CHAPTER-V
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

State and civil society have been the most widely discussed categories in social sciences. The State-civil society relations have also generated serious debates in developmental discourses and democratic practices. However, the conceptualisation and interpretations of the State and civil society vary across time and space, and between scholars, development practitioners as well as countries and regions. Admittedly, the State as an agency faces critical challenges under neoliberal conditions even as it is compelled to retreat from the social security as well as developmental realms. In the liberal tradition, civil society was seen as important in protecting the rights of the individual from the arbitrary power of the State. Over years, however, the civil society has undergone a role transformation—particularly in the era of neoliberal globalism—thereby it has become a necessary partner of the State in the realm of ‘development’ and ‘governance.’ Currently, there are also efforts to transpose the State in the Third World from its developmental activities. Though the State in such a scenario may appear to be shrinking in its role and activities, it has also been ‘militaristic’ in implementing laws and treaties of the market. Consequently, the social dislocations following liberalisation and globalisation tend to generate insecurity complexes which many right-wing political forces might appropriate to make inroads into societies. The ascendancy of the New Right in several countries can, thus, be placed within this paradigm shift in international political economy. The rise of the Hindu Right in India too can be comprehended within this framework.

1 Historically, the concepts of State and civil society have been associated with the development and expansion of capitalism in the West. The gradual shift from feudalism to capitalist mode production and the emergence of a new middle class reconfigured the power equations in such societies. The West as a system of States and economies evolved hand in hand. The absolutist/authoritarian States can be considered as the precursors of the modern State. The liberal discourses on State and civil society took progress along with these developments. The Social Contract
theorists were, perhaps, the first to offer the basic premises for the development of the concepts of State and civil society. According to them, the individuals created civil society in order to get out of the problem-ridden state of nature. Later, in order to overcome the insecure conditions of civil society, people created the sovereign—the State. The Social Contract theorists agreed on the importance of ‘consent’ in the making of ‘civil/political’ society. Giving ‘consent’ is a rational decision because the individual gets security of his life and property only in a ‘civilised’ community. J.S. Mill, Tocqueville, Hegel, Max Weber and many other thinkers in the liberal tradition offered insights on the State and civil society. Hegel rejected the classical economist position of the self-regulation of the market and stressed the importance of State in this realm. To him the realm of economy and civil society are the same. The exclusionary nature of the market prevents the vast sections of the people to enjoy the freedom of civil society. Hegel’s idea of free market and administration of justice resembled that of the classical liberals like Locke and Smith, but he differed from them in respect of the importance of State in society. To Hegel, the State is necessary to lessen the tension between the general interest and the private interest.

The differences within the liberal discourses were basically on the question of the intensity of the State regulation on society, in accordance with the demands/interests as well as the strategies of the capitalist system. In its classical period, liberalism sought to demand/support for more individual autonomy and very less State regulation. In its welfare capitalist phase, there was more State intervention in societal matters, quintessentially a State-guided society. When it comes to the neoliberal era, the State has been rolling back from the social security and welfare realms. With the shrinking role of the State as a major ‘provider,’ individual self-regulation and NGO activism became prominent.

The Debates on State and civil society assumed a new dimension in the context of the theories of capital accumulation and class domination. Marx viewed the State as a product of society in a particular stage of its transition. He argued that the State and its officials tend to exploit and oppress the civil society on behalf of certain particular sectional groups. Yet, Marx endorsed a vital role for civil society in the historical development of mankind, and contended that it cut across both the State
and the nation. Rejecting the existence of civil society as an independent sphere, Marx saw its origin in the class relations and in the political economy. He claimed that the realm of civil society is basically exclusionary and exploitative that caused the total alienation of the working class. This is in contrast to the liberal view which generally regarded civil society as a realm of high emancipatory potential. Extending the Marxian notion that the State is a coercive instrument of dominant class, Gramsci said that the very process of domination is not achieved through coercion alone, but also through the active ‘consent’ of the masses. His theory of the State came out of a proper understanding of the relationship between the State and civil society. However, he rejected the ‘economism’ of the conventional Marxism in all its forms and explains how both the State and civil society have been playing a constitutive role in creating/maintaining the ruling class hegemony. Nicos Poulantzas’s analysis on the State is also a departure from the conventional Marxist position. He focuses on political and ideological struggles, and rejects all forms of instrumentalism in analysing the modern State and viewed that State is a complex social relation. According to him, classes cannot be seen as simple economic forces existing outside the State and controlling it as a passive instrument for its own interests. The class struggle is not impounded to the civil society but it is reproduced within the State apparatus.

Like Gramsci and Poulantzas, Lukacs also contributed to rethinking classical Marxist position on State and civil society. The Critical Theorists of the Frankfurt School had drawn heavily from the perspectives of Lukacs and Gramsci on the relevance of civil society and culture. The focus of their analyses was on the ever-expanding role of the State, alienation, the growing interlocking of the base and superstructure, the spread of culture industry, the development of authoritarianism, human rights violations, social movements etc. Among the contributions from the Critical Theory tradition, the concept of ‘public sphere’ developed by Jürgen Habermas stands out. The public sphere, to be located in civil society, is a realm where people could discuss matters of mutual concern, and learn about facts, events, and the opinions, interests, and perspectives of others in an environment free of coercion or inequalities. To Habermas, the civil society comprises of spontaneously emergent associations, organisations,
and movements that distill and transmit such reactions in amplified form to the public sphere. Its core comprises of a network of associations that institutionalises problem-solving discourses on questions of general interest inside the framework of organised public spheres.

The State and civil society came in for critical evaluation in the post-positivist traditions of social theory also, as reflected in the postmodern/poststructural literature since 1970s. These writings have thrown open several critical questions concerning the very foundation of modernity, the State and civil society under liberalism and socialism. According to postmodernists, the claims and promises with respect to ‘emancipation,’ ‘liberation,’ ‘development,’ human rights etc. are only grant narratives and therefore they are no longer sustainable. Foucault questioned the State-centric notions of power and stressed the ‘capillary flow of power’ in the societal body. He insisted that the studies of power should begin from the ‘micro-physics of power,’ which are the specific forms of exercise in different institutional sites.

The revival of the concept of civil society in the last quarter of the twentieth century was associated with the ‘activist’ assertions in many countries, particularly in former socialist countries. The disintegration of the Soviet Union created a conductive atmosphere for the ‘minimalist’ school to assert its position. This became inevitable for legitimising the neoliberal globalism. The situation was gently used by the right-wing forces in many countries. They created a general feeling that there was no alternative to the liberal ideology and institutions. This was the time when the neoliberal institutions were trying to incorporate the Third World economies into the world capitalist system through aid, loans and assistance.

