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THE IMPLICATIONS OF DOMESTIC PARTY IDEOLOGIES ON REFUGEE
POLICY: A CASE STUDY OF BANGLADESH AND THE ROHINGYA

by

SAMUEL S. SCHIFFER

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Honors in the Major Program in Political Science
in the College of Sciences
and in the Burnett Honors College
at the University of Central Florida
Orlando, Florida

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Thesis Chair: Nikola Mirilovic, PhD.

ABSTRACT

Why do some political parties in Bangladesh discriminate against the Rohingya, while some do not? Much has been written about the conflict in Myanmar, but the plight of Rohingya in Bangladesh remains understudied. This lack of understanding is underscored by the five million Syrian refugees fleeing their own civil war that dominates the news and the attention of scholars. The Rohingya, however, are stateless: they are denied citizenship in their native Myanmar and are forced to find refuge in whichever country will take them.

Much has been published that links immigration policy to security considerations and the national identity and ethnic homogeneity of the host country. I argue that it is the domestic politics of Bangladesh that directly influences the policies concerning, and subsequent treatment of, the Rohingya migrants. This leads back to the question I pose: why is it that some political parties in Bangladesh actively support the ethnic group while others actively discriminate against the Rohingya? I argue that it is the individual ideologies of that party that can be directly attributed to their stance on Rohingya. Using qualitative analysis, I measure how a party's foreign policy, social policy, and political ideology affects that organization's attitude toward Rohingya refugees. Understanding the largely political nature of refugee policy will allow policy-makers, intergovernmental organizations, and human rights groups to be better equipped to improve the conditions of, not only the Rohingya population, but other vulnerable refugee groups that seek safety in foreign states.

DEDICATIONS

For the Rohingya of Myanmar, Bangladesh, and wherever they are pushed.

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I would like to thank Christopher Faulkner for making the plight of the Rohingya known to me.

Thank you to Dr. Mirilovic and the rest of my committee for teaching me the ways of the academic. Thank you to *RR* for reminding me to laugh. Thank you to Eileen and Steve Schiffer for giving me the opportunity to go to college and pursue what I love.

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And a most special thanks to the media outlets, human rights organizations, and scholars that are making the ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya known worldwide. Without your tireless effort and acute focus on the abuses they face every day, the Rohingya would be wiped from their ancestral home and the face of the Earth without a second glance.

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INTRODUCTION

Why do some political parties in Bangladesh discriminate against the Rohingya, while some do not? Much has been written about the conflict in Myanmar, but the plight of Rohingya in Bangladesh remains understudied. With estimates putting the number of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh at 800,000, substantive research on why they are mistreated is left wanting. This lack of understanding is underscored by the five million Syrian refugees fleeing their own civil war that dominates the news and the attention of scholars. The Rohingya, however, are stateless: they are denied citizenship in their native Myanmar and are forced to find refuge in whichever country will take them. This entails perilous journeys in the Bengal Sea with potential destination countries literally pushing them away, back out to sea. For this reason, many seek safety in Bangladesh, which shares a small land border with Myanmar.

Much has been published that links immigration policy to security considerations and the national identity and ethnic homogeneity of the host country. I argue that it is the domestic politics of Bangladesh that directly influences the policies concerning, and subsequent treatment of, the Rohingya migrants. This leads back to the question I pose: why is it that some political parties in Bangladesh actively support the ethnic group while others actively discriminate against the Rohingya? I believe that it is the individual ideologies of that party that can be directly attributed to their stance on Rohingya. Using qualitative analysis, I will measure how a party's social policy and political ideology affects that organization's attitude toward Rohingya refugees. Understanding the largely political nature of refugee policy will allow policy-makers, intergovernmental organizations, and human rights groups to be better equipped to improve the

conditions of, not only the Rohingya population, but other vulnerable refugee groups that seek safety in foreign states.

The United Nations determines a refugee to be:

A person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.¹

For the purpose of this study, the above UN definition of a refugee will be used to describe the Rohingya migrants. They are the victims of sectarian persecution in Myanmar, involving rape, displacement, and killing. They are also denied citizenship in Myanmar, further placing them within the confines of the UN definition as “...not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence...”

Because worldwide refugee numbers are ever-increasing, this study will focus on the Rohingya experience outside of Myanmar as a refugee in Bangladesh and act as a case study of the implications domestic politics have on refugee populations within host countries. There is an abundance of scholarly work on the factors that lead to immigration policy, including security, political economy, and even domestic politics. Yet there is a lack of focus on the specific effects that host country party politics have on refugee policy. The focus is normally placed on the

¹ United Nations. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. Geneva: n.p., 1951. Print.

country policy as a whole, rather than identifying the internal dynamics of the various political voices. This study seeks to expand the literature on immigration policy by including a specific instance of party ideologies having a direct effect on refugee public policy.

BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Starting with “Operation: Dragon King” in 1977, a clear pattern of genocidal tendencies can be found being perpetrated by the Burmese government against the Rohingya in the Rakhine State. This pattern is identified in the report, “Countdown to Annihilation: Genocide in Myanmar”.² The report contends that the Myanmar government is carrying out a silent genocide against the ethnic group right under the world’s nose. Identifying specific steps in the process of a genocide, according to Daniel Feierstein, the report then applies what the Burmese government has done, or is attempting to do, to those steps to build their case.

In Human Rights Watch’s report on the violence against the Rohingya in the Rakhine State, they document the promotion of ethnic violence against the minority group, coordinated attacks and abuses, mass graves of Rohingya, humanitarian concerns, denial of citizenship, and the legal standards of ethnic cleansing as a crime against humanity.³ For a more detailed description and documentation of the conditions of the Rohingya in Myanmar, Chris Lewa, coordinator for the Arakan Project, has published a report providing a background of the Rohingya’s state in Myanmar and their reasons for fleeing to Bangladesh.⁴

With the scores of Rohingya moving out of the Rakhine State, a significant migrant problem has been created in Southeast Asia. In Eileen Pittaway’s “The Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh: A Failure of the International Protection Regime”, she describes the shortcomings of the global response to protect the ethnic group, with a particular focus on the status of

² de la Cour Venning, Alicia, et al. *Countdown to Annihilation: Genocide in Myanmar*. International State Crime Initiative, 2015

³ Human Rights Watch. *"All You Can Do Is Pray": Crimes Against Humanity and Ethnic Cleansing of Rohingya Muslims in Burma's Arakan State*. Human Rights Watch, 2012, *"All You Can Do Is Pray": Crimes Against Humanity and Ethnic Cleansing of Rohingya Muslims in Burma's Arakan State*.

⁴ The Arakan Project. *Unregistered Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh: Crackdown, Forced Displacement and Hunger*. Asia-Pacific Refugee Rights Network, 2010.

Rohingya in Bangladesh. She contends that the international community has been “unwilling and unable to offer an effective solution” and that failure to act has manifested itself in Bangladesh.⁵ Pittway states that three durable solutions have not been achieved: “voluntary repatriation to the home country, local integration in the country of asylum, and resettlement in a third country.”⁶

By 1978, 200,000 Rohingya had fled into Bangladesh. Because of this massive influx, Bangladesh had to request assistance from the United Nations to help support the refugees. Bangladesh then suspended all movement of Rohingya into the country and deemed all the persons in the country as illegal immigrants with no official status as refugees. It was then that the UN stepped in and threatened to withdraw aid from Burma if they did not agree to take back the Rohingya.⁷ Burma reluctantly agreed, and between 1993 and 1997, 230,000 Rohingya were forcefully returned to Burma. In an interview conducted by the UNHCR with individual refugees, it was found that only 30 percent of Rohingya wished to return to Burma while Bangladesh insisted that they all return.⁸

Local integration, Pittway contends, has also been non-existent in Bangladesh. To be locally integrated, a refugee must become members of the host society legally, economically, and politically.⁹ The Bangladeshi government has made this extremely hard for the UNHRC to achieve as Bangladesh continues to reject any sort of local integration. Not only are they denied status as official refugees, but they are subject to sexual violence, malnutrition, and insufficient

⁵ Pittaway, Eileen. "The Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh: A Failure of the International Protection Regime." *Protracted Displacement in Asia: No Place to Call Home*. London: Ashgate, 2008. 83-104. Print. Law, Ethics, and Governance Ser.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

health care and education by the Bangladeshi government. This leaves the Rohingya depended on international human rights regimes whose goal for the group is to become self-sufficient in Bangladesh. Until the cycle of abuse stops from Bangladesh, the Rohingya will remain tethered to the UNHCR and other groups that are already limited to act in the country.¹⁰

Pittaway concludes with her assessment on the 3rd country resettlement of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. According to her, “Resettlement has come to be seen as the only way in which they can regain a meaningful life”.¹¹ In 2007, the UNHCR instigated a resettlement program for the Rohingya, but countries only accepted refugees based on their ability to integrate into their society rather than those in greatest need.¹² The trauma that they experience in Bangladesh, the poor health status, and low levels of education all combine to make Rohingya migrants unlikely to fit “integration criteria” of prospective host countries.¹³

While the Rohingya crisis coming out of Myanmar is the most pressing instance of protracted displacement in South Asia, there is a larger issue of displaced persons throughout the world. In Michael G. Smith’s “Better Approaches to Protracted Displacement?” he identifies problems in reconciling “the inherent tension between humanitarianism and realpolitik”.¹⁴ How can a host country balance universal morality with national self-interest? Smith argues that there are no durable solutions to protracted displacement, but enduring solutions, which require refugees to wait and endure their situations for years without resolution.¹⁵ This acts as no solution at all and only proves the international community’s inability to provide adequate

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Smith, Michael G. "Better Approaches to Protracted Displacement?" *Protracted Displacement in Asia: No Place to Call Home* (2008): 209.

