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Majority Minority: a comparative historical analysis of political responses to demographic transformation

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ABSTRACT

This study asks: What drives divergent reactions to demographic transformation? This question has grown in salience as the politics of the United States and Western Europe react to the prospect of becoming Majority Minority states — where the native constituency of people, defined by race, ethnicity, and/or religion, loses its numerical advantage in the territory of a sovereign state. Relatively little is known about how societies govern such demographic change in the course of global history such that we may anticipate and contextualise policy responses today. To address this question, I undertake a comparative historical analysis of six Majority Minority states — Bahrain (1920–2010), the Hawaiian Kingdom (1840–1900), Mauritius (1830–1880), historic New York State (1830–1880), Singapore (1850–1970), and Trinidad and Tobago (1840–2010). Earlier historical work and contemporary attitudinal analyses have focused on the ways that popular discontent, racism, and xenophobia drive responses. However, I find that that divergent political outcomes are subject to national institutions — specfically, whether the state equally enfranchises the newcomer population and whether the government's subsequent redefinition of the national identity is inclusive or exclusive.

Introduction

A Majority Minority state is one with sovereign control over immigration policy, where one constituency of people – defined by race, ethnicity, and/or religion – has lost its numerical advantage. The prospect of such a demographic scenario hangs over the contemporary social politics of the United States,[1] Canada, and numerous countries in Oceania and Europe, where large numbers of citizens are concerned about the effect of declining native fertility rates and rising immigration on national identity and character. These circumstances, it is thought, represent uncharted waters for social and political relations (Gest 2016; Allen 2017; Hopkins, Sides, and Citrin 2019; Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck 2018), and they have stimulated a search for pathways toward democratic coexistence and away from authoritarianism (inter alia, Galston 2018; Goldstone and Diamond 2019; but also Lijphart 1977, 1999). However, this discussion has heretofore been

INDUSTRIALIZATION
|
IMPORTATION OF LABOR
|
SEGREGATION

UNEQUAL ENFRANCHISEMENT   EQUAL ENFRANCHISEMENT

DEFINITION OF IDENTITY   DEFINITION OF IDENTITY

EXCLUSIVE   EXCLUSIVE   INCLUSIVE   INCLUSIVE   EXCLUSIVE   EXCLUSIVE

Bahrain   Singapore   Hawaii   New York   Mauritius   Trinidad

SUPPRESSION   RECONSTITUTION   CONTESTATION

Figure 1. Outcome pathways.

unmoored from historical study. In fact, as this journal issue demonstrates, there have been multiple Majority Minority transitions, and the historical record offers significant evidence about how such societies and their governments have responded. This study asks: What drives divergent political reactions to such demographic transformation?

To address this question, I undertake a comparative historical analysis of six states, in which the indigenous or native-born majority has lost its numerical advantage. These include Bahrain, Mauritius, and the four states examined in greater historical detail later in this journal issue – Singapore (by Frost), New York (by Hirota), Hawaiʻi (by Iijima), and Trinidad and Tobago (by Ramcharitar).[2] With such demographic transformations imminent, these societies pursued three different paths: (1) resist demographic change through suppression or cooptation; (2) reconcile through an inclusive redefinition of the nation; or (3) endure irresolvable social contestation. In a succinct review of these countries' histories – condensed from a deeper examination that extends into a consideration of their contemporary affairs – I find that these outcomes are contingent on whether the state equally enfranchises the newcomer population and whether its subsequent redefinition of the national identity is inclusive or exclusive. While inclusive redefinitions override some historic inequities (Hawaiʻi and New York), governments that pursue exclusive identities are confronted by latent or suppressed social tension in states with structurally unequal constituencies (Bahrain and Singapore) and overt contestation in states with equally enfranchised constituencies (Mauritius and Trinidad). See Figure 1.

Put another way, I find the state has two sequential choices: First, political leaders must decide whether they will:

(a) emphasise ethnic divisions and seek to establish the predominance of one constituency (whether it is a majority or minority);

  or

(b) minimise the salience of such social boundaries and try to construct an inclusive polity that provides equal opportunities for leadership and influence (Hawaiʻi and New York).

Should political leaders elect to emphasise divisions in the interest of one group's supremacy, a second choice is whether they will:

(c) formalise the marginalisation of subordinate groups by enacting discriminatory laws that, while affording the subordinated groups an economic role, reduce or remove the prospects for political power (Bahrain and Singapore);

  or

(d) sustain the veneer of equal opportunity and equal power, while relying on more subtle and informal discrimination to reduce the prospects for the empowerment of one constituency or another (Mauritius and Trinidad).

While these findings may appear intuitive at first glance, the role of government responses to demographic change plays a subordinate role in existing scholarship, which has largely been pursued by political psychologists and behavioralists who primarily focus on contemporary public attitudes. Immigration historians have studied the power of institutions in the management of demographic change (e.g. Fitzgerald and Cook-Martín 2014), but many analyses suggest the driving influence of popular discontent, racism, and xenophobia over government policy and rhetoric (e.g. Tichenor 2002; Lake and Reynolds 2008; McKeown 2008). To capture the variation in these policies, I catalogue five binary expressions of national identity employed by political actors that facilitate cross-cutting solidarities or inflame social tensions. These relate to (1) state ideologies, (2) the socialisation of youth, (3) the recognition of national cultural attributes, (4) the nature of commercial relations, and (5) the perception of national threats. These findings contextualise contemporary developments in the course of the history of Majority Minority states and provide a map of the critical junctures where social conflict may be averted.

Majority Minority societies

A Majority Minority country is a state with sovereign control over immigration policy, where one constituency of people – defined by race, ethnicity, and/or religion – has lost its numerical advantage. While in some cases numerical advantage is ceded to another

constituency, in other cases, it is ceded to multiple constituencies, leaving no majority group at all. Plurality and majority status are not one and the same.

In the cases studied here, Majority Minority societies emerged as the residual demographies of the British Empire's pursuit of free-flowing capital, commerce, and labour between its dominions. The arrival of settlers brought wars and disease epidemics that decimated indigenous populations. The trafficking of slaves then brought self-sufficiency and prosperity to colonial settlements with fewer local interdependencies. In parts of the Americas and Oceania, these events would solidify white majorities in a number of self-governing settler states and African-origin majorities across British territories in the islands around the Caribbean Sea and Indian Ocean. But it was the post-slavery innovation of alternatives to forced migration – indentured servitude, penal contracts, and 'assisted migration' – that brought large numbers of South Asians, East Asians, and others to every corner of the earth that forever altered the delicate demography of the small societies under consideration in this analysis.

While forced immigrants are not imposed on the societies that today face similar demographic futures (except with asylum seekers), there are parallels in the intensity of popular discontent currently expressed in the United States and Europe. Views about immigration, once considered a peripheral social issue, have become the litmus test for conservative politics (Kaufmann 2019). In 2018, one in four Americans and Europeans independently selected immigration as the most salient political issue for them (Pew Research Center 2018; Silver 2018). Political entrepreneurs have seized the fervour to transform electoral coalitions and to energise Far Right parties that blame the judiciary and bureaucracy's liberalism for the imposition of immigrants. Global migration, the product of liberal and democratic institutions in the modern era, has produced an environment that puts these institutions to the test.

