceted challenges which would be beyond RSS's control.

One of the pernicious effects of *Hindutva* and RSS's stranglehold of the Indian society and polity has been the permeation of its hyper nationalism into national institutions like media and judiciary. The status of judiciary as handmaiden of RSS supported BJP government, has left no hope for the estranged minority communities who are up in arms against injustice after finding the doors of legal remedies shut. Some time back, a segment of intellectuals and academics had reacted boldly as conscientious objectors to *Hindutva* excesses. More than 40 Indian writers had returned their Sahitya Akademi awards in protest against a culture of intolerance.¹⁵² That incident is now a distant memory. The strident Hindu nationalism's RSS version based on cultural and racial superiority has made the people jingoistic. The Indian media has become a fawning accomplice to *Hindutva* propaganda whipping up war hysteria against Pakistan every now and then. The Indian

¹⁵¹ Anderson and Shridhar Damle, *Messenger of Hindu Nationalism: How the RSS Reshaped India*, 158.

¹⁵² Burke, Jason, "Indian writers return awards in protest against climate of intolerance," *The Guardian*, October 14, 2015.

judiciary has also succumbed to the inebriating dose of *Hindutva* and has refused to give relief to minorities whenever they are hounded by the Hindu extremists.

Chapter 6

Conclusions/Recommendations

- The expansionist agenda of RSS aims at the domination of entire Indian subcontinent including the old mythical boundaries of *Akhand Bharat*. This attitude would result in the territorial disputes and attempts to convert the smaller neighbours as client states. Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka have already started displaying the signs of nervousness and would further get sucked into such disputes with India. The RSS influence through Hindu population in Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka prognosticates trouble for these countries where RSS can exert influence through its proxies. Pakistan should try for a regional consensus on the reinvigoration of multilateral fora like SAARC, which have remained dormant due to Indian non-cooperation. In addition Pakistan should use Chinese leverage over countries like Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka to forge friendly ties with Pakistan to counter RSS-BJP agenda for the region.
- Pakistan must resort to external balancing to forestall the Indian aggressive intentions. On external front, diplomatic alliances need to be forged based upon the dictates of geography, national interest and politico

economic incentives. Pakistan must capitalize upon its economic partnership with China to strengthen itself economically without getting distracted by Sino-US rivalry. Diplomacy should be employed as the first line of defence in dealing with India and its RSS-driven foreign policy. Economic incentives and regional connectivity should be offered as diplomatic dividends to lure India out of a supercilious disregard of peace overtures.

- The misanthropic *Hindutva* creed's potential dangers to human rights, as well as regional peace, need to be highlighted at all international fora through formal as well as informal channels. Epistemic means including print, electronic and digital media, documentaries, films and seminars need to highlight the well-researched aspects of *Hindutva* cultural violence. The atrocities and deliberate suppression of Muslim cultural identity throughout India, including Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJ&K) should be highlighted effectively. A proper record of Indian atrocities along with a record of Muslim casualties at the hands of the Indian security forces should be catalogued and presented at international fora, such as UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), UN General Assembly, UN Security Council (UNSC), major human rights organizations, INGOs, international legal fraternity and major media houses.

- Pakistan should develop national resilience to counter the covert warfare. The relative deprivation, social polarization, and unaddressed grievances would be the targets of *Hindutva* fanatics in the entire CPEC Zone, KP/Balochistan, and Makran Coast. The destabilization of Gilgit-Baltistan and the hydropower projects would be a distinct possibility, for which special preemptive measures need to be taken as a part of comprehensive national counter-terrorism strategy.
- *Hindutva* ideology of confrontation and expansionism will be the guiding principle of the Indian information warfare against Pakistan and China in future. To win the battle of narratives, Pakistani media houses, think tanks and government information channels should be fully galvanized and resourced. Pakistan must have a strong leverage over some information channels, such as media houses and think tanks in addition to motivating a vast number of private TV channels to counter the information war against Pakistan.
- Due to waning political popularity and economic problems *Hindutva* ideologues and their political front i.e., BJP government would like to divert their population's attention from internal to external front. Continued unrest in the Indian Occupied Kashmir and bad international Press may become a *casus belli*

to conduct a false flag operation for furnishing an excuse for small scale air or ground ingress across the LOC. The Indian humiliation at the hands of the Chinese soldiers on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) could also act as a catalyst to open a front against Pakistan on LOC. Pakistan must maintain a high state of readiness on LOC to counter any possible Indian adventure. Pakistan must also accord top priority to its critical communication and IT infrastructure against a possible cyber-attack as part of the hybrid warfare.