¹⁵ Ibid.

protections for those in protracted displacement.¹⁶ The UNHCR has advocated against a “care and maintenance” approach that will create a cycle of dependence on the international human rights regimes, but few alternatives present themselves.¹⁷

In his paper, Smith identifies the Rohingya issue as a good example of protracted displacement that, unfortunately, is one that is only fit for an enduring solution. However, he presents four key lessons for humanitarian agencies that emerge from the crisis. First, agencies must mobilize support and advocate greater attention for the Rohingya.¹⁸ Second, the UN in particular must follow through with its humanitarian mandate regardless of the political challenges.¹⁹ Third, assistance to the Rohingya needs to be combined with assistance to the local Bangladesh communities. This will increase chances for local integration and lower animosity between the two groups.²⁰ Finally, immediate attention must be given to a resettlement program as the caseload of Rohingya in Bangladesh represents a relatively small population compared to other displaced persons in the world.²¹

Some explanations of the Rohingya treatment in Bangladesh can be attributed to larger issues of democratization, or the lack thereof, in Southeast Asia that can affect immigration policy. Stephen Castles provides theories relating to the issues of migration, citizenship, and ethnicity. Castles goes on to describe the fragile relationship between democratization and citizen rights, which he sees as being affected by “immigration and the development of new

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

forms of ethno-cultural diversity”.²² According to Castles, the more heterogeneous its population is in terms of ethnicity, the harder it is to build a democratic system of government. Therefore, immigration, the adding of new ethnicities to the pool of residents in the state, will hinder that state’s ability to achieve democracy.²³ This can, in turn, lead young, developing states to adopt restrictive immigration policies or harsh laws on migrants once they are in the country. He applies this to Southeast Asia in three ways.

First, the European model of homogeneity and the theory of the “nation-state” did not have the time it needed to develop in Asia. No autonomous cities developed that could challenge the power of the rulers as what happened in Europe. Instead, peasant rebellions merely established new dynasties that did not change the political structure.²⁴ Second, the notion of the nation - state and citizenship was brought to the region through colonialism, a practice marred by repression, racism, and exploitation. This can be seen in Bangladesh with the presence of Great Britain in the 19th century. While the colonial liberation movements attempted to take over the government system put in place by the colonial powers, the democratic citizen had not evolved in the region to translate that liberation into a successful, western democracy - type government. Dictatorships and authoritarianism became widespread.²⁵ Finally, the states in Southeast Asia did not have time to homogenize the way Western states did in order to implement successful democracy. Many times, the labor movement spurred by colonialists brought ethnicities from other countries into new regions that further muddled the ethnic homogeneity of the country.²⁶

²² Castles, Stephen. *New migrations, ethnicity and nationalism in southeast and east Asia*. University of Oxford. Transnational Communities Programme, 1998.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

This can also be seen in Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, and Myanmar when the British needed men to tend the colonial rice fields.

In another paper by Castles, “Why Migration Policies Fail”, he argues that “difficulties in implementing migration policies arise to a large extent from the interactions... between the political systems of the states involved”.²⁷ Castles goes on to describe the factions in a political system and how their perceptions of migrants can lead to discord in the government and result in contradictory and ineffective immigration policy. Migration can be seen as advantageous by some groups, and a threat to others. Some people may see migrant settlement in their neighborhoods as harmful “because they feel it will worsen housing conditions, while others may see immigration as a source of urban renewal and a more vibrant cultural mix.”²⁸ According to Castles, “Politicians, social movements and the media all have a role in shaping and directing people's reactions to migration.”²⁹ However, “The strength of nationalism and racism in immigration countries has made it easier to mobilize public opinion against immigration than for it.”³⁰

As a developing country, Bangladesh must consider immigration in the larger scheme of its nation building process. Like what Castles argues, Harris Mylonas agrees that ethnic and national homogeneity are necessary to build a nation state. Immigration throws a wrench into this process by adding new ethnicities and nationalities to the mix. Mylonas argues that the “core group” in the host country, the inhabitants of the country that share the same national type, is represented by the ruling elite in that country. That ruling elite aims at the survival of the state

²⁷ Castles, Stephen. "Why migration policies fail." *Ethnic and racial studies* 27.2 (2004): 205-227.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

and their position in it and will not rest until the nation building is complete, which entails the removal or silencing of all threatening non-core actors in the state. The ruling elite is driven by a homogenizing imperative.³¹ Mylonas puts forth a few theories regarding immigration policies in these nation building states.

First, he looks at the state capacity in absolute terms. Does the state have the ability to implement its nation building policies, or not? If they do not, they will attempt an accommodationist stance as the state apparatus does not have the ability to fully assimilate the non-core group into the core group.³² Next, Mylonas puts forth the idea that the salience and homogeneity of the non-core group in question will have an impact on their treatment by the ruling class of the host country. If the group is nomadic, isolated, and/or small, members will quickly assimilate into the upper echelons of the core group to increase their social esteem. Otherwise, if the non-core group is very strong in their ethnic, religions, or territorial bond, the core group will act more hostile to the non-core group and see it as a threat. The non-core group will seek to establish a beachhead in the host country with a political identity in the form of cultural, linguistic, and religious links. The ruling class of the host country will fear external powers supporting the non-core group in an attempt to destabilize the country.³³ Finally, Mylonas describes how the political demands of the non-core group can influence their subsequent treatment in the host country. Demands can range from non-territorial rights, such as recognition as citizens and political participation, to territorial demands in which the non-core group claims autonomy or independence from the state. Conversely, demands from the non-core

³¹ Mylonas, Harris. *Politics of Nation-Building: Making Co-Nationals, Refugees, and Minorities*. N.p.: Cambridge U Press, 2013. Print.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

group can be influenced by their treatment from the host country. Violence directed at the non-core group can lead to an escalation of the group's demands unless they are totally suppressed.³⁴

Politics and ideology are discussed by Russell as an overlooked factor when seeking out the determinants of immigration policy. In her case study of Kuwait, Russell sees politics and political interest groups “at the intersection of objectives and determinants” of migration policy.³⁵ Political actors will perceive the different aspects of the migrant group, particularly their labor impact, as either favorable to their agenda or unfavorable and act accordingly. She goes on to describe how members of the Kuwaiti merchant elites and the newer commercial interests have pushed for liberal entry policies, then restrictive rights once they are in the country. These groups will also oppose naturalization.³⁶ Conversely, Kuwaiti Nationalists, comprising of the poorer members of society, tend to support policies that restrict the entry of foreign nationals and oppose giving rights to the ones who reside in the country.³⁷ In addition to the labor considerations of political actors, recent political events, security issues, economic conditions, demographic change, positions of political actors in policy making process, and perceived social costs and consequences of immigration all need to be taken into account when governments adopt the immigration policies that they do.³⁸

Russell’s theory does well to highlight the need to pay attention to ideology and politics of state actors as shaping the direction of the immigration phenomenon. However, Russell’s argument assumes that the migrants are moving into the host state to solely seek employment.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Russell, Sharon Stanton. "Politics and Ideology in Migration Policy Formulation: The Case of Kuwait." *International Migration Review* 23.1 (1989): 24-27. Print.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

Political actors and interest groups build their opinions of the migrants based the impact they will make on the labor market. Refugees are largely kept out of the equation as they may seek employment, citizenship, and asylum from a hostile and dangerous home state. These other aspects of the immigrant needs and demands must be taken into account.

Regime type is discussed as an important predictor in immigration policy by Nikola Mirilovic. Making a comparison between democracies and dictatorship, he argues that while many immigrants would prefer to live in the former, the demand for immigrants is higher in the latter.³⁹ In democracies, immigrants are given access to the welfare state and are granted political rights that inherently make living in the state a better option. However, immigration policy in these countries remain restrictive, whereas in dictatorships, there is a permissive policy towards migrant admissions. Bangladesh, however, does not fall into the polar regime types that he describes in his theory. The country has a history of vacillating between authoritarian rule and liberal democracy. Therefore, it is imperative to analyze the internal dynamics of the Bangladeshi political systems, namely the political parties.

Western democracies, having the most developed political institutions and party ideologies, provide an important setting for looking at the effects of party politics and ideology on immigration policy. Gallya Lahav argues that ideological orientations and party affiliation structure elite attitudes towards the immigration issue in Europe.⁴⁰ Looking at members of European parliament, Lahav has found that elites from the different parties have attitudes that are distinct.⁴¹ The “left-right construct” organizes policy makers when it comes to preferences of

³⁹ Mirilovic, Nikola. “The Politics of Immigration: Dictatorship, Development, and Defense.” *Comparative Politics*, vol. 42, no. 3, 2010, pp. 273–292.

⁴⁰ Lahav, Gallya. “Ideological and party constraints on immigration attitudes in Europe.” *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 35.3 (1997): 377-406.

⁴¹ Ibid.

migrants and the policies that govern them.⁴² She has found that policy makers on the left are more likely to amend social inequalities that migrants face and seek to extend their rights than their counterparts on the right.⁴³ Her report flies in the face of recent assertions that party affiliation and ideology have eroded and have become largely symbolic when deciding policy in Europe. Lahav has found that parties and their ideologies have remained significant in immigration discourse and continue to shape the dialogue on immigrant entry.⁴⁴ She debunks the idea that the creation of a European parliament and intergovernmental framework somehow antiquates party affiliation and ideology. These ties to ideas and perceptions of culture still inform the decision making when it comes to immigration policy.

As well as Lahav makes the case for party affiliation and ideology as a predictor for immigration policy, her argument is limited to the borders of Europe and advanced Western international governance. Bangladesh is a country that formed in the latter half of the 20th century and lacks the hundreds of years it took for complex democratic institutions to form. The country is prone to regime change and does not have the stability required for political discourse that does not result in either a coup or civil war. This paper seeks to make the case for party and ideology as a predictor for immigration policy in the context of a lesser developed country.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS

Immigration and refugee populations have been the subject of a myriad amount of studies and scholarly attention. Security issues, the wealth of the host nation, and ethnic differences are all cited as useful and proven justifications for a restrictive and discriminatory policy against immigrants and refugees. However, most of the literature concerns host states that are Western, advanced democracies, like the United States and European Union countries. These states have had hundreds of years to establish stable, democratic institutions that have evolved over time and are able to withstand political discourse and competition without falling victim to a coup or a regime change. Bangladesh presents an interesting case because it does not have the advanced hallmarks of democracy, like free and fair elections, independent branches of government, or healthy political competition. Therefore, it deserves a unique lens through which to study its immigration policy, particularly concerning the Rohingya. In immigration literature, it is argued that security, economic policy, and ethnic differences provide the reasons behind a state's immigration policy. I argue that these factors as explanations do not apply to Bangladesh.

Security is the most commonly used justification for an immigration policy. This can be seen in the Trump Administration's attempted block of migrants from Muslim-majority countries and Syrian refugees in the United States and the National Front's platform of restricted immigration in France. The literature can serve these cases just fine as they are countries that have experienced considerable terrorist attacks from people who were not citizens of the state, the September 11 attacks in the United States, and the multiple terror attacks in France since the rise of the Islamic State in 2015. However, when applying this analytical framework to a country like Bangladesh, the pieces do not fit together as nicely as they do in other cases.

