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Toxic Leadership, Secular Identity and Politics of Hindu Rashtra

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Abstract:

Academic perspectives acknowledge the results of leadership from constructive to destructive. Destructive leadership entails negative consequences for organizations. Misuse of power in politics, corporate and religious arena has re-invigorated interest in destructive leadership. It fosters politics of division and polarization in societies. Among the scholars articulating the concept, the US academician, Art Padilla's work has referred to the Toxic Triangle model, focusing on the nexus between leaders, their susceptible followers and facilitative environment. This model views destructive leadership in its natural ecology: resulting from the interaction among leaders, followers, and the context. The Toxic Triangle model thereby tends to study polarity and split within societies as the natural consequence of destructive leadership. Within this perspective, the study applies the Toxic Triangle theoretical framework to study leadership roles in India. Relying on qualitative research methodological tools such as content analysis, the study reviews the impact of Hindutva ideology upon India's secular identity. It has argued that leader, followers and facilitative environment constitute the nexus of leadership, followers and conducive environment undermining secularism in India.

Key Words: India, Modi, destructive leadership, toxic triangle, RSS, Hindutva

INTRODUCTION

In recent times, misuse of power in politics, corporate and religious arena has reinvigorated interest in destructive leadership—a phenomenon addressed inadequately in academic and professional literature. Plato, Nietzsche, and Bernard Russell have emphasized the role of positive and constructive leadership. Contemporary literature has, however, shown little interest in leadership' abuse of authority.

Academic research work in social science has remained oblivious to the dark side of leadership, emphasizing more on leadership charisma. A variety of concepts, articulated in multidisciplinary perspectives have entailed focus on destructive leadership (Brown, et al. 2009). Toxic leadership entails generation of poisonous effects upon all those exposed to leadership's dangerous methods of assertive control in corporate and religious domains, sports and political arenas (Padilla, et al. 2007).

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The new trends have shown a consistency of approach on the negative spectrum of leadership, supplementing the concept's overall growth (Conger, 1990). In academic articulation, scholars have highlighted the dark side of personality traits or character attributes, as 'blind values in the service of fanatics' (Hogan, et al. 1990). Others have highlighted the consequences or outcomes of destructive leadership (Barbara, 2004). For example, Conger has referred to 'disastrous outcomes (Conger, 1990); while Connor et al have explained 'destructive acts' (Connor, et al. 1995). More recent literary focus has analyzed the type of destructive behavior (Aasland, et al. 2010), examining toxicity adopting a managerial or health perspective. Within the literature of psychology, Goldman's work examines toxic leadership from a mental health perspective (Hogan, et al. 1990). However, Sankowsky's description of the abuse of power refers to narcissist behavior (Sankowsky, 1995). Thus, a hybrid multidisciplinary picture has emerged on destructive leadership in recent scholarly literature.

Meanwhile, academic literature on Political Science has focused on different styles of political leadership (Shahbazi, et al. 2016). Kellerman and Padilla have referred to the portrayal of 'positive and constructive aspects' as the flip side of Political Science academic literature (Barbara, 2004), (Padilla, et al. 2007). Levels of toxic leaders may vary from mild to toxic, fueled by incompetence for leadership positions, culminating in evil practices: corruption, unethical conduct, anarchy and criminal behavior. MacGregor Burns has emphasized unethical or immoral leadership as inherent failure and disqualification of leadership (Burns, 2004). Toxic leaders may resort to hindrance, obstruction or manipulation of the due legal process. Or they may contaminate the environment; induce disbelief, terror, chaos, uncertainty, unpredictability, apprehension and menace. Table 1 (Higgs, 2009) identifies bad, destructive and/or toxic leadership literature in recent years.

The concept of toxic triangle has been aligned closely to bad, destructive, narcissistic and evil leadership, followers and environment. Among the key factors indicative of toxic leadership, scholars have identified personality traits or behavior attributes such as discontentment, meanness and wicked tendencies of putting others down, with a deep sense of incompetence and inadequacy. Barbara Kellerman has indicated seven character attributes, as qualitative distinctions of bad/toxic leadership (Barbara, 2004). Leaders who display incompetency of initiative, skill and political will in utilizing power for promotion of positive change, inadaptability and lack of acceptance of new ideas, lack of 'self-control,' callousness with a high disregard for others, corruption, justification of lying, cheating and stealing, self-interest, insular and evil leadership.

