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Putting the Ontological Back into Ontological Security

Indian Indeterminacy as a Challenge to Selfhood

Meredydd Rix

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EXCERPT

This study sets out to do two things. Firstly, it seeks to contribute to the burgeoning literature on ontological security in International Relations (IR)... Secondly, I hope to say something about Indian nationalism by making the case for Bangladesh's importance in the project of nation-curation. I show how the uncodability of the Bangladeshi migrant and the Indian citizen presents an ontological threat to the Indian nation, portending an implosion of selfhood by undermining claims to an ontic reality for something called the Indian nation...

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Meredydd Rix is an independent researcher with a focus on South Asia. An adapted version of this paper won the 2020 International Relations and Political Science departmental prize at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (IHEID).

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Acknowledgements

1. Introduction

1   This study sets out to do two things. Firstly, it seeks to contribute to the burgeoning literature on ontological security in International Relations (IR). In much of the literature to date, there has been a conflation of identity and selfhood and the casualty of this has very often been the ontological. Drawing on the work of Huysmans and Bauman, among others, I seek to sketch an account of ontological security that recentres the role of ontology and selfhood, which is what separates ontological security from identity security. In doing so, I creatively reinterpret the concept of ontological security, looking in particular at the role of indeterminacy in disrupting it. Secondly, I hope to say something about Indian nationalism by making the case for Bangladesh's importance in the project of nation-curation. I show how the uncodability of the Bangladeshi migrant and the Indian citizen presents an ontological threat to the Indian nation, portending an implosion of selfhood by undermining claims to an ontic reality for something called the Indian nation.

2   To make my argument I analyse Indian newspaper discourse about Bangladesh and Bangladeshis, looking both at how the anxiety over indeterminacy is evident and at how the discourse works to abolish this indeterminacy by overcoding ambivalence. To do so, I use a combination of methods from critical discourse studies alongside a more quantitively informed corpus-based analysis. I then place this discourse within a wider set of practices, materialities and institutions also focused on the banishment of indeterminacy.

3   The study continues as follows. The remainder of this chapter introduces in more detail the arguments made and provides contextual information, both about ontological security and about India, Indian nationalism, and Bangladesh. In the second chapter, I develop my theoretical argument, situating the study within and against the literature on ontological security. Chapter three details the methods and research design of my discourse analysis, which occupies chapter four. Chapter five moves beyond the discourse, looking at those institutions and practices that work alongside it and showing how they too support my argument that national indeterminacy causes ontological insecurity.

1.1 Summary of Argument and Contribution to Ontological Security Theory

4 The problematic of ontological security is the negotiation of chaos and uncertainty that 'lurks' "on the other side of what might appear to be quite trivial aspects of day-to-day action and discourse" (Giddens, 1991: 36). This radical uncertainty emerges from the inability to provide meaning and sense to the world, and ourselves. In international relations, as in sociology, the focus has primarily been on how self-narratives bracket out chaos by providing a structure and a story that makes action and cognition possible. Narratives about ourselves produce a sense of self-identity that generates certainty in our world. The implication is that when these narratives begin to break down, we are once again faced with radical uncertainty about our being – that is to say, ontological insecurity. The problem with this literature, particularly as it has been used in international relations, is that ontological security often becomes operationalised as little more than identity security. The focus has thus been on the creation, maintenance and insecurity of ideas of 'who we are', rather than more explicitly ontological questions of 'are we?'. The result is that selfhood has often been reduced to a function of identity. While this literature has proved valuable, and while I am not suggesting that identity is not crucial to notions of self, I suggest that the focus on ontology need not and should not be confined to questions of identity, and that delinking selfhood from identity allows for a greater focus on radical uncertainty, chaos and questions of ontology more generally.

5 In this vein, I look at the radical uncertainty that derives from indeterminacy. Indeterminacy is that condition of not being able to make a judgement as the value of something; the inability to code a given phenomenon. This uncodability gets to the heart of radical uncertainty; without determinacy the world is amorphous, unknowable and unthinkable. Determinacy is the product of an order; it institutes a way of organising chaos that makes the world coherent and actionable. The indeterminacy of selfhood is thus what could properly be described as ontological insecurity.

6 I look for the signs of ontological insecurity in India, paying particular attention to those margins where indeterminacy most visibly raises its head. I hope to show how such indeterminacy can, in Spivak's (1993: 70) words, "show the irreducible margin in the center". This is particularly relevant to international relations because it can help to account for numerous phenomena in world politics, phenomena that often have concrete consequences for the lives and security of a great number of people. For instance, the India-Bangladesh border fence is the longest border structure in the world, running the equivalent of Greece to Somalia, and is one of the world's deadliest. Beyond insufficient realist and functionalist accounts, ontological insecurity offers to make this enormous disciplinary project intelligible. Indeed, it coheres quite a lot of what counts for politics more generally, as I shall attempt to illustrate. Certainly, the focus on ontological security places the border within a larger set of practices, materialities and representations that both bespeak an ontological anxiety and are aimed at its amelioration. What links them is their attempt at banishing the indeterminate that threatens the possibility of national selfhood. In making my argument, I show how the Indian nation is afflicted by a distinct ontological insecurity concerning Bangladesh and Bangladeshis.

7   Krishna (1994: 509) noted many years ago how India, as "this child of partition… has cartographic anxiety inscribed in its very genetic code". This cartographic anxiety derives from the obvious arbitrariness of India's borders (physical and otherwise) that are often indeterminate. This indeterminacy challenges the idea of the nation's ontic status. I explore this cartographic anxiety largely through discourse and the institutions of citizenship. I look at how indeterminacy can be shown to cause anxiety, and how this anxiety manifests itself discursively, but also materially, in practices, institutions and infrastructures, all of which seek to banish the indeterminate and create a sense of illusive-elusive ontological security. Part of this involves looking at how India narrates itself and its neighbours, and how these narrations work to make possible a sense of coherent and unitary national selfhood by strongly overcoding the arbitrary and liminal nature of nationhood. The liminal is banished by producing a set of representations that position Bangladesh(is) as devalorised, dangerous and deviant. In creating Bangladesh as a kind of postcolonial dystopia, India is able to distinguish itself as progressive, advanced and agential; a contrast space emerges that is the very possibility for sovereign selfhood. The overcoding of indeterminacy offers to restore a sense of difference that underpins ontological status. The threat of indeterminacy is therefore the threat of the annulment of such a status.

8   Representations of Bangladesh therefore work to secure Indian exceptionalism by erecting a clear line between the self and the other. This line becomes central to Indian ontological security, though, because it is merely a discursive effect, it is forever unstable. The risk is that this line could be broken and the difference between the exceptional India and remedial Bangladesh fades. This constant threat undergirds Indian ontological security; the reinscription of the line becomes the condition not just of Indian identity, but of Indian ipseity. In this paper I trace this line in discourse, analysing how Bangladesh(is) are narrated in India's two largest English-language newspapers. I argue that this discourse works analogously to the fence in asserting a sovereign presence.

1.2 Contextual Information – The Case of India and Bangladesh

9   A wealth of scholarship has looked at Indian nationalism over many decades, from numerous angles. Much of the literature has focused on Pakistan, or its fraught relationships with religion, secularism, diversity, masculinity and modernity, among others (e.g. Das, 2008; Nandy, 2003; Krishna, 1999). Almost no scholarship to date has sought to interrogate Indian nationhood vis-à-vis Bangladesh, and while many studies have looked at issues of Bangladeshi migration very few have systematically brought this analysis back to a discussion on national identity or nationalism. Much of the most interesting scholarship in this area is anthropological (e.g. Ludden, 2003; van Schendel, 2004; Sur 2013; Hussain, 2015; Cons, 2016) and has sought to problematise the 'coherence' of national identities and to emphasise the lived reality of borderland communities, whose ontic modalities blur the boundaries between nations. What this scholarship has not done so explicitly is to link this problematisation to broader discussions of Indian nationalism, and to use them to place Bangladesh and Bangladeshis at the centre of national self-making practices. One key exception is the work of Sankaran Krishna (1994; 1999) whose work on 'cartographic anxiety' sought to

link the permeability of the border to a wider postcolonial anxiety over nation-building and secessionism.

10 Beyond this, there has also been some scholarship on Bangladeshi migrants in Indian cities, particularly by Ramachandran (2003, 2006), though as she notes (2004), this research is often difficult to carry out and, since her work in the early 2000s, limited additional scholarship has looked at Bangladeshi migrants outside border regions. Some scholarship on ontological security has taken South Asia as an empirical case. Most notably, Kinnvall's *Globalization and Religious Nationalism in India: The Search for Ontological Security* (2006) has become a key text in ontological security studies, and has since be complemented by additional work on the region (e.g. Kinnvall, 2019; Kinnvall and Svensson, 2017). A few others, including Chacko's (2014) study of ontological security in India-US relations, have also theorised ontological security from South Asia. None of this scholarship, however, has looked at India and Bangladesh.

1.2.1 General Overview of Bangladeshi and Indian History

11 India gained independence in 1947 with the partition of India and Pakistan. Partition emerged as a demand of the Muslim League, led by Jinnah, who collaborated with the British during WWII, while much of the Congress Party were in gaol, in return for a separate homeland for Muslims (Pakistan means 'Land of the Pure'). The Congress Party ruled India for three decades consecutively, first under Jawaharlal Nehru and then under his daughter Indira Gandhi. The 1970s and 1980s were a period of distinct instability in India, when a number of wars (e.g. the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War) and insurgencies were seen as very real threats to the coherence of the Indian state and nation. Between 1947 and 2014 the Congress Party was in power for all but nine years.

12 In 2014 the Hindutvavadi Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came to power under Narendra Modi, who won a second landslide victory in 2019. The BJP is a member of the Sangh Parivar, a 'family' of right-wing organisations rooted in the ideology of Hindutva. Hindutva or 'Hindu' nationalism sees Hinduism as the defining feature of an Indian 'civilisation' that has been subverted over centuries. The political project is to protect and resurrect this Hindu civilisation. A 'Hindu' in Hindutva ideology is anyone whose 'fatherland' is coterminous with their holy land (Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, Buddhists),[1] though it is possible to become Hindu through assimilation, as in the case of Jews, Christians and Parsis (see Varshney, 1993). Muslims, who comprise 14% of the population, therefore figure as the key non-Hindu in Indian society from the Hindutva perspective. It is important to note that Hinduism consists of very disparate beliefs and practices, and the form of Hinduism valorised by the Sangh Parivar is a very particular form of Hinduism (high-caste, North Indian) (see Menon, 2019).

13 What is now Bangladesh was carved out of India by Partition in 1947, then as the eastern wing of Pakistan. The political and economic domination of East Pakistan by West Pakistan resulted in popular unrest and the rise of a strong confederate and later secessionist movement. Following violent repression and genocide, Bangladesh gained independence in 1971 during the third Indo-Pakistan War, when Indian forces invaded East Pakistan with the support of local militias. The Awami League (AL) government of Sheikh Mujib governed until 1975, when a military coup presaged a decade and a half of dictatorship under Generals Zia and Ershad. In 1990, Bangladesh once again held elections. The Awami League, led by Mujib's daughter Hasina, and the Bangladesh

National Party (BNP), led by General Zia's wife Khaleda Begum, came to dominate electoral politics. Since 2008, the Hasina government has consolidated its power through political repression and crackdowns on opposition parties. The 2014 election was boycotted by opposition parties and the 2018 general election saw widespread violence and vote-rigging. Bangladesh is the eighth most populous country in the world, with 165 million people, 98% of whom are Bengali. Islam is the majority religion (88%), though 10% are Hindu (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2018).

14 There is animosity in Bangladesh towards the Indian government. From the 1970s the military felt as if their victory had been stolen by the Indian army and that the AL's closeness to India was both unbecoming and a threat to sovereignty. This was one of the issues that led to Mujib's assassination by the military (van Schendel, 2009: 182). Bangladesh's relationship with India has been troubled ever since, though the return of the AL has led to notable cooperation between Hasina and Modi in recent years. Nonetheless, there is a great deal of anti-Indian sentiment in Bangladesh, with many seeing India as domineering. Water sharing issues, the construction of the border fence, frequent killings by border guards, support for militant groups, and anti-Bangladeshi rhetoric have been recurring issues in Bangladeshi politics. Many in Bangladesh are also deeply critical of violence against Muslims in India, and of the Modi government. Instances such as the Gujarat Riots (2002), oppression in Kashmir, and the destruction of the Babri Masjid (1992) have evoked strong emotions in Bangladesh, and have even led to reprisals on non-Muslim communities, whose religion is often conflated with pro-Indian sentiment (van Schendel, 2009: 208). Bangladesh cancelled Modi's visit to Dhaka in 2020 amid widespread public backlash and protest.

15 In India, its intervention in Bangladesh in 1971 gave the country perhaps its greatest foreign policy success and demonstrated its emergence as a major power. By creating an independent Bangladesh and confining Pakistan to its western wing, India established its pre-eminence in South Asia and made up for its humiliating defeat by the Chinese a decade earlier. Indira Gandhi used Bangladeshi independence as a way of entrenching Indian dominance in the subcontinent and Indian leaders ever since have sought to incorporate Bangladesh into a system of regional hegemony. Indeed, its intervention in 1971 is widely perceived in India as entitling it to special privileges, and as obliging Bangladesh to accept Indian leadership. As noted above, this has created resentment in Bangladesh, and has defined a politics that has sought to push back against perceived Indian domineering. In India, anti-Indian sentiment and the decline of secularism and democracy in Bangladesh are seen as acts of betrayal for the gift of independence (Van Schendel, 2009: 184).

1.2.2 Indian Nationalisms

16 There are two mainstream nationalisms in India, Hindutvavadi and secular.[2] While the BJP and Sangh Parivar head a nationalist movement based on Hindutva, the Congress and other parties have traditionally sought to define a secular nationalism. Within this, two strands can be identified: Nehru's highly modernist secularism and Gandhi's 'Hindu-inspired' secularism that drew on Hindu ideas and morality, and sought not so much the separation of religion and politics (as Nehru did), but rather an equidistance of politics from all religions (Nandy, 2003). Gandhi's nationalism therefore was deeply informed by his faith, but it was not Hindutvavadi. Secularist parties have also long

been pressured to adopt a 'soft-Hindutva' position that has ultimately undermined secularism in the country. Importantly, while there are two key forms of nationalism, most people hold elements of both, and indeed, even the BJP has found it expedient to use the language of secularism to win votes.

17   Hindutvavadi nationalism emerged in the 19th century as an attempt to frame a Hindu identity that could be the basis for political mobilisation. The idea of Hinduism that Hindutva takes to be Hinduism proper is based on upper-caste North Indian practices and beliefs (*sanartan dharna*), many of which are in fact not practiced by many members of India's so-called Hindu majority (Menon, 2019; Shepherd, 2019; Oddie, 2006; Udayakumar, 2005). It is based on the idea of reinstating a 'golden age' of Hindu civilisation (Hansen, 1996) that was corrupted by Muslim invasion and Buddhist pacifism (Savarkar, 1922; Golwalkar, 1939) and more lately by secularism. The notion of Hinduism as a unitary 'religion' emerged through the colonial encounter, with a Christianity that was seen to be unitary and a nationalism based on a common bond. Hindutva arose as an attempt to build a notion of a Hindu nation that could harness the mobilising power that western nationalism and Christianity had supposedly done (Menon, 2019).

1.2.3 Partition and Borders as Problematic

18   The border between India and Bangladesh is one of the least naturalised and is coterminous with no pre-existing boundaries. In the border areas of West Bengal, Assam and Tripura, Bengalis are the majority on both sides, and both Hindus and Muslims are common on either side.[3] Often accent and dialect are the only ways to differentiate Indians and Bangladeshis, but in the borderlands this difference is non-existent, and some migrant communities who have become legalised in India (those who came before 1971) have maintained their dialects, further complicating the codability of Indian and Bangladeshi. Outside the border regions local populations cannot differentiate between Bengali accents, and most Bangladeshi migrants outside eastern India speak Hindi.

19   The border came into existence in 1947, first as the border between India and Pakistan, and after 1971, as the border between India and Bangladesh. The idea that Partition divided Muslim majority and Hindu majority areas is a myth that serves to vindicate both British expediency and post-independence nationalisms. In fact, 42% of Bengal's non-Muslims found themselves in Pakistan in August 1947. Khulna and the Chittagong Hill Tracts, which became part of East Pakistan, had a non-Muslim majority, while Murshidabad, which became part of India, had a Muslim majority (see van Schendel, 2009: 99). The result was that 20% of East Pakistan's citizens were non-Muslim in 1947 and that number remains 12% today (van Schendel, 2009; Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2018).

20   The memory of Partition in India tends to be dominated by the Punjab experience, which saw a fast and near-complete exchange of Muslims and non-Muslims, accompanied by widespread violence. The eastern partition, however, was different, with a far slower, less violent, and less total exchange of populations. The eastern partition accounts for only 23% of Partition migration. Indeed, the particular forms of territoriality that could be said to accompany and define nation-statism were far from intuitive in the east. For centuries, migration, both seasonal and permanent, had been

the norm in Bengal and beyond. Political boundaries had little effect on everyday territoriality and it was widely perceived that the partition of 1947 would consequently also have little effect. Indeed, Bengal had been partitioned in 1905 but had been reunited six years later and many believed that the partition of 1947 may be equally as short-lived, a belief that continued among some until the 1970s (Ghosh, 2015: 277; van Schendel, 2009: 101; Chakravartty, 2005).

21 Consequently, post-Partition migration in the east was far less sudden or total than it had been in the west, and occurred for reasons often unrelated to communal violence (van Schendel, 2009: 132). Unlike in the west, large numbers of non-Muslims chose to stay in East Pakistan after Partition, with far more staying than leaving. The migration that did occur was often temporary, with many families moving for employment or in response to political and environmental disasters, only to return after a period of time (van Schendel, 2009: 132). Indeed, prior to 1952, documents were not legally required for travel between East Pakistan and India, in stark contrast to the west where documents had been required since 1948. Before 1952 some even maintained government jobs on one side, and kept their permanent residence on the other, as in the case of railway workers (Roy, 2016). It was not until 1955, eight years after Partition, that India adopted its first citizenship laws (Roy, 2010), reinforcing once again that current forms of territoriality and belonging were not hegemonic from the 'beginning'.

22 Since then, several waves of migration have occurred, particularly following bouts of violence, and most notably following the 1971 war when as many as 10 million refugees took shelter in India (van Schendel, 2009: 164), most of whom returned. There has also been a notable growth in Bengali populations in the Indian states of Assam and Tripura. This has been blamed on migration from Bangladesh, which has certainly occurred, though scholars are divided on whether immigration or fertility is the prime cause (Mannan, 2018; Saikia *et al.*, 2020). Certainly, Bengali immigration into these regions began at least a century ago and constitutes the latest in several centuries of eastward agrarian expansion (van Schendel, 2009; Saikia, 2019). For centuries forest and swamp lands have been pushed back along with the indigenous peoples that lived there. Just a century before independence, Sylhet, now a major city in Bangladesh (but in Assam until 1947), was described as "outside the pale of human habitation" (Ludden, 2003: 5082). This expansion boomed in the colonial period as Bengali populations spread eastward and northward into East Bengal, Assam, Tripura and Myanmar (Rohingyas) often sponsored by the colonial government. This expansion has met with resistance from indigenous communities. In Assam and Tripura in particular, violent protest movements and insurgencies targeting Bengali immigrants have occurred, and continue to this day.

23 The point of this historical tangent is to make the point that the border between Bangladesh and India is fraught. The border is inherently compromised both by everyday practices that refuse or subvert it, and because the very imposition of a border in these spaces problematises the codability of nationhood and belonging. As one border-security commander lamented, "these people speak the same language, wear similar clothes and look no different. It is impossible to differentiate a Bangladeshi and an Indian" (Krishna, 1994: 515). The following vignettes reinforce this indeterminacy and uncodability:

> Hoseb Ali, a resident of Nabinnagar village [India]... sat in his courtyard, lit a bidi [cigarette] and gently tossed the matchstick away. The matchstick, still smouldering, landed in Bangladesh. "Uncle, come over, I have something to tell you", he shouted. (Banerjee, 1993)
>
> Panitar's division is as direct as it is arbitrary: The houses on either side of a dusty lane occupy two neighbouring countries... Dotty, like several others, crosses the border, both ways, almost every day to play a game of cricket, catch a film, visit family, shop at the markets. (Vijayan, 2016)

24 While the border fence has gradually disrupted cross-border ontic modalities such as these, it has been unable to impose any degree of determinacy. The fence may discipline movement, but it has failed as of yet to discipline uncodability. The fact that it remains largely impossible to differentiate Bangladeshis (even those who do not live in border areas) from Indians, and thus Indians from Bangladeshis, is evidence of this. If the vision of an independent South Asia was one of sovereign nations, clear territorialities, and 'western' notions of citizenship, the project of post-independence has been to make this image a reality. The importance of achieving this goal is (perhaps ironically) directly related to the politics of decolonisation, where a strong nation and state become the vehicle to reclaiming agency and subjecthood in world politics, and for development and change domestically. To lose a sense of nationhood is thus to lose the decolonial project; this loss is precisely what is threatened by the indeterminacy of nationhood that the concern with Bangladesh and Bangladeshis is all about.

1.2.4 The Politics of Anti-Bangladeshi Sentiment – Assamese to National Politics

25 The anti-immigrant movement began in the 1960s and initiated the narrative of Bangladeshi 'infiltration' that became part of right-wing Indian discourse in the 1980s and has since become mainstream. In Assam, this narrative began as the 'Bongal Kheda' (evict the Bengalis) movement and re-emerged in the Assam Agitations of the 1980s that saw several massacres of Bengali villages. Assam continues to be at the centre of anti-Bangladeshi politics, and the presence and growth of Bengalis in Assam has been used by Assamese politicians as a political tool. Assamese politicians initiated the narrative of 'infiltration', the demand for border fencing, for citizenship testing and for deportation. Importantly however, anti-Bangladeshi sentiment, and the anxiety that I shall argue pervades the border and those seen to cross it, cannot be reduced to the politics of Assam. The politics of Bangladesh(is) in India has gained its own life with its adoption into national politics. In the following chapters, I shall show that the issue of Bangladesh and its indeterminacy is at the heart of Indian ontological insecurity.

1.3 Against 'Rationalism'

26 In making the case of a pervasive cartographic anxiety produced by indeterminacy and the need to counter it, I need to show that the preoccupation with the border cannot be explained simply in terms of rationalist arguments from a security or economic perspective. One of the claims made by politicians is that Bangladeshi migrants are an economic burden on India, preventing genuine citizens from accessing employment opportunities and state aid, and that this accounts for the obsession with illegal migration. From an economic point of view, this argument is hard to maintain for

several reasons. Firstly, as studies have shown (e.g. Ramachandran, 2004), most Bangladeshi migrants in Indian cities are in the informal sector, often working as manual labourers and domestic servants. Their labour supplements rather than competes with Indian labour (Sen, 2003), and many of the jobs they do are ones not wanted by most Indians, for instance manual scavenging (Sen, 2019). The idea that politicians should be enraged with Bangladeshis 'stealing' these jobs seems ironic given political parties do not regularly advocate for more employment in these 'sectors'. Seasonal agricultural labour is also thought to have been a key draw for Bangladeshis, but at certain times of the year there is a shortage of agricultural labour and so migration is once again complementary.

27 The vast majority of Bangladeshi migrants, though, have most likely settled in remote areas and practice subsistence agriculture. It is no coincidence that many migrants from Bengal (whether Bangladeshi or 'Indian') have made Assam and the chars their home, given the availability of land there. The chars in particular, where many Bengalis in Assam live, constitute some of the most marginal 'land' in India. It is difficult to see how their presence constitutes much of a burden on the economic opportunities of other 'properly Indian' populations in the region.

28 Secondly, the argument that Bangladeshis might be taking advantage of Indian state support is also spurious. Even for most of the 'legal' poor in India, reliable government support is a pipe dream: more a fiction of the middle-class than a reality among those who need it (e.g. Chatterjee, 2004; Sen, 2003). One need only look at the places where Bangladeshis are supposed to 'settle' to reinforce the point. The chars of Assam and the urban slums of large cities represent some of the least 'supported' parts of India. Most of the people in these areas do not have access to even the most basic services, so the idea that they are a drain on resources is a misnomer. As Mashiur (2018) notes, "there is nothing for them to leech off of, even if they were capable of leeching in the first place—education, health care, all of that tends to be a lot better at policing the identities of the people they serve than we imagine… The charity argument is the home of the bigot and the idiot. There is no charity available".

29 It should also be noted that, despite severe data challenges, evidence suggests that Bangladeshi immigration has slowed substantially over the last couple of decades. Economic improvement in Bangladesh, access to wealthier countries such as Malaysia and the Gulf, and political hostility have made India an increasingly unpopular destination. Although one should be deeply cautious of census data in this respect, the number of Bangladeshis in India dropped significantly between the 2001 and 2011 censuses, largely because of deaths of older-generation migrants and 'refugees', and the overall immigration rate is down from 0.6% to 0.4% (Tumbe, 2019).