Christopher Rudolph is among one of the scholars that argues there is a significant security concern when states enact immigration policy. He admits, though, that many of the theories he posits do not apply to developing countries. This is because his theses are interwoven with political economy considerations that are really only applicable in advanced, Western, industrialized nations.⁴⁵

In Utpala Rahman's "The Rohingya Refugee: A Security Dilemma for Bangladesh", the Rohingya migrant is a threat to the internal stability of Bangladesh and a source of inter-state tension between the country and Myanmar. She portrays the refugee group as a political, economic, social, environmental, and human security threat. The solution, according to Rahman, is for Bangladesh to enact a policy that will lift the Rohingya migrants from their current state of despondency in order to keep them out of encampment and subsequent militarization.⁴⁶

Rahman contends that the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar are fertile grounds for recruitment by Islamic militants.⁴⁷ The Rohingya Solidarity Organization, a militant organization created by the Rohingya minority in Myanmar to achieve independence, has moved into Bangladesh with the thousands of others escaping Rakhine. The RSO now operates in Bangladesh with support from other Islamic militant groups in the country, most notably the Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB).⁴⁸ Rahman continues to state that the Rohingyas protracted status in refugee camps only bolster their ties to armed groups that seek to harm the government and people of Bangladesh.

⁴⁵ Rudolph, Christopher. "Security and the Political Economy of International Migration." *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 97, no. 4, 2003, pp. 603–620.

⁴⁶ Rahman, Utpala. "The Rohingya Refugee: A Security Dilemma for Bangladesh." *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 8.2 (2010): 233-39.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Rahman also sees the Rohingya as competing with Bangladeshis workers for jobs on the Myanmar - Bangladesh border that, in turn, creates hostilities and lead to clashes between ethnic groups.⁴⁹ In addition, the large amounts of Rohingya place a strain on the already limited resources in the area, contributing to tensions between “newcomers and native populations”.⁵⁰ This resource strain can also be seen in the environmental degradation of the area as refugees cut down timber to build shelters. This places the Rohingya in direct competition with the native Bangladeshis who also depend on the natural resources in the area for their livelihood.⁵¹

First, the security threat the Bangladesh faces is almost all internal. The product of a brutal liberation war in 1971, Bangladesh has a history of rape, murder, and genocide woven into its history of a sovereign nation. During the conflict, the Yahya Khan regime of Pakistan sent his troops to Dhaka, the capital city of the Bengali nationalists and unleashed a large siege of the city for two days.⁵² According to eyewitness accounts, 15,000 Bengalis had lost their lives, the most notable being the murder of 17 professors and 200 students on the Dhaka University campus.⁵³ The results of the war left a significant number of Pakistani supporters in Bangladesh after the war to represent the interests of Pakistan. Most notably, the Jamaat-e-Islamic political party, which fought on the side of Pakistan during the war and was charged with committing some of the worst atrocities during the conflict, including the murder of the Bengali intellectuals in March of 1971.⁵⁴ Rather than expressing political differences in a setting of peaceful discourse, Bangladesh has been plagued by the expression of political activism in the form of

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Jahan, Rounaq. “Genocide in Bangladesh.” *Century of Genocide: Critical Essays and Eyewitness Accounts*, edited by Samuel Totten and William S. Parsons, Routledge, 2009.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

political terrorism. One of the most notable occurred in 2004 when fundamentalist Islamist terrorists from Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami perpetrated a grenade attack against the Awami League leadership during an anti-terrorism rally. The man behind the attacks was Mufti Abdul Hannan, a Bangladeshi citizen.⁵⁵

Second, the RSO that Rahman contends poses a threat to Bangladeshi national security has been long defunct. Formed as a response to the Burmese military's crackdown in the late 1970s, the RSO was just one of the nationalist groups that was formed by Rohingya after the refugee crisis and the dismal conditions they were subject to. Seeking to secure greater rights for the Rohingya within Burma, the organization was targeted as a terrorist organization by the Burmese government.⁵⁶ With purported and dubious claims of having ties with Jamaat-e-Islami and other extremist organizations, the RSO was largely confined to the Cox's Bazar area of Bangladesh that held the major population centers for Rohingya migrants in the country. From there, the RSO carried out localized military attacks against the Burmese forces that were responsible for the atrocities in the Rakhine State.⁵⁷ The organization experienced a permanent decline in 2001 when the Bangladeshi government targeted the group's training camps.⁵⁸ By promulgating this myth of Rohingya terrorism, the government of Myanmar has caught the attention of established terror networks, like Al-Qaeda, Al-Shabab, and Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid. These groups have expressed solidarity with the plight of the Rohingya and have called for attacks on the Burmese military and Buddhists in Myanmar.⁵⁹ This is negative publicity that affects the Rohingya's credibility as a vulnerable group. And as a vulnerable group, they have

⁵⁵ Karlekar, Hiranmay. *Bangladesh, the next Afghanistan?* SAGE Publications, 2005.

⁵⁶ O'Hara, Elliot Brennan & Christopher. "The Rohingya and Islamic Extremism: A Convenient Myth." *The Diplomat*, The Diplomat, 29 June 2015, thediplomat.com/2015/06/the-rohingya-and-islamic-extremism-a-convenient-myth/.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

been largely insulated against the wider Islamic world, making any claim of ties to international terror networks extremely far-fetched.

Finally, the claims of worker conflict in Bangladesh between Bangladeshi workers and Rohingya is also overexaggerated, if not outright false. There is no competition for work in Rohingya population centers in Bangladesh because the Bangladeshi government is not letting the Rohingya work.⁶⁰

Many will argue that Bangladesh is being hostile to Rohingya refugees because they are a poor, densely populated state that cannot sustain the addition of hundreds of thousands of more people. While it is objectively true to state that Bangladesh may not be able to absorb the migrants into their state without extreme strain put on resources, to make a blanket statement about all the political voices as sharing that opinion is misguided. There are many different voices coming from major opposition parties that are not in power and cannot enact official policy. The purpose of this study is to investigate why different political parties in Bangladesh are treating the Rohingya differently.

Gary Freeman makes the argument that a state's welfare status determines their immigration policy. He posits that, because the welfare state has to provide extensively for its citizens, it will react negatively to the addition of more citizens as it will eventually become impossible for the state to sustain its social programs. The state must insulate itself from the labor that flows from state to state in an open immigration system.⁶¹ However, Freeman's theory assumes that each state has a homogenous political attitude that either supports the idea of a welfare state or denies it outright. For socially democratic states like Norway, Denmark, and

⁶⁰ "The Half-Million Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh Will Not Leave Soon." *The Economist*, The Economist Newspaper, 19 Oct. 2017

⁶¹ Freeman, Gary P. "Migration and the political economy of the welfare state." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 485.1 (1986): 51-63.

Sweden, the theory fits nicely as the provisions of a welfare state are woven into the country's identity. The theory, however, does not account for politically heterogeneous states like Bangladesh that consistently vacillate between liberal and socialist economic structures. It is necessary, therefore, to understand the individual policies and ideologies of each party to fully understand what determines their immigration policy, particularly concerning the Rohingya.

It is argued that the ethnic makeup of a state will determine its reception of immigrants. According to popular and scholarly belief, if the immigrant group's ethnicity is different than the host state's, then the host state will pursue restrictive policies against that immigrant group. That Bangladesh has pursued a restrictive and discriminatory policy against the Rohingya is a sign of their ethnic differences with the migrant group is false for two reasons. First, the Rohingya share almost the same ethnicity as native Bengali's, as well as religious beliefs. While there is significant political discourse surrounding the ethnicity and history of the Rohingya in Western Myanmar, it is agreed upon by a majority of anthropology and historical scholars that the group is descended from a variety of Arab Muslim traders who came to the Arakan Kingdom in the 8th century A.D.⁶² The Arakan Kingdom, at the height of its existence, comprised of the land stretching from Chittagong (present day Bangladesh) to the present day Rakhine State in Myanmar.⁶³ Second, there is variation within the political discourse as to the policy that should be taken against the Rohingya. There are parties out of the ruling government that take very different stances on the Rohingya than the ruling powers.

While flawed in its assumptions of American identity and culture, Samuel Huntington has been the biggest proponent of identity and ethnicity differences as an obstacle to

⁶² Chowdhury, Mohammed Ali. "The Advent of Islam in Arakan and Rohingyas." *AHS, op. cit* (1995): 29.

⁶³ Phayre, Arthur Purves. *History of Burma: Including Burma Proper, Pegu, Taungu, Tenasserim, and Arakan. From the Earliest Time to the End of the First War with British India*. Trübner & Company, 1884.

⁶⁴ Amrith, Sunil S. *Crossing the Bay of Bengal*. Harvard University Press, 2013.

immigration. He posits that Hispanic migration into the United States is problematic because it would be impossible for them to assimilate into the American identity.⁶⁵ This is a case study that provides a micro empirical example of a macro principle: ethnicity and identity are key determinants to immigration policy. While some would argue that this can be applied to justify the treatment of the Rohingya in Bangladesh, it cannot because the Rohingya possess the same ethnic characteristics of the Bengali population as well as the language. Both peoples are considered Indo-Aryan both ethnic-wise and linguistically. Because of their shared ethnic identity and culture, it is impossible for people to argue that it is identity clashes that keep the Bangladeshi government from accepting Rohingya refugees.

⁶⁵ Huntington, Samuel P. "The Hispanic Challenge." *Foreign Policy*, no. 141, 2004, pp. 30–45.

HYPOTHESIS AND METHODOLOGY

There has been extensive research on the subjects of security, national identity, ethnicity, and democratization as determining most of the immigration policy that states create. What is lacking in analysis and consideration as a determinant to immigration law is domestic party politics, specifically in developing countries where democratic institutions, such as political parties, amount to little more than factions vying for control of the country. Such is the case in Bangladesh. While there are multiple political factions in the country, three dominate the political discourse in the state: the Awami League, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, and Jamaat-e-Islami. The Awami League has confronted the Rohingya migrants with discriminatory policies. As the ruling party, there have been repatriations conducted, documented by the United Nations, relocations to uninhabitable regions, criticized by human rights groups, and an unwillingness to recognize the Rohingya as refugees, per the official statements of the party leaders.⁶⁶⁶⁷ The Bangladesh National Party have expressed support for the Rohingya and call for the ruling Awami League to provide shelter to the minority group.⁶⁸ In addition to voicing their support, the BNP is calling for the United Nations to issue a resolution condemning Myanmar for their treatment of the Rohingya and provide aid and resources to Bangladesh in order to provide shelter for the Rohingya in Bangladesh, something the Awami League has failed to accomplish.⁶⁹ Jamaat-e-Islami has also expressed support for the Rohingya. In a press release,

⁶⁶ *Myanmar: The Politics of Rakhine State*. Rep. no. 261. Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2014. Print.

