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A Sign of the Times: How Ethnonationalist Executives Affect Democracy

An Honors Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Honors in Political Science

By

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Under the Mentorship of Dr. Srobana Bhattacharya

Abstract

In the immediate post-Cold War era, proponents of democracy envisioned a world with few barriers to the spread of democracy and its institutions globally. However, a clear trend has been definitively established in the recent academic discourse pointing to a marked decline in the quality of democracies in several democratizing states. While the root causes for this decline continue to be a contentious subject, much of the existing literature depends on institutional theory to explain the cause of democratic backsliding. Concurrently, we have seen a dramatic stream of news about the state of democracy in two of the world's most significant democracies- the US and India. Given the seeming influence of right-wing leaders in these countries, the question then arises about the effect an ethnonationalist executive would have on a multicultural democracy. With this, I seek to establish first: what constitutes an ethnonationalist executive, secondly: whether or not ethnonationalism as a manifest ideology in these cases lead to democratic decline logically, and thirdly: whether former President Trump and current PM Modi, if determined to be ethnonationalist executives, have instituted policy that clearly stems from normative ethnonationalist arguments, with a demonstrable decline in the appropriate democratic metrics. The goal of this project is meant to better understand the competing ideologies that are of apparent importance to democracy and its maintenance and aims to be of assistance to both policymakers and researchers alike.

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The trauma of the events of Jan. 6 2021 was felt around the world, with several critics of the then-President Trump citing his inflammatory rhetoric and consistent divisive messaging as a primary cause. The events of this day, which took place inside and within the immediate vicinity of the US Capitol, occurred as a reaction to the changing social and demographic facts of the time. In response to a voting process characterized by concerted efforts to expand the vote to historically marginalized and underrepresented communities, including in Georgia, then-President Trump instigated a violent mob to attack the Capitol, personally requesting that his followers come to DC for the express purpose of such. The reality is that this violent outburst was organized and utilized by a chief executive with clear sympathies to communities based on both religion and race- a reaction to the increased representation of the very communities he maligned and smeared. But the reality is that former President Trump cannot logically, alone, explain anything other than this singular manifestation of a much wider trend that has democracy generally under the microscope. This trend is democratic backsliding. According to Freedom House (2020), 2020 was the 15th consecutive year of democratic backsliding, with the US (United States) being only one of an array of offenders. The underlying cause of democratic backsliding is complex. There are a combination of factors including political rhetoric, leadership dynamics, institutional failures and existing levels of populism and nationalist ideologies. The question that we are then left with is how do these far-right political movements globally affect democratization towards a liberal ideal?

Identity politics is a critical factor and several recent events across the world provide relevant cases. Victor Orban in Hungary has heavily used the Christian religion to vilify and isolate immigrant Muslims and members of the LGBTQI+ community in and outside Hungary, being quoted as saying "We shouldn't forget that the people who are coming here grew up in a different religion and represent a completely different culture. Most are not Christian, but Muslim.... That is an important question, because Europe and European culture have Christian roots," (Washington Post 2015). Trump has used similar rhetoric and stringent immigration policies to reinforce the idea of a distinctly Christian, conservative American identity as well, but also to exclude undesirable identities such as, again, those predominantly of Muslim faith. Modi, as well, has led India during a time that has seen prominent national politicians associate themselves heavily with Hinduism, coinciding with an embrace of what has been dubbed neo-Hindutva ideology. The question we are then left with is does an embrace of these identities come at the cost of retaining qualities of a more liberal democracy?

Another dimension to consider within this strain is not just the embrace of religion as a distinguishing factor, but the ethnic argument that is often heavily implied as a result of the religious argument. In fact, the embrace of a particular religious identity may well directly implicate a favored ethnic identity, which then causes us to question whether these political movements are conflating religion and ideology to present an ethnonationalist argument to explain a decline in democratic values within their respective countries. The key, then, is to establish what a country's perceived identity is supposed to be, according to these such movements, and examine them for exclusive factors that contradict the qualities that would augment the democratic quality of a basic,

electoral democracy. Thus the question is: how do ethnonationalist executives affect the level of democracy in multicultural consolidated democracies?

This question is directly linked to the issue of democratic backsliding, but not highlighted much in existing literature. Bauer and Becker (2020), for example, attempt to cite populism as having a direct link to democratic backsliding. However, populism does not appear to be the sole prerogative of political movements coinciding with democratic backsliding. Even in definition, populism is not necessarily in conflict with the promotion of the core dimensions of democracy. In fact, populism, which is the practice of making political appeals directly to the public often as a critique of traditional ruling elites or institutions, may well amount to little more than a tool used by any number of ideologically different political movements to acquire power, gain public support, etc. This objection, in Bauer and Becker's (2020) study, is specifically cited. These answers to the question of the cause of democratic backsliding do not consider what both in theory and in practice consistently leads to democratic backsliding. The question of the role of ethnonationalist executives begs this question as it would appear that arguments made for the creation and maintenance of a culturally/ethnically/religiously-based identity inherently contradict the creation of a free and inclusive democracy. Furthermore, these ethnonationalists have risen in profile alongside and as a part of populism and heightened levels of identity-based politics, which creates a space for democracy to falter. Ethnonationalist executives, in using populism to make an argument for a wider public mandate, threaten democracy by embracing identity politics in an exclusive manner, thereby leading democracies into a state of decline.

In this paper, I examine the ideas of populism, ethnonationalism, democracy, democratic decline, and the role of institutions. I explore these foundational concepts in a way that establishes their theoretical definitions, based on the work of peer-reviewed authorities. Furthermore, these themes of democracy and democratic backsliding; ethnonationalism and populism; and the role of institutions, serve as the basis for both the project and the organization of the literature. Following an introduction into these central ideas, I present the case that an analysis of these ideas leads us to question the influence of ethnonationalist executives on the level of democracy within our multicultural democracies during the period of their administration. Accordingly, I analyze this and test the hypothesis to show how the presence of an ethnonationalist executive has a negative causal effect on the quality of democracy within their respective country. This analysis seeks to identify an ethnonationalist argument for a preferred identity within their society, an implementation of such preferences within official policy or treatment of other communities, and finally whether this has had a demonstrable effect on the selected indicators provided by VDem and Freedom House.

Literature Review

Democracy and Backsliding

The first step to approaching this topic is understanding democracy and its many subtypes. In this, Dahl's *On Democracy*, provides a baseline for what constitutes a democracy, the metrics by which we can measure it, and its many variations (Dahl 2005, p 35-42). Dahl's (2005) work is crucial to understanding the basis of democracy,

primarily through an understanding of the six pillars he lays out- free, fair, and frequent

elections, elected officials, freedom of expression, freedom of association, inclusive

citizenship, and the presence of multiple sources of information (Dahl 2005).

In addition, this provides a good understanding of what democratic backsliding

truly constitutes. Specifically, it is to mean that a given state has declined in the value of

the examined metrics which directly or practically correspond to a foundational,

theoretical basis of democracy. This is relevant as democracy, as a concept, can be

manifested in countless different forms, from simple mob rule to a liberal society with

rights and representation. Even though each of these examples from across the spectrum

of democracy can, in a basic sense, qualify as democracies, the important thing to

consider is that considering democracy as this type of spectrum allows us to see the

distinguishing factors that contribute to a "more" or "less" democratic society. By

characterizing this spectrum of democracy with essential qualifiers like the level of

inclusivity within a society, or the fairness of its elections, or the presence of robust

rights, we can see how the effects of individuals can influence an augmentation, or more

notably a decline in these qualifiers. This is what constitutes democratic backsliding- a

decline in the qualifiers that push a most basic democracy to a more liberalized society.

Since democratic backsliding can be nebulous and sometimes difficult to pin down

conclusively, this broader definition provides the flexibility needed to advance an

analysis of the two consolidated democracies while still accurately reflecting the

recurring ideas present in the existing literature. These, as stated previously include

definitions such as Gandhi's (2016) institutionally-focused definition and Waldner and

Lust's (2018) more practical definition which adds the continuity aspect to the idea of democratic quality decline (Gandhi 2016; Waldner and Lust 2018).

However, there is room for debate on this topic, specifically in terms of how democracy corresponds to the ideas of identity politics. While Huntington (1991: 13) specifically mentions a correlation between Protestant Christianity and democratization. Yet in the US, the modern association of Protestant Christianity and democratic values bears examination.

While an understanding of democratic backsliding is central to the issue at hand, democracies are particularly relevant due to how they, at least in theory, include the citizen in the decision-making process of politics. Thus, to understand democracy generally, it is necessary that a discussion of how democracies impact civilian lives be included in the project. Many of the sources are devoted to this key concept, from Bauer & Becker (2020), to Gandhi (2019) that institutions are the critical foundations of democratic society (Bauer and Becker 2020; Gandhi 2019). Simply put, democracy must be understood through examining the institutions that implement it into the daily lives of the citizens who live within democratic societies. Therefore, through the reading of this article and several others like it over the past several years, public media outlets have effectively demonstrated how the executives of both India and the US have had serious impacts on the daily lives of their citizens, which then is reflected in the form of public approval or disapproval. Reading these sources thus demonstrates that an analysis of democratic decline must include an interpretation of how the actions of the executive affect the lives of the citizenry.

Populism and Ethnonationalism

As previously alluded to, after observing democracy in its implementation in democratizing societies, the next logical step is to further examine the more extraordinary events and actors that appear to have links to democratic backsliding, especially in the liberal democratic sense. This would include concepts such as populism, ethno-nationalism, institutionalism, and authoritarianism. In this effort, Bauer & Becker (2020), as well as Bonikowski (2020) were particularly helpful as their respective analyses of populism, in particular, in both identity and in its implementation. It distinguishes populism from ethno-nationalism, which helps to isolate populism and thus permits attributing characteristics and effects to it, as well as analyzing the effects of populism on one of the key focuses of the study- institutions and how they implement democracy in terms of the common citizen (Bauer and Becker 2020; Bonikowski 2020).

