Title: From the Old City to All of India: An Ideological Analysis of the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen

Assignment Component
Thesis

Ishmael Maxwell

The Oxford School of Global and Area Studies
University of Oxford

Paper submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Modern South Asian Studies at the University of Oxford

Date Submitted: 09/08/2023

Word count: 11,947

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

In February 2023, the All India *Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen* (AIMIM) held its first ever National Convention in Mumbai, Maharastra.[1] More than a thousand AIMIM officials were present, a bustling mass of legislative members, corporators, and city presidents. They had arrived from a wide range of states - Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and others. This diversity is noteworthy. Just ten years prior, such geographical spread was absent from AIMIM's membership, with the vast majority of its representatives hailing from the Muslim-majority Old City of Hyderabad, where the party was founded in 1957 and maintains deep dynastic roots. The National Convention itself and the geographical breadth of its attendees reflect AIMIM's prioritisation of national expansion in the last decade. In a set of resolutions agreed upon at the Convention, attendees committed "to continue the political expansion of the party... to spread the message of AIMIM to every corner of India".[2] Under the leadership of party president Asaduddin Owaisi, AIMIM appears determined to live up to its name, the All-India Council for Muslim Unity.

In this pursuit of national expansion, AIMIM seeks to defy the historical failure of Muslim-led parties in post-Independence India. Indian Muslims are a dispersed and heterogenous minority divided by sect, school, caste, and class, who have thus rarely succeeded in meaningful collective political action.[3] Aspiration for greater cohesion has been further dampened by structural conditions, namely an "artificial binary between secular nationalism and religious communalism" in national politics in which "to be secular and nationalist for a Muslim entails publicly disclaiming too close an association with the specific traits of the minority

---

[1] Syed Mohammed, 'AIMIM National Convention in Mumbai under Way', *The Hindu*, 2023.
[2] AIMIM, 'National Convention Resolutions', 2023.
[3] Hilal Ahmed, *Siyasi Muslims: A Story of Political Islams in India* (Gurgaon, India: Penguin Viking, 2019), 10.

community".[4] AIMIM, however, has explicitly forged its national profile around championing the Muslim community, resisting this secular-communal binary. As Owaisi declared to me, "this whole struggle which we are doing right now is to create an environment where Muslims have leadership and their voices [are] being heard".[5] A defining challenge emerges: how does AIMIM articulate a Muslim voice in national debates, despite a fragmented Muslim community and anti-communal discourses?

To explore this question, this thesis examines AIMIM's direct participation in national ideological contestations. According to Chhibber and Verma, national policy in India is contested along two related yet independent axes, *statism* and *recognition*. On the axis of statism, debates centre on the extent to which the state "should exercise substantial influence on social and economic policy", while on the recognition axis, political actors contest whether the state should take an activist role in the "correction of group-based social inequalities".[6] These cleavages are decisive in shaping India's party system, yet the secular-communal binary presents a 'master narrative' that excludes Muslim participation in ideological debates.[7] For example, the debates over recognition and statism respectively include discussion of quotas and economic upliftment programmes for historically marginalised social groups. However, the state's definition of Muslims as a religious group rather than a marginalised group disqualifies them from receiving these benefits.[8] Consequently, prior to AIMIM, Muslims' political articulation in electoral politics was confined to cultural claims through membership in the Indian National

---

[4] Ayesha Jalal, 'Exploding Communalism: The Politics of Muslim Identity in South Asia', in *Nationalism, Democracy and Development: State and Politics in India,* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 17.

[5] Interview by Author, Asaduddin Owaisi, 8 April 2023.

[6] Pradeep K. Chhibber and Rahul Verma, *Ideology and Identity*, vol. 1 (Oxford University Press, 2018), 31.

[7] Ashutosh Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India*, 2. ed (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2002), 55.

[8] Gurharpal Singh and Giorgio Shani, *Sikh Nationalism: From a Dominant Minority to an Ethno-Religious Diaspora*, New Approaches to Asian History (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 112.

Congress Party (INC) and other secularist parties.[9] AIMIM, however, circumvents these limitations to actively engage in debates across both axes of ideology.

In this thesis, I draw on fieldwork, party documents, and Lok Sabha debates to reveal how AIMIM has overcome constraints on Muslim political articulation to participate directly in national ideological debates. I first locate this research in the broader literature on Muslim representation and outline my methodology. Chapter I examines AIMIM's construction of a national Muslim identity as a non-religious category, drawing from the party's roots in representing Hyderabad's deprived and disenchanted Muslim public. Chapter II analyses AIMIM's engagement with the ideological axis of recognition, primarily expressed through arguments for representative leadership and Muslim inclusion in India's reservation system. Chapter III explores AIMIM's stances on the axis of statism. It argues that the party advocates against social statism (particularly, the activism of the state in civil issues and religious institutions) while demanding economic statism, especially upliftment schemes for minorities.

Ultimately, I argue that AIMIM has sought to construct a secularised Indian Muslim identity to engage in the full spectrum of national ideological contestations that have historically excluded Muslims. By incorporating Muslims within national discourses of recognition and statism, the party aims to embed Muslim group identity within the state apparatus as a non-religious category defined instead by marginalisation, distinctive Indianness, and opposition to both Hindu majoritarianism and ambivalent secularism.

---

[9] Ornit Shani, 'Conceptions of Citizenship in India and the "Muslim Question"', *Modern Asian Studies* 44, no. 1 (January 2010): 165.

Muslim Representation in India

Before discussing AIMIM, a review of the scholarly analysis and historical practice of Muslim representation in India is necessary. Muslim representation has presented a challenge for the Indian state and its Muslim population since before Independence. Partition was, in part, instigated by the Muslim League who consolidated support for the idea of a separate Muslim nation by promoting a unified Muslim political identity and a fear of subjugation within a Hindu-majority state. [10] For the 45 million Muslims who remained in India, the newly established state of Pakistan represented an albatross that prevented political articulations around religious identity without garnering accusations of communalism or disloyalty. As Sherman argues, "the idea of the Muslim minority separated collective political action by Muslims from the realm of national or secular politics".[11]

This challenge was compounded by a confusion of categories between inclusive and composite nationalism within the official idioms of the Indian state. At once, the state professed a composite nationalism that India depicted as a 'federation of faiths,' while simultaneously maintaining an inclusive nationalist idiom of secularism that excluded religion from the state apparatus.[12] Bhargava finds that these distinct idioms cohere and represent a distinctive Indian secularism in which the state maintains a "principled distance" from religion without eliminating it from the public sphere. [13] In the case of Muslim representation, however, Jalal argues that the collapsing of inclusive and composite idioms makes academic and political debates unable to

---

[10] Francis Robinson, 'The British Empire and Muslim Identity in South Asia', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 8 (1998): 278.

[11] Taylor C. Sherman, *Muslim Belonging in Secular India: Negotiating Citizenship in Postcolonial Hyderabad*, 1st ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2015), 4.

[12] Jalal, 'Exploding Communalism: The Politics of Muslim Identity in South Asia', 16.

[13] Rajeev Bhargava, 'The Distinctiveness of Indian Secularism', in *The Future of Secularism* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), 21.

"retain an analytical distinction between Muslim identity and a Muslim communal politics".[14] This confusion has produced an artificial secular-communal binary that precludes Muslim political articulations.[15]

Despite fears of Muslim communalism from Hindu nationalists and liberals alike, efforts to construct a unified Muslim political identity in India are stifled by the community's great heterogeneity and fragmentation. Even amongst India's Sunni *madrasas,* there is a fierce debate over conceptions of what is properly 'Islamic,' with each professing its own doctrine.[16] Hasan argues that Muslim elites have sought to capitalise on communitarian solidarity only to fail in their mobilisation because of the great diversity within disparate sections of the community. [17]

Within the constraints posed by the secular-communal binary and community fragmentation, scholars have studied how Muslims sought political representation within the Indian state. A dominant electoral strategy among Muslims was to seek minority protection within the INC's liberal politics.[18] While this relationship was often ambivalent and strategic, it offered a path towards assimilation into the nation's mainstream. [19] However, constrained by the INC's liberal norms, Muslims were limited to group-identity claims against the state's intervention into religious and cultural issues.[20] As Shani observes, "the scope that was left for Muslims within the liberal field was to make...cultural identity claims over the restoration of the minority status for Aligarh University, protection of Muslim personal law, and the status of

[14] Jalal, 'Exploding Communalism: The Politics of Muslim Identity in South Asia', 17.

[15] Ibid., 17.

[16] Arshad Alam, 'The Enemy Within: Madrasa and Muslim Identity in North India', *Modern Asian Studies* 42, no. 2–3 (2008): 607.

[17] Mushirul Hasan, *Legacy of a Divided Nation: India's Muslims since Independence*. (London: Hurst, 1997), 12.

[18] Sherman, *Muslim Belonging in Secular India,* 17.

[19] Ibid., 17.

[20] Heewon Kim, *The Struggle for Equality: India's Muslims and Rethinking the UPA Experience*, 1st ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2019), 39.

Urdu, leaving untouched the question of economic development".[21] Singh and Shani argue that the INC's accommodation of Muslim cultural claims was a tactical manoeuvre to avoid providing the community substantive access to state institutions through economic upliftment or reservations.[22]

Following the INC's decline and the rise of regional and caste-based parties in the 1970s and 1980s, many Muslims seeking political representation maintained a similar strategy of alliance with secularist parties.[23] Electoral studies find that Muslims often align with the party they believe has the best chance of winning in their constituency, regardless of whether it seeks to represent Muslims.[24] Compared to the INC's umbrella politics, Muslim claims are further marginalised in parties that seek state resources for a particular caste group.[25] These parties are also less likely to nominate Muslim candidates, further decreasing Muslim representation.[26] Nevertheless, non-INC parties now receive the majority of India's Muslim vote.