⁶⁷ "Bangladesh: Reject Rohingya Refugee Relocation Plan." *Human Rights Watch*. N.p., 09 Feb. 2017. Web.

⁶⁸ "Stand by Myanmar Rohingyas, BNP Urges Government." *Bdnews24.com*. N.p., 26 Nov. 2016. Web.

⁶⁹ Sen, Gautam. "Fallout of the Rohingya Issue on Bangladesh's Domestic Politics." *Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses*, 3 Oct. 2017, idsa.in/idsacomments/fallout-of-the-rohingya-issue-on-bangladesh-domestic-politics_gsen_031017.

the party has urged the Bangladesh government to allow the Rohingya to enter the country on humanitarian grounds.⁷⁰ In addition, the Islamist party has called for the following:

...the UN, OIC, all international forums and organizations, human rights watchdogs and most particularly the Muslim countries and the peace loving people around the world to create pressure upon the Myanmar government to stop ongoing massacre and genocide, to take the Rohingya Muslims back in their home, to restore their citizenship and to ensure their all out safety.⁷¹

I believe it is the competition and individual ideologies of these groups that determine the treatment of the Rohingya migrants in Bangladesh.

What, then, can account for the differences in the parties that subsequently lead to the treatment of the migrants? Why do some parties in Bangladesh discriminate against the Rohingya while others do not? My hypotheses state there are two main variables, in the form of party policy, that lead to either their support for the minority group or animosity: their social values and political ideologies. There are those that argue Bangladesh, like much of South Asia, is not equipped to handle large influxes of refugees because a strong civil society has not developed, the already high population density, and their absence from most international frameworks on refugee treatment. Therefore, it is expected that the country would pursue restrictionist and exclusionary policies towards the migrants. I will be able to control for these alternative explanations by highlighting the very different approaches each political party takes

⁷⁰ "Jamaat-e-Islami declares nationwide peaceful demonstration on Wednesday protesting ongoing mass killings against Muslims in Myanmar." *Jamaat-e-Islami.org*. N.p., 21 Nov. 2016. Web.

⁷¹ "Ameer-e-Jamaat Condemns Mass Killings against the Rohingya Muslims; Urges to Offer Prayer on Friday." *Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami*, 30 Aug. 2017, jamaat-e-islami.org/en/article-details.php?category=31&article=370.

towards Rohingya migrants, proving that there is variation when it comes to refugee policy in the country.

My hypotheses are as follows: first, a party's social values impact their policy towards the Rohingya migrants. Second, a party's political ideologies will impact their policy towards Rohingya migrants. The party's social values, in the form of a relationship with Islam will impact their stance on Rohingya migrants in the following way: the warmer a political party is towards Islam, the warmer their policy is towards the Rohingya. This can be explained in the following way: the Rohingya are a Muslim group, therefore, the more aligned with Islam a party is, the warmer their stance toward the Rohingya will be. Jonathan Fox's research corroborates this idea that the religion of the policy making group can affect the treatment of another group. He has found that when a minority group's religion differs from that of a culturally similar majority, discriminatory policies can be expected to be enacted by the majority group.⁷² Over the past few decades, a substantial Rohingya diaspora has developed in Southeast Bangladesh, establishing cultural bonds between the people of the two countries.

Finally, I believe that the political ideologies of each party, which can be measured by their nationalistic bent and position on democratic government, will influence their stance on Rohingya migrants in the following ways: I expect that the more nationalistic a party, the more receptive a party will be of Rohingya migrants. I expect that the warmer a party is towards democracy, the warmer a party will be towards Rohingya migrants. I also include two complimentary variables to a party's political ideologies: foreign policy will compliment a party's nationalistic bent and economic policy will compliment a party's democratic bent.

⁷² Fox, Jonathan. "Religious Causes of Discrimination against Ethno-Religious Minorities." *International Studies Quarterly* 44.3 (2000): 423-450.

Normally, as a nationalistic party, immigrants and refugees would be seen as unwanted and muddying the national homogeneity of the country. In the context of Bangladesh, however, a country's nationalistic bent plays a backseat role to the factor of party competition. For example, the BNP is a nationalistic party, but opposes the liberal and global oriented Awami League who pursues discriminatory policies against the Rohingya. Therefore, the BNP, while nationalistic, adopts accommodationist policies towards the Rohingya, for the purpose of standing against the Awami League's restrictions policies. The BNP also represents the identity of the Bangladeshi people, which in years since independence, has meant ethno-religious identification. Belonging to the same religion and sharing the same ethnic qualities, the Rohingya are a part of the "nation" that the BNP purports to represent the interests of.

Foreign policy goes hand-in-hand with nationalism. This can be explained in the following way: Prime Minister Modi in India, through his "Act East Policy" has sought to strengthen ties, both economic and militarily with ASEAN nations, most notably Myanmar.⁷³ Because of this policy goal, Prime Minister Modi has been skeptical of the reports accusing Myanmar of sponsoring violence against the Rohingya in the Rakhine State, preferring to allow Myanmar to solve the problem internally. India views the Rohingya crisis as Myanmar's problem, not the surrounding states. Naturally, any political ally of India would adopt a similar stance. As far as Pakistan, Mylonas' theory that an external power can affect a host state's policy towards a migrant group comes into play. His theory states that the if the external power, Pakistan in this case, is an adversary of the host state, Bangladesh, and supports the immigrant group, then the host state will adopt restrictionist policies towards that immigrant

⁷³ Sajjanhar, Ashok. "2 Years On, Has Modi's 'Act East' Policy Made a Difference for India?" *The Diplomat*. The Diplomat, 04 June 2016. Web.

group, the Rohingya in this case.⁷⁴ Mylonas' theory holds true, conversely, in that parties that are pro-Pakistan have a much warmer attitude toward Rohingya migrants.

Bangladesh has a unitary system of governance with a Westminster-styled parliamentary government. There are 350 seats to be filled by parliament members elected in different districts using by a plurality of votes. Elections are scheduled to happen every five years, but turmoil and violence often delay the voting process. In the latest election in 2014, there was only a 22% voter turnout as the BNP-led opposition boycotted the election.⁷⁵ The Prime Minister is the head of government and the cabinet. The President is the head of state, but the office has largely been reduced to a ceremonial role. As Gary Freeman points out, democratic states are more likely to adopt liberal and inclusionary policies towards immigrants. The policy makers in Bangladesh, according to Freeman, are vote maximizers that seek to please organized interest groups that favor immigration, rather than the general public who will be less excited about the prospect of immigrant inclusion.⁷⁶

This can also explain why parties who favor a free and private economy would have a warm stance towards Rohingya: a liberal democracy means a free economy that has business interests that inclusionary immigration policies would be conducive to. Those business interests will prove strong organized groups that can influence policy makers.

⁷⁴ Mylonas, Harris. *Politics of Nation-Building: Making Co-Nationals, Refugees, and Minorities*.

⁷⁵ Barry, Ellen. "Low Turnout in Bangladesh Elections Amid Boycott and Violence." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 5 Jan. 2014

⁷⁶ Freeman, Gary P. "Modes of immigration politics in liberal democratic states." *International migration review*.

Table 1: *Independent Variables and Hypothesized Relationship with Dependent Variable*

Political Ideologies Variables	
Nationalism	Parties that have a nationalistic bent will have a warmer stance on Rohingya migrants.
Democracy	Parties that have a democratic bent will have a warmer stance on Rohingya migrants.
Social Values Variables	
Relationship with Islam	Parties with a warmer relationship with Islam will have a warmer stance on Rohingya migrants.

Table 2: *Independent Variables Values*

Independent variables	Independent variable values
Social Values	Pro-Islam or Secular
Political Ideologies	Nationalistic or Not nationalistic
	Democratic or Not democratic

Table 3: *Parties and Respective Independent Variable Values*

Party	Variable value
Social Policy Variables	
Awami League	Secular
BNP	Pro-Islam
Jamaat-e-Islami	Pro-Islam
Political Ideology Variables	
Awami League	Not nationalistic
	Not democratic
BNP	Nationalistic
	Democratic
Jamaat-e-Islami	Not nationalistic
	Democratic

AWAMI LEAGUE

Awami League Social Values

Because Bangladesh is a majority Muslim state, each major political party in the country is forced to hold a stance on the religion. While Bangladesh was founded as a secular state, both civilian and military, secular and non-secular in their political platforms, governments have moved away from that idea, recognizing Bangladesh as a Muslim-majority state.⁷⁷ For the purposes of this study and because of the reason just mentioned, I will use each party's specific party platform on Islam to operationalize their social values. According to my hypothesis, if the political party in question has a warm relationship with Islam, their attitude towards the Rohingya will be positive, and the opposite will be true if they are more secular. This study will consider a relationship with Islam "warm" if the party recognizes it as the state religion, and "cold" if they do not.

First, I will look at the Awami League's relationship with Islam. According to most scholars and historians, Bangladesh was founded as a secular nation, attempting to distance itself with the more Islamic-oriented Pakistan. As the first governing party in the state's history, the Awami League has always maintained itself as a secular and moderate party compared with the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami, its main competitors. According to the party's constitution, secularism is one of its fundamental principles.⁷⁸ Despite the Awami League's official stance on religion, many of its members and supporters do practice Islam. However, because they do not recognize it as the state religion, those opposed to the Awami League accuse it of being actively

⁷⁷ Griffiths, Martin, and Mubashar Hasan. "Playing with Fire: Islamism and Politics in Bangladesh." *Asian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 23, no. 2, 2015, pp. 226–241.

