

HINDUTVA AS AN INFORMAL INSTITUTION

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Makale İlk Gönderim Tarihi / Recieved (First): 30.05.2020

Makale Kabul Tarihi / Accepted: 10.10.2020

Abstract

In this article, Hindu nationalism has been considered as an informal institution through an institutionalist perspective. The purpose of the article is to identify how Hindutva functions as an informal institution. In this context, Hindutva has been evaluated based on three basic features of an institution: setting rules, shaping behavior and effecting the result. The rule-making feature has been studied through the ideas of ideologists such as Savarkar and Golwalkar with reference to the Hindu social order. Subsequently, it has been argued that these socio-political rules have been accepted by the huge social segments in the country and influenced the behaviors of the social base. Finally, it has been emphasized how Hindutva has influenced the result and brought the Hindu nationalists to power. Accordingly, it will be concluded how Hindutva has become the mainstream of politics in the country. However, with reference to the recent Citizenship Law protests in the country, it has been noted how other informal institutions, particularly secularism, threaten the future of Hindutva.

Keywords: Hindutva, Informal Institutions, Rules, Behaviors, Results.

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1. Introduction

The return of institutions has been discussed in global politics these days. Increasing social mobilizations, the inability of public institutions to respond to citizen demands and decreased socio-political trust have caused a need for a regulator and rule-maker. These facts increase the debate on political and institutional disruption and decay in global and local politics (King, 2016: 217). Institutions are also presented as antidotes by social scientists with all their rules, norms and values. The reason why institutions are so important is their characteristics. In particular, if the issue is on instability, mobilization and chaos, three main characteristics of institutions come to mind: 1-) Setting rules, 2-) shaping behaviors, 3-) effecting the result (Hickey, 2015). Institutions have been seen as a veto player that sets rules, shapes or limits behavior, and results in order and stability against the mobilization of the masses. In this context, it can be envisioned that the most important instrument for policy makers will be the institutions in the age of uncertainty we live.

In addition to the functional importance of institutions, the institutionalists have drawn attention to the importance of informal institutions as well as formal institutions lately. According to them, politics and governance can be determined not only by formal rules, but also by informal rules, norms and values. In this respect, informal institutions can emerge as tools that set rules, shape behaviors and influence the outcome, just like formal institutions. In other words, informal institutions can change the rules of the game. The capacities of informal institutions can be used to manage change in this age of global and local socio-political transformation. Informal institutions not only emerge as customs, traditions, cultural and regional habits; it can also rise as an idea and ideology (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004: 725-734). In this study, we will consider Hindutva as an idea and examine its informal capacity.

These days, Hindutva, whose origins go back to the early 1900s, has been an idea at the center of Indian politics. Hindutva, a rising idea with Modi government since 2014, has dictated its rules to all Indian citizens like an official ideology, forced them to a certain behavior and ultimately tried to drag them towards the desired result. Even it has made secular nationalism semi-dysfunctional, which was previously in the formal ideology position. In this study, we will examine Hindutva's capacity to set rules, shape behaviors and influence the outcome as an informal institution. Our goal is to discuss whether Hindutva, which motivates Hindu masses in a certain direction through Hindu nationalism today, can ensure a permanent loyalty, trust and solidarity. Where do the Anti-Citizenship Act Protests, especially in recent times, fit in this context? Will the Hindutva idea be consolidated, or will a new informal institution replace it?

2. Rising Hindutwa Politics in India

The rising Hindu nationalism in India can be addressed in both historical (colonial-post-colonial), ideological (Savarkar-Golwalkar) and institutional (Hindu Muhasabha-RSS-BJP) contexts. However, the idea of Hindutva will be examined by putting Savarkar, RSS and BJP in the center. In our opinion, firstly Savarkar has introduced the idea as a rule, and then RSS played an important role in shaping the behavior of Hindu masses. Finally, BJP has institutionalized the idea and brought it to the center of politics.

