

New forms of cultural nationalism? American and British Indians in the Trump and Brexit Twittersphere

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Abstract

Diaspora networks are one of the key, but often invisible, drivers in reinforcing long-distance nationalism towards the ‘homeland’ but simultaneously construct nationalist myths within their countries of residence. This article examines Indian diaspora supporters of Brexit and Trump in the United Kingdom and the United States who promote exclusionary nationalist imaginaries. Combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, it analyses British Indian and Indian American users that circulate radical right narratives within the Brexit and Trump Twittersphere. This article finds that these users express issues of concern pertinent to the radical right—for example, Islam and Muslims and the left-oriented political and media establishment—by employing civic nationalist discourse that promotes cultural nationalism. It sheds light on digital practices among diaspora actors who participate in the reinvigoration of exclusionary nationalist imaginaries of the Anglo-Western radical right.

KEYWORDS

Brexit, cultural nationalism, diaspora, radical right, Trump

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1 | INTRODUCTION

The rise of the radical right in Europe and North America, as well as India, the Philippines, Brazil and Turkey, demands a global evaluation of contemporary forms of exclusionary nationalism. Although international connections have long existed between radical right nationalist movements (see Motadel, 2019), 'transnational communities' (Portes, 2000) continually reconfigure and reinvigorate nationalist imaginaries. Digital communications in diaspora and migrant networks are key, though often invisible, drivers of such reconfigurations.

Research has focused on exploring how diaspora and migrant communities employ digital communications to reconnect with the 'homeland' and foster long-distance nationalism (see Koukoutsaki-Monnier, 2012). With regard to the Indian diaspora, our focus in this article, much of the existing literature concerns the phenomenon of digital *Hindutva* (or Hindu nationalism) in order to support majoritarian nationalism in India (Biswas, 2010; Conversi, 2012; Mathew, 2000; Mathew & Prashad, 2000; Rajagopal, 2000; Therwath, 2012). This reflects a wealth of literature concerning the relationship between media use and diasporas (see Georgiou, 2006; Karim, 2003).

Yet, we argue that there is a lacuna in the literature towards situating not only how the diaspora reinforces long-distance nationalism but nationalism within their countries of residence. Despite reference to virtual diasporic communities that '[represent] a cultural minority hoping to function as an interest group in a consolidated nation-state' as a 'reformed, expanded' nationalism (Hylland Eriksen, 2007, pp. 10–11), we look beyond the formation of ethnic and religious interest groups in order to secure representation as a means to fulfil governmental policy agendas of integration and multiculturalism. Rather, we build upon Appadurai's (1996) notion of 'new patriotisms', which posit 'new forms of linkage between diasporic nationalisms, delocalized political communications, and revitalized political commitments at both ends of the diasporic process', the latter reflected by Indian diaspora use of digital communications to engage simultaneously with Indian politics and 'minoritarian' diasporic politics (p. 196). We utilise this concept to illustrate how members of the Indian diaspora in the United Kingdom and the United States construct new linkages on online platforms between the 'homeland' and countries of residence/settlement through an exclusionary nationalist lens.

This article situates Indian diaspora supporters of Brexit and Trump in the United Kingdom and the United States that articulate civic nationalist discourse in order to foster their inclusion in exclusionary forms of cultural nationalism in a manner not yet addressed in literature on the radical right nor on diasporas. We first introduce how the Western radical right has come to adopt civic nationalist rhetoric as a means of foregrounding 'our' national values on the basis of culture. We then turn to the emergence of *Hindutva* among diaspora communities in the United Kingdom and the United States, which, contrary to the ethnonationalism of *Hindutva* in India, is reconfigured in the diaspora as cultural nationalism. Next, we argue that diaspora *Hindutva* merged with the Brexit and Trump campaigns in 2016 to create a new expression of cultural nationalism articulated through civic nationalist frames.

From this basis, we explore British Indian and Indian American supporters of Brexit and Trump who use Twitter to embed themselves in the Anglophone radical right milieu. Using combined qualitative and quantitative methods, we analyse the discourse and social ties of pro-Brexit and pro-Trump Indian diaspora Twitter accounts by employing a word collocation analysis of tweets, a network analysis of retweets and a keyword analysis of retweets in order to determine how these users articulate and frame key themes related to the radical right. We find that this sample of Indian diaspora Twitter users draws upon civic nationalist frames to engage with influential radical right networks that promote cultural nationalism. Overall, we shed light on diasporic actors who employ digital communications to participate in the reinvigoration of exclusionary nationalist imaginaries of the Anglo-Western radical right.

2 | ETHNIC MINORITY SUPPORT FOR THE RADICAL RIGHT?

We define the radical right in both ideational and behavioural terms, following the general consensus in literature within this field. The radical right refers to actors and organisations that promote a pro-democratic (i.e. ideational)

and anti-violence (i.e. behavioural) approach to achieve their means; the extreme right, on the other hand, promotes an anti-democratic and pro-violence approach. Both the radical and the extreme right fall under the umbrella of the far right, which is ideologically consolidated around nativism, extreme nationalism and authoritarianism (see Mudde, 2019). Using this definition, we focus on the Brexit referendum and Trump's election in 2016 as events that received support from the radical right.

Literature on radical right parties, movements and politicians considers their articulation of nationalism to centre on ethnic homogeneity. For example, Rydgren (2007) describes the radical right's 'emphasis on ethno-nationalism rooted in myths about the distant past' with the aim of 'strengthening the nation by making it more ethnically homogenous' (p. 242; see also Elgenius & Rydgren, 2019). Bar-On (2020) similarly develops the notion of nationalism as the 'master concept of the radical right' (p. 17). The implicit assumption is that the radical right favours ethnic over civic variants of nationalism, with the former seen as exclusionary and the latter as inclusionary.

Whereas we acknowledge that a vast majority of the radical right supports an ideology that falls under the definition of ethnonationalism, on the other hand, Halikiopoulou et al. (2012) argue that much of the success of the radical right today stems from an ability to articulate civic nationalist frames:

How does a party or movement pushing what amounts to an ethnic exclusivist agenda annex the values of tolerance, liberalism and diversity in the interests of mobilising a nation? The answer: by identifying these values as the unique patrimony of the nation, threatened by an influx of outsiders who do not share and are unable or unwilling to adopt them. In other words: 'our' nation is one of tolerance, liberalism and diversity and that tradition is threatened by an influx of intolerant, reactionary and narrow-minded 'others'. (p. 109)

Here, they claim that the radical right has successfully adopted civic nationalist rhetoric in order to proclaim itself a guardian of the 'values' of the nation-state. This shift in rhetoric is partly due to reformed strategies and tactics of the radical right for recruitment purposes, as well as a discursive transformation to legitimise the radical right's message for mainstream appeal (Akkerman et al., 2016, pp. 1–27; Mudde, 2004, 2007).