As anti-communal discourses and community fragmentation have constrained Muslim representation and advocacy in electoral politics, another Muslim strategy has been to exert political influence through non-electoral political organisations. Significant scholarly attention has been paid to the Muslim *Majlis-e-Mushawarat*, which was formed in 1964 and extended support to individual candidates from various parties whose ideologies aligned with the interests of the Muslim community.[27] While this strategy did not lead to direct representation, it allowed

---

[21] Shani, 'Conceptions of Citizenship in India and the "Muslim Question"', 167.
[22] Singh and Shani, *Sikh Nationalism*, 17.
[23] Atul Kohli, ed., *The Success of India's Democracy*, Contemporary South Asia 6 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2006), 9.
[24] Oliver Heath, Gilles Verniers, and Sanjay Kumar, 'Do Muslim Voters Prefer Muslim Candidates? Co-Religiosity and Voting Behaviour in India', *Electoral Studies* 38 (2015): 10.; Madhavi Devasher, 'When Favoritism Fails: The Politics of Cross-Ethnic Voting among Muslims in India', *Ethnopolitics* 19, no. 5 (2020): 433.
[25] Adnan Farooqui, 'Political Representation of a Minority: Muslim Representation in Contemporary India', *India Review* 19, no. 2 (2020): 156.
[26] Ibid., 157
[27] Shani, 'Conceptions of Citizenship in India and the "Muslim Question"', 166.

Muslims to advocate for their interests on non-cultural issues, including economic empowerment and reservations. However, few of the candidates backed by the *Majlis-e-Mushawarat* were elected, limiting the efficacy of this approach.[28] New Muslim political organisations have also emerged amidst rising Hindu majoritarianism, operating outside of the electoral arena but advocating for Muslim group interests. Ahmad's study of the Jamaat-I Islami demonstrates the willingness of these organisations to embrace democracy when the democratic state is responsive to the community's needs and to radicalise when it discriminates against them.[29] Emmerich finds a similar dynamic in examining the Popular Front of India (PFI), which advocates for the socio-economic upliftment of Muslims but is banned for its links with terror groups.[30]

AIMIM's strategy, however, represents a diversion from past approaches to Muslim representation in India. While ambivalent secular alliances and non-electoral engagement have so far characterised the practice and study of Muslim representation in India, AIMIM aspires for national expansion and ideological engagement as a Muslim-led party. A focus on AIMIM's national expansion is not entirely new. Bajpai and Farooqui analysed the party's national presence as a case of 'non-extremist out-bidding'.[31] The authors position AIMIM's expansion within the context of rising Hindu majoritarianism, arguing that while traditional accounts expect minority parties to respond to majoritarianism with extremism, AIMIM has advocated for a path of moderation and constitutionalism.[32] This study provides valuable insight, but AIMIM's moderation is to be expected considering its electoral presence and the constraints posed by anti-

---

[28] Zaheer Quraishi, 'Emergence and Eclipse of Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat', *Economic and Political Weekly* 6, no. 25 (1971): 1229.

[29] Irfan Ahmad, *Islamism and Democracy in India: The Transformation of Jamaat-e-Islami*, Princeton Studies in Muslim Politics (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2009).

[30] Arndt Emmerich, *Islamic Movements in India: Moderation and Its Discontents*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2019).

[31] Rochana Bajpai and Adnan Farooqui, 'Non-Extremist Outbidding: Muslim Leadership in Majoritarian India', *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 24, no. 3 (2018): 276–98.

[32] Ibid., 276.

communal discourses. This thesis seeks to expand on this research by instead emphasising the party's active contestation in national ideological debates.

Fieldwork, Sources, and Methodology

To analyse AIMIM's ideological articulation, this research draws from field interviews, party documents, and Lok Sabha debates. I spent a month between March and April 2023 in Hyderabad's Old City, organising and conducting interviews with AIMIM party officials. While I leveraged relationships with local professors, most of my connections were made through frequent visits to the AIMIM party headquarters, *Darussalam.*

Despite making the connections in person, all interviews took place online to protect the officials. Considering the party's oppositional stance toward the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its ambition to provide national representation for Muslims, AIMIM has become the target of violence by some Hindu nationalists. Asaddudin Owaisi famously rejected the offer of a government security detail after an attempt on his life, proclaiming, "I believe that if the country's poor, downtrodden, and minority communities get security in the Constitution, then I will get it".[33] While such a threat was relatively low in Hyderabad, I took the measure of online interviews out of an abundance of caution. Nevertheless, all the officials I interviewed gave me explicit permission to quote them by name.

I conducted interviews using a semi-structured interview method. Although I entered interviews with scripted guide questions, the course of discussion differed based on which avenues garnered the most revealing responses. Semi-structured interviewing permitted this

---

[33] Asaduddin Owaisi, Lok Sabha Debate, 4 February 2022 [Translation].

flexibility: questions were adjusted, abandoned, repeated, or pursued further.[34] For example, the method allowed for different thematic emphases when interviewing top officials involved in articulating the national strategy and municipal-level officials with more specific focuses. Following their interview, several officials also provided me with party documents. These included memos relating to AIMIM's civic activities in Hyderabad as well as the internal resolutions signed by the party at its first National Convention.

Alongside formal interviews with party officials, I also had informal conversations with journalists, community members, and a wide variety of local Hyderabadis about the party. While I reference perspectives shared with me in these conversations, I do not make any explicit attributions to them in my research, which focuses on party-level ideological articulation. However, the exclusion of a broader array of unofficial perspectives on the party does present a limitation to this research. Formal interviews with civil society and local constituents would illuminate the resonance of AIMIM's strategy. I did, however, formally interview opposing officials to supplement my analysis, specifically the BJP spokesperson to Hyderabad and a former AIMIM canvasser now working for the INC. They each represent competing perspectives on the axes of recognition and statism, contesting AIMIM's stances.

There were other limitations to my research. First, by exclusively visiting Hyderabad, I was unable to arrange interviews with newly elected AIMIM officials in other states who would be helpful in analysing AIMIM as a national party. Second, my positionality posed both limitations and strengths to my study. In this research, I can be described as an 'in-betweener:' I have Muslim family in Hyderabad, but I did not grow up in the city.[35] Once I revealed my

---

[34] Dean Hammer and Aaron Wildavsky, 'The Open-Ended, Semistructured Interview: An (Almost) Operational Guide', in *Craftways*, by Aaron Wildavsky, 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2018), 61.
[35] Garrie-John Barnes, 'Researcher Positionality: The Liquid Inbetweener', *PRACTICE*, 2021, 3.

familial connection to the city and Muslim identity, many officials and constituents seemed more at ease in our conversations. However, since nearly half of the interviews were conducted in Urdu, my non-native language skills made some conversations more strained or superficial.

My research also included analysis of the speeches of AIMIM's two Members of Parliament (MPs), Asaddudin Owaisi and Imtiyaz Jaleel. While Owaisi has represented the Hyderabad constituency since 2004, this analysis includes only speeches he has made since the first session of the 16th Lok Sabha, formed after the 2014 national election. The 16th Lok Sabha, in which the BJP won an outright majority, is the starting point of this analysis because AIMIM then initiated a more concerted effort towards national expansion and ideological contestation. Imtiyaz Jaleel – AIMIM's first MP outside of Hyderabad – was elected in 2019 for the Aurangabad constituency. Speeches since his election are included in the analysis. Both deliver their parliamentary speeches in English, Urdu, or a combination of the two.

Data from the semi-structured interviews, party documents, and parliamentary debates is intertwined throughout the proceeding chapters. To analyse the data, I use Chhibber and Verma's framework of political ideology in India, situated within the conceptual tradition of ideological analysis.[36] Conceptual approaches draw on intellectual history as well as Freeden's theory of *ideological morphology*: the structure and relationship between political concepts. [37] Freeden argues that "political concepts acquire meaning not only through accumulative traditions of discourse...but also by means of their particular structural position within a configuration of other political concepts".[38] In this vein, Chhibber and Verma root their notions of recognition and statism – the primary ideological axes along which Indian politics are contested – on pre-

---

[36] Chhibber and Verma, *Ideology and Identity*.
[37] Michael Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach*, Reprinted (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2008), 2.
[38] Ibid., 4.

modern and modern political thought in India, as well as the premise that structural arrangements are illuminated in key moments of contestation, like debates and elections. To this premise, Chhibber and Verma add that political elites or parties seeking to differentiate their ideological positions are necessary to produce stable ideological cleavages.[39] The proceeding chapter will analyse how AIMIM has articulated a secularised Muslim identity, enabling the party to establish ideological stances and participate in national debates.

---

[39] Chhibber and Verma, *Ideology and Identity,* 15.

Chapter I: Articulating a National Muslim Identity

One Saturday in Hyderabad, sitting in AIMIM's party headquarters, *Darussalam,* I observed party President Asaduddin Owaisi as he spoke to a stream of constituents. In a row next to Owaisi, five state-level MLAs also sat, processing constituent concerns one-on-one. The informality of the scene betrayed the charged hush that had fallen over the office two hours before when it was announced that Owaisi was coming to *Darussalam* that day. His fiery speeches in the Lok Sabha and AIMIM's expansion have elevated his celebrity status in the Indian political landscape, arguably anointing him as the most recognisable Muslim politician in India. Nevertheless, I witnessed Owaisi listen carefully to the personal, civic issues of his constituents, from college scholarship applications to land contracts.

