From Cyber-Hindutva to Ab Ki Baar Trump Sarkar: A Twitter analysis of Hindu diaspora support for the populist radical right

Abstract

In many ways, Modi’s success in 2014 foreshadowed the current emergence of a populist radical right revolt in the West. The Brexit referendum to leave the EU and Trump’s success in the US general election in 2016 sparked new waves of discussion on nativism, nationalism, and the far right. Within these analyses, very little attention has been devoted towards exploring the transnational ideological circulation of Islamophobia and anti-establishment sentiment. This paper thus explores the role of the Hindu diaspora as a mediator in the political discourse promoted by the Brexit campaign and Trump’s presidency. Through an analysis of pro-Brexit and Trump Twitter accounts of British and American Hindus, it situates how the diaspora manifests support for populist radical right movements, parties, and politicians in the UK and US. Ultimately, this paper aims to situate how diasporic Hindu identities are subsumed into exclusivist national political agendas in Western societies.

Introduction

This paper explores the online role of Hindu diaspora supporters for Brexit and Trump’s presidency in the UK and US. It begins by introducing Modi’s electoral victory in the Indian 2014 election, situating how the candidate’s populist stance on social media fostered a resurgence of ethno-nationalism rooted in Hindu identity. This performance of Hindu-ness resonated amongst a diaspora who helped cultivate Modi’s platform into modes of belonging. The response of Hindus living outside India is next foregrounded within a historical legacy of Hindutva organisations and movements in the West. The evolution of ‘cyber-Hindutva’ and the ‘Internet Hindu’ reflects a nexus of technological advances in global communications, the resources and skills of Hindus abroad, and an aggressive persona of transnational and identity politics.

What remains under-researched is how diasporic Hindutva has translated into support for populist radical right movements, parties and/or politicians in the West. With Islamophobic and anti-establishment campaigning during the Brexit referendum to leave the European Union and Trump’s election and presidency in the US, this ignited a highly vocal minority of Hindu diaspora supporters. This paper thus analyses the nature of involvement of diasporic Hindus in
Brexit Britain and Trump’s America as embedded within the Twitter network. It employs a qualitative approach to explore how Hindu account users interact and engage with salient issues on the platform. Preliminary findings demonstrate that users tweet to inform and (re)produce political attitudes in order to generate new forms of political participation and mobilization albeit concentrated in echo chambers defined by boundaries of exclusion/inclusion.

Ultimately, this paper combines different bodies of literature and approaches in order to theorize the newfound phenomenon of Hindu diaspora support for Brexit and Trump. It aims to illuminate commonly assumed paradoxical political views of a minority demographic, and contributes towards understanding and explaining their support for populist radical right movements, parties, and/or politicians in the West.

‘India has won’

India’s 2014 general election was unprecedented in political history. Combined with an innovative communications strategy, the BJP truly excelled on a platform focusing on issues of governance, anti-corruption, economic development and job creation (particularly in the technology industry), and infrastructure development. By simultaneously targeting the incumbent Congress Party for decades of ‘dynastic politics’ and the failure to create sustainable growth, the BJP reached out to a large and growing audience disillusioned with unscrupulous party politics.

The key ingredient towards BJP success was undoubtedly its candidate Narendra Modi. Positioning himself as an outsider with humble origins and a magnetic persona during the campaign, Modi’s tactic of attacking the political and media establishment was an attempt to ‘present himself as an aam admi, a common man’ (Jaffrelot 2015, 159), often a “victim” of an elite “news media conspiracy” (Chakravarty & Roy 2015, 316). The ‘social media politician’ (New York Times 2014) instead used social networking platforms (Twitter, Facebook, Google+, YouTube) as a highly effective communicative tool in engaging with the public by replying to questions, crowdsourcing comments and recommendations on key issues, and hosting live streams with young, first-time voters (Ahmed, Jaidka & Cho 2016; Chadha & Guha 2016; Pal 2015; see Rajagopal 2014). Modi strategically constructed a self-image of transparency,

---

1 Modi’s tweet upon hearing of electoral victory
accountability, and accessibility by exploiting a populist narrative. In many ways, Modi encapsulates ‘a larger brand image that at once straddles two spaces—a man who represents values and tradition and a man who represents globalized modernity’ (Pal 2015, 2). Modi’s electoral performance illustrates this delicate balance of defining India in the 21st century.