The definition of populism is often nebulous, and is thus, as Mudde and Kaltwasser (2012) suggest, used in such a varying fashion as to make the term flexible enough to accommodate many differing points of view. In essence, one man's populist threat could just as easily be another's democratic redeemer. However, a number of key points have been commonly established in relation to populism. What seems to be common amongst all of these sources and authorities is that populism is, at its core, an appeal to common people within democratic societies as a means for acquiring and maintaining political power. This often comes with some dimension of being in direct contrast with a class of established societal elites. However, areas for discord beyond this seemingly common ground are plenty, with Bauer & Becker (2018) making the case that populism comes in direct conflict with a number of democratic norms as a consistent

character trait. Galston (2018) agrees with this analysis and emphasizes that populists seek to interpret, as an exclusive trait, a popular mandate from elections which may not necessarily provide such. Galston's point highlights that elections are seldom so unanimous as to be able to provide the sort of wide-reaching mandate that populists seek to extrapolate (2018). Therefore, according to Galston (2018) populists naturally conflict with the democratic norms and best practices that sustain and advance democracies towards a more liberal democracy. This is so because these populists decrease the inclusivity of society by projecting what could well be a minority political preference onto the entirety of the political electorate; thereby silencing opposing political preferences in favor of one's preferred set of political preferences (Galston 2018).

However, Bauer and Becker (2018) note themselves that the same definition they use to advocate for their argument which pits populism against a more liberal democracy can very well be used to highlight that populism could be utilized to effect a greater degree of democracy within a number of societies. In reality, the objections raised to Bauer & Becker's (2018) and Galston's (2018) critiques of populism raise salient points. Mudde and Kaltwasser (2012) lead a number of voices in opposition to the idea that populism is, by nature, contrary to the increasing liberalization of democracies. Notably, Mudde & Kaltwasser (2012 p. 6-7) object to one of the most common practices researchers utilize when defining or using populism. They point out that the division of society into distinctive groups (including the public "mob" in contrast to the elites) is neither inherently political nor unique to populism, thus the critique of populism on the grounds that its division of society is both necessarily political and detrimental is problematic (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2012 p. 6-7). Furthermore, they argue, the critique

of populism on the grounds that it does, either necessarily or by habit, unduly extrapolate popular mandates from election results is just as easily a critique of all politicians and political parties (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2012 p. 6-7). Indeed, all politicians seek the popular mandate, including both those who seek to destroy democracy and those who seek to raise democratic values within their societies. Politics are, to a large degree, defined by media spin, interpretation, polling, and numerous other factors that are quite open to interpretation. If we are to condemn populism for attempting to interpret a mandate from election results that do suggest, as an example, at minimum, a plurality of the voting preference, then how are we to not condemn all politicians on the same grounds?

Moreover, Galston's (2018) point that populists listen to one segment of the popular will to the exclusion of others after elections is no fair critique of populism. Democracy is a political system, and politics is the practice of defining who gets what in a world defined by scarcity. As the world is defined by scarcity, not everyone can get what they want, even in terms of political attention to their preferences. Democracy is a system that manages to provide a common means of determining what the public desires most, even if the system itself is structurally designed to provide for some inherent preference or interpretation of popular will. Therefore, as democracy is a political system in a world defined by scarcity, it cannot accommodate all indicated public preferences. Instead, democracy prioritizes what a majority of voters prefer at the time, and such results in that preference's greater representation in government. To critique populism for listening and prioritizing its set of political preferences instead of those it does not campaign for or support is an undue critique to make of populism alone. All political

forces have causes they champion for and have causes they do not support. Either we must expect politics to provide and represent every single preference indicated by our voters, and thus grind our democracies to a halt in our infighting, or we acknowledge that politics, by its nature, is a process of prioritization. Simply put, to critique populism on the grounds that it excludes consideration or support of policies and political views that it does not champion is a critique of politics generally, not populism uniquely.

Furthermore, populism may be more complex than merely serving as solely good or solely detrimental to democracy. Decker (2003) makes this case in his article which analyzes the effects of populism on democracy. Decker (2003) raises the point that populism is, at its base, not inherently conflictual with democracy, mentioning that populism can just as easily *encourage* inclusion of ideas and individual voters (in contrast to Galston 2018) and "refresh" politics from time to time to keep the interests of voters included in the political process. However, populism emerges as more of a tool rather than a positive or negative force on democracy when Decker (2003) examines the negative effects of populism. As a fair critique, Decker mentions that "[populists] could contribute to the hollowing out of the democratic substance of the constitutional state.," which, as, frequently, newcomers to the democratic process, would seem logical that their more direct approach to the electorate would initially conflict with intermediary institutions (Decker 2003: 50). However, just as this may well be accurate, Decker's (2003) critique of populism on the grounds that populism circumvents essential intermediary democratic institutions in the long-run in favor of more direct democracy is in direct contradiction with his earlier ideas. This is true as earlier in his paper, Decker (2003) mentioned that populism is beneficial to democracy as it provides a sort of

refresh in the ongoing political discourse, which keeps democracies in touch with newer political preferences. Furthermore, Decker mentions that populism both "gives a voice to protest" and provides the electorate with the means of political participation, without which their interests may "feed into darker channels of violence and sectarianism," (Decker 2003: 48) Additionally, Decker (2003) characterizes populism by mentioning how populist political parties struggle to self-justify when they do acquire power, as they are defined by their opposition to political elites. Therefore, if each of these is true, then couldn't it just as easily be said that populism *sustains* democratic norms as much as it may well detract from them while in office? For if populism includes members of the electorate in a way that affords them at least a voice for their political priorities, and thus in so doing deters more detrimental means of political expression, is not democracy supported by populism's presence? Again, by detracting from more detrimental means of political expression, does not populism indoctrinate and include members of the electorate into the normal channels of democratic governance, even if populism may detract from and decry some of the norms of these channels and intermediaries? What is then evident is that populism is all of these things, and thus appears both positive and negative given the context. Therefore, if populism is characterized by all of these things, is not populism effectively a neutral tool, equally capable of degrading democracy as it is capable of sustaining it? The conflict on this discussion, with salient points on both sides of the aisle, would seem to confirm that populism is indeed just a tool, and thus cannot be fundamentally opposed to the increasing liberalization of our democracies.

Additional information on this subject, provided by the predictive analysis of Chesterley & Roberti (2019), further motivates me to ask how ethnonationalist leaders

influence democratization. Chesterley & Roberti (2019) found that not only do populist political leaders have a corrosive effect on CDI's, but they are logically incentivized to establish dominant political control over them and to alter the effects they have on the public.

As another authority on the topic, Munoglu (2011) further advances a common definition and characterization of ethnonationalism that plays a central role in this project. Munoglu uses the definition that ethnonationalism consists of ideologies that support the idea, "...that nations are built on primordial ethnic ties including blood, kinship, belief, etc," (Munoglu 2011: 1). This in and of itself is not an issue for this project, however Munoglu continues in his characterization of what ethnonationalism necessarily seeks in politics by underlining the "inward-looking," nature of the ideology, as well as how it seeks the attainment of values policy important to the ethnic group without any concern for the positions of other ethnic groups and how their interests and status may be affected by such (Munoglu 2011: 1). This is not to say that ethnonationalism does not consider the interests or status of other ethnic groups, but that it dismisses them. This is crucial to remember because to argue that ethnonationalism advocates the interests of a single ethnic group *in ignorance* of the place and goals of other ethnic groups is an entirely different matter than that it does so with at least a base awareness of other ethnic and cultural groups. Therefore, since ethnonationalism is so characterized, it is significant to the topic because it implies that ethnonationalist movements in the studied countries advocates for the interest of a particular ethnic and/or cultural group with at least some awareness of the presence of others, and thus seeks still to exclude them from their ultimate desires for democratic society.

In accordance with this definition of ethnonationalism, Menashi (2010) presents a modern conception of the idea of how a perceived national identity inherently conflicts with the principles of liberal, inclusive democracy. In his study, he discusses the modern state of Israel and brings to light the idea that Israel has, in many respects, adopted an official religion as the land of the Jewish people. The importance of this is, as he says, is that Israel represents the compatibility between the principles of ethnonationalist identities and liberal democracy (Menashi 2010). However, Menashi's example of how ethnonationalist identities can function in tandem with liberal democracy only demonstrates how such is inherently flawed. Though Israel may well be the country of the Jewish people, the physical state of Israel is a modern concept that has existed in actuality only since the mid 1940's. What remains an undeniable fact is that Israel was founded in a land that was already occupied by the same ethnic group that remains there today- the Palestinians. If the events of May 2021 have demonstrated anything to even just the casual onlooker, it is that relations between ethnic Jewish people and East Jerusalem & Gaza are poor for a good reason. In fact, the most recent conflict between these two groups serves to underline how ethnonationalist identities naturally disdain difference- how a policy of being the Jewish state cannot treat equally Jewish people and non-Jewish people. The Associated Press Furthers this point by highlighting that longtime resident Palestinian families in East Jerusalem faced eviction from their homes to help preserve the Jewish majority in the region (AP 2021). This practically demonstrates how identity-based preferences inherently conflict with otherness in multicultural states. If a preference is indicated by government policy, then people belonging to such a preference will inevitably be favored in policy over those who fail to

meet this standard. Smooha (1997) supports this by saying that ethnic divisions lead to disagreements and how the dominance of one ethnic group can lead to disparities in the rights offered to all ethnic groups, specifically a disparity between the majority and a minority. The fact that Israel has preferred, in policy, the Jewish identity means that it simply cannot view as an equal one of its citizens of a different faith or identity.

Institutions and Ideologies

The literature suggests strongly that ideologies, populist political actors, institutions, and democratization all play together in ways which are comprehensible and causal. The literature clearly supports the concept that institutions (specifically those which are common across a wide variety of countries) are the working hands of democracy. Democracy, specifically liberal democracy, may well be high-minded in its conception. However, a democracy that cannot deliver on jobs, security, and essential basic public services, for example, cannot be sustained- no matter how great the freedom to choose, act, and live may be. Thus, from this understanding, it is understood that the literature points to, but does not definitively establish, the effect of a democratic regime's meeting of societal demands as a root cause of democratic backsliding. This intersection between governance and everyday need is best explained as a regime's capability for its core democratic institutions to address the issues and needs most central for families and individuals to survive and maintain a certain standard of living. It is clear that the literature, especially as argued at length by Bermeo (2016), indicates that among these core institutions, the executive emerges as a distinguishable and uniquely impactful institution in terms of democratic development (Bermeo 2016). When taken in the context of the ethnonationalist and populist political cultures of India and the US at the

time of writing, it is evident that an executive coming from such movements is, according to the literature, seemingly poised to capture and characterize other institutions with their undemocratic ideologies. These then further manipulate democratic institutions in a manner corrosive to democratization in the long-term, thus leading to accelerated democratic backsliding.

