

Bovine meat, authoritarian populism, and state contradictions in Modi's India

Jostein Jakobsen¹  | Kenneth Bo Nielsen² 

¹Centre for Development and the Environment, University of Oslo, Oslo

²Department of Social Anthropology, University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway

Correspondence

Jostein Jakobsen, Centre for Development and the Environment, University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway, P.O. Box 1116, Blindern, 0317 Oslo, Norway.

Email: jostein.jakobsen@sum.uio.no

This article is part of a future Special Issue: Populism, Agrarian Movements and Progressive Politics.

Abstract

While authoritarian populism and its relationship to the rural world have gained analytical prominence recently, few have attempted a systematic exploration of how various authoritarian populisms emerge from, and are embedded within, dynamics of capital accumulation, state, and class struggle. Drawing on Poulantzas' approach to "state contradictions," we focus on the ways by which bovine meat figures in Narendra Modi's authoritarian populist project in contemporary India. On the one hand, violent authoritarianism in the country uses beef eating as a powerful tool for subjugating subaltern groups to Hindutva rule. On the other hand, the country houses a rapidly expanding beef meat agro-industry, accounting for as much as 20% of global exports and based on corporate concentration around dominant class interests. We argue that this points to state contradictions in Modi's India witnessing strained accumulation patterns. These contradictions, we emphasize, have distinct ramifications for India's classes of labour in the countryside, as certain groups experience what we describe as a process of "double victimization."

KEYWORDS

authoritarian populism, capitalist state, emancipatory rural politics initiative, Hindu nationalism, India

This is an open access article under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/) License, which permits use and distribution in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, the use is non-commercial and no modifications or adaptations are made.

© 2022 The Authors. *Journal of Agrarian Change* published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

1 | INTRODUCTION

The relationship between authoritarian politics and the rural world has received unprecedented attention in critical agrarian studies in recent years. This is largely due to the research emanating from the Emancipatory Rural Politics Initiative (ERPI), a collaborative effort among scholars and activists striving to unravel the ramification for rural politics of right-wing deepening across the world. ERPI has spawned a series of publications scrutinizing this relationship under concepts such as “authoritarian populism” (Scoones et al., 2018), “counter-revolution” (Bello, 2019), “right-wing populism” (Borras, 2020), or “right-wing nationalism” (Haroon Akram-Lodhi, 2021). These various “populisms” all index “the deliberate political act of aggregating disparate and even competing and contradictory class and group interests and demands into a relatively homogenized voice, that is, “we, the people,” against an “adversarial them” for tactical or strategic purposes” (Borras, 2020, p. 5).

However, some of the most recent contributions to this conversation stress the importance of going beyond the prevailing focus on populisms as ideological or discursive phenomena, to probe underlying capitalist and class dynamics. Henry Bernstein (2020, p. 1539) thus writes: “What should be clear enough is that authoritarian populism, for all its diverse manifestations, should always be interrogated first through the questions: what class interests does it serve? By what means? And with what effects?” Taking a cue from Bernstein’s assessment, McKay and colleagues similarly argue for moving beyond analysing authoritarian populism in a solely discursive manner, to probe underlying capitalist dynamics structuring authoritarian populism with their distinctive class contradictions and antagonisms. This, they write, “requires going beyond the discourse to a serious engagement with the role and nature of the state, and thus, an analysis into the nature of the class and intra-class relationships in society and in agrarian formation” (McKay et al., 2020, p. 355).

In this article, we heed this call by attending to one of the most prominent examples of authoritarian politics today: Narendra Modi’s India. Commonly conceptualized as an “authoritarian populist” (Nielsen & Nilsen, 2022; Sinha, 2021), Modi and his Hindu nationalist project are frequently seen as paradigmatic to the new authoritarianisms enumerated above. Such is its current standing that Walden Bello (2019, p. 68) calls it “the hegemonic force in Indian politics” today. This hegemonic configuration has turned increasingly to authoritarian populist discourse and measures, with a concomitant rise in social disorder and repression (Chacko, 2018; Nielsen & Nilsen, 2021). Key to our purposes, the ruling party’s hegemonic project is centred on the twin ideological agendas of Hindu nationalism that seeks to turn India into a Hindu majoritarian state (Chatterji et al., 2019) and neoliberal economic policies that seek to create new spaces for capitalist accumulation (Palshikar, 2019).

We know from Gramsci (1971) that hegemonies are unstable and contested, a position that Stuart Hall—who coined the term “authoritarian populism”—certainly shared (Hall, 2011, p. 727–728). So did Poulantzas, whose work on “authoritarian statism” triggered Hall’s thinking in the 1980s (McKay et al., 2020). We suggest that the call for renewed attention to the state to unravel the capitalist dynamic beneath right-wing populist politics across the world invites attention to another strand of Poulantzas’ writings: his idea of “state contradictions.” Poulantzas (1978) discusses the state as “a relationship of forces or more precisely the material condensation of such a relationship among classes and class fractions” (p. 128, emphasis removed). This relationship is necessarily strained, frequently conflictual, giving rise to a series of “internal contradictions within the State” (p. 131, emphasis removed). So, rather than looking for contradictions in hegemonies as such or in hegemonic projects, Poulantzas offers a perspective that would emphasize contradiction within the state—within, in our case, states housing hegemonic authoritarian populist projects. Poulantzas’ class-analytical approach to the state invites consideration of the conjuncturally specific articulations between the “political” and the “economic,” considered not as distinct realms but rather as aspects or “moments” of capitalist constellations, where relations of production—comprising both “political” class relations and “economic” relations—always remain determinant (Poulantzas, 2008, p. 396–397). A Poulantzian lens enables scrutiny of the ways state contradictions play out across the ostensibly “political” (frequently framed in a “cultural” idiom) and “economic” aspects of Modi’s authoritarian populist project. Yet, as Holloway and Picciotto pointed out in their classic contribution to Marxist state theory, Poulantzas’ class-analytical focus arguably tended to underplay

the “economic” as “too little attention is paid to basing the analysis of class struggle on the actual dynamic of capital accumulation” (Holloway and Picciotto, 1978, p. 9). Consequently, we argue, rethinking authoritarian populism to explore state and class relations underpinning the ideological or discursive realm demands simultaneously a careful engagement with accumulation dynamics *and* their contradictions.

To explore state contradictions as these are embedded in capitalist dynamics in Modi's India, we focus on beef which, in the Indian context, primarily refers to buffalo meat, known as carabeef. Raj Patel (2018) has pointed to the use of beef meat and mobilization against beef eating as a potent tool for the Hindu nationalist project, forging majoritarian unity through xenophobia and racism—a key aspect of authoritarian populism tout court (Borras, 2020). While the ravages of angry mobs beating and killing individuals—predominantly from subaltern groups including Muslim and lower castes—for allegedly trespassing the rules of Hindu cow veneration has been broadcast in international news, what is less broadly known is that India has emerged as a world-leading exporter of beef, accounting for as much as 20% of global exports, anchored in an expanding export industry based on corporate concentration around dominant class interests. The co-existence of these two apparently contradictory trends—violent majoritarian politics centred on meat eating and a significant meat industry—both supported and facilitated by Modi's state opens a space for exploring authoritarian populism's relationship to state contradictions, capital accumulation patterns and on-the-ground rural ramifications. Meat and bovine bodies are, in other words, crucial sites where these capitalist relations become visible. On the one hand, promoting cow protectionism and vegetarianism by violent and legislative means furthers the Hindu nationalist project by consolidating the image of India as first and foremost a Hindu nation and relegates non-Hindus to the status of ominous Others. On the other hand, the role of beef meat within Indian agricultural exports for regional/global value chains furthers the opening of the Indian agrarian economy, opening new avenues for capital accumulation. These contradictions, we argue, have distinct ramifications for India's classes of labour in the countryside. Specifically, certain groups among rural classes of labour whose livelihoods are dependent upon the livestock economy in various ways experience a “double victimization” at the receiving end of Hindu nationalist cow vigilantism as well as at the losing end of the ongoing restructuring of the livestock economy that favours major actors backed and represented by dominant class interests.

We start by presenting an overview of the relations between hegemony, Hindutva and capital accumulation patterns in Modi's India. We then move on to describing the role of beef in the authoritarian populist Hindutva project. Thereafter, we proceed to show how the political economy of meat in the country has restructured over the last decades, emphasizing evolving class and accumulation dynamics and its contradictory relationship to the state. The penultimate section then discusses ramifications for classes of labour in the countryside, drawing on existing work conducted by brave Indian journalists under highly adverse conditions. Lastly, we summarize and assess the implications for progressive counter-hegemonic mobilization in a conjuncture where the Hindutva chauvinism of Modi's authoritarian populism seeks political majority by pitting classes of labour against each other.

Since we aim to describe and analyse the big picture, a more fine-grained and systematic mapping of interstate variation and conflicts is beyond the scope of this article. Instead, we draw selectively on empirical examples from several Indian states to illustrate broader trends. A few states, however, receive more in-depth attention, particularly Uttar Pradesh, where we find the most striking manifestations of the processes that we are concerned with, simultaneously housing virulent Hindutva forces, significant parts of the beef agro-industry, and those sections of rural classes of labour most heavily affected by double victimization.

