CHAPTER 6

Demographic Politics in Asia's Super-Size Democracies: India, Bangladesh and Pakistan

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1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the political implications of demographic changes in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan, with a special focus on the world's largest democracy—India. With a share of around 23% of the world population today and throughout the first half of the twenty-first century, India, Bangladesh and Pakistan play a critical role in shaping developments in world demography. These countries, which were part of the erstwhile Indian subcontinent, all received independence nearly at the same time. Their populations continue to grow, albeit at different speeds. India is projected to overtake China as the country with the world's largest population before 2030. The populations of Bangladesh and Pakistan are also growing in recent times but at varied pace. Pakistan has been registering much faster growth than both India and Bangladesh.

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All three countries are also known for their demographic diversity across regions. What makes these countries stand out most in recent times are the fast changing demographic profiles, with rapid decline in fertility both in India and in Bangladesh, though less so in Pakistan (Bongaarts et al., 2013; Caldwell et al., 1999; James, 2011; Sathar & Casterline, 1998). These demographic changes in India and Bangladesh have been unprecedented during the last three decades and they created a drastic shift in the age structure of the population which is widely discussed in terms of a demographic dividend (Amjad, 2013; Jalal Uddin & Karim, 2016; James, 2008). The share of children (ages 0–14) to the total population in Bangladesh and India has decreased dramatically from 45 and 41%, respectively, in 1970 to 29% by 2015. Pakistan, by contrast, lags behind in this demographic shift, although the trend towards low fertility is clearly observable. In general, there is no doubt to the fact that a bulk of the youth population will define the political demography of these countries in the coming decades. The share of children continues to be around 35% in the year 2015 as against 42% in 1970. Therefore, the adult population growth and its characteristics are vitally important to understand political demography in the region. While the age structure transition is clearly evident, so is the growth of the elderly population, albeit less pronounced (Alam & Barrientos, 2010; Giridhar et al., 2014). In India and Bangladesh, the fastest growing population group across different ages are the elderly, which is likely to lead to political power shifts in favour of the elderly, but not yet in the next three to four decades.

It is important to understand that the pathways through which these countries achieved demographic changes are considerably different from the experience of developed countries (Vanhuysse & Goerres, 2012). While socio-economic changes defined demographic changes in most countries of the world, it was considerably different in the South Asian context—particularly in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan. Here, the fertility transition was driven mostly by the strong implementation of family planning programmes (Bhat, 2002; James, 2011; Khuda, 2000; Robinson, 2007; Srinivasan, 1995). The onset of the fertility transition was not preceded by any significant improvement in living standards. In the case of India, it was driven by the fact that a vast majority of the poor and illiterate accepted family planning and thereby the small family norm (Bhat, 2002). Such a push towards population control along with other antenatal policies has been the subject of intense political debate, particularly in India (Srinivasan, 1995).

As a result, the characteristics of the current adult population in these countries are significantly different as compared to many other countries undergoing fertility transitions. While the demographic changes are visible among the current youth population, the educational and skills levels are rather weak (James, 2011; Wazir et al., 2013). Therefore, it is important that these countries are dealt with differently in terms of both theory and framework while analysing the impact of demographic changes on political demography. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section deals with the current demographic profile and changes in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan. The second section focuses on the demographic changes and its diversity in these countries with a special focus on regional and religious demographic diversity. Section three brings out the major impact of demographic changes on the political landscape.

2   Demographic Profile and Changes, 1990–2040

As pointed out, India, Bangladesh and Pakistan constitute a little less than a quarter of the world population currently and this will remain so until the middle of this century. The demographic profiles of India and Bangladesh have close similarities; that of Pakistan lags behind in demographic change. For instance, the population growth rate between 1990 and 2015 was around 1.6% per annum for India and Bangladesh, but around 2.3% for Pakistan. In the coming 25 years, from 2015 to 2040, the Indian and Bangladeshi population growth rate will decline significantly to 0.8%. Pakistan, on the other hand, will grow at nearly the same rate as at which these two countries have grown in the past 25 years. Note that while the population sizes of Bangladesh and Pakistan were nearly equal in 1990, by 2040, Pakistan's population will be almost 82 million larger than the population of Bangladesh (Table 1). All these indicate that India and Bangladesh have undergone rapid demographic changes in recent decades, while Pakistan is lagging.

The causes of population change are dominated by the fertility transition and mortality changes to a minor extent, and the impact of emigration on population dynamics has been rather negligible in all three countries. In Bangladesh, emigration has been slightly higher than in India and Pakistan (1.6% of net migration), but given the size of Bangladesh's population, its overall impact on the population growth rate is negligible. Fertility rates in Bangladesh and India are nearly at replacement level in 2015, with rates of 2.1 and 2.3, respectively. While