- The return of Taliban government and the flight of Ashraf Ghani in Afghanistan has resulted in a temporary setback for the Indian disruption network in Afghanistan. The RSS-driven Indian foreign policy is still wedded to a global power surrogacy and is, therefore, likely to stir up trouble as a peace spoiler in Afghanistan. Pakistan needs to sensitize the regional as well as global powers of this possibility and remain alert to the recrudescence of the Indian inspired violence in Afghanistan.
- Pakistan's economic strangulation is being cleverly executed through the denial of intra region trade and commerce. Due to restrictive border movement, trade with Afghanistan has also gone down from \$3 billion/year to \$300 million/year in 2019. After Taliban takeover the dip of 73% in flow of cargo

compared to 2020 has been experienced.¹⁵³ The continual strife in Afghanistan is also denying Pakistan the fruits of economically beneficial projects such as TAPI, CASA, and East West trade corridor linking with Central Asia. India has invested \$500 million in the first phase of Chabahar Port in Iran to reach out to Afghanistan and Central Asia bypassing Pakistan. It has got temporary jolt after the US withdrawal but would definitely try a comeback. The trade apartheid against Pakistan is in line with RSS-BJP agenda of denying Pakistan any economic advantage with the overall aim of keeping it weak and destabilized. Pakistan, therefore, needs to actively pursue trade talks with all regional countries, including India to draw optimum benefit of its geostrategic location.

- Pakistan should ramp up its efforts to project its soft power potential both at home and abroad. Though Pakistan would never be able to match the Indian resources and size yet an asymmetric response through a smart strategy remaining well within our resources should be capable of winning some support at international level. Organization of Pakistani diaspora and selective lobbying should create

¹⁵³ Mubarak Zeb Khan, "Pakistan's exports to Afghanistan fall sharply since Taliban takeover," Dawn, October 3, 2021, Pakistan's exports to Afghanistan fall sharply since Taliban takeover - Newspaper - DAWN.COM

avenues employing smart strategic communications to get our narrative abroad.

- Pakistan's condemnation of the violation of fundamental human rights by *Hindutva* forces would contribute to raising of hope amongst the suppressed Muslims and other minorities of India. Pakistan should keep highlighting the plight of Muslims in India at the OIC platform and other international human rights forums. The RSS network in USA, Europe, and the Middle East should be exposed and its sinister activities reported to the host nations, especially in the Muslim countries. The *Kashmiri* Muslims should be materially and diplomatically supported to stand up to RSS-BJP combine's sinister designs of social and political reengineering of the State of Jammu and Kashmir.
- The plight of marginalized Hindu castes like Dalits and other scheduled castes should be highlighted to sensitize the international community of the egregious violation of human and minorities' rights. The estranged religious communities like Sikhs and Christians should be wooed away from the dragnet of Hindu nationalism by offering special recognition to their cultural and religious identity. Minority communities like Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, and Christians in India should be coopted through diplomacy and cultural integration. Religious tourism *ala* Kartarpur Gurdawara should be promoted

between India and Pakistan to break the suffocating chokehold of the RSS propaganda against Pakistan. Christian churches in Pakistan could be expanded to include hostels for the Indian Christian visitors along with the residential compounds and dining facilities for Sikh visitors to Pakistan. Important Hindu temples such as Katas Raj Mandir in Chakwal and Bibi Nani Mandir in Makran's coastal belt should be developed into world-class resorts, capable of attracting religious tourism from all over the world.

- Pakistan should map out the RSS's organizational structure in detail and then go about exposing that structure and its extremist objectives through carefully crafted strategic messaging at the regional and international level. The political and cultural resemblance of the RSS with the European fascist parties like Nazi party should be highlighted especially the human rights abuses against minorities in India, especially, in the North Eastern seven states and State of Jammu and Kashmir.
- The illegality of Kashmir's annexation [without the endorsement of the State's Constituent Assembly] should be exposed through a sustained campaign of lawfare in the UN. Pakistan must highlight the RSS's ideology and its anti-Muslim designs at OIC as well as the think tanks in the Islamic world to sensitize the Islamic countries, especially the Gulf monarchies

about the deep-seated antipathy of *Hindutva* ideologues and their political wing i.e., BJP against the Muslims. A concerted effort through repeated reminders might find some resonance with the Islamic countries, if the message of these nefarious designs and human rights violations is effectively packaged and disseminated.

