

Accepted Manuscript

Title: Aspirations for national belonging and support for collective action among marginalized groups

Authors: Emmy Lindstam

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2026.2686735>

Publication: Conflict Management and Peace Science

Citation: Lindstam, E. (2026). Aspirations for national belonging and support for collective action among marginalized groups. Conflict Management and Peace Science, 07388942261457944.

This article has been accepted for publication and undergone full peer review but has not been through the copyediting, typesetting, pagination and proofreading process, which may lead to differences between this version and the Version of Record. Please cite this article as doi: <https://doi.org/10.1108/QJPS-06-2024-0083>

Aspirations for National Belonging and Support for Collective Action among Marginalized Groups

Emmy Lindstam¹

July 2, 2026²

Abstract

Across the globe, ethnic minorities experience discrimination and exclusion in contexts of rising majoritarianism. Yet, many minorities suffer in silence, fearing that asserting ethnic identity and participating in protest will challenge their commitment to the nation in the eyes of broader society. In this article, I theorize that collective action frames that draw on national symbols and portray ethnic grievances as pertaining to the nation, more broadly, can strengthen support for protest among ethnic minorities. I test this theory through two original survey experiments with a sample of Indian Muslims (N=1,311) in the context of rising Hindu nationalism. The findings reveal that “national identity frames” strengthen support for ethnic resistance while “ethnic identity frames” weaken support under exclusionary nationalism. The findings suggest that minorities are more supportive of protest movements that employ collective action frames depicting ethnic resistance as an act of patriotism.

¹Assistant Professor, School of Politics, Economics and Global Affairs, IE University, email: emmy.lindstam@ie.edu

²I would like to thank Sabine Carey, Vasiliki Fouka and Harald Schoen, as well as participants at the 2023 EMPESA workshop. This study was pre-registered and has undergone ethical review. Competing interests: The author declare none.

1 Introduction

In December 2019, thousands of Indian Muslims took to the streets, joining the mass protests against the passing of the contentious Citizenship Amendment Bill. The bill was widely criticized for using religion as a criterion for citizenship, and its transition into law caused widespread anger and fear among the Muslim community who questioned their place in a country increasingly resembling a “majoritarian state” (Chatterji et al. 2019) or an “ethnic democracy” (Jaffrelot 2021a). Waving the Tricolour Indian flag and chanting the national anthem, Indian Muslims openly denounced the marginalization of religious minorities in India. The mass mobilization of Indian Muslims in 2019 stood in stark contrast with a prolonged period of “Muslim silence” preceding the approval of the bill. Political commentators periodically referred to this “puzzling silence” in the context of deepening nationalist exclusion (Ahmed 2019; Chakravarty 2019), and some concluded that Hindu nationalist hegemony had fostered the “apparent withdrawal of Muslims to restricted enclaves of political action” (Kursheed 2019: 218).

When do marginalized groups stay silent when faced with exclusionary policies, and when are they more likely to react by voicing their grievances openly? Political parties defending exclusionary nationalism are gaining ground across the world. Yet, while some findings suggest that minorities are likely to assert their ethnic identity (Bisin et al. 2011; Fouka 2020) and mobilize as a response to exclusionary policies (Oskooii 2020; Weiss et al. 2021) – at least under some conditions (Cho et al. 2006; Pantoja et al. 2001), other findings suggest that minorities disassociate from their devalued identity (Fouka 2019; Mussweiler et al. 2000) or retreat from public life (Hobbs and Lajevardi 2019; Schildkraut 2005).

Drawing on research from the social identity tradition (Reicher 2004; Tajfel and Turner 1986) and research on protest behavior among ethnic minorities (Bonilla and Tillery 2020; Klandermans 2014), I provide a theoretical framework aimed at improving our understanding of the link between social identity and support for collective action among marginalized groups.¹ I propose two interrelated arguments, building on the conjecture that many ethnic minorities aspire to be fully accepted as part of the national community, yet do not wish to disassociate from their ethnic identity. First, I suggest that where nationalism is exclusionary (where the dominant ethnic group is viewed as *central* to national identity), minorities may

¹Throughout the article, I use the term *collective action* to refer to minorities’ willingness to support movements that challenge discriminatory state policies or practices. The terms *protest*, *mobilization* and *resistance* are used interchangeably to denote collective efforts aimed at defending group rights.

be wary of asserting their ethnic identity and articulating ethnic interests, as this could be construed as “anti-national”. Second, building on the previous argument, I propose that certain *narratives of mobilization* promoted by political entrepreneurs and protest participants can counteract minorities’ tendency to retreat from public life. I theorize that collective action frames that draw on national symbols and portray ethnic grievances as pertaining to the nation, more broadly, can strengthen support for resistance among minorities who experience insecure national belonging. Where minorities are made to feel as though they must choose between minority and national identity, narratives that portray ethnic protest as an act of patriotism are expected to encourage collective action and thus enable opportunities for social change.

To evaluate the theoretical argument, I conduct two original survey experiments in India, a context in which Muslims increasingly face insecure national belonging amid growing Hindu nationalism (Jaffrelot 2021b). 1,311 Indian Muslims participated in the survey experiments, which were fielded between March and April 2021. In the survey, respondents receive short descriptions of three different protest movements and are asked to what extent they endorse each movement. I examine whether support for these movements is lower under exclusionary nationalism by randomly assigning respondents an exercise designed to strengthen the perceived centrality of Hindu identity to the Indian nation. Subsequently, I evaluate the central argument regarding the role of collective action frames in mobilizing support by randomly assigning additional descriptions and visual illustrations to each of the three protest movements according to either a (1) national identity frame, (2) an ethnic identity frame or (3) a neutral frame.

The findings reveal that support for collective action is lower among Muslim respondents when the centrality of Hindu identity to the Indian nation is salient. The findings also show that respondents are less willing to openly reveal their Muslim identity under such conditions. When asked to select a social media avatar – some of which clearly signal Muslim identity while others do not – to represent them in an online interaction, Muslim respondents in the treatment group become 6 percentage points less likely to select an avatar that clearly signals Muslim identity. Together, these findings indicate that minorities are less likely to assert ethnic identity and more likely to decline opportunities to articulate ethnic grievances when their belonging as “true” members of the nation is challenged.

Under what conditions are minorities more likely to challenge their oppression, in contexts

where asserting minority identity is viewed as unpatriotic or “anti-national” behavior in the eyes of broader society? In line with the theoretical argument, the findings underscore the importance of narratives of mobilization in shaping preferences for resistance among individuals who experience insecure national belonging. I find that collective action frames that portray minorities’ grievances as pertaining to the secular nation, more broadly, strengthen support for resistance among marginalized groups, while ethnic or “particularistic” frames dissuade minorities from endorsing or participating in protest.

Understanding the obstacles that minorities face when deciding whether to mobilize is of critical importance. Because ethnic and religious minorities are systematically underrepresented in formal political institutions across much of the world (Bird et al. 2011; Dancygier et al. 2019), protest often constitutes one of the few available channels through which they can meaningfully express grievances and make claims. In India, for instance, Muslims face entrenched barriers to political inclusion or representation, even by secular parties (Farooqui 2020; Allie 2024). Although protest may appear unlikely to succeed or directly achieve policy change for minority communities, research shows that it can generate important spillover effects on public opinion and legislative behavior (Gause 2022; Wasow 2020).

My research provides new insights into the behavior of ethnic minorities in contexts of nationalist exclusion (Haas and Lindstam 2024; Majumdar 2023) and contributes to broader debates on nationalism and ethnicity in South Asia (Badrinathan et al. 2024; Kalin and Siddiqui 2020; Malik 2025). It also contributes to the social identity tradition, which seeks to explain the conditions under which resistance among marginalized groups emerges (Klandermans 2014; Tajfel and Turner 1986). By bridging this framework with research on collective action frames (Benford and Snow 2000; Bonilla and Tillery 2020) and the effects of narratives (Williamson and Malik 2021), my work highlights how framing can generate short-term openings for mobilization in contexts where minorities might otherwise downplay their identities. It also provides new insights into how minorities “manage” their identities in settings where asserting minority identity is viewed as unpatriotic or “anti-national.” As such, it contributes to research on the relationship between minority and national identity, and how dual identities among minorities can be formed and sustained (Arababah et al. 2021; Charnysh et al. 2015; Simonsen 2016).

My research also contributes to a strand of literature examining responses to exclusion and discrimination among disadvantaged groups (Abdelgadir and Fouka 2020; Hobbs and

Lajevardi 2019; Oskooii 2020), and whether being targeted by exclusionary policies mobilizes or demobilizes (Oskooii 2016; Weiss et al. 2021). I theorize that minorities are likely to feel torn between a wish to defend their rights and a desire to secure recognition as full members of the nation. Accordingly, they should be more likely to mobilize as a response to exclusionary policies when protest is framed in a way that makes participation less likely to challenge their commitment to the nation in the eyes of broader society.

Finally, the article engages with longstanding questions in comparative politics about the conditions under which marginalized groups mobilize. Classic theories of collective action emphasize that mobilization depends not only on grievances, but also on resources, opportunities, group consciousness, and the perceived legitimacy of protest (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011; McAdam 1999; Tarrow 2022). Exclusion and repression raise the social and political costs of protest, often deterring mobilization even among highly dissatisfied groups (Davenport 2007). In such settings, minorities may falsify their preferences or refrain from action unless new cues render protest more socially permissible or create common knowledge that others share similar intentions (Chwe 2013; Kuran 1991). My research speaks to this literature by highlighting how certain collective action frames can enable individuals who would otherwise keep their preferences private to support protest movements by reducing the perceived costs of dissent.

2 Theoretical Framework

2.1 Dual Identity, Insecure Belonging and Preferences for Resistance

Under what conditions do marginalized groups support collective action? The social identity tradition (Tajfel and Turner 1986) offers a rich framework for understanding when collective action among disadvantaged groups is more or less likely. According to this perspective, individuals who belong to devalued social groups are likely to respond to negative social identity in one of two ways: by attempting to dissociate from the stigmatized group through assimilation or “passing,” or by engaging in collective efforts to improve the group’s status. The former response weakens group cohesion and “creates obstacles to mobilizing group members for collective action over common interests” (Tajfel and Turner 1986: 288). In contrast, maintaining strong identification with the subordinate group – despite incentives to disassociate – makes collective action a viable pathway to restore group status and recognition. Consistent with this logic, a large body of research finds that ethnic identification is a key predictor of

protest participation among minorities (Merseeth 2018; Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2013; Ufkes et al. 2016).

Strong identification with a disadvantaged group, however, is not in itself sufficient to predict mobilization. Many marginalized individuals maintain deep attachment to their ethnic or religious community yet refrain from engaging in collective action. Fear of reprisals, lack of leadership or efficacy, or internalized inferiority may partly explain this reluctance (Allie 2025; Reicher and Haslam 2006; Rozenas and Zhukov 2019), but other mechanisms – consistent with the social identity framework – are also likely at play. Individuals rarely define themselves through a single group membership. Members of minority communities often identify simultaneously with their ethnic or religious group and the broader national community – a pattern commonly referred to as *dual identification* (Simon and Ruhs 2008; Klandermans 2014). This dual attachment is prevalent across diverse contexts, including among immigrant, ethnic, and religious minorities (Hopkins 2011; Fleischmann and Verkuyten 2016). Such dual attachments raise important questions about how multiple identities interact in shaping minorities’ pursuit of positive social identity. In particular, when efforts to enhance the status of the minority group risk undermining group members’ claim to belong to national community, individuals may face complex trade-offs over how to best advance their group’s social standing.

I theorize that, in certain contexts, minorities face a trade-off between mobilizing to improve the social standing of their ethnic group and maintaining credibility as loyal members of the nation. The extent to which this trade-off emerges depends on the type of nationalism that is salient in a given context and period – that is, on how the dominant group imagines the national community as either inclusive or exclusive of ethnic minorities. Nationalisms vary in their degree of ascriptiveness: the extent to which membership in the nation is defined by descent-based attributes such as ethnicity, religion, or language (Mylonas and Tudor 2023; Singh 2022). As the recent global rise of ethnic nationalism illustrates, elites often promote competing national narratives whose relative salience shifts over time. While more inclusionary narratives tend to depict all citizens as equal members of the nation, more exclusionary or ascriptive narratives delineate a national “core” of authentic members and a “periphery” of those who, while nominally included, are never fully accepted as equal members of the nation (Haas and Lindstam 2024; Pandey 1999). These “cores” are not naturally occurring; rather they are actively constructed through strategic boundary-making (Chandra 2012; Singh 2015). I argue that, in contexts where elites in power promote ascriptive national narratives and ex-

clusionary nationalism is salient, minorities are more likely to feel torn between a desire to mobilize for social change, and incentives to signal loyalty to the “core” national community.

Under exclusionary nationalism, marginalized group members bear the burden of proving their genuine belonging through various means, such as frequently asserting their patriotism or strictly conforming to norms of conduct promoted by the dominant group. Deviations from these norms are likely to be met with suspicion, interpreted as signs of “otherness,” or used to justify the group’s inferior status. [Cammett et al. \(2024\)](#) describe this dynamic as “defensive cooperation,” noting that minorities “face the additional burden of adhering to perceived expectations from the majority group, which in turn shapes norms of ingroup policing to protect the group image in a hostile sociopolitical environment” ([Cammett et al. 2024: 322-323](#)). Consistently, [Williams \(2015\)](#) shows that minorities in India often refrain from protesting out of fear of being blamed for causing communal tensions. These dynamics are likely to be amplified in contexts where ethnic minorities are portrayed as less than full members of the nation and where expressing ethnic grievances may further threaten already fragile claims to national belonging.

Protest, in particular, is often perceived as inherently unpatriotic ([Klandermans 2014](#)), especially when carried out by ethnic minorities ([Manekin and Mitts 2022](#)) to advance minority group interests ([Hopkins and Blackwood 2011](#)). As a result, minority citizens striving for recognition as full members of the nation may forgo opportunities to assert ethnic identity publically, or articulate group-based demands or engage in collective action. In this sense, protest participation can present a zero-sum dilemma: voicing ethnic grievances and engaging in collective action could strengthen the standing of one identity (ethnic), but the cost of being marginalized from another (national). Given the symbolic and material benefits associated with national identity – including status, recognition and protection from discrimination – many minorities may strategically refrain.² I argue that under exclusionary nationalism, asserting minority identity becomes more costly for ethnic minorities, as it undermines their perceived credibility as loyal members of the nation, and as a consequence, support for col-

²Research supports the notion that the political consequences of dual identity depend on the perceived compatibility between ethnic and national identity. In interviews with British Muslims, [Hopkins and Blackwood \(2011\)](#) found that awareness of being denied recognition as fully British undermined respondents’ willingness to advocate publicly for their community. Similarly, [Wiley et al. \(2014\)](#) and [Verkuyten \(2017\)](#) show that dual identity does not predict protest when the dominant group fails to recognize minorities’ belonging or emphasizes assimilation.

lective action declines.³

H₁: Under exclusionary nationalism, ethnic minorities will be less willing to assert minority identity.

H₂ : Under exclusionary nationalism, support for collective action will be lower among ethnic minorities.

2.2 Identity Frames and Mobilization

How do opportunities for collective action and social change arise in contexts where asserting minority identity is viewed as unpatriotic, or even “anti-national” behavior? I propose that whether or not minorities will mobilize depends – in part – on the particular narratives of mobilization employed by political entrepreneurs. Support for resistance may therefore rise and fall, depending on the extent to which particular movements frame resistance in ways that resonate with ethnic minorities’ aspirations for national inclusion. Certain *narratives of mobilization* can counteract the tendency among minorities who experience insecure national belonging to retreat from public life. More specifically, collective action frames that portray resistance as a manifestation of patriotism or commitment to the nation could foster support for collective action. Thus, narratives, interpretations, and symbols matter in mobilizing support for collective action (Benford and Snow 2000; Johnston and Noakes 2005) and support for protest movements may rise or fall depending on how resistance is framed.

The theoretical argument highlights the importance of *collective action frames* in shaping support for protest among marginalized groups, especially under exclusionary nationalism. Collective action frames have been defined as “schemata of interpretation that enable individuals to locate, perceive, identify and label” events in their lives and the broader world (Goffman 1974: 21). They are “action oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate social movement activities” (Snow and Benford 1992). Collective action frames can develop in the streets as protesters mobilize, or they can be the product of social movement entrepreneurs “making practical decisions in response to the styles, forms and normative codes of the target audience” (Johnston and Noakes 2005:7). A particular grievance can be framed in many different ways, and this framing may carry consequences for who turns out to protest,

³The pre-registered hypotheses focus on expected behavior among minorities who identify strongly with both their ethnic and national identities. However, the theoretical framework also implies heterogeneous effects based on individuals’ levels of ethnic and national identification. I elaborate on these expectations in Appendix Section A.

why and when.⁴

Gamson (1995) refers to different components of collective action frames, one of which is the *identity component*. The identity component of collective action frames refers to the process of defining “we”. It conveys *who* is experiencing certain grievances and thereby *who* should act collectively for social change. In framing minorities’ grievances, collective action frames vary in the extent to which they emphasize ethnic identities, superordinate identities or intersectional identities (Bonilla and Tillery 2020),⁵ as well as in their use of different symbols (e.g., images, flags, heroes) in highlighting these different identities (Gamson 1995; Williams 2004). The lens of social identity therefore provides different interpretations of the social world and can carry consequences for whether or not action is viewed as legitimate in the eyes of protest participants as well as broader society.

I theorize that frames that highlight national identity can strengthen support for resistance movements among marginalized group members by reducing concern that protest will challenge their commitment to the nation in the eyes of broader society. In continuation, I distinguish between “ethnic identity frames” and “national identity frames”. “Ethnic identity frames” are defined as schemata of interpretation that portray grievances as pertaining uniquely to the ethnic group and that draw on group-specific ethnic symbols (such as ethnic flags, songs, attire etc.). “National identity frames”, in turn, are defined as schemata of interpretation that portray grievances as pertaining to the secular nation, more broadly, and that draw on national symbols (such as the national flag or constitution). While ethnic identity frames justify and seek to motivate resistance in a way that could more easily be construed as being at odds with the national interest, national identity frames lend legitimacy to acts of resistance by framing protest participation as an act of patriotism. National identity frames *link* or *connect* ethnic and national identity depicting the categories as sum-positive rather than zero-sum. Framing resistance in this way implies that protecting ethnic interests also means acting in defense of the nation. Accordingly, protest participation should be less likely to challenge minorities’ commitment to the nation in the eyes of broader society.

