Lisans Üstü Tez Makalesi

(RE)PRODUCTION OF HINDUTVA-DRIVEN POPULISM IN INDIA: AN ANALYSIS OF BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY'S POLITICAL MESSAGING IN TWITTERSPHERE[*]

Hindistan'da Hindutva Güdümlü Popülizmin (Yeniden) Üretimi: Bharatiya Janata Partisi'nin Twittersphere'deki Siyasi Mesajlarının Analizi

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Abstract

This study develops an understanding of how India's Bharatiya Janata Party used Hindutva doctrine for building populist discourse on Twittersphere during 2019 general elections. Keeping in view the close ideological connection of the BJP with extreme right wing Hindu organization Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh – which laid ground for modern-era Hindutva movement – and increasing incidents of persecution and exclusion of minorities under the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi since 2014, this study uses the technique of critical discourse analysis to analyze the political messages posted by BJP and its leaders for developing themes and sub-themes of Hindutva-driven populism at micro, meso and macro levels. The study found that Hindutva ideology played a determining role in political messages of the BJP by constructing the people and us vs them notions, encouraging ostracization of others, promising Hindutva reforms in New India and building imagery of charismatic political leader through historical, mythological and ritualistic references. The study makes considerable contribution to the fields of communication and political science by pointing use of right-wing populist discourse as a tool of political communication to garner votes of dominantly Hindu population and pave way for reduced political liberties, undemocratic practices and Hindu chauvinism.

Keywords: *Bharatiya Janata Party, Narendra Modi, Hindutva, Right-wing Populism, Political Communication, Indian Nationalism.*

Öz

Bu çalışma, Hindistan Bharatiya Janata Partisi'nin 2019 genel seçimlerinde Twittersphere'de popülist söylem oluşturmak için Hindutva doktrinini nasıl kullandığına dair bir anlayış geliştiriyor. İdeolojik olarak BJP modern çağ Hindutva hareketinin zeminini hazırlayan aşırı sağ Hindu örgütü Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh ile yakından ilişkilidir. Bu arada, 2014'ten beri Başbakan Narendra Modi'nin hükümeti altında azınlıklara yönelik zulüm ve dışlama artmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışma, eleştirel söylem analizi tekniğini kullanarak Hindutva

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güdümlü popülizmin temalarını ve alt temalarını mikro, orta ve makro düzeyde geliştirmek için BJP ve liderlerinin yayımladığı siyasi mesajları analiz etmektedir. Çalışma, Hindutva ideolojisinin BJP'nin politik mesajlarında belirleyici bir rol oynadığını ortaya koymuştur; halk ve biz vs. onlar kavramlarını inşa ederek, başkalarının dışlanmasını teşvik ederek, Yeni Hindistan'da Hindutva reformları vaat etmekte ve tarihî, mitolojik ve ritüelistik aracılığıyla karizmatik siyasi lider imgeleri oluşturmaktadır. Çalışma, sağcı popülist söylemin, baskın Hindu nüfusunun oylarını toplamak ve azaltılmış siyasi özgürlükler, demokratik olmayan uygulamalar ve Hindu şovenizminin yolunu açmak için bir siyasi iletişim aracı olarak kullanılmasına işaret ederek iletişim ve siyaset bilimi alanlarına önemli katkılar sağlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Bharatiya Janata Partisi, Narendra Modi, Hindutva, Sağ Popülizm, Siyasal İletişim, Hint Milliyetçiliği.*

Introduction

After India's general elections held in April and May in 2019, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) mainly dominated by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) rose to power for a second consecutive tenure. This was the first time when the BJP gained such a huge electoral dominance in the lower house of the Indian parliament – also known as the *Lok Sabha* – and this development also sent the waves of serious concerns in some people around the world due to the BJP's close ideological closeness with the ultra-right Hinduist group: the RSS or the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. The RSS laid the foundation of the modern-era Hindutva[1] movement under the slogan of "one nation, one caste and one culture." After the BJP established the government in 2014 with the former RSS activist Narendra Modi as the Prime Minister of India, the number of incidents of persecution and intolerance towards minorities particularly the Muslims has increased. This study is an attempt to discuss the historical development of the Hindutva movement as a populist political thought and explain how the BJP electoral campaign for the general election of 2019 in India used the ideological thoughts of Hindutva along with the features of populism to popularize its political discourse.

Essentials of Populist Discourse

Primarily, populism has two essentials: the strength of the people and a tendency to define the others or the antagonistic elements (Ionescu and Gellner, 1969). Similarly, political populism also maintains the presence of an antagonistic and deep-rooted division between the people and the established others or the elite. Therefore, the populist group portrays itself as directly connected with the people in order to represent their interests (Canovan, 1981). The populists further claim that the established system has excluded the people from themselves and hence they cannot represent the people's interests (Canovan, 2002).

The literature suggests that populist movements emerge in the electoral democracies whenever there is some tension present between the pragmatic and the redemptive political styles (Canovan, 1999). The redemptive style suggests "the government of the people, by the people and for the people" (Canovan, 1999) while the pragmatic view suggests democracy as "a system of processing conflicts without killing one another" (Przeworski, 1991). Thus, democratic systems themselves carry the very ingredients for the rise of populism in a society. The populists highlight the problems with the existing system while blaming "the others" for this situation, and appeal "the people" to follow them to introduce reforms (Canovan, 1999). It is also important to note that while the system itself makes ground for the construction of populist identities, the populists or the charismatic leaders portray themselves as the only representatives of the people through their discourse (Westlind, 1996). In other words: "populism signifies the effort to destroy established institutions of interest intermediation and elite control and to put in their place some kind of direct voice of the people, embodied in the leader of the populist party" (Kitschelt and McGann, 1995: 160).