- The infamous Citizen Amendment Act (CAA) and selective application of National Register of Citizen (NRC) is a clear pointer towards Nazi style ghettoization and cultural exclusion of the Muslim community. The implementation of NRC in the state of Assam in 2013-14 has rendered 1.9 million Muslims stateless. Pakistan must make a common cause with Bangladesh to bring this injustice to the attention of the international community.

Conclusion

Hindutva is a violent creed rooted in hatred and xenophobia. The Nehruvian civic nationalism has slowly been overtaken by the religious nationalism of Savarkar and Hedgewar. A hateful ideology that thrives on cultural violence has taken hold of the Indian polity. The social and political opposition to this vicious form of Nazi ideology patterned nationalism is effete and fragmented. Congress and other small political parties that subscribe to the secular ethos of the Indian constitution are not effective enough to stem the rot of the cultural apartheid being imposed on the Indian minorities. The juggernaut of *Hindutva's* revanchism rolls by thunderously trampling the human rights, international norms and peace prospects in a nuclearized neighborhood. In Gramsci's words, the patterns of hegemony are being fostered through embedded prejudice and denial of choices to minorities inside the Indian Union. The worst implication is the externalization of the internal exclusivism through export of the divisive *Hindutva* ideology to neighbours like Myanmar, Bangladesh, Nepal, China, and Pakistan. *Hindutva's* "Akhand Bharat" concept seeks to claim all that was theirs in a mythological past resulting in border conflicts with all the above-mentioned neighbouring states. The border conflicts with so many neighbours would be some kind of a record that underlines the influence of the political ideology driving the BJP government. There is an urgent requirement on part of

Conclusions/Recommendations

international community to focus on this menace by taking off its partisan glasses to see the replay of Nazis game in a region that desperately needs peace, connectivity and partnerships after years of strife.■

ANNEXURES

Annex-A**Prayer**

“Affectionate Motherland, I eternally bow to you/O land of Hindus, you have reared me in comfort/O Sacred Land, the Great Creator of God, may this body of mine be dedicated to you/ I again and again bow before You/ O God Almighty, we the integral part of *Hindu Rashtra* salute you in reverence/ For Your cause have we girded up our loins/Give us your Blessings for its accomplishment.”

Source: *Shams ul Islam, RSS Primer: Based on Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, 14.*

Annex-B**Oath**

“Before the all-powerful God and my ancestors, I most solemnly take this oath, that I became a member of the RSS in order to achieve all round greatness of my sacred Hindu religion, Hindu society and Hindu culture. I shall perform the work of the *Sangh* honestly, disinterestedly, with my heart and soul, and I shall adhere to this goal all my life, *Bharat Mata Ki Jai*.”

Source: Shams ul Islam, RSS Primer: Based on Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, 14.

Annex-C

**The Constitution of the
Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh**
(Translated from the original in Hindi)
(As adopted on 1st August 1949 and amended upto 1st July
1972)

Abbreviations

Sangh:	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
A.B.P.S.:	Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha
A.B.K.M.:	Akhil Bharatiya Karyakari Mandal
P.K.M.:	Prantiya Karyakari Mandal
K.M.:	Karyakari Mandal

Preamble

Whereas in the disintegrated condition of the country it was considered necessary to have an Organization,

- (a) to eradicate the fissiparous tendencies arising from the diversities of sect, faith, caste and creed and from political, economic, linguistic and provincial differences, amongst Hindus;
- (b) to make them realise the greatness of their past;
- (c) to inculcate in them a spirit of service, sacrifice and selfless devotion to the Society;

- (d) to build up an organised and well-disciplined corporate life; and
- (e) to bring about an all-round regeneration of the *Hindu Samaj* on the basis of its *Dharma* and its *Sanskriti*;

AND WHERE AS The Organisation Known As 'RASHTRIYA SWAYAMSEVAK SANGH' Was Started On The Vijaya Dashami Day In The Year 1982 Vikram Samvat (1925 A.D.) By The Late Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar;