From these sources, consistent arguments emerge. This trend would seem to first establish democracy as having several key bases which can logically be affected by external influences (ex. prosperous/poor economies, foreign influence, faith, etc.). The ability of these influences to degrade the strength and quality of these pillars, when realized, results in a worse-off democracy which would then be in a state of democratic backsliding. Democratic backsliding emerges as a trend directly caused by several likely external influences. While there are plenty of likely candidates for what would cause democratic backsliding, ethnonationalism has emerged as a logical antithesis to democratic pillars such as inclusive citizenship. Theseethnonationalist movements have caught recent global attention by implementing policies in significant, multicultural democracies such as the US and India. This suggests that, not only in terms of garnering media attention, the core institutions of a democracy, such as a chief executive, may also play a noteworthy role in implementing ideologies that may or may not harm the quality of democracy in a given country. Therefore, having seen that ethnonationalism and its manifestations appear logically poised to be identified as cause for democratic backsliding, I explore how ethnonationalist executives affect democratization?

Theory

Ethnonationalism is the advocacy of policies favorable to one particular ethnic or cultural group regardless, or in spite of other dissimilar groups within the same society (Munoglu 2011). It relies on an established ethnic or cultural identity and pushes for such ideological goals as both a political movement and as institutionalized in the form of ethnonationalist laws and policies. The state promotion of one ethnic or cultural identity over another necessarily leads to state-sponsored inequality within multicultural democracies such as the US and India. Thus, if it is true that a society consists of multiple ethnic and cultural identities and the state acts upon preferences towards one of these ethnic and/or cultural identities, then the state has made a normative decision as to what the preferred identity of its citizens should be. This is state-sponsored ethnonationalism. Simply put, the state, which can be viewed in this case as the chief executive, can influence the quality of its democracy by recognizing the significance of ethnic and cultural identities and making policy decisions as to which identities it prefers to admit into their societies, benefit, condemn, and ignore. I argue that ethnonationalist chief executives use the institutions they control to create ethnonationalist policies that directly lead to a decline in values critical to democratic quality in multicultural democracies. I analyze specific policies and rhetoric to show some of the underlying mechanisms through which ethnonationalist executives necessarily lead to democratic backsliding in multicultural democracies.

Within this question lie two variables: the ethnonationalist executive and democratization. Given what has been introduced in the literature, it is clear that the chief

executive has agency to shape and influence their respective country via policies. This extends to democratization. Democratization, as the force acted upon by the decisions and policies of the chief executive's administration, responds to such stimulus through metrics that reflect its theoretical makeup. For the purposes of this study, studies like Freedom House's annual *Freedom in the World* report as well as VDem metrics Elections Free and Fair, Access to State Jobs by Social Groups, and Executive Corruption Index serves to demonstrate that the administrations of former President Trump and current PM Modi have led to numerically-proven declines in democratic metrics. Therefore, with the provision of evidence that demonstrates an implementation of ethnonationalist policies, the numerical decline of these metrics shows that the logical connections between ethnonationalist executives and democratic decline are supported by actual responsive data.

It can be argued that the mere presence of an ethnonationalist executive coinciding with the decline in such values indicative of democratic health does not definitively conclude a causal relationship between the variables of an ethnonationalist executive and democratic backsliding. This would be a correct observation. The point is to then *prove* that an ethnonationalist not only coincides with democratic backsliding, but logically causes it. I argue that the ethnonationalist executive cannot, in the context of a multicultural democracy, lead to anything except democratic decline.

The inherent nature of ethnonationalism as a political force is, as previously explained, exclusionary and preferential. Democratization, by contrast, measures the progression of a country's democratic governance relative to the ideal of a consolidated liberal democracy. Thus, on pure logic alone, the exclusive and preferential nature of

ethnonationalism advocates for policies and norms directly in conflict with the idea of inclusive citizenship. Further, as seen in the study conducted by Chesterley and Roberti (2016), when we see the addition of populism to these ethnonationalist executives, these executives are statistically more likely and more incentivised to retain power despite expressed voter will. This, by itself, advances the point that ethnonationalist executives, and particularly populist ethnonationalist executives like former President Trump and current PM Modi, are unequivocally at odds with democratization in multicultural democracies.

To complement the strength of the logical argument, tangible evidence of these leaders' policies and political speech provides additional support that it is these figures specifically that are using democratic institutions to lead to a decline in democratic quality. Campaign rhetoric, Twitter posts, speeches, and actual policies implemented during their administrations all provide hard evidence that these figures not only affiliated themselves with ethnonationalist movements, but endorsed them through political speech and implemented them in official policy. Thus, when one is logically at odds with democratization from the onset, when one then speaks out consistently and repeatedly in a manner that can only be understood to be contrary to democratization, and when one crystallizes such ethnonationalist ideology into hard policy, one can only be understood to be the direct cause of any measurable and significant democratic backsliding occurring under one's administration.

Fig. 1.1: Theory Model

Model	Possible Independent Variable Values	Corresponding Dependent Variable Values
Ethnonationalist Executive in Multicultural Democracy → Democratic Backsliding	Presence of Ethnonationalist Executive in Multicultural Democracy	Significant Decline in Values: (Democratic Backsliding)
		Freedom in the World, Elections Free and Fair, Access to State Jobs by Social Groups, Executive Corruption Index
	Absence of Ethnonationalist Executive in Multicultural Democracy	No Significant Decline in Values:
		Freedom in the World, Elections Free and Fair, Access to State Jobs by Social Groups, Executive Corruption Index

Research Design:

For this study, I use a comparative case study of India and the United States to show how ethnonationalism corrodes democracy.Within the discussion of democracy, particularly among its advocates, few countries are spoken with such hope and promise as India. In addition to the promise that India brings as a rising democratic power, the US is still viewed as a dependable power capable of projecting democratic interests across the world.These highly diverse democracies should be some of our democratic success

stories, yet both have been deeply characterized by political movements that seem vocally opposed to the presence of foreigners in a number of cases and opposed to minority groups in others. Further, these countries both experienced significant decline over a variety of metrics relevant to democracy in recent years, from a variety of sources. However, this decline causes us to ask why it occurred, and to whom we can point as the cause of such decline. To further push the point, India is no longer regarded as a full-fledged democracy, but rather as an "electoral autocracy" (BBC 2021). In regards to the US, the Jan. 6th Capitol riots of 2021 posed an existential crisis to one of the supposedly more dependably democratic countries, and is largely seen as the natural culmination of the alt-right political movement that has been the bedrock of former President Trump's base for years.

When considering the significance of democratic backsliding to society generally, there emerges cases where the effects of democratic backsliding would be of greater impact. These cases, specifically the US and India, are deeply important to consider given a range of factors. Firstly, these countries are defined by having a significant impact on not just their regional spheres of influence, but a salient impact on world affairs. While there are certainly an array of other candidates displaying democratic backsliding, India and the US display this trait *and* demonstrate a greater consequence in doing so. Thus, what affects the policy and traditions of these countries affects, by extension, the policy of other countries around the globe. This imports a natural distinction that sets these cases apart for study. India, for example, has impacted significantly the affairs of its region. In terms of immigration, India has largely blocked the Rohingya Muslim ethnic group fleeing its repression in Myanmar and has even repatriated these refugees despite the

risks to them in doing so (BBC 2018). This, in turn, has exacerbated not only the condition of the Rohingya refugees, but the entire region's ability to handle the influx of refugees. Thus, in doing so, India elevates what is largely a regional issue to the forefront of immigration and human rights crises internationally just through one element of its national policy.

Compounding their influence on the international stage, both of these countries are characterized by the level of consolidation within their democracies that may not be immediately present in other noteworthy candidates. As Gandhi (2019) states, democracies are measured in their development by the institutions that they possess, which are often crafted by elites. The more developed and stable these institutions are, the more consolidated the society is. This is not measuring the quality of democracy, as a liberal democracy extends far beyond the simple stability of a consolidated democracy. Both India and the US serve as examples of a developed democracy complete with many of the institutions strong enough to support and sustain their level of democracy. While this is not to say that these cases are perfect examples of democracy, basic examination points to these cases as fitting examples of democracies that should be capable of handling a level of duress while maintaining the democratic qualities and traditions. Therefore, as consolidated democracies, changes in their democratic status are naturally of greater consequence. As consolidated democracies, India and the US, in many ways, serve as bastions of democracy- evidence that democracy works in both Global North and Global South societies. Especially as advocates for the spread and further consolidation of increasingly liberal democracy internationally, the health of these two countries in terms of their democracy is vital.

In today's terms, this can be more directly illustrated with reference to the increasing power and influence of China in 2021. China, today, has invested heavily in its international outreach, particularly through its Belt and Road Initiative. The growing influence of Chinese-style, market-based dictatorship, from the point of view of leading Western powers, requires suitable counterbalances. In many ways, India, due to its proximity and military, economic, and political strength, as well as the US, being the reigning global power, fit this need to balance out China. Thus, should these societies experience declines in their democracy, their ideological opposition to growing Chinese influence may subside, which would drastically change the geopolitical calculus in Asia and Oceania. Therefore, India and the US are deeply important to the discussion of current global politics as changes in their democratic status would not only influence the discourse on democracy generally, but would in all likelihood affect the entire balance of global politics. This, in many ways, is a quality unique to the US and India. While Hungary, for example, presents a fascinating case on the direct affiliation of national policy and a selected religious identity, the democratic decline resulting may be limited in consequence to the regional sphere while the US and India would surely affect both the regional sphere and the global sphere.

India and the US serve as models for consolidated democracy, but also differ in many ways. Culturally, religiously, geographically, economically, and developmentally, these countries differ. Thus, in such differing examples, if a trend can be established, such a trend could be more easily extrapolated onto other case studies. Thus, as the US and India serve as models for democracy, they may well facilitate the discussion of democracy by serving as models for declines in their democracy.