In this effort, the struggle for reforms or establishment of the people's system, the populists excessively rely on the power of communication to convince the people that are participating in the power struggle on their behalf. The scholars have an agreement on the existence of this power (Thompson, 1995; Castells, 2007). Pierre Bourdieu (1991: 66) suggests that "symbols are… instruments of knowledge and communication…they make it possible for there to be a consensus on the meaning of the social world, a consensus which contributes fundamentally to the reproduction of the social order". Furthermore, the power of communication is also established through "the belief in the legitimacy of the words and of those who utter them" (Bourdieu, 1991: 70). Therefore, in the research work under discussion, the BJP and its leaders are suggested to have benefitted from symbols and references of the Hindutva doctrine through discursive texts to establish the relationship between themselves and the

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[1] Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, the father of modern-day Hindutva movement, used the word "Hindutva" from Sanskrit language to describe the concept of "Hinduness" or the "quality of being a Hindu" (Savarkar, 1924). Hindutva movement seeks to transform India in the light of their slogan "one nation, one caste and one culture", where the homogeneity of the Indian nation will be maintained with Hinduism being the supreme embodiment of the political system. It is considered as an alternative discourse or political pathology required for India's return to its mythological greatness of the past (Smith, 1966; Lahiry, 2005; Kanungo, 2006; Jaffrelot, 2007).

people while simultaneously defining the people also, like "the relation between those who exercise power and those who submit to it" (Bourdieu, 1991: 166).

The people remain the central essential of the populism, while the application of a public discourse which might be based on a political, religious or mythological doctrine provides basis for the construction of the people, and also the other essentials of the populism outlined by the scholars as "the definition of popular characteristics is established through articulation in discourse, often referring to elements from other established discourses" (Westlind, 1996: 95). The populist discourse can also be defined by "a language whose speakers conceive of ordinary people as a noble assemblage not bound narrowly by class, view their elite opponents as self-serving and undemocratic, and seek to mobilize the former against the latter" (Kazin, 1995). In this study, the Hindutva doctrine provides historical, religious and mythological references and basis for the construction of the essentials of the populist discourse that was produced by the BJP and its leadership during the 2019 election campaign to gain electoral support of Indians.

Hindutva-Driven Populism

As Cas Mudde (2016) argues, populist movements require "the pure people" and "the corrupt elite or others". Likewise, the father of the modern-day Hindutva movement Vinayak Damodar Savarkar also identifies "the people" in his book called Essentials of Hindutva: the people who recognize India as their fatherland (*pitribhumi*) and treats it like *punyabhumi* or the holy land (Savarkar, 1924: 43-44). Likewise the founder of the RSS K. B. Hedgewar states that the cultural and religious legacy of Hinduism must become the primary essence of India's national identity once it gains freedom from Britain (Goyal, 1979; Chitkara, 2004; Kanungo, 2002; Andersen and Damle, 1987).

Another Hindutva proponent Bankim Chandra also maintains the view that "only Hinduism could bring about a synthesis of nationalism" in India (Bhattacharya, 1982). In the words of the RSS leader M.S. Golwalkar, the conception of "the people" states that "we [the Hindus] have been in undisputed and undisturbed possession of this land for over 8 or even 10 thousand years before the land was invaded by any foreign race…we Hindus came into this land from nowhere, but are indigenous children of the soil always, from times immemorial and are natural masters of the country" (Golwalkar, 1939). With the definition of "the people", "the others" of the Hindutva doctrine also get defined to be as the ones who migrated to India from any foreign land and those who do not follow the cultural and religious symbols and rituals of Hinduism: the Muslim settlers of India who belonged to the Central Asian or Middle Eastern countries originally. Savarkar maintains that Muslims and Christians are "foreign elements" in India whose "holy land is far off in Arabia and Palestine [and] their mythology and Prophets and heroes are not the children of this soil" (Savarkar, 1989: 113). A stark parallel of this discourse can also be identified in Israeli politics where Judaism as a religion shapes much of political and national developments of the country (Baumgart-Ochse, 2009). The construction of "the people" and "the others" is also carried out through social exclusion and inclusion at the same time at political, symbolic and material levels (Filc, 2010). The adoption of ancient Hebrew as the national language of Israel (Tessler, 1990) also points to a similar trait of revivalism as displayed by the Hindutva movement. These parallels confirm that historical, mythological and symbolic references play a critical role in shaping and re-shaping of nation states through popular discourse.

Taggart claims that populism arises in a society where several conditions are met: a sense of crisis and a belief that existing political setup is unable to resolve the crisis (Taggart, 2002: 69), and the populists build an alternative discourse on this basis to offer a political pathology (Taggart, 2002: 80). Likewise, the Hindutva movement has continued to highlight that the existing political setup of India was ailing and full of shortcomings. The very core thought of Hindutva, "one nation, one caste and one culture" or the homogeneity of the Indian nation with Hinduism being the supreme embodiment of the political system, is the alternative discourse or political pathology required for India's return to its mythological greatness of the past: just like a perfect populist thought (Smith, 1966; Lahiry, 2005; Kanungo, 2006; Jaffrelot, 2007).

The theorists also assert that populist movements hardly call themselves something political and greatly rely on the slogans such as "a call for better governance" as a reason to mobilize the masses (Taggart, 2002: 67). During the last two centuries, the Hindutva movement has tried to maintain a

reluctantly political image for itself and rather called itself as a movement of reforms and cultural revival of Hinduism. In the early days of the Hindutva's modern-day struggle, it has called for "one nation, one religion, one culture and one language" in the name of Lord Ram where Hindu icons, symbols, norms and values should dominate as the national elements (Goyal, 1979; Frykenberg, 2008; Andersen and Damle, 1987; Chitkara, 2004). The ideological literature of the RSS also recognizes it as a non-political movement which rather focuses on social and cultural activism (Andersen and Damle, 1987; Bhatt, 2001). According to Christophe Jaffrelot (2013), the BJS was also more focused on spreading its Hindutva ideology at the grass-root level instead of winning elections and actively endorsing itself as a political force. However, this reluctance to directly refer the movement as political struggle rather than a movement of mere social change and cultural revivalism slowly diminished after the establishment of the BJP which does identify itself as a political element but again insists that the Hindutva doctrine provides necessary guidelines to its leaders and workers.