The emergence of Hindu nationalism in contemporary India must be located in colonial India. But the idea of Hindutva was conceptualized by Savarkar in the 1920s. Savarkar has explained the content of the concept in his work "Essentials of Hindutva" and the names like Golwalkar strengthened the concept (Savarkar, 1923). The main claim of the study is that India belongs to Hindus. In the book, Hinduism is culturally defined rather than belief, and while Sikhs and Buddhists were included in the nation; Muslims and Christians were pointed out as the other of the idea. Hindutva's ultimate goal is to unite Hindus, revive Hindu society and make India a "Hindu Rashtra" (Savarkar, 1923).

Golwalkar has been the main contributor to the Hindutva idea in the post-Savarkar period. Golwalkar has claimed that the Hindus belong to a unique race (Aryan). According to him, the Aryans had come to this land from the North of India and were the main owners of this land. In addition to these scientifically impossible claims, the most important contribution made by Golwalkar is related to the fact that it has framed the Hindu community. It has embarked on building a homogeneous Hindu society with a strong social engineering. As a result, they have laid the foundations of the idea of Hindutva and determined the rules that Hindus should follow in socio-political life (Golwalkar, 1939).

While Golwalkar has contributed to the theoretical development of the Hindutva idea; his RSS has played a critical role in the implementation of the Hindutva idea and its reach to the masses. The founder of RSS, Hedgewar and his successor, Golwalkar, have accepted the ideas of Savarkar and made RSS the locomotive organization of Hindu nationalism. Although their leaders have always been upper castes, RSS has trained Hindu children and youth through the Hindu discipline. In addition to this pedagogical function, the organisation promotes the ideals of upholding Indian culture and the values of a civil society and spreads the ideology of Hindutva, to strengthen the Hindu community (Golwalkar, 1966). In this context, the main purpose is to unite the Hindu community to form a Hindu Rashtra (Hindu nation). In short, RSS has taught them the rules that the Hindu community should follow and shaped their behavior in line with Hindutva goals (Sharma, 2007: 1-33).

RSS has made the Hindutva idea a movement, but the institutionalization of the idea and the movement has realized with BJP. Although many RSS-supported parties that adopted the Hindutva idea were established in the pre-BJP period, BJP was extra successful due to the collapse period of the Congress. If the Congress System did not collapse, the idea of secularism, the informal institution of Congress, could survive. However, the disruption of the idea of secularism along with the Congress system led to the strengthening of Hindutva as a new informal institution. The most important equivalent of this in politics has been Modi's BJP (Jaffrelot, 2007: 189). Today, it is necessary to say that Modi is also effective in mobilizing Hindu masses with its charismatic personality, although the debate continues whether RSS manages BJP or BJP manages RSS. However, this does not change the fact that BJP is a result of Hindutva idea and RSS mobilization. Savarkar has set the rule, RSS has shaped behaviors, and Modi power has emerged as a result (Jaffrelot, 2012: 92).

3. Hindutva Rules

Above all, Hindutva has emerged as an informal institution that sets the rules. In this context, it has glorified the rules, norms and values of the Hindu social order. The most important feature of the Hindu social order is that traditional professions related to caste, religion, society and birth has built society unequally. The society, which is categorized unequally, has been divided into upper and lower classes. These days, this social inequality has been able to reveal lower classes with different income levels. Another dark side of the Hindu social order is related to a Brahmanical system of inequality (Ambedkar, 1992: 91). This unequal system, known as the caste system, emphasizes the interests of the upper castes and grants lower social rights to the lower casts. Inequalities in education, employment and marriages can be given as examples here. In this respect, it can be claimed that Hindutva is actually an informal institution that defends the interests of its upper classes. In addition, Dalits who fall outside the four-fold caste system are crushed more than the lower casts. Today, Dalits corresponds to one of the most violent sections within the socio-political system (Louis, 2020: 111-115). The Indian state has struggled with the idea of secularism until today. Secularism, which has encouraged the coexistence of different segments, has been regressed by Hindutva and Hindu nationalism has sat in the center of politics (Jaffrelot, 2010: 3-170).