AND WHEREAS Shri Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar Was Nominated By The Said Dr. Hedgewar To Succeed Him In The Year 1997 Vikram Samvat (1940 A.D.);

AND WHEREAS The Sangh Had Till Now No Written Constitution; AND WHEREAS In The Present Changed Conditions, It Is Deemed Desirable To Reduce To Writing The Constitution As Also The Aims and Objects of the Sangh and its Methods of Work,

THE RASHTRIYA SWAYAMSEVAK SANGH hereby adopts the following Constitution:

ARTICLE 1

NAME

The name of the Organisation is RASHTRIYA SWAYAMSEVAK SANGH.'

ARTICLE 2**HEAD-QUARTERS**

The Head-Quarters of the Akhil Bharatiya Karyakari Mandal is at NAGPUR.

ARTICLE 3**AIMS AND OBJECTS**

The Aims and Objects of the Sangh are to weld together various diverse groups within the Hindu Samaj and to revitalise and rejuvenate the same on the basis of its *Dharma* and Sanskriti, that it may achieve an all-sided development of Bharatvarsha.

ARTICLE 4**POLICY**

- (a) The Sangh believes in the orderly evolution of the society and adheres to a peaceful and legitimate means for the realisation of its ideals.
- (b) In consonance with the cultural heritage of the Hindu Samaj, the Sangh has abiding faith in the fundamental principle of respect towards all faiths.
- (c) The Sangh is aloof from politics and is devoted to social and cultural fields only. However, the Swayamsevakas are free, as individuals, to join any party, institution, or front, political or otherwise, except such parties, institutions, or fronts which subscribe to or believe in extra-national loyalties, or resort to violent and/or secret activities to

achieve their ends, or which promote or attempt to promote, or have the object of promoting any feeling of enmity or hatred towards any other community or creed or religious denomination. Persons owing allegiance to the above-mentioned undesirable elements and methods of working shall have no place in the Sangh.

ARTICLE 5

DHWAJ

While recognising the duty of every citizen to be loyal to and to respect the State Flag, the Sangh has as its flag, the 'BHAGWA- DHWAJ'-the age-old symbol of Hindu Sanskriti which the Sangh regards as its '*GURU*.'

ARTICLE 6

SWAYAMSEVAK

- 1 (a) Any male Hindu of 18 years or above, who subscribes to the Aims and Objects of the Sangh and conforms generally to its discipline and associates himself with the activities of the *Shakha* will be considered as a Swayamsevak.
- (b) A Swayamsevak shall be deemed to be an Active Swayamsevak if he pledges to devote himself for the furtherance of the Aims and Objects of the Sangh, and attends a *Shakha* regularly or performs any work duly assigned to him.
- (c) A Swayamsevak shall cease to be a Swayamsevak if he resigns or is removed for any act prejudicial to the interests of the *Shakha* or the *Sangh*.

2. Bal Swayamsevak – Any male Hindu below the age of 18 may be admitted and allowed to participate in the *Shakha* programmes as a Bal Swayamsevak.

ARTICLE 7

SHAKHA

- (a) Swayamsevaks desirous of propagating the Aims and Objects of the *Sangh* coming together in the form of a regular assemblage will form a Centre. Each Centre shall be a self-contained unit receiving its finances and making its own financial disbursements and is herein referred to as a '*SHAKHA*.'
- (b) Each such *Shakha* shall constitute the primary unit of the *Sangh*, which shall be an autonomous body in respect of its administration and finances.
- (c) The *Shakha* shall function under the directions of its Karyakari Mandal.

ARTICLE 8

PROGRAMMES

For the fulfilment of the Aims and Objectives as set out herein earlier, the *Shakhas* may undertake any or all of the following programmes:

‘Arranging frequent discussions and lectures for imparting intellectual and moral education to Swayamsevaks

and others and inculcating in them love for the Nation and the ideals of Hindu Dharma and Sanskriti.

‘Establishing and running of Libraries and Reading Rooms for the benefit of the general public.

‘Carrying on of activities or undertaking programmes for the welfare and benefit of the general public, such as extending medical care, propagation of literacy and improvement of the living conditions of the poorer sections of the society; and flood and famine relief, study circles and free exhibition of educative films and advancement of other objects of general public utility, but not involving carrying on of activity for profit.