Leadership, which employs pain and suffering as an 'instrument' of power, while committing physical or psychological harm as a method of leadership control. To qualify as toxic, intent is the most significant attribute: the intent to inflict some reasonably serious and enduring harm on followers and organizations (Hepell, 2011). The deliberate intent to inflict harm to others distinguishes toxic leaders from careless or unintentional toxic leaders.

A series of characteristics remain identical to 'destructive behaviors' such as playing with other groups' basest fears. For example, violation of the rights of followers, misleading followers through lies; subverting the justice system and committing crimes; building a totalitarian/dynastic regime; playing one group against another. Fostering hatred; identifying scapegoats; promoting incompetence, cronyism, corruption; and critically, feeding illusions to followers, and fueling dependency thereby, are the characteristics of destructive behaviors. However, Padilla, et al. has

gone beyond the work of Whicker, Kellerman and Lipman-Blumen (Whicker: 1996, Kellerman: 2004, Lipman-Blumen: 2005) to construct a more substantive model for defining toxic leadership: destructive behaviors of leader, resulting from susceptible behavior of followers, supported by facilitative environment for fulfillment of agendas.

The work of Padilla & et al on toxic triangles can be applied to study the political leadership role of leaders in different contexts. The toxic triangle framework helps to analyze leaders as inherently damaging on the basis of personal charisma, need for power, narcissism, and dominance of the ideology of hate.

A qualitative distinction can be made among the followers of toxic leaders. The followership analysis subdivides followers into two groups: conformers and colluders. The conformers are the followers with low level of maturity, low self-evaluation and petty needs. Colluders share the value and worldview of the destructive leader having ambitions similar to him. The existence of a conductive environment makes the toxic triangle complete.

A combination of factors can provide for a facilitative environment such as instability; perceived threats; cultural values; or lack of checks and balances. Art Padilla has defined toxic leadership as the result of an interactive process. Padilla has explicitly introduced the concept of 'Toxic Triangle'-as a systematic confluence of leader, follower and favorable environmental factors to execute the agenda of 'destructive leadership.' Art Padilla's work recommended studying leadership in its natural settings. Figure 1 (Padilla, 2007) illustrates this triangulated approach through a more integrated and comprehensive picture by addressing the three dynamics of the leadership process: the interaction among leaders, followers and environment.

TOXIC TRIANGLE: POLITICS OF HINDUTVA

Art Padilla has applied the Toxic Triangle model to study the case of Fidel Castro. This section applies Padilla's model to study Narendra Modi, Indian Prime Minister's leadership role in India. The concept entails the tendency to demonstrate destructive leadership behavior, supported by susceptible followers in a conducive environment where destructive leaders and susceptible followers interact. This section has argued that Hindutva ideology has ramifications for Indian secular identity and stability in South Asia.

Nicholas Greenwood Onuf, Alexander Wendt, Ted Hopf and other constructivists have argued on identity and behavior in relation to 'others' (Onuf, et al. 2013). Choices made by agents in pursuit of their interests, hold consequences in shaping conditions of anarchy worldwide. This phenomenon shapes the security dynamics of state, regions, and the international system. Identities interests, actions and behavior highly depend upon actors' perception of who they are. Historically, religious identity may overshadow the national identity in influence (Paxton, 2004). The BJP's ideological leadership under Narendra Modi has equated Indian nationalism with the religious identity marker of Hindutva. The ideology has introduced divisive strands of 'us' and 'them' divide in the multicultural, multiethnic plural and secular identity of India.

Religion has become the major determinant catalyzing ideological transformation in India. Inherent to the concept is the complex detail of exclusive ideas of Hinduism. The ideology is projected as the predominant force of Hindu nationalism. Distorting India's plural image and playing as accomplice

in Ayodhya and Gujarat massacre, Modi's ideology of Hindutva has aimed to create a racial identity of Hindu renaissance and social transformation. The practice has tarnished Indian legacy of assimilation that had so far engulfed Indians of diverse religious, philosophical and spiritual origin under secularism.