2 | HINDUTVA HEGEMONY AND ACCUMULATION PATTERNS IN NEOLIBERAL INDIA

To grasp state contradictions in Modi's India, we proceed from the observation that the growth model pursued by the BJP—and by all Indian governments since economic liberalization in 1991—has been highly unequal in its economic impact, generating stark social and economic inequities (Drèze & Sen, 2013). Recent estimates by Chancel and

Piketty (2019) even show that inequality has now reached its highest level since the days of the British Raj. While neoliberalisation in India has been restrained and incomplete, the overall thrust has been towards opening to private (domestic and international) capital of ever-more sectors, creating avenues for accumulation for corporate and dominant class interests (see Chatterjee, 2008; Gupta & Sivaramakrishnan, 2010). This has placed mounting pressure on Indian governments to negotiate the required consent in the context of competitive democratic politics. Resulting compromises have, as Ahmed and Chatterjee (2016, p. 332) argue, revealed the “contradiction of the simultaneous production of neoliberal and welfare policy.” The 2004–2014 period of Congress-led governments is especially important in this regard insofar as they placed a marked focus on establishing ambitious welfare programmes in employment, food security, and education, while also remaining committed to liberalizing economic reforms (see Nilsen & Nielsen, 2016). With the coming to power of Modi’s assertive Hindu nationalist government, however, we have seen a departure from the inclusive neoliberalism and moderately secular orientation of the prior government. To clarify what the BJP’s authoritarian populism is about, it is worth quoting extensively from Suhas Palshikar’s work on the BJP’s strategy for crafting a new hegemony:

What the Modi regime is set to do is to acquire the support of corporate interests separately (i.e., unconnected from the cultural agenda) for its *economic* agenda, and at the same time, acquire approval for its *socio-political* agenda from the larger public by linking it to the economic agenda. The corporate classes are expected not to be interested in or concerned with the emerging debates in the arena of public political culture believing that irrespective of what political culture emerges, the *economic* agenda would be implemented vigorously and the erosion of diversity would not hurt the material interests of the corporates. On the other hand, the ordinary citizen is sought to be convinced that economic wellbeing is primarily a function of a strong nation and therefore, the hurdles in becoming a strong nation (such as social schisms, minority appeasement, anti-national use of freedom of expression) need to be overcome. This is where the ability of Modi to bring together the middle classes and corporate interests become crucial. This alliance is critical not only to his electoral prospects, but more so for the hegemonic project. Modi emerges as the extraordinary leader because of skilfully marrying an aggressive corporatized economy with an assertive majoritarian politics (Palshikar, 2019, p. 113–114, emphasis added).

Other scholars have likened this “aggressive corporatized economy” to a form of “expedited neoliberalism” (Desai, 2016) that promises quick returns on investments, business-friendly policies, and overall pro-capital economic measures, to the benefit of dominant class interests. Among the many initiatives where this is visible, Modi’s flagship “Make in India” programme (Chacko, 2018) with its emphasis on ease of doing business indicators and FDI inflows is probably the most well-known. Modi’s centralizing thrust thus currently puts major capitals and specific capitalists—especially those on friendly terms with Modi’s political project—in an increasingly comfortable position within the evolving political economy, leading to very real concerns about increasing concentration of ownership across a range of industries (Chandra, 2020; Chandra & Verma, 2020), and speculations that India might soon see a new form of “conglomerate” capitalism dominated by a small number of large firms (Damodaran, 2020). Small capitalists, in contrast, find themselves increasingly marginalized within Modi’s strongly centralized government, with ever narrower channels of influence and few reliable intermediaries. We return later to the question of state-capital relations in our discussion of the Modi government’s relationship to major meat exporters, a fraction of capital that has risen to strength within the political economy, while simultaneously situated in a highly strained relationship to other pillars of Modi’s authoritarian populism.

As Ravinder Kaur (2020) has shown, Modi’s work on crafting this closer alignment between Hindutva and neoliberalization goes back to the early 2000s. Modi has been so instrumental in this that he now embodies “the entanglements between the imperatives of capitalist growth and ... cultural nationalism” (Kaur, 2020, p. 248). In contrast to the unsuccessful “India Shining” campaign of the previous BJP government in 2004, Modi has successfully

harnessed the dream of “good times” to the vehicle of Hindu nationalism and has instrumentalized the neoliberal formula of economic growth towards the making of a strong Hindu nation. This, she argues, locks “illiberal” cultural nationalism and “neoliberal” capitalist growth into a state of mutual indebtedness (Kaur, 2020, p. 246) under authoritarian populist leadership.

We may have reason, however, to nuance both Kaur's and Palshikar's assessments. As James Manor (2019) has argued, Modi's hegemonic project remains unstable, challenged from the outside by various regional populisms and counter-hegemonic forces and movements, but also, as our Poulantzian analytics emphasizes, from various *internal* state contradictions. To unravel how the latter unfold in the case of beef, we proceed in the next two sections to look at the political and economic “moment” of Modi's authoritarian populism. For heuristic purposes, we initially treat them separately, starting with the political. Below, we show how Hindutva has a particular ideological emphasis on cow veneration that has—increasingly under Modi—been violently enforced and enshrined in state law. This, as we show later, has had very real material and economic consequences for India's rural classes of labour.

3 | BOVINE POLITICS: MOBILIZATION, LEGISLATION AND VIGILANTISM

The Indian world of bovines is subject to multiple regimes of classification. As Narayanan (2018) has shown, Hindutva activists and cow protectionists distinguish between three categories of bovines: the native Indian-bred, the crossbreeds or foreign species such as Jersey and Holstein-Friesian bovines, and the buffalo. This division is, in a caste-like manner, highly stratified. Only the native or “desi” breeds are regarded as “pure” (akin to a Brahman), whereas the crossbreeds are regarded as a socially inferior mixed breed, a “low-caste monstrosity” (p. 344). The buffalo ranks even lower, as an innately contemptible animal explicitly referenced as low caste (p. 346), and ritually devalued. Legal regimes that protect bovines, on the other hand, do not distinguish between native and foreign species. Nor do they always distinguish between cows and buffaloes in matters of law, although they often do. Additionally, regardless of the extent to which livestock owners subscribe to such stratified categorization of bovines, economical distinctions between “productive” and “unproductive” animals remain significant.

While the existence of such multiple classificatory regimes arguably creates spaces for multiple forms of bovine politics, the bovine politics that we analyse below is driven primarily by the instrumentalized used of bovine bodies real or imagined in a violent project of Hindu majoritarianism, fuelled by suspicion, rumour, and gossip. As such, bovine bodies are a central site for the Hindu nationalist project of forging “unity” on xenophobic or racist grounds—a key aspect of all authoritarian populisms (Borras, 2020).

Whereas Hindu nationalists see cow veneration as a cultural tradition that defines Hinduism as a religious practice, the elevation of the cow to sacred status for *all* Hindus is both recent and contested (Jha, 2002). Cow protectionism as a political tactic deployed to assert Hindu identity and unify diverse castes and communities can be traced back to the latter half of the 19th century (Freitag, 1980). In the colonial context, the cow was an eminently useful symbol for highlighting and politicizing the perceived differences between Muslims (who ate it) and Hindus (who revered it) and for moving this difference into the domain of public agitation. The Hindu reform movement, the Arya Samaj, spearheaded this politicisation of the cow, and during the 1880s, cow protection societies became particularly active in north India. These societies petitioned the colonial government and fought legal battles in the name of the cow and also organized processions that led to violent communal clashes between Hindus and Muslims (Metcalfe & Metcalfe, 2006, p. 150–155). Among Hindu nationalists, this “rallying round the cow” (Pandey, 1988) was to produce a shared sense of Hindu identity and unity, with India's Muslim minority cast as the antagonistic “other.” It was through the cow that community, nation, and religion were conjoined, and by referring to the cow as “mother,” Hindu nationalists sought to evoke the same imagery as the term “Mother India”: symbolic purity and virtue that must be protected at all costs from those who threaten the Hindu nation (Gittinger, 2017).

Independent India has seen repeated instances of political mobilization against the consumption of beef. Just five years after India had become an independent nation, the RSS collected upwards of 17 million signatures on a

petition that demanded a national ban on cow slaughter. Cow protection and a national ban on cow slaughter have remained a core issue with the RSS ever since: In the early 1950s, the Bharatiya Jan Sangh, the forerunner of the BJP, made cow protection one of its core elements and, in the mid-1960s, the RSS spearheaded a “great all-party campaign” for the protection of the cow that eventually attempted to storm the Indian parliament to pressure legislators to criminalize cow slaughter in the entire country (Copland, 2014). The Hindu right, however, was never alone in championing cow protectionism which was also widely endorsed by the self-professed secular Congress party, and many Congress-ruled states have passed laws restricting or banning the slaughter of cattle.

Cow protectionism gradually became less important within the RSS and BJP in the 1990s as priorities shifted towards economic growth and liberalization, yet it remained a core issue with other organizations within the larger Hindu nationalist movement. Cow protection has, however, in recent years assumed an unprecedented centrality to Indian politics. Since 2014, when Modi came to power, bovines make almost daily headlines. On the one hand, and as part of a broader pattern of writing Hindu nationalism into law (Nielsen & Nilsen, 2021, 2022), ever-stricter laws are passed to “protect the cow”; on the other hand, vigilante groups take it upon themselves to punish those who do not sufficiently respect the cow.

Cow protection is under article 48 of the Indian Constitution a “state subject,” meaning that there is no central law on this question that applies to the whole country. Rather, India has “a patchwork of state laws on cow protection, ranging from no bans to total prohibition” (Andersen & Damle, 2019, p. 177). While a systematic review of this “patchwork” is beyond the scope of this article, we note that some form of cow protection now exists in a large majority of India's states and Union Territories.¹ Three quarters of the states banning cow slaughter make it a cognizable offence (alongside rape, murder, and theft), while in half it is a nonbailable offence (alongside sedition, counterfeiting, and trafficking). Modi is known to favour a national ban on cow slaughter (Andersen & Damle, 2019, p. 179), and while such a national ban has so far not materialized, state-level legislative changes have systematically made the slaughter of cows (or even the sale and possession of cow beef) illegal in ever-larger parts of the country under Modi (Jaffrelot, 2019, p. 59).²

Modi's home state of Gujarat, for instance, in 2017, amended an act from 1954 that criminalized cow slaughter, transportation of cows for slaughter, and the possession of beef, to extend the maximum sentence for cow slaughter to life imprisonment. Other BJP-controlled states such as Maharashtra (where BJP lost the 2019 elections) and Haryana have also toughened cow protection legislation by criminalizing beef consumption in 2015. The former imposed a total ban on the slaughter of all cattle (bulls and bullocks included) and completely banned all transport of cattle out of the state (Ramdas, 2017a). In Haryana, the state police set up a so-called “cow task force” (Jaffrelot, 2019, p. 62). And Uttar Pradesh, under the hardliner Hindu nationalist chief minister Yogi Adityanath, recently imposed unprecedentedly strict legal punishments for various offences ranging from cow slaughter to “endangering the life of cows” by, for example, not providing them food and water. Uttar Pradesh also, along with Gujarat and Rajasthan, recently introduced legal amendments enabling the confiscation of vehicles alleged to be transporting cattle for slaughter (Ramdas, 2017b). The southern state of Karnataka—ruled by the BJP since 2019—followed suit in 2020, passing the Prevention of Slaughter and Preservation of Cattle Bill 2020 that not only bans the slaughter of all cows, bulls, bullocks and calves but also outlaws the slaughter of buffaloes below the age of 13, makes smuggling and transporting animals for slaughter an offence and empowers the police to conduct searches based on suspicion (Daniyal, 2020).³ What we have seen under Modi is, in other words, a profusion of legislative protections available to the cow.