Table 1 Population size and percentage to the world population in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, 2015–2040

| Country & year | Net migration (in'000) | Share of age-groups in % | | | | Ratio of (65 +) to (18-64) | Population Size (in '000) | City density (per sq. mi.) |
		0–17	20–34	65+	80+			
Bangladesh 1990	−219.36	48.97	23.93	3.12	0.25	6.50	105983	19.81
Bangladesh 2015	−2526.48	35.51	26.82	4.97	0.94	8.36	160996	34.28
Bangladesh 2040	−1500.00	23.81	21.97	10.99	1.96	16.85	197134	
India 1990	45.15	44.12	24.15	3.83	0.45	7.36	870602	19.81
India 2015	−2578.21	34.48	25.57	5.62	0.86	9.37	1311051	32.75
India 2040	−2000.00	25.75	21.92	10.72	1.99	16.88	1633728	
Pakistan 1990	139.79	49.19	22.43	3.91	0.49	8.33	107608	30.58
Pakistan 2015	−1181.92	41.17	25.96	4.49	0.65	8.27	188925	38.76
Pakistan 2040	−800.00	32.38	24.69	6.72	0.94	11.03	278987	

Source Authors' calculations using data compiled from United Nations (2015), and World Bank (2015a, b)

Bangladesh is already at the replacement level fertility rate of 2.1, India's fertility rate is likely to reach replacement level in a few years. On the contrary, the fertility rate in Pakistan is more than one child higher and is unlikely to reach replacement level even in 2040. Contrary to the differentials in fertility, life expectancy at birth is very similar in India and Pakistan (69 and 67 in 2015), and slightly higher in Bangladesh (73). By 2040, Bangladesh is projected to reach a life expectancy of over 80 years while India will be around 75 and Pakistan around 70.

Figure 1 presents the age-sex pyramid of these three countries for the three time periods (1990, 2020, and 2040). The median ages are presented in Table 2. For all the three countries, the population pyramid base was broader in 1990. The median age was relatively low: at below 20 in Bangladesh and Pakistan and just above 20 in India. Bangladesh showed a faster transition in the last 25 years with an increase in the
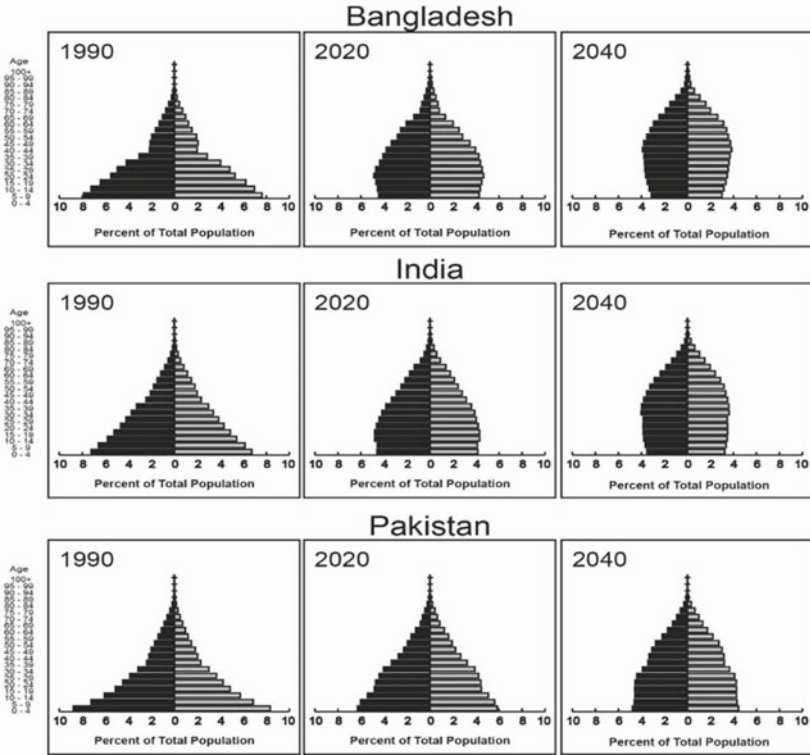
Fig. 1 Age-sex population pyramid for Bangladesh, India and Pakistan for 1990, 2020 and 2040 (*Note* Males are to the left [black], females to the right [grey]. *Source* Computations by Richard Cincotta)

median age of 6 years by 2015. India's progress in median age was to the tune of 4 years and that of Pakistan less than 4 years. Thus, the age distribution has become broader at the middle ages in Bangladesh and India by 2015 and it continued by 2040. By 2040, Bangladesh will have the highest median age value among the three countries at 36 years, followed by India at 35 years, while Pakistan will only have a median age of less than 30 years.

The ageing scenario will be nearly the same in India and Bangladesh in 2040, with almost 11% of the population aged 65 and above, while Pakistan will have only 7% of the population in the elderly group. Thus,

Table 2 Median age of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan in 1990, 2015 and 2040

Country	Year	Median age
Bangladesh	1990	18.56
	2015	25.64
	2040	35.91
India	1990	21.10
	2015	26.68
	2040	34.55
Pakistan	1990	18.50
	2015	22.46
	2040	28.18

Source Authors' calculations using data compiled from United Nations (2015)

not only the demographic dividend but even the ageing of the population will be substantially delayed in Pakistan compared to India and Bangladesh, primarily due to slow fertility decline. The ageing index computed as the ratio of 65 and above against the 18–64 age group shows nearly the same pattern (Table 1). Around 8% of the elderly was depended on the working-age population in 2015 in all three countries. It will have doubled both in India and in Bangladesh in the coming 25 years but increased only by 3 percentage points for Pakistan.

