

The struggle for India's Soul

How collective action against the BJP's recently introduced citizenship reforms have put at contention two opposing ideas regarding the country's secular foundations



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Abstract

On 11th December 2019, the Parliament of India signed an act titled the ‘Citizenship Amendment Act 2019’ (CAA), which offered Indian citizenship to persecuted religious minorities from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan, specifically Hindus, Christians, Sikhs, Parsis, Jains, and Buddhists. The law explicitly left out Muslims from being able to attain Indian citizenship under the CAA. In the following days, the introduction of this law caused protests across the country, which saw constituents argue that the CAA, along with the National Register of Citizens (NRC), which is an official record of all legal citizens in India, could render a large number of Indian Muslims stateless. The argument also put forth by anti-CAA protestors is that the incumbent Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi is practicing its Hindu nationalist agenda by framing laws that use religion as a criterion, and disadvantage Indian Muslims.

For this thesis, I will be using the concept of Collective Action Frames, and some of its constituent concepts to illustrate the motivation behind actors protesting against the CAA, and also the attempts made by the Indian government and supporters of the CAA to counter the protestors claims. I will use the data I have collected from archival news videos and articles, in such a way that it becomes evident the protestors are linking the CAA back to the post-independence era in India, where the country was divided on religious lines and an Islamic Pakistan was formed, and since then, there have been calls for making India a ‘Hindu Rashtra’ (Hindu country). The title of this thesis is called “The struggle for India’s Soul” since those protesting against the CAA believe the law is unconstitutional and against the ‘secular fabric’ of India.

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Introduction

Gulshan stands in the midst of thousands of women at Shaheen Bagh, clutching her infant in her arms as she speaks to the camera. “The government has broken our hearts. For so many generations, my family has lived in India, and today they’ve come to ask us to prove our citizenship. All these mothers and sisters present here today will not go back home until the government repeals the CAA and NRC” (NDTV 2019). What Gulshan is referring to is the Citizenship Amendment Act and the National Register of Citizens, laws which were introduced by the incumbent Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) as a method, according to the BJP, to “remove every single infiltrator from the country” (Daniyal 2019).

What the BJP refers to when they speak about removing “infiltrators from the country”, are a set of laws that offer Indian citizenship to Hindus, Christians, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, and Parsis from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, and have faced religious persecution in these countries (Sharma 2019). These laws explicitly leave out Muslims from being able to attain citizenship in India through the CAA, and the common grievance among anti-CAA protestors is that the law, when used in tandem with the NRC, could strip millions of Indian Muslims off statehood (Shankar 2020).

The BJP, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has been in power since 2014, and since their election the discourse regarding Indian Muslims and other religious minorities has deteriorated significantly (Sajjad 2018). The BJP is categorically seen as a ‘Hindu nationalist’ party in India and derives its ideology from the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a right-wing paramilitary volunteer organization, who’s founders viewed Muslims as “outsiders” and recognized Hindus as the only rightful inhabitants of India (Sajjad 2018). Between 2009 to 2018, there have been 254 incidents of hate crimes motivated by religious hatred, 90% of which have occurred since the BJP government took power at the center in 2014 (Mander 2018). The compilation of this data however does not include violence against Muslims seen as a result of the CAA and NRC laws beings introduced in parliament, and the harsh crackdown on those protesting against these laws by the Indian state, as well as the 2020 pogrom in New Delhi which saw the systematic killings of 36 Muslims. The pogrom was seen as a result of an incendiary speech made by a high-ranking BJP official, who in his

attempt to counter the narratives put forth by anti-CAA demonstrators, issued a call for violence against them (The Wire 2020).

This thesis tries to make sense of the collective action seen in the weeks following the CAA and NRC's introduction in parliament, and how frame analysis can be used to understand and link the constituent's grievances with the debate surrounding the BJP's rising intolerance towards religious minorities in India. What is being witnessed in India today can be linked to the post-partition era which saw the creation of an Islamic Pakistan, which has seen Indian Muslims constantly under the shroud of proving their loyalty to India (Reynolds 2020).

Collective action frames are defined by Benford and Snow as “action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of social movement organizations” (Benford and Snow 2000). The protests surrounding CAA and NRC in India took on several framing and counter framing processes. Anti-CAA protestors and their grievances were countered not only by members of the public in favor of the bills, but also by high-ranking members of the BJP, including Prime Minister Modi himself. Therefore, in order to analyze the mass mobilization of constituents seen after these bills were introduced in parliament, I have formulated the following research puzzle: **How can collective action frames elucidate the mobilization of actors in favor of or against the Indian government's decision to introduce the Citizenship Amendment Act and the National Register of Citizens in 2019, perceived as an attempt to disenfranchise the country's Muslim citizens?** I will unpack the research puzzle using the following sub-questions:

- 1) How did anti-CAA protestors utilize injustice frames that emotionally resonated with potential recruits against laws which were seen as discriminatory against Muslims in India?
- 2) Through what ways did the government of India counter the frames of anti-CAA protestors in order to defend the introduction of the Citizenship Amendment Act and National Register of Citizens?

- 3) How can maternal frames be used to explain why the protestors at Shaheen Bagh were not met with violent means of dispersal from the Indian government, and how their ideas and meanings emotionally resonated with prospective constituents?

Relevance

This research is relevant as it applies the concepts of frame analysis to the current conditions in which India, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is becoming more authoritarian, as exemplified by Freedom House's report where it downgraded India to a "partially free democracy" (Repucci and Slipowitz 2021). By becoming more authoritarian, minorities in India are feeling the impacts of a Hindu nationalist government by having civil liberties curbed and by favoring the interests of a majority religious community (i.e., The abrogation of Article 370, and the building of a Ram Temple in Ayodhya¹).

The thesis also has historical significance as anti-CAA protestors argue the laws are against the secular fabric of India, as envisioned by the framers of India's constitution written in the post-independence era. Since partition, Muslims in India have faced xenophobic treatment and societal disadvantages, the reasons for which can be linked to the community's decision to remain in India after the creation of an Islamic Pakistan (Reynolds 2020), and with the CAA being introduced, constituents advocating against the CAA believe the law places the "burden of proof" of citizenship on India's Muslims.

Chapter Outline

In order to answer the research question, the thesis is structured as follows. In Chapter One, I will provide the empirical overview of my research puzzle and discuss the political circumstances in India which make the research puzzle relevant. I will also discuss the literature surrounding the empirical context, and indicate how both academic debates, surrounding the theoretical and empirical contexts of my research puzzle will help provide news insights and add to already existing literature.

¹ See more on this in the empirical section

In Chapter two, I will begin by presenting the theoretical framework my research is guided by and describe the academic debate in which the topic is situated. I will also provide an overview on the sensitizing topics derived from the literature on frame analysis and how they helped me guide my research.

Chapter Three will discuss the methodology adopted to answer the proposed research puzzle. I will provide an overview of the research strategy, how I went about sampling and selecting data, as well as an insight into the research method. The chapter also illustrates the limits of research due to Covid-19.

Chapter Four will answer the first sub-question, where the grievances of anti-CAA demonstrators will be analyzed through the prism of injustice frames. The chapter will also include emotional resonance described as a determinant in bringing about mass mobilization after the frames were initially articulated.

Chapter Five answers the second sub-question, which demonstrates messages and speeches used to counter the claims made by actors in Chapter Four and analyzes how counter claims made by pro-CAA demonstrators and elements within the BJP led to rioting and violence in New Delhi.

Chapter Six deals with the demonstrators at Shaheen Bagh, who comprised mostly of Muslim women and how their collective action can be analyzed by using maternal frames. The chapter also uses emotional resonance in tandem with maternal frames, to demonstrate why the women of Shaheen Bagh successfully carried out one of the largest anti-CAA demonstrations in India and could not be forcefully removed or dispersed by the Indian state.

To conclude, I will summarize my findings, reflect upon the answers to my research questions, and also discuss questions that can be posed by future researchers of this topic.

Chapter 1. Empirical Context

In this section I will discuss the empirical debate within in my research puzzle is situated. Since the Citizenship Amendment Act is perceived by constituents as a law which is anti-Muslim, it is important to discuss the partition of India in 1947 which saw the creation of an Islamic Pakistan. Since partition, there was a growing movement within India which called for recognizing the country as a “homeland for the Hindus”² propagated primarily by Hindu nationalists. The BJP is part of a collection of Hindu nationalist organizations which come under the umbrella term “Sangh Parivaar”³, which translates to “family of the organizations”, and in the post-Independence era, this group of organizations have been involved in several sectarian disputes, most notably the destruction of the Babri mosque in Ayodhya. Today, through the BJP being in power, the Sangh Parivar is able to promote its Hindu nationalism through government policies and legislation, the most apparent example of which can be seen in the introduction of the CAA and NRC laws.

I will then move on to a discussion of what exactly is the Citizenship Amendment Act, and why is it being perceived as a threat to Indian Muslims when implemented in tandem with the National Register of Citizens. Anti-CAA protestors have also argued against the constitutional validity of the CAA which I will also discuss in this section.

Lastly, I will present an overview on the mobilization of actors and against the CAA, which was seen through massive demonstrations, sit-in protests, rallies and illustrate how the BJP responded to these by showing excessive use of force, as well as instances of violence and rioting against anti-CAA demonstrators. The reason why Shaheen Bagh will be discussed separately from other anti-CAA protests is because the movement was unique due to it being comprised predominantly by Muslim women, who broke from gender norms and utilized their positions as mothers and homemakers to stand up to the Indian government.

² <https://www.asianstudies.org/publications/eaarchives/on-the-difference-between-hinduism-and-hindutva/>

³ Jaffrelot C., Therwath I. (2012) *The Global Sangh Parivar: A Study of Contemporary International Hinduism*. In: Green A., Viaene V. (eds) *Religious Internationals in the Modern World*. The Palgrave Macmillan Transnational History Series. Palgrave Macmillan, London.

1.1 Hindu Nationalism and India's Muslims

In her paper on Hindu nationalism and the Muslim minority in India, Nathelene Reynolds quotes an excerpt from Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad's autobiography⁴ regarding the apparent creation of Pakistan and what implications that may have on India's Muslims. "Considering the scheme in all its aspects I have come to the conclusion that it is harmful not only for India as a whole but for Muslims in particular. [...] ... it seems that the scheme of Pakistan is a symbol of defeatism"⁵. Reynolds showcased Maulana Azad's emphasis on how the creation of Pakistan would not allay the fears of Indian Muslims being governed in a Hindu majority state, and the community would constantly be divided between those who would choose the path of Pakistan and those who would remain in India⁶. This according to Reynolds would result in Hindu nationalists constantly questioning the Indian Muslims loyalty to the nation⁷. When speaking of the BJP's ideology and history, arguments can be made that their political ascendance can be credited to 'Hindutva'⁸- an ideology that seeks to establish the hegemony of Hindus and the Hindu way of life⁹. One of the chief ideologues of Hindutva, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, conceptualized through his work that Hindus are the original and rightful inhabitants of India, and Muslims must be viewed as outsiders¹⁰. Sajjad in his paper on illustrating the state of India's Muslims since the BJP was elected in 2014, states that Savarkar is a celebrated figure within the BJP, and his ideas form much of the school of thought by which the party operates today¹¹. Hindutva for the BJP does not only bode well to create a unity among the country's Hindus, but also acts as a political strategy when it faces failures in policy and meeting development goals¹². In his paper Sajjad quotes Gudavarthy and states, "if development does not deliver, then the BJP-RSS jointly pushes for Hindutva politics, mobilizing communal polarization while claiming integration through development."¹³

⁴ Azad, Maulana Abul Kalam. *India Wins Freedom*. Sangam Books, 1988.

⁵ Ibid, 142.

⁶ Ibid, 247.

⁷ Reynolds, Nathelene. *Corridors of Knowledge for Peace and Development*. Report. Edited by Aneel Sarah S., Haroon Uzma T., and Niazi Imrana. Sustainable Development Policy Institute, 2020. 279-303. Accessed August 3, 2021.

⁸ Sajjad, Muhammad Waqas. "Examining the State of Muslim Minority under Modi's BJP since 2014." *Strategic Studies* 38, no. 4 (2018): 19-36. Accessed August 3, 2021. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48544275>

⁹ An ideology seeking to establish the hegemony of Hindus and the Hindu way of life. Oxford English Dictionary. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

¹⁰ Sajjad, Muhammad Waqas. "Examining the State of Muslim Minority under Modi's BJP since 2014." *Strategic Studies* 38, no. 4 (2018): 19-36. Accessed August 3, 2021. p.23

¹¹ Ibid, 23.

¹² Ibid, 24

¹³ Ibid, 24.

In order to analyze the socio-political and economic state of India's Muslims, a seven-person commission was tasked with conducting this analysis by former Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in 2005, the findings of which were titled as the "Sachar Committee Report". In Sajjad's analysis, he concluded that the report found India's Muslim community constrained and lagging behind in terms of economic, educational and societal development due to structural and institutional issues in place which caused obstacles on their path to progress¹⁴. According to the report Indian Muslims fell victim to the liberalization of the Indian economy, losing jobs in traditional sectors such as hand and power looms, automobile manufacturing, garment making etc.¹⁵ This dealt a severe blow to the community's chances for economic development, and thrust a majority of Indian Muslims towards poverty.

Reynolds states that prejudices in India cast blame regarding the high levels of poverty within the Muslim community on the community members themselves, due to their reluctance for attaining an enlightened education.¹⁶ The Sachar report however discovered that the exclusion of Muslim women from full participation in society, could be put down to how young Muslim girls being constrained to a "madrassa"¹⁷ education, which made them ineligible for scholarships as the state did not recognize the madrassa system.¹⁸ The disadvantaged position of Muslim women in India constrained them to roles within gender-based norms, such as homemakers, and it was through this standing that they challenged these gender-norms during the protests at Shaheen Bagh, which will be discussed later in this thesis.