30 While such statistics must be taken with caution, it is to be noted that even the largest figures of Bangladeshi immigrants in India (which have no evidence behind them) put the number at 20 million. This represents 1.5% of the Indian population. The economic threat posed by Bangladeshis is therefore hard to argue, and certainly fails to account for the zeal with which the border and its so-called transgressors are securitised. Indeed, if one was to make a purely economic argument, the cost of border fencing, infrared cameras, drone surveillance, the 2,500 NRC test centres and 40,000 civil servants, the 100 foreigner's tribunals and the world's largest border force most likely cost far more than any economic damage that may be caused by illegal migration.

31   The other issue with economic arguments is the case of Nepal, which also sends a large number of migrants to India. As with Bangladesh, figures vary widely, from 4 million (Kharel, 2019) to 7 million (Bhattrai, 2007). Nepal and India signed a treaty in 1950 that guaranteed free movement between India and Nepal. While there are some concerns in India over Nepali migrants (e.g. Subba, 2018) and illegal activity, it is nowhere near the scale of concern over Bangladesh. This is partly because of Nepalis' religion and the ambivalence of categories of nationhood and citizenship, and partly because, as legalised migrants, they are not forced to pass off as Indian.

32   The other argument that frequently occurs in the corpus and more broadly, is the security threat posed by Bangladeshis. Migrants from Bangladesh are held accountable for crime and terrorism in India, and even insurgency, but again, the evidence is thin at best. Bangladeshi gangs are alleged to operate in numerous Indian cities, and have been linked (in the corpus) to robbery and theft. In addition, numerous articles deal with fake currency crossing from Bangladesh to India. Islamic terrorism is an issue in India and Bangladesh, and a number of high-profile terror attacks in Bangladesh have occurred in the last decade. Nonetheless, it is unclear that the preoccupation with Bangladeshi immigration can be explained by a concern with terrorism or crime. Testing the citizenship of millions of people is an extreme length to go to root out terrorism, and is also an inefficient one, as foreignness is clearly not a useful proxy for terrorism. The fencing of the border also seems an ineffective strategy given that terror networks in India operate with the support of international governments and non-state actors for whom a border fence is unlikely to be problematic. It is also hard to explain the transformation of citizenship laws with reference to terror and crime, and thus other explanations are needed.

33   Bangladesh used to provide sanctuary for insurgent groups operating in India's north-east, including the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), however this was largely in retaliation for Indian support for insurgency in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) (Bhaumik, 2009). This support ceased in the 1990s, following the CHT peace accord and the arrest of ULFA's leader Anup Chetia in Dhaka, both in 1997. The security threat posed by insurgent support is therefore not present today, and indeed is far more of an issue along the Myanmar border, with the still very active National Socialist Council of Nagaland operating from there (Bhaumik, 2009). Interestingly, there has been little push to fence this border. The insurgent threat is therefore also unable to account for the state and nation's obsession with Bangladesh.

1.4 Structure of the Study

34   The study is structured as follows. Chapter two reviews the work on ontological security to date, arguing that by reducing selfhood to a function of identity, the ontological has not been fully theorised. I then sketch a theory of ontological security that foregrounds the ontological, focusing on indeterminacy and uncodability. Chapter three details the methods and research design. Here I introduce corpus-assisted discourse analysis, address my 'data', and discuss what would constitute evidence of my theoretical framework. In chapter four I conduct a discourse analysis, looking at how the ontological insecurity posed by indeterminacy is both evidenced and mitigated. In chapter five, I go beyond the discourse and link it to developments in Indian politics,

notably changes in citizenship law, the materiality of the border, and the practices and politics of citizenship testing.

NOTES DE BAS DE PAGE

1. While these groups are considered "Hindu" by Hindutvavadis, it is important to note that many of them do not accept this categorisation, and Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism were all in some way political responses to Hinduism (Brahminical rule) with which they sought to split (see, Menon, 2019).

2. There are many regional nationalisms, and forms of dalit nationalism. While both have played a strong role in Indian politics, neither have had the reach or power that secular and Hindutvavadi nationalisms have had.

3. Bengali speakers number 79 million in West Bengal, 9 million in Assam and 2.5 million in Tripura, with significant numbers elsewhere in India, largely due to labour migration.

2. Ontological Security and Chaos

1   The central project of literature on ontological security, and late modernity more generally, is the negotiation of chaos and radical uncertainty. Radical uncertainty is the uncertainty that occurs when the ability to provide order and sense to the world is fundamentally challenged. It is at the centre of cognition and action, for both are dependent on an ordering that makes the underlying chaos of our existence intelligible and actionable. It is in this sense that radical uncertainty is of an ontological nature, as we no longer know what it means to be.

2   Ontological security has grown out of the research agenda of late modernity and the risk society, where self and society increasingly become the subject of reflexivity (Beck, Giddens and Lash, 1994).[1] This means that we are increasingly conscious of our selfhood and that our actions and notions of identity are the conscious product of reflection. In late modernity, many of the 'certainties' that anchored the social and the self appear increasingly fragile or non-existent. The self and society direct their attention to the process of their own production as a consequence of the destabilisation of social relations and identities (Giddens, 1990).

3   Giddens' claim is that, in the late modern era, tradition and culture have lost their salience, giving rise to an increasingly self-reflexive individual. With the destabilisation of tradition, the rigid options of self-identity give way to a situation where "we have no choice but to choose how to be and how to act" (Giddens, 1994: 75). Reflexivity takes on a new centrality in a world disembedded from the structures of the past. Giddens sees this process as defined both by radical possibility and by the potential for anxiety – or rather *ontological insecurity* – as the self loses the certainties that are seen to define the traditional. Disembedded from societal narratives of self and identity, the reflexive self has the challenge of creating identity certainty for itself, through the use of narratives about one's self. Thus, "the reflexive project of the self, which consists in the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives, takes place in the context of multiple choice" (Giddens, 1991: 6).

4   Giddens argues that the self is produced in early childhood when we come to perceive a distinction between an external world and ourselves. This is similar to Mead's (1934: 247) symbolic interactionist notion of the self, where the self only comes into view when we see the self as an object. For Giddens, the period of early childhood is also a

period where the identity of the self is grounded in a sense of 'basic trust' that emerges from the parental relation. This basic trust is "directly linked to achieving an early sense of ontological security" (Giddens, 1991: 4). The loss of tradition that marks late modernity results in a challenge to basic trust, and more generally to the certainties that ground our sense of 'being', introducing the ever-present potential of ontological insecurity. 'Ontological security' is a concept adapted by Giddens from the psychoanalytic work of Laing (1960). Normally,

> The individual ... may experience his own being as real, alive, whole; as differentiated from the rest of the world in ordinary circumstances so clearly that his identity and autonomy are never in question; as a continuum in time; as having an inner consistency, substantiality, genuineness, and worth; as spatially coextensive with the body; and, usually, as having begun in or around birth and liable to extinction with death. He thus has a firm core of ontological security. (Laing, 1960: 41-42)

5   Ontological security thus comes from a sense of ourselves as autonomous and unitary, as possessing a sense of inner presence: a core. When this sense breaks down, we become ontologically *insecure*. For Giddens, ontological security is maintained by creating narratives that ground a sense of identity and impart a sense of temporal continuity and internal coherence. In IR, most of the literature on ontological security has also focused on narrative as a way of producing certainty about ourselves and the world. Narratives about ourselves produce a sense of 'self-identity' that generates certainty. The implication is that when these narratives break down or become untenable, we are faced with radical uncertainty. This has been looked at from various angles, from feelings of shame emerging from the inability to reconcile one's actions with one's sense of identity (Steele, 2008; Browning, 2018), to a lack of fixity as a consequence of rapid change (Kinnvall, 2006), to an inability to integrate external events into our systems of knowing (Chernobrov, 2016).

6   Like these studies I also take radical uncertainty as my central focus, but I do not foreground narrative and identity. Instead, I look at the radical uncertainty that derives from indeterminacy. Indeterminacy is that condition of not being able to make a judgement as to the value or meaning of something: the inability to code a given phenomenon. This uncodability gets to the heart of radical uncertainty; without determinacy the world is amorphous, unknowable and unthinkable. Determinacy is the foundation of an order; it institutes a way of organising chaos that makes the world coherent and actionable. In this way, it provides the building-blocks of an ontological framework. When the self becomes uncodable – when the self is the phenomenon that cannot be determined – we have what could properly be described as *ontological* insecurity; an insecurity about the nature of being.

2.1 What Is 'Ontological' about Ontological Security?

7   The theory of ontological security that Giddens develops takes the individual as the unit of analysis. Work on ontological security in IR has been split by those that take the state or nation (Mitzen, 2006; Steele, 2008; Chernobrov, 2016), and those that take the individual as the unit of analysis (Kinnvall, 2006; Browning, 2018). I take the nation as my unit, recognising of course that the nation is a product of national*ism* and that it comes to mean different things in different forms of nationalism. Fundamentally, while the content of nationalism may be different, the form – with its mobilisation of history,

its affiliation to a (desired) 'national' state, its position as the centre of political contestation, and its sense of ontic reality – remains consistent.

8 We can talk of a national self to the extent that the nation is psychologically real for its members, and that in representing the 'nation' as an entity, it is accorded an ontological status. To be able to see ourselves we need to objectify ourselves – to see our self as an object. This objectification imparts a coherence and an essence. Essence is therefore implied in the notion of the self.[2] Moreover, to be able to 'biograph' ourselves (the focus of ontological security scholars), we need to take a similar position outside the self to interpret a trajectory and a coherence. In doing so, we also come to implicitly objectify ourselves. Selfhood therefore relies on the belief in and tacit understanding that there is something that makes us, *us.* The same can be said for the nation, whose object-ness accords it an implicit metaphysics. The inability to code Bangladeshis and Indians undermines the object-ness of the national self. It is an inability to see the self from the outside as a coherent whole; the boundary between inside and outside, self and not-self evaporates. There is thus a loss of selfhood. National indeterminacy suggests that the self does not meaningfully exist. If the categories of self and not-self implode, the self in its objectivity and metaphysical presence is fatally challenged.

9 Ontological insecurity is the inability to experience oneself as a "real, alive whole" (Laing, 1960: 39). In theories of ontological security to date, we are ontologically insecure when we no longer know who we are, and when our identity no longer feels fixed or certain (Kinnvall *et al.,* 2018). Ontological security therefore resides "in the capacity to keep a particular narrative going" (Giddens, 1991: 54). Ontological insecurity in this sense, threatens a particular notion of self-identity. The inability to integrate our actions with identity (Steele, 2008; Browning, 2018), the inability to fit the actions of others into our narratives (Chernobrov, 2016), and the increasing sense that our identities are no longer fixed or rooted (Kinnvall, 2006) can all be sources of ontological insecurity. In much of the literature it is hard to differentiate identity from ontology. At best, identity is shown to provide a sense of ontology by making the world and our place in it recognisable and actionable, but more often ontology is not explicitly engaged with. This is in part a result of the intellectual heritage of the concept, in psychoanalysis and psychology, and in part a result of the conflation of self and identity, or the reduction of the former to the latter.

10 This reduction is obvious in Giddens' work, where the concepts are often hyphenated as 'self-identity'. What self adds to identity here, is not always clear. This potential to conflate identity and self in the literature has also been noted by Browning and Joenniemi (2016) though to different ends. They argue that "identities and selves are presented as largely inter-changeable terms. Insofar as a distinction is made, selves figure merely as a reflection of identities" (Browning and Joenniemi, 2016: 4). They then argue that the pursuit of ontological security has become indistinguishable from the pursuit of identity preservation, and that, in this form, it is hard to see the added value to existing literatures on identity. Their interest is in developing the notion of reflexivity central to Giddens' work, and focusing on how the adaptability of identity gives distinct analytical purchase beyond existing work on identity security. Others such as Rossdale (2015) and Mälksoo (2015) have also noted the inherent ethical difficulty in 'ontologising' identity security, and suggest that ontological security

should not be reduced to justifying securitisation. Implicit in this argument is also the common reduction of 'ontological security' to 'identity security'.

11 I concur, but instead of looking at the potential of reflexivity and adaptability, I seek to make a different point, and to do so I take as my starting point the difference Giddens (1991: 48) notes between ontological awareness and self-identity (explored in the next section). I want to focus on what happens, when it becomes hard to maintain not consistency of *who* we are, but rather consistency of the fact *that* we are – in other words, I am interested not so much in a loss of identity but in a loss of selfhood. I do not deny that identity and notions of 'who we are' play a key function in the production of ontology (an understanding of being), but for ontological security to say substantially more than literature on identity security, the concepts of ontology and self have to be able to work independently of identity.

12 Recently, there has been an increased focus in the literature on Lacanian thought and its potential to offer a different perspective on ontological security. Eberle (2019), Kinnvall (2019), Vieira (2018) and Solomon (2015) are among those to have developed these ideas, though they echo earlier work, particularly by Zizek (e.g. 1993, also Glynos and Stavrakakis, 2008). Following Lacan, they argue that subjectivity is constituted by a sense of lack because the unconscious is fundamentally external to the individual (as language and the 'symbolic order'). This elementary lack is constitutive of fantasy relations towards various 'things' (*objet petit a*) that, once (re)attained, will supposedly restore our sense of wholeness and coherence (Lacan, 1988). Preventing us from attaining this 'thing' is usually some 'other'. Kinnvall (2019) looks at the construction of Muslims as the other that supposedly deprives Hindutvavadis of their present-day Ram Rajya. Vieira (2018) takes a different approach, re-reading Lacan's mirror-stage and arguing that the West comes to figure as the archetype of wholeness in relation to an inherent lack felt by postcolonial societies (drawing on Bhabha's [1984] work on mimicry, also informed by Lacan).

13 While I find this turn to Lacanianism a useful way of theorising international relations, I have a number of reservations regarding its relationship to ontological security. Firstly, I wonder whether a Lacanian approach is incommensurable with Giddens' research agenda, given the ahistorical nature of 'lack' which would seemingly go against Giddens' notion that there has been a distinct change to the subject in 'late modernity'. More importantly however, I am uncertain what the term 'ontological security' adds to Lacanian theory. If the answer is that it is a one-way street, if Lacan's theory gives a satisfactory account of anxiety over being, has ontological security dug its own grave? It is not clear to me that recent contributions have done much more than argue *with* Lacan, just with the addition of the words 'ontological security'. Ontological security should add something to Lacanianism, or it should accept that it cannot and is perhaps therefore defunct, or it should argue that the focus on ontological security offers something different. Here, I attempt to present an account of ontological insecurity that I hope goes some way to doing the latter.

14 Importantly though, many of the studies that take a Lacanian approach, also reduce selfhood to identity. The 'thing' is seen to be the essence of an identity (Finlayson, 1998) that is denied or perverted by the threat of an other that deprives the self of this coherence/essence. Actions to remove or counter this other that steals our thing, are therefore read as actions that seek to secure, in its coherence, a particular essence (see also Kinnvall, 2014: 324). Although an other is not a prerequisite in Lacanian

psychoanalysis, most studies of nationalism and identity have focused on one. There is therefore a similar focus on identity and its securitisation though greater attention is paid in linking this securitisation to the production of the subject. While identity and identification are undeniably important, I am trying to argue that ontology – a sense of beingness – is not merely a function of identity and attempted identification.

15   To have ontological status – to have a sense of being – is not synonymous with having a sense of identity. In the case of India apropos Bangladesh, what is in question is not merely Indian identity, but rather the coherence of India as an entity accorded ontological status. The question that the Bangladeshi induces is not 'who am I?' but rather 'am I?'. It concerns the ability to think of the nation as something. For something to be ontological it should concern the nature of being and existence; to be ontologically insecure should be to cast the nature of being and existence into doubt. Challenges to an identity, feelings of shame, or a sense of 'homelessness' (Kinnvall, 2006) are not obviously of this nature. Certainly, one could conceive that at an extreme level, such feelings could undermine our sense of being, but how one draws the line is not clear. It should be remembered that Laing's (1960) original concept of ontological insecurity was developed to understand the experience of schizophrenia. Needless to say, schizophrenia is quite different to shame.

2.2 Putting the Ontological Back into Ontological Security

16   The history of the sub-field of ontological security in IR is well rehearsed, travelling from Laing, via Giddens into IR, manifesting in a first generation of literature split by Kinnvall's psychosocial focus on the individual (2006) and Mitzen (2006), Steele (2008) and Zarakol's (2010) focus on states and nations. This research and its divergence have formed the basis for most of the research of the last decade and a half. Despite differences, ontological security has largely maintained close links with Giddensian sociology, particularly his (1991) analysis of self-identity. Yet, as rehearsed as this history may be, it works to sideline and deny those divergences and moments of discontinuity that have characterised the study of ontological security. The first attempt to theorise ontological security in the context of international politics was self-consciously *non*-Giddensian.

17   Huysmans' (1998) article is important in critical security studies (CSS) for its reframing of security as a 'thick signifier': the argument that the naming of a situation as a 'security' issue is not merely descriptive, but organises social relations in the process. This point has been well taken in CSS and ontological security more specifically (particularly since Rossdale's [2015] critique). Yet Huysmans' article was also the first to introduce ontological security to international relations and was careful to distance the term from its hitherto Giddensian roots. Huysmans introduced ontological security against the backdrop of death and indeterminacy, which could be read as an extension of the Giddensian theme of late modernity. However, Huysmans was referencing quite a different scholarship, and taking the notion of death and its securitisation in a different direction. Huysmans (1991: 251) takes death as Baudrillard understands it, as the point at which the meaning of the subject and of value is obliterated. "Death ought never to be understood as the real event that affects a subject or a body, but as a *form* in which the determinacy of the subject and of value is lost" (Baudrillard, 1993: 5). The

indeterminacy that Huysmans talks of is not synonymous with the 'chaos of risk', rather it is in the Baudrillardian sense that it is meant, of symbolic death – the death of meaning, and of a system of differences (life and death being a founding one). Security in this context is a process through which meaning is created and maintained, and the indeterminacy of signification/meaning is obscured by a focus on concretised danger.

18 The challenge of indeterminacy "concerns not a challenge to an order but to the possibility of the activity of ordering itself" (Huysmans, 1998: 241). Huysmans draws heavily on Bauman (1990, 1991) in his evocation of the stranger of Simmellian fame. The stranger is that which is neither friend nor enemy, inside nor out, neither part of the self nor part of the other; something that exceeds the given categorisation, and instead is characterised by a sense of 'strangeness'. Unlike the figure of the enemy that challenges a particular order, the figure of the stranger challenges the very possibility of ordering. For Huysmans, ontological insecurity is the feeling of indeterminacy and chaos that results from a challenge to the possibility of ordering. Interestingly, this problematic has seldom featured in the ensuing literature on ontological security. Instead, the unrelentingly post-structural and post-modern approach has given way to a socio-psychological frame that has fundamentally reinterpreted the nature of ontology and security, back towards its Giddensian roots.

19 While Huysmans was the first to theorise the ontological insecurity deriving from indeterminacy, his article did not explore this any further, or with any empirical focus. No subsequent work has taken the idea of indeterminacy and ontological security further. Moreover, arguably he did not take indeterminacy as far as he could. The example of the 'stranger' that Huysmans and Bauman give is that of Jews in 20th-century European society. My understanding of indeterminacy is somewhat different to theirs. Bauman (1991: 85) writes:

> [Jews] were the ultimate incongruity - a *nonnational nation.* Their strangeness was not confined to any particular place; they were *universal* strangers. They were not visitors from another country, as there was no such 'another country' - indeed, no country where they could claim not to be visitors or strangers. The Jews were 'strangehood incarnated', the eternal wanderers, the epitomy of nonterritoriality, the very essence of homelessness and absence of roots; an unexorcizable spectre of conventionality in the house of the absolute, of a nomadic past in the era of settlement.

20 The challenge constituted by Jews, as presented by Bauman, is a challenge to the order of nationhood to the extent that they have no 'nation' or at least that they have no nation-state, and that, while German or Czech (etc.), they remain at the margins of the German and Czech nations. To what extent this is a challenge to nationhood as an ontological framework is dubious though, as Jews were still seen as a 'nation' in Bauman's terms, albeit a 'homeless' one. Jews are therefore problematic because they problematised belonging and the boundaries of a nation. Nonetheless, as 'strangers' they are recognisable as such. They are codable to the extent that they are identifiable, even in their attempts to assimilate. Bauman (1991: 86, quoting Robert) goes on:

> at home the young Jews of Prague lived, thought, and wrote like Germans apparently resembling other Germans, but outside of their neighbourhoods no one was deceived, the 'others' recognized them instantly by their faces, their manners, their accent.

21 They are therefore not indeterminate in the sense of being uncodable, they are indeterminate to the extent that they are neither of the inside nor of the outside. They

have a 'strange' quality that unsettles the division between friend and enemy that Bauman (1990: 153) argues is the defining function of the nation-state. They refuse (or are refused) the supposed universality and 'horizonal comradeship' that is seen to define the national domestic (Bauman, 1990; Anderson, 1983). In Bauman's (1990: 145) account then, the stranger is indeterminate because he "is neither friend nor enemy; and because he may be both. And because we do not know, and have no way of knowing, which is the case".

22 On the contrary, I would argue that it is precisely in those moments when the Jew *is* the friend – when she is assumed unproblematically to be German or Czech – that are unsettling of the given order. It is not the pretence of resemblance, or of dissimulation, as Bauman implies, but rather the very real inability to distinguish German from Jew, and the resulting sense that the order that differentiates German and Jew is impossible to maintain. It is in this sense that I take indeterminacy, exploring the inability to code Bangladeshis and Indians. In the following chapters I will show how Bangladeshis are hypervisible-yet-invisible; both facets of which are a function of the indeterminacy of the Indian nation. They are hypervisible to the extent that they are seen to be everywhere; a pervasiveness in part made possible by the large number of Indians seen to be Bangladeshi. They are invisible precisely for the same reason; their indeterminacy with Indians means that they can 'blend in'. Nonetheless, the ontological framework of nationalism relies on the determinacy of the order of nationhood. The (assumed) presence of spectral Bangladeshis undermines the determinacy and thus the believability of the order of nationhood.

23 The difference between a challenge to *an* order, and to the possibility of order*ing*, is crucial, and concerns the difference between identity security and *ontological* security. Much of the existing literature has too readily reduced challenges to a particular identity – a sense of *who* we are – rather than looking at challenges to the ability to see oneself *as a self.* A sense of incommensurability between particular actions and one's biographical narrative, does not usually result in an ontological anxiety – where ontology refers to the condition of being and existence. In my case, the anxiety over Bangladesh and Bangladeshis very clearly relates to an anxiety over the condition of being and existence, not merely over a sense of identity. Of course, to the extent that a challenge to order*ing* is also a challenge to *an* order, so a challenge to ontology is also a challenge to a particular conception of being (in this case an 'identity'), but the former cannot be reduced to the latter.

24 Bangladesh and Bangladeshis problematise determinacy through the uncodability of the border and those seen to cross it. As will be discussed more fully below, the fact that the borderland does not correspond to any pre-existing boundaries (people of the same ethnic groups, religions, languages and families live on both sides) makes it almost impossible to differentiate a 'Bangladeshi' from an 'Indian'. Even those Bangladeshis from regions of Bangladesh far from the border who migrate to Indian cities, are impossible to identify with any certainty. The similarity of their language and cultural practices, and the sheer number of internal migrants in India (450 million in 2011) means Bangladeshi migrants easily merge into the 'Indian' population (De, 2019).[3] The effect of this ambivalence and uncodability is that Bangladeshis take on a spectral quality. The inability to identify those who are Bangladeshi and those who are Indian undermines claims to an Indianness that forms the essence of the nation. If the Bangladeshi and the Indian elide, if the difference between them implodes, so too does

the metaphysical edifice of nationhood. Elision is precisely the annulment of value and meaning. This elision is therefore a threat to determinacy and the possibility of ordering. The implosion of the self is prefigured in those moments of undecidability. This is an ontological threat – it induces a sense of ontological insecurity – in as much as the inability to specify the 'self' suggests that the self never meaningfully existed in the first place.[4] It is a challenge to any notion of self that is built upon the belief in metaphysics (in this case nationalism), or on some difference from an other.

25   The indeterminacy of the border between Bangladesh and India, Bangladeshis and Indians, is a threat to the *particular* ordering of people in South Asia – i.e. the location of the border that creates the order. But it is also a challenge to the existence of a border, and thus to the ability *to* order. The inability to determine the border, suggests that the border cannot be made to exist – that there is no essential Indianness, no sovereign presence, and no essential difference between Indian and Bangladeshi. Moreover, this is doubly troubling, partly because Bangladesh and Bangladeshis are key sites where parts of the Indian self are disowned and projected (it is the dystopic nature of Bangladesh that enables an exceptionalist India to understand itself), and partly because of the salience of ontological insecurity in a postcolonial context (explored in the next section).

26   Importantly, while I reinterpret ontological security away from Giddens and the psychosocial focus of ontological security literature, the move I make could be creatively read from Giddens' work, and the division he makes between self-identity and ontological awareness. Giddens (1991) identifies four 'existential questions' that must be answered in order to provide a sense of ontological security, yet in much of the literature, these questions are not accorded equal weight. Both Giddens and IR scholars have focused primarily on his fourth question concerning narrative and self-identity (as implied in his title *Modernity and Self Identity*). Giddens' first two questions, concerning the struggle of being over non-being, and of death and finality, are not fully engaged with either by Giddens or subsequently. It is in creatively expanding upon these two questions that I think a fuller picture of *ontological* security can take shape.