⁷⁸ "THE CONSTITUTION OF THE BANGLADESH AWAMI LEAGUE." *Wayback Machine*, web.archive.org/web/20090315031859/http://www.albd.org/autoalbd/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=125&Itemid=50.

anti-Islam. While this is not true, the Awami League has taken steps that Bengalis may view as opposed to Islam, such as the ICT set up by the party to prosecute members of Jamaat-e-Islami. Many of the mem convicted were prominent Islamic scholars and leaders, active in the Muslim community in Bangladesh.⁷⁹

Due to the Awami Leagues secular relationship with Islam, they are less interested in helping the Rohingya than the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami, who have an incentive to help the migrants as they share a similar religious identity. The Rohingya are a Muslim minority concentrated in the West of Myanmar, a majority Buddhist country. The largest rationale behind the violence against the Rohingya in the Rakhine state has, therefore, been sectarian. This religiously fueled violence has rallied the Muslim world in support of the Rohingya, including the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami.⁸⁰ The Rohingya have not seen the same support from the Awami League due to the fact they have no sectarian ally in the party. In addition, the Awami League has reason to suppress the migrants in Bangladesh as they pose an electoral threat to the party. The Rohingya are concentrated in areas that are BNP and Jamaat strongholds. With the sectarian support the BNP and Jamaat can provide, the Rohingya see them as their dog in the political fight. As the Awami League tightens their grip on control of the country, it would serve their best interest to strip the Rohingya of any means to support their opposition electorally.⁸²

⁷⁹ "Bangladesh War Crimes Trial: Key Accused." *BBC News*, BBC, 4 Sept. 2016, www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-20970123.

⁸⁰ "Jamaat-e-Islami declares nationwide peaceful demonstration on Wednesday protesting ongoing mass killings against Muslims in Myanmar." *Jamaat-e-Islami.org*. N.p., 21 Nov. 2016. Web.

⁸¹ "Stand by Myanmar Rohingyas, BNP Urges Government." *Bdnews24.com*. N.p., 26 Nov. 2016. Web.

⁸² Schiffer, Sam. "The Political Motives Behind Bangladesh's Abuse of Rohingya Refugees." *Political Violence at a Glance*, 29 June 2017

Awami League Political Ideologies

Finally, I will discuss the Awami League's political ideologies' effect on their policies concerning the Rohingya migrants. According to my hypothesis, the political ideology variable is operationalized as a party's sense of nationalism and whether or not the party has been a defender of democracy in Bangladesh. I have posited that the relationship between the variables mentioned and a party's attitude towards Rohingya migrants will be as follows: if a party is nationalistic, they will have a warmer stance on Rohingya migrants; if a party is a defender of democracy, they will have a warmer stance on Rohingya migrants. I have also included complimentary variables that will help further explain the links between political ideologies and migrant attitude. As a compliment to nationalism, a party's foreign policy has proven to be important to consider when gauging their treatment of the Rohingya migrants. I posit that when a party eschews nationalistic rhetoric and implements policy of that nature, they tend to be more pro-Pakistan as well as opposed to India. Also, as a complimentary variable to a party's democratic bent, I posit that when a party is a proponent of liberal democracy, they will also follow suit in their economic policies, favoring a less regulated market. When a party has a more restrictive view of the democratic process and free elections, they will favor a more regulated, welfare-based economy.

Awami League Nationalism

Due to the fact that Bangladesh was born out of a war of liberation from Pakistan, a current of nationalism has run through the country since its inception in 1971. The Awami League has been no exception to that patriotism. However, since regaining power in 2009, the party has had to counter the nationalism of BNP with its own brand of globalism in an effort to open up Bangladesh to the rest of the world. This is illustrated by Bangladesh's recent outreach

into regional connectivity under the leadership of the Awami League, and, most importantly, its willingness to work with India, one of the world's largest economies. Under the leadership of the Awami League, Bangladesh has maintained its member status in the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), a regional international organization designed to foster technological and economic cooperation among Bay of Bengal states. The Awami League also oversaw the opening of the BIMSTEC Permanent Secretariat in Bangladesh's capital, Dhaka.⁸³ Additionally, the ruling Awami League has been accused of maintaining trade relationships with India that are unfavorable to Bangladesh, an accusation corroborated by the Awami League's overtures since regaining power in 2009.⁸⁴

It is because, in part, of the Awami League's globalist ideologies that they have pursued discriminatory policies against the Rohingya migrants in Bangladesh. The globally-minded politics and regionally deal making of the Awami League has opened the Bangladesh government and their decision making up to the influences of other states, leading to the policies they have implemented against the Rohingya migrants. This is most notable in the party's growing affinity for Prime Minister Modi's India. The burgeoning partnership between Bangladesh and India means an aligning of values and goals. Modi's "Act East" plan that seeks to kindle a relationship with ASEAN nations pulls Bangladesh into the alliance, also. Because Modi has expressed the opinion that Myanmar has the sole responsibility to handle the Rohingya crisis, the Awami League has taken the same position in the form of repatriations and the elimination of pull factors in East Bangladesh. As mentioned earlier, the BIMSTEC regional organization also joins Bangladesh and Myanmar. It would be in the best interest for Bangladesh

⁸³ Chand, Manish. "BIMSTEC: Building Bridges between South Asia & Southeast Asia." *India Writes*, 6 Mar. 2014

⁸⁴ Kumar, Anand. "Domestic Politics of Bangladesh and India–Bangladesh Relations." *Strategic Analysis* 38.5 (2014): 652-667.

to keep itself from chastising Myanmar, also a member state, or caring for their ethnic cleansing refugees. Rather, the Awami League has widely chosen to allow Myanmar to handle it internally and minimize the amount of Rohingya migrants in Bangladesh.

Awami League Foreign Policy

Currently the ruling party in Bangladesh, the Awami League is the prime example of a political party in Bangladesh that has pursued discriminatory policies against the Rohingya migrants. Led by Prime Minister Hasina, I posit that this is due to their values and ideologies as a political party, specifically their foreign policy, social values, and political ideology. First, I will discuss their foreign policy as having a causal relationship with their treatment of Rohingya migrants. Namely, the party's diplomatic ties with India and Pakistan, two states that have a rich and complex history with Bangladesh and serve as some of the largest wedges between the parties I will discuss. I hypothesize that if a party takes a pro-India stance, they will be more likely to pursue discriminatory policies against Rohingya migrants, where the opposite will be true if a party does not take a pro-India stance.

Since Bangladesh's inception after the Liberation War in 1971, the Awami League has always viewed India as a friend. This is due in large part to India's intervention on the side of the Bangladesh independence movement during the war, led by the Awami League. Indian-Awami relations were once again rekindled during the 2014 election in Bangladesh that saw India play a large role in their support for the Awami League. According to Kumar, "There was a widespread perception that India had openly supported the Awami League's continuation in power."⁸⁵ This has involved barring other political parties from participating in elections and creating controversial tribunals to punish those who the Awami League deem committed war

⁸⁵ Ibid.

crimes on the side of Pakistan during the Liberation War, many of whom were leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami.⁸⁶

Much of the mutual goodwill between the Awami League and India can be attributed to their shared history with Pakistan. As the leaders of the independence movement during the Liberation War, the Awami League has historically viewed Pakistan as an adversary. This is further illustrated by the war crimes tribunal created by the Awami League to prosecute individuals seen as supporting Pakistan during the civil war. In 2012, The International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) began convicting those deemed as having committed war crimes during the conflict. Very prominent members of Jamaat-e-Islami and BNP were convicted by the court, including former leaders of Jamaat, Ghulam Azam and Motiur Rahman Nizami. The courts methods, however, have been called deeply flawed and problematic with direct government intervention on the side of the prosecution.⁸⁷ The court also reopened old wounds between the two countries that both sides have worked to close over the decades since the conflict ended.⁸⁸ Those convicted were mostly comprised of opposition party members and Islamic scholars who supported an undivided Pakistan at the time of the Liberation War.

As stated, it is my hypothesis that a party with a pro-India stance will pursue discriminatory policies against Rohingya migrants. This holds true for the Awami League in that their historical friendship with India is directly influencing their harsh attitudes towards the Rohingya coming out of Myanmar. This is illustrated by Indian Prime Minister Modi's "Act East Policy" that has sought to strengthen ties, both economic and militarily with ASEAN

⁸⁶ Ramani, Samuel. "Here's How the Bangladesh Government Is Making Religious Violence More Likely." *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 21 July 2016

⁸⁷ "Bangladesh: Government Backtracks on Rights." *Human Rights Watch*, 17 Apr. 2015, www.hrw.org/news/2013/02/01/bangladesh-government-backtracks-rights.

⁸⁸ Bhaumik, Subir. "War Trials Re-Open Old Wounds in Bangladesh." *US & Canada | Al Jazeera*, Al Jazeera, 5 Feb. 2013

nations, most notably Myanmar.⁸⁹ Because of this policy goal, Prime Minister Modi has been skeptical of the reports accusing Myanmar of sponsoring violence against the Rohingya in the Rakhine State, preferring to allow Myanmar to solve the problem internally. India views the Rohingya crisis as Myanmar's problem, not the surrounding states. Naturally, any political ally of India would adopt a similar stance, in this case, the Awami League in Bangladesh. In an effort to court India and Modi, the Awami League has confronted the Rohingya migrants with discriminatory policies. As the ruling party, there have been repatriations conducted, documented by the United Nations, relocations to uninhabitable regions, criticized by human rights groups, and an unwillingness to recognize the Rohingya as refugees.^{90,91}

My hypothesis also states that a party that does not have a pro-Pakistan stance will pursue discriminatory policies against the Rohingya. This holds true in the case of the Awami League. Illustrated by the problematic war crimes tribunal, the party's warm relationship with India, and the opposite sides the Awami League and Pakistan took during the Liberation War, Bangladesh has exhibited a cold relationship with Pakistan. My hypothesized relationship between the Awami League's view of Pakistan and their attitude toward the Rohingya can be summarized by Harris Mylonas' theory on the link between a host state's foreign policy and a foreign group of people. Mylonas posits that when a host state encounters an enemy-supported group, the ruling political elites will not accommodate this group. This is because the host state may interpret the foreign group as a future fifth column for the adversary state.⁹² This has been seen in Bangladesh where the ruling Awami League has refused to accommodate and assimilate the Rohingya migrants.

⁸⁹ Sajjanhar, Ashok. "2 Years On, Has Modi's 'Act East' Policy Made a Difference for India?" *The Diplomat*.

⁹⁰ *Myanmar: The Politics of Rakhine State*. Rep. no. 261. Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2014. Print.

⁹¹ "Bangladesh: Reject Rohingya Refugee Relocation Plan." *Human Rights Watch*. N.p., 09 Feb. 2017. Web.

⁹² Mylonas, Harris. *Politics of Nation-Building: Making Co-Nationals, Refugees, and Minorities*.