Long before neoliberalism emerged as a dominant concern of global capitalism, many libertarians had argued for a ‘minimal state.’ They held that many of the powers of the modern Welfare State are ‘morally illegitimate.’ According to them, the State violates the rights of citizens when they force, or threaten to force, individuals to transfer their ‘legitimately held wealth’ to the State in order to provide for pensions, to help the needy, or to pay for public goods etc. Robert Nozick had already asserted that nothing more than the maintenance of peace and the
security of individuals and property by the State can be justified. Hayek had also reflected on this theme of ‘minimum’ dispensation. This gained currency since the 1980s.

The new-found role of the State as a facilitator of global finance has implications for the common people. The changed equation between the State and civil society in a globalised environment has inevitably generated new forms of security threat. Meanwhile there are attempts towards cultural hybridisation and the resulting assertions of New Right forces (like the Hindu Right in India) tend to undermine the process of democratisation.

II

During the last three decades there was a proliferation of New Right movements and organisations across the world. The New Right is a term used to denote various forms of conservative, right-wing, or self-proclaimed dissident oppositional movements and groups that emerged in the second half of the twentieth century who were ideologically committed to neoliberalism as well as being socially conservative. The New Right advocated deregulation of business, dismantling of the Welfare State, privatisation of nationalised industries and restructuring of the national workforce in order to increase industrial and economic flexibility in an increasingly global market. The nature and mobilisation of the New Right groups and organisations vary from country to country. The strategies employed by them for articulation and mobilisation also differ. Religion, race, ethnicity etc are the most widely used categories for mobilisation and articulation, and civil society is the terrain of activities through which the New Right forces attempt to gain legitimacy. Many of them argue that the government interference in the market would distort the very balance of demand and supply and emphasised the laissez faire. According to them, the State should only focus on matters of defense, law and order, necessary public works etc. New Right leaders are also fierce critics of Keynesian policies of economic management, and high public expenditure on welfare. They are also known as advocates of ‘national discipline and strong defense.’ The peculiar feature of the New Right is the convergence of the traditional liberal defense of the free economy with the traditional conservative defense of State authority. As such, the Hindu
Right in India shares many of the characteristics of the New Right in other countries.

III

Parallel to the process of re-conceptualisation of State and civil society, there have also been attempts to revisit the notion of security from the neoliberal and Critical Constructivist angles. This has assumed a new dimension with the advent of globalisation. Security has now been reconceptualised with human beings at the centre of discourses rather than the State. This underlined a shift from the State-centric notion of security to a global, individualistic version of security. The ‘human security’ approach thus implied that the individual is at the core of any security perspective. Satisfaction of individual needs at different realms of life is central in such approach. The human security frame acknowledges that the security of citizens is not always bound up with the security of the State. At times, the State itself may threaten its citizens. It also acknowledges that in the twenty-first century the State may not always be able to keep its citizens secure, and other actors, at the local, regional and global levels, should share responsibility for human security.

Though security is a core concept in the theory and praxis of national, regional and international politics, it is also viewed in the context of local, inter-local and trans-local relations. In the positivist paradigm, security focuses on power, politics, and anarchy as fixed—mainstream IR reads narrowly into the role of ideology as manifested in the concepts of State, national interest, and nationalism. However, it does not pay any attention to the ways in which anarchy/insecurity may be constructed or how the roles of ideology, culture, history, or state practices themselves may produce anarchy in IR.

The Critical Constructivists, however, address the above concern and view security as ‘representations’ of danger. For them, objects of insecurity are not ontologically separate things but mutually constituted in a variety of ways that may privilege a certain conception of identity over others. Operating within a framework of meanings, assumptions, and distinctive social identities, the representation of the ‘Other’, their identities and what constitutes insecurity ‘imaginaries’ are left open to the dynamics of
interpretation, whereby relations of identity may also be produced, enforced, and reified in a conflictual manner. Critical Constructivists assume that all social (in) securities are culturally produced. Insecurities are inevitably ‘social constructions’ rather than given—threats do not just exist out there, but have to be produced. Security is also linked closely with identity politics. How we define ourselves depends on how we ‘represent’ others. This ‘representation’ is thus integrally linked with how we ‘secure’ ourselves against the ‘Other.’ Representations of the ‘Other’ as a source of danger to the security of the ‘Self’ in conventional understandings of security are accompanied by an abstraction, dehumanization, and stereotyping of the ‘Other.’ The ‘Other’ gets reduced to being a danger and hence an object that is fit for surveillance, control, policing and possibly extermination. This logic of the discourse of security dictates that the security of the ‘Self’ facilitates and even demands the use of policing and violence against the ‘Other.’ This is demonstrated through the case of the Hindu Right’s politics of representation, which legitimises hate-campaigns and violence in the name of securing the Hindu ‘Self’ at various levels. This discourse of security has been widely employed through the realm of civil society as illustrated in the previous chapters.

IV

The State and civil society in India are evidently complex domains of socio-political engagement given the very nature of their origin and development under colonial and postcolonial conditions. Perceptibly, the State in India has been undergoing major changes since the colonial days as has been the case with the civil society which had already become vibrant in the context of the challenges of modernity and the rising tempo of nationalism. The State had the pressure of colonial administration and all its requirements, but the civil society in its multitudes developed its own concerns and responses from different vantage points. These concerns and responses were manifested in the anti-colonial struggle, nationalist aspirations, anti-caste/socio-religious reform movements, civil liberty activities etc. In the postcolonial conditions, the State and civil society went through a variety of experiences largely because of the new challenges of state-building and nation-building.
The nature of Indian State and its path of development are critical factors in understanding the potential and limitations of the role of civil society. The development of capitalism in India is, therefore, a major factor to be reckoned with. In the course of colonialist expansion, an economic condition was created to facilitate the formation of capitalist relations in India on a massive scale. Meanwhile, way back in the nineteenth century many Indian trade associations were formed such as Bombay Mill Owners’ Association (1875) and the Ahmedabad Mill Owners’ Association (1891). The Congress also started conducting Indian industrial conferences along with its annual sessions. The efforts culminated in the formation of the FICCI. Once the capitalist class strengthened its position, it began to play an active role in the freedom struggle and, by the mid-thirties it became the most influential class on the anti-imperialist front. The capitalist class could easily exercise its influence on the Congress and became a decisive factor at the time of the transfer of power. The Indian business groups drew closer to the Congress, which was emerging as a mass movement aimed at putting an end to British rule. For its part, the Congress was committed to a policy of rapid industrialisation, which it believed would benefit the capitalist class too. The Bombay Plan of 1944 had clearly recognised the necessity of active participation of the State in promoting industry. The post-independent State had followed the proposals of the Bombay Plan. This reflected the Keynesian approach to the role of the State in the capitalist development. The notion of Welfare State was thus put in place to legitimise the capitalist path of development. The role of the State was further underlined in India’s Industrial Policy Resolutions of 1948 and 1956 by which the State was expected to intervene in the development process.