Direct interface with officials who provide services at *Darussalam* is a central component of AIMIM's offering in Hyderabad's Old City. By not restricting the kinds of requests constituents can make, AIMIM has established itself as a perceived panacea for the problems of the Old City. While this reputation creates discontent when some problems are inevitably left unsolved, it also presents the party as indispensable. For example, former AIMIM Corporator Ayesha Rubina shared how an MSc student in Physics visited the office asking for help finding a job. When Rubina asked her why she had come to a political party's office for help with employment, she replied, "Where else would I go?"[40]

While AIMIM's work at *Darussalam* has maintained its popularity in Hyderabad, this level of direct service is not feasible as the party seeks to expand nationally and become a representative of Muslims in national ideological debates. As Suneetha and Moid find in their study of service requests made to *Darussalam,* "the services, access, [and] welfare programmes

---

[40] Interview by Author, Ayesha Rubina, 7 April 2023.

which are being asked for and pursued, do not necessarily translate into 'interests' to be debated in the legislative arena".[41] Furthermore, *Darussalam's* history reflects how deeply bonded AIMIM is to the Muslim public in Hyderabad; the legal fight for control of the office and AIMIM's 'victory' are central elements of the party's lore. In 1963, there was a trial to determine the ownership of the office between AIMIM, a pro-INC splinter group, and two other Muslim organisations. Because the money for the property was purportedly raised by Hyderabad's Muslims, the resolution of the lawsuit became symbolic of who was the rightful representative of the community.[42] When AIMIM was issued the legal title, it reinforced its legitimate authority in Hyderabad's Muslim community.

This chapter seeks to unravel how a party so deeply connected to a place and historically oriented towards constituent service has articulated a national Muslim identity to establish itself as a representative of India's diverse and dispersed Muslim population. Ultimately, I argue that while AIMIM's history is deeply intertwined with that of the Old City of Hyderabad, its efforts to represent the Hyderabadi Muslim public provide the roots for a national Muslim identity based on the community's marginalisation, distinctive Indianness, and opposition to Hindu nationalism and passive secularism. Even if this construction, devoid of religious or cultural symbolism, is not convincing for the entirety of India's Muslim community, it has outward-facing utility, allowing AIMIM to make group-based claims to the state despite community fragmentation and anti-communal discourses.

---

[41] A. Suneetha and M. A. Moid, 'Mediating Muslim Citizenship? AIMIM and Its Letters', *Contemporary South Asia* 27, no. 1 (2 January 2019): 118.
[42] Shefali Jha, 'Democracy on a Minor Note: The All-India Majlis-E-Ittehadu'ul Mislimin and Its Hyderabadi Muslim Publics' (University of Chicago, 2017), 244.

AIMIM's Roots

      After Independence, challenges to Muslim belonging and representation were especially acute in Hyderabad.[43] The city had a fiercely distinct identity, having remained a princely state during the British Raj under a lineage of Muslim Nizams. The princely state remained independent until India forcibly annexed it through a brutal assault in 1948, coined Hyderabad's 'Police Action'.[44] AIMIM's antecedent party, the *Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen* (MIM), fought against the Indian army during the Police Action, having previously supported the Nizam's consolidation of power against the princely state's Hindu majority.[45] Fearing Hyderabad's Muslim political identity, which had become increasingly theocratic in the 20th century, the Indian state installed Hindu governors and marginalise Muslims. Simultaneously, Hindu mobs committed a series of massacres of Hyderabadi Muslims with the complicity of the Indian army.[46]

      In this unstable milieu, AIMIM was re-established by Abdul Wahed Owaisi, the grandfather of current party president Asaddudin Owaisi. Although AIMIM's original iteration, the MIM, violently opposed the integration of Hyderabad into the Indian state, the rebirthed party sought to coax the disillusioned and marginalised population of Hyderabadi Muslims towards engagement with formal institutions and Indian politics. As such, Jha argues that AIMIM was a fundamentally new organisation, distinct from its predecessor in every way but in name.[47] While presenting an opposition to Hindu majoritarianism, AIMIM's official history document recounts that the newly rebirthed party's goal was "to protect the rights of the

---

[43] Sherman, *Muslim Belonging in Secular India, 16*.

[44] M. A. Moid and A. Suneetha, 'Rethinking Majlis' Politics: Pre-1948 Muslim Concerns in Hyderabad State', *The Indian Economic & Social History Review* 55, no. 1 (January 2018): 49.

[45] Ibid., 45

[46] Sherman, *Muslim Belonging in Secular India, 21*.

[47] Jha, 'Democracy on a Minor Note: The All-India Majlis-E-Ittehadu'ul Mislimin and Its Hyderabadi Muslim Publics', x.

minorities enshrined in the Indian Constitution... integrating a disheartened Muslim community into India's democratic and secular framework and political and electoral processes".[48]

However, AIMIM drew deep suspicion from the INC, which did not separate the party from its anti-integrationist predecessor, the MIM.[49] With the INC's overwhelming dominance following Independence, AIMIM controlled only a few assembly seats in the erstwhile state of Andhra Pradesh until the 1980s. At this point, the INC's decline led to a great fragmentation of India's electoral system, allowing for the emergence of a wide array of regional, ethnic, and caste-based parties.[50] Party President Abdul Wahed Owaisi was elected to the Lok Sabha for the first time in 1984 and AIMIM gained a majority in the Hyderabad municipal corporation in 1986, though it was eventually usurped by the Telangana Rashtra Samithi, which championed the movement for Telangana statehood.

However, in the Old City of Hyderabad, AIMIM has controlled a seat in the Lok Sabha since 1984, winning vast majorities.[51] In a country where regional parties are infamously transient and voters and politicians are both equally willing to defect from one election to the next, AIMIM's enduring dominance in Hyderabad's Old City is remarkable.[52] As many officials and constituents remarked to me, with either satisfaction or exasperation, there is no real party but AIMIM in the Old City. Part of its continued success is due to its civic and constituent service activities, as Telangana MLA Syed Aminul Jafri highlighted to me: "AIMIM focuses on the civic issues. Whether it is the city roads, flyovers, subways, sewage network, waters supply

---

[48] AIMIM, 'All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM): A Party with a Vision', 2020.

[49] Moid and Suneetha, 'Rethinking Majlis' Politics', 42.

[50] Zoya Hasan, ed., *Politics and the State in India*, Readings in Indian Government and Politics 3 (New Delhi Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2000), 10.

[51] Interview by Author, Syed Aminul Jafri, 31 March 2023.

[52] Oliver Heath and Adam Ziegfeld, 'Why So Little Strategic Voting in India?', *American Political Science Review* 116, no. 4 (2022): 1523.

or power supply".[53] Furthermore, many constituents I spoke to mentioned *Darussalam* as a key offering and feared losing this resource if AIMIM were ever defeated in the Old City.

While civic issues are important for AIMIM's success in Hyderabad, other parties could fulfil a similar role, with the possible exception of *Darussalam* as a unique institution of direct constituency service. However, as outlined, AIMIM's popularity is also rooted in its particular history of representing Hyderabadi Muslims. Far from seeking to establish Muslims' *opposition* to the state and secularism, AIMIM's goal in Hyderabad was to integrate Muslims into the Indian state, despite government actions perpetuating the community's sense of difference and marginalisation after the annexation of Hyderabad. AIMIM's historical representation of Hyderabadi Muslims provides the basis for the party's emerging national aspiration to assert Muslim group rights within ideological debates and political structures. In constructing a national Muslim identity, it has drawn from the same components that defined its efforts to draw Hyderabad's Muslim population into the Indian state: attention to the community's marginalisation, its distinctive Indianness, and its opposition to exclusivist Hindu nationalist and ambivalent secularist parties.

A National Muslim Identity

First and foremost, AIMIM seeks to supplant a *cultural* notion of Muslim group identity in national discourse with an emphasis on the community's *socio-economic* marginalisation and deprivation. To evidence this facet of the Indian Muslim experience, the party evokes reports produced by national government committees. The INC administration under Manmohan Singh commissioned the Sachar Committee Report in 2006, outlining the social, economic, and

---

[53] Interview by Author, Syed Aminul Jafri.

educational conditions of Muslims in India. While such an emphasis on Muslims as a socio-economically marginalised group was uncommon within the INC's liberal framework, the report came at a particular point of fragility for the INC, which had just endured an unprecedented period in opposition to a BJP administration and to various coalitions of regional and caste-based parties.[54]

Owaisi references the Sachar Committee Report as the basis, among other studies, for a notion of Muslims as a marginalised group, stating "you have empirical evidence of Muslim backwardness in the form of Sachar committee report. You have also various scholars doing studies on Muslim backwardness that show that current strategies have not given any positive result at all".[55] The report's findings suggest that Muslims are further marginalised on average when compared with other deprived groups, including Other Backward Classes (OBCs), Scheduled Castes (SCs), and Schedules Tribes (STs).[56] While these groups are specifically recognised by the state as marginalised and in need of social upliftment, Muslims' categorisation as a religious group excludes them from affirmative action within the Indian conception of secular nationalism.

By highlighting the Sachar Committee report, AIMIM makes explicit efforts to separate Muslim political identity and Muslim cultural identity and, instead, create parallels with conceptualisations of OBC, SC, and ST categories. As Bajpai argues, liberal multiculturalism emphasises the protection of culture in debates over group-differentiated rights, but that in "most real world debates on minority rights...cultural identity serves to identify disadvantaged social

---

[54] Abusaleh Shariff, *Institutionalizing Constitutional Rights: Post-Sachar Committee Scenario*, First edition (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2016), 2.
[55] Interview by Author, Asaduddin Owaisi.
[56] Government of India, 'Social Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India (Sachar Report)', 2006.

groups that face unequal terms when seeking participation in state and civil society institutions".[57] To further seek Muslims' recognition as a disadvantaged social group and not a cultural category, AIMIM has commissioned the Hyderabad-based think tank, the Centre for Development Policy and Practice (CDPP), to produce several state-level studies of Muslim marginalisation. So far, these studies have focused on Muslims' socio-economic conditions in Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan, with plans for a new report on Bihar.