Across all Majority Minority societies, however, popular conceptions of demographic change are contingent on the scope of national identity construction. Were identities broadened to include newcomers of different ethnicities or religions, the majority would have remained the majority, albeit a reconstituted majority. The alteration of identity constructions is not implausible; feelings of groupness and linked fate change over time and are conditional on context. However, in a study of twenty European countries, Sides and Citrin (2007) found that anti-immigrant sentiments are most associated with a desire for cultural unity, a fear of cultural pluralism. Sides (2016) later drew similar conclusions from a study of American voters who shifted their support from President Obama to President Trump. He found that they were motivated by a desire to preserve the Christian faith, deport undocumented immigrants, reduce immigration, and that they scored high on metrics of racial resentment. Indeed, as the following section exhibits, we know from contemporary social, psychological, and public opinion research that grave challenges hinder the path to coexistence and pluralism.

How do societies respond to demographic change?

Among social scientists examining the effects of demographic change, most focus on individual-level responses, and they find that a principal obstacle to coexistence is that, even when immigrants rank high on measures traditionally deemed central to assimilation, they are perceived by native individuals to be different. Scholars have historically conflated

economic mobility with assimilation (e.g. South, Crowder, and Pais 2008; Waters and Jiménez 2015), when little systematic evidence shows how objective gains in language, income, neighbourhood integration, or intermarriage translate into immigrants' and natives' subjective notions of insider and outsider statuses. For example, Turper et al. (2015) find that public support for immigrants in the United States and the Netherlands is impacted by educational and occupational credentials of potential immigrants. However, public support is not equivalent to belonging and group identification. Employing a conjoint survey, Schachter (2016) showed respondents two profiles of possible neighbours and asked them which of the two individuals they would rather have as a neighbour, and how similar they rated prospective neighbours to themselves. White Americans, she found, are generally open to relationships with immigrant-origin individuals, with the exception of black immigrants and black natives, and particularly undocumented immigrants. Yet white natives simultaneously view all racial minorities, regardless of citizenship and related characteristics, as very dissimilar to themselves. This disconnect suggests that for non-white groups, structural assimilation is occurring without increasing symbolic acceptance from the white established society.

Researchers have also found that social relations are conditioned by the intensifying pressures of demographic change, intolerance, and tribalism. Outten et al. (2012) randomly assigned a sample of white American respondents to two conditions: the first group viewed a graph of ethnic demographic figures for 2003, while the second group viewed 2003 demographic figures as well as projections for 2060 – the point at which white Americans were then estimated to no longer be the majority. The researchers found that 'participants in the future white minority condition reported feeling significantly more anger toward … and fear of … ethnic minorities than participants exposed only to current figures'. Additionally, whites who received the treatment of 2060 demographic projections reported feeling greater sympathy toward other whites than did those who received only the 2003 information.

When alerted to the growth of minority out-groups, social relations have also been found to be a platform for protecting and enhancing the in-group's position. Abascal (2015) randomly primed American respondents with information about Hispanic population growth and then tested the effect of the information on redistributive generosity. White people in the treatment condition contributed significantly more to white recipients than black recipients. Those assigned to the treatment condition also were significantly more likely to define their identity as 'white' rather than as 'American'. Craig and Richeson (2014) found that white participants who read about future American racial demographics expressed a greater relative preference to be in settings and interactions with other whites than racial minorities, when compared to those who did not receive the treatment. Like Abascal, they found that such implicit bias emerged even in reference to minority groups that are not primarily responsible for the dramatic increases in the non-white share of the total population.

Other researchers have used different techniques to simulate demographic change in order to test its effects on public attitudes. Prominently, Enos (2014) assigned a small number of Spanish-speaking individuals to board particular commuter train stations in homogeneously white communities in the Boston metropolitan area at the same time each day for two weeks to repeatedly expose the same commuters to a diversifying population. Enos found that respondents who waited on platforms with 'non-invasive Spanish-speaking people' favoured more exclusionary policies, indicating that threatening

behaviour is 'not a necessary component for the stimulation of exclusionary attitudes'. Notably, Enos recorded opinions after both three days and ten days. While opinions on both days were more exclusionary for the treatment group, opinions on Day 3 were more exclusionary than those on Day 10, indicating that longer exposure to an outgroup may moderate negative reactions and ultimately lead to comfort.

Of course, the process of becoming a Majority Minority society is one that lasts far more than ten days; it is a multi-decade, if not multi-century, process. Alas, despite substantial research about the political and social issues that arise when foreigners settle into a region hitherto associated with another (usually native) group, we know little about how governments respond when the majority status of that native group is threatened. In a well-known study of such a phenomenon, Weiner (1978, 371) examined the consequences of internal migration between Indian states and regions, particularly cases in which opportunistic migrants clash with natives unnerved by the subsequent alteration of social, economic, and political hierarchies. In conclusion, Weiner wrote: The challenge of a political leadership is to find a way of assisting those who are falling behind in the development process, without adopting policies that constrict the innovative, ambitious, creative elements of a society whose talents are essential if the entire country is to move forward.

As explored in the fledgling field of political demography, finding this balance is heavily subject to the actions of states (see Goldstone, Kaufmann, and Toft 2015). While governance by ethnic or religious minorities was common in premodern societies, the modern spread of democracy and popular sovereignty has engendered an expectation that majority ethnicities should hold power (Kaufmann and Haklai 2008). These expectations have led to social conflict in states confronting political matters related to indigenous ethnic minorities or majorities (Vanhanen 1999), but also states confronting political matters related to ethnic minorities of foreign origins that ascend to power (Kaufmann 2004), such as those considered here. The conclusions from these studies show the extent to which the state is both an actor and an arena in the migration-conflict nexus (Côté, Mitchell, and Toft 2018), and how the very idea of a majority is subject to state-driven constructions itself (see Gladney 1998).

Despite decades and centuries in each other's presence, significant divisions between ethno-religious groups characterise the few Majority Minority societies today, dimming hopes that simple repeated exposure promotes coexistence and reducing confidence in the state as an honest broker. However, a historical perspective reveals that other Majority Minority societies are characterised by relative harmony and even hybridity. From the review above, social scientists have come to understand human propensities in the face of demographic change; they are largely competitive and untrusting. However, we know little about why these predispositions are sometimes tempered to promote greater coexistence. This question begs a long-term examination at the national level to understand the ways social and psychological predispositions may be intermediated by differences in context, institutions, and leadership. To anticipate future national reactions to transformational demographic change, this study looks to the past.

Design and case selection

I study the histories of six representative cases with different configurations of relevant independent variables that may affect political relations since the one-time majority lost

its numerical advantage. Naturally, historical research is limited by the small selection of cases under consideration or, in this case, the small number of cases available. However, historical research is instructive when considering processes that require decades and centuries to gestate. Survey research can gauge reactions of modern samples, but how public opinion translates into institutional behaviour requires a long-term view.

To pursue this inquiry, I have defined a class of Majority Minority states that feature analogous demographic circumstances, despite distinct geographical, cultural, and regime contexts.[3] While New York is a subnational unit, as I detail below (and Hirota 2021 elaborates elsewhere in this issue), the state controlled immigrant admissions into and removals from its territory until 1882 – just like the other cases in the postcolonial era. Using secondary sources, I examine the history of each selected society and then undertake a structured comparison of these narratives to draw inferences about the range of intervening variables that comingle to drive different forms of social conflict. I am therefore able to observe potential causal factors, create typologies of progress, and determine what conditions present in a case activate different pathways. Even though the democracies introduce 'one person, one vote' elections, which makes demography more important for ethnic conflict, we nevertheless see similar backlash and attempts to manipulate demographic change across all the cases.