H₃ : Support for collective action among ethnic minorities will be **(a)** higher for movements that employ national identity frames and **(b)** lower for movements that employ ethnic identity

⁴Movements may employ more than one particular frame (e.g., organizers may hope to mobilize different constituents with different frames) and may experience internal battles over which particular frame to rely on (Gamson 1995).

⁵For instance, Bonilla and Tillery (2020) find that intersectional identity frames demobilized non-subgroup members of the Black Lives Matter movement

frames.

The hypothesis outlined above (H_3) is not universal, but should apply in certain settings. For instance, national identity frames are not necessarily more effective in mobilizing support for resistance than ethnic identity frames where ethnic minorities are recognized as unquestioned members of the nation. Above all, national identity frames should strengthen support for resistance under exclusionary nationalism, when minorities are asked to “prove” their commitment to the nation. Similarly, ethnic identity frames should weaken support for resistance when the dominant ethnic group is viewed as central:

H_4 : The **(a)** positive effect of national identity frames and **(b)** negative effect of ethnic identity frames on support for collective action will be larger under exclusionary nationalism.

In summary, nations are constructed as “cores” – the essential, natural, unquestioned members – and “peripheries” those who “might be allowed to be part of the nation, but ‘never quite’” (Pandey 1999: 608). Where ethnic minorities are viewed as peripheral yet aspire to be recognized as full members of the nation, ethnic minorities become less willing to assert minority identity as it diminishes their credibility as committed members of the nation (H_1) and less willing to support collective action for social change (H_2). In such contexts, national identity frames may be particularly effective in mobilizing support for collective action as participation is less likely to be viewed as “anti-national” by mainstream society (H_{3a}). Ethnic identity frames, on the other hand, will be less likely to mobilize support (H_{3b}). The stronger the perceived centrality of the dominant ethnic group to national identity, the more effective national identity frames (H_{4a}) and the less effective ethnic identity frames (H_{4b}) should be in mobilizing support for collective action.

3 Empirical Setting

3.1 Case Selection

Empirically evaluating the theoretical argument regarding the role of identity frames requires a careful case selection; not all cases fall within the boundaries to which the theory applies. First, the theory applies in contexts where a large proportion of ethnic minorities identify with their ethnic group yet aspire to be accepted by broader society as full members of the nation (i.e., minorities hold “dual identities”). Second, the theory applies in contexts where a

dominant ethnic group is viewed as central to national identity – at least among large pockets of society. Taking this into account, I evaluate the theoretical argument in India, focusing on preferences for resistance among members of India’s Muslim minority.

Many Indian Muslims hold dual identities. According to a recent representative survey carried out by Pew Research Center on Tolerance and Segregation in India,⁶ 99% of Muslims report feeling “proud to be an Indian”. An equal proportion of respondents report also feeling “proud to be a Muslim”. It appears, therefore, that the great majority of Indian Muslims simultaneously identify at both the superordinate level (as Indian) and at the subgroup level (as Muslim). India is also a context in which the dominant ethnicity is viewed by many as central to national identity. According to the survey by Pew Research Center, 81% of Hindus agree or fully agree that it is important to be a Hindu in order to be “truly Indian”. Although Muslim minorities in India have been viewed as “foreigners” and accused of divided loyalties since the days of Partition (Habib 2017; Pandey 1999), the community is facing deepening marginalization and exclusion from India as an “imagined community” in recent years (Ahmed 2019). The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) – in power since 2014 – has dedicated itself to erase India’s Muslim heritage and re-write history according to Hindu nationalist ideology (Chatterji et al. 2019). As Hindu identity has become increasingly central to national identity, Muslim’s national belonging has become increasingly insecure.

3.2 Muslim Protest in India

In recent years, several events could have sparked large-scale protests among Indian Muslims but failed to do so. Such events include the many cases of cow-related gang violence and the related lack of police responsiveness (Dhillon 2019), the Supreme Court’s verdict on Ayodhya allowing a Hindu temple to be built on the contested site (Varadarajan 2019), the renaming of Muslim-sounding cities and streets across the country (Ahmad 2018) and the passing of new anti-conversion laws and amendments (Jamil 2021). Observers noted that rather than mobilize politically as a response to such events, many Muslims preferred to keep a low profile, or “become invisible” in the political sphere (Chakravarty 2019; Kurshid 2019).

In December 2019, the Muslim silence ended abruptly as thousands of Indian Muslims joined in the mass protests against the passing of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) (Khan 2020). The act was widely criticized for discriminating on the basis of religion in

⁶Information on the survey can be found at <https://www.pewforum.org/2021/06/29/religion-in-india-tolerance-and-segregation/>.

granting access to citizenship and caused widespread anger and concern among members of the Muslim community.⁷ As protests erupted across the country, domestic and international observers noted the extensive use of national symbols such as the Tricolour flag, the national anthem and the Constitution among protest participants (Biswas 2020; Khan 2020). Elaborating on the use of these symbols, academics and activists alike highlighted their function in signalling patriotism and warding off accusations of “anti-nationalism”. According to history professor Rohit De “the Narendra Modi-led ruling Hindu nationalist BJP government has painted almost all opposition to its policies as ‘anti-national’. By using the constitution, the protesters can continue to assert their patriotism, use national symbols and songs and challenge the discourse of ‘anti-nationalism’ with constitutional patriotism” (Biswas 2020). According to anti-CAA activist Umar Khalid, the use of nationalist symbols was an attempt by Muslims to “redefine nationalism” (Khan 2020), asserting a sum-positive identity by which Muslim identity and Indian identity are not at odds. These anecdotes suggest that “national identity frames” may play an important role in mobilizing ethnic minorities, and that the impact of different identity frames on preferences for resistance deserves further attention.⁸

4 Research Design

I evaluate the theoretical framework through two survey experiments in India with a sample of Muslim respondents. In the first experiment, respondents are randomly assigned to a treatment condition aimed to strengthen the perceived centrality of Hindu identity to the Indian nation. Subsequently, respondents are asked to what extent they endorse, and would be willing to participate in, three different protest movements. In the second experiment, a collective action frame is randomly assigned to each protest description, highlighting either (1) national identity, (2) ethnic (Muslim) identity or (3) no specific identity. Figure 1 illustrates the steps of the design.

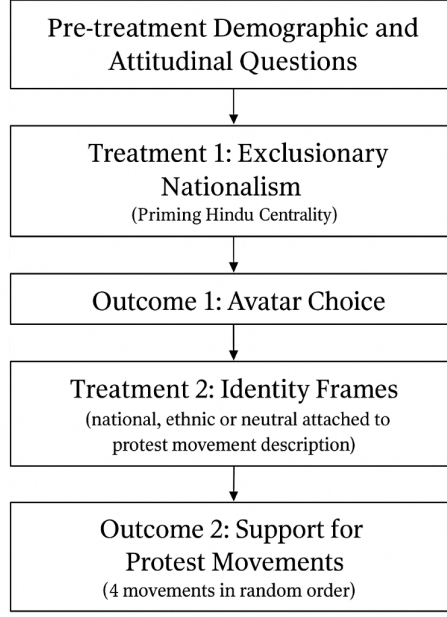
4.1 Sample

The experimental study was conducted with sample of 1,311 Indian Muslims recruited via the online sampling tool Lucid (now Cint). Potential respondents are invited to participate through email invitation links, and respondents who complete the survey receive participation

⁷Many fear that the CAA – combined with the proposed plans of compiling a National Register of Citizens (NRC) – could end up depriving many document-less Muslims of citizenship rights.

⁸See Appendix Section H.2 for additional anecdotal evidence.

Figure 1: **Experimental Design**



fees in the form of e-rewards/e-currency. Sampling took place across India between March and April 2021, with quotas set for region (north/west/east/south) to ensure the representation of Indian Muslims from across the country. Although the sample is not representative of the full Muslim population, respondents come from diverse backgrounds in terms of gender, caste, income, urban/rural residency and education.⁹ Respondents were able to complete the survey either in English or in Hindi.¹⁰

4.2 Treatment 1: Hindu Centrality

The theory suggests that, under exclusionary nationalism, ethnic minorities become less willing to assert their minority identity and less inclined to support collective action. Exclusionary nationalism constructs the nation around the dominant ethnocultural group, portraying minorities as less authentically national. To assess these implications, I design a treatment that captures this key feature of exclusionary nationalism: the perceived centrality of the dominant group to the nation. Specifically, the treatment primes respondents with images and narratives of prominent Hindu figures described as “Indian heroes,” thereby reinforcing the

⁹See Table B2 for a description of the socio-demographic characteristics of participants. See also Appendix Section D6 for a comparison of characteristics with a representative sample of 3,336 Indian Muslims collected by Pew Research Center. The table shows that while my sample is more educated, wealthier and better educated, both samples show remarkably similar levels of group identifications and religiosity. Furthermore, while the online sample is not fully representative, it may more closely capture the profile of those who could plausibly participate in protest—urban, educated, and politically aware individuals.

¹⁰See Appendix Section C.6 for information on exclusions of low-quality data.

idea that Hindu identity lies at the symbolic core of the nation.

Respondents in this treatment first view images of five different historical figures and are asked to select the hero they believe to be the most popular in broader society. The options include a range of figures, some commonly celebrated by the Hindu right, such as Chhatrapati Shivaji or V. D. Savarkar. Subsequently, respondents receive a piece of information about a specific contribution to the Indian nation, namely information about the author of the Indian national song, “Vande Mataram” (a Hindu nationalist). A manipulation check indicates that the treatment lowers respondents’ perceptions of Muslims’ contributions to the Indian nation, suggesting that it successfully primes Hindu centrality (see Appendix Sections C.2 and C.4 for more details).¹¹

4.3 Asserting Muslim Identity

I examine respondents’ willingness to openly reveal or “affirm” their minority identity in a short exercise. I provide respondents with a selection of six avatars from which they are asked to indicate which avatar they would select if they were to play an online game with other people (see Appendix Figure C1). The provided avatar options vary in the degree to which they signal Muslim identity.¹² The exercise is designed to elicit thoughts of how respondents would like to represent themselves in a social interaction with other Indians and is meant to capture their willingness to “reveal” their minority identity. The item is therefore slightly different from more standard measures aiming to capture respondents’ self-perceived social identity. The avatar options are gender congruent (women see only female avatars and men see male avatars). Three of these avatars clearly signal Muslim identity.¹³ one avatar looks “neutral” (i.e., not easily identifiable as Hindu or Muslim, avatar 1), while two avatars signal Hindu identity (avatars 2-3). When designing the avatars, I took care to include variation in the avatars’ style of dress (modern vs. traditional), so that participants who identify as Muslim did not feel forced into selecting a traditional or pious religious stereotype to express

¹¹I originally also included an additional treatment designed to prime Muslim centrality within the Indian nation. However, as shown in Appendix Figure C2, the manipulation did not shift perceptions of Muslim contributions to India in the expected direction. I therefore cannot use this treatment for theory testing. See Section C.2 for more details.

¹²These avatars were previously pre-tested to assess how well they signal Hindu vs. Muslim identity. See Appendix Section C.3 for more information.

¹³The religious markers included for the Muslim avatars are widespread in India. According to Pew Research Center (2020), 89% of Muslim women report covering their head in public, 76% of men wear a skullcap, and 69% wear a beard. Thus, showing such markers is not necessarily restricted to particularly religious Muslims but represents a common form of Muslim identity expression in the Indian context. At the same time, reports suggest that Indian Muslims more frequently conceal these identities in response to rising majoritarianism (Ara 2025).

that identity. I construct a dummy variable indicating whether or not the avatar signals Muslim identity.¹⁴

4.4 Support for Collective Action

After completing the two exercises on Indian heroes and social identity, respondents proceed to the second part of the study in which they are asked to state their support for a series of protest movements. I measure support for these movements using two items. The first captures respondents' endorsement of the protest movement (5-point scale) and the second captures respondents' willingness to participate in the protest activity (4-point scale). Respondents are asked about their support for three different movements, all of which aim to improve conditions for Indian Muslims. These are the (1) anti-CAA protests, (2) protests against the Supreme Court's judgment on the case of Ayodhya and (3) protests against cow-related gang violence. All three movements are intended to capture support for movements that protest discriminatory policies or practices against Indian Muslims, albeit along different dimensions.¹⁵ Each movement is briefly described, and respondents are then asked about their own support for the cause and their personal willingness to participate in the movement. I ask respondents about their support for three different movements in order to (1) be able to draw more general conclusions regarding the role of identity frames and ensure that the findings do not only apply to one specific movement and (2) compare effect sizes across movements that are already likely to be associated with different types of collective action frames. For instance, while the anti-CAA movement witnessed widespread mobilization drawing on national identity frames, protests surrounding the Ayodhya verdict and cow-related violence remained largely latent – potential rather than established arenas of collective action with less clearly defined frames. See Figure 2 for the descriptions of each movement.

In addition to the three protest movements described, respondents are asked about their support for a fourth movement: protest against corruption. I include this movement as

¹⁴Appendix C.3 shows that the avatar-choice measure correlates with other theoretically related constructs, providing support for its validity.

¹⁵Anecdotal evidence supports the view that these movements are connected manifestations of the same broader concern. Participants and commentators often discuss them as part of a continuum of grievances regarding discrimination and the erosion of minority rights. For instance, a professor at a Delhi university writes: “The Ayodhya judgment was a precursor to the CAA. Treating the Hindu claim – even without any evidence – as weightier than the Muslim claim created a hierarchy in which Muslims were inferior. The CAA does the same” (Apoorvanand 2019). Despite these commonalities, it is entirely plausible that some individuals might support one movement but not another. The movements differ in emphasis and in the types of grievances they highlight—legal, symbolic, or security-related. Differences in support likely depend on personal exposure to threat (e.g., cow-related violence, fears of losing citizenship rights) and on social position (e.g., class, education, or urban–rural background).

a benchmark, allowing me to compare support for movements that protest discriminatory policies and practice, from support for more general protest activity. Anti-corruption protests are common in India but are not directly related to Muslim exclusion. Overall, participation in this type of protest is less likely to be viewed as sensitive or “unpatriotic”.

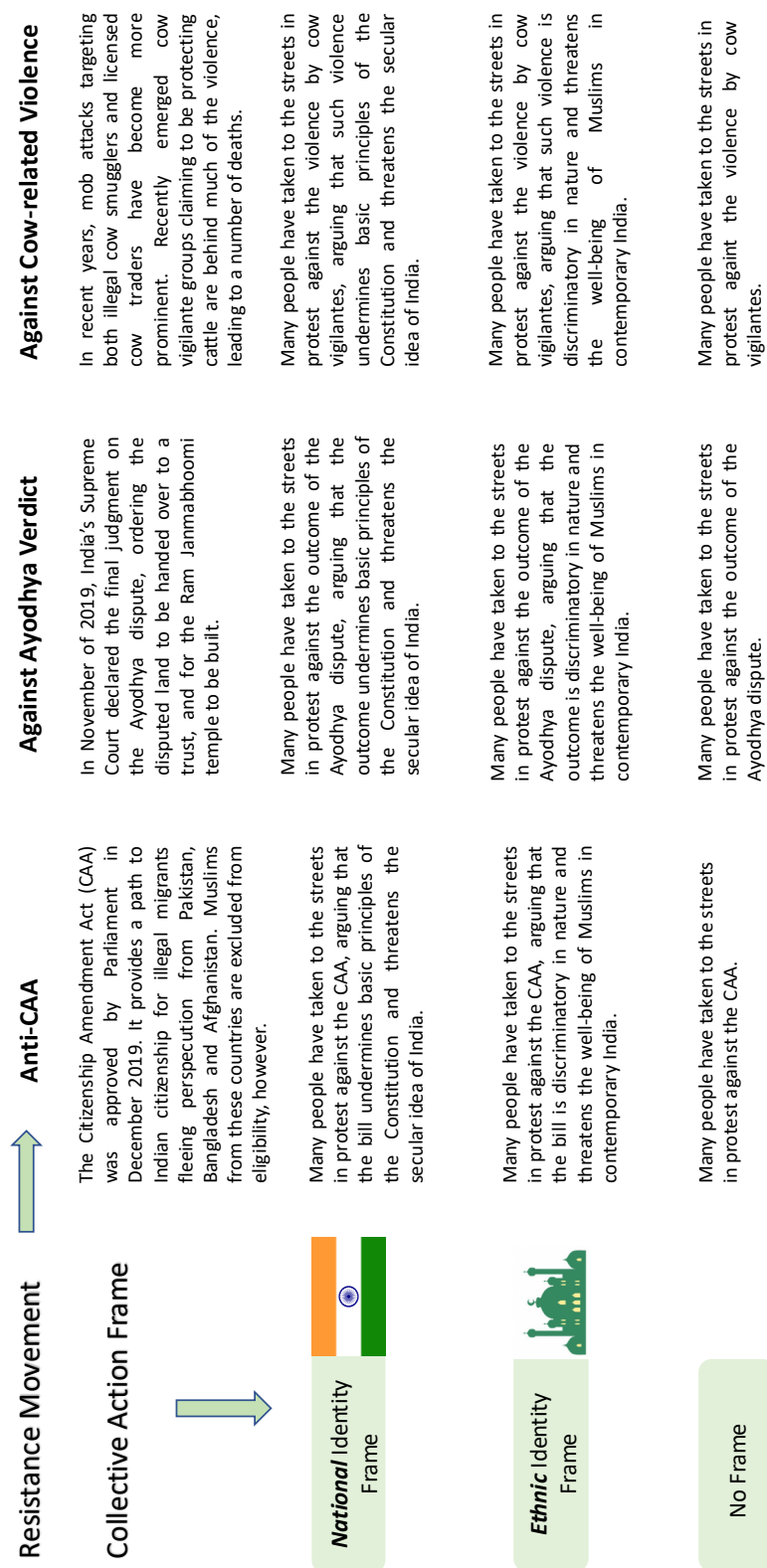
4.5 Treatment 2: National and Ethnic Frames

To examine the effect of identity frames on support for collective action, I randomly assign an additional sentence to the description of the protest movements, framing grievances as either (1) specific to the Muslim community (“ethnic identity frame”) or (2) as pertaining more generally to the secular nation (“national identity frame”).¹⁶ In addition, I include a visual image in order to *amplify* the respective frame: either an image of a mosque or – in the national frame – an image of the Indian flag.¹⁷ The different frames are randomly attached to the protest descriptions outlined above. Each respondent is asked about his or her support for three different protest movements and is exposed to one national identity frame, one ethnic identity frame and one control frame. For instance, some respondents will read a description of the anti-CAA protests according to an ethnic identity frame, a description of the Ayodhya court case according to a national identity frame and a description of protest against cow-related gang violence with no particular frame. Other respondents will be exposed to different combinations of resistance movements and identity frames. The order of the frames and movements is randomized. The design allows me to examine the effect of identity frames *independent of* the particular protest movement, while at the same time allowing me to explore whether the effectiveness of a given frames applies only to a particular movement, or more generally. The wording used for each separate identity frame is held constant across protest descriptions. See Figure 2 for the exact item wordings.