Another essential of populist movements is the conception of a centralized and charismatic leader who maintains a strong and direct linkage with the people (Di Tella, 1965 and 1997). The Hindutva movement also has such valued leadership over the decades (Jaffrelot, 1996). Initially, Dayananda Saraswati, Swami Shraddhananda and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee provided the charismatic but scattered leadership to the populist thought of Hindutva. Subsequently, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, Keshav Baliram Hedgewar and M. S. Golwalkar became more centralized charismatic leaders in their respective times. Similarly, after the BJS and BJP's ascendance to the leadership of the Hindutva movement, Shyama Prasad Mookerjee, Lal Krishna Advani and Atal Bihari Vajpayee filled the void of this leadership (Udayakumar, 2005). Eventually, Narendra Modi's massive popularity led him to the leadership of the whole Hindutva doctrine (Diwakar, 2014; Kaul, 2017; Zain, 2019). The electoral campaign of the BJP during 2014 and 2019 general elections were also mainly focused on the imagery of Narendra Modi to confirm that he was the latest and undisputed central and charismatic leader of the Hindutva movement now.

Research Questions

Based on the existing scholarship on the populist discourse and the Hindutva movement to bridge the gaps and contemporize these subjects through discourse analysis, this paper attempts to find answers to the following research questions:

• Did the Hindutva doctrine play a determining feature in the political messages shared by the Bharatiya Janata Party during the 2019 election campaign?

• Did the production of the Hindutva doctrine by the BJP exhibit the features of the populist discourse, i.e., construction of the people, definition of the others, presence of the charismatic leader, identification of the foreign enemy and promise of reforms in the ailing system?

• Did the BJP use the Hindu religious symbols and references to construct the Hindutva-driven populist messages?

Fairclough's Discourse Analysis Model

This study relies on Norman Fairclough's (1992) "three dimensional CDA model" which suggests the interpretation of the selected discourse at three levels:

• Textual Dimension: at this level the linguistic characteristics and organization of text are taken into consideration i.e. vocabulary, text structure, grammar, coherence and intertextuality (Fairclough, 1992: 78).

• Discursive Dimension: at this level the "production, distribution and consumption of the text" is analyzed in the light of discourse types as per the social factors (Fairclough, 1992: 78).

• Societal Dimension: at this level the discursive practices are analyzed in terms of their broader implications and the analysis focuses on how it "shapes the nature of the discursive practice, and the constructive effects of discourse" (Fairclough, 1992: 4).

In this study, political messages tweeted by the Bharatiya Janata Party have been taken into consideration with a complete possibility of interpretation on the basis of historical, mythological and religious references as Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis focuses on "dialectical relations between discourse and other objects, elements or moments, as well as analysis of the internal relations of discourse" (Fairclough, 2013: 4).

Research Design

For the CDA of the texts to find answers of the research questions and development of the debate at macro, meso and micro levels, this study adopted a research design as following:

• Tweets shared by the 45 Twitter accounts of the BJP and its leadership during the 2019 election campaign from April 11, 2019 to May 26, 2019. The selected accounts represent the central and regional offices of the BJP and its leadership based on the criteria that these accounts were frequently mentioned and retweeted by the verified official account of the BJP (@bjp4india). These accounts include: BJP LIVE (@bjplive), Bharatiya Janta Party (@bjp4india), Amit Shah Office (@amitshahoffice), Narendra Modi (@narendramodi), Amit Shah (@amitshah), GVL Narasimha Rao (@gvlnrao), Arun Jaitley (@arunjaitley), Sushma Swaraj (@sushmaswaraj), Uma Bharti (@umasribharti), Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore (@ra_thore), Yogi Adityanath (@myogiadityanath), BJP Rajasthan (@bjp4rajasthan), Narayan Lal Panchariya (@npanchariyabjp), Nirmala Sitharaman (@nsitharaman), Dr. Anirban Ganguly @anirbanganguly), BJP Madhya Pradesh (@bjp4mp), BJP Utter Pradesh (@bjp4up), BJP Taripura (@bjp4tripura), Biplab Kumar Deb (@bjpbiplab), Ram Madhav (@rammadhavbjp), BJP Kashmir (@bjp4jnk), Kiren Rijiju (@kirenrijiju), Rajat Sethi (@rajatsethi86), Vinay Prabhakar Sahasrabuddhe (@vinay1011), BJP Maharashtra (@bjp4maharashtra), Smirthi Irani (@smritiirani), Manoj Tiwari (@manojtiwarimp), Hans Raj Hans (@hansrajhanshrh), narendramodi_in (@narendramodi_in), Dr. Mahendra Singh (@bjpdrmahendra), Dr. Anil Jain (@aniljaindr), Vijay Rupani (@vijayrupanibjp), ROHIT CHAHAL (@rohit_chahal), Kuljeet Singh Chahal (@kuljeetschahal), Rajnath Singh (@rajnathsingh), Devendra Fadnavis (@dev_fadnavis), BJP Bihar (@bjp4bihar), Manoj Sinha (@manojsinhabjp), Sunny Deol (@iamsunnydeol), BJP Punjab (@bjp4punjab), Prof Rakesh Sinha (@rakeshsinha01), Nityanand Rai (@nityanandraibjp), Ramlal (@ramlal), Rajiv Pratap Rudy (@rajivprataprudy).