The PM’s populist revolt distinctively conflated ethno-religiosity as a basis of belonging against the secular, corrupt political and media establishment. Modi ‘associated himself with Hindu symbols and personalities’, playing into the domain of upper class, upper caste Hindu culture saturated with ethnoreligious connotations wrought by a legacy of Hindutva politics (Jaffrelot 2015a, 160; 2015b, 24). If ‘Hindu nationalist politics has oscillated between ethno-religious nationalism, and socio-economic issues of corruption and economic growth throughout its career in postcolonial India’ (Udupa 2014, 15), then 2014 was the hallmark of a success story. Modi’s victory, however, could not be possible without significant diaspora support, who helped cultivate his campaign platform into identity-based frames of transnational belonging. Volunteer networks abroad, such as the Overseas Friends of BJP, played a prominent role during the campaign (Chadha & Guha 2016). The next section highlights the growth of Hindutva amongst the UK and US diaspora.

Hindu hurt

The performance of Hindu identity amongst the diaspora is a way of simultaneously constructing imaginaries of the homeland and of creating an identity outside India. This paper defines the Hindu diaspora according to Vertovec’s three meanings: as a social form (‘an identified group characterized by their relationship-despite-dispersal’), as a type of consciousness (marked by ‘awareness of multi-locality’ and ‘engagement with, and consequent visibility in, public space’), and as a mode of cultural production (‘involving the production and reproduction of transnational social and cultural phenomena’) (2000, 141-160). Long-distance nationalism is therefore not a one direction trajectory, either spatially, temporally, or bodily, but rather, a continuous cycle of active engagement between the homeland and communities abroad. Hindu diasporic identity is dynamic and constantly reproduced based on contextual experiences. The malleability of diasporic spaces to find one’s ‘roots’, however, allows easy access for

---

2 It should be noted, however, that being pro-Modi does not necessarily equate to being pro-Hindutva. Often, the two are conflated but due regard should be taken towards recognizing that Modi’s victory came from a variety of supporters, including those that voted for his neoliberal economic proposals than ideological justification.
Hindutva to flourish.

Hindutva ideology and organisations has a historical presence amongst the Hindu diaspora in the UK, US, Canada, the Caribbean, and eastern and southern Africa (Bhatt & Mukta 2000, 435). The diaspora significantly provides financial support for political projects in India through campaigning efforts by Hindutva organisations (Kamat & Matthew 2003, 12; Matthew 2000). Whilst joining in such activities is a way of building socio-cultural capital with other entrepreneurs and professional migrants (Matthew & Prashad 2000, 524), it more importantly provides comfort to a diaspora seeking to define itself in the West. For many, Hindutva organisations signal a moral compass amidst the perceived ‘loss of Hindu identity, tradition, values and dharma in the face of Western materialism, consumption, permissiveness, immorality, corruption and the pursuit of lucre’ (Bhatt 2000, 572). The demand from migrants to educate their children in Hindu traditions (Jaffrelot & Therwath 2007) reflects an attempt to reconnect with their ‘culture’ of ‘back home.’ Hindutva organisations seize upon this opportunity to present a version of Hinduism that can accommodate the diasporic experience.

Whether serving as ethnic lobbies in party politics, or adopting a human rights discourse in terms of a victimhood narrative (Jaffrelot & Therwath 2007; Therwath 2012; Zavos 2010, 12; Bhatt 2000, 580; Kamat & Matthew 2003), the 'multicultural turn' in the West has had a profound impact on diasporic Hindutva organisations. In post-9/11 America, Hindutva manifests as an ethnic lobby to policy makers and legislators, as American Hindu representatives distance themselves from the Muslim ‘other’ by exploiting anti-Islam sentiments (Kurien 2006). In the UK, despite disproportionate socio-economic success as a minority population, the articulation of ‘Hindu hurt’ by diasporic Hindutva organisations plays upon experiences of historical marginalization and racism. These organisations regularly feature in British government policies related to diversity, multiculturalism, and community cohesion in the name of religious and cultural plurality (Zavos 2010, 18). Further, self-described umbrella organisations (which operate outside the Sangh Parivar network) campaign on issues of Hindu representation in the public sphere, employing the discourse of multiculturalism such as politics of recognition for the ‘Hindu community’, thereby institutionalising and essentialising Hindu identity (see Anderson 2015). British Hindutva is thus the outcome of a highly politicized agenda that is a reaction to the

---

nexus of transnational and multicultural identity politics.