¹⁶In recent decades, the concept of secularism has become contested and has been appropriated by Hindu nationalist actors who invoke secularism to criticize perceived “appeasement” of minorities. Nevertheless, references to the “secular idea of India” in public discourse continue to signal concern about the erosion of pluralism and rising majoritarianism. See Appendix Section D.3 for further discussion.

¹⁷As such, I build on Benford and Snow (2000) who suggest that framing involves two processes: articulation (connecting and aligning events) and amplification (highlighting and accenting symbols).

Figure 2: Identity Frames



5 Empirical Strategy and Ethics

5.1 Empirical Strategy

In the main analysis, I run a series of OLS regressions to compare the outcome measures between each treatment and the control group, respectively. I report average treatment effects as well as point estimates of the mean levels of the outcomes of interest across treatment conditions. Results are reported both excluding and including pre-treatment demographic controls.¹⁸ When investigating the effects of the *national* and *ethnic* identity frames (relative to the *control*), I analyse the data in long-format. Since each respondent reports their support for three different protest movements (each associated with a different identity frame), each respondent appears three times in the long data set. When analysing the data in long-format, I cluster standard errors at the respondent-level. See Section C.5 for my pre-specified model specifications.¹⁹

6 Results

The main results section is organized as follows: I begin by examining how exclusionary nationalism affects respondents' willingness to assert minority identity (H_1) and support collective action (H_2). I continue by testing the main hypotheses regarding the role of identity frames in mobilizing support for resistance (H_3). Finally, I examine whether respondents' sensitivity to identity frames depend on the extent to which Hindu identity is depicted as central to the Indian nation (H_4).²⁰

6.1 Hindu Centrality and Willingness to Assert Minority Identity

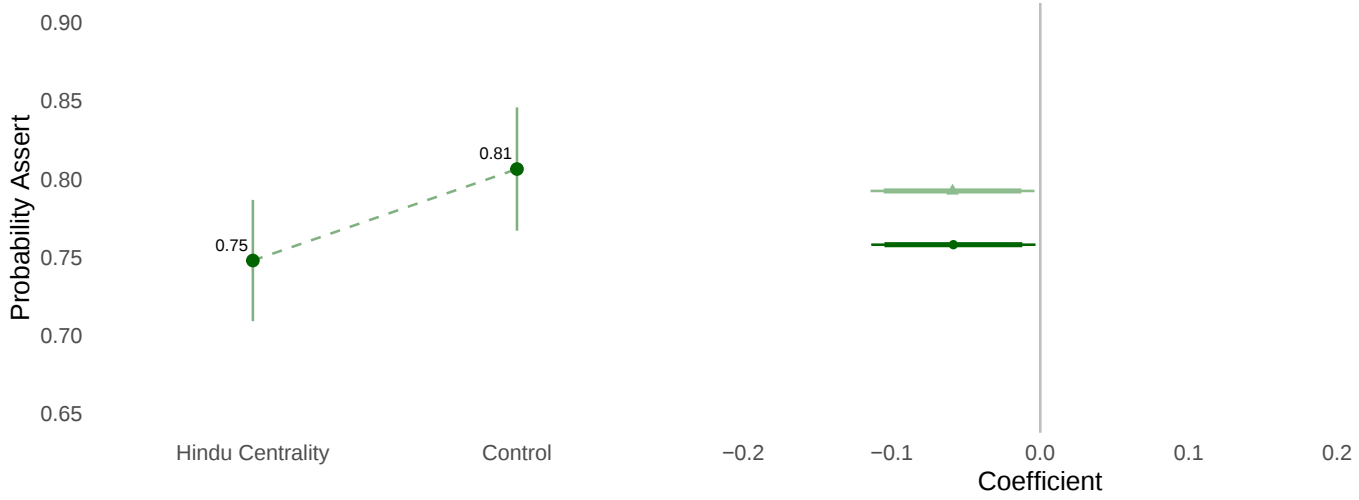
According to H_1 , minorities should be less willing to openly assert their minority identity under exclusionary nationalism. Results are reported in Figure 3. As illustrated, respondents assigned to the “Hindu centrality” treatment are indeed less willing to assert minority identity than respondents assigned to the control condition (95% CI [-0.11, -0.00]). In substantive terms, average willingness to pick a Muslim avatar reduces from a probability of 0.81 (95% CI [0.77; 0.85]) in the control group to 0.75 (95% CI [0.71; 0.79]) in the Hindu centrality group.

¹⁸Pre-treatment controls include gender, age, region of residence, urban resident and education.

¹⁹See Appendix Section E for a discussion of Ethics.

²⁰In Appendix D.1 I report some descriptive statistics including information on respondents' self-perceived social identities. Figure D3 indicates high levels of dual identity among the sampled respondents. Average identification as Muslim is 90 on a scale from 0-100 and average identification as Indian is 91.

Figure 3: **Avatar Choice**



Note: This figure shows treatment effects of Hindu centrality on willingness to assert minority identity among Muslims. Coefficient plots are based on linear regression models excluding controls (dark line) and including sociodemographic controls (bright line). 95% (thin line) and 90% (thick line) confidence intervals are shown. $N = 1,311$. See Appendix Table F7 for full regression model output.

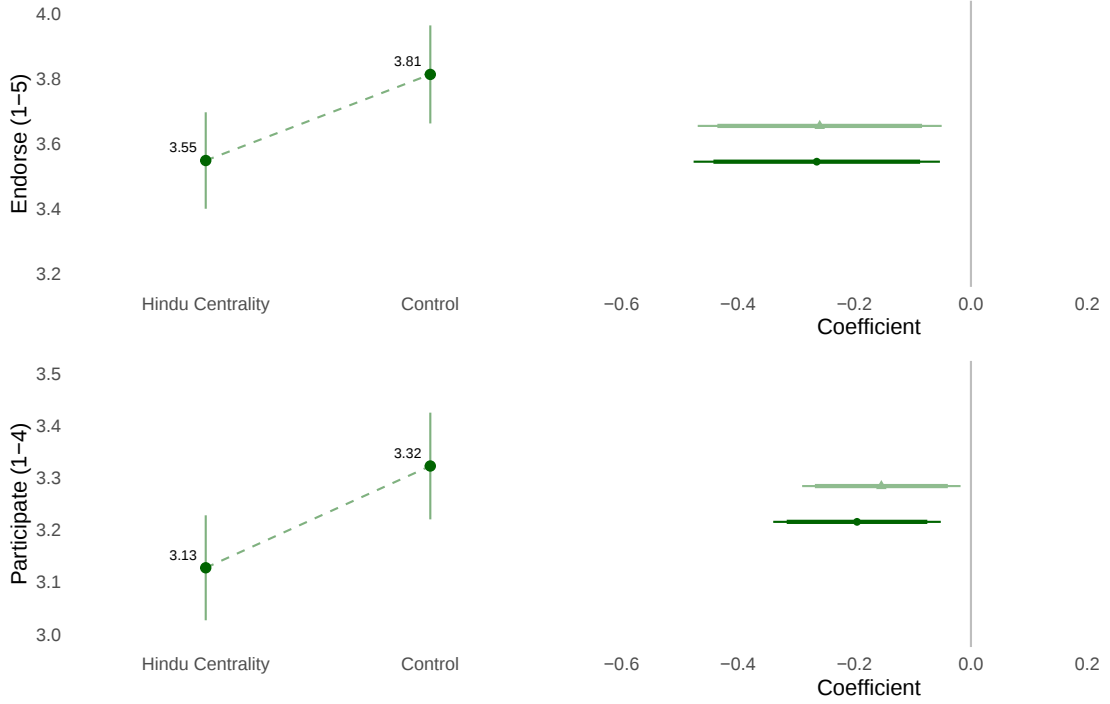
The evidence therefore supports the notion that minorities are less willing to affirm or reveal their minority identity when their belonging to the nation is experienced as less secure (H_1).

6.2 Hindu Centrality and Support for Collective Action

According to my second hypotheses (H_2), support for collective action should be lower among ethnic minorities under exclusionary nationalism. To explore this hypothesis, I examine whether being assigned to the “Hindu Centrality” treatment weakens support for collective action.²¹ Results are reported in Figure 4. The top panels show how the centrality treatment affects endorsements of the resistance movements, while the bottom panels show respondents’ reported willingness to participate in the movement. I find evidence in favor of H_2 . Respondents in the “Hindu Centrality” treatment are less willing to endorse the resistance movement and less willing to report that they would be willing to participate in the movement than respondents in the control condition. While average endorsement of the resistance movements is 3.81 (95% CI [3.66; 3.96]) in the control condition, it is 3.55 (95% CI [3.53; 3.82]) in the “Hindu Centrality” group. The difference is statistically significant at the 5% level.

²¹According to the theoretical framework, minorities should be less willing to articulate *ethnic interests* when dominant ethnicity is central to national identity. I therefore examine responses to the subset of resistance movements described using an ethnic frame. In later subsections I explore the conditional effects of different identity frames given Hindu centrality.

Figure 4: **Hindu Centrality and Preferences for Resistance**

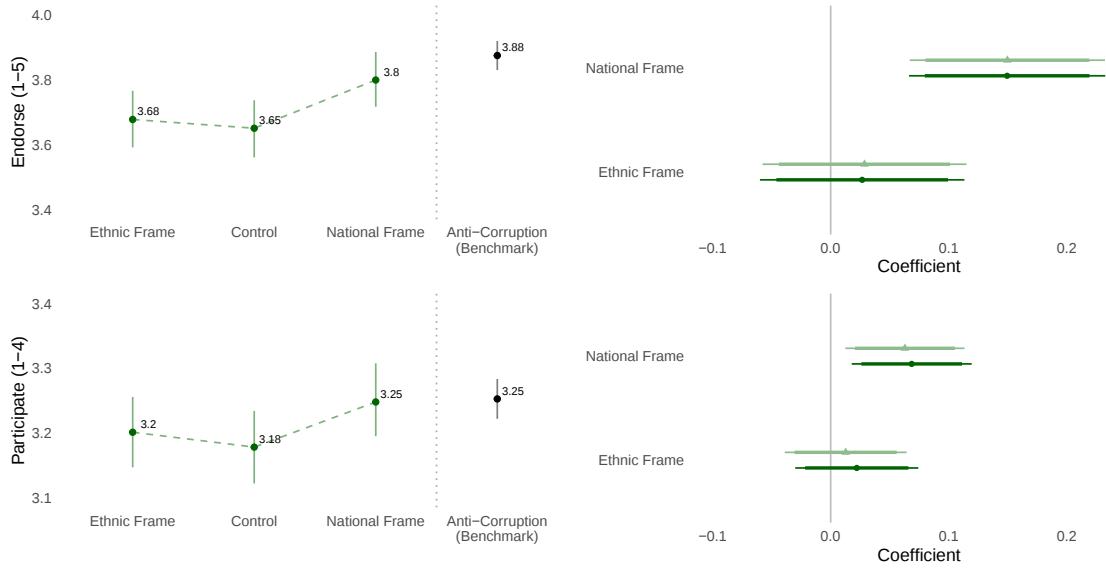


Note: This figure shows treatment effects of Hindu centrality on support for resistance among Muslims. Coefficient plots are based on linear regression models excluding controls (dark line) and including sociodemographic controls (bright line). 95% (thin line) and 90% (thick line) confidence intervals are shown. $N = 1,311$. See Appendix Table F8 for full regression model output.

6.3 Identity Frames and Support for Collective Action

In the following subsection, I examine H_3 concerning the role of identity frames in shaping support for resistance. I examine endorsement of the resistance movement and willingness to participate in the movement separately. Results are reported in Figure 5. I find evidence in favor of H_{3a} . National identity frames strengthen support for resistance among respondents. In substantive terms, the national identity frame enhances average endorsements of the movement by 0.15 on a 1-5 scale and willingness to participate in the movement by 0.06 on a 1-4 scale when pooling observations across all movements. While support for resistance is 3.64 (95% CI [3.56; 3.73]) for movements with no particular frame, support rises to 3.80 (95% CI [3.73; 3.89]) for movements described using a national frame. Although the substantive effects are not large, they are not trivial. As shown in the figure, average support for anti-corruption protests (our benchmark) is 3.88. National identity frames thus strengthen support for ethnic resistance movements to levels that are almost equal to those of our benchmark. The effect

Figure 5: **Identity Frames and Support for Resistance**



Note: This figure shows treatment effects of identity frames on support for resistance. Coefficient plots are based on linear regression models excluding controls (dark line) and including sociodemographic controls (bright line). 95% (thin line) and 90% (thick line) confidence intervals are shown. $N = 3,933$. See Appendix Table F9 for full regression model output.

size is also comparable to those in similar experiments.²² Although the evidence is supportive of H_{3a} , I do not find evidence in favor of H_{3b} . Ethnic identity frames do not affect levels of support as compared to the control condition, on average.²³

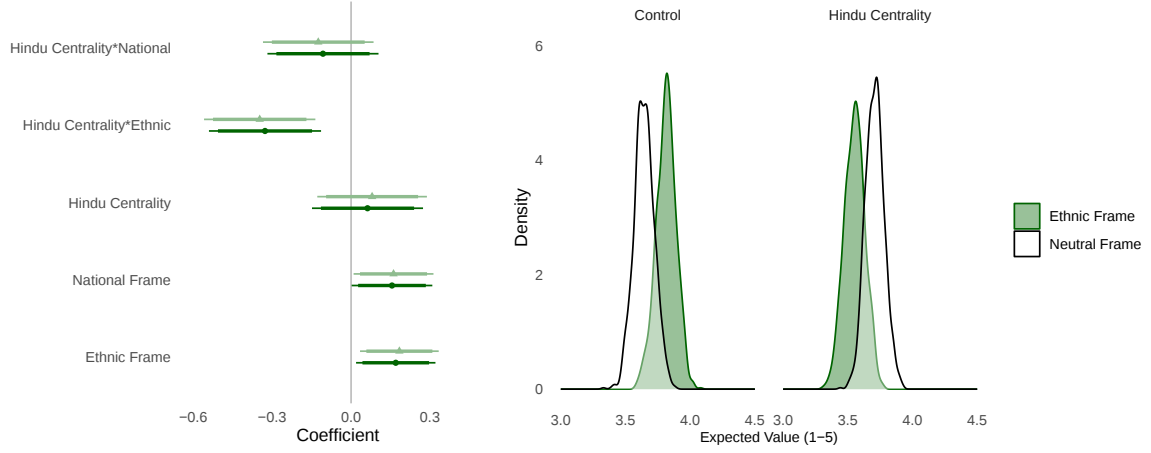
6.4 The Conditional Effects of Identity Frames

Next, I examine how the strength of identity frames in shaping support for collective action depend on Hindu centrality (H_4). Results are reported in Figure 6. As can be observed, Hindu Centrality does condition the effects of the identity frames, according to H_4 . While ethnic identity frames enhance support for resistance in the control condition, the same frame clearly reduces support for protest when Hindu centrality is salient. This pattern is illustrated in the right panel of Figure 6. As the Figure illustrates, the ethnic identity frame enhances

²²The effect size of the national identity frame on endorsement of the resistance movement is 0.10 standard deviations. This is comparable to effects reported in Williamson et al. (2021) who report effect sizes of 0.06 and 0.08 standard deviations and Kalla and Broockman (2020) who report effect sizes of 0.07 and 0.11 standard deviations.

²³A challenge that emerges when examining the role of identity frames in affecting support for different movements is that respondents are likely to already associate particular movements with certain identity frames. For instance, the anti-CAA movement is likely to already come associated with national frames in people's minds. If a certain movement is already strongly associated with a particular frame, it is unlikely that an experimental treatment that frames an issue in that way will be effective in affecting levels support. Appendix Figure G7 shows that, effectively, minorities are more sensitive to frames that deviate from those which already come associated with a particular issue or movement. For instance, the national identity frame is most predictive of support for protest against the verdict against Ayodhya.

Figure 6: **Interaction Effect**



Note: This figure shows treatment effects of identity frames on support for resistance conditional on Hindu Centrality. Coefficient plots (left) are based on linear regression models excluding controls (dark line) and including sociodemographic controls (bright line). 95% (thin line) and 90% (thick line) confidence intervals are shown. The right panel shows simulated sampling distributions for respondents in the control and “Hindu Centrality” treatments. $N = 3,933$. See Appendix Table F10 for full regression model output.