¹Existing legislation may be accessed at: <https://cjp.org.in/cow-slaughter-prevention-laws-in-india/>

²Again, this includes non-BJP states, indicating the hegemonic position of cow protectionism in the Indian polity today and showcasing the efficiency of his authoritarian populism in shaping political common sense.

³Interestingly, the introduction of cow protection laws may at times produce internal conflicts within the BJP. For example, new cow protection laws in Maharashtra and Karnataka have produced a potential beef shortage in neighbouring Goa which—with an electorally significant population of Christians and Muslims—consumes large amounts of beef. This has led Goa's BJP chief minister to take steps to ensure that the state is not hit by an “indirect beef ban” and that beef supply remains stable. Yet irrespective of such contradictions within the BJP's Hindutva project, the outcome has nevertheless overall been the steadfast profusion of legislative protections across the country.

Enhanced legal protection for the cow has gone hand in hand with a steep rise in cow protection vigilantism as armed gangs of predominantly young men affiliated with various Hindu nationalist organizations have taken it upon themselves to “protect the cow.” These vigilante groups are not part of the state apparatus, but form part of the new power structure under the BJP qua their ideological and sometimes organizational closeness to the party in power. This includes the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, the student wing of the RSS, which has been involved in violent attacks on university student associations over beef eating (Illiah Shepherd, 2019). They roam the roads in search of culprits transporting cows for slaughter or track down people claimed to have killed cows, ready to beat, maim or kill people, and Muslims in particular. Their operations are often based on rumours about water buffalo traders and handlers illegally transporting cows for slaughter. Such violent “Islamophobic gastronomy” as a way of adjudicating over citizenship, pitting classes of labour against each other, is widespread in authoritarian populisms (Patel, 2018).

Cow veneration, legal protectionism and street vigilantism thus work together to draw boundaries between “true Indians” (who revere the cow) and their antinational enemies within (who eat or slaughter it). In this way, cows and beef in combination play crucial roles within the larger hegemonic project of the BJP and Hindu nationalist organizations. In effect, they “partake of a new formation of the state, the formation of a *de facto* if not a *de jure* Hindu *rashtra*” (Jaffrelot, 2019, p. 65) through unofficial and often violent forms of social and moral regulation that unfold with tacit or overt endorsement by the state, increasingly backed by law. It is far from an uncontested project, and it has been resisted most spectacularly through “beef festivals” organized in different parts of India, on campuses by university students and in public spaces in cities by political parties, where Dalits in particular have used them to assert a counter-hegemonic identity in opposition to the deeply Brahmanical version of Hinduism promoted by Hindu nationalists (Natrajan, 2018). Nonetheless, the socio-political Hindutva “moment” remains on a strong footing. Yet, as we discuss next, a decisive state contradiction arises in relation to the economic “moment” of neoliberalization, where India has seen concerted efforts at boosting agricultural exports and spurring capital accumulation by integration with growing transnational markets, in which India's beef meat industry plays a prominent role.

4 | BOVINE ECONOMY: THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF INDIA'S BOVINE AGRO-INDUSTRY

The surge in violent attention to beef eating under Modi is paralleled in a contradictory way by a surge in beef exports. In 2015, Modi's second year in office, India emerged as the world's largest beef exporter—overwhelmingly from buffaloes, which generally elide the legal restrictions imposed on cow slaughter—and has remained one of the top exporters since. Opening agrarian sectors for increased export orientation is part-and-parcel of the assertive neoliberal economic policies of the Modi government, and although the rapid growth in beef exports began under the earlier dispensation, they have stabilized at a high level under Modi, both in terms of value and quantity (see Figure 1).⁴

Despite its size, the Indian export sector cannot compete with advanced industrial livestock operations in other countries and has therefore specialized on “meeting demand in the fastest growing segment of the world beef market, primarily among low- and middle-income countries in Asia and the Middle East” (Landes et al., 2016). Vietnam is by far the largest market. With an export flow at 1.8 billion USD in 2018, it comprised the third largest single trade flow in meat globally.⁵ India's exports to Vietnam flow further into China, one of the world's largest markets in meat (Jakobsen & Hansen, 2020).

⁴Exports dropped slightly in 2018–2019 and fell further in 2019–2020, overwhelmingly because of dramatically reduced exports to Vietnam.

⁵Data from <https://resourcetrade.earth>

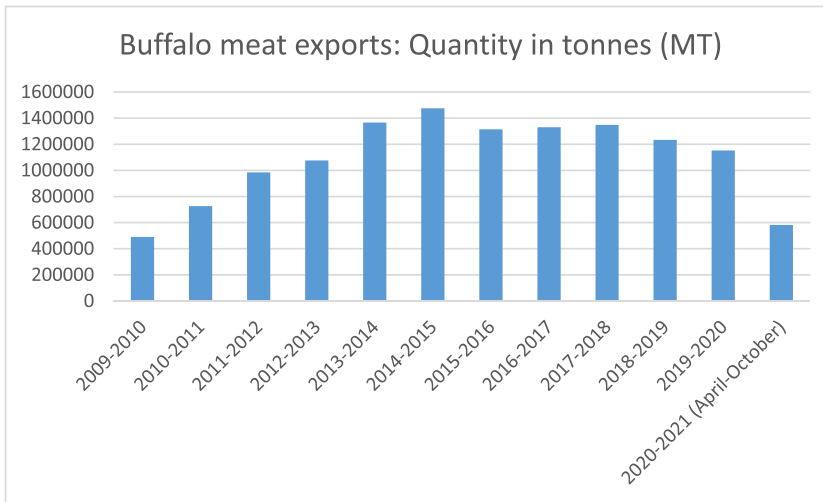


FIGURE 1 Compiled by authors based on data from agricultural and processed food products export development authority

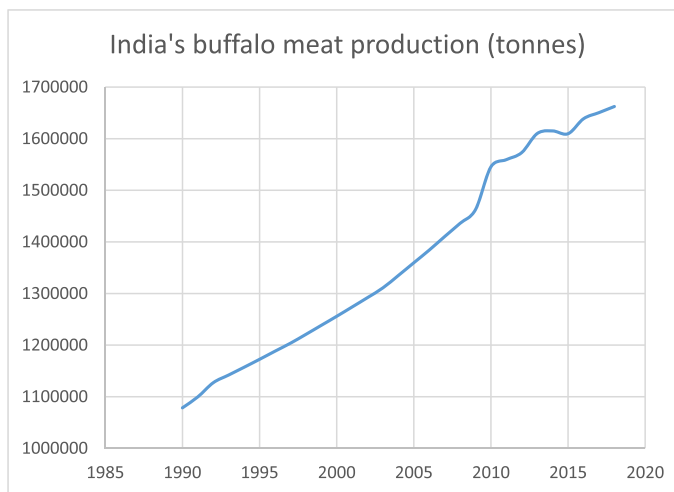


FIGURE 2 Compiled by the authors based on FAO data

Studies from the 1970s found that the dominant mechanism of eliminating cattle in India was starvation resulting in so-called natural death. The reasons were “Hindu sentiments” and “the absence of a widespread and well-organized slaughter industry” (Nair, 1981). Against this backdrop, the surge in beef exports from 2008 to 2014 is spectacular. The volume of Indian beef exports expanded by 17% annually (Landes et al., 2016), peaking at 1.475 million metric tonnes. This period saw sustained governmental efforts at strengthening the export industry, including by India’s National Meat and Poultry Processing Board, established in 2009. During the last decades, as we can surmise, buffalo meat production in India has increased significantly, with numbers from the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization showing a 54.1% increase from 1990 to 2018 (see Figure 2).

To further unravel the state contradiction surrounding the bovine economy, we in the following pay attention to class dynamics and patterns of capital accumulation. To do so, we first explore the neoliberal restructuring of the

bovine economy since the 1990s, and second, the relations between Modi's state, his authoritarian populist project, and the fractions of capital pushing further corporate growth in the bovine meat sector.

4.1 | THE RESTRUCTURING OF THE BOVINE ECONOMY: CLASS AND ACCUMULATION DYNAMICS

Once we look more closely at the political economy of India's beef agro-industry, we identify a progressive shift from a livestock economy based on decentralized, informal production among rural classes of labour to an expanding export sector driving novel accumulation patterns based on corporate concentration and dominant class interests, facilitated (uneasily) by the Indian state. These recent developments towards growing meat exports through corporate concentration mark a politically strained consolidation of restructuring processes that have, in fact, been unfolding since the 1990s. We trace this process in detail below.

While the Hindutva ideology of cow veneration and vegetarianism clearly implies “a gross misrepresentation of reality” as most of the Indian population in fact consumes meat (Natrajan & Jacob, 2018, p. 63), India's overall meat consumption does remain very low compared with other middle-income countries. The main domestic function of the livestock economy is thus not to produce meat for domestic consumption (although India recently emerged as the world's second-fastest growing market for processed meat and poultry (Das, 2017)). Rather, bovines are used for milk production and domestic milk consumption, with a “near doubling of aggregate milk consumption as food in India between the early 1980s and the late 1990s” (Khan & Bidabadi, 2004, p. 107).⁶ The livestock sector behind such massive produce is estimated to employ as much as 20 million people directly, overwhelmingly in the countryside.