Whilst Hindutva has succeeded under Western multiculturalism, it has undoubtedly bolstered within the climate of the current BJP government and Modi in India. Modi’s claims of representing ‘the people’ (Hindus) against the ‘dangerous others’ (Muslims and secular elite), resonates amongst a diaspora keen to preserve their Hindu identity in the West. The emergence of ‘Internet Hindus’ or ‘Cyber Hindus’, described as ‘self-styled right-wing Hindu activists,’ are frequently recruited by the BJP in India and in diasporic locations to push pro-Hindutva/Modi, as well as anti-Muslim and anti-secular, coverage online (Udupa 2014, 15; Chadha & Guha 2016, 4397-8; Chakravartty & Roy 2015, 318). Internet Hindus construct the narrative of India as a Hindu rashtra by promoting a ‘golden’ Hindu past. Modi is consequently viewed as a figure capable of restoring lost glory. And by creating this boundary against the Muslim ‘other,’ Internet Hindus build on Islamophobic anxiety prevalent in a post-9/11 era, especially in the West.

For many, online performance is a means of engaging in ‘Hindutva politics as discursive practice’ in order to ‘recast Hindu nationalism as an entrepreneurial, ideological project of net-enabled youth’ (Udupa 2015, 436, 433). The Internet Hindu hence ‘can be seen as a local phenomenon with a global presence, with his elite character intact and his penchant for aggressive, identity-based political speech amplified through his presence on social media networks’ (Mohan 2015, 342). For participating members of the diaspora, belonging to a global Hindu-ness attracts those seeking a connection with the homeland. It simultaneously reinforces a collective, stable identity as a community.

What remains under-researched is how diasporic Hindutva—amplified by online networks—has translated into Hindu diaspora support for populist radical right movements, parties, and/or politicians in the West. Islamophobic and anti-establishment rhetoric during the Brexit referendum to leave the European Union and Trump’s campaign and presidency in the US likely resonated with right-wing diasporic Hindus. The following provides a brief overview of how these campaigns employed populist radical right discourse, at times deliberately targeting the Hindu diaspora.
Take back control

Populist radical right movements and parties promote an ideological combination of ethno-nationalism, xenophobia expressed as cultural racism, and anti-establishment populism (Rydgren 2005). National identity is conflated with a distinct cultural identity rooted in an ethnic past. The contemporary populist radical right hence holds ‘a visceral opposition to, and demonization of Islam’ and consequently, ‘immigrants from Muslim countries’, whom are viewed as incompatible with national values (Kallis 2015, 28; Rydgren 2007, 244). The ‘elite’ political and media establishment are criticized for failing to respond and resolve issues such as uncontrolled Muslim immigration threatening (ethno)national identity.

Ethnic minorities and/or immigrants rarely support the populist radical right. As such, very little research exists about these supporters. One notable exception is a case study in the Netherlands. Roopram & van Steenbergen (2014) analysed Hindustani voters of the Freedom Party (PVV), a populist radical right party with a strong anti-immigration and anti-Islam platform. Whilst some Hindustani PVV voters promoted a ‘work ethos’ discourse citing concerns of immigration as an economic burden on the welfare state (56), others (solely Hindu) advocated a ‘hindu-nationalist’ discourse that fears Islam as a cultural threat to the Netherlands (ibid., 57). The latter spoke of Islamist radicalisation and extremism, connecting historical and cultural narratives of past Muslim rule in India to the contemporary threat of ‘Islamization’ of Dutch society (ibid., 55-6). This is particularly important as it signals how Hindutva can operate and adapt to local contexts, and ultimately, bolster support for populist radical right ideology in the West. If we are to consider how the PVV appealed to Hindustanis in the Netherlands, then such insight might also apply to pro-Brexit and Trump Hindu supporters.

During the 2016 referendum campaign for Britain’s membership in the EU, the populist radical right UK Independence Party attacked the establishment for failing to address issues of immigration and integration—escalated at the time by sensational media coverage of the refugee crisis. UKIP leader Nigel Farage blamed the metropolitan elite for enacting policies that created ‘parallel lives’ and hence, Islamist extremism within communities (Kallis 2015). In doing so, UKIP portrayed Muslims as a ‘fifth column’ within British society who were a threat to national culture and national security. By linking potential Islamist extremist activity of future refugees to past integration policy failures, UKIP promoted a discourse of fear in the present. UKIP

---

4 Slogan used by the Leave camp of the UK EU referendum campaign
significantly used Twitter as an avenue to garner support during the campaign, including broadcasting the party’s platform to users instead of the mainstream media, setting the discursive framing of the Leave camp, and creating the appearance of direct access in the political realm (Usherwood & Wright 2017). The extensive use of Twitter bots by the pro-Brexit side additionally helped generate more and targeted content (Howard & Kollanyi 2016, 4). In short, UKIP exercised an impressive social media strategy during the EU referendum which helped ensure its populist radical right message had reached an intended audience.

