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Calling the Gravediggers?

Hindu-Nationalism – India's Bêtes Noires

under Stress

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Calling the Gravediggers? Hindu-Nationalism – India’s Bêtes Noires under Stress

One of the most noteworthy developments in contemporary Indian politics is the occurrence of a phenomenon often described as Hindu-Nationalism, Hindu fundamentalism or even Hindu-Chauvinism. Since recently, even the buzzword of Hindu-terrorism appeared. Irrespective of the debate circling around the proper terminology, the issue being discussed so vividly refers to serious efforts to undertake dramatic changes and shifts within the political culture of India. This attempted transformation of state and society in the country, which manifested itself through ‘communal violence’ (clashes between religious communities, especially Hindus and Muslims) as well as actions aimed at challenging constitutional provisions such as secularism in combination with increasingly radical socio-political demands, have posed a severe threat to the Indian model of consensus democracy and have sadly lived up to bleak forecasts. It seems however that the core question has not been adequately answered. To which extent can this phenomenon grow into a solid, long-term political force to be reckoned with, one which does not succumb to the ebb and flow of public opinion? This article will argue, that the rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), as the main political representative of the Hindu-Nationalists, revealed an existential dilemma of the entire Hindu-Nationalist movement. How will the BJP conciliate the radical and moderate elements of the party or in which way will the BJP try to bridge ideological, cultural-orientated demands from within the non-parliamentary wing of the movement with the political necessities of accumulating political power for it. Or in brief, how does the BJP aim to solve the contradiction between ideology and *Realpolitik*? Like every party it had to deal with the balancing act of harmonizing visions, the ideology and every day politics. More or less unconstrained internal conflicts over leadership, the lack of intra-party democratic mechanisms as well as personal quarrels and (more or less) struggles over leadership (especially among the succeeding generations), all had a negative impact on the (whole) Hindu-Nationalist movement, especially on the political-parliamentarian wing of the BJP and lead to a strong erosion of power, which manifested itself in the weak performances in elections in 2004 and 2009 which ultimately threatened the Party’s survival.

Before we however prematurely call the ‘gravedigger to bury Hindu nationalism’, one has to analyse the organizational structures, which have held the movement together and have proved to be the movement’s life line. Furthermore one must shed light on the interactions and problems within the organizational structure itself. Against this backdrop this article will ventilate the topic of the organizational and personal interlacing as well as ideological foundation and symbolism of the Hindu-Nationalist movement. In addition the article will focus on mobilization strategies and the culture of protest, which are core tools in moulding group identity and strengthening the political power of Hindu-Nationalism. This focus is especially relevant due to the fact that the past has shown us how the “usage” of these tools can lead to religiously motivated violence particularly between Hindus and Muslims. But before starting with a detailed elaboration, it is paramount to mention that the calculations of militant hard-liners within the Hindu-Nationalist movement to gain political capital by attacking religious minorities, especially Muslims and Christians did not add up. The Indian electorate reacted harshly and caused disastrous defeats for the BJP in the electoral arena. But instead of a sharp, consequent and substantial re-assessment of campaign strategies and political demands based on radical ideology, radical elements of the movement were stuck in their old patterns of transforming their agenda into the societal and political spheres. Since then the BJP has been involved in numerous, frequently

surfacing struggles over its leadership and agenda setting. The most recent example is the on-going conflict between Gujarat's BJP Chief Minister Narendra Modi and BJP president Nitin Gadkari. In order to shed light on this issue one also has to emphasise that these party in fights are driven by the media and political adversaries for obvious reasons. They nevertheless indicate that the BJP suffers from serious, deconstructive factionalism which not only challenges their own unity but also the cohesiveness of the whole Hindu-Nationalist movement. This should be kept in mind during the following analysis.