Awami League Democracy

One of the largest criticisms of the Awami League has been their aggressive consolidation of power by highly undemocratic means. In the run-up to the 2014 national elections, the party cracked down on the opposing BNP and placed their leader, Khaleda Zia, under house arrest, all but ensuring the Awami League would run unopposed in the election. One of many bodies and states criticizing the election, the UN's Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called the vote neither peaceful nor inclusive.⁹³ In response to the flawed elections, BNP leader Zia called the Awami League-led government both autocratic and illegal. She also called for the immediate abdication of the leadership by the Awami League.⁹⁴ Freeman's theory can also be used to identify the relationship between the Awami League's strained relationship with democracy and their policy towards the Rohingya migrants.

According to Freeman, parties in liberal, democratic states are vote-maximizers that seek to please organized interest groups that favor immigration, rather than the general public who will be less excited about the prospect of immigrant inclusion.⁹⁵ Illustrated by the election turmoil in 2014, the Awami League is less concerned with maximizing votes than undermining the democratic process to their advantage. When a party removes all opposition, there is less competition for votes, making the need to satisfy any type of base less important. The possible base, in this case, being Rohingya migrants and their supporters.

Awami League Economic Policy

One of the founding principles of the Awami League in Bangladesh was democratic socialism, an economic ideology envisioned by the party, but one that has yet to surface in the

⁹³ Chowdhury, Syed Tashfin. "Violent Bangladesh Poll 'Not Credible'." *Bangladesh | Al Jazeera*, Al Jazeera, 7 Jan. 2014

⁹⁴ "Bangladesh Activists Clash with Police at Polls Protest." *BBC News*, BBC, 29 Dec. 2013

⁹⁵ Ibid.

poverty-stricken country. While the economy has shown steady signs of improving, there have been consistent labor disputes and hostile worker-owner relations in the garment industry that takes the lion's share of the country's economy.⁹⁶ Despite this, the Awami League maintains in its "Vision 2021" political manifesto that by the nation's 50th anniversary, Bangladesh will be a middle-income nation with marked by economic development and initiative, including the alleviation of poverty, the meeting of basic needs, and a robust healthcare, housing, and education sector.⁹⁷

The restrictionist immigration policies directed at the Rohingya by the Awami League can also be linked to their "Vision 2021" political manifesto. In an effort to reach the goals laid out in the plan, a high degree of economic control is required. This runs anathema to the liberal economy envisioned by parties like the BNP. According to Gary Freeman's theory on immigration policy and economics, an increase in immigration is conducive to a classically liberal economy, rather than a welfare state.⁹⁸ Therefore, the social democratic goals enshrined in the party's founding constitution and the necessary reforms needed to reach their 2021 goal, the restriction of Rohingya into Bangladesh is in the Awami League's best interest. In order to alleviate the poverty of the country and bolster the healthcare and education system, the introduction of hundreds of thousands of additional potential citizens cannot be accepted. Too large of a strain will be put on the social institutions the Awami League wishes to implement.

⁹⁶ Ahmad, Ahrar. "Bangladesh in 2012: Economic Growth, Political Under-Development." *Asian Survey*, vol. 53, no. 1, 2013, pp. 73–83.

⁹⁷ Giménez, Lea, et al. "Bangladesh: Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper." *IMF Staff Country Reports*, vol. 13, no. 63, 2013, p. 1.

⁹⁸ Freeman, Gary P. "Modes of immigration politics in liberal democratic states." *International migration review*.

THE BANGLADESH NATIONALIST PARTY

Bangladesh Nationalist Party Social Values

As mentioned, the BNP differentiated itself from the Awami League in Bangladesh's first years by adopting a Muslim-centric stance. They did not see the new country as a secular state to stand apart from Pakistan, but a nation of Muslims that should embrace its common religious identity and reach out to the broader Muslim world. This adoption of Bangladeshi nationalism based on Islam was the motive first used by party founder General Zia-ur-Rahman that laid the foundation for the military leadership of General Hussein Muhammad Ershad during the 1980's.⁹⁹ This Islamic nationalism continues into the current BNP party leadership. Rahman's daughter, Khaleda Zia, the current leader of the BNP, has developed a partnership with Jamaat-e-Islami leaders based on their shared Islamic values. While Jamaat-e-Islami prefers a Bangladesh under fundamental, Islamist Sharia Law, the two parties have united in their opposition to the Awami League.¹⁰⁰

According to my thesis, the warmer a political party is to Islam, the warmer they will act towards to Rohingya migrants. This can be explained, largely, by the work of Jonathan Fox. He posits that the policy making body's religious makeup has a direct relationship with the policies that that body imposes. If the body in question, in this case the BNP, shares the same religion with the group in question, the Rohingya, there will be less discrimination within the policies.¹⁰¹ The Rohingya also serve the BNP electorally. Along with the calls for rights for the migrants, the BNP is a staunch supporter of free elections in Bangladesh. Being vote-maximizers, the

⁹⁹ Griffiths, Martin, and Mubashar Hasan. "Playing with Fire: Islamism and Politics in Bangladesh." *Asian Journal of Political Science*.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Fox, Jonathan. "Religious Causes of Discrimination against Ethno-Religious Minorities." *International Studies Quarterly*

BNP will benefit from the religious ties the party shares with the Rohingya. To understand the support the Rohingya have for the BNP and vice versa, it is important to understand the ethnolinguistic similarities between Bengalis and Rohingya. They are both Indo-Aryan peoples that share language similarities native to South. As a party founded on Bengali self-determination and national pride, it is natural for the BNP and the Rohingya to have an affinity for one another, as they share largely the same ethnicity, language, and religious characteristics. The BNP has proven the above theses in their policies concerning the Rohingya. Sharing an ethnic and Muslim identity, the BNP, in its opposition, has called for the Awami League to end their discrimination against the group and give them the rights that they are entitled to as refugees.

Bangladesh Nationalist Party Political Ideologies

As the final variable I will discuss pertaining to the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, I hypothesize that the BNP's stances on democracy and nationalism, as components of their whole political ideology, will inform their policies concerning the Rohingya. I will also include the complimentary values of foreign policy as a compliment to the party's stance on nationalism, and economic policy as a compliment to the party's stance on the role of liberal democracy.

Bangladesh Nationalist Party Nationalism

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party is inherently a nationalistic party. Before Bangladesh's inception, the BNP's founder was a leader in the Liberation War with Pakistan, even reading the official declaration of independence from Pakistan from a captured radio station in Chittagong.¹⁰² It is this strong sense of nationalism that has informed the party's policies from the beginning. Zia sought to separate itself from the Awami League's pro-India stance, create a

¹⁰² Ibid.

Bangladeshi identity based on Islam, and strengthen the nation economically through self-sufficiency.¹⁰³ These policies are enshrined in a 19-point program that serves as the party's founding manifesto. According to that founding document, "The sovereignty and independence of Bangladesh, golden fruits of the historic liberation struggle, is our sacred trust and inviolable right."¹⁰⁴

That nationalism plays a role in a party's attitude towards Rohingya migrants is also central to my thesis. I posit that the more nationalistically minded a party is, the more likely they will pursue inclusionary policies concerning the migrants. Normally this would not be true as nationalism is a tried and true insulation from migrant acceptance. However, this holds true in the case of the BNP for two reasons. Firstly, the BNP is the largest opposition party to the ruling Awami League that has pursued globalist policies and is seen by many Bangladeshi nationals as having to close of a relationship to India at the expense of Bangladeshi interests. More importantly, the ruling party has pursued exclusionary policies against the Rohingya migrants. To prove their opposition mettle, the BNP has expressed support for the Rohingya migrants. Secondly, the BNP has formed a Bangladeshi nationalism based not on linguistic similarities, but religious and sectarian overlaps, namely Islam. As the Rohingya migrants are a Muslim minority, the BNP is more than willing to incorporate them into the Bangladeshi sphere to strengthen their ranks both electorally and ideologically with the hundreds of thousands that are taking shelter in Bangladesh.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ "19 Points Program." *Bangladesh National Party*, bnpbangladesh.com/backup_30-05-2016/en/index.php/b-n-p/19-points-program.

Bangladesh Nationalist Party Foreign Policy

The main opposition party in Bangladesh, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party has been a strident supporter of the Rohingya. According to my hypothesis, this is due to a combination of two factors: their social values and political ideologies. As I did with the Awami League, I will discuss each area of policy and provide an analysis that explains that policy with their attitude toward the Rohingya migrants. First, I will cover the BNP's foreign policy, specifically their relationship and stance with and towards India and Pakistan, Bangladesh's most formidable diplomatic partners.

As mentioned earlier, political parties in Bangladesh are largely defined by their relationship with India, the superpower in South Asia. As Bangladesh's most nationalistic party, the relationship between the BNP and India is inherently one of tension. The party's animosity towards India goes back to the inception of Bangladesh soon after the Liberation War. Initially, India and Bangladesh enjoyed a period of friendship and mutual respect after the war, united by their mutual animosity towards Pakistan. Tides turned, however, when in 1975, General Zia-ur-Rahman of the newly formed BNP assumed power in Bangladesh. Rahman moved away from the purely linguistic nationalism in the country to one based on Islam, alienating the new country from its Indian allies. India's attempted cultural overtures to Bangladesh in order to resume good relations backfired when the BNP perceived the good intentions as an Indian affront to the new-found Bangladeshi nationalism. Rahman and his BNP viewed India as seeking to dilute the hard-earned Bangladeshi nationalism with their own culture. As with most other South Asian countries, Bangladesh, under the control of the BNP, also became wary of India's growing influence in the region. Being an anti-India party was a quick way to prove the party's

nationalist credentials.¹⁰⁵ That animosity towards India still serves as the party's mission statement today. The BNP, while not in power after boycotting the 2014 elections in Bangladesh, regularly condemns the Awami League for their close ties with Modi's India.¹⁰⁶

In addition to its relationship with India, the policy positions the BNP takes against Pakistan is also vital to understanding the foreign policy of the party. Despite the BNP's reputation as a nationalistic party, it understands the cultural similarities that Bangladesh and Pakistan share, namely Islam as the dominant religion. Attempts were made to reconcile the two nations under the BNP's leadership in the years following the war. With Rahman emphasizing the importance of religion, an effort was made to normalize relations between the former enemies. Ties were also strengthened in order to bolster a mutual stance against India as a growing hegemonic threat in the region. This friendship between the BNP and Pakistan has been maintained today by the BNP's current leader Khaleda Zia. The relationship today, however, has turned more sinister with India accusing the BNP of aiding Pakistani intelligence in their campaign against India.¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, the friendly relationship with Pakistan has been a hallmark policy of the BNP in Bangladeshi politics.