Table 1 also shows that the proportion of people in the 20–34 age group constitutes nearly 26% in all three countries. This, perhaps, indicates that a higher proportion of the population are entering the eligible voting ages. Over 20% of the population will continue to belong to this age group, indicating that young adults will dominate the socio-economic and political landscape of these countries in the coming few decades.

3   FACTORS LEADING TO DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

Another important aspect of the uniqueness of the fertility transition in these countries is the factors contributing to fertility decline. The factors that led to demographic changes in these countries are considerably different from a classical fertility transition. The mortality decline in the Indian subcontinent started prior to independence in 1947, much earlier than the fertility transition. The region experienced a very slow increase in population until about 1921, primarily due to famines and epidemics of plague and cholera. The influenza epidemic of 1918–1919 is

estimated to have killed nearly 5% of the population in the subcontinent (Visaria & Visaria, 1994). However, there has been progressive control of cholera and plague resulting in a drastic decline in the death rate since 1921.

The decline in fertility, however, only began in the 1960s and only in certain selected regional pockets. The first state to show signs of rapid decline in fertility in India was Kerala, located in the south-west, and at the time of the onset of fertility transition one of the poorest states in the country (Bhat & Rajan, 1990; Krishnan 1976). Since then, Kerala has attracted international attention because of its 'Kerala model' of development. The Kerala model prioritized social indicators such as education and health care, rather than merely economic growth. The state differed from other regions in terms of literacy levels, particularly among women. The female literacy level in Kerala was found to be much higher when fertility started to decline. The Kerala model thus resulted in an uncommon trajectory of development with the state achieving high social development (in indicators such as life expectancy, infant mortality and birth rate), even though its per capita income was low. Later, several other states in India and also Bangladesh experienced a faster fertility transition, which was neither backed by improvements in living standards, nor by significant educational levels (Basu & Amin, 2000; Mahendra Dev & James, 2002; Srinivasan et al., 1991). The unconventional fertility transition of Kerala meant that the majority of couples adopting a small family norm were poor, illiterate or rather with considerably low skill levels (Bhat, 2002).

The role of a strong family planning programme in reducing fertility levels in these countries is often emphasized. It is considered that the widespread acceptance of small family norms, irrespective of socio-economic status, is due to the strong implementation of the programme by the government (Srinivasan, 1995). India's rapid population growth has been a concern for many, especially in terms of its relationship with economic development (Coale & Hoover, 1958). India was the first government in the world to introduce an official family planning programme as early as 1952, shortly after its independence in 1947. The objective was to make family planning services widely and easily accessible. Since then, the programme was fully subsidized and provided free of cost through the public healthcare system. The consecutive decadal census in the second half of the last century has shown increasing growth of population within the vicinity of 2% per annum. This has led to the

introduction of several other measures like a target-oriented family planning programme wherein each health worker is given targets to achieve certain number of female sterilizations. A variety of incentives were introduced and offered to acceptors of the family planning programme as part of the strategy to voluntarily promote family planning and fertility control (Srinivasan et al., 2007). Similar family planning programmes have been adopted in Bangladesh and Pakistan, mainly through collaborations with NGOs and through female health workers.

India's family planning programme, indeed, has a checkered history (Rao, 2004). The increasing concern over the population growth has led to its forceful implementation, particularly in the emergency years (1975–1977) (Srinivasan, 1995). The fall of the government shortly after emergency is often squarely attributed to undue government interference in the forceful implementation of family planning (Srinivasan, 1995; Visaria & Chari, 1998). Another major criticism was the large-scale promotion of female sterilization in the country with women bearing the main burden of contraception. Female sterilization continues to be the major contraceptive method in India, accounting for nearly 86% of the total use of modern contraceptives (International Institute for Population Sciences, 2017), compared to just 7% in Bangladesh, where pills and condoms are the leading methods of contraception (DHS Bangladesh, 2016). In Pakistan as well, the female sterilization constitutes only 28% of the total contraceptive use (Carton & Agha, 2012). It is therefore clear that the demographic transition in these countries is also not without any political upheavals. The role of the state in promoting family planning, and particularly from the point of view of women, has been widely criticized in all these countries (Sen et al., 1994). Although other explanations of fertility transition are at times suggested—such as diffusion of contraceptive knowledge (Guilmoto & Rajan, 2005; Mahendra Dev & James, 2002), poverty-induced fertility transition (Mencher, 1980) and the role of social development (Bhat & Rajan, 1990)—government intervention remains one of the strongest factors behind the fertility transition especially in India and Bangladesh.

