

The Violence of Security: Hindu Nationalism and the Politics of Representing ‘the Muslim’ as a Danger

DIBYESH ANAND

Department of Economics and International Development, University of Bath, UK

ABSTRACT *This paper conceptualizes security as a discourse of violence that masks violence in the name of counter-violence, killing in the name of protection. As the case of Hindutva in India illustrates, violence against minorities is normalized in the name of personal, communal, national and even international security. The will to secure the Self has as its corollary the will to make insecure the Other, the desire to control and use violence. Using the example of anti-Muslim violence in Gujarat in 2002, the paper examines some of the ways in which a stereotypical image of Muslim men (the figure of ‘the Muslim’) is seen as constituting the danger against which the Hindu body politic needs to be secured. The violence against minority Muslims is facilitated and justified in the name of achieving security for the Hindu Self at individual, community, national as well as international levels.*

KEY WORDS: Security, Hindu Right, representation, violence, India, masculinity

Introduction

This paper is a journey into the recent spectacle of collective communal violence in India, its (extra)ordinariness and the gestures that seek to translate the corporeality of violence into abstraction. These enabling gestures can be understood as a part of a discourse of security. It is the logic of this discourse of security that enables extreme violence to be normalized, systematized and institutionalized. The politics of hate, of which the Hindu Right (Hindu nationalists; also called *Hindutva*) in India is a good example,¹ feeds upon, as well as shapes, local societies’ conceptions of security and insecurity. The global environment, with its own dynamic politics of representation of dangers, has a direct impact on the local societies’ conceptions. A recent example of the so-called ‘Hindu–Muslim’ communal riots in India is from Gujarat (one of the country’s federal states) in 2002,² where more than 2000 people (mostly Muslims) were killed in the space of a couple of months.

Correspondence Address: Dibyesh Anand, Department of Economics and International Development, 3 East, University of Bath, Bath BA2 7AY, UK. Email: D.Anand@bath.ac.uk

The paper is divided into four sections. It starts with an outline of the political context of communal violence in India and then moves on to conceptualize security as a productive discourse—one that produces ‘dangers’ to security as well as the object to be secured. The third section discusses the centrality of particular representations of threatening Muslim masculinity (the figure of ‘the Muslim’) in *Hindutva* discourse. ‘The Muslim’ is seen as constituting the danger against which the Hindu body politic needs to be secured. This legitimizes the use of violence against Muslims in the name of securing the Hindu Self. The last section of the article visits Gujarat 2002 (a shorthand I use for the anti-Muslim violence that took place there in 2002) as the most (in)famous site that can best be made sense of within the (meta)discourse of security. The paper concludes by re-emphasizing that the violence of the kind witnessed in Gujarat 2002 is made possible, probable and even inevitable by the logic of violence and abstraction that is part of the discourse of security. The main argument of this paper is that the violence against minority Muslims is facilitated and justified in the name of achieving security for the Hindu Self at individual, community, national as well as international levels.

The Hindu Right in India

Communal violence in India should be understood within the larger context of the struggle and debate over the secularism of the postcolonial Indian state (for perspectives on secularism in India, see Bhargava, 1998). This has become especially significant since the 1990s, the decade that saw the end of Indian National Congress’s dominance and the rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a Hindu nationalist party. The history of Hindu nationalism in India is as long as that of the mainstream nationalism represented mainly by the Congress (see Jaffrelot, 1999; Misra, 2004; Zavos, 2000). The attitude of many Congress leaders and activists towards majoritarian communalism (of which Hindu nationalism is an articulation) and even communal violence has been ambiguous. Yet BJP and its *Hindutva* ideology are different and distinct from the dominant ideals of the Indian state as secular. Their rhetoric of democracy, rights and nation is based on a simplistic majoritarian principle and runs along the following lines: since Hindus are the majority, it is ‘natural’ and ‘democratic’ that their ‘rights’ should be promoted by the Indian state which hitherto has been ‘pseudo-secular’ because of its appeasement of minorities!