It can be said that Hindutva, which promotes Hindu social order, glorifies Hindus in terms of social identities and promotes Hindu superiority. Hindus, who have constituted the majority of the

society, have been thought to be the owners of the society. Therefore, sections other than Hindus are regarded as second-class citizens and have to adapt to Hindus (Jaffrelot, 2010: 170). All Hindus should reconstruct their nations and create a Hindu Rashtra with this awareness. The historical collective consciousness owned has been built by Hindus. This idea, which sees Hindus as the main component of the nation, accepts India as the homeland of Hindus in this context and ignores other groups and identities. Sections outside the nation should be expelled from India, the homeland of Hindus (Puniyani, 2006: 199-205). In this context, it can be said that the Hindu superiority approach that Hindutva predicted has a very social Darwinist attitude. So the big one will destroy the small one.

According to Hindutva, the owners of society are Hindus, while Muslims are seen as others. Muslims have been historically seen as the continuation of the Mughal people and defined as invaders. Pakistan's departure from the country and its establishment as a separate state supported this view. It can be said that Savarkar, who is seen as the founder of the Hindutva idea, has been inspired by Zionism. Just as Israel has remained alone among Islamic countries and has had no choice but to fight, the same logic has been advocated for Hindu nationalists. These views of Savarkar can be seen in his works on "The Fraternity of India-Zionism". According to this logic, Hindus should fight against the Muslims who occupy India and want to destroy themselves and throw them out of their physical sphere. This logic has been mobilized in social life as well as in elections in India. While Hindu votes are mobilized; The anti-Muslim wave has been raised. Thus, Hindu votes have been mobilized and the anti-Muslim wave has been raised. As a result, Hindutva, as a rule, has glorified Hindus, marginalized Muslims and continued the inequalities of the Hindu social order (Sen, 2015: 690-711).

4. Hindutva as a Way of Behaviour

Hindutva has produced behavioral mobilization as well as mental mobilization. It has shaped the behavior of the masses in accordance with the new mental paradigm. It has caused irrational behavior models as well as rational behaviors. However, a strong collective action has been built, in which the Hindu majority joins the caravan every day. However, a strong collective action has been built in which the Hindu majority increases its support day by day. This has led to the emergence of numerous militant or political organizations such as RSS, VHP and BJP. These Hindu nationalist organizations, Sangh Parivar, have used Hindutva in line with their goals. By creating a Hindutva agenda, they constantly updated the idea in parallel with the need and conjuncture. They reproduced the idea of Hindutva and developed the largest massive voluntary political organizations in the world. Currently, the BJP claims to be the most political party in the world. While BJP constitutes the political wing of Sangh Parivar; there are many organizations that represent Hindutva in every segment of the society. Organizations such as Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), Bajrang Dal, Bharatiya Kishan Sangh (BKS) are some of these (Andersen & Damle, 2019: 214).

Besides the mechanical political organizations, the idea of Hindutva also encouraged the masses to numerous violent acts. 1992 Ayodhya Events is one of these examples (BBC News, 2003). It has essentially targeted the most important symbol of Muslims in South Asia. Tensions has been initiated using purely non-scientific evidence, and the debates has been interpreted as a just cause for Hindus. In fact, the anti-Babri Mosque movement in Ayodhya had been initiated by the VHP in the 1980s. According to Hindu radicals, the place where the Babri Mosque was located was the location of the temple of Ram, which was holy for Hindus. Accordingly, the Babri Mosque had to be demolished and the Ram temple should be built instead of it. BJP has launched a major campaign through VHP and leaders such as Advani. They traveled all over the country and mobilized the Hindu population against the Babri Mosque. As a result, the Hindus made a great rebellion against the Babri Mosque in the country and destroyed the mosque built by Babur Shah, the founder of the Baburites (Sharma, 2003: 127-137). With reference to this event, Hindu radicals have mobilized Hindu nationalism and marginalized

Muslims since the 1990s. In 2019, the Supreme Court in the country ruled in favor of the Hindus in the Ayodhya Case and allowed the construction of the Ram temple. Therefore, the discussions are still ongoing and the idea of Hindutva shapes the behavior of not only the masses but also the institutions (Avari, 2013: 231-247).