While I am unable to measure social conflict quantitatively, I differentiate between three principal outcomes across the cases under consideration – those that (1) resist the implications of demographic change through suppression or cooptation; (2) reconcile demographic change through an inclusive redefinition of the nation; and those that (3) endure irresolvable social contestation (see Table 1). In each society under study, the immigrant-origin newcomers are all from rather populous homelands with strong diasporas but also histories of subjugation in light of indentured servitude or poverty. And compared to the resident population they displace, they have different racial, ethnic, and/or religious backgrounds, and are subject to composite understandings of these backgrounds that broadbrush them into monolithic stereotypes (e.g. Indian Hindus or Irish Catholics). The six cases, classed by their social outcomes, cover a universe of responses and include:

Suppression

Bahrain

The demography of Bahrain, long a crossroads for the pearl trade, has for centuries reflected tensions between the Shias, who comprise a majority of its nationals, and the Sunnis, who have historically ruled the island with the backing of the British as a bulwark against the Persian Empire. Since the 1970s oil boom, as elsewhere in the Gulf Region, vast numbers of temporary labour migrants have grown to outnumber both sects of the national population and complicate the preexisting tensions. Driven by these admissions, the population of Bahrain nearly tripled between 1995 and 2017, from 559,000 to 1.5 million (Kapiszewski 2006). On the one hand, this demographic transformation has discomforted Bahrainis of all sectarian backgrounds, and the Kingdom has severely restricted access to citizenship to ensure that migrants do not receive access to the country's enormous, oil rent-backed subsidies and benefits. On the other hand, and unlike elsewhere in the Gulf, the government has also wielded these same citizenship laws to

Table 1. Variables.

	Controls			Independent variables							Outcome
Small Island Nations	Colonial Rule	Majority Minority Milestone	Original Population	Labour Source	Slavery	Current Regime Type	Immigration	Equality	Identity		Social Relations
Bahrain	British	~2008	Shia and Sunni Arab	South Asia, Sunni Arab	Limited	Constitutional Monarchy	Continuous	Unequal	Exclusive		Suppressed
Singapore	British	~1830	Malay	China, South Asia	Limited	Uncompetitive Republic	Continuous	Unequal	Exclusive		Suppressed
Hawai'i	American, British	~1890	Hawaiian	China, Japan, Philippines	No	Presidential Republic	Concentrated	Unequal	Inclusive		Reconstituted
New York	British, Dutch	~1880	English/ Dutch	Catholic Europe	Limited	Presidential Republic	Continuous	Equal	Inclusive		Reconstituted
Mauritius	British, French	~1861	Afro-Creole	India	Yes	Parliamentary Democracy	Concentrated	Equal	Exclusive		Contested
Trinidad	British, Spanish	~1995	Afro-Creole	India	Yes	Parliamentary Democracy	Concentrated	Equal	Exclusive		Contested

selectively naturalise Sunni Arab migrants as a buffer against the sectarian tensions that flared amidst the 2011 Arab Spring. Although Bahrain historically separated the ideas of numerical dominance from political dominance, the ruling government now uses global migration to bolster the position of its dominant sect. The result is a society characterised by social conflict, suppressed by a powerful state that placates Shia nationals with rent-backed subsidies and subordinates immigrants as a second-class constituency with limited rights and freedoms.

Singapore

In Singapore, the principally Chinese-origin leadership has struggled to rhetorically justify Chinese demographic dominance over the indigenous Malays and immigrant-origin Indians, as promoted by the British Empire during the nineteenth century. The Chinese sojourned in this tropical port, an island at the tip of Malaya, since the British arrival in 1819 and have sought to naturalise their presence as the necessary keepers of one of the world's most important centres of commerce. To sustain its success, Singapore's national founders insisted that the city-state needed to sustain its 'multiracial' harmony. However, the government has pursued this harmony by freezing its demographic distribution at levels recorded at the turn of the twentieth century. To do so, the city-state has used highly selective immigration admissions policies to compensate for declining fertility rates and ageing among the Chinese-origin community in the face of growing Indian and Malay constituencies. This *de facto* race-based selection squarely contradicts the country's meritocratic, race-blind doctrine. While Singapore has managed to both resist demographic pressures and significant social conflict, the government's awkward contortions to preserve Chinese hegemony have begun to foment the very anxieties and competition they were designed to prevent (see Frost 2021, this issue).

Reconstitution

Hawai'i

Before their annexation by the United States in 1898, the Hawaiian Islands were a multiethnic kingdom with a prosperous economy centred on its sugar plantations and midPacific harbour. Both to position itself geopolitically and ensure its crops were harvested, Hawaiian monarchs pursued relations with foreign governments by populating their cabinets and cane fields with foreigners. After the introduction of continental diseases killed two-thirds of the Hawaiian population by 1823[4], its share of the population was further reduced by the arrival of Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Portuguese, British, and American immigrants, most of whom were recruited by the Kingdom. From 1840 to 1898, the native Hawaiian population declined from a 97 percent majority to a 36 percent minority. And while some intermarriage (particularly with Chinese labourers) and relatively generous treatment of foreigners produced more harmonious interethnic relations during this period, it also produced an 1893 American-backed coup that was opposed by Native Hawaiians who – by this point – were without sufficient popular or military power to resist. One result of the American annexation was the segregation and suppression of native Hawaiian culture. This part-Hawaiian, multiracial, and 'non-white' underclass quietly preserved Native Hawaiian culture until a 1960s revival that is carried on today

by a multiethnic coalition of advocates in the face of American hegemony (see Iijima 2021, this issue).

New York

United States immigration admissions and removals were federalised only in 1882. In the preceding years, states like New York managed their own policies of selection and deportation the same way a sovereign state might do so. This left the New York Commissioners of Emigration responsible for the unprecedented amount of Irish people who entered between 1845 and 1854 – an influx that outnumbered all other sources of immigration to New York since 1776 combined. At the time, the state and city of New York were largely of English and Dutch origins, and the United States was being swept by a wave of support for the xenophobic Know Nothing movement and its nativist American Party, which scored election victories in many mid-nineteenth-century gubernatorial, congressional, and mayoral races. The backlash focused on the predominantly Catholic Irish – many of whom arrived as paupers and public charges. While there was a great deal of sabre rattling, there was very little action by the government to actually prevent immigrants' arrival and execute their removal. New York's immigrant population was by then a well-integrated voting bloc that was coveted by candidates as well as a labour force that was valued by powerful business interests – a model for future waves of newcomers. Beginning with this political incorporation, the Irish (along with Italians and other once-excluded groups) were eventually also incorporated into the American fraternity of whiteness by the 1960s, which both cemented their higher status and distinguished them from future waves of excluded immigrants (see Hirota 2021, this issue).

Contestation

Mauritius

A small island off the coast of southeastern Africa, Mauritius became inhabited when Dutch, French, and then British settlers imported slaves from Madagascar and Eastern Africa. In 1834, Mauritius became the earliest territory to introduce Indian indentured labourers in the world – the so-callled 'Great Experiment'. Within thirty years, Indians outnumbered the African freedmen and had completely displaced them on the sugar plantations. Many Indians would receive land at the conclusion of their indenture – a reward unavailable to the former slaves upon their emancipation that set the Indian community up for economic advantage in the decades thereafter when Indians and largely African-origin, Catholic Creoles were given the right to vote. As tensions between the two communities deepened into the twentieth century, Indian Hindus increasingly appealed to emerging Indian and Hindu nationalism and sustained diaspora links to their country of origin rather than reconcile with their African-origin countrymen. Hindu schools, missions, and associations reinforced their status and asserted their dominance in a country they quickly defined.

