

Globalizations

ISSN: 1474-7731 (Print) 1474-774X (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/rglo20

The saffron diaspora: Hindutva mobilization and state-led diaspora governance in the United Kingdom

Ferhat Cagri Aras & Bahar Baser

To cite this article: Ferhat Cagri Aras & Bahar Baser (25 Jul 2026): The saffron diaspora: Hindutva mobilization and state-led diaspora governance in the United Kingdom, Globalizations, DOI: 10.1080/14747731.2026.2706995

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2026.2706995

© 2026 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

Published online: 25 Jul 2026.

Submit your article to this journal

View related articles

View Crossmark data

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
https://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?journalCode=rglo20

GLOBALIZATIONS
https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2026.2706995

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

OPEN ACCESS Check for updates

The saffron diaspora: Hindutva mobilization and state-led diaspora governance in the United Kingdom

Ferhat Cagri Aras [a] and Bahar Baser [b,c,d]

[a]International Relations, Karadeniz Technical University, Trabzon, Turkey; [b]School of Government and International Affairs, Durham University, Durham, UK; [c]Asia Observatory, Universidad Francisco de Vitoria, Madrid, Spain; [d]SIGLA, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, South Africa

ABSTRACT

In line with the neoliberal trends in global politics, home states started showing more interest in harnessing their diasporas for economic, political and cultural benefits. For illiberal home states, diaspora communities also have emerged as strategic assets with which they project extraterritorial power, manage their emigrant communities and expand their ideological reach and political visions beyond borders. In the light of these debates, the article focuses on India's evolving diaspora governance policy under the Modi government where the perceptions of diaspora have shifted from a symbolic cultural resource with emotional attachments to the homeland, to a central tool for political projects, driven by external and internal motivations. Drawing on previous studies which discussed diaspora building and governance from a social engineering perspective, the article demonstrates how state mechanisms such as the Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) card help to create ideologically filtered political spaces beyond national borders.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 4 December 2025
Accepted 16 July 2026

KEYWORDS
Hindutva; transnational authoritarianism; diaspora governance; diaspora diplomacy; India

Introduction

Over the last decades, diaspora communities have acquired a growing strategic importance for nation-states. These communities are no longer seen merely as scattered structures formed by individuals of immigrant origin; but as strategic communities where the cross-border policies of states are shaped, reproduced, and at times, disciplined (Baser & Féron, 2022; Betts & Jones, 2016; Silverman et al., 2026). For homelands, the diaspora has ceased to be merely a symbolic arena for forging cultural ties; it has transformed into an indispensable instrument for the dissemination of economic, cultural, and geopolitical influence (Alonso & Mylonas, 2019; Cochrane, 2016). Both liberal and illiberal states showed interest in formulating diaspora policies. However, there is demonstratable evidence that illiberal states also instrumentalised these policies for expanding their sovereignty abroad in order to project hegemonic power outside their borders (Uysal, 2019; Wong, 2024). Throughout time, diaspora has become an asset with which states project power, manage and control populations across borders and reproduce political visions. While home states have been motivated by a desire to leverage the social, political, and economic capital accumulated by diasporas abroad, they have also started to view these communities as an extension of their own

CONTACT Bahar Baser bahar.baser@durham.ac.uk

© 2026 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

global image (Akçapar & Aksel, 2017; Liu, 2022; Turner, 2013). The recent literature shed light on how these multi-layered motivations encourage certain nation states to form versatile ways of governing their diasporas while they also pave the way for selective engagement with different segments of diasporas. Nation states do actually exclude and include specific groups depending on their political projects that are at play in the transnational arena. At the same time, diaspora actors retain agency in how they negotiate, reinterpret, accommodate, or resist homeland governance projects. Diaspora governance should therefore be understood as an interactive and contested process rather than a unidirectional exercise of state power (Grossman et al., 2025).

One of the most striking examples of those states which showed a keen interest in formulating state-led diaspora engagement policies is India. Particularly with Modi government, a notable transformation and a proactive approach have been observed in India's foreign policy and its relations with its transnational communities residing outside India's borders. The diaspora has begun to occupy a central place in Modi's strategic thinking and foreign policy implementation (Böcü & Panwar, 2022; Pradhan & Mohapatra, 2020). As a result, Hindu nationalist organizations have started to become more visible and active, reflecting the domestic politics abroad. Scholars, such as Anderson (2023, p. 1) define Hindu nationalism as 'a majoritarian, conservative, and militant political ideology, and ethno-nationalist movement that rejects pluralistic secularism and is ascendent in contemporary India' and demonstrate how this ideology is playing a pivotal role in the mobilization of contemporary Indian diaspora.[1]

Under the Modi administration, diasporas were transformed into instruments of statecraft, blurring the boundaries between cultural outreach, political mobilization, and ideological dissemination abroad. As Tripathi and Biswas (2024, p. 588) argue, the contemporary Indian diaspora policy included components that aimed at strengthening emotional linkages with its loyal diaspora which supports Hindu Nationalism or Hindutva. Diaspora policies were tailored to specifically create an emotional proximity between the diaspora and the citizens at home. One important dimension of these policies involves building transnational legitimacy for broader political projects associated with the Modi era (Tripathi & Biswas, 2024, p. 589). Through populist policies at home and abroad, Modi administration managed to involve the diaspora back in homeland politics, made the 'loyal' diaspora a sought-after source for its legitimacy as well as turning the diaspora to an arena of support for its Hindu nationalist projects (Tripathi & Biswas, 2024). Therefore, the fundamental question that this article asks is how India's contemporary diaspora policies not only create a sense of belonging or strengthen cultural ties, but also how a specific political vision is reproduced and disseminated through the diaspora.

This article argues that India's diaspora policy is a sophisticated social engineering project that uses strategies of both inclusion and exclusion to extend state sovereignty beyond its borders. To analyse this process, the article is guided by two theoretical perspectives: Scott's concept of 'legibility' and Schmitt (1996)'s definition of the political based on the 'friend-enemy' distinction. Scott uses this concept to analyse how states try to simplify, codify and thus render populations governable. This framework has been applied to other cases such as Turkiye by Aksel (2022) who demonstrated that home states use social engineering to shape diaspora formation, mobilization and repression as part of diaspora governance. We build on these previous studies and extend Scott's understanding beyond the traditional borders of the nation-state and adapt it to transnational settings where home states seek to categorize, map and manage their diasporas across borders. We argue that Schmitt's political framework can be applied to transnational settings where selective engagement by home states occurs as the continuation of homeland political project projections. The friend–enemy distinction is used here not as a rigid binary model, but as a lens for analysing

how political belonging, loyalty, and dissent become hierarchically organized within diaspora governance. This framework can help us how external and internal conflict dynamics can be (re)produced, fabricated and weaponised by various actors, including home state policymakers themselves.

The framework proposes a two-step mechanism. First, the state deploys 'legibility' tools such as the OCI (Overseas Citizen of India) card to classify, register, and manage overseas populations. Second, these administrative practices may facilitate differentiated forms of political incorporation in which certain diaspora actors are embraced as legitimate representatives of the nation, while others are viewed with suspicion, marginality, or political hostility. Schmitt's friend–enemy distinction is therefore employed here not as a rigid binary model, but as a heuristic lens for examining how political loyalty, dissent, and belonging become hierarchically organized within diaspora governance.

The article makes three main contributions to the growing literature on diaspora governance and transnational politics. First, empirically, it provides one of the few qualitative studies examining how members of the Indian diaspora in the United Kingdom perceive, negotiate, and experience Modi-era diaspora governance policies in their everyday lives. Second, conceptually, it contributes to the debates on how diaspora governance is not merely as a form of soft power or diaspora diplomacy, but as a broader project of transnational social engineering that combines mechanisms of inclusion, mobilization, monitoring, and selective exclusion. Third, theoretically, the article brings Scott's concept of legibility into conversation with relational understandings of friend–enemy dynamics in order to analyse how political belonging, loyalty, and dissent become structured within diaspora governance practices across transnational space.

This article develops a qualitative approach in order to examine India's diaspora governance and combines document analysis with field research. Within the scope of the article, legal texts reflecting the Indian state's diaspora policies, official reports, documents from diaspora events, and the discourses of government officials were examined. The article focuses on the Indian Diaspora in the United Kingdom as a case study. The United Kingdom provides a compelling context for examining the Indian diaspora, given its historical ties to colonial rule, post-independence migration flows, and the subsequent consolidation of Indian communities across the country. Today, this diaspora is not only one of the largest in Europe but also one of its most politically, economically, and culturally active (Anderson, 2023). This dynamism is evident in the visibility of Indian-origin actors in British politics, academia, civil society, and business, all while maintaining strong connections to their homeland. Building on this context, this study adopts a qualitative research design that utilizes semi-structured interviews to explore the perspectives and experiences of the Indian diaspora in the United Kingdom. Fieldwork was conducted between November 2024 and July 2025 in fourteen cities across the UK.[2] In total, 33 semi-structured interviews were conducted with Indian Diaspora. The interviews engaged a wide spectrum of the Indian diaspora, including members of civil society organizations, activists, academics, students, asylum seekers, opinion leaders, and individuals affiliated with various diaspora groups. In selecting participants, purposive and snowballing sampling techniques were used in combination. In the initial stage, key actors who could provide access to different social institutional networks within the Indian diaspora in the UK were identified. Through these individuals, access was gained to various groups within diaspora communities. As interviews progressed, participants recommended additional interviewees, thereby facilitating access to different social circles.

The fieldwork covered several cities in the UK where the Indian diaspora is densely concentrated. Interviews were conducted in London, Leicester, Birmingham, Manchester, Bournemouth, Edinburgh, Westminster, Luton, Cambridge, Oxford and Newcastle. These cities represent the

main locations where Indian diaspora activities and community organizations are most actively concentrated in the UK. The interview data were subsequently analysed through a thematic analysis approach. Selected excerpts illustrating the key analytical themes are presented. These quotations were chosen to represent recurring patterns identified across the broader dataset rather than to provide an exhaustive presentation of all interview material. While the study draws on a diverse set of interviews conducted across several UK cities, the findings should be interpreted as illustrative of broader patterns rather than statistically representative of the entire Indian diaspora in the United Kingdom. The quotations included throughout the article were selected not as isolated testimonies, but as illustrative examples of broader themes and recurring patterns identified across the wider interview dataset.