While Narendra Modi was Chief Minister of the Indian state Gujarat in 2013, his administration dismissed the policy recommendations made by the Sachar report to improve the well-being of Muslims in the state. The BJP stated that the report was "unconstitutional" as it was intended to help only the Muslim minority.¹⁹ After becoming being elected to form

¹⁴ Ibid, 22.

¹⁵ Reynolds, Nathelene. *Corridors of Knowledge for Peace and Development*. Report. Edited by Aneel Sarah S., Haroon Uzma T., and Niazi Imrana. Sustainable Development Policy Institute, 2020. 279-303. Accessed August 3, 2021. p.293

¹⁶ Ibid, 293.

¹⁷ A college where Islamic faith is taught. Oxford English Dictionary. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

¹⁸ Reynolds, Nathelene. *Corridors of Knowledge for Peace and Development*. Report. Edited by Aneel Sarah S., Haroon Uzma T., and Niazi Imrana. Sustainable Development Policy Institute, 2020. 279-303. Accessed August 3, 2021. p.292

¹⁹ Reynolds, Nathelene. *Corridors of Knowledge for Peace and Development*. Report. Edited by Aneel Sarah S., Haroon Uzma T., and Niazi Imrana. Sustainable Development Policy Institute, 2020. 279-303. p. 295

the central government in 2014 and seeing Narendra Modi Prime Minister of India, several instances have been reported of sectarian violence targeting Muslims across the country. Sajjad illustrates “cow vigilantism”, a phenomenon where Hindu vigilante groups attack those accused of killing, stealing or selling cows for beef, and mentions that between 2014 and 2017, there were 76 cow-related hate crimes in India, with a majority of those killed or injured being Muslims.²⁰ Apart from this, the BJP has also put forth several components of its Hindu nationalist agenda in the public sphere, and has acted upon them through constitutional amendments and introducing bills in the Indian parliament. One such instance was the revocation of Article 370, which provided autonomy to Jammu and Kashmir, India’s largest Muslim majority state, and annexed the region with the rest of India. This, along with the construction of a Ram Temple in Ayodhya, and the implementation of the Uniform Civil Code across the country, are described as some of the “core issues of the BJP²¹, each of which have direct consequences for India’s Muslim community.

Overall, the academic debate surrounding how Hindu nationalism has consequences on the state and well-being of India’s Muslim minority suggests that since the election of the BJP in 2014, the emphasis of treating Muslims as well as other religious or cast-based minority as “outsiders” or “others” in India has become more prominent in political discourse. Both Reynolds and Sajjad specify the “Ghar-Vapasi” program, which translates to the return of all to the original (Hindu) faith- a rhetoric that Hindu nationalists feel more emboldened towards amplifying since the BJP came to power. The marginalization of India’s non-Hindu communities was exemplified by the Citizenship Amendment Act, and the mobilization of constituents in favor or and against this law showed the polarization of the country under the Modi government. A discussion on what makes up the CAA, its constitutional validity, and the demonstrations following its introduction will be discussed in the next sub-chapter.

1.2 Citizenship Amendment Act

In 2019, the Indian parliament passed in bill in the upper house of parliament titled the “Citizenship Amendment Act (2019)”, a provision which would give Indian citizenship to persecuted religious minorities from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh, who belong to

²⁰ Sajjad, Muhammad Waqas. "Examining the State of Muslim Minority under Modi's BJP since 2014." *Strategic Studies* 38, no. 4 (2018): 19-36. p. 28

²¹ Reynolds, Nathelene. *Corridors of Knowledge for Peace and Development*. Report. Edited by Aneel Sarah S., Haroon Uzma T., and Niazi Imrana. Sustainable Development Policy Institute, 2020. 279-303. p. 287

the Hindu, Sikh, Parsi, Buddhist, Jain, or Christian communities. The bill explicitly leaves out Muslims, which has been perceived as discriminatory, unconstitutional, and an attempt by the current BJP government to propagate its Hindu nationalist agenda in the country. The academic debate surrounding the characteristics of the bill state that this isn't the first time in the country's history that laws concerning citizenship utilize religion as a basis to define who is an Indian citizen, as this was seen previously during the partition of India in 1947.

After the borders separating India and Pakistan were drawn in 1947, the Indian sub-continent saw its largest mass migrations between both countries on account for people who wished to live in an Islamic Pakistan or, what was described at that time, a secular India. According to Sharma, the demand for a Muslim homeland created a perception that Muslims would identify with Pakistan, whereas other communities living in the region such as Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists would identify with India.²² He also mentions that the most ardent of Hindu nationalists at the time would perceive the creation of Pakistan as “the last straw that tore the nation” culminating centuries of Muslim invasions which hurt the Hindu community in India.²³ Therefore, Sharma states that “the logic of Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan determined the nature of exodus of millions of people from both sides of the border.”²⁴

According to Chandrachud, after the first wave of migration following the partition of the Indian sub-continent, there was a second wave of migration which saw Muslims wanting to return to India, which caused troubles for the Indian government.²⁵ The government began to use homes of those Muslims who migrated to Pakistan to shelter Hindu and Sikh refugees, coming into India.²⁶ Due to the resentment caused by returning Muslims among the Hindu diaspora, the government introduced a permit system to deal with movement between both regions, which Sharma describes as “a perfect example of how the law without mentioning religious identity in its letter, was designed to distinguish border crosses on the basis of religion.”²⁷ By explicitly leaving out Muslims in the Citizenship Amendment Act (2019) both

²² Chetna Sharma (2019) Citizenship Amendment Bill 2016: continuities and contestations with special reference to politics in Assam, India, *Asian Ethnicity*, 20:4, 522-540. p. 524

²³ *Ibid*, 524.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 524.

²⁵ Chandrachud, Abhinav. "Secularism and the Citizenship Amendment Act." *Indian Law Review* 4, no. 2 (2020): 138-162. p. 4

²⁶ *Ibid*, p.3.

²⁷ Chetna Sharma (2019) Citizenship Amendment Bill 2016: continuities and contestations with special reference to politics in Assam, India, *Asian Ethnicity*, 20:4, 522-540.

Chandrachud and Sharma argue that the provision harkens back to the partition-era perception that India would remain a country predominantly for the Hindus and Muslims would always find a homeland for themselves in Pakistan. Chandrachud also argues that the CAA can be deemed as unconstitutional, as “partition-era housing shortages and a communal environment charged by millions of refugees, no longer exist in India today.”²⁸

A case study where the enactment of CAA and NRC laws caused political upheaval and discontent among inhabitants was most prominently seen in the Indian state of Assam. Assam is known to have a complex demographic history, due to its sharing of a border with Bangladesh, known in the partition-era as “East Pakistan”. After partition in 1947 several non-Assamese, Hindi or Urdu speaking refugees sought refuge in Assam which upset local councils and ministers raising concerns that the indigenous Assamese population would become overwhelmed by an influx of migrants. The government of India sought to address these concerns by ratifying the “Assam Accords”, a set of rules which stated anyone who arrived in Assam before 1 January 1966 would be declared a resident of Assam with full voting rights, and anyone who arrived after 25 March 1971 (The commencement of the Bangladesh War) would be denied citizenship and instantly deported. With these provisions in place in 1985, when the BJP government decided to implement an NRC list within Assam in 2019, 1,906,657 people were excluded as migrants to be deported. According to Chandrachud, when the CAA was implemented in this context, it would grant citizenship those refugees in Assam who belong to the Hindu, Sikh, Christian, Parsi, Buddhist and Jain religious groups, and would leave out those who are Muslim.²⁹ Therefore, when applying the CAA and NRC laws across India, academic debate suggests the laws can be deemed as unconstitutional and unsecular as they differentiate on the basis of religion. Both Sharma and Chandrachud illustrate that even though the CAA provides citizenship to minorities facing religious persecution in their states, by leaving out Muslims, it turns a blind eye to certain at-risk communities such as the Ahmadiyas in Pakistan or the Rohingyas in Myanmar.

The perception of CAA and NRC laws being unconstitutional and using religion as a basis to determine citizenship has not caused mass mobilization just in Assam, but also across the rest of India. The primary concern of dissidents is that the laws propagate pro-Hindu ideals in

²⁸ Chandrachud, Abhinav. "Secularism and the Citizenship Amendment Act." *Indian Law Review* 4, no. 2 (2020): 138-162. p. 3

²⁹ *Ibid*, 24.

defining who is a citizen of India, and this is seen as an attack on the secular fabric of the country. Rallies against the CAA and NRC laws have taken place across several large cities in the country, and in response, the government of India has used excessive force, arbitrary arrests and detentions, as well as the instigation of communal riots³⁰ in order to counter the protestors. The forthcoming sub-chapter will address the anti-CAA rallies in India, and how ideals such as inclusivity and secularism were used by constituents to put forth their grievances.

1.3 Anti-CAA/NRC Protests

After the Citizenship Amendment Act was passed by the parliament of India on 11 December 2019, protests against the act broke out across various cities in India. In the capital New Delhi, several of the protests were led by student unions and organizations from local universities, and it was in these universities that the government of India confronted protestors with violence and excessive use of force. On the 15 December 2019 anti-CAA protest at Jamia Millia Islamia University, the New Delhi broke into the university campus and assaulted students present in the library, as well as in their dormitories, which resulted in around 200 students being injured.³¹ Similarly, at the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), several masked people broke their way into the university campus, and assaulted students as well as members of faculty.³² The accused are presumed to be members of Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad, a student organization affiliated with the RSS. JNU has been synonymous with student-led activism since its inception, and its criticism of the Modi government and the introduction of the CAA has resulted in the BJP frequently labeling the university as a hotbed of fundamentalism and separatism.³³

But perhaps the worst form of violence seen in retaliation to anti-CAA protests occurred in North East Delhi on 23 February 2020. Local BJP leader Kapil Mishra delivered a speech to his supporters where he made calls for dispersing an anti-CAA sit-in demonstration in the Jafrabad neighborhood of North East Delhi and stated, “we will not listen to the police if the roads are not cleared after three days.”³⁴ This resulted in pro-BJP mobs engaging in the

³⁰ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/26/world/asia/delhi-riots-kapil-mishra.html>

³¹ <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/jamia-library-police-attack-students-recall-6271624/>

³² <https://time.com/5760597/what-happened-during-jnu-attack-india/>

³³ <https://theprint.in/politics/modi-govt-targeting-jnu-because-it-never-produced-right-wing-leaders-says-shiv-sena/324257/>

³⁴ Hindustan Times. <https://youtu.be/c64KynJC1X8>

systematic destruction of property, rioting, and killing of individuals in predominantly Muslim neighborhoods of North East Delhi. The violence lasted six days, and resulted in the deaths of 36 Muslims, 15 Hindus, and over 200 people injured.

If there was one protest which remained immune to the BJP's excessive use of force, it was at Shaheen Bagh, a 24-hour sit-in demonstration that was comprised of mostly Muslim women. They gathered in response to the government's introduction of the CAA and NRC laws by labeling them as unsecular and discriminatory, and also as a result of the violence seen at Jamia Millia Islamia University where protesting students were assaulted by the New Delhi police. Gupta describes the women at Shaheen Bagh as those who "had never before been politically active"³⁵ and "captured the imagination of not only other Indians but also the world."³⁶ Gupta argues that the women of Shaheen Bagh used their standing of homemakers and maternal figures who remained away from politics and posed a "significant challenge to the Hindu majoritarian philosophy of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) and its parent organization, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)."³⁷

Faisal in his paper on the hermeneutics of Muslim identity in India states that even though the country's constitution was built on normative secularism, it still "grants legal privileges to various communities to secure their identity and cultural uniqueness, known as personal laws."³⁸ These personal laws have been viewed by Hindu nationalists as tools which pander to the Islamic community in India and encourage identity politics. One of the most foremost cases pertaining to Islamic personal law in India, specifically Muslim women, is that of the *triple talaq* law, a provision by which a husband would divorce their spouse by uttering the word "*talaq*" thrice, and its abolishment under the BJP government. Faisal states that rather than abolishing the law to promote gender equality, the BJP attempted to eradicate a provision specified under the Muslim Personal Law by using the pretext of "protecting Muslim sisters."³⁹

³⁵ Gupta, Uttaran Das. "Chilli powder and resistance: Mirch Masala, Shaheen Bagh, and the politics of space." *Jindal Global Law Review* (2021): 1-13. p. 1

³⁶ *Ibid*, p.1.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p.1.

³⁸ Faisal, Syed Mohammed. "Shaheen Bagh and the hermeneutics of Muslim identity in South Asia." *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 10, no. 3 (2020): 767-775.

³⁹ *Ibid*, p.770.

Faisal also states that protestors at Shaheen Bagh overcome the problems posed by identity politics and alleged minority appeasement, by viewing the protest as “an exploration into the very question of our relationship to this land as opposed to the one forged by modern bureaucracies.”⁴⁰ He mentions how one of the protestors when interviewed by a journalist, recites the names of seven generations of her family, and challenges Modi to do the same. Gupta writes of how the CAA and NRC laws posed an existential threat to India’s Muslims, and turned anxiety to anger, which resulted in the sit-in protest at Shaheen Bagh.⁴¹ The protestors were made up of women who were engaged in domestic roles and created routines where they would share roles between tending to responsibilities at home and being present at the protest. This according to Gupta saw the women “claiming public spaces as an extension of domestic life”⁴² and demonstrate “lived and practice-based identifications rooted in the experience of blood and soil in contrast to the state-sanctioned classifications based in nationalist frameworks.”⁴³

Overall, the literature surrounding anti-CAA protests identifies challenges by members of the public against ideals of Hindutva, by harkening to the images of secularism, inclusivity, and constitutionalism. At CAA protests sites, dissidents are known to carry images of Gandhi, Ambedkar, Bhagat Singh etc. and read the preamble of the Indian constitution, all in an effort to represent their idea of India, which was idealized post-independence in 1947. The academic debate in which literature on Shaheen Bagh is situated composes of how the Muslim community in India is perceived, and how the women of Shaheen Bagh are challenging those norms by actively engaging in the political sphere.