Trinidad and Tobago

The 1807 abolition of slavery and the 1838 emancipation of African-origin slaves led the British Empire to import indentured labour from India to Trinidad and Tobago's plantations, forever altering the two Caribbean islands' demography. Placed together as an

unintended consequence of British mercantilism, these two ethnic communities would evolve quite separately for a century until the colony's 1962 independence left them to govern one another with equal status. Afro-Trinidadian Creoles ruled for the country's first thirty years of sovereignty and have made fervent claims to the islands' cultural heritage. Indo-Trinidadians, however, have prospered economically, challenged such claims to authenticity, and have grown in numerical share and power thanks to the emigration of many Afro-Trinidadians to Britain, Canada, and the United States. With the two communities now comprising near equal, non-majority shares of the national population and a growing minority of mixed-race Trinidadians, many political matters have been interpreted through the narrow lens of ethnic supremacy with very slim margins. Suddenly, mundane issues such as immigration admissions, but also calypso and Carnival, assume symbolic meaning for the balance of power. The result is a society openly concerned with ethnic differences (see Ramcharitar 2021, this issue). It may be tempting to dismiss Majority Minority societies as an anomalous artefact of British imperial history that have emerged in a number of small island states with uniquely fragile population distributions. This would be wrong for two reasons.

First, it is not that Majority Minority demographies emerge only in these unique social ecosystems; it is that these demographies simply emerged there *first*. Countries like Australia, Canada, and the United States have arguably already passed the Majority Minority threshold if one thinks of the original majority in early nineteenth-century terms – Anglo Protestants. Today's 'white' majorities in these countries include numerous ethnicities that were excluded from earlier conceptions of whiteness, including the Irish, Italians, Portuguese, Greeks, Jews, Turks, Iranians, and Arabs, among others. The same is increasingly true in Belgium, France, and the Netherlands, which already have indigenous religious minorities and have experienced great influxes of people from their former colonial territories and the European Union.

Second, dismissing the study of Majority Minority societies also ignores important evidence about the constructed nature of national identity. If national identities are formed based on those who compose the nation, changing the composition of the nation, by definition, changes the national identity. Just as Trinidadian cuisine has embraced curry, Britain's national dish today is chicken tikka masala. Just as non-Chinese Singaporeans commonly understand expressions in Mandarin, Americans casually employ expressions in Spanish, Yiddish, and Italian. Just as the Hawaiian Kingdom created space for Buddhist temples and Christian missions, Canada has made provisions for shari'ah councils. While this does not necessarily mean that the popular conceptions of what it means to be a Briton, American, or Canadian changes, it does mean that the state will accommodate new norms and tolerate new expressions of difference. Adjustments and the incremental alteration of social boundaries lay bare the evolution of purportedly static national myths.

The state-level studies that follow not only clarify the connections that link cases of Majority Minority transitions but also reveal the unique local conditions that inform different governments' ultimate responses to disorienting demographic change. These nuances matter because they exhibit the way that local factors moderate or amplify global trends. However, the comparative histories are especially useful for their cross-national connections, which alert us in the present to the echoes in time.

Table 2. Majority minority societies in six stages.

Stage 1: Industrialisation of the British Empire
Stage 2: Importation of Labour
Stage 3: Segregation and Segmentation
Stage 4: Enfranchisement and Equality
Stage 5: Nativism and the Reconstruction of Identity
Stage 6: Political Backlash

Six stages

In each case, social histories follow a chronological sequence of six stages. The industrialisation of the British Empire galvanised the first steps toward Majority Minority societies. To accommodate new demand for agricultural and mineral commodities, the Empire found the labour in colonies inadequate and began to import it from elsewhere. To divide and control more unwieldy societies, the British (often with their national government partners) then segregated different ethnic groups and segmented the labour market. Eventually, the newcomers were integrated, and questions arose about the structural equality of immigrants in the eyes of the state. It is at this juncture that the cases under consideration truly began to diverge. For this reason, after reviewing the record of industrialisation, labour importation, and segregation, I focus much of my analysis on how states managed questions of equal status and the reconsideration of national identities – some to include the ascendant newcomers, others to distinguish themselves and exclude others (see Table 2).

Stages 1–3: industrialization, indenture, and segregation

Beginning in the early nineteenth century, the British Empire began to industrialise and shift its orientation to supplying a new global economy of free trade. The superiority of the Royal Navy led to the acquisition of new territories. Markets once oriented to serve Britain were scaled up to meet new demand from the hundreds of thousands of British colonists around the world and others outside the British Empire. This led the Empire's administrators in the resource-rich colonies to further commoditize agricultural and mineral products, which were of value both as raw materials and in the finished products of Britain's burgeoning textile, metalwork, and hardware industries. In Europe, these phenomena reoriented domestic economies, specialising labour markets, and displacing millions of subsistence farmers into rapidly urbanising cities.

Many of the case countries took on new value during this period. The British had only recently acquired Mauritius, Trinidad, and Tobago – the latter was only ceded by the French in the 1815 Treaty of Vienna and became a ward of Trinidad in 1889. Until this time, Mauritius had a rather diverse agricultural economy that produced coffee, timber, and rice, and wooded land in Trinidad was still being converted to farming. Trinidad's economy was highly underdeveloped, as the island's colonisation had begun only in the late eighteenth century. But soon, sugar production would take over in Mauritius and Trinidad, while planters in Tobago dedicated themselves to cotton. The xenophobic and isolationist Hawaiian Islands repelled the British and most other foreigners with unfriendly

landholding and trade laws until 1843, when the Hawaiian monarchy made concessions to obviate threats from Western powers, eager to access its whaling and sugar industries.

The industrialisation of the British Empire touched Singapore and Bahrain around the same period. Singapore's position on a strait between the Indian Ocean and South China Sea made it critical for British control of sea routes to East Asia when it was first acquired from the Johor Sultanate in 1819. And while it would become a critical crossroads for imperial commerce, its settlement grew with its agricultural production of pepper, gambier, and the discovery of tin in Malaya in the 1840s. In Bahrain, the British gained jurisdiction over all resident British subjects in 1861, and over all foreign subjects by 1906, as the island became a de facto protectorate of the Empire. At the time, there was a pearl-diving boom, and Bahrain was a source of lucrative customs that the British did not want to yield to the Persians or Ottomans. The island's true industrialisation, however, came with the 1929 discovery of oil and its bonanza in the 1970s.

After having been colonised by the British for two centuries, New York was very much integrated into the industrial history of the British Empire in the nineteenth century as a major importer of British manufactured products and receptacle for unwanted Irish people. Most Irish immigrants left voluntarily, but European governments and landlords also routinely paid the passage of paupers to North America as a means of addressing poverty and reducing public charges (See Klebaner 1961; Anbinder 2002; Duffy 2004; Moran 2004; Hirota 2018).

Just around the time when more labour would be required in all six cases, the British Empire cut off its most precious font of manpower – slavery. After slavery's abolition in 1807, British colonies emancipated millions of predominantly African-origin people over the course of the next thirty years. Initially, there were attempts to improve working conditions to make the practice of slavery more palatable in the face of new global norms of universal humanity. Many planters converted slaves into 'apprentices' to launder the exploitation of the arrangement. But ultimately, upon emancipation in the 1830s, most freed slaves fled the sites of their bondage. Rather than offer them fair wages, planters scrambled for an alternative source of cheap labour (Greene 1976, 261–262).

A new system, which capitalised on innovations in communication and transportation from one corner of the Empire to the other, replaced the exploitation of slavery with indenture. Imperial bureaucrats in London controlled a global web of local agents, recruiters, and colonial protectors that promised land and freedom once contractors completed their requried term. By this point, planters and imperial bureaucrats were dismissive of African labour and worried that even indentured Africans would attract the skepticism of antislavery activists. Instead, they pursued people elsewhere, some from Europe, others from Southeast Asia, but ultimately most came from India and a smaller number from China (Greene 1976, 261–262).