Reconfiguring diaspora governance under Modi

Modi's coming to power with the BJP government in 2014 did not only signify a change of government in India's politics; it is also ushered in a broader transformation process in the spheres of the state, society and international relations (Chakraborty, 2024). During this period, India's domestic politics characterized by increasing political centralization, strengthening of Hindu nationalism, and redefinition of discourse of economic development within a nationalist framework. The BJP has advanced a comprehensive political project seeks to reposition India as a rising economic power and a strong cultural and civilization-based nation. This ideational shift affected domestic politics, also India's diaspora policies and its relations with global diaspora communities with a significant extent.

However, India's diaspora policies did not emerge solely during the Modi era. India in fact began to develop institutional relations with its diaspora particularly from the 1990s onwards. With the Indian economy starting to follow liberal policies in the post-Cold War period and with cultural integration initiatives gaining momentum, the economic and political potential of overseas Indian communities began to attract greater attention (Kapila, 2019). Indeed, many of the liberal policies pursued in this period required foreign investment, and the main channel for this investment was sought through diaspora-based networks. In this context, the diaspora regarded as a strategic resource in terms of investment, technology transfer and international connections. The PBD meetings were in fact among the key initiatives aimed precisely at this need, namely, the institutionalization of relations between the diaspora and the state. Through these events, launched in the early 2000s, diaspora representatives, businesspeople and political actors were able to establish direct contact with the Indian government, and diaspora communities encouraged to contribute to India's development process (Kapur, 2010). During the same period, another initiative aimed at strengthening relations with the diaspora was the introduction of the OCI card scheme. This scheme enabled persons of Indian origin living abroad to establish stronger ties with India and reinforced the institutional basis of relations between the diaspora and the state (Newsland Chase, 2015). These policies demonstrate that India regards its diaspora communities as important actors in terms of economic development and international cooperation.

At the same time, under Modi, the scope and function of diaspora policies have expanded considerably and have been placed within a new ideological framework: a hegemonic project in which Hindu nationalism is combined with neoliberal economic policies (Biswas, 2023; Mathew, 2022; Nielsen et al., 2026; Pradhan & Mohapatra, 2020; Sengupta & Swamy, 2020; Srinivas, 2019). The discourse of economic development and that of cultural nationalism are employed as mutually reinforcing elements. BJP has sought to define India as a rising economic power on a global

scale, while simultaneously developing a strong national narrative that foregrounds the historical legacy of Hindu civilization till 2014 (Chopra, 2024). In this context, Kaur (2020)'s notion of a 'Brand New Nation' offers an important framework for understanding India's rebranding process at the global level in the Modi era.

According to Kaur (2020), in the Modi era India is being re-presented as a new national project for both global investors and diaspora communities. This project is shaped, on the one hand, by promises of economic growth and development and, on the other, is sustained by a strong cultural and nationalist discourse. In this way, India is portrayed both as an economic hub offering investment opportunities and as a nation with a powerful civilisational identity. This ideological and economic transformation has also had significant effects on diaspora policies. The Modi government has come to view diaspora communities as actors that provide economic contributions and communities enhancing India's global image; that is played a role in the reproduction of national identity (Kundra et al., 2025). In this context, relations with the diaspora acquired an increasingly visible and symbolic character. One of the most striking examples of this policy is the large-scale diaspora gatherings organized during Modi's overseas visits. This diaspora events held in different countries have been interpreted merely as part of diplomatic engagement and political spectacles that highlight India's global power.

Indeed, the discourse employed during these diaspora visits clearly reveals the BJP government's perspective on diasporas. In his 2014 speech, Modi stated that 'the Indian diaspora is not just a community abroad; it is a living bridge between India and the world (Modi, 2014)'. Similarly, at the diaspora event at Wembley in 2015, he used the expression 'great ambassadors (Modi, 2015)'. The same framing can be observed in his speech at the Westminster event in 2018 and in his address at PBD in 2023 (Modi, 2023). The core message in all of these is that the diaspora is conceived as a global representative of India in areas such as Make in India, Yoga, Ayurveda and Indian industries. The 2024 New York event is likewise shaped around this idea, albeit with a slightly different reference: 'You have always been India's strongest brand ambassadors … That is why I call all of you Rashtradoot (Modi, 2024)'.

The reconfiguration of diaspora policies in this way has led diaspora communities to assume a more central role in India's global strategy. The Indian government frequently describes members of the diaspora as 'cultural ambassadors' or 'national representatives' and encourages diaspora communities to contribute to India's global rise. Numerous speeches and events in which the Modi government calls on members of the diaspora to support India's global development goals clearly reflect this approach. Enabling the diaspora to contribute to India's economic development objectives and to strengthen the country's international image has become one of the cores aims of this policy. At the same time, diaspora policies in the Modi era are intended to strengthen economic and cultural ties; this has also acquired an ideological dimension (Srinivas, 2019). The projection of Hindu nationalism into the international arena through diaspora communities has been a key component of this process. The mobilization of the Hindutva ideology in different ways within diaspora communities has made the political character of diaspora policies more visible. In this context, some studies show that diaspora networks are mobilized through organizations linked to Hindu nationalism and that these networks maintain strong connections with political developments in India (Karakuş, 2025; Roy et al., 2025; Nielsen et al., 2026; Pal et al., 2025; Singh, 2026). Nielsen et al.'s (2026) characterization of the political project that emerged in the Modi era as neoliberal Hindu nationalism. This perspective argues that economic liberalization and Hindu nationalism coalesce within a mutually reinforcing hegemonic project. According to this, India seeks to construct a strong national identity through both an economic development narrative and a discourse

of cultural unity. In this way, promises of economic growth and nationalist rhetoric combine to create a political framework that mobilizes broad segments of society.

The ideological transformation of diaspora policies also raises the question of how diaspora communities are defined and categorized by the state. As the Indian state has sought to strengthen its relations with the diaspora, clear distinctions have emerged within diaspora communities between loyal and critical actors. In some cases, debates have arisen over diaspora members who criticize government policies facing various administrative or legal pressures (Human Rights Watch, 2024). This situation shows that relations between the diaspora and the state are not always harmonious and that diaspora policies may also function as a political mechanism of control.

At the same time, diaspora communities are not homogeneous entities. The presence of different religious, ethnic and political identities within the diaspora gives rise to diverse reactions to state policies (Baser & Böcü, 2025). For this reason, the relationship between the diaspora and the state should be understood not as a one-way mobilization process, but as a complex field shaped by the mutual interaction of different actors. While some diaspora groups strongly support the policies of the Modi government, others adopt a more critical stance towards these policies. The multilayered character of diaspora politics is also shaped by the political contexts of the countries in which diaspora members reside. In particular, the Indian diaspora living in Western countries has both become integrated into the political systems of host states and maintained strong cultural and political ties with India (Pande, 2014).

In the Modi era, diaspora communities have been conceptualized, on the one hand, as carriers of India's global economic and cultural power and, on the other, as a social space that is reframed in terms of national identity and political loyalty (Srinivas, 2019). The impact of this transformation is particularly visible in countries with large and institutionalized diaspora populations. The United Kingdom, with its historical migration dynamics and the size of its diaspora communities, constitutes one of the key contexts in which India's diaspora policies can be most clearly observed. The Indian diaspora in the UK therefore offers a crucial case for examining how the Indian state defines, mobilizes and governs diaspora communities.

Existing scholarship has already demonstrated that diaspora governance involves practices of categorization, mobilization, and selective incorporation (Aksel, 2022; Gamlen, 2014; Kleist, 2013; Wong, 2024). Recent studies have also examined how states construct idealised diaspora subjects through ideological and cultural projects (Baser & Böcü, 2025; Orjuela, 2025). Rather than claiming that social engineering dimensions of diaspora governance are entirely new, this article builds on and extends this literature in three ways. First, it focuses specifically on the Modi-era transformation of Indian diaspora governance within the UK context. Second, it analyses how diaspora governance intersects with broader processes of democratic backsliding, Hindu nationalism, and transnational authoritarian practices. Third, it combines legibility frameworks with relational understandings of political antagonism to examine how differentiated forms of belonging and exclusion emerge within diaspora spaces.

Embrace and exclude: the dual nature of modern diaspora governance

For modern nation-states, the diaspora has ceased to be merely an arena for establishing symbolic ties with communities abroad; it has transformed into a strategic instrument for spreading economic, cultural, and geopolitical influence (Dickinson, 2017; Silverman et al., 2026; Yanasmayan & Kaşlı, 2019). Communities of immigrant origin possess a potential sphere of influence as a domain of exchange in the international arena, and as non-state actors, their agency and role in

global politics have become increasingly recognized theoretical structures. This new domain is part of the efforts by states to redefine and manage their relationships with citizens and their descendants beyond their own borders. While immigrant-sending states are motivated by the desire to utilize the social, political, and economic capital that diasporas accumulate abroad (Baser & Ozturk, 2020), they also view these communities as both a resource and an extension of their own global image (Karim, 2003). In this process, states are developing various legal, bureaucratic, and cultural mechanisms to make diasporas more visible, monitorable, and manageable (Gamlen, 2006).

The growing literature on diaspora governance mostly focused on home states' political, cultural and economic motivations. Some authors tried to explain this recent urge to govern diasporas from a neoliberal perspective while others focused on diasporas as emerging soft power tools, in other words the agents of new forms of diplomacy in transnational settings- diaspora diplomacy (Ho & McConnell, 2019). These scholarly discussions illuminated the complexities of managing transnational communities as part of a polity that 'belongs' to the nation state with defined borders. However, they have not necessarily fully explored the versatile mechanisms that home states engage with different segments in diasporas depending on their ethnic, religious, ideological or spatial meanings to the homeland policymakers. Recent academic work have started to pay attention to the selective nature of diaspora governance policies by examining intra-diaspora political dynamics and the home states' interests in curbing or cultivating diaspora mobilization in line with its own political aims in the transnational arena (Adamson, 2019; Alonso & Mylonas, 2019; Baser & Böcü, 2025; Silverman et al., 2026).

To contribute to this growing literature on diaspora governance and critically engage with nation state interventions in global diaspora politics, this article draws concepts from broader theoretical frameworks that unpack political dynamics between states and polity. The first of these is Scott (1998)'s concept of the modern state's desire to make society *legible* by simplifying it; the other is Schmitt (1996)'s theory, which defines the essence of the political through the friend-enemy distinction and the concept of sovereignty. These two perspectives reveal how diaspora policies, on the one hand, reconstruct their own national communities and grant them rights, while on the other, they carry the potential to ideologically shape these communities, reward the loyal, and control, suppress, and exclude dissident or 'undesirable' elements.