4   REGIONAL AND RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHIC DIVERSITY

Perhaps, one of the important factors that define the political demography of these three countries is the wide regional heterogeneity in demographic patterns. India's vast diversity in languages, cultures and religions is well

Table 3 Share of population in major religious groups in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan, 2015

Country	Hindu	Islam	Christian	Other religions
India	79.5	14.4	2.5	3.1
Pakistan	1.9	96.4	1.6	0.03
Bangladesh	9.1	89.8	0.2	0.60

Source Central Intelligence Agency (2017)

known (see also Skirbekk & Navarro, this volume). But it is also important to note that the country displays a considerable heterogeneity in socio-economic and demographic patterns across its various regions. This is also true with regard to Bangladesh and Pakistan, though less than in India. Both in India and in Bangladesh, some regions have achieved replacement level fertility several years back while other parts are yet to reach that level leading to considerable differences in the age structure as well as the population growth patterns. This also has implications for the internal migration in these countries. In Pakistan, most regions are far above replacement level fertility, but at the same time there are considerable differences in fertility across regions. Religious differences in fertility, particularly among minorities, are also a subject of wider political debates (Devine & White, 2013; Jejeebhoy & Sathar, 2001; Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2013). While India and Bangladesh have significant subpopulations other than the major religious group (Hindus and Muslims), in Pakistan only 3% of the population are non-Muslims (Table 3).

Such differences in regional and religious demographic patterns have wider political implications. In this section, regional and religious differences are brought out separately for the three countries, and the implications of such changes are discussed in the subsequent section.

4.1   India: Countries Within a Country

The fertility transition in the south of India was relatively early. Kerala was one of the pioneers in the fertility transition as early as in the 1960s (Bhat & Rajan, 1990; Krishnan, 1976). Later on, in the 1980s, other southern states like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh had also entered into the rapid fertility transition (James, 2011). Subsequently, the transition also spread to many other states in the western and eastern

regions of the country. However, the Hindi-speaking central Indian states (Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh), constituting 42% of the India's population, showed negligible signs of changes in fertility in the 1980s. This has led the famous Indian demographer Ashish Bose to call these states *BIMARU*, meaning sickness in Hindi (Mishra, 2014). Later, each of these states was divided into two, resulting in a total of six states. Even today, these states continue to have high fertility compared to the other parts. According to the latest data available for the year 2016, fertility levels in three of these states continued to be above 3 children per women (SRS Statistical Report, 2016). The southern, eastern and western states mostly have fertility levels of less than or near to 2. Figure 2 shows the differentials in total fertility rate (TFR) across Indian states. Similarly, the rural-urban fertility differentials are also striking in India. The urban India, constituting nearly 30% of the total population, has already reached a fertility level of less than 2.

Not only the demographic patterns but also the differences in other socio-economic characteristics between these regions are striking. Along with the fertility transition, the socio-economic conditions of southern states have improved considerably. Therefore, the regional heterogeneity in India cannot be viewed only in terms of demographic pattern but has clear demarcation for both, the social and economic development. The per capita income of southern states is invariably higher than the national average. Central India, on the contrary, has the lowest socio-economic development in the country (Economic Survey, 2018).

Most of the states with lower levels of fertility have become an attractive destination for labour in-migrants due to severe scarcity of manual labour and higher wages within these states (Rajan, 2013). This is entirely legal as the internal movement of the citizens does not have any legal constraints in India. Most of these labourers are working in the construction sector which has grown significantly in the 2000s as a result of an economic boom in the southern states. However, it can be observed that the in-migrants are subjected to bad working and living conditions (Rajan & James, 2007). The discrimination due to differences in language, culture and adverse living conditions is often concerned with regard to the migrant workers. There are instances where the resident population perceives that the in-migrants bring an alien culture and are responsible for increasing crime rates (Basheer, 2015; United Nations, 2015).

Religious differentials in subpopulation growth have become a subject of intense debate in India, particularly since the late 1990s (Alagarajan &
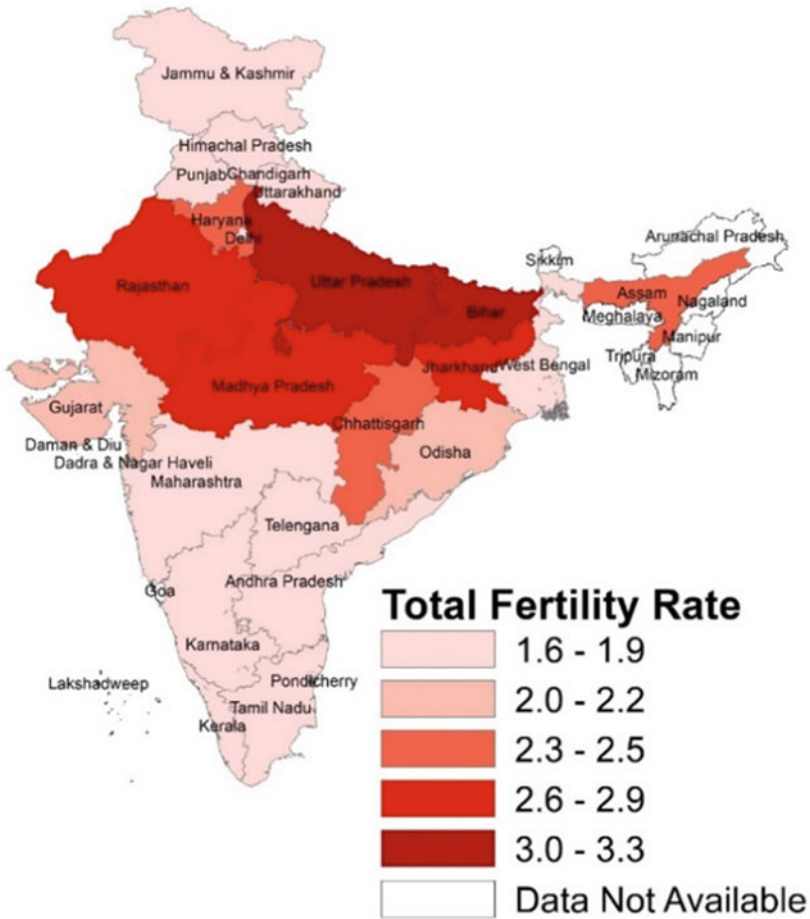
Fig. 2 Total Fertility Rate (TFR) across Indian States, 2016 (*Source* Data from http://www.censusindia.gov.in/vital_statistics/SRS_Report_2016/7. Chap_3-Fertility_Indicators-2016.pdf)