Some of the newcomers were political exiles, others were on penal contracts, but the vast remainder were labourers who sought new opportunity. Upon their arrival, they were almost instantly situated in opposition to indigenous peoples (in the case of Singapore and Hawaii) or the former slaves they replaced (in the case of Mauritius and Trinidad). While some of the contractors would return to their origins at the end of their term and reindenture elsewhere, many would settle in their original destinations. Indentured servants were offered marginally better labour standards by the plantation administrators, who considered 'Asiatics' and 'coolies' to be more docile and manageable and perhaps

higher in the nineteenth century hierarchy of races than Africans – setting the tone for future social tensions.

The residential segregation of migrants from natives, and the segmentation of labour markets that placed migrants and natives in separate industries, reinforced social boundaries and prevented the two constituencies from unifying to produce coalitions of solidarity. In the dominions of the British Empire, this was done overtly as a matter of economic and public policy. Separation was often justified by eugenicist logic that classified different ethnic groups according to racist judgments of civilisation and moral character, fostering resentment and competition for the Crown's favour. This blinded each constituency from understanding the circumstances of the other and subverted broad attempts to co-organise or rebel. The legacies of these divisions would endure for many generations and, in many cases, never fade across the cases under study.

Stage 4: enfranchisement and equality

Realisation of immigrants' enfranchisement and formal equality signalled to natives a change in the status of the migrant population – that they would be permanent, recognised as fellow nationals and, in some cases, granted exceptional, even advantageous treatment. Equal recognition is therefore a pivotal step in the course of Majority Minority social relations. Naturally, this took place in the three regions where democracies developed – Mauritius, New York, and Trinidad and Tobago – which each eventually mandated people's incorporation independent of their ethnic background. Even in cases in which the immigrant-origin newcomers did not benefit from special treatment, their enfranchisement challenged the status of native communities who placed value in their heritage and authenticity. Where democratic governments resisted the recognition of equal status, systems of stratification emerged that preserved such value.

In Mauritius, there has been formal equality between people of Indian and African origin effectively since emancipation freed Africans in 1835 and since the expiry of indentured contracts in the late nineteenth century. Literate, property-holding men could vote as early as 1790, while universal suffrage was introduced in 1959. Africans were initially granted their freedom at a time when people of Indian origin were largely subject to contractual obligations and restrictions in mobility. However, indentured servants were set up for economic and political advantage in what remained an agrarian economy when they were granted land of their own. Many of these allotments were located on planter's property with arable soil that yielded sugar cane, which Indians could then sell to the larger estates. Some Indian families were able to amass multiple and larger farms that elevated them to bourgeois status mere decades after their arrival. Meanwhile, most Africans fled to cities and towns to work menial jobs, separating them from their islands' principal source of prosperity and impoverishing them for generations thereafter. Reinforced by their access to land provisions but also by incipient Indian nationalism, Indians sought to distinguish themselves as racially superior under the nineteenth-century logics of civilisation and grow closer to the British government. The British also did little to facilitate interethnic harmony or bolster African Creoles. They were wary of African Creole loyalties to the Roman Catholic French and also sought to protect their relationship with India – their most populous and prosperous colonial possession.

In Trinidad, where many Indians accessed land in lieu of return passages and successful Indian merchants have been visible since the late nineteenth century, land ownership was not commonplace and certainly did not translate into social and political organisation. Indians' relatively late arrival, and the positioning of the Creole population in the urban centres, allowed Creoles to dominate control of civic and educational institutions. This outsized place in the public sector continued after independence but was met with a challenge. Indo-Trinidadians established their own institutions – news publications, religious organisations, political parties, and social associations – over the course of the twentieth century. During an oil boom from 1973 to 1983, Indians with small businesses began to acquire wealth. Using this new wealth to access education, they began to enter the professions (medicine, engineering, law, accountancy) in large numbers. By the 1990s, Indo-Trinidadians were also gaining more representation in government and law enforcement careers once the exclusive domain of African Creoles. Apart from the cultural, no sphere of Trinidadian society was out of bounds (see Ramcharitar 2021, this issue). The political sphere, guarded through gerrymandering, was sufficiently altered by 1995 to allow the Indian-led party into power through a coalition.

In Hawaii, integration and eventually intermarriage signalled the ultimate equality of foreigners and the dissolution of any sense of pure indigeneity. When immigrant Chinese, Filipino, and Japanese labourers completed their contracts, many settled in rural Hawaiian communities. While some were able to lease farms they dedicated to taro, rice, poi, and sugarcane, others acted as buyers, middle-men, and merchants. A significant number (particularly the Chinese) married native Hawaiian women, who inherited ancestral lands. White people from the United States and Europe also began intermarrying and serving in the Hawaiian government. From 1842 to 1880, white people comprised 28 percent of the Legislature despite making up only 7 percent of the population (McGregor-Alegado 1979). By 1910, intermarriage was so common that Census representatives included the ethnic classifications 'Asiatic-Hawaiian' and 'Caucasian-Hawaiian' alongside 'Hawaiian'. While this hybridity transcended the social boundaries that plagued other Majority Minority societies, it also structured American policies of assimilation that sought to eliminate the native Hawaiian language and culture. Americans secured advantages for the white planter class and grouped Hawaii's mixed population as an undifferentiated 'colored' underclass that was to be re-educated and civilised. While the Hawaiian Kingdom was pressured into granting foreigners formal equality, American colonisers felt no such pressure and offered few concessions (see Iijima 2021, this issue).

Since independence, the Singaporean government also sought to assimilate its population – but into a civic rather than ethnic or racial identity – in the interest of assuaging social tension and creating the veneer of equality. After riots in 1964, the government justified authoritarian control over the press, freedom of assembly, and freedom of speech as necessary measures to prevent an unravelling balkanisation. The ruling People's Action Party (PAP) soon dedicated itself to breaking up ethnic enclaves and recalibrating ethnic distributions in schools, electoral districts, and housing to reflect the country's Chinese-majority demographic 'balance'. Critics have argued that such measures simply diluted dissent and cemented PAP rule by extending the Chinese majority to all parts and sectors of the city–state. In the 2011 general election, opposition MPs attracted nearly 40 percent of the popular vote – their largest share since independence – but won a

mere six seats (6.9 percent) in the Singapore Parliament (BBC 2011). Political inequality became plain for all to see (see Frost 2021, this issue).

No such veneers belie the Bahraini political context. The *kafala* system overtly and systematically uses citizenship to distinguish and disenfranchise foreigners, which is why recent upsurges in naturalisation have raised so many eyebrows. While naturalisation rates are near-zero in every other GCC state, Bahrain offered citizenship to 1.5 percent of its foreign-born population in 2011 (Boucher and Gest 2018). The selective grants of citizenship not only offered equal access to the state's generous subsidies and entitlements; they also suggested the equal status of people whom nationals came to believe were subordinate. It is arguable whether this loss of national distinction has irked Bahraini Shias more than its thinly veiled objective to alter the country's sectarian demography. Though the vast majority of foreigners remain highly precarious and subject to contingent labour contracts, the exceptions have undermined social stability.

Again, the Irish in New York offer a contrast. Without any such constraints on their numbers and integration in a still-growing country, the Irish wasted no time pursuing equal status. Even before the potato famine–induced large-scale immigration, the Irish comprised half the priests in the diocese and a majority of New York City's parishes (Dolan 2008). During this period, Archbishop John Hughes helped establish a relationship with the Democratic Party such that when thousands more Irish arrived between 1845 and 1854, a powerful political bloc was created to counter the tide of xenophobia that swept through the United States in the late nineteenth century. During this period, the Irish pushed for the founding of the Commissioners of Emigration and incentivized Democratic leaders to pursue pro-immigrant policies to solicit their votes, or at least avoid their ire (Ernst 1994; Hirota 2017). As new immigrants of Italian, Jewish, and Chinese background entered the United States later in the nineteenth century, the Irish had already established a number of institutions that protected immigrant interests and facilitated their equal enfranchisement (see Hirota 2021, this issue). They were also deeply entrenched into a New York political machine that worked off an elaborate, overt system of patronage (Erie 1990; Galway 2014).