Throughout the US national election the same year, Trump’s campaign likewise galvanized support with a populist radical right narrative. Whilst a majority of Trump’s policy proposals were not radical, the campaign’s rhetoric was outwardly hostile towards governing political institutions (Eiermann 2016). In a study of Trump’s Twitter following, for example, Wang et. al (2016) found that attacks on the incumbent Democratic political party received the most “likes”; in short, anti-establishment sentiment was a motivating factor for Trump supporters who were largely disaffected with the governing status quo. What made Trump’s campaign especially unique, however, was a deliberate targeting of Hindu Americans.

Ab Ki Baar Trump Sarkar

During autumn of 2016, at the height of the US election, a particular Indian-American individual, Shalabh Kumar, gained notoriety in the media spotlight for being an active proponent of Trump’s candidacy, having donated nearly $1 million to the presidential hopeful’s campaign. Kumar launched the Republican Hindu Coalition the same year, an advocacy organisation seeking to be the ‘bridge between the Hindu-American community and Republican policymakers and leaders’ (RHC website 2017) on issues pertinent to the US and India, such as trade and foreign policy relations, as well as security cooperation on Islamist extremism.

In October 2016, the RHC sponsored a public, ‘family fun’ event featuring Bollywood performances and keynote speaker Trump. Trump’s speech contained a few key themes that drew praise from the audience. First, Trump stressed entrepreneurial success, both in India and among American Hindus. The then-candidate described how ‘[Hindu] values of hard work, education, and enterprise’ have contributed to US society. More significantly, Trump referred to

5 More research on the Trump campaign’s social media strategy is needed in order to effectively evaluate the extent of online support for populist radical right discourse.

6 For whole speech see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bz51FYfHV2M.
Modi’s economic schemes as a model for the US, prompting much applause. Launched in 2014, Modi’s ‘Make In India’ initiative spurs job creation by encouraging foreign direct investment. It eliminates tax regulations and bureaucratic red tape in order to create more business-friendly sectors, particularly in manufacturing and production. Its aim is to cultivate India as a 21st-century economic powerhouse. For many American Hindus, Trump’s vision to ‘Make America Great Again’ relies on similarly favourable neoliberal policies. By projecting the myth of the American Dream, Trump attracted an audience beyond his core voters by embodying American capitalist ideals.

Secondly, Trump praised India’s role in fighting ‘radical Islamic terrorism’, especially with Pakistan. By doing so, Trump targeted the heart of the Hindu nationalist narrative: anti-Muslim anxiety, where Islam is viewed as a foreign threat to Indian security. Although Indian Muslims represent the country’s second largest religion, their minority status has been continuously undermined by Hindu nationalists as ‘anti-national’, ultimately reinforcing the idea that India is a Hindu nation and Pakistan a Muslim one. Additionally, Bangladeshi migrant workers in India are also stigmatised for promoting Islamist activities. Sensationalised stories of ‘radicalised’ migrants have prompted reactionary responses to increase border security with the Muslim majority nation. Anti-Muslim prejudice on the subcontinent towards Pakistanis and Bangladeshis has carried over in the form of Islamophobic views in post-9/11 America, with a sizeable cohort that continues to hold negative stereotypes.

Lastly, Trump called out on ‘crooked Hillary’ with her links to the ‘politically correct’ establishment. At the event, a poster surfaced that showed Hillary Clinton, with devil horns, as being in cahoots with Congress leader Sonia Gandhi to eliminate Modi in a ‘witch hunt’. By once again citing Modi as a role model ‘who has been very energetic in reforming India’s bureaucracy’, Trump signals his appreciation of the PM’s initiative to root out corruption. Like Modi, Trump cultivated a persona as an anti-establishment figure.