• The representative sample (N= 5,648) of the texts have been developed based on the criteria that the BJP and its leaders must have shared most appropriate content related to the subject of the thesis on the days of the religious festivals or rituals associated with Hindu gods/goddesses/lords which took place during the days of election campaign into consideration:

o April 14, 2019: *Rama Navami* and *Baisakhi*

o April 15, 2019: *Vishu*

o April 19, 2019: *Hanuman Jayanti*

o May 7, 2019: *Akshaya Tritiya*

o May 18, 2019: *Buddha Purnima*

o Additionally, the days of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's meditation in the cave as an expression of Hindu ritual (May 18, 2019 and May 19, 2019) and day of the announcement of the election result (May 23, 2019) and days of celebration (May 24, May 25 and May 26 of 2019) have also been included in the sample.

• For the collection of the tweets from the selected Twitter accounts associated with the BJP and its leaders, the Twitter API was used through a Python library named Tweepy. Using this method, the Twitter data was collected on May 3, May 12 and May 26, 2019 to ensure that all of the tweets shared by the selected accounts have been successfully stored in the .tsv format data files.

• After translation of some texts into English from Hindi, the further cleansing and purposive sampling of the originally collected data, computer- based programs, i.e., Open Office and Microsoft Excel have been used. Similarly, for the discourse analysis and development of themes and qualitative analysis, the computer-based program NVivo 12 Plus has also been used.

Analysis and Findings

This section carries a detailed description of analysis and interpretation of the texts as outlined for
each dimension of the CDA model. This is important to understand that one or more than dimension has
been applied to interpret the each text depending on the nature and context of the text, and hence not
necessarily all three dimensions have been put into practice separately for interpretation of the texts.

(Re)Connecting with Hindutva

The BJP put the discourse practices into action to reclaim its strong ideological relationship with
the Hindutva movement to ensure that the Hindutva doctrine is produced or performed in front of "the
people" to garner the electoral victory in the 2019 general elections. The analysis of the selected texts
show that the BJP used the election slogans, mentioned the persons, carried pictures of the leaders and
consistently repeated the political demands and reforms which have a very strong relationship with the
Hindutva movement to claim the legacy of the Hindutva doctrine as a political discourse. Along with
this, the number of direct mentions were also noted: "Narendra Modi's 2019 victory is Hindutva 2.0
(RT @rammadhavbjp)" and "India's new dynamic era will be up to race, religion, nationalism,
Hindutva, On the strength of development, a new future will be created (@myogiadityanath)". Even the
discussion on a vision of the Hindutva doctrine's rise to the global stage was also found: "Swami
Vivekananda had said that America will adopt our culture the day a sleeping Hindu wakes up. That day
is getting closer (@rohit_chahal)". This refers to pre-supposed assertion of the Hindutva movement on
cultural superiority of Hinduism and suggestion for the application of Hindu philosophies in economic
and political policies (Udayakumar, 2005).

Here are the connotational explanations of the most popular slogans used by the BJP during the
2019 election campaign which have a possible historical reference with the Hindutva doctrine:

• Bharat Mata ki Jai – the slogan literally means "Hail Motherland India" and it takes its roots
from the book titled "Essential of Hindutva" by V.D. Savarkar in which he states that only that person
who claims India to be his *pitribhumi* (fatherland) and calls it as *punyabhumi* (the holy land) can call
himself an Indian (Savarkar, 1924). Another Hindutva-proponent Golwalkar also equated the holy
motherland of India to Vishnu-patni and urged his followers to worship it and show the highest level of
devotion (Golwalkar, 1966).

• *Vande Mataram* – also known as *Bande Mataram* slogan which refers to the historic anti-
Muslim anthem written by Bankim Chandra who known as the "creator of Hindu nationalism"
(Chaudhuri, 1951). He even suggested militant schemes based on Hindu mythology and anti-Muslim
social rhetoric in his novels such as *Anandamath*, *Sitaram* and *Mrinalini* (Sil, 2002).

The second most important reference to the Hindutva movement was the practice of hailing the
key personalities which helped in shaping the Hindutva doctrine over the time: Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel,
Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, Deendayal Upadhyaya, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Lal Krishna Advani, Murali
Manohar Joshi and Anil Madhav Dave.

Here's a quick review of the excerpts from the 2019 election campaign of the BJP:

• Abolishment of Jammu and Kashmir's Special Status – "Section 370 and 35A should be
abrogated (@BJPLive)" and "In the last five years we have made all the necessary efforts to ensure
peace in Jammu and Kashmir through decisive action and a firm policy. We reiterate our view of Article
370 from the time of the Jana Sangh (@BJPLive)".

• Eradication of Special Muslim Civil Code – "Prime Minister @narendramodi ji who has given
justice to women suffering from triple talaq in the history of independent India" and "Be it a demand of
uniform civil code, be it Section 370 or 35A…We will sit and decide that we will remove it
(@BJP4Punjab)".

• Making India a Refuge for Hindus – "Modi Ji's government will first give citizenship to refugees
through Citizen Amendment Bill (@BJPLive)".

Construction of Hindutva-Nation

The proponents of Hindutva movement laid out a clear framework to construct "the people" or a "Hindutva-nation" through their publications and speeches from the late 19th century. Bankim Chandra, Savarkar, Golwalkar and Hedgewar established an outright agreement to construct "the people" of Hindutva doctrine on the basis of Hindu identity, nationhood, culture, religion and symbols. The tweets carried the connotations such as "saffron-ization of India", "saffron wave", "saffron is coming" and "saffron flag" to express the bond of pro-Hindutva forces of the *Sangh Parivar*. The textual mention of the Hindu gods, except the public message about their birth festivals, were also found to be used to draw metaphorical references to the BJP and the opposition parties based on their mythological characters. For example, a tweet stated "On May 23, the people will know who is Duryodhana and who is Arjun (@AmitShah)" while drawing an antagonizing mythological reference of a villain and a hero among the BJP and the opposition parties respectively.