1.4 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have present the empirical context within which my research puzzle is situated. By giving an overview of the circumstances that led to India’s partition and using that as a starting point from which to illustrate my topic, I have attempted to present the ideological basis discussed in the post-partition era which led to the creation of an Islamic Pakistan and secular India, ideas that are used to articulate arguments for and against the

⁴⁰ Ibid, p.772.

⁴¹ Gupta, Uttaran Das. "Chilli powder and resistance: Mirch Masala, Shaheen Bagh, and the politics of space." *Jindal Global Law Review* (2021): 1-13. p. 10

⁴² Ibid, p.10.

⁴³ Ibid, p. 10.

implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act. After the partition era and creation of Pakistan, the well-being and prosperity of the Muslim community in India is worth analyzing as academic scholars believe the community faces structural and societal impediments, as well as a lack of opportunities due to being discriminated upon. As discussed in the review, the community has constantly been asked to prove its loyalty to India by Hindu nationalists due to the creation of an Islamic Pakistan.

The Citizenship Amendment Act has been described as unconstitutional by legal scholars, and the consensus among those protesting against the law is that it violates the secular foundation of India. By using religion as a basis to define citizenship which primarily excludes Muslims, the BJP is seen in propagating its pro-Hindu agenda through constitutional amendments. The protests against this bill have resulted in the state using excessive force to disperse protestors, and one such instance can be described as a pogrom which saw 6 days of violence and rioting in New Delhi. One such protest which could not be met with violent means of dispersal by the Indian government was that of Shaheen Bagh as it was led primarily by Muslim women, perceived as homemakers and caregivers, who broke away from traditional gender norms in order to challenge the BJP and its pro-Hindu agenda. The empirical overview of my research puzzle has one unifying theme, which is secularism- a topic debated during the partition of India where the founding fathers of the country attempted to separate religion from the constitution, and today a similar debate ensues surrounding the CAA, since the law utilizes religion to define Indian citizenship.

Chapter 2. Collective Action Frames

In this chapter I will provide an overview on collective action frames, and how various components of framing processes can be applied to the context surrounding the CAA/ NRC protests in India. By using Benford and Snow's paper on framing process and social movements, I was able to identify the characteristic and variable features of collective action frames that were used as sensitizing concepts used to unpack my research puzzle.

In India, after the introduction of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), antagonists mobilized behind narratives of how the law is against the secular fabric of India and blamed the BJP for actively engaging in sectarianism by marginalizing the country's Muslims. Those leading these movements can be defined as what Benford and Snow refer to as "signifying agents actively engaged in the production and maintenance of meaning for constituents, antagonists, and bystanders or observers."⁴⁴ The authors describe the process of constructing meaning as an "active, processual phenomenon that implies agency and contention at the level of reality construction"⁴⁵. This can be applied to the case of India, since anti-CAA protests evolved from an increasing sentiment that the Modi government was pandering to its pro-Hindutva since its election in 2014 which threatened the state of minorities in the country. The protests also showcase agency, in the sense that movement activists were able to engage their constituents over extended periods of time in various Indian cities. Lastly, constituents who are a part of mobilization as resulted by the introduction of the CAA also utilize frames which are contentious, as counter framing often results from the challenges pro-CAA and anti-CAA activists present each other.

By building on Benford and Snow's literature on framing processes, I was able to identify theoretical aspects of frame analysis which I use as sensitizing concepts to unpack my research puzzle. In the subsequent subchapters, I will review the literature surrounding these sensitizing concepts and explain why these sources were selected in relation to the research project, and how these sources relate to each other.

⁴⁴ Benford, Robert D., and David A. Snow. "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment." *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 611-39. Accessed August 2, 2021.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 614.

2.1 Diagnostic Framing and Injustice Frames

When speaking of the characteristic features surrounding collective action frames, Benford and Snow indicate that social movement organizations have ‘core framing tasks’⁴⁶, which are described as “movement adherents negotiating a shared understanding of some problematic condition or situation they define as in need of change, making attributions regarding who or what is to blame, articulate an alternative set of arrangements, and urging others to act in concert to affect change”⁴⁷. The authors define these core framing tasks into diagnostic, prognostic and motivational framing, which is the process by which movement actors can get prospective constituents to mobilize. In order to make sense of how which conditions anti-CAA activists in India recognized as in need or change, consideration will be given to diagnostic framing and injustice frames as much of the narrative surrounding calls to repeal CAA and NRC laws, hinge around identifying Muslims as victims of injustice and amplifying their victimization.

While reviewing the literature around injustice frames, Benford and Snow remark that these are “a mode of interpretation- prefatory to collective noncompliance, protest, and/or rebellion- generated and adopted by those who come to define the actions of an authority as unjust”⁴⁸. Gamson in his paper on injustice frames talks about the hardships that people have had to suffer due to acts or conditions beyond their control and this can be used to elucidate the conditions under which India’s Muslims live not just since the partition of the country which created an Islamic Pakistan, but also since the election of the Hindu nationalist BJP in 2014. There have been several government sanctioned reports in India that analyze the overall well-being of India’s religious and caste-based minorities (Sachar report, Mandal commission⁴⁹) which have indicated the indignities these groups face in their daily lives in India, and Gamson speaks of injustice frames as tools in which these grievances can be shared, which result in collective action.⁵⁰ Building on acts and conditions posed on victim

⁴⁶ Ibid, 615.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 614.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 619.

⁴⁹ <https://minorityaffairs.gov.in/reports/sachar-committee-report>
<http://www.ncbc.nic.in/Writereaddata/Mandal%20Commission%20Report%20of%20the%201st%20Part%20English635228715105764974.pdf>

⁵⁰ Gamson, William A. "Injustice frames." The Wiley-Blackwell encyclopedia of social and political movements (2013).

groups which result in suffering, Gamson states that injustice frames also have an emotional component⁵¹, which will be discussed as ‘emotional resonance’ later in this chapter.

Since the citizenship amendment act is being contested over its constitutional legality, there is also a legal component that must be addressed while talking about the injustice that the Muslim minority in India faces as a result of this act. To understand the relationship between legality and injustice frames, Marshall in her paper on the everyday construction of sexual harassment within workplaces in the US states, “Legal norms constitute an important aspect of a movement’s symbolic and strategic repertoire⁵². Movements often invoke legal rights when articulating their demands.”⁵³ Just as the paper highlights how women in workplaces exercise their right to invoke the rule of law when describing the subjugation, which they face from their male superiors of counterparts, anti-CAA activists also engage in juridical rights claims in order to mobilize prospective constituents and plead their case.

Marshall argues that law provides individuals with a “powerful set of interpretive tools in a disputing process”⁵⁴, where meanings of events can be contested in an ideological, social and cultural context. In India, anti-CAA activists challenge the amendment under Article 14 of the Indian constitution, which states “The state shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.”⁵⁵ These activists believe that by excluding Muslims from acquiring citizenship in India through the CAA, the government is violating Article 14. By using the frames of legality and injustice in tandem with each other to generate discontent among potential recruits.

Since it has been mentioned that framing can be a disputing process, it is important to understand how in a contested debate frames can be used to counter each other. Just as there are activists who oppose the CAA on grounds of unconstitutionality, there are those who support the amendment and plead its case on humanitarian grounds. This contesting process is referred to as counter-framing and shall be discussed in the upcoming subchapter.

⁵¹ Ibid, p.2.

⁵² Marshall, Anna-Maria. "Injustice frames, legality, and the everyday construction of sexual harassment." *Law & Social Inquiry* 28, no. 3 (2003): 659-689. p. 664.

⁵³ Ibid, p.664.

⁵⁴ Ibid, p.661.

⁵⁵ <https://iitr.ac.in/internalcomplaintscommittee/annexure.pdf>

2.2 Counter-framing

Following diagnostic framing, Benford and Snow define the second core framing task of collective action frames as ‘prognostic framing’ which alludes to the ways in which social movement organizations articulate proposed solutions or problems, as well as strategies for how a plan can be carried out. Since we have discussed that framing is an activity that doesn’t exist in a vacuum and occurs in a contested environment, prognostic activities by SMOs tend to contradict the narratives and frames put forth by their opponents. This is referred to as “counter-framing”⁵⁶ and we have seen in this in the Indian context, in terms of the narratives put forth by the Bhartiya Janata Party, labelling anti-CAA protestors as “terrorists”.⁵⁷ Since the process of counter-framing exists in complex arenas, they are influenced by institutional elites (McAdams 1996), and as an example I will be using speeches made by the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, as well as some of the highest-ranking officials of BJP, made to counter the claims of anti-CAA activists.

In their paper on the strategies of counter-framing, Chong and Druckman argue that the effectiveness of a counter-frame depends on “1) when it is received in relation to the original (opposing) message, and 2) how often it is repeated”⁵⁸. A counter-frame according to them comes in response to an original articulation of ideas and meanings, and in order to be classified as a successful retort, the frame must come later in time than the initial frame and is repeated to the targeted audience periodically. The labelling of constituents opposing the CAA as “terrorists” was not just repeated by the Indian prime minister and top BJP officials, but those members of the public who came out in support of the CAA also repeated the government’s counter-frames and subscribed to the notion that they are opposing constituents who want to cause communal disharmony within India.

The data gathered regarding counter-frames used by the BJP to discredit anti-CAA protestors points towards two main types of counter frames⁵⁹: 1) Problem denial- in the sense that

⁵⁶ Benford, Robert D., and David A. Snow. "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment." *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 611-39. Accessed August 2, 2021.

⁵⁷ https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/right-to-protest-fundamental-can-t-call-it-terrorist-act-delhi-hc-121061501594_1.html

⁵⁸ Chong, Dennis, and James N. Druckman. "Strategies of Counter-framing." *Available at SSRN 1912083* (2011).

⁵⁹ Nikolayenko, Olena. "Framing and counter-framing a Peace March in Russia: the use of Twitter during a hybrid war." *Social Movement Studies* 18, no. 5 (2019): 602-621.

repeatedly the BJP has made assurances that the CAA and NRC laws will not disenfranchise any existing Muslim citizens of India and 2) Attacks on the collective character of the protestors- by labelling them as “anti-nationals” and also by issuing repeated threats of violence against those demonstrating against the CAA. Olena Nikolayenko in her paper on framing and counter-framing which occurred during the peace march against the Russian invasion of Ukraine, alludes to how peace activists were met with violence by counter demonstrators, which was a direct result of counter-frames used by pro-Kremlin activists to discredit the peace activists⁶⁰. These counter-frames bear striking resemblances to the case of India, where in 2020 riots in New Delhi were seen as a direct result of incendiary remarks made by a BJP minister framing the peaceful protestors as “rioters” and called for their forced removal from the sit-in demonstration site.

The New Delhi riots were seen as a direct result of counter-frames made by BJP ministers questioning the collective character of protestors. However, one particular sit-in demonstration which began in December 2019 and lasted until March 2020, was the Shaheen Bagh sit-in demonstration led primarily by Muslim women. The protest dispersed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and not intimidation tactics used by the BJP. They used frames of motherhood and unity, calling for repealing the CAA on grounds of protecting future Indian generations from discrimination, and these frames are described and elaborated on as “maternal frames” in the forthcoming subchapter.

2.3 Maternal Frames

Benford and Snow argue that there exist only a handful of frames which are inclusive and flexible enough to provide a “master algorithm which can color and constrain the orientations and activities of other movements”, and they refer to these as “master frames”⁶¹. They refer to the “return to Democracy” frame by exemplifying the case of the mobilization of women against the state in Chile. In order to include feminism in their collective action against Pinochet’s authoritarian regime, Noonan argues that the “return to Democracy” frame is

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Benford, Robert D., and David A. Snow. "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment." *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 611-39. Accessed August 2, 2021. p.619

flexible enough to include ideas as feminism, which makes the frame more resonant and influential.⁶²

Just as the case with Chile, I believe in the Indian context, the injustice frames proffered by anti-CAA activists with regards to the potential disenfranchisement of Muslims by the proposed law, were flexible enough to include the grievances of Muslim women, seen most evidently at the Shaheen Bagh sit in demonstrations. In order to articulate their grievances, they used ideas of motherhood and values of family, which can be defined under “Maternal frames”⁶³

Noonan defines the maternal frame as a tool which “captures the notion of collective action based on traditional gender and family roles for women.”⁶⁴ When conservative women in Chile organized the march of “Pots and Pans” to symbolize their discontent against deteriorating economic conditions, the women alluded to their “maternal instincts” and “womanly intuition” as a justification for their non-traditional behavior.⁶⁵ Motherhood was perceived to be a culturally resonant and successful tool through which women had their grievances heard. During a particularly violent era in Chile following Pinochet’s seizure of power, women, who had not played dominant roles in the political sphere, began to mobilize against the regime.⁶⁶ Men in Chile were the primary victims of oppression in Chile since women were thought of as adopting traditional and marginal roles in society, and this enabled women to take more prominent roles in voicing discontent against the regime (Chuchryk 1991:156). It is through similar circumstances and reasonings that the women of Shaheen Bagh chose to mobilize, seeing male anti-CAA constituents being met with violence and excessive use of force by the Indian state. The women of Shaheen Bagh successfully deployed maternal frames, which allowed them to not only protest against the CAA for an extended period of time, but the Indian state could also not use violence to disperse them, as they had with men, due to the women’s amplification of maternal roles in society.

⁶² Noonan, Rita K. "Women against the state: Political opportunities and collective action frames in Chile's transition to democracy." In *Sociological Forum*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 81-111. Kluwer Academic Publishers-Plenum Publishers, 1995. p. 88

⁶³ *Ibid*, 88.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 88.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 104.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 96.