AIMIM contends that the socio-economic marginalisation of Muslims has been perpetuated by both secularist and Hindu nationalist parties. Therefore, an oppositional stance towards these factions forms the second aspect of AIMIM's articulation of a national Muslim identity. Owaisi makes specific reference to the failures of Muslim leaders who have sought community representation through alignment with the INC and other secularist parties:

> The strategy that the Muslim elders had evolved and practiced for last 50 years has completely failed. It was that, 'we will not aspire for political leadership but we'll vote for the secular parties and in the process we will get our development issues taken care of. And at the same time the security issue will also be taken care of. Then equity and all those things.' But this strategy has completely cratered. In fact, it has fallen on its face.[58]

Beyond failing to deliver on development and upliftment for Muslims, AIMIM argues that Muslim leaders' decision to join the INC allowed for the emergence of Hindu nationalism. Owaisi argues that the traditional strategy of Muslim representation, "has not stopped communal riots. It has not stopped genocide which happened in Gujarat or in Delhi. And now the communalism is a hydra-headed monster, it has taken shape. And in 2014 it has given a great

[57] Rochana Bajpai, *Debating Difference: Group Rights and Liberal Democracy in India*, 1st ed. (Oxford University PressDelhi, 2011), 7.
[58] Interview by Author, Asaduddin Owaisi.

victory to the BJP".[59] Therefore, secularist and Hindu nationalist parties may oppose each other, but an effective Muslim group identity requires separation from both these factions. One AIMIM official told me, "I think a point will come when all so-called Muslim groups have to be one. If the same pattern [of failing secularist parties and Hindu nationalism] goes on for a long time, then we don't have to make too much of an effort".[60]

Despite this oppositional stance to both the secularist and Hindu nationalist parties, AIMIM keeps its critique within the framework of Indian secular nationalism. During a Lok Sabha debate, Owaisi implicitly references the collapsing of inclusive and composite nationalisms in India that has produced an anti-communal discourse against Muslim group identity and allowed the rise of Hindu nationalism:

> Why is it, Madam, that when I oppose the BJP, I am called an anti-nationalist, I am called a Jinnah in making? When I oppose the secular parties, I am called communal...How is it that these two political parties have appropriated the right of nationalism and secularism? I condemn their right.[61]

AIMIM presents this opposition to both the majoritarian and liberal frameworks put forth by the BJP and INC respectively as an element of a distinct Muslim political identity that requires group-based, Muslim-led representation.

While forming an oppositional stance towards secularist and Hindu nationalist parties, AIMIM also seeks to emphasise Muslims' deep connection to the Indian nation and Constitution. Reminiscent of AIMIM's historical advocacy for the equal citizenship of Hyderabad's disaffected Muslim population in the newly independent Indian state, AIMIM seeks to counter

---

[59] Ibid.
[60] Interview by Author, Ayesha Rubina.
[61] Asaduddin Owaisi, Lok Sabha Debate, 1 December 2015.

BJP discourses that Muslims are not indigenous to India and have greater allegiances to either Pakistan or other Muslim-majority regions.[62] Drawing on history, Owaisi argues that Muslims have deep loyalties to India as a homeland, pointing out that the Mughals, and other Muslim rulers before them, "stayed here, invested here, died here, were born here, married here, and were buried here".[63]

In relation to Muslims' relationship to the modern Indian state, Owaisi states that India's Muslim freedom fighters are AIMIM's greatest source of inspiration: "We don't look towards a foreign country's leader or hero over there because our struggle is different. For our disease, whatever we have, we have to find the medicine from this land, not from somewhere else".[64] Yet, in a Lok Sabha speech, the AIMIM President makes an implicit comparison to Muslim minorities in other regions: "I would like to know from the Government – are you planning to implant people as the Israelis? Are you trying to imitate the Chinese?"[65] However, this affinity is more a critique of the national administrations' similar treatment of their Muslim minorities than any cultural or religious affinity between the disparate Muslim minority populations. To the contrary, AIMIM consistently references Muslims' commitment to the Indian Constitution as a central aspect of their group identity.

AIMIM's articulation of a national Muslim identity based on Muslim marginalisation, opposition to the majority factions, and the community's distinctive Indianness has the outward-facing goal of legitimising Muslim claims to the state by distancing from religious-based categorisation. Within the community, AIMIM may not be able to fully overcome the Muslim population's great heterogeneity and the party's own deep association with Hyderabad. Along

---

[62] Christophe Jaffrelot, 'Toward a Hindu State?', *Journal of Democracy* 28, no. 3 (2017): 55.
[63] Interview by Author, Asaduddin Owaisi.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Asaduddin Owaisi, Lok Sabha Debate, 8 August 2018.

with divisions based on sect, caste, and class, there is a distinct north-south divide between Muslims, which AIMIM officials acknowledge. Owaisi stated, "In my opinion, what really pulls the Muslim community down is the Muslims of Bengal, Assam".[66] MLC Aminul Jafri adds that Southern Muslims are ahead of the north "because of education and their progressive thinking and ideas with mostly secular functioning".[67] Implicit in this statement is a belief that northern Muslims may not be as committed to secularism as those in the South. Consequently, AIMIM's non-religious national Muslim identity is based less on a belief that the construction is most representative of the majority of India's Muslim population. Instead, it serves to legitimise a Muslim group category that enables the party to assert itself as a Muslim representative in national ideological debates where it can embed Muslim group identity in state structures. The following chapters will examine how AIMIM leverages this construction in its participation in debates on the ideological axes of statism and recognition.

---

[66] Interview by Author, Asaduddin Owaisi.
[67] Interview by Author, Syed Aminul Jafri.

Chapter II: AIMIM and the Politics of Recognition

In response to the first President's Address to the Lok Sabha under the new BJP administration in 2014, Owaisi made an impassioned speech criticising the government's policy agenda while being booed and shamed by BJP members. In defiance, he compelled the House Speaker, "I am sure that you will live up to the great ideals and independence of the Speaker's post. .a minority Member belonging to the Muslim minority would be given ample opportunity to raise the [community's] issues".[68] By highlighting the importance of his identity and the needs of a particular identity group, Owaisi evoked one of the central ideological axes that defines Indian political debates: the politics of recognition.

At its core, recognition refers to the state's acknowledgement and propagation of group-based rights to uplift marginalised communities. However, there "are enough people on both sides. .[with] clearly articulated sets of alternative ideas," creating a deep and longstanding ideological conflict over the efficacy and constitutionality of this practice.[69] Those opposed to recognition argue that differentiated group identities undermine India's unity, subsume the individual, and produce group loyalties that degrade democracy and equity.[70] Furthermore, rather than serving to empower marginalised groups, opponents warn that state practices of recognition will be exploited by political elites seeking power without benefitting the target communities.[71] In contrast, proponents of reservations argue "that all citizens should share power equally in the state, and that some groups of citizens may require special treatment in order to attain the authenticity and dignity that are proper to that equal status".[72]

---

[68] Asaduddin Owaisi, Lok Sabha Debate, 6 June 2014.
[69] Chhibber and Verma, *Ideology and Identity*, 33.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Bajpai, *Debating Difference*, 2.
[72] Chhibber and Verma, *Ideology and Identity*, 34.

However, even among proponents of recognition, Muslims have been excluded from these ideological debates since Independence because of their categorisation as a religious group. The 'master narrative' of a secular-communal binary supersedes notions of group-based upliftment.[73] While recognition of distinct Muslim identity is seen as communal, recognising 'backward' caste groups and tribes does not force the state to grapple with the contradictory idioms of composite and inclusive nationalism.[74] Muslims' inability to advocate for group-differentiated rights in the electoral arena is further pronounced under the BJP's Hindu nationalist administration, which is sceptical of recognition, especially for religious minorities.

This chapter examines how AIMIM, having constructed a secularised Muslim identity, engages with debates over the politics of recognition despite these challenges. By framing Muslims as a marginalised group underserviced by traditional parties and committed to Indian democracy, AIMIM argues in favour of recognition, specifically for Muslim-led representation in elected bodies and Muslims reservations in education, politics, and employment.

Representation

Owaisi highlighted to me, "Our main strategy is, have your political representation, have your political leadership. What is most important is Muslim political leadership".[75] In this strategy, AIMIM positions Muslim-identifying leadership as a prerequisite for equality in politics for the Muslim community. However, the importance of representative electoral leadership is highly contested in India and beyond. Anne Phillips frames this aspect of recognition as *the politics of presence*, arguing that voters rarely identify with the full ideological platform of

---

[73] Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life, 55*.
[74] Jalal, 'Exploding Communalism: The Politics of Muslim Identity in South Asia', 17.
[75] Interview by Author, Asaduddin Owaisi.

umbrella political parties and, therefore, "fair representation is also about achieving a rough correspondence between the range of experiences, perspectives, and concerns in the electorate".[76] Phillips asserts that it is especially important for societies' ethnic diversity to be reflected in electoral bodies.