The Phenomenon of Hindu-Nationalism

Hindu-Nationalism must be understood as a societal phenomenon which finds its most visible expression in the emergence of a social movement. In this context one can state, that Hindu-Nationalism is carried by a widespread network consisting of various organizations, well-known as *Sangh Parivar* or the *Sangh* family. However, this movement is not a new product of independent India. Its roots can be traced far back to the colonial history of the country and finds its origin in exponents of Hindu revivalism like *Arya Samaj*. Furthermore, the movement is equipped with an ideological foundation (*Hindutva*) to provide the numerous movement-organizations as well as their individual members and associates with a collective identity that functions as a common bond along ethnic-cultural and especially religious lines. A process which was indirectly reinforced by the British colonial power. The division of the population in caste and religious groups created new collective identities in India. The evolution of Muslim group identity at the beginning of the 20th century deeply fostered and strengthened Hindu identity. However, the fundamental concept of this identity project to transform Indian society as well as its political-institutional structures from a secular into a theocratic Hindu state.

Hindutva - Ideology and Identity

Herein it is argued that one cannot tackle Hindu-Nationalism and its internal and external conflicts within its spearhead organizations, the *Sangh Parivar*, without a deeper understanding of the collective identity that is applied in the process of political mobilization. The most coherent and influential formulation of *Hindutva* was provided by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1883-1966) in the early 1920s. His overall puzzle was how to build an Indian nation which is strong enough to ensure its independence (*Swaraj*, or "self-rule") in the international competition of nations. From his point of view Indian history had witnessed various attempts to build up a national entity but all had failed because of the inherent heterogeneity of Hinduism as the socio-cultural and religious system of the majority. Here, he identified a "perverted notion of tolerance" which leads to a lack of common accepted norms (identity) as well as disintegration of the (Hindu) people. To counter this, a homogenous community of the Hindus (*Hindu-Sangathan*) had to be built up in which all heterogeneous elements were to be excluded. To create such a society the establishment of a Hindu state (*Hindu Rashtra*) was necessary, including the socio - economic and political transformations in all spheres of national life. Therefore, the most crucial step is the definition of citizenship. In other words, the puzzle of who is a Hindu must be understood in the context of the definition of which person is a legitimate citizen. To operationalize this, he suggested a set of criteria consisting of three main elements *Rashtra* (common land), *Jati* (common blood) and *Sanskriti* (common culture) which should be used as guidelines in distinguishing between Hindu and non-Hindu. In essence, to be a Hindu one had to be born in India, one needed Indian (Hindu) parents, and one had to accept and internalize the Hindu culture.

Ayodhya – Mobilization Strategy, Symbol and Ritual

Ayodhya, a holy place which for Muslims and Hindus alike is of extra-ordinary importance, has dominated the discourse of Indian politics since its existence. It captured the international spotlight after the demolition of the Babri Masjid on 6 December 1992 which sparked communal violence in various parts of the country. The destroyed mosque, built in 1528 by a general of Babar, founder of the Mughal dynasty, has been a site of religious confrontation because some Hindus claim that the mosque was erected in order to replace an ancient Hindu temple built in the 11th century AD to mark the birthplace of Lord Ram, one of Hinduism's most revered deities. Under British colonial rule a railing was put around the mosque to separate places of worship, allowing the inner court to be used by the Muslims and a raised outer platform by Hindus. Following the Partition and the *communalized* atmosphere, the newly independent Indian government closed the site, placing it under guard. However, on the night of 22 December 1949 an idol of Ram was planted in the mosque, provoking riots that were squashed by the army and civil lawsuits were filed by Hindu and Muslim leaders over the site's ownership. Declared a disputed site, the government locked the gates until the mid-1980s when Hindu extremists began an agitation to unlock the gates and build a temple for Ram. Several parties have used the issue in their quest for political power. However, taking the genesis and development into account, one must state that the Ayodhya controversy was much more than only a "temple-and/or-mosque" dispute. In fact it is closely linked to the appearance of Hindu-Nationalism and might also lead to its decline on the political landscape of India. However, to elaborate on this one must point out the significance of this Ayodhya issue for the hardliners of the Hindutva ideology.