Following its pseudo-rally, the RHC produced campaign material specifically targeting Hindu Americans. Self-described as the ‘Ab Ki Baar Trump Sarkar’ (This time a Trump government) campaign—modeled after ‘Ab Ki Baar Modi Sarkar’ in 2014—the RHC released a video ad featuring Trump reinforcing his commitment to Hindu American interests and speaking in Hindi, ‘Ab Ki Baar Trump Sarkar’. After the election, international news outlets

7 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IzZVhLdtLV8
took greater notice of the RHC and Kumar’s devotion to Trump and his platform. Indeed, Kumar held a prominent role in Trump’s transition team, and continues to be involved in the White House as part of the Asian Pacific American Advisory Committee and the National Committee of Asian American Republicans. The BBC reported Kumar as ‘the go-to guy not just for Indian-Americans chasing opportunities in the new administration but apparently for the Indian officials seeking contacts with Trump’s aides’ (2017). Kumar often visits India as spokesman for the RHC, providing media interviews where he declares support for the Trump administration and promises favourable US-India relations.

What Kumar, the RHC, and ‘Ab Ki Baar Trump Sarkar’ symbolize is a much larger phenomenon at play. Combined with the emergence of online-based groups such as ‘Hindus for Trump’, and the less vocal but noticeable shift towards Brexit in the UK, diasporic Hindus as visible proponents of populist radical right ideas has been simmering for some time. Ideological, transnational connections exist between Hindutva and the populist radical right in the form of anti-Muslim anxiety and anti-establishment sentiment. The following section discusses preliminary findings of how diasporic Hindus participate in and engage with pro-Brexit and pro- Trump content on Twitter.

**From #JaiHind to #MAGA**

Unlike a large number of studies conducted on social media platforms that mainly incorporate a quantitative approach, this paper focuses on a qualitative design that aims to capture the nature of Twitter activity and interactions between users. Twitter account users were manually chosen of Hindus living in the UK and US who express pro-Brexit and/or pro-Trump political opinions, whether in the form of tweeting original content, retweets, and/or replies to other users. Determining account selection criteria was difficult due a number of factors, not least that a limited number of accounts were explicit in revealing both Hindu identity and preference for populist radical right politics. Often, Hindu names and/or photos became an indicator, although determining religious affiliation was tricky and ran the risk of essentialising ethnic/racial identities based on phenotype, e.g. conflating Hindus with Sikhs or even Muslims. Further, the location of accounts collected was determined by listed profile information and/or tweets that originated with British or American content which signaled deeper familiarity of local issues (again, this ran the risk of assuming knowledge was linked to place of residence).
What was certain was that accounts had to contain right leaning political content that favoured Brexit (not exclusively UKIP) and/or Trump (not exclusively Republican). If accounts additionally tweeted Hindutva or pro-Modi material this was a bonus, but not a necessary condition.

Lastly, account users were both individuals and organisations, although a majority belonged to the former. Some accounts belonged to ardent leaders, activists, or advocates, whilst others to private individuals. The number of followers or levels of activity were not significant factors as much as participation in the Twitter network. Accounts that had never tweeted, however, were disregarded for the sample. Over time, some account users did change privacy settings to protected tweets and data collection thus ceased unless tweets were made public again. Others had changed usernames or to entirely new accounts, making it difficult to track accounts at times.

Beginning April 2017 to present, Nvivo software was used to scrape entire timelines of selected Twitter accounts. Utilising Nvivo software tools, the word frequency of tweets was first extracted, inclusive of stemmed words, e.g. ‘vote’ and ‘voting’ (figure 1).

---

8 Accounts were not followed with the exception of a few prominent accounts followed prior to data collection. Furthermore, in order to protect anonymity of account users, despite Twitter content as publicly available data, personal information has not revealed and/or disclosed in the findings.
Clearly, the word ‘Trump’ (as well as the president’s Twitter handle) was the most frequent word within the tweet collection. Other frequent words included in descending order: ‘people’, ‘vote’, ‘Hillary’, ‘Muslim’, ‘elect’, ‘Islam’, ‘UKIP’, ‘Obama’, ‘media’, ‘liberal’, ‘maga’, etc. Conducting a word frequency query was useful as it indicated common topics discussed on Twitter.