We also challenge the assumption that ethnic nationalism equates to exclusionary practices and civic nationalism equates to inclusionary agendas. As highlighted by Brubaker (2004), both ethnic and civic nationalism are 'simultaneously inclusive and exclusive. What varies is not the fact or even the degree of inclusiveness or exclusiveness, but the bases or criteria of inclusion and exclusion' (p. 141). Namely, the former is based on common ethnicity with 'an emphasis on descent' or 'ethno-cultural' (pp. 136–137); the latter is based on citizenship that, 'by its very nature, is an exclusive as well as an inclusive status' or by 'political creed' (pp. 141–142). By extension, civic nationalism is not inherently more inclusive, but rather a different form of inclusivity.

We argue that one consequence of the radical right's linguistic shift towards civic nationalism is that it has enabled the rise of ethnic minority and immigrant supporters who favour radical right agendas in Western societies (see Leidig, 2019; Mulinari & Neergaard, 2018; Pettersson et al., 2016; Roopram & van Steenberg, 2014). Boundaries of inclusion and exclusion do not have to be necessarily ethnic or racial in nature and can instead co-opt the civic variants of 'values' as described by Halikiopoulou et al. We claim that the employment of civic nationalist frames merely serves as a tactic of the radical right in order to effectively promote an exclusionary *cultural* nationalism. By cultural nationalism, we are referring to a variant of nationalism in between ethnic and civic nationalism in which national identity is shaped by a shared dominant culture. According to Hutchinson (2015), the 'primary aim of cultural nationalists is to identify and revive what they regard as a distinctive and primordial collective personality that has a name, unique origins, a history, a culture, a homeland, and social and political practices' (p. 1). In short, a radical right vision of cultural nationalism prioritises the cultivation of a hegemonic culture based on historical antecedent, in which 'non-native' differences can be accepted so long as a significant degree of assimilation is achieved within the dominant culture. By denoting the nation in terms of cultural values, this could similarly be viewed as adopting the language of cultural racism that surpassed the biological racism previously characteristic of the radical

right (see Barker, 1981). Below, we illustrate how individuals in the Indian diaspora revise and reconfigure the boundaries of who belongs in the nationalist imaginary articulated by the British and American radical right, afforded by their deployment of civic nationalist discourse in order to promote cultural nationalism.

3 | THE CULTURAL NATIONALISM OF DIASPORA *HINDUTVA*

The rise of diaspora *Hindutva* organisations partly responds to the desire of diaspora communities to create a collective identity as a minority outside of India. As such, we first provide a brief overview of *Hindutva*, before situating the emergence of diaspora *Hindutva*. We highlight how diaspora *Hindutva* organisations arose in congruence with the creation of (virtual) long-distance nationalist sentiment, but, equally important, came to adopt narratives of nationalist myth making within their countries of settlement, thus opening up possibilities for cementing 'new patriotisms'.

Hindutva refers to an ideology that aims to create a Hindu *rashtra*, or state, in India. Its ideologues equate Hindu identity with Indian identity and advocate for a majoritarian nationalism based on the territorial domain of ancient Hindu civilization (Leidig, 2020a). Thus, *Hindutva* can be characterised as a variant of ethnonationalism, in which being a Hindu literally equates to *Blut und Boden* [Blood and soil]: 'a "natural" geography and sacred ties of blood' (Zachariah, 2015, p. 653). *Hindutva* first emerged during British colonialism in which Muslims were viewed as an internal enemy complicit in the colonial project. Following India's independence in 1947 and the Partition of the sub-continent into India and Pakistan, *Hindutva* actors continued to play a role in constructing the imaginary of India as a Hindu nation-state. The subsequent decades witnessed the proliferation of *Hindutva* organisations, including the establishment of the *Bharatiya Janata Party* (BJP, or Indian People's Party), the only political party that has adopted *Hindutva* as its official ideology. Today, the BJP governs India under Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

During the 20th century, Indian emigrants to the United States and Europe established diaspora *Hindutva* organisations to build community identity around shared experiences of racism and discrimination within these new 'host societies', in addition to creating long-distance nationalist sentiments towards the 'homeland' (Bhatt, 2000; Jaffrelot & Therwath, 2007; Mathew, 2000; Mathew & Prashad, 2000; Mukta, 2000; Raj, 2000; Rajagopal, 2000; Zavos, 2010). Over time, the Indian diaspora in Western societies gained socio-economic status in middle-class professions, especially with new migrants in the 1980s and 1990s employed in the information and communication technology sector. *Hindutva* organisations used the web to appeal to migrants and the diaspora abroad, with particular attention to students and engineers in IT that had settled in North America (Therwath, 2012, p. 555). Such active interventions resulted in the recruitment of so-called Internet Hindus to promote long-distance nationalism that supports *Hindutva* in India but also creates a diaspora globally united under the banner of Hindu identity. In short, *Hindutva* organisations were 'quick to understand and tap the potential of the Web to bind together a heterogeneous and geographically spread-out community and transform it into an "imagined community"' (Therwath, 2012, p. 557). This article explores how this 'imagined community' can result in new formations of digital nationalism expressed by the diaspora towards their countries of settlement/residence, building on the concept of 'new patriotisms' to include allegiance to the radical right's cultural nationalist project.

Although diaspora *Hindutva* organisations maintain long-distance nationalist sentiments towards India, they simultaneously came to construct narratives of nationalist myth making in Western societies. Many organisations, such as the *Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh* (HSS, or Hindu Volunteer Organisation), *Vishwa Hindu Parishad* (VHP, or World Hindu Council) UK and America and Overseas Friends of BJP (OFBJP), responded to the policy agenda of multiculturalism by lobbying or mobilising at the grassroots level in the name of cultural and religious pluralism (Anderson, 2015; Bhatt, 2000; Jaffrelot & Therwath, 2007; Kamat & Mathew, 2003; Kurien, 2006, 2016; Zavos, 2010). By claiming to represent the Hindu community, diaspora *Hindutva* organisations became the dominant voice in 'interfaith forums and government consultations' (Anderson, 2015, p. 41) on issues of community cohesion, diversity and integration. Consequently, diaspora *Hindutva* organisations adopted civic nationalist discourse based

on liberal values of tolerance and respect for difference and defined themselves in opposition to other ethnic and religious communities (i.e. Muslims) who allegedly do not support these values (Kurien, 2006; Zavos, 2010). Here, we detect a shift from the ethnonationalist expressions of *Hindutva* in India towards the civic nationalist rhetoric of diaspora *Hindutva* in order to promote a cultural nationalism that posits Muslims as the cultural 'other'. This shared linguistic attribute with the Western radical right provides common ground between these movements.

4 | THE POLITICAL OPPORTUNITIES OF BREXIT AND TRUMP

The Leave.EU and Trump campaigns in 2016 represent conjunctures in which diaspora *Hindutva* merged with the exclusionary elements of the radical right's cultural nationalism. The campaigns highlighted certain issues that resonated with what diaspora *Hindutva* organisations had been articulating for years, especially the threat of Islam. Even more so, they made a direct appeal to British Indian and Indian American voters.

During the EU referendum campaign, the portrayal of Muslims as cultural 'others', encapsulated by the so-called refugee crisis that dominated news headlines, was a particularly salient trope (Virdee & McGeever, 2017). At its height, prominent Brexiteer Nigel Farage posed in front of what became the infamous 'Breaking Point' poster depicting a mass number of (mostly male) Middle Eastern refugees supposedly at Europe's borders (Virdee & McGeever, 2017) and bearing the words 'We must break free of the EU and take back control'. In building upon and reinforcing pre-existing anxieties surrounding uncontrolled borders as dictated by the EU's freedom of movement clause, this implies that Muslim migrants would take advantage of the current immigration system and pose a threat to British culture and society.