Generally, the Hindu-Nationalist movement has undertaken various attempts to generate collective identity among its members and sympathisers in order to build a unified (Hindu) community. In this context, their main strategies are focused on processes of inclusion and exclusion to separate the people of India into two categories: "The We" and "The Others". Therefore, various procedures are used to enable the Hindu-Nationalist to feel part of a cohesive community ("The *imagined* We"). This is mainly operationalized by the commonly exercised rituals and practices initiated and organized by the VHP-RSS combination, like the *Ektatmata Yajna*, a "pilgrimage for the Unity of the Hindus" through the nationwide distribution of "holy Ganges water" in 1983; or the *Ram Shila Pujas* (consecration of bricks and their transportation to Ayodhya) in 1989 and the connected *Ram Janmabhoomi* movement to re-erect a Hindu temple with the very same "holy bricks" in Ayodhya. To enhance the impact of these agitations, the BJP coordinated the efforts of its affiliates and launched the so called *Rath Yatra* in 1990. This had the aim of leading as many Hindu *karsevaks* (volunteers) as possible to the disputed place and to force the rebuilding of a temple and consequently the destruction of the Babri mosque.

Due to all these agitations Ayodhya temporarily turned into the major flashpoint in India's political landscape, a phenomena which can be interpreted in various ways. First, Ayodhya appears as an outstanding example of how the *Sangh*-family tries to combine religion, history and politics in order to achieve mass mobilization. Second, Ayodhya was shifted into the centre of the Hindu-Nationalists self-conception. As such, a reconstructed Ram temple on the site of the destroyed Babri mosque was propagated as a symbol for the emergence of a new Hindu state and visualized their notion of national integration understood as a unification of the Hindus. Third, it also marks the endmost "combined operation" of the *Sangh Parivar* to work towards the establishment of a *Hindu Rashtra*, at least for the time being. In the aftermath of Ayodhya, the BJP had to face the consequences of the destruction and the nationwide extra-ordinary clashes between

Hindus and Muslims, as they lost their political alliance partners as well as the widespread support of the Indian electorate. Therefore, Ayodhya is more a symptom than a cause of a much bigger challenge for the country's democratic development, especially in the last two-and-a-half decades.

However, the real dispute centred around the socio-political connotations and challenges to state and society will remain significant: First, the unwillingness by Hindutva-hardliner of the non-parliamentary wing of the Hindu-Nationalist movement to depart substantially from radical claims and ideology; secondly the inability of the BJP to reduce its ties with the radical elements of the movement because of independence and personal leverages ('double-memberships'). The latest claims by several political parties in the Lok Sabha for justice for the victims of the 1992 riots in the context of the destruction of the Babri Mosque after 20 years of judicial and parliamentary ignorance shows that the problem can temporarily be frozen but is not solved yet.

Sangh Parivar – An unconventional family

It is significant to emphasize that Hindu-Nationalism is not a monolithic-block. In fact, its organizations differ substantially regarding structures, behavioural patterns, types of memberships (from full-time worker to part-time activist), aims, and spheres of action. However, this societal formation, despite all the programmatic and institutional differentiations, can clearly be identified as a social and political movement, even if it is a quite atypical one.

Generally the term *Sangh Parivar* refers to an alliance of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary organizations which obliged themselves to the Hindutva-concept. In the center of the *Sangh* family stands a work-sharing triumvirate, existing of the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS, National Volunteer Organization) functioning as a organizational and ideological backbone, the *Vishwa Hindu Parishad* (VHP, World Hindu Council) covering all kinds of (Hindu) religious matters, e.g. reconstruction of Hindu-temples, and attempts to function as an umbrella organization of the numerous streams and sects among Hinduisms, as well as the *Bharatiya Janata Party* (BJP, Indian People's Party), which assumed the task to represent the movement in the political-parliamentary sphere. Despite their personal and ideological linkages, each of these three organizations acts independently, has its own agenda and preamble, structures and strategies. However, the overall aim is to be able to penetrate all segments and dimensions of the society.

