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October 9, 2024

Search Committee
School of Politics, Economics & Global Affairs
IE University, Paseo de la Castellana,
259, Madrid, Spain

Dear Search Committee,

I am writing to apply for the position of Assistant Professor in IE University's School of Politics, Economics & Global Affairs. I am currently a PhD candidate in Political Science and Agricultural & Applied Economics at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, expecting to complete my dissertation in the spring of 2025. Additionally, I am a pre-doctoral fellow on the POLARCHATS ERC Project at the Polarization, Identity, and Misinformation (PIM) Lab, hosted by the Instituto Carlos III-Juan March (IC3JM). My research centers on political institutions and the challenges they face, with a particular empirical focus on South Asia. In particular, I am pursuing two interlinked research agendas: one on the effects of various institutions on political selection, and the other on contemporary institutional challenges such as misinformation and climate change.

My dissertation focuses on how institutions shape political representation. In my job market paper, I focus on electoral quotas designed to increase the representation of historically marginalized groups. Over 80 countries have implemented some form of quotas, but most target either gender or ethnicity, even though individuals have multiple, overlapping identities. This raises an important question: Do efforts to improve representation along one dimension—such as ethnicity—affect representation along another, like gender? For instance, does increasing the representation of ethnic minorities inadvertently reduce female representation? To explore these potential spillovers, my paper examines how quotas for marginalized ethnic groups affect women's representation. I argue that ethnic quotas can influence women's representation if gender norms vary by social status. To empirically test this, I use a novel design that leverages quasi-random variation in the assignment of quotas for council member seats in rural Maharashtra. I find that quotas for marginalized caste groups not only increase women's representation on the ballot but also in political office. The evidence suggests these effects are mainly driven by factors consistent with my theory, i.e., gender norms are more favorable for women from marginalized caste groups, allowing them to participate in electoral processes. This paper demonstrates how social norms moderate the effects of institutional design on representation.

In the second paper, I examine how electoral laws shape political candidacy, specifically focusing on India's two-child policy, which disqualifies citizens with more than two children from running for local government office. Since political officeholders significantly influence the communities they govern, these laws were designed to shape social norms around family size. I leverage state-level variations in the adoption of this law and employ a difference-in-differences approach to analyze its impact on political candidacy among Muslims, India's largest religious minority and one of its most marginalized groups. I find that the fertility limits significantly reduces the likelihood of Muslims contesting local elections. Drawing on primary data from phone surveys with over 500 village politicians in Maharashtra, I argue that the decline in Muslim candidacy is largely driven by the social costs of deviating from community norms and the externalities due to the imperfect enforcement of these laws. This paper underscores states' efforts to shape social norms through

electoral laws may come at the cost of the representation of marginalized groups. In the third paper of my dissertation, I explore the implications of how decentralized governments elect their executives. While existing literature extensively addresses the incentives and performance of government heads under different voting systems, little attention has been paid to legislatures. I examine how changes in voting systems affect who enters, stays, or exits the electoral race for the office of legislature, with a particular focus on the impact on historically marginalized groups.

In addition to my dissertation, I work on projects that study contemporary challenges to institutions such as misinformation and climate change. These include co-authored research that implements a randomized controlled trial (RCT) across 583 villages, targeting over 12,000 students in Bihar (India) to assess whether a sustained, classroom-based media literacy intervention can counter the spread of misinformation. Another project uses a two-arm vignette experiment to explore how attributes of information—such as social norms and the identity of the transmitter—affect the dissemination of misinformation. I also working on a new project that examines the impact of extreme polling day temperatures on voter turnout and electoral outcomes in state assembly elections across India.

My research, coursework, and teaching experience at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, along with my previous teaching experience in India, have shaped my teaching philosophy, which is grounded in the belief that talent can be nurtured. I believe students from all backgrounds and abilities can be trained to achieve their goals. Throughout my career, I have actively engaged with undergraduate, graduate, and mid-career students, and I am prepared and eager to teach a wide range of courses in political economy, comparative politics, and quantitative research methods at both undergraduate and graduate levels. I am particularly excited to offer a course on the political economy of development. Additionally, I am also excited by the prospects of contributing to the further development of the curriculum with a focus on contemporary challenges like climate change and misinformation (fake news). I can also offer specialized courses on quantitative research methods, including research design, econometrics, causal inference, and applied data analysis. With my multidisciplinary background in economics, political science, and statistics, I am confident in my ability to contribute meaningfully to courses that aim to leave a lasting pedagogical and intellectual impact beyond the classroom.

I am excited about the opportunity to pursue a career at IE University. My affiliation with the PIM Lab at IC3JM has given me a deep appreciation for the vibrant city of Madrid, its rich culture, and its stimulating academic environment. Additionally, the prospect of relocating to Europe from the U.S. excites me, as it brings me closer to both my family in India and the region I study. I am particularly enthusiastic about how my research aligns with the department's strengths in political behavior, media, and environmental politics. I have attached my curriculum vitae, writing samples, and four letters of recommendation from my committee members and faculty collaborators—Rikhil Bhavnani, Laura Schechter, Simon Chauchard, and Yoshiko Herrera.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Your sincerely,

Priyadarshi Amar