27   Giddens' (1991: 48) first question concerns "*existence itself*: the discovery of an ontological framework". This ontological framework should provide sense to the world, something that makes being in the world intelligible. What is at stake in this ontological framework is "the 'struggle of being against non-being'" (ibid.). This refers to Kierkegaard and his concept of 'dread'. Kierkegaard's philosophy is pivotal to scholarship on reflexivity and the risk society. Dread is differentiated from fear in that it lacks a definite object. Dread is nebulous; it is an overwhelming sense of infinity and the unknown. As Kierkegaard (1844/1980: 61) puts it, "freedom looks down into its own possibility, laying hold of finiteness to support itself". I interpret this finiteness to be synonymous with determinacy. Determinacy creates finiteness to the extent that it shuts down endless possibility (which is what Kierkegaard means by freedom). It creates a structure and an order that limits the chaos of infinity. This structure and order that is the product of determinacy is what could be called an ontological framework. Indeed, an ontological framework is provided and made possible by determinacy; it is the ability to provide an order to the world, to make it intelligible and actionable. For Giddens (1984), it is exactly those moments of undecidability, where our 'practical consciousness' is challenged, that produce anxiety. Undecidability is very often a result of indeterminacy (Derrida, 1981). Total indeterminacy is chaos; it is

formless and meaningless. Determinacy is therefore synonymous with the viability of an ontological framework. Giddens (1991: 48) goes on to say that "to 'be', for the human individual, is to have ontological awareness", which, he is careful to stress, "is not the same as awareness of self-identity, however closely the two may be related". Ontological awareness is precisely the existence of a framework that makes the world intelligible and actionable.

28   The second question Giddens identifies concerns death and finality; the ultimate unknowability of death. Giddens is keen to distinguish biological death from 'subjective death'. We can know biological death but we cannot know subjective death, because it is at the point of knowing that we cease to know anything. For Giddens, this again causes dread over a sense of infinity and the unknown. This idea that it is at the point of knowing that we cease to know anything is precisely what Baudrillard means by reversion; it is annulment. Although Giddens does not venture in this direction, death is the ultimate opposite not just of life, but of meaning, value and presence. Baudrillard (1993: 147) writes: "our whole culture is just one huge effort to dissociate life and death, to ward off the ambivalence of death in the interests of life as value". The separation of life from death, with death being the void, gives 'life' a positive value. The price of living life 'in positivity' is the construction of death as the absolute, as irreversible, as pure negativity/nothingness. For Baudrillard, this construction of 'life' and 'death' and the instantiation of positive value that it enables informs human endeavour – the holding off of death. "The elimination of death is our phantasm, and ramifies in every direction: for religion, the afterlife and immortality; for science, truth; and for economics, productivity and accumulation" (Baudrillard, 1993: 147-148).

29   The bar between life and death is also what guarantees ontology; beingness requires its opposite – its reversion in the form of death. Indeterminacy is death to the extent that it is the annulment of value and meaning in a system based on difference and equivalence. Indeterminacy, in its refusal to take on a value, to enter into an order of equivalence, poses a fatal challenge to value. As Baudrillard (1981: 209) puts it, "ambivalence is not the dialectical negation of value it is the incessant potentiality of its annulment, of the destruction of the *illusion of value*". Value works according to a structure of differentiation – ambivalence refuses to be pinned down by difference, it cannot be identified. Value, identity and presence are synonyms; they are all functions of difference on a scale of equivalence, and they all imply a metaphysics. The idea of ontology and of self (defined by a presence) therefore relies on the maintenance of determinacy, for without determinacy, value, presence, identity and meaning evaporate. An idea of selfhood built around these concepts and notions dies in its encounter with its own indeterminacy.

30   Ontology as beingness implies a presence and facticity. To be able to speak of an Indianness and of an Indian nation implies that there is *something* around which such claims cohere; an essence that is seen to confer a presence. As Grace (2000: 42) puts it, "identity is premised on the notion of essence; not because it is singular and unified, but because it only becomes meaningful in a logic of the real where ontological status is separated ... from its (linguistic) representation". Thus, the self as commonly understood implies and is synonymous with a sovereign presence that makes us distinct. It is in this sense that I speak of a national self. Post-structural thought has long shown how this presence (ontology) is a produced effect of its signification, which serves to constantly defer it (e.g. Derrida, 1968; Baudrillard, 1981). In other words, the

presence of something called Indianness is a function of those strategies that call it into being; it has no ontic reality. The creation of presence creates Indianness as something, as a positive value that exists. This positivity is crucial and derives from determinacy to the extent that presence and value obtain their ontic reality from their position on a scale of equivalence.

31 Determinacy is created by the ability to provide an order to chaos and complexity, and is a function of differences on a scale of equivalence. To be able to identify something as this and not that, we look to what differentiates them. These differences are on a scale of equivalence to the extent that it is difference in relation to sameness, rather than a radical alterity whose difference cannot be categorised or comprehended on the same terms (Baudrillard, 1981). Difference and equivalence are therefore central to any order, and form the structure of determinacy and the conditions for codability. In the following chapters I show how Bangladeshi difference is curated so as to enable the presence of Indian selfhood, and how instances of indeterminacy, where this curation breaks down, presents an ontological challenge to the presence of an Indian nation.

32 Narrative, of course, provides determinacy, but determinacy is not reducible to narrative. Narrative becomes possible because of the determinacy of categories such as self and other, friend and foe (and nation and nationals) that make narrativisation possible. To interrogate determinacy is therefore to interrogate the ontological frameworks that order and structure the world. In this study I look at the indeterminacy of Indianness and of Indian subjects, particularly in relation to Bangladesh. Codability is a function of difference. It need not be categorical difference; it can be difference of degree. Similarly, difference need not need to have a singular value, difference can be polyvalent – what it cannot be is *ambi*valent.

2.3 Postcoloniality and National Indeterminacy

33 Indeterminacy is particularly marked in a postcolonial context that is often characterised by very recent partitions and territorialities, and where nationalism is only recently hegemonic. In contrast to countries (usually ex-colonial powers) where the accoutrements of nation-statism tend to be more naturalised, many former-colonies are characterised by a relationship to the nation and to territory that is anything but naturalised. Of course, the naturalised nature of nation-statism has usually been a result of centuries of violence, assimilation and cleansing. Krishna (1994: 509) noted how India as a "child of partition... has cartographic anxiety inscribed in its very genetic code". This cartographic anxiety derives from the obvious arbitrariness of its borders (physical and otherwise) which are seen to undermine claims that an 'India' exists and that it is bestowed with an essence, a meaning and a common future.

34 Independence was fought for and won on the basis of claims to nationhood and sovereign statehood, and succeeded as such. It is in some ways a tragic irony that the act of decolonisation itself should need to adopt the forms of nationhood and statehood valorised and naturalised by colonial powers (Spivak, 1993, 2016). In one way it is the 'inheritance' of the international system that is captured in the terms of postcolonialism and the continuing legacy of imperialism (Chatterjee, 1998). Having won independence on the basis of nationhood and statehood, the project of decolonisation was hampered before it began. It is another case of 'the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house'. The politics of the postcolonial in South Asia

has been defined by a struggle to live up to an ideal posited and supposedly embodied by the colonial other (and the historical self) (Nandy, 2007; Krishna, 1999; for an ontological security perspective, see Vieira, 2018).

35   Most theories of nationalism take the emergence of national sentiment to be the apotheosis of processes of nationalisation (e.g. Gellner, 1983; Anderson, 1983; Nairn, 1997; Hechter, 1987). Conversely, in India (and generally) the idea of the nation proceeds nationalism and 'national integration' (Seth, 1992; Bauman, 1990). Certainly the colonial experience and the independence movement started a process of nation creation, but it was only "once the alien was expelled, [that] the drive to achieving modernity and unity could begin in real earnest" (Krishna, 1992: 860).

36   Nehru was very explicit about this, commenting that while India had an essence that extended into prehistory, this was not the same as or sufficient for a sense of nation and nationalism. A sense of national consciousness had to be generated and communicated by a nationalist elite (Seth, 1992: 42). Nationalism is therefore something that must be consciously produced. Nationalism was a universal that India could also partake in; Indianness as essence was seen as a national incipience, and its realisation a teleological necessity (Nehru, 1946; Seth, 1992). History and self were cast in a way that read nation, nationalism and statehood both back in time and into the future. The nation-form was thus seen as prefigured, and 'Indian' pasts were read in terms of a nationalist future. The categories of nation and state were never questioned by members of the independence movement or by politicians since. Nonetheless, beyond nationalist discourse and 'civil society', the nation remains unnaturalised, particularly at its many margins. The complete inability to distinguish citizen from foreigner is just one of the many ways in which 'the nation' is deeply problematic. Ontological insecurity is a symptom of this.

37   The ontological challenge posed by national indeterminacy is also particularly pronounced in a postcolonial context, not just because the nation is far from fully naturalised, but also because the nation takes on a great deal of significance. The colonial experience was ontologically alienating to the extent that the ontological frameworks through which the world has come to be seen placed the colonised outside a sense of 'here' and 'now' (Alcoff, 2007; Mignolo, 1999). The nation appears as a vehicle to overcome this alienation, offering a here and now: an ontological framework from which to reclaim a position of subjectivity. Nationalism is therefore a way of re-establishing a relationship between the decolonised self and its reality, and of reasserting an agency and autonomy over oneself and in the world (Chatterjee, 1993; Fanon, 1963). The nation takes on a key ontological function in the postcolonial context, and so I would expect the indeterminacy of nationhood to produce even greater ontological insecurity. Because there is seen to be so much at stake in postcolonial nationalism, threats to the validity of this order, this *here* and *now*, are seen as particularly existential. Postcolonial nationalism is in this sense haunted by the possibility of slipping back into an alienated relationship with one's self. Of course, the extent to which this decolonisation of subjectivity and the reclamation of a position of agency is possible within the nation and state form is dubious (Spivak, 2016; Bhabha, 1990). Perhaps because of this double bind, because even in asserting a claim to the here and now in these terms, the colonial nationalist fails to escape colonial alienation, it further feeds the anxiousness that pervades postcolonial nationalism (Krishna, 1999).

38   I show how Bangladesh becomes the example of a nation that has failed to reclaim its here and now, suspended between ex-colony and not-yet-nation (Krishna, 1994). Wojczewski (2019: 188) notes how Indian nationalism positions itself in relation to temporal and spatial others, notably colonialism and Pakistan and China. I argue that the categories of temporal and spatial others converge in the image of Bangladesh, as a country unable to escape the colonial condition. Bangladesh's present is seen as a postcolonial dystopia, a country unable to develop, to chart its own path or make its own history, mired in communal violence. The othering of Bangladesh therefore also feeds off the memory of the colonial period as one of great suffering, violence and communal fragmentation. This memory of colonialism is projected onto the modern-day image of Bangladesh as an example of an ex-colony that has failed to become a post-colony (Samaddar, 1999). In India, as in many other postcolonial contexts, one of the legacies of colonialism has been the delegitimisation of those so-called traditional ontic modalities that are seen as antithetical to the rationalism of developmentalism. As Nandy (2007: 172) writes "today only that past is being celebrated which is seen as conducive to modernisation and development; only that past is being rued which is seen as resistant to modernity and development". Culture therefore becomes seen either as a 'resource' to be bent to the national will or as an obstructive force that must be subjugated (or at least tamed) lest it prevent the march of history. As Fanon (1963: 169) wrote, "the effect consciously sought by colonialism was to drive into the natives' heads the idea that if the settlers were to leave, they would at once fall back into barbarism, degradation, and bestiality". Culture therefore becomes refracted through the colonial lens, not only as irrational, superstitious and backward, but also as threatening and debased.

39   Colonial narratives of 'oriental despotism' and of the pre-colonial as a 'heart of darkness' ironically (and tragically) re-emerge as internalised projections of the past, against which modern statehood is constructed, and the nationalist, developmentalist project legitimised.[5] The result is that those ontic modalities which are not seen as abetting the march of development require urgent cleansing (Krishna, 1999: 15). It is my contention that Bangladesh comes to figure as this heart of darkness in Indian representations, so as to make the exceptionality of Indian development and statehood pronounced.

40   Samaddar (2005) once suggested that Bangladesh acts as a kind of phantasmagoria in India; a dystopic horror scene that casts long shadows. Hordes of destitute migrants, persecuted minorities, and Islamic fundamentalists are seen to spill over into India, pushed there by rampant "population growth, poverty, flood, famine, cyclone, war, riots and persecution" (Samaddar, 1999: 19). It is this spectre that Hazarika (2011) has called the 'Bangladesh Syndrome'. I argue that this 'syndrome' is tied up with cartographic anxiety and the need to disavow the ambiguity of nation that the border and migrant reveal.

41   Bangladesh therefore comes to be seen as a place of poverty and lawlessness, with a state unable or unwilling to perform its historic role. Majoritarianism leads to the violent persecution of minorities, and mass political violence. The spatial and temporal others thus converge in the image of Bangladesh as a 'modern-day colony'. Yet, because it is a piece of the past, in the present, it is also monstrous and mutated; the fascination with Bangladesh as a place rife with Islamic terrorists fits into broader global images of the terrorist as 'deviant' and 'neomedieval' (Mitchell, 2011; also Kinnvall, 2006).

Ultimately, this feeds into a sense of cartographic anxiety. Maintaining the image of a naturalised border becomes essential to guaranteeing the Indian state and nation against the spectre of the mutated past that is Bangladesh. The porosity of the border and the uncodability of the migrant, threaten to reveal the falsity of these oppositions, in doing so, undermining not just the identity of the Indian self, but its coherence as sovereign and present.

42   Yet, the threat posed by Bangladesh and Bangladeshi immigration is not a threat of one becoming the other, of India becoming *like* Bangladesh. It is the threat of the self always having been the other. National selfhood therefore is what separates India from Bangladesh, and enables India to claim a here and now. The possibility that the border between them may be indistinguishable, that the Indian national self might not have ontological status, is thus a threat to the process of decolonisation. In this way, the threat is not that India might become like Bangladesh, but that the difference that accords India a sense of self has never really existed. This is evident in the fact that the discourse analysed in chapter four focuses not just on Bangladeshis coming to India, but on the indeterminacy of Indians and Bangladeshis. Those discourses that create and curate Bangladesh as a dystopic spectre work to overcode this indeterminacy and restore a sense of sovereign, present selfhood.

43   The extent to which it is possible to decolonise nation-statism is well beyond the remit of this study. Nonetheless, it is important to justify my position a little further. Some have suggested that the nation and state are not derivative discourses. The best critique is made by Chatterjee (1986, 1993), among others, and looks at whether the nation and state have developed a 'life of their own' that is non-mimetic and that produces forms of action and selfhood that are 'authentic'. I certainly think it is myopic to suggest that nation and state have not been reinscribed, but they have been reinscribed in a way that it is still firmly within what Spivak (1988) calls the 'culture of imperialism'. Thus, I would be cautious to exaggerate the extent to which citizenship, territory and nation-form, which are those aspects of nation-statism most under study, have developed substantially in non-mimetic ways.

44   Both major strands of nationalism are built in the image of European nationalism, even if they venerate cultural forms that were previously decried by the colonial regime. As discussed in chapter one, both Nehruvian and Hindutvavadi nationalisms were constructed in conscious emulation of 'European' nationalisms which were seen to be the source of power behind imperialism.[6] Indeed, even the extent to which the mobilisation of an 'authentic culture' in the sphere of nationalism has occurred, is open to contest, given that much of what counts as 'culture' and 'community' in India and South Asia continues to be framed by colonial discourse and governmentality (Menon, 2019; Chatterjee, 1993). Chatterjee's history of middle-class nationalism in Bengal is also evidence of the way that, even when it was staking a claim to sovereignty, it did so within terms set out by colonial knowledge. The notion of a sovereign 'inner', the realm of the spiritual where the East is supposedly superior, is uncontestably within the logic of orientalist discourse (Chatterjee, 1998: 278). This is certainly not to say that there are not numerous alternatives (Ambedkar and Gandhi offered two quite different visions) but these alternatives have not become part of the mainstream, beyond tokenistic gestures.

45   Certainly, the notions of citizenship, belonging and territoriality, and the practices that police them, have not been the subject of decolonial introspection. Ideas of citizenship

and territoriality are perhaps the most derivative and least contestable elements of nation-statism in South Asia. In chapter one I noted how current understandings of territory and belonging were not preordained at independence. Nonetheless, nationalist logics succeeded in enclosing the imaginaries of belonging in the region, and in closing down alternative ontic modalities that continue to contest the present hegemony. The nation-form, as a category of belonging and an ontological framework, intimately tied to citizenship and territory, is also far from decolonised. The idea of nations, organised in a community of states, with the nation as *the* organising principle of belonging, with clearly demarcated territories and nationals, is doxical in South Asia, as with most of the world. Yet such an ontological framework is the product of a specific time and place, and is intimately tied to the commonsense of mid-20th-century imperial Europe and to colonial rule in the 'colonies'. Thus, as Spivak (2016: 51) writes, "national liberation is not a revolution. My generation… spoke of 'post-colonial' ironically because the failure of decolonization seemed to start the morning after". In the end, Chatterjee (1993: 11) sums it up well: "autonomous forms of imagination of the community were, and continue to be, overwhelmed and swamped by the history of the postcolonial state. Here lies the root of our postcolonial misery: not in our inability to think out new forms of the modern community but in our surrender to the old forms of the modern state".

2.4 Looking for the Signs of Ontological Insecurity

46 In chapters four and five I trace the ontological insecurity that derives from national indeterminacy. Before doing so, perhaps a pertinent question to consider is, what differentiates the anxiety of ontological insecurity from anxiety or moral panic stoked instrumentally by politicians for electoral ends? My answer to this has several facets. Firstly, I contest that there is a firm line between instrumental political discourse, moral panic and ontological insecurity, as the former two work precisely because they draw on issues of who the nation is/should be and what it should not be. To suggest that Bangladeshis cause anxiety because they pervert national culture becomes ontological when it derives from a blurring of the nation. The focus on Bangladeshis as all-pervasive yet spectral is what enables this anxiety to be effective (even when instrumental, which it sometimes is). Secondly, the concern with bordering and defining the nation, which has been noted and can be evidenced going back since independence, shows this to be a continuation of the nation-building process, and a legacy of Partition, of determining inside from out (Krishna, 1994; Samaddar, 1999). The longevity of this anxiety, and the centrality of it to the construction of an Indian nation is convincing evidence that it is fundamental to nationalism and the ongoing struggle for an ontic reality of the nation. This incidentally has been the subject of a great deal of scholarship, which I am working within. For me, this constitutes evidence that this anxiety can be understood as ontological and not merely expedient – though as I have said, they are not incompatible.

47 That said, there are a number of other ways, one could potentially differentiate ontological anxiety from other forms of anxiety. Firstly, if evidence of anxiety is confined to political speeches and interviews, if it is restricted to a particular party or section of politics, or if it is short-lived or only evident during elections, this would point towards an anxiety that may be more instrumental than ontological. In chapters

four and five I shall show how none of these are the case. Moreover, as stated, if the anxiety identified is over indeterminacy, then one can assume that indeterminacy and thus (in my framework) ontology, is the source. That anxiety derives from indeterminacy is something I demonstrate throughout this paper. Further evidence of this is found in looking at what the discourse *does* – how it seeks to reduce indeterminacy, by overcoding Indian and Bangladeshi. Thus, what is clear from this brief discussion is that the strength of my argument depends on my ability to demonstrate that the anxiety derives from indeterminacy. In the following chapter, I explore questions of method and evidence in more depth, before moving on to analysis.

NOTES DE BAS DE PAGE

1. Interestingly, late modernity has not featured centrally in ontological security in IR. Thus, the extent to which the notion of late modernity is useful or valid (and if its omission is problematic) is not the concern of this study.

2. This does not imply a natural or foundational essence, but that there is something that enables us to speak of the self as *something* – it is accorded object-ness.

3. This is not really the case with other migrants. Nepalis are the other main migrant population, but because migration is legal for them, they do not 'hide' and are therefore not ambivalent. Pakistanis are small in number, Burmese are confined mainly to the north-east which is already excluded from the Indian nation, and Afghans are more visible and tend to live in enclaves. Bangladeshis are therefore the most ambiguous migrant group.

4. Of course, it existed in the imagination, but part of this imagination is the idea of its metaphysical reality.

5. Modi claimed in 2014 that "the slave mentality of 1,200 years is troubling us" (Ahmad and Kanungo, 2019: 29).

6. Both Savarkar and Golwalkar (1939), the founding ideologues of Hindutva, explicitly noted how India needed to emulate Nazi nationalism (Krishnan, 2019).

3. Methods and Research Design

3.1 Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies

1   Corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS)[1] is a relatively nascent approach to discourse analysis, particularly outside linguistics and adjacent disciplines, and indeed draws heavily on the theory and methodology of corpus linguistics (CL). The corpus-assisted part of it concerns the use of computerised corpora to study patterns in language. A corpus is a collection of texts built to be representative of a particular body of discourse; in my case that of two English-language newspapers. If discourse is to be understood as productive and constraining we need to be able to conceive of and study discourse as more than the sum of its parts, to look beyond individual texts and understand how a 'body of discourse' in its totality works to produce the social world in which we live. All approaches to discourse attempt to do this, but corpus approaches are uniquely suited to the study of discourses as systematic and patterned, because of their ability to draw on frequency data and to make statistical claims.

2   Traditionally, in corpus linguistics, this would be used to compare language use in particular contexts, for instance to compare Indian and British English or 19th and 21st century fiction. The focus here would be on understanding what makes particular discourses linguistically unique. More recently, the applicability of this to discourse studies has led to an emergence of more politically engaged analyses (Partington *et al.* [2013] and Baker and McEnery [2015] represent major interventions of CL methods into discourse analysis).

3   At the heart of corpus linguistics is the idea of collocation. Collocation (as in co-location) is when words occur together with a frequency greater than chance. Collocation enables us to see how language is structured and patterned throughout a discourse. Collocation patterns can tell us how words are used and the semantic associations they hold. Building on the notion of collocation in CADS is the theory of lexical priming developed by Hoey (2005). Lexical priming suggests that words are psychologically primed through regular use to occur (and avoid occurring) with certain other words, with certain semantic associations, in certain grammatical roles, and in certain positions within a discourse (Hoey, 2005: 13). It is this priming that accounts for

the naturalness of language, and consequently the sense that certain language use is unnatural even if grammatically coherent.

4   This may seem banal, but it is in fact highly significant because it challenges many of the assumptions underpinning classical linguistics, particularly in its assertion that "grammar and semantics are *post hoc* effects of the way lexical items have been primed" (Hoey, 2005:391). It is significant for discourse analysts because, by studying the ways in which certain words are primed, we can understand how they are used, and the meanings they carry with them. In this sense, words are not innocent; they are learnt through their encounters with other words and become "loaded with the cumulative effects of those encounters" (Hoey, 2004: 386). Studying collocation and priming therefore enables us to study discourse not as a set of statements or texts that have meaning individually, but rather to understand discourse in a thicker sense and to be able to make claims as to how ingrained and how common certain meanings, representations and attitudes are in a discourse. It is therefore about the study of patterns: a study made possible by the large-*n* approach of CL.

5   If discourse is fundamentally more than the sum of its parts (individual texts and utterances), then the ability to analyse a body of discourse as a whole is important, as is the ability to make claims to external validity. CL can obviate the potential in lower-*n* studies to 'cherry-pick' texts and elements in the discourse that most fit their arguments. Importantly however, it is corpus-*assisted* to the extent that CL methods are only part of the study (Partington *et al.*, 2013: 10). Close reading and the use of methods and tools found in discourse analysis more generally (including elements commonly used in critical discourse studies [CDS]) are also important. Combining methods is therefore a form of triangulation that can help to show what is common, and to catch elements and interpretations that may escape the notice of another approach (Taylor and Marchi, 2018). It is very much in the interest of triangulation that this study is carried out, in the belief that more than one method adds validity and completeness.

6   Given the *assisted* nature of CADS, it is possible to use most discourse-analytical tools alongside it. There were therefore decisions to be made regarding what tools I would use and what textual features I would focus on. Discourse analysis has been popular in IR for some time, originally with those working within critical and post-structural epistemologies, and later with mainstream constructivists. What counts as discourse analysis has varied widely (see Lundborg and Vaughan-Williams, 2015 for an overview). Perhaps the most common approach to date in IR has been 'predicate analysis' as developed by Milliken (2005) among others. Predicate analysis looks at the verbs, adverbs and adjectives used to characterise (predicate) subjects. This can be useful to understand how subjects are constructed in discourse and what agency they are accorded. Although not under the rubric of 'predicate analysis' I do study predication when I look at the collocations of subjects like *Bangladesh, border* and *migrant.*

7   Conventional predicate analysis usually looks at how a subject is predicated in each instance in a number of texts. The resulting analysis is likely to be more fine-grained with the potential to yield more detail and nuance. Nonetheless, there are a number of advantages of CADS in the analysis of predication, notably the ability to work with a far larger and potentially more representative set of texts, the ability to infer patterns of predication that may be largely invisible if studied manually, and the ability to make inferences about lexical priming. Moreover, issues of detail and nuance are not as pronounced as might be assumed, because of the use of concordance analysis and

because the *assisted* nature of CADS means I can employ additional tools that can reinsert granularity. Lastly, it is interesting to note that Baker and Levon (2015) compared the results of purely corpus-based and 'qualitative' analyses by different researchers on the same texts (one down-sampled from the corpus) and found the corpus approach to be similarly nuanced. In my study, as with most others, I combine both approaches in the interest of triangulation.