Building on previous work on diaspora studies which applied Scott's legibility framework on other cases such as Turkey (Aksel, 2019, 2022), we aim to enhance contemporary understanding of diaspora governance. Together, these two theoretical frameworks allow us to form a multi-scalar approach to both understand state-diaspora and intra-diaspora relations and explore how homeland policymakers can render diaspora populations 'legible' to cultivate stronger ties with, mobilize, co-opt or manage them. We may also further understand how friend-enemy logics can be embedded in diaspora governance frameworks by home states, combined with diasporas' own agency and dynamics, and create binaries and antagonisms in transnational settings, that are inherited from homeland politics.

Schmitt's conceptualization of politics as structured around the friend–enemy distinction provides a valuable framework for analysing diaspora governance, as it highlights how states draw boundaries of loyalty and exclusion beyond their territorial borders (Schmitt, 1996). This lens is particularly relevant in the case of India, where the rise of Hindu nationalism has intensified efforts to cultivate 'friendly' diaspora groups while marginalizing those deemed 'enemies'. The state's strategies of recognition, mobilization, and withdrawal of privileges operate through this binary: pro-government organizations are elevated as cultural ambassadors, courted through high-profile events and symbolic gestures, while dissenting voices are delegitimised or denied

access to resources, including through practices (Tripathi & Biswas, 2024). As Gulati (2016) notes, Modi's communication with the diaspora constitutes a discursive site of power where national identity is reconstructed through selective appeals to unity, progress, and modernity, while sidelining pluralist alternatives. Reports of UK-based organizations channelling funds to RSS-affiliated groups in India, many implicated in sectarian violence, also reveal how the friend–enemy logic is reproduced materially within transnational networks (Awaaz, 2004). In this sense, the Schmittian friend–enemy distinction provides a lens to interpret how diasporic engagement reinforces exclusionary notions of belonging, legitimizes antagonism, and extends the political logic of Hindutva beyond the territorial borders of India (Kinnvall, 2019).

The friend–enemy framework is particularly relevant to understanding the political mobilization of the Indian diaspora, as it sheds light on how Hindutva-oriented narratives reproduce antagonistic boundaries across transnational spaces. As Gulati (2016) notes, Modi's communication with the diaspora constitutes a discursive site of power where national identity is reconstructed through selective appeals to unity, progress, and modernity, while sidelining pluralist alternatives. Scholars such as Biswas (2023) also demonstrate that there is significant pushback against the Hindutva ideology within the Indian diaspora by various anti-Hindutva groups. This antagonistic framing has material implications, as demonstrated by reports documenting how UK-based organizations such as HSS and Sewa International have channelled funds to RSS-affiliated groups in India, many of which have been implicated in sectarian violence (Awaaz, 2004). In this sense, the Schmittian friend–enemy distinction provides a lens to interpret how diasporic engagement reinforces exclusionary notions of belonging, legitimizes antagonism, and extends the political logic of Hindutva beyond the territorial borders of India.

These new engagement strategies by states aim both to encourage the diaspora to strengthen ties with the homeland and to mobilize them as a lobbying force that promotes the homeland's interests in the countries where they live. Therefore, while diaspora management is, on one hand, an effort to build a positive relationship through public diplomacy and soft power tools (Melissen, 2005), it is, on the other hand, transforming transnational platforms into a structure that operates negatively through surveillance, control, and transnational repression, especially for authoritarian states (Karabegović, 2025; Tsourapas, 2021). This dual-faceted process demonstrates the complexity of the modern state's social engineering project and its practices of sovereignty that extend beyond its borders (Aksel, 2022).

According to Scott (1998), one of the fundamental projects of the modern state is to simplify the complex, local, and multi-layered social structures of the society it governs to make them *legible* to its bureaucratic mind. In this quest for legibility, the state aims to classify and standardize the population, thereby making its behaviour predictable and manageable. This is a precondition for the state to carry out its basic functions, such as collecting taxes, military conscription, preventing epidemics, or suppressing rebellions. Therefore, the construction of the modern state is, in a sense, a process of conquering this illegibility. As one of his most powerful metaphors to describe this process, Scott uses the scientific forestry that emerged in eighteenth-century Prussia and Saxony (Scott, 1998). Scott's metaphor emphasizes how the state's high-modernist projects, which can also be well-intentioned, can lead to unexpected and devastating consequences by ignoring local and practical knowledge.

Within this framework, diaspora policies can be read as an effort to reconfigure a non-territorial community, which is desired to be disciplined and managed, through the state's simplifying logic. States develop various *legibility* tools to incorporate diasporas into their own databases and ideological frameworks. Aksel's (2022) work on Turkey's diaspora policies clearly demonstrated that

Turkey's engagement with its diaspora benefits for applying such legibility tools to map, monitor and control the expatriate communities. Her findings can illuminate the complexities of other cases as well. For instance, in the case of India, the creation of statuses such as PIO (Person of Indian Origin) and OCI (Overseas Citizen of India) is one of the most concrete indicators of this effort. While these cards grant the diaspora rights like visa-free travel and property acquisition, they also offer the state the ability to more effectively monitor, record, and unify this scattered community under a common policy framework.

Other diaspora engagement strategies such as mass gatherings like Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) constitute institutional mechanisms designed to manage diasporas, and to mobilize them for the state's public diplomacy and soft power objectives. While these institutions bind diaspora members to the state by offering them specific services, they also disseminate their own ideological visions by cooperating with loyal diaspora organizations and appointing them as *cultural ambassadors* (Davari & Jang, 2024).

This process is a phenomenon that Gamlen (2014) defines as diaspora governance and which is rapidly spreading worldwide; so much so that today, more than half of the United Nations member states have their own diaspora institutions. The spread of these institutions is often promoted as a *good practice* by international actors such as the World Bank and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), as well as by a community of experts that can be described as an *epistemic community* (Beduschi, 2021). This global framework shows that states' efforts to make their diasporas *legible* are shaped not only internally but also by international norms and policies. This desire of the state to seeing and simplify is not just an administrative necessity but also forms the basis of a profound political project that defines who is and is not part of the nation.

The state's project of making society legible is not merely a matter of administrative regulation and resource management; it is also the act of establishing the most fundamental dynamic of the political, namely, the distinction between friend (in this case politically aligned diaspora actors) and enemy (and in this case diaspora actors perceived as hostile), as termed by Schmitt. According to Schmitt (1996), the political cannot be reduced to moral, aesthetic, or economic categories; its essence is based on a community's relationship with the existentially 'different and foreign' and, in the most extreme case, the possibility of conflict with it. The sovereign is the actor who decides on the 'state of exception' in which the normal order is suspended, thereby drawing the boundaries of the political unit. Viewed from this framework, diaspora policies are not just embracing and inclusive (Manor, 2013); they are also exclusionary by their very nature. As Aksel (2022, p. 312, 323) also argues, 'as social engineering projects, diaspora engagement policies are state created mechanisms that aim to facilitate a state's ability to monitor mobile populations and mold their behavior'. This process, for instance, can be observed in India's efforts to define the diaspora through ideal profiles such as a 'good Indian citizen (Dasgupta & Mahn, 2023)', a 'loyal Hindu (Mishra, 2016; Tripathi & Biswas, 2024)', or a 'patriotist Muslims (Leidig, 2020)', and to marginalize those who do not fit this profile.

This ideal citizen profile is generally based on criteria such as loyalty to the homeland, adherence to specific cultural and religious values, and acting in alignment with the state's official rhetoric. Those who fall outside of this definition can be coded as the 'enemy'. Schmitt (1996) makes a nuanced distinction within the enemy category: the 'conventional enemy (*hostis*)', who is recognized within international law and has certain rights; the 'real enemy (*the partisan*)', who is an irregular but ideological warrior tied to their land; and the 'absolute enemy (*the terrorist*)', who is bound by no territory or rules and is driven entirely by ideology. In the modern era, the increasing criminalization of the enemy and the shift towards the 'absolute enemy' category has granted states

the legitimacy to use more intensive and limitless methods to combat them. In the Indian case, the friend-enemy dichotomy becomes evident in polarizing interactions between Hindutva-aligned diaspora actors and their liberal, secular or leftist counterparts. The spillover of homeland's conflicts with outside actors also play a significant role. For instance, the India-Pakistan rivalry also holds significant importance in the context of inter-diaspora everyday interactions. Diaspora actors frequently construct solidarities by positioning themselves against perceived adversaries, both within the diaspora and in relation to homeland politics, thereby translating and transporting homeland antagonisms into host-country contexts (Féron & Baser, 2024).

This friend-enemy distinction is manifested in diaspora governance practices as 'positive' and 'negative' engagement policies (Baser & Ozturk, 2020). 'Positive' policies are directed towards loyal or 'winnable' segments of the *diaspora*. The state views these groups as instruments of public diplomacy, 'brand ambassadors', and partners for the development of the homeland. For these groups, civil society organizations are established or supported, programmes are organized to strengthen cultural and economic ties, and they are encouraged to conduct lobbying activities in line with the homeland's interests. One of the most concrete examples of India's policies in this area is the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) event, which was launched in 2003 under the BJP government and continued by subsequent administrations. This annual organization serves as an official platform bringing together representatives of the Indian diaspora from all over the world with Indian officials. These events initially provided significant investment contributions but have since evolved into a more structural role, channelling investments and supporting development in both countries. Awards like the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award (PBSA), presented at these events, honour diaspora members who have achieved success abroad and made important contributions to India. By defining and rewarding the 'good diaspora citizen' profile, these awards serve to symbolically reinforce ties with the homeland.

'Negative' policies, on the other hand, are directed at 'dissident diaspora' groups perceived by the state as an 'enemy' or 'threat'. This situation becomes particularly evident when authoritarian regimes export their internal political struggles and repressive mechanisms into the transnational sphere (Baser & Ozturk, 2020). States use diaspora institutions as apparatuses of repression to monitor and control diaspora members they view as dissidents. For example, Savarkar (1923)'s definition of Hindutva, which does not deem Muslims and Christians 'fully' Indian because their holy lands are outside India, places these groups within an exclusionary framework in the diaspora context as well. This ideological exclusion transforms into concrete repressive practices within the diaspora. Diaspora members who criticize human rights violations or government policies in India, especially those who speak of the oppression of Sikh or Muslim minorities, face the risk of being labelled divisive or terrorist by both structures affiliated with the Indian state and by other diaspora members loyal to the homeland. This situation is further accentuated by the transformation of mechanisms like the OCI card, originally presented as a positive engagement tool, into an instrument of surveillance and threat.