This use of symbolism also goes in complete and absolute alignment with the argument of the RSS founder K. B. Hedgewar who said that the cultural and religious legacy of Hinduism must become the primary essence of India's national identity once it gains freedom from Britain (Chitkara, 2004; Goyal, 1979; Kanungo, 2002; Andersen and Damle, 1987). Savarkar also endorsed this conception of Hindutva-nation as follows: "the Hindu culture is the life-breath of Hindustan. It is therefore clear that if Hindustan is to be protected, we should first nourish the Hindu culture… It is therefore the duty of every Hindu to do his best to consolidate Hindu society" (Kumar and Muralidhar, 1997). These tweets shared by the BJP stalwarts Amit Shah and Narendra Modi also signify the similar construction of the Hindutva-nation or the people: "Shree Ram is the idol of every Indian, he exists in the culture and ethos of India. No one can stop us from worshipping him (@AmitShah)." Another one is as following: "The iconic Badrinath Temple remains an important part of our culture and ethos. Had the honour of joining the Puja at the Temple today (@narendramodi)".

The following tweets sent out by Amit Shah and Adityanath Yogi also highlight the same debate on Hindu identity and a pretext to protect that identity:

• "During the SP-BSP era, the youth of Uttar Pradesh had an identity crisis, the youth was hesitant to name their city (@myogiadityanath)" – in order to draw a reference to a recent movement across India to rename the cities named after Muslims to give them Hindu identity.

• "You decide for yourself, who will you vote for? Congress has a fraud letter: silence on Ram temple construction. BJP has a resolution letter: Construction of Ram temple soon within the scope of the constitution (@AmitShah)" – to show that only the BJP was sincere to establish the Ram mandir on the place of *Babri* Mosque as outlined by the Hindutva movement.

• "Were Kashmiri Pandits massacred or not? (@AmitShah)" – in an attempt to repeat the claim of most pro-Hindutva groups that Hindus living in Jammu and Kashmir were brutally killed and forced to leave this region by the Muslims.

• "There's a difference between the infiltrators and refugees. The Citizenship Amendment Bill is meant for the persecuted refugees (@AmitShah)" – while drawing a subtle reference to what Golwalkar said even before the independence of India. Another tweet which stated: "The Hindu, Sikh, Christian, Jain and Buddhist arrived as refugees, we are going to give them citizenship (@AmitShah)" completes the exact context of the Citizenship Amendment Act introduced by the BJP which discriminates Muslims immigrants, just as they have been referred to as infiltrators here. This antagonism symbolizes that "the Hindutva-nation" does not include the Muslims.

• "Those Muslims continued to unite, did not know when the Hindu became one (@myogiadityanath)" also exhibits a similar prejudicial sentiment towards Muslims.

Construction of Antagonistic Others

The historical references and cited literature confirmed that Muslims, Christians and Communists of India were included in "the others" (Savarkar, 1924; Golwalkar, 1939; Chaudhuri, 1951; Qureshi,

1989; Savarkar, 1989; Sil, 2002); however, the discursive analysis revealed that the Christian Indians are now included as a part of "the people" instead of "the others". On the matter of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), the excerpts from Twitter-based text stated: "The Hindu, Sikh, Christian, Jain and Buddhist arrived as refugees are going to be given citizenship by government (@AmitShah)", meanwhile the Muslims have been left out as the others by saying that "Modi ji's government will first give citizenship to refugees through Citizen Amendment Bill. Later, the evacuation of intruders will be done from Calcutta to Kutch and from Kashmir to Kanyakumari (@AmitShah)" with a tag of intruders. This is exactly how the early proponents of the Hindutva doctrine also referred to Muslims in their publications. Likewise, the communists also continue to be part of "the others" through negative referencing as per teachings of the original Hindutva doctrine: "Communists ruled in Bengal when they sowed the seeds of violence in Bengal politics. When Communists were removed from power TMC has pursued the same culture (@AmitShah)".

Similarly, the repeated references and mentions to the anti-Muslim anthem knows as Vande Mataram or Bande Mataram at the political rallies of the BJP leaders connote that the Muslims have been excluded from conception of "the people" under the Hindutva doctrine. An excerpt states: "Brothers and sisters, they have brought such people into the field who are also reluctant to speak *Vande Mataram*. Who will not respect *Vande Mataram*, how will respect mother India?", and the mention of a Muslim name in the tweet "Real Name - Mohammad Nisar, Orange T-shirt, *Tilak* on Forehead. Now you can understand many things, you can also connect this (RT @BJP4UP) exhibits an alignment the same tone of "the others" for the Muslims. Another dimension of tagging the Muslims as "the others" was the use of contents about Rohingya Muslims of Myanmar in some tweets and retweets: "Amnesty forced to admit genocide of Hindu population by the Rohingyas. All those who campaigned for Rohingyas to be given refuge should answer it now (RT @BJP4UP)". The human rights activists and politicians of opposition parties who urged the BJP government to give refuge to the persecuted Rohingya Muslim community in India seem to be the immediate target of this text: "There was a ruckus inside Islampur to recruit Urdu teachers, the children there said that we want to study in Bengali. But Mamta said that you have to study in Urdu, when the children protested, the 2 children named Rajesh and Tapas were hurt (@BJPLive)" was tweeted by the BJP leader Amit Shah to signify the Urdu language of Muslims as a foreign language while suggesting that it is unwelcomed by the Indian children. In the same excerpt, he tagged the opposition leader Mamata Banerjee as part of "the antagonizing others" and "the elite of the ailing system" for being a supporter of the Urdu language of Muslims. Another tweet by the BJP leader said that "During her press conf, Mamata Banerjee today said she will attend an iftar party next week. While saying it she also added, "*Jai Shri Ram* cannot be chanted in Bengal" (@RajatSethi86)" to suggest the notion of "the others" for the same opposition politician from the West Bengal state for expressing an intention to become part of a ceremony to break the fast with Muslims during the month of Ramadan. Likewise, the UP Chief Minister Adityanath Yogi labeled several opposition political parties as "the others" for objecting to the BJP's move to abrogate special civil code for the Muslims and introduce "a uniform civil code in India": "When it comes to triple talaq, SP, BSP, Congress unite against it (@BJP4India)", suggesting that these political parties were pro-Muslim through such efforts.