So how have the relationships with India and Pakistan affected the BNP's attitude towards the Rohingya migrants in Bangladesh? Much like the underlying justification of their diplomatic ties with India and Pakistan, it has to do with the party's nationalistic goals. The BNP has carefully cultivated a Bangladeshi nationalism rooted in religious identity, namely Islam. This has pitted the party against India, a largely Hindu nation, and united it with Pakistan,

¹⁰⁵ Pant, Harsh V. "India and Bangladesh: Will the Twain Ever Meet?" *Asian Survey*, vol. 47, no. 2, 2007, pp. 231–249.

¹⁰⁶ Pti. "Many Bangladeshis Anti-India Due to Ties with Ruling Awami League: Oppn Adviser." <https://www.hindustantimes.com/>, 26 Aug. 2016

¹⁰⁷ Pant, Harsh V. "India and Bangladesh: Will the Twain Ever Meet?"

a country that shares a common religious identity. The Rohingya are a Muslim minority escaping ethnic cleansing in their native Myanmar. They have garnered support from most major Muslim states, including, most importantly, Pakistan.¹⁰⁸ Over the years, after the successive Rohingya persecutions in Myanmar, a sizable diaspora of 300,000 of the minority has established itself in Karachi, raising money for the refugees currently fleeing Myanmar.¹⁰⁹ The sectarian Pakistani support is also shared by the BNP, leading to the BNP's support of the Rohingya's plight, also. That the Rohingya support will add to the BNP's power as a political force in Bangladesh and against India also informs the party's attitude toward the migrant group. As mentioned earlier, Prime Minister Modi's "Act East" policy has influenced his stance that the Rohingya crisis is one that needs to be solved internally by Myanmar. In order to counter this, the BNP has made a point to criticize the Awami League for supporting this position.¹¹⁰

Bangladesh Nationalist Party Democracy

First, I will cover the BNP's stance on democracy over their years as a political force in Bangladesh. The Bangladesh Nationalist Party was one of the first proponents and implementers of liberal democracy in Bangladesh. After a series of coups that displaced the Awami League leadership in the early 1970's, after the creation of the independent state, General Zia-ur-Rahman rose to power and created the Bangladesh Nationalist Party. As a key figure in the Liberation War, General Zia was bolstered by his Bangladesh nationalism, his belief that Islam is the religion of Bangladesh, and, most importantly, his dedication to moving Bangladesh in the direction of liberal democracy. Upon becoming President in 1977, he began transitioning

¹⁰⁸ Luck, Taylor. "Why Plight of Rohingya Muslims Has Suddenly Captivated the Arab World." *The Christian Science Monitor*, The Christian Science Monitor, 13 Sept. 2017

¹⁰⁹ Sayeed, Saad. "Rohingya Refugees in Pakistan Fear for Relatives in Myanmar." *Reuters*, Thomson Reuters, 10 Sept. 2017

¹¹⁰ Correspondent bdnews24.com, Senior. "Stand by Myanmar Rohingyas, BNP Urges Government." *bdnews24.Com*, 26 Nov. 2016

leadership positions from the military to civilians, illustrated by his barring of military colleagues from holding cabinet and military positions.¹¹¹ In 1978, Zia announced that there would be elections held to “pave the way for democracy”. In addition, he lifted the previous ban on political parties and intimated his intention to amend the constitution to allow for independent judiciary as well as a "sovereign parliament."¹¹²

Today, under the leadership of Zia’s widow, Begum Khaleda Zia, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party has continued Zia’s vision of democracy in Bangladesh. Throughout the 1980’s, as Bangladesh was controlled by the Ershad military regime, the BNP refused to participate in government as they saw the regime illegitimate.¹¹³ It was Ershad who was behind the assassination of Zia, ending the slow progression towards democracy. Under the current Awami League rule, the BNP finds itself again barred from government by a highly undemocratic party. It is from this position that the BNP has called for the implementation of a caretaker government to oversee free and fair elections.¹¹⁴

According to my hypothesis, the warmer a party is to democracy, the warmer their stance will be on the Rohingya migrants. This is true in the case of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party since the influx of the minority group in the past five years. As proponents of democracy, the BNP supports the assimilation and normalization of the Rohingya minority, as they are a vote-maximizing entity. Going back to the theory of Gary Freeman, the BNP would benefit from the Rohingya electorally if they were able to participate in elections. It is this prospect of votes that will return the party to power that plays a part in driving their policies towards the migrants.

¹¹¹ James Heitzman and Robert Worden, editors. *Bangladesh: A Country Study*. Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1989.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Bangladesh Nationalist Party Economics

Economics also plays a sizable role in the formation of political ideology for the BNP. Part of the 19-point program previously mentioned, economic self-sufficiency is integral to the Bangladeshi people, according to the BNP. As opposed to the Awami League, which sees itself as the center-left party, the BNP is firmly in the center-right with their nationalistic tendencies and their classically economic ideals. From the beginning of the party, an economy based on Bangladeshi nationalism was their goal. With that vision in mind, Zia set out to emphasize a market that as decentralized, free, and focused on agriculture and industry. To that end, the leader traveled the Bangladeshi countryside to encourage rural farmers to produce more foods and grains to meet the demands of the self-sufficiency ideal. While creating multiple programs to bolster rural development, including the Bangladesh Jute and Rice research institutes, he also moved to de-collectivize farms to promote the private sector and increase exports. In his liberalization pursuit, Zia and the BNP were able to reduce quotas and restrictions on agriculture and industrial activities.¹¹⁵

The economics of the BNP plays a large role in their acceptance of migrants, also. The decentralized, private economy that the BNP envisions is conducive to the integrations of the Rohingya in the following way: according to Freeman's theory, the liberal democracy that grants its economy a high degree of liberalism will have business interests that will benefit from the inclusionary immigration policies, as that means more labor at a cheaper cost. This holds especially true in Bangladesh where unskilled labor makes up the lion's share of the labor force in the country.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ James Heitzman and Robert Worden, editors. *Bangladesh: A Country Study*.

¹¹⁶ Kallol, Asif Showkat. "Almost 90% of Bangladesh's Workers Are Unskilled." *Dhaka Tribune*, 24 July 2017

JAMAAT-E-ISLAMI

Jamaat-e-Islami Social Values

Jamaat-e-Islami's social values inform all of their subsequent values and policies. Jamaat was founded as a political movement that seeks to transform society into an Islamic state through modern revolutionary means. This involves a revisionist method that aims to replace the leaders of a current, secular state with those that will work to transform the state into one based on Islamic values and Sharia law. Jamaat works within the contemporary democratic framework of a country to achieve their ultimate goals. Because of these goals, the Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami hold very strong pro-Islamic values.

According to Maidul Islam, the rise of Jamaat-e-Islami in Bangladesh can largely be attributed to the failure of a secular-nationalist state that was created when Bangladesh achieved independence.¹¹⁷ The government following the creation of the state failed to address and eradicate the extreme poverty and man-made famine that afflicted the Bangladeshi people in the early years of the state. Under pressure to solve the nation's problems, the leader at the time, the Awami League's Mujib, resorted to repressive measures that meant the banning of political parties and the concentration of power in the executive branch, rendering Mujib as the absolute ruler of Bangladesh.¹¹⁸ This fermented the Jamaat movement in Bangladesh and, as a result, when the party was reinstated by Zia through the BNP, Jamaat regained power built upon the Muslim identity of Bangladesh revived by the BNP and Zia.

Today, the party again finds itself barred from participating in elections by the ruling Awami League, without a ruler (executed by the Awami League) and partnering with the BNP to

¹¹⁷ Islam, Maidul. *Limits of Islamism: Jamaat-e-Islami in Contemporary India and Bangladesh*. Cambridge University Press, 2015.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

oppose the current leadership in Bangladesh. As an Islamist revisionist party, Jamaat relies upon the polls to regain power and diffuse their idea of an Islamic state. The region in which most of the Rohingya migrants reside has historically been an electoral stronghold by Jamaat.¹¹⁹ The massive influx of Rohingya could mean a huge number of voters for the Jamaat party if they are granted voting rights in Bangladesh. But first, Jamaat must prove to the Rohingya that they support their cause and share the same religious identity. It is the mutual trust based on religion that plays a vital role in Jamaat's vocal support for the Rohingya in both Myanmar, but more importantly, Bangladesh.

Jamaat-e-Islami Political Ideologies

The final variable that I will discuss pertaining to Jamaat-e-Islami is their political ideology in the form of their stance on democracy and nationalism, with the complimentary values of foreign policy (for nationalism) and economic policy (for democracy). As a primarily religious party, the exact policies regarding each arena of domestic politics as a predictor of their attitude toward the Rohingya is a little murky. Their religiosity has a much better direction of causation. Despite this, it is important to understand their worldly ideologies as they contribute to the logistics of Rohingya assistance.

Jamaat-e-Islami Nationalism

As mentioned, I hypothesize that the more nationalistically minded a political party is, the warmer it will be toward Rohingya migrants. The Bangladesh Jamaat party is not nationalistic in the conventional sense of the term. In fact, Maududi was a staunch critic of nationalism as he sought to unite the Muslim world along the lines of Islam, not any nation.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Schiffer, Sam. "The Political Motives Behind Bangladesh's Abuse of Rohingya Refugees."

¹²⁰ Islam, Maidul. *Limits of Islamism: Jamaat-e-Islami in Contemporary India and Bangladesh*.

As a religious-political movement, the party is inherently un-nationalistic in the sense that they see nation-states incompatible with Islam, hence Maududi's indifference, if not opposition, to the creation of Pakistan as a home for Indian Muslims. When it comes to the Bangladesh Jamaat, the party, then the Pakistan Jamaat, was opposed to the creation of the independent state of Bangladesh. Today, the party works within the confines of the Bangladeshi state and recognizes it as such, but still holds a favorable relationship with Pakistan, highlighting the party's lack of Bangladeshi nationalism.

The relationship between Jamaat and the BNP is key to understanding how the party's nationalism, or lack of it, informs their attitude toward Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. While Jamaat expresses a lack of national pride in their politics, their main and crucial political ally, the BNP, does. It is for this reason that we see Jamaat voicing support for the Rohingya migrants. The Rohingya provide a bolster for the BNP's nationalist leanings, helping the party toward their goal of returning to power in Bangladesh. Because the BNP has a chance of returning to the Bangladeshi parliament, their coalition partner, Jamaat, will likely return with them.