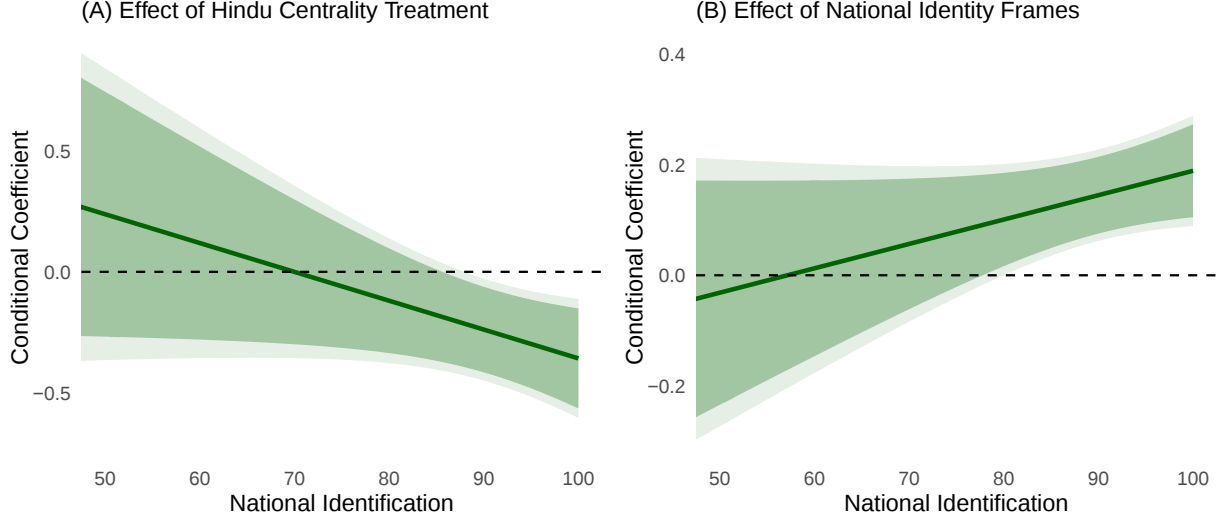
average support for resistance with respect to the control group by 0.18 (95% CI [0.04; 0.33]) on a 1-5 scale in the control condition, while it reduces support for resistance by 0.16 (95% CI [0.31; 0.01]) with respect to the control when the centrality of Hindu identity is salient. This finding is consistent with the theoretical argument that ethnic frames reduce support under exclusionary nationalism (H_{4b}).

While respondents are more sensitive to the ethnic identity frame when Hindu centrality is salient, H_{4a} states that respondents should also be more sensitive to national identity frames when the centrality of Hindu identity to the Indian nation is salient. The evidence does not support this proposition, however. The effects of the national identity frame are not statistically distinguishable from one another in the different treatment conditions. In sum, while respondents react more negatively to ethnic frames when the centrality of Hindu identity to the Indian nation is salient, respondents act positively to the national identity frames across all treatment conditions.

7 Mechanisms

The results suggest that Muslim minorities become less willing to assert ethnic identity (H_1) and less willing to support collective action (H_2) under exclusionary nationalism. In addition, my findings suggest that narratives of mobilization that draw on national symbols and portray

Figure 7: **The Moderating Role of National Identification**



Note: This figure shows treatment effects of (A) Hindu centrality and (B) National identity frames on support for collective action, conditional on national identification. Conditional treatment effects are based on linear regression models including controls. 95% (light) and 90% (dark) confidence intervals are shown. See Appendix Table F11 for full regression model output.

ethnic grievances as a subset of national grievances, strengthen support for collective action (H_{3a}). While I do not find that ethnic identity frames weaken support for protest on average (H_{3b}), ethnic identity frames have a negative effect on support for protest under exclusionary nationalism (H_{4b}). To explore the mechanisms driving these patterns, I consider additional implications of the theoretical argument.

7.1 National identification and Collective Action

According to the argument developed above, minorities who aspire to be recognized as full members of the nation may hesitate to defend their group rights under exclusionary nationalism, fearing that protest could undermine their credibility as committed members of the nation. This reasoning implies heterogeneity among Muslims – between those who do and those who do not aspire to be accepted as core members of the national in-group. As detailed in Appendix Section A, the argument suggests that, assuming high levels of ethnic identification, we should observe (1) stronger negative effects of exclusionary nationalism on minorities' willingness to support collective action among respondents with high levels of national identification, and (2) stronger positive effects of national identity frames among these same respondents.

The survey includes a pre-treatment measure of national identification, which asks respon-

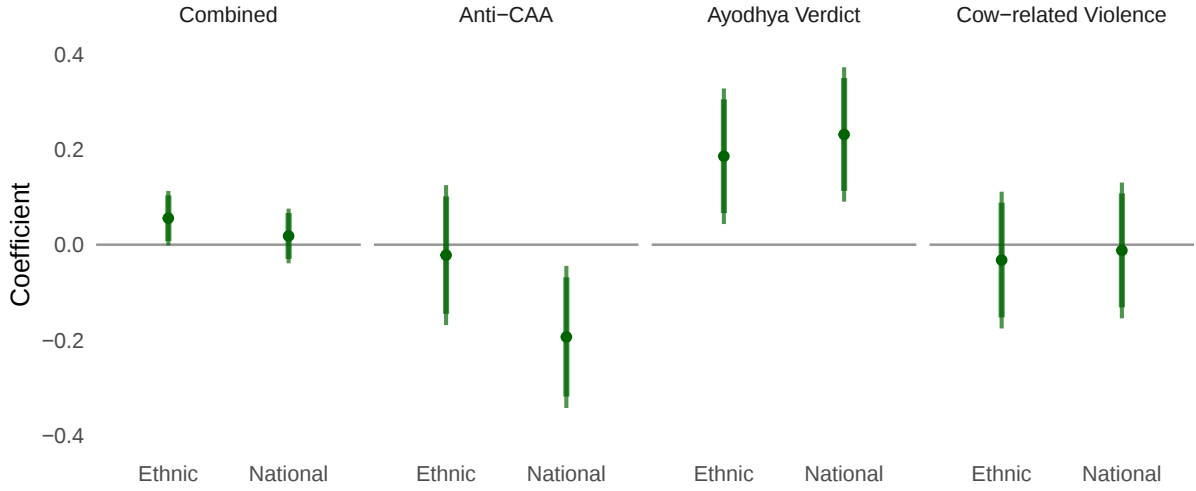
dents to rate how important different groups are to their sense of self on a scale from 0 to 100. To examine heterogeneous treatment effects, I interact national identification with each of the two central treatments: (1) *Hindu centrality* and (2) *Identity frames*. Figure 7 presents conditional treatment effects across the range of national identification values. Panel (A) shows that the negative effect of priming Hindu centrality emerges only among individuals with strong national identification (holding ethnic identification constant). The interaction is statistically significant at the 90 percent level, and the pattern is consistent with theoretical expectations. Panel (B) indicates that the effects of the national identity frames are also evident only among respondents with a strong sense of national identity, and not among those who identify less strongly with the nation. Note, however, that this interaction coefficient does not reach conventional significance levels. This may reflect limited statistical power, as few respondents exhibit low levels of national identification. The findings should therefore be interpreted as suggestive.

7.2 Second-Order Beliefs

The argument also suggests that identity frames influence willingness to protest by differentially shaping beliefs about how the mainstream community will perceive the protest movement. Specifically, (1) ethnic identity frames should increase beliefs that mainstream society will view protest as anti-national, and (2) national identity frames should reduce such beliefs relative to the neutral frame. I therefore examine how identity frames shape perceptions of how protest will be viewed by the broader society. Figure 8 presents the results. On average, national identity frames do not significantly reduce perceptions that mainstream society will view protest as anti-national. In contrast, ethnic identity frames increase such perceptions, helping to explain why these frames reduce support for protest under exclusionary nationalism.

Figure 8 also disaggregates the results by protest movement, revealing interesting heterogeneity. Notably, for the anti-CAA movement, national identity frames significantly reduce perceptions that protest will be viewed as anti-national, consistent with theoretical expectations. For the other protest movements, however, different patterns emerge. For the Ayodhya verdict, both ethnic and national identity frames heighten perceptions that protest would appear anti-national. This pattern may reflect strong prevailing associations of Ayodhya with Muslim identity, which constrain the extent to which it can be reframed in national terms.

Figure 8: **Identity Frames and Second-Order Beliefs**



Note: Treatment effects of identity frames on beliefs that protest will be viewed as anti-national by protest movement. Coefficient plots are based on linear regression models including controls. 95% (thin line) and 90% (thick line) confidence intervals are shown. See Appendix Table F12 for full regression model output.

No consistent pattern emerges in the case of cow-related violence.

7.3 Interpretation

Overall, the findings present a set of mixed results. On the one hand, exclusionary nationalism exerts a stronger negative effect on support for protest among individuals with a deeper attachment to the nation, suggesting that aspirations to belong may inhibit support for collective action among certain groups. On the other hand, the positive effects of national identity frames likely operate through multiple, partly overlapping mechanisms. The analysis here focuses primarily on the perceived *repercussions of protest* – whether intangible threats related to loss of self-worth and belonging, or tangible threats such as backlash and discrimination.²⁴ However, *expectations of protest success* may also play an important role. As Wasow (2020) argues, how mainstream media frames protest can shape the likelihood of its success, and minorities' may be making such considerations into account. Moreover, minorities' willingness to participate may also depend on their expectations about whether members of the domi-

²⁴The evidence is consistent with the notion that concerns about the repercussions of protest – particularly doubts about one's credibility as a committed national – help explain these findings. It remains unclear, however, whether respondents focus primarily on intangible threats, such as loss of self-worth and esteem, or on tangible threats related to discrimination and backlash. Both mechanisms are plausible and likely operate simultaneously. Evidence in Appendix Figure H9 supports the importance of psychological factors: the effects of national identity frames are strongest among respondents with low self-esteem, while perceived discrimination does not moderate the relationship. At the same time, Figure H10 shows that ethnic identity frames exert stronger negative effects in contexts with a larger proportion of Muslim residents, suggesting that concerns about potential backlash may also play a role.

nant group may join the protests, which could also be affected by identity frames. Finally, identity frames may also affect minorities' feelings of *entitlement to protest*. As shown in Appendix Figure H8, exposure to national identity frames increases minorities' sense of having the right to protest against the Ayodhya verdict. The precise mechanisms remain difficult to disentangle with the data at hand and most likely operate simultaneously. Future research could explore these questions using samples with more variation in degrees of identification and using survey instruments specifically designed to disentangle these mechanisms.²⁵

8 Discussion

In this article, I have highlighted the role of narratives of mobilization in shaping support for collective action among marginalized groups. The empirical findings show that collective action frames that draw on national symbols and interpret ethnic grievances as a threat to national principles are particularly likely to mobilize support for protest among Indian Muslims. These findings raise two broader questions: To what extent are they likely to generalize to other minority groups or settings? And what are the broader implications of understanding minorities' proclivity to support or participate in protest?

8.1 External Validity

How likely are these results to be externally valid within the context of India? The results are based on responses from an online sample that is not representative of the broader Muslim population. Baseline support for the protest movements is relatively high, suggesting that participants in this sample are more predisposed toward collective action than the broader population. While this limits generalizability, the fact that national identity frames produce effects even among a politically engaged and mobilization-prone group could imply that the observed effects represent conservative, lower-bound estimates.

More broadly, how might these findings generalize to other minority groups and contexts? The results are likely to extend to groups who hold dual identities and experience insecure national belonging. In this study, I experimentally primed the centrality of Hindu identity to the India nation, in order to explore how experiencing insecure national belonging affects support for collective action. In practice, the experience of insecure belonging can vary both

²⁵Appendix Section H.3 also explores alternative mechanisms such as perceived issue importance and demand effects. I also explore how the identity frames affect a placebo outcome: respondents' willingness to contact an international NGO.

within groups across time, as elites promote more exclusionary or inclusionary forms of nationalism, and across groups, depending on their degree of perceived “foreignness”. As [Zou and Cheryan \(2017\)](#) and [Pérez et al. \(2025\)](#) argue, minority groups differ in the extent to which they are perceived as foreign rather than simply lower in the social hierarchy. For example, in the United States, Hispanic Americans are often viewed as more “foreign” than Black Americans, even though both face racism and structural discrimination. This distinction is crucial: the more a group’s belonging to the nation is questioned, the more powerful national identity frames are likely to be in motivating collective action.

That said, most minority groups can be portrayed as “foreign,” even when they have long been native to the nation. This applies to Indian Muslims, whose belonging has been periodically questioned, but also to minorities elsewhere, such as Kurds in Turkey or non-Malays in Malaysia. National belonging is not fixed: it expands under inclusive narratives and contracts under exclusionary ones. As a result, the perceived “foreignness” of minorities varies across time and context. For instance, [Varshney and Staggs \(2024\)](#) draw direct parallels between Muslims in India and Black Americans under Jim Crow. While Black Americans’ national inclusion has become more secure since that era, Indian Muslims today face increasingly similar threats to those once experienced by Black Americans under white supremacy.

Consistently, shifts in the type of nationalism promoted by political elites may help explain how minority framing strategies evolve over time. During the secular decades following independence, Muslim protests were often framed along ethnic lines. For example, in the 1985 Shah Bano case, thousands protested in defense of Muslim personal law and cultural autonomy. As Hindu nationalism gained strength, Muslim protest became less frequent and the “Muslim silence” was only broken with the eruption of the anti-CAA protests, which employed a markedly different collective action frame. In the United States, leaders of the Civil Rights Movement employed national identity frames, aligning their goals with the nation’s foundational promises and invoking ideals such as the American Dream and principles of justice and freedom. By contrast, the Black Lives Matter movement challenges mainstream values, embraces an “unapologetically Black” identity, and draws on Black nationalist frames ([Bonilla and Tillery 2020](#)). These shifts in framing strategies – from ethnic to national in India and from national to ethnic in the United States – are consistent with the theoretical argument advanced here.

8.2 Implications and Conclusion

This article has examined the conditions under which marginalized groups are more likely to support collective action. The theoretical argument rests on the assumption that protest can, under some circumstances, yield meaningful benefits for disadvantaged groups – enhancing their social standing and positive social identity. Yet one might ask whether it is ever rational for minorities to protest, given their numerical disadvantage and the multiple potential repercussions of protest. Recent work in American politics suggests that minority protest can, under certain conditions, be strategically advantageous. [Gause \(2022\)](#) argues that legislators may, in fact, be more responsive to the demands of racial and ethnic minority groups than those of white or more affluent constituencies. Because participating in protest is generally more costly for marginalized communities, such actions send especially credible signals of issue salience to policymakers. [Wasow \(2020\)](#) shows that subordinate group’s protest strategies play a critical role in shaping how minority concerns are framed by the majority-oriented press. When framing is favorable, protest can shift public opinion toward coalitions more aligned with the subordinate group’s interests.

In the Indian context, specifically, the findings speak directly to ongoing debates within civil society about how Muslims should voice their grievances. The types of collective action frames examined in this study are actively contested across activist, political, and academic circles. The question of which frames work is not merely theoretical but central to strategic discussions among organizers and opinion leaders. For instance, at Jamia Millia Islamia University, students reportedly clashed over whether protests against the CAA should be framed as an attack on Muslims and Islam – serving as an entry point for Muslim assertion – or described in more secular, civic terms ([Amin and Mushtaq 2019](#)). Similarly, public commentary in prominent Indian outlets has questioned whether Muslim visibility in protest risks reinforcing the Hindu-Muslim binary, thereby consolidating Hindu nationalist support, or whether visible Muslim participation is necessary to articulate a viable alternative to Hindutva.²⁶

To conclude, the findings suggest that the willingness of marginalized groups to mobilize depends on the interplay between minority identification, the nationalist narratives advanced by elites, and the framing strategies activists employ to make their struggles resonate. Future research should build on this work by more precisely unpacking the mechanisms that link these factors to patterns of collective action. In particular, scholars could examine how these

²⁶See Appendix Section [H.2](#).

dynamics vary among minorities with differing levels of ethnic and national identification, across groups that differ in their perceived “foreignness,” and in contexts where national belonging is more or less secure. Doing so would deepen our understanding of when and how different narratives of mobilization can either constrain or enable political participation among marginalized groups.

References

- Abdelgadir, A. and V. Fouka (2020). Political Secularism and Muslim Integration in the West: Assessing the Effects of the French Headscarf Ban. *American Political Science Review* 114(3), 707–723.
- Ahmad, R. (2018). Renaming India: Saffronisation of Public Spaces. *Al Jazeera*.
- Ahmed, H. (2019). *Siyasi Muslims: A Story of Political Islam in India*. Penguin Random House India Private Limited.
- Allie, F. (2024). The representation trap: How and why muslims struggle to maintain power in india. Technical report, Working paper.
- Allie, F. (2025). India’s new minority politics. *Journal of Democracy* 36(2), 78–91.
- Alrababah, A., W. Marble, S. Mousa, and A. Siegel (2021). Can Exposure to Celebrities Reduce Prejudice? The Effect of Mohamed Salah on Islamophobic Behaviors and Attitudes. *American Political Science Review* 115(4), 1111–1128.
- Amin, M. and S. Mushtaq (2019). To invoke allah or to not: Secular islamophobia and the protesting indian muslim. *The Caravan* 31.
- Apoorvanand (2019). Indian muslims are asserting their citizenship, in whatever clothes they want to wear. *The Wire*.
- Ara, I. (2025). Indian muslims have learned to hide our identities. we shouldn’t have to. *Time Magazine*.
- Aronow, P., J. Kalla, L. Orr, and J. Ternovski (2020). Evidence of Rising Rates of Inattentiveness on Lucid in 2020. *SocArXiv Papers*.
- Badrinathan, S., S. Chauchard, and N. Siddiqui (2024). Misinformation and Support for Vigilantism: An Experiment in India and Pakistan. *American Political Science Review*, 1–19.
- Benford, R. D. and D. A. Snow (2000). Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment. *Annual Review of Sociology* 26(1), 611–639.
- Bird, K., T. Saalfeld, and A. M. Wust (2011). *The political representation of immigrants and minorities*. Taylor & Francis Limited.
- Bisin, A., E. Patacchini, T. Verdier, and Y. Zenou (2011). Formation and Persistence of Oppositional Identities. *European Economic Review* 55(8), 1046–1071.
- Biswas, S. (2020). Why Protesting Indians are Chanting the Constitution. *BBC News*.
- Bonilla, T. and A. B. Tillery (2020). Which Identity Frames Boost Support for and Mobilization in the #BlackLivesMatter Movement? An Experimental Test. *American Political Science Review* 114(4), 947–962.
- Cammatt, M., P. Chakrabarti, and D. Romney (2024). Persecuted minorities and defensive cooperation: Contributions to public goods by hindus and muslims in delhi. *Comparative Political Studies* 57(2), 321–355.
- Chakravarty, I. (2019). What Explains the Silence among Muslim Communities on the Ayodhya Judgment? *Scroll.in*.