The *Hindutva* movement therefore is a ‘conservative revolution’, combining paternalist and xenophobic discourses with democratic and universalist ones on rights and entitlements (Hansen, 1999, p. 4). *Hindutva* is targeted at transforming the Indian state and controlling the Muslim and Christian minorities. At the same time, the primary goal is to transform the Hindus, to “awaken the Hindu nation” (see Chitkara, 2003; Hingle, 1999; Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, 2003). There is a schizophrenic shuttling between the idea of a pre-existing monolithic Hindu nation and a lamentation that most members of this supposed nation do not fit *Hindutva*’s template of an ideal citizen of the Hindu nation. A *Hindutva* website’s call illustrates this well: “No Hindu politics is possible unless there is Hindu-Awakening. And that Hindu-Awakening is not yet in sight” (Anon, n.d.). *Hindutva* is self-recognized as being as much about representing the Hindu nation

as it is about fabricating one. This has been the case throughout the 20th century (see Noorani, 2002).

What is different at the start of the 21st century is the respectability and influence gained by the exponents of *Hindutva* through participation in the government at the federal level as well as in various states (such as Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh), allowing them to gain access to the resources of the state. For instance, leaders who were seen as firebrand ideologues during the 1990s can become members of the government. Non-*Hindutva* politicians can compete over who is a more authentic Hindu. School children can be taught a history where militant Hinduism is normalized and minority religions such as Islam (and as a corollary, Indian Muslims) are alienated. Government employees can join *Hindutva* organizations and the prime minister can pronounce, in a cavalier manner, that the Muslims are a source of 'problems' everywhere in the world (as Atal Behari Vajpayee did in 2002; see Anon, 2002a). Thus, there has been a visible shift to the right in Indian politics and the ascendancy of *Hindutva* forces is its clearest manifestation.³ However, it is worth noting that the ascendancy of the *Hindutva* is contested and uneven throughout the country, affected by various local, political and social factors.

Communal violence in India remains a debated subject among actors including politicians, activists and scholars (for various intellectual positions see Basu *et al.*, 1993; Brass, 2003; Brass and Vanaik, 2002; Das, 1990; Hansen, 1999; Huntington, 1993; Jaffrelot, 1999; Kakar, 1996; Nandy, 1988; Pandey, 1990; Sarkar, S., 2002; Varshney, 2002). *Hindutva* shares the neo-Orientalist belief in the primordial naturalness of Hindu-Muslim violence in India (a 'historic clash' as most Western media tend to report). I reject this and argue that 'riots' (spectacular incidents of intercommunal collective violence) are not a direct product of communalism (where communities are seen as bounded, historical and given). Instead, I adopt a social constructionist position that sees 'communal' riots as being exercises in the construction of communities through mobilization (of the 'Self'), purification (erasure of commonalities) and definition (through violence of what is the Self and what is the Other). Communalism is not merely a reflection of a pre-existing community but the will to create a bounded community (see Pandey, 1990). Communalism as an ideology operates at the level of the individual as well as the collective—the identity and interests of individuals are seen as coinciding with that of the collective, the community. In this sense, it is deterministic. For instance, in the case of Hindu-Muslim communalism, every individual is reduced to only a Hindu or only a Muslim—no other identities matter. As several testimonies after riots have shown, identification with community becomes stronger since one suffers on account of being a member of that community. Patwardhan in his film *Father, Son and Holy War* (1994) finds that the Muslim women who were identifying their common interests with Hindu women before the 1993 riots in Mumbai felt that, during violence, it was their 'Muslimness' that marked them and their being a 'woman' became irrelevant.

The reduction of individuals to only one form of identity is generally more common in representations of the minorities by the majoritarian discourses. The idea being that, while 'we' the majority can experiment with identities, 'they' the minorities are over-determined by what marks them as a minority. While the Hindus have multiple layers of identity, every aspect of a Muslim is supposed to be

determined by her/his Muslimness. The determinism of communal discourses dehumanizes the Other and presents it as a danger to the security of the Self.