India's livestock economy is largely decentralized, and most livestock owners have only a single (or a few) buffalo or cow, reared, grazed, and utilized within households rather than industrialized operations (Dorin & Landy, 2009, p. 134). Official numbers hold that the average “herd size” for bovines is as little as two animals.⁷ The most recent government report on livestock ownership shows that livestock-rearing is most commonly reported among households with “marginal” (73.14%) and “small” (13.74%) landholdings as well as landless households.⁸ In our terms, vast proportions of the country's livestock are within the domain of classes of labour in the countryside. Comparably, numbers from the 1990s described abattoirs as overwhelmingly “small, unlicensed units,” with only around 25 units “relatively large” and “geared to the export market” (Dorin & Landy, 2009, p. 136). As we show below, the recent expansions of the export sector dominated by capitalist enterprises therefore entail novel accumulation patterns that differ markedly from how the livestock economy functions within the livelihoods of the country's classes of labour.

There are also clear differences in the production systems involved in the export sector and the domestic economy organized around classes of labour, respectively. Both domestic and export uses start with animals primarily reared by small and marginal farmers or landless labourers, who sell animals—especially culled dairy animals—to traders (FICCI, 2013; Landes et al., 2016).⁹ From this point, however, the two systems depart: domestic marketing chains proceed from traders to municipal slaughterhouses, whereas the export chains have traders selling to other actors, namely, export-oriented operations running more integrated processing facilities that then supply export firms (Ramdas, 2017b). This reveals a break, we would emphasize, in terms of class and accumulation patterns in the political economy of India's bovine agro-industry.

The export firms and associated meat processors emerge as key new actors in a highly concentrated industry with a limited number of players. An industry source from 2017 speaks of around 150 Indian beef exporters, with the top 10 companies representing a mix of ownership interests, seemingly including also Muslim-owned,

⁶This was enabled by the “White Revolution” unfolding since the 1970s.

⁷See report at http://apeda.gov.in/apedawebsite/MEAT_MANUAL/Chap1/chap1.pdf

⁸See report at http://mospin.nic.in/sites/default/files/publication_reports/nss_rep_572.pdf

⁹The link between dairy and industrial killing of bovines is however largely ignored by cow protection legislation (Narayanan, 2019a).

halal-industry oriented exporters (Export Genius, 2017).¹⁰ Other sources mention a mere 49 registered slaughter/processing facilities for export (Landes et al., 2016) or as little as 13 completely export-oriented processing units.¹¹ Moreover, companies located in just a few states dominate the industry—Uttar Pradesh as the most prominent, followed by Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Punjab.¹² This clustering by states may gloss over an even more intense form of clustering as the main meat export firms are concentrated in a few cities alone, with Mumbai and New Delhi accounting for 66% of the revenue in the industry, according to one source (Export Genius, 2017). Concentration ostensibly also appears in ownership, leading one commentator to hold that India's meat export industry is “owned by just a clutch of people” (Anand, 2014).

While hard facts about the industry are hard to find, Mumbai-based Allansons Pvt Ltd is considered the leading company. A rare newspaper report describing this actor writes: “Fauzan Alavi, a Director with Allansons, said that in both years (2014–2015 and 2015–2016), the company exported around Rs 10,000 crore of buffalo meat. Total exports are around Rs 25,700 crore, which means that Allansons exports more than a third of India's buffalo meat” (Chakraborty, 2017). A report on beef exports during the first quarter of 2017 supports this estimate and shows that the exporters ranked two to five at the time in combination exported close to 22% of the country's buffalo meat (Export Genius, 2017). The top five companies in other words accounted for around 55% of all Indian beef exports. These are indeed indications of accumulation patterns with distinct class dynamics.¹³

4.2 | STATE-CAPITAL RELATIONS UNDER MODI

Relations between Modi's government and this surging industry are, as indicated, strained and uneasy. On the one hand, ongoing transformations in the meat industry align unproblematically with the more general economic restructuring under Modi that favours large-scale capital and its class fractions. On the other hand, in his spectacularly successful 2014 electoral campaign, Modi's authoritarian populist discourse cast the meat industry as a villain, lambasting the incumbent Congress-led government for allowing a “Pink Revolution” in meat, in breach with “Hindu” values. “This country wants a Green Revolution,” Modi said, adding that:

But those at the centre want a Pink Revolution. Do you know what it means? When animals are slaughtered, the colour of their flesh is pink. Animals are being slaughtered and taken out of the country. The government in Delhi is giving subsidies to those who are carrying out this slaughter (cited in Kumar, 2014).

The most striking manifestation of state contradictions involved here is of course the meat industry's continued growth, despite the crackdowns that followed Modi's win. Political opponents and commentators have noted this contradiction and have accused Modi of “double standards,” including by way of speculations about the alleged involvement of BJP politicians in the meat industry (PTI, 2018). Indeed, in 2015, newspapers documented that subsidiaries of Allansons had donated INR 2.5 crore to the BJP for an election campaign (Dhawan, 2015). Given the opaque ways in which money flows in Indian politics (Kapur & Vaishnav, 2018), this indicates the existence of larger unreported transactions between big players in the meat industry and politicians and government.

State contradictions between the socio-political Hindutva “moment” of Modi's authoritarian populism and its intertwined neoliberalizing economic “moment” manifest elsewhere too. Unfazed by accusations of double

¹⁰This points to complex class/caste relations at work in the meat industry, where the very notion of “dominant class” interests would need further unpacking through sustained empirical research into the key actors in the industry.

¹¹See website http://apeda.gov.in/apedawebsite/SubHead_Products/Bufalo_Meat.htm

¹²Uttar Pradesh likely also procures animals from neighbouring states (Landes et al., 2016).

¹³While we do not have sufficient empirical basis for assessing whether these accumulation patterns have turned increasingly oligarchic under Modi, we know that, despite their contradictory nature, state-capital relations under Modi have at the very least allowed for the continuation of this oligarchic industry.

standards, Modi's government has recognized and even rewarded Allansons for "outstanding export performance" and for its overall contributions to the food sector. And in the policy domain, the government subsidy for slaughterhouses increased by 33% during Modi's first term in power, in spite of his strong criticism of his predecessor's excessive subsidies (Sharma, 2019). This increase in subsidies came under the central government-run scheme of the National Mission for Food Processing, introduced in 2014, aiming to upgrade and modernize slaughtering facilities, as part of a broader thrust towards modernizing supply chains for ease of capital flows in agro-industrial sectors, with an emphasis on food processing including meat. This, we would argue, resonates with Modi's broad "Make in India" agenda, which includes streamlining and upgrading processing facilities and value chains across different sectors. India's food processing sector was indeed in 2019 recognized by the USDA (2019) as a "sunrise sector" with great potential for capital investment, a sign that the Make in India agenda is attractive from the point of view of capital. All in all, the agro-industrial reform favoured by Modi's government pushes towards capital-intensive and increasingly integrated operations—making for a specific trajectory of agrarian change tying up with specific class and accumulation dynamics.

Perhaps the clearest indicator of continuing meat export expansion under Modi is the concerted efforts at agreements with China for direct imports of Indian meat. These efforts have been ongoing since 2014, described by an (anonymous) leading government official as a "top priority" (Mathew, 2017), alongside efforts at controlling foot and mouth disease in the livestock herd, to fulfill regulations in China. This effort was described in newspapers as one of the first actions taken by Modi's second government in 2019 (Pandey, 2019). However, in late 2019, crack-downs in China on trade of buffalo from Vietnam (but mostly originating from India) put this lucrative business at risk, ostensibly leading to speculations on the Indian side about shifting towards Indonesia as a possible step-in market (Parija, 2019), while also working to enlist Brazil as a new potential collaborator (KNN India, 2020). As a final indication of the continuing drive towards export expansion, we note how leading industry representatives during the height of the COVID-19 crisis that severely hit global meat production and trade began talking about "stepping in" to meet global shortages.

5 | AUTHORITARIAN POPULISM AND THE "DOUBLE VICTIMIZATION" OF CLASSES OF LABOUR IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

In line with core concerns within the ERPI, we now turn to the ramification for rural lives and politics of India's "right-wing deepening" or to put it more precisely, to the impact of the bovine politics and economics of Modi's authoritarian populism on India's classes of labour in the countryside. This step is crucial not only because it sheds light on key "effects" of authoritarian populism, following Bernstein (2020, p. 1539) but also because it opens a space to reflect on the potential for the emergence of progressive politics in the countryside. To foreshadow what is to come, we seek to show that a key "effect" has been the double victimization of certain groups of classes of labour who are, on the one hand, direct and indirect victims of vigilantism and, on the other hand, increasingly excluded from the bovine economy because of political economic restructuring.¹⁴

The average "herd size" for bovines in India is, as noted, as little as two animals, with livestock-rearing most common among households with "marginal" and "small" landholdings and landless households. Such households use cattle in mixed farming systems for transport, grazing, fertilization, and dairy, thereby opening multiple avenues for income. Selling cattle once the lactation or reproductive age is over usually recovers 30%–40% of the cost of a new milk-yielding animal and is crucial to the social reproduction of rural classes of labour. It is similarly common for farmers to sell their draught animals soon after the main agriculture season is over and then reinvest in a new pair of animals for the next season. If robust beef, offals and leather markets are in place, sold animals will command between one-fourth and one-third of its original price. In the case of female cattle, farmers usually sell their fourth or

¹⁴While our focus remains predominantly on classes of labour in the countryside, we also point to the impact on urban and semi-urban working classes.

fifth lactation females, which may be transported to states permitting slaughter. Money from the sale would be used to partially offset the cost of a new animal (Salve, 2020). Among poor families, the capture and selling of stray cattle to butchers has sometimes provided a source of income. And in drought-affected areas—such as parts of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh—where rural classes of labour live precarious lives, cattle may be sold to tide over economic crises (Singh, 2017).