Indeed, some diaspora members state that having an OCI card is 'like being monitored in the countries you *are in* (Baser & Ozturk, 2020)' and that as they begin to criticize the government's policies, this privilege starts to 'feel like a threat (Abramson, 2024)' (See also Bhat & Chadha, 2023). The Indian government's use of its authority to revoke the OCI status of individuals it claims are engaged in 'anti-India' activities is a concrete example of this threat. Such practices aim to create a mechanism of self-censorship within the diaspora, marginalizing critical voices and imposing the profile of the 'good Indian citizen' who is loyal to the homeland and aligned with the government's rhetoric

(Human Rights Watch, 2024). Therefore, certain forms of diaspora governance may also reproduce dynamics associated with Schmittian understandings of political belonging and exclusion.

In the case of India, this situation is embodied by both the administrative categorization of diaspora individuals with OCI cards and the spread of Hindutva ideology in the diaspora through organizations like the HSS and VHP. While these organizations build a 'good citizen' profile based on Hindu identity, they systematically marginalize and code Muslim, Christian, or secular voices that do not fit this profile as the 'other'. This process, as Newswander (2011) notes, shows that administrative institutions do not only serve an instrumental function but also play a constitutive role. These institutions fill the vacuums that emerge in times of crisis or after problematic incidents by inventing new governing rationalities and practices related to security and identity.

Similarly, diaspora institutions also become constitutive actors that determine what diaspora means, how loyalty is to be measured, and how threat is to be defined. In conclusion, diaspora governance policies implemented by illiberal home states at times can turn the diaspora into both a controllable pool of resources and a political space that is subjected to ideological homogenization. This points to a practice of transnational authoritarianism in which critical voices are suppressed, loyalty is rewarded, and the state extends its domain of sovereignty far beyond its own geographical borders.

Importantly, the friend–enemy distinction is not treated here as a fixed or totalizing binary through which all diaspora members are categorized. Diaspora communities remain internally fragmented, politically heterogeneous, and shaped by multiple and overlapping forms of belonging. Rather than producing absolute divisions, diaspora governance often generates layered hierarchies of inclusion, conditional belonging, selective recognition, and differentiated suspicion. In this sense, the Schmittian framework is used analytically to illuminate how political antagonisms and boundaries of loyalty may emerge and be reproduced within transnational spaces, rather than to suggest the existence of fully coherent or uniformly imposed categories.

The Indian case: from 'unity in diversity' to a proactive turn

The Indian diaspora represents one of the largest and most influential transnational communities in the world. It is generally categorized under Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs), and Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI). Historically, the diaspora has been shaped by multiple waves of migration, ranging from indentured labour flows during the colonial era to the movement of professionals, students, and workers in the post-independence period. A substantial part of these migration trajectories has been driven by economic dynamics, which laid the foundation for the permanent settlement of Indian communities across the globe. Today, the Indian diaspora is estimated at approximately 30–35 million people worldwide. In the context of the United Kingdom, the diaspora stands out not only for its numerical size but also for its social and political embeddedness. In the United Kingdom, official census figures indicate that more than 1.8 million people of Indian origin reside in the country, constituting the largest ethnic minority group. British Indians are active across civil society, academia, business networks, and electoral politics. This global dispersion and institutional consolidation enable the diaspora to act as a bridge between India and host societies, while simultaneously shaping transnational debates on identity, belonging, and power (See Anderson 2023).

In recent years, India's efforts to reshape its relationships with its citizens abroad and with communities of Indian origin have gained significant momentum, particularly since the end of the twentieth century. This evolution has had various reflections in countries like the UK, where the

Indian diaspora is historically deep-rooted and large. These new engagement strategies from the state are based on an understanding of the diaspora as both a resource and an extension of India's global image (Varadarajan, 2010). The foundation of these policies is to strengthen the diaspora's ties with the homeland, encourage them to contribute to India's development, and, at the same time, mobilize them as a lobbying force that looks after India's interests in the countries where they live (Srinivas, 2019).[3]

One of the most concrete examples of India's efforts to institutionalize its relations with the diaspora and make Indians abroad legible is the creation of the PIO and OCI statuses. These statuses mark a significant transformation in India's policies towards its citizens abroad and people of Indian origin. The PIO and OCI cards, initially offered under different regulations, were merged into a single status in 2015 (Newsland Chase, 2015). The goal was to make it easier for individuals of Indian origin to maintain their presence in their countries of residence without severing ties with the homeland, and to consolidate data on diaspora groups in order to implement a unified policy from a single, centralized authority. Similar practices can be observed in other countries that aim to actively engage their diaspora groups.

Scott conceptualizes the efforts of states to render complex social formations more intelligible, classifiable, and governable. The concept in the literature was originally applied to describe how modern states sought to secure control by simplifying populations through censuses, maps, and categories. In the context of diaspora politics, however, it also explains how dispersed or fluid migrant communities (such as in the Indian case through legal categories like NRIs, PIOs, and OCI, as well as state-sponsored events and institutional mechanisms) are made visible and manageable. This process is not only presented as granting rights or recognition to these groups but simultaneously enables the systematic regulation of those designated as 'others'. As a result, diaspora policies extend beyond producing belonging or reinforcing cultural ties; they also promote the dissemination of a particular political imagination (Hindutva) through the diaspora itself. Such promotion, in turn, renders these groupings even more legible to the state.

For the Indian diaspora in the UK, the OCI status, while granting a range of rights such as visa-free travel to India, property acquisition, work, and education, also enables the Indian state to monitor and record the diaspora more effectively. The OCI card offers a form of 'flexible citizenship', making it possible for Indians in the UK to both protect their rights as British citizens or residents and maintain their cultural, economic, and familial ties with India (Verma, 2013). This policy, which can be seen as part of the state's strategy to make the diaspora legible and standardize its relations with the homeland, also serves the purpose of categorizing the diaspora, granting them specific rights and privileges, shaping their behaviour, and encouraging them to remain loyal and devoted members to the homeland. The spread of the OCI programme in countries with a large number of citizens of Indian origin constitutes an important pillar of India's long-distance nation-building project (Jaffrelot & Therwath, 2007). The fact that these statuses do not create a direct conflict with UK citizenship or settlement processes, but rather have a complementary nature, is a factor that facilitates their acceptance by diaspora members.

Similar to the OCI scheme, another significant initiative launched by India to strengthen ties with the diaspora and involve them in the homeland's development is the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) event. First held in 2003 during the term of the BJP government and subsequently continued by Congress party governments, this event aims to bring together representatives of the Indian diaspora from all over the world (MoEA, n.d.). By offering a platform that brings Indian officials and diaspora members together, PBD aims to strengthen the diaspora's relations with the homeland, position them as India's cultural ambassadors, and attract them to the country as

investors. These events, which in the first phase made important contributions by attracting investment (Aras, 2023), later led to an initiative to create an investment channel, and in subsequent phases, this evolved into a position that channels investment and supports development in both countries (Pradhan & Mohapatra, 2020).

The Indian diaspora in the UK has shown significant participation in PBD events since their inception. A large number of business people, professionals, academics, and representatives of civil society organizations in the UK have attended these meetings. This participation is an indicator of the UK diaspora's strong ties with India and its interest in the homeland's future. PBD events have offered Indians in the UK the opportunity both to obtain first-hand information about developments in India and to have a direct say in the Indian government's diaspora policies. In addition, the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award (PBSA) presented at these events has honoured individuals of Indian origin who have succeeded abroad and made significant contributions to India. These awards have also resonated within the UK diaspora and have served to symbolically reinforce ties with the homeland.

Large-scale organizations like PBD aim to project an image of the diaspora as a unified force supporting the homeland. In fact, events such as the VHS (Vishwa Hindu Sammelan), organized by the VHP in Milton Keynes, UK, in 1989, which brought together hundreds of Hindu organizations and tens of thousands of participants (Anderson, 2024), had demonstrated the potential for such mass diaspora mobilisations in the UK much earlier. By institutionalizing such grassroots movements at the state level and providing them with an official platform, PBD aims to channel the diaspora's energy in line with India's national interests. These events contribute to the UK diaspora being perceived as part of India's soft power and helping to positively influence India's image in the countries where they live.

Within diaspora communities, political identities are often structured through mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. In this sense, the diaspora space can reproduce political boundaries that resemble what Schmitt conceptualizes as the *friend–enemy distinction*, where loyalty and dissent become key markers of belonging. However, such state-sponsored platforms also carry the potential to draw the diaspora towards a specific political and ideological line and to marginalize critical voices:

> The hostility shown by people of Indian origin here (in the UK) toward those with separatist views is actually because our ideas about the mainland do not conform to their own. If we speak here about the injustices we experienced in India, we are labelled terrorists; if we speak about them there, our lives are already in danger. Even people who were our neighbours and are here today are unwilling to meet with us because we are trying to make our voices heard. (interview conducted in London, 14 January 2025)

Rather than reflecting direct state repression alone, this quotation illustrates how homeland political antagonisms may become reproduced within diaspora social spaces through informal mechanisms of ideological policing and social exclusion. In this sense, the boundaries between 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' forms of diasporic political expression are not enforced solely through formal institutions, but may also emerge through intra-diaspora pressures and community-level disciplining practices. This demonstrates how diaspora governance can operate through dispersed social relations that extend beyond the direct apparatus of the state.

Diplomatic missions play a key role for homeland states in conducting relations with their citizens abroad. The High Commission of India in London holds a central position in the development and management of relations with the large and diverse Indian diaspora in the UK. The High Commission is an important instrument for the implementation of diaspora policies in the UK, such as

receiving and processing OCI card applications and encouraging and organizing participation in events like PBD. Furthermore, it promotes Indian culture in the UK and ensures that diaspora members maintain official ties with the homeland by organizing cultural events, national day celebrations, seminars, and conferences. These services are part of the state's efforts to make the diaspora legible and to establish regular communication with them:

> Having an OCI means being watched. At first, it was a good feeling to go to India, to know that we had rights. But later, as we started to speak about the persecution of people from our own caste, these cards began to feel like a threat to us as well. Over time, for no apparent reason, these privileges make you feel insecure. (interview conducted in London, 13 March 2025)

This illustrates what Scott conceptualizes as the state's effort to render populations legible through administrative practices. By registering, categorizing and maintaining regular contact with diaspora members through mechanisms such as OCI cards and diplomatic institutions, the state seeks to increase its visibility over overseas populations and manage its relationship with them more effectively.

