



Volunteers for the Hindu nationalist group Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, or R.S.S., marching in September in Nagpur, India.

From Shadows to Power: How Hindu Right Reshaped India

By MUJIB MASHAL and HARI KUMAR

NAGPUR, India — In Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s most important speech of the year, his annual Independence Day address in August, he used the stage to honor the group that changed his life and is remaking India.

That it was Mr. Modi’s most forceful and public nod in his 11 years in office to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh — the far-right Hindu nationalist group known as the R.S.S., which had molded his personal and professional life since he was a young boy — was a reflection of what a king-making power the group has become as it celebrated its 100th anniversary this year.

The R.S.S. originated as a shadowy cabal for the revival of Hindu pride after a long history of Muslim invasions and colonial rule in India, its early leaders openly drawing inspiration from the nationalist formula of Fascist parties in Europe during the 1930s and 1940s. It has survived repeated bans, including being accused in the assassination of Gandhi, to grow into the largest right-wing



ALTAF HUSSAIN/REUTERS

The R.S.S. has molded Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s life since he was a boy.

juggernaut in the world.

More than a decade of Mr. Modi, one of their most ambitious and capable recruits, at the helm of national power has brought the organization the kind of success and acceptability that many of its leaders say they never dared imagine. While there have at times been tensions with the strongman premier, the R.S.S. is closing in on its dream to rebuild India’s secular republic as a muscular, Hindu-first nation.

The R.S.S. has infiltrated and co-opted India’s institutions to such a degree that its deep roots will ensure it remains a powerful force long after Mr. Modi is gone. It reaches inside India’s society, government, courts, police, media and academic institutions through a vast umbrella of affiliated groups, placing core members into all of them. It makes and breaks political careers. It commands loyalty across the nation by offering young men a path to relevance and influence in their communities through Hindu-nationalist activism.

Though the R.S.S. still cultivates an air as a secret society, it has been proudly more public in recent years. Its members and its influence are everywhere.

When you see Mr. Modi’s Bharatiya Janata Party dominate critical elections, you are seeing the R.S.S.’s political machine at work, with the central group shaping the fates and fortunes of the party’s candidates. And when you see Hindu vigilantes parading through Muslim neighborhoods or ransacking churches, you are seeing the R.S.S. affiliates exercising their vision of supremacy.

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Afrikaner Felt He Was Invited. ICE Jailed Him.

By MIRIAM JORDAN

Benjamin Schoonwinkel took President Trump at his word.

The United States would welcome South Africans like Mr. Schoonwinkel, white Afrikaners who Mr. Trump said had become victims of government discrimination in the decades since apartheid ended and the country’s Black majority gained political power. Afrikaners who claimed past persecution or fear of future harm could come to the United States as refugees, Mr. Trump declared, even as his administration was closing that door to the rest of the world.

In September, Mr. Schoonwinkel boarded a flight from Johannesburg to Atlanta, and on arrival told U.S. border agents that he was seeking asylum.

But he hadn’t come through the refugee program, as the Trump administration had intended. Rather, Mr. Schoonwinkel, 59, had chosen to travel on a tourist visa and to seek asylum.

Instead of being allowed to enter the country, he found himself in handcuffs. Within two days, he was in a federal detention center in rural Georgia, where about 2,000 people who have been swept up in Mr. Trump’s immigration crackdown are being held. He has

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French Symbol: Femme Fatale to Cause Célèbre

The actress, singer and activist Brigitte Bardot, who has died at 91, personified France in a literal way: In 1969, she became the first celebrity to be used as the model for Marianne, the symbol of the Republic that has adorned the country’s City Halls as well as official documents, stamps and coins since the French Revolution. Just over a year earlier, she had kicked off her TV special “Le Show Bardot,” wearing little besides thigh-high boots and a French flag, as the national anthem played and then quickly morphed into a peppy new pop tune.

B.B., as she was known, was a new France: bold, free and unconventional.