The referendum results revealed that approximately one-third of British Asians voted Leave. Specifically, 33% of Hindus supported Brexit (Ashcroft, 2016) compared with 41% of British Indians overall (Martin et al., 2019, p. 6). This suggests that the Leave campaign's anti-Muslim platform to protect a cultural nationalist identity at least partially appealed to the concerns of this demographic.

The Trump campaign in the United States performed less successfully among Indian Americans. Ultimately, only about 16% of Indian Americans voted for the Republican candidate. This is unsurprising given that the majority identify as Democrat and ideologically liberal (Ramakrishnan et al., 2016). Yet, the minority of Indian American Trump supporters remain a highly vocal and importantly, well-funded bloc. This is best epitomised by the efforts of the Republican Hindu Coalition (RHC), which, in 2016, endorsed Trump's campaign *before* he secured the Republican nomination (Thobani, 2019, p. 6).

In October 2016, the RHC featured Trump as the keynote speaker at a public rally.¹ Trump began by stating 'I'm a big fan of Hindu and I'm a big fan of India ... if I'm elected President, the Indian and the Hindu community will have a true friend in the White House', before describing Indian Americans as hard-working and entrepreneurial 'good immigrants'. Trump also highlighted India's role in fighting 'radical Islamic terrorism', promising stronger US-India collaboration in 'defeating' this threat. By referencing Islam as a national security threat to both the United States and India, Trump merged the narrative of a global War on Terror into the long-standing narrative of India as a Hindu nation. In other words, the 'geographies of India and the US are made symbolically synonymous, metaphorically mapped onto one another via concerns to secure their (different) territorial boundaries' (Thobani, 2019, p. 13).

The Brexit and Trump campaigns thus directed efforts to appeal to Indian diaspora voters. These campaigns crystallised the ideology of diaspora *Hindutva* with the Anglo-Western radical right through a shared anti-Muslim and anti-Islam agenda promoting cultural nationalism, but importantly doing so with civic nationalist rhetoric referring to immigration and citizenship. In response, the emergence of pro-Brexit and pro-Trump Indian diaspora Twitter accounts based on identitarian membership, such as 'Sikhs for Britain' and 'Hindus for Trump', signified a new medium of expressing support on the platform (Leidig, 2020b). We next address how Twitter became a means for Indian diaspora users to consolidate and mobilise around the radical right's view of cultural nationalism using civil nationalist discourse.

5 | METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

We employ a mixed quantitative and qualitative approach to explore how Indian diaspora Twitter users position themselves within a radical right agenda of cultural nationalism through deployment of civic nationalist discourse, focusing specifically on supporters of Brexit and Trump. Twitter was the chosen social media platform of study based on its prominence in the Brexit (Howard & Kollanyi, 2016; Usherwood & Wright, 2017) and Trump campaigns (Kreis, 2017; Wang et al., 2016). Recent work on the far right online demonstrates that far right politicians and social movements in North America and Western Europe use Twitter to engage with audiences and politicise cultural identity (Ganesh & Froio, 2020; Klein & Muis, 2019), build transnational followings (Froio & Ganesh, 2019) and enable wide dissemination of propaganda (Åkerlund, 2020). Indeed, far right users have utilised digital media for decades to build community, share information and construct and connect with what has been referred to as a global white identity (Perry & Scrivens, 2016). Today, the far right continues to make use of digital media for mobilisation, community building and establishing boundaries between in-groups and out-groups (Caiani & Parenti, 2016; Fielitz & Thurston, 2019; Gaudette et al., 2020; Simpson & Druxes, 2015).

Research on *Hindutva* on Twitter focuses on users in India (Farokhi, 2021; Udupa, 2018), whereas studies of diaspora *Hindutva* as a digital phenomenon is more limited (for exception, see Leidig, 2020b; Therwath, 2012; Thobani, 2019). Consequently, this paper identifies and fulfils a major gap concerning not only the relevance of Twitter for diaspora *Hindutva* mobilisation but also highlights the potential of the social media platform for bridging transnational connections in the shared ideology of diaspora *Hindutva* and the Western radical right, building upon 'new patriotisms' in diaspora digital communications.

For this article, NVivo's NCapture software was used to scrape entire timelines of 39 Indian diaspora Twitter users who express pro-Brexit and pro-Trump views, providing the first to most recent tweet of each user, during the time period April 2017 to April 2018 (Leidig, 2019). The sample of Twitter accounts was manually selected of diasporic Indians living in the United Kingdom and the United States, beginning with public figures and organisations and using a snowball method based on tweets, retweets, mentions and/or replies. Determining account selection was difficult due to the limited number of users that revealed a Hindu identity and preference for Brexit and/or Trump. Indian Sikh and Christian diaspora users actively posting pro-Brexit and Trump content were additionally included given a restrictive sample size of solely Hindus (for more, see Leidig, 2019). Further, the location of accounts was determined by listed profile information and/or tweets signalling British or American origin, which indicated familiarity with local issues (the risk here was assuming knowledge was linked to country of residence). Importantly, nearly all users shared content in support of both Brexit and Trump, thus indicating the nature of exchange on Twitter as an intrinsically transnational phenomenon.

TABLE 1 Breakdown of Twitter account users by (a) type of account and country and (b) descriptive statistics

Type of account	Country	
	United Kingdom	United States
Individual	17	20
Organisation	2	8
Total	19	28
Mean followers	4024.75	
Mean tweets	13,666.66	
Median followers	861	
Median tweets	6037	
Standard dev. followers	8877.57	
Standard dev. tweets	23,761.07	

Table 1 details the type of account, for which two and eight are organisations in the United Kingdom and the United States and 17 and 20 belong to individuals, respectively. Note that we collected data on 39 users, although the table displays 47 accounts. This is because users deleted and created new accounts during data collection, such that two or more accounts can be attributed to the same user.

The table also provides descriptive statistics including the mean number of followers and tweets, the median number of followers and tweets and the standard deviation of followers and tweets. Our approach is particularly valuable in understanding Indian diaspora Twitter users in support of Brexit and Trump as it starts with the entire timelines of these accounts rather than keywords.

To analyse the data, we employ three quantitative approaches to explore three issues: first, the nature of participation of these diaspora users in key themes of radical right discourse; second, evidence that illustrates the centrality of civic nationalist rhetoric in upholding cultural nationalism for Indian diaspora supporters of Brexit and Trump; and third, discursive subcommunities that measure the extent of their exchange with others, giving more granularity to our understanding of the broader network of these Indian diaspora users. We selected three metrics that address each of these issues, respectively: (1) the probability of particular word collocations, (2) retweet connections between users and (3) keyword analysis of all tweets. This combined approach highlights how these users take advantage of the platform, positions them in specific discursive subcommunities and evaluates *who* they seek to engage with in radical right networks.