In recent years, however, such administrative mechanisms have also become the subject of debate among diaspora communities, particularly in cases where they appear to be used in response to critical voices abroad. In this context, the cancellation or suspension of OCI status in several high-profile cases has generated discussions about the potential use of administrative instruments to constrain critical diaspora actors. For instance, journalist Aatish Taseer's OCI status was revoked in 2019 following his criticism of Prime Minister Narendra Modi (Taseer, 2025). Similarly, the OCI status of Swedish-based academic Ashok Swain was suspended in 2023, although the decision was later overturned through legal channels (Bhatia, 2025). More recently, the OCI status of UK-based scholar Nitasha Kaul was cancelled after she publicly criticized the Modi government (The Hindu, 2025). In other cases, administrative restrictions have taken the form of visa denials or entry restrictions, as illustrated by the refusal of a visa to historian Audrey Truschke following her critical work on Hindu nationalism (Kanga, 2021).

These developments have contributed to broader debates within diaspora communities regarding the extent to which mechanisms designed to facilitate diaspora engagement may also function as instruments through which the state regulates or disciplines overseas critics. These cases are not isolated incidents. Similar concerns have been widely discussed within diaspora communities, including in public debates, legal commentaries, and online discussions where individuals have shared experiences related to visa denials, entry restrictions, or difficulties associated with OCI status. Such discussions have further contributed to the perception among some diaspora members that administrative instruments regulating diaspora engagement may also function as mechanisms through which the state can exercise control over overseas critics.

The role of the Indian High Commission is not limited to service provision; it is also influential in disseminating the Indian state's messages about its diaspora policies and rhetoric to diaspora communities in the UK. Organizing visits for high-level officials from India, holding regular meetings with diaspora leaders, and developing cooperation with diaspora organizations are among the High Commission's important duties. Just as the RSS headquarters in Nagpur keeps records of its members who emigrate abroad and puts them in contact with existing structures in their destination countries (Jaffrelot & Therwath, 2007), the High Commission can also perform a similar networking and coordination function through official channels. It can be said that the High Commission's role in diaspora engagement has grown, particularly during the Modi era when the Indian government's diaspora policy became more proactive, and it has taken on a more active

role in mobilizing the diaspora in line with India's foreign policy objectives such as enhancing India's global image and soft power, securing political support in partner countries, countering critical narratives and maintaining loyalty abroad (Chakraborty, 2024; Srinivas, 2019; Tandon, 2016). The protests held in front of the Indian High Commission during periods of conflict between India and Pakistan are an example of the diaspora's efforts to react to political developments in the homeland and to voice these reactions through diplomatic missions (Mathew, 2022). Such interactions turn the High Commission into an intermediary institution between the diaspora and the state.

Institutions, ideology, and mobilization: India's social engineering in the UK

The engagement of the Indian state and its affiliated ideological organizations with the diaspora can be understood not only through official policies and institutional structures but also as a social engineering project conducted through cultural, religious, and political practices. The Hindutva ideology among the Indian diaspora in the UK is one of the most prominent facets of this. This dissemination is systematically carried out by the RSS and its broad network of affiliated organizations, known as the Sangh Parivar (Andersen & Damle, 2018).

The HSS (Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh), which can be described as the overseas wing of the RSS, began its activities in the UK in the 1960s by establishing local units called *shakhas* (HSS-UK, n.d.). These *shakhas* were established particularly in cities with large Indian immigrant populations, such as Birmingham and Bradford, and became a centre of attraction for families wishing to pass on Indian culture to their children. HSS *shakhas* operate by adapting the RSS model in India to the UK context; adaptations include holding fewer prayers, playing team sports instead of martial arts, and organizing mixed-gender meetings on Sundays or during school holidays (HSS-UK, 2023). Today, there are around sixty *shakhas* operating on a weekly basis in the UK. These activities, many of which were established with the aim of carrying out cultural events, have over time also come to be used as a tool for lobbying and intercultural interaction within the diaspora communities. Homeland political conflicts are often reproduced and reinterpreted within diaspora spaces. Rather than remaining geographically confined to South Asia, rivalries like the India–Pakistan conflict can also shape everyday interactions and perceptions among diaspora members. In this sense, diaspora organizations and networks may function as arenas where nationalist narratives and antagonisms originating in the homeland are reproduced. As one interviewee stated:

> Of course, we will help when they need us. Pakistanis here are hostile towards us. They are also spreading propaganda against us here. That is why cutting off the water (referring to the period after the Pulwama terror attacks) is important. They use our water and attack our lands, rejecting the hand we have extended. The situation here is no different from the one over there. (interview conducted in Birmingham, 9 May 2025)

This quotation demonstrates how homeland geopolitical rivalries may be translated into diaspora settings and embedded within everyday social and political interactions in host societies. Rather than functioning solely as distant nationalist sentiment, homeland conflicts may become rearticulated through diaspora identities, perceptions of threat, and transnational political solidarities.

In addition to the HSS, other important organizations of the Sangh Parivar are also active in the UK. Organizations such as the UK branch of the VHP, established in 1972, the OFBJP (Overseas Friends of the BJP) the UK branch of the Rashtra Sevika Samiti (the women's wing of the RSS), the NHSF UK, which is the equivalent of the student organization ABVP, and Bharat Sewa, the

equivalent of the social service organization Sewa Bharti, are also active in the UK. These organizations attempt to spread the Hindutva ideology through Hindu temples, cultural centres, and educational institutions. For example, materials such as VHP UK's publication for teachers, 'Explaining Hindu Dharma: A Guide for Teachers (Prinja, 1999)', and 'Hinduism for Schools (Lakhani, 2005)' written by Seeta Lakhani aim to disseminate religious and cultural knowledge from a Hindu nationalist perspective. In Lakhani's book, negative views are expressed on issues like cloning, birth control, extramarital sex, divorce, adultery, and homosexuality; it is claimed that institutions like the BCC broadcast biased content about Hinduism, and it is noted that maps of India are drawn in line with Hindu nationalist claims (Lakhani, 2005).

Powerful Hindu sects like Swaminarayan Sanstha also serve as important allies and channels for the spread of Hindu nationalism, particularly among the wealthy Gujarati community. For example, the permanent exhibition titled 'Understanding Hinduism' at the large Swaminarayan temple in London's Neasden area has a highly nationalistic tone and includes claims that emphasize the superiority of Hindu civilization (SSM-London, n.d.). Similarly, all Gujarati media in the UK echoes Hindutva rhetoric, such as that of the 'Christian Threat' in India (Jaffrelot & Therwath, 2007).

Beyond political mobilization, diaspora organizations also play a significant role in the intergenerational transmission of cultural and national identities. Through youth camps, cultural programmes, and language courses, younger generations of the diaspora are socialized into particular narratives about homeland, culture, and belonging. These initiatives aim not only to preserve cultural heritage but also to sustain emotional and symbolic ties with the homeland. Summer camps, language courses, and student cultural evenings such as *Mastana*, organized at the University of Cambridge, are among the mechanisms used to reach younger generations. As one interviewee explained:

> We operate organising summer camps every year. Fundamentally, the youth don't have a strong connection with us, but their families want them to know their culture. This situation stems from the thought that 'one day we will return to India'. (interview conducted in Cambridge, 3 April 2025)

Hindu nationalist organizations that actively disseminate propaganda through social media seek to consolidate support for Hindutva ideology by taking advantage of the political and cultural space provided by multiculturalism in the UK. At the same time, they often mobilize diaspora members by drawing on experiences of racism, xenophobia, and perceived marginalization within host societies:

> Here, the primary goal is not the individual, but the community's interest. When you look at this viewpoint, it's not actually about the country's interests either, but religious interests. If you are a Muslim, you are not wanted; no matter what you do, you are not the same to them. I look at Muslims in other countries and there is this thing called love for the flag; they have great respect for their flags. When I look at it, it has seemed like a piece of paper to me since I was a child. It doesn't make any sense. (interview conducted in London, 15 January 2025)

Such perceptions illustrate how ideological narratives within diaspora communities can create internal boundaries based on religion and political identity, reinforcing forms of polarization that mirror debates taking place in the homeland. The findings suggest that some diaspora actors experience forms of symbolic exclusion in which national belonging becomes increasingly associated with religious conformity and ideological alignment. Modi's election as prime minister in 2014 further increased support for Hindutva in the diaspora and accelerated the HSS's plans to expand its presence into European countries such as Finland, Norway, and Italy (Sengupta & Swamy, 2020). This situation demonstrates how Hindutva in Europe, via the HSS, is intertwined with social, political, and civil realities and how it has become integrated with diaspora identities. Although this

integration is fundamentally structured to serve the Hindutva and an elite group within India, in the long term, it results in the creation of a foreign policy approach that groups countries regionally, while also leading to a situation where citizens who remain outside this grouping (Sajjanhar, 2024).

Another important dimension of the social engineering efforts by India and the Hindutva movement targeting the diaspora in the UK is the promotion of the 'good Indian citizen' profile and the exclusion of those who do not fit it. This profile is generally defined through loyalty to the homeland, adherence to Hindu cultural values, and a specific linguistic and religious identity (Reddy, 2011).

M. S. Golwalkar (1973) invited diaspora members to 'keep alive an intense spirit of national self-esteem … teach their children Hindu civilisation … [and] build temples', urging them to sustain cultural pride and continuity in their daily lives. While these injunctions may appear as cultural advice, they also constitute practices of social engineering. Teaching children about Hindu civilization institutionalizes ideological reproduction across generations; constructing temples transforms diaspora spaces into enduring sites of Hindu visibility and authority; and invoking the 'glorious heritage of our ancestors' embeds a narrative that binds individuals into a shared political project (Hindutva Watch, 2007). In this sense, Golwalkar's guidance represents a deliberate attempt to engineer social cohesion and ideological alignment within the diaspora, aligning cultural reproduction with political objectives.