Kulkarni, 2008; Bhat & Zavier, 2005; Dharmalingam & Morgan, 2004; James & Nair, 2005). The growth rate of the Muslim population has been around 30% between 1961 and 2001 and around 25% since then; that of the Hindu population has been around 25% between 1961 and 1981 and

around 20% between 1981 and 2011 (Bhat & Zavier, 2005). According to the latest round of the National Family Health Survey, the number of children for Hindus is 2.1 as against 2.6 for Muslims (International Institute for Population Sciences, 2017). Such differences are frequently the subject of wider political debates on the future religious composition of the country.

In addition to religion, the *caste* factor also plays a pivotal role in understanding population dynamics and fertility transition in India. The socio-economic backwardness of the Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) are well recognized in the country. The SC consists of 16.6% and ST 8.6% of the total population (Census of India, 2011). As a result of the backwardness, the fertility levels have been higher among these caste groups. The fertility rate among SC is 2.3 children per women while that of ST is 2.5 children per women as against 1.9 children for the upper caste group (International Institute for Population Sciences, 2017). A Socially Backward Classes Commission headed by the Indian parliamentarian B P Mandal was set up by the government in 1979. It also identified that there are 'other backward castes' (OBC) in India that are out of the category of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Earlier, the reservation in government jobs and admission to the public educational institutions were implemented only for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. With the Mandal Commission Report, the government had decided to extend the reservation policies for the OBC category as well. Around 40% of India's population are classified into this OBC category. The fertility rate among OBC was slightly lower than among the SC and ST groups, but higher than the forward caste (2.2 children) (International Institute for Population Sciences, 2017). Overall, diversity by region, religion and caste has both demographic and political significance in the country. These factors have often been considered as the reason for success or failure of the different political parties in the country.

4.2   Pakistan: Regional Diversity with Religious Homogeneity

Interstate and rural-urban differentials can be observed in Pakistan as well. While the state of Punjab has a high Human Development Index (HDI) with high achievements in health, education and economic growth, the state of Balochistan has very low achievements in these domains (Pakistan National Human Development Report 2017, 2018). District level differentials in human development are even more stark. While the capital city

of Islamabad has a fertility rate of 3.0 (much lower than the national level of fertility of 3.8), the province of Balochistan has a fertility rate as high as 4.2 children per women. Undoubtedly, such variation also has direct links with the prevailing socio-economic conditions of the region. While around 60% of women use contraceptives in the province of Islamabad, only around 20% do so in Balochistan (Pakistan National Human Development Report 2017, 2018).

Furthermore, urban areas have better levels of human development than their rural counterparts. Levels of human development in urban Pakistan can be compared with those in South Africa (HDI value of 0.66), whereas those in rural Pakistan are as low as in Togo (0.49). While the fertility rate of urban Pakistan is lower at 3.2, it is nearly one child higher in rural Pakistan. Pakistan is currently also experiencing a high rate of urbanization, at 2.77% annual growth (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2017; Pakistan National Human Development Report 2017, 2018).

Religious diversity is rather negligible: around 96% of the population of Pakistan are Muslims. Christians and Hindus form only a minority, with around 1.6 and 1.9%, respectively. The fertility rate is nearly the same for Hindus and Muslims in Pakistan (Hackett et al., 2015).