Given that these countries are so significant to not just democracy, but global economics, power, and diplomacy, these cases have a natural weight and pertinence that lends to their selection as case studies. Further, both have experienced democratic backsliding during the time frame of 2016-2020, as supported by Freedom House (2020), which is a necessary trait. Freedom House is used as it is a good indicator of whether an argument for democratic decline holds weight in the larger scheme of democratization. Freedom House offers a convenient means of empirically demonstrating that the perceived effects of policy and rhetoric have real, measurable effects in a way that can be demonstrated readily. Thus, if an argument is presented that in all logic should import a significant effect on a democratic society, Freedom House provides a way of seeing if that logic plays out in the broader scheme of an administration.
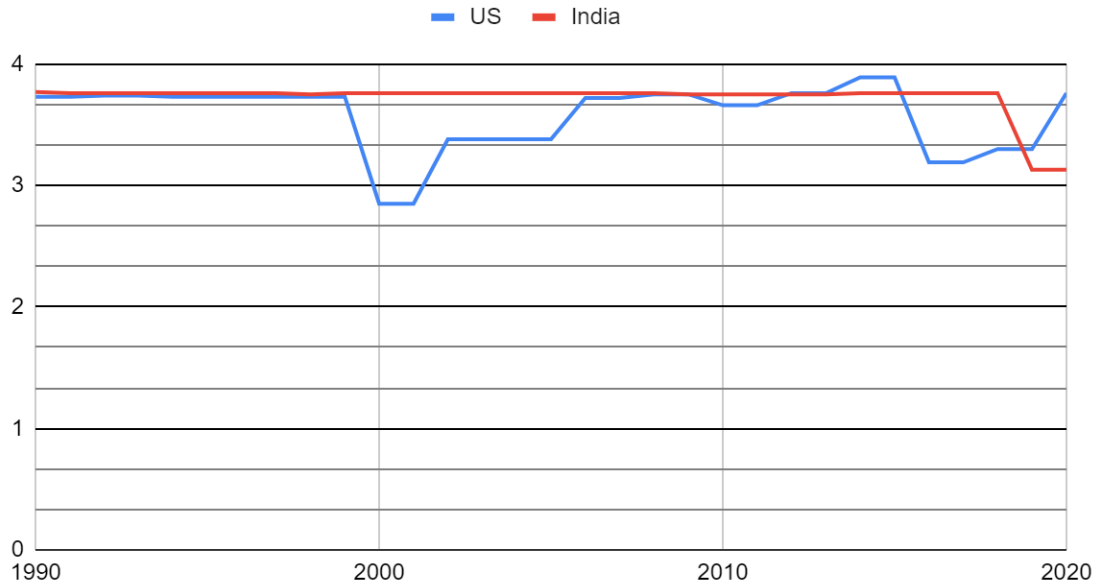
The other core trait needed in a potential case study on this question is the presence of an ethnonationalist executive throughout this period. The key to this is a leader who emerges from a political party or movement that pushes for ethnonationalist goals (with exclusionary principles as a major indicator). This leader will further need to demonstrate that they have not just emerged from this party, but espouse ethnonationalist views themselves. This can include evidence from political speech, tweets, etc. As a final criteria for this type of executive, the executive will need to be shown to have used the powers of their office to implement policies that coincide with the ethnonationalist normative vision they have previously given support to. These policies should be characterized by much of what characterizes ethnonationalism- exclusionary policies based on ethnicity, faith, and culture; denial of inclusion to groups so perceived as other; and/or establishing preferences in regards to these groups as recognized by state policy.

As shown below in Figure 1.1 and as I will later defend, both India and the US meet these criteria. Each of these countries either possess, or have possessed during the period of 2016-2020, an ethnonationalist executive- former President Trump and current PM Modi. Both countries experienced a notable decline across several metrics and studies relevant to democracy, and both are characterized by Freedom House (2020) as having experienced democratic backsliding from 2016-2020. Finally, as mentioned previously, both countries have serious weight in regards to culture, economics, diplomacy, military, and scientific innovation. With these countries possessing all of these characteristics simultaneously and throughout this period of time, these countries become prime candidates for study. It is with this in mind that I use India and the US as my two case studies within this most different analysis.

Figure 1.1: Most Different Case Study

| Outcome:	Case A: The United States	Case B: India	Similarity/ Difference
Democratic Backsliding	Yes	Yes	Similar
Variable:	United States	India	Similarity/ Difference
Type of democratic system	Presidential	Parliamentary	Difference
Number of competitive parties	2-party system	Multiparty	Difference
Size of GDP & economic development	GDP: App. $21.43 trillion (Global North)	GDP: App. $2.7 trillion (Global South)	Difference
Size of power	Global superpower	Regional power	Difference
Presence of ethnonationalist movement	Yes	Yes	Similar
Populist chief executive	Yes	Yes	Similar

Election Free and Fair (VDem 2020)

(0 is least free, 4 is most free)
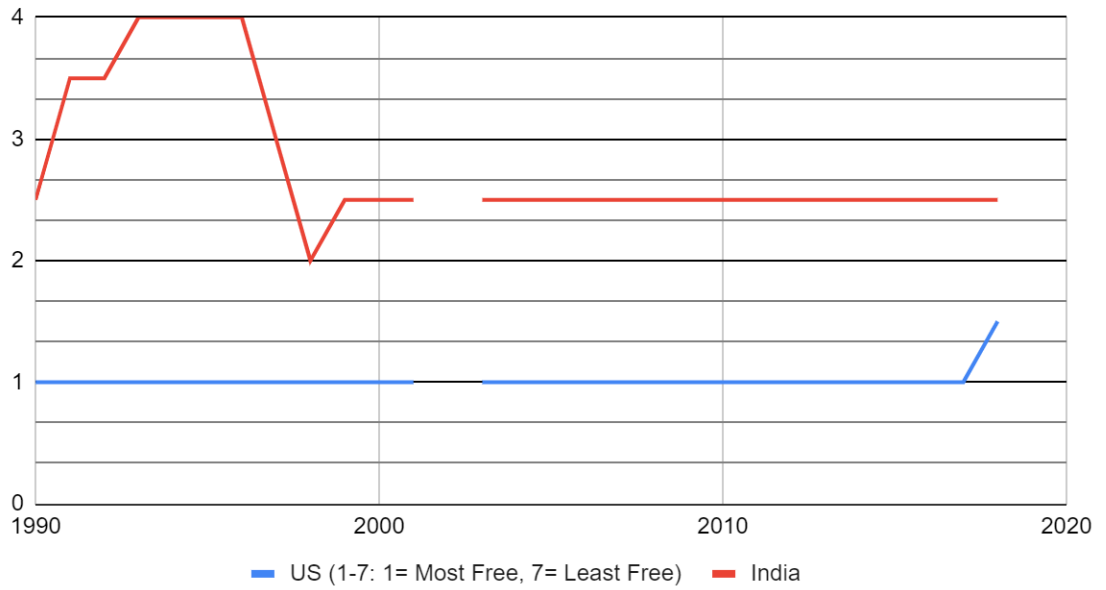
Access to State Jobs by Social Group (VDem 2020)
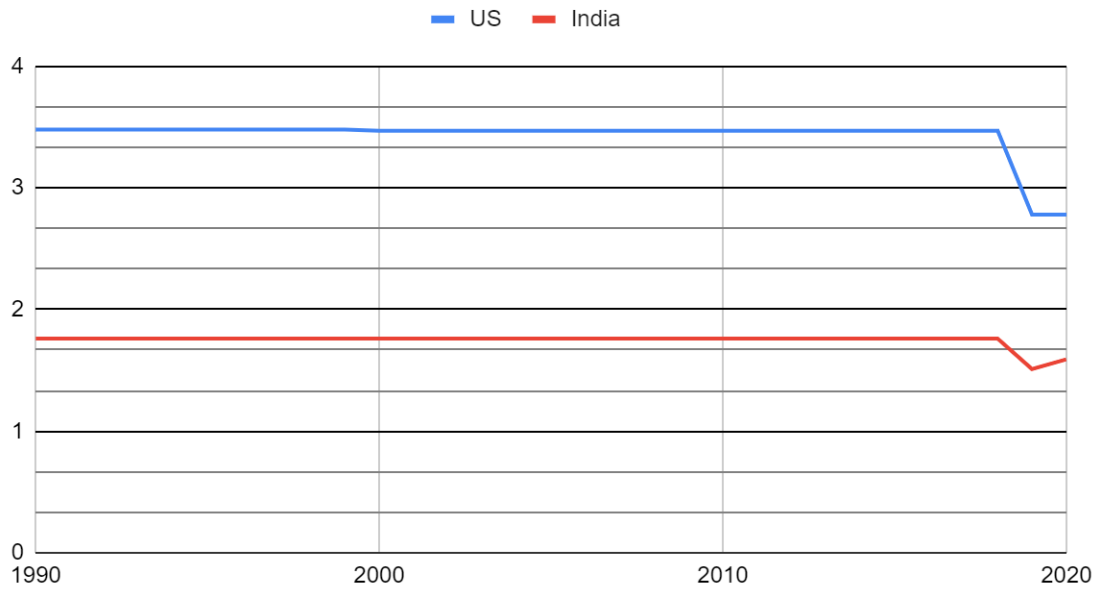
(0 is least access, 4 is most access)

Executive Corruption Index (VDem 2020)
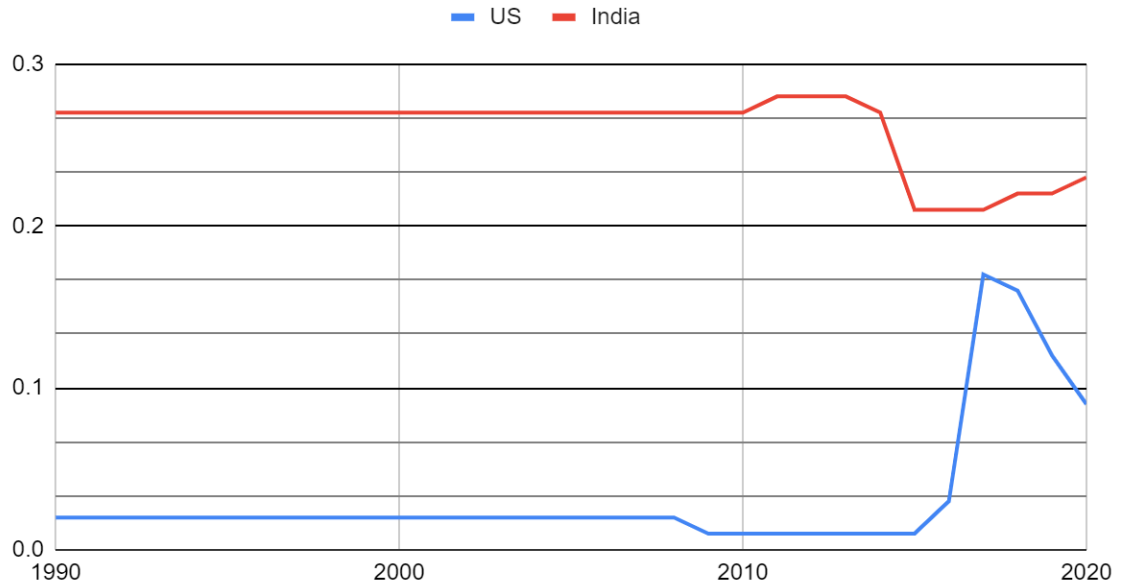
(0 is least corrupt, .3 is more corrupt)

Freedom in the World (Freedom House 2020)

Ethnonationalism has already been presented and explained in a way that demonstrates its significance to the subject, yet democratic backsliding requires its introduction as well. Within this paper, I use terms such as democratic backsliding, democratic decline, loss in the quality of democracy, etc. interchangeably. These phrases all refer to the central outcome that I seek to understand- the state of a country becoming less democratic when viewed from the relative standpoint of a liberal democracy being the end result of democratization. To characterize this, I use Gandhi's (2018) institutional approach that states that democratic backsliding is a result of democratic institutions being either manipulated by elites (such as a chief executive) or crafted specifically by elites to retain their power. Her conclusions support the idea that democratic backsliding is visible through the changes in its institutions and thus where the institutions of a democracy decline significantly, so too can we find democratic backsliding (Gandhi 2018). Using Gandhi's (2018) institutional approach, which focuses on the importance of institutions in their inception and maintenance as significant for democratic development, I add a focus on the rational choice process of executives, specifically those ideologically aligned against key features of democracy.