‘Imparting physical education by means of exercises and games with a view to improving the physical and mental faculties of Swayamsevaks and others for the co-ordinated and disciplined development of the Society.

‘Arranging periodical classes for Swayamsevaks to be trained as Instructors and Workers.

‘Celebrating festivals of cultural importance with a view to providing opportunity for Swayamsevaks and others to imbibe the sublime cultural values of character, service and sacrifice to rededicate themselves to the cause of society.

‘Adopting suitable means and establishing institutions to propagate the ideals and activities of the *Sangh* and to educate the people.

‘Generally the *Shakhas* may do all such things as are considered necessary and are conducive directly or indirectly, to promoting and achieving any of the objects of the *Sangh*.’

ARTICLE 9**FINANCES**

Any voluntary offering made with devotion before the BHAGWA-DHWAJ shall exclusively constitute the finances of the *Shakha* and shall belong to and be solely managed and disbursed by the *Shakha* for the promotion of the Aims and Objects of the Sangh and general advancement of *Sangh* work to be done by the *Shakha* according to the rules framed by it for that purpose.

ARTICLE 10**ELECTIONS**

- (a) Elections shall be held after every three years.
- (b) The date, method and venue of election shall be determined by the concerned K.M. in consultation with the A.B.K.M.

ARTICLE 11**QUALIFICATION FOR VOTERS AND CANDIDATES
FOR ELECTIONS AND APPOINTEES****(a) VOTERS**

Every Active Swayamsevak of at least one-year standing immediately prior to the date of the preparation of the Electoral lists for the election, shall be entitled to vote in the election.

(b) CANDIDATES FOR ELECTIONS AND APPOINTEES

- (1) A Swayamsevak, who is an office-bearer of a political party, shall not be eligible as a candidate for election or as an appointee to any post so long as he is such an office-bearer.
- (2) A candidate for election, or an appointee to any Akhil Bharatiya post, shall be an Active Swayamsevak of at least six years' continuous standing.
- (3) A candidate or appointee for Sanghachalakship shall be an Active Swayamsevak of at least one-year standing.

ARTICLE 12

SARSANGHCHALAK

The late Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, the founder of the *Sangh*, was the Adya (First) Sarsanghchalak. He, in consultation with the then K.K.M., nominated Shri Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar, who is the Sarsanghchalak since then. The Sarsanghchalak will nominate his successor as and when the necessity arises, with the consent of the then A.B.K.M.

The Sarsanghchalak is the Guide and Philosopher of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. He may attend, summon or address any assembly of the Swayamsevaks, A.B.P.S. and Karyakari Mandals severally or jointly.

ARTICLE 13

SARKARYAVAHA

- (a) The elected members of the Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha (vide Article 15a) shall elect the Sarkaryavaha.

- (b) The Sarkaryavaha shall act in consultation with the Sarsanghchalak.
- (c) In case of death, incapacity, or resignation of the Sarkaryavaha, the A.B.K.M. may appoint a person to discharge his duties until such time as his successor is elected.

ARTICLE 14

AKHIL BHARATIYA KARYAKARI MANDAL

- (a) THE Sarkaryavaha shall form the Akhil Bharatiya Karyakari Mandal of which he shall be the Chairman with the following office-bearers duly appointed by him.
 - i) One or more Sah-Sarkaryavahas.
 - ii) Akhil Bharatiya Sharirik Shikshan Pramukh. (In-charge of guidance in physical education.)
 - iii) Akhil Bharatiya Bouddhik Shikshan Pramukh. (In-charge of guidance in intellectual and moral instruction.)
 - iv) Akhil Bharatiya Prachar Pramukh (In-charge of propagation of Sangh work and guidance to Pracharaks).
 - v) Akhil Bharatiya Vyavastha Pramukh. (In-charge of general management)
 and not less than five members chosen from among the Prantiya Karyakari Mandals.
- (b) THE following will be the functions of the A.B.K.M. :
 - i) The A.B.K.M is the co-ordinating body of all of the *Shakhas* in the country to carry out the policy and programmes laid down by the A.B.P.S.

- ii) The A.B.K.M. will frame rules and bye-laws in consonance with the Constitution for the purpose of regulating its own affairs and for the general functioning of the *Sangh*.