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh

The RSS was founded in 1925 by K.B. Hedgewar as a so called "cultural organization" but with a clear political vision to curb the fragmentation of the Hindu society and to establish a Hindu state. Both goals, regarding the rationale of the RSS, were until then inhibited by a lack in morality, discipline and character of the Hindus. The basic conviction was, if one indoctrinates a certain degree of Hindus by Hindutva ideology (in this context interpreted as a representation of Sangh Parivar's interests) a new Hindu elite could be generated. Once these cadres are put in place at key positions of state and society, secular India can be transformed into a Hindu state, more or less automatically. In this context, the RSS sees itself as a state within the state which is on its way to constitute and represent the state exclusively.

Over the years the RSS created a broadly diversified network of different sub- and co-ordinated organizations, supported by some tens of thousands of local meeting and training centres (*Shakhas*, branches) with millions of members (confirmed data on the

number of members are not available). Furthermore it owns various newspapers, runs labour unions and student organizations, and maintains schools and hospitals among many other institutions. However, the most significant bodies are the *Shakhas* as the main building blocks of the RSS in which the members attend P.E. classes and are indoctrinated ideologically. The vision is to construct a homogeneous society that is caste and class-less. Within the *Sangh Parivar* the RSS functions as a kind of “mother organization” and “cadre-hot-bed” which sees itself as the core of the entire movement's organizational structure, the top political decision-maker, and the ideological pacesetter. Especially through double-membership and the provision of personnel, infrastructural and financial resources the RSS follows a kind of *appropriation*-strategy to extent its influence on the society and to push the *Hinduisation* of the Indian political process.

In this context, the RSS is using a twofold strategy: On the one side it uses the already existing institutions of state and society; on the other side it is involved in the creation of new organizations. Latter ones were formally separated but were in fact guided by them. The efforts of the hindu-nationalist movement to implement the *Hindutva*-concept politically are not only enforced in the parliamentary sphere but also supported by activities of the extra-parliamentary network. Nevertheless, the feasibility of implementing this aim within the realm of politics was drastic and was increasingly questioned over the last years within the movement. Additionally there was the perception that a direct participation in politics might threaten the integrity and internal cohesion of the RSS.

Vishwa Hindu Parishad

Founded in 1964 (initiated by the RSS), the VHP is the most significant cultural and religious-political associated organization. From a hindu-nationalist perspective, there were two reasons for creating this organization. First, there was the goal of confronting and/or counterbalancing the institutionalized monotheistic religions of the West with a new organization capable of providing cohesion and unity to a disparate community of Hindus. Secondly, the VHP sought an opportunity to influence the broader masses, especially the *dalits* (“untouchables”) and the tribal communities. Previously, achieving these two goals had been, impossible because of the elitist behaviour of the RSS. In particular, the numerous and diverse Hindu clerics had not been reached until than by the *Sangh Parivar*. Therefore, the VHP was founded as a platform for the different hinduistic movements, schools, streams, and sects, not only to promote the idea of unity within the hindu-community (*Ekatmata*) but also to create the opportunity to exercise direct influence on these groups. Additionally, the VHP offered crucial services for certain political parties and other organisations. Despite the attempts of the RSS to entrench supremacy and guidance through personnel control via its cadres among the VHP echelon, the *Vishwa Hindu Parishad* over the years emerged as a political influential as well as increasingly autonomous independent hindu-nationalist movement.

Bharatiya Janata Party

The rise of the BJP, which was founded in 1980 as a successor to the existing *Bharatiya Jan Sangh* (BJS), founded in 1951, is one of the most significant political events in modern India. With its radical positions like the claim to (re-)build the Hindu-temple in Ayodhya, the abrogation of Article 370 which grants the Muslim majority state Jammu & Kashmir a special constitutional status, or the advocacy of a unified personal law (civil code), the party remained outside of the political mainstream for a long time and a shadowy existence in the political landscape of India.