However, over years, the Indian economy experienced many difficulties in spite of the planned development and the task of industrialisation. The trends in the economy clearly suggested the slowdown in industrial growth, poor performance of agriculture and unchanged income distribution which constrained the growth of the home market. The pressures resulting from the oil crisis of 1973–74 further upset the tasks of development. This had obviously set the background for economic liberalisation. Thus, by the mid 1970s, the policy of import substitution was relegated to the background and the emphasis shifted to import-led
export or export-led growth. The 1980s witnessed the beginning of liberalism, which changed the political economy of the Indian State, reoriented industrial production, altered class alignments and prepared the ground for a far-reaching transition.

V

The civil society in India also evolved during the colonial period. It was embedded in the idea of ‘nation’ and ‘nationalism.’ There were three ‘master narratives’ in Indian nationalism: secular nationalism (of the Congress); religious nationalism (consisted of the Hindu nationalism as well as the Muslim nationalism); and caste-based assertions (of the deprived sections). The national resistance movement, spearheaded by the Congress was the main source of civil society activity in early twentieth century. When the Congress developed into a mass movement, large segments of the population were drawn into political and social activism, and while the struggle was basically anti-colonial, the movement held within itself many forms of activities which would continue as independent sections of civil society, one case in point being the women’s movement. Other forms of social movements also gained in strength during the first half of the twentieth century. It was a time when the political practices under the colonial rule tended to fragment the society along caste and religious lines. The colonial authorities had maintained their hegemony over the inhabitants through various ways. Besides the civilian and military superiority, the colonialists also employed the power of rational discourses. Indeed, to the British, the assertion of the native intellectuals was an essential prerequisite for legitimising their regime in the colony. The educational policy of the British was to fulfill the administrative needs of the empire in India and also to sustain an ideological hegemony over the natives.

Meanwhile, from the nineteenth century onwards, the civil society witnessed struggles by untouchables and other deprived sections against the existing exploitative system. These movements had recognised the modern view of democracy and the equality of man. Though they were basically against the existing social evils of the Hindu belief system, they were also challenging the hegemonic nature of the religious reformist movements in British India. It may be noted that a number of organisations
and associations (like AIWC) were formed during this time influenced by the
nineteenth century reform movements. Many of the organisations that
addressed social issues were closely associated with the nationalist
movement. The trend continued even after independence. A number of
organisations and movements mushroomed in different areas of the
country. For example, peasant movements were so decisive in the political
history of India. During the colonial period as well as in the postcolonial
period, the peasants revolted against the existing exploitative system. The
movements by the Tribals added a new dimension to the existing struggles.
The Dalit movements emerged as responses to the socio-economic-cultural
differences existing within the system. Indeed, the assertions of the
deprived sections in the society were mainly aimed to get a space in the
mainstream civil domain i.e. shifting from an exploitative, discriminatory
system towards a society based on social equality and justice. This
perception was based on the principles of modernity and the deprived
sections, on the whole, anticipated emancipation through modernity.
Meanwhile, the minority assertions, especially from the Muslim community,
foccused on broader issues like separate electorates, representation etc.
They were, in fact, not the reflection of the will of the whole Muslim
population in India; rather they represented the interests of an elite class
within the Muslim community. The events since the early 1940s eventually
led to partition. The partition riots, in turn, led to polarisations in society.

When India became independent, there already existed a well-developed
and relatively mature civil society. The nationalist elite maintained that the
objectives of building a modern and prosperous nation guided by the
principles of secularism, central planning, and democratic socialism could
only be attained under the guidance of a strong democratic State. Nehru
expected that the ordinary Indians would acquire a democratic
consciousness, which would ultimately cease to identify themselves through
traditional caste categories and demand greater economic equality. What
happened in the political history of India was not a melting away of tradition
under the powerful light of modernist enlightenment. Those institutions of
modernity, like the State, which had to be accepted as part of the modern
condition, have been dealt with through a traditionally intelligible grid of
social identity and action. The constitutional system in India, therefore, was
consistent with the internal principles of liberal constitutionalism, but
inconsistent with the self-understanding of social groups. The State simply assumed that citizens would act as liberal individuals, but failed to set in motion a cultural process, which could provide the great masses of people the means of acquiring such self-understanding. The Congress, in the meantime, relied primarily on the support and cooperation of the local landowning interests—in particular, on the village landlords and the rich and upper strata of the middle peasantry, to organise the party cadres and mobilise the grassroots support for the party. In its effort to win, the Congress adapted to the local power structure. It recruited from among those who had local power and influence. The result was a political system with considerable tension between a government concerned with modernising the society and economy and a party seeking to adapt itself to the local environment to win elections.

However, it became quite clear soon that although the nationalist leaders sought to trigger social change through constitutional democracy, their efforts did not bring forth positive results altogether. This interaction of various social conservatism and economic radicalism in the context of political democracy led to non-elite groups getting organised and they did this through their caste/regional identities. Linguistic states had to be created in response to popular pressure from the local elites well as local middle classes who wanted public jobs and public contracts. Next came the pressure from the rural areas to divert resources to agriculture; this led to the launching of Green Revolution with input subsidies as well as price guarantees for outputs. But even then the discontent due to slow growth-rate continued. This broke into floods of protests from tribal, Dalit and lower caste groups since the 1970s.

The Emergency (1975-77) and the restoration of democracy not only redefined and extended the boundaries of civil society, by redefining the relationship of citizens with the State, it also restructured civil society in a significant way, and made it more alert to the transgression of its boundary hereafter by the State. Understandably, the most important consequence of the Emergency for civil society was the question concerning the collapse of State institutions and their inability to protect the rights of the citizens. The civil rights movement had, until then, remained confined to piecemeal addressing of issues. The emergency galvanised the movement, as democracy, citizenship and constitutional
protection of fundamental rights overnight became important issues for public debate. While the Emergency meant a breach with the Indian democratic practice, and a severe curtailment of civil and political rights, it also had a revitalising effect on civil society, which, after 1977, witnessed an increase of activities within traditional social movements such as peasants, workers and students, but also amongst the new social movements, including environmental groups and women’s organisations. The emphasis on environmentalism and gender issues was also a global phenomenon of this period. As a consequence, new groups understood the necessity to actively claim their rights and to fight against perceived injustices. State developmentalism as a project was questioned, and from the 1980s the Indian State itself encouraged NGOs to take more responsibility for social development. The liberalisation of the Indian economy facilitated this process. The study thus tried to locate the emergence of the Hindu Right in India within the economic and social dislocations caused by failed developmentalism as well as new discontents triggered off by the State’s adoption of neoliberal polices in the era of globalisation.