Therefore, if the focus must rest on the status on democratic institutions, then we must ask which ones are worth considering. VDem (2020) and Freedom House (2020) both not only provide a variety of metrics to choose from, but the data to draw conclusions from such metrics. Keeping Dahl's (2005) six pillars in mind, I chose several that are directly related to the performance of government institutions generally and a pillar of democracy. The first is Freedom House's (2020) annual *Freedom in the World* report that establishes the *annual health of a democracy*, combined with a description as

to the degree of freedom associated with the people living in that country. This ties directly into the question of democratization by offering an overview of a case's situation annually and illustrating such from the relative standpoint of an ideal liberal democracy.

The other metrics I use to measure the health of a case's institutions come from VDem (2020). The first among these is VDem's (2020) *Elections Free and Fair*. Elections are clearly of extensive significance to democracy and an active citizenry, thus if decline is present in this institution, then a democracy has taken a hit in a more critical area. Dahl (2005) specifically cites Free and Fair Elections as one of the pillars of democracy, thus this metric has immediate relevance. The third is *Access to State Jobs by Social Groups*. A democracy has a necessary interest in maintaining a level of equality between its various social groups- an entity entirely separate from one's socioeconomic or political group. Social groups, in this sense, have significant connections to one's cultural and ethnic affiliation, thus the decline in their access to state employment opportunities while others' are maintained produces a state-sponsored inequality. This, it is maintained, could indicate that the state views different social groups and assigns them different levels of preference in terms of including them in the governing component of society. If this value should decline, then this metric, which relates to inclusive citizenship, can demonstrate democratic decline. The last metric used is the *Executive Corruption Index*. This index is meant to examine the executive branch specifically for declines in its overall optimal governance. While this does not necessarily mean a decline in a democratic value according to Dahl's six pillars, if a decline is present, it points to an overall decline in one of the principal components of governance, and thus a decline in a country generally.

Another primary source for testing the hypothesis is immigration data as reflective of operationalized ethnonationalist ideology. Immigration data comes from national immigration databases. These databases are least likely to bias the counting of immigrants of differing categories/nationalities/identities and may lead to new ways to measure the impact of nationally implemented immigration policies. For the US, the Department of Homeland Security will serve as the source for immigration statistics. While much can be inferred or directly learned from individual campaign rhetoric, actual policies embody the thinking of the leaders who craft them. Policies, especially as data-driven as immigration, can be quantified and broken down to draw conclusions on the impact of an administration's immigration policy towards external populations. Therefore, as immigration touches heavily upon the idea of who *should* belong within society, immigration statistics will be used to examine whether an administration has disproportionately favored one identity over another. Therefore, if we see evidence of discrimination implemented through immigration policy, then it can be said that ethnonationalist executives encourage discrimination in immigration as a fact contrary to increasing levels of liberal democracy. This coincides with the hypothesis that the presence of ethnonationalist executives will encourage declines in indicators of democratic health, such as encouraging discriminatory practices against unfair categorizations such as faith identification. Immigration is inextricably linked with our personal beliefs and normative views, as it leads to our development of what types of members our society should consist of. If it can be determined that an executive not only has a preference as to who should be admitted into a multicultural democracy, but that this also 1) comes at the logical <u>and</u> real exclusion of non-preferred identities, 2) comes at

such an expense to these other identities as to be unreasonably disproportionate in comparison to favored identities, and 3) in so doing, comes into conflict with a core dimension of democracy as defined by Dahl (2005), then the hypothesis will be considered supported. For if an identity preference exists, and that preference can be understood to be enshrined in law with an undue degree of discrimination that excludes others on the basis of their disfavored other identity, then how can we argue that our society has since maintained or expanded upon its original level of inclusivity? Immigration and immigration data is relevant to this discussion as immigration offers a specific policy that can be examined and utilized to explain changes in the more observable metrics offered by VDem and Freedom House. Immigration will help pull together and explain why changes occur and will help these metrics better relate to some of Dahl's core dimensions of democracy, such as inclusive citizenry.

The analysis would be incomplete without a proper context. To state a claim that ethnonationalist executives cause democratic backsliding after looking at a time span of just four years is quite ambitious. Thus, to accommodate the potential counterargument, I frame the time period of 2016-2020 within the broader context of administration in these countries from 1990 to 2020. The goal is then that any potential aberration in the values of the metrics observed during 2016-2020 could be more closely related to the timing and administration of the ethnonationalist executives in question. With the broader background to frame the study, trends can be more firmly established and blame for democratic backsliding more easily assigned. This project will observe these two administrations critically through demostrable ways as the means of noting their influence on the status of democracy within their respective societies. This, primarily, is

to include the *rhetoric* of both P.M. Modi and former President Trump, the *policies* they have put in place, and available *data on immigration*. Rhetoric showsnot only how these leaders wish to be seen by their respective electorates, but also how they wish to associate themselves and thus, how they think. This is significant because if a discriminatory policy should be found, for it to be truly reflective of the conscience of the executive overseeing its creation, one must first identify their intent going into policy-creation. Because as recent events have shown within the US, policies can be implemented without a clear *mens rea* to discriminate, per se, yet still discriminate in their function. Thus, to find a policy indicative of ethnonationalist ideology and not just simple discrimination, rhetoric that indicates ethnonationalism as well as how a leader visibly associates themselves will serve as a necessary backdrop that is required to link a potentially-ethnonationalist policy to a bona fide ethnonationalist leader, and by extension, their influence on the level of democracy within the US or India.

Analysis:

As democracy has been better introduced in its theory, the candidacy of significant, consolidated democracies becomes of particular note. In our world, a perfect example of democracy does not yet exist, yet consolidated democracies offer some of the better candidates for study as they have had time to establish themselves and develop past many of the destabilizing factors associated with underdeveloped democracies. Thus, as the literature suggests through the metrics of VDem, the US and India have developed into the case studies for this project. VDem, Curato, and Freedom House have all contributed significantly to this end. VDem and Freedom House, in combination with an

institutional approach to the problem, present a variety of metrics useful to measure gradual institutional decline within specific societies (Freedom House; VDem). However, the institutional approach alone does not adequately pinpoint viable candidates, but the cultural approach does help in this. As the cultural approach states that societies develop in accordance with custom, language, and communal interaction, it would appear relevant that countries with political movements influenced significantly by their individual cultures would be the most interesting. The ongoing media coverage has well demonstrated the influence of the ideas of American Exceptionalism, American religion, and conservative culture on the American far-right, which may best be embodied in the recent rise of the MAGA movement. However, India has a much more established link between culture and politics. The modern interpretation of Hindutva, or "Neo-Hindutva," as Anderson and Longkumer (2018), encapsulates this point rather effectively (Anderson and Longkumer 2018). The idea that India was, and should be a single nation-state founded on the values and beliefs of Hinduism is inherently rooted in culturally normative beliefs and the identification of the self with not only an ethnicity, but an ethno-religious culture (Anderson and Longkumer 2018). This then is linked to Indian policy and governance through the affiliation of the dominant BJP party with this ideology, which then firmly establishes the presence of an ethno-nationalist movement within India. Therefore, empirical metrics have led to the candidates of the US and India, provided by VDem and Freedom House, and help to establish a functioning rationale behind the selection (Freedom House; VDem).

The first task is to identify the logical arguments espoused by the political movements in question- the MAGA movement in the US and the BJP in India. The

MAGA movement is a right-wing, heavily conservative political base that unequivocally supports former Pres. Trump (Kirk 2020). It proclaims itself to be inclusive of all ethnic groups, focusing on "Making America Great Again," and returning to the mythical American identity (Kirk 2020). There are many leaps of logic, boasts, and general problems that Kirk's (2020) book, *The MAGA Doctrine: The Only Ideas That Will Win the Future*, present, but there is one problem in particular that merits exploration. Ethnonationalism argues for an essential, singular national identity in ethnicity, culture, values, faith, etc. Here, we find a strong trace of constructivism. The American identity Kirk (2020) speaks so adoringly and wistfully of truly does not exist. There is no evidence that a singular American identity does now, or has ever existed- nor is there evidence to suggest that at any one time that Americans ever generally arrived at consensus on matters of morality, faith, culture, and the consequence of one's race. Consider our continued conflict over the nature and significance of racial and ethnic association throughout the entirety of the existence of the US, or the abundance of faiths present in the US at most any given time, or our ever-present political divides. The reality is that Americans are different, and have always been different rather than homogenous. The very idea of what makes an American still troubles us as we consider how such a definition has grown and evolved over just the past 150 years, with our modern discussions including dimensions of our involuntary origins and our inherent ancestral ties to the land which now comprise modern America. If we cannot even agree on what we are as a people, then how can we all uniformly agree on a singular vision of what a single, ideal American would look like, much less *should*? Would the slave involuntarily imported from Western Africa agree on the exact same image of the ideal American as

the old-money fraternity pledge at Harvard? Would the indigenous peoples native to America agree on the exact same values, morals, customs, music preferences, tastes, and government as the New York-bound immigrant from Germany? The answer is no. What Kirk (2020) represents, then, is a figurehead for a people and political movement so shocked by the realization that the "American identity" they have always taken for granted is merely a fiction that they attempt to *will* into existence. This is a key component of ethnonationalism- there *must* be some identity that we must collectively strive for.