HSS *shakhas* in the UK attract immigrants who want to pass on Indian culture to their children, and organizations like the VHP attempt to teach the younger generations a Hindu 'catechism' (Jaffrelot & Therwath, 2007). These efforts aim to make young people in the diaspora proud of their Hindu identities, knowledgeable about their cultural heritage, and remain self-confident. However, this 'good Indian citizen' profile generally promotes a specific interpretation of Hinduism and a North-Indian, Hindi-centric ethos; this carries the risk of ignoring or marginalizing the diversity within the diaspora. Savarkar (1923)'s definition of Hindutva does not consider Muslim and Christian Indians to be 'full' Indians because their holy lands are outside of India, and this can create an exclusionary effect in the diaspora context as well. Golwalkar (1966)'s statements that minorities could only live as outcasts if they did not merge into the 'national race' are one of the most extreme examples of this exclusionary logic.

Such ideological formulations resonate with broader discussions in diaspora studies regarding the construction of symbolic boundaries within transnational communities. As Brubaker (2005) argues, diasporic identities are often shaped through boundary-making processes that distinguish insiders from outsiders and define who legitimately belongs to the national community. In this sense, ideological narratives associated with Hindutva may contribute to the reproduction of similar boundaries within diaspora spaces. These dynamics can shape how individuals perceive belonging, security, and political loyalty within diaspora communities:

> These people have truly gone mad. My family has lived in Delhi for years. As children, we didn't really understand why we lived in separate communities. But as time went on, they attacked our neighbourhood under various pretexts. When you're a child, you see it as a fight. But now we understand that it is a massacre. While studying in India, a Muslim friend of ours argued with them, and after that, we never heard from him again; we started a social media campaign called 'Where is Najeeb?', but after a while, everything we do is forgotten. (interview conducted in Edinburgh, 23 December 2024)

The prioritization of Hindu identity over other identities and the promotion of specific cultural practices can be seen as an effort to create a form of homogenization and cultural uniformity within

the diaspora. Such dynamics resonate with broader discussions in diaspora studies regarding the construction of symbolic boundaries within transnational communities. As Brubaker (2005) argues, diasporic identities are often shaped through boundary-making processes that distinguish insiders from outsiders and define who legitimately belongs to the national community. This situation can create discomfort, particularly among secular, left-leaning, or segments of the diaspora that are critical of certain interpretations of Hindu nationalism, leading to them being seen as 'excluded' or 'undesirable'. For example, the campaign by Sangh Parivar publications in the UK and the US to separate young and wealthy Hindus from the broader mass of 'Asians' is a manifestation of this type of identity politics. Such practices attempt to simplify the complex and multilayered identities of the diaspora, trying to force them into the narrow moulds of the homeland state or the dominant ideology. The spread of the 'Hindu hurt' discourse and the policing of representations of Hinduism are also part of the effort to protect this 'good Indian citizen' profile and to suppress interpretations that do not conform to it:

> Many of those involved in these groups don't even believe in this kind of nonsense. Feeling a sense of belonging to a certain group has become a part of their business. They think, 'I have to be involved or I must offer support, otherwise we will be excluded or isolated by the community like the others'. There is a fine line between believing sincerely and believing for show; many of them stay on the other side of that line. (interview conducted in London, 16 January 2025)

The mobilization of the Indian diaspora in the UK for both Indian and UK elections is an important area of application for the social engineering strategies of the homeland state and the Hindutva movement. Beyond shaping cultural and ideological identities, these networks also play a significant role in the political mobilization of diaspora communities. These mobilization efforts aim for the diaspora both to be involved in political processes in India and to act as a political force that looks after India's interests in the country where they live. When it comes to Indian elections, the diaspora in the UK is seen as a significant source of support, particularly for the BJP and Modi. Structures like the OFBJP actively campaign for the BJP in the UK, raise funds, and mobilize voters (Bhatt, 2000). Indeed, the BJP gave a special place, and party leaders organized tours in countries like the US to generate resources from the diaspora (Aggarwal & Lebowitz, 2024); it can be assumed that this model is also valid for the UK.

During Modi's election campaigns, volunteers from religious networks such as the Swaminarayan community have conducted telephone campaigns from their homes in the UK, visited their hometowns in India to personally campaign for the leader, established websites, and managed social media pages affiliated with the BJP (Manthorpe & Martin, 2019). The large rallies organized by Prime Minister Modi in the UK also serve the purpose of consolidating the political support of the diaspora and making a show of force aimed at voters in the homeland. Such events increase the importance of the diaspora in Indian politics and make them a part of the political developments in the homeland.

In the context of UK elections, the mobilization of the Indian diaspora generally manifests as the support of candidates of Indian origin or the favouring of politicians and parties that advocate for good relations with India. In September 2003, the 'Operation Hindu Vote' campaign was launched by some Hindutva organizations, including the Hindu Forum UK, and some members of parliament of Indian origin (Siddique, 2019). This campaign aimed to identify Hindu population centres and individuals who openly supported an extreme vision of Hindu nationalism, to provide them with lobbying materials such as press packs, and to combine national lobbying efforts with participation in local politics. The NHSF also encourage their members to be active in student unions and student politics (NHSF-UK, 2021). Such efforts aim to ensure that the Indian diaspora is taken

more seriously in UK politics. This mobilization can also be seen as part of India's strategy to expand its sphere of influence as a long-distance nation-state through its diaspora in the UK.

An important pillar of the social engineering project of India and the Sangh Parivar with the diaspora in the UK consists of the complex network of relationships between state-sponsored or state-affiliated civil society organizations and diaspora associations. These relationships manifest in various forms, such as financing, joint projects, ideological guidance, and networking. Sangh Parivar-affiliated organizations in the UK, such as the HSS, VHP UK, OFBJP, Rashtra Sevika Samiti, NHSF UK, and Bharat Sewa, have close ties with the RSS and are generally directed from the RSS headquarters in Nagpur. The RSS has divided the world into geographical regions with senior cadres responsible for each, and the VHP's headquarters in Delhi has exercised authority over all its worldwide organizations since 1984. Officials are regularly sent from Nagpur to inspect HSS UK training camps and even to conduct standard training sessions (Kanungo, 2019). This situation demonstrates that the central structure in India has established a direct control and guidance mechanism over its extensions in the diaspora.

Financial relationships also form an important dimension of this network. For example, reports published by a human rights network called Awaaz have revealed the overseas financing structure of the Sangh Parivar, particularly through Sewa International UK. It is stated that Sewa International UK collected significant funds from the Gujarati community in the UK, especially after the 2003 Gujarat earthquake, and that a large portion of these funds was transferred to Sewa Bharti in Gujarat. There are also allegations that some of these funds were used for the construction of Hindu nationalist schools instead of for the reconstruction of destroyed villages (Mathur, 2014). This situation demonstrates how diaspora funds can be used to support specific ideological projects in the homeland. However, because the UK Charity Commission restricts the financing of political and sectarian activities, and India's Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) restricts its affiliates from receiving foreign funds without prior permission from the central government, Sangh Parivar components try to conceal their ties with the RSS.

The networks of religious communities like Swaminarayan Sanstha have also provided significant resources and infrastructure for Modi's political project. The international networks, volunteers, and promotional mechanisms of these communities have been used to strengthen Modi's image in election campaigns and on international platforms. Hundreds of international organizations and forums, such as the international branches of FISI, HAF, Sewa International, VHP, and HSS, are part of this diasporic informal diplomacy network. These organizations have achieved many diplomatic successes, such as the passing of the India-US Nuclear Deal, intervening in the content of Hinduism textbooks in schools in the US, UK, and Kenya, financing and organizing joint rallies for Modi with world leaders, and bypassing CAATSA sanctions (Aras, 2023; Leidig, 2020; Saha, 2025; Thakkar, 2022). This network of relationships demonstrates how the Indian state and the Hindutva movement use diaspora associations and NGOs as instruments for their soft power and social engineering projects. These structures mobilize the diaspora in line with the homeland's political and ideological goals, while at the same time disseminating a sense of identity and belonging within the diaspora.

Conclusion

This article examined the transformation of India's diaspora governance under the Modi government through the case of the Indian diaspora in the United Kingdom. By scrutinizing India's evolving diaspora governance policies under the Modi regime, the article built on the existing literature on global diasporas, by putting more emphasis on the selective nature of diaspora engagement by

home states as well as on the instrumentalization of diasporic transnational fields as grounds for transnational regime legitimacy and loyalty-building for nation-building projects. We argued that Scott's notion of making society legible and Schmitt's logic of constructing the political through the friend–enemy distinction converge in diaspora policies, forming the basis for a complex, multilayered practice of transnational social engineering (see also Aksel, 2022). These two theoretical frameworks are not mutually exclusive; on the contrary, they complement each other, illuminating the dual nature of the state's relationship with the diaspora, that is, how it simultaneously operates mechanisms of both administrative rationalization and political exclusion. On the one hand, as seen in Scott's analysis, the state uses tools such as OCI cards, diaspora institutions, and standardized programmes to transform the diaspora into a quantifiable, classifiable, and manageable category. This means the diaspora is turned into a community that is behaviourally guided and subjected to the state's bureaucratic logic.

On the other hand, Schmitt's theory demonstrates how this administrative project transforms into an ideological loyalty test. The state extends its political sovereignty into the transnational sphere by determining who is a friend (*loyal, serving national interests*) and who is an enemy (*dissident, a threat*) within this community it has made legible (Schmitt, 1996). At the intersection of these two mechanisms, the diaspora becomes both a behaviourally managed administrative object and an ideologically filtered political space. More broadly, the findings suggest that diaspora governance should not be understood solely through the frameworks of soft power, economic engagement, or long-distance nationalism. The Indian case demonstrates how diaspora policies may also function as mechanisms through which states attempt to regulate political belonging, manage ideological boundaries, and project domestic political transformations into transnational space. At the same time, diaspora communities remain internally fragmented and politically contested spaces in which state projects are negotiated, resisted, and reinterpreted in multiple ways. Future research could further explore how different diaspora groups negotiate, resist, reinterpret, or accommodate these governance practices across varying host-country contexts.

Notes

1. Recent scholarship has increasingly discussed India under the Modi government through the lenses of democratic backsliding, democratic erosion, and illiberal majoritarianism. These debates have focused on issues such as executive centralization, pressures on civil society and media, and the growing influence of Hindu nationalist discourse in public institutions (see Chatterji et al., 2019; Human Rights Watch, 2024; Varshney, 2022). While this article does not aim to adjudicate these broader debates, it situates contemporary diaspora governance within this evolving political context.
2. Interviews were conducted by the first author.
3. For a historical perspective on the evolution of India's diaspora governance policies see Pradhan and Mohapatra (2020).