A considerable scholarly literature on the incumbent regime's ideological drive has built up over the past two decades. The concept of Hindutva has a long genealogy. The politics of identity started with the Saffron Movement, extending to Sarvakar, Golwalkar and Upadaya's portrayal of Hindu racial and cultural superiority in India. Modi's leadership of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has carried on with the Saffron legacy of redefining Indian institutional and political structures on Hindutva identity, supported by followers, unleashing the toxic triangle of destructive leadership for minorities in India.

Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1883–1966), in his book, Essentials of Hindutva (1923) laid out the basics of the Hindutva concept to become its pioneer. The book, republished in 1928 as Hindutva: Who Is a Hindu? serves as the foundational text of the Hindutva nationalist creed, shaping Narendra Modi and his followers of Sangh Parivar's social and political ideals (Savarkar, 1928). Savarkar employed ethnic, cultural and racial connotations to describe 'the quality of being a Hindu.' The Hindu ideologue, serving as the Sarsangchalak or head of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) had argued that three distinctions qualified a person to become a Hindu—the man who considered India to be his matrbhumi, (motherland); the land of his ancestors or pitrbhumi; and his holy land or punyabhumi. Savarkar conceived Hindutva in racial terms as an indefinable quality, inherent in the Hindu race. In Sarvarkar's ideas, the three essentials of Hindutva included a common nation (rashtra), a common race (jati) and a common civilization (sanskriti). Hindus qualified to be the natives of the land and India designated as the land of the Hindus.

Savarkar argued that the Hindu faith, unlike Christianity and Islam, originated in India. A Hindu was the one born of Hindu parents who regarded India — 'this land of Bharatvarsha from the Indus to the Seas'— as his motherland, his holy land, and the cradle-land of his religion (Savarkar, 1928). In Savarkar's terms, other faiths like Sikhism, Buddhism and Jainism also qualified as variants of Hinduism for fulfilling the same three criteria of Hindu faith. However, Islam and Christianity did not qualify the criterion as these religions were born outside India. Sarvarkar conceded that Hinduism was only a derivative, a fraction or a part of Hindutva. Since Hindutva was non-identical to the term Hinduism—there was the need for Hindu reassertion. Golwalkar carried on with the legacy of Sarvarkar's ideas.

M. S. Golwalkar (1906–1973), serving as the Sarsangchalak or head of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) for three decades (1940–1973), was the principal ideologue of Hindu nationalism. Golwalkar argued that a 'national regeneration' was necessary. In his 1939 book 'We, or Our Nationhood Defined,' Golwalkar argued that Hinduism was the national religion of India, and there was no real India besides Hindu India (Golwalkar, 1939). Golwalkar asserted that India was the holy land of the Hindus; the terra firma of the Hindu nation alone to flourish upon. Golwalkar painted Hindutva as the ideology of establishing Hindu values and way of life within the political arrangements of India. Golwalkar and the RSS became passionate advocates of 'cultural nationalism,' as opposed to the civic nationalism enshrined in the Constitution of India. Regarding the problems of minorities in India, Golwalkar argued that there were two courses open to foreign

elements in India: to merge in the national race and adopt its culture or to live at its mercy as long as the national race may allow them to do so and quit the country at the sweet will of the national race.

Golwalkar argued that foreign races in Hindustan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion, entertain no idea but those of the glorification of the Hindu race and culture, and lost their separate existence to merge in the Hindu race, or may stay in the country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu Nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment—not even citizen rights (Golwalkar, 1939).

Upadhayay reached the same conclusion as Savarkar and Golwalkar. Hindutva had received its full conceptual ideological completion at the hands of RSS and Bharatiya Janasangh leader Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhayay. The leader defined Hindutva in his article, 'Akhand Bharat: Objectives and Means' as implying uniform cultural homogeneity. In 1944, the leader argued in a conference that as Indian Muslims could not be thrown out due to their huge numbers, they must identify themselves completely with Indian life on the basis of a homogeneous culture—by making Muslims proper Indians (Bhishkar, 2014). Upadhayay proposed the idea of Akhand Bharat arguing that national unity or integration was impossible without uprooting political aspirations of Islam in India ((Bhishkar, 2014). Upadhayay stayed worried that India's constitutional system had been created in negation of its true inherent national spirit of Bharatavarsa---the land of the Hindus.