8   Perhaps the biggest limitation of CADS is also its key strength; if the phenomenon of interest hinges on discrete words or phrases and their patterned use, CL is likely to add value, but for phenomena that do not crystallise around lexical items it is of little use (Mautner, 2016). This is overcome by concordance analysis and contextualisation. Indeed, one of the potential issues of CL methods is the potential to exclude context from the analysis: both the context in which the words or collocates are used and the context of the corpus in relation to corpus-exterior information. There are simple ways to obviate this potential. The first is the use of concordancing; a concordance line is a word in the corpus in its immediate context. Figure 1 shows concordance lines for *Bangladeshi*, displaying the search word in its context. This can then be clicked on and the entire article can be read. This adds context and granularity back into the study and indeed it is through the iterative use of collocation and concordance analysis that discourses can be studied (I discuss more about using concordance analysis as a plausibility probe in the following chapter). Moreover, by accessing the collocation in context, and by expanding the context, sometimes to the whole article, I can study dynamics more common to CDS approaches.

Figure 1
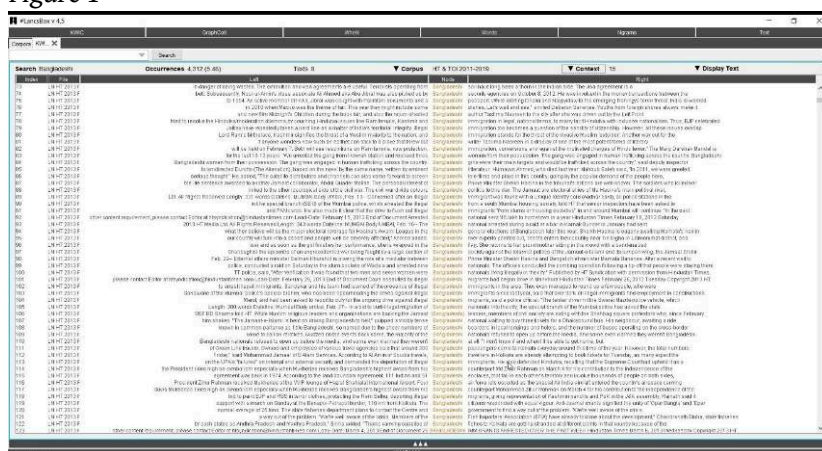
9   The second way I recontextualise my corpus analysis, is to look outside the corpus. The discourse I study is of course a small part of a larger set of discourses, processes, materialities and power relations, all of which are crucial in understanding the discourse. In looking at some of these processes outside the corpus – for instance the development of citizenship law, the materiality of the border and the testing of nationality – I ensure that my analysis is grounded in a broader politics, and am cognisant of the fact that the discourse is a product of this wider context and in turn helps to produce the context in which these other processes and discourses occur.

3.2 The Corpus

10 I used LexisNexis to create the corpus, extracting articles with the terms *Bangladesh* and *Bangladeshi* from the *Times of India* (TOI) and the *Hindustan Times* (HT) in the years 2011, 2013, 2017 and 2019. I chose to build the corpus in this way for two reasons. Firstly, I am able to disaggregate the corpus into four sub-corpora by year. In this way I can understand what has changed in the discourse over these years, and what has remained constant. Secondly, I have chosen these years specifically because I wanted to sample periods of Congress and BJP government. The first two periods were during the most recent Congress-UPA term, while the latter two were during the current BJP-led government. As I shall show, there has been minimal discursive change between these periods, reinforcing the idea that anxiety over Bangladesh plays a central role in more than one form of Indian nationalism, and suggesting that this anxiety is not merely an instrument of party politics. It would have been interesting to conduct a larger diachronic analysis, going back to the independence of Bangladesh and trace the changes in discourse. The archive I used did not contain TOI articles earlier than mid-2010 (HT went to 2004), and to construct a corpus going further back was therefore not feasible in this study. Nonetheless, this span still allows for a meaningful diachronic comparison.

11 I chose the TOI because it is the highest-circulating English daily in India, and the most visited news website in the country (Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2019; Alexa, 2019). While *The Hindu* has the second highest circulation, I chose the HT (third) because LexisNexis did not have archived material for *The Hindu* before 2014. As English-language newspapers, these publications necessarily cater to an educated readership, though both are relatively populist and could not be described as 'high-brow'. Furthermore, while English is only understood by around 30% of Indians, it is the second most spoken language in India (MRUC, 2019). English-language newspapers play a large role in Indian discourse due to their imbrication with the urban middle and upper classes. Consequently, the discourse found in English newspapers has power beyond those who read it, in its capacity to influence the wider framing of issues (Jolly, 2016: 4). Importantly however, I would not expect them to differ greatly in their framing from mainstream non-English papers such as *Dainik Jagran* or *Dainik Bhaskar*, the two largest papers in the country, particularly regarding issues of 'national security' and immigration, which are also highly populist and right-wing. Like most mainstream media in India, both the TOI and HT are relatively right-wing, with the TOI being further to the right than the HT (Subramaniam, 2012).[2]

12 In seeking to understand how Bangladesh might figure in ontological security, there were numerous sources of evidence to choose from. I chose to focus on discourse because it is at least in part through discourse that I would expect ontological (in)security to be narrated and discussed, and because discourse works to create ontological security by structuring the world and our relationship to it. That is to say that I understand discourse to be productive of ontological security; that it is a securitising practice (among others). Ontological security is a difficult thing to study because the link between indicators and theory is not straight forward and will always need to be argued. This difficulty is why I have sought to triangulate my findings in the discourse with other sources of evidence: namely changes in citizenship law, citizenship testing and the practices of border security.

13   I chose newspaper discourse in particular for two reasons. Firstly, there is a wide availability of data; there is a lot of it and it can be gathered in a systematic way. Secondly, I wanted to study everyday discourse that could be said to in some way reflect a broader discourse on Bangladesh in Indian society. Newspaper discourse has a cumulative effect in that it is built upon day after day. As Baker (2005: 61-62) notes, "a negative or ambiguous word, phrase or association may not amount to much on its own, but if similar sentiments appear on a regular basis, then the discourse will become more powerful, penetrating into society's subconscious as the given way of thinking". I had considered using parliamentary debates but decided against it in this study, partly because the data was not as easily available and partly because I did not consider it to be as closely imbricated with popular and everyday parlance as newspaper discourse.

14   The challenge of any discourse analysis is that discourse 'out there' cannot be studied in its totality or its naturalness. The discourse that is produced in everyday interactions at tea shops, on the bus or over dinner, etc. is inaccessible, at least in the form required by the discourse analyst. Similarly, of the spoken or written discourse that could be 'captured' and analysed, decisions still have to be made about what to include and what not to include. One cannot study discourse in its entirety. The task therefore, is to choose a section of discourse that can be said to most effectively stand in for that wider discourse that we cannot access, and to acknowledge the limitations that this decision necessarily implies. Newspaper discourse is extremely profuse, is engaged with by a large number of members of a discourse community (relative to most other sources of data) and is used in a casual manner (unlike, for instance political speeches that may be either very diplomatic or the complete opposite). Additionally, it is more *productive* than many other parts of a discourse precisely because it is widespread, incremental, and often authoritative in the sense that it provides information to others and thus helps to frame certain issues. Importantly, though, these framings usually already exist (and corpus-based analysis is ideal for studying these patterns). Much of my corpus is not built from articles specifically about Bangladesh; instead, most of the instances of the search words *Bangladesh* and *Bangladeshi* are used in passing, in the context of another issue (e.g. crime, legal change, urban development). This is an advantage when we want to study everyday discourse because comments made in passing are usually indicative of a particular taken-for-granted understanding. Newspapers are also very nationalistic, particularly mainstream Indian newspapers. They are therefore useful places for studying national*isms* and their ontological insecurities.

3.3 Parameters

15   A collocation is a pair of words that co-occur together in a corpus with an unexpected frequency. Collocates are built using all of the words proximate to a node (the word searched for). The collocation 'window' is the number of words either side of the node from which the collocate list is built. The common default in CADS is five words to the left of the node, and five to the right. This is expressed in notation as L5R5. Sometimes I restrict the window in order to focus on the words immediately preceding or succeeding the node. This can show how the node is modified. For instance, I search for *Bangladeshi* with an L1R0 window, to see that the adjectives that occur immediately before *Bangladeshi* are *illegal* and *suspected*. Moreover, searching only for adjacent collocates can help to manually build collocation networks (described below, and in

chapter four). It should also be noted that lexical priming is most effective in adjacent collocates; language develops a formulaic quality most powerfully in words that are immediately proximate. Formulaic language does extend beyond adjacent collocates, but not as strongly (Vilkaitė, 2016; Gray and Biber, 2013; Molinaro *et al.*, 2010). Thus, if there is a strong collocation in L1 or R1, this is most likely to be evidence of lexical priming, with collocates built from a wider window telling us a lot more about the semantic context of words and their primings, but not so directly about the primings themselves.

16   Building collocations involves using a measure of collocation. In general, I use MI3 because, like all MI (mutual information) measures, it focuses on the strength of association between collocates, but overcomes some of the weaknesses of the standard MI measure. MI biases infrequency and exclusivity. It identifies those collocates that are almost always found with the node (e.g. *Herring* is usually with *red*, *O'war* is always with *Man*, *okey* is always with *dokey*). However, these collocates may be very strongly associated with a node, but they are usually also highly infrequent. In the case of *Bangladesh*, one of the top collocates using MI is *$12*, because *$12* occurs only once in the corpus and happens to be proximate to *Bangladesh*. However, because it is so infrequent, it tells us nothing about patterns in discourse. Traditionally a frequency threshold has been applied to filter out infrequent collocates. In MI3 (or MI cubed) this is obviated as more weight is accorded to frequency, producing a list of collocates that are both relatively exclusive (in comparison to *t*-score and log-likelihood for instance) and relatively frequent (in comparison to MI). MI3 has become a popular metric with CADS researchers for these reasons (see Brezina, 2018 for a detailed discussion on measures in corpus linguistics; also Baker, 2014). Unless otherwise stated, I used MI3, with the default statistical and frequency cut-offs of 9 and 5 respectively, with an L5R5 window.

17   In addition to concordancing and collocation lists, *Lancsbox* also enables the production of collocation networks (see Brezina, McEnery and Wattam, 2015). While most collocation analysis looks solely at first-order collocates (the collocates of a given node), collocation networks allow us to visualise the collocates of collocates (which would be second-order, third-order, etc.). This can be useful, because it enables tracing of more complex semantic contexts, as shall be demonstrated in the analysis.

3.4 Discursive Signs of Ontological Insecurity

18   Before continuing to the analysis, it is pertinent to briefly suggest what might be expected to be found, and what might constitute signs of ontological insecurity. As discussed in the previous chapter, I expect to see indeterminacy, and an anxiety over this indeterminacy. Concretely, I expect to identify issues of identification and misidentification, where there seems to be a confusion over the nationality of certain people. Signs of this might include words that concern forms of *documentation* or a lack thereof, or words such as *citizenship, nationality, belonging* etc. which might bespeak a concern over how to know if a person is Bangladeshi or Indian. Moreover, I would expect discussion of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) to be prevalent, and for this to be concerned in part over the capacity for mistakes in the identification of nationality. Secondly, and relatedly, I would expect to see the prevalence of modifiers predicating nationality and, in doing so, casting doubt on it: for example, 'she was

perhaps a Bangladeshi' or 'four *potential* Bangladeshis were...', etc. Other modifiers might include *alleged, suspected, considered, thought to be, likely*, and so on.

19   Having thus identified indeterminacy, I would therefore expect to see signs of anxiety over this indeterminacy. It should be noted that I am likely to only find the residue of anxiety over indeterminacy in discourse. I would not expect this to be discussed or accounted for explicitly, given, as Giddens (1991) reminds us, much of what unnerves us is dealt with at the level of practical as opposed to discursive consciousness. Moreover, newspapers are not in the business of offering soul-searching accounts of identity and selfhood. Consequently, ontological insecurity or the anxiety over indeterminacy is unlikely to be declared in so many words. In this context, those other markers become particularly important, though, of course, they are precisely residues or signs. A key sign of this may be the sheer prevalence of discourse on the challenge of identification. This would imply an obsession and a concern with such challenges. Another marker might be a semantic preference for outrage or shock upon finding that Bangladeshis had been found passing off as Indians. Lexis in this vein might include *shocked, alarmed* etc. More generally, it might suggest that the indeterminacy is a security concern and lead to drives to identify other Bangladeshis who had hitherto passed off as Indian. The concern then is with how many others might be hiding.

20   The other side of this, which I would expect to be perhaps more prevalent, is the overcoding of Bangladeshi and Indian populations. Evidence of overcoding might be seen in the denial of ambiguity. This may be found in the way nationality is asserted *as if* proven. It might also be seen in the way Bangladeshis and Indians are portrayed consistently, in diametrical ways, thus once again reinforcing difference. Conversely, if Bangladesh and Bangladeshis were represented inconsistently, for instance with a high level of semantic variation and collocate competition, this would suggest that overcoding was less prevalent. In line with my reasoning in chapter two, concerning Bangladesh as dystopic and how this may confer a sense of exceptionalism and provide a contrast space for selfhood, I would expect a largely negative portrayal of Bangladesh and Bangladeshis, perhaps explicitly contrasted to India and Indians.

NOTES DE BAS DE PAGE

1. Corpus approaches to linguistics go under various names, some positioning it with CDS, others seeking to be less 'critical' (see Baker and McEnery, 2015: 5). I have chosen to use the term CADS because it differentiates it from other approaches within CDA, but also acknowledges that the study I will undertake will use eclectic methods, some of which will be based in corpus research, hence corpus-*assisted.* Following Partington *et al.* (2013: 6), I see CADS "not as a discipline or field of study but more a methodology, that is, a set of tools and general practices and ways of using those tools for the purpose of language analysis", notwithstanding the fact that corpus linguistics has fundamentally changed the way we understand language and discourse.

2. For an overview of the Indian media environment, see e.g. Sulehria (2018).

4. Discourse Analysis

1   Having discussed what I consider to constitute evidence of ontological insecurity, and the securitisation of ontology (through overcoding), the purpose of this chapter is to provide evidence to this effect. In the first section I introduce the corpus data and pinpoint areas for closer examination, as well as noting to what extent the discourse has changed. In the second section I focus on the signs of indeterminacy and the ontological insecurity this produces. In the following sections I explore this further, paying particular attention to how this indeterminacy is overcoded through discourse, and how this seeks to produce a sense of ontological security.

2   The attention in the second half of the chapter is thus on what the discourse does: how it creates and curates Bangladesh and how this produces, instantiates and maintains the border/difference between India and Bangladesh. In creating Bangladesh as a dystopic spectre, Indian ontological security is advanced. As I discussed in chapter one, and will return to in the next chapter, the process of nation-building in India has hinged on the need to make Partition final: to naturalise the notion of nationhood and to realise the nation as distinct and imbued with ontological status. The history of Indian nationalism and nation-building has been centred on the creation of such a presence, precisely by curating difference. But because this difference evaporates at the margins, it is asserted but ungrounded. As Bangladesh's first Principal Secretary commented in 1985: "[we need to] establish our separateness, since we are basically the same people with the same history and culture. Because we desire a separate political homeland, negative sustenance becomes absolutely necessary" (quoted in Hassan, 1987: 180). This is as true for all three 'children of partition'. Thus, in the following pages, I look at how the discourse establishes this separateness, generates negative sustenance and, in doing so, denies and obliterates the ambivalence that challenges it.

4.1 Overview

3   Tables 1 and 2 are collocate lists of *Bangladesh* and *from Bangladesh* respectively. They denote the top 35 nouns, adjectives and verbs, with sports references and place names removed. Tables 3 to 5 are the diachronic breakdown of collocates by year, again according to nouns, adjectives and verbs, for the word *Bangladesh.* The MI3 score, as

discussed in chapter three, is a measure of association; the higher the number, the more strongly associated the collocation is. Collocate frequency and corpus frequency are present in tables 1 and 2 and show how many times the collocate appears proximate to the node (*Bangladesh* or *from Bangladesh*) and how many times it appears overall in the corpus. This column will not be engaged with in the analysis but is included to provide a sense of frequency. This is omitted in the diachronic tables due to space constraints. These tables show how Bangladesh and Bangladeshis are predicated in the discourse. I have used these tables as an entry point into the discourse, using them to identify patterns that I then analyse in more depth.

Table 1. '*Bangladesh*' collocation lists

Nouns	MI3	Coll Freq/Corp Freq	Adjectives	MI3	Coll Freq/Corp Freq	Verbs	MI3	Coll Freq/Corp Freq
Border	25.5	1077/6406	Illegal	22.0	393/3395	Be	29.5	9002/237547
Day	25.3	1234/11343	Religious	20.6	218/1568	Have	27.8	4544/99631
Country	24.3	1038/12883	Indian	20.5	411/11390	Will	24.4	1455/33042
Minority	23.1	417/1980	High	20.3	291/4578	Say	23.8	1422/49925
Liberation	22.8	277/711	Other	19.8	396/16653	Neighbour	22.7	346/1501
Hasina	22.7	317/1121	Good	19.5	301/8761	Take	22.5	732/15599
Sheikh	22.7	321/1174	International	18.9	197/3653	Border	22.4	207/389
War	22.6	391/2207	More	18.7	233/7072	Come	22.1	609/12066
Minister	22.2	589/10419	Adjoining	17.9	63/239	Enter	21.8	303/1855
Refugee	22.1	353/2332	Foreign	17.9	139/2735	Smuggle	21.6	217/759
Land	21.6	330/2663	Next	17.7	151/3882	Include	21.5	433/6460
Non-Muslim	21.6	156/288	Full	17.6	110/1659	Flee	21.3	217/983
Migrant	21.3	261/1647	Porous	17.5	55/217	Get	21.2	520/14056
Government	21.0	477/12166	Historic	17.4	73/544	Make	20.8	463/13458
Muslim-majority	20.6	106/187	close	17.3	92/1183	Would	20.7	423/10909
District	20.5	320/5307	Hindu	17.3	83/881	Cross	20.3	183/1186
Persecution	20.5	162/697	Adverse	17.1	51/224	Go	20.2	382/11065
Immigrant	20.5	219/1762	Chief	17.0	134/4588	Give	20.0	331/8222
Prime	20.4	246/2544	Recent	16.9	96/1716	Do	19.9	384/14323
Army	20.2	223/2163	Bad	16.8	85/1262	Persecute	19.5	113/475
Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen	20.1	74/89	Few	16.8	120/3564	Visit	19.5	183/2039
Visit	20.1	203/1844	Many	16.8	137/5562	Sign	19.3	149/1256
People	20.0	368/11770	Big	16.7	126/4453	Face	19.2	187/2618
Agreement	20.0	185/1504	Deputy	16.7	66/662	Lead	19.2	223/4487
BGB	19.6	97/278	Similar	16.5	76/1124	Send	19.2	188/2728
Commission	19.6	143/920	National	16.5	103/2876	Live	19.1	184/2678
Guards	19.5	64/86	Several	16.2	98/3025	Help	19.1	209/4062
Citizenship	19.4	267/6719	New	16.2	118/5335	Start	19.0	218/4943
State	19.2	326/13601	Top	16.2	93/2674	Reach	18.8	172/2759
Parsis	19.2	91/299	only	16.1	82/1965	Migrate	18.7	83/318
River	19.2	162/1764	Due	16.0	87/2357	Can	18.7	259/9727
Rohingya	19.1	166/1911	Ongoing	16.0	57/704	Hold	18.7	203/4759
Influx	19.1	101/435	Bilateral	15.9	60/828	Look	18.6	201/5006
Update	19.1	124/829	first-ever	15.9	35/165	Set	18.6	187/4038
Guard	19.1	107/539	Fake	15.9	82/2198	Add	18.5	212/6143

Table 2. '*from Bangladesh*' collocation lists

Nouns	MI3	Coll Freq/Corp Freq	Adjectives	MI3	Coll Freq/Corp Freq	Verbs	MI3	Coll Freq/Corp Freq
Afghanistan	24.4	276/3015	Illegal	23.9	253/3395	Be	23.4	943/237547
Migrant	23.7	191/1674	Hindu	20.2	70/881	Have	21.7	469/99631
Pakistan	23.3	324/10491	Religious	18.8	60/1568	Grant	20.8	84/1075
Non-Muslims	22.9	78/195	Indian	16.7	73/11390	Come	20.7	184/12066
Non-Muslim	22.4	80/288	Undocumented	16.0	12/82	Migrate	20.1	48/318
Influx	22.2	87/435	Fake	15.8	34/2198	Smuggle	19.7	58/759
Immigrant	22.1	134/1762	Many	14.3	33/5562	Persecute	19.1	44/475
Citizenship	21.9	201/6719	More	14.2	35/7072	Enter	19.1	69/1855
Refugee	21.0	116/2332	Other	14.0	44/16653	Import	18.2	29/268
Infiltration	20.9	62/380	Muslim	13.9	18/1208	Hail	17.7	32/495
Minority	20.4	94/1980	Minor	13.5	10/271	Cross	17.3	39/1186
Migration	20.2	57/486	Unabated	13.5	6/61	Bring	17.1	55/3843
India	19.3	219/52180	Large	12.9	18/2382	Say	16.9	123/48925
Hindu	18.7	65/2105	Bengali	12.7	14/1288	Infiltrate	16.5	15/115
Parsis	18.6	33/299	Strange	12.7	6/102	Will	16.4	96/33042
Nepal	18.5	66/2557	Huge	12.6	14/1406	Arrest	16.1	43/3548
Buddhist	18.4	46/886	Few	12.6	19/3564	Settle	15.8	26/969
Christian	17.9	34/497	Demographic	12.3	6/134	Include	15.5	45/6460
Girl	17.9	50/1592	Porous	12.3	7/217	Sneak	15.3	13/174
Infiltrator	17.7	30/397	Various	12.3	14/2478	Get	15.3	56/14056
Jains	17.7	27/203	valid	11.8	7/309	Rescue	15.2	20/661
People	17.5	88/11770	Most	11.8	14/2478	Would	15.0	48/10909
Myanmar	17.4	54/2857	Migrant	11.7	6/209	Give	14.8	42/8222
Assam	17.2	69/6797	Early	11.6	12/1756	Encourage	14.3	14/430
Garment	17.0	27/491	Suspected	11.1	6/319	Take	14.1	44/15599
Import	16.9	27/508	Worth	10.6	7/704	Accord	14.0	25/2950
Note	16.9	43/2146	High	10.6	13/4578	Allow	14.0	22/2056
Bengal	16.8	63/7172	First	10.5	17/10946	Seek	13.7	23/2836
Burglar	16.7	9/22	Several	10.5	11/3025	Provide	13.7	23/2872
Currency	16.5	36/1602	Young	10.3	9/1794	Source	13.4	6/63
Immigration	16.4	23/454	Good	10.3	15/8761	Claim	13.4	20/2404
Fish	16.2	22/462	Counterfeit	10.2	5/332	Hurt	13.3	12/531
Anti-immigration	15.9	6/11	Criminal	10.2	5/350	Can	13.3	31/9729
Number	15.9	44/4355	Full	9.9	8/1659	Swamp	13.3	5/41
Kolkata	15.8	49/6615	Free	9.8	6/789	Could	13.2	26/6045

Table 3. *Bangladesh* collocation lists by year, Nouns only

2011	MI3	2013	MI3		2017	MI3		2019	MI3	
Land	20.4	Border	22.1	↑	Day	25.0	↑	Minority	22.8	↑
Border	18.8	Country	19.9	–	Border	22.2	–	Country	21.9	–
Country	18.7	War	19.3	–	Sheikh	20.3	↑	non-Muslim	21.8	↑
Minister	18.3	Liberation	19.3	–	Country	19.9	–	Border	21.7	–
Government	17.6	Land	18.5	–	Hasina	19.8	↑	Non-Muslims	21.6	↑
Possession	17.2	Government	17.9	–	Refugee	19.0	↑	Refugee	21.0	↑
War	17.0	Nationalist	17.7	↑	Army	18.7	↑	Persecution	20.7	↑
Deal	17.0	BGB	17.1	↑	Minister	18.5	–	Muslim-Majority	20.7	↑
Liberation	16.9	District	17.1	↑	Rohingya	18.4	↑	Hasina	20.4	–
Agreement	16.6	Guards	16.8	↑	Liberation	18.2	–	Sheikh	20.2	–
Sheikh	16.6	Export	16.4	↑	PM	18.0	↑	Liberation	20.1	–
Hasina	16.6	Party	16.3	↑	War	17.8	–	Day	20.0	↓
Visit	16.4	Enclave	16.1	↑	Minority	17.6	↑	Migrant	19.9	–
Prime	16.3	Minister	16.0	–	District	17.6	–	War	19.7	–
Year	16.2	Year	16.0	–	Prime	17.5	↑	Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen	19.5	↑
Army	16.1	Treaty	16.0	–	Visit	17.3	↑	Citizenship	19.2	↑
Acre	16.0	Guard	15.8	↑	Government	17.3	–	Minister	19.2	–
Water	15.5	Girl	15.7	↑	Migrant	17.2	↑	Parsis	19.2	↑
Teesta	15.4	Hideout	15.7	↑	Year	17.1	–	Christian	18.8	↑
Infiltration	15.4	Film	15.6	↑	Immigrant	17.0	–	Immigrant	18.3	–
Swap	15.4	Agreement	15.5	–	Rohingyas	17.0	↑	People	17.7	–
Area	15.3	Opposition	15.5	↑	River	16.9	–	Prime	17.6	–
People	14.9	BSF	15.5	↑	Group	16.7	↑	PM	17.5	–
Issue	14.8	Immigrant	15.4	↑	Agreement	16.6	–	Commission	17.2	–
Shakib	14.8	State	15.3	↑	Side	16.5	↑	Migration	17.2	↑
Nation	14.8	Hasina	15.3	–	Armymen	16.3	↑	District	17.2	–
Part	14.7	Counterpart	15.3	–	Water	16.3	↑	Guard	17.1	↑
Relation	14.7	Acre	15.3	–	State	16.3	–	Influx	17.0	–
Treaty	14.6	Note	15.3	↑	Influx	16.3	↑	Film	17.0	↑
Manmohan	14.4	River	15.2	↑	Commission	16.1	↑	Hindu	16.9	–
Counterpart	14.3	Extradition	15.1	↑	Blog	16.0	↑	Xi	16.8	↑
AL	14.2	Route	15.1	↑	People	16.0	↑	Coast	16.8	↑
High	14.0	Deal	15.0	–	Creation	15.9	↑	Terror	16.5	↑
Biman	14.0	High	15.0	↑	Teesta	15.9	–	Jains	16.5	↑
Tipaimukh	14.0	Source	14.8	↑	Hindu	15.9	↑	Encounter	16.5	↑