Before Independence, electoral representation for Muslims was institutionalised. The Indian Councils Act 1909 granted separate electorates for Muslims as part of broader reforms to increase Indian involvement in the governance of British India.[77] While the INC initially opposed this measure, it eventually sought greater cooperation with the Muslim League, and the two parties co-signed the Lucknow Pact 1916, reserving a third of seats in the Legislative Council for Muslims.[78]

Following Independence and the reduction of India's Muslim population after Partition, the INC abandoned separate Muslim electorates, its leaders arguing that they "started the awful habit of treating Hindus and Muslims as distinct and congealed political entities, bolstered sectarianism and ghettoised minorities, and strengthened the resolve of every community to care only for their own interests".[79] Simultaneously, however, the INC advocated in favour of recognition for marginalised groups defined by non-religious categories, including electoral representation. The state reserved seats in the Lok Sabha for caste and tribal groups as part of an extensive programme of reservations. The number of reserved seats has increased, with 84 seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and 47 for Scheduled Tribes. Therefore, despite the INC's pro-recognition stance, the anti-communal 'master narrative' excluded Muslims from inclusion in the

---

[76] Anne Phillips, 'The Politics of Presence: Do Politicians Represent Us?', *LSE Department of Government* (blog), 2017, https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/government/2017/09/06/the-politics-of-presence-do-politicians-represent-us/.
[77] Abhay Datar, 'The Lucknow Pact of 1916: A Second Look at the Congress-Muslim League Agreement', *Economic and Political Weekly* 47, no. 10 (2012): 66.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Bhargava, 'The Distinctiveness of Indian Secularism', 21.

ideological debate over representation and the corresponding political structures. After Independence, then, Muslims could not prioritise representation as an ideological stance, instead aligning with secularist parties. Muslim representation in the Lok Sabha has consistently remained far below the community's population share, reaching its lowest point in 2014 at just over 4% despite comprising 14% of India's population.

AIMIM views Muslims' lack of presence in the Lok Sabha as a particular concern: "there is very low Muslim representation in the parliament and the various state assemblies. This is very important for our party".[80] The party seeks to deflect accusations of communalism by rooting its claim for representation in its articulation of a secular national Muslim identity. AIMIM argues that Muslim-identifying representation is necessary, not to advocate for religious issues, but to reduce the community's marginalisation. As Owaisi asks, "Without Muslim representation, who will work for your emancipation? Who will work for your development?"[81] Furthermore, AIMIM suggests that Muslim electoral representation is beneficial for Indian democracy, reducing communalism, not propagating it:

> Wherever there is no Muslim political party we have gone, Bihar, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand. And I feel that if we are successful, then India's democracy would be special. If you have more political representation, the lesser chance of radicalisation. If you have more political voices, you have less extreme people. That is what we are trying to do.[82]

Essentially, AIMIM deflects accusations of communalism by framing its advocacy for Muslim representation as strengthening Indian democracy, not servicing a particular group's interests.

---

[80] Interview by Author, Asaduddin Owaisi.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid.

The party's stance also evokes the moderation thesis posed by Ahmad and Emmerich, that Muslims remain moderate when pluralist democracy is responsive to their needs.[83]

While AIMIM's stance aligns with Phillip's notion of the politics of presence, other Muslim politicians do not prioritise representative leadership, revealing the ideological spectrum of recognition upon which AIMIM asserts its claim. For example, the Muslim BJP spokesperson to Hyderabad, Firasath Ali Baqri, told me, "Muslims do not need Muslim candidates. AIMIM's politics are religious-based, our politics are not religious-based. Our politics are common politics. For everyone".[84] In other words, Baqri views Muslims' direct representation in parliament as less important than the election of a party that, in his view, is best for the country, benefitting Muslims by extension. A former AIMIM canvasser who defected to the INC told me that secularist parties were best positioned to serve Muslims regardless of their representatives' identities. From his perspective, AIMIM only helped the BJP by promoting communalism and splitting the vote: "[AIMIM] are promoting communalism by their speeches. They are affecting so many young minds. [Owaisi] is only coming here to split votes, to split Muslim votes, to benefit the BJP".[85]

AIMIM responds to these claims by asserting the failure of secularist parties to service Muslims and its opposition to the BJP. As Owaisi argues:

> Other communities' support base for the BJP has increased, support has jumped from various castes, OBCs, and Dalits. So, this whole argument over who stops BJP, Muslims cannot stop BJP. Electorally I'm saying. Ideologically we'll be opposing them, raising our voices in all the public for us but electorally, it is the Hindus who have to stop the BJP, and they're not able to do that.

---

[83] Ahmad, *Islamism and Democracy in India*.; Emmerich, *Islamic Movements in India*.
[84] Interview by Author, Firasath Ali Baqri, 2 April 2023 [Translation].
[85] Interview by Author, Ibrahim, 11 April 2023.

> Congress [INC] has failed completely. They know that the Muslims have no voice, they have nowhere to go and they will always fall in line and support.[86]

Owaisi suggests that the INC has failed to maintain the support of marginalised Hindu groups in favour of secularism and pluralist democracy. Therefore, Muslims require their own representation to advocate against the majoritarianism of the ruling BJP administration. AIMIM Corporator Rubina asks, "If there can be a Hindu party, so why can't there be a Muslim party?"[87] Ultimately, AIMIM has used each aspect of its construction of a national Muslim identity to advocate for Muslim representation amidst ideological contestation and the countervailing anti-communal narrative.

Reservations

Intertwined with its advocacy for Muslim representation, AIMIM has engaged in national ideological debates over the politics of recognition on the issue of reservations. Reservations are an extensive system of affirmative action for marginalised groups, reserving jobs in public institutions and preferential admissions to schools and universities. [88] Electoral representation, as discussed in the previous section, is also guaranteed to marginalised groups through reservations.

Although the idea of Muslim reservations was dismissed following Independence, India's Constituent Assembly debated at length the value of reservations for lower castes and tribes. They ultimately concluded that "[reservations] were necessary to integrate deprived groups into the mainstream of political life, to remove the handicaps resulting from their centuries of neglect and oppression, and to break down the social barriers imposed by caste-conscious Hindus". [89]

---

[86] Interview by Author, Asaduddin Owaisi.
[87] Interview by Author, Ayesha Rubina [Translation].
[88] Bhikhu Parekh, 'The Poverty of Indian Political Theory', *History of Political Thought* 13, no. 3 (1992): 536.
[89] Ibid., 537.

However, the continued ideological contestation over this form of recognition was demonstrated by a Supreme Court case against reservations brought forth by the large faction that opposed them as well as the initial imposition of a 15-year limit to the programme.[90] Opponents included both Hindu nationalists and liberals. The former faction opposed the 'appeasement' of specific groups, arguing that proper democracy should adhere to the will of the majority. The latter contended that "any modern liberal state should not recognize group identity at all".[91]

While AIMIM advocates for the reservation system to be extended to Muslims, this stance has been contested among Muslim leaders since Independence. Some Muslim leaders wanted to reduce their group identification, which would be crystalised by Muslim reservations, because they wanted the community to be perceived as an undifferentiated part of a unified Indian nation. Alam argues that "the [Muslim] political class is sharply divided on different forms of affirmative action, if not the idea of 'affirmative action' for minorities per se".[92] Amidst this contestation, AIMIM argues for reservations to be provided to Muslims on the basis of its articulation of a secularised Muslim national identity.

Even before its national expansion, AIMIM fought for and achieved Muslim reservations at the state level in today's Telangana, previously a part of Andhra Pradesh. As Aminul Jafri told me, "The Majlees has been fighting for the reservations right since its inception, its revival. It got success in 2004".[93] This statement references AIMIM's endorsement of the INC in its 2004 state-level campaign in Andhra Pradesh in exchange for its commitment to a 5% Muslim reservation. Following the INC's victory (in alliance with the TRS and two communist parties),

---

[90] Abhinav Chandrachud, *These Seats Are Reserved: Caste, Quotas and the Constitution of India* (Gurugram: Viking by Penguin Random House India, 2023), 20.

[91] Ibid., 258.

[92] Mohd. Sanjeer Alam, 'Affirmative Action for Muslims? Arguments, Contentions and Alternatives', *Studies in Indian Politics* 2, no. 2 (2014): 226.

[93] Interview by Author, Syed Aminul Jafri.

the state's ruling coalition enacted the reservation, though it was reduced to 4% by a High Court. Since 2014, AIMIM has advocated for an expansion of the Muslim reservation to 12% in Telangana. However, the BJP administration opposes this reform, committing instead to the total removal of the 4% reservation.[94]

At the state and national level, AIMIM utilises its framing of Muslims as a non-religious category to call for the extension of reservations to Muslim communities, especially in education and employment. Centrally, AIMIM makes this claim by emphasising the distinctive Indianness of the Muslim population:

> This government is against giving Dalit status to Muslims. Why? Because in Islam there is no discrimination. Yes, absolutely. There is no such thing in Islam. But the reality is that there is casteism in India, there are castes among the Muslims. When you yourself are saying that there are Pasmanda [lower-caste] Muslims. So, give it to them.[95]

As caste stratification is not permitted within Islam, AIMIM avoids advocating for Muslims on a religious or theological basis. Instead, the party depicts Indian Muslim identity as uniquely shaped by its socio-geographical context, which contributed to the emergence of caste in the community. Despite the endemic nature of caste in the subcontinent, it is unacknowledged by other Muslim leaders, including non-electoral activists for Muslims' socio-economic advancement like the Popular Front of India (PFI). Emmerich finds that the PFI sees the articulation of Muslim caste difference as counterproductive for Muslim unity, instead preferring the position that all Muslims are backward and in need of reservations.[96] While the PFI's stance may benefit internal Muslim unity, it damages the outward legitimacy of its demand for

---

[94] Ibid.

[95] Interview by Author, Asaduddin Owaisi.

[96] Emmerich, *Islamic Movements in India*, 194.

reservations, failing to respond to the anti-communal 'master narrative' by framing Muslim political identity as a religious category.

By acknowledging caste within Islam, AIMIM subverts the anti-communal 'master narrative,' positing that *not* providing reservations to lower-caste Muslims amounts to religious discrimination. Owaisi argues that refusal to provide reservations to Dalit Muslims, "goes against the right to equality. How can you distribute on the basis of religion when a Buddhist, a Sikh and a Hindu can be given a Dalit status?"[97] Furthermore, AIMIM states that the government must "remove the unconstitutional religious classification and ensure that Dalits have freedom of religion. Dalit Muslims and Christians should have the right to be classified as Scheduled Castes".[98] In other words, AIMIM is willing to position Dalit Muslims' caste identity above their religious identity in state claims-making to reduce the salience of the secular-communal binary. Instead of seeking a separate Muslim reservation category, it demands that Muslims be added to the SC and ST Categories.