Pinochet in Chile is said to have respected the ideas of motherhood and family, which Chilean women saw as an opportunity to mobilize.⁶⁷ In the case of India, the BJP declared itself the “savior” of Muslim women by abolishing the ‘triple talaq’ rule⁶⁸, and it is through this alleged affinity towards Muslim women that has allowed protestors at Shaheen Bagh to amplify their grievances. As will be seen in the chapter on how maternal frames were deployed effectively by the women of Shaheen Bagh, the data gathered show’s themes of motherhood and traditional family values, that protestors used not only to raise calls for repealing the CAA, but also for preserving the secularism in an India that would be habitable for future generations of minorities.

Since themes of motherhood and cultural resonance have been referred to when discussing maternal frames, it becomes essential to discuss the concept of emotional resonance, seen not just articulated by the women of Shaheen Bagh, but also by all anti-CAA constituents. In the forthcoming sub-chapter, I shall review existing literature on emotional resonance, and how it is through emotional resonance that frame articulators are eventually able to convince prospective constituents to mobilize.

2.4 Emotional Resonance

Emotional resonance is defined as “the emotional harmony and/or disjuncture ideology, practices, or collective action frames and the emotional lives of potential recruits.⁶⁹ In her paper on emotional resonance, social location and strategic framing, Belinda Robnett states that within recent literature on the subject of emotional framing, the importance of emotion in recruitment, sustenance, dissolution of social movements has started to become more apparent.⁷⁰ In this thesis I attempt to show that between the process of articulating a frame which eventually leads to collective action, there has to be some form of emotional resonance experienced by prospective constituents which ultimately compels them to become a part of any social movements.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 96.

⁶⁸ <https://www.newslaundry.com/2019/08/23/triple-talaq-gives-women-a-fighting-chance>

⁶⁹ Robnett, Belinda. "Emotional resonance, social location, and strategic framing." *Sociological Focus* 37, no. 3 (2004): 195-212.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 196.

It is important to note the distinction Robnett makes between emotional and cultural resonance. Cultural resonance occurs when a frame is compatible with larger societal values and norms⁷¹ whereas Robnett states that ideas can resonate emotionally with constituents because they can be radical and liberating.⁷² In the chapters where I address how anti-CAA activists used emotional resonance while proffering their frames of injustice, I elaborate on how the constituents use ideas of ‘a secular India’ and the CAA being “unconstitutional”, to show how these frames resonated emotionally and caused mobilization across the country.

In their paper on motivational framing within the transgender community in the US, Schrock Holden and Reid state that emotional resonance was used as an effective sensitizing concept to understand mobilization across diverse social movement.⁷³ When highlighting how SMOs use emotional discourse to motivate constituents, they highlight the work of social constructionists such as Gordon and Lutz specifically to their notions on how folk theories can be used to generate certain emotions, and when individuals choose to act on their emotions.⁷⁴ The protestors at Shaheen Bagh, as well as constituents against the CAA across the country, invoke stories of Bhagat Singh, Mahatma Gandhi, and B.R Ambedkar among others, as India’s “founding fathers”, who envisioned a country that defined its citizens not by their religion, but by being born within the borders of India. They often refer to the Indian freedom struggle as part of their emotional appeal to prospective constituents and call upon Indian citizens to reject the CAA by labeling it against the constitution and the “social fabric of India”⁷⁵

Overall, by using emotional resonance as a sensitizing concept in my thesis, I will try to illustrate that when SMOs proffer their ideas and attempt align prospective constituents within their frames, the ideas must appeal to their emotions in order to move from resonance to mobilization. Existing literature on the topic does suggest that emotional resonance is the link between targeted recruits’ emotional lives and the emotional messages encoded in SMO

⁷¹ Ibid, 198.

⁷² Ibid, 199.

⁷³Schrock, Douglas, Daphne Holden, and Lori Reid. "Creating emotional resonance: Interpersonal emotion work and motivational framing in a transgender community." *Social Problems* 51, no. 1 (2004): 61-81.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 63.

⁷⁵ <https://www.hindustantimes.com/columns/stop-straining-the-social-fabric-of-the-country/story-jtDuxwdUo2omHQgROUUCdM.html>

framing⁷⁶and I will use the case of anti-CAA constituents by defining what specific emotional appeals were made by SMOs in India in order to get them to mobilize.

2.5 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I intended to elaborate on the literature surrounding the theoretical framework I have chosen to incorporate in my thesis, collective action frames, and define the sensitizing concepts I recognized to develop sub-questions to help me unpack my research puzzle. Just as discussed in the chapter above, certain master frames, such as injustice frames, are flexible enough to incorporate ideas that are movement specific, which is why I will make use of concepts such as maternal frames and counter-framing, in order to understand the articulation of ideas from both pro and anti CAA constituents.

⁷⁶ Schrock, Douglas, Daphne Holden, and Lori Reid. "Creating emotional resonance: Interpersonal emotion work and motivational framing in a transgender community." *Social Problems* 51, no. 1 (2004): 61-81.

Chapter 3. Methodology

In this section elaborate on the methods used to answer my research puzzle. I will go over the research strategy, highlight the ontological and epistemological nature of my thesis, illustrate the sampling methods used, and describe the phases of my research method. The chapter will conclude by providing the ethical considerations and limitations faced while conducting the research.

3.1 Research Strategy

Mason describes ontological positions as, “asking what you see as the very nature, character, and essence of things in the social world”.⁷⁷ To best illustrate the ontological nature of my research puzzle, I would use properties of what Mason describes as 1) Motivations, ideas, perceptions and 2) Others, collectives, groups, movements. Since the analytical framework of my research is collective action frames, I will be studying what Benford, and Snow would describe as the beliefs and meanings that inspire or legitimate the activities of social movement organizations.⁷⁸ The topic tries to understand how frame analysis can be deployed to understand the ideas that were proffered by anti-CAA activists in order to get prospective constituents to mobilize against the law. By using sensitizing concepts such as injustice frames and emotional resonance, what I attempt to do is specify which specific ideas and beliefs did the articulators of the frame use to highlight injustices faced by the Muslim community in India, and how a concept such as secularism was used to ensure the beliefs resonated with prospective constituents in order to build a collective movement against the Citizenship Amendment Act.

In terms of epistemology, this thesis tries to generate data from observing the social processes that occur when a frame articulator disseminates an idea, how that idea potentially resonated with prospective constituents, and how it ultimately leads to collective mobilization. This process can be best described by the critical theory epistemological stance, which Mason describes as, “life is determined through social and historical processes and power relations – researcher seeks to uncover these and question the taken for granted.”⁷⁹ The rules of critical

⁷⁷ Mason, Jennifer. 2017. *Qualitative Researching*. 3rd ed. London, England: SAGE Publications. p.4

⁷⁸ Benford, Robert D., and David A. Snow. "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment." *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 611-39. Accessed August 2, 2021.

⁷⁹ Mason, Jennifer. 2017. *Qualitative Researching*. 3rd ed. London, England: SAGE Publications. p.8

theory apply aptly to my research, since the debate surrounding the Citizenship Amendment Act is not solely a social one, but has historical significance as well, as it takes into consideration the perception and standing of Muslims in India post-independence. Critical theory also incorporates power relations, and my research looks at how Hindu nationalism adopted by the current BJP government disenfranchises India's Muslims, and continues to question their loyalty to the nation.

In accordance with the ontology and epistemology stances that best describe my research, I believe the best form of intellectual puzzle that describes the phenomena I am investigating is a processual puzzle. Mason describes processual puzzles as, "how things change, interact, and influence each other, for example in particular settings or cases, where you will explore the dynamics, nuances, ebbs and flows, in phenomena under investigation."⁸⁰ In my thesis I will provide evidence on how it was a process that resulted in collective action against the Citizenship Amendment Act, which incorporates the dynamics between Hindu nationalists and India's Muslim community. Therefore, by bearing in mind the type of research puzzle, as well as the ontology and epistemology of my research puzzle, I believe a qualitative research strategy would be most appropriate to answer the questions posed by my research.

3.2 Sampling Method

To begin describing my sampling method, I will address the who, what, when, and where aspects of my research. In terms of 'where', the research I conducted was set entirely in India. The anti-CAA protests and pro-CAA rallies from where I've collected my data, occurred primarily in New Delhi and Mumbai. Due to Covid-19, I was not able to travel to India to conduct interviews, and therefore have had to rely on previously documented information primarily through news articles, interviews uploaded to YouTube by news companies, and long-formative narrative journalism magazines and websites. As I have experience working as a journalist in India, I was able to identify those niche sources and news reporters who have covered the anti-CAA protests extensively and will cite their work as part of my data gathered in the forthcoming chapters.

The data I have gathered for my research comes from a timeframe between 11 December 2019 and 24 March 2020. The Citizenship Amendment Act was passed in the Indian

⁸⁰ Ibid, 12.

parliament on 11 December 2019, after which the nation saw protests and demonstrations break out in various cities. Several of these protests had to be curbed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and since the Shaheen Bagh demonstration culminated on 24 March 2020, I gathered my data between CAA's passage and Shaheen Bagh's culmination. There are certain speeches however made by prominent BJP ministers, including Modi, which are critical of anti-CAA demonstrators' excerpts from which I have included in my data as part of the counter-framing the Indian government engaged in.

In terms of 'who' and 'what' I believe the data I have gathered can be broken down into three distinct categories. Firstly, I analyzed texts and speeches made by anti-CAA constituents. This is the collective of people who called for the repealing of the CAA law, and since I am observing this topic through the lens of frame analysis, I categorized their ideas and beliefs under injustice frames. Anti-CAA activists question the CAA on legal grounds and doubt its constitutional validity, and also highlight the 'injustice' faced by India's Muslim community who are now under the threat of disenfranchisement due to this law introduced by a Hindu nationalist BJP government. The data gathered will also illustrate how the speeches and texts put forth by anti-CAA activists were successful in emotionally resonating with prospective constituents as they harkened to ideas of secularism, constitutionality and unity by referring to Independence era activists such as Gandhi, Ambedkar, Bhagat Singh etc. and quoting them during rallies and protests.

Secondly, I also analyzed the texts and speeches made by constituents in favor of the CAA laws, and this includes not just protestors and members of the public speaking in support of the bill, but also members of the BJP defending the amendment to India's citizenship laws. Under the lens of frame analysis, I have used the concept of counter-framing to gather data which is indicative of the BJP countering the narrative put forth by anti-CAA activists. These also included statements made by Prime Minister Modi, and Home Minister Amit Shah in the Indian parliament during debates regarding the CAA as well as during discussions regarding anti-CAA protests occurring across the country. The data I will use to illustrate the BJP's counter frames will also include incendiary speeches and remarks made by certain BJP ministers, which resulted in the New Delhi riots of 2020 where 36 Muslims and 15 Hindus were killed over a 6-day period of looting, rioting, and violence.

Lastly, I also gathered motifs and texts presented by the women of Shaheen Bagh. The reason why this protest is being treated differently due to the anti-CAA protests previously discussed is because this gathering was unique in nature as it was led almost entirely by Muslim women. Within frame analysis I used the concept of maternal frames to gather data which suggested how the women of Shaheen Bagh used their standings as homemakers, mothers and caregivers to enter the political sphere and become unsusceptible to the violent means of dispersal that the BJP used to quell other protests. The data I gathered from the speeches made by these women and from interviews given to journalists also suggests that their ideas emotionally resonated with members of the Indian public, and the protest was able to garner international attention.

I utilized a purposeful sampling approach, which according to Patton is, “a technique widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources.”⁸¹ Unable to conduct interviews due to Covid-19, I became highly dependent on previously gathered information and archival sources to find the data applicable for my research. In the forthcoming sub-section, I will illustrate the use of news articles and video interviews from digital media sources based in India, and the use of debates from the upper and lower house of the Indian parliament which were televised.

3.2.1 Digital media sources

Digital media is any form of media which used electronic devices for distribution. Several news companies in India have adopted this model of information dissemination, and upload their content on services such as YouTube, or on their own websites. The media outlets whose interviews I utilize for my research, such as TheWire.in, Hindustan Times, The Print, India Today etc. were involved in attending protests and rallies regarding the CAA in various Indian cities. I was able to use YouTube and set a search parameter for videos from rallies between 11 December 2019 and 24 March 2020. The interviews conducted from these rallies include anti and pro CAA constituents, members of the BJP, and women from Shaheen Bagh.

⁸¹ Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful Sampling for Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis in Mixed Method Implementation Research. *Administration and policy in mental health*, 42(5), 533–544. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y>

3.2.2 Parliament telecasts

The upper and lower houses of the Indian parliament telecast debates regarding the proposal of new bills and amendments before they are voted upon. For this thesis, I have used excerpts from speeches made by Prime Minister Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and various other members of the BJP in order to demonstrate how the government countered the narratives put forth by anti-CAA constituents, in order to defend implementing the law.

Overall, not being able to go to India due to Covid-19 did void me of the opportunity to interview CAA constituents directly, but the interviews that have been previously conducted do adequately cover their grievances, ideas, and beliefs in a way that gives me enough data viewed from the lens of frame analysis.

3.3 Research Method

To explain the details of my research method, I shall begin by stating my research puzzle. The puzzle incorporates components such as the analytical frame, and the theoretically informed complication, from which I was able to derive sensitizing concepts that became the basis of my sub-questions. Following this, I will present the process by which I was able to gather and analyze data required to answer my sub-questions, as well as the data collection techniques I was able to implement.

3.3.1 Research Puzzle and Sub-Questions

The research puzzle that I was able to create which best operationalizes the intent of my thesis is: *How can collective action frames elucidate the mobilization of actors in favor of or against the Indian government's decision to introduce the Citizenship Amendment Act and the National Register of Citizens in 2019, perceived as an attempt to disenfranchise the country's Muslim citizens?* The research puzzle incorporates the lens of frame analysis to view the mobilization against the nation's recent amendment to its citizenship laws, and how those were perceived as a method to subjugate a religious minority in India by a right-wing government. After deriving sensitizing concepts from the existing literature regarding my analytical frame, I was able to formulate the sub-questions that would demonstrate the various components of the mobilization that occurred in India following the CAA's introduction.