4.3   Bangladesh: Densely Populated; Sparsely Heterogeneous

Bangladesh is among the countries with the highest population density in the world. Compared to India and Pakistan, the regional differences are relatively small. Although there are urban-rural differences in fertility, they are not as sharp as in the case of Pakistan or India. The fertility rate is around 1.7 in urban areas and 2.2 in rural areas. Divisions such as Mymensingh and Barishal have higher fertility rates of 2.44 and 2.34, respectively, while the divisions of Rangpur and Sylhet have lower fertility rates of 2.22 and 2.09, respectively (DHS Bangladesh, 2016). In the past 25 years, Bangladesh has registered a sharp reduction in fertility and an increase in life expectancy in almost all the regions and reduced the regional diversity significantly. While Islam is the official and dominant religion of Bangladesh, the constitution of the country guarantees freedom of religion and grants equal rights to citizens irrespective of their religious affiliation (Bangladesh's Constitution, 2018). Bangladesh has a higher share of Hindus compared to Pakistan. The fertility levels among Hindus and Muslims are nearly the same in Bangladesh.

5   THE POLITICAL REPERCUSSION
OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

The changing demographic profiles and the considerable regional and religious diversities in these countries have considerable political repercussions. The rapid age structure transition itself has its own effect in India and Bangladesh, particularly on the voting pattern. As all three countries follow a parliamentary form of democracy, public policies and public discourse are likely to be affected by the demographic changes. Five major implications deserve discussion.

5.1   Age Structure and Voting Pattern

The demographic transition and the resulting shifts in the relative size of age groups have various impacts on democratic processes, particularly in India and Bangladesh. Salient political debates in both countries now consider how to take advantage of the youth bulge. Job creation has therefore become a critical part of government policies. In India, the number of graduates entering the labour market is much higher than the employment opportunities available to them at present. This phenomenon is often called "educated unemployment" (Gandhi et al., 2014). As already pointed out, the characteristics of the youth populations in these countries are significantly different from what is expected from a country with similar drastic demographic changes. Most young citizens are semi-literate or with only elementary education, which pushes them to work in the countries' informal sector. Generally, nearly 90% of the Indian workforce is in the informal sector (ILO, 2018) and similar levels are obtained in Bangladesh and Pakistan. Women in particular find it hard to get into the labour market (Desai, 2010). South Asia in general has a very low female labour force participation compared to the world. The work participation of females is as low as 23.9% in Pakistan, 27.3 for India and 33.4% for Bangladesh in 2015 (World Bank, 2015a). Thus, it is often argued that these countries are unable to take advantage of the demographic dividend (Basu, 2011; Bloom & Canning, 2008; Desai, 2010).

The lack of employment opportunities for the youth has caused serious and direct political reactions and has been among the major debates in several central elections in India over the past two decades. Successive governments formulated different policies aiming at improvement of

employment levels and quality of the workforce. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGA) launched in India in 2005 was directed at giving 100 days of assured employment to every rural household in 600 districts in India. One-third of the proposed employment in the scheme was reserved for women. The applicant for the scheme was also entitled to a daily unemployment allowance in cases where he/she was not provided employment within 15 days. Along with other schemes aimed at improving the levels of employment in the country, the Government of India also made efforts to improve the skills of the workforce and improve the quality of employment. The government created a Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship apart from the already existing Ministry of Labour and Employment in 2014. However, the unemployment situation in the country is still grave. In 2018, the Indian Railways (which employs the largest number of people in the country) received 23.7 million applications to fill 0.13 million vacancies (Express, 2018). These issues are on the verge of becoming more politically salient in the near future.

Voting turnout is relatively low in the subcontinent, although it did increase between 1990 and 2015 from around 62 to 66% for India, and from around 46 to 54% for Pakistan. Bangladesh's voting turnout has remained more or less constant at around 51% during the same period, in part due to instances of violence during recent elections (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2015). Already the largest democracy in the world, India keeps on growing. According to the Election Commission of India, 814.5 million Indians were eligible to vote in the 2014 elections. Around 23.1 million of the total eligible voters in India were of the age group of 18–19 years alone. There are also substantial regional variations within these countries in terms of participation in democracy. For instance, the Indian state of Bihar had a low voting turnout of 56 percent whereas the state of West Bengal recorded a rate of around 82% (Statistical Reports of Lok Sabha Elections, 2014). Similarly, there are variations in voting patterns across gender. The number of women voters is significantly lower than their male counterparts. In India, around 20% of the eligible female voters, which constitute around 65 million women, are 'missing' from the electorate (Kapoor & Ravi, 2014). Women have also been underrepresented in the central and state assemblies of these countries. Questions pertaining to this are rising in India's public sphere. Major political parties in India are assuring more women participation in electoral politics in their manifestos. The

Women's Reservation Bill was introduced in India in 2008 to ensure women's representation by reserving one-third of seats in central and state assemblies to women. However, this bill could not be passed in the parliament due to differences among the political parties. Similarly, the low voting percentage is also due to increases in levels of internal migration. Presently, due to lack of well-developed official documentation, there is no system to accommodate the short-term and informal migrants in the electorate (Rajan et al., 2019). Thus, the increasing levels of internal migration are further decreasing the already low voting percentage.

Not surprisingly and despite the fact that in all three countries youth dominate in terms of proportion as well as the voting share, the parliamentarians are much older compared to the population age distribution. In India, most of the members of the parliament are between 46 and 60, whereas the median age of the country is 28. In 2014, around 25% of the members in the lower house still belonged to a cohort that was born before the independence of the country (Statistical Reports of Lok Sabha Elections, 2014).