6 | FINDINGS

6.1 | Word collocations

Word collocations of tweets provides insight into how Indian diaspora Twitter users articulate and frame key themes related to the radical right. We decided to quantitatively explore collocations of the words 'Islam', 'Muslim' and 'left' on the basis that these codes not only receive high numbers of tweets but are also prevalent themes in radical right rhetoric on social media to designate out-groups (Ganesh & Froio, 2020; Gaudette et al., 2020; Klein & Muis, 2019). We do so with a metric that explores the words that are most likely to appear adjacent to the words representing the codes. Our findings indicate that although these users frame Muslims as a threat to civic values and cultural national identity, they also focus on the threat of the political left and its proximity to the 'establishment'. Thus, there is a significant homology between cultural racism and anti-establishment views identified by scholars of the radical right in European countries (Caiani & Conti, 2014; Froio, 2018; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017; Rydgren, 2017).

Here, we explore the role of civic nationalist framings around these words for this sample of Indian diaspora users. Table 2 presents the 10 most probable collocates for each code (measured by their log-likelihood value of co-occurrence within four words of the code; see Baker, 2006). Word collocations provide an overview of the frames most likely to be attached to these codes. The collocations are sorted in descending order of their log-likelihood score. The higher the log-likelihood, the more likely those two terms are to appear within four words of one another.

The overarching finding across the word collocations of these codes demonstrates that Islam/Muslims and the political left are constructed as out-groups that are threatening to national values and the security of 'well-integrated' minority groups such as these Indian diaspora users. Islam, of course, is used to reference the religion as a whole, whereas Muslim tends to be focused on the followers of that religion (hence we report collocates of both). Both sets of collocations once again show how these Indian diaspora users articulate civic nationalism to distance themselves from threatening cultural 'others' impinging on the nation.

Concerns of Islam as a 'radical' religion that upholds an 'ideology' that is 'incompatible' plays into radical right narratives and tropes that promote the idea that Islam is a cultural threat to Western societies. This is a key theme that has emerged in research on Islamophobia in the radical right online (Allen, 2016; Awan, 2014; Ekman, 2015; Froio, 2018; Törnberg & Törnberg, 2016). Reproducing a form of Islamophobia as 'a loosely defined Muslim culture

TABLE 2 Word collocations for 'Islam', 'Muslim' and 'left' by log-likelihood

Islam		Muslim	
Collocation	Log-likelihood	Collocation	Log-likelihood
radical, islam	381.9	muslim, brotherhood	245.1
islam, religion	162.7	muslim, gang	160.6
convert, islam	109.0	moderate, muslim	114.8
untold, islam	94.4	british, muslim	107.6
islam, peace	74.6	muslim, country	98.8
islam, ideology	67.7	muslim, grooming	97.6
converted, islam	45.3	muslim, woman	86.1
islam, muslim	40.4	muslim, ban	67.9
islam, incompatible	39.0	muslim, refugee	67.4
islam, political	36.0	non, muslim	63.1
Left			
Collocation	Log-likelihood		
left, wing	448.6		
the, left	291.1		
far, left	172.5		
alt, left	155.0		
regressive, left	100.8		
left, right	36.0		
tolerant, left	35.9		
caucus, left	34.9		
left, winger	32.0		
left, rig	24.8		

Notes: When the collocate precedes the code, the collocate is more likely to appear *before* the code. When it follows the code, the collocate is more likely to appear *after* the code.

and community inherently and homogeneously opposed' to mythical and essentialist 'Western values' (Mondon & Winter, 2017, p. 2163), these tweets position Islam as fundamentally at odds with the 'tolerance' and 'liberalism' of Western countries. As the founder of the aforementioned RHC, Shalabh Kumar, tweets,

My Hindu & Muslim friends around the world: @POTUS address to 55 Muslim nations may be the trigger that brings Islam back to religion of peace. (21 May 2017)

Hinduism, which most of these users adhere to, is viewed to be a 'compatible' religion in Western countries given the lobbying efforts of diaspora *Hindutva* organisations to present Hinduism as a 'peaceful' and 'tolerant' religion suited to Western norms (Kurien, 2006); in contrast, Islam, as Kumar indicates, is 'inherently and homogeneously unpeaceful.

The word collocation for 'Muslim' also complements the word collocation for 'Islam' as Muslims are viewed according to radical right tropes such as a 'terrorist' threat; as secretly extreme rather than 'moderate' in their religiosity; as hyper-sexualised deviants engaged in 'grooming' and 'rape'; and as 'refugees' and 'migrants' who pose a danger in spreading 'their' intolerant way of life upon 'our' tolerant values (see Alexander 2013 in Mondon &

Winter, 2017, p. 2156). Often, these tropes are combined into a representation of Muslims, as one tweet from the Hindus for Trump account reveals:

Muslim migrants murder priest in a church, we need to ban Muslim immigration, we need Trump!
[with hyperlink to a *New York Times* article about an ISIS attack in a church in France] (26 July 2016)

By framing Muslims as migrants linked to terrorist activity, these Indian diaspora users employ civic nationalist discourse that targets Muslims not on the basis of race, but rather through the lens of culture and religion that should be redressed with immigration policies. As Simonsen and Bonikowski (2019) note, conceptions of civic nationalism can correlate strongly with anti-Muslim, and not simply anti-immigrant, attitudes. Civic definitions of nationalism when interpreted on the basis of cultural nationalism can promote exclusionary views on the assumption that Muslims are incompatible with Western culture (see also Luong, 2019). Signifying Muslims as culturally incompatible essentialises a vast and diverse group of people as a supposedly 'culturally backward' monolith.

These Indian diaspora users instead identify themselves as 'good' and 'assimilated', positioned in happy co-existence with hegemonic Western/Christian culture (Thobani, 2019, p. 755). This plays into the notion of the so-called 'model minority' status of non-Muslim Indian Americans and British Indians (see Balan & Mahalingam, 2015; Saran, 2016). In reference to the high educational attainment and income of an ethnic minority demographic, coupled with low rates of criminality and high family/marital stability, model minorities are praised for their societal 'integration'. The non-Muslim Indian diaspora in the United Kingdom and the United States maintains this designation in socio-economic indicators (Office for National Statistics, 2020; Pew Research Center, 2015), thus reproducing a 'good immigrant' narrative, as opposed to the intrinsically unassimilable traits of Muslims.

Word collocations for the term 'left' additionally reveals how these Indian diaspora users describe those with left-wing ideological tendencies as a monolith with radical, emotional, 'regressive' and extremist views. Myriad terms such as 'far' and 'alt' left are used to construct this group as homogeneous and extreme. This essentialisation of the left advances an underlying argument in which those with 'left' views constitute part of the political and media establishment that seeks to undermine 'us' and 'our' values in favour of 'them' (i.e. Muslims). Often, these Indian diaspora users combine discourse about the political left and Muslims, as tweeted by a young British man of Hindu background:

The left clearly don't give a s**t about organised Muslim child grooming gangs targeting non-Muslim children.