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding

This work was supported by Türkiye Bilimsel ve Teknolojik Araştırma Kurumu [grant number 1059B192400090].

Notes on contributors

Ferhat Cagri Aras, PhD, is Associate Professor of International Relations at Karadeniz Technical University, Türkiye. His research focuses on South Asian politics, Indian foreign policy, Indian diaspora, development cooperation and emerging powers.

Bahar Baser, PhD, is Professor of Politics and International Relations at Durham University, specialising in diaspora studies, peacebuilding, conflict transformation, and transnational political mobilisation, with a regional focus on the Middle East.

ORCID

Ferhat Cagri Aras http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2108-1981
Bahar Baser http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8583-5909

References

Abramson, Y. (2024). Securitizing the nation beyond the state: Diasporas as threats, victims, and assets. *European Journal of International Relations*, *30*(1), 78–103. https://doi.org/10.1177/13540661221151036

Adamson, F. B. (2019). Sending states and the making of intra-diasporic politics: Turkey and its diaspora(s). *International Migration Review*, *53*(1), 210–236. https://doi.org/10.1177/0197918318767665

Aggarwal, M., & Lebowitz, M. (2024, April 16). Indian election: Prime Minister Modi's BJP seeks supporters in the U.S. *NBC News*. https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/india-election-president-narendra-modi-bjp-us-american-support-rcna139717

Akçapar, Ş. K., & Aksel, D. B. (2017). Public diplomacy through diaspora engagement: The case of Turkey. *PERCEPTIONS: Journal of International Affairs*, *22*(3), 135–160. https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/perception/issue/48951/624486

Aksel, D. (2019). *Home states and homeland politics: Interactions between the Turkish state and its emigrants in France and the United States*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Aksel, D. (2022). Diaspora engagement policies as transnational social engineering: Rise and failure of Turkey's diaspora policies. *Middle East Critique*, *31*(4), 311–325. https://doi.org/10.1080/19436149.2022.2127631

Alonso, A. D., & Mylonas, H. (2019). The microfoundations of diaspora politics: Unpacking the state and disaggregating the diaspora. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *45*(4), 473–491. (world). https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1409160

Andersen, W. K., & Damle, S. D. (2018). *The RSS: A view to the inside*. Penguin Viking, an imprint of Penguin Random House.

Anderson, E. T. (2024, September 30). The Birat Hindu Sammelan. *The Caravan*.

Anderson, E. T. G. (2023). *Hindu Nationalism in the Indian Diaspora: Transnational Politics and British Multiculturalism* (1st ed.). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197746202.001.0001.

Aras, F. C. (2023). *Make in India initiative for sustainable development: Unleashing potential*. White Falcon Publishing.

Awaaz. (2004). *In bad faith: British charity & Hindu extremism* (p. 4) [Report Summary]. South Asia Watch Ltd. http://www.sacw.net/DC/CommunalismCollection/ArticlesArchive/British_charity_and_Hindu_extremism_a_report_summary.pdf

Baser, B., & Böcü, G. (2025). Youth responses to state-manufactured diaspora mobilization: Turkey's diaspora governance and the politics of selective engagement. *Globalizations*, *22*(1), 81–97. https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2024.2306724

Baser, B., & Féron, É. (2022). Host state reactions to home state diaspora engagement policies: Rethinking state sovereignty and limits of diaspora governance. *Global Networks*, *22*(2), 226–241. https://doi.org/10.1111/glob.12341

Baser, B., & Ozturk, A. E. (2020). Positive and negative diaspora governance in context: From public diplomacy to transnational authoritarianism. *Middle East Critique*, *29*(3), 319–334. https://doi.org/10.1080/19436149.2020.1770449

Beduschi, A. (2021). International migration management in the age of artificial intelligence. *Migration Studies*, *9*(3), 576–596. https://doi.org/10.1093/migration/mnaa003

Betts, A., & Jones, W. (2016). Mobilising the diaspora. In A. Betts & W. Jones (Eds.), *Mobilising the diaspora: How refugees challenge authoritarianism* (pp. i–ii). Cambridge University Press. https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/mobilising-the-diaspora/mobilising-the-diaspora/8B0FB8E0E5C300BBF43FD3E50FA3A9EA

Bhat, P., & Chadha, K. (2023). The mob, the state and harassment of journalists via twitter in India. *Digital Journalism*, *11*(10), 1788–1808. https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2022.2134164

Bhatia, S. (2025, April 4). 'My OCI was Cancelled Twice and Restored Both Times by the Courts': Ashok Swain [News]. Wire. *The Wire*. https://thewire.in/government/my-oci-was-cancelled-twice-and-restored-both-times-by-the-courts-ashok-swain

Bhatt, C. (2000). Dharmo Rakshati Rakshitah : Hindutva movements in the UK. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *23*(3), 559–593. https://doi.org/10.1080/014198700328999

Biswas, B. (2023). (Re)imagining the idea of India: Contestations about Hindutva among the Indian American diaspora. *Nations and Nationalism*, *29*(3), 1112–1124. https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12905

Böcü, G., & Panwar, N. (2022). Populist diaspora engagement. *Diaspora Studies*, *15*(2), 158–183. https://doi.org/10.1163/09763457-bja10013

Brubaker, R. (2005). The 'diaspora' diaspora. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *28*(1), 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/0141987042000289997

Chakraborty, D. (2024). Resurgence of India's soft power under Modi reign: A comparative analysis. *Journal of Polity & Society*, *16*(2), 101–114.

Chatterji, A. P., Hansen, T. B., & Jaffrelot, C. (2019). *Majoritarian state: How hindu nationalism is changing India* (1st ed.). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190078171.001.0001

Chopra, R. (2024, December 25). *Hinduism, soft power, and the remaking of global Indian public culture under Narendra Modi* [Forum]. Berkley Forum. Berkley Center. https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/posts/hinduism-soft-power-and-the-remaking-of-global-indian-public-culture-under-narendra-modi

Cochrane, F. (2016). *Migration and security in the global age: Diaspora communities and conflict* (First issued in paperback). Routledge.

Dasgupta, R. K., & Mahn, C. (2023). Between visibility and elsewhere: South Asian queer creative cultures and resistance. *South Asian Diaspora*, *15*(1), 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1080/19438192.2022.2164429

Davari, D., & Jang, S. (2024). Diaspora's intuitive role as cultural ambassador: Toward a new cultural sustainability perspective. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, *32*(7), 1332–1349. https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2023.2225802

Dickinson, J. (2017). The political geographies of diaspora strategies: Rethinking the 'sending state'. *Geography Compass*, *11*(2), e12305. https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12305

Féron, É., & Baser, B. (2024). *Diasporas and transportation of homeland conflicts: Inter-group dynamics and host country responses* (1st ed.). Routledge.

Gamlen, A. (2006). *Diaspora engagement policies: What are they, and what kinds of states use them?* (Working Paper WP-06-32; p. 31). University of Oxford.

Gamlen, A. (2014). Diaspora institutions and diaspora governance. *International Migration Review*, *48*(1_suppl), 180–217. https://doi.org/10.1111/imre.12136

Golwalkar, M. S. (1966). *Bunch of thoughts*. Sahitya Sindhu Prakashana.

Golwalkar, M. S. (1973). *Private correspondence sent to L. M. Sabherwal* [Letter]. http://bo-k2s.sciences-po.fr/mass-violence-war-massacre-resistance/en/document/golwalkar-19-february-1906a-5-june-1973

Grossman, J., Böcü, G., & Baser, B. (2025). Diaspora exclusion in divided home states: Israel and Turkey compared. *Alternatives*, 03043754251324679.

Gulati, S. (2016). *Modiplomacy and Diaspower: The discursive construction of modernity andnational identity in Narendra Modi's communication with the Indian diaspora* (p. 49) [Working Paper]. Media@LSE. https://www.lse.ac.uk/media-and-communications/assets/documents/research/msc-dissertations/2016/Dissertation-Saanya-Gulati.pdf

Hindutva Watch. (2007, December 4). Long-distance nationalism of the Hindu diaspora in the West. *Hindutva Watch*. https://www.hindutvawatch.org/the-sangh-parivar-and-the-hindu-diaspora-in-the-west-what-kind-of-long-distance-nationalism/

Ho, E. L. E., & McConnell, F. (2019). Conceptualizing 'diaspora diplomacy': Territory and populations betwixt the domestic and foreign. *Progress in Human Geography*, *43*(2), 235–255. https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132517740217

HSS-UK. (2023). *HSS(UK) events: December 2023- Extra Edition* [Online post]. https://hssuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Sangh_Mail_December_2023_Extra_1.0.pdf

HSS-UK. (n.d.). About HSS (UK)—a brief introduction. *HSS UK | Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh UK*. Retrieved 23 June 2025, from https://hssuk.org/about/

Human Rights Watch. (2024, March 17). *India: Authorities revoke visa privileges of diaspora critics | Human Rights Watch*. https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/03/17/india-authorities-revoke-visa-privileges-diaspora-critics

Jaffrelot, C., & Therwath, I. (2007). The Sangh Parivar and The Hindu diaspora in the west: What kind of "long-distance nationalism"? *International Political Sociology*, *1*(3), 278–295. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-5687.2007.00018.x

Kanga, S. (2021, May 19). *The Hindu Right cannot debate me because it rejects critical thought: Audrey Truschke* [News]. The Caravan. https://caravanmagazine.in/history/hindu-right-cannot-debate-me-audrey-truschke

Kanungo, P. (2019). Sangh and Sarkar: The RSS power centre shifts from Nagpur to New Delhi. In A. P. Chatterji, T. B. Hansen, & C. Jaffrelot (Eds.), *Majoritarian state: How Hindu nationalism is changing India* (pp. 133–150). Oxford University Press.

Kapila, U. (2019). *Indian economy since independence* (30th ed.). Academic Foundation.

Kapur, D. (2010). Diaspora, development, and democracy: The domestic impact of international migration from India. *Diaspora, Development, and Democracy: The Domestic Impact of International Migration from India*.