VI

The emergence and consolidation of the Hindu Right in India almost coincided with the New Right movements in the West. The importance of the Hindu Right emergence in the 1980s and 1990s needs to be understood within a broad framework of the trajectory of Hindutva. Significantly, a major running theme of the evolution and consolidation of the Hindutva has been ‘how to secure’ the Hindu identity and the ‘self’ against the perceived threats from ‘others.’ Plausibly, all ideologues of the Hindutva as well as the organisational programmes of the Sangh Parivar underlined the importance of this ‘self/other’ dichotomy. This is crucially significant in articulating a political doctrine with ‘difference’ in order to mobilise people in the civil society.

The emergence of the Hindu Right and its implications for India are often understood as relatively recent phenomena with the decline of ‘Congress System.’ In India, the debate surrounding the concept of Hindutva was basically a debate over the viability of cultural nationalism. When the political Hinduism is examined in its present variety, one has to look at the
movement in its totality. It seems to be very important to look at the transformation that took place in the Hindu society towards more ritualistic patterns of life and how the Hindutva has been appropriating these changes. The attempts to invent a unity in spite of rich diversity are the peculiar feature of the Hindutva. This has been ensured through various organisational networks in the civil society.

The ideology of Hindutva was deployed by the Sangh Parivar organisations such as Jana Sangh, BJP, RSS, VHP etc to crystallise the pluralist Hindu identity in their attempt to formulate a Hindu nation. In this process, many ‘others’ are constructed both within and outside the nation. This provides little room for the dialogue between the ‘self’ and the ‘non-self’ because threats and insecurity are the essential pre-requisites for Hindutva. The lineage of the Hindutva can be traced back to the writings and activities of Dayananda Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo to V.D. Savarkar and M.S. Golwalkar and many others. The ‘cow Protection movement’ led by the Arya Samaj and the Sanatana Dharma Sabha were early attempts to establish an ideological hegemony among the pluralist Hindu folk. The cow protection movement had an impact on the nature of the mental and social space carved out for the emerging civil society, on nationalism and the competing community identities that emerged in the early twentieth century. This had produced a dichotomy of ‘inside – outside’ in which the British, Muslims and the Christians were viewed as the ‘outsiders’ and glorified a native Hindu religious body which was ‘pure’ and had originated from the Vedas. Those ‘others’ were ‘polluted.’ This was an inception of the religious nationalism in India. The militant Hindu nationalism progressed in parallel with the mainstream nationalism and the former, in turn, twisted itself towards a more political one, the Hindutva over years.

The Hindu religious revivalism of the nineteenth century had culminated into an extreme Hindutva posture in the 1920s. V. D. Savarkar was the prime ideologue of this version of politics. Hindutva emerged as a political phenomenon and it had very little to do with the religious practice of the Hindus. Savarkar distinguished Hinduism from Hindutva, the latter being interpreted as the political history of the Hindu people. He tried to securitise the social relations in India on the basis of the ‘self’ and ‘other.’ To Savarkar the Indian history is essentially ‘antagonistic’ and “the Hindus and Muslims were locked in a life and death battle for centuries.” Here
there were no possibilities of cooperation between the ‘self’ and the ‘non-self’. The defining and distancing of the ‘self’ possibility led to the caricaturing of the ‘non-self.’ Savarkar said that unity of the people, “their modernization and their militarisation are the fundamental dimensions of Hindu nationalism: Every nation should be equipped with update arms and army so as to be ever prepared to face the danger of civil war within the country and aggression from without.” On several occasions Savarkar gave hints concerning the impossibility of a coexistence of Hindus and Muslims. He accused the Indian Muslims of being “anti-Hindu, anti-Indian with extra-territorial allegiance.” According to him, the entire Muslim community in India is communal.

Like Savarkar, M.S Golwalkar also used the same analytical tools to define the ‘Hindu nation.’ In an attempt to crystallise a militant Hindu identity, Golwalkar used his own version of ‘culture,’ history’, ‘nation’ etc for securitising the majority community, thereby making a sharp distinction between the Hindu civilisation, other cultures and religious systems. Golwalkar also territorialised the Hindu nation. In an attempt to historicise the Hindu nation, back to thousands of years, he portrayed the history of the Indian Muslims and Christians as ‘short’ and called them as ‘aggressors’ because they came here to build their empire. So they were ‘alien people, ‘outsiders.’ To Golwalkar the Muslims and Christians were “outside the boundaries of the nation” who looked to “some foreign land as their holy places.” He insisted that the other religions in India must subordinate themselves to the Hindu nation. The nature of the ‘Hindu State’ Golwalkar conceptualised was not only of an authoritarian type but it necessarily possessed aggressive characteristics in view of ‘threats’ and ‘dangers of disruption.’ Hence he sought to change the “present ill-conceived federal structure” (of India) to “the only correct form of government, the unitary one.” His notion of security was also increasingly associated with ‘national defence and military capability.’ Thus, by reinforcing an enemy image of the ‘Other,’ Golwalkar was trying to politicise and militarise the Hindu identity.

Among all the Sangh Parivar organisations working in the civil society, the RSS has always maintained its hold and acted as the main driving force of Hindu Rashtra. Established in 1925, the RSS had emerged as the largest Hindu organisation in a few years’ time and propagated the Hindutva
ideology with a view to infusing “new physical strength into the majority community.” The RSS has been active throughout India (as well as abroad as the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh) as the chief motivator and the core organisation of the Sangh family. Each and every organisation of the Sangh Parivar has been inspired by the RSS which provides an ideological base for their actions. The Sangh consists of BJP (its predecessor, BJS), ABVP, BMS, VHP, Seva Bharati, and Kalyan Ashram. The RSS has also strong influence on various Hindu scholastic centres across the country. The general philosophical outlook of the RSS is cultural nationalism manifesting through “integral humanism, aimed at preserving the spiritual and moral traditions of India.” The RSS has been using the civil society by engaging itself in numerous social, service charity, and relief works, as well as actively participated in the political process after 1948. It is well-organised and has a hierarchical structure with the Sarsanghchalak being the highest rank. Over years, the RSS developed a systematic framework and a very specific modus operandi. The founder of RSS, Hedgewar, called for efforts to work at the grassroots in order to reform Hindu society from below and he set up Shakhas (local branches) of the movement in towns and villages according to a specified pattern. The work of the Sangh is through personal contact. These contacts lead to close ties, friendship and personal cooperation, mutuality in personal relations and a desire to work together to solve the problems of a particular area. This socialisation process brings forth (bonding) social capital in civil society.