AIMIM also highlights Muslim socio-economic marginalisation as an aspect of Muslim national identity to advocate for Muslim reservations. In the Lok Sabha, Owaisi argues:

> Will this Government consider the Muslim community, not on the basis of religion, but on the basis of the empirical data given by the Government of India itself as socially and educationally backward? I am not at all opposed to giving reservation to Patels, Marathas and Jats, but those who have empirical evidence that the social education of Muslims are backward, you will have to give reservation to them.[99]

This argument emphasises that Muslims are more socio-economically deprived than caste and tribal groups that do receive reservations. However, AIMIM's stance is not unchallenged. Baqri,

---

[97] Interview by Author, Asaduddin Owaisi.
[98] AIMIM, 'National Convention Resolutions'.
[99] Asaduddin Owaisi, Lok Sabha Debate, 10 April 2017 [Translation].

Hyderabad's BJP spokesperson, contests AIMIM's argument for reservations, stating, "Muslims do not need reservations. There should be competition. I want it to be that if I do well on an exam, then I will get the position".[100] Baqri's critique reflects the BJP's larger scepticism towards reservations and recognition. For many in the BJP, reservations appease minority groups, undermining competition and the will of the majority. However, AIMIM retorts that reservations for Muslims are necessary to correct historical and contemporary injustices perpetuated by forces of Hindu majoritarianism.[101]

Ultimately, AIMIM has taken a pro-recognition stance, advocating for Muslim representation and reservations by legitimising its participation in national debates through its secularised articulation of Muslim identity. Rather than seeking to establish Muslim difference, the party has emphasised the community's shared experience with other marginalised groups in India. The party pursues a similar strategy in its engagement with the politics of statism, examined in the proceeding chapter.

---

[100] Interview by Author, Firasath Ali Baqri [Translation].
[101] AIMIM, 'National Convention Resolutions'.

Chapter III: AIMIM and the Politics of Statism

With his 2019 victory in the Maharashtrian city of Aurangabad, Imtiyaz Jaleel became AIMIM's first Lok Sabha MP outside of Hyderabad. His election substantively demonstrated AIMIM's progress towards national expansion and provided the party with another mouthpiece in ideological contestations. In one of his early speeches in the Lok Sabha following his election, the new representative of a Muslim-led party implored, "Muslims should not get a subsidy for Hajj".[102]

Hajj is an annual pilgrimage for followers of Islam to the religion's most holy city of Mecca. All physically and financially capable adults are expected to make the journey once in their lifetime. Jaleel's opposition to state sponsorship for this pilgrimage, long provided by the Indian state, may appear an unexpected stance for a member of a party seeking to become a national representative of Muslims. However, Jaleel' s full statement, echoing previous comments by Owaisi, encapsulates AIMIM's positioning in national ideological debates over the politics of statism through an articulation of a secular Muslim identity. Jaleel continues:

> This is our religious work, there is no need to spend money for it. We had requested the government to open schools for Muslim girls with the money that you spend every year in the name of Hajj subsidy of Rs 700 crore. You heard what you wanted to hear. You stopped the Hajj subsidy, but not a single school has been opened for Muslims.[103]

In requesting a direct transfer of subsidies for Hajj to Muslim schools, Jaleel envisions an Indian state that keeps a distance from socio-cultural issues but takes an active role in the economic empowerment of marginalised groups, encapsulating AIMIM's position on statism.

---

[102] Imtiyaz Jaleel, Lok Sabha Debate, 13 March 2020 [Translation].
[103] Ibid.

There is significant debate in Indian politics over how much of an activist role the state should take in reforming society, which Chhibber and Verma define as the ideological axis of statism.[104] The state's role is debated in both the social and economic policy domains. Anti-statist leaders and political thinkers in India see "a limited role for the state vis-à-vis society and, even though the state is supposed to look after the poor, it is not for the state to redistribute wealth".[105] Those favouring statism, by contrast, view India's social structure as fundamentally flawed, therefore deeming societal reform and wealth redistribution to be state imperatives. Consequently, the axis of statism can be further disambiguated into the subcategories of social statism and economic statism.

Influential Muslim thinker Abul A'la Maududi advocated against all forms of statism with theologically rooted justifications. Economically, Maududi argued that the basic necessities of the poor should be provided via charity – *Zakat* – from the wealthy. Therefore, while the poor are not subject to utter destitution, the state does not take an activist role in systemically changing the balance of wealth between individuals.[106] Socially, the state should also keep a distance, allowing religious communities to live according to their own cultures and adopt their own civil codes. Permitting Muslim claims against social statism through its liberal framework, the INC recognised Muslim Personal Law (MPL), a separate civil code for the community that governs civil issues like inheritance, marriage, and property succession.[107] However, notions of secular pluralism did not extend to economic statism as the anti-communal 'master narrative' restricted Muslims from making group-based claims on socio-economic issues.[108]

---

[104] Chhibber and Verma, *Ideology and Identity,* 71.
[105] Ibid., 74
[106] Ibid., 73
[107] Jeff Redding, *A Secular Need: Islamic Law and State Governance in Contemporary India*, Global South Asia (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2020), 32.
[108] Shani, 'Conceptions of Citizenship in India and the "Muslim Question"', 165.

AIMIM, however, has not remained confined to issues of social statism, but has also engaged in national ideological debates over the state's activist role in the economy. This chapter analyses the party's engagement with the politics of social and economic statism. AIMIM maintains past Muslim opposition to social statism and encroachments on MPL, which it views as a constitutional directive threatened by Hindu nationalist aggression. The party also vocally supports economic statism, calling for group-based socio-economic upliftment of Muslims as a marginalised group as well as broader economic redistribution, decrying the crony capitalist tendencies of the BJP and secularist parties. Through its stances against abridging MPL and in favour of economic upliftment for Muslims, AIMIM seeks to embed Muslim group identity within state structures.

Social Statism

In debates over the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019, Owaisi participated as one its most vociferous opponents. The act was eventually passed, banning *Triple Talaq*, a Hanafi Sunni practice where a man can divorce his wife by uttering *Talaq* ("divorce") three times. The criminalisation of *Triple Talaq* represented a major step for the BJP towards its goal of a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) and a clear example of social statism: the state perceived *Triple Talaq* as a flaw in India's social structure and, taking an activist role, intervened in the domain of religion to reform society.

The state's intervention on *Triple Talaq* represented a distinct challenge to traditional Muslim political articulations. Since Independence, Muslim claims to the state were limited to issues of social statism, especially MPL.[109] While the secular-communal binary precluded

---

[109] Ibid., 166.

Muslim participation in debates over recognition and economic statism, Article 26 of the Indian Constitution grants each religious denomination the right "to manage its own affairs in matters of religion".[110] Furthermore, the INC's liberal framework, which defined Muslims as a religious community, permitted their claims on the state for cultural autonomy.[111] The INC viewed these claims as expressions of pluralism, not forcing the state to confront the collapsed idioms of composite and inclusive nationalism. Consequently, "for many Muslims, the preservation of Muslim Personal Law has become the touchstone of their capacity to defend their religious identity in modern India".[112]

The banning of *Triple Talaq* represented the most significant effort by the BJP since taking power in 2014 to assume an activist role in reforming MPL. While AIMIM aligned with other Muslim leaders in opposing this instance of social statism, the party sought to utilise its articulation of a secular Muslim identity rather than a religious or cultural argument. Owaisi rooted his Lok Sabha arguments against criminalising *Triple Talaq* in Muslims' commitment to the Indian Constitution and opposition to the discriminatory policies of the BJP. Owaisi frames the criminalisation as an encroachment on MPL, which "has the protection of the fundamental rights as guaranteed in Article 25 of the Constitution".[113] Owaisi also argues that the BJP discriminated against Muslims through the measure because, "if a non-Muslim husband is prosecuted sentenced to one year and a Muslim is sentenced to three years, is it not a violation of Articles 14 and 15?"[114] Article 14 of the Indian Constitution provides equality before the law and article 15 bans discrimination on the basis of religion. Therefore, Owaisi placed less emphasis on

---

[110] The Constitution of India, 1950, Art. 26.
[111] Shani, 'Conceptions of Citizenship in India and the "Muslim Question"', 166.
[112] Justin Jones, '"Signs of Churning": Muslim Personal Law and Public Contestation in Twenty-First Century India', *Modern Asian Studies* 44, no. 1 (2010): 175.
[113] Asaduddin Owaisi, Lok Sabha Debate, 28 December 2017.
[114] Asaduddin Owaisi, Lok Sabha Debate, 21 June 2019 [Translation].

religious identity in his defence of *Triple Talaq* and rather depicted the BJP's campaign as undermining the pluralist nature of India's secular democracy.

AIMIM also asserts opposition to BJP majoritarianism and commitment to Indian pluralism in its objection to a Uniform Civil Code (UCC). The BJP seeks to implement a UCC and erase MPL, employing the socially statist argument that MPL is biased against women and in need of reform. AIMIM retorts that, "UCC will be a majoritarian law that will outlaw personal laws of minorities while protecting Hindu family law. This is unacceptable and unconstitutional".[115] By opposing a majoritarian aggressor that aims to give primacy to Hindu culture, AIMIM avoids anti-communal accusations that MPL creates religious-based difference. Furthermore, AIMIM asserts, "India's soul is its diversity and pluralism. A Uniform Civil Code will be a disaster. A single law cannot govern our astoundingly diverse and populous country".[116] Instead of presenting Muslims' desire for distinction from the Indian whole, AIMIM depicts pluralism as an important aspect of Indian democracy and secularism. Therefore, within AIMIM's articulation of a Muslim political identity, maintaining MPL demonstrates Muslims' distinctive Indianness, not their difference.