Stage 5: nativism and the reconstruction of identity

Immigrant-origin people's equal status and/or incorporation into their new societies eventually inspired nativist revivals that sought to reconstruct the national identity in the face of its dissolution. The arrival of immigrants prompts a search for national consciousness – a sense of 'we' to confront the seemingly unified, distinct sense of 'they'. To substantiate demands for immigrants' integration, the incumbents feel an obligation to clarify the identity and culture to which immigrants must integrate. The results are often cacophonous, contradictory, and constructed understandings of heritage that scramble for a narrative, usually not found. While in some contexts, native majorities strove to exclude the newcomers, in others, reconstituted identities were built to incorporate the newcomers without losing long-established foundations.

This story has been repeated over and over with each successive wave of immigration into the United States. The arrival of Irish Catholics into New York aroused stereotypes of Irish destitution and complacency and stoked paranoia about a Papist takeover by people with foreign allegiances. This contrasted with an aspiring American

self-image rooted in a creed of independent, industrious Protestantism. Nativist activists, such as William C. Brownlee and Samuel F. B. Morse, published anti-Catholic propaganda to 'warn our Protestant friends of the insidious Jesuitical working of that abomination, showing its demoralizing, debasing character' (Bennett 1995, 39; Hirota 2018). The city became a haven for Irish and immigrant life, defying the xenophobia extant elsewhere in the United States and even elsewhere in New York State. This came to a head in May 1857 when the Irish-dominated New York City Municipal Police fought the state legislature-backed Metropolitan Police, who were attempting to arrest Mayor Fernando Wood on corruption charges, in front of City Hall. In the face of new influxes of Jewish and Chinese people later in the nineteenth century, however, the diminished Anglo American majority calculated to adopt the Irish into the fraternity of 'whiteness' in order to preserve its numerical advantage (Burrows and Wallace 1999; Anbinder 2016).

It is precisely this sort of American disorder that the governments of Bahrain and Singapore sought to avoid by ensuring that the national character is never in question. While the Bahrainis have historically limited who may naturalise into the indigenous identity, the Chinese in Singapore have sought to naturalise themselves as the rightful inhabitants of the otherwise Malay region. Despite Chinese rule and demographic hegemony, the Singaporean government has recast the city-state's history as the triumph of a 'multiracial' society founded on 'balance' in museums and textbooks. Wary of the island's fragile demographics, Bahrainis initially recruited labourers from other Arab countries during the 1970s oil boom to preserve the island's Arab national character. Even though these migrants were ineligible for naturalisation, the kingdom feared a revolt in the name of the era's pan-Arabism. South Asians were deemed to be a more servile replacement; they lacked other Arabs' sense of entitlement but were largely of Sunni Muslim backgrounds. When it was revealed that a growing number of new Sunni Arab immigrants were naturalised and suddenly so entitled, Bahrain would experience massive demonstrations in 2009 and 2011 (Alshehabi 2014).

In the face of demographic change in Trinidad, conflict over the national character played out in public institutions and local newspapers, the domain of the incumbent African Creoles. The country's principal twentieth-century periodical, *The Guardian*, was the primary battleground. Debates over identity and equality have raged, intensified after Basdeo Panday – Trinidad's first Indian-origin Prime Minister – and the United National Congress (UNC) formed a coalition government in 1995. There were accusations of racism and stereotyping, from references to the UNC victory ('Chutney Rising') to disparities in access to education; there were questions of national symbolism, from the nomination of the steel drum as the National Instrument to divisive lyrics in calypso music; and there were Creole attempts to delegitimize an outright UNC majority in 2000. This took place amidst an Africanization of Creole culture, in which some emphasised their transnational connections in the face of local diversification. During this period, Trinidad-American professor Selwyn Cudjoe formed the National Association for the Empowerment of African People (NAEAP), which formed an umbrella for existing pockets of Afrocentrists, and Afrocentric ideologies that had persisted from the Black Power revolution of 1970s. The NAEAP embraced traditional African dress, initiated resistance strategies like a 'buy black' campaign, and argued for reparations in light of

Table 3. Identity binaries.

Pivot to coexistence	Binary	Pivot to inflammation
The production of universalist, transcendent ideologies – and the creation of an inclusive national identity:	*Ideology*	The production of ideologies of inferiority and favouritism – and the creation of an exclusive national identity:
(a) intermarriage (b) religion to unite (c) socialism (d) labour solidarity (e) authoritarian ideology		(a) residential segregation (b) religion to divide (c) stratification (d) supremacy (e) eugenics
Inclusive socialisation:	*Socialisation*	Exclusive socialisation:
(a) national language policy (b) universal conscription (c) school integration (d) textbooks		(a) national language policy (b) selective conscription (c) school segregation (d) textbooks
Promotion of inclusive national cultural attributes:	*Culture*	Promotion of exclusive national cultural attributes:
(a) music (b) cuisine (c) sport (d) tradition and custom		(a) politics of memory/truth (b) invigoration of historical disputes (c) tradition and custom
Inclusive commercial experience:	*Commerce*	Exclusive commercial experience:
(a) market interdependencies (b) reduction of inequality (c) distribution of state resources		(a) labour market segmentation (b) racialised poverty (c) politics of reparation and affirmative action
Focus on sources of external threat to produce inclusion:	*Threat*	Focus on sources of internal threat to produce exclusion:
(a) war (b) encroachment (c) pan-ethnic political movements		(a) census politics: gerrymandering and representation (b) racialised partisanship

historical slavery and colonial oppression. Each such effort constructed a Trinidadian national character that was foremost African in origin (see Ramcharitar 2021, this issue).

Many native Hawaiians formed civic organisations to protest the end of isolationism and the various concessions made by the Kingdom to foreign governments from the 1840s until its annexation in 1898. By then, there were few venues to express their dissent and fewer native Hawaiians remaining. The American government imposed a draconian assimilation regime that, likening native Hawaiian culture to savagery, prohibited the use of its language and banned *hula* rituals in an attempt to civilise its people. Near extinction, these cultural components survived in private homes where they were practiced as surreptitious acts of protest. During the anti-establishment and anti-colonial 1960s, Hawaiian culture experienced a revival that would produce the reinvigoration of Hawaiian nationalism. After decades of hiding their unpalatable Hawaiian backgrounds,

people of mixed Hawaiian descent embraced their heritage and engaged in projects that reclaimed ancestral lands, returned fishponds and farmland to their original states, founded Hawaiian language schools, danced *hula*, and voyaged using traditional canoes and wayfinding navigation to demonstrate the sophistication of early Hawaiian civilisation. Because the Hawaiian population was by this point largely of mixed, multiracial descent, the nativism was an unusually (but necessarily) inclusive movement with a largely inclusive identity (see Iijima 2021, this issue).

Identity binaries

From this comparative analysis arise five key identity binaries that push toward a politics of inclusion or exclusion (see Table 3). These binaries help explain the way that New York and Hawai'i have ultimately evaded divisive social tension, while Bahrain, Mauritius, and Trinidad are defined by such tension. Interestingly, Singapore has constructed an ostensibly inclusive identity that distracts from a social structure rigidly defined by race.