The RSS viewed that the ideal of the Sangh is to carry the nation to the “pinnacle of glory, through organizing the entire society and ensuring protection of Hindu Dharma.” Through constant propaganda, the Sangh sought to imagine a nation, ‘Hindu Rashtra,’ by portraying the Muslims and Christians as ‘enemies.’ This ‘enemy’ image has been perpetuated through the Shakhas. To the RSS, the Muslims, Christians and the communists are ‘outsiders’ who misinterpret history by denouncing the history of Hindu heroism, which had frustrated the invaders. As such they are portrayed as engaged in protecting their ‘imperialist interests.’ The RSS campaigned that ‘the evangelisation’ was part of the “uniform world policy to revive Christiandom for re-establishing Western supremacy” and was not prompted by spiritual motives. Establishing a ‘Hindu Rashtra has been the leitmotif of the RSS and hence it has been appropriating various
cultural spheres across a wide spectrum of the civil society in India making room for the Swayamsevaks to work in those organisations and associations, thereby legitimising the RSS ideology.

The Hindu Mahasabha, established in 1915, reorganised itself in 1925 with a view to propagating the Hindutva ideology. When Savarkar became the President of the Hindu Mahasabha in 1937, the organisation assumed new political importance with its aggressive anti-Muslim postures. It took a direct interest in elections and party politics. However, the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi was a setback to both Hindu Mahasabha and RSS. The RSS was banned and the Sangh lost its credibility among the people. The Hindu Mahasabha reorganised itself in 1937 with a view to propagating the Hindutva ideology. When Savarkar became the President of the Hindu Mahasabha in 1937, the organisation assumed new political importance with its aggressive anti-Muslim postures. It took a direct interest in elections and party politics. However, the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi was a setback to both Hindu Mahasabha and RSS. The RSS was banned and the Sangh lost its credibility among the people. The formation of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh in 1951 was another turning point in the history of Sangh Parivar. The Jana Sangh also aimed to re-establish itself following a party model in the image of RSS. Indeed, its policies and programmes showed its natural affiliation with the RSS. Contrary to the Nehruvian idealism on matters of national security, the Jana Sangh stood on the RSS position: ‘militarise the nation.’ In 1958 the Jana Sangh adopted its manifesto and programme which stated its position on matters of national security: (a) compulsory military training to all young men; (b), nationalization of all the wings of the armed forces in their inspiration as well as form; (c), immediate establishment of defence industries; and (d) organisation of vast territorial army. The Jana Sangh also emphasised the necessity of manufacturing nuclear weapons.

The Sangh stood for a unitary state, contrary to the Indian federal system. It also severely criticised the special status granted to Jammu and Kashmir and called for enacting a common civil code for both the Hindus and Muslims. However, the Jana Sangh, over years, lost its influence because of its tie up with the RSS. The increase in the communal riots and the number of people killed during the late sixties and seventies and the allegations against the Hindu nationalists as shown in the reports of various communal riots put the Jana Sangh in a defensive position. Meanwhile the failure of the Jana Sangh to promote the RSS ideology prompted them to think about a new organisation which culminated in the formation of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) in 1964. The leitmotif of this was to unite the pluralist Hindu on a single platform for the safeguarding of their common interest. Through its wide networks all over India and abroad, the VHP has been mobilising Hindus on a wide range of
issues from cow protection, Ram temple, jihadi terrorism, to the use of Sanskrit. It has also networks among the backward castes and Dalits. The VHP has offices and activities in foreign countries too.

The Sangh Parivar’s aim was not merely to penetrate into the civil society through *Shakhas*. It also sought to establish organisations working within specific social categories. The Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), the students’ wing, the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), its workers’ union, the Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram (VKA) its Adivasi wing were some of them. VKA sought to counter the influence of Christian movements among the Adivasis. The VKA developed a counter strategy by imitating missionary methods and thus accomplished a number of reconversions. The other Sangh organisations that began to make headway in the civil society were ‘Vidya Bharati’ (Indian Knowledge) established in 1977 to coordinate a network of schools, first developed by the RSS in the 1950s on the basis of local initiatives, and Seva Bharati (Indian Service) created in 1979 to penetrate India’s slums through social activities such as free schools, low-cost medicines, etc. Perhaps the most recent and controversial one emerged in the Sangh family is Bajrang Dal. The VHP was instrumental in the creation of the Bajrang Dal, which is a militant organisation based on the ideology of Hindutva. Established in October 1984 in Uttar Pradesh in the background of the Ayodhya movement, it began to grow in size. Bajrang Dal, like VHP and RSS, generated fear-psychosis about Islamic jihad in India and declared that that they were engaged in the campaign across the nation. In sum, the Sangh organisations had already established wide networks in the civil society and the persistent theme of mobilisation was securitisation of the society by reinforcing the ‘self/other’ images.

VII

State and civil society came under critical challenges since the 1980s. The period was also marked by momentous changes within the country and across the world. There was an unprecedented economic crisis in India in the late 1980s which affected the country’s position very badly. The disintegration of the socialist bloc, the ascendancy of neoliberal/New Right forces and market economy, the ever-expanding global capital, the formation of the WTO, 9/11 attacks and the ‘war on terror’ were the other
major developments. The economic crisis led India to substantially revise its development paradigm and the economic/industrial policies pursued for more than four decades. When India launched neoliberal policies in the 1990s, many critical questions emerged with respect to the role of State and civil society, long-held policies of self-reliance, import substitution etc. This period also witnessed new trends and patterns within the political system such as aggressive communal mobilisation, regionalism, shifting electoral strategies of political parties, governmental instability etc. Coalition experiments also became an accepted reality.

The State and civil society in India began to experience new forms of challenges against the backdrop of a new political economy regime which was gradually emerging in the 1980s. Its main objective was to ensure a slow but steady rollback of the State, deregulation of industries, decontrol of prices, liberalisation of imports, tax reductions etc. With the proclamation of a new economic policy by the Rajiv government, the development paradigm of the Indian State experienced a new shift. Following this, the Narasimha Rao government embarked on a wave of economic reforms in 1991 under the macroeconomic stabilisation and the structural adjustment policy.

Meanwhile the relative failure of the Indian State created feelings of exclusion amongst large segments of the population, and there were allegations that the State was not neutral, but biased on the basis of class and caste interests. These biases created sentiments of apathy and also facilitated negative mobilisation and manipulation of various primordial identities such as religion and caste. This ultimately led to demands and actions which seriously undermined the democratic system by the strengthening of exclusivist identities. These were based on religion or caste and were at the centre of political mobilisation, which involved political parties as well as other parts of Indian civil society. This resulted in the cementing of the community-based identities. The ascendency of the Hindu Right was most evident during this time when the BJP in the 1980s and 1990s grew from a marginal party to a dominant force in Indian politics.
Meanwhile, as a result of the extremely personalised rule of Indira Gandhi, especially after the Emergency, the ‘Congress System’ went into decline, creating a political vacuum which was filled by competing regional, caste and linguistic interests. Indira Gandhi’s government could not alleviate poverty in the ways that it had promised and the people became disillusioned with the Congress dominance and turned to alternatives. Consequently, the divisions that characterised the Indian politics in the 1980s and 1990s were marked by a more competitive electoral environment in which coalition building and the support of consistent vote banks became the hallmark of a successful political strategy.