ARTICLE 15

AKHIL BHARATIYA PRATINIDHI SABHA

- (a) THE delegates elected in accordance with Article 16 (a) and (i) and (ii) in a Prant shall elect from amongst themselves one tenth of their number as representatives of the *Shakhas* on the Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha.
- (b) The A.B.P.S shall consist of –
 - i) Representatives of the *Shakhas* as elected in 15(a) above.
 - ii) Sanghachalak and Pracharaks of Vibhags and Prants.
 - iii) Members of the A.B.K.M.
- (c) THE Sarkaryavaha shall be the chairman of the A.B.P.S.
- (d) THE A.B.P.S shall meet at least once a year.
- (e) THE A.B.P.S shall review the work and lay down policy and programmes of the Sangh.

ARTICLE 16

DELEGATES AND SANGHCHALAKS

- (a) i) Fifty or more Swayamsevaks entitled to vote in Shakha will elect from among themselves one for every fifty such Swayamsevaks as delegates of the *Shakha*.

- ii) Such of the *Shakhas* as are having less than fifty Swayamsevaks entitled to vote will come together to elect delegates.
- (b) The delegates, as elected above, in a Jilla, in a Vibhag and in a Prant will elect the Jilla Sanghachalak, the Vibhag Sanghachalak and the Prant Sanghachalak, respectively.
- (c) The Jilla Sanghachalak, in consultation with the Prant Sanghachalak and Prant Pracharak will nominate Sanghachalaks for the various *Shakhas* and groups of *Shakhas* within the Jilla.
- (d) In case a suitable person is not available for the office of Sanghachalak, the Jilla Sanghachalak will appoint a Karyavaha.
- (e) In case of death, incapacity or resignation of Prant, Vibhag or Jilla Sanghachalak the K.M. of the larger area may appoint a person to discharge the duties of the respective Sanghachalak until such time as his successor is elected.

ARTICLE 17

PRACHARAKS

- (a)
 - i) Pracharaks shall be full time workers selected from amongst those devoted workers of high integrity, whose mission is to serve the society through the Sangh and who, of their own free will, dedicate themselves to the Cause.
 - ii) They will receive no remuneration. However, their expenses will be met by the *Shakhas*.
- (b) Appointment of Pracharaks –
 - i) The Sarkaryavaha will appoint Prant Pracharaks on the advice of the Akhil Bharatiya Prachar Pramukh

and in consultation with the Prant Sanghachalak concerned.

- ii) The Prant Sanghachalak on the advice of Prant Pracharak will appoint Pracharaks for different areas in the Prant for the assistance and co-ordination of the *Shakhas* in their respective areas.

ARTICLE 18

KARYAKARI MANDALS

- (a) Sanghachalak of a Prant, Vibhag or Jilla elected in accordance with 16(b), or any group of *Shakhas* within the Jilla appointed in accordance with 16(c), will form a Karyakari Mandal of the respective area, of which he shall be the Chairman, consisting of the following office bearers duly appointed by him –
 - i) Karyavaha
 - ii) Pracharak (appointed under Article 17(b)(ii))
 - iii) Sharirik Shikshan Pramukh.
 - iv) Bouddhik Shikshan Pramukh.
 - v) Vyavastha Pramukh.
- (b) The Sanghachalak of a *Shakha* appointed in accordance with 16(c), will form a Karyakari Mandal, of which he shall be the Chairman, consisting of the following office-bearers duly appointed by him –
 - i) Karyavaha
 - ii) Sharirik Shikshan Pramukh.
 - iii) Bouddhik Shikshan Pramukh.
 - iv) Prachar Pramukh.
 - v) Vyavastha Pramukh.

vi) Nidhi Pramukh.

NOTE – In case suitable person/s is/are not available for appointment to any one or more of the above posts the same may remain vacant until suitable person/s is/are available.

- (c) Each Karyakari Mandal shall also have in addition not less than three members chosen from amongst the other Karyakari Mandals within the area, if any.
- (d) K.Ms. will be executive bodies in their respective areas, guided by the K.M. of the immediate larger area for implementing the policy and carrying out the programme laid down by the A.B.P.S.
- (e) The K.M. of a Shakha will have the power to take disciplinary action against any individual Swayamsevak for breach of discipline or behaviour prejudicial to the interests of the *Shakha* or the *Sangh*. Such an action will be subject to confirmation by the Karyakari Mandal of the immediate larger area.