- Chandra, K. (2012). *Constructivist Theories of Ethnic Politics*. Oxford University Press.
- Charnysh, V., C. Lucas, and P. Singh (2015). The Ties that Bind: National Identity Salience and Pro-social Behavior toward the Ethnic Other. *Comparative Political Studies* 48(3), 267–300.
- Chatterji, A. P., T. B. Hansen, and C. Jaffrelot (2019). *Majoritarian State: How Hindu Nationalism is Changing India*. Oxford University Press.
- Chenoweth, E. and M. J. Stephan (2011). *Why civil resistance works: The strategic logic of nonviolent conflict*. Columbia University Press.
- Chhabria, P. (2019). Citizenship act protests: 'i wait in silence as my world falls apart'. *BBC*.
- Cho, W. K. T., J. G. Gimpel, and T. Wu (2006). Clarifying the Role of SES in Political Participation: Policy Threat and Arab American Mobilization. *Journal of Politics* 68(4), 977–991.
- Chwe, M. S.-Y. (2013). *Rational ritual: Culture, coordination, and common knowledge*. Princeton University Press.
- Dancygier, R., K.-O. Lindgren, P. Nyman, and K. Vernby (2019). The Pipeline Is Not the Problem: A Case–Control Study of Immigrants' Political Underrepresentation. *SSRN Working Paper*.
- Davenport, C. (2007). State Repression and Political Order. *Annual Review of Political Science* 10, 1–23.
- Dhillon, A. (2019). 'Free Pass for Mobs': India Urged to Stem Vigilante Violence against Minorities. *The Guardian*.
- Farooqui, A. (2020). Political representation of a minority: Muslim representation in contemporary india. *India Review* 19(2), 153–175.
- Fleischmann, F. and M. Verkuyten (2016). Dual Identity among Immigrants: Comparing Different Conceptualizations, their Measurements, and Implications. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology* 22(2), 151.
- Fouka, V. (2019). How do Immigrants Respond to Discrimination? The Case of Germans in the US During World War I. *American Political Science Review* 113(2), 405–422.
- Fouka, V. (2020). Backlash: The Unintended Effects of Language Prohibition in US schools after World War I. *The Review of Economic Studies* 87(1), 204–239.
- Gamson, W. A. (1995). Constructing Social Protest. In *Social Movements and Culture*, Volume 4, pp. 85–106.
- Gause, L. (2022). *The advantage of disadvantage*. Cambridge University Press.
- Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. Harvard University Press.
- Haas, N. and E. Lindstam (2024). My history or our history? historical revisionism and entitlement to lead. *American Political Science Review* 118(4), 1778–1802.
- Habib, S. I. (2017). *Indian Nationalism: The Essential Writings*. Aleph Book Company.

- Hobbs, W. and N. Lajevardi (2019). Effects of Divisive Political Campaigns on the Day-to-Day Segregation of Arab and Muslim Americans. *American Political Science Review* 113(1), 270–276.
- Hoff, K. and P. Pandey (2006). Discrimination, Social Identity, and Durable Inequalities. *American Economic Review* 96(2), 206–211.
- Hopkins, N. (2011). Dual Identities and their Recognition: Minority Group Members’ Perspectives. *Political Psychology* 32(2), 251–270.
- Hopkins, N. and L. Blackwood (2011). Everyday Citizenship: Identity and Recognition. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* 21(3), 215–227.
- Jaffrelot, C. (2021a). Christophe Jaffrelot on the Way Hindutva is Changing History and Science Textbooks in Schools. *Scroll.in*.
- Jaffrelot, C. (2021b). *Modi’s India: Hindu Nationalism and the Rise of Ethnic Democracy*. Princeton University Press.
- Jamil, G. (2021). India’s ‘Love Jihad’ Anti-Conversion Laws aim to Further Oppress Minorities, and it’s Working. *The Conversation*.
- Johnston, H. and J. A. Noakes (2005). *Frames of Protest: Social Movements and the Framing Perspective*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Kalin, M. and N. Siddiqui (2020). National Identity, Religious Tolerance, and Group Conflict: Insights from a Survey Experiment in Pakistan. *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 37(1), 58–82.
- Kalla, J. and D. E. Broockman (2020). Reducing Exclusionary Attitudes through Interpersonal Conversation: Evidence from Three Field Experiments. *The American Political Science Review* 114(2), 410–425.
- Khan, F. (2020). Tricolour, Anthem - India’s Muslims on Why They’re Using National Symbols in Protests. *The Print*.
- Khilnani, S. (2004). *The Idea of India*. Penguin Books India.
- Klandermans, P. G. (2014). Identity Politics and Politicized Identities: Identity Processes and the Dynamics of Protest. *Political Psychology* 35(1), 1–22.
- Kuran, T. (1991). Now out of never: The element of surprise in the east european revolution of 1989. *World politics* 44(1), 7–48.
- Kurshid, S. (2019). *Visible Muslim, Invisible Citizen*. Rupa Publications.
- Majumdar, R. (2023). Reducing Prejudice and Support for Religious Nationalism Through Conversations on WhatsApp. *Available at SSRN 4569815*.
- Malik, M. (2025). Defiant pride: Origins and consequences of ethnic voting. *American Journal of Political Science*.
- Manekin, D. and T. Mitts (2022). Effective for whom? ethnic identity and nonviolent resistance. *American Political Science Review* 116(1), 161–180.
- McAdam, D. (1999). *Political process and the development of black insurgency, 1930-1970*. University of Chicago Press.

- Merseeth, J. L. (2018). Race-ing Solidarity: Asian Americans and Support for Black Lives Matter. *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 6(3), 337–356.
- Mussweiler, T., S. Gabriel, and G. V. Bodenhausen (2000). Shifting Social Identities as a Strategy for Deflecting Threatening Social Comparisons. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 79(3), 398–409.
- Mylonas, H. and M. Tudor (2023). *Varieties of nationalism: Communities, narratives, identities*. Cambridge University Press.
- Oskooii, K. (2016). How Discrimination impacts Sociopolitical Behavior: A Multidimensional Perspective. *Political Psychology* 37(5), 613–640.
- Oskooii, K. (2020). Perceived Discrimination and Political Behavior. *British Journal of Political Science* 50(3), 867–892.
- Pandey, G. (1999). Can a Muslim be an Indian? *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41(4), 608–629.
- Pantoja, A. D., R. Ramirez, and G. M. Segura (2001). Citizens by Choice, Voters by Necessity: Patterns in Political Mobilization by Naturalized Latinos. *Political Research Quarterly* 54(4), 729–750.
- Pérez, E., J. H. Lee, and G. M. Luna (2025). Partisans of color: Asian american and latino party id in an era of racialization and polarization. *American Political Science Review*, 1–17.
- Reicher, S. (2004). The Context of Social Identity: Domination, Resistance, and Change. *Political Psychology* 25(6), 921–945.
- Reicher, S. and S. A. Haslam (2006). Rethinking the psychology of tyranny: The bbc prison study. *British Journal of Social Psychology* 45(1), 1–40.
- Rozenas, A. and Y. M. Zhukov (2019). Mass repression and political loyalty: Evidence from stalin’s ‘terror by hunger’. *American Political Science Review* 113(2), 569–583.
- Schildkraut, D. J. (2005). The Rise and Fall of Political Engagement among Latinos: The Role of Identity and Perceptions of Discrimination. *Political Behavior* 27(3), 285–312.
- Sharma, Y. and S. Singh (2023). Shaheen bagh and the politics of protest in the anti-caa movement in india. *Feminist Encounters: A Journal of Critical Studies in Culture and Politics* 7(1), 01–14.
- Simon, B. and D. Ruhs (2008). Identity and Politicization among Turkish Migrants in Germany: the Role of Dual Identification. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 95(6), 1354–1366.
- Simonsen, K. B. (2016). How the Host Nation’s Boundary Drawing Affects Immigrants’ Belonging. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 42(7), 1153–1176.
- Singh, P. (2015). *How solidarity works for welfare: Subnationalism and social development in India*. Cambridge University Press.
- Singh, P. (2022). How exclusionary nationalism has made the world socially sicker from covid-19. *Nationalities Papers* 50(1), 104–117.
- Snow, D. A. and R. D. Benford (1992). Master Frames and Cycles of Protest. In *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*. Yale University Press.

- Tajfel, H. and J. C. Turner (1986). The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Relations. In *The Psychology of Intergroup Relations*. Nelson Hall.
- Tarrow, S. (2022). *Power in movement*. Cambridge university press.
- Ufkes, E. G., J. Calcagno, D. E. Glasford, and J. F. Dovidio (2016). Understanding How Common Ingroup Identity Undermines Collective Action among Disadvantaged-Group Members. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 63, 26–35.
- Van Stekelenburg, J. and B. Klandermans (2013). The Social Psychology of Protest. *Current Sociology* 61(5-6), 886–905.
- Varadarajan, S. (2019). What the Supreme Court’s Ayodhya Judgment Means for the Future of the Republic. *The Wire*.
- Varshney, A. and C. Staggs (2024). Hindu nationalism and the new jim crow. *Journal of Democracy* 35(1), 5–18.
- Verkuyten, M. (2017). Dual Identity and Immigrants’ Protest against Discrimination: The Moderating Role of Diversity Ideologies. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 20(6), 924–934.
- Vij, S. (2018). Muslims have internalised the idea that they must keep quiet. *New Age Islam*.
- Wasow, O. (2020). Agenda seeding: How 1960s black protests moved elites, public opinion and voting. *American Political Science Review* 114(3), 638–659.
- Weiss, C. M., A. Siegel, and D. Romney (2021). How Threats of Exclusion Mobilize Palestinian Political Participation. *Working Paper*.
- Wiley, S., J. Figueroa, and T. Lauricella (2014). When Does Dual Identity Predict Protest? The Moderating Roles of Anti-immigrant Policies and Opinion-based Group Identity. *European Journal of Social Psychology* 44(3), 209–215.
- Williams, P. (2015). *Politics, citizenship and Muslim lives in India*, Chapter Everyday peace? John Wiley & Sons.
- Williams, R. (2004). The Cultural Context of Collective Action: Constrains, Opportunities and the Symbolic Life of Social Movements. In *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*. Blackwell Publishers.
- Williamson, S., C. L. Adida, A. Lo, M. R. Platas, L. Prather, and S. H. Werfel (2021). Family Matters: How Immigrant Histories can Promote Inclusion. *American Political Science Review* 115(2), 686–693.
- Williamson, S. and M. Malik (2021). Contesting Narratives of Repression: Experimental Evidence from Sisi’s Egypt. *Journal of Peace Research* 58(5), 1018–1033.
- Zou, L. X. and S. Cheryan (2017). Two axes of subordination: A new model of racial position. *Journal of personality and social psychology* 112(5), 696.

Online Appendix

Table of Contents

A	Additional Theoretical Expectations	A2
B	Summary Statistics and Balance	A4
C	Research Design	A6
C.1	Attention Checks	A6
C.2	Centrality Treatments	A6
C.3	Avatars	A8
C.4	Manipulation Check and Interpretation	A10
C.5	Pre-registered Empirical Specification	A12
C.6	Exclusions	A12
D	Case Selection	A13
D.1	Social Identity among Sampled Respondents	A13
D.2	Comparison with Representative Sample	A15
D.3	Secularism in India	A17
E	Ethics	A18
F	Tables with Regression Model Output	A19
G	Additional Results	A25
H	Mechanisms	A28
H.1	Further Uncovering the Mechanism	A28
H.2	Anecdotal Evidence	A28
H.3	Alternative Mechanisms	A32

A Additional Theoretical Expectations

The pre-registered hypotheses in the main article focus on expected behavior among minorities who hold both ethnic and national identities. However, the theoretical framework also implies important heterogeneity in how individuals may respond to exclusionary versus inclusive nationalism depending on the strength of their identification with the ethnic minority and with the national community. Building on the logic of social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1986), the intensity and configuration of these identities shape both the motivation and the perceived costs of participating in collective action. Below, I elaborate briefly on these four combinations and summarize the expectations in Table A1.

Individuals with weak ethnic identification are expected to show low support for collective action regardless of the surrounding nationalist discourse. Because they lack a strong attachment to the aggrieved group, they are unlikely to develop a salient sense of group consciousness. By contrast, individuals with strong ethnic but weak national identification are more likely to express consistent support for protest, as their weaker attachment to the national community reduces concerns about belonging or social sanctions. The absence of national identification may also encourage less civic and more confrontational forms of mobilization. Among individuals with strong dual identification—those who identify deeply both with their ethnic group and with the nation—the effects of nationalism are expected to be more context dependent. Under inclusive nationalism, these individuals can reconcile their dual attachments and support protest on behalf of their group. Under exclusionary nationalism, however, they face competing pressures: expressing group-based grievances may signal disloyalty to the nation, generating internal tension and diminishing their willingness to mobilize.

Note that the type of nationalism salient in a given context may also influence protest incentives directly, as exclusionary nationalism often entails more exclusionary policies and thus greater grievances. The theoretical focus here, however, assumes that grievances are held constant and suggests that even identical exclusionary policies can elicit different reactions depending on whether inclusive or exclusionary nationalism is salient in a given context.

The expectations are summarized in Table A1. The typology shows how the theoretical framework can generate testable micro-level predictions. It also provides a foundation for future research on the interaction between dual identities and varying conceptions of nationalism.

Table A1: **Theoretical Expectations by Strength of Ethnic and National Identification**

Ethnic/National	Weak	Strong
Weak	Low support for collective action; limited attachment to aggrieved group.	Low support for collective action; limited attachment to aggrieved group.
Strong	High support for protest or destructive forms of mobilization; ethnic solidarity drives engagement regardless of nationalism type.	Context-dependent support: under <i>inclusive nationalism</i> , dual identifiers can support protest without threatening national belonging; under <i>exclusionary nationalism</i> , dual identifiers worry about the repercussions of protest on their acceptance as members of the nation.

One implication derived from the framework is that, where minorities identify strongly with their ethnic group, the effect of exclusionary nationalism on support for protest depends on *minorities' levels of national identification*. Under exclusionary nationalism, individuals who strongly identify with the nation may experience a heightened sense of tension between their ethnic and national identities, making them more reluctant to engage in collective action that could be perceived as disloyal.

A second implication derived from this argument is that national identity frames should be most effective in mobilizing individuals with strong national attachments, as they help to reconcile or reduce this perceived trade-off between ethnic and national identities.

Assuming high levels of ethnic identification,

***E*₁**: The negative effect of exclusionary nationalism on support for collective action will be greater among minorities who identify strongly with their national identity.

***E*₂**: The positive effect of national identity frames on support for collective action will be greater among minorities who identify strongly with their national identity.

B Summary Statistics and Balance

Table B2 shows summary statistics for respondents in the sample.

Table B2: **Summary Statistics**

Statistic	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Female	0.346	0.476	0	1
Age ≤ 30	0.304	0.460	0	1
Age 31–40	0.297	0.457	0	1
Age 41–50	0.149	0.356	0	1
Age > 50	0.250	0.433	0	1
High Education	0.598	0.490	0	1
Low Caste	0.531	0.499	0	1
Urban	0.275	0.446	0	1
Region North	0.339	0.473	0	1
Region East	0.197	0.398	0	1
Region West	0.097	0.296	0	1
Region South	0.368	0.482	0	1
Religiosity	3.606	0.691	1	4
National ID	91.025	15.040	0	100
Ethnic ID	90.417	16.237	0	100

Table B3 shows that randomization was effectively implemented, as participants are balanced across treatments on observable characteristics.

Table B3: **Balance Test: Control vs Hindu Centrality**

Variable	Group	Mean	SD	p-value
Female	Control	0.335	0.473	0.197
	Hindu Centrality	0.377	0.485	
Age <30	Control	0.304	0.460	0.525
	Hindu Centrality	0.324	0.469	
Age 31–40	Control	0.294	0.456	0.666
	Hindu Centrality	0.308	0.462	
Age 41–50	Control	0.153	0.361	0.327
	Hindu Centrality	0.130	0.336	
Age < 50	Control	0.249	0.433	0.725
	Hindu Centrality	0.238	0.427	
High Education	Control	0.603	0.490	0.76
	Hindu Centrality	0.593	0.492	
Low Caste	Control	0.532	0.500	0.894
	Hindu Centrality	0.537	0.499	
Urban	Control	0.297	0.457	0.405
	Hindu Centrality	0.271	0.445	
Region North	Control	0.349	0.477	0.287
	Hindu Centrality	0.315	0.465	
Region East	Control	0.175	0.380	0.28
	Hindu Centrality	0.204	0.403	
Region West	Control	0.105	0.307	0.394
	Hindu Centrality	0.088	0.284	
Region South	Control	0.371	0.484	0.496
	Hindu Centrality	0.394	0.489	
Religiosity	Control	3.636	0.636	0.136
	Hindu Centrality	3.567	0.715	
National ID	Control	90.868	15.032	0.795
	Hindu Centrality	90.597	15.329	
Ethnic ID	Control	91.280	15.178	0.128
	Hindu Centrality	89.569	17.511	

*p-values from two-sided t-tests.

C Research Design

C.1 Attention Checks

As a first check, I inform respondents that careful attention to the survey questions is critical. Only respondents who answer “I understand” to this statement are allowed to proceed to take the survey. Second, at the end of the demographics section of the questionnaire, I include the following item: “People are very busy these days. We are testing whether people read questions. To show that you’ve read this much, answer both “extremely interested” and “very interested”. Respondents who do not answer both “extremely interested” and “very interested” are excluded from the survey.

C.2 Centrality Treatments

The “Hindu Centrality” treatment is intentionally subtle and avoids directly highlighting Muslim exclusion. This design choice ensures that any observed decrease in support for collective action should be driven not primarily by fear induced by majoritarian hostility, but as a consequence of the perceived tension between Muslim and national identity. Evidence from open-ended responses in Appendix Section C2 suggest that the treatment effectively activated considerations regarding Hindu centrality.