The Productive Discourse of Security

Security is a central concept in the theory and praxis not only of international relations but of local, inter-local and trans-local relations. In positivist literature on security it is assumed to possess an ontological and epistemological certainty where the sources of insecurity as well as the referent of security are givens. In line with the literature of critical international relations (see Campbell, 1998; Krause and Williams, 1997; Lipschutz, 1995; Weldes *et al.*, 1999), I conceptualize security as a productive discourse that produces insecurities to be operated upon, as well as defines the identity of the object to be secured. This challenges the dominant conceptual grammar of security that treats insecurities as unavoidable facts, while focusing attention on the acquisition of security by given entities. It foregrounds the processes through which something or someone (the Other) is discursively produced as a source of insecurity against which the Self needs to be secured. Thus, discourses of insecurity are about ‘representations of danger’ (Campbell, 1998; Dillon, 1996). Insecurities, in this view, are social constructions rather than givens—threats do not just exist out there, but have to be created. All insecurities are culturally produced in the sense that they are produced in and out of “the context within which people give meanings to their actions and experiences and make sense of their lives” (Tomlinson, in Weldes *et al.*, 1999, p. 1). Insecurities and the objects that suffer from insecurities are mutually constituted. That is, in contrast to the received view, which treats objects of security and insecurity themselves as pre-given and natural and as separate things, we treat them as mutually constituted cultural and social constructions and thus products of processes of identity construction of Self–Other. The argument that security is about representations of danger and social construction of the Self and the Other does not imply that there are no ‘real’ effects. What it means is that there is nothing inherent in any act or being or object that makes it a source of insecurity and danger.

Security is 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, depersonalization 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 (cf. Foucault, 1977; 1988). 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 can be illustrated through the case of *Hindutva*’s politics of representation, which legitimizes anti-Muslim violence in the name of securing the Hindu body politic at various levels. ‘The Muslim’, a stereotype of Muslim males, is posed as a danger to the body of Hindu women and through her to the purity of the Hindu nation. At the same time it is 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 facilitate the politics of hate against the Muslims in India.

Representing 'the Muslim' as a Danger

'The Muslim' as an object of insecurity in the *Hindutva* discourse inhabits the levels of the personal, local, national and international. 'The Muslim' is discursively constructed as a site of fear, fantasy, distrust, anger, envy and hatred, thus generating desires of emulation, abjection and/or extermination. My argument is that these desires are not confined to the subscribers to *Hindutva* but are prevalent in the wider society among those describing themselves as Hindu. The *Hindutva* movement is not an inevitable result of these prejudicial desires but scavenges upon them and in turn fuels and fossilizes them. The desire of emulation, abjection, and extermination is inextricably linked to certain threatening representations of 'the Muslim'. The politics of *Hindutva* is one where the construction of a desired masculinity (ideal Hindu male, virile yet with controlled sexuality) requires the destruction of competing masculinities and men. In the words of V. D. Savarkar, one of the 'founding fathers' of *Hindutva*, the aim of Hindu nationalism is to recuperate manliness and "Hinduize all politics and militarize hindudom" (in Pandey, 1993, p. 263).

Hindutva's politics of representation is one replete with myths and stereotypes. Let me provide you with some snapshots.⁴ *Hindutva* discourses construct a myth of the Hindu self as virtuous, civilized, peaceful, accommodating, enlightened, clean and tolerant, as opposed to 'the Muslim' Other, which is morally corrupt, barbaric, violent, rigid, backward, dirty and fanatic. The myth borrows from various stereotypes and motifs that are prevalent in India and elsewhere, including the West. The Prophet's sex life, licentious Arabs buying young girls and boys, men with four wives, Muslim prostitutes, the lack of democracy in the Muslim world—all these motifs are mobilized to 'confirm' the immorality and corruption of Muslims. *Halal* meat, circumcision, the history of the spread of Islam through sword and rape, forms of punishment in the Arab world, Islamic terrorism—these images are deployed to provide a proof of the supposed barbaric and violent character of Islam and Muslims.

This is encapsulated by Savarkar's statement: "where religion is goaded on by rapine and rapine serves as a hand-maid to religion, the propelling force that is generated by these together is only equalled by the profundity of human misery and devastation they leave behind them in their march" (Savarkar, 1999, p. 26). Refusal to modernize, the veil, *sharia* law, the low status of women—these stereotypes characterize the Muslims as rigid and backward. Muslims supposedly have a penchant for living in small houses in ghettos and walled cities, which goes with 'the Muslim's' predilection for filth and dirt. As Kakar (1996, p. 107) in his analysis of stereotypes about Muslims points out, "the image of Muslim animality is composed of the perceived ferocity, rampant sexuality, and demand for instant gratification of the male, and a dirtiness which is less a matter of bodily cleanliness and more of an inner pollution as a consequence of the consumption of forbidden, tabooed foods".