Yet Bardot wasn’t a consensual figure. You might even say she was among the first problematic stars of the modern era: Admired and reviled in turns, or even simultaneously, she was a star accused of being a bad actress, a cranky, unfiltered misanthrope doubling as an emblem of modernity and liberation, and a tireless crusader for animal rights who cottoned to the far-right National Front and was convicted multiple times for “inciting racial hatred.”

Bardot did not need anyone to cancel her, though: In a way, she did it herself, quitting acting in 1973 before she turned 40. Unlike many star retirements before



BETTMANN ARCHIVE, VIA GETTY IMAGES

Brigitte Bardot, at her villa in St.-Tropez in 1962, died at 91. She retired from acting to defend animal rights. Obituary, Page A12.

and since, this one stuck. Many may argue that this left her with enough time on her hands to get in trouble, but for better or for worse, she wanted agency, and she got it.

Long before she became Marianne, Bardot carried an even heavier burden: She was synonymous with womanhood itself. After all, the movie that made

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Agendas of 3 Trump Aides Fuel Venezuela Campaign

New Details of Deliberations Show How Oil, Drugs and Immigration Played Role

This article is by Edward Wong, Tyler Pager, Charlie Savage, Julian E. Barnes and Maria Abi-Habib.

WASHINGTON — On a spring night in the Oval Office, President Trump asked Secretary of State Marco Rubio how to get tougher on Venezuela.

It was just before Memorial Day, and anti-leftist Cuban American lawmakers whose votes Mr. Trump needed for his signature domestic policy bill were urging him to tighten a vise on Venezuela by stopping Chevron’s oil operations there. But Mr. Trump did not want to lose the only U.S. foothold in Venezuela’s oil industry, where China is the biggest foreign player.

The president was considering allowing Chevron to continue. But he told Mr. Rubio, a longtime hawk on Venezuela and Cuba, that they had to show the lawmakers and other doubters they could bring the hammer down on Nicolás Maduro, the leftist autocratic leader of Venezuela, whom Mr. Trump had tried to oust in his first term.

Another aide in the room, Stephen Miller, said he had ideas. As Mr. Trump’s homeland security adviser, he had been talking with other officials about Mr. Trump’s campaign vow to bomb fentanyl labs. For various reasons, that notion had faded, and in recent weeks Mr. Miller had turned to exploring attacks on boats suspected of carrying drugs

off the shores of Central America.

Mr. Miller’s deliberations had not focused on Venezuela, which does not produce fentanyl. But three separate policy goals began merging that night — crippling Mr. Maduro, using military force against drug cartels and securing access to Venezuela’s vast oil reserves for U.S. companies.

Two months later, Mr. Trump signed a secret directive ordering the Pentagon to carry out military operations against Latin American drug cartels and specifically calling for maritime strikes. Though the justification was drugs in general, the operation would concentrate enormous naval firepower off the coast of Venezuela.

The result has been an increasingly militarized pressure campaign intended to remove Mr. Maduro from power.

It has been marked by U.S. strikes that have killed at least 105 people on boats in the Caribbean and the eastern Pacific, a quasi-blockade of oil tankers entering and leaving Venezuelan ports and threats by Mr. Trump to carry out land strikes in Venezuela.

It reflects overlapping drives by Mr. Rubio and Mr. Miller, who have worked in tandem on policies against Mr. Maduro. Each has come to it with a focus on long-held goals: for Mr. Rubio, the son of Cuban immigrants who also

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NEWS ANALYSIS

Israeli Leader In Tight Spot

Pressure-Filled Choices Define the Year Ahead

By DAVID M. HALBFINGER

Benjamin Netanyahu has been prime minister of Israel for so long that nearly everyone knows how he governs.

He delays decisions. He keeps options open for as long as possible and creates new ones whenever he can. He wears down, outwits and outlasts his adversaries — as well as his ostensible allies. He turns crises — including some of his own creation — into opportunities he can defuse, for a price.