ARTICLE 19

QUORUM

ONE half of the total strength shall form the QUORUM for the meetings of the various Karyakari Mandals, and one fifth for the A.B.P.S.

ARTICLE 20**UNDEVELOPED PRANTS**

IN case of prants in which the work has not yet developed to an appreciable level, the A.B.K.M may provide representation to them on the A.B.P.S in a manner it deems fit.

ARTICLE 21**INTERPRETATION AND AMENDMENTS
TO CONSTITUTION**

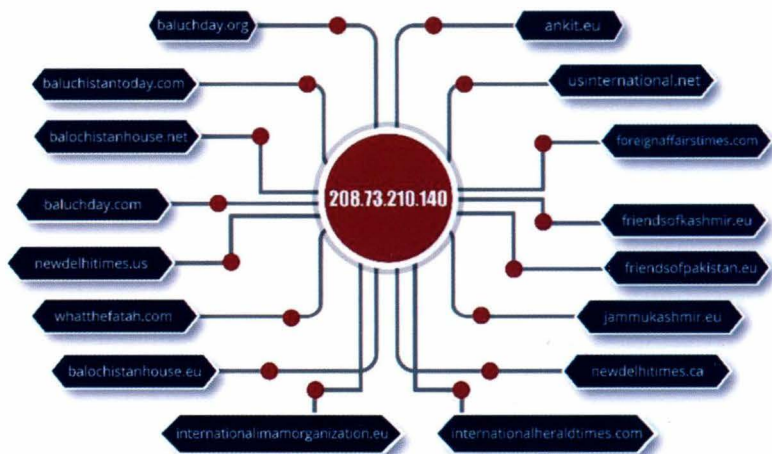
- (a) The interpretation of the Constitution and its Articles by the A.B.K.M shall be final.
- (b) An amendment to the Constitution not inconsistent with the Aims and Objects of the *Sangh* can be proposed at a convention specially convened for that purpose by the A.B.K.M on its own, or to the A.B.K.M by any P.K.M., or by any other Karyakari Mandal with the recommendation of the respective P.K.M., or by any twenty-five members of the A.B.P.S. The A.B.K.M after due consideration will put the proposal of such an amendment before the P.K.Ms. and the amendment will be deemed carried if two-thirds of the P.K.Ms. agree by simple majority.
- (c) The decision of the P.K.Ms. regarding such amendments may be brought for reconsideration before the A.B.P.S. on a requisition by any twenty-five members of that Sabha. The decision of the A.B.P.S in this behalf, taken by a two-thirds majority shall be final.

Source: Sanjeev Kelkar, *Lost Years of the RSS* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2011), pp. 324–32.