The remaining respondents were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: (1) a pure control condition, in which respondents proceed directly to the subsequent survey questions, or (2) a “Muslim Centrality” condition. In the “Muslim Centrality” condition, respondents are shown images of prominent Muslim figures, as opposed to Hindu heroes, along with information highlighting a Muslim contribution to the Indian nation. I include this condition to further test the theory: if priming Hindu centrality reduces minorities’ willingness to assert minority identity and support resistance movements, then priming Muslim centrality should produce the opposite effect – strengthening Muslim identity and increasing support for protest. However, as shown in Appendix Figure C.4, this treatment did not influence belonging in the expected direction. Specifically, the manipulation did not strengthen perceptions of Muslim contributions to the Indian nation. As a result, I cannot use the “Muslim centrality” treatment for theory testing. Rather than strengthening Muslims’ perceived contributions, the manipulation check indicates that it inadvertently strengthened perceptions of Hindu contributions. This response is consistent with findings by Hoff and Pandey (2006), who suggest that low-caste individuals in India perform worse in economic tasks when their social identity is salient, due to internalized inferiority. A similar dynamic may be at play here, where priming Muslim identity alone could lower, rather than strengthen, Muslims’ sense of belonging. Furthermore, evidence from open-ended responses in Appendix Section C2 suggests that the treatment may have had a limited impact due to how respondents interpreted it. Most participants focused on former president A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, a figure widely seen as “secular” and symbolically detached from Muslim identity.

C.2.1 Hindu Centrality

India has many heroes, and many prominent individuals worked towards making the nation what it is today. Below, you can see the image of 5 different Indian heroes. Please select the hero who you think is the most popular according to the majority of people in India.

- Chhatrapati Shivaji
- Rani of Jhansi
- Vinayak Damodar Savarkar
- Swami Vivekananda
- Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel

In a few words, describe why you selected this particular hero.

The name of India's national song is Vande Mataram. This song was written by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. Did you know this?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

C.2.2 Muslim Centrality

India has many heroes, and many prominent individuals worked towards making the nation what it is today. Below, you can see the image of 5 different Indian heroes. Please select one hero who you think has made an especially important contribution to the Indian nation.

- Akbar the Great
- Maulana Azad
- Razia Sultan
- A.P.J. Abdul Kalam
- Syed Ahmad Khan

In a few words, describe why you selected this particular hero.

According to many accounts the person who came up with the final design of the Indian national flag was a Muslim woman named Surayya Tyabji. Did you know this?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

C.3 Avatars

Figure C1: Avatar Choice

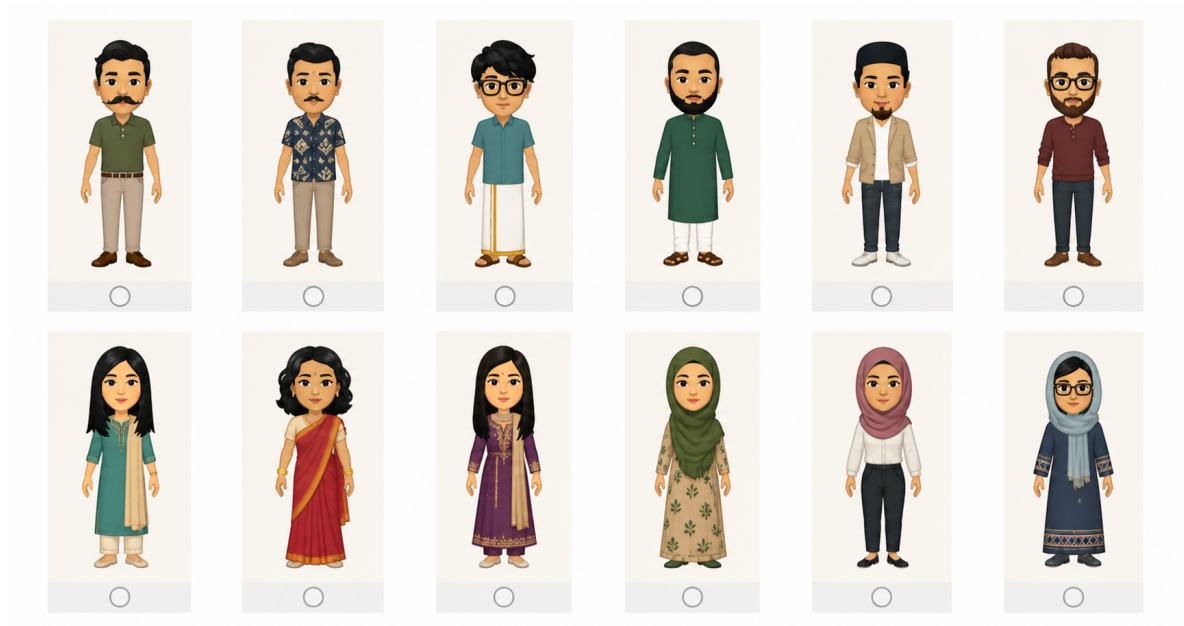


Table C4: Perceptions of Avatars by Intended Religion and Gender

Avatar #	Intended Religion	Gender	% perceived as Hindu	% perceived as Muslim
1	Neutral	Male	53	2
2	Hindu	Male	71	2
3	Hindu	Male	68	1
4	Muslim	Male	2	91
5	Muslim	Male	3	58
6	Muslim	Male	4	74
7	Neutral	Female	69	3
8	Hindu	Female	74	1
9	Hindu	Female	74	1
10	Muslim	Female	2	85
11	Muslim	Female	NA	NA
12	Muslim	Female	NA	NA

Note: This Table shows the perceived religion of the different avatar options. The results are based on a pre-test (N=60) carried out prior to the main study.

Table C5 explores the correlation between the avatar choice measure and theoretically related constructs such as Muslim identification and perceived discrimination against Muslims. The results suggest positive correlations between these measures.

Table C5: **Validating Avatar Choice Measure**

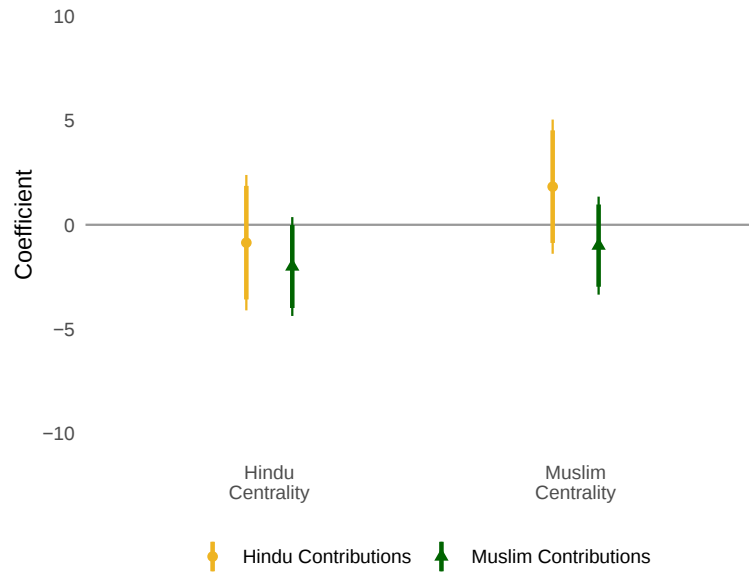
	<i>Dependent variable:</i>
	Muslim-signalling Avatar (0/1)
National Identification	−0.001 (0.001)
Ethnic Identification	0.004*** (0.001)
Discrimination against Muslims	0.030** (0.013)
Observations	1,311
R ²	0.035
<i>Note:</i> *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

C.4 Manipulation Check and Interpretation

C.4.1 Manipulation Check

Figure C2 shows that the Hindu Centrality treatment reduces perceptions that Muslims have contributed to the Indian nation, according to expectation. I do not find, however, that the Muslim Centrality treatment increases the perceived contributions of Muslims. Overall, the Muslim Centrality treatment appear to have unintended consequences.

Figure C2: **Effects of Centrality Treatments on Perceived Contributions of Hindus and Muslims**



Note: This figure shows how the centrality treatments affects the perceived contributions of Hindus (yellow) and Muslims (green) to the Indian nation. 95% confidence intervals are shown.

C.4.2 Interpreting Open-ended Responses

The treatments required respondents to elaborate on why they believed one of the listed heroes is particularly popular in India. Analyzing these open-ended responses provides useful insights into how respondents engaged with the treatment prompts.

- First, the *Hindu Centrality* treatment appears to largely have worked as intended and effectively reduced perceptions of Muslims' contributions. Evidence from the open-ended responses suggests that the treatment successfully brought to mind considerations of what other Indians think about their national heroes and identity. Many respondents explicitly linked this popularity to the Hindu identity of the heroes. For instance, several respondents explained that Shivaji Maharaj is popular because society views him as "a great warrior who fought against the Mughals". Another respondent noted that "many people of different states worship him as an incarnation of God." Another respondent noted that the hero was popular simply "because of Hinduism".
- While the *Hindu Centrality* treatment reduced perceived Muslim contributions, it did not increase perceived Hindu contributions, as one might have expected. Although the precise reason for this is unclear, I speculate that (1) Muslim respondents may have reacted primarily to their own group's standing rather than adjusting their views of

Hindus, and/or (2) Hindus' contributions were already viewed as uncontroversial, so there was limited scope for upward adjustment.

- The *Muslim Centrality* treatment did not increase perceived Muslim contributions. As noted in the manuscript, this treatment did not work as intended, and unfortunately cannot be used for theory testing. One possible explanation for this is that making Muslim identity salient could prime feelings of marginalization, thereby dampening expressions of in-group pride rather than strengthening it. This would be consistent with prior literature (Hoff and Pandey 2006). However, this could also relate to how respondents interpreted the treatment itself. This treatment prompt asked respondents what hero *they* perceived as having made a particularly important contribution. When analyzing the open-ended responses, I find that the vast majority selected former president A. P. J. Abdul Kalam as their preferred hero. Responses show that many actually had limited knowledge of the other historical figures listed. It is possible that Kalam's image – often seen as “secular” or, in BJP discourse, as a “good Muslim” – may not have strongly primed religious identity. For example, many respondents wrote responses in line with “he has done a lot to improve the space program in India,” suggesting admiration for achievements largely unrelated to his identity. In fact, only 9 responses mentioned the word “Muslim”.

C.5 Pre-registered Empirical Specification

To test the hypotheses, I rely on simple differences-in-means and OLS estimators to compare the outcome measures between each treatment and the control group, respectively. The main analyses focuses on the average treatment effects relative to the control. The main model is specified by the equations below:

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta_1 T_{i,1} + \beta_2 T_{i,2} + \psi \mathbf{x}_i + \epsilon_i \quad (1)$$

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta_1 T_{i,1} + \beta_2 T_{i,2} + \beta_3 T_{i,1} * T_{i,2} + \psi \mathbf{x}_i + \epsilon_i \quad (2)$$

where Y_i is the outcome for individual i , T_1 is a treatment indicator variable that equals 1 if individual i was randomly assigned to the *Hindu Centrality* treatment condition and T_2 is a treatment indicator variable that equals 1 if individual i was randomly assigned to the *national/ethnic identity frame* treatment. $\mathbf{x}_i$ is a vector of control variables, ϵ_i is unexplained variance, and α is the intercept.

C.6 Exclusions

When designing the survey and cleaning the data, I took several steps to ensure high data quality. First, I included two pre-treatment attention checks to identify and exclude respondents who clearly were not paying attention to the survey content. These attention checks were inspired by [Aronow et al. \(2020\)](#) in a paper on inattentiveness among online survey respondents recruited by Lucid (see Section C.1 for further details). Second, I excluded respondents who took the survey very quickly (i.e., less than half the median soft launch completion time) or very slowly (i.e., more than twice the median soft launch completion time). Finally, I excluded respondents who did not provide meaningful or relevant answers to an open-ended, pre-treatment question about their religious sect.

D Case Selection

Many Indian Muslims hold dual identities. According to a recent representative survey carried out by Pew Research Center on Tolerance and Segregation in India,²⁷ 99% of Muslims report feeling “proud to be an Indian”. An equal proportion of respondents report also feeling “proud to be a Muslim”. It appears, therefore, that the great majority of Indian Muslims simultaneously identify at both the superordinate level (as Indian) and at the subgroup level (as Muslim). India is also a context in which the dominant ethnicity is viewed by many as central to national identity. According to the survey by Pew Research Center, 81% of Hindus agree or fully agree that it is important to be a Hindu in order to be “truly Indian”. Although Muslim minorities in India have been viewed as “foreigners” and accused of divided loyalties since the days of Partition (Habib 2017; Pandey 1999), the community is facing deepening marginalization and exclusion from India as an “imagined community” in recent years (Ahmed 2019; Nussbaum 2009). The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) – in power since 2014 – has dedicated itself to erase India’s Muslim heritage and re-write history according to Hindu nationalist ideology (Chatterji et al. 2019). As Hindu identity has become increasingly central to national identity, Muslim’s national belonging has become increasingly insecure.

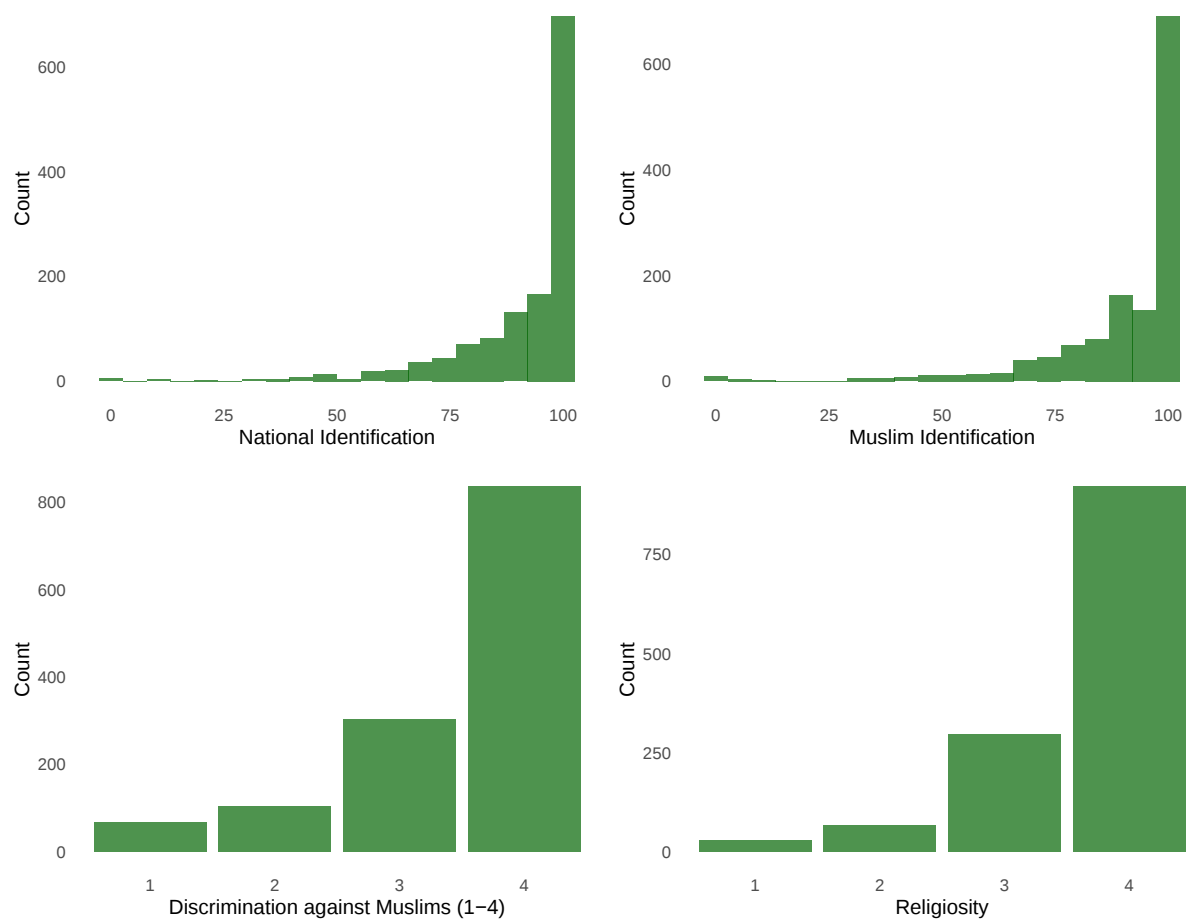
D.1 Social Identity among Sampled Respondents

As part of the pre-treatment questionnaire, respondents were asked how important different group identities are to their sense of self on a scale from 0 to 100. As the theoretical argument applies to contexts where many minorities aspire to belong to the nation, yet do not want to give up minority identity, I begin by examining respondents’ self-reported strength of identification as Indian and as Muslim. The top panels in Figure D3 indicate high levels of dual identity among the sampled respondents. Average identification as Muslim is 90 on a scale from 0-100 and average identification as Indian is 91. Dual identity (i.e., identifying strongly both with the nation and with the ethnic group) is high, with 75% of the sampled respondents reporting that they identify both as Muslim and Indian with 80 or more on a scale from 0 to 100.

The bottom panels of Figure D3 show levels of perceived discrimination and religiosity among respondents. Most respondents are either “fairly religious” or “very religious”. Respondents also perceive discrimination against Muslims with 64% of sampled respondents stating that Muslims face “a lot” of discrimination or unfair treatment in India.

²⁷Information on the survey can be found at <https://www.pewforum.org/2021/06/29/religion-in-india-tolerance-and-segregation/>.

Figure D3: Identity, Religiosity and Perceived Discrimination



Note: This figure shows respondents' self-perceived identification as Indian and Muslim (top panels) and respondents' perceptions of discrimination (bottom left panel) and religiosity (bottom right panels). 4 indicates higher values (e.g., a lot of discrimination against Muslim and high levels of religiosity). N = 1,311.