Another example that mobilized Hindu masses is the Gujarat Events that rose in 2002 (Jaffrelet, 2003: 16). The violence here has also been remembered as the Gujarat Massacres. In Gujarat, Hindu crowds have been mobilized and Muslims have been massacred by them. On the morning of February 27, 2002, returning from Ayodhya to Ahmedabad, Sabarmati Express stopped near the Godhra Train Station. The passengers were mostly Hindus who returned from Ayodhya. A debate has begun between the Hindus and the sellers on the railway platform. The debate has intensified and the train has been set on fire under uncertain conditions. 59 people, including women and children, have been killed. According to Hindu nationalists, the responsible for the events was completely Muslims. In the post-Godhra period, a massive campaign of violence against Muslims has been launched in Gujarat. The actors have been again workers from VHP and BJP. VHP has called for a state-wide bandh or strike. Although the Supreme Court declared that such strikes were unconstitutional and illegal; Hindu crowds targeted and massacred many Muslims. As the events were soothed, 1044 people had died and 2500 people had been injured. What is interesting here is that in the state of Gujarat, where Modi is Prime Minister, the government did not try to prevent the violence that erupted across the state. This has once again revealed that the idea of Hindutva guides not only the Hindu crowds but the behavior of the institutions (Berenschot, 2014: 18-37).

We can choose the latest example for Hindu mobilization from recent times. The new Citizenship Law, which the Modi administration has put into practice in India for a while, has caused a great reaction of Muslims and a huge wave of protest emerged. Hindu violence, which coincided with Trump's visit on the same day, has targeted both protesters and Muslims. In fact, Modi had taken many steps for the Hindutva agenda it promised after the 2019 Elections. Before the Citizenship Act Amendment, he has changed the status of Kashmir, influenced the Babri Masjid case in favor of Hindu nationalists and launched the National Citizenship Registration (NCR) record, which would leave thousands of Muslims stateless in Assam (Saha, 2019). The Citizenship Amendment Act has been the last practice that has made Muslims second-class citizens. The Muslims' protests have been supported by all identities of the country and the Modi government has softened its discourse. However, anti-Muslim violence that was initiated by Hindu crowds in Delhi has once again caused a great crime against humanity. Muslims who have been subjected to violence in the streets, the residents of Delhi whose houses have been damaged and the Mosques burned are some examples reflected by this violence (Tripathi, 2019). As can be clearly seen, the idea of Hindutva has shaped the irrational behavior of radical Hindus since the 1980s and has been able to cause different acts of violence (TRT World, 2020).

5. The Results of Hindutva

Whether it is a formal or informal institution, the most important feature of the institutions is that it affects a certain result. Hindutva, which sets rules and shapes behavior, has been able to influence many outcomes as an informal institution. In this respect, mobilization of massive Hindu masses during election periods and election victories of BJP have corresponded to the most important result of Hindutva. Hindutva has been the biggest lever of success in the establishment of BJP governments in the 1970s and 1990s. Likewise, Hindutva has also played the leading role in the massive victories of Modi in the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha Elections. Although a developmental agenda was observed in 2014, it could be said that the Hindutva agenda was dominant in the 2019 elections. Election victories of Hindutva has affected not only general elections but also state and local elections. As a matter of fact, the rise of BJP, which took power in many states after 2014, was called the Saffron Wave (Hansen,

1999). On the other hand, the counter-wave of BJP's rise in the provinces has come quickly. BJP has recently lost the elections in Delhi to the Aam Aadami Party (AAP) in February 2020 (Times of India, 2020). Now, it has anti-BJP governments in 12 states. Despite the massive Hindu support of the BJP, why it declines will be addressed in the conclusion (Maps of India, 2020).