Firstly, I asked *how did anti-CAA protestors utilize injustice frames that emotionally resonated with potential recruits against laws which were seen as discriminatory against Muslims in India?* The literature review in previous chapters regarding injustice frames would recognize that by alluding to the treatment of Muslims in India since the partition of India, anti-CAA protestors presented ideas that would potentially resonate with their constituents on an emotional level, which would transpire appeals into collective action. The data I have collected shows not only do they allude to the victimization of Muslims, but also to the BJP and their inherent Hindu nationalism.

In the second sub-question I ask *through what ways did the government of India counter the frames of anti-CAA protestors in order to defend the introduction of the Citizenship Amendment Act and National Register of Citizens?* During the course of the collective movements in favor of and against the CAA, the ruling BJP has engaged in making incendiary remarks against protestors which have led to communal violence within the country. Their remarks defend the CAA law by labeling it as a “humanitarian provision”, but they also label dissidents as “terrorists” and “threats to national security”. The BJP made defending the CAA an electoral issue and have encouraged voters to vote for the party in order to ensure “demonstrations such as those at Shaheen Bagh do not occur again.”⁸² Overall, the data I have collected regarding the BJP’s counter-frames illustrates that the government has not just attempted to defend the CAA, but also vilify those speak against it.

Lastly, in the third sub-question, I ask *how can maternal frames be used to explain why the protestors at Shaheen Bagh were not met with violent means of dispersal from the Indian government, and how their ideas and meanings emotionally resonated with prospective constituents?* The Shaheen Bagh protests were prominently documented by not just Indian news outlets but by those in several countries. Since the 24-hour sit-in demonstration last close to four months, several interviews with women present at the protest were conducted by various news channels and uploaded to their websites and YouTube. These protests were unique since they were almost entirely comprised by Muslim women and by using their standings as mothers and homemakers, and their ideas, beliefs, and speeches have been thoroughly recorded and documented. The data I have gathered shows how these women

⁸² Hindustan Times. “Vote for BJP so current hits Shaheen Bagh: Amit Shah poll pitch in Delhi <https://youtu.be/Gi8DLPIBzal>

used their standing as mothers and homemakers to protests, breaking traditional gender norms in collective movements held in India.

3.3.2 Phases of Data Collection

Phase 1: Empirical context

In the first phase I attempted to understand empirically the history of India's post-partition Muslim community. Those Muslims who wished to remain in India after the creation of Pakistan were as I have indicated previously, made to constantly prove their loyalty to India. Due to this, as the Sachar committee report suggests, Muslims in India have faced economic and societal impediments to prosper as a community. I tried to also understand how Hindu nationalism portrays Islam and India's Muslim community as outsiders and the descendants of invaders. Since the BJP is fundamentally a Hindu nationalist party, I also read literature which was indicative of their attitudes and perceptions towards Muslims, and how after coming into power in 2014, they have implemented some of their core policies listed in their manifesto (the construction of a Ram temple in Ayodhya, the abolishment of Article 370 etc.) which directly affect India's Muslims. The introduction of the Citizenship Amendment Act in 2019 is a further step of BJP's ideological basis which views India as a homeland of the Hindus.

Phase 2: Anti-CAA rallies

In this phase I initially started out by understanding the Citizenship Amendment Act from a legal perspective, which clearly stated under this provision, expedited citizenship would be made available to those religiously persecuted and belonging from the Hindu, Sikh, Christian, Parsi, Jain, and Buddhist communities coming from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. The legal provision excluded Muslims, and several legal scholars argue that it also violates the Indian constitution. After understanding the workings of the CAA, I set out documenting data from protests that argued against the law. CAA protests in India lasted for about four months between December 2019 and March 2020, and I viewed previously conducted interviews by journalists from these rallies in order to gather my data. I coded this data bearing in mind grievances that can be described under 'injustice frames' to show how

demonstrators were alluding to the victimization of Muslims in India under the BJP, as well as questioning the legal validity of the Citizenship Amendment Act. The interviews I viewed also highlighted the emotional appeals made by protestors through invoking themes of secularism and inclusivity, as an attempt to mobilize potential constituents.

Phase 3: Pro-CAA rallies and rhetors by the BJP

During phase 3 I identified rallies held in India between December 2019 and March 2020 that were in support of the Citizenship Amendment Act. Under what Benford and Snow describe counter framing, I was able to analyze the rhetors put forth by pro-BJP constituents. Benford and Snow also illustrate that framing does not occur in a vacuum and is therefore a contesting process. The data I gathered between December 2019 and March 2020 was categorized as “pro-CAA” and “anti-CAA”, illustrating the competitive nature of the debate. Pro-CAA constituents held counter rallies against anti-CAA protests, while at the Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, members of the ABVP, known to be in favor of the CAA, beat and assaulted those students who protested earlier against the bill. The government of India in parliament spoke in favor of the bill, where countering the narratives of anti-CAA protestors. Prime Minister Modi himself has addressed this issue and has also been involved in making incendiary remarks against the protestors, which I will be illustrating in the forthcoming chapters. To view and record the speeches made by BJP ministers against the CAA, I viewed telecasts from the winter session of the Indian parliament, available in their video archives. Other BJP ministers made speeches at political rallies, which I will also be quoting as part of my analysis.

Phase 4: Texts and Images from Shaheen Bagh

In this phase I went through documented speeches and interviews from the women of Shaheen Bagh and depended mostly on videos from New Delhi Televisions’ (NDTV) coverage of the protest. Bearing in mind what I describe earlier as maternal frames, I highlighted patterns of those speeches and texts where the women of Shaheen Bagh would use their standing as mothers and homemakers to enter the political arena and label the CAA laws as “harmful for the future of India’s children.” I also concluded that the notions of secularism, inclusivity, and maternal concern put forth by protestors at Shaheen Bagh

resonated emotionally with prospective anti-CAA constituents, which allowed for the demonstration to be conducted across 101 days, and not be met with violent means of dispersal by the Indian government.

Phase 5: Coalesce data and present findings

Lastly, from the data I have gathered I will be answering the sub-questions posed by my thesis. In doing so, I will illustrate how framing theory can be used to understand the mobilization of constituents for and against the Citizenship Amendment Act and demonstrate the linkages of the issue to the post-partition era perception of Muslims in India by Hindu nationalists.

3.4 Limitations, Ethical Considerations and Positionality

In terms of limitations, I was not able to travel to India due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Since most of the data gathered for my thesis would involve participant interviews with those individuals present at protest venues across the country, extensive traveling would have been involved for me personally and this was not permissible in the midst of a pandemic. Instead, I turned to previously gathered interviews by various news organizations who were present at these protest sites, and that provided my adequate data to answer the questions posed by my research puzzle.

In the era of the pandemic, several of my peers turned to Zoom and other forms of long-distance communication in order to conduct interviews for their data collection process. For my particular research I had to gather data from sources such as those women who participated in the sit-in demonstration at Shaheen Bagh, or those individuals who were present at anti-CAA demonstrations and met with violent means of dispersal by the Indian state. Establishing such contacts and having someone who was present at Shaheen Bagh speak to me over Zoom did not seem permissible, since in order to establish these contacts, I would have had to be in New Delhi and identify potential interviewees through word of mouth. Hence, I chose to depend on archival data, and in terms of ethical considerations, I have cited this data appropriately.

When speaking of positionality, I find myself confident in the ability to recognize the appropriate sources to acquire data from, when speaking of the texts and speeches which occurred at the CAA movements in India. Having worked as a journalist in India myself, I was aware of news sources to depend on that would represent the views of CAA constituents without prior media bias. Many of the interviews I viewed were conducted in Hindi and being Indian myself I was able to translate these interviews to English in order to use them for my thesis.

Chapter 4. Grievances of Anti-CAA Protestors

*My grandfather always used to tell me that India is a dream. If someone says this dream belongs only to the Hindus, or is only for the Muslims, then they have no right to share in this dream. A dream is all inclusive. A dream sees no religion.*⁸³

This vignette is chosen from an anti-CAA protestor speaking to a news reporter in New Delhi. In a way, it perfectly exemplifies some of the main grievances posed by those who argue against the CAA and NRC laws. The protestor, Amir Aziz equates India to a dream which was envisioned in the post-independence era, where a citizen of this country would be defined not by their religion, but by the place of their birth. These arguments divide the grievances of anti-CAA antagonists into three main categories. Firstly, they argue that the bill violates the secular constitution of India by using religion as a basis to frame laws. Secondly, protestors highlight the victimization of Muslims in India and how they have been treated by successive governments and emphasize the role of the BJP in the subjugation of Muslims, which builds into their third category of grievance, that the BJP is operating under ideals of Hindu nationalism, which views Muslims as outsiders in India. The basis of anti-CAA activists' grievances will form the structure of this chapter. Two concepts of frame analysis, injustice frames and emotional resonance will be used as a lens from which the protestors grievances will be viewed.

4.1 Unconstitutionality of the CAA

One of the foremost arguments put forth by anti-CAA constituents is that the law violates Article 14 of the Indian constitution. Article 14 states, "The state shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India."⁸⁴ Anti-CAA activists believe that since the Citizenship Amendment Act provides citizenship to certain religious groups and evidently leaves out Muslims, it is in direct violation of the law. One of the activists at the New Delhi anti-CAA protest on December 19th said:

⁸³ ScoopWhoop Unscripted. A day at the NRC and CAA Protests in Delhi <https://youtu.be/amsHBCiJsVM>

⁸⁴ <https://iitr.ac.in/internalcomplaintscommittee/annexure.pdf>

“It strikes against the basic fabric of our constitution which is secular in nature. The government is marginalizing people on the basis of their religion, which has no place in a secular democracy like ours.”

The clause within the Citizenship Amendment Act that defines who is eligible to be labeled as a member of a persecuted religion and seek citizenship in India is defined as, “Provided that any person belonging to Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi or Christian community from Afghanistan, Bangladesh or Pakistan, who entered into India on or before the 31st day of December, 2014 and who has been exempted by the Central Government by or under clause (c) of sub-section (2) of section 3 of the Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920 or from the application of the provisions of the Foreigners Act, 1946 or any rule or order made thereunder, shall not be treated as illegal migrant for the purposes of this Act.”⁸⁵ From a legal perspective, in his paper on secularism and the Citizenship Amendment Act, Chandrachud does illustrate that the law is unconstitutional since it does not take into consideration several other communities that may have faced religious persecution in the countries listed above, and therefore does not adhere to the secular basis of the constitution. He states, “Jews, Muslim minorities like Shias, or Ahmadiyahs, even atheists or agnostics, may have been persecuted, on the grounds of religion, in Afghanistan, Pakistan, or Bangladesh. Yet, the CAA, turns a blind eye toward them. In covering only some religious communities and not others, the CAA violates the principle of secularism which is a part of constitutional morality.”⁸⁶

The second way in which the legal standing of the CAA is being questioned is by placing the burden of proof on the public. Another protestor when speaking to the media at a rally in New Delhi stated:

“The logic with which they applied demonetization⁸⁷ across the country is now being used to force the CAA and NRC laws upon us. Demonetization assumed that each individual is guilty, and the onus was on the individual to prove that they do not have

⁸⁵ <https://egazette.nic.in/WriteReadData/2019/214646.pdf>

⁸⁶ Chandrachud, Abhinav. "Secularism and the Citizenship Amendment Act." *Indian Law Review* 4, no. 2 (2020): 138-162. p.24

⁸⁷ <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/what-is-demonetisation-and-why-was-it-done/articleshow/55326862.cms?from=mdr>

any wealth acquired illegally. With the CAA, once again the government is assuming all citizens are illegitimate, and they have to prove through documentation that they are legal citizens of this country. The poorest members of our society had to spend hours in queues during demonetization just so they could prove their wealth was legitimate, and now they will have to go through the same arduous process to prove their citizenship due to the CAA.”

This is in reference to the arbitrary way in which the Indian government decided to invalidate certain currency bills in the country overnight in an attempt to seize funds earned illegally, however the move put the onus on each Indian citizen to prove the legitimacy of their funds, and the country witnessed several weeks of public agitation, where all members of society were inconvenienced into getting their currency exchanged from bank. Such a cumbersome process would be incorporated once again under the CAA and NRC laws, where each citizen would be perceived as “guilty until proven innocent”, and public agitation would occur again where citizens would have to gather proof of citizenship and demonstrate their legitimacy to the government. Chandrachud concurs with this assessment in his paper, and states, “The deeper problem lies not with the CAA or NRC, but with the manner in which citizenship has to be proved in India. Under the usual rules of evidence, the burden of proving a fact is on the person who asserts that fact. So ordinarily, if the government prosecuted someone and asserted that he was not an Indian citizen but a foreigner, the burden ought to have been on the government to prove that the person was not an Indian citizen.”⁸⁸

4.2 Victimization of India’s Muslims

At CAA protest sites another theme of injustice often invoked by protestors is the state of India’s Muslim minority, and the impediments they have faced to economic and societal prosperity. One of the anti-CAA dissidents at a rally in New Delhi stated:

“In our country, since the last 60 years these people (BJP) have been trying to target Muslims. Muslims have sacrificed their lives for the country’s independence. And today, they want to gather all the country’s Muslims, especially those of us who

⁸⁸ Chandrachud, Abhinav. "Secularism and the Citizenship Amendment Act." *Indian Law Review* 4, no. 2 (2020): 138-162. p. 26

belong to lower-income groups and put us all in a detention centre. This is what our government is doing today.”