Karabegović, D. (2025). Fixing things from the outside? Diaspora politicians and transnational political engagement. *Globalizations*, *22*(1), 114–131. https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2024.2336647

Karakuş, M. (2025). Intersecting nationalisms: Hindutva, Zionism, and their shared exclusionary policies. *Çankırı Karatekin Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi*, *15*(4), 1363–1393. https://doi.org/10.18074/ckuiibfd.1618505

Karim, K. H. (2003). Mapping diasporic mediascapes. In K. H. Karim (Ed.). *The media of diaspora* (0 ed., pp. 1–19). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203380642

Kaur, R. (2020). *Brand new nation: Capitalist dreams and nationalist designs in twenty-first-century India*. Stanford University Press. https://www.sup.org/books/asian-studies/brand-new-nation

Kinnvall, C. (2019). Populism, ontological insecurity and Hindutva: Modi and the masculinization of Indian politics. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, *32*(3), 283–302. https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2019.1588851

Kleist, N. (2013). Flexible politics of belonging: Diaspora mobilisation in ghana. *African Studies*, *72*(2), 285–306. https://doi.org/10.1080/00020184.2013.812883

Kundra, S., Bhattacharya, A., & Sarwal, A. (2025). Unraveling India's cultural diplomacy with Fiji: A decade of engagement (2014–2025). *Cogent Social Sciences*, *11*(1), 2555745. https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2025.2555745

Lakhani, S. (2005). *Hinduism for schools*. Vivekananda Centre London Ltd.

Leidig, E. (2020). Hindutva as a variant of right-wing extremism. *Patterns of Prejudice*, *54*(3), 215–237. https://doi.org/10.1080/0031322X.2020.1759861

Liu, J. M. (2022). When diaspora politics meet global ambitions: Diaspora institutions amid China's geopolitical transformations. *International Migration Review*, *56*(4), 1255–1279. https://doi.org/10.1177/01979183211072824

Manor, J. (2013). Who is a citizen?' A multidimensional question. In S. Mitra (Ed.), *Citizenship as cultural flow. Transcultural research – Heidelberg studies on Asia and Europe in a global context* (pp. 107–120). Springer.

Manthorpe, R., & Martin, A. J. (2019, November 7). *General election: Indian nationalist party BJP supporters to campaign in UK against Labour*. Sky News. https://news.sky.com/story/general-election-indian-nationalist-party-bjp-supporters-to-campaign-in-uk-against-labour-11854965

Mathew, N. (2022). Bhakt nation: The return of The Hindu diaspora in Modi's India. *History and Anthropology*, *33*(3), 337–354. https://doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2021.1946049

Mathur, C. (2014). The Indian state, the diasporic Hindu right and the 'desire named development'. In L. Brennan (Ed.), *Enacting globalization: Multidisciplinary perspectives on international integration* (pp. 13–19). Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137361943_2

Melissen, J. (2005). The new public diplomacy: Between theory and practice. In J. Melissen (Ed.), *The new public diplomacy: Soft power in international relations* (pp. 3–27). Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230554931_1

Mishra, A. K. (2016). Diaspora, development and the Indian state. *The Round Table*, *105*(6), 701–721. https://doi.org/10.1080/00358533.2016.1246859

Modi, N. (2014, September 29). *PM Modi's speech at Madison Square Garden* [Video recording]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P34MFTKZjSk

Modi, N. (2015, November 14). *PM Modi's speech at the Community Address in Wembley Stadium, London* [Video recording]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCtkcfUvA2Q

Modi, N. (2023, May 23). *PM Modi addresses community programme in Sydney, Australia* [Video recording]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nSKpKZPs5NQ

Modi, N. (2024, October 5). *PM Modi addresses community programme in New York | English Subtitles* [Video recording]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dDfcgScEAJc

MoEA. (n.d.). *Pravasi Bharatiya Divas* [Online post].

Newsland Chase. (2015, February 4). Merger of PIO and OCI card schemes brings eligibility changes and clarifications. *Newland Chase*. https://newlandchase.com/india-merger-of-pio-and-oci-card-schemes-brings-eligibility-changes-and-clarifications/

Newswander, C. B. (2011). Foucauldian power and Schmittian politics: The craft of constitution. *Administration & Society*, *43*(5), 537–560. https://doi.org/10.1177/0095399711412735

NHSF-UK. (2021, April 7). *Anti-Hindu sentiments on campus: Voices from the ground. | National Hindu Students' Forum (UK)*. https://www.nhsf.org.uk/2021/04/press-release-antihindusentiments/

Nielsen, K. B., Nilsen, A. G., & Selvaraj, M. S. (2026). Relocations of Hindutva: Hindu nationalism under Modi 3.0. *Forum for Development Studies*, *53*(1), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/08039410.2025.2599112

Orjuela, C., Wackenhut, A. F., & Hirt, N. (2025). Authoritarian states and their new generation(s) diasporas: An introduction. *Globalizations*, *22*(1), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2024.2432755

Pal, F., Thapliyal, N., & Gandbhir, G. (2025). Taking ideology out: Finding the diasporic Hindu far-right down under. *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, *79*(5), 691–708. https://doi.org/10.1080/10357718.2025.2519395

Pande, A. (2014). The role of Indian diaspora in the development of the Indian IT industry. *Diaspora Studies*, *7*(2), 121–129. https://doi.org/10.1080/09739572.2014.911446

Pradhan, R., & Mohapatra, A. (2020). India's diaspora policy: Evidence of soft power diplomacy under Modi. *South Asian Diaspora*, *12*(2), 145–161. https://doi.org/10.1080/19438192.2020.1712792

Prinja, N. K. (1999). *Explaining Hindu Dharma: A guide for teachers*. Vishwa Hindu Parishad (UK).

Reddy, D. S. (2011). Hindutva: Formative assertions. *Religion Compass*, *5*(8), 439–451. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8171.2011.00290.x

Roy, R., Purkayastha, B., & Narayan, A. (2025). Gendered patterns of counter-dissemination: Hindu women navigating religious nationalism in the United States. *Sociological Bulletin*. *74*(4), 472–488. https://doi.org/10.1177/00380229251349577

Saha, R. (2025, March 14). *Are India-UK ties on track to achieve vision 2030?* The Diplomat. https://thediplomat.com/2025/03/are-india-uk-ties-on-track-to-achieve-vision-2030/

Sajjanhar, A. (2024). How India's new intellectual elite functions under a Hindu supremacist government. In *The Wire*. The Wire. https://thewire.in/culture/ow-indias-new-intellectual-elite-functions-under-a-hindu-supremacist-government

Savarkar, V. D. (1923). *Hindutva: Who Is a Hindu?* Hindi Sahitya Sadan.

Schmitt, C. (1996). *The concept of the political*. University of Chicago Press.

Scott, J. C. (1998). *Seeing like a state: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed*. Yale University Press.

Sengupta, R., & Swamy, P. (2020). Hindutva in Europe: Making sense of diaspora contexts. In K. A. Jacobsen & F. Sardella (Eds.), *Handbook of Hinduism in Europe* (Vol. 1, pp. 648–664). Brill. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004432284_022

Siddique, H. (2019, November 8). 'Divisive tactics': WhatsApp messages urge Hindus to vote against Labour. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/nov/08/british-hindus-urged-whatsapp-messages-vote-against-labour

Silverman, J. A., Abramson, Y., & Grossman, J. (2026). 'It's all personal': State-led mobilisation of diaspora individuals. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, *28*(1), 187–209. *Online First*. (Sage UK: London, England). https://doi.org/10.1177/13691481251339473

Singh, S. (2026). *Diaspora as diplomats: Rethinking the role of transnational communities in shaping non-state armed groups*. Geneva Graduate Institute. https://doi.org/10.71609/iheid-0jem-y618

Srinivas, J. (2019). Modi's cultural diplomacy and role of Indian diaspora. *Central European Journal of International and Security Studies*, *13*(2), 74–90. https://doi.org/10.51870/CEJISS.A130201

SSM-London. (n.d.). *Exhibition: 'Understanding Hinduism' – BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, London*. Retrieved 23 June 2025, from https://londonmandir.baps.org/the-mandir/exhibition-understanding-hinduism/

Tandon, A. (2016). Transforming the unbound elephant to the lovable Asian hulk: Why is Modi leveraging India's soft power? *The Round Table*, *105*(1), 57–65. https://doi.org/10.1080/00358533.2015.1126956

Taseer, A. (2025). *A return to self: Excursions in exile*. Catapult.

Thakkar, C. (2022). India vs UK: The story of an unprecedented diplomatic win. *International Affairs*, *98*(1), 349–350. https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiab248

The Hindu. (2025, May 19). *British academic Nitasha Kaul says her OCI registration cancelled—The Hindu* [News]. The Hindu. The Hindu News. https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/british-academic-nitasha-kaul-says-her-oci-registration-cancelled/article69594330.ece

Tripathi, S., & Biswas, B. (2024). 'Everything is fine in India': Crafting emotional proximity among the Indian diasporas. *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, *25*(4), 587–604. https://doi.org/10.1080/21567689.2024.2419675

Tsourapas, G. (2021). Global autocracies: Strategies of transnational repression, legitimation, and co-optation in world politics. *International Studies Review*, *23*(3), 616–644. https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/viaa061

Turner, S. (2013). Staging the Rwandan diaspora: The politics of performance. *African Studies*, *72*(2), 265–284. (world). https://doi.org/10.1080/00020184.2013.812888

Uysal, N. (2019). The rise of diasporas as adversarial non-state actors in public diplomacy: The Turkish case. *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, *14*(3), 272–292. https://doi.org/10.1163/1871191X-14401030

Varadarajan, L. (2010). *The domestic abroad: Diasporas in international relations*. Oxford University Press.

Varshney, A. (2022). India's Democratic Longevity and Its Troubled Trajectory. In S. Mainwaring & T. Masoud (Eds.), *Democracy in Hard Places*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197598757.003.0002

Verma, S. (2013). *Instruments of engagement: Assesing India's PIO and OCI Schemes* (Carim No. 2013/21; p. 39). India Centre for Migration. https://www.mea.gov.in/images/pdf/AssessingIndiasPIOandOCISchemes.pdf

Wong, K. C.-P. (2024). Sowing hate, cultivating loyalists: Mobilizing repressive nationalist diasporas for transnational repression by the People's Republic of China Regime. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *68*(12), 1655–1678. (Sage CA: Los Angeles, CA). https://doi.org/10.1177/00027642241267931

Yanasmayan, Z., & Kaşlı, Z. (2019). Reading diasporic engagements through the lens of citizenship: Turkey as a test case. *Political Geography*, *70*, 24–33. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2019.01.004