However, cow vigilantism and new legal restrictions imposed on the transport and slaughter of cattle have in effect amounted to a comprehensive clampdown on the cattle trade, the partial collapse of animal markets, and a concomitant inability of classes of labour to dispose of their cattle in economically sensible ways. Even in places where sales formally remain legal, the violence of vigilante groups has instilled fear among rural classes of labour who often no longer dare to sell their buffaloes or aged milk-yielding cattle for fear of reprisals. Unable to dispose of cattle in economically sound ways, they are faced with the additional economic and labour burden that maintaining aged and unproductive animals entails, as these need feeding, grazing, watering, cleaning, and healthcare (Salve, 2020). Unsurprisingly, given that the majority of the estimated 22 million workers involved in India's beef trade are Dalits and Muslims, these segments of classes of labour have been particularly victimized (Ramdas, 2020a). Muslim cattle transporters have become favourite targets for self-appointed cow protectors, who often work in close conjunction with the police and with the blessing of the BJP MLAs, MPs, and Ministers (Anderson & Jaffrelot, 2018). Dalits have also been targeted by such groups. In one much-publicized incident, seven Dalits were thrashed and urinated upon in Modi's home state of Gujarat for performing their traditional occupation, namely, skinning cows (Manor, 2019, p. 123). In contrast, caste Hindu cattle and cattle transporters are generally spared (Jaffrelot, 2019, p. 60).

We identify variants of this pattern in key north Indian states where the impact of the bovine politics of Modi's authoritarian populism has been the strongest. This includes Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh and also Haryana and Rajasthan. In Maharashtra, it has had a crippling effect on the backward caste Muslim Qureshi community of butchers, as well as animal traders, transport workers, and leatherworkers whose livelihoods are based on the hides, leather and cattle skins of the post-slaughter economy. The production cycles of purchase and sales of animals, crucial both for farmers' livelihoods and sustaining cattle in the agriculture economy, have effectively collapsed, as have markets for bullocks and cows, causing huge losses to farmers (Ramdas, 2017a, 2020b). The poor have been hit the hardest, insofar as beef used to be their cheapest source of protein, while some cattle-owning classes of labour have been forced into the illegal cattle trade to recuperate at least some of the value of their aged cattle (Ganapatye, 2020). In Rajasthan, raids by cow vigilantes have been regular, often violent, and have even been described as “the new normal.” Journalists have described how villages dependent on the cattle economy are facing economic trouble and the cow becoming a pariah breed. A 2019 report on Khoabas village in Alwar district tells of how Muslim villagers, who take their cattle 10 km away in search of pasture, are routinely victims of vigilante raids, when cattle might be forcefully confiscated, and the owner assaulted. This makes cattle-rearing virtually unsustainable as keeping the cattle in the village requires prohibitively expensive stall feeding. This has placed rural households in a situation where they in practice can neither sell their cattle (for fear of reprisals) nor keep it (because of economic constraints). With cattle having almost disappeared from the village, cattle farmers turn to daily wage labour at construction sites in the city. Dairy farmers have also been jailed after being charged with cruelty against animals, and some have given up their business. Other reports from villages in Rajasthan similarly tell of households having withdrawn from the cattle profession, turning to labour migration for daily wages in the city (Jitendra, 2019a). In Haryana, stringent laws and vigilantism have similarly forced farmers to keep unproductive cattle. Reports from the backward Mewat district tell of how not just the trade of bovines but even the trade of goats—common only among the poorest rural households who combine this activity with casual labour—has reportedly been targeted by the police. The pattern is one where even small quantities of beef, or meat alleged to be beef, have led to attacks, especially on Muslims and Dalits (Jitendra, 2019b).

In Uttar Pradesh, vigilante violence has been particularly intense, and Muslims have been especially targeted. As described by Jaffrelot (2019, p. 59), north India was between 2015 and 2017 “the theatre of a series of lynchings of

Muslims, following a near identical pattern each time: The Muslims accused of cattle smuggling or consuming beef were attacked and, in dozens of cases, died of their wounds.” In one tragic case, a Muslim in Uttar Pradesh was accused of killing a cow 30 years earlier and beaten to death (Manor, 2019, p. 122). Such vigilantism has worked in tandem with stricter laws and a move by the state government to close all municipal slaughterhouses. In 2015, the National Green Tribunal had ordered all slaughterhouses running without requisite permits to be shut. But only in 2017 did the newly elected BJP state government use the ruling as a pretext to target the meat industry by ordering action against slaughterhouses and meat sellers operating without valid licences and violating environmental and health rules. This led to a virtual shutdown of government slaughterhouses, the only beef source for domestic consumption, affecting the entire market chain comprising rural classes of labour with disposable animals, factory and leather workers, meat sellers, and consumers (Ramdas, 2017b). Farmers became unable to fetch good prices for cattle in general, even for productive milch cattle, because potential buyers were concerned that they might not be able to resell. While the estimate in one report that when one animal is slaughtered, 20 people find work, is clearly exaggerated (Moudgil, 2017), the estimate that the closure of Uttar Pradesh's slaughterhouses could leave several million people jobless is not far off the mark as it affects allied industries such as leather—where Dalits make up a large proportion of the labour force—and meat packaging and, crucial to our argument, chokes a “small but important revenue stream for its poor farmers, especially in drought-prone areas” where India's classes of labour are especially vulnerable and impoverished (Singh, 2017).

With small and marginal farmers thus unable to sell their cattle for a profit and unable to shoulder the expense that comes with stall feeding unproductive cattle, Uttar Pradesh has seen a steep rise in the number of stray cattle, crowding urban areas, and constituting a major threat to farmers' standing crops. One report from Semri village close to the border with Nepal testifies to the magnitude of the threat of stray cattle to small farmers. In Semri, a village meeting decided to round up stray cattle and transport it into Nepal. This operation reportedly cost the villagers INR 37,000 that was spent on hiring 22 tractors carrying 255 stray cattle across the border—accompanied by more than 40 motorcycles carrying over 100 armed residents—where the cattle was abandoned in the Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary, following a violent scuffle with local Nepalese villagers that left many injured. This was no stray incident. Many villagers in districts bordering Nepal such as Khiri, Bahraich, and Shravasti incur great expenses and a considerable risk of violence herding stray cattle across the border (Jitendra, 2019c).

5.1 | THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF GAUSHALAS

The Hindutva solution to the problems faced by India's rural classes of labour has been to set up gaushalas, or care centres, for aged cows. While the official purpose of these gaushalas is to care for unproductive cows until they die a natural death (Sharma, 2017), they also function, as Yamini Narayanan (2019b) has argued, as sites of “Hindutva ultranationalism,” where the “Hindu mother cow” is offered sanctuary, ostensibly from “predatory Muslim males.” Many, if not most gaushalas, accept only the ostensibly “pure” native breeds that are associated with Brahmanism (Narayanan, 2018).

A comprehensive 2017 investigation by Reuters showed how several gaushalas are in effect transit points where cattle stolen from Muslims by cow vigilantes are dropped off and later either given or sold to Hindu farmers. Two of the largest organizations running gaushalas in Uttar Pradesh estimated to have confiscated and passed on close to 200,000 cows in a span of just 3 years after Modi assumed office. Although the market value of seized cattle is hard to estimate, the report suggests that the value of cattle seized by these two organizations in just three years amounts to app. USD 36 million. On average, the 110 gaushalas surveyed by Reuters estimated a 50% increase in their cattle holding during Modi's first three years in power. In addition, gaushalas particularly, but not exclusively, in BJP-governed states enjoy considerable state patronage. In Haryana, the cow protection commission went from allotting INR 18.5 million rupees to cow sheds in 2014–2015 to more than 37 million for 2016–2017. In Rajasthan, funding doubled from about INR one billion in 2013–2014 to more than 2.3 billion rupees in 2016–2017 (Siddiqui

et al., 2017). A significant part of this money has now been shown to have been granted to “fake gaushalas,” some of which did not house even a single cow.¹⁵ Rajasthan tops the list of states with the most gaushalas, with the other north Indian states of Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, and Haryana constituting the top-5 (Noronha, 2018). And nationally, Modi’s central government in 2020 launched a new scheme under which INR 900 crore (app. USD 140 million) is set aside for registered gaushalas (Shenoy, 2020). Gaushala maintenance is also becoming a favourite target for corporate CSR spending (Jain & Singh, 2018; Mampatta & Kant, 2018). The political economy of gaushalas thus entails a considerable state- and corporate-sponsored redistribution of (cattle) wealth from rural classes of labour into the hands of Hindutva-affiliated groups and organizations.

5.2 | TOWARDS CORPORATE CONCENTRATION?

While the bovine politics of the Hindutva forces have negatively affected India’s classes of labour in the countryside—and Dalits and Muslims in particular—in a very immediate and direct way, it may also lead to broader sectoral restructurings that could in the longer run undermine important sectors in the informal economy in which most of India’s classes of labour navigate, and lead to greater corporate concentration in these sectors. This is not to say that vigilante and legislative crackdowns on the beef trade left the organized industry entirely unscathed. Indeed, in 2017, industrial beef exporters in Uttar Pradesh complained that the urgent shortage of meat meant that economically important exports to countries in the Middle East during Ramadan (when exports double compared with other times of the year) had been significantly delayed, causing a loss of goodwill and face—as well as money—for Indian meat exporters, according to Fauzan Alavi (cited in Kaushik, 2017). At the time, nine formally registered export units had been closed by the authorities in the state, while a few other export facilities closed of their own volition for a time, to avoid controversy. Other export units remained in business but could only operate at heavily reduced capacity—sometimes as low as 20% to 25%—due to supply constraints. According to Allanasons, the value of its meat exports dropped by USD 90 million in the month of March 2017 alone, compared with the same month the previous year (Kaushik, 2017). Yet while the fall in meat supplies evidently in the short term hit the formal market of large, export-oriented actors running mechanized and well-equipped slaughterhouses (Jeelani, 2017), trade data suggest that cow vigilantism affected domestic consumption much more than exports. Most large actors—including several units owned by Allanasons—were in fact in possession of required permits and could continue to operate legally while the informal sector collapsed. According to Ramdas, this meant that the big private players in beef in Uttar Pradesh that were created as export points have, because of the collapse of the informal sector catering to domestic consumption, now made considerable inroads also into domestic beef markets. In other words, the closure of the municipal slaughterhouses by the state government facilitated corporate concentration, insofar as small butchers selling beef became vertically integrated into export companies (Salve, 2020).