Economic Statism

Although AIMIM opposes social statism, the party's opposition is not rooted in an ideological commitment to a limited state. Instead, maintaining Muslim Personal Law (MPL) serves AIMIM's goal of embedding Muslim identity in the state apparatus. This objective also

---

115 AIMIM, 'National Convention Resolutions'.
116 Ibid.

explains AIMIM's *support* for economic statism, which is the socio-economic reform of society carried out by the state.[117]

In the Indian context, economic statism does not refer to infrastructure development or service delivery to the poor, which are "par for the course" for politicians across India's ideological spectrum.[118] For example, despite the BJP's anti-statist stance, its local organisations and state administrations have long been active in offering services.[119] Instead, the national debate hinges on whether broad service delivery and charity to the poor "will ever solve the 'poverty problem' in the absence of meaningful social reform".[120] Economic statists, such as the chief architect of India's Constitution, B. R. Ambedkar, argue that the state must play an activist role and "remove social, political, and economic inequality by providing better opportunities to the submerged classes".[121] AIMIM MPs Owaisi and Jaleel often reference Ambedkar in their speeches to the Lok Sabha. In fact, Jaleel won his seat in Aurangabad in alliance with the Vanchit Bahujan Aaghadi, the party of Ambedkar's grandson, Prakash Ambedkar. While Ambedkar himself may not have envisioned Muslims as one of the 'submerged classes,' AIMIM has utilized its secular Muslim identity to advocate for the extension of economic statist policies to Muslims as a marginalised and distinctively Indian group and to oppose the shrinking role of the state in redressing economic inequalities under the BJP.

Central to AIMIM's support for economic statism is its demand for economic upliftment programmes for Muslims and other minorities. Historically, calls for targeted socio-economic programmes for Muslims have been precluded by anti-communal discourses, which depict

---

117 Chhibber and Verma, *Ideology and Identity,* 71.
118 Ibid., 73.
119 Christophe Jaffrelot, 'Hindu Nationalism and the Social Welfare Strategy', in *Development, Civil Society and Faith-Based Organizations*, ed. Gerard Clarke and Michael Jennings (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2008), 240.
120 Chhibber and Verma, *Ideology and Identity,* 74.
121 Ibid., 73.

claims on state resources by religious groups as anti-secular. [122] To overcome this obstacle,

AIMIM relies on its articulation of a Muslim identity centred on marginalisation rather than as a

religious category. In particular, the party emphasises education as a central feature of Muslim

marginalisation. Citing state data, Owaisi points out that, "in the 2011 census, the lowest literacy

rate was of Muslims; lowest number of people in schools was of Muslims; highest drop-out rate

was of Muslims; and lowest number of people in graduation was of Muslims. [123] Furthermore,

Owaisi explains that education is directly connected to the community's economic deprivation:

"The biggest cause of Muslim debt is education. This is really pulling the Muslim community

down throughout India. Cost of education". [124]

AIMIM seeks to demonstrate its commitment to educational upliftment for Muslims at

the local level. Creating private educational institutions has been a key initiative for AIMIM in

the Old City of Hyderabad. The Salar-e-Millat Educational Trust, established by the party in

2006, funds the Owaisi Schools of Excellence, English-medium primary schools that provide

free education to children from poor families. These schools are present across the Old City,

boldly bearing the Owaisi name. The trust's stated purpose is to "benefit the Muslim community

in particular and the poorer strata of society in general".[125] While these initiatives do promote

Muslim welfare, they are not state-funded and so do not directly conflict with the ideological

commitments of anti-statists. AIMIM, however, does not see privately funded schools as an all-

encompassing solution for Muslim upliftment. Instead, Ayesha Rubina, the primary designer of

---

[122] Jalal, 'Exploding Communalism: The Politics of Muslim Identity in South Asia', 16.
[123] Owaisi, Lok Sabha Debate, 8 January 2019.
[124] Interview by Author, Asaduddin Owaisi.
[125] AIMIM, 'Salar-e-Millat Educational Trust', 2020.

the Owaisi Schools of Excellence, tells me that "AIMIM tries from its side to do whatever it can,

but it also needs the government to support educational enhancement of the minorities".[126] This

state support for the educational and economic upliftment of particular groups is contested by

the ruling BJP. BJP spokesperson Baqri asserts:

> We will try to help the needy people in our country in a proper way. Help them with dignity. Not
>
> put them below, we won't do our work like that. Our party, the BJP, works for everyone. Not
>
> only minority, not only majority. In India, the population is 140 crores. For 140 crores, our BJP
>
> has an equal policy.[127]

From this anti-statist perspective, the BJP argues that it is not the state's role to reform society.

Programmes that seek to uplift particular communities, rather than the entire population, create

difference between groups, dividing the Indian whole. The INC also remains sceptical of

economic programmes for religious groups, raising little opposition to the BJP's slashing of the

minority budget in 2021. Jaleel emphasised their complicity: "I do not want to ask the BJP

[about the minority budget], because minorities have nothing to do with them, but I am sitting

here in the midst of cold secular parties".[128]

Contesting the stances of the BJP and INC, Owaisi argues that state activism in

addressing economic and educational equality for Muslims is more than just a Muslim issue, but

a national one:

> [Muslim upliftment] has to be a primary responsibility of the government. In fact, it is nationally
>
> important for India to become a stronger country. You cannot allow 14% of the population to lag

---

[126] Interview by Author, Ayesha Rubina.
[127] Interview by Author, Firasath Ali Baqri [Translation].
[128] Imtiyaz Jaleel, Lok Sabha Debate, 11 February 2021 [Translation].

behind. If a jumbo jet has to take off from an air tarmac and if 14% are lagging behind, how can the aircraft take off?[129]

Therefore, from AIMIM's perspective, the state should take an activist role in transforming society such that minority groups are not economically marginalised. Framing marginalisation as an aspect of national Muslim identity, AIMIM's suggests targeted economic uplift for Muslims is necessary to achieve a unified Indian 'whole.' Reducing group-differentiated upliftment will lead only to further marginalisation, obstructing this goal.

AIMIM's commitment to economic statism is not limited to upliftment for Muslims as the party also calls for state activism in wealth redistribution and broad support for the marginalised. Demonstrating AIMIM's stance in favour of redistribution, Owaisi argues against the Taxation Law (Amendment) Bill, 2019, arguing, "to reduce social inequality you need tax collection but on the contrary you are reducing it".[130] Furthermore, drawing on its opposition to the BJP and secularist parties – a core feature of its articulation of a national Muslim identity – AIMIM accuses both factions of allowing corporate interests to co-opt the state at the expense of marginalised groups. As Owaisi states, "Under the BJP, we have oligarchs now. Which is also called as crony capitalism. Even Congress did this".[131] Owaisi further accuses the BJP and INC of working together to support the economic elite: "You [BJP] are against NGOs, but you are for corporates and political parties. I want to know the *jugalbandi* ('entwinement') between you and the Congress [INC]".[132] Furthermore, AIMIM highlights the detrimental impact this alleged pro-corporate policy has had on the marginalised. Jaleel protests, "we are forgiving crores of rupees to the industries but are adamant on giving only eight to ten thousand rupees to

---

[129] Interview by Author, Asaduddin Owaisi.
[130] Asaduddin Owaisi, Lok Sabha Debate, 2019.
[131] Interview by Author, Asaduddin Owaisi.
[132] Asaduddin Owaisi, Lok Sabha Debate, 2016.

the farmers".[133] While this broader opposition to economic statism does not directly serve to embed Muslim identity in the state apparatus, it reflects the party's conception of a secular Muslim identity where Muslims are included as part of the broader constituency of India's marginalised.

---

[133] Imtiyaz Jaleel, Lok Sabha Debate, 18 November 2019 [Translation].

Conclusion

In its national expansion, AIMIM presents itself as a representative for India's heterogenous and dispersed Muslim population. Previously, hopes for a Muslim-led party contesting elections and participating directly in national debates were stifled by the collapsing idioms of inclusive and composite nationalism that produced an artificial binary between secularism and communalism. This thesis has demonstrated how AIMIM has overcome this obstacle to engage directly in national ideological contestations. Instead of seeking to reconcile differences within the Muslim community by delving into issues of religious practice, the party has articulated an outward-facing national Muslim identity that seeks to legitimise 'Muslim' as a non-religious category. Drawing on its roots in the Old City of Hyderabad, AIMIM defines a national Muslim identity in terms of marginalisation, distinctive Indianness, and opposition to both Hindu majoritarianism and ambivalent secularism. Enabled by its legitimising construction of a national Muslim identity, AIMIM has inserted itself within broader national ideological debates on recognition and statism from which Muslims have historically been excluded. By participating in these debates, the party has sought to embed Muslim group identity within the state apparatus as a secularised category through reservations, the maintenance of Muslim Personal Law, and minority upliftment programmes.

Presenting a deep analysis of AIMIM's national profile, this thesis contributes to the study of Muslim representation in India. By seeking national expansion as a Muslim-led party, AIMIM departs from historical approaches to Muslim representation in India, namely ambivalent alliances with secularist parties and non-electoral pressure groups. These previous strategies have been dominant both in scholarly analysis and political practice. Jalal argued that Muslims need "the very political solidarity which the secular nationalist idiom damns as 'communalism' and the

electoral scene in any case renders impossible" but that "the words of the insular and bigoted fatwah-giving bearded men will ricochet on any debate," precluding the possibility of a Muslim-led party.[134] While AIMIM's national expansion is far from fully realised, the party's rapid growth suggests its particular articulation of a secularised national Muslim identity may present a new avenue for Muslim political representation as well as analytical and theoretical inquiry. Nevertheless, judging the broad salience of AIMIM's message requires tracking the party's continued progress along with ethnographic study in Muslim communities where the party seeks to expand.