Another significant aspect of "construction of the antagonizing others" was by accusing the opposition parties of being anti-Hindu:

- "I have always held that the @MamataOfficial led TMC is anti-Hindu, opposed to our traditions, has disdain for our faith & our modes of worship, works to decimate our legacy, our heritage & stands for appeasement politics... here is one more example of that contempt (@anirbanganguly)" – Mamata Banerjee was seen to have been accused of being anti-Hindu in order to symbolize her political party as "the others".

- The INC that is considered as the largest opposing political party in India was also identified as "the others" for the accusation of maligning Hinduism: "The Congress government had created a fake theory of saffron terror and has maligned our culture in the world (@AmitShah)".

The BJP also tried to build a political discourse around the events of militancy in the Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) region while accusing the INC of not doing enough to protect the Hindu residents of the J&K: "They saw the atrocities on Kashmiri Pandits but ignored them (@AmitShah)". The BJP outrightly accused the INC for backing the Kashmiri youth who allegedly chanted anti-India mantra at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) of New Delhi during a protest. An excerpt from the texts suggested: "The Manifesto of the Congress Party has been created by a dismembered gang [*tukde tukde gang*]. Those who used to chant slogans in JNU, Bharat will be into pieces, *InshaAllah*, *InshaAllah*. I think this gang has made the Congress manifesto (@AmitShah)". The local Kashmiri politicians and the pro-communism media outlets also got tagged as "the others" for being anti-Hindu or a little accommodating to the Muslims of Kashmir – "A man is killed in Kashmir. Left Media & Omar Abdullah start spreading fake news that he was killed by Cow vigilantes (@vinay1011)". Similarly, the sentiment of being anti-national was also applied in the context of Jammu and Kashmir to signify several opposition leaders as "the others" for questioning a militant attack which killed dozens of Indian soldiers in Pulwama, Kashmir region: "SP leader Ram Gopal Yadav insulted the martyrs of Pulwama, he questioned the army, Ram Gopal Yadav is speaking the language of Pakistan (@myogiadityanath)".

The rhetoric of being pro-Pakistan was widely used against the opposition political groups as well as their political leaders:

- "On the one hand, leaders like Ashok Gehlot themselves demand proof of the surgical strike carried out by India, on the other hand they are fully aware of the surgical strike done by Pakistan. (@BJP4Rajasthan)".

- "What does Kamal Nath want the UN meeting to be about India's election? Today the whole world has accepted that Pakistan is harboring terrorism (@AmitShah)".

Portrayal of Charismatic Leadership

The electoral campaign of the BJP during the 2019 general elections was outrightly focused on Narendra Modi as an undisputed central and charismatic leader of the Hindutva struggle for the Sangh Family (*Parivar*). An analysis of the texts shows that "Narendra Modi" was the most frequently repeated keyword associated with a political figure. Likewise Modi's Twitter username "@narendramodi" was also among top mentions. Similarly, the content shared by the BJP and its leadership also carried a large number of hashtags and all of them were built around Narendra Modi. It also indicates the primary focus of the 2019 election campaign as well as the clear realization of the presence of Narendra Modi as the charismatic leader of the Hindutva movement, and the people were appealed to stand behind him. A list of most frequent hashtags appearing in the texts is as follows:

- #hardilmeimodi – Modi is in every heart.

- #bharatmangemodidobara – India wants Modi again.

- #bharatbolemodifirse – India says Modi again.

- #phirekbaarmodisarkar – Once again Modi government.

- #jeetegatomodihi – Modi will be the winner definitely.

The analyzed texts shared by the selected Twitter accounts of the BJP and its leaders also mentioned certain distinctive features associated with the charismatic personality of their undisputed and central leader: Narendra Modi. These characteristics were referred to through these keywords: leadership, development, economic growth, surgical strike, Balakot airstrike, watchman, diplomatic success.

Here are some excerpts carrying references to the several characteristics and successes associated with the charismatic guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi:

- "There was a feeling in the public mind that there is no concrete action against terrorism. After the arrival of Modi ji, the public felt confident that now a leader has come who can enter the house of terrorists and take action (@BJP4India)".

- "It is only under Modi that India has struck twice at the place of origin of terrorists in the form of the 2016 surgical strike and 2019 airstrike at Balakot (@BJP4India)".

- "The terror tag on Masood Azhar is the biggest diplomatic victory of Narendra Modi (@AmitShah)".

- "Bomb blasts have stopped in Delhi as well as in the whole country, because now the fear of Modi that is in the minds of terrorists (@AmitShah)".

- "They do not believe how much diplomatic success has been achieved by the Prime Minister of India? Today the whole world has recognized that Pakistan is harboring terrorism (@BJPLive)".

- "The people of the country are feeling safe under the leadership of Modi ji, the country's economy has become the world's fastest growing economy and has become the sixth largest economy in the world (@AmitShah)".