The demographic dividend is likely to continue to have an effect in India and Bangladesh over the next few decades, and for Pakistan much longer still. Undoubtedly, India and Bangladesh will probably continue to feel the pressure of ageing populations beyond the 2030s (Balachandran, 2020; Balachandran et al., 2019). The sixty and plus population is expected to triple from 92 million today to 316 million by mid-century, when it will constitute one-fifth of the population in India. With the increasing elderly population in different states, there has been a huge demand for introducing social security schemes. With the majority of the population both in India and in Bangladesh working in the informal sector, there is hardly any old-age security available. Currently, the old-age security burden is being borne by the family. With the changing demographic profiles, that may no longer be possible in the future. Governments launch programmes to ensure old-age security at least among the poor sections of the population from time to time (Barrientos, 2012). The Department of Social Services under the Ministry of Social Welfare in Bangladesh, in 1998, launched a monthly allowance programme for disabled older population from poor backgrounds. In Pakistan, a scheme called Employees Old Age Benefits Institution was launched in 1976 to support retired poor elderly. In India, the Indira Gandhi Old Age Pension Scheme was launched in 2007 and provided a monthly pension for the poor elderly population. However, the amounts

provided are relatively small and, due to poor targeting, do not cover the eligible. The work-based pensions are allotted only to workers from certain formal sector, whereas most of the workers in these countries are working in the informal sector.

5.2   Regional Diversity and Constitutional Politics

Demographic disparities across regions have serious implications at different levels of politics and policies, and even for larger questions of political order and stability. This is perhaps less the case in Bangladesh than in the more regionally diverse India and Pakistan. As Pakistan has not entered the last stages of demographic transition, the political repercussions are likely to last much longer than in India, where an advanced demographic transition goes hand in hand with considerable regional heterogeneity already today. For instance, the Indian Constitution specifies a fixed number of members to the parliament per state, which has been fixed in accordance with the population Census of 1971. Initially, the parliament seats were frozen till 2001. However, the date has been extended to 2026 due to severe opposition from regions with rapid demographic changes, who stood to lose many seats. The states with advanced demographic changes argued that they were being punished because they were successful in implementing governmental family planning initiatives. The Constitution requires this arrangement to be re-analysed in 2026, and undoubtedly, it will have serious political implications. It is expected that the representation in the Indian Parliament will undergo rapid changes, with the central Indian states receiving a substantially higher number of seats once the number of seats is unfrozen. This in turn is likely to create more political imbalances and conflicts. As mentioned, the laggards in the fertility transition are mainly the Hindi-speaking central Indian states, which currently account for nearly 42% of the total population. At the same time, it is pertinent to mention that there is an inherent imbalance in the number of seats based on population at present. For instance, the four southern states of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala account for just over 21% of the population but get 129 Lok Sabha seats. By contrast, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, the two most populous Hindi states, account for 25.1% of the population, but get only 120 seats (Firstpost, 2011). Hence, an average person from the South Indian state of Kerala is 1.5 times more represented than an

average Bihari. A change in seat allocation can have significant impact on the Indian electorate.

Nevertheless, the demographic heterogeneity in India also provides a unique opportunity to fill the labour deficit within the country through inter-state migration. Of late, there has been a large inflow of migrants from the northern belt, having high a fertility rate, to the southern region with below-replacement level of fertility. This is known as replacement migration. These migrants are generally drawn from less privileged sections in terms of both caste and class hierarchy in India and as such may have to circumvent various hardships. Although migration as such may be development driven, there is the possibility of increased conflict and unrest in the destination regions (Rajan & James, 2007). A study using cross-regional, time-series data on violence in Indian states (1989–2009) reveals the possibility of escalating violence due to demographic heterogeneity in the country (Forsberg et al., 2011).[1]

Another major impact of demographic heterogeneity in India is on allocation of federal resources across states. The Finance Commission is a constitutional body which is appointed every five years and decides, among other functions, on the terms of allocating federal funds to different states. Since 1971, the allocation of federal funds has been based on a formula that gives weight to states chiefly based on their population share (based on the 1971 Census) and their level of economic backwardness. However, the new finance commission formed in 2017 proposed in its Terms of Reference (ToR) to convert the formula into population based on 2011 Census data. This proposal saw a massive resistance from the southern Indian states, which argued that they are being penalized for successfully implementing a national policy aimed at reducing fertility. Moreover, these states are also economically well-off, and they substantially contribute to the total tax share going to the federal government. Southern states therefore argued that though

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[1] For instance, Bengaluru, a city in the southern state of Karnataka saw agitation against excessive use of Hindi in communication. This anti-Hindi agitation needs to be seen from the backdrop that Hindi is the lingua franca of the migrant population to the city which grew tremendously over the past two decades. Similarly, the state of Maharashtra saw several agitations seeking reservations to the Marathi population (who are the natives of the state) in employment. This happens in the backdrop of Maharashtra being a state with highest number of migrants. Migrants are mainly from the states with lower levels of developments and higher number of youths, such as the states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh.