Table 4. *Bangladesh* collocation lists by year, adjectives only

2011	MI3	2013	MI3		2017	MI3		2019	MI3	
Adverse	16.8	Illegal	16.2	–	Illegal	19.2	↑	Religious	20.3	↑
Illegal	16.3	Political	15.7	↑	High	18.1	↑	Illegal	19.3	–
Indian	15.4	Indian	15.5	–	Full	17.2	↑	Indian	18.4	–
Good	14.7	International	15.4	–	Good	16.9	↑	Adjoining	17.5	↑
Other	14.6	Other	15.3	–	Other	16.4	–	High	17.1	–
Chief	14.5	High	14.8	–	Indian	15.6	–	Hindu	16.9	↑
Foreign	12.9	Such	14.6	–	More	15.6	↑	More	16.8	–
Mutual	12.9	Similar	14.5	↑	Such	15.5	–	Other	16.7	–
Such	12.8	Porous	14.0	↑	Recent	15.1	↑	Historic	16.6	↑
Newborn	12.7	Good	13.8	–	Official	15.0	–	Foreign	16.5	↑
International	12.7	Adverse	13.6	↓	International	15.0	–	Christian	16.3	↑
More	12.5	Protective	13.3	–	Chief	15.0	↑	Next	16.3	↑
Prime	12.5	Close	13.2	–	Porous	15.0	–	Such	16.2	–
Low	12.4	General	13.1	↑	Limited	15.0	↑	International	15.9	–
Joint	12.3	Asian	13.1	↑	Close	15.0	–	Good	15.8	–
High	12.3	Next	13.0	↑	National	14.8	–	Memorable	15.2	↑
Unconstitutional	12.1	Main	13.0	↑	Religious	14.7	–	Big	15.1	–
Bilateral	12.0	Militant	12.9	↑	Bad	14.6	↑	Riverine	14.8	↑
Legal	11.9	Adjoining	12.8	↑	Desperate	14.4	↑	Many	14.8	↑
Protective	11.8	Bilateral	12.8	–	Deputy	14.3	↑	Only	14.7	↑
Due	11.7	National	12.6	↑	Excellent	14.0	↑	Coastal	14.2	↑
Recent	11.6	Few	12.5	↑	Clueless	13.9	↑	Few	14.1	–
Important	11.5	Fake	12.4	↑	Herculean	13.7	↑	non-Muslim	14.0	↑
Top	11.4	Foreign	12.4	–	Major	13.7	↑	Several	13.9	↑
Vulnerable	11.3	Religious	12.2	↑	Great	13.7	↑	Early	13.9	↑
Strong	11.2	Recent	12.1	–	Past	13.6	↑	Deputy	13.7	–
Close	11.2	Important	11.9	–	Previous	13.6	↑	Strong	13.6	↑
Huge	11.2	Able	11.8	↑	Few	13.6	–	Muslim	13.6	↑
Adversely-possessed	11.0	Present	11.7	↑	Similar	13.5	–	Bad	13.5	–
Ready	11.0	Due	11.7	–	Big	13.5	↑	Porous	13.4	–
Many	11.0	Islamic	11.6	↑	Long	13.5	–	Short	13.4	–
Deputy	11.0	Low	11.5	–	Brilliant	13.3	↑	Islamic	13.4	↑
Willing	10.9	Riverine	11.4	↑	Same	13.2	↑	Upcoming	13.4	↑
Political	10.9	Top	11.4	–	Huge	13.2	↑	Western	13.3	↑
Even	10.9	Bad	11.3	↑	Quality	13.2	↑	Likely	13.3	↑

Table 5. *Bangladesh* collocation lists by year, verbs only

2011	MI3	2013	MI3		2017	MI3		2019	MI3	
Be	23.7	Be	24.7	–	Be	26.2	–	Be	26.5	–
Have	21.9	Have	22.7	–	Have	24.7	–	Have	24.7	–
Say	18.8	Say	19.2	–	Will	21.9	↑	Will	21.3	–
Will	17.7	Will	18.8	–	Say	20.6	–	Border	20.4	–
Sign	17.3	Neighbour	18.7	–	Take	19.4	–	Say	20.3	–
Give	16.6	Smuggle	18.2	–	Flee	19.1	↑	Enter	20.2	–
Would	16.5	Include	17.9	–	Neighbour	18.7	–	Neighbour	20.2	–
Come	16.3	Come	17.6	–	Border	18.5	–	Take	20.0	–
Take	16.2	Border	17.4	–	Smuggle	18.5	–	Come	19.9	–
Neighbour	15.9	Take	17.0	–	Get	18.4	–	Persecute	19.5	↑
Hand	15.8	Export	16.2	–	Include	18.2	–	Flee	18.7	–
Smuggle	15.6	Cross	15.8	↑	Enter	17.9	–	Get	18.3	–
Include	15.5	Get	15.8	–	Cross	17.7	–	Make	18.2	–
Make	15.5	Visit	15.8	–	Come	17.7	–	Include	18.0	–
Do	14.8	Sign	15.8	–	See	17.4	↑	Would	17.9	–
Arrest	14.8	Enter	15.8	–	Make	17.4	–	Face	17.9	–
Get	14.8	Would	15.6	–	Trail	17.0	↑	Migrate	17.7	↑
Border	14.7	Go	15.3	–	Help	17.0	↑	Live	17.6	–
go	14.6	Import	15.2	↑	Reach	16.9	↑	Go	17.3	–
Add	14.6	Bring	15.2	↑	Go	16.9	–	Smuggle	17.3	–
Visit	14.2	Share	15.0	↑	Give	16.8	–	Send	17.2	–
Liberate	14.1	Arrest	15.0	↑	Live	16.4	↑	Opt	17.2	↑
Cede	13.8	Make	14.9	–	Would	16.3	–	Do	17.2	–
Can	13.8	Lead	14.8	↑	Look	16.2	–	Cross	16.8	–
Remain	13.5	Do	14.6	–	Do	16.2	–	Could	16.8	↑
Enter	13.4	Move	14.3	↑	Declare	16.2	↑	Begin	16.6	↑
Bring	13.2	Hold	14.2	↑	Deflate	16.2	↑	Start	16.6	–
Find	13.2	Find	14.2	–	Face	16.1	↑	Visit	16.6	↑
Look	13.1	Add	14.1	↑	Hold	16.0	–	Return	16.4	↑
Fail	13.0	Base	14.0	↑	Can	15.9	↑	Give	16.4	–
Could	12.8	Flee	14.0	↑	Start	15.7	↑	Need	16.3	↑
Claim	12.7	Accord	13.9	↑	Set	15.7	↑	Become	16.2	↑
Put	12.7	Give	13.9	–	Send	15.5	–	Read	16.2	↑
Ask	12.7	Send	13.9	↑	Sum	15.4	↑	Set	15.9	–
Shift	12.6	Sneak	13.8	–	Share	15.4	–	Help	15.8	–

4   The first thing to note is that, as expected, there is a prevalence for discourses that overcode Bangladesh and Bangladeshis. There is a consistent negative semantic preference undermined only by signs of diplomatic success (*historic agreement* – the Land Boundary agreement discussed below). Words such as *good* and *brilliant* are used in reference only to sport.[1] Some words might be said to be semantically neutral and some words are purely functional (particularly adjectives and verbs) as would be expected. Otherwise, the majority of the collocates imply or refer to a negative representation. At a very broad level then, we can say there appears to be minimal semantic competition.

5   Indeed, this negative semantic preference can be divided into at least two discourse prosodies. A discourse prosody is the semantic character that particular words keep. For instance, in Baker's (2014) study of portrayals of homosexuality, he found that a common collocation of *gay* was *allegations*, implying that homosexuality was something shameful. However, he also noted that other collocates like *slurs, confessed* and *smears* worked in the same way. Discourse prosody enables one to systematically analyse collocation patterns and draw links between numerous collocates (Baker, 2014: 111). Using table 2, and exploring concordances, I identified two main discourse prosodies: Bangladeshis come to India escaping persecution, and Bangladeshi migrants are pernicious. Both of these represent Bangladesh negatively, either as a place unsafe for minorities, or as a place and a people mired in crime, violence and illegality.

6   The first discourse prosody is evident in the collocates highlighted green in table 2. Many of the words in this prosody emerge from and are prevalent because of the discourse surrounding the 2019 Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), that *granted non-Muslims* (defined as *Jains, Parsis, Hindus, Christians, Buddhists* and Sikhs) from *Bangladesh, Pakistan* and *Afghanistan* the ability to claim Indian *citizenship*. Indeed, the prosody is far less prevalent in the 2011, 2013 and 2017 sub-corpora, though it does exist (see below). It should be noted that there are no Jains, Sikhs or Parsis in Bangladesh, and so these words are collocates only because of the CAA discourse. I will return to this in more depth below, but at this point it is important to note that the CAA was successfully justified by claims that these three countries *persecute* their *religious minorities* who then come to India as *refugees*. The reflection is therefore that Bangladesh is either unwilling or unable to provide a safe and just environment, and that conversely, the Indian state

and nation is the opposite. This discourse prosody therefore confirms the notion of overcoding, as discussed at the end of chapter three.

7   The second discourse prosody, which is prevalent throughout all sub-corpora, is that of Bangladeshis as pernicious. The words highlighted red show them to be framed as *illegal infiltrators* who *sneak* into India, often *smuggling fake/counterfeit currency/notes,* and who indulge in *criminal* activities (*burglar*) for which they are sometimes *arrested.* This group is presented as an *influx* that is *unabated* and poses a *demographic* challenge that has *swamped* or *hurt* the Indian nation, in particular Assam, which was the premise of the *Assam Accord.* This is reinforced if we look only at collocates that immediately modify *Bangladeshi* (i.e. L1R0). The top two collocates were *illegal and suspected.* Repeating the search for L0R1, the top collocates were *immigrant* and *migrant*, followed by *settlers* and *nationals.* We can therefore see that Bangladeshi is primed to be modified by *illegal* and *suspected* and to be followed by *(im)migrant.* We can take this further by exploring it as a collocation network. A collocation network is a visualisation of chains of collocates (see Brezina, McEnery and Wattam, 2015; Baker, 2016). Following collocations, and the collocations of those collocates, I found four formulaic phrases with the word *Bangladeshi*:

> Illegal > Bangladeshi > (im)migrant > held/arrested/caught/nabbed
> Illegal > Bangladeshi > (im)migrants > are > flooding
> Suspected > Bangladeshi > immigrants
> Suspected > Bangladeshi > nationals

8   In exploring collocation networks, we can understand how patterns of language use emerge in the discourse and how these may be said to become formulaic. Primings prime further primings and language use, while creative, is also visibly frequently patterned and primed through regular use. This is incidentally very close to post-structural ideas of intertextuality and performativity, and of discourse as a structuring regime. This collocation network also allows us to explore collocational competition, i.e. the collocates that compete to occur with any given node. *Illegal* and *suspected* compete to modify *Bangladeshi.* In this case, the collocates share a negative semantics and a discourse prosody for doing something they should not. If the competition were greater, and included more diverse options (e.g. *intelligent*, *wealthy*), this would evince a more varied representation of Bangladeshis in the discourse. Since it is not, we can say that Bangladeshis are represented consistently, with little variation.

9   Importantly, three of these collocation networks and the lexical primings therein provide support for the presence of ontological insecurity. The second one coheres with a wider semantic preference for border movement already identified, and suggests that Bangladeshis are flooding into India. As I shall argue further below, this is indicative of two things. Firstly, it denies ambiguity by constructing the identity of the Bangladeshi as unproblematic (illegal is not modified as alleged, suspected, likely, etc.) even though this is usually far from the case. Evidence of this is seen in very low conviction rates. The *Foreigner's Act* places the burden of proof on the accused. Data on how many are arrested are subsequently put before a Foreigner's Tribunal, and how many of those are found to be non-Indian, are not available. In Assam, the conviction rate of the Foreigner's Tribunals has been around 4% (Rix, 2016). The NRC figure for illegal migration in Assam was slightly higher at 5.75%, though this included a significant number of indigenous people. It is likely that figures for the rest of the country would be much lower given Assam's proximity to Bangladesh. Nonetheless, this widespread ambiguity is omitted and overcoded. Secondly, and relatedly, it begins

to construct the porosity of the border as an alibi; this sense of flooding is created precisely because there is a degree of indeterminacy between Indians and Bangladeshis. The border is not as porous as it is made out to be, and many of those claimed to be Bangladeshi are in fact not.

10   This is pre-empted in the third and fourth formulaic phrases: *suspected Bangladeshi nationals/immigrants*. I suggested in chapter three that one of the indicators of indeterminacy that I expected was the frequent use of modifiers such as *suspected*. Evidence that suspected is in fact one of the words most primed with Bangladeshi is therefore strong evidence of this indeterminacy. Having given a brief overview of the corpus and the discourses therein, I shall now discuss what changes have occurred, before delving into an in-depth analysis, beginning with the notion of this idea of the 'suspected Bangladeshi national'.

4.1.1 Has the Discourse Changed?

11   One of the reasons for building a corpus that stretched over several years was to understand what elements of the discourse have changed or remained constant over time. My argument that the indeterminacy of the difference between India and Bangladesh is a source of ontological insecurity would be strengthened if I could show that the concern with Bangladesh, Bangladeshis and Bangladeshi immigration was not simply a temporary phenomenon, but a recurring theme in Indian politics. This is quite clear historically, looking at the origins of the Bongal Kheda and Assam Movement following Partition and rising after Bangladeshi independence in Kolkata and elsewhere, particularly after the fall of the Mujib government. Throughout the mid-1980s and 1990s this spread across India and culminated in a number of deportation drives. Although I am unable to go back this far in the discourse, I still seek to understand if the discourse has changed over the study period.

12   To understand how the anxiety over Bangladesh transcends party-political positions I chose to construct a corpus that dealt with both Congress- and BJP-led eras. Importantly, I would expect to see some changes in focus over the period, because, as I argue, indeterminacy haunts different nationalisms in different ways. I therefore expected changes in terms of the relative prevalence of framings, but minimal change in the range of framings evident. The tropes and anxieties I identify have featured throughout the study years. This will be evident in the discussion of the concordance examples.

13   I already noted that there appears to have been an increase in the concern over Bangladesh as majoritarian and Islamic and over 'refugees' who have left Bangladesh for India because of this. This has been the main change over the study years and coincides quite clearly with BJP rule and particularly with their passing of the CAA. However, the concordance lists actually overstate this increase because of the preoccupation with the CAA in the media. In fact, the discourse of Bangladesh as Islamically majoritarian and a source of refugees is evident in all study years, and, as I shall show, the CAA is evidence of this in its use of this discourse as legitimation.

14   Besides this, two discourses that featured relatively frequently in the 2011 and 2013 sub-corpora but not in 2017 or 2019 concerned the Land Boundary Agreement and the sharing of the Teesta River. The former was an agreement that Manmohan Singh tried to finalise that sought to settle the issue of enclaves. The border between India and

Bangladesh had around two hundred enclaves, where pieces of territory belonging to one country were surrounded by the other. The BJP were highly opposed to the issue, which they framed as *ceding* territory to Bangladesh, and were concerned with how many *acres* India would lose. Incidentally, the BJP then passed the agreement in their first year in office. The sharing of the Teesta River that runs through India into Bangladesh has been a diplomatic issue for decades, following the construction of a barrage that limited water entering Bangladesh. In 2011 Manmohan Singh negotiated a water-sharing agreement, but it faced opposition from the Chief Minister of West Bengal, and was shelved by the incoming BJP government. Neither issue is immediately relevant here.

15   Additionally, the concordance lists in tables 3 to 5 would suggest terrorism has become an issue between 2011 and 2019, with both *terror* and *Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen* featuring on the 2019 list in table 3. This over-represents the data however. Partly, this is because of the way MI3 works in biasing exclusivity, and so because *Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen* is an exclusive collocate of Bangladesh it features in the list. Importantly, references to terror do exist in collocate lists for all other years, but do not make the top 35. The word *blog* in the 2017 corpus refers to attacks on secular bloggers by terrorists in Bangladesh that year. There is therefore evidence that references to terrorism and Bangladesh increased in 2019, but as I expected, this discourse did already exist prior to that.

16   Lastly, discourse concerning Rohingyas was more frequent in 2017. This is because of the mass movement of Rohingyas to Bangladesh following violence in 2017. References did occur in 2013 and 2019, though less frequently.

4.2 The Obsession with Documentation and 'Suspected Bangladeshis'

17   In this section, I focus on demonstrating both indeterminacy and the anxiety this causes. One way to show this is in the challenge of identifying Bangladeshis and Indians. As noted, the prevalence of the collocate 'suspected' concerns precisely this indeterminacy, in that people are suspected of being Bangladeshi, but this is rarely proven. It is nearly impossible to prove conclusively the non-Indianness of those suspected of being Bangladeshi.[2] This causes anxiety over how to prove nationality in a context where essentialised markers of difference do not exist, where many (poor) Indians are under-documented, where bureaucratic inefficacy renders the verification of documents problematic, and where there are very few documents that can legally prove citizenship (Roy, 2016: 348; Jayal, 2013: 72). A focus on documentation betokens this difficulty and highlights the need to identify both Bangladeshis and Indians and thus to reinsert determinacy. If determinacy were straightforward, documentation would not be so important.

18   This focus on documentation is not immediately apparent in the collocate lists, though it is intimated in the adjective *undocumented* in table 2. To explore this further, I treated the words *Aadhaar,*[3] *voter ID, pan card, passport, ration card* and *ID* as a single collocate of *Bangladeshi*, and manually calculated the MI3 score, which was 20.2. I did this because, in as far they concern documentation and proof of Indianness, they work as synonyms.[4] It should be noted that this score would put it in the top ten noun collocates of

Bangladeshi. However, this under-represents the prevalence of the discourse surrounding suspected Bangladeshis and documentation, because the collocate list is built with an L5R5 window. I read and manually coded 100 randomly selected articles with the words *Bangladeshi immigrant* or *Bangladeshi migrant*; 71 discussed the challenge of identification and proof of citizenship. Below are three examples:

> ...the intelligence bureau had conducted a vast survey in 2003 when thousands of people with doubtful credentials were traced in Varanasi and surrounding districts. It was suspected that they were Bangladeshi immigrants who had started dwelling here to earn livelihood by working as rag pickers, rickshaw pullers and labourers. However, when the exercise to detect their parental roots with the help of state police like West Bengal failed to yield any positive result, the issue was put on the back burner... the local intelligence unit had also made a similar exercise when it had succeeded in tracing over 800 suspected Bangladeshi immigrants. But, again, the efforts to trace their roots did not yield any fruitful result. (TOI, 2011)
>
> "We are Indians and no one has the right to label us Bangladeshi. Such a claim will render us jobless. Each one of us has documents such as voter identity card and Aadhaar card. Why would anyone suspect us to be immigrants in our own motherland?" said 22-year-old Sabina. (HT, 2017)
>
> Police in Tripura are in a fix after 18 Muslim men of suspected nationality allegedly sneaked in from Bangladesh armed with Aadhaar cards, saying they were from Murshidabad in West Bengal... Police are trying to establish if the Aadhaar cards are genuine and how the 18 reached Tripura from West Bengal via Bangladesh. Sepahijala superintendent of police Sudipta Das said they were yet to get permission to interrogate the youths who are in judicial custody till November 6. "We are trying to find their identity through UIDAI and whether or not they are Bangladeshi nationals," Das said. (HT, 2013)

19   In these examples, the indeterminacy of those 'suspected' is evident. The ubiquity of the discourse about the inability to identify Bangladeshis is evidence that this inability is inducive of ontological anxiety over indeterminacy. In these examples, what is clear is the indeterminacy of national belonging and citizenship. There is no clarity beyond documentation as to the citizenship of 'suspected Bangladeshis' and 'dubious' Indians. The pervasive focus on documentation also signals the provisional and unstable nature of national belonging and the presence of a national self. For many people in India, the only thing that marks them out as Indian or not, is their ability to show documentation. This may sound obvious, but in many other contexts, nationhood and citizenship are more naturalised. The fact that nationality is often forcibly reduced to documentation undermines the notion of a nation that is cohered by a tangible Indianness.

20   In India there is often a distinct anxiety surrounding the need for documentation, particularly in places like Assam, West Bengal, Tripura or Odisha, where people have regularly been required to prove their nationality. But this is also the case throughout India, particularly with that large section of the population who are outside the nation-proper, living in what Chatterjee (2004) calls 'political society'. For these people, documentation becomes a top priority. In my own experience in Assam and Tripura for instance, people are fully conversant in the language of bureaucracy and citizenship. In Assam one is regularly told what admissible documents they have, what category A and B documents they possess, whether their ancestors can be found in the legacy data, etc. For members of a community that is one of the least developed, with one of the lowest literacy rates in India, the degree of fluency in the documentary regimes of the state is remarkable, and signifies the essentiality of such a regime to their life (relatedly, see e.g. Gupta, 2012). Documentation here becomes the only marker of nationhood (and the

only thing separating people from citizenship and statelessness). This is precisely what is reflected in the corpus by this focus on documentation or the lack thereof. The anxiety of these people vis-à-vis documentation is a function of the state and nation's anxiety over their uncodability.

21   This inability to prove a person is Bangladeshi is the reason India has such difficulty deporting them, as Bangladesh understandably requires proof of nationality. As a result, the police not only struggle to prove their suspicions, they also have no way of dealing with those they do deem Bangladeshi. Consequently, police forces prefer displays of physical force over arrest, trial and deportation, a dynamic common to policing of the Indian poor more generally (Roy, 2010; Chatterjee, 2004). Often those accused are simply stripped of any Indian documentation they do have and are declared infiltrators (Chhotray, 2018). This then compounds the issue by destroying what little documentary evidence they did possess. Indeterminacy and lack of proof means that Bangladeshis are almost always 'suspected' rather than 'proven'. One of the key ways Bangladeshis are 'suspected' is their use of Bengali, often spoken with a 'Bangladeshi' accent.

> Police said that these migrants have crossed the border from Dhaka and have entered India while their advocates maintained that they were Bengalis and from Odissa [an Indian state] and were caught only because they spoke Bangla. (TOI, 2013)
> The Bangladeshis settled in Delhi could speak good Hindi and you can't distinguish them from their accent. (TOI, 2011)
> The... [victims] told police that the robbers were speaking in an Assamese/ Bangladeshi a dialect [*sic*]. There is a huge population of such natives in Auragabad. (TOI, 2017)

22   In the absence of evidence, statements such as this become implicit legitimisations of allegations of foreignness. Van Leeuwen (2007: 93) argues that studying legitimation involves studying 'residues' – "a 'residue' of elements that could not be said to add anything to the description of what actually went on". Here, in lieu of documentary proof of non-citizenship, other markers are used in an attempt to restore determinacy. Their use of Bengali, or of languages (Oriya, Assamese) that sound similar, is a common means of identifying 'Bangladeshis'. In states adjacent to India, often a Bangladeshi accent is remarked upon. Needless to say, none of these are effective ways of distinguishing nationality, and many of those who stay in India for some time learn to imitate a West Bengali accent, or become fluent in Hindi.

23   Bangladeshis therefore take on a spectral quality. Their common indeterminacy with eastern Indians means that they both blend in and are able to take on an outsized appearance. Precisely because they blend in with other Indian communities, who then become branded as 'suspected Bangladeshis', the Bangladeshi migrant becomes hypervisible in India. The combination of hypervisibility and invisibility compounds the spectral nature of Bangladeshi immigrants, who are consequently thought to be 'flooding in'. In Assam, for instance, there are between 9 and 13 million people who might be considered 'suspected Bangladeshis'.[5] The fact that the NRC determined only 1.9 million to be foreign, and that this is likely to reduce to around 100,000 following appeals, is evidence of this indeterminacy (Karmakar, 2020).