Moreover, given that buffalo meat for domestic consumption used to be overwhelmingly based on the production of fresh meat processed and sold daily (Ramdas, 2017b), the sudden dearth of fresh meat in the market means that a market shift towards corporate producers of frozen meat products who operate at scale cannot be ruled out (Moudgil, 2017). Ramdas, in fact, argues that we should seriously consider that government attempts to disrupt the beef trade may in effect be “a sinister mechanism for the wealth in this trade to be captured by the organized industry” (Ramdas, 2020a), at the expense of rural classes of labour.

Comparable concentration can also be seen in related sectors. Again, in Uttar Pradesh, the largest market for buffalo skin in India, the Pechbagh hide market in Kanpur, has seen trade decline since 2015, following the mob lynching of two Muslim men suspected of stealing and slaughtering a stolen cow calf. Hide supplies for the Pechbagh market come largely from the now-closed government abattoirs, while other supplies came from villages through people engaged in skinning dead animals, that is, the Dalit segment of rural classes of labour. Sellers at Pechbagh

¹⁵Source: <https://www.opindia.com/2021/03/gaushala-scam-rajasthan-62-lakh-worth-government-money-without-single-cow/>

market reported in mid-2017 that, with municipal abattoirs shut, whatever raw material they now received came exclusively from the villages and overwhelmingly from animals who died of natural causes. According to one seller, his supply had gone down from 10,000 hides per month to 500, leading to a reduction in number of employees from eight workers to one (Moudgil, 2017). In contrast to the collapse of the Pechbagh market that depended on supplies from municipal slaughterhouses and rural classes of labour, the big tanneries and exporters remain in business. Tellingly, these are able to source hides widely, obtaining them directly from the large, mechanized privately-run slaughterhouses, or even from abroad. These stronger linkages between large capitalists dealing in hides and meat arguably index greater corporate concentration across the bovine economy.

6 | CONCLUDING DISCUSSION: STATE CONTRADICTIONS AND COUNTER-HEGEMONIC PROJECTS

Exploring the contentious role of bovine meat in Modi's India, this contribution has joined recent attempts at understanding the relationship between authoritarian populisms and the rural world, going beyond the discursive realm by "engaging with forms and processes of accumulation, class dynamics, and the nature and role of the state" (Mckay et al., 2020, p. 354). Drawing on Poulantzas' idea of "internal contradictions within the State" (Poulantzas, 1978, p. 131), we have interrogated some of the otherwise hidden dynamics that may be found in mutually constitutive relation to authoritarian populist projects holding state power. An underlying aim has been an increased engagement with state theory. As Vergara-Camus and Kay (2017, p. 242) pointed out, much scholarship in critical agrarian studies has "highlighted the central role that the state plays in processes of agrarian change. However, very few studies have attempted to re-examine the ways in which we understand the state or have scrutinized the underlying assumptions about the nature of the state that agrarian scholars reproduce." We have specifically emphasized state contradictions within Modi's authoritarian populist project where the political "moment" associated with wielding anti-beef sentiments as a political weapon finds itself in a contradictory relationship to the economic "moment" of corporate-oriented neoliberalization. These state contradictions, in turn, point to distinct class and accumulation dynamics between the class coalition supporting Hindutva, especially in the "core" northern states, and the corporate interests behind India's beef export sector. We have sought to show how these contradictions ramify on the ground in the Indian livestock economy, with distinctly negative "effects" for the country's classes of labour in the countryside. Here, certain groups are found to suffer a form of double victimization at the receiving end of Hindutva violence, vigilantism and legislative chauvinism as well as a looming expulsion from the livestock economy as neoliberalization advances. While our analysis has focused on the big picture, circumscribed by the availability of empirical descriptions, more grounded examinations would likely unravel additional fine-grained dynamics of struggle among the country's variegated classes of labour.

In conclusion, we would like to offer some reflections on the possible implications of our analysis for thinking about emancipatory strategies aimed at improving the material and political conditions of India's labouring classes and for strengthening progressive or even counter-hegemonic projects from below.

Prospects seem, in key respects, bleak. While the demonstrated state contradictions may indicate constraints to further corporate-directed neoliberalization in the livestock agro-industry, Modi's regime does not appear to suffer any serious political consequences from these state contradictions. While Modi's authoritarian populism targets poorer groups unable to threaten his government politically and electorally, political support for the Hindutva cause has overall *increased* among the very groups experiencing double victimization over the period analysed here. This mirrors broader political dynamics in contemporary India, where the hegemonic qualities of Modi's authoritarian populism are evident in the impressive ability to incorporate new social groups, including those marginalized by Hindutva politics, thus impeding the potential for counter-hegemonic mobilization. Prospects for emancipatory rural politics are not necessarily strengthened merely by the existence of state contradictions. Studying state contradictions may thus tell us a good deal more about how authoritarian populism is *made* than how it is to be *unmade*.

An additional factor that makes it “absurdly difficult” to imagine ways in which India's agrarian world could “split the ranks” of Modi's authoritarian populist project (see Borrás, 2020) is the way in which this project entrenches social fault lines among India's rural classes of labour that seriously hinder the development of oppositional collective action from below. On the one hand, Modi's authoritarian populism is predicated on defining India's Muslim minority as the anti-national enemy within, thus ideologically pitting Muslims against Hindus of all castes. On the other hand, it is predicated on offering the aspirational and moderately upwardly mobile neo-middle classes predominantly from backward caste backgrounds an organic passage into the middle-class mainstream where Hindutva is on a strong footing (Jaffrelot, 2015). Although this may happen in a multitude of ways, it often reinforces caste antagonisms between backward castes and Dalits. An emancipatory political project would therefore need to work against these multiple entrenched social fault lines that split the ranks of rural classes of labour.

In this context, we find it useful to begin from Borrás's (2020) arguments for a (potential) “left-wing populism” that may work against such entrenched social fault lines, without pretending that they do not exist. The combination of class politics and populism, Borrás argues, is desirable *despite* all the tensions and contradictions this combination internalizes (Borrás, 2020, p., 28). Such left-wing populism certainly appears as a politico-theoretical landscape of urgent importance, but given its numerous and partly familiar pitfalls, we suggest to slightly more parsimoniously think with Pattenden and Bansal's (2021) idea of the possibility for new “alliances of classes of labour” to emerge in rural India. When reframed in this way, the prospects are not exclusively bleak. As Vanaik (cited in Borrás, 2020, p. 24) reminds us, basic agrarian issues continue to render Modi politically vulnerable, as seen recently in the massive farmers' protests against the neoliberalization of Indian agriculture. As Pattenden and Bansal (2021, p.22–23) argue, these farmers' protests index several important things about India's contemporary agrarian world, namely, (1) that the economic concerns of labourers, farmer-labourers and smaller farmers increasingly overlap; (2) that contradictions *within* the Indian countryside can, to a certain extent and under specific circumstances, be eclipsed by contradictions *beyond* the countryside; and (3) that structurally speaking the Indian countryside is well set for a broad alliance of less wealthy sections. Even if a “new alliance of classes of labour” is unlikely to keep transnational capital and Hindutva politics at bay for now, the vision of their future decline may well be crystallizing, they conclude (Pattenden & Bansal, 2021, p. 28).

Although other assessments of the recent farmers' protests are less optimistic about the depth and durability of such broad alliances (Lerche, 2021), we might at the very least speculate about the prospects of rural classes of labour forging new alliances around a restructuring bovine economy. As indicated through our analysis of double victimization, rural classes of labour among both Dalits and Muslims experience profound adversity, produced at the intersection of religious majoritarianism, ascriptive hierarchies, and class relations. To some extent, albeit only partially, they share this experience with backward caste small farmers, whose livelihoods have similarly been severely undermined by Modi's bovine politics and economics and perhaps even with farmers of all size for whom the stray cattle menace has led to significant destruction of crops. In this regard, our analysis provides some support for Pattenden and Bansal's assertion that the *conditions* are, structurally speaking, well set for a (relatively) broad alliance of “less wealthy sections.” More specifically, those who are structurally positioned to forge such an alliance would include Dalits, Muslims, and lower backward castes. Numerous obstacles to the realization of such alliances of course remain: Dalit, Muslim, and OBC communities are internally stratified categories who seldom act in uniform ways; Modi's hegemonic Hindutva project works in fragmenting ways by persuasively holding out the prospect of inclusion for Dalits and OBCs and the partial incorporation of some of their aspirations and interests while simultaneously undermining any form of Muslim political engagement; and lower OBC communities cannot automatically be expected to look “downwards for alliances rather than upwards” (Pattenden & Bansal, 2021, p. 21–22; 28). We can add to this the usual perils and pitfalls involved in forging cross-caste, cross-class alliances (Nielsen, 2016, 2018; Pattenden, 2016). Contentions surrounding the cattle economy will therefore not in their own right bring such alliances into being, and the actual formation of new alliances for progressive counter-mobilization will still depend on “how the class dynamics of capitalism play out in various countrysides” and the extent to which those dynamics generate more or less clear class categories that manifest in distinct forms of political practice (Bernstein, 2020, p. 1533).

Nonetheless, we would reiterate, the objective conditions surrounding the country's classes of labour may at the very least index political possibility and potential. In other words, the ways in which Modi's authoritarian populism is reconfiguring India's bovine economy may open up and make visible new spaces for progressive and perhaps even counter-hegemonic mobilization, starting from locations of profound adversity that are configured in such a way that they break with the very social fault lines that undergird and sustain the authoritarian populist project. How such possibility and potential will play out, and the extent to which we will see counter-hegemonic tendencies crystallizing in tangible organizational forms, will, as always, be determined in and through political struggle.