The first binary relates to the use of inclusive or exclusive **state ideologies** that unite or divide a multiethnic population. Since Lee Kuan Yew and his deputies founded the People's Action Party in 1954, its core principle has been that the 'multiracial' city–state belonged equally to 'one united people regardless of race, religion or language'. This contrasts sharply to the manner in which Bahrain guards the image of and access to its kingdom – a state derived from an indigenous nation, which hosts guest workers at its discretion.

The second binary relates to the **socialisation** of children into inclusive or exclusive state programmes with normative instruction. Similarly, Singapore and Bahrain provide a useful disparity. The Singaporean government has proactively sought to define a universal, civic, national identity grounded in the use of English, compulsory national service for men, and an acknowledgement of the city-state's hybrid diet. Bahrain barely attempts to socialise migrants. They are admitted under two-year renewable contracts – biennial reminders of their contingency – and migrants' children are admitted on the basis of demonstrated ability to financially support them. Meanwhile, by keeping migrants in segregated neighbourhoods and quarantined dormitories, the government ensures no socialisation will take place anyway.

The third binary relates to the promotion of **cultural attributes** that either transcend or reinforce social boundaries. Hawaii's recent cultural revival has been powerful because it has welcomed all who are interested in reinvigorating the archipelago's ancestral traditions. This is both a strategy for inclusion and a necessity in light of the extent of intermarriage in Hawaiian society. The revival's popularisation and commercialisation has also made it appear more innocuous to those who cannot trace their heritage to the kingdom. Alternatively, while the Trinidadian government's tight embrace of the annual Carnival has been similarly popularised and commercialised, its political effect has been to alienate many Indian-origin Trinidadians from the country's purported heritage (Rohlehr 2004, 131–139).

The fourth binary relates to a **system of commerce** that either reproduces social disparities or segregation in the economic sector or overlooks them for the sake of mutual benefit. Across all the cases, commercial transactions indeed bring together different constituencies in a manner that transcends social and political divisions. However, the

segmentation of the labour market early in the histories of Mauritius, Trinidad, and Bahrain have held consequences. In Trinidad and Bahrain, the private and public sectors have been historically separated on ethnic and national lines. This severely constrains the opportunities for different constituencies to interact in encounters of mutual dependency. In New York, Irish civic incorporation facilitated their economic incorporation thanks to vast systems of bartering and patronage run through the church and state.

Finally, the fifth binary relates to whether the state's **identified threats** are external, and thereby unifying, or internal, and thereby divisive. Despite the unignorable presence of British colonisers over time, Bahrain, Mauritius, and Trinidad have all principally focused their attention on internal threats to the respective constituencies' ethnic supremacy and claim to rightful power. In the case of New York, the Irish benefited from the arrival of other immigrants whose religious and ethnic differences distracted Anglo Protestants from their own and ultimately made the Irish appear relatively familiar (Anbinder 2002, 2016). Similarly, any resentment harboured against Asians in Hawai'i was eventually superseded by resentment for American colonisers'.

Stage 6: political backlash

Political backlash is merely the translation of nativist anxiety into discriminatory regimes, proxy debates, and other grasps for social control. For control is at the core of all nativism under circumstances of swift demographic change. Nativists seek to control the demographic distribution, the means of violence, the national culture and, if nothing else, the historical narrative. This is why, when confronted by the arrival and integration of the Other, the incumbent constituency invokes a retelling of history. Nostalgia exudes a sense of predictability, but also allows the storyteller to reframe the significance of past events and attributes. It hits the brakes on unwieldy social change. This backlash takes place concurrently with the rise of nativism and, across the six cases, takes numerous forms.

Immigration policy is a primary policy domain for backlash because immigration was, in all cases, the core driver of the demographic change in the first place. Governments recruit those immigrants deemed to be of desirable origins to reinforce their dominance and oppose the naturalisation of others. In Trinidad, the People's National Movement (PNM) was accused of overlooking the unauthorised entry of African-origin people from other Caribbean islands. In Singapore, the government has been accused of altering its standards to facilitate the admission of people of Chinese origins. Just as Bahraini Shias have protested the naturalisation of Sunni Arabs in the twenty-first century, native Hawaiians resisted the naturalisation of Europeans and Americans as the kingdom first opened to foreign commercial interests in the mid-nineteenth century. Often, governments selectively deported individuals in the interest of making a public demonstration against certain groups. While this tactic was less common in New York, where the Irish were quickly entrenched in municipal agencies, it was very common in the nearby Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Where immigration cannot turn back the demographic clock, in election-based systems, nativists turn to the electoral institutions that determine how and where power is distributed. Naturalisation may determine who has the right to vote and be counted. However, governments can also amend voting rights, revise the Census rules, and alter

constituency districts (gerrymander) to mitigate the political impact of demographic change. Each of these techniques was employed in a Trinidadian public sphere in which all decisions were perceived to be zero-sum. In Singapore, policies of residential balance also served to ensure that there were no significant concentrations of Malay- or Indian-origin people to organise dissent or support the opposition party. In Mauritius, a 2011 Truth and Justice Commission detailed the way that Mauritius' Creoles were disproportionately subject to inadequate housing, illiteracy, and manual labour positions, while being underrepresented in certain business sectors and politics. These actions become particularly contentious in contexts where partisan differences have become racialized – where parties formally or informally represent and pursue certain ethnic constituencies' interests.

Further, backlash can simply take place to reassure native communities of their social status. These are the politics of symbolism, in which solidaristic rhetoric bonds the endangered constituency, in which political actions may change one life but comfort hundreds of thousands. The Mauritian government ensured that the Aapravasi Ghat – the harborside depot in Port Louis that processed the arrival of hundreds of thousands of Indian indentured servants – was the island's first UNESCO World Heritage Site, instead of Le Morne peninsula, which long sheltered African maroons. In Hawai'i, after an 1881 world tour to promote bilateral relations in the face of domestic nativism and foreigners' colonial ambitions, King Kalākaua launched a number of programmes to promote the prestige of the Hawaiian national identity. He revived the public *hula* performances, built the 'Iolani Palace, commissioned an iconic Kamehameha statue, and held a formal coronation ceremony (Quigg 1988; Kamehiro 2009). He also sponsored Hawaiian natives to attend many of the world's leading universities and established initiatives to document Hawaiian genealogy, science, and the arts. A century later, native Hawaiians have personally pursued similar symbolic acts as of nationalist resistance behind a more civic – rather than ethnic – identity. In Trinidad, Creole-led governments tightly embraced the Trinidad Carnival. Though a universal festival, Carnival is culturally African and Christian with its embrace of Afro-Caribbean music, costume, and calypso. Successive governments consistently increased funding for the annual event and turned two-day celebrations of Afro-Caribbean culture into a global expression of the Trinidadian national character (Ramcharitar 2020a).

One truth emerges across all these examples of contentious, symbolic politics: by the time societies engage in nativism, it is often too late to alter the state's demographic future. Indeed, backlash only takes place when it is already recognised that the native or incumbent constituency's majority status is under threat. The backlash that ensues anyway is not merely futile; it often poisons social relations for the years and decades to come.

Conclusion

It is thought that smaller societies are better positioned to peacefully manage ethnically, racially, or religiously diverse populations because they are more socially interconnected and more collectively vulnerable to external threats (Lijphart 1977, 1999). While certainly none of the six cases we consider here experienced civil war, the historical evidence demonstrates that none was without social tension and anxiety about demographic

Table 4. Descriptive overview of stages.