Originally proposed by Chanakya in Arthashastra in the 3rd century BC, the idea of Akhand Bharat found a place and is described in ancient Bharatiya scriptures. Figure 2 illustrates Chanakya's articulation of the idea of Akhand Bharat, which means all states of the Indian subcontinent—the modern—day nations of Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Burma, Tibet, Bhutan, and Bangladesh under the authority of Hindu administration. Golwalkar, the second Sarsanghchalak of RSS in 1949 had termed Pakistan as an 'uncertain state,' stating that sangchalaks were to unsettle Pakistan if it was a settled fact. For Golwalkar, the spirit of men decided the issues of settled or unsettled facts steered by a spirit of dedication to a cause, believed as righteous and glorious.

The Politics of Hindu Rashtra

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) under the leadership of Narendra Modi has officially adopted the philosophy of Hindutva in all practical manifestations. The Hindutva philosophy has seen its practical zenith at the hands of India's current ruling party, on deeply entrenched religious identity markers. Modi has tried to make India 'a theocratic state based on the philosophy of Hindutva,' managing to grab 303 seats in the 2019 Indian elections. The occasion became an opportunity for Modi-BJP-RSS troika to unfold their agenda in a Hindu-dominated India. In its practical manifestation, Hindutva implied abolition of Article 370, implementation of Uniform Civil Codes and building of Ram Temple at Ayodhya. With the two third majority in parliament, the march towards implementation of Hindutva has instilled an authoritarian streak in the new government of India. Arun Shouria says that Narendra Modi's leadership has been narcissistic, running a one-man government, the direction of which was dangerous for a secular India. Secular quarters and international forums have expressed their concern over the way minority rights have been suppressed in India.

RSS: Followers and Facilitators

This section argues that Sangh Parivar activists have acted as followers and facilitators under Modi's leadership to create a conducive environment for implementation of Hindutva agenda. Championed by the Hindu nationalist organization RSS, the VHP, and the BJP, collectively called the Sangh Parivar, Hindutva activists have privileged a doctrinal view of Hinduism, undermining its inclusive and assimilative traditions. In espousing secularism, Indian political structure so far upheld the rich syncretic tradition of coexistence in India's multiethnic and plural society. However, seeking to implement Sarvakar, Golwalkar and Uppadaya's philosophical traditions, the Modi's leadership along with its supportive activists has aimed to foresee abrogation of Indian secular constitution and creation of ideological Hindu state or Rashtra. Upholding racial and cultural supremacy of the Hindus, rectifications of past errors and historical anomalies lay at the core of the activists' implementation of the Hindutva agenda.

The landslide victory of Narendra Modi led Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the latest Indian elections has demonstrated conclusively the growing appeal of Hindutva or the extremist version of Hindu nationalism within the Indian electorate. David Frawley has pointed to inferiority complex and Hindus lack of self-esteem resulting from foreign rule, oppression and forcible conversions as the motivational and psychological factors for Hindu revival (Frawley, 2004). The BJP election campaign cleverly exploited deep-seated sentiments among the vast majority of the Hindus in India for defining Indian nationalism in accordance with Hindu culture and values. Modi played on these sentiments and the Pulwama attack to whip up an anti-Pakistan and anti-Muslim frenzy as part of his election rhetoric as the election plank to win victory in India. Modi's advocacy of Hindutva has been the expression of 'right-wing extremism' and fascist in the classical sense, adhering to a disputed concept of homogenized majority and cultural hegemony. Modi's communalism has driven Indian minorities to a state of constant insecurity.