But events are lining up in a way that may tax even his well-documented ability to stretch out tough decisions and shape them to his advantage.

Mr. Netanyahu’s criminal trial on charges of bribery and fraud is inexorably advancing. President Trump’s peace plan for Gaza is inching along toward a difficult Phase 2, and tensions are building with the White House over Israel’s actions in Syria and Lebanon. And polls indicate Mr. Netanyahu is headed to defeat in next year’s elections.

The pressure on him is mounting from every direction.

That includes from the Israeli right, Mr. Netanyahu’s political base, which is agitating for him to pursue annexation of the Israeli-occupied West Bank despite Mr. Trump’s warnings that doing so would trigger a harsh U.S. response.

On each of these fronts, 2026 is shaping up as a momentous year for Mr. Netanyahu, 76, and for the country he has represented for the better part of three decades. He is almost certainly going to have to make a series of decisions with great consequence — for Israeli society and

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SASHA MASLOV FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

“You start counting every day,” Sgt. Serhii Tyschenko said.

For 472 Days, A Dank Bunker At Kyiv’s Front

By CASSANDRA VINOGRAD and OLEKSANDR CHUBKO

KYIV, Ukraine — The soldier suspected early on that this front-line rotation would be difficult. But 472 days straight, in a bunker, under fire?

“I didn’t expect it to last so long,” the soldier, Sgt. Serhii Tyschenko, said one recent afternoon at his home outside Kyiv, Ukraine’s capital, his wife glued to his side. “I hoped it would be a month, two months at most.”

Instead, he spent more than a year underground in a damp bunker without fresh air or even a ray of sunlight for much of the time. “It becomes very hard mentally,” he said.

Lengthy rotations have long been a problem in Ukraine’s fight against Russian forces, as Kyiv has struggled with troop shortages. The ubiquity of drones has made things worse because it is nearly impossible for soldiers to move positions without being spotted.

But overly long rotations damage morale and risk psychological

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PEACE TALKS President Trump met with Ukraine’s leader, but a deal remained elusive. PAGE A8



INTERNATIONAL A4-12

After Israeli Prison, More Pain

Haitham Salem was held 11 months without charge. Upon his release, he learned his family was dead. PAGE A4

Myanmar’s Pessimistic Vote

In an election almost sure to favor the ruling military junta, turnout in big cities appeared to have fallen. PAGE A7

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Can America Build Big Again?

Crumbling highways and other broken infrastructure indicate decades of stalled progress. But the pendulum may be ready to swing back. PAGE A14

Rethinking Policy for Homeless

The Trump administration is moving away from Housing First, which supporters call “evidence based” but opponents consider too permissive. PAGE A13

Mamdani’s New Neighbors

As the mayor-elect prepares to leave his beloved Astoria, a chilly welcome awaits him on the Upper East Side near Gracie Mansion. PAGE A16

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Tech Is Getting What It Wants

President Trump has backed policies that allow the industry to grow. Some conservatives are concerned about the mutually beneficial alliance. PAGE B1

Shedding Student Loan Debt

Distressed borrowers using a simpler bankruptcy process are succeeding, and more people like them should try, a new study suggests. PAGE B1

Billionaires Eye the Exits

Even though a proposal to tax billionaires may not reach California’s ballot in November, some wealthy residents are not taking any chances. PAGE B1



SPORTS D1-8

Horseman of the Court

It’s basketball that made Nikola Jokic of the Denver Nuggets famous, but it’s horses that make him happy. PAGE D1

Ready to Burst on Scene

A look at three young players who bear watching on the PGA and LIV Tours this coming year. PAGE D2

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In Memoriam

Remembering the words of Roberta Flack, David Lynch and other artists who died in the past year. PAGE C1

World’s Most Interesting Man

The table tennis champ Marty Reisman, who inspired Timothée Chalamet’s new film, was quite the character. PAGE C1

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Filippo Grandi

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