Protestors at these sites are often reminiscent of the role India’s Muslim community played during the pre-independence freedom struggle and make claims to being citizens of India under notions of having forefathers who fought for the nation’s independence. Protestors at anti-CAA rallies often carry images of Muslim freedom activists such as Ashfaqullah Khan, in order to emphasise the community’s role during the freedom struggle. Such an allude can be categorized under emotional resonance which ultimately leads constituents to collective action. The detention centre that the anti-CAA activist refers to in his speech are currently operational in the state of Assam, where the Indian government currently holds those who were excluded from the National Register of Citizens, and who’s citizenship status in India is yet to be determined. Since the Indian state has made assurances that the NRC will be applicable all across the country and not just in Assam, anti-CAA activists fear that detention centres the likes of which are seen in Assam will start to be built across all Indian states.

Secondly, protestors also state that under the BJP, there have been legislations separate from the CAA and NRC bills that work to marginalize India’s Muslims. A protestor named Jasbeer Singh Arora who was present at the 19 December 2019 protest at New Delhi’s Jantar Mantar stated:

“Post-partition, there was a conscious effort made for India to be an inclusive nation and define its citizens irrespective of religion. Since this government has come into power in 2014, they’ve tried to make one-sided amendments to India’s citizenship laws that favor one particular religious group (Hindus). Now that they have majority in the Indian parliament, the sort of legislature they’ve brought in; be it abrogating Article 370 in Kashmir, the construction of a Hindu temple in Ayodhya, or the triple talaq bill, they are essentially teasing the Indian public by stating we are in power now and we can do as we please. In Aligarh where I come from, all the Muslims I know tell me they feel marginalized, and perceive the government is treating them like second class citizens.”⁸⁹

⁸⁹ The Lallantop. CAA Protests <https://youtu.be/KBDB4NcrgY>

What Arora is alluding to here are provisions that the BJP was continually listed in its election manifestos in 2014 and 2019. The abrogation of Article 370 in Kashmir which takes away the states autonomous status, or the construction of a Hindu temple in Ayodhya, where once a mosque stood which was demolished by a Hindu mob in 1992 are all seen as sectarian instances part of the BJP's Hindu nationalist agenda. Arora also makes an emotional plea for unity as part of his speech where he states, "More than the Bhagwat Geeta⁹⁰, Quran or Guru Granth⁹¹, I feel the people need to read India's constitution."

Protestors at anti-CAA rallies, particularly Muslim protestors, also communicated a sense of fear and uncertainty the community is currently experiencing due to the uncertainty brought about by the CAA and NRC laws. The government of India has not made it well understood on what basis will members of the public be able to prove their citizenship (the state categorically rejected passports, state issued IDs, etc. as qualifiers for proof of citizenship), and while those who belong to the Hindu, Sikh, Jain, Christian, Parsi or Buddhist religious groups will be able to claim citizenship through the CAA laws, Indian Muslims face a degree of uncertainty when faced with not having the appropriate documents to prove their citizenship. Amir Aziz, a protestor present at an anti-CAA rally in New Delhi stated:

"I have no work left; Modi took away all the jobs in this country. I study at the Jamia Milia Islamia University, and they (New Delhi police) came into our library and destroyed our library. What should I do? My name is Amir Aziz, and that too is a problem now. If the Aadhar card⁹² is not enough to prove my citizenship, then what do I show? My father has lived in this country all his life but doesn't have any state issued documents. How does he prove that he's Indian? We want to know what exactly is going to happen to us if we can't prove we're Indian."⁹³

Another protestor at the same rally stated:

⁹⁰ Hindu holy scripture

⁹¹ Sikh holy scripture

⁹² 12-digit identification number issued by the government of India

⁹³ ScoopWhoop Unscripted. A day at the NRC and CAA Protests in Delhi <https://youtu.be/amsHBCiJsVM>

“We are all scared. I do not know where this movement will go, but this is a moment. Within this moment, there are a lot of possibilities. When you look around, you’ll understand why different (from various religions) people have come here today. They are hurt. My mother who moved to India from Lahore after partition, she is hurt. She wants to say that this is not the country we had made.”⁹⁴

Protestors often harken back to the post-independence era in India, where the country was divided into an Islamic Pakistan and a secular India and saw one of the largest cross-border migrations and refugee crisis in the region’s history. As discussed in this thesis before, those Muslims who chose to remain in India have constantly have to be targets of Hindu nationalist ideologies where they are questioned regarding their loyalty to the nation. The next section of analysis will illustrate how the BJP is perceived to have furthered its Hindu nationalist agenda by introducing the CAA and view Indian Muslims as “outsiders”.

4.3 Hindu Nationalism and Viewing Muslims as the “Other”

As discussed in this thesis earlier, components of Hindu nationalism illustrate the notion that India is a country to be perceived as a homeland for the Hindus, and considers other religions, especially Islam, as foreign. Anti-CAA constituents argue that the BJP government’s decision to introduce the CAA in parliament furthers their Hindu nationalist ideals. At an anti-CAA rally, Mohammad Imran Pratapgarhi, an Urdu poet and politician affiliated with the Indian National Congress was not just critical about the CAA law itself, but alluded to the ideology or notion where it stems from:

“Our grievances are not just regarding the CAA alone. Behind these laws there is a hidden agenda which stems from this governments deep rooted desires, and therefore our concerns are regarding the Citizenship Amendment Act and National Register of Citizens being implemented together. The NRC was implemented in Assam, and after viewing the religious background of those who stood to lose their citizenship, the state introduced the CAA which essentially excludes one group (Muslims). What does this government desire? During partition those Muslims who chose to remain in India

⁹⁴ Ibid

belong to this country, and now the government wants to divide us through these laws. The nation was already divided in 1947. Let us be in peace now.”

Pratapgarhi harkens back to the partition era, which is frequently invoked by anti-CAA constituents to emotionally resonate with audiences. In this quote Pratapgarhi also illustrates the ways in which the CAA and NRC laws would work in tandem to disenfranchise Muslims; when Assam conducted the NRC due to which 1.9 million Indian’s were rendered stateless, most of the people whose names appeared on the exclusion list were Hindu. Seeing this, the BJP introduced the provision of CAA, by which Hindus and other religious groups except Muslims could get back their citizen status.

In the midst of the CAA protests between December 2019 and March 2020, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed a rally election rally in the northeastern state of Jharkhand, where he made incendiary remarks about anti-CAA activists and stated, “Those who are causing violence can be identified by their clothes”⁹⁵, a veiled remark towards Muslims who wear a traditional skull cap (I will also be referring to this in the section on counter-framing). Several anti-CAA activists responded to stating this as an example of the head of state making xenophobic remarks towards the country’s Muslim community. One protestor stated:

“When the nation’s Prime Ministers says we can judge someone’s true nature by the clothes they wear, then all the citizens of the country should remove and do away with their clothes. Those who decided to leave India in 1947 after the partition are now being told they can come back to the country, and those who decided to make India their home in 1947 are now being asked to prove they’re Indian. I want to tell Amit Shah (Home Minister) to come to his senses, otherwise the entire country will take to the streets without their clothes.”

In her paper on Hindu nationalism and India’s Muslim minority, Nathelene Reynolds refers to the writings of Maulana Azad where he states the creation of Pakistan would equal to a

⁹⁵ Hindustan Times. Arsonists identifiable by clothes: PM slams opposition https://youtu.be/6v8_OpeVSIU

“sign of defeatism”⁹⁶ and the “community would constantly be divided between those who would choose the path of Pakistan and those who would remain in India.”⁹⁷ This has proven to today and occurs when Hindu nationalists asks Indian Muslims to prove their loyalty to the country. Pro-CAA constituents and members of the BJP constantly remark that those who are displeased with the government can move to Pakistan, a veiled remark to provoke anti-CAA activists, and in response to this one anti-CAA activist said:

People are saying there are other countries which are inherently Islamic in nature, so why don't we go there. Why should I go? This is my country, and I'm going to live here. I'm saying this directly to the person who needs to hear this (Modi). The government keeps stating that we want to bring those Hindus who are religiously persecuted in neighboring countries, and to that we say yes, they must be brought here. But at the same time, they speak about taking away the citizenship of people who already live here by bringing in the NRC. Why should I have to prove my citizenship?

4.4 Chapter Summary

Overall, what I attempt in this chapter is to illustrate how the arguments of anti-CAA activists can be defined by viewing them through the lens of injustice frames and emotional resonance. The alleged victimization of Muslims in India begins right after the partition-era, and subsequent governments have failed to address the economic and social impediments faced by the community. This is linked to the movement against the Citizenship Amendment Act by use of injustice frames, examples of which I have highlighted in the form of quotes from anti-CAA constituents.

The way emotional resonance was used to illustrate arguments against the CAA, was when constituents invoked ideals of secularism, the constitution of India, and the ideals of which India was formed and was contrary to the theocratic establishment of Pakistan. Using these ideas, anti-CAA activists argue that the law is exclusionary, unsecular and against the ideals

⁹⁶ Reynolds, Nathelene. *Corridors of Knowledge for Peace and Development*. Report. Edited by Aneel Sarah S., Haroon Uzma T., and Niazi Imrana. Sustainable Development Policy Institute, 2020. 279-303

⁹⁷ Ibid, 281.

of the Indian nation. In the forthcoming chapter, I will present examples of how pro-CAA constituents, and members of the BJP responded and countered the claims of anti-CAA activists in an attempt to defend the CAA and NRC laws.

Chapter 5. Counter-Framing by the State and Adherents

In this chapter I will attempt to illustrate the ways in which pro-CAA constituents and the BJP responded to the grievances of those opposing the Citizenship Amendment Act. By bearing in mind the process of counter-framing, I was able to identify initially, the contested environment in which arguments regarding the CAA were competing against each other, and ways in which the BJP defended their decision to implement the CAA and NRC laws across the country. I also recognized speeches and texts that indicated the BJP was engaging in doublespeak, or at times contradicting itself, which has added to the confusion and ambiguity surrounding the implementation of CAA and NRC laws in India. To demonstrate the counter-framing activity, I have divided this chapter into three sub-sections denoting three different ways in which the BJP and pro-CAA constituents countered the claims of anti-CAA activists.

Firstly, the BJP defending the CAA law from a constitutional point of view and argued that it serves as a humanitarian law by providing refuge in India to those who have been persecuted in India's neighboring countries on the basis of religion. Thereafter, the BJP began to label anti-CAA protestors as extremists who were determined to disrupt the harmony of the country. At election rallies the BJP would frame anti-CAA constituents and their movements as a threat to the country and would ask voters to cast their ballots in the BJP's favor in order to "rid the nation of such extremists". BJP ministers were even caught on record making incendiary remarks against anti-CAA activists, and I will illustrate how these texts caused the 2020 New Delhi riots. Lastly, I will attempt to show how the BJP engages in doublespeak, often contradicting itself on the ways in which the CAA and NRC laws will be implemented, adding to the confusion and concern among Indian Muslims as to what will be their fate if they are de-registered from the National Register of Citizens.

5.1 Defending the CAA and NRC laws

In the previous section, I have illustrated how one of the primary concerns of anti-CAA activists is the constitutional validity of the Citizenship Amendment Act, and how it is in direct violation of Article 14, which calls for equal treatment of all persons before the law. In their attempts to defend the passage of the bill, Indian Home Minister Amit Shah addressed

this concern in parliament, and by using the “reasonable classification”⁹⁸ clause under Article 14 of the Indian Constitution, Shah defended the bill by saying:

“Everyone here today has stated that the CAA violates Article 14 of the Indian Constitution. The article reads that the State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India. The bill that I am presenting today allegedly, according to the members of opposition, violates the right to equality. Under reasonable classification, Article 14 cannot stop the state from drafting laws. If we want to draft a law today that acts as a provision for persecuted religious minorities from three particular countries, then why was the government under Indira Gandhi not questioned for providing expedited citizenship to migrants from Bangladesh in 1971?”⁹⁹

The BJP has constantly alluded to the fact that it isn’t under their administration that Indian citizenship laws are being amended for the first time. Just as Shah mentions Indira Gandhi in his speech at the Lok Sabha, several BJP ministers have referenced Jawaharlal Nehru, India’s first Prime Minister, and his administration’s proposed amendments to the citizenship law in the partition era. While defending the bill during the same debate in parliament, Shah also stated:

“I’d like to state why this bill is necessary. When our nation attained independence, then if the Indian National Congress had not partitioned the country on the basis of religion, then we wouldn’t be discussing this provision today.”¹⁰⁰

When discussing the constitutional validity of the CAA, Chandrachud in his paper writes that the communal era under which citizenship on the basis of religion was differentiated during the Nehru administration in the midst of partition, that communal environment does not exist in the current environment. Chandrachud writes, “The right to equality under the Indian constitution is not reserved for citizens alone. True, discrimination against returning Muslim immigrants from Pakistan was a hidden premise prevalent at the founding of the Indian

⁹⁸ <https://www.iralr.in/post/reasonable-classification-under-indian-constitution-article-14>

⁹⁹ Rajya Sabha TV. Citizenship Amendment Bill introduced in Lok Sabha <https://youtu.be/D7XfqQm7Zxl>

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

republic. However, those times were different. Muslim immigrants were then prevented from coming here because of partition-era housing shortages and to prevent communal rioting in a charged environment. Those conditions do not exist today.”¹⁰¹

In his defense of the CAA on a constitutional basis, Shah cites Article 14’s “equality before the law” clause and asks the parliament if all citizens are deemed equal, why does the state of India provide special provisions to minorities and those from Other Backward Classes (OBCs).¹⁰² He said in parliament:

“If we interpret Article 14 in its most literal sense and state that all citizens must be treated equal in the face of law, then why do we have separate laws for minorities in the country? Why doesn’t the law of equality apply to them?”

Shah here is referring to the laws which are specific to certain religious groups, such as the Muslim personal law, and their validity in the Indian constitution if Article 14 is interpreted in its most literal sense. This can be viewed as another example of the BJP’s Hindu nationalist agenda, since in all their manifestos since 2014, they have made repeated calls for a ‘Uniform Civil Code’, that would do away with personal laws drafted to cater to each religious community individually. This has raised concerns among minority and socially disadvantaged groups in India.