However, a temporary decline of the until than ruling Indian National Congress (INC)

resulting in the erosion of its “one-party-dominance” (or so called “congress-system”) created a political power vacuum into which the BJP could move in. Here one has to point out, that this was only possible through the massive support of its so called “non-political”, cultural organizations RSS and VHP as well as their affiliated and/or subordinates organizations. Nevertheless, the rise of the BJP was also enabled by the negative perception of Indira Gandhi’s emergency rule (1975-77) as well as her increasingly tutelage style of governance and various accusations of corruptions (especially the Bofors scandal) against her family as well as various INC governments. Additionally, unpopular policies and policy implementations like forced sterilizations or the violent expulsion of people in the context of city development programmes (best described as ‘socio-economic cleansing’) alienated the Indian electorate from the INC and portrayed the BJP as the only political alternative at that time. In other words, Indians were voting for the Hindu-Nationalists not because of their anti-Muslim attitude or the rhetoric of violence but rather because of the poor and criticised political performance of the INC. However, the rise of the BJP was remarkable: in the period from 1951/52 until 1999, the party was able to increase its seats in the national parliament (Lok Sabha) from 3 to 182 (expressed as a percentage of votes this was an increase from 3,1 to 23,8%).

Dilemma of the Hindu-National movement

Observing the developments of the last one and a half decades one can state that the *Sangh Parivar* had to face the typical dilemmas of a socio-political movement. Not only the access but also the maintenance of political power through elections demands a wide-scale accommodation of –interests that are also likely to be divergent. To be able to do this successfully, one has to dilute the originally (mostly radical) vision and ideology, which consequently leads to a certain degree of incoherence within its own political agenda. Torn between culture- and power orientated interests, the Hindu-nationalist movement had to face a conflict between its political vision derived from its Hindutva-ideology and the *Realpolitik* of being a part of the coalition government (NDA, National Democratic Alliance). This imposed practical-political constraints on its political wing. Here, to maintain the cohesion of its political alliance the BJP had to “freeze” its most radical political demands, like the re-building of a Hindu temple in Ayodhya, the introduction of an unified civil code (obligatory for all religious communities), or the elimination of the special status of Kashmir as it is granted in the Indian Constitution. These led not only to an alienation of the BJP from its affiliates RSS and VHP but also to serious tensions between the radical and the moderate poles of the entire movement. In this context one can state that until the BJP took office and gained central political power, as well as responsibility in New Delhi, an open conflict between the different Hindu-Nationalist organizations did not appear, at least not within the public domain. However, during the time of the BJP-led governments, the architecture of the *Sangh* family was somehow disrupted, which became more evident after a series of electoral defeats most significantly on the national level in 2004 and 2009. It seems that the relationship between the BJP founders and the RSS, as well as VHP, was characterized more by mutual distrust than loyalty and that there is an increasing potential for conflicts. The clash between VHP and BJP appeared especially during the time (1998-2004) as the latter one had to form and lead governments. In this context, the BJP was accused of being a political party that did not represent the interests of the Hindus. However, it was not until recently that the movement began to take such a critical stand against its representing political party. Here the metaphor of the “supporting-leg” (RSS/VHP) and the “kicking-leg” (BJP) is particularly relevant, based as it is on the notion that a party which is an offspring of a movement and which has to purely/solely serve the interest of the very same movement is unsustainable. In other words, the concept of the

Hindu-Nationalist movement as an integrated, collective actor could not stand in front of Indian political realities. Here the period of the last BJP government shows that the “appropriation-strategy” of the RSS has substantial weaknesses. The liberal, moderate mainstream of the party’s leadership followed the conviction that the BJP and other organizations certainly belonged to the same family. However, despite the very close mutual relationship among the “family members” it was increasingly perceived by the BJP that they are all different and more or less autonomous bodies with divergent interests and goals. It becomes apparent that the BJP wanted to be more than just a “supporting-leg” or mouthpiece of the Hindu-Nationalist movement. Furthermore, they claim for themselves more than just a subordinate function. Here one can state that the BJP took a position which differed in various cases with the ideological convictions of its affiliates.