It is here that the rise of Hindutva has been analysed within the larger context of the struggle and debate over the secularism of the postcolonial Indian State, on the one hand, and the emerging social issues and tensions following the introduction of liberalisation and privatisation, on the other. This became significant since the 1990s—the decade that saw the end of Congress’s dominance and the rise of BJP. The discourse of violence that the BJP and other Hindu Right organisations carried on during the period included the hate campaign against the minorities which was facilitated and justified in the name of achieving ‘security’ for the ‘Hindu Self’ at individual, community, national as well as international levels. The will to secure the ‘Self’ has as its corollary the will to make insecure the ‘Other’, the desire to control and use violence. The new discourse of security/insecurity that the Hindutva unleashed enabled extreme violence to be normalised, systematised and institutionalised. The ‘politics of hate’ spawned by the Hindutva was a good example that fed upon, as well as shaped, civil society’s conceptions of security/insecurity. The global environment with its own dynamic politics of representation of dangers had a direct impact on the civil society.

The 1980s and 1990s were marked by the growing fear generated by the Hindu Right that the minority Muslim population was “increasing its presence in India,” “challenging Indian sovereignty and rule of law,” and “controlling the politics of the country.” The ‘insecurity’ of the Hindus was blown out of proportion, and the BJP, RSS, VHP and other Hindu Right organisations had worked hard within the civil society in the task of securitisation of the Hindu identity. Thus, BJP’s emergence as the most
dominant Hindu Right force in India in the 1980s was the culmination of a sustained effort on the part of its predecessor, Jan Sangh, VHP and the RSS to bring Hindutva into mainstream politics. The BJP and other Hindu Right organisations played on “the fears of the Hindu majority” that the “Muslim population posed a threat to Hindus in India.” This was based on the “changing demographics of the Muslim population” and the political mobilisation in the 1980s and 1990s such as the growth of Islamic fundamentalism and the changing voting patterns of the Muslim population. This has also been linked with ‘terrorism’ and ‘Islamism.’ The Sangh leaders said that the ideological basis of terrorism in India was “anti-national in its intent and pan-Islamic in its appeal.” It was called the manifestation of a deeper malaise of the spread of extremism in most parts of the Muslim world, funded by fundamentalist groups. According to them, “murderous campaign” of jihad and the terrorists had a definite objective—to “establish worldwide domination of political Islam.” Naturally, India’s multi-faith society, the constitutional principle of secularism and the cultural-spiritual ethos of Hinduism “are anathema to Islamism,” they said. Throughout this period, the Hindu Right organisations and their leaders persistently talked about the ‘threats’ to the Hindus. The themes of campaign included illegal immigration from neighbouring Bangladesh, the plight of the Kashmiri Pandits, demolition of temples in Kashmir, conversion etc.

The Jana Sangh, which spearheaded the cause of ‘Hindu nationalism’ for long, merged with other non-communist parties to form the Janata Party in 1977 and assumed power at the centre. But the Janata experiment failed when it was caught up in conflicts among its constituent units. The Jana Sangh faction finally left the Janata Party. One of the main causes of the collapse of the Janata experiment was ‘the dual membership’—the loyalty of the Jana Sangh faction to the RSS. The new party, BJP, faced two main problems; first, how the new party could be distinguished from the former BJS, in order to exhibit its ‘newness’ and to “broaden their electoral reach on both a geographic and demographic basis”; secondly, how it could be placed as an alternative to the Congress. As a strategy, the BJP declared itself committed to a programme of ‘Gandhian Socialism’ and introduced a new set of policy documents to become a counterforce to the Congress. Its leadership criticised the Congress for its ‘denial of
democracy by imposing emergency in 1975,' ‘minority appeasement,’ and
‘distortion of secularism,’ ‘corruption,’ ‘unprincipled pursuit of power,’
‘unbridled consumerism in disregard of India’s cultural traditions’ etc.

However, the attempts to broad base its support in the 1984
parliamentary elections failed to attain the expected results. The BJP got
only two seats with 7.86 votes in the election. This was a setback to the
party. The RSS during this time indicated that the remedy to the crisis lay
in the restoration of the leadership’s rapport with a sizable section of its
‘selfless cadres’ still alienated since the Janata rule. It also argued that
‘positive secularism’ and ‘Gandhian socialism’ had alienated the party. In
the wake of this, the BJP appointed a high power Working Group to study
the results of the elections which later came out with remedial action.
Meanwhile, two events in early 1986 provided considerable leeway for
BJP’s re-emergence which it skilfully utilised through its mobilisation in the
civil society with the help of RSS, VHP and Bajrang Dal. The first one was
the opening of the gates of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya. In February, the
Rajiv Government passed the Muslim Women’s Bill in Parliament to
override the Supreme Court’s verdict in the Shah Bano case. The BJP and
the Sangh Parivar organisations decided to appropriate these issues,
thereby mobilising the majority Hindu community for drawing political
mileage. It was during this time that the BJP held its plenary in May 1986
with L.K. Advani assuming the leadership of the party. The change in
leadership had rejuvenated the hardcore members of the Sangh who were
motivated by the principles of ‘Hindu nationalism’ rather than ‘Gandhian
Socialism’.

BJP’s aggressive nationalism and its strategy of electoral alliance brought
86 seats to the party and it became the third largest party in Parliament.
The BJP and the left parties gave support to the V.P. Singh-led National
Front government. However, this was seen as the victory of a new wave of
politics played by L.K. Advani. The BJP’s strategy of gaining popularity
needs to be understood in the context of its politics of mobilisation and
securitisation since the middle of 1980s. Uniform Civil Code (in the context
of the Shah Bano case), Article 370 (in the context of the Kashmir
question), Ayodhya dispute (in the context of Rama Janmabhoomi-Babri
Masjid issue), Mandal Commission Recommendations (reservations for
backward classes), ban on cow slaughter were some of the prominent
issues that the BJP, VHP, Bajrang Dal and other Sangh organisations took up for mobilisation in the civil society. The BJP also understood that the Rajiv Government was playing both minority and majority cards simultaneously. While appeasing the Muslims in the Shah Bano case, the government also decided to authorise the Hindus to conduct prayers at the site of Babri Masjid by opening the gate of the premises in an attempt to woo the Hindus.