Politically Reluctant Populism of Hindutva

The election manifestos of the BJP released in 2014 and 2019 also carried several electoral promises to revive the Hindu culture and ensure protection of Hinduism as a religion, i.e. the establishment of the Ram Temple at the place of the Babri Masjid and the introduction of the Citizenship of Amendment Act (CAA) to issue citizenship to the persecuted Hindus of the neighboring countries. This political reluctance of the BJP and the Hindutva doctrine is completely aligned with the scholarly features of populism: populist movements hardly call themselves something political and greatly rely on the slogans such as "a call for better governance" and always focus on their ideological struggle as a reason to mobilize the masses (Taggart, 2002).

Here are the sub-themes found under this theme as a result of qualitative analysis of the texts:

- Construction Ram Temple in Ayodhya – "Our stand on issues of faith like that of the building of Ram temple (@AmitShah)".

- Restoration of Anti-Women Hindu Tradition at Sabarimala Temple – "Our stand on issues of faith like… restoration of tradition in Sabarimala temple is crystal clear (@AmitShah)".

- "Magnificent, Soulful and Divine Somnath (@AmitShah)", "Somnath … unique symbol of faith and glorious eternal tradition @AmitShah)" and "In video clip: BJP chief Amit Shah performing puja at Somnath temple in Gujarat (@BJPLive)": This refers to the historic campaign of Mehmood Ghaznavi who attacked the 13th century India for seventeen times and eventually destroyed the Somnath temple to make way for arrival of Muslims in Indian sub-continent.

These excerpts connote the BJP's strong will to protect the Hindu religion and revive its culture as per the mythology of *Mahabharat*.

- "The Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi inquired about the pace of development works going on in Kedarnath temple (@BJP4India)":

- "Now the procession of *Saraswati Pooja*, *Durga Puja* and *Ram Navami* will take place inside Bengal and there is no need for Mamta Didi to stop it. Once you 23 seats to lotus in Bengal (@AmitShah)".

- "When we came to power, we…Also started the *Kandar* yatra again. Also prohibited people living in Rampur who do not respect sisters and daughters (@AmitShah)".

These quotes refer to the BJP's effort to portray the antagonistic others as anti-Hindu while itself as a defender and protector of the Hindu religion and rituals.

- "The Congress government had created fake theory of saffron terror and maligned our culture in the world (@AmitShah)".

- "In the world without evidence, the culture that gave the message of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* is called a terrorist. This is going to be costly for Congress (@narendramodi)"

The BJP thus aims to take all significant steps to guarantee that Hinduism is cleared of any association with terrorism, unlike the INC, which is accused of being anti-Hindu by the BJP.

- "Modi ji's government will… give citizenship to refugees through Citizen Amendment Bill (@AmitShah)":

Making India a Homeland for Hindus refers to the electoral promise of the BJP that Hindu, Jain, Christian and Sikh refugees who face persecution in the neighboring countries will be provided Indian citizenship. Muslims have been discriminately singled out of this legislation.

- "On the initiative of India, the United Nations declared June 21 as International Yoga Day and today this day is celebrated with great enthusiasm all over the world (@BJP4MP)".

- "Swami Vivekananda had said that America will adopt our culture the day a sleeping Hindu wakes up. That day is getting closer (@rohit_chahal)".

The promotion of the Hindu culture at the global level refers to the construction of a political discourse in favor of the BJP to show that it is committed to the conservation and promotion of the Hindu culture unlike the typical political parties to confirm the contemporary political reluctance in the Hindutva movement.

- Modi's Meditation in Cave – refers to the most important incident during the final round of voting during the general polls of 2019 of India when Narendra Modi started an hours-long meditation in a Himalayan cave near *Kedarnath* temple. Modi's meditation was also broadcasted live through social media platforms and traditional media channels. It signifies how Modi practices Hinduism and its rituals at personal level and gives importance to their conservation.

Introduction of Hindutva Reforms in India

The BJP's electioneering movement for 2019 polls largely built the political discourse on the basis of the Hindutva doctrine and promised several reforms to the public to lead toward practical implementation. That is why the victory of the BJP was also termed as the beginning of Hindutva 2.0 in the political messages. The rhetoric of "Hindutva 2.0" or "New India" was widely visible in the analyzed discursive texts and #NewIndia hashtag was frequently mentioned with a contextual common public discourse that it was "March towards Renaissance (RT @ vinay1011)" of the Hindutva in India.

A CDA of the sampled texts reveals a number of reforms promised by the BJP had clear historic and ideological connections with the Hindutva movement. Furthermore, it is important to be mentioned here that promises of these reforms were also made to re-connect the 2019 election campaign with the original standing of the Hindutva movement:

- Citizenship for the non-Muslim Refugees – "We will first bring CAB to give Indian citizenship to the Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain and Christian refugees from the neighbouring countries and then will ensure that every infiltrator is identified and deported out of India (@AmitShah)".

- Completion of National Register of Citizens (NCR): "The SC had asked the previous government to implement NRC as well but they did not do it. Now, when we are implementing the NRC. If someone is trying to make unfounded allegations, then they seem to consider themselves good enough to question the wisdom of the SC (@BJPLive)".

- Abrogation of Constitutional Article 370 – "In the last five years we have made all the necessary efforts to ensure peace in Jammu and Kashmir through decisive action and a firm policy. We reiterate our view of Article 370 from the time of the Jana Sangh (@AmitShah)".

- Abrogation of Constitutional Article 35A – "We are also committed to abolishing Section 35A. We believe that Section 35A is discriminatory against non- permanent residents and women of Jammu and Kashmir. This section is also a hindrance in the development of Jammu and Kashmir (@BJPLive)".