Evidently, this opens for recurring, thorny questions about the possible conjunction of new alliances of classes of labour and the more established Left, including in the shape of trade union mobilization. Witnessing the seemingly increased capacity of Leftist trade unions at sustaining and perhaps even strengthening the reach of alliances of classes of labour in the context of the contemporary farmers' protests, such thorny issues may not be without promise. As Poulantzas (2017 [1979]) put it shortly before his passing, revealing an optimism of the will that can speak to our concerns, conjunctions between popular mobilization and the organized Left are defined by "a certain irreducible tension"—yet this tension, Poulantzas suggests, is likely "an integral part" of progressive political transformation. A future research agenda capable of interrogating authoritarian populism and thinking through emancipatory strategies from below would, by implication, have to carefully trace actual processes of accumulation and class formation; engage and unpack the state and state contradictions in context-specific ways; and work towards a detailed disaggregation of local class relations to identify those social locations of extreme adversity and double victimization from which counter-hegemonic projects might emerge.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank Jonathan Pattenden and the three anonymous reviewers for thorough and constructive feedback. Earlier versions of the article also gained significantly from generous comments provided by Alf Gunvald Nilsen, Arve Hansen, Karen Lykke Syse, and members of the South Asia Symposium in Oslo. All errors and omissions remain, of course, our own. Open access funding enabled and organized by Projekt DEAL.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Not available.

ORCID

Jostein Jakobsen  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2284-6106>

Kenneth Bo Nielsen  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6318-6039>

REFERENCES

- Ahmed, W., & Chatterjee, I. (2016). Antinomies of the Indian State. In A. Cafruny, L. S. Talani, & G. P. Martin (Eds.), *The Palgrave handbook of critical international political economy* (pp. 331–349). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-50018-2_17
- Anand, M. (2014, October 20). 'Pink Revolution' beneficial to whom? Open. Retrieved from <http://www.openthemagazine.com/article/india/pink-revolution-beneficial-to-whom>
- Andersen, W., & Damle, S. D. (2019). *Messengers of Hindu Nationalism: How the RSS Reshaped India*. Hurst and Company.
- Anderson, E., & Jaffrelot, C. (2018). Hindu nationalism and the 'saffronisation of the public sphere': An interview with Christophe Jaffrelot. *Contemporary South Asia*, 26(4), 468–482.
- Bello, W. (2019). *Counterrevolution: The global rise of the far right*. Practical Action Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.3362/9781788530538>
- Bernstein, H. (2020). Unpacking 'authoritarian populism' and rural politics: Some comments on ERPI. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 47(7), 1526–1542. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2020.1786063>
- Borras, S. M. (2020). Agrarian social movements: The absurdly difficult but not impossible agenda of defeating right-wing populism and exploring a socialist future. *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 20, 3–36. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joac.12311>

- Chacko, P. (2018). The right turn in India: Authoritarianism, populism and Neoliberalisation. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 48(4), 541–565. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00472336.2018.1446546>
- Chakraborty, A. (2017). Indias biggest buff meat exporter gets govt award for 'outstanding performance'. News18. <https://www.news18.com/news/india/indias-biggest-buff-meat-exporter-gets-govt-award-for-outstanding-performance-1432427.html>
- Chancel, L., & Piketty, T. (2019). Indian Income Inequality, 1922?2015: From British Raj to Billionaire Raj? *Review of Income and Wealth*, 65, S33–S62.
- Chandra, R. (2020). Taking the temperature of capital. Seminar. <https://www.india-seminar.com/semframe.html>
- Chandra, R., & Verma, R. (2020). The problem. Seminar. <https://www.india-seminar.com/semframe.html>
- Chatterjee, P. (2008). Democracy and economic transformation in India. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 43(1), 53–62. <https://doi.org/10.21648/arthavij/2008/v50/i1/115446>
- Chatterji, A. P., Blom Hansen, T., & Jaffrelot, C. (2019). *Majoritarian state: How Hindu nationalism is changing India*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190078171.001.0001>
- Copland, I. (2014). History in flux: Indira Gandhi and the 'great all-party Campaign for the protection of the cow, 1966–8. *Journal of Contemporary History*, 49(2), 410–439. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022009413515535>
- Damodaran, H. (2020). From 'entrepreneurial' to 'conglomerate' capitalism. Seminar. <https://www.india-seminar.com/semframe.html>
- Daniyal, S. (2020). At a time of acute farmer distress, Karnatakas bovine slaughter bill will make lives even worse. *The Scroll* [At a time of acute farmer distress, Karnatakas bovine slaughter bill will make things even worse \(scroll.in\)](https://www.thescroll.in/2020/07/20/at-a-time-of-acute-farmer-distress-karnatakas-bovine-slaughter-bill-will-make-lives-even-worse/)
- Das, S. (2017). India is second fastest growing processed meat and poultry market: Report. Economic Times: Retail. [India is second fastest growing processed meat and poultry market: Report, Retail News, ET Retail \(indiatimes.com\)](https://economictimes.com/news/retail/india-is-second-fastest-growing-processed-meat-and-poultry-market-report/)
- Desai, R. (2016). The Slow-Motion Counterrevolution: Developmental Contradictions and the Emergence of Neoliberalism. In K. B. Nielsen & A. G. Nilsen (Eds.), *Social movements and the state in India: Deepening democracy?* (pp. 25–51). Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-59133-3_2
- Dhawan, H. (2015). BJP got Rs. 2.50 cr in donations from firms exporting buffalo meat. The Times of India. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/BJP-got-Rs-2-50-cr-in-donations-from-firms-exporting-buffalo-meat/articleshow/50195323.cms>
- Dorin, B., & Landy, F. (2009). *Agriculture and Food in India: A Half-century Review from Independence to Globalization*. Manohar.
- Drèze, J., & Sen, A. (2013). *Uncertain glory: India and its contradictions*. Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.23943/9781400848775>
- Export Genius. (2017). Top beef exporters in India: Report on beef and other meat exporters. Export Genius Blog. <https://www.exportgenius.in/blog/top-beef-exporters-in-india-report-on-beef-and-other-meat-exporters-22.php>
- Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI). (2013). Overview of the Indian Buffalo Meat Value Chain. Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. New Delhi, India. Available at: www.ficci.com/spdocument/20331/Indian-Bufferalo-Report.pdf
- Freitag, S. B. (1980). Sacred symbol as mobilizing ideology: The north Indian search for a "Hindu" Community. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 22(4), 597–625. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417500009567>
- Ganapatye, S. (2020). Ban on cattle slaughter has done little to stop beef trade in Maharashtra. *Mumbai Mirror*. <https://mumbaimirror.indiatimes.com/mumbai/other/ban-toothless-illegal-beef-trade-thrived-in-5-years/articleshow/74234401.cms>
- Gittinger, J. L. (2017). The rhetoric of violence, religion, and purity in India's cow protection movement. *Journal of Religion and Violence*.
- Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the prison notebooks*. International Publishers.
- Gupta, A., & Sivaramakrishnan, K. (2010). Introduction: The state in India after liberalization. In *The state in India after liberalization* (pp. 17–44). Routledge.
- Hall, S. (2011). The neo-liberal revolution. *Cultural Studies*, 25(6), 705–728. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2011.619886>
- Haroon Akram-Lodhi, A. (2021). I will follow? Authoritarian populism, past and present. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2021.1961224>
- Holloway, J., & Picciotto, S. (1978). Introduction: Towards a materialist theory of the state. In J. Holloway & S. Picciotto (Eds.), *The state and capital: A Marxist debate*. Edward Arnold.
- Illiah Shepherd, K. (2019). Freedom to eat. The caravan. <https://caravanmagazine.in/reportage/fight-beef-democratic-right>
- KNN India. (2020). IIA invites Brazil to be country partner for "India food expo 2020". *KNN India*. <https://knnindia.co.in/news/newsdetails/global/ia-invites-brazil-to-be-country-partner-for-india-food-expo-2020>
- Jaffrelot, C. (2015). The class element in the 2014 Indian election and the BJP's success with special reference to the Hindi belt. *Studies in Indian Politics*, 3(1), 19–38.
- Jaffrelot, C. (2019). A *De facto* ethnic democracy? Obliterating and targeting the other, Hindu vigilantes, and the ethno-state. In A. P. Chatterji, T. Blom Hansen, & C. Jaffrelot (Eds.), *Majoritarian State: How Hindu Nationalism is Changing India* (Vol. 2019). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190078171.003.0003>