In this case, this user attributes political correctness practiced by the political left that allows for grooming activities of Muslim men to proliferate unchecked. Again, what Halikiopoulou et al. (2012) describe as 'identifying these values as the unique patrimony of the nation, threatened by an influx of outsiders who do not share and are unable or unwilling to adopt them' (p. 109). This civic nationalist framing sustains the idea that those with a left-wing ideology do not preserve the cultural values of the nationalist imaginary, instead making affordances to 'outsiders' (i.e. Muslims) who threaten to erode the social fabric of Western societies.

By focusing on word collocations of the terms 'Islam', 'Muslim' and 'left', we identify how these Indian diaspora users employ civic nationalist rhetoric in order to construct boundaries against cultural 'others' that betray the values of the nation in which they have settled/reside, thereby promoting a radical right cultural nationalism. Although there are notable differences between American and British political systems and cultures, partly reflected by vocabulary in the word collocations (e.g. 'alt-left' commonly used in the United States and 'grooming' to refer to Muslim gangs in the United Kingdom), we find that there is an emergent Anglophone radical right ecosystem on Twitter (further explored below). This echoes previous research showing the trans-Atlantic linkages of far right networks on Twitter (Ganesh, 2020) and other online platforms (Pertwee, 2020).

Although word collocations provide insight into the discourse of these users, it does not consider the ties between users in these groups, nor is it adequate for differentiating and partitioning the users. We thus turn to network analysis in the following section, which allows us to understand the different groups that these users engage with and situate themselves. Moreover, understanding the connections between groups is necessary to ascertain the degree to which the commitment to civic nationalist discourse as a tactic of cultural nationalism is involved in the enactment of transnational linkages between users.

6.2 | Network analysis of retweets

Our network analysis focuses on relations between sampled Indian diaspora users and radical right publics on Twitter. We attempt to partition the sampled users by focusing on retweets to situate users in specific segments based

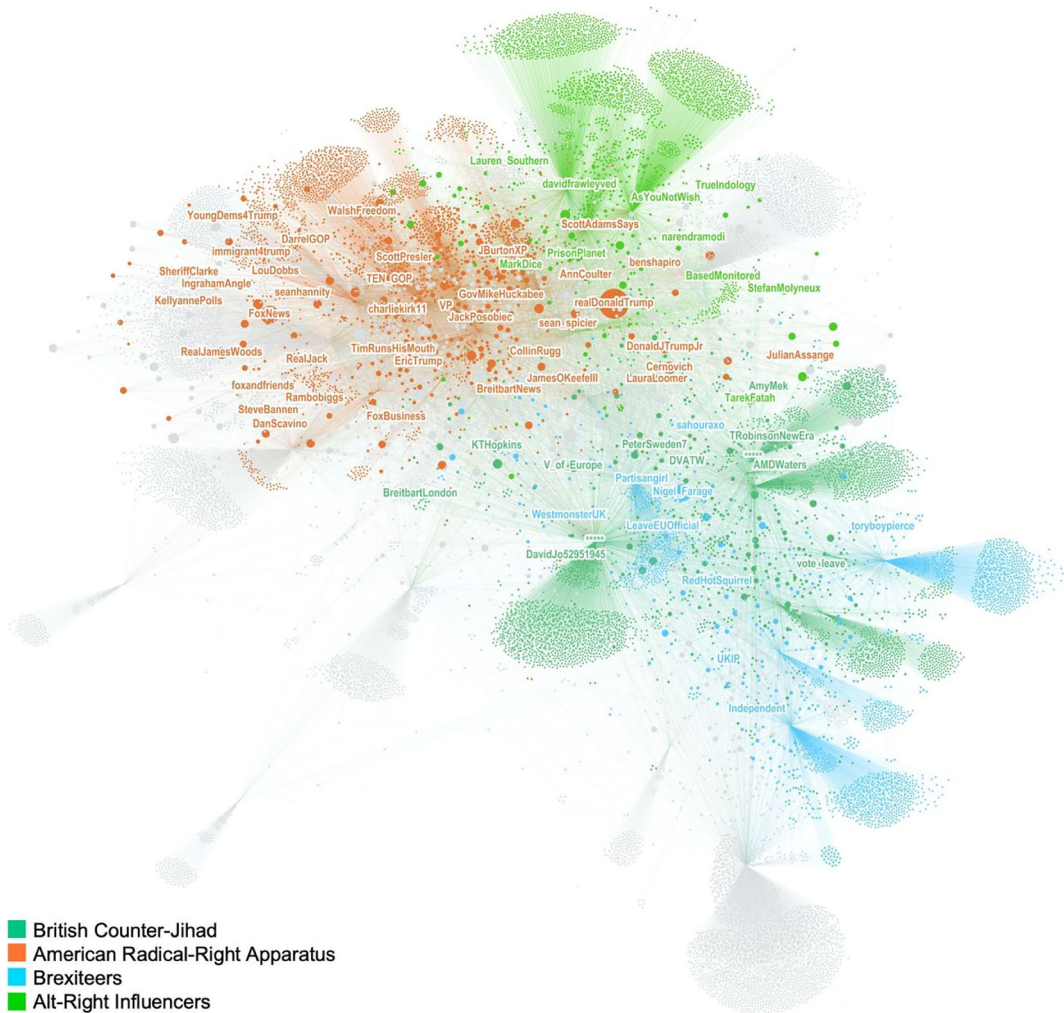


FIGURE 1 Network graph highlighting four main communities. Note: Account handles designated with * are to protect identities of Indian diaspora Twitter users in the sample. Named users refer to Twitter screen names and only appear for users in one of the four communities retweeted 120 times or more. Only the top four communities are indicated in the legend above, constituting 53% of all users' retweets [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

on who they retweet, similar to the technique used by Froio and Ganesh (2019). Unlike tweets, which have no inherent data that can be used for a social graph to study ties between users on the platform, retweets or tweets with mentions can be used to construct a graph.

Figure 1 provides a visualisation of a directed network graph of each of our 39 users' retweets and their targets. Starting with the 185,580 tweets authored by the sampled users, we extracted all retweets, yielding 102,606 retweets (55% of the total). To compile the general structure of the graph and its most influential nodes, we measure the degree centrality of each node in the network, which represents a user in our dataset (whose names are suppressed), as well as other Twitter accounts whom they retweeted. Thus, each node has a variable number of outgoing connections, signalling retweets 'sent' to the targeted account (out-degree), and a variable number of incoming connections, indicating retweets 'received' (in-degree). Each incoming or outgoing connection (an edge) increases a node's degree centrality by one. Thus, we can measure the most retweeted accounts using in-degree centrality, the total count of incoming connections. In the graph (Figure 1), accounts with the largest nodes (represented as circles in the visualisation) have the highest in-degree centrality.

Table 3, meanwhile, displays the Top 20 accounts by in-degree centrality. Clearly, Trump's official Twitter handle is disproportionately retweeted by this sample of users. However, the table also provides insight into which Twitter accounts tend to absorb the attention of this set of Indian diaspora users. It demonstrates that these users are actively engaged within the British and American radical right Twittersphere.