The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) supported by Shiv Sena, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the BJP has created an identity crisis, unleashing a reign of terror for the Muslims, Christians, Dalits and other religious minorities in India (George, 2016). Hindutva is an extreme form of 'conservatism' or 'ethnic absolutism.' Modi and Sangh Parivar followers have asserted Hindu identity for India, unleashing a free hand to retrograde elements in Indian society. Modi's brand of followers has embarked on rewriting textbooks to glorify Hindu leaders (Punyani, 2016). The practice of vigilantism, love jihad and gharwapsi aims at protecting Indian girls and cows, extolling forcible reconversions upon the society. Modi's followers have demanded that all must chant, 'Bharat Mata ki Jai (Victory to Holy Mother India),' as a litmus test of Indian nationalism and loyalty (Murtaza, 2019). Indian secularism has been reshaped by the politics of extremism and identity. Politics of vigilantism under surge of re-defined Hindu nationalism has posed a threat to human security (Jafferelot. 2019). Christopher Jafferelot points out that heterogeneous Indian society has felt threatened by Hindu ethnic majority of the BJP's exclusivist policies.

Justice Sachar Committee Report has cited Muslim's socio-economic conditions, marginally above the Dalits but worse than other backward castes in India. Muslims suffer from denial of representation in administration, education, health, and other social services, suffering from institutional bias and denial of legal rights. Modi's Hindutva policy has fueled anti-minority sentiments to spark off religious fervor, promoting ethnicity for political dominance of the Hindu

identities in India. Paul R. Brass in The Production of Hindu – Muslim Violence in Contemporary India has highlighted the role of BJP, Indian political parties and the elite in India's communal riots and violence (Brass, 2003). The Hindu identity branding has extended Hindu political and economic areas of influence at the cost of Indian nationhood, democracy, pluralism, inclusivity, and the ethics of globalization (Ramamurthy, 2016). Taking over the cosmopolitanism of Hindu society, Hindutva-inspired Islamophobia by Modi and his followers have unleashed communalism and extremism into the entire domestic and public circles of society. In Neo-Hindutva: Evolving forms, spaces, and expressions of Hindu Nationalism, Edward Andersen and Arkotong Longkumer explain the transformation of Hindutva to Neo-Hindutva (Anderson, 2018). Eviane Leidig in Hindutva as a variant of Right-Wing Extremism by Modi and his followers have tried to reconstruct Indian nationalism within the framework of right-wing extremism of Hindutva for electoral gains. Identity based political leadership tends to divert from the bread and butter issues of India.

Modi popularly, known to some as 'the butcher of Gujarat' had shown arrogance, obstinacy, signs of incompetency, support for acts of violence, and poor decision making. In the wake of Modi's second term, followers of the Hindutva doctrine—BJP and its militant arm, Rahtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) have unleashed a reign of terror for Indian minorities (George, 2016). Hate crimes have increased against Muslim Dali and Christian minorities being lynched by Hindu mobs. Human rights activists, journalists and students have been thrown in jails in India. Upadaya and Golwalkar's philosophical orientation of forcible assimilation of differences, based on subversion of minorities has guided Modi's ideas. Abrogation of article 370 has created the world's biggest jail in Indian Occupied Kashmir in India.

Hindutva ideology is rooted in the primacy of culture. Hindutva symbolizes Indian nationalism in which Hindu religious identity coincided with the culture. Golwalkar had declared culture as a product of all-comprehensive Hindu religion, a part of its indistinguishable identity. For Hindutva followers, India's national culture was/is Hindu religious culture and cultural nationalism cloaking plural India in a mantle of Hindu identity. Modi's ideologues Bajrang Dal and its cohorts declare openly that conversions from Hinduism to any other faith are anti-national. Similarly, atrocities on allegations of 'love jihad'- the alleged entrapment of unwary Hindu girls by Muslim men with forcible conversion to Hindu faith, were unchecked and covertly protected. BJP ruled state governments have already outlawed conversions without specific permission of the government; while the use of inducements or threats to convert is already illegal across the state. Mass conversions of illiterates and semi-literates have been outlawed, for fear of exploitation. The Indian system recognizes India's diversity; Hindutva undermines Indian citizenship and the constitutional basis of Indian state.

The followers of Hindutva have enacted laws to protect cows with vociferous demands for their strict enforcement. Cow vigilantism, protection or Gaurakshak societies have taken upon themselves to compel compliance under Modi and his followers' protection. The constitution has empowered the state legislatures to prevent slaughter and legislate on cattle preservation. However, different states have different approaches to cow welfare. The decision to institute the full prohibition of cow slaughter is a state prerogative, but the central government has passed Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (Regulation of Livestock Markets) Rules, 2016 to make cow slaughter impossible, preventing the transport or sale of cattle for beef export and consumption.