The Ram Janmabhoomi movement began to gather momentum when the Hindu Right organisations like RSS, VHP and Bajrang Dal, with the BJP’s blessings and participation, launched a series of powerful mobilisations using religious symbols and gestures such as a campaign to collect bricks for the temple, carrying Ram-Jyotis (lamps in processions), and holding special pujas (worship) in cities and towns. Highly politicised sadhus and upper-caste cadres of the Sangh Parivar constituted the most committed participants in the movement. Very soon, it also began to gather the support of the low and middle-caste Hindus. For them, the movement’s main attraction was that it sought to provide a pan-Indian or pan-Hindu and a homogenous, respectable and 'Sanskritised' identity to them, as distinct from the subaltern, marginal and oppressive reality of their (typically rural or semi-urban) existence.

In 1983, the VHP became the central figure in the Sangh family with its ‘sacrifice for unanimity.’ It launched three processions throughout India with the ‘Sacred Water’ from the river Ganges. It also launched another programme named Ram Puja. It was a ceremony in which the bricks (shila), inscribed with the words ‘Shri Ram’ were consecrated locally and, then, collected and taken them to Ayodhya in special chariots for building the proposed Ram temple. There was another organisation which was in the forefront of the Ayodhya agitation, Bajrang Dal (BD), the militant youth wing of the VHP. The name of the Bajrang Dal invoked the imagery of the army of monkey warriors in the epic Ramayana. This organization was primarily seen as an instrument of other organisations.

Yet another opportunity for the BJP-RSS-VHP-BD combine to make further political leverage occurred during 1989-90 when the National Front government decided to implement the recommendations of the Mandal Commission. The BJP formally supported the Mandal recommendations at
the national level and undermined it locally, especially in places where it relied on upper caste support. Advani’s Rath Yatra from Somnath to Ayodhya effected a sea change in the political scene. BJP itself admitted that “Mandal had divided the people, Ayodhya united the people.” The success of the Sangh combine was its strategic approach to mobilise the pluralistic Hindu folk towards a particular end, the ‘re-construction’ of the Ram temple Ayodhya.

However, Advani’s Rath Yatra was accompanied by massive bloodshed, and several communal riots broke out throughout India. The long years of communal mobilisation through more than 84 organisations controlled by the RSS finally culminated in the destruction of the Babri Masjid on 6 December 1992. The provocations for the demolition were outlined by the BJP: The general and growing “Hindu resentment against pseudo-secularism” and “minority appeasement,” the allergy of most political parties to Hinduism and the consequent “loss of national identity,” the political effect implicit in the Babri structure which is an “invader’s victory monument,” etc. The Liberhan Commission, which enquired in to the whole episode came to the conclusion that “the mobilisation of the Karsevaks and their convergence to Ayodhya and Faizabad was neither spontaneous nor voluntary. It was well-orchestrated and planned.”

The demolition of the Masjid and the accompanying communal violence helped the BJP to securitise the whole issue, thereby polarising the population into groups. The party very skilfully utilised the issue for electoral gains. From 1989 onwards, the BJP had made considerable progress in terms of the number of seats that it won in various elections as well as the percentage of votes that they secured. Meanwhile, the demolition of the Babri Masjid had invited widespread criticisms against the BJP and its support organisations from all over the world. The BJP was, therefore, in a defensive posture for some time. Yet, the increase in the voting percentage of the BJP was so amazing. It had risen from 7.7 per cent in 1984, 11.3 per cent in 1989, 20 per cent in 1991, 20.2 per cent in 1996 to 25.4 per cent in 1998. In the 1999 Lok Sabha elections the BJP had secured 298 seats and became the ruling party at the centre with a clear-cut majority in parliament. Apparently, the common factor in the increase in the popularity of the Jana Sangh and the BJP was their indebtedness to Hindutva and cultural nationalism. L.K. Advani, later, acknowledged that
the “BJP’s subsequent trajectory of meteoric growth was due to the Ayodhya movement.” He also admitted that the movement had changed his “profile in Indian politics.”

The ascendency of the BJP as the ruling party of India during 1998-2004 represented the revival of Hindutva. Communal sentiments continued to echo in the writings and campaigns of the BJP, which tended to see Hindutva as a unifying force that would create a national identity and ensure social cohesion for India. A manifestation of this ideological prejudice in the nation-building process could be seen in the Election Manifesto of BJP in 1996. There were several instances in which the BJP-VHP-RSS combine had indulged in the constructions of ‘self’ and ‘other’ on the basis of religious identity. The VHP and other Sangh leaders consistently called for "a fight for the preservation of a civilization, for Indianess, for national consciousness” and they even suspected alleged “treachery on the part of the Muslims against India” because the former "rooted for Pakistan during the two Indo-Pakistan wars.” The BJP claimed that its nationalism has been based on "one nation, one people, one culture." Thus the concept of Hindu Rashtra becomes virtually essential to Hinduism as the dominant religion in India. Muslims have been constructed as "invaders and foreign transplants.” The Sangh openly said: “Muslims, led by the Islamic clergy and Islamic society have innate unwillingness to change, did not notice the scars that Hindus felt from the Indian past. It is admirable that Hindus never took advantage of the debt Muslims owed Hindus for their tolerance and non-vengefulness.”

While Hindutva sought to carve out a cultural space during this period, the BJP as a ruling party began to face a serious dilemma in the realm of economy. Initially, its economic policy was caught between two contradictory tendencies: ‘pragmatism and ideological purity.’ The party later on talked about ‘calibrated globalisation.’ It suggested that although internal liberalisation would continue, the State would intervene to protect Indian industry from foreign competition and regulate external influence in the economy. The notion of Swadeshi was again deployed to appeal to intra-party elements and find an electoral space in response to the liberalising agenda of the opposition. However, after assuming office, the BJP leadership switched positions to appeal to the middle class, which embraced globalisation.
The BJP-led NDA government’s decision to test nuclear weapons in May 1998 strengthened the hands of the reform faction. The nuclear explosions were greeted with euphoria within the Sangh Parivar for having displayed Indian power and assured its status in the world. The RSS, VHP and other organisations celebrated the Pokhran-II and unleashed a nationwide campaign to legitimise nuclear weapons to meet the threat from Pakistan, the traditional rival of India. This was given a hyper realist dimension by deploying the discourse of security along cultural lines. This gave the pragmatists within the BJP considerable leverage to proceed with neoliberal reforms. The VHP projected the nuclear weapons as a “symbol of militarised Hindu revivalism” and celebrated the blasts with the cry of Jai Shri Ram. The BJP’s nationalist agenda constructed an internal Othering vis-a-vis Islam/Pakistan, thereby justifying India’s nuclearisation. The VHP leader Ashok Singal said: “Hindu Sadhus and religious leaders, in a bid to 'immortalise' the recent nuclear tests at Pokhran, are planning to set up a shakti peeth (seat of divine power) near the blasts' site.” "India intends to be powerful in the interest of world peace, in keeping with the preachings of Lord Buddha," he quipped, adding that there could be no peace without power. "Look at the Hindu deities, they all bear weapons in their hands," Singal remarked. Other Sangh leaders said that “this singular historic feat has aroused the dormant self-respect of the nation.” The ‘consensus’ behind the BJP’s dangerous nuclear adventure was obviously an attempted consensus behind Hindutva. The Security adventurism had in fact satisfied the hard-core elements in the Sangh.