- Jain, S., & Singh, M. P. (2018). India Incs donations to gaushalas show surge. NDTV. <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/india-incs-donations-to-gaushalas-show-surge-ndtv-fact-check-1800408>
- Jakobsen, J., & Hansen, A. (2020). Geographies of meatification: An emerging Asian meat complex. *Globalizations*, 17(1), 93–109. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2019.1614723>
- Jeelani, G. (2017). Job loss fear looms large over UPs biggest slaughterhouse where Hindus outnumber Muslims. Hindustan Times. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/job-loss-fear-looms-over-up-s-biggest-slaughterhouse-where-hindus-outnumber-muslims/story-wodpKHLyMScJsJdsZZnjyO.html>
- Jha, D. N. (2002). *The myth of the holy cow*. Verso.
- Jitendra. (2019a). Indias cow crisis part 2: Threat of decline looms over livestock economy after 35 years growth. *Down to Earth*. <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/agriculture/india-s-cow-crisis-part-2-threat-of-decline-looms-over-livestock-economy-after-35-years-growth-62731>
- Jitendra. (2019b). Indias cow crisis part 4: The stigma of Mewat. *Down to earth*. <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/agriculture/india-s-cow-crisis-part-4-the-stigma-of-mewat-62782>
- Jitendra. (2019c). Indias cow crisis part 1: Nepal bears the brunt of Indias cow vigilantism. *Down to earth*. <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/agriculture/india-s-cow-crisis-part-1-nepal-bears-the-brunt-of-india-s-cow-vigilantism-62703>
- Kapur, D., & Vaishnav, M. (Eds.) (2018). *Costs of democracy: Political finance in India*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780199487271.001.0001>
- Kaur, R. (2020). *Brand new nation*. Stanford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781503612600>
- Kaushik, N. (2017). Indias beef exports hit by cow vigilantism. *Gulf News*, 17 May. <https://gulfnews.com/lifestyle/indias-beef-exports-hit-by-cow-vigilantism-1.2028673>
- Khan, A. A., & Bidabadi, F. S. (2004). Livestock revolution in India: Its impact and policy response. *South Asia Research*, 24(2), 99–122. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0262728004047907>
- Kumar, R. (2014). Modi targets 'pink revolution'. *The telegraph*. <https://www.telegraphindia.com/india/modi-targets-pink-revolution/cid/191376>
- Landes, M., Melton, A., & Edwards, S. (2016). *From where the Buffalo roam: India's beef exports*. States Department of Agriculture.
- Lerche, J. (2021). The farm laws struggle 2020-2021: Class-caste alliances and bypassed agrarian transition in neoliberal India. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 48(7), 1380–1396. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2021.1986013>
- Mampatta, S., & Kant, K. (2018). Holy cow! Now even India Inc spends money on them. *Rediff*. <https://www.rediff.com/money/special/holy-cow-now-even-india-inc-spends-money-on-them/20181122.htm>
- Manor, J. (2019). Can Modi and the BJP achieve and sustain hegemony? In A. P. Chatterji, T. B. Hansen, & C. Jaffrelot (Eds.), *Majoritarian State* (pp. 117–130). Hurst. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190078171.003.0007>
- Mathew, L. (2017). China finally agrees to import buffalo meat from India. *The Indian Express*. <https://indianexpress.com/article/business/business-others/china-finally-agrees-to-import-buffalo-meat-from-india-4476301/>
- McKay, B. M., De Gustavovo, O., & Liu, J. (2020). Authoritarianism, populism, nationalism and resistance in the agrarian south. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies/Revue Canadienne d'études du développement*, 41(3), 347–362. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02255189.2020.1814707>
- Metcalf, B. D., & Metcalf, T. R. (2006). *A concise history of modern India*. Cambridge University Press.
- Moudgil, M. (2017). UPs slaughterhouse crackdown: Butchers, farmers, traders hit, big businesses gain. *Indiaspend*. <https://archive.indiaspend.com/cover-story/ups-slaughterhouse-crackdown-butchers-farmers-traders-hit-big-businesses-gain-92135>
- Nair, K. N. (1981). Review: Studies on India's cattle economy. *EPW*, 16(9), 321–323.
- Narayanan, Y. (2018). Cow protection as 'Casteised speciesism': Sacralisation, commercialisation and politicisation. *South Asia*, 41(2), 331–351. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2018.1419794>
- Narayanan, Y. (2019a). Jugaad and informality as drivers of Indias cow slaughter economy. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 51(7), 1516–1535. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X19852640>
- Narayanan, Y. (2019b). "Cow is a mother, mothers can do anything for their children!" gaushalas as landscapes of Anthropatriarchy and Hindu patriarchy. *Hypatia*, 34, 195–221. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hypa.12460>
- Natrajan, B. (2018). Cultural identity and beef festivals: Toward a 'multiculturalism against caste'. *Contemporary South Asia*, 26(3), 287–304.
- Natrajan, B., & Jacob, S. (2018). 'Provincialising' vegetarianism: Putting Indian food habits in their place. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 53(9), 54–64.
- Nielsen, K. B. (2016). The Politics of Caste and Class in Singurs Anti-Land Acquisition Struggle. In U. Chandra, G. Heierstad, & K. B. Nielsen (Eds.), *The politics of caste in West Bengal* (pp. 125–146). Routledge.
- Nielsen, K. B. (2018). *Land dispossession and everyday politics in rural eastern India*. Anthem Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1zxsknd>
- Nielsen, K. B., & Nilsen, A. G. (2021). Love Jihad and the governance of gender and intimacy in Hindu nationalist statecraft. *Religion*, 12, 1068. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12121068>

- Nielsen, K. B., & Nilsen, A. G. (2022). Hindu Nationalist Statecraft and Modis Authoritarian Populism. In S. Widmalm (Ed.), *Routledge handbook on Autocratization in South Asia* (pp. 92–100). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003042211-10>
- Nilsen, A. G., & Nielsen, K. B. (2016). Social Movements, State Formation and Democracy in India: An Introduction. In K. B. Nielsen & A. G. Nilsen (Eds.), *Social movements and the state in India: Deepening democracy?* (pp. 1–23). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-59133-3_1
- Noronha, R. (2018). Till the cows come home: can gaushalas solve farmers woes? *India Today*. <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/the-big-story/story/20180402-uttar-pradesh-yogi-adityanath-cow-shelter-budget-gaushalas-1196432-2018-03-22>
- Palshikar, S. (2019). Toward hegemony: The BJP beyond electoral dominance. In A. P. Chatterji, T. B. Hansen, & C. Jaffrelot (Eds.), *Majoritarian state: How Hindu nationalism is changing India* (pp. 101–116). Oxford University Press.
- Pandey, G. (1988). Rallying around the cow. In R. Guha (Ed.), *Subaltern studies III*. Oxford University Press.
- Pandey, N. (2019). Modi govt plans to push buffalo meat exports as China is set to lift curbs on Indian beef. *The Print*. <https://theprint.in/india/governance/modi-govt-plans-to-push-buffalo-meat-exports-as-china-is-set-to-lift-curbs-on-indian-beef/262316/>
- Parija, P. (2019). Chinas crackdown on illegal meat puts Indias \$2-bn trade at risk. *Business Standard*. https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/china-s-crackdown-on-illegal-meat-puts-india-s-2-bn-trade-at-risk-119120900078_1.html
- Patel, R. (2018). Islamophobia Gastronomica – On the food police, rural populism and killing. *OpenIndia*. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/openIndia/raj-patel/islamophobia-gastronomica-on-food-police-rural-populism-and-killing>
- Pattenden, J. (2016). *Labour, state and society in rural India: A class-relational approach*. Manchester University Press. <https://doi.org/10.7765/9781784997021.00009>
- Pattenden, J., & Bansal, G. (2021). A new class Alliance in the Indian countryside? From new farmers movements to the 2020 protest wave. *EPW*, 56(26&27), 22–29.
- Poulantzas, N. (1978). *State, power, socialism*. New Left Review Editions.
- Poulantzas, N. (2008). *The Poulantzas reader: Marxism, law, and the state*. Edited by James Martin. Verso.
- Poulantzas, N. (2017 [1979]). The state, social movements, party: Interview with Nicos Poulantzas (1979). *Viewpoint Magazine*. <https://viewpointmag.com/2017/12/18/state-social-movements-party-interview-nicos-poulantzas-1979/>
- PTI. (2018). Beef export flourishing under PM Modis regime: Ramalinga Reddy. *Deccan Herald* <https://www.deccanherald.com/content/667682/beef-export-flourishing-pm-modis.html>
- Ramdas, S. R. (2017a). The beef ban effect: Stray cattle, broken markets and boom time for buffaloes. *The Wire*. <https://thewire.in/politics/beef-ban-cattle-market>
- Ramdas, S. R. (2017b). The sordid truth about the BJPs drive against meat in UP. *The wire*. [The Sordid Truth About the BJPs Drive Against Meat in UP \(thewire.in\)](https://thewire.in/politics/the-sordid-truth-about-the-bjps-drive-against-meat-in-up)
- Ramdas, S. R. (2020a). Concentration of the Livestock Sector: Through the lens of Milk and Meat. In *Corporate concentration in agriculture and food. Focus on the global south*. Alternative Law Forum & Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung.
- Ramdas, S. R. (2020b). Will Karnatakas new bill sound the death knell for its cattle wealth? *The Leaflet*. <https://www.theleaflet.in/will-karnatakas-new-bill-sound-the-death-knell-for-its-cattle-wealth/#>
- Salve, P. (2020). “Cow vigilantism has led to a major collapse in animal markets and hurt farm incomes”: Cattle expert. *Scroll*. <https://scroll.in/article/955725/cow-vigilantism-has-led-to-a-major-collapse-in-animal-markets-and-hit-farm-incomes-cattle-expert>
- Scoones, I., Edelman, M., Borrás, S. M., Hall, R., Wolford, W., & White, B. (2018). Emancipatory rural politics: Confronting authoritarian populism. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 45(1), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2017.1339693>
- Sharma, A. (2017). Cows a boon for mankind, says Yogi Adityanath approving gaushalas in Uttar Pradesh. *Economic Times* [Cows a boon for mankind, says Yogi Adityanath approving Gaushalas in Uttar Pradesh - The Economic Times \(indiatimes.com\)](https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/News/India-News/Cows-a-boon-for-mankind-says-Yogi-Adityanath-approving-Gaushalas-in-Uttar-Pradesh-The-Economic-Times-Indiatimes.com)
- Sharma, M. (2019). Modi slammed UPA for subsidising slaughterhouses, but his govt gave them 33% more money. *The Print*. <https://theprint.in/india/governance/modi-slammed-upa-for-subsidising-slaughterhouses-but-his-govt-gave-them-33-more-money/329800/>
- Shenoy, J. (2020). Centre to provide Rs 900 crore to registered gaushalas in India: Nirmala Sitharaman. *Times of India*. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/centre-to-provide-rs-900-crore-to-registered-gaushalas-in-india-nirmala-sitharaman/articleshow/79176296.cms>
- Siddiqui, Z., Das, K. N., Wilkes, T., & Lasserter, T. (2017). Emboldened by Modis ascent, Indias cow vigilantes deny Muslims their livelihoods. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/india-politics-religion-cows/>
- Singh, J. (2017). UPs anti-abattoir campaign could cripple prime revenue – And job-generating industries. *Indiaspend*. <https://www.indiaspend.com/ups-anti-abattoir-campaign-could-cripple-prime-revenue-and-job-generating-industries-33121>

- Sinha, S. (2021). Strong leaders, authoritarian populism and Indian developmentalism: The Modi moment in historical context. *Geoforum*, 124, 320-333.
- USDA. (2019). Indias food processing sector: a sunrise sector. https://apps.fas.usda.gov/newgainapi/api/report/downloadreportbyfilename?filename=Food%20Processing%20Ingredients_New%20Delhi_India_5-7-2019.pdf
- Vergara-Camus, L., & Kay, C. (2017). Agribusiness, peasants, left-wing governments, and the state in Latin America: An overview and theoretical reflections. *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 17(2), 239-257. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joac.12215>

How to cite this article: Jakobsen, J., & Nielsen, K. B. (2022). Bovine meat, authoritarian populism, and state contradictions in Modi's India. *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joac.12495>