The new rules cripple the meat export, dairy, leather and other allied businesses, which provided employment for over one million individuals within the country, mainly from minority communities (Tharoor, 2018). Maharashtra's beef ban destroyed the livelihoods of a million Muslim butchers and truckers in that state; a nationwide ban would push more people into poverty, dependent on beef and meat related trade. The government decision is, therefore, socially discriminatory, since it specifically and disproportionately harms the poorer and less privileged sections of Indian society. The riots of Indian farmers in India are another embodiment of social and political discriminatory practices against citizens in India.

The destructive side of Modi's leadership has persisted with Nazi-Hindutva mind-set of his policies. International mainstream leaders and international humanitarian organizations have criticized Modi and his followers' toxic leadership for targeting the minorities--Muslims, Dalits and Christians. Creating an environment of hostility and insecurity, Modi's leadership has targeted Indian Muslim community in particular. The Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019 has aimed to provide Indian citizenship to illegal migrants of diverse origins entering India except the Muslims.

The discriminatory criterion has granted citizenship rights to minorities of diverse origins other than Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan, making religion a criterion under the Indian law. Relaxing residence naturalization criteria from twelve years to six, the immediate beneficiaries of the bill have only been 30,000 people. The new law has been vehemently criticized by international observers for discriminating on the basis of religion. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) called the practice 'fundamentally discriminatory' asking for a non-discriminatory 'robust national asylum system. Moreover, the bill has rendered many Muslim citizens stateless for lack of stringent birth or identity proof requirements. Also, persecuted religious minorities from regions such as Tibet, Sri Lanka and Myanmar have also been restricted citizenship rights.

India's Conducive Environment

In another instance, Modi and his aides have been successful in pressurizing international organizations such as Amnesty International India to shut down its operations. Modi's discriminatory practices have been rejected by the world leadership. The US president Joe Biden condemned Modi nationalist citizenship laws and criticized the implementation of National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam, which disqualified nearly 2 million people as non-citizens. Terming these measures as discriminatory, Biden asserted that such measures overlooked the spirit of secularism for sustaining multi-ethnic and multi-religious democracy in India. Biden urged that unconditional restoration of fundamental rights without discrimination be made in Indian occupied Kashmir. To criticize the discriminatory environment, a much stronger position has been taken by Kamila Harris, the first woman elected as Vice President, who asserted that the Kashmiris were not alone in their struggle.

Successfully increasing the vote bank from 282 to 303 seats, the BJP has placed itself in a comfortable rubber stamping position in the Indian Lok Sabha. The election outcome has delivered a fatal blow to the ideals of a secular, liberal and multi-cultural India. Ethnic majority of Hindu dominance has defined the cultural values of Indian secular identity at the expense of Muslims,

Christians and Dalits in India. As anticipated, Muslim minorities will face growing discrimination and social persecution at the hands of extremist Hindu policies in India.

CONCLUSION

The study has argued with substantial evidence that Modi's destructive leadership and his followers' squad of Hindu supremacy have unleashed a reign of terror for the Indian minorities. Acts like revoking of Article 370, abuse of power in Kashmir and Citizenship Amendment Act 2019 has buried credentials of secularism in India. Rising extremism has proliferated Islamophobia in South Asia, increasing the threat of nuclear confrontation. Modi's destructive adventurism may radicalize marginalized minorities, making them to appeal to terrorist organizations like ISIS and Al-Qaeda. Other implications may result from money laundering and terror financing of radical groups by the South Asian diaspora. India has adopted a hard line approach on regional and international issues. Neo-Hindu nationalism preached by Modi's Hindutva politics has posed a threat to security in South Asia. The Toxic Triangle of destructive leadership has heightened India-Pakistan regional tensions and increased skirmishes on India-Pakistan border. Insecurity and a regional arms race has been ensued. Indian citizenship and immigration policy against Muslims has increased local resentment. The toxic environment of insecurity has domestic, regional and global implications.

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