Another result of Hindutva mobilization is related to the fact that the RSS-BJP duo is increasing its power within the statemechanism day by day. Since the day Hindutva came to the center of country politics, one of the leading agendas of the RSS-BJP partnership has been that they describe citizens who do not support them as anti-nationalists. This process has been particularly effective in bureaucracy. The most striking examples are the Army and the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court is one of the most important institutions for justice and democracy, but it has been the subject of controversy in the country where Judges are influenced by politics. The powers and decisions used by the Supreme Court Presidents in some cases have caused a great judicial crisis in the country (Dev, 2018). Many Supreme Court Judges have voiced the illegal relationship between the President and the BJP. Although BJP dismissed the allegations, Supreme Court President Ranjan Gogoi was nominated by BJP as a candidate for Rajya Sabha after his retirement (Vaidyanathan, 2020). Another example is the Army, and the design of the army has been widely debated in terms of the relationship between soldiers and politics. Due to the unique structure of the Army in India, no coup has taken place. However, in the past years, the Kashmir policy of BJP has raised some objections by the soldiers. The soldier has stated that the Kashmir Problem should be resolved through politics rather than hard security policy. A few years later, the same military elites has supported the same Kashmir policy. The reason for this has been the restructuring of Army under the leadership of BJP. As a matter of fact, General Bagwad, who previously criticized BJP, has become the Chief of General Staff after design (Tewari, 2019).

In the context of the results contributed by Hindutva, the transformation in economy and foreign policy can also be addressed. The country, which has previously followed a social democratic and developmental agenda in Congress, has started a process of integration into the global economy by transitioning to a neo-liberal policy in BJP government. Similar neoliberal policies has also been visible at the end of the Congress period, but the vote of anti-incumbency against Congress caused the party to be defeated in 2014. On the other hand, Modi's developmental agenda has supported Hindutva from its 2014 victory. Modi has asked for permission to spread the Gujarat Model to the whole country, and voters have approved it (India Talking, 2006). However, India, which has some weaknesses in integrating with the global economy, has increased its dependence on some actors, particularly the USA. The side effects of the free market, on the other hand, have led to the mobilization of farmers and peasants with a major agricultural crisis inside. In foreign policy, the Hindu nationalist elites has been able to incorporate the Hindutva agenda very quickly into the foreign policy agenda. All peace possibilities with Pakistan have been suspended and cultural capacity has been tried to be used in foreign policy within the scope of the "Act East" initiative (Modi Govt to, 2014). However, the most important development that shows how active Hindutva is in foreign policy has been the choice of BJP elites to the agenda of the country again with the concept of "Akhand Bharat" (Chitkara, 2004: 262). The concept that can be defined as "Undivided India" has revealed an expansionary foreign policy imagination of India. The desire to re-include all geographies from Pakistan to Bangladesh, which used to be the land of India, has been determined. As a result, the influence of Hindutva on political desires and results has been able to prove by these behaviors (Erdman, 2007: 55).

6. Conclusion: The limits of Hindutva

As analyzed in the study, Hindutva has the characteristics of an informal institution and has the capacity to set rules, shape behavior, and influence the outcome. Hindu nationalist elites in the country have been able to provide the collective action that brought them to power. Hindu has also been able to

generate a certain amount of social capital among voters. They have also been able to generate a certain amount of social capital among Hindu voters. Hindutva can be evaluated as a positive informal institution with this feature. On the other hand, it has been able to reveal the sections excluded from the country, especially Muslims and Dalits. This reveals the negative informal capacity of Hindutva. In other words, Hindutva has been able to evolve towards a problematic institution as well as a problem solving institution. The most important indicator of this is anti-Citizenship Protests. Protests can function in favor of BJP government in the short term. However, in the medium and long term, the process may not continue as BJP wants. Because the protests has broken the relationship between the BJP government and the younger generations. Instead of Hindutva, the youth began to chant the return of Gandhi ideas. This signals that Hindutva may be replaced by secular values as an informal institution in the future. As a result, it can be claimed that the idea of Hindutva has certain limits.

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