When defending the need for CAA on a humanitarian basis, the BJP has stated the law would provide refuge in India to those minorities who have been persecuted on the basis of their religion in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The BJP states Muslims have been excluded from the list of religious eligible to apply for Indian citizenship under this law as the countries mentioned under the CAA are Islamic in nature, and thus Muslims cannot be religiously persecuted there. Shah said:

¹⁰¹ Chandrachud, Abhinav. "Secularism and the Citizenship Amendment Act." *Indian Law Review* 4, no. 2 (2020): 138-162. p.21

¹⁰² Galanter, Marc. "Who Are the Other Backward Classes?: An Introduction to a Constitutional Puzzle." *Economic and Political Weekly* 13, no. 43/44 (1978): 1812-828. Accessed August 3, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4367065>.

“To understand why we need the Citizenship Amendment Act, we need to have a look at the constitutions of the three countries addressed in the proposed law: Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Each of their constitution states the countries are Islamic republics, and the religion officially endorsed by each state is Islam. Therefore, is it possible that in these countries any Muslims could face persecution on the basis of their religion? It is impossible.

However, as mentioned in this thesis earlier, Chandrachud has mentioned in his paper that there are groups which come under the Islamic faith, as well as those groups which are separate from the list of six religions mentioned in the CAA that are being religiously persecuted in these three countries. “Jews, Muslim minorities like Shias or Ahmadiyahs, even atheists or agnostics, may have been persecuted, on grounds of religion, in Afghanistan, Pakistan or Bangladesh. Yet, the CAA turns a blind eye towards them. In covering only some religious communities and not others, the CAA violates the principle of secularism which is a part of constitutional morality”.¹⁰³ The BJP also ignored the persecution of the Rohingyas in Myanmar, who are now living as refugees in Bangladesh, but will excluded or prohibited from seeking asylum in India due to the CAA.

5.2 Labeling Protestors as “Terrorists”

In countering the validity of anti-CAA constituents and their movements, the BJP and its adherents started to label them as terrorists and those wishing to disrupt the harmony of the nation. By doing this, pro-CAA constituents attempt to counter the frames proffered by anti-CAA activists and delegitimize their opponents’ arguments. This process of counter-framing occurred at rallies organized by the BJP during election season, as well as at protests organized by pro-CAA constituents coming from members of the public. Such rallies were held across various parts of India, and here protestors were countering the claims of secularism and constitutionality proffered initially by anti-CAA activists. One such protestor at a pro-CAA rally said:

“¹⁰⁴There’s only one country for the Hindus (India). The Muslims have fifty-seven. Pakistan was made upon the religion of Islam, and therefore India belongs to the

¹⁰³ Chandrachud, Abhinav. "Secularism and the Citizenship Amendment Act." *Indian Law Review* 4, no. 2 (2020): 138-162. p.2

¹⁰⁴ TheWire. Voices From Pro-CAA and Anti-CAA Rallies in Mumbai https://youtu.be/1bQ_BL_iOFg

Hindus. I completely support making India a Hindu theocracy. In Hinduism we consider the whole world to be part of our community, but if you infiltrate the country and engage in terrorism, then we are right to shoot you in the head. People say terrorism has no religion, but then why do we find all terrorists to be Muslim?”

We can see here that pro-CAA activists not only align with the BJP’s Hindu nationalistic basis, but go as far as to say that constitutionally, India should become a Hindu nation. This alluded to the partition-era debate, where Hindu nationalists were aggrieved at the prospect of an Islamic Pakistan, but not a Hindu India. This can also be viewed as a treatment of Muslims as outsiders in India, by labeling Muslims as infiltrators, and pro-CAA constituents also attempt to delegitimize anti-CAA constituents by labelling them as terrorists.

“All these liberals, communists, and jihadis are working together to cause disharmony in the nation. They come throw stones at our police forces, and then hide behind their women. Let them go to Pakistan.”¹⁰⁵

This statement by another protestor can be seen as another example of viewing Muslims as outsiders and making an allude to the notion that Pakistan is the inherent homeland for all Muslims in the region. This particular protestor refers to anti-CAA constituents “hiding behind their women” as a reference to the protestors at Shaheen Bagh, which I will be illustrating upon in the next chapter.

Mobilizing activities in favor of and against the Citizenship Amendment Act coincided with former U.S President’s Donald Trump’s visit to India. Pro-CAA constituents, in order to proffer their counter-frame of labeling anti-CAA activists as terrorists, suggested these actors were acting under the premise of “damaging India’s reputation on a global scale. One such pro-CAA activist at a rally in New Delhi stated:

“The main intent of the anti-CAA protestors is to spread violence and instigate riots. Since Trump is visiting India tomorrow, they want to cause disharmony violence to

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

tarnish the reputation of our country on a global scale. These are not peaceful demonstrators. They've picked up sticks and stones close to Hindu neighborhoods and have beaten people and caused them bodily harm. You can feel the violence starting to brew in these neighborhoods. We (pro-CAA activists) have no masks, stones, or sticks with us. We're peaceful. We don't want to instigate riots. Trump knows there are undesirable people of certain religions in every country.”¹⁰⁶

The neighborhoods this activist refers to were the ones where the New Delhi riots of 2020 occurred, where disproportionately Muslim homes and businesses were destroyed, and 36 Muslims lost their lives with 15 Hindus as a result of the violence. The New Delhi riots occurred as a result of increasing hostility between anti-CAA and pro-CAA constituents in New Delhi, and in the buildup to the violence, several BJP ministers, including Prime Minister Modi himself were seen making incendiary remarks. At a rally in Jharkhand while addressing protests against the CAA, Modi said:

“The Congress and its supporters are creating disruptions within the country. They are committing arson on the streets. Those who are lighting these fires, and when we see their images on TV, we can identify who exactly these arsonists are from the clothes they wear.”¹⁰⁷

By referring to identifying “arsonists from the clothes they wear”, Modi is referring to the skull caps worn by people of the Islamic faith. Another BJP minister, Kapil Mishra, called on pro-CAA activists to take to the streets as a measure to forcefully disperse those protesting against the bill, including the women of Shaheen Bagh. He stated:

“Delhi should keep burning. This is what they want. That is why they have blocked these roads and are creating a riot-like atmosphere. Our side hasn't thrown a stone yet. The police are with us, and I want to say that until Trump is still in India we'll watch

¹⁰⁶ Mojo Story. Pro-CAA Protestors <https://youtu.be/vbZHcifLARY>

¹⁰⁷ Hindustan Times. Arsonists identifiable by clothes https://youtu.be/6v8_OpeVSIU

quietly. But after that, we won't even listen to you (police) if the roads aren't cleared. After that, we'll have to descend on the streets.”¹⁰⁸

The day after Mishra made this speech is marked as the day the New Delhi riots began and lasted for 6 days, which as evidenced above shows much of the violence, deaths, and destruction of property was borne by the Muslim community.

Apart from the frames that countered anti-CAA activists, the BJP also engaged in counter-framing activity that would be targeted at mobilizing potential constituents in their favor. They did this by addressing common public perceptions of the CAA and NRC laws by making claims about who they would be applicable to, from what date would they apply, and why Indian Muslims need not fear the laws, however in doing so, they began to contradict their own statements regarding the bills. I illustrate this in the next sub-chapter.

5.3 Doublespeak by the BJP

Doublespeak is defined as language used to deceive usually through concealment or misrepresentation of truth. When discussing the CAA and NRC laws, members of the BJP have engaged in doublespeak which had led to uncertainty and confusion among India's Muslim minority as well as those who are protesting against the CAA. While addressing the Indian parliament in December 2019, Home Minister Amit Shah mentioned that the NRC will be implemented across India, and not just in the state of Assam where the exercise was already conducted. He said:

“When we bring the NRC, no infiltrators in India will be safe. We have made a declaration to the parliament and announced that the NRC will be implemented in a periodic and systematic manner.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Hindustan Times. “Only 3 days...” BJP leaders' threat to disobey Delhi Cops amid CAA Protests <https://youtu.be/c64KynJC1X8>

¹⁰⁹ Rajya Sabha TV. Citizenship Amendment Bill introduced in Lok Sabha <https://youtu.be/D7XfqQm7Zxl>

However, just 12 days after Shah’s address in parliament, while addressing an election rally in Jharkhand, Prime Minister Narendra Modi dismissed the implementation of the NRC, and falsely claimed it was never discussed in parliament. He said:

“Such lies are being peddled about the NRC. This was made by the Congress decades ago. We haven’t made the law, neither have we discussed it in parliament. The law has not been drafted or ratified in any way. This is nothing but rumormongering.”¹¹⁰

This shows one example of how the BJP has contradicted itself when discussing the implementation of the NRC across India. When the NRC was implemented in the state of Assam, 1.9 million individuals were excluded from the register of citizens. From these, several were held in detention centers made by the state to house these individuals on a temporary basis until their citizenship status was determined. However, at the same rally in Jharkhand, Prime Minister Modi stated there aren’t any detention centers in India, and no Muslims have been sent to such centers. He stated:

“This country’s Muslims are not being sent to detention centers, neither are there such centers established in India. Since 2014 when my government was elected, till today there have been no discussions regarding an NRC law being implemented. Rumors are being spread by anti-India elements.”¹¹¹

This statement by the Prime Minister directly contradicts his own cabinet members’ debates, speeches and arguments put forth in the Indian parliament.

Another way in which the BJP engages in doublespeak with regards to defending the CAA and NRC laws, is when they claim who exactly the laws are applicable to. When they defend the CAA on humanitarian grounds, they often refer to the religious persecution faced by religious minorities in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. In reference to the treatment

¹¹⁰ Hindustan Times. Arsonists identifiable by clothes https://youtu.be/6v8_OpeVSIU

¹¹¹ Indian Express. PM Modi on detention centers in India, CAA and NRC <https://youtu.be/Gd-bwVUqb-s>

of minorities in countries where the state endorsed religion is Islam, Prime Minister Modi stated:

“In Pakistan, women have to face severe restrictions, especially if they are not Muslim. They are forced to marry and have become victims to forced religious conversion. This occurs since Pakistan is an Islamic country, and their ways and traditions are separate from ours (Hindus).”¹¹²

However, within India, several states ruled by the BJP have introduced what is known as the “Love Jihad” laws, which is described as an Islamophobic conspiracy theory propagated by Hindu nationalists. According to “Love Jihad”, Muslim men in India target Hindu women to potentially marry and forcefully convert to Islam. This proposed law has been used to indirectly suppress inter-faith marriages in India and has seen Muslim men subject to intimidation and violence by Hindu nationalists. Thus, the Prime Minister contradicts himself when he states his government has it in their interests to protect the rights of women as the Indian state is currently in the process of establishing laws which disenfranchise men and women from their freedom of rights in courtship.

5.4 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have attempted to use the concept of counter-framing to categorize the rhetors made by pro-CAA constituents and members of the BJP against the injustice claims initially proffered by anti-CAA constituents. The counter-frames hinged directly on claims on unconstitutionality, legal validity, and requirements for the CAA laws, and the Indian state also attempt to discredit those opposing the CAA by means of intimidation and violence. Pro-CAA constituents were seen in favor of Hindu nationalist aims and beliefs that cast Muslims as outsiders in the Indian state, and advocated for India to be defined as a Hindu state, alluding to the post-partition era debates which saw the creation of an Islamic Pakistan

In the next chapter I will be speaking about the protests at Shaheen Bagh, and how the Muslim women present at these protests used maternal frames to not be susceptible to the

¹¹² Hindustan Times. Recognize those who lie <https://youtu.be/h6HcASuWXko>

BJP's tactics of intimidation and violence, and broke gender norms by entering the political arena. These were some of the most resonant and longest enduring protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act, and in the forthcoming chapter I will attempt to demonstrate how they achieved this standing.

Chapter 6. Women of Shaheen Bagh

“India is like a flower bouquet. It is full of flowers of all colors, and a bouquet does not look beautiful unless it has varying colors in it. Sadly, Modi doesn’t understand this.”¹¹³

The quote above is from a woman who was present at the Shaheen Bagh sit-in demonstration on the night of 8th January 2019. In the sheer scale with which Muslim women in India came out to protest against the CAA and NRC laws was unprecedented in the country, as the perception of Muslim women in the country is that of women who are engaged in the role of homemakers and caregivers. In this section I will argue that the women of Shaheen Bagh and their grievances, when viewed from a lens of maternal frames, illustrates why they were successful in having their protest last three months (disbanded only due to the Covid-19 lockdown in India). I will present the role of women in the anti-CAA protests and their grievances in three sub-sections. Firstly, I will illustrate the reasons described by the women of Shaheen Bagh to engage in political activity as a result of the violence seen at Jamia Milia Islamia University, and the dangers the Indian police force poses to anti-CAA constituents. Thereafter I will discuss how these women broke away from traditional gender norms and the perception of Muslim in Indian society and congregate at Shaheen Bagh. Lastly, I will present the ways in which the women of Shaheen Bagh used emotional resonance through their grievances to appeal to prospective anti-CAA constituents.

6.1 Attacks on our Children

On the evening of December 15th, the Delhi police broke into Jamia Milia Islamia University’s campus, and was caught on camera attacking students in their dorms and libraries. The students at the university were engaged in anti-CAA protests over the last few days, and the Delhi police, under direction from the central government, assaulted the university’s students. This was one of the primary reasons prompted by the protestors at

¹¹³ NDTV Prime Time, Jan 09, 2020. Ravish’s ground report on the unshakable women of Delhi’s Shaheen Bagh <https://youtu.be/TQm7nBa49WQ>

Shaheen Bagh to come out at sit in demonstration not just against the CAA and NRC, but also for the future of their children. One protestor at Shaheen Bagh stated:

“Women over here have started congregating at Shaheen Bagh after December 15 because our children and students were attacked at the Jamia Milia Islamia University. Most women here are mothers. Yes, we were already protesting against the attack on the country’s constitution, but the Delhi police decided to assault students in the university’s campus, and our fellow sisters were assaulted in their dormitories. My children one day will study at such universities and live in these dormitories, but we worry about our children’s future. Modi talks about giving our children the best future we can, but we don’t feel they have a future anymore because of everything that has happened.”¹¹⁴

Just as with the students of Jamia University, several other instances were reported where the police, under orders of the state, used excessive force to disperse protestors. The women of Shaheen Bagh made conscious efforts to ensure the young, college going students would not be harmed by themselves taking to the streets and joining the anti-CAA protests.