24   Indeed, the purpose of the NRC is precisely to uncover (but really to produce) the determinacy of the nation that is obfuscated in the borderland. Everyone in Assam has had to prove that their family has been in India since 1971. As expected, evident in the

discourse is the extreme difficulty encountered in implementing the NRC, and the anxiety that seems to surround issues of determining nationality. There were over 300 articles in the corpus that dealt with the difficulties of the NRC, particularly the ability to prove citizenship and illegality. Note the following examples:

> A retired army officer was asked to prove his Indian nationality as Assam police branded him a Bangladeshi... A foreigners tribunal served a notice to Mohammed Azmal Hoque, who retired as a junior commissioned officer (JCO) last year after serving the army for 30 years. The Guwahati-based Hoque maintains that his family is indigenous Assamese and his father's name is mentioned on the voters list of 1966. His mother's name was listed in the 1951 national register of citizens. "I have no doubt that I will get justice. But it pains me when my daughter questions me if this is how the country treats those who serve it for so many years," he said on Sunday. Hoque enlisted in 1986... The couple's son is studying in the Rashtriya Indian Military College in Dehradun and daughter at Army Public School in Guwahati. "This incident has saddened me a lot. Even after 30 years of service to the nation, we are asked to prove our identity. This is unnecessary harassment," he said. The tribunal had served notices to government officials before and a talked-about instance is Assam police constable Abu Taher Ahmed, who was accused of being an illegal immigrant. (HT, 2017)
>
> Earlier this month, former Congress MLA from Goalpara Shadeed Mazumdar and his wife were served notices by the NRC office to re-verify their documents. Another former MLA Siddique Ahmed also got a similar notice. (HT, 2017)

25   If military officers, constables and elected politicians, those thought perhaps to be unquestionably Indian, can be at the heart of the nation one minute and alien the next, there is a codability crisis. In cases like this, it is clear it is not merely about moral panic; it is the anxiety over the possibility of annulment. In Assam, the nation comes up against its own indeterminacy. Over the decades there have been numerous attempts to verify and exclude, and even the current NRC is not necessarily final, with the government suggesting it will redo it in Assam as part of a nationwide NRC.

26   The suspected nature of Bangladeshis has at least two dimensions. On the one hand, it gets to the heart of the codability crisis: the total inability to prove national belonging. On the other hand, it suggests that certain populations are suspect: that something about them seems peripheral to the nation, neither inside nor out. Bengali Muslims and poor eastern Indians are assumed by many to be Bangladeshi precisely because they are seen to have the attributes of Bangladeshiness. There is an ambiguousness that pervades the notion of nation in India. Legally, nationhood is encapsulated in citizenship, but in most nationalisms (notably Hindutva, but also Gandhian and even Nehruvian nationalism), national belonging inheres in some combination of cultural, spiritual or religious markers (Oommen, 1997; Seth, 1992; Varshney, 1993; Krishna, 1994). Of course, the incompatibility of these visions, and the subsequent ambiguity regarding the extent of the nation has led to a great degree of anxiety. Ideally, the nation and state should be coextensive, with the nation being as clear cut as the territory it supposedly inhabits. The fact that the nation is not clear cut, and that, at its many edges, the nation is either everywhere or nowhere, undermines national selfhood. If ontological status – a sense of self – relies on difference within equivalence, the inability to specify this difference, and operationalise it (what defines the nation in the first place?) threatens to annul the positivity of an Indianness. This second form is incidentally very similar to Bauman's (1990) framing of national indeterminacy and the anxiety this generates.

27   Nonetheless, indeterminacy is perhaps more acceptable in those considered to be marginal to the nation. Those who are poor, rural, low-caste, and who inhabit slums or bordering states are peripheral to the nation-proper (e.g. Jalais, 2013). Indeterminacy is particularly disconcerting when it concerns the middle-class nationalist. The following article reveals not only the spectral nature of Bangladeshis and the indeterminacy of citizenship and belonging; it also betokens an anxiety over the inability to distinguish Indian from Bangladeshi:

> Concerned after an illegal Bangladeshi immigrant was found with a Unique Identity card (Aadhaar card), all police stations in the city have been instructed to check housing societies to flush out such illegal residents who may have fraudulently obtained identity documents. The discovery of the Aadhaar card has sent alarm bells ringing in the security establishments as such documents can also enable illegal migrants to get an NoC [permit] from the police in buying or renting an accommodation in registered housing societies without raising suspicion. Sources in the special branch (SB II) of the Mumbai police, which arrested the illegal Bangladeshi from a south Mumbai housing society, told HT that senior inspectors have been asked to meet office bearers in housing societies and to run a check on the lease and licence agreements. Instruction has been given to real estate agents and property brokers to alert the police whenever they find any customer's identity document suspicious. Naval Bajaj, additional commissioner of police, SB II, said the police have also written to the departments concerned in the state and central governments to incorporate stricter conditions while issuing crucial personal identification documents such as the Aadhaar and PAN cards. (HT, 2013)

28   In this article there are number of the indicators identified in chapter three. Not only are there indicators of a concern with indeterminacy, there are also indicators of the anxiety this causes. In this case indeterminacy literally *sent alarm bells ringing.* What is particularly interesting here is the concern that Bangladeshis are hiding in plain sight, in the midst of the Indian nation. The housing society is the home of the Indian citizen proper, the middle-class Indian of civil society (Chatterjee, 2004), and South Mumbai is one of the wealthiest places in India.[6] Incidentally, there is a clear pattern in the discourse concerning Bangladeshis and residence in formal dwellings. If the Bangladeshi can blend in here without *raising suspicion* then there really is a codability crisis. Very clear in this example is the spectral nature of Bangladeshis, who haunt the Indian nation. The discovery of a Bangladeshi who had been passing off as a 'respectable' Indian citizen for years under the nose of fully paid-up members of the nation set *alarm bells ringing*. This is because the presence and indeterminacy of Bangladeshis here threatens to annul the positivity and ontological status of Indianness and of an Indian self, antithetical to and distinct from Bangladesh. If even the centre of the national self is compromised and contingent, a borderland in its own right, then the incoherence of nation is not just something seen on the territorial edge, but something that defines the nation. It is a case of the 'irreducible margin in the centre'. If the nation is in fact defined by its indeterminacy, then it becomes clear that it cannot have an essential presence, that it is doomed and defined by its frantic attempts to disguise its indeterminacy. This troubled relationship with indeterminacy is what underpins nationalism; it is marked by its hauntedness. In the inability to determine nationality is the annulment of value.

29   In a cartoon in the TOI (Adhwaryu, 2018),[7] the codability crisis of Indians and Bangladeshis, and India and Bangladesh, is made explicit. The cartoon details the exodus of Indian migrants from Gujarat, who left following violence by local

communities. The migrants meet on the road, with their bundles of clothing atop their heads. One of them asks "Bangladeshi!?" and the other responds "No… Desi!!".[8] The cartoon implies a number of things. Firstly, their dialogue suggests that Indian and Bangladeshi migrants are indeterminate. Secondly, it suggests that they are essentially the same; literally walking through the country with their possessions on their backs. Both have left their homes for work, and both have been the victims of violence and exclusion. The cartoon therefore challenges the difference between Indians and Bangladeshis, supposed citizen and suspected foreigner, but also, implicitly, India and Bangladesh. Bangladesh, a country of violence and poverty where its people are forced to leave, is rendered indistinguishable from India, where the migrant is also a victim of violence and poverty, consigned to a life of itinerancy. The cartoon thus raises the question of the relevance of nationhood in a context where the supposed national and suspected Bangladeshi are functionally the same.

30   In the following sections I explore the ways that Bangladesh and Bangladeshis are represented in the discourse. These representations work to construct Bangladesh and those seen to be Bangladeshis as phantasmagorical. This works to overcode the indeterminacy that seemingly pervades nationhood in South Asia. Importantly, in constructing Bangladesh as dystopic, indeterminacy becomes even more dangerous, as it raises the prospect that either the dystopia is exaggerated or that India too is dystopic (if indeed we can still speak of an 'India' after its elision with Bangladesh). In both scenarios, the national self risks annulment. In this way, Bangladeshis in India do cause moral panic, but this panic is especially effective because of those instances of indeterminacy. The nature of Bangladeshis as all-pervasive yet spectral is what enables this panic to be effective, and what makes it ontological.

4.3 Bangladesh as Undevelopable

31   Developmentalism has been central to Indian politics and nationalism since independence, and, indeed, is intimately tied to the postcolonial project around which nationalisms cohere. Securing development has particular significance in the context of postcolonialism, as it is understood as a way of reasserting an agency, subjectivity and pride that colonial knowledge systems have long denied. The picture of Bangladesh as undeveloped (or even undevelop*able*) feeds into the idea of Bangladesh as a postcolonial dystopia, and figures Bangladesh and Bangladeshis as phantasmagoric. Bangladesh as poor and underdeveloped thus reoccurs throughout the corpus:

> …the migration is essentially driven by abject poverty and hunger prevailing in the neighbouring country. (HT, 2013)
> The endless street battles and riots that characterised its politics for decades, the steady stream of migrants into India and elsewhere, and the threat of Islamicist influence have been a reflection of the country's poverty. (HT, 2013)
> The Bangladeshi youth have always been very dynamic despite their poverty, unemployment and the country's several religious issues. (HT, 2013)

32   In cases such as these, Bangladesh is presented as poor, politically unstable and violently Islamic, all themes explored further below. Of particular interest are those instances where Bangladeshi and Indian development are contrasted. Numerous articles that deal with India's poor ranking in development indices compare India's score with Bangladesh's often-higher score as a way to reinforce India's failures. The fact that India measures its own development failures against Bangladesh implies that

Bangladesh is commonly perceived as less developed than India. The choice of Bangladesh as a juxtaposed comparison is intentionally done so as to maximise effect and reinforce Indian failure. Observe the following:

> **Even Bangladesh, no economic superpower**, claims it has reduced the maternal mortality rate from 320 per 100,000 live births in 2001 to 194 per 100,000 in 2010. In India… [it] continues to be as high as 230 deaths per 100,000 live births… **Bangladesh has put India to shame**. (TOI, 2011)
>
> **Even neighbouring Bangladesh…** could **put India to shame** with the corresponding figures [for female school enrolment]. (TOI, 2011)
>
> **Even Bangladesh** has performed better than India in many aspects of human resources development. (HT, 2013)
>
> **Even Bangladesh** had banned free sale of the corrosive substance and enacted a law treating acid attack. (TOI, 2013)
>
> India's expenditure [on mental health] is an abysmal 0.06%, **less even than Bangladesh** (0.44%). (TOI, 2017)
>
> India continues to be one of the poor performers ranking at 154, much below China, Sri Lanka and **even Bangladesh**. (TOI, 2017)

33   Alternatively, Bangladesh is grouped together with states that are stereotyped as undeveloped, particularly those in sub-Saharan Africa. There is a long record in Indian and colonial political discourse of looking down upon Africa (Gandhi's racism is well known for instance [Krishna, 2015]) and racism continues along these lines today (e.g. Gupta, 1991). While this is of course a product of colonial thought, and while there is also a history of Indo-African solidarity, the stereotype persists, as it does throughout the world. It is therefore no coincidence that sub-Saharan countries are grouped with Bangladesh to emphasise Indian failure:

> Over one in five women in India aged 20-24 had given birth before the age of 18. In countries like Bangladesh, Chad and Niger, around a third of all women aged 20-24 are married by the age of 15. (TOI, 2011)
>
> We can take solace from the fact that a worldwide scorecard on child marriage shows that we're better off than Bangladesh, Mali and Burkina Faso. (TOI, 2011)
>
> India is doing worse than Bangladesh and sub-Saharan Africa in terms of malnutrition. (TOI, 2013)
>
> Global Risks Atlas 2011 on Friday described India as the 16th riskiest country to invest in for the security hazards it poses and **rather embarrassingly** clubs it with Niger, **Bangladesh** and Mali. (TOI, 2011)

34   Alternatively, Bangladesh is grouped with states that are commonly understood as 'failed' or 'rogue':

> An International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) ranked India below countries like North Korea, Bangladesh and Iraq in its annual report on global hunger. (TOI, 2017)

35   Indeed, even though Pakistan is often negatively contrasted with Indian development, there are signs that Bangladesh is perceived as even less developed. There is a common perception in South Asia that Bangladesh is the least developed in the region. The verb 'stunned' gives away the cognitive dissonance produced by the claims that Bangladesh is more developed than others:

> Pakistanis are also **stunned** that many reports now rank Bangladesh… ahead of it in several economic metrics. (TOI, 2017)

36   Van Dijk (2018: 240) looks at how implication often signals presuppositions: statements which "represent the knowledge shared by speaker and recipients… and which is relevant for the production and interpretation of a… discourse". Put simply,

presuppositions are those pieces of knowledge that are assumed to be true and known, and which make elements of discourse interpretable. The notion that Bangladesh is undeveloped is presupposed in the juxtaposition of Indian failure and Bangladeshi success. Saying that India ranked below Switzerland in development indices amounts to a truism that does not require highlighting, and that does not destabilise the idea of India as an agential postcolonial state (and hence India is never contrasted with Switzerland in the corpus). The idea that India ranks below Bangladesh, however, is surprising, because it jars with the implied and presupposed understanding of Bangladesh as poor and India as advanced. The juxtaposition therefore challenges the validity of the difference between India and Bangladesh, and heralds the possibility of elision and the 'death of the self'. Here, ontological insecurity is generated for rhetorical ends.

37 If the developed/undevelopable divide is an instantiation of the necessary border between the self and the not-self, the suggestion that this divide is fictitious is a threat to the notion of self, for if there is no difference on a scale of equivalence, the nation's ontological status is questioned. The indeterminacy of nationhood finds its defence in those discourses that both picture the border as porous and overcode the Indian poor as Bangladeshi. This then works as an alibi, both for Indian failure and for indeterminacy, as shown below. It is as if Bangladesh's underdevelopment is infectious:

> A slum has been **festering** in a coastal regulatory zone in Dahisar despite the best efforts of locals, activists and even corporators to **remove it**. The 8,000 shanties of Ganpat Patil Nagar on Link Road, Dahisar, apart from being an **eyesore**, are causing immense environmental damage… "illegal hutments kept **proliferating** in the area till the BMC [Bombay Municipal Corporation] razed the structures in 2003. But the activity started again right afterwards," said Abhishek Ghosalkar, a corporator. "The main occupants of the slum are migrants from Bangladesh and Nepal". (TOI, 2013)

38 Six months later, the TOI reports on the same slum:

> this pocket of 8,000 shanties on mangrove land was a threat to the environment and a hotbed for water and power thefts. Dahisar residents had also said that the slum comprising migrants mainly from Bangladesh, served as a vote-bank. (TOI, 2013)

39 There are several points worth highlighting. Firstly, the use of words such as *festering*, *eyesore* and *hotbed* work to emphasise the abhorrence of the settlement and the people who live there, who, like disease or bacteria, *fester* (like a *sore*) and *proliferate*. As though it was cancerous, they had tried to *remove it,* but it came back again. Secondly, the claim that the *occupants* (in contrast to the *residents* of the area) were mainly Bangladeshi is asserted but no evidence is provided, implying that it is easily believable and requires no elaboration. This is despite the fact that the Dahisar slum is one of India's largest, and that it is highly unlikely that the majority of occupants are non-Indian. It is also noteworthy how the quote in the original article lists both Bangladeshis and Nepalis as the main occupants, but that this is reduced simply to Bangladeshis in the second article.

40 The association between Bangladeshis and poverty, and the indeterminacy of Indians and Bangladeshis, also works through presupposition. Note the following:

> The demand for detection and deportation of suspected illegal immigrants in Karnataka… is not new. The BJP's… Arvind Limbavali has for long claimed that there are many illegal Bangladeshi immigrants in the city. **A slum where migrants from West Bengal reside, was to be demolished, but was eventually stayed by the Karnataka high court.** (HT, 2019)

41   Here, an article about Bangladeshi 'infiltration' ends with a sentence describing a slum where migrants from West Bengal reside. No link is made between this sentence and the rest of the article. Without knowledge of the presupposition that Bangladeshis 'pretend' to be West Bengali, and that by association poor Bengali migrants are themselves 'suspect', and without the association between Bangladesh(is) and poverty, this final sentence makes no sense. Here, once again, the figure of the Bangladeshi migrant provides an alibi for Indian poverty by casting doubt on the Indianness of the supposed residents. In another article, the link between Bangladesh and slums is developed further:

> A settlement in Bhayander, named as 'Bangladesh zopadpatti' [slum] on government documents, has recently come to light. Interestingly, the slum has been carrying the name for over 35 years and is occupied mostly by people from the interiors of Maharashtra. Civic officials and residents of the slum, however, have not found anything objectionable in the use of the word 'Bangladesh' while referring to the locality. Two other 'Bangladesh' exist in Utan and Chowk villages of Bhayander. Here too, the occupants are from rural Maharashtra... "No one knows how these places came to be referred to as Bangladesh. No one has ever raised any objection." Residents say that no Bangladesh national lives in any of these slums. A number of illegal Bangladeshis, however, have been fished out of various hutments in Mira-Bhayander. Civic officials said that the term Bangladesh was being used even before the municipality came into existence. (TOI, 2013)

42   Mehta (2006) notes how the localities of another Mumbai slum took on the meanings of South Asian geopolitics. The square in the Muslim area became known as the 'Parliament of Pakistan' and the drain that separated Muslim from Hindu houses was commonly known as the 'India-Pakistan border', with yet another being the 'Line of Control'. Similarly here, we have very poor areas becoming known locally (and even officially) as little Bangladeshes despite the absence of anyone from Bangladesh. It is no coincidence that these areas are some of the poorest and least 'developed' in India, and one can assume that, just as areas become named after Pakistan because of the religion of their residents, so these areas became named after Bangladesh because of the destitution of those who live there. This is prime evidence that Bangladesh and Bangladeshis have become overcoded in India, and it also subliminally creates a contrast space where Indian difference and selfhood become possible.

43   Ultimately, the association of poverty, uncleanliness and unsightliness with Bangladesh feeds into an anxiety to secure the India of development and progress:

> Two ambitious apartment schemes of the Lucknow Development Authority - Dhenumati and Kalptaru apartment - would be executed by construction giants Larsen & Toubro and Nagarjuna... The apartment tower, which would rise to a height of approximately 150 feet would look over a park magnificently carved out of red sand stones... For any apartment complex, security happens to be a major concern. Dhenumati apartment here takes the cake. It comes just adjacent to the Bahukhandi Vidhayak Niwas (MLA residence) and opposite Butler palace. **The only sore for the scheme would be a huge slum opposite to the site. The slum spreads over an area of 10 acres and essentially has Bangladeshi immigrants** ...
> Each unit would have an area in the range of 96.18 sq mts to 149.62 sq mts and the sale pricing in the range of Rs 21.50 lakh to Rs 32.50 lakhs. (TOI, 2011)

44   The security they speak of is not just a material one (though given Bangladesh's association with crime this is clearly implied), it is also a conceptual one. It is about securing India as a progressive, agential and developing nation. The division between the rights-bearing citizen who resides in formalised dwellings and the Bangladeshi

'infiltrator' who festers in proliferating slums is evident. The use of the word *sore* here coheres with the general semantic preference for Bangladeshis as diseased (or more aptly as being a disease). It is the *spread* of this disease that is the security concern.

45 Keeping the Bangladeshi out becomes crucial to keeping the Indian nation on the path of progress and development. It is not about any one of these slums or instances and their factuality as 'Bangladeshi'. Rather they are emblematic of the threat of Bangladesh and Bangladeshis in India. By coding these areas as Bangladeshi, the problem of poverty in these areas is externalised, as a foreign problem to be removed rather than a key element of the Indian nation. Moreover, and more importantly, it provides a contrast space wherein India gains a presence in contrast to the poverty of Bangladesh. This contrast however, in part relies upon the viability of the order that separates India from Bangladesh. If this order were shown to be fictitious, if the contrast space were to collapse, there would be nothing to separate aspirant India from diseased Bangladesh. The implosion of the contrast space is the implosion of the self. This implosion was threatened in accounts of indeterminacy presented above, and the example of the housing society is particularly apposite here.

46 Of course, I am not suggesting that poverty is always or even ordinarily branded as Bangladeshi. It is not. But these instances where it is serve to indicate the perception of Bangladesh itself as festering, where the slum becomes a synecdoche for the state and nation. In this context, the subsequent indeterminacy of the border and the citizen present a threat. If the presence of Bangladeshis threatens to undermine development in India, the collapse of the border threatens the difference between exceptional India and benighted Bangladesh. But precisely because India's *presence* is a function of its difference, the threat to this presence by indeterminacy is a threat to the viability of a national self. The coding of Bangladeshis as always poor thus both signals a concern over the border and works to resurrect the border conceptually.

4.4 Bangladesh as Anarchic and Communal

47 The idea that Bangladesh is underdeveloped feeds into an image of weak statehood, where the state is unwilling or unable to fulfil its historic role. Again, this discourse is important to the extent that it creates presence through difference for 'India'. Perhaps the clearest example of the Bangladeshi state being represented as weak or anarchic is the discourse that Bangladesh is violent, communal and non-democratic. This was hinted at in table 2 where *from Bangladesh* was primed to co-occur with words like *Hindu*(s), *religious minority* and *persecute*, implying a discourse prosody of people fleeing persecution in Bangladesh. Indeed, there has been a steady rise in references to Bangladeshi minorities and their persecution. This is unsurprising given the BJPs 'advocacy' of Hindus outside India and their understanding of India as the rightful home of all Hindus. As noted, they passed the CAA in 2019 on this basis. The collocate list of *from Bangladesh* for the 2019 sub-corpus is dominated by references to the CAA. The same list from the 2017 sub-corpus has reference to *religious minorities, Hindu(s)* and *persecuted* but far less frequently. By 2013 none of the top 35 collocates include reference to religion or persecution, though in 2011 *Hindu* and *refugee* reappear. There is therefore a rise in discourse about minorities in the corpus, but the discourse itself is not new. Note the following:

> Given that the persecution of religious minorities is rampant in these countries...
> (HT, 2019)
> So why was this amendment necessary for the minorities of the three Muslim-majority republics of the subcontinent? Because they face extinction-level persecution. (HT, 2019)
> ...the formation of Pakistan and Bangladesh as Islamic nations led to persecution of Hindus and other minorities in the two countries, which necessitated the legislation. (TOI, 2019)

48 Here, discussions of the CAA use a pre-existing discourse of religious violence to justify the granting of citizenship to non-Muslims (those that are considered *Hindu* under the terms of Hindutva). The presupposition is that the discourse of Bangladesh as a centre for Islamic fundamentalism and violence (often with the complicity of the state) is well known in India. This presupposed discourse then works to legitimise the CAA. Incidentally, the act has nothing to do with a concern for refugees, and everything to do with the BJP's electoral politics in east and north-east India. This is evident in the fact that persecution is not mentioned in the wording of the act. The assumption is that it is so obvious that non-Muslims are persecuted in these countries that it does not need to be explicitly mentioned.

49 Ever since at least the partition of 1905 there has been a sense of ascending political Islam and anti-Hindu sentiment in East Bengal. Indeed, incidentally, the spread of Islam in Bengal was largely due to Brahminical oppression of Buddhists and low-caste Hindus for whom the egalitarian ideas of Islam, particularly Sufism, offered an alternative (Uddin, 2006; Eaton, 1993; Roy, 1983). The partition of 1905 was supported by many East Bengali Muslims and 'Hindu' dalits because it ostensibly signalled a change from Hindu domination (Ludden, 2012). This support was viewed by many high-caste Hindus as a betrayal of Bengali identity and a capitulation to British policies of divide and rule (Sengupta, 2012; Chatterji, 1994). Since then, instances of communal violence and support for the 1947 partition have compounded the sense that East Bengal is a 'hotbed' of Islamic fundamentalism and majoritarianism, which has become woven into the narrative of Partition and nationalist history.

50 In the colonial period, Bengal witnessed some of the worst instances of communal violence, particularly the 'Great Calcutta Killings' of 1946. News of these riots caused reprisals as far away as Punjab. Further reprisals in Noakhali and Khulna (present-day Bangladesh) also sparked violence elsewhere, with Gandhi himself spending several months in East Bengal trying to pacify the situation. Ultimately these instances informed India's partition (Sengupta, 2012). Since independence, Bengali and Islamic majoritarianism have been key dynamics both in East Pakistan and Bangladesh, with isolated but not infrequent violence towards religious minorities (which has also been the case in India, importantly).

51 This is of course a partial reading. As Ghosh (2015) argues, the violence of colonial Bengal was not necessarily 'about' religion, and was tied up with economic issues which were simplified in the press as communal.[9] Moreover, as Bandyopadhyay (2004: 198-205) notes, the mobilisation of communal sentiment in 1940s East Bengal was due in large part to the Hindu Mahasabha[10] seeking to instil a sense of Hindu consciousness among low-castes. Most of the Hindus in Bengal, particularly in the east, were (and remain) low-caste or dalit; they had far better relations with Muslim communities and did not identify as Hindu until the 1940s. Indeed, in 1906, Namasudra leaders[11] petitioned the colonial government supporting the 1905 partition, saying: "Namasudras

and Mohamedans are the predominating communities of Eastern Bengal, and the latter unlike the Hindus possess a good deal of sympathy for the Namasudras" (quoted in Ludden, 2012: 508). Furthermore, the fact that there was minimal violence following Partition in 1947 and that most non-Muslims remained in East Pakistan after Partition (in stark contrast to the west) point to the extent to which the idea of East Bengal as communal is partial.