In order to position each node into a subgroup of this network, we employ network analysis techniques to explore the connection between different groups. Referring to Table 3, although Donald Trump is retweeted almost three times more than the second place account—@PrisonPlanet (British far right personality Paul Joseph Watson)—in-degree centrality is heavy-tailed, and it is possible that individual users or sets of them (given that our sample has

TABLE 3 Top 20 accounts retweeted by sample of users

Account	In-degree
realDonaldTrump	6127
PrisonPlanet	2060
Cernovich	1291
FoxNews	1228
JackPosobiec	1088
TRobinsonNewEra	882
Nigel_Farage	841
DineshDSouza	770
DonaldJTrumpJr	717
RealJamesWoods	706
mitchellvii	701
sahouraxo	618
LeaveEUOfficial	541
DarrelGOP	514
AnnCoulter	505
KTHopkins	409
ScottPresler	402
benshapiro	401
AMDWaters	376
wikileaks	375

TABLE 4 Four largest communities engaged with by Indian diaspora users, based on retweets

Community	Count of users	Per cent of total nodes in this community	Top 5 accounts retweeted
1. British Counter-Jihad	8 (UK based)	17%	TRobinsonNewEra; KTHopkins; AMDWaters; British Indian Twitter user in our sample; V_of_Europe
2. American Radical Right Apparatus	10 (US based)	13%	realDonaldTrump; Cernovich; FoxNews; JackPosobiec; DonaldJTrumpJr
3. Brexiteers	4 (UK based)	11%	Nigel_Farage; sahouraxo; LeaveEUOfficial; UKIP; WestmonsterUK
4. Alt-Right Influencers	4 (US based)	12%	PrisonPlanet; AsYouNotWish; StefanMolyneux; MarkDice; TarekFatah

a number of UK- and US-based users) may have retweeted one account significantly more than another. In order to position these users into specific clusters and identify such idiosyncratic behaviour, we use a modularity class algorithm that identifies communities in a network based on their connectivity to one another (Blondel et al., 2008). We iteratively use modularity class to detect specific communities to produce a sufficiently granular set of communities without having too many that would make analysis too complex. After several passes of the community detection algorithm, 12 communities were identified; however, we focus on the top four in Figure 1 due to length considerations.

Table 4 breaks down the four largest communities from Figure 1 with the number of users in each community, the per cent of all nodes that belong within it and the Top 5 accounts retweeted. Together, these four make more than 50% of the total nodes in the dataset.

6.3 | Interconnectivity between communities and (trans)nationalism

Focusing on the four communities above, the 'American Radical Right Apparatus' and 'Alt-Right Influencers' communities receive the most retweets from other communities, which suggests that they are likely to be hubs where we can identify transnational retweet relationships (e.g. going from the United Kingdom to the United States, or vice versa). Indeed, US-based users that we identify as part of these two communities frequently connect with British users. Looking at the data overall, we see that most of these users are primarily engaged in information exchange and engagement with users in their own countries, yet specific political leaders and ideological groups are key nodes in building a bridge for information exchange between American and British users engaged with the radical right.

This finding highlights a unique transnational integration between these US- and UK-based communities. As Pertwee (2020) notes, the counter-jihad movement is trans-Atlantic, with shared overlap with the American alt-right and 'Trumpian Republicanism', a relationship measured by our 'British Counter-Jihad', 'Alt-Right Influencers' and 'American Radical Right Apparatus' communities. In particular, 'this heterogenous political coalition was drawn together by an apocalyptic narrative of Western crisis, decline and capitulation to Islamic conquest, and a conspiratorial narrative of left-liberal collusion with Muslims to bring about the "Islamization of the West"' (p. 218): out-group designations reflected in the network analysis of retweets and the word collocations of our users. The bridge between UK and North American counter-jihad networks, according to Pertwee, formed in such a way that it 'is able to appeal to groups historically excluded by the far right' (pp. 213–217).

We argue that frequently overlooked among groups historically excluded are non-Muslim Indian diaspora actors and their adherents captured in the 'British Counter-Jihad' and 'Alt-Right Influencers' communities above. For

instance, the top accounts most retweeted in the 'British Counter-Jihad' community include founder of the English Defence League, Tommy Robinson (@TRobinsonNewEra), anti-Sharia activist Anne Marie Waters (@AMDWaters) and British tabloid columnist Katie Hopkins (@KTHopkins). Their accounts have since been banned from Twitter for violating hate speech policies, but examples of their tweets reveal how each of them are uniquely situated in their appropriation of *Hindutva* narratives to promote their counter-jihad agenda:

The biggest Hindu-Sikh Holocaust in World History Whitewashed. @TRobinsonNewEra (17 May 2017) [with link to an article by Hindu nationalist website Hinduxistence.org]

If the recent million or so migrants to Europe had been Hindu (say), would the terror/rape still have followed? We all know the answer. @AMDWaters (10 July 2017)

The victim was Hindu. The killer Muslim. And so religion is not mentioned. In India—just as across Western Europe, New Zealand & the Christian countries, one religion always benefits from censorship of the facts. @KTHopkins (15 May 2019) [with shared images of newspaper headlines of a woman stabbed to death in Delhi]

Each of these tweets signal a familiarity with *Hindutva* narratives, and when combined with the anti-Islam stance of a broader counter-jihad movement, provides a unique transnational orientation. Furthermore, the English Defence League included a Sikh Division built on an anti-Muslim alliance, as well as former spokesperson Guramit Singh Kalirai (Lane, 2012, pp. 28–39; Singh, 2017, pp. 40–42). Links between the EDL and Hindus were not as formalised but still existent (Lane, 2012, pp. 40–45). Tommy Robinson, meanwhile, has long been an outspoken advocate of *Hindutva*, interviewing influential Indian figures on the threat of Islam² and discussing the need for labelling crime perpetrators as Muslim, not 'Asian', in order to protect Hindus and Sikhs.³

On the other hand, the 'Alt-Right Influencers' community includes two prominent *Hindutva* commentators—@AsYouNotWish (Sonam Mahajan) and @TarekFatah—based in India and Canada, respectively. That they are featured in the same community with other top accounts @PrisonPlanet, @StefanMolyneux and @MarkDice reveals a unique ideological convergence between *Hindutva* and the Anglo-Western radical right.