A Trojan Horse for India’s Democracy?

Today Hindu-Nationalism from its own perspective is residing in a quite grotesque situation. To transform the secular concept of state into a Hindu one, the movement had to constitute itself as an anti-systemic force. However, instead of inducing the desired socio-political change it contributed – more unconsciously than consciously – to the consolidation of the existing democratic order. Contrary to the demands of the radical wing of the movement the BJP designed itself as a party which neither reject nor fights against the rules of the game or openly opposes the normative foundation of India's political structure. However, to portray Hindu-Nationalism as a pillar for the country’s democracy is definitely out of sync with social and political reality. Not only is Hindu-Nationalism perceived to be responsible and closely associated with extraordinary threatening “accidental circumstances”, particularly the destruction of the Babri mosque in Ayodhya and the subsequent violent clashes between Hindus and Muslims as well as the communal pogroms in Gujarat, but also with a social- and political notion of state which is diametric to the fundamental consensus (*Unity in Diversity*) within the Indian society. To sum up, taking the recent developments of the last years into account following dominant perspectives can be identified.

A serious crisis of parliamentary Hindu-Nationalism!

The BJP had to realize quite early on that its rise and success in the parliamentary sphere was based on the emergence of an increasing political awareness and participation of the new middle class which identified the BJP temporarily as an electoral alternative. However, *Hindutva* as a political program proved to be neither the basis for a sustainable political mobilization nor, in the context of generating a cohesive impact on the Hindu-Nationalist organizations, capable of holding the radical and moderate wings as a closed, corporate movement together. Here, the general elections of 2009 showed once again that the Indian electorate is more interested in social harmony as well as law and order instead of an amortization and revenge for an artificially constructed humiliation of the Hindu community and violence towards minorities. Furthermore, in the last years the movement was undermined by its very own structures. The radical stream of hostile behaviour cultivated by elements of the Party did not only have an impact on the „external enemy“ but also on its own affiliates within the movement.

RSS Supremacy between Reluctance and Restorations

To assess the implications of the latest developments regarding Ayodhya as well as in attempting to predict future trends one has to take into account especially the political

performance of the *Sangh Parivar*. In this regard one can state that the Hindu-Nationalist movement was not only able to form a complex combination of social-movement organizations but also to set up a second national political force. Furthermore, the BJP was able to establish itself first as a remarkable party in opposition towards the INC; second, it was able to break the one-party-dominance of the INC and to displace the INC through free and fair elections; third, it managed to install an functioning “quasi-two-party system” including the introduction of coalition politics into the Indian political system. Having this unique performance in mind, the BJP gained much confidence not only in the political arena of New Delhi but also within the *Sangh Parivar*. This imbued the political wing with a quest for power and let the negligence of the culture-orientated demands and ideological directions from the RSS, at least temporarily.

BJP: falling back into formation?

The reluctance of the BJP to enforce *Hindutva* politics to the Hindu nationalists’ relevant policy fields led to a situation, where the *Sangh Parivar* lost its functional adaptivity. In order to undermine unacceptable aberrations from the *Hindutva* agenda and to suppress sectarian tendencies, the RSS undertook various attempts to restore the RSS-centrists’ power relationship structure within the Hindu-Nationalist movement. According to its own claim, the RSS became active in not only sorting out potential irritations with regards to the internal organization and ideological direction of the BJP. However, de-facto the RSS was able to entrench once again its supremacy within the *Sangh Parivar* as well as its control over the increasing autonomous and “rebellious” BJP. The electoral defeat in 2009 and the extraordinary lack of leadership within the BJP as well as the starved top brass of the RSS, under the guidance of *Sarsanghchalak* (supreme and sole head) Mohan Bhagwat, ensured that the BJP was not only disciplined but also more or less degraded to a subordinate element of the movement. This was due to an absence of sufficient inner-party democracy, here especially the non-existence of institutionalized democratic mechanisms of leadership recruitment or the neglect of the principle of consensus in decision-making processes within the BJP, the drastic structural weaknesses (the BJP was not represented at the last election in four major states : West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala). Additionally the extensive lack in communication among BJP-leaders and between the party’s national spearhead and its regional cadres, contributed to the party’s downfall within the political landscape as well as among its movement affiliates. The exclusion of certain elite cadres (e.g. Jaswant Singh), was an additional irritation, leading to increased dissatisfaction within the social base of the party. Confused ideas over ideological orientation and party loyalty alienated and paralyzed party-workers as well as sympathizers.