The 'fanaticism' of Muslims is a motif that needs no elaboration since it is deployed by many states and groups around the world in contemporary times. This 'fanaticism' (of which Al-Qaida is the most recent incarnation) is supposed to flow out of Islam (the Prophet's personal character, the Quran's rigid instructions and the spread of Islam through violence). At the same time it is claimed to be a result of the

physical and moral character of Muslims. Empirical studies (see Brass, 2003; Datta, 1993; Jayawardena and De Alwis, 1998; Kakar, 1996; Ludden, 1996b; Pandey, 1993; Sarkar and Butalia 1995), anecdotal evidence and personal experience show that these myths are not confined to *Hindutva* forces but are increasingly becoming part of a 'common sense' among other Hindus (especially the upper caste) too. These images borrow heavily from the orientalist and imperialist writings of the West (see Kabbani, 1986; Lewis, 1996; Said, 1978). In recent times *Hindutva* proponents, especially in cyberspace, have been scavenging voraciously from racist writings about Islam and the 'Muslim mind' coming out of the West (see note 4). The so-called international 'war on terror' has only reinforced this association of Islam with terrorism. The most common image of the Muslim among *Hindutva* proponents today is of a 'terrorist'. As the writings of such proponents show, Muslims and terrorism are seen as inseparable. For instance, Chitkara laments that "Common Hindu is surprised why riots take place when Muslims have already been given a separate home-land in Pakistan? Terrorism shows that their appetite has not been quenched" (2003, pp. 38, xi–xii). This conflation serves to criminalize large sections of Muslim males. The supposed 'terrorism' of Muslims is seen as a justification to discriminate against them and to marginalise them from 'sensitive' government posts (see Khalidi, 2003).

While the 'The Muslim terrorist' is constructed as a grave threat to the national security of India today, in the long term what is seen as even more dangerous to the existence of the Hindu nation is the spectre of 'overpopulating Muslims'. Every census in India since the late 19th century has been followed by a hue and cry about the relative strength of Hindus *vis-à-vis* Muslims. The idea of demographic decline has been entrenched in *Hindutva* since the early 20th century. This was encapsulated by U. N. Mukherji's analysis of Hindus as a dying race in 1909—"they count their gains, we calculate our losses" (in Elst, 1997). More recently, after the alarmist (and erroneous) report on the 2001 census, the debate resumed about how Muslims are breeding like rabbits and are going to overtake Hindus (see Dayal, 2004; Rajalakshmi, 2004). There are various spectres—obliteration of the Hindu nation (in a few hundred years); defeat of the Hindus in the numbers game (in a few decades); another Pakistan, as in a few years time Muslims will constitute 30% of the population (as was the case during 1947), bolstering their claim for partition. Aahrya Dharmendra, a Hindu religious leader, proclaimed in a public meeting in 2003: "Muslims breed like rabbits and their population would soon overtake that of the Hindus" (Gandhi, 2003). The scientific arguments against unduly alarmist readings of demographic figures, which expose lies about the alarmism or rationalize differential population growth among religious groups (see Datta, 1993) do not do away with the common 'knowledge'/myth of overpopulating Muslims. This becomes clear when one participates in conversations with many Hindus in middle class drawing rooms, university cafes, tea stalls, and other public and private gatherings.

The 'overpopulating Muslim' is linked not only to religion but also to the virility of Muslim men (and the over-fertility of Muslim women). This imagined virility is used to construct an image of Muslim masculinity that is marked by an uncontrolled and uncontrollable lust and is hence a danger to Hindu women. The handsome Muslim who is a master of the art of seduction, the lecherous Muslim and the Muslim rapist—all these images play upon each other as a danger for 'innocent'

Hindu females (see Gupta, 2001). This then encourages the mobilization of Hindu women for *Hindutva* in the name of self-defence and protection of the body of Hindu women and the Hindu nation.⁵ But more crucially, it exhorts Hindu men to ‘protect’ their innocent Hindu mothers, sisters and daughters. This implies defending Hindu women from ‘the Muslim’ who is lecherous and a potential rapist. It also entails protecting Hindu women from the seduction of Muslim men by policing interactions between Hindu women and Muslim men, casting any relationship based on this interaction as an indicator of sly Muslim men polluting, converting and oppressing Hindu women. Any agency of the Hindu woman in such relationships is denied. The close connection between demonizing the Muslim and policing (Hindu) women’s sexuality is well illustrated in debates during the early 20th century when Hindu widow remarriage was promoted as necessary to ‘control’ the passion of Hindu widows, who would otherwise become prey to the designs of Muslim men (see Gupta, 2001).