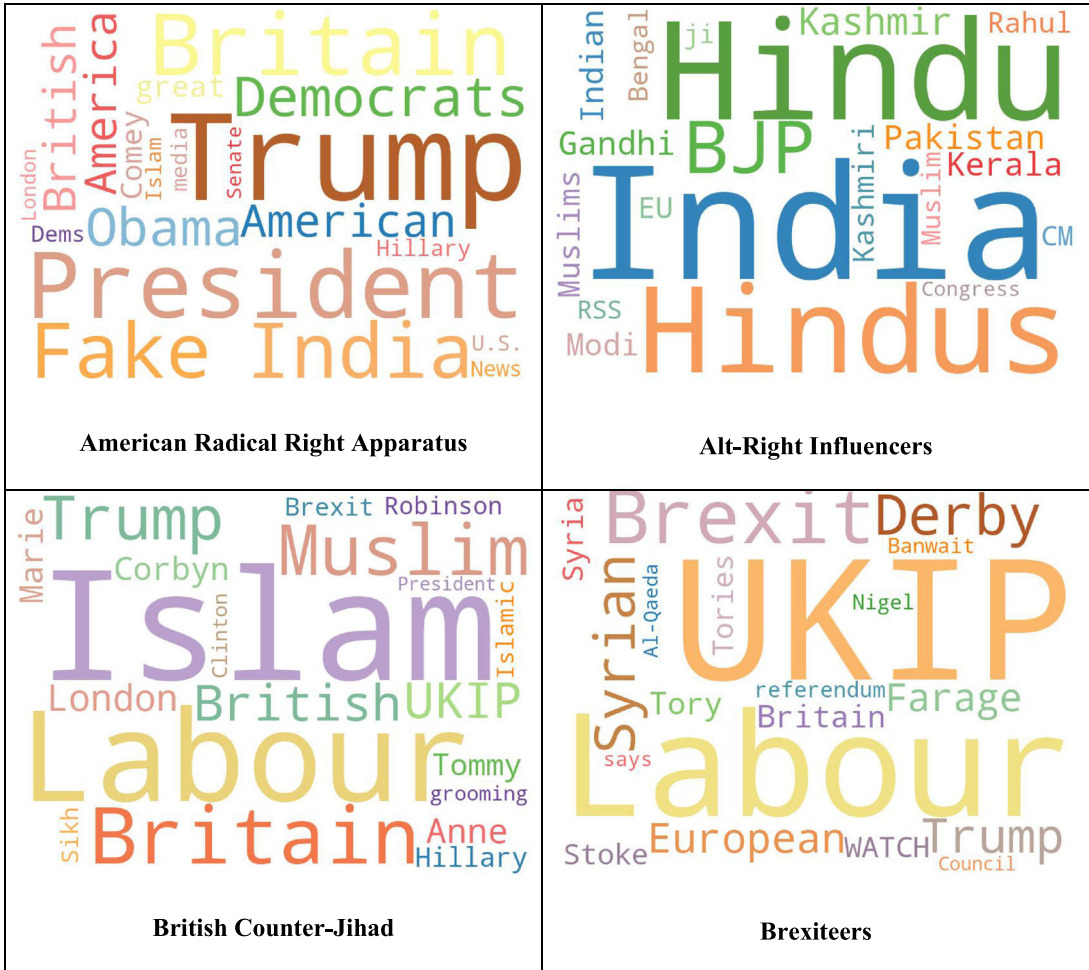
We next explore these four largest communities using a keyword analysis of all tweets to position how civic nationalist framing is employed by radical right actors, sometimes in combination with *Hindutva* narratives, to promote cultural nationalism.

6.4 | Keyword analysis of discursive communities

In this section, we expand the scope of our analysis by considering the unique topics of conversation between tweets in each community at an aggregate level by calculating and studying each community's keywords. The following discourse analysis situates the in-group and out-group dynamics and network interactions by considering all tweets (both retweets and other types of tweets) authored by users in each community. To do so, all of the tweets in each community were collected together into a corpus of documents and turned into a frequency distribution of words. The frequency of each word in the community is then compared with the frequency of that word used across *all* the communities using a chi-squared test. This generates a keyness value that allows us to identify the words that are most peculiar to that community, applying a method similar to Baker (2010). We then visualise the Top 20 words for each of the four communities in a word cloud displayed in Table 5, where the words are sized by their keyness value. This provides a high-level overview of the main topics of discussion.

As Wodak (2011) argues, the construction of positive representations of self and negative representations of others in racist discourse depends on representations of social actors to stand in for the whole, labelling social actors

TABLE 5 Keywords of four largest communities



positively and negatively, justifications and framing strategies. Through our analysis of the keywords, the repetition and production of in-group and out-group boundaries is central to all these communities. Moreover, across the communities, we identify common topoi parts of argumentation that ‘enable and justify the transition from the argument or arguments to the conclusion’, which construct Muslims as a constant threat and the left as the scapegoat for supporting them (see Wodak, 2011, pp. 63–64). By differentiating themselves from Muslims and the left, these Indian diaspora users seize upon the civic nationalist framings offered by the radical right to include themselves in their conceptions of ‘us’, ‘we’, ‘our’, ‘their’ and ‘them’ through their use of Twitter in everyday life. Further building upon Wodak (2015), who argues that ‘right-wing populist parties instrumentalize some kind of ethnic/religious/linguistic/political minority as a scapegoat for most if not all current woes and subsequently construe the respective group as dangerous and threatening “to us”’, Indian diaspora users latch onto the political scapegoats articulated by the radical right. However, in doing so, they reconfigure the borders that define the ‘us’ invoked in the radical right’s exclusionary nationalism, which is often defined through the lens of ethnic and cultural homogeneity. With social media affording different forms of interactivity and logics of content distribution based on popularity (see Van Dijck & Poell, 2013), Indian diaspora users’ routine repetition and reproduction of these civic nationalist narratives helps insert themselves into the ‘imagined community’ of the radical right.

The 'American Radical Right Apparatus' community is clustered around Twitter accounts based in the United States. The keywords in this community illustrate that countries such as Britain and India are prominently referenced by these users, indicating that this community tends to include commentary that constructs Islam and Muslims as threats across India, the United Kingdom and the United States. One well-known radical right pundit opines about the Manchester Arena bombing:

UK spent more time harassing Tommy Robinson for saying this would happen than stopping this.
@JackPosobiec (23 May 2017) [with link to Sky News coverage]⁴

By accusing British police and law enforcement of focusing on far right actors at the expense of addressing jihadist terrorism, the tweet highlights how American and British radical right actors construct the threat of Islamist extremism to the United States and the United Kingdom. Returning to Appadurai's notion of 'new patriotisms', this represents new forms of linkages between diasporic actors and radical right politics that are underwritten by the civic nationalist framings used in the 'American Radical Right Apparatus' community. The insinuation that the UK 'establishment' focuses on harmless activists like Tommy Robinson shows that 'others' (i.e. Muslims) take advantage of the political left's multiculturalism policies with the intent to undermine societies, which resonates with Indian diaspora users. Top accounts in this community frequently employ radical right civic nationalist framing of the political left as usurping 'our' values at the expense of threatening cultural 'others'.

In other communities, these users refocus a sense of 'us' by bringing India into the picture, often using it as an allied territory also under threat from Islam and Muslims. In fact, the 'Alt-Right Influencers' community is based on users located primarily in the United States who are the most extreme ideologically and often tweet *Hindutva* content (as discussed above), frequently referencing far right themes on 'Islamisation'. Tweets about the topic often promote the 'Eurabia' and 'Islamisation' theories whereby Muslims are alleged to be intent on spreading jihad by virtue of demographic warfare in order to eventually instal an Islamic caliphate in the West (Bangstad, 2013; Carr, 2006; Lee, 2015). This is commonly framed as civic nationalist rhetoric that situates Islam and Muslims as a threat to Europeans and North Americans collectively, but these Indian diaspora users also include India as part of this collective under threat. The community's keywords are disproportionately centred on India, Hindu(s) and references to Prime Minister Modi, as well as South Asian politics more generally. This is best reflected by one tweet that highlights the threat of Islam to Hindu-majority India:

What Islamic Invaders really did to India—A Muslim Historian writes in Hindustan Times.
@TarekFatah (24 March 2017)

Here, this tweet serves as a warning to Western societies about the 'invasion' of Islam, as was experienced by the subcontinent under the Islamic Mughal Empire centuries ago. Given that this account is North American based, this can be compared with the fact that 'the epicentre of Hindu nationalist forces is in the diaspora, and more precisely in the United States' by virtue of online activity (Therwath, 2012, p. 567). Our findings indicate that this holds true among this community of users. We thus term these users *translators*, as they fuse *Hindutva* ideology into Anglo-Western radical right networks. Here, these users help bridge a shared ideological commitment to exclusionary nationalism in India with that in Western societies. They do so by portraying Muslims and Islamic 'culture' as incompatible with 'our' ostensibly civic, democratic values.