Jamaat-e-Islami Foreign Policy

Despite being shut out from Bangladeshi politics for much of the party's existence, Jamaat-e-Islami still serves as a powerful actor in the country's politics. As the most noteworthy and impactful Islamist party in Bangladesh, Jamaat has voiced their support for the Rohingya migrants that are taking shelter in the state. As with the other two parties I have discussed, I will cover Jamaat policies concerning foreign policy, social values, and their political ideologies and how they, in turn, influence their stance on the Rohingya migrants. Maudul Islam's *Limits of Islamism: Jamaat-e-Islami in Contemporary India and Bangladesh* provides perhaps the most comprehensive information on the Jamaat-e-Islami movement as a political force in Bangladesh,

giving an in-depth look at the party as a political entity rather than a radical religious movement, as most other researchers have. In discussing Jamaat, I will use primarily his work as a source for information

According to the founder of the Jamaat-e-Islami movement, Syed Ab'ul Ala Maududi, the party is based in Islamism. Therefore, any sense of nationalism or deep recognition of any state that is not an Islamic state is insidious and inherently un-Islamic.¹²¹ However, as a political movement, the Bangladesh Jamaat is forced to take a side when it comes to foreign policy concerning India and Pakistan. Even Maududi, who opposed the creation of Pakistan, understood the need to play the game of politics to advance his ideals of Islam. Furthermore, because the party experienced the most pivotal moments of its history in each country, Jamaat in Bangladesh, out of political necessity, takes a policy position on India and Pakistan.

While in a coalition government with the BNP during the mid-2000's, Jamaat and the BNP shared a similar stance towards India, one that was cold. According to a Jamaat intellectual, India has always exploited Bangladesh regarding trade and water rights.¹²² Moreover, according to another intellectual, the anti-Indian sentiment, or rather the cold Indian relationship he describes it as, originates from the Indian hostility towards Jamaat, not from Jamaat itself.¹²³ This animosity directed at Jamaat stems from the support the group lent Pakistan during the Liberation War. Therefore, the feelings between Jamaat and India are largely derived from the geo-political history of the Indian subcontinent, not contemporary politics or ideology. However, it can be said that Jamaat, because of its alliance with the BNP,

¹²¹ Mortimer, Edward. *Faith and Power: The Politics of Islam*. Random House, 1982.

¹²² Islam, Maidul. *Limits of Islamism: Jamaat-e-Islami in Contemporary India and Bangladesh*.

¹²³ Ibid.

takes its stance against India purely to oppose the Awami League, which they, along with the BNP accuse of being outwardly pro-Indian.

The Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami has an integral relationship with Pakistan that goes back to the movement's roots. During the Liberation War, Jamaat supported a united Pakistan. Because the main motivation behind the secession from Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh was one of ethno-linguistic nationalism, largely fostered by the Awami League and, initially the BNP, the Jamaat-e-Islami chapter in Pakistan opposed it, rightly claiming the justification was one of secular, not Islamic, nature. This was inherently contradictory to the movement's founding principle of creating a state based wholly on Islam. Additionally, after the war and Bangladesh's independence, Jamaat lived in exile in Pakistan until the ban on the party was lifted by Zia, then leader of Bangladesh through the BNP. Today, Jamaat again finds itself barred from participating in government by the ruling Awami League, using the Jamaat's support of Pakistan as its primary justification of the ban.¹²⁴

Jamaat-e-Islami has been a vocal supporter of the Rohingya in Bangladesh.¹²⁵ While it is easy to chalk this up to pure sectarian commonalities, Jamaat's foreign policy also plays a role in the decision, too. As mentioned before, India has been a staunch advocate for Myanmar after the implementation of Prime Minister Modi's "Act East" policy. In an effort to court Modi, the Awami League has gotten on board with the policy, taking pressure off Myanmar to solve the crisis. Due to the animosity that the Awami League and India has shown Jamaat, it is natural that the party announce a policy that would counter India's and the Awami League's on the Rohingya.

¹²⁴ Kumar, Sanjay. "Is Bangladesh's Ban on Jamaat-e-Islami Democratic?" *The Diplomat*, The Diplomat, 7 Aug. 2013

¹²⁵ "Jamaat-e-Islami declares nationwide peaceful demonstration on Wednesday protesting ongoing mass killings against Muslims in Myanmar." *Jamaat-e-islami.org*.

Jamaat's relationship with Pakistan is vital to understanding their position on the Rohingya migrants. Being a party that has very close ties with the northern neighbor of Bangladesh, Jamaat also represents Pakistan's interests in Bangladesh, which are largely religious. This sectarian bond between the Bangladesh Jamaat and Pakistan is one of the driving forces that is compelling the party to take positive action on behalf of the minority group. Like much of the Muslim world, Pakistan has called for support of the Muslim Rohingya in Myanmar, and for the safety of the migrants in other countries. Pakistan's support can be attributed to the common religion that the country shares with the Bangladesh Rohingya and the large Rohingya refugee population that has established a sizeable diaspora in Pakistan.¹²⁶ These combining factors drive the support of Jamaat in Bangladesh for the Rohingya.

Jamaat-e-Islami Democracy

First, I will cover Jamaat's stance on democracy. As an Islamist party, many believe that the party pursues methods of governing that follow Islamic law: a theocracy that lacks free and fair elections that are hallmarks of liberal democracy. However, once the party succeeds in transforming the state into one that practices Islamic law, the Islamic state would follow the democratic and republican values of the caliphate.¹²⁷ Additionally, the party was specifically designed to work within the conventional democratic state. In the pre-partition years, Jamaat-e-Islami was created as an effort to transform India into a modern Islamic state, not by any violent revolution, but through revisionism. Maududi sought to transform society from the top down: beginning with the leaders who will, in turn, diffuse it down through the rest of the state. Therefore, Jamaat is designed to work within democracy. While they pull no punches criticizing

¹²⁶ Constable, Pamela. "The Horror of the Rohingya Crisis Has Enraged Pakistanis, Sparking Huge Protests." *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 12 Sept. 2017

¹²⁷ Islam, Maidul. *Limits of Islamism: Jamaat-e-Islami in Contemporary India and Bangladesh*.

“Western cultural globalization”, Jamaat in Bangladesh has accepted liberal parliamentary democracy as means to an end. Working within Bangladeshi parliamentary politics allows the party to express itself in periodic elections to elect organizational leadership, debates, discussions, and consultations for policy making.¹²⁸

This utilization of contemporary, secular parliamentary governing in Bangladesh is important when considering Jamaat’s support for the Rohingya. As mentioned before, because of the shared sectarian identities and values in Islam, the Rohingya act as a boon to Jamaat electoral hopes. This relationship would be moot if the Rohingya could not offer a path back to the government for Jamaat. Even the ruling Awami League has voiced their concern about Jamaat exploiting the Rohingya crisis for political gain.¹²⁹ Despite the dubious ethical motives behind Jamaat’s support for the migrants, the fact that the Rohingya may play an important role for the party as a voting base is vital to understanding and predicting their warm reception for the persecuted group.

Jamaat-e-Islami Economics

Finally, the economics of the Bangladesh Jamaat is one that shifts with the political environment. It cannot be confined to such characteristics as liberal, socialist, protectionist, or regulated because, ideally, the society would be based on Islamic law as an “alternative” to both capitalism and socialism.¹³⁰ However, according to Islam (author), Jamaat vacillates between the economic systems of two competing forms of politico-ideological actors in Bangladesh: the old, nationalist-populist regimes and those who propose economic liberalism, the Awami League dominating the former and the BNP the latter.¹³¹ This fits into what I have characterized Jamaat

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Raju, Fazlur Rahman. “Awami League Alert to Jamaat Exploiting Rohingya Crisis.” *Dhaka Tribune*, 24 Sept. 2017

¹³⁰ Islam, Maidul. *Limits of Islamism: Jamaat-e-Islami in Contemporary India and Bangladesh*.

¹³¹ Ibid.

as expressing themselves politically: aligning themselves with the BNP to regain entry into the Bangladeshi political arena. The author goes on to describe Jamaat as a political actor that operates on the margins of the politico-ideological discourse that attacks the power bloc from the outside.¹³² The party keeps alive the sentiments of deprivation, inequality, and discrimination that fuels their battle against the party in power. The Bangladesh Jamaat are currently locked in a battle with the Awami League, siding with the BNP. This causes Jamaat to assume the economic structure that the BNP prefers, which is a liberal economy.

As mentioned earlier, the BNP's economic ideology of a free-market has influenced their stance on the Rohingya in that they prefer an inclusionary policy as the migrants will feed the Bangladeshi economy that is already based on unskilled labor. Because Jamaat-e-Islami is currently on the politico-ideological side of the BNP, they also share this opinion.

¹³² *ibid.*

CONCLUSION

The integration and assimilation of immigrants and refugees and the policies governing them has been researched thoroughly. Security, nationalism, ethnicity all play a role in the policies that are enacted when it comes to migrants residing in the host country. What appears to be less researched is domestic party politics as a determinant to immigration policy, especially in a developing country where party politics amounts to little more than factional fighting for control of a country. This paper highlighted the importance of party politics in determining immigration policy by selecting three parties within Bangladesh and reconciling the ideologies of those parties with the distinct policy they have on Rohingya migrants. The Awami League, Bangladesh Nationalist Party, and Jamaat-e-Islami maintain distinct social and political attitudes that influence their stance on the Rohingya migrants. Studying Bangladesh and its political dynamics provides interesting insight to how a developing country, prone to faction competition, enacts immigration policy.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

While the methodology and findings of this study have utilized the latest information on the crisis of the Rohingya in Bangladesh and Myanmar, this is an ever-developing situation and at the time of publication may fail to include the most recent of developments that could change the findings of the study. I also make some assumptions about the Rohingya voting tendencies. These are based on the theoretical and empirical findings of scholars who have completed literature on immigration policy and party politics, Gary Freeman's work in particular. I rely on his work that links immigration policy to vote-maximizing political parties. I also rely on Jonathan Fox's work that links patterns of systematic discrimination to ethnic makeup, making a connection between discrimination, voting, and immigration policy. Unfortunately, empirical evidence of Rohingya voting tendencies are unavailable as they are a stateless group and have been denied the right to vote in both Myanmar and Bangladesh. For future research, it would be imperative to visit and interview a swath of Rohingya immigrants, both for their accounts of their treatment at the hands of the Bangladeshi government and their attitude towards the political parties that I have discussed in this study. The Rohingya crisis, is one that is quickly becoming dire. It is vital for popular as well as academic attention to remain on the actions of both the Burmese and Bangladeshi governments.

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