- Introduction of Uniform Civil Code – "Prime Minister @narendramodi ji who has given justice to women suffering from triple talaq in the history of independent India" and "Be it a demand of uniform civil code, be it Section 370 or 35A…We will sit and decide that we will remove it (@BJP4Punjab)".

Identifying a Foreign Enemy

The analysis of excerpts from the discursive texts associated with the theme of construction of "the antagonizing others" within India also showed that the BJP and its leaders accused their opponents of being pro-Pakistan to build a political discourse against them. The mention of "Pakistan" as a negative keyword was found to be very frequent. In addition to Pakistan's mention for the construction of "the antagonizing others", the thematic conception of Pakistan as a foreign enemy has been done on the basis of three sub-themes:

- Pakistan is Behind Terrorism in India – "Thus the most important issue which, confronts India in the short, medium and even the long run, is how do we handle the State of Jammu and Kashmir and terrorism emanating from Pakistan and from within? (@arunjaitley)".

- Pakistan is the top Target of India's Diplomatic Efforts in the World – "They do not believe how much diplomatic success has been achieved by the Prime Minister of India? Today the whole world has recognized that Pakistan is harboring terrorism (@AmitShah)".

Discussion and Conclusion

The versatile presence of the Hindutva doctrine in the BJP's 2019 election campaign confirmed that it was actually central driving force to shape the political messages of the BJP. While the historic and mythological references, symbolism and ritualistic notions were outrightly used to establish the BJP as a contemporary political face of the Hindutva doctrine, as many as six key features of populism were also found to be functioning with the Hindutva doctrine being a determining factor of these essentials of populism. The conception of the people, construction of the antagonizing others, identification of a charismatic leader, portrayal of politically reluctant agenda and definition of a foreign enemy were completely built on the basis of the teachings, reference and set of demands recorded by the Hindutva movement since the independence of India. Additionally, an ambitiously Hindutva-focused collection of political and constitutional reforms to correct the mistakes of anti-Hindutva governments were also made part of the public discourse to assert that the BJP was totally committed to the populist struggle of Hindutva and would definitely guarantee correction of the ailing political system of India as outlined by the proponents of Hindutva doctrine.

The steps taken by the BJP government immediately after taking over the governance offices in May 2019 also undertakes Hindutva-based prejudice and discrimination against the segment of the Indian society which was outrageously declared as "the others", "foreign invaders" and "infiltrators" – Muslims – during the election campaign. The three major constitutional reforms introduced by BJP i.e. cancellation of constitutional articles 370 and 35A, insertion of Citizenship Amendment law and enforcement of new domicile law in Jammu and Kashmir region clearly stand aligned to the decades-old aspersions of the Hindutva movement and victimize Muslim community of India. Another Hindutva-focused reform known as "completion of the National Register of Citizens (NRC)" still happens to be in the offing and can be announced at any time during the government of the BJP. These constitutional and administrative reforms appear to be a mere fulfillment of the electoral promises made by the BJP, however, they do have deep roots to the Hindutva movement and further suppress the Indian Muslims who already face the societal suppression under the rule of the BJP.

Another sad display of weak and challenged democratic and liberal practices in India as a result of the tarnished public and political discourse is the further adoption of ruthless, undemocratic and inhuman schemes to enforce these Hindutva-based reforms. The government's subtle silence and inaction of the law enforcement agencies against the attackers despite their presence on the sites of such incidents indicates that anti-Muslim steps or Hindutva reforms cannot even protested in India: the most primary human rights being violated in the largest democracy country on earth.

The discriminatory and Islamophobic attitude of government authorities, certain segments of society and TV channels was also witnessed in India following the spread of COVID-19 in different regions when a large gathering of a Muslim missionary group was held and several people who attended this congressional activities were tested positive for the coronavirus. As a result, the already ostracized

Muslims of India were blamed to have hatched the conspiracy of spreading COVID-19 in the country. The incidents of verbal and physical assault against Muslims were also reported from different parts of the country, as well as social media hatemongers came up with "corona-jihad" analogy against the Muslims. The government officials also mentioned a separate sub-category of corona-positive patients who belonged to the Muslim missionary movement to further strengthen the theory that Muslims were deliberately spreading coronavirus in India. Contrary to this, no Hindu patients were tagged under any such sub-category due for participating in congressional activities at Hindu temples nor any top Hindu temples were barred from mass public gathering until the second half of March.

It is certainly evident through the cited discussion and historical references that the production of the Hindutva doctrine by the BJP was not merely limited to the campaign itself, but it is rather transforming the system of governance as well as the social fabric in India. The great momentum of anti-Muslim hatred in the Indian society – which was also expressed by the early proponents of Hindutva – has been renewed under the rule of the BJP and due to excessive political communication based on the Hindutva doctrine. And, it seems to be a definite outcome that India is quickly transforming itself as a Hindu Rashtra in a top-to-bottom manner and pace of this transformation toward fascism would only increase if the BJP government continues to appease the majority Hindu population instead of protecting the rights of its citizens irrespective of their religious beliefs. The exploitation of the channels of direct communication between the political leaders and the common public also proves that the online political communication could be even more full of hatred and social division: paving way for distribution of any political slogan which can potentially appease most voters irrespective of the future consequences.

As a contribution to the field of communication, this study is expected to further strengthen the debate on the different forms of political communication and provide a necessary basis for the improvement of digital media tools and digital media literacy among the common users to enable them to become active participants in the uncontrolled flood of information. The researchers and architects of the contemporary communication platforms i.e. social media forums need to review the current situation where populist and extremist agenda is widely distributed through political communication based on these networks, so that the social networking spirit of these platforms can be maintained. First of such measures could be an algorithm-based audit of any online political campaigns to ensure that no fallacy, hatred or discrimination is published through new media platforms to secure the strategic integrity of political communication.

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