Next, we must further examine this identity. Kirk (2020) has already established both the identity to be examined and the figure to lead us to the embrace of this identity- Trump. An additional element of ethnonationalism is that the identity in question must be a normative one- one that relies on a consistent set of characteristics that form the cultural and ethnic facets of this identity. While Kirk (2020) initially states that minority groups are welcomed to join the MAGA movement, Kirk (2020) lets slip an interesting phrase. In his Preface, Kirk (2020) states, "Liberty is the shield with which we have protected individuals, families, churches, and communities…" which is interesting because in its strong association of liberty with the "American identity," it also makes several assertions (Kirk 2020: X). Among these assertions is the immediate default of "churches" as both a house of worship and as a core facet of our identity, and more specifically, the defense of the same (Kirk 2020: X). By Kirk's (2020) own words, it would seem that he is directly arguing that Christianity and the defense of Christianity is a component of our identity worthy of direct mention. This coincides neatly with the ongoing affiliation of white evangelicals with the Trump base, as well as Trump's own actions. Among these is

Trump posing with a Bible in front of a Washington D.C. church after having protestors

beaten out of the way to permit the photo op in June of 2020 (NPR 2020). To compound

the emphasis on Christianity as a preferred faith, which is itself heavily associated in

American history with white people, Trump has taken a notably anti-Muslim stance

which has been reflected in several policy decisions. In his own words, Trump has

espoused flagrantly false conspiracy theories about individuals of Islamic faith, such as

his 11/25/15 tweet in his he states, "Credible Source on 9-11 Muslim Celebrations: FBI

https://t.co/UICDNcftJS via @WKRG" (@realdonaldtrump, NILC 2015). On the

campaign trail, Trump actively campaigned for a "Muslim ban" in as many words, and

then unilaterally signed Executive Order 13769, which barred all travel to the US by

residents, refugees, and citizens of seven majority-Muslim countries (ACLUWA 2020;

BBC 2015). Further, he has made repeatedly the implication that Islam and terrorists are

inherently connected throughout his time in office. What we see in these instances is not

one-off, isolated events, but a coherent series of attacks and demonization efforts to paint

a picture of the reprehensible, shifty "other" which is a device frequently used to build

opposition to a real or imagined enemy. Trump's campaign speeches reveal a particular

and unique degree of scrutiny and displeasure towards Muslims, in particular, and

maintain a tone of advocated distrust as well as keeping a consistent pitch to voters to

view Muslims as not inherently American. It is this particular effort that presents the

most trouble democratically since divisive rhetoric, while still just a tool, combined with

a specific target demographic and a healthy dose of demonization can lead to increased

perceptions that these targets are not true, full, deserving members of society, which

certainly crosses the threshold into thoroughly un-democratic territory. We have seen this

happen before not just globally, but in the US towards Americans of Japanese ancestry. The increasing demonization and distrustful rhetoric and imagery leveled at those particular Americans led to some of the most disastrous failures of American morality in our history and categorically shifted a whole demographic of Americans into a lower class of citizenship. Thus, if American democracy was historically severely undermined by hateful, divisive, and xenophobic rhetoric on the basis of ancestry and ethnicity, then why should we question whether such is different on the basis of religion in the case of an executive like Trump who has such an attentive and supportive voter base, which has clearly shown its ability to drastically alter the American political landscape?

From this, one thing emerges consistently- that Christianity, especially conservative Christian norms, are preferred and that Islam is viewed and treated as a hostile other. More importantly, Trump's association of Islam, terrorism, and immigration reveals just how "other" his perception of Islam is, and how the implication is that Islam is an undesirable import from lesser societies abroad. To put it bluntly, USC (2020) gives us the following unprompted quote taken directly from former President Trump's lips: "I think Islam hates us," (USC 2020). Here we see not only the establishment of a preferred national identity, but also the use of executive power to cement this preference. This, as mentioned previously, is state-sponsored inequality operating on principles consistent with an ethnonationalist movement within the same society. Therefore, in addition to how ethnonationalism is logically and naturally opposed to the equality of several identities within the same society, we have actual evidence that demonstrates the ethnonationalism of an executive. In Trump's case in particular, Twitter has been employed as an effective tool to question the place of Muslims in American society generally, as well as directly

within matters relating to immigration, as seen in the table below. Twitter, and its

subsequent far-right social media offshoots, offer an ideal tool by which an executive can

target messaging to a particular audience and remain in constant contact. Drawing upon

the idea of how social media can often result in a type of political rhetoric echo chamber,

Trump has employed this particular platform to enhance his messaging capabilities to a

wider audience of Americans who then take their information directly from both sources

like Trump's Twitter feed as well as other recommended right-wing

information/disinformation outlets.

Trump Tweets
SEE YOU IN COURT, THE SECURITY OF OUR NATION IS AT STAKE! (Sky News 2020)
So interesting to see "Progressive" Democrat Congresswomen, who originally came from countries whose governments are a complete and total catastrophe, the worst, most corrupt and inept anywhere in the world (if they even have a functioning government at all), now loudly...... (Sky News 2020)
On the Muslim issue: It might help @BarackObama if he actually supported Christians religious liberty rights (NILC ND)
Credible Source on 9-11 Muslim Celebrations: FBI https://t.co/UICDNcftJS via @WKRG (NILC ND)
Incompetent Hillary, despite the horrible attack in Brussels today, wants borders to be weak and open-and let the Muslims flow in. No way! (NILC ND)

The rhetoric employed by former President Trump fills the gaps that US

immigration data leads us to. The US has long been a favored destination for those

seeking to emigrate from or flee their home countries, with recent years proving no

exception. Trump's effect on immigration has been codified into official government

policy, as mentioned above, and thus it is logical that the numbers of refugees and asylees from the countries listed on the ban would see a noticeable drop in their admitted applicants. When looking at the information provided by the US Department of Homeland Security, this expectation of decreased accepted applicants is born out. Based on the information available by country, which ranges from 2013-2019, the majority of Muslim-majority countries (with available data) listed on Trump's travel ban experienced drops in accepted applicants for asylum/refugee status (Refugee Arrivals: Fiscal Years 2016 to 2019) (CIA World Factbook). Of these Muslim-majoirty countries with available data who were listed on either Executive Orders 13769 or 13780, 80% experienced an overall drop in accepted applicants and 78% experienced a drop of 60% or higher (Refugee Arrivals: Fiscal Years 2016 to 2019). This means that over two-thirds of Muslim-majoirty countries/countries with significant Muslim populations listed on the travel ban experienced a significant drop in accepted applicants from these countries, with the average percent drop in accepted applicants being 63% (Refugee Arrivals: Fiscal Years 2016 to 2019) (CIA World Factbook).

While accepted immigrants of this category were down generally during the Trump presidency, the significantly lower acceptance rate for Muslim majority/significantly Muslim populations stands in contrast with the average percentage change in accepted asylees from other comparable majority-Christian/significantly Christian countries. The significance of the countries listed on the 2017 travel ban, according to the President's legal representation in *Trump v. Hawaii* (2018) as well as according to remarks made by the President himself, was that the ban was necessary to protect "national security" vis-à-vis a cited terrorist threat related to immigrants from

these listed countries (Montanaro and Totenberg 2018). The President further detailed his argument for the ban on the grounds that the listed countries, while majority/significantly Muslim, commonly lacked the political integrity and institutions to verify the identities and character of immigrants coming from their countries and thus the situation of these countries posed a threat to the national security of the US (*Trump v. Hawaii* 2018). If we are to accept that, despite the evidence to the contrary, the Trump administration truly pursued an immigration policy consistent with the limiting of applicant acceptances for those coming from countries with internal security and stability issues, then surely this too would be born out across the data set? In essence, if the Trump administration truly sought to employ a stricter, yet unbiased immigration policy, then the percentage change of accepted asylees should not vary overly between comparable societies of differing majority/significant faiths.

To this end, six majority-Christian, non-consolidated democracies with weaker institutional integrity were chosen (Ukraine, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Cameroon). Each of these countries had sufficient data present to evaluate, were majority-Christian, were culturally diverse, and had salient issues of national security (ex. Active internal armed conflict, gang-violence, secessionist movements, violence, illegal immigration, etc.) (CIA World Factbook). Thus, each of these countries should have received the same scrutiny in immigration policy as those countries of Muslim-majoirty, if Trump's immigration policy truly was unbiased and across the board. Among these countries, 50% saw net increases in overall accepted asylees/refugees and 50% saw net losses in overall accepted asylees/refugees (Refugee Arrivals: Fiscal Years 2016 to 2019). Of those countries that saw losses, the average

percentage loss was 15.7%. The overall average percentage change among these countries was +250.4%, with Guatemala being an outlier; without Guatemala factored in, the average percentage change was +21.3%. Thus, these representative Christian-majoirty countries saw overall gains of on avg. +21.3% in accepted asylees/refugees while Muslim-majoirty/significant countries saw a drop of 63% on average in their accepted applicants (Refugee Arrivals: Fiscal Years 2016 to 2019).

In brief, there is no serious explanation for why a disparity of 84.3 percentage points should exist between comparable countries of different faiths. While the Supreme Court is bound by an obligation to accept even face-value arguments for national security in the name of the Constitution, statistics and policy fail to support the idea that the Trump travel ban is anything other than the logical conclusion and manifestation of ethnonationalist faith-based discrimination. The absence of logical support for this disparity between Muslim and Christian countries creates a mystery that fails all other reasoning, since the impetus of national security has seemingly forgotten to apply itself to non-Muslim majority countries on the whole, much less to the same degree of rigor. It is only within the context of Trump's aforementioned rhetoric and declared intent can any reason for this particular disparity be found, and that is simply that to the Trump administration, Muslim immigrants are not welcome. This is hardly surprising, since Trump himself, while on the campaign trail, called the travel ban not a national security ban, but a Muslim ban. Thus, as Trump has not only indicated an ideological preference towards Christians, but has favored them in concrete government policy to the exclusion of Muslim immigrants, we must accept that the politician who talks like an ethnonationalist, acts like an ethnonationalist, and governs like an ethnoationalist, is, in

fact, an ethnonationalist. Therefore, as we have seen Trump's ideological

ethnonationalism enshrined in law at the very real expense of minority populations being

able to stay or participate in our democratic society, we must conclude that Trump's

ethnonationalism seriously violates the core principle of inclusive citizenship and thus