D.2 Comparison with Representative Sample

Table D6: **Comparison of Sample Characteristics: Pew Representative Survey (2020) and Online Survey**

Characteristic	Pew Survey (2020)	Online Survey
Monthly income below 10,000 INR	70% below, 30% above	7% below, 93% above
Education level	23% illiterate; 30% up to primary; 31% up to high school; 13% bachelor/technical training	0% illiterate; <1% up to primary; 33% up to high school; 51% bachelor/technical training
Urban residence	28% urban; 72% rural	68% urban; 31% rural
Caste composition	56% General; 34% OBC; 10% SC/ST	46% General; 43% OBC; 10% SC/ST
Importance of religion	93% say religion somewhat or very important	96% say religion somewhat or very important
Identification with nation (Indian)	93% “very proud to be Indian”	Mean = 91 (0–100 scale)
Identification with religion (Muslim)	96% “very proud to be Muslim”	Mean = 90 (0–100 scale)
Perceived discrimination against Muslims	31% perceive “a lot” of discrimination	87% perceive “a lot” of discrimination

As expected, the online sample is younger, more educated, wealthier, and more urban than the Pew sample – patterns typical of online respondent pools.

1. The two samples show remarkably similar levels of religiosity, as well as ethnic and national identification. In the Pew sample, 91% of respondents say that religion is somewhat or very important in their lives. In the online sample, the comparable percentage is 92%. In terms of identity, 93% of the Pew sample report being very proud of being Indian and 96% report being very proud of being Muslim. In my own sample, the average strength of identification on a scale from 0-100 is 91 for being Indian and 90 for being Muslim. This suggests that dual identity is very common among Indian Muslims at large and therefore, the theoretical framework should apply more broadly.
2. While the online sample differs from the national population in its sociodemographic composition, it may in fact capture the profile of individuals who could be considered *potential* participants in protest. The argument and hypotheses apply most directly to individuals who would be inclined to mobilize, but falsify their preferences or decline to protest due to considerations regarding the repercussions of protest on their claim to national identity. Although the demographic characteristics of protest participants likely varies across issues, participants in the Citizenship Amendment Act protests included many students and middle-class, urban professionals. From this perspective, the absence of less-educated respondents is not necessarily a major limitation.
3. That said, the sample in this study is likely more educated, affluent, and politically interested than the average potential Indian Muslim protest participant. Respondents willing to participate in this type of survey are probably more politically engaged to

begin with and may feel less apprehensive about asserting their group identity than those who decline participation. Levels of political interest in the sample are indeed quite high, as is overall support for the protest movements. Although it is difficult to determine exactly how this affects the generalizability of the findings, this profile likely makes the estimates conservative. In particular, the fact that national-identity frames have discernible effects even among a group already predisposed to mobilize suggests that the observed effects are likely to be lower bounds.

4. Finally, in considering broader generalizability, I would expect the main findings to hold. However, among India's large rural population with little or no formal education, other obstacles likely play a greater role in discouraging political participation among Muslim minorities – such as internalized feelings of inferiority or concerns about personal and communal security. Although levels of group identification are high, the data suggests that group consciousness (perceived discrimination) remains far more limited in the representative sample. In contexts where such consciousness does emerge, however, the collective action frames are likely to influence levels of support.

D.3 Secularism in India

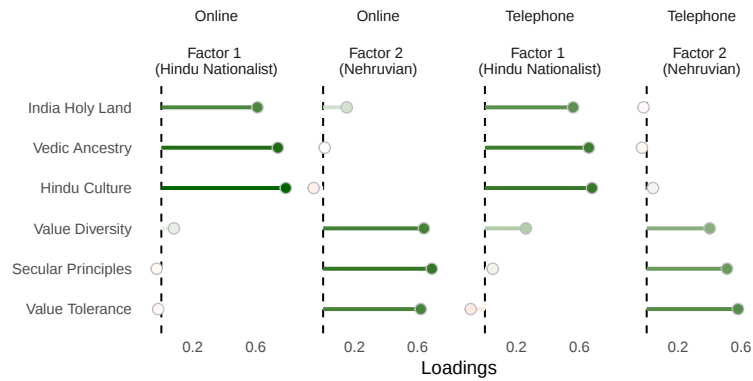
The idea of secularism in India is quite distinct from that in many other contexts. As articulated by Nehru and other founding leaders, Indian secularism referred not to a strict separation between religion and state, but to equal respect for all faiths and the protection of religious pluralism as a cornerstone of national identity (Khilnani 2004). In recent decades, the concept has become contested and has been appropriated in different ways — including by Hindu nationalist actors who invoke secularism to criticize perceived “appeasement” of minorities. Whereas Nehru understood secularism to imply a special responsibility of the majority community toward religious minorities, the BJP reframes secularism as a justification for denying minorities any “special treatment” or accommodation. Nevertheless, references to the “secular idea of India” continue to evoke the founding ideal of an inclusive national narrative and, in public discourse, often to signal concern about the erosion of pluralism and the risk of India’s transition into a more majoritarian state. As such, it represents a grievance that extends beyond the Muslim community.

When designing the national identity frames, the phrase “threatens the secular idea of India” was intended to evoke a threat to this foundational, inclusive conception of the nation — something that concerns all citizens, not only Muslims. Indeed, during the anti-CAA protests, this ideal was often explicitly invoked and protest often justified to “defend the secular idea of India” (Sharma and Singh 2023). In this context, a perceived threat to secularism could be perceived as the erosion of India’s multicultural and plural national project.

Nonetheless, because the meaning of secularism has shifted and become contested, it is important to assess whether the public still associates secularism with the inclusive idea of India. To explore this, I draw on data that I collected in 2023 on conceptions of national identity. To capture conceptions of national identity among the Indian public, I designed a survey battery and fielded it both in (1) two online surveys that were representative on key demographics collected through the survey company Cint (N=4,106) in 2024 and (2) a representative telephonic random-digit dialing (RDD) survey collected through the survey company CVoter (N=1,255) in 2023. The battery asks respondents to what extent they agree or disagree that the following criteria are important for being “truly Indian”. One of these criteria involves “to be committed to Secular principles”.

I conducted a factor analysis which reveals that items clustered into factors consistent with two visions of nationalism (see Figure D4). The items “India Holy Land,” “Vedic Ancestry,” and “Hindu Culture” loaded strongly onto one factor, which I interpret as reflecting an ascriptive conception of national identity. This dimension aligns closely with a Hindu nationalist understanding, emphasizing a shared culture, language, and heritage. On the other hand, the items “Value Diversity,” “Secular Principles,” and “Value Tolerance” loaded onto a second factor, which can be understood as a secular or “universalist” dimension of national identity which aligns with the Nehruvian narrative. I therefore believe it is unlikely that respondents perceived the treatment as aligned with a majoritarian worldview.

Figure D4: **Factor Analyses: Conceptions of National Identity**



Note: This figure shows standardized factor loadings from an exploratory factor analysis.

E Ethics

Given the sensitive nature of the topic under study, I took several steps to ensure that the study was conducted to a high ethical standard. First, I discussed the project and the pre-analysis plan with Muslim faculty at Indian institutions to receive their input on the ethical aspects of the study. Second, I carefully chose treatment material that would be unlikely to provoke negative responses or be perceived of as offensive. Third, I asked respondents to share their experience of the study in an open-ended question and examined these in detail after soft launching the study. Respondents overwhelmingly felt that the study was important and dealt with issues of concern to their community. Finally, I submitted the pre-analysis plan for ethical review at the ethical board at the University of Mannheim. The survey was entirely anonymous and no personal contact details were collected.

F Tables with Regression Model Output

Table F7 shows the full regression output from the models testing H_1 . As can be observed, respondents assigned to the “Hindu centrality” treatment are less willing to assert Muslim identity than respondents assigned to the control condition.

Table F7: **Asserting Minority Identity**

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Muslim Avatar	
	(1)	(2)
Hindu Centrality	−0.059** (0.028)	−0.059** (0.028)
Muslim Centrality	−0.008 (0.028)	−0.007 (0.028)
Controls	No	Yes
Observations	1,311	1,311
R ²	0.004	0.019

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Note: Controls include: gender, age category, urban resident, education and region.

Table F8 shows the full regression output from the models testing H_2 . As can be observed, respondents assigned to the “Hindu centrality” treatment are less willing to endorse ethnic resistance movements than respondents assigned to the control condition.

Table F8: **Hindu Centrality and Support for Collective Action**

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Support	Participate	Support	Participate
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Hindu Centrality	−0.265** (0.108)	−0.196*** (0.073)	−0.260** (0.107)	−0.154** (0.069)
Muslim Centrality	−0.139 (0.106)	−0.165** (0.072)	−0.144 (0.105)	−0.167** (0.068)
Controls	No	No	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,311	1,311	1,311	1,311
R ²	0.005	0.006	0.038	0.125

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Note: Controls include: gender, age category, urban resident, education, region and movement issue.

Table F9 shows the full regression output from the models testing H_3 . As can be observed, national identity frames enhance respondents endorsement of the movements and willingness to participate in them.

Table F9: **Identity Frames and Support for Collective Action**

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Support	Participate	Support	Participate
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Ethnic Frame	0.027 (0.044)	0.022 (0.027)	0.029 (0.044)	0.013 (0.026)
National Frame	0.150*** (0.042)	0.069*** (0.026)	0.150*** (0.042)	0.063** (0.026)
Controls	No	No	Yes	Yes
Observations	3,933	3,933	3,933	3,933
R ²	0.002	0.001	0.034	0.119

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Note: Controls include: gender, age category, urban resident, education, region and movement issue. Standard errors clustered at respondent level.

Table F10 shows the full regression output from the models testing H_4 . As can be observed, the ethnic identity frame decreases support for resistance when the centrality of Hindu identity to the Indian nation is salient.

Table F10: **Interaction Effect**

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Support (1)	Participate (2)	Support (3)	Participate (4)
Ethnic Frame	0.170** (0.077)	0.141*** (0.047)	0.184** (0.076)	0.128*** (0.047)
National Frame	0.156** (0.078)	0.057 (0.050)	0.161** (0.077)	0.054 (0.050)
Hindu Centrality	0.062 (0.108)	−0.027 (0.074)	0.080 (0.106)	0.009 (0.070)
Muslim Centrality	−0.038 (0.107)	0.016 (0.072)	−0.046 (0.106)	−0.003 (0.067)
Ethnic Frame × Hindu Centrality	−0.327*** (0.109)	−0.169** (0.067)	−0.347*** (0.108)	−0.168** (0.066)
National Frame × Hindu Centrality	−0.107 (0.108)	0.0005 (0.067)	−0.125 (0.107)	−0.010 (0.067)
Ethnic Frame × Muslim Centrality	−0.100 (0.108)	−0.180*** (0.064)	−0.115 (0.107)	−0.171*** (0.063)
National Frame × Muslim Centrality	0.083 (0.104)	0.032 (0.064)	0.084 (0.103)	0.034 (0.064)
Controls	No	No	Yes	Yes
Observations	3,933	3,933	3,933	3,933
R ²	0.004	0.003	0.036	0.120

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Note: Controls include: gender, age category, urban resident, education, region and movement issue. Standard errors clustered at respondent level.

Table F11 shows how national identification moderates the effect of Hindu Centrality on support for collective action.

Table F11: **The Moderating Role of National Identification**

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>
	Support
Hindu Centrality	0.835 (0.651)
Muslim Centrality	0.512 (0.655)
National Identification	0.008 (0.005)
Muslim Identification	0.010*** (0.003)
Hindu Centrality*National Identification	−0.012* (0.007)
Muslim Centrality*National Identification	−0.007 (0.007)
Observations	1,311
R ²	0.018
<i>Note:</i> *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Table F12 shows the effect of identity frames on second-order beliefs (beliefs that others will view the protest as anti-national), by protest movement.

Table F12: **Identity Frames and Second-Order Beliefs**

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Protest viewed as Anti-National			
	Combined	Anti-CAA	Ayodhya	Cow Violence
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Ethnic Frame	0.056* (0.029)	−0.022 (0.074)	0.186** (0.075)	−0.032 (0.071)
National Frame	0.018 (0.029)	−0.194** (0.077)	0.232*** (0.072)	−0.012 (0.073)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	3,933	1,311	1,311	1,311
R ²	0.122	0.113	0.146	0.129

Note:

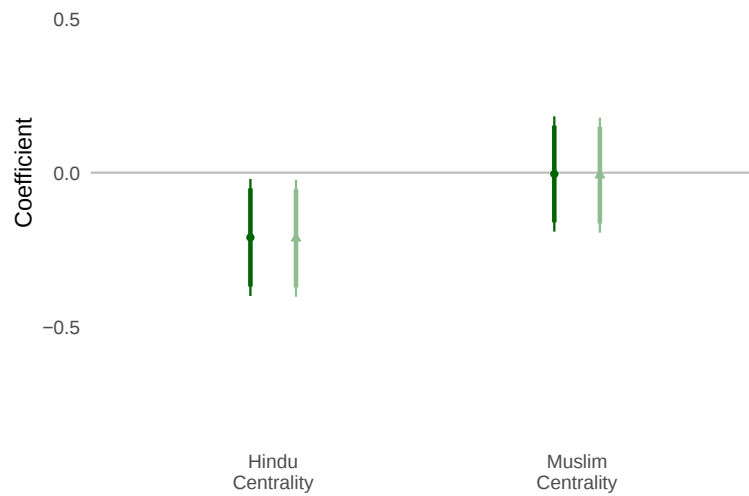
*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Note: Controls include: gender, age category, urban resident, education, region and self-esteem. Standard errors clustered at respondent level.

G Additional Results

Figure G5 shows how the Hindu Centrality treatment affects respondents' willingness to assert minority identity, when operationalized as a continuous variable. The measure ranges from 1-6 where 6 represents that avatar that most clearly signals Muslim religion. The coding is carried out based on results from a pre-test (N=60) in which respondents identified a range of avatars according to their perceived religious backgrounds.

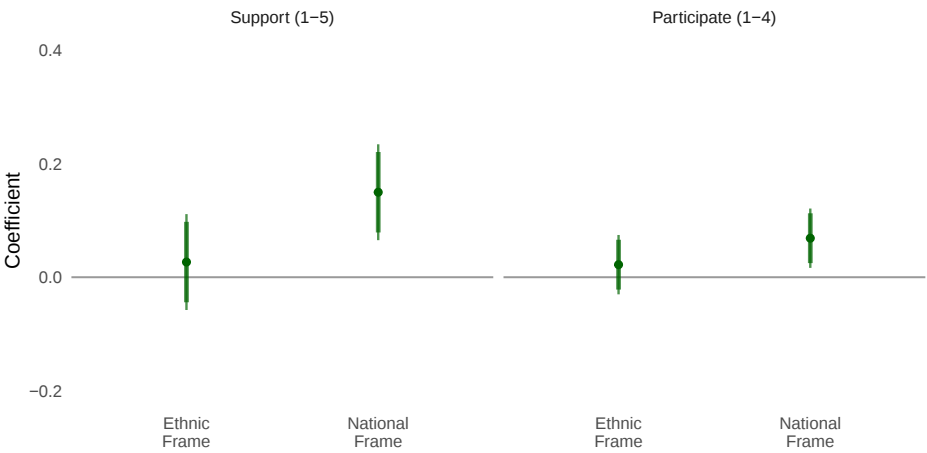
Figure G5: **Asserting Minority Identity**



Note: This figure shows treatment effects of Hindu/Muslim centrality on willingness to assert minority identity among Muslims. The outcome variable is a continuous measure ranging from 1-6 where 6 represents the avatar that mostly clearly signals Muslim religion. Coefficient plots are based on linear regression models excluding controls (dark line) and including sociodemographic controls (bright line). 95% (thin line) and 90% (thick line) confidence intervals are shown. N = 1,311.

Figure G6 replicates the main analysis (H_3) including individual fixed effects. Results remain very similar.

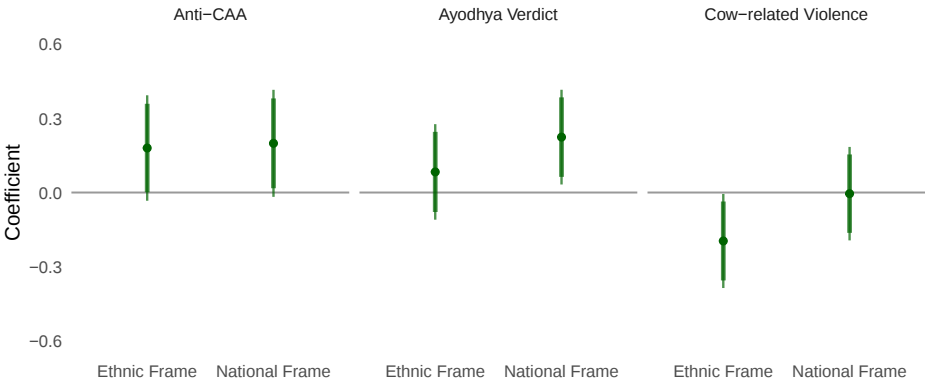
Figure G6: **Identity Frames and Support for Resistance (individual fixed effects)**



Note: This figure shows treatment effects of identity frames on support for resistance. Coefficient plots are based on linear regression models with individual fixed effects. 95% (thin line) and 90% (thick line) confidence intervals are shown.

Figure G7 shows how the identity frames affect support for resistance for *each* of the separate resistance movement. The figure shows that national identity frames have the strongest positive effect on support for protest against the verdict on Ayodhya. Similarly, the ethnic identity frame has the strongest negative effect on support for protest against cow-related violence. Somewhat surprisingly, however, ethnic identity frames do not have a negative impact on support for anti-CAA protests. Overall, the findings suggest that, as expected, minorities are more sensitive to frames that deviate from those which already come associated with a particular issue or movement.

Figure G7: Identity Frames and Support for Separate Resistance Movements



Note: This figure shows treatment effects of identity frames on support each separate resistance movement. Coefficient plots are based on linear regression models with controls. 95% (thin line) and 90% (thick line) confidence intervals are shown.