NDA government’s education policy also sought to legitimise the cultural logic of Hindutva. There were allegations of saffronisation of education designed to promote bigotry and religious fanaticism in the name of inculcating knowledge of culture in the young generation. Even school children were indoctrinated in religious intolerance, the inferiority of non-Hindus, and the collective blame of Muslims and Christians for wrongs against Hindus at various points in Indian history, as interpreted by Hindu nationalists. In the text books the West and its culture were projected as “enemies of Hindu culture.” Religions such as Islam and Christianity were depicted as “alien to India,” as they were the religions of foreign invaders—the Mughals and the British. The historical reconstruction of “Muslim and Christian atrocities” and their projection onto the present as
a ‘threat’ to the integrity and security of India were powerful weapons in legitimising the violence against Christians and Muslims, later on.

In 2002 the state of Gujarat experienced a traumatising episode of communal violence in which the Muslims were aggressively targeted. Gujarat was even called “Hindutva Laboratory.” In February-March 2002, hundreds of people—mostly Muslims—were killed in Gujarat, apparently aided and abetted by the BJP-ruled state government headed by Narendra Modi. Intermittent violence against Muslims continued in the months that followed. In the aftermath, thousands of people were rendered homeless and internally displaced. Numerous inquiries and commissions—such as the National Human Rights Commission of India—held that Narendra Modi, as the Chief Minister of the state, had complete command over the police and other law enforcement machinery during the period. They all condemned the role of the government in providing leadership and material support in the politically motivated attacks on minorities in Gujarat. National Human Rights Commission pointed out that “there was a comprehensive failure on the part of the State Government to control the persistent violation of the rights to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the people of the State.” Chief Minister Narendra Modi and other leaders belonging to the Hindu Right organizations alleged that the Godhra tragedy had been a pre-planned Muslim conspiracy to attack Hindus, subvert the state, and damage the economy. In addition, Modi further sought to stoke religious passions of the majority Hindu community by taking the decision to bring the charred remains of the victims of the tragedy to Ahmedabad in a public ceremony intended to arouse passions.

Advani, however, defended the role of Narendra Modi in the whole episode saying that “Gujarat made spectacular progress” under him. He said that “people of all castes and communities in Gujarat have benefitted” from his “commitment to security, development and clean administration.” He went a step further and said that “Modi’s re-election highlighted several lessons which were relevant not only for Gujarat but for the whole country. Thus, the anti-Muslim violence in Gujarat in 2002 was cloaked by the Hindutva organisations as ‘inevitable’ and ‘understandable’ acts to secure the Hindu ‘Self.’ The discourse of security offered the Hindu Right organisations a tool to legitimize violence as
nonviolence, killers as defenders, rape as understandable lust, and death as non-death.

The NDA government continued to exploit the rhetoric surrounding the global ‘war against terrorism’ in order to target religious minorities and political opponents. Most notably, the long debated anti-terrorism legislation, the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA), was pushed through parliament in March 2002. This logic of the discourse of security dictated that the security of the ‘Self’ facilitated and even demanded the use of policing and violence against the ‘Other.’ This was exemplified in the case of Hindutva’s politics of representation, which legitimised anti-Muslim/anti-Pakistan stance in the name of ‘securing’ the Hindu body politic at various levels. Here ‘the Muslim’ was seen as a ‘threat’ to national, state and international security. These representations of ‘the Muslim’ as a danger to the ‘security’ of the Hindu body politic facilitated the politics of hate campaign against the Muslims in India (and inevitably against Pakistan too). While the Gujarat carnage was an example of this campaign of Hindutva in the realm of domestic politics, Pokhran-II (1998) and Kargil War (1999) represented two other major instances in the realm of national security/defence whereby representations did play a major role in legitimising the logic of cultural nationalism.

The Kargil war in May-July 1999 provided a huge boost to the campaign of Hindutva forces, and thereby the electoral future of the BJP. The war generated a “unifying response of binding a nation together as never before” claimed by the NDA government. The public saw for themselves that Indian military personnel assigned to winkle out the infiltrators entrenched in commanding heights with clear lines of fire performed heroically. It was also the first experience of war as spectacle and war as infotainment. Even media endowed militarism with a nobility of purpose and defined nationalism as patriotic flag waving, dangerously intolerant and demonising of the ‘other’- in this case, all Pakistanis. Pakistan and the people of Pakistan became the enemy, fused in the media shaped popular imagination with rogue states and Talibanised terrorists. Following the outbreak of the war, the BJP and other Sangh organisations unleashed a violent campaign across the nation. Political leaders, strategic analysts and sections of the media in India called for a more aggressive war and the opening of new fronts. There were also calls in India for the bombardment
of Pakistani supply routes to Kargil. The BJP leaders argued that unilateral ceasefires against militants and ‘Pakistani mercenaries’ would be signs of weakness and softness before ‘a duplicitous adversary’ and difficult for (the BJP) cadre to swallow.

Having won the Kargil war, the NDA predictably played heavily on its national security credentials during the 1999 general elections. Its 1999 manifesto expounded the war leadership shown by the caretaker administration. The manifesto also was very specific in noting the high ratio of national security pledges made in 1998 and their achievements in just thirteen months of government, including exercising the nuclear option, successfully testing a second-generation Agni ballistic missile, increasing the defence budget, and creating a NSC to advise the government on all matters of national security. In October 1999, the NDA headed by BJP came back to power which won a comfortable majority in the 13th Lok Sabha. The December 2001 terrorist attacks on the Indian Parliament further helped the Sangh organisations to launch aggressive campaigns. The Sangh cadres felt that their past appeals to the Prime Minister not to negotiate with Pakistan had been vindicated with “yet another betrayal.” Calls for a declaration of war on Pakistan drawing parallels with America’s war on the Taliban after 9/11 were made regularly from the RSS and other Sangh organisations.

In sum, the Hindutva mobilisation during the last three decades resulted in aggressive campaigns and violent incidences—from the demolition of the Babri Masjid to Gujarat carnage, from Pokhran nuclear explosions to Kargil war. The Hindu Right assertions were fuelled by the structural changes in the Indian State and civil society since the 1980s. The BJP’s mobilisational tactics leading to its capture of power in the 1990s can be explained in terms of its strategic intervention following the social dislocations caused by the economic liberalisation and neoliberal policies.