	Industrialisation	Labour Import	Segregation	In/Equality	Identity	Relations
Bahrain	Pearls, Oil	Continuous: Sunni Arab, South-Asian Sunni	Kafala system; Segmented public and private sector	Selective Naturalisation	Exclusive nationality attainable through royal authority	Tiered society; Suppressed Shia dissidence
Singapore	Tin, Gambier, Commerce	Continuous: Chinese, Tamil, Indian	Enclave-based settlement; Kapitan governance system	Bifurcated, racialized visa system	Adherence to ethno-racial quotas	Housing, education, immigration, society structured by race
Hawaii	Sugar, Whaling	Concentrated: Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Portugese	Plantation labour camps; Restricted land ownership	Subordination of 'colored' populations; Unions	Intermarriage, diffused native Hawaiian heritage	Inclusive, anti-hegemonic spirit of Aloha
New York	Manufacturing, Commerce	Continuous: Irish, Italian, Jewish, German	Residential segregation; Bloc mobilisation	Early enfranchisement and political power	Incorporation of the Irish and Italians into whiteness	Region-contingent 'nation of immigrants'
Mauritius	Sugar, Coffee	Concentrated: Indian	Land grants after indenture; Mobility restrictions	Cross-ethnic voting rights	Pan-Africanism; Indian nationalism	Racialized partisanship and poverty
Trinidad	Sugar, Cotton	Concentrated: Indian	Land grants after indenture; Urban rural divide	Cross-ethnic voting rights; Labour socialism	Pan-Africanism; Creole nationalism; Indian nationalism	Racialized partisanship and poverty

change either. However, they clearly feature divergent outcomes: Bahrain and Singapore suppressed social tensions to facilitate peaceful coexistence and sustain Sunni Arab and Chinese control, respectively. Hawaiʻi and New York ultimately reconstituted the image of their societies to regroup a mixed-race underclass in Hawaiʻi and amalgamate a 'white' ruling class in New York. Meanwhile, democracies in Mauritius and Trinidad succumbed to tempting incentives to exploit latent social tensions and harvest them for short-term electoral advantage.

With such variations in outcomes, despair and conflict are not structurally inevitable. Countries can choose whether they want to have peace or conflict; Majority Minority relations are – at their core – governed. Focusing on such government actions, I find that divergent outcomes are contingent on whether the state equally enfranchises the newcomer population and whether its subsequent redefinition of the national identity is inclusive or exclusive. While inclusive redefinitions override historic inequities (Hawaiʻi and New York), governments that pursue exclusive identities are confronted by latent or suppressed social tension in states with structurally unequal constituencies (Bahrain and Singapore) and overt contestation in states with equally enfranchised constituencies (Mauritius and Trinidad). (See Table 4 for an overview.)

More simply, the state has two sequential choices: First, political leaders must decide whether they will:

(a) emphasise ethnic divisions and seek to establish the predominance of one constituency (whether it is a majority or minority);

    or

(b) minimise the salience of such social boundaries and try to construct an inclusive polity that provides equal opportunities for leadership and influence (Hawaiʻi and New York).

Should political leaders elect to emphasise divisions in the interest of one group's supremacy, a second choice is whether they will:

(c) formalise the marginalisation of subordinate groups by enacting discriminatory laws that, while affording the subordinated groups an economic role, reduce or remove the prospects for political power (Bahrain and Singapore);

    or

(d) sustain the veneer of equal opportunity and equal power, while relying on informal discrimination to reduce the prospects for the empowerment of the subordinated constituency (Mauritius and Trinidad).

A further secondary alternative, unseen in these cases, is where:

(e) political leaders seek to wholly subordinate the opposing constituency, even with coercion, if required.

Importantly, the evidence exhibits how states are not bound by their prior course when the majority and minority compositions change. That is, even states with prior structural inequality can indeed become inclusive (e.g. Hawaii), while states that had enjoyed formal structural equality can turn conflictual if the majority elects to impose discriminatory policies to protect their political dominance when their demographic advantage wanes (e.g. Trinidad). This does not mean that formal legal foundations of equality are irrelevant. Indeed, where they are in place, they produce senses of entitlement to equal protection and opportunity that make populations more conscious of violations and more likely to make claims of the state. They may also require the state concerned with ethnic predominance to rely on informal – often cultural – means. Where they are absent, they produce lower expectations and less likelihood of confrontation, at least in the short run. However, such legal foundations do not necessarily predict whether or not the state will be or remain inclusive. And they do not prohibit the eventual development of a sense of entitlement and status among historically subordinated populations.

The conditional determinacy of political institutions is important to the contemporary moment, when divergent outcomes are beginning to emerge inside the same state. Differing responses to demographic change characterise different regions inside of Australia, Britain, Canada, Germany, Switzerland, and the United States. Such regions – some of which are semiautonomous – are subject to the same institutions but feature local governors who have responded to demographic changes in divergent manners. Many regions with large populations of immigrant-origin, ethnic minorities have become more inclusive and adaptive to demographic changes. Others, particularly in regions that are predominantly white, have sought to preserve their dominance – often employing the same (albeit devolved) identity binaries outlined in Table 3.

Still, one problematic trend appears nearly universal. Across all the cases I consider, governors demonstrated a propensity to appeal to old, colonial ideologies and hierarchies to justify their status rather than defy these legacies and construct new social systems. The various nations populating the different states examined here are frequently defined by colonial constructions, even in modern times. Long after the British left America, perceptions about the problematic character of Irish Catholics endured. Pan-Africanism and Indian nationalism remain powerful in Trinidad and Mauritius to this day. Bahrain and Singapore continue to fulfil British visions for them to serve as useful crossroads for regional commerce in the neoliberal global economy. These various societies asserted their territoriality as postcolonial states but maintained a sticky colonial mindset. This suggests that, in the contemporary era, historical tropes and imaginaries are unlikely to suddenly disappear.

The pursuit of harmony therefore lies in the state's recreation of the boundaries of such social hierarchies to make them unconditional on birthright or to redefine the lines of national distinction. Many of the case societies have managed to preserve the dominance or self-determination of one ethnic group over another. But the question remains: at what cost? Bahrain is characterised by a draconian system of segregation. Singapore artificially touts multiracialism while preserving Chinese hegemony. Indians and Africans in Trinidad have pursued separate agendas to an unsatisfying draw. On the other hand, native Hawaiians lost control of their kingdom but gained a social stability grounded in anti-imperialistic reverence for their ancestral past and sublime hybridity. Taking two steps

forward in Majority Minority societies, it seems, requires the state to first take one step back.

Notes

1. The United States Census (2018) estimates that a mix of ethnic minorities will outnumber the non-Hispanic white American population by 2045. The school-aged American population will be 'Majority Minority' by 2020, and individual regions have not featured a white Protestant majority for decades. More than half of America's major cities are now composed of majorities of Latinos and other non-white ethnicities (Frey 2018). While a number of scholars have questioned the validity of these projections in light of future policy shocks and changes in self-identification, particularly among Latinos and multiracial people (Alba 2016; Myers and Levy 2018; Prewitt 2018), it is clear that these projections have framed popular understandings about the future of American society (Hopkins, Sides, and Citrin 2019).
2. A justification for the case selection appears in a later section.
3. There are not many other Majority Minority sovereign countries. From my review, these include Fiji, Guyana, Kuwait, Qatar, Suriname, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Fiji, Guyana, Suriname are structurally similar to Mauritius and Trinidad, given the arrival of indentured labourers from South Asia and Java. However, it is notable that Indians displaced indigenous Fijians, rather than the descendants of African slaves, and Suriname has a Dutch colonial history and no ethnic majority. Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE generally resemble the Bahraini experience. However, they lack Bahrain's sectarian politics between native Sunni and Shia constituencies.
4. It is worth noting that a share of the population loss was also due to the emigration of Hawaiian sailors.

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