Annex-D-1

Indian Chronicles

IP Address Used by **Srivastava Group** to Host
Its Domain Names

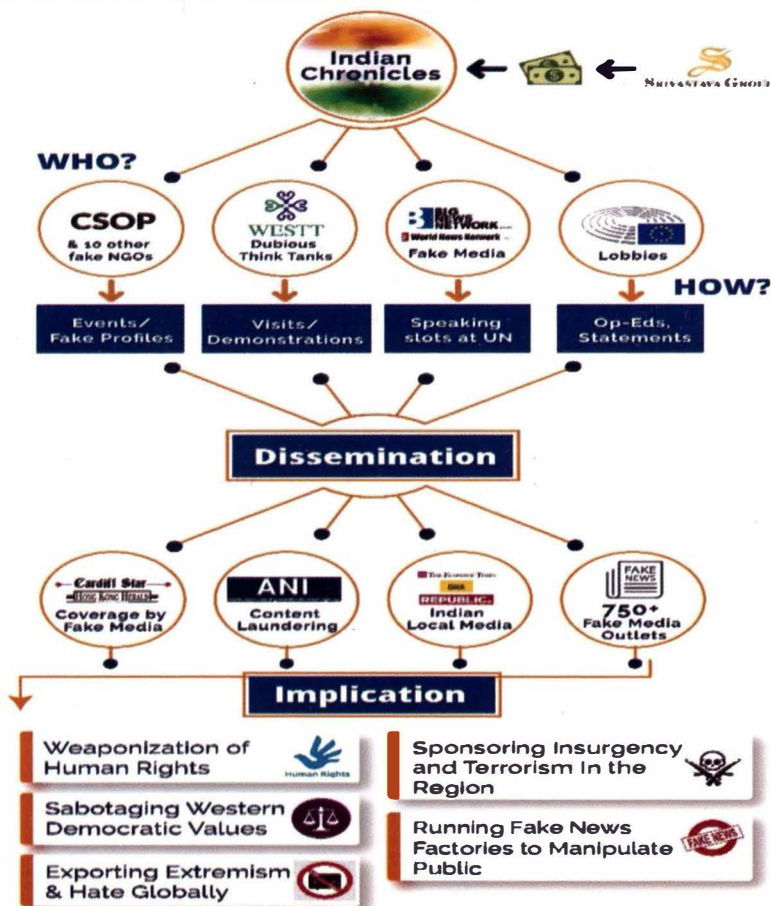


MORE THAN 500 DOMAINS
to Spread Hate, Fake News, & Propaganda

Source: EU DisInfo Lab Report

Annex-D-2

Indian Propaganda Factory Tactics & Methods



Annexure

Annex-E

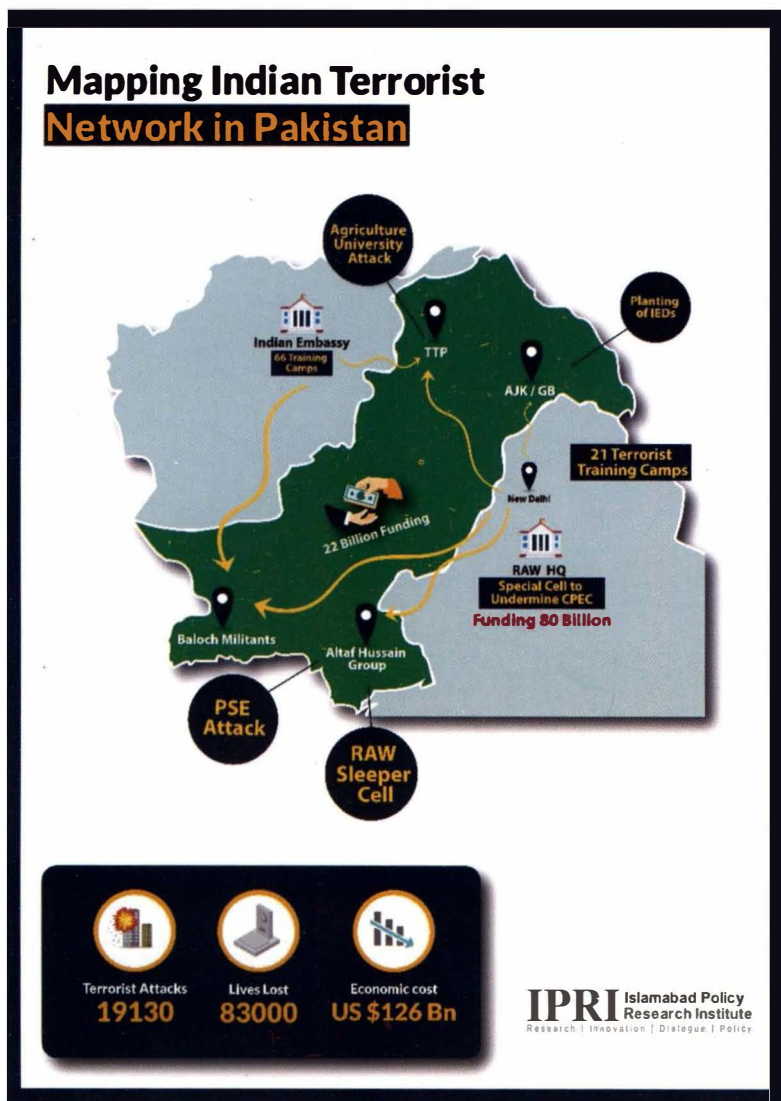
Political map published by India



Source: <https://thefederal.com/states/north/uttarakhand/nepals-radio-stations-broadcast-anti-india-speeches-in-bordering-areas/?amp>

Annex-F

Indian Destabilizing Tactics





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