52 Moreover, the struggle for Bangladeshi independence was, on many levels, a struggle for secularism and democracy, and a continuation of the long-established notion of *Bengaliness* as a unifier. As one commentator wrote of Bangladeshi independence, the idea of Muslim nationalism, which had been "formulated in the middle-class living rooms of Uttar Pradesh, was buried in the Bengali countryside" (Ali, in Fazal, 2015: 82). The victory of independence (1971) and Bangladeshi nationalism represented a victory of Bengali identity over and above Islamic identity (van Schendel, 2009), and the fact that today 12% of Bangladeshis are non-Muslim is indicative that, though far from perfect, the country is not the communal dystopia it is made out to be. This story has sadly been sidelined, and, as a consequence, the image of Bangladesh as majoritarian, rife with violence against minorities, is commonplace in India, to the exclusion of a more complex view.

53 Today, many point to a decreasing proportion of Hindus in Bangladesh as evidence of majoritarian violence. While not denying the challenges faced by minorities in Bangladesh, it is important to note that in fact the number of non-Muslims in Bangladesh has increased over the last decade, from 10% to 12%. Moreover, the categorisation of Hindu migrants in India as 'refugees' often misrepresents the myriad reasons minorities have moved to India.[12] Another regular feature in the corpus was the common reference to Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan as Islamic Republics. Bangladesh is not an Islamic republic, and while it has Islam as the state religion it remains a secular country. Nonetheless, the grouping of Bangladesh with Pakistan and Afghanistan suggests similarities between both the treatment of minorities and the political stability in these countries. These similarities are hard to argue. While Bangladesh does have 'radical elements' (as does India), they do not operate at the level they have done in Pakistan or Afghanistan, and religious minorities have not faced the same degree of persecution. Moreover, while much of Afghanistan and parts of Pakistan have been or are controlled by Islamist groups, this has never been the case in Bangladesh, where state power has never meaningfully been challenged (except in the Chittagong Hill Tracts where a secular insurgency occurred).

54 My point is not to suggest that minorities in Bangladesh do not face insecurity and discrimination, but rather to reinsert nuance, complexity and similitude between India and Bangladesh. When Bangladesh can no longer figure as a communal dystopia, and when Indian claims to rule of law and minority protection can be shown to be similarly partial, the ability to differentiate on a scale of equivalence becomes infinitely more challenging. Indeterminacy of sorts once again raises its head in the challenge of coding indeterminate difference. Instead, however, this indeterminacy is banished as Bangladesh becomes overcoded.

55 The focus therefore is on what this discourse *does*. Overcoding Bangladesh as a place rife with Islamic violence and terrorism is useful to the extent that it helps India understand itself as politically stable and secular, or to enable Hindutva claims that 'Hindu civilisation' is more virtuous, and that Islam is necessarily perverting of Indian

potential. The discourse of religious violence thus works to bolster ontological security for both secular and Hindutvavadi nationalism. For secular nationalists, the idea of Bangladesh as violently majoritarian contrasts with and makes possible their construction of India as secular, democratic and founded on the principal of inclusivity. Consider the following:

> The riots that have broken out against the harsh but unsurprising sentences being passed down by Bangladesh's war crimes tribunal are a reminder of the continuing struggle between the country's Islamicist elements and its more secular Bengali instincts. (HT, 2013)

> The endless street battles and riots that characterised its politics for decades, the steady stream of migrants into India and elsewhere, and the threat of Islamicist influence have been a reflection of the country's poverty. This poverty is no longer deemed inevitable... The present trial, whose credibility has already been undermined by incidents that included the disappearance of a defence witness at the court's gates, underlines how fragile Bangladesh's progress continues to be and how much more proactive India needs to be. (HT, 2013)

> Haider's murder has enraged secular Bangladesh and split the nation into two. (HT, 2013)

56　In these examples, Bangladesh is presented as a country *split into two*, with an *Islamist* half and a *secular* half: as if the murder of Haider (an atheist blogger) was supported by half of Bangladesh. There also seems to be a tension between 'Islamists' and *secular Bengali instincts* as if being Islamist (or even Muslim) and Bengali is a contradiction in terms. This implicitly feeds into the Hindutvavadi idea that the subcontinent is not naturally Muslim; there is an Indian core (i.e. Hindu civilisation), an *instinct* that has been perverted by the imposition of Islam. In this context, India needs to be more *proactive* in supporting *fragile Bangladesh.* India here is positioned as a benevolent but superior neighbour, whose role and right is to intervene in Bangladeshi politics. This feeds into the reason for the original souring of Indo-Bangladeshi relations; a backlash against Indian attempts at hegemony. Also of note here, is the construction of Bangladesh as anarchic and violent; the focus on *riots* and *street-battles* converges with an image of the state that is either unwilling or unable to provide order and security, captured by *Islamist influence.* As then Indian prime minister Manmohan Singh commented, "at least 25 percent of the population of Bangladesh swear by the *Jamiat-ul-Islami* and they are very anti-Indian, and they are in the clutches, many times, of the ISI" (Hazarika, 2011).

57　Similarly, for Hindutvavadi nationalists, the idea of Bangladesh as Islamic and dangerous feeds into their mythology of Islam as destructive of virtuous Hindu culture and antithetical to a strong and virtuous political and social order. An HT opinion piece makes this clear:

> The CAA is an affirmation of our diverse and inclusive Indian civilisation, which dates back nearly 7,000 years. Our existence as a modern nation-state, anchored in a constitutional republic, represents only 1% of our history. The inclusive character of this civilisational heritage is reflected by the fact that Malabar Jews, Syrian Christians, Parsis of erstwhile Persia, or my parents, fleeing the violence of Partition, have all found a safe home in our land. It draws inspiration from, and is a continuation of, this civilisational value system. Given that the persecution of religious minorities is rampant in these countries, the CAA seeks to secure those individuals in India who have fled from Pakistan and elsewhere due to the harsh conditions they lived through on account of their religion. (HT, 2019)

58 This idea of the Indian state as the continuation of a 7,000-year-old civilisation is firmly rooted in Hindutva ideology, and the 'history' of Hindu civilisation created by Savarkar (1923). Like Savarkar, the writer characterises Hindu civilisation as inclusive and generous, bound together by a "civilisational value system". The writer juxtaposes the virtuosity of 'Indian'-as-Hindu civilisation with the persecution, intolerance and violence of Pakistan and Bangladesh.[13] These countries are not party to this civilisation, despite sharing the same land (Akhand Bharat), ancestry, languages and, presumably, 99% of their history. This contrast works to place Bangladesh and Pakistan as inferior and dangerous, but importantly it does so in a way that elevates and exceptionalises India. Bangladesh and Pakistan are presented almost as a 'heart of darkness' characterised by savagery and violence. In both secular nationalism and Hindutva, Islam is seen as a symptom and a cause of Bangladesh's failure to move from ex-colony to post-colony. The contrast provides an ontological space for understanding India. The overcoding of India and Bangladesh as wholly different reinserts determinacy into a space constantly undermined by the ambivalence of the uncodable.

59 Similarly, secular India defines itself largely in reference to the non-secularism of its neighbours, particularly Pakistan and Bangladesh. The imbrication of Islam with politics in these countries is seen to necessarily end up perverting good governance and rule of law. Pakistan and Bangladesh therefore become the examples of what happens when a state strays from the path of secularism; they are the reminder of what could happen in India.

4.5 The Infiltrator

60 The construction of Bangladesh as a 'hotbed' of radical Islam is linked to the prevalent notion of Bangladeshis as *infiltrators*, as noted in table 2. The rhetoric of infiltration first emerged in relation to Pakistan, and the supposed movement of Pakistani-backed insurgents into Indian Kashmir. In Assam, where *Bongal* (meaning foreigner, later Bengali) was the common term between 1940 and 1960, *infiltration* became increasingly popular from the 1980s onwards, perhaps as a strategic move to frame the issue more effectively, nationally. In Assam, the term is used for people of all religions. By the early 1990s, the BJP popularised the term infiltration in reference to Muslim Bangladeshi immigrants across India, and it has now become mainstream parlance, to refer both to Bangladeshis in general and to Bangladeshi Muslims. For Hindutva, the term is inherently tied to the religion of the migrant. Modi made this quite clear in 2014:

> Two types of people have come from Bangladesh – the refugees who have been thrown out in the name of religion and the infiltrators… In any country of the world if there are Indians in whose blood the colour of India runs, if they are ethnic Indians, whatever be the colour of their passport. Should not they come to India and be greeted with open arms? …Those who are thrown out of Bangladesh, those who observe Durgastami and speak Bengali, they are all our Mother India's children. (*Indian Express*, 2014).

61 There is an explicit conflation of Indian and Hindu here, to the extent that only those who observe Durgastami (Bengal's largest Hindu festival) are those in whose blood the colour of India (presumably saffron) runs. Muslims here are absurdly denied a blood relation, or even an ethnic relation, to India and Indians. The difference is black and

white, no indeterminacy is permitted. The Muslim Bangladeshi is the latest antagonist in the 'history' of Muslim invasion. They are infiltrators to the extent that they present a demographic challenge to the Indian-as-Hindu nation.

62   Indeterminacy is key here however; Hindutva is all about creating determinacy. The creation and curation of Hinduism as a monolithic entity with an ontic reality (a presence), and the creation and curation of Muslims as outsiders, is fundamentally a means of producing determinacy and overcoding the inherent indeterminacy that undermines such a view. In fact, Hinduism is not cohered by *sanatana dharma*, and even the key mythologies of Hinduism (e.g. the Ramayana) are understood in very different ways across India. In many places, Hindu practices have a distinct Islamic/Sufi influence, just as many strands of Islam in India incorporate practices more familiar to Hinduism. This curation of Hinduism and Hindu was seen very clearly in the previous section, in the way dalit and low-caste communities were gradually and often forcibly interpellated as 'Hindus', and as the opposite of Muslims.

63   The point in this tangent is that Hindutva itself is deeply involved in the production and maintenance of determinacy: of overcoding these complex and disparate dynamics to produce determinacy based on a division of Hindu and Muslim. Coding poor east Indian Muslims as Bangladeshis therefore fits into their quest for determinacy. Ultimately, however, there is still a great anxiety over this. The Indian nation is not a Hindu nation; much to the BJP's chagrin, the NRC is the latest proof of this. The indeterminacy of the Bangladeshi is disturbing because it reveals the indeterminacy of the Indian, particularly of the Indian Muslim. Hindutva constructs the Muslim as inherently non-Indian, as alien. The presence of Indian Muslims and the fact that many chose to remain in India (thus rejecting the two-nation theory) is uncomfortable for Hindutvavadi politics. This of course feeds into the ambiguity surrounding the concepts of citizenship, nationhood and belonging, and the fact that in Hindutva terms, while Muslims may be outside to the nation, they are nevertheless inside of it as far as citizenship is concerned. The disjuncture between the imaginary of nation and the institution of nationality is once again a form of indeterminacy. The idea of Bangladeshi infiltrators and of a porous border works to restore Hindutva ontological security by enabling the construction of poor Muslims as foreign.

64   However, secularism in India also often has an implicit closeness to Hinduism (Udayakumar, 2005). Even the purest secularist, Nehru, could not ultimately escape from a reliance on defining Indianness in terms clearly couched in 'Hindu culture' (Varshney, 1993). Muslims still form the minority that needs to be accorded protection, or modified as 'Indian Muslims' (you never hear the term Indian Hindus because it is like saying Indian Indians) (Pandey, 1999). As Asad (1993: 257) notes, "to speak of cultural majorities and minorities is... to make the implicit claim that members of some cultures truly belong to a particular politically defined place, but those of others (minority cultures) do not". Muslims have never been un-tenuously part of the Indian 'we' and have always needed to prove their Indianness; that is to say that they have always been marked by indeterminacy.

65   Moreover, the term infiltration also captures the anxiety that surrounds (perceived) Bangladeshi immigration, and the indeterminacy of those 'suspected'. Its dual semantics of harm and secrecy set up the image of the Bangladeshi as a threat, in part because of their activity, but also in part because of their ability to hide in plain sight. Consider the following:

> To keep a check on the rising crime graph in the city, police have decided to set up vigil and start the verification drive of Bangladeshi migrants. The Local Intelligence Unit (LIU) has prepared a list of 19 **'sensitive' areas** that happen to be a **safe haven for Bangladeshis...** Officials in LIU told TOI that Bangladeshis usually **infiltrate** Assam to get their ID cards, passports and voter cards made. From there, they migrate to semi-urban areas in the country. **They live in slum areas** near residential colonies **and work as rag-pickers**. They usually **strike during the night**, and after committing the crime, flee to other states... **Bangladeshis hide in the guise of Assamese**. (TOI, 22 April 2017)

66   This article clearly draws on numerous stereotypes common to representations of Bangladeshis in the corpus. Here, Bangladeshis are not only presented as a 'threat', but also held responsible for an increase in crime in the city (Lucknow), and for poverty. In this regard the 'suspected Bangladeshi' serves an ontological function by allowing the externalisation of crime and poverty as foreign problems. However, just as interesting is the claim that "Bangladeshis hide in the guise of the Assamese" (which concurs with the statements on language above). Together these claims signal the ambiguity that pervades the border/order and as such induces a sense of cartographic anxiety about the ontology (being-ness) of the Indian nation and self.

67   Implicit here is the surface indiscernibility of Bangladeshis and Indians: the tacit acknowledgement of ambiguity. The indiscernibility is only superficial; the Bangladeshi cannot possibly share in the values and culture of the Indian citizen, just as they are excluded from the '7,000-year-old Indian civilisation'. Terms like *guise* and *infiltrate* reveal the anxiety of indeterminacy, but they also reassert certainty. Thus, while a Bangladeshi may 'don the guise' of the Indian, may 'infiltrate' and thereby gain the appurtenances of Indianness, such acts fail to change the fundamental difference of Indianness and Bangladeshiness that supposedly lies beneath. The tell-tale signs of the Bangladeshi give away the falsity of this surface likeness; the poverty and lawlessness of the subject cannot help but confirm their Bangladeshiness. Legal standard of proof becomes irrelevant – their association with poverty, lawlessness and their 'dubious' accent/appearance is proof beyond reasonable doubt. The common use of the word infiltrate may bespeak an ontological anxiety, but it also serves an ontological purpose. It suggests that those who inhabit the liminal, or who come to India and live as Indians, cannot be understood as Indian.

4.6 Agency

68   The tropes and representations I have analysed so far have all suggested, in one way or another, that the Bangladeshi state is weak. Terrorism, communal violence, human trafficking, economic migration, poverty and illegality all bespeak a state unable to fulfil its proper role as the guarantor of development and progress (Krishna, 1999). The Bangladeshi state is therefore non-agential. I argue that this perception is also evident in the way Bangladesh is narrated. Proportionally, *India* is succeeded by a verb 27% more often that *Bangladesh*, with the latter having almost half the range of verbs than India. Moreover, the use of verbs that are most associated with agency (as opposed to passivity) – *do, will, can, go, make* – are even less proportionate, with these being used 40% as frequently for Bangladesh as for India. Indeed, Bangladesh very rarely collocates with verbs, and when it does, it is often in coordination with other countries, notably India. This suggests that Bangladesh is not often presented as a country that acts or

possesses agency, and that when it does act, it does not do so unilaterally. This is in sharp contrast to India which very often collocates with verbs. Additionally, India is more than twice as likely to be the subject (67%) compared to Bangladesh (26%), which instead is strongly primed to be used as an object.[14] Indeed, even when Bangladesh is the subject, and thus supposedly the actor, it is sometimes represented more as a receiver/reactor than a protagonist. For example:

> Bangladesh **grapples** with a huge influx of refugees;
> New Delhi 's support would **help** Bangladesh resolve all of their issues.

69 Alternatively, it is modified or made conditional. For example:

> **when** Bangladesh buys its first nuclear reactor;
> **if** Bangladesh takes effective actions against the militants;
> **Though** Bangladesh plans to launch its geostationary communication satellite.

70 The repeated denial of a subject position to Bangladesh works to construct a sense that Bangladesh is non-agential and passive, in contrast to the agential and active India (see Partington's [2015] analysis of the 'The Arab World'). Hoey (2005: 13) argues that words are primed not just to collocate with other words (as in 'suspected Bangladeshi') but also "to occur in (or avoid) certain grammatical positions, and to occur in (or avoid) certain grammatical functions". From the analysis above it is clear that Bangladesh is primed to avoid both grammatical positions which confer subjecthood or agency and to occur in positions that objectify and disavow the potential for agency. Thus, even at the grammatical level, we can see the instantiation of a line between the agential India and the passive Bangladesh. This line, as I have argued, is crucial to maintaining the notion of the sovereign, present self.

4.7 The Standard of Proof – A Summary

71 To conclude this chapter, it is apposite to return to what I suggested would provide evidence of ontological insecurity, and to assess to what extent my analysis of the discourse has provided it. In chapter two I discussed how to differentiate the anxiety of ontological insecurity from moral panic used for instrumental political ends. I suggested that, while the two are not mutually exclusive, signs of ontological insecurity would be reinforced if I could show that the discourses were not temporally bound to elections or government terms. I have shown throughout this chapter that the anxiety around Bangladeshis and their indeterminacy has continued largely unchanged across the study period. I also suggested that such concerns should not be found solely or mainly in quotes of politicians. As my concordance and other examples have shown, this is not the case. Thirdly, I suggested that my ability to show the ontological nature of anxiety would depend on the ability to link it to indeterminacy. At the end of chapter three I discussed what would constitute evidence, at a discursive and linguistic level, of indeterminacy, and of anxiety over this.

72 Indicators of indeterminacy were identified as issues of identification and misidentification (seen in the common reference to identity documents or lack thereof), the capacity for mistakes in the identification of nationality in the NRC, and the prevalent use of modifiers to cast doubt on the nationality of people. All three of these indicators were evidenced throughout. There was a strong prevalence and a discourse prosody for identity documents that I showed was linked to issues of identification and misidentification. I noted the frequency of articles concerned over

the NRC and the difficulty it was having in identifying citizens and foreigners, and I found that *Bangladeshi* was closely primed with *suspected.*

73   Indicators that this indeterminacy caused anxiety included the sheer prevalence of discourse concerning the challenge of identification, which would bespeak an obsession with indeterminacy. This prevalence has been clearly shown. I also suggested that a semantic preference for shock or alarm upon finding that Bangladeshis had been passing off as Indians would reinforce my argument for ontological insecurity over indeterminacy. Evidence to this effect was found and shown in numerous concordance examples.

74   Lastly, I suggested that evidence of ontological insecurity caused by indeterminacy might be seen in the way India and Bangladesh are overcoded. The second half of this chapter has dealt primarily with this overcoding. This was also evident in the way nationality was often asserted *as if* proven. I particularly suggested that overcoding could be said to occur if there was minimal semantic variation and discursive competition, and that this could be said to create a contrast space for Indian ipseity if Bangladesh was portrayed in a consistently negative light, particularly in comparison to India. This has very much been the case, with Bangladesh figuring without variation, as poor, non-agential, communal and anarchic.

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1. By looking at concordance lines it is possible to understand in what ways particular words are used. Just because *war* collocates with *Bangladesh* does not necessarily mean that we can infer the context in which the two words are used. Far from suggesting a tense relationship, concordance analysis shows that *war* actually refers to the Bangladesh *Liberation* War, in which India played a key role. Looking at concordance lines (i.e. individual collocations in context) thus constitutes a plausibility probe. All subsequent collocation analysis follows analysis of concordance lines.

2. Information on how many of those arrested are then prosecuted, and how many of those are found definitively to be Bangladeshi, is not readily available. The deportation rate (~580/year) could be an indicative measure, given that Bangladesh requires the highest standard of proof (Hindustan Times, 2017). Bangladeshis constitute 75% of deportations. To put this into some context, the EU, which has one third of the Indian population, deported 158,000 people in 2018 (European Commission, 2019). The point therefore is that the deportation rate is very low, suggesting that adequate proof of foreignness is rare.

3. Biometric cards.

4. Legally, none of these are proof of citizenship, but they are often used nonetheless as a symbol of citizenship.

5. This is extrapolated from census data but is very difficult to calculate because the census distinguishes religion and language. Most of the Hindu Bengalis speak Bengali in Assam, but many of the Muslim Bengalis speak Assamese. In addition, some of the Muslims in Assam are not Bengali, while the Barak Valley has always been Bengali-speaking.

6. Housing societies in India can be highly political, with many people *de facto* refused residency if they are Muslim, lower-caste or otherwise deemed 'unrespectable'. See e.g. Banerjee *et al.* (2015).

7. The cartoon cannot be shown here due to Swiss copyright law.

8. Desi means indigenous, or in this context, Indian.

9. Indeed, "As ever, the role of the popular press was significant in generating and punctuating narratives and time-lines. The 'Great Calcutta Killing', almost exactly a year before the Partition, is remembered for its violence and political significance, to be sure, but certainly also for this very memorable moniker and mnemonic, which was generated years after the event(s) by a Calcutta newspaper" (Ghosh, 2015: 270).

10. A Hindu chauvinist organisation.

11. A dalit/avarna community.

12. My own work with Hindu and Buddhist minorities who have left Bangladesh suggests that numerous reasons motivated the choice, only one of which was insecurity.

13. Indeed, Hindutva often presents 'Hindu culture' as a truer manifestation of secularism in its claimed focus on humanitarianism, peace and 'assimilation'. As Modi tweeted, after the passing of the CAA: "This bill is in line with India's centuries old ethos of assimilation and belief in humanitarian values" (HT, 2019). Hindutva nationalists also commonly refer to others as 'pseudo-secularists'.

14. This was calculated by randomly down-sampling to 100 instances of both terms.

5. Non-Discursive Evidence

1   In chapter four I showed how Bangladesh is constructed through discourse in such a way as to create determinacy and ontological presence for the Indian nation. I also explored the collapse of this determinacy and the concern with the challenge of identification that emerges from the hypervisible-yet-invisible Bangladeshi. In this chapter I will link the granular evidence presented in the previous chapter and place the analysis into a bigger picture. The discourses analysed are of course a small part of a larger set of discourses, processes, materialities and power relations, all of which are crucial in understanding ontological insecurity. The analysis of a discourse needs to be explored within the social and material contexts of which it is a part. Deeply imbricated in the production of meaning are various institutional and material structures. Although there is not the scope to explore these in great detail, in this chapter I explore some of these structures and imbrications, looking in particular at the materiality of the border and its fence, at the development of citizenship law, and at the practices of citizenship testing.

5.1 Border Anxiety

2   Much of chapter four was dedicated to analysing an anxiety that pervades the border. This anxiety is visible not just in discourse, but also materially. The construction of the border fence and the violence with which it is policed do not appear to respond to a substantial material challenge; they are in fact evidence of India's ontological insecurity. Here, I explore this further. I first show that the obsession with the border does not appear to be a proportionate response to a material challenge, raising the question of how to account for this obsession. I then show that the border is in fact an attempt to produce the determinacy the nation alleges exists, and that the border and the fascination with its transgression are a function of the indeterminacy of the Indian subject. In doing so, I suggest that the border itself institutes a particular way of seeing that makes indeterminacy visible and challenging.

3   The Indo-Bangladesh border fence is the world's longest, at around 3,200km. It is double-fenced, with a border road facilitating troop transport, and the government is now upgrading the border using floodlights, lasers, cameras and motion sensors, with

outposts every 3.5km.[1] The fence is guarded by the world's largest border force, the BSF. The border itself is one of the deadliest in the world in terms of deaths caused by security forces (HRW, 2010).[2] Yet it is not clear that this enormous investment in the border is a proportionate response to a material challenge. As discussed in chapter one, the argument that the border is a response to insurgency, terrorism or the economic burden of migrants is hard to defend. Indeed, the anxiety over the transgression of the border seems to far outweigh those acts of transgression. For every person who was arrested trying to cross the Bangladesh border in 2019, two articles in the corpus were written on Bangladeshi migrants. This suggests that there is a distinct obsession with Bangladeshi immigration above and beyond the actual issue.

4 Indeed, the BSF only detected 1,351 'infiltrators' in 2019 (The Wire, 2020). In contrast, the US apprehended more than double this number every day along its border with Mexico, despite Mexico having a smaller population (US CBP, 2020). This signals that not many people are trying to cross, that these attempts are not that effective, or that corruption means that the number is under-reported. The infrastructural and institutional investments along the border suggest that efficacy is not a major challenge, and while corruption is well known, even if the BSF let five people in for every one person apprehended, that still amounts to only around eight thousand people who enter in a year.[3] My point is that the expense and the obsession with the border, and the prevalence of the discourse on 'infiltration', do not seem to be reflected by a substantial material challenge. What then accounts for this obsession?

5 The obsession with the border and its inviolability derives from the need to conceptually separate India from Bangladesh, and to understand the borderland as a zone of determinacy. The border is exactly the point where the indeterminacy of nationhood is starkest, and where the distinction between self and other is seen to implode. The indeterminacy of the Indian nation means that the supposed Bangladeshi migrant becomes a spectre that is always present yet invisible. Consequently, the issue of migration takes on an outsized role in Indian politics, as the number of 'suspected Bangladeshis' far outnumbers the number of actual Bangladeshis. As a result, the border seems more porous than it is. This returns us once again to the indeterminacy of the Indian nation. The challenge is actually from within. The Indian nation, haunted by the Bangladeshi, comes to be haunted by itself. The inability to code its own people reveals the indeterminacy of nationhood and selfhood in South Asia.