However, one has to wait and observe to what extent the BJP is able to tackle its structural challenges (ideological as well as organizational ones) plus to which extent party can (re)introduce principles like freedom of speech, constructive self-criticism and the collective decision-making. It will be crucial for a further (noteworthy) existence of the BJP as a serious alternative towards the INC, that the party is able to solve and avoid internal generational-conflict as well as leadership clashes with the RSS. Nevertheless, how the BJP leadership is able to balance the *Sangh Parivar*’s demand to undertake ideological reassessments, to suppress or to remove moderate revisions of the *Hindutva* concept as well as to ensure its power-political interests in the parliamentary sphere will be essential. Failure in both directions will have a serious impact on a (successful) future existence of the BJP: if it turns towards a too “soft-Hindutva” in order to maintain its ability to produces political consensus, the *Sangh Parivar* will withdraw its support from its party as already happened in the 1984 general elections in which the RSS backed the INC election

campaign. Having the weak electoral performance of its predecessor BJS in mind, the newly founded BJP is trying to get into the political mainstream and has moved significantly to more centrist and moderate positions. However, the INC at that time after the assassination of Indira Gandhi adopted a rather strong “Hindu-rhetoric” which was much appreciated and rewarded by the RSS.

Concluding remarks and perspectives: Sangh Parivar as a Hub for Hindu terrorism?

That the BJP is in an existential identity and structural crisis led some political observers to announce the self-dissolution of the BJP. However, it seems that the BJP is still quite alive and it is definitely far too early to talk about the end of a parliamentary Hindu-Nationalism. Herein the Ayodhya verdict seems to generate some new dynamics among the Hindu-Nationalists as well as their interaction with society and the state. However, the turmoil of the last years between the RSS, BJP and the VHP due to the so called dilution of hard-line *Hindutva* alienated elements within the *Sangh* family so far that they turned towards a form of vigilantism to enforce the establishment of a *Hindu Rashtra*. This militancy is not a totally new phenomenon but it seems that it constitutes a trend of increasingly emerging terrorist cells within the *Hindutva* movement, acting independently from the *Sangh* leadership. The blast in Malegaon (Maharashtra) of 2006, or in Goa (Margao) of 2009 are widely interpreted (and partly proven) as strong indicators for a new type of “Hindu terrorism”. However, until now it has been hard to measure how far certain elements of the *Sangh Parivar* are involved in militant activities. Nevertheless, one has to be aware that the *Hindutva* concept as defined by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar is not only the question of how to define a Hindu as a citizen of the *Hindu-Rashtra* but that it also gives some vague notions about how to implement it (*Hindu Rashtravad*). In this Savarkar linked the realization of *Hindutva* with the concepts of “Relative, Righteous Violence” as well as the “Hindu Holy War” (*dharma yuddha*) in order to take a position against M.K. “Mahatma” Gandhi’s idea of absolute non-violence to liberate India from the British yoke. In other words, Savarkar implemented a moral legitimization for the use of violence. Besides the fact, that this was mainly formulated in the context of using coercive power against foreign occupation, there is definitely a threat that this can today be interpreted by extremist segments to justify a “Hindu terrorism” in contemporary and future India. To sum up, *Hindutva* and its representing organization of the *Sangh Parivar* remain a potential and real threat for India.

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