comes at the direct expense of democracy within American society.
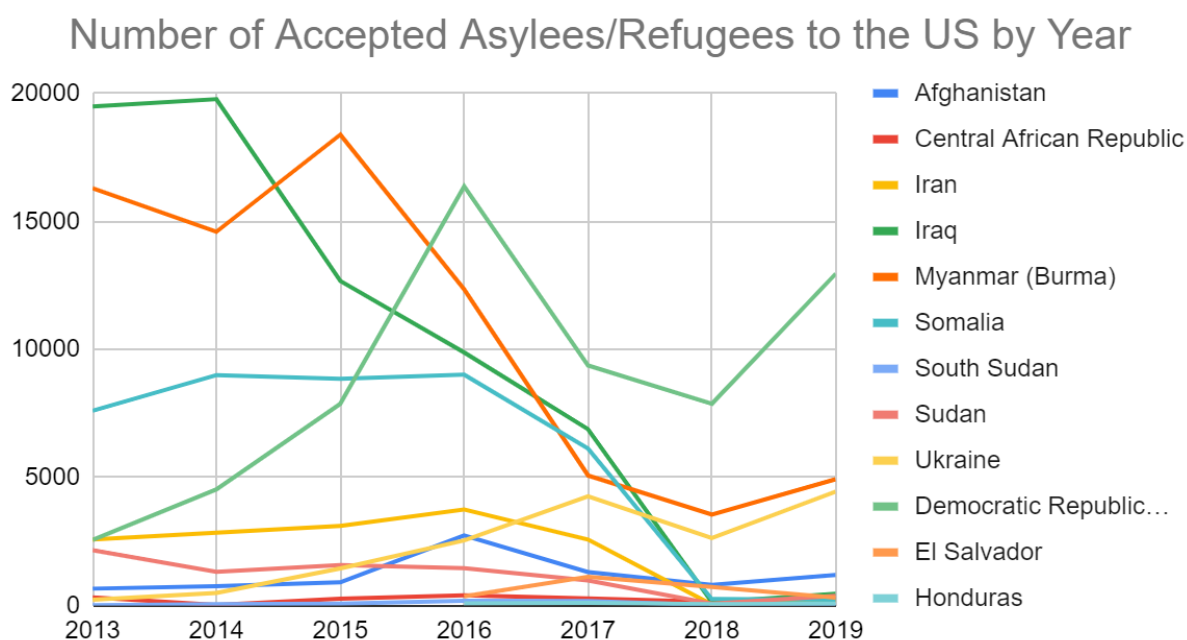
The next step is to go through the same process with Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)

in India. The BJP unequivocally supports PM Modi as the natural leader of its movement,

and Modi often supports his party throughout India's election cycles. The core of the BJP

as a conservative, predominantly Hindu movement is the underlying philosophy of

neo-Hindutva. Longkumer (2018) explains that this neo-Hindutva ideology directly

advocates for an exclusive Indian nation-state founded on the principles of Hinduism,

largely in reaction to Islam in India as a corrupting influence. We have since seen Modi

embrace this ideology and gradually begin pushing out Muslim immigrants, such as with

India's Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA/CAB) that stripped citizenship from millions of predominantly Muslim refugees and residents (BBC 2019). In addition, India has been largely unwelcoming and hostile to the arrival of Rohingya Muslim refugees from neighboring Burma. This demonstrates a level of state-sponsored disdain for a Muslim idenitity in favor of one centered on traditional Hindu values.

Throughout the Modi administration, we have seen a sharp domestic-international divide in both rhetoric and policy. All chief executives must play a role on both the domestic and international stage, however a characterization of such executives can be found in how such executives treat these two stages differently. Indeed, the distinguishing characteristics of the agenda pursued on these two fronts can be telling, and PM Modi's administration has accorded with this principle. While India-Pakistan relations remain acrimonious and conflictual following lows in the 2019 India-Pakistan Jammu and Kashmir Crisis, India's treatment of Muslim-majority countries abroad has contrasted significantly with the Modi administration's treatment of Muslims at home (Global Conflict Tracker: CFR). India's foreign policy towards Muslim-majoirty countries appears appeasing and cooperative, with PM Modi notably speaking alongside Jordan's King Abdullah II at the New Delhi conference on Islamic Heritage on March 1, 2018 (Aljamea-tus-Saifiyah 2018). In the conference, PM Modi used a softer tone towards Islam generally, commenting that "Terrorism has no religion... the fight against terrorism and radicalisation is not against any religion. Our war is against the radical mindset that misguides youth," (Thirumalai 2018). Furthermore, in response to the recent takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban, the Modi administration commented on India's "historical friendship" with the majority-Afghan people, and stated the administration's concern that

the recent Afghan crisis would "have catastrophic consequences for regional stability," (Hindustan Times 2021). In addition to this fact, Modi, as stated by media outlet IndiaToday (2019) took to Twitter to strongly advocate for the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which is explained in full later, but specifically cited a Hindu guru, Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev, in his explanation for the merits of the Act. This specific messaging on the CAA, as well as the symbolic nature of the cited source in this Twitter exchange, indicates a distinct support for Hinduism on a matter directly exclusive against Muslims, particularly in immigration. Therefore, in this, we have seen a similarly disruptive use of messaging, including the use of social media platforms like Twitter, by an executive to promote divisive goals and policies that run contrary to the ideals of liberal democracy.

The overall message that can be understood from India's international outreach towards majority-Mulim countries is that India values stability and cooperation. It makes sense given that India must continually live so close to its archrival, Pakistan, that it would seek to reach out to regional partners like Jordan and Afghanistan. However, it is this that highlights the logical sub-agenda that remains consistent with the Modi administration's foreign policy. By pushing for access for international aid into the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, India can help avoid a disastrous repeat of the influx of Muslim Rohingya refugees as it experienced starting in 2017. For as we experienced in Indeed the key underlying message of Indian foreign policy is cooperation with Muslims in Muslim-majority countries, as long as they remain in their own countries. However, this prime example of the Rohingya refugee crisis is a key factor in our analysis of Indian policy, particularly in how discrimination rises when Muslims cross the threshold of foreign policy to domestic policy.

As previously discussed, Indian foreign policy towards Muslims doesn't run into any major problems in terms of discrimination, as it is generally cooperative and reflects India's regional interests in dealing with enemies like Pakistan. However, this contrasts heavily with India's treatment of the Rohingya refugees which sought asylum in India after experiencing extensive persecution and genocide in Myanmar. These immigrants, which are majority Muslim, are one of the few examples of hard evidence in immigration that we are able to receive from the Indian government, which generally doesn't publish immigration figures, much less detailed ones. This lack of information makes it difficult to conduct a thorough analysis, yet this emptiness amplifies India's treatment of the Rohingya refugees. As Deutsche Welle (DW) reports, India has been largely hostile to the incoming waves of refugees and actively engages in a policy to return them back to Myanmar, where they will almost certainly face extensive persecution (DW n.d.). This brings up the question as to why. As a source in the article states, "There are other refugees in India also, but the government is targeting only Rohingya because of our religion," Sabber Kyaw Min, director of the Rohingya Human Rights Initiative (DW n.d.). It certainly begs the question as to why a more liberal democracy, which is partially characterized by a greater enjoyment of human rights, would single out this group of refugees for extradition to a level of persecution any liberal democracy would, itself, find reprehensible? What we then have before us is a choice between accepting two eventualities: either the Indian government is extraordinarily callous and selective in its application of human rights, or this community represents an antithesis to the identity preferences of the Modi administration due to their Muslim faith and heritage and thus constitute an impermissable threat to the broader Indian Hindu-based identity.

Especially when compared to Bangladesh's treatment of these endangered immigrants, India has no serious excuse as to why a country so supposedly committed to the ideals of equality, secularism, and democracy would abjectly deny and condemn the Rohingya people seeking asylum within India. To put this abject disparity into perspective, Bangladesh, a country with a GDP per capita of just $1,855.74 and an overall GDP of $302.6 billion, currently has and supports a total population of Rohingya refugees numbering 866,457 according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Meanwhile, India, with a GDP per capita of $2,099.50 and an overall GDP of $2.87 trillion, with stronger institutions and a history of taking in refugees from Tibet, Sri Lanka, and others, holds just 40,000 Rohingya refugees. This means that Bangladesh, which lacks many of the institutional and economic strengths of India, accepts and supports over 2,066% more Rohingya immigrants in comparison to India's number of immigrants. Combine this with the fact that India actively seeks deportation of its Rohingya refugees and the difference between these two democratic countries is striking. Here, we see that when Muslims seek entry into India, thereby crossing the line between the international and domestic spheres, Modi's administration loses its cooperative tone and actively seeks to impose hard barriers on even the most helpless of Muslim refugee populations. Again, "national security" conveniently dovetails with instances of ethnonationalist policies put in motion (Jaiswal and Kumar 2021). The immigration factor is a salient one and represents one's accession to the community that they live in- a melding of identities. Deportation that singles out a single group for its religious identity halts this, and fits into the backdrop of Modi's overall domestic policy of catering to Indian Hindus at the expense of Muslims within India.

Another key element of Modi's domestic policies is the federal treatment of Jammu and Kashmir. The discussion of this state is important because an identity is not formed out of immigration alone, but includes how we treat those already within our borders. We have already discussed how PM Modi affiliates directly with the BJP, which itself directly supports Neo-Hindutva ideology as government policy. Of all India's states, Jammu and Kashmir is the only state with a majority-Muslim population (app. 68%). Jammu and Kashmir was the subject of controversy in India and abroad when India's federal government, under PM Modi' leadership, stripped the state of its autonomy and statehood in 2019, leading to confrontations between locals, separatists, and Indian government actors (Pal 2019). While PM Modi's administration cited economic and security concerns, the treatment of the people living in Jammu and Kashmir is truly exceptional. 4,000 people arrested in a single month from the onset of the federal government crackdown, with numerous local politicians and widespread restrictions on movement and freedom of speech (Human Rights Watch 2020; Pal 2019). While the discussion of the crackdown and its implementation is important in and of itself, one central idea comes to the forefront; the status of India's only majority-Muslim state.

A federal government is defined in majority by the power-sharing structure of government: states share power with the federal government which, in turn, reserves a degree of autonomy for the states to act in their own regional interests. While preemption is still a major power of a federal government, states can check the power of the federal government by pursuing their own agendas with their own agencies. Naturally then, the status of the state would have a national impact as the powers of the state limit the influence of the centralized federal government. This check on the power of the federal

government ensures greater division of power, and more importantly, greater representation for more localized populations. Therefore, when a state is stripped of its statehood, that enhanced representation is stripped away also. More localized concerns are silenced in the face of having less representation and a lack of competent authorities capable of negotiating with the federal government. The stripping of Jammu and Kashmir's statehood puts the territory's inhabitants at a disadvantage in the interests-negotiation process in comparison to every other state in India. Thus, while the official reason may be cited as economic and national security interests, in practice, it is wholly discriminatory to the only state in India with a majority-Muslim population. While Hindu Indians now enjoy representation in all levels of Indian government, Muslims, particularly in Jammu and Kashmir find themselves without a comparable ally in government in comparison to all populations in all other states. This reduces Muslim Indian's ability to co-direct the agendas of not only the state governments in India, which can more directly represent and champion local causes, but significantly reduces their ability to influence the federal agenda.