Thus a militant aggressive masculinity is called for in the name of defence and security of the Self (women, family, community, religion, nation, state). The construction of ‘the Hindu’ draws its legitimacy from the representation of ‘the Muslim’ as a danger to the Hindu body and in turn legitimizes the use of ‘any means’ to protect and take revenge. The Hindu male is expected to protect Hindu women and, in the process, if required, is justified in castrating Muslim men and raping Muslim women. This violence is masked as self-defence. As Bacchetta points out, “the counterpart to the chaste Hindu male is the Muslim male polygamist or rapist, and to the chaste motherly Hindu woman is the Muslim woman as prostitute or potential wife” (2004, p. 101).

Thus ‘the Muslim’ as a gendered figure is constructed to mobilize the Hindu male and female and awaken the Hindu nation. The fact that *Hindutva* forces are not dominant politically in India does not reduce the danger of such vicious representations of the Muslim fermenting collective anti-Muslim violence. As I pointed out earlier, what is more disturbing is that these representations scavenge upon, and in turn shape and fossilize, prejudicial desires that are common in the popular imaginary among many Hindus in India and abroad. Not enough attention has been paid to the “highly selective and manipulative process by which myths and stereotypes about the marauding and libidinous Muslim, the innocent and motherlike Hindu woman, the tolerant Hindu man, have entered and entrenched themselves in public memory and consciousness” (Butalia, 1995, p. 79). Hindu fanaticism is seen as a contradiction in terms by some Hindus who, while politically shunning the Hindu Right, buy into the myth of Hinduism as marked overwhelmingly by tolerance. Although Hindu chauvinism is widespread, it is not hegemonic, as there are many Hindus who do not subscribe to it. Rejecting the charge of Hindu communalism, the apologists of *Hindutva* will present communal conflicts as “an unintended by-product of Hindu national self-assertion that results from adverse reactions from minority communities and from the Indian state” (Ludden, 1996a, p. 16). In most communal riots in contemporary India Muslims are overwhelmingly victimized in terms of loss of life, dignity and livelihood. Yet this screaming fact is silenced by blaming the victims—the loss is sad, but ‘they’ (Muslims) asked for it! Why did they start the riot, why do they support Pakistan, why are they terrorists and criminals, why do they create problems and strife

everywhere in the world, why cannot they be like us? These questions rid many Hindus of their guilty conscience and leave intact the self-image of the enlightened, tolerant Hindu. Anti-Muslim riots in Gujarat in 2002 illustrate well this ‘blame the victim’ ideology and the role the imagining of ‘the Muslim’ as a danger to the security of Hindu body plays in making sense of this kind of violence.

Visiting a Site of Communal Violence: Gujarat 2002

The anti-Muslim violence in Gujarat in 2002 was masked by the *Hindutva* forces as ‘inevitable’ and ‘understandable’ acts to secure the Hindu Self. The (meta)discourse of security offered the forces of *Hindutva* a tool to legitimize violence as non-violence, killers as defenders, rape as understandable lust, and death as non-death. I shall not go into details of the violence and explanations of it here (see Anon, 2002b; Independent Fact Finding Mission, 2002; Anon, 2003; Mander, 2002; IJ, 2003; Varadarajan, 2002). What I propose is one of the ways in which we can make sense of the complicity of a significant number of Hindus in this violence, borrowing the analysis from various reports mentioned above.

During February 2002 the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), one of the constituents of the *Sangh Parivar* (see note 1), was carrying on with its agitation over the building of a temple in Ayodhya.⁶ After some altercation, one coach of the Sabarmati Express, a train returning from Ayodhya and carrying many Hindu *kar sevaks* (activists), was burnt at Godhra station in Gujarat on 26 February, killing 58 people. What followed for the next couple of months was massive communal violence in which most of the victims were Muslims. Although *Hindutva* forces painted this anti-Muslim violence, in which around 2000 were killed, as a reaction to Godhra, documented evidence points to four crucial features of this violence which challenge the ‘riots-as-post-Godhra-reaction’ thesis. First, there was active state complicity—through police inaction (see Human Rights Watch, 2002); frequent police participation in anti-Muslim violence; hate speeches by members of the state government and the BJP; active participation of local and state leaders in fomenting violence; and availability of lists of Muslim establishments (data privy to the government) to the Hindu mobs. Second, there was conscious and well orchestrated pre-planning for communal violence through the activities of various *Hindutva* organizations. Third, organizations such as VHP used the train incident as an excuse to ‘teach Muslims a lesson’ through vicious use of brutality. Fourth, the ruling party, the BJP, used this to buttress its political position—a strategy that succeeded, with the party coming to power with a greater majority in a snap election. After a few months the violence subsided but the hatred and its legacy remain as the struggle to rebuild lives and secure justice continues.