The women of Shaheen Bagh also addressed the fact that they are concerned about the future generations of their children in this country due to the passage of the CAA and NRC laws. They view the laws as discriminatory towards the Muslims, and claim the debates surrounding the bills communalize society in general, and leave more volatile environments for their children to grow up in. The women stress that not only do they want to protect their children from the attacks of the Delhi police, but the overall targeting of Muslims in India under the Modi government, which due to the CAA and NRC laws could affect several future generations of Muslims in India to come:

“Is this the kind of society in which we can raise children? At a young age, a child should only be concerned with his or her academics and extracurricular activities. And this government is feeding communalism to our children. They are dividing these young kids on the lines of Hindus versus Muslims”¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

This can be viewed as an example of how the women of Shaheen Bagh deploy maternal frames and use their standings as mothers to address political concerns of their identity groups. Noonan describes maternal frames as tools which capture the notion of collective action based on traditional gender and family roles of women.¹¹⁶ In the forthcoming subsection, I will refer to how the norms of gender and tradition were broken away from at Shaheen Bagh and moved away from the traditional ways in which Indian Muslim women are perceived.

6.2 Breaking away from Gender Roles

The perception of Muslim women in India has been deemed as very conservative and mostly confined to the roles of homemakers and mothers. Which is why when the Shaheen Bagh protests occurred, it captured the nation's attention as collective action primarily originating from Muslim women was never seen before. One of the women protestors at Shaheen Bagh stated:

“In Islam women are kept always under the protection of the burqa and are covered. But the women who are here have left their covers at home. This is unprecedented. The women who have come here to speak out have an aim in mind. And we will achieve this. As long as the CAA and NRC laws aren't removed, we are not moving an inch.”¹¹⁷

The primary grievance presented at Shaheen Bagh regarding the CAA and NRC laws is that the provisions are unconstitutional, and against the secular make-up of the country. The laws in tandem are perceived to be tools which will directly disenfranchise large numbers of Muslims across the country, but rather than communalize the issue as a primarily Muslim grievance, the women of Shaheen Bagh state this is a matter of national consequence.

¹¹⁶ Noonan, Rita K. "Women against the state: Political opportunities and collective action frames in Chile's transition to democracy." In *Sociological Forum*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 81-111. Kluwer Academic Publishers-Plenum Publishers, 1995. p. 88

¹¹⁷ NDTV Prime Time, Jan 09, 2020. Ravish's ground report on the unshakable women of Delhi's Shaheen Bagh <https://youtu.be/TQm7nBa49WQ>

“This is an attack on the country’s constitution. If we would have taken to the streets to address any of the plights India’s Muslims face, such as the recent mob lynching episodes against Muslim men, our protest would have been given a communal color. Since this is regarding the constitution and soul of our nation, we have decided to come out of our homes and stand against this bill. All the economically backward groups affected by this who may not own property in India or be able to provide sufficient evidence of citizenship, where will they go? Who will stand for them?”¹¹⁸

The reason why this can be cited as an example of Muslim women breaking gender norms is because as one of the demographics least represented in all areas of Indian society, to hear calls of constitutionality and secularism collectively from Muslim women was not witnessed before in Indian society. These women also state that it will be India’s least economically advanced factions that will be most adversely affected by this law, as not everyone possesses property or assets in India to prove citizenship. The women of Shaheen Bagh indicate taking a moral stand by stating they will not provide proof of citizenship, as it is unconstitutional and unlawful for the government to ask them to do so.

Protestors here also address some of the inherent qualities of Hindu nationalism seen through the recent laws and legislations approved by the BJP. The triple talaq bill was much debated and spoken about, and after it was passed and the triple talaq dissolved, the BJP labelled it as a victory for the rights of Muslim women. However, one protestor alluded to the pretense behind abrogating triple talaq and mentioned that the BJP absolved it not for women empowerment, but for curbing special provisions provided to Muslims under the Muslim Personal Law. She states:

“Certain journalists are spreading rumors that our protest will come to an end any day now. Even if we’re shot at by bullets, or beaten by sticks, we will not move an inch. Who is Modi to ask our whether we are Indian or not? He was under the impression the Muslim women never leave their homes. They absolved the triple talaq by

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

claiming it was for the empowerment for Muslim women, and today we are here on the streets then why is he in hiding? Why isn't he listening to us now?"¹¹⁹

Protestors at Shaheen Bagh also articulated the notion that when working in tandem, the CAA and NRC would be used to disenfranchise solely India's Muslims, as made evident by the results of the NRC exercise in Assam. One such protestor stated:

“When they conducted the NRC exercise in Assam, they found 900,000 Hindus and 400,000 Muslims who couldn't provide ample documents to prove their citizenship. So now they've come up with the CAA, which will grant the Hindus citizenship, but will render the Muslims stateless. Even if I can, I am not going to show them my proof of citizenship. Why should I? Who is Amit Shah to ask us for our papers? Tell him to show us his papers first.”

6.3 The Battle for India's Soul

Protestors at Shaheen Bagh exemplified through their speeches and texts that the BJP, operating under ideals found in Hindutva and Hindu nationalism, is intent on disenfranchising Muslims and passing the notion that India is a homeland for the Hindus. In the examples below I will list the texts in which the women of Shaheen Bagh allude back to the post-partition era of India, where they claim their forefathers chose to remain in a secular India, rather than move to a theocratic Pakistan.

“Our Prime Minister should know we are just as patriotic as he is. Our ancestors have shed their blood for the freedom of this country. We feel compelled to take to the streets. We were only concerned initially with the upbringing of our children and their education, but the Prime Minister and Home Minister have forced us to take to the streets. We've fought for India, and our sacrifices are in its soil. They are erasing the history of India's Muslims from the country.”¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

Here the protestor refers to the Indian independence struggle and attempts to emotionally resonate with audiences by stating that their ancestors were part of those activists who fought against the British Raj, and today their descendants are being asked to prove their “Indianness”. This protestor’s speech exemplifies the idea under Hindu nationalism which views Muslims as outsiders.

Another protestor alludes to the future generations of Muslims, and refers to Home Minister Amit Shah’s claims that all Hindus, Christians, Sikhs, Parsis, Jains, and Buddhists would be offered citizenship under the CAA, and all other “infiltrators would be removed”¹²¹

“We feel as if we’re doing something for our freedom, for our country, and for our children. They’ve made us so sad and emotional by doing this. For decades, my parents and grandparents have called India their home. And today they’re asking us to prove whether we’re Indian or not? We will stand here day and night for our children’s future. Amit Shah says we will not provide citizenship to Muslims. Why? Isn’t India their country as well? Don’t they belong to this country too?”¹²²

Overall, as the title of this thesis would suggest, anti-CAA constituents, including the women of Shaheen Bagh, have made claims that by imposing laws which violate India’s constitution, the government is putting at risk the social fabric of India. These grievances were amplified most prominently at anti-CAA rallies and at Shaheen Bagh. A protestor exemplifies her intent to protest as an example of battling for the nation’s soul when she said to a journalist, “Sir, I’ve come here to save my children. I am scared and upset. This is the first time I’ve ever come to a protest in my life. I just want to save my children and my India.”¹²³

Chapter Summary

Overall, this chapter tries to illustrate how the grievances of protestors at Shaheen Bagh can be understood through maternal frames and emotional resonance. Shaheen Bagh can be listed

¹²¹ <https://www.thequint.com/news/india/bjp-twitter-official-nrc-citizenship-amendment-act-election-rally-tweet-deleted>

¹²² NDTV Prime Time, Jan 09, 2020. Ravish’s ground report on the unshakable women of Delhi’s Shaheen Bagh <https://youtu.be/TQm7nBa49WQ>

¹²³ Ibid.

as the longest running protest against the CAA and NRC laws, disbanded only due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and effective in the sense that the protest was reported and written about in publications globally. The women of Shaheen Bagh used these standings of mothers and homemakers to engage in political activity, which as Noonan has mentioned in her paper, was a successful tool to get the group's grievances heard in various Latin American countries.¹²⁴

Having taken to the streets as a result of students being assaulted by the police while protesting against the CAA, constituents at Shaheen Bagh referred to the future of Muslims in this country, which they deem is at risk due to a government that puts ideals of Hindu nationalism at the forefront when making any legislation. By reflecting to ideas such as secularism and constitutionality, the women of Shaheen Bagh broke away from the ways in which they were commonly perceived, and amplified their grievances effectively across not only Indian, but global audiences.

¹²⁴ Noonan, Rita K. "Women against the state: Political opportunities and collective action frames in Chile's transition to democracy." In *Sociological Forum*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 81-111. Kluwer Academic Publishers-Plenum Publishers, 1995. p. 90.

Conclusion

Discussion and Closing Remarks

What this thesis aims to do is present an overview of the country in the years since the BJP was elected in 2014, particularly on matters of religious freedom and civil rights. In their election manifestos from 2014 and 2019, the BJP has repeated their emphasis on three core principle changes that the party has been defined by for several years now; the construction of a Ram temple in Ayodhya, the abrogation of Article 370, and the implementation of a Uniform Civil Code across a country. At the time of writing this thesis, the supreme court of India has given permission to construct a Ram temple in Ayodhya on the same site the Babri mosque was demolished, Article 370 of the Indian constitution stands abrogated revoked Kashmir's autonomous status, and discussions are currently ongoing for the implementation of a Uniform Civil Code in India after the Covid-19 crisis were to end. These core issues that the BJP has worked on has direct implications on the Muslims of India, and now with the implementation of the CAA and NRC laws, the country's Muslims perceive these bills as the largest existential threat to their well-being in India since the post-partition era.

The reason why I chose to view the collective action regarding the CAA and NRC laws through the lens of frame analysis is because, in framing theory I could understand how beliefs and meanings proffered by constituents would result in collective action, and since collective movements following the passage of the CAA in India occurred in massive numbers, I deemed this frame appropriate to study my researchable phenomenon.

To understand the difference between the ideals and meanings of those supporting the CAA and NRC laws, and those who opposed it, I took into consideration the contesting environment which Benford and Snow propose all framing activity takes place. It was through understanding sensitizing concepts such as injustice frames, counter frames, and several others that I was able to view opposing ideas competing against each other, and how each side articulates and proffers these frames. Speeches and texts of each constituent must in some way resonate with a targeted audience, and I believe emotional resonance is essential in translating ideas and texts into collective action.

I was able to apply the theoretical aspects of collective action frames to my empirical case study set in India and analyzed events that transpired in the country from December 2019

when the CAA law was formally passed in parliament. From viewing anti-CAA rallies, protests, speeches, and the events at Shaheen Bagh, I was able to understand what concepts of frame analysis I would need to make sense of the role they play in a competing environment against the BJP government, and those who support the passage of the CAA. Alternatively, I viewed the speeches and beliefs articulated by members of the BJP as well as pro-CAA constituents to understand how they would counter, and ultimately attempt to delegitimize the arguments put forth by anti-CAA constituents. I was able to see how the counter claims made against anti-CAA constituents led to violence, as the language used to counter their claims can only be described as incendiary, and this was not just used by audience members or bystanders, but by the Prime Minister of India himself.

What I was also able to understand through this research is how a group of women became immune to the instigation of violence by pro-CAA activists. The women of Shaheen Bagh used their standings as mothers and caregivers in society, and though the BJP tried to delegitimize them verbally, they were not able to use violent means of dispersal in the way they had with other anti-CAA constituents. Seeing these women invoke ideas of secularism, unity, and constitutionality, the Shaheen Bagh protests lasted the longest in the contesting environment my research is situated in and was successful in resonating with audiences on a global scale.

Ultimately, if I were to propose a conclusion or discovery made from this research, I would state that currently in India there are two opposing forces at odds with each other: those who view India as a secular state, and those who would see the country described as a Hindu theocracy. The current government, in their attempts to pass legislation and create an overall environment that favors Hindus over all other religions in the country, is becoming more authoritarian in the way it operates and quells dissent. It should come as no surprise that India is viewed now in some circles as an electoral autocracy.

Scope for further research

Moving forward, researchers in the future can look at how India under the BJP is becoming more authoritarian and which institutions of democracy, is the government interfering in. Studies have shown that India's judiciary is coming increasingly under the influence of the

government, as is the Election Commission of India, whose sole purpose is to ensure fair elections across the nation. As a journalist I am keenly aware of how most broadcast news networks in India have become government mouthpieces, and thus every institution that makes India a democracy is at risk under this administration.

In their quest for absolute power in the country, the main rallying cry by which the BJP garners support is by claiming the country's Hindus are in danger, and it is India's Muslims who are at the received end of this alleged victimization. Today in India, alongside the CAA and NRC, we are seeing other laws that use religion as a formative basis, and almost all of these laws disadvantage the Muslims. The Love Jihad laws, which essentially penalizes any Muslim male who wishes to marry a Hindu woman, is one example of how Islamophobia is being used by the BJP to rally their primary voter base. As seen recently during the Covid-19 pandemic, Muslims were also victimized as "Corona-Jihadis", another conspiracy which blames India's Muslims as the leading cause of the pandemic. Bearing in mind such instances, I will recommend future researchers looking into India to study how the government is moving towards autocracy, and is marginalizing Muslims to strengthen their hold over power.

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