6 What the nation comes up against at the border is the fiction of its own presence. The inability to find a border in the borderland suggests that the hailed nation is not underpinned by the presence it alleges. The history of the border is one of gradual 'disciplining', of converting 'recalcitrant peoples' into citizens and foreigners (Samaddar, 1999). As discussed above, the forms of belonging and territoriality that have come to characterise South Asia (and nation-statism more generally) were far from intuitive in the region that was gradually bisected after 1947. Understandings of territory and belonging continue to deny the logic of nationalism in the border region, and it is this refusal to succumb to national determinacy that gives rise to the violence of the border (and arguably statism more generally) (Chaturvedi, 2005; Krishna, 1994).

7 Importantly, however, there is a particular way of seeing that the border produces. Just as, for Foucault (1977), the materiality of the prison produces a particular gaze or way of seeing, so the border and its fence produce a particular gaze, a way of looking at space and at movement (and ultimately a way of understanding ontology). The gaze

that the border gives rise to is one that naturalises the idea of determinacy and division and, concomitantly, of difference and presence. In this perhaps counter-intuitive way, the border fence as a material object renders visible the indeterminacy and ambivalence of the now-margin. The border in this sense produces indeterminacy. Ethnographies of the border have revealed the anxiety those tasked with guarding it derive from its indeterminacy. Krishna (1994: 515) for instance recalls:

> The sector commander of the BSF... was similarly irritated. He asked: "How can we stop the infiltration? We do not understand Bengali. These people speak the same language, wear similar clothes and look no different. It is impossible to differentiate between a Bangladeshi and an Indian. Also, many live in houses adjacent to each other." In his own words, the arbitrary and violent production of a "border" by the Border Security Force becomes transparent. In the face of a reality that does not allow him to distinguish a "Bengali Indian" from a "Bengali Bangladeshi," the commander is forced to rely on the production of an alternative border - that of the nation-state and of citizenship. Commander Shahal angrily concludes that "Indians should be issued identity cards immediately." Given the impossibility of producing difference out of religious, regional, linguistic, and physical characteristics, he plumps for nationality. Yet, in the subcontinent (as elsewhere), the differentiation of nations supposedly rests upon some combination of precisely these "essentialized" characteristics.

8   There is an ontological insecurity here about what 'nation' is. There is an anger and a frustration that the ontology of nation is inconsistent and incommensurable with a 'reality' that is uncomfortably ambivalent. This ambivalence is a kind of radical alterity to this ontology; it cannot be captured in the terms of 'difference within equivalence', and thus by value, metaphysics or identity. The border guard, frustrated by the ambivalence of supposedly essentialised markers of nationhood, decides instead that documenting all Indians is the only way of creating the determinacy desired. This reflects the analysis of documentation in the previous chapter. In the absence of the determinacy of the subject, determinacy is delegated to the arbitrary assignment of documentation, as if the nation as an idea is cohered and derives its presence from the possession of an ID card. Where is the 7,000-year-old history here? Where are the people in whose blood the colour of India runs? Where is the spirit of Indianness that Gandhi asserted and Nehru hoped for? They are nowhere, or else everywhere. As Samaddar (1999: 58) wrote, "either the glorious nation is today a thing of the past along the border, or this is a border... which does not respect the nation... In the eyes of the state, the border thus threateningly expands/shrinks inward and the nation becomes an object of elegy". The inability to find a border in the borderland signals the possibility that the border does not exist at all. If there is no definitive line dividing them, what then separates the agential and progressive India from the anarchic and impotent Bangladesh? Just how far into the Indian nation does the Bangladeshi reach? To lose the border is to lose the presence of the nation, for it bespeaks a breakdown in the ability to differentiate, and thus see the self. The violence of the border and the state's attempts to discipline ambivalence must therefore be read in this context.

5.2 Citizenship Law under the Spectre of Indeterminacy

9   Linked to the border and the task of dividing Indian from Bangladeshi is citizenship law. The anxiety that derives from the uncodability of Bangladeshis and Indians is very

evident in the development of citizenship. Citizenship laws are precisely that instrument that designates inside from out, self from other; they are designed to create and represent determinacy. In India, almost all major changes to citizenship laws since independence are marked by an anxiety over the indeterminacy of so-called Bangladeshis (Roy, 2010).

10   Much like territoriality, the concept of citizenship in India did not emerge 'fully formed' in 1947. The Constitution, which came into effect in 1950, established the notion of Indian citizenship but it was not until 1955/1956, almost a decade after independence, that the first Citizenship Act was passed and Citizenship Rules were framed. These years therefore represent an interregnum where citizenship was just an incipience (Roy, 2010). Before this though, travel and residency documentation had already sought to create determinacy out of the indeterminacy of Partition migration (Roy, 2016). The documentary regimes that emerged and the problems encountered in their implementation fed into the eventual framing of paper rights, and the understandings of citizenship and belonging that ensued.

11   India's first Citizenship Act (1955) was an archetypal *jus soli* framework, according citizenship to anyone born in India. In 1986 this was amended, following the Assam Agitation against Bengalis (when the term *infiltration* began to be applied), restricting citizenship to anyone born in India with at least one Indian parent. Article 6a specified that anyone from 'the specified territory' (defined as Bangladesh) who entered Assam after 1971 (Bangladeshi independence) would not be accorded citizenship. Already in 1986, the *jus soli* notion of citizenship had begun to give way to *jus sanguinis* precisely in order to try and differentiate between Bangladeshis and Indians. As Jayal (2013: 22) notes, "the policy imperative to control illegal immigration from Bangladesh led to the contraction of citizenship law into an increasingly descent-based principle".

12   The next substantive amendment was in 2003, when citizenship was restricted further to anyone born in India, at least "one of whose parents is a citizen... and the other is not an illegal migrant" (Citizenship Act, 2003). The inclusion of this clause was specifically in response to perceived Bangladeshi 'infiltration' and the continued need to police the difference between the two nations (Roy, 2008). The amendment was presented by the BJP but enjoyed cross-party support. The justification for further restricting citizenship was explicitly to stop Bangladeshis and their offspring (both Hindu and Muslim) becoming Indian. The aim of these changes was to create a clear boundary between Indian and Bangladeshi, even if it meant excluding many people considered part of the nation. A nation willing to render stateless millions of people born in India, to Indian parents, is a nation that is convulsed by a distinct anxiety. The brutality of this parallels the brutality shown towards indeterminate subjects, Bangladeshi and Indian alike, that was explored in the last chapter. The contempt and violence with which 'suspected Bangladeshis' are treated, like many marginal groups in India, is justified as necessary to the project of nationalism, security and development (Khanikar, 2018; Kaviraj, 2005; Eckert, 2005).

13   This amendment sought to create and maintain determinacy by keeping Indians 'pure' and preventing intermarriage that would advance the crisis of indeterminacy. Indeed, this is evident even in the detention of 'declared foreigners', who are kept in the same gaols as Indian criminals, but are not allowed into communal areas so as to prevent their 'mixing' with, and corrupting, bonafide citizens (Mander, 2018a). The idea of keeping the nation pure by preventing the children of Bangladeshis from becoming

Indians is absurd. The nation's seeming amnesia towards centuries-old familial ties is part of a larger process of post-Partition alienation in the region. In South Asia, the need to make Partition final has defined much of the national project, from before the constitution, through to the present (Roy, 2014). The need for borders and citizenship to be final in South Asia is intimately linked to the need for national determinacy as a precondition for a national self.

14   From 1948 the Indian and Pakistani governments began making migration increasingly difficult, particularly in the west. From July 1948 people traveling from West Pakistan to India required a permit, and approval from both governments, which became increasingly hard to get (Roy, 2014). In 1950, when the constitution was framed, the need to declare Partition as final figured heavily, particularly in the stipulation that anyone who had left for Pakistan after March 1947 (before Partition) but returned to India would not be considered an Indian citizen. What is evident here is the need to make Partition final, to discipline movement and belonging and create national determinacy. Much of the politics of nation-building in the last 70 years has been about a continued need to create closure and finality. The gradual ratcheting of citizenship is evidence of this. The ontological framework of nationhood (that the 'nation' exists and has a presence), is undermined by a scenario of constant migration where the indeterminacy of the nation becomes obvious. Ontological security can therefore be traced back even to the constitution, in the need to stem movement and create finality, as a precondition for determinacy. Increasingly restrictive citizenship amendments thus represent a continuation of this.

15   The 2003 amendment also introduced a form of overseas citizenship to people of Indian heritage. It accords citizenship to anyone who is a child or grandchild of someone who was eligible for citizenship in 1950, as long as they are not the children or grandchildren of "a person who is or had been at any time a citizen of Pakistan, Bangladesh or such country as the Central Government may... specify" (Citizenship Act Amendment, 2003). Originally the government specified 16 countries as eligible, but quickly expanded this to all but Pakistan and Bangladesh (Jayal, 2013: 101). It is no coincidence that these two countries are the countries of Partition, where the problem of indeterminacy is most profound.

16   The development of Indian citizenship law traced through its various amendments clearly shows a preoccupation with Bangladeshi migrants as the driving force behind the framing of who counts as Indian. The definition of an Indian as enshrined in citizenship has been repeatedly and consciously determined in relation to the Bangladeshi, and the need to somehow institute a clear boundary between Indians and Bangladeshis. The repeated changes to citizenship law bespeak a wider difficulty in determining who belongs and who does not. The liminality of the border causes anxiety over the extent of the nation, and of the national self.

17   This liminality has led to changes not just in citizenship, but also in documentary regimes. The border commander quoted above was clear about the need to provide ID cards in order to make determinacy possible. Incidentally, the introduction of the Aadhaar biometric identity scheme in 2009 was justified partly on the pretext of maintaining the determinacy of Indians in the face of Bangladeshi migrants (Arora, 2019: 42). The idea was to create a uniform form of identity that would rationalise determinacy and enable the easy verification of Indianness. Of course, the introduction of Aadhaar cards was about far more than indeterminacy, but it is not the first identity

document produced at least partly with Bangladeshi migrants in mind. An earlier attempt at ID cards, undertaken in 2003, was also launched explicitly to produce determinacy, with the cards initially being issued only in border regions.

5.3 Identifying the Spectre, Looking for Determinacy

18   As Assam is the place where this indeterminacy is most contentious, the repeated attempts to banish it and institute a Manichean divide is further evidence of an anxiety over the difference between the Bangladeshi and the Indian. In 1983 the Congress passed the Illegal Migrants Determination by Tribunal (IMDT) Act replacing the colonial-era Foreigner's Act exclusively in Assam. The act followed the Assam Accord which mandated the government to find and deport illegal immigrants. While the *Foreigner's Act* places the burden of proof on the accused,[4] the IMDT Act placed the burden on the plaintiff. The justification for the IMDT Act was that it "'protected the genuine Indian citizens'… by introducing 'an element of judicial scrutiny to determine the citizenship of a person'" (Sonowal vs Union of India, 2005). Under this act it became much harder to accuse someone of illegality, and harder to prove such accusations in court. The government, in an affidavit defending the IMDT Act in the Supreme Court, argued that "but for the element of judicial scrutiny thousands of *Indians* would have been deported" (Sonowal vs Union of India, 2005). The government here acknowledged the indeterminacy of the nation in Assam.

19   In 2005 the IMDT Act was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. This was justified "on grounds of *restoring to the Union its constitutional duty of protecting the state from external aggression*" (Sonowal vs Union of India, 2005). Those liminal communities, immigrants or not, thus become framed not just as 'illegal' but as bodies whose very presence represents an act of aggression against India and Indianness. The court, adopting the rhetoric of Assamese chauvinists, referred to demographic changes (i.e. an increase in Muslims) in Assam as a security threat to the Indian (read Hindu) nation. Indeed, according to a Congress Party report, Bangladeshi 'infiltration' was part of a larger plan to create a 'greater Bangladesh' annexing a large portion of India (Roy, 2010: 114). The idea of a plot to create a Bangladeshi 'lebensraum' is oft-touted (Samaddar, 1999: 19) and General Rawat, Chief of Defence Staff, recently referred to this as 'proxy warfare' (Rawat, 2018). These narratives signal an acute anxiety over the presence of hypervisible-yet-invisible Bangladeshis, and the struggle to come to terms with the existence of Indian (Bengali) Muslims. Once again, the indeterminacy of the border is a source of ontological anxiety.

20   For decades, Bengalis, Hindu and Muslim, have had to repeatedly prove their citizenship in Assam, first before the IMDT Act. Later, in 1997 the Assam Government updated the electoral register, marking those unable to provide proof of citizenship as 'D' or 'doubtful voters' and removing them from the register. Around 370,000 people were classed as D voters (Bhattacharyya, 2005). The IMDT Act created eleven 'Foreigners' Tribunals' where D voters' (and many others') claims to citizenship were assessed. Since the IMDT Act was withdrawn the number of tribunals has increased to 100. Of the 200,000 D voters assessed by tribunals by 2005, 98.2% had been found to be Indian (Bhattacharyya, 2005). Many of those who were declared illegal were done so under *ex parte* orders, where they were declared foreign in their absence from court (often because they did not receive notice) (Mander, 2018a).

21 The 2003 Citizenship Amendment also mandated the creation of the NRC which was completed in 2019. With over 53,000 employees in 2,500 test centres, and at a cost of over $160 million US dollars, it was a gargantuan exercise. The aim of the NRC was to create a list of verified citizens and illegal immigrants, with the burden of proof resting with the citizen/infiltrator. The final list released in 2019 omitted 1.9 million people (likely to reduce following appeals) and the government is building ten detention camps for 'illegal immigrants' (Mander, 2018a), although they have repeatedly asserted that those excluded will not be detained. The BJP made extending the NRC nationwide a 2019 election pledge.

22 Doubtful voters, or more appropriately, doubtful *Indians*, epitomise the status of poor Bengalis (and indeed many others) not just in Assam but throughout India. The NRC, the Foreigners' Tribunals, radical transformations in citizenship law, as well as the materiality of border fencing and detention camps reveal the deep anxiety surrounding the border, physically in land and bodies, and conceptually in terms of an imagined community. What the NRC has revealed is the challenge/aporia of demarcating self from other. With many in Assam and throughout India lacking documentation, what the nation has come up against is the fiction of its own presence. If nations are natural and self-evident, if one can truly speak of an inherent *Indianness*, and if borders really do demarcate one 'imagined community' from another, then the act of distinguishing Bangladeshis from Indians should be unproblematic. The very fact that it is not marks the fiction of a national presence. The challenge to codability posed by the so-called Bangladeshi causes deep anxiety over the meaningfulness of nation, threatening the 'imaginability' of the community, and of the national self.

5.4 Biopolitics and the Production of (In)determinacy

23 The state and nation's policies of exclusion also have the effect of materially and psychologically producing a border and reinscribing determinacy. Assam is one of most peripheral parts of India, and the *chars* or sediment islands in the Brahmaputra River, on which most Bengalis in the state live, is a periphery of a periphery. The people who live here have almost no government interaction beyond the incessant policing of their right to reside. Seventy percent live below the poverty line (double the state average), and basic government services are all but non-existent (Chakraborty, 2014).[5] In this context, most people are undocumented purely because of their marginality in relation to the state. As Chakraborty (2014: 115) notes, "The *char* areas are geographically 'alienated' from the 'mainland' and psychologically 'detached' from the 'mainstream'" because of their victimisation by Assamese politics – a detachment and alienation that is self-compounding. This state- and nation-enforced exclusion produces these liminal communities as outside the nation; their poverty and separateness from the 'mainstream' are then used as evidence of their Bangladeshiness. This is of course only possible because of the powerful stereotype of Bangladesh as underdeveloped, as explored in chapter four.

24 This is the case not just in Assam, but throughout India. Bengali and eastern Indian migrants in cities like Delhi and Mumbai are often accused of being Bangladeshi and face frequent intimidation by police. Starting in the 1990s with Operation Pushback, deportation drives have been common (Ramachandran, 2003). In 2001 a public interest litigation was filed in Delhi High Court alleging that as many as 3 million Bangladeshis

were residing there illegally. The court upheld the petitioner's allegations and instructed the Delhi Police to deport 100 illegal immigrants a day. Deportation drives ensued though they were unable to reach their target, and most of those deported were done so without proof of their illegality (Kapur, 2010: 166; Roy, 2010: 98). Indeed, even deportation is not what it seems. Given Bangladesh's longstanding policy of not accepting deportees without proof of citizenship, and with the Indian state unable to definitively prove their origin either way, the government is usually compelled to surreptitiously push them across the border, which is largely unsuccessful (Sen, 2003; Ramachandran, 2003). Similar drives have taken place in other parts of India over the last two decades. Largely though, because of the practical impossibility of proving illegality, the bureaucracy involved in trying to do so, and the difficulty of deportation, the state prefers to periodically terrorise those they believe to be Bangladeshi, destroying homes and beating suspects (Ramachandran, 2003: 638). Just like in Assam, those identified with Bangladesh, whether Bangladeshi or not, become excluded from the state and nation and this exclusion is then used as evidence of their foreignness.

25   This precarity is also a key reason that Bangladeshis have become spectral. Unlike Nepalis whose status in India is legal, the incessant vilification of Bangladeshis forces them to live underground (as those who have tried to study or work with them [myself included] can attest [e.g. Ramachandran, 2004; Das and Ansari, 2018]). The irony therefore is that the very production of the border has the effect of blurring it; the policies implemented to increase determinacy end up producing the very indeterminacy they seek to combat. The search for ontological security, ends up undermining itself.

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1. https://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/India/document/papers/BM_MAN-IN-BANG-270813.pdf

2. The BSF agreed to cease the use of excessive force and did for some time. There is evidence that the number is now rising again (Odhikar, 2019).

3. In 2013 the arrest rate was 209, jumping to 2,455 in 2014 when the BJP came to power (The Wire, 2020). This suggests that the BJP has been more aggressive in border-policing, which is in line with their rhetoric and election promises. These figures also suggests that there was corruption in 2013, but that it was cut substantially from 2014. Even assuming corruption is still widely prevalent, they suggest that it is already greatly reduced.

4. There is little clarity on the standard of proof required under the Foreigner's Act. The NRC noted that voter IDs, Aadhaar Cards and passports were not acceptable proof, and for citizenship to be meaningful presumably the standard of proof required must be uniform. Because the standard is therefore high, it is hard for people to prove their citizenship 'beyond doubt'. In UK law, from which the Foreigner's Act derives, a claim to citizenship is established "if the evidence that it exists outweighs, however slightly, the evidence that it does not. Any requirement that applicants/claimants produce 'conclusive' evidence of their status, or establish their position

'beyond doubt', sets the standard too high" (Home Office, 2019: 5). This is not the case in India, where proving citizenship is thus much harder, and so many can be wrongly declared foreign.

5. Indeed, "the institutional agencies... entrusted with the task of developing these areas spends more than 70 per cent of its allocated budget on revenue expenditure for its staff, leaving meagre amount for development activities for the people residing in the char areas" (Chakraborty, 2011: 57).

6. Conclusion

1   In this study, I have sought to sketch a theory of ontological security that places questions of an ontological nature in the foreground. In doing so, I have tried to theorise ontological security in a way that navigates away from the tendency to reduce ontology and selfhood to identity. I have suggested that ontological insecurity is a function of national indeterminacy, where the ontological status of the national self is cast into doubt. In chapters four and five, I attempted to show empirically how such a theory might be demonstrated. In so doing, I suggested that Indian nationalisms, in as much as they posit a notion of Indian selfhood, have been defined in part by the constant need to navigate and banish indeterminacy. One vital indeterminacy is that of Bangladesh and Bangladeshis. Ever since Partition, what is now called Bangladesh has been understood as peripheral to Indian politics. In western South Asia, the challenge for India is constitutive of nationalism and statism. In the east, while there are constituting elements, the challenge is largely the opposite, in that far from bolstering nationalism and statism, it undermines them. In this way, it is perhaps from the east that the challenge to the nation and national selfhood is most pronounced.

2   The indeterminacy of nationhood, and the seeming pervasiveness of Bangladeshi migrants threaten to annul the selfhood of Indian nationhood. As I discussed in chapter two, the ontological status of a nation is a function of determinacy as the ability to differentiate it on a scale of equivalence. In chapters four and five I showed how this determinacy is constantly undermined. The inability to identify who is Bangladeshi and who is Indian has led to an anxiety that has manifested itself in changes to citizenship, the mass testing and re-testing of nationality, and the emergence of documentary regimes, to name but a few. I explored the anxiety that surrounded indeterminacy, the loss of a sense of national self, and of distinction therein. Moreover, much of chapters four and five charted the countering of indeterminacy, in the constant efforts to produce the border and the nation, in discourse, in bodies, in 'culture' and in ontic modalities.

3   I chose the case of India vis-à-vis Bangladesh, in part because it is one I know well, and in part because, as discussed, the anxiety surrounding national indeterminacy is perhaps especially prominent here. Nonetheless, all so-called margins operate similarly; they all undermine the coherence of ontological status and presence, and all selves built upon such a presence are necessarily haunted by the irreducible margin at

their centre. To this extent I would suggest that this account of ontological insecurity has wide applicability. Also clear from this study, I hope, is the utility of ontological insecurity in global politics. I have tried to show that ontological security is not just a theoretical indulgence, but is useful to the extent that it makes intelligible and links together a plethora of disparate processes, practices and institutions, all of which have very concrete repercussions. In India, tens of millions of people encounter very viscerally the nation's ontological anxiety on a daily basis.[1]

4   Beyond making the case of the importance of indeterminacy and of Bangladesh in the study of Indian politics and nationalism, this study aimed to 'put the ontological back into ontological security'. I have argued that most of the approaches to date have effectively reduced selfhood to identity, and that in the process ontological security has largely been reduced to identity security. Here, I have sought to refocus ontological security firmly around questions of ontology. I suggested in chapter two that such questions would concern not so much 'who are we?' but rather more philosophically, 'are we?'. It is, to use the language of Benedict Anderson, a concern over the imaginability of the imagined community that breaks down in the inability to specify it. Following Huysmans and Bauman, I interpreted ontological security as a challenge, not (merely) to a particular order, but to the possibility of ordering itself. In doing so I focused on the role of determinacy in creating ontological security. Determinacy is what underpins an ontological framework – it is, in Giddens' terms, what keeps at bay the anxiety of chaos.

5   In this case I have shown how such indeterminacy challenges the positivity and ontological status that nationalism accords the nation. In the indeterminacy of Indian and Bangladeshi nationals, the idea of India and Indianness is undermined, by revealing the irreducible margin at the centre. At this margin, the nation is either everywhere or nowhere. In a Baudrillardian sense, this is the collapse of the bar that gives positivity, meaning and value – that bar that divides life from death and thus guarantees ontology. In those instances where the Indian and Bangladeshi could not be discerned, the meaningfulness of the order that constitutes them as Indian and Bangladeshi, was threatened with annulment.

6   Implicit in much of this study has been the work of Derrida, and his concepts of *différance* and undecidability, among others. Derrida's project was, like that of many so-called post-structuralists, to interrogate ideas of presence, determinacy and sovereignty, which are seen to be central to the idea of ontology. Derrida's alternative is *hauntology* – itself a play on words. Hauntology displaces the presence of being that is implied in ontology, and emphasises instead that ontology is a produced effect of those acts that call it into being. The notion of ontology is therefore haunted by its incompleteness and by those indeterminacies that call it into question. It is this that has been the focus of this study, and that I have argued is central to the politics of nationalism. To this extent, I wonder if hauntological insecurity would not be a more apt term. Such a term might help to put at the centre of the study the impossibility of ever achieving ontological security, that has been noted by numerous contributors to this margin of international relations.

7   Lastly, I wish to address a potential concern. At times throughout this study, it may have appeared that I was diminishing individuality, difference and identity and suggesting that India and Bangladesh are the 'same'. Quite diametrically, I have sought to question the Manichean portrayal of these terms that the order of nationhood seeks

to impose, and to reinsert indeterminacy, not as a function of similarity, but as a function of differences that cannot be captured by difference within equivalence. Thus, in emphasising indeterminacy I have sought to move beyond the notion of identity and difference, not in the interest of homogenisation and denial but, conversely, in the interest of seeking to understand ontic realities that are themselves flattened and immeasurably reduced by the focus on identity, difference within equivalence and, ultimately, ontology. I have aimed therefore, not at the "violent erasure of cultural being, but rather the prior impossibility of culture being captured by, or submitting to, the order of ontological or semiological being" (Prentice, 2017: 1001). To this extent, I have positioned indeterminacy as a kind of radical alterity in its refusal to be pinned down by difference within equivalence, and by identity, meaning, value and presence. That is to say, indeterminacy refuses the terms of ontology – this is the cause of ontological insecurity – but also offers a place from which to critique the hegemony of ontology. There is no scope left in this study to explore such ideas further, but it is perhaps in the modalities and perspectives of those positioned as indeterminate that such a place could be located.[2]

NOTES DE BAS DE PAGE

1. And that is just regarding the anxiety posed by Bangladeshi indeterminacy. Anxiety over other indeterminacies (e.g. the codability of Hinduism) most likely mean that most people beyond that small minority of middle-class bonafide citizens, navigate on a daily basis a life under the spectre of the nation's ontological insecurity.

2. This has been pre-empted by the Subaltern Studies Collective, and by a number of anthropologists working along the border.

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