The third community, 'British Counter-Jihad', occasionally tweets in reference to *Hindutva* narratives, though the word cloud for this community depicts that most of the words used by these accounts refer to the British context, which is unsurprising given that these accounts are UK based. Users in this community retweet accounts that discuss Islam and Muslims as primary issues of concern. For example:

Labour owns the Muslim vote Theresa. Don't prostitute Britain in the pursuit of it. #standstrong.
@KTHopkins (3 September 2017)

By signalling the centre-left Labour Party as 'owning' the Muslim vote bank, this invokes the notion that the party is 'appeasing' the British Muslim community. This rhetoric extends through several retweets concerning 'Muslim grooming gangs', for instance:

Live: 'Young girls led out of Derby house after police raid'—No prizes for guessing the religion of these 'men'. @TRobinsonNewEra (12 August 2017)

By linking Islam as the rationale for engaging in acts of grooming, this conflates a 'culturally backward' religion with abusive behaviour assumed to be the practice of that religion. In engaging with the radical right's broader racist narrative on 'grooming gangs', Indian diaspora users position themselves as part of the British 'us' allegedly threatened by Islam and Muslims, betrayed by the political and media establishment seeking to 'appease' Muslims in the name of multiculturalism (see Cockbain & Tufail, 2020).

Finally, discourse in the 'Brexiters' community is composed of users based in the United Kingdom who emphasise a radical right cultural nationalism using civic nationalist frames as it targets the EU and the political left for not representing 'our' values. For example:

Virtue signalling EU Leaders have welcomed ISIS into their cities. I'm 100% behind Trump's plan to Make America Safe Again. @NigelFarage (2 February 2017)

By equating EU politicians with an open border policy on immigration, this reinforces the narrative that freedom of movement poses a risk for potential migrants who sympathise with Islamist extremism to enter through Europe's borders and into the United Kingdom. Likewise, Farage's reference to Trump, who will make America 'safe' shortly after the so-called Muslim travel ban was put into effect, indicates a trans-Atlantic convergence of a radical right agenda articulated as civic nationalism through immigration policies.

Civic nationalist discourse enables Indian diaspora users in the Brexit and Trump Twittersphere an opportunity to create and express 'new patriotisms' that advance the radical right's exclusionary nationalism. Whereas the keywords in the 'American Radical Right Apparatus' and 'Alt-Right Influencers' communities reference the construction of North America, Europe and India as a shared geography threatened by Islam and Muslims, in the 'British Counter-Jihad' and 'Brexiters' communities, we see how this is localised through particular debates about child sexual exploitation and freedom of movement. By reproducing the in-group and out-group boundaries through translating *Hindutva* ideology and localising their discourse around specific debates, these Indian diaspora Twitter users represent a significant and important milieu on the margins of the radical right. The civic nationalist discourse of the radical right provides a space for articulations of Indian diaspora patriotisms, commitments proven by their repetition of key scapegoats of Muslims and the political left. What is interesting—and consistent—is how these users connect *Hindutva* and the radical right in narrations of 'us' in the Brexit and Trump Twittersphere.

7 | CONCLUSION

In this article, we take as our premise the notion that diaspora and migrant networks not only promote long-distance nationalism towards the 'homeland' through digital communications but can equally serve to reinforce nationalism within their countries of settlement/residence, in effect constructing 'new patriotisms'. We argue that such displays of nationalism can take an exclusionary, rather than inclusionary, stance.

We begin by situating how the Western radical right has adopted civic nationalist rhetoric as a means of articulating 'our' national values on the basis of cultural nationalism. We argue that this discursive shift has

resulted in the rise of ethnic minority and immigrant supporters that favour radical right agendas in Western societies. Consequently, we aim in this article to highlight a case study of how Indian diaspora supporters of Brexit and Trump in the United Kingdom and the United States reconfigure the boundaries of who belongs in the cultural nationalist imaginary as articulated through the civic nationalist rhetoric of the British and American radical right.

We explore British Indian and Indian American supporters of Brexit and Trump who use Twitter as a means of discourse and information exchange in order to embed themselves into the Anglophone radical right milieu. Using combined quantitative (word collocations, network analysis and keyword analysis) and qualitative (discourse analysis) approaches, we find that these Indian diaspora users perpetuate and circulate narratives of the radical right, sometimes in combination with *Hindutva* tropes. By discussing issues such as Islam and Muslims and the left-oriented political and media establishment according to civic nationalist frames, these users engage with influential Anglo-Western radical right actors that promote cultural nationalism.

Further, we find that despite these Indian diaspora users confined to national contexts, the nature of their exchange with prominent radical right Twitter accounts consists of cross-national issues. Thus, we argue that these users play a key role in reconfiguring transnational dynamics into nationalist imaginaries. Overall, we shed light on individuals in diaspora networks that employ digital communications to participate in exclusionary nationalist myth making according to civic nationalist rhetoric expressed by the Anglo-Western radical right.

For future research, there are a few avenues that remain to be explored. First, if Indian diaspora users latch onto civic nationalism to find a place in the 'us' narrated by the radical right, it is still unclear to what degree the radical right in the United Kingdom and the United States has reciprocated this relationship. More pertinently, future research taking up this topic, but using other data sources, might explore the extent to which India is recognised, alongside Europe and North America, as a country facing the *same* threat. Considering the notion that the far right in European and settler-colonial countries depends on an imaginary of a 'white diaspora' (Back, 2002), future research would benefit from exploring the extent to which the radical right sees India and its non-Muslim population as facing the same threat. This raises further questions about the ways in which Indian diaspora actors articulate 'new patriotisms' and the extent to which they are successful in reshaping the 'us' of the radical right in their countries of settlement, which overwhelmingly imagines an ethnic homeland.

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ENDNOTES

¹ For whole speech, see 'FULL Donald Trump Speech At Hindus United Against Terror Event 10 152,016 Hindus For Trump', Republican Hindu Coalition, YouTube, 15 December 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bz51FYfHV2M>

² Tommy Robinson and Tapan Ghosh: Islam's War Against Hinduism in India, Rebel News, 23 January 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MMZjUIJSsQY&feature=youtu.be>

³ https://www.therebel.media/tommy_robinson_muslim_not_asian

⁴ Due to ethical considerations of privacy, we have focused on examples of retweets of top nodes in these communities in lieu of presenting tweets of Indian diaspora users in our sample.

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