Especially within the context of BJP-supported Hindutva ideology and Hindu-identity preference, the stripping of statehood from Jammu and Kashmir is a direct implementation of representation-denying strategies to disfavored religious identities. Because as power is relative, the diminishment of one religious faction's ability to negotiate local preferences with the federal government necessarily comes at the direct power boost to those of other religious factions. No one religious identity stands to gain more from the dimishment of Muslim representation than do the Hindus of India, which have a significant majority in all other Indian states. Thus, through this analysis, it is clear

that Modi's actions towards Jammu and Kashmir constitute a direct assault on

representation for the disfavored Muslim Indian population motivated by a desire to

enhance Hindu representation. With less representation, Indian Muslims have less ability

to argue for their interests at both the state and federal levels, leading to their

diminishment in the political and practical makeup of India as a whole. In this, we easily

see the stark difference between PM Modi's administration's attitude towards Muslims

internationally and Muslims as a part of India. Where Muslims abroad are supported and

cooperated with, Muslims inside India constitute national security concerns meriting

harsh crackdowns, politically-motivated silencings, thousands of arrests, and violations of

the most basic freedom of government critique. It is clear that such a contrast between

these two policy spheres demonstrates both a general hostility towards Muslim Indians

and a desire to diminish their place in the Indian identity relative to Hindu Indians.

However, Jammu and Kashmir are not the only locales in which government

attitudes toward Muslims are visible. While the stripping of statehood from this territory

has national ramifications, few government policies influence the real makeup and

inclusion of differing citizens in democracy like laws pertaining to citizenship itself.

Citizenship is vital to governance generally, yet in democracies, citizenship means the

difference between being a passive onlooker to one's society and being someone who can

fight for their interests with real impacts. In short, citizenship directly influences who can

and can't vote, and voting is the difference between being acted upon by one's

government versus acting upon the government. Citizenship influences the very ideas and

notions available to our society, and informs our understanding of who belongs. Stripping

citizenship from an individual, for example, is a powerful statement of who doesn't

belong, and this is precisely the statement the Modi administration sought to make when implementing the Citizenship Amendment Act/Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAA). Building upon the exclusionary National Register of Citizens (NRC), which when updated in 2019, left millions of residents, primarily in the State of Assam, in limbo as to their citizenship (Assam NRC 2019). In essence, where millions had formerly been considered citizens, they had been left off the Register, meaning that their citizenship or residency was now in legal jeopardy. The problem with the update to the NRC is that the majority of those jeopardized by the update were Bangladeshi immigrants, many of whom had lived in the state or were descendants of those residents since the time of the post-colonial partition of India (Assam NRC 2019). This means that while the exact concentration of Muslim residents can't be known, we do know that these immigrants came from a majority-Muslim state. Furthermore, the BBC writes that BJP support for the publication of the NRC update was strong until "a lot of Bengali Hindus - a strong voter base for the BJP - were also left out of the list, and would possibly become illegal immigrants" (Citizenship Amendment Bill 2019). It is only upon such a discovery that the BJP "changed tack days before the final list was published, saying it was error-ridden" (Citizenship Amendment Bill 2019).

This is where the CAA comes in. While the update to the NRC objectively jeopardized both Hindu and Muslim alike, the CAA sought to directly enshrine religious discrimination into law. The CAA states directly that religious minorities from neighboring states, upon furnishing proof of their origin, would be protected from deportation as those left off of the NRC would face as illegal residents in India (Citizenship Amendment Bill 2019). The CAA states additionally that these religious

minorities would receive a fast-tracked route to citizenship and legal residency

(Citizenship Amendment Bill 2019). The problem is that this depends upon the religious

minority, with the acceptable religious minorities limited exclusively to Hindus, Sikhs,

Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Christians (Citizenship Amendment Bill 2019). This,

notably, leaves out Muslims. This would, arbitrarily, leave out Rohingya Muslims fleeing

persecution in Myanmar as well as those Muslim immigrants from Bangladesh. Thus we

are pressed to ask why such a seemingly arbitrary distinction and exclusion exists? Why

are these minorities more deserving of asylum than those fleeing genocide and mass

rape? The CAA indeed formed the basis for the Indian government's deportation of

Rohingya refugees back to Myanmar, which now instead of being labeled immigrants or

refugees, are now labeled "infiltrators" to be "identified and expelled from India" by

Indian Home Minister, Amit Shah (Citizenship Amendment Bill 2019). Thus, in this we

see how not only were longstanding Muslim citizens, residents, and refugees were

stripped of their protected status formerly alongside all other religious groups, but how

they were discriminated against with prejudice while other religious groups were

prioritized and protected.

The importance of this cannot be overstated. The Indian Constitution enshrines

secularism into the highest law, recognizing that policy based on exclusionary principles

of religion is inherently discriminatory and unduly limits who can and can't be included

in the secular Indian identity. Now we have laws that deport purely on the basis of

Muslim identity and prioritize those of a number of other religious affiliations. This,

however, is not itself entirely supportive of the Hindu-based identity which Modi values.

Even though Muslims may well be directly discriminated against and excluded from

Indian society and politics, the inclusion of non-Hindu populations runs counter to this

identity preference. This is true unless one considers the likely influx/exclusion disparity.

In Afghanistan, the US Department of State estimates that 99% of the Afghan population

is Muslim of one sect or another. In Pakistan, the US State Department estimates that

over 96% of the population is Muslim, which excludes Ahmadi Muslims which are

themselves excluded from prioritization by the CAA, and 1.6% are Hindu. In

Bangladesh, the US State Department estimates that 89% are Muslim and 10% are

Hindu, with only 1% being of another religious category. Of this already small category,

aspiring immigrants must prove that they were religiously persecuted and must be able to

prove their origin. This means that the number of potential Muslim refugees and

immigrants excluded from prioritization and consideration far exceeds any influx of

non-Hindu immigrants. Further, for these countries, Hindus make up one of, if not the

largest category of the minority religious, meaning that of the small number of

immigrants available for CAA prioritization, a significant number, if not a large majority

will be Hindu. This means that Modi's preferred Hindu identity is actually upheld since

the number of non-Hindu immigrants under the CAA would effectively be

inconsequential, while the number of excluded Muslims would be extraordinary.

In this discussion on Indian domestic policy, we can easily see how such contrasts

with Indian foreign policy. In reality, Indian domestic policy and rhetoric has highlighted

the Modi administration's disfavor of Muslim immigrants and Indian citizens/legal

residents. In the NRC and the CAA, the Modi administration, in conjunction with the BJP

which the Modi administration heavily supports and champions, has enshrined religious

discrimination into law. Further, beyond those seeking to become a part of the

supposedly-secular Indian social, cultural, and political fabric, discrimination has been forced into domestic politics and the very structure of government itself in the treatment of Jammu and Kashmir. While the dearth of public official Indian immigration figures, much less by religion or origin, presents limitations to the examination of Indian policy, the contrast evident between Indian domestic and international policy treatment of Muslims is striking enough and empirically supported enough to conclusively point to institutionalized discrimination against Muslims. This discrimination against Muslims within Indian domestic politics is explained through the backdrop of BJP-advocated policies and their espoused Hindutva ideology, which directly calls for the formal and real establishment of the Indian identity an Hindus, Hindu faith, and Hindu cultures. Given that we have seen this discrimination play out in accordance with the stated ideology and desires of the current Modi administration, we must accept that this institutionalized discrimination is the product of a chief executive who has normative views on the Indian identity incompatible with the inclusive nature of democracy within a multi-cultural setting. Liberal democracy requires the ideal of inclusive, non-discriminatory citizenship, and such discriminatory policies have been implemented under the Modi administration to the express detriment and exclusion of Muslim populations within and entering India. We must further accept that Modi, acting as an ethnonationalist executive, has stepped away from the more liberal, secular India of the past in an embrace of an exclusive identity consistent with an inferior quality of democracy. Thus, we must accept that PM Modi is responsible for intentional democratic backsliding within India.

Conclusion:

For the past several years under the Trump and Modi administrations, identity preferences have been not only espoused through rhetoric and political affiliation, but through policy actions and the way that their administrations have weaponized their liberal democracies against those they deem less-than. Their attitudes towards Muslims, in particular, have shown a consistent trend to excluding them from the social, cultural, and political inclusion from their respective societies. Keeping in mind that India and the US are in all senses multicultural democracies with histories of maintaining such, declines in inclusivity spurred by inflammatory rhetoric and unfair and discriminatory treatment in government policy, specifically immigration, have resulted in these administrations effectively walking away from liberal democracy in favor of exclusive, lesser democracies. Each of these administrations has consciously indicated preferences in identity for their societies. India has pursued a double-standard to discriminate against, silence, and outright deport Muslims in India while systematically favoring and bending over backwards for Hindu Indians and refugee hopefuls. Trump has pursued both a consistent policy of divisive rhetoric demonizing and persecuting Muslim Americans while simultaneously pandering to white, conservative nationalists with his extremist policies and rhetoric. In addition to such, the systematically discriminatory immigration policy Trump has pursued has denied Muslim refugees the same chances for inclusion, safety, and employment in the US in favor of comparable Christian refugees.

In essence, these administrations have overseen a near-reversal of the policies and practices that have historically seen their democracies hailed as imperfect examples of democracy can be. With declines in Freedom House and VDem metrics coinciding with significant arguments from primarily an immigration and rhetoric standpoint, we must acknowledge that these executives are ethnonationalists who sought/are seeking to replace a (imperfectly) just, secular, and egalitarian society with their version of what society should look like as a homogenous, consistent identity rather than societies characterized by aloof indifference to the characteristics that distinguish us. These normative views exceed the normal bounds of mainstream politics and delve whole-heartedly into ethnonationalism, to the exclusion and detriment of entire swathes of society who live, work, and contribute already to our multicultural societies. Therefore, as we have seen ethnonationalism in theory clash with increasing levels of liberal democracy within multicultural democracies and as we have seen ethnonationalism operationalized actually clash with the ideals of liberal democracy, it is apparent that the idea that ethnonationalist executives necessarily lead to democratic backsliding in multicultural democracies is consistent. It is precisely because of this that we must view these ethnonationalists within the context of both their political views and their policy actions. Thus, we must hold them as those responsible for the clear decline in the quality of their democracies. Therefore, based on these two cases, it seems consistent that ethnonationalist executives cause democratic backsliding in multicultural democracies. In the future, this research could greatly benefit from observing how the length of time in office affects the ability of ethnonationalist executives to corrupt institutions and ultimately cause decline in a multicultural democracy.

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