What makes the spectacle of anti-Muslim violence in Gujarat 2002 extraordinary is its banality and its ‘participative’ nature. Class, gender, age, or caste were no barrier either for the willing participants or for the unwilling victims. It is not sufficient to explain this phenomenon in instrumental terms alone. While interests did play an important role (for instance, looting, grabbing of land, occupying houses, settling scores), these were not the sole determining factor. For the majority who did not benefit in instrumental terms but still accepted *Hindutva* versions of the violence and voted with their feet by re-electing the BJP in Assembly polls, it was the

imagined subjectivity of the victims (dangerous, fanatic, violent, and hence to be blamed for provoking Hindus) that was the important factor. It is these dehumanized representations of the Other as a danger that offer us a good handle with which to understand the normalization of abnormal violence and the construction of a secure Hindu identity through the humiliation and extermination of other identities.

The approving statements of a Hindu man (a non-participant, middle class professional man), quoted by Cohn (2003), reflect a sentiment that is widespread (both in the real and the virtual world; see note 4):

Muslim boys, even married ones, try to have friendships with Hindu girls. I tell you, most Muslim guys are very good looking, and Hindu girls are very innocent—once they give you their heart, it's easily broken . . . I personally feel they're spoiling the lives of these Hindu girls. Our blood gets hot. We can't stand them . . . It's time that the Hindus fight violence with violence.

The need to secure the Hindu female body against the danger of 'the Muslim' was therefore seen as one of the rationales for violence against Muslims (for a detailed treatment, see IJJ, 2003). Gujarat 2002 was a lesson in masculinization, showing, through the defeat and humiliation of Muslim men, who the 'real men' were. The slogan '*Jis Hinduon ka khoon na khola, woh Hindu nahin, woh hijra hain*' (Those Hindus whose blood does not boil, are not Hindus, they are eunuchs), chanted by the student wing of BJP at a premier university in Delhi during a post-Godhra procession (see Sarkar, T., 2002), illustrates this obsession with manhood. Various forms of display of violent sexuality were seen, emphasizing Hindu manhood as the violent protector of Hindus and revealing the impotency of 'the Muslim'. The reaction of Pravin Togadia, a leader of the VHP, in the aftermath of Godhra is significant: "Hindu Society will avenge the Godhra killings. Muslims should accept the fact that Hindus are not wearing bangles. We will respond vigorously to all such incidents" (An Independent Fact Finding Mission, 2002). Pamphlets exhorting Hindu men not to feel guilty about raping Muslim women; regional Gujarati newspapers sensationalizing false stories about Hindu girls being raped; *Hindutva* ideologues hammering on about the historic rape of Hindu women and nation at the hands of Muslims; the distribution of bangles (an ornamental marker of femininity) to Hindu men who did not participate; the punishment (through killing, boycott and hate campaigns) of Hindu men and women who were seen as helping Muslims—all these show that the macabre display of 'tolerance', 'passion' and 'reaction' (these were the self-serving terms used by various proponents of *Hindutva* to characterize the anti-Muslim violence) was anything but spontaneous (for detailed reports, see 'Genocide Gujarat', 2002). They show the construction of a particular form of masculinity through acts of violence, a masculinity that declares itself the protector of the security of Hindu bodies as well as of the Hindu body politic.