But in order to explore how key issues trending on the social media network could be most relevant in informing and (re)producing political attitudes, manual coding was applied using a text search query to reveal how certain words were used in context. Five key themes that were further categorized by subtype were coded: 1) ‘immigration’ (including the terms ‘illegal’; ‘refugee’; ‘rape’; ‘multiculturalism’), 2) ‘foreign policy’ (including the terms ‘India’ and/or ‘Modi’ and/or ‘BJP’; ‘EU’), 3) ‘establishment’ (including the terms ‘Hillary’ and/or ‘Clinton’ and/or ‘Hillary Clinton’; ‘Obama’; ‘media’ and/or ‘BBC’ and/or ‘CNN’; ‘liberal’ and/or ‘left’; ‘Democrats’; ‘Labour’), 4) ‘Hindu’ (including the terms ‘Hindus’ and/or ‘Indian’), and 5) ‘Islam’ (including the terms ‘Muslim’ and/or ‘terrorism’ and/or ‘ISIS’). By coding tweets according to term usage in conversation, this developed an approach to explore how Hindu users participate within Twitterverse culture and community. For example, a query on the word ‘immigration’ highlighted its use by all account users and the tweets in which the word was used in order to discern where particular terms occur in content. Figure 2 provides an example of a word tree, highlighting how ‘immigration’ was discussed in one thread of conversation.

Figure 2
Here, the term ‘immigration’ is discussed with regard to a potential Trump administration that would favour legal immigration based on amiable relations with PM Modi. In the same thread, a call to action is made towards Indian Americans not to vote for (crooked) Hillary Clinton likely due to the candidate’s policy platform on immigration. This conversation thread indicates it took place during the time of the US presidential election as it references the RHC sponsored ‘Ab Ki Baar Trump Sarkar’ campaign.

Further, if we want to examine the nature of the relationship between themes, a cluster analysis as displayed in figure 3 provides a visual representation of themes clustered together based on words in common.

![Nodes clustered by word similarity](image)

Figure 3
Based on the cluster analysis, we can infer that multiculturalism is frequently used in tweets referencing the Labour party in the UK, as well as the role of the BBC and the EU in relation to Labour. This is likely due to the policy mandate of the political-media establishment on multiculturalism, and subsequently how critics place blame on its failure.

The above preliminary findings are useful indicators in how Hindu account users discuss salient issues on Twitter. It supports the hypothesis that Hindus participate and engage in the populist radical right’s discursive online milieu.

Discussion

This paper brings together different bodies of literature and approaches in order to understand how diasporic Hindu identities might be subsumed into exclusivist national political agendas in Western societies. By collecting and analysing data of diasporic Hindu Twitter users that express pro-Brexit and pro-Trump content, we obtain insight into how online spaces may help construct meanings of ethnic and (trans)national identities. Based on preliminary findings, it is clear that Hindu account users are actively engaged in political discussions within the Brexit and Trump Twittersphere(s). Their interactions frame key issues and beliefs in online spaces. This involvement merits consideration towards situating their role within the wider milieu of populist radical right agendas.

Hindu account users perform political agency as a conscious act of engagement on Twitter’s platform. The network serves as a medium that also reciprocates the imagined audience back to the user, effectively creating how information is processed (Marwick & boyd 2010). Their practices and experiences shape how ideas, strategies, and agendas are cultivated into political realities made possible by digital communication. For Hindu users, participating in the Twittersphere signals belonging on multiple levels: as individuals, as an imaginary collective diasporic Hindu-ness, and as members of Twitter society. These acts condition what Bennett & Segerberg (2012, 752, 760) describe as connective action, or ‘interpersonal networks’ that ‘resemble collective action, yet without the same role played by formal organizations’ whereby technology becomes the organizational principle (see also Bimber 2017).

Difficulty arises when pinpointing the nature of diasporic Hindu political participation and mobilization. The extent to which Hindutva remains an influential factor in motivating
diasporic Hindus to support the populist radical right remains unknown; boundaries are often blurred and contextual with much left to interpretation. Further, Hindus in the UK that voted for Brexit may or may not be UKIP voters/supporters, just as Hindus in the US that voted for Trump may or may not be Republican voters/supporters, thus complicating how we might understand the ways in which populist radical right narratives evolve, converge, and adapt beyond traditional party—and perhaps, movement—boundaries. Their emergence reflects what Chadwick (2013, chapter 1) describes as a convergence of ‘older organizational forms—political parties and interest groups—[that] now blend together their own preexisting campaigning styles with mobilization repertoires typically associated with social movement organizations’. This paper consequently explores the significant role of populist radical right discourse as it develops, adapts, and modifies on social media.

More research is needed to determine the extent to which diasporic Hindu users operate within Twittersphere. These findings are a first step towards gathering data on how such identity building processes emerge, develop, and proliferate amongst users. Continued exploration will help illuminate the commonly assumed paradoxical political views of a highly vocal demographic, as well as provide context of their support for populist radical right movements, parties, and/or politicians in the West.
References


Eviane Cheng Leidig  
Center for Research on Extremism  
University of Oslo