H Mechanisms

H.1 Further Uncovering the Mechanism

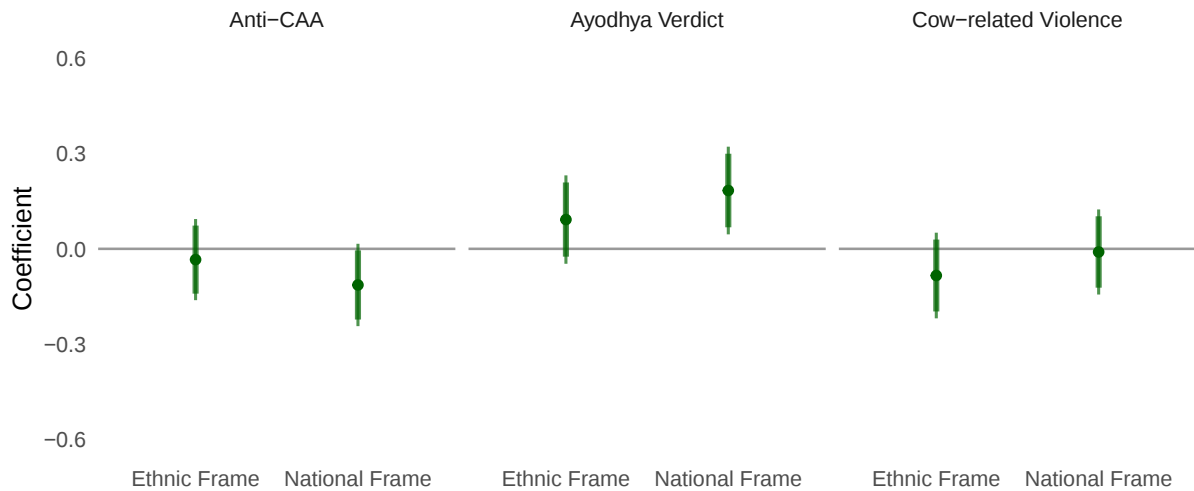
H.2 Anecdotal Evidence

Anecdotal accounts support the general argument made in this article. For instance, in an interview with the BBC, one Muslim woman explained: “I want to voice criticism against discriminatory policies [...] But each time I am rejected as ‘anti-national’ or ‘anti-Hindu’ and forced back into the shadows” (Chhabria 2019). Journalist Shivam Jha observes that “Muslims have internalized the idea that they must keep quiet [...] The silence is also strategic. Muslims realize that the BJP and its Hindutva ideology want them to assert themselves, and then use it to tell Hindus, ‘Look how Muslims are being so assertive!’” (Vij 2018). And a professor at a Delhi university writes: “The fear among many who support protest is that protests will now become a prisoner of the Hindu–Muslim binary, thereby doing a disservice to the cause itself (Apoorvanand 2019).

H.2.1 Perceived Entitlement to Protest

Figure H8 shows how the collective action frames affect respondents’ perceived “right” to protest on this issue. As shown, respondents are more likely to feel that they have the right to protest against the Ayodhya verdict, when framed in national terms. This suggests that additional mechanisms may partly explain the positive effects of national identity frames on support.

Figure H8: Identity Frames and Perceived Right to Protest

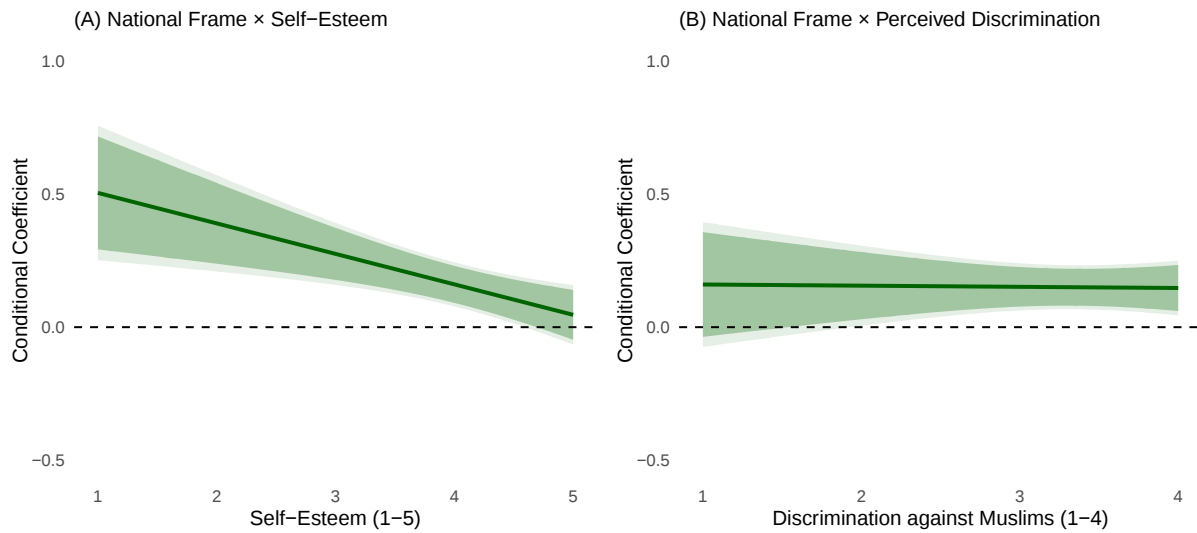


Note: Treatment effects of identity frames on perceived right to protest. Coefficient plots are based on linear regression models including controls. 95% (thin line) and 90% (thick line) confidence intervals are shown.

H.2.2 Self-esteem and Perceived Discrimination

The evidence presented in the *Mechanisms* section is consistent with the notion that concerns about the *repercussions of protest* – particularly doubts about one’s credibility as a committed national – in part help explain these findings. It remains unclear, however, whether respondents experience these repercussions primarily as a loss of positive social identity or as tangible threats of discrimination and backlash. Both mechanisms are plausible and likely operate simultaneously. Evidence in Figure H9 supports the importance of psychological factors: the effects of national identity frames are strongest among respondents with low self-esteem, while perceived discrimination does not moderate the relationship. This pattern suggests that identity-based self-worth likely plays an important role in shaping support for protest.

Figure H9: Self-Esteem and Perceived Discrimination



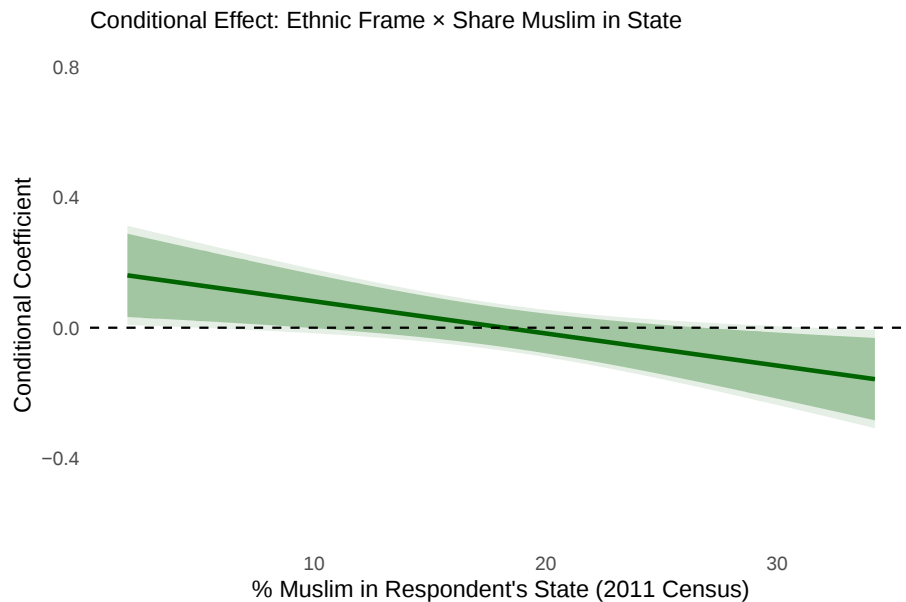
Note: Treatment effects of national identity frames on support for protest movements given levels of (A) self-esteem and (B) perceived discrimination. Coefficient plots are based on linear regression models. 95% (light) and 90% (dark) confidence intervals are shown.

H.2.3 Religious Composition in State

One might predict that, in areas with a larger Muslim population, Muslims may be more visible and perceived as more threatening by the dominant group, which could make minorities more concerned about how collective action is framed in order to avoid violent backlash or discrimination. Unfortunately, I do not have information on respondents' immediate localities and am unable to carry out this kind of analysis in a satisfactory way. However, I can identify respondents' state of residence. To explore this question, I therefore merge the survey data with state-level information on the percentage of Muslim residents from the 2011 Census and estimate models interacting the treatment variables with the state's Muslim population share.

Figure H10 illustrates the conditional marginal effects across the observed range of Muslim population shares. The results show no statistically significant interaction between the national identity frame and the percentage of Muslims. However, the ethnic identity frame exhibits a negative interaction with the Muslim population share ($b = -0.10$, $p = 0.029$), suggesting that the negative effect of ethnic frames on support for protest is stronger in states with larger Muslim populations.

Figure H10: **Effect of Ethnic Identity Frames by % Muslim in State**



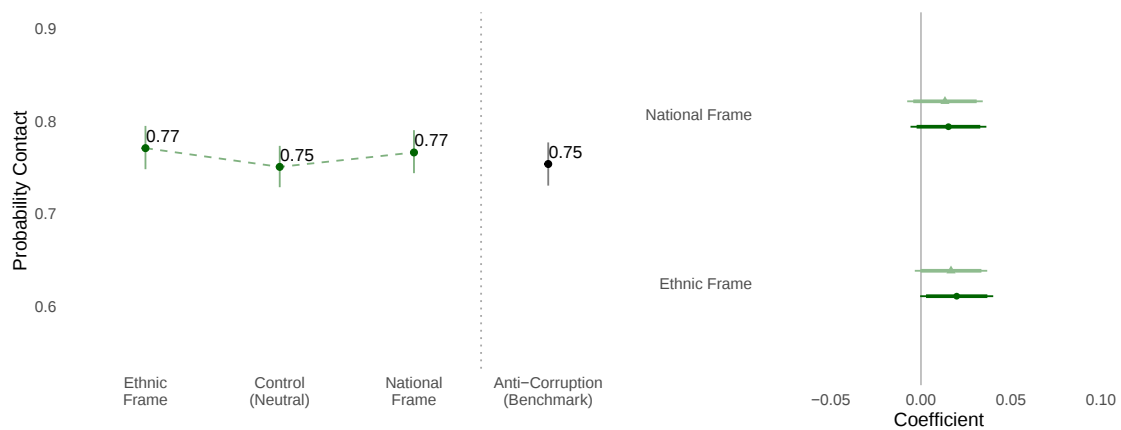
Note: Treatment effects of ethnic identity frames on support for protest movements by % Muslims in the State. Coefficient plots are based on linear regression models. 95% (light) and 90% (dark) confidence intervals are shown.

H.2.4 Over vs. Covert Support

The emergence of ethnic resistance movements threatens minorities chances of gaining acceptance as members of the national ingroup, as their actions are likely to be construed as “anti-national”. However, minorities have other options to voice their concerns and pressurize the government in ways that do not directly implicate the minority group in such “unpatriotic” activities. For instance, minorities could seek support from international actors, demanding that they speak on the minority group’s behalf. This would provide an *indirect* form of resistance, which is less likely to challenge minorities’ commitment to the nation as it does not involve any overt action by group members themselves. If national identity frames do indeed strengthen support for resistance movements by reducing perceptions that protest will challenge their commitment to the nation, we would *not expect* to observe a mobilizing effect of national identity frames as compared to ethnic identity frames when asked about an outcome that is unlikely to challenge this commitment to begin with.

To test this implication, I ask respondents whether they would be willing to contact an international NGO asking it to make a statement in favor of the cause. At the end of the survey, respondents who answer “yes” to this question are provided with a link to access the webpage and contact form of “Minority Rights Group International” where they can compose an e-mail if they wish. According to the theorized mechanism, I would not expect the national identity frame to be more effective than ethnic identity frames in shaping support for resistance when the outcome of interest is the choice to contact an international NGO. Results are reported in Appendix Figure H11. As expected, I do not observe any difference across treatment conditions on willingness to contact an international NGO. Both ethnic and national identity frames have positive (and marginally significant) effects on willingness to contact an international NGO. In sum, while the evidence in favor of the theorized mechanisms is far from conclusive, there is suggestive evidence that national identity frames strengthen support for resistance by reducing concerns among minorities that protest challenges their commitment to the nation in the eyes of broader society.

Figure H11: Willingness to Contact International NGO



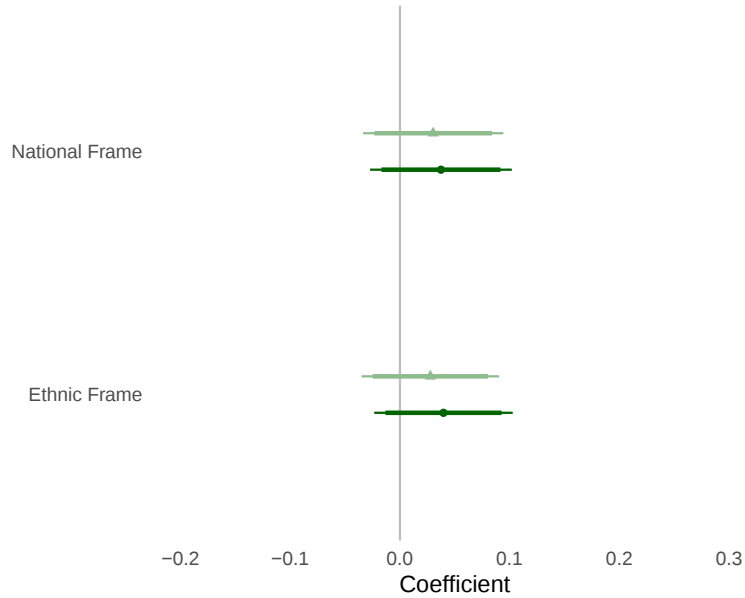
Note: This figure shows treatment effects of identity frames on willingness to contact an international NGO. Coefficient plots are based on linear regression models excluding controls (dark colour) and including controls (light colour). 95% (thin line) and 90% (thick line) confidence intervals are shown. N= 3,933.

H.3 Alternative Mechanisms

H.3.1 Issue Importance

National identity frames may increase perceptions that the matter at hand is important, as the frame casts the issue as a grievance affecting the nation, rather than just part of the population. I explore this possibility by including an item asking respondents to what extent they perceive the issue as important. Responses are also given on 5-point scales.

Figure H12: **Alternative Mechanism**



Note: Treatment effects of identity frames on potential mechanisms. Coefficient plots are based on linear regression models excluding controls (dark colour) and including controls (light colour). 95% (thin line) and 90% (thick line) confidence intervals are shown. $N = 3,933$.

Results are presented in the right panel in Figure H12. National identity frames do not appear to increase perceptions that protest is important, with respect to the control or the ethnic frame.

H.3.2 Demand Effects

Another alternative explanation that comes to mind are potential demand effects. Could participants be inferring that the experimenter expects to observe more positive reactions to national identity frames and more negative reactions to ethnic identity frames? Additionally, could priming Hindu centrality exacerbate these demand effects? Overall, I do not see clear reasons why participants should guess or infer that the researcher expects to see more positive responses to the national identity frames. The ethnic identity frames do not portray protest in a negative light, but rather highlight the Muslim community's legitimate grievances. If anything, demand effects could have produced positive effects from both national and ethnic frames as they both produce arguments for why the policies in question are problematic.

A critic might take the argument one step further and suggest that priming Hindu heroes should prompt respondents to react more negatively to the ethnic identity frames, not because this primes respondents' feelings of being peripheral to national identity, but because this makes it clearer to respondents what the experimenter expects to observe. Although I cannot fully dismiss this possibility, I would expect to observe more consistent findings across the different outcomes, if this were the case. For instance, if demand effects were driving the

results, I would also expect to observe a negative interaction between Hindu centrality and ethnic frame on outcomes such as minorities' perceived right to protest against the issue or and their willingness to contact an international NGO (outcomes which should not be affected according to the theoretical framework). As shown in Table H13, the effect of the ethnic frame on these outcomes is not statistically stronger among respondents in the Hindu centrality treatment group.

Table H13: **Demand Effects: Identity Frames Hindu Centrality**

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	NGO Contact	Right to Protest
	(1)	(2)
Ethnic Frame	0.032* (0.019)	0.071 (0.055)
National Frame	−0.003 (0.019)	0.011 (0.055)
Hindu Centrality	−0.031 (0.027)	−0.057 (0.073)
Ethnic Frame × Hindu Centrality	−0.029 (0.026)	−0.097 (0.072)
National Frame × Hindu Centrality	0.013 (0.027)	0.010 (0.075)
Observations	3,933	3,933
R ²	0.168	0.028
Adjusted R ²	0.164	0.023
<i>Note:</i> *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01		

Finally, recent work on the prevalence of demand effects in online survey experiments (Mum-molo and Peterson 2019) suggests that research participants generally show a limited ability (or willingness) to adjust their behavior to align with researcher expectations. The authors find that even when participants are assigned information about experimenter intent and when financial incentives to respond in line with researcher expectations are provided, participants fail to adjust their behavior to meet these expectations. The authors conclude that survey experimental designs are often robust to demand effects and that efforts to obfuscate the aim of experimental studies may be unnecessary. Research also suggests that while the primary source of demand effects in laboratory experiments tends to be subtle cues offered by researchers in their direct interactions with experimental participants, online survey experiments with their depersonalized interactions between researcher and participants tend to be considered least-likely cases for the presence of such demand effects (McDermott 2002; Siah 2005).

Appendix References

- Ahmed, Hilal. 2019. *Siyasi Muslims: A Story of Political Islam in India*. Penguin Random House India Private Limited.
- Chatterji, Angana P, Thomas Blom Hansen and Christophe Jaffrelot. 2019. *Majoritarian State: How Hindu Nationalism is Changing India*. Oxford University Press.
- Habib, S Irfan. 2017. *Indian Nationalism: The Essential Writings*. Aleph Book Company.
- McDermott, Rose. 2002. “Experimental Methods in Political Science.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 5(1):31–61.
- Mummolo, Jonathan and Erik Peterson. 2019. “Demand Effects in Survey Experiments: An Empirical Assessment.” *American Political Science Review* 113(2):517–529.
- Nussbaum, Martha. 2009. *The Clash Within: Democracy, Religious Violence, and India’s Future*. Harvard University Press.
- Pandey, Gyanendra. 1999. “Can a Muslim be an Indian?” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41(4):608–629.
- Siah, Cha Yeow. 2005. “All that Glitters is not Gold: Examining the Perils and Obstacles in Collecting Data on the Internet.” *International Negotiation* 10(1):115–130.