Furthermore, this thesis has implications for the study of ideology in Indian politics. While theories of Indian ideological contestations have primarily been applied to large political parties or aggregated debates, this thesis applied Chhibber and Verma's framework to a relatively small party that represents a minority group. AIMIM's engagement in debates on both the axes of statism and recognition demonstrates the potential agency of smaller actors in influencing national ideological debates. As this study focused primarily on AIMIM's strategy and output, future research could unravel whether its advocacy has produced a substantive discursive shift in ideological arenas like the Lok Sabha. While such shifts in national debate are difficult to measure, AIMIM has become a favourite target of both the BJP and INC, demonstrating that the major parties are engaging with its ideas, even if in oppositional terms.[135] Regardless, this thesis has clearly demonstrated that AIMIM, once a party of the Old City of Hyderabad, has actively participated in national ideological debates during its expansion, striving to represent Muslims and embed a secularised Muslim identity in state policy.

---

[134] Jalal, 'Exploding Communalism: The Politics of Muslim Identity in South Asia', 18.
[135] 'BJP and AIMIM Two Sides of the Same Coin: Congress', *The Economic Times*, 2021, https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/bjp-and-aimim-two-sides-of-the-same-coin-congress/articleshow/88240018.cms.

Word Count: 11,947

Bibliography

Primary

AIMIM. 'All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM): A Party with a Vision', 2020.

_____. 'National Convention Resolutions', 2023.

_____. 'Salar-e-Millat Educational Trust', 2020.

Government of India. 'Social Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of

      India (Sachar Report)', 2006.

Interview by Author. Asaduddin Owaisi, 8 April 2023.

_____. Ayesha Rubina, 7 April 2023.

_____. Firasath Ali Baqri, 2 April 2023.

_____. Ibrahim, 11 April 2023.

_____. Syed Aminul Jafri, 31 March 2023.

Jaleel, Imtiyaz. 'Lok Sabha Debate'. 18 November 2019.

_____. 'Lok Sabha Debate'. 13 March 2020.

_____. 'Lok Sabha Debate'. 11 February 2021.

Owaisi, Asaduddin. 'Lok Sabha Debate'. 6 June 2014.

_____. 'Lok Sabha Debate'. 1 December 2015.

_____. 'Lok Sabha Debate'. 4 May 2016.

_____. 'Lok Sabha Debate'. 10 April 2017.

_____. 'Lok Sabha Debate'. 28 December 2017.

_____. 'Lok Sabha Debate'. 21 June 2019.

_____. 'Lok Sabha Debate'. 8 August 2019.

_____. 'Lok Sabha Debate'. 4 February 2022.

The Constitution of India, 1950, Article 26 (Freedom to manage religious affairs).

Secondary

Ahmad, Irfan. *Islamism and Democracy in India: The Transformation of Jamaat-e-Islami*.
Princeton Studies in Muslim Politics. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2009.

Ahmed, Hilal. *Siyasi Muslims: A Story of Political Islams in India*. Gurgaon, India: Penguin
Viking, 2019.

Alam, Arshad. 'The Enemy Within: Madrasa and Muslim Identity in North India'. *Modern Asian
Studies* 42, no. 2–3 (March 2008): 605–27.

Alam, Mohd. Sanjeer. 'Affirmative Action for Muslims? Arguments, Contentions and
Alternatives'. *Studies in Indian Politics* 2, no. 2 (December 2014): 215–29.

Bajpai, Rochana. *Debating Difference: Group Rights and Liberal Democracy in India*. 1st ed.
Oxford University PressDelhi, 2011.

Bajpai, Rochana, and Adnan Farooqui. 'Non-Extremist Outbidding: Muslim Leadership in
Majoritarian India'. *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 24, no. 3 (3 July 2018): 276–98.

Barnes, Garrie-John. 'Researcher Positionality: The Liquid Inbetweener'. *PRACTICE*, 20 August
2021, 1–8.

Bhargava, Rajeev. 'The Distinctiveness of Indian Secularism'. In *The Future of Secularism*, 20–
53. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Chandrachud, Abhinav. *These Seats Are Reserved: Caste, Quotas and the Constitution of India*.
Gurugram: Viking by Penguin Random House India, 2023.

Chhibber, Pradeep K., and Rahul Verma. *Ideology and Identity*. Vol. 1. Oxford University Press,
2018.

Datar, Abhay. 'The Lucknow Pact of 1916: A Second Look at the Congress-Muslim League

   Agreement'. *Economic and Political Weekly* 47, no. 10 (2012): 65–69.

Devasher, Madhavi. 'When Favoritism Fails: The Politics of Cross-Ethnic Voting among

   Muslims in India'. *Ethnopolitics* 19, no. 5 (19 October 2020): 433–58.

Emmerich, Arndt. *Islamic Movements in India: Moderation and Its Discontents*. 1st ed.

   Routledge, 2019.

Farooqui, Adnan. 'Political Representation of a Minority: Muslim Representation in

   Contemporary India'. *India Review* 19, no. 2 (14 March 2020): 153–75.

Hammer, Dean, and Aaron Wildavsky. 'The Open-Ended, Semistructured Interview: An

   (Almost) Operational Guide'. In *Craftways*, by Aaron Wildavsky, 57–101, 2nd ed.

   Routledge, 2018.

Hasan, Zoya, ed. *Politics and the State in India*. Readings in Indian Government and Politics

   3. New Delhi Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2000.

Heath, Oliver, Gilles Verniers, and Sanjay Kumar. 'Do Muslim Voters Prefer Muslim

   Candidates? Co-Religiosity and Voting Behaviour in India'. *Electoral Studies* 38 (June

   2015): 10–18.

Heath, Oliver, and Adam Ziegfeld. 'Why So Little Strategic Voting in India?' *American Political

   Science Review* 116, no. 4 (November 2022): 1523–29.

Jaffrelot, Christophe. 'Hindu Nationalism and the Social Welfare Strategy'. In *Development,

   Civil Society and Faith-Based Organizations*, edited by Gerard Clarke and Michael

   Jennings, 240–59. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2008.

_____. 'Toward a Hindu State?' *Journal of Democracy* 28, no. 3 (2017): 52–63.

Jalal, Ayesha. 'Exploding Communalism: The Politics of Muslim Identity in South Asia'. In
Nationalism, Democracy and Development: State and Politics in India, 1–29. Delhi:
Oxford University Press, 1999.

Jha, Shefali. 'Democracy on a Minor Note: The All-India Majlis-E-Ittehadu'ul Mislimin and Its
Hyderabadi Muslim Publics'. University of Chicago, 2017.

Jones, Justin. '"Signs of Churning": Muslim Personal Law and Public Contestation in Twenty-
First Century India'. *Modern Asian Studies* 44, no. 1 (January 2010): 175–200.

Kim, Heewon. *The Struggle for Equality: India's Muslims and Rethinking the UPA Experience*.
1st ed. Cambridge University Press, 2019.

Kohli, Atul, ed. *The Success of India's Democracy*. Contemporary South Asia 6.
Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2006.

Mohammed, Syed. 'AIMIM National Convention in Mumbai under Way'. *The Hindu*, 2023.
https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/telangana/aimim-national-convention-in-
mumbai-under-way/article66553052.ece.

Moid, M. A., and A. Suneetha. 'Rethinking Majlis' Politics: Pre-1948 Muslim Concerns in
Hyderabad State'. *The Indian Economic & Social History Review* 55, no. 1 (January
2018): 29–52.

Mushirul Hasan. *Legacy of a Divided Nation: India's Muslims since Independence*. 1. publ.
London: Hurst, 1997.

Parekh, Bhikhu. 'The Poverty of Indian Political Theory'. *History of Political Thought* 13, no.
3 (1992): 535–60.

Phillips, Anne. 'The Politics of Presence: Do Politicians Represent Us?' *LSE Department of Government* (blog), 2017. https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/government/2017/09/06/the-politics-of-presence-do-politicians-represent-us/.

Quraishi, Zaheer. 'Emergence and Eclipse of Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat'. *Economic and Political Weekly* 6, no. 25 (1971): 1229–34.

Redding, Jeff. *A Secular Need: Islamic Law and State Governance in Contemporary India*. Global South Asia. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2020.

Robinson, Francis. 'The British Empire and Muslim Identity in South Asia'. *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 8 (December 1998): 271–89.

Shani, Ornit. 'Conceptions of Citizenship in India and the "Muslim Question"'. *Modern Asian Studies* 44, no. 1 (January 2010): 145–73.

Shariff, Abusaleh. *Institutionalizing Constitutional Rights: Post-Sachar Committee Scenario*. First edition. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Sherman, Taylor C. *Muslim Belonging in Secular India: Negotiating Citizenship in Postcolonial Hyderabad*. 1st ed. Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Singh, Gurharpal, and Giorgio Shani. *Sikh Nationalism: From a Dominant Minority to an Ethno-Religious Diaspora*. New Approaches to Asian History. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2022.

Suneetha, A., and M. A. Moid. 'Mediating Muslim Citizenship? AIMIM and Its Letters'. *Contemporary South Asia* 27, no. 1 (2 January 2019): 117–32.

The Economic Times. 'BJP and AIMIM Two Sides of the Same Coin: Congress'. 2021. https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/bjp-and-aimim-two-sides-of-the-same-coin-congress/articleshow/88240018.cms.

Varshney, Ashutosh. *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India*. 2. ed. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2002.