they contribute significantly to federal funds, they do not receive enough in re-allocations from the finance commission. The same is true with respect to the allocation of budgets from federal government to the states for different health programmes. In the year 2005, the Government of India has made much bigger budget allocations to improve population and health indicators particularly in the demographically lagging states in the northern and eastern part of the country. The states which have progressed in demographic and health indicators got a much lower share than the demographically backward states. This is often considered as a disincentive for performance.[2]

5.3   Religious and Caste Diversity

Other important aspects of political demography in these countries are the religious differences in population and its growth differentials. Again, this dimension is most relevant in India, with its huge religious and caste differences in demography and socio-economic standing. Such differences are not found in Bangladesh, while Pakistan has a 96% Muslim population. The higher growth rate of the minority Muslim population in India has often been a matter of intense concern in certain political circles (Joshi et al., 2003; Reddy, 2003). While it is true that Muslim fertility is high, it is important to note that Muslims generally tend to live in areas with the highest fertility in India, particularly in the northern states (James & Nair, 2005). Studies also found that the Muslim fertility follows nearly the same pace of transition as the Hindus', particularly in the period of accelerated fertility decline in the country (Krishnaji & James, 2005). Although many apprehensions on Muslim fertility and Muslim population becoming a majority religion in the future are not valid, the growth differences have significant political repercussions in the country (Bhat & Zavier, 2005). Politicians have often used this as a tool to scare the majority religion into voting for them.

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[2] Interestingly, major political leaders from all southern Indian states have been raising this issue as discrimination against them and discussed it as one of the major election propagandas against the ruling party at the federal government (Balachandran, 2018; Daniyal, 2018; *New Indian Express*, 2018). A formal meeting of the South Indian finance ministers took place in early 2018 to form an alliance to raise voice against such decisions. A small fraction of leaders from South India are also raising slogans to form a new South-Indian country (*The News Minute*, 2018).

The growth differentials among caste groups in India, however, have not led to direct criticism on their demographic behaviours as it is considered that caste diversity and backwardness are the result of centuries of discrimination against them. The reservation policies in the realms of jobs and education were specifically introduced for SC and ST groups in India[3] and this limitation was enshrined in the Indian Constitution. However, the Government of India adopted a 'reservation policy' in the late 1980s whereby people from OBC are given a quota in various governmental educational institutions and employment opportunities (Thorat & Newman, 2010). Since then, several caste groups in India have been claiming for status of 'OBC' to gain the benefits of the reservation policies. The 'upper caste' voices are also raised on the non-efficiency of caste system and on the 'unfairness' that it has created for them. Various political parties have been raising the issues related to caste with regard to different benefits from the government. Caste is seen as a major determinant of many socio-economic outcomes and the Government of India conducted a first Socio-Economic and Caste Census in independent India in 2011. The results of the census showed that the performance of lower castes is lower (Census of India, 2011). Given the likely demographic developments of lower castes, caste and caste composition will no doubt play a major role in Indian politics in coming decades.

The minorities in Pakistan are mostly concentrated on few areas (Mahmud, 1995). There are reserved seats for minority communities in different provincial and national elections. However, there is criticism that religious minorities are discriminated against and there are apprehensions about the decrease in the share of religious minorities (Roche, 2016). Not only across religious groups, but even within the majority religion, vast differences exist in Pakistan. Instances of sectarian violence have occurred between the Sunni and Shia Muslims since the 1980s. With considerable demographic and socio-economic differences between them, there are increasing possibilities of conflicts between these groups even in future.

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[3] Additionally, several political parties were eager to get support of the caste groups by announcing different policies and programmes for them. Even political parties were formed primarily to unite such caste groups and these were also successful in different contexts (Lee, 2013). There is also strong criticism and counter-criticism of parties that favour certain caste groups or discriminate against others (Jaffrelot, 2012).

6   Conclusion

Overall, it is clear that demographically India and Bangladesh show very similar patterns of change, with fertility levels and age structure currently at almost the same level. Pakistan, on the other hand, shows only early signs of fertility transition and has a substantial proportion of child population. Even in the coming 25 years, Pakistan will remain a young population while India and Bangladesh will show signs of an ageing society. What is striking, particularly in India and Pakistan, is the wide regional and religious heterogeneity in demographic patterns. Such differences are narrow in the case of Bangladesh. All this will lead to significant political upheavals in these countries.

As democratic countries, all three nations are struggling to address the large challenges posed by the demographic transition, and the political implications of demographic changes are numerous. Tensions in the resource distribution across regions, decisions on the number of parliamentary seats and chances for conflict due to demographic defences can all be observed in India and to some extent, in Pakistan. A major challenge for these nations will be to provide employment opportunities for the young population, particularly the youth, to take advantage of the demographic dividend. All three countries have a very poor record in providing female employment despite drastic fertility transition. All these critical challenges are at the heart of discussion, both in the public and among political classes, but initiatives to address them had limited success. Undoubtedly, demographic changes in these countries will continue to have immense importance for the demographic and political order of the globe, if only because of their sheer population size, at currently almost a quarter of the world's population.

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