The majority of the people in the affected areas of Gujarat did not participate directly in the violence. However, there was no strong protest against the violence. Many non-governmental organizations and citizens groups did not speak out in strong terms condemning the violence. 'All sides should calm down' is seen as implying that no one is responsible. The silent majority's inaction in Gujarat in 2002

was an action loaded in favour of those perpetrating anti-Muslim violence. The BJP state leadership, which was clearly identified as complicit with the Gujarat 2002 killing machinery, was confident of gaining electorally after the riot and the fact that this confidence paid off is an indictment of the silent majority. The electoral victory in the State Assembly elections of December 2002—the best performance ever by BJP on its own in any state in India—challenged most factors that are seen as important in India’s electoral democracy (e.g. anti-incumbency factor, lack of development and strength of the opposition) and showed that violence against Muslims had paid off. This cannot be explained by the instrumental interests of the Hindu majority alone but by the lack of compassion for the Muslim victims. There was a curious reversal of responsibility as many Hindus blamed Muslims for the violence and saw themselves as the victims whose security was threatened by ‘the Muslim’.

Conclusion: Does Security Kill?

This paper answers in the affirmative. Security is not a response to a pre-existing danger but is constitutive of it. And this constitution of danger and insecurity is productive of violence. Security masks violence in the name of counter-violence, killing in the name of protection. As the case of *Hindutva* in India illustrates, violence against minorities is normalized in the name of personal, communal, national and even international security. The will to secure the Self has as its corollary the will to make insecure the Other, the desire to control and use violence. An engaged scholarship that recognizes the violence of security is a step in the direction of interrogating the theory and praxis of security that underpins the violent world we live in today.

Notes

1. The Hindu Right in India is seen as subscribing to Hindu nationalism (*Hindutva*). While the main political party espousing this is the BJP, there are various other political and cultural organizations and movements, including the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), VHP, Bajrang Dal, Durga Vahini, and so on, that are together seen as belonging to the *Sangh Parivar* (the Sangh family, where the Sangh, i.e. the RSS, is seen as the parent organization).
2. India has a federal set-up and Gujarat is a state in Western India. In 2002 the ruling party in Gujarat was the BJP under the Chief Ministership of Narendra Modi. As anti-Muslim riots spread through Gujarat in the first half of 2002 the national media reported clear complicity of the Modi administration in the violence. Yet the federal government, consisting of the BJP in a coalition, ignored and downplayed the severity of the riots. After the violence had abated, with more than 2000 Muslims killed and tens of thousands of people (mostly Muslim, but quite a few Hindus too) displaced, the BJP in Gujarat was confident of gaining electorally and called for an early election for the State Assembly. In this paper I am primarily interested in why such collective communal violence against minorities pays electorally. Why would Hindus who would not otherwise vote BJP in the election, go out and vote for it even though the majority of the victims of violence were Muslims?
3. It would be simplistic to see this shift solely in terms of the rise of Hindu nationalism. The changing global environment—the emergence of the USA as the sole superpower, the dissipation of the nonaligned movement, neoliberal globalization as the dominant regime—has led to liberalization, privatization and marketization. The establishment of neoliberal orthodoxy in India has been an important part of this shift to the Right (see Ahmad, 2004).
4. The sample is distilled from anecdotal evidence, discussions with those with Hindu chauvinist leanings, academic literature on *Hindutva* and, most importantly, from pro-*Hindutva* websites, including <http://>

www.hinduunity.org/; <http://www.hindutva.org/>; <http://www.freeindia.org/>; <http://www.organiser.org/>; and <http://www.swordoftruth.com/>.

5. In this paper I do not examine two issues that are related to the questions about *Hindutva* and masculinity. One is the *Hindutva* image of women in general and Muslim women in particular. The second is the role of Hindu women in *Hindutva* organizations and during communal riots. For various perspectives, see Bacchetta (2004), Jayawardena and De Alwis (1998) and Sarkar and Butalia (1995).
6. *Hindutva* forces have been agitating over the building of a temple at the supposed birthplace of Lord Rama in Ayodhya, a town in North India. This town became infamous in 1992 when Babri Mosque (which allegedly was built by the Mughal ruler Babur in the 16th century over the site of a Hindu temple) was demolished. The demolition was followed by serious anti-Muslim riots in various parts of India. The Ram Janmabhoomi campaign to build a temple at the site of the demolished mosque has been deployed by *Hindutva* forces, especially the VHP, in an attempt to mobilize Hindus. At the start of 2002 the VHP had restarted the campaign, despite the warnings that this would incite communal hatred. For analyses of the movement, see Brass (1997), Ludden (1996b) and Pandey (1993).

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