

Population Explosion and its Unconventional Security Fallout: A Case Study of India

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Abstract

The demographic composition of a country plays a crucial role in shaping its trajectory, particularly evident in the case of India, the world's most populous country. Diversity brings many challenges, presenting opportunities and threats to its development, intensifying as the population grows. While some argue that population growth may not necessarily hinder prosperity, effective resource management and governance are imperative to address the complex challenges. This study delves into various dimensions to assess the country's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, shedding light on governance dynamics and their impact on the nation's trajectory. Drawing upon environmental, humanitarian, and security concerns, this study explores the complex relationship between population trends and resource availability in the country. It examines how governance structures influence population trends and vice versa, highlighting the interconnectedness between demographic factors and governance outcomes. Through a nuanced analysis of non-traditional security issues, the article emphasises the need to manage population growth, offering insights into navigating the socio-political landscape of India.

Keywords: unconventional security, population explosion, human security, good governance sustainability

Introduction

Conventional and non-conventional threats can both undermine a nation's security. It is crucial to identify these threats as they

significantly impact a country's domestic and foreign policies and reflect the strengths and weaknesses of the nation. Conventional threats typically involve military actions that directly challenge a country's security

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and sovereignty. On the other hand, non-conventional security issues encompass a wide range of concerns, including climate change, health issues, terrorism, human rights violations, and food shortages, all of which affects the well-being of citizens. Resolving non-traditional and traditional security issues is essential for achieving positive peace, as Galthung's peace construct suggested. Non-conventional security issues can disrupt a country's peace and may lead to traditional security issues if left unaddressed. International non-conventional security issues such as terrorism, drug trafficking, and other transnational crimes require global collaboration for effective solutions. In contrast, domestic non-traditional issues are the responsibility of national policymakers.

The demographics of a nation are an indicator of several factors. Amongst the non-traditional security issues, most of the threats are directly or indirectly associated with the growth and fall of the population. The connection between the factors is explored in a subsection below. These factors contribute to the stability, uniform standard of living and the overall peace of the country. Unprecedented excess population growth can thoroughly disrupt a state's governance. A country's size and diversity are also catalytic in a state's constitution. Studies on why small states or countries with comparatively homogeneous populations have higher happiness indexes and lower hate crimes and

human rights violations are thus relevant. Population presents the governance with a resource that can be navigated to their advantage or that can be the vehicle that derails them. Of the non-traditional security issues that the country is facing, be it terrorism, food security, energy crisis or ethnic violence, the demographics comes as a factor that intensifies it. As the first to implement a family planning initiative and the country with the most diaspora globally, India has been a people-centric nation, inclusive of many facets in the social and cultural sphere. The country is presented with such an opportunity to forge a future that elevates the country's prosperity.

India is the most populous country in the world as of 2023. The exponential growth of the human population has transcended conventional boundaries of security, reshaped geopolitical landscapes and necessitated a nuanced understanding of its multifaceted impacts. From environmental degradation to socio-economic disparities, population explosion poses significant challenges across diverse security dimensions. The strain on natural resources, infrastructure, and social services exacerbates vulnerabilities, heightening risks of conflict, instability, and societal unrest.

Within the context of India, a country experiencing rapid population growth, the government and civil society are actively addressing the multifaceted implications of this phenomenon.

Initiatives focusing on family planning, education, healthcare, and socio-economic development underscore efforts to mitigate the security fallout. However, the unprecedented scale and pace of population growth highlight the urgency of concerted action to address its unconventional dimensions and avert potential security threats. To navigate the complexities of population explosion and its security implications, adopting holistic approaches and innovative strategies to safeguard global stability and sustainable development is imperative.

History of Population in India

In 1997, *The Population Bomb* by Paul Ehrlich took the liberty of compressing India into a few deprived images: "crowded slum area", streets "alive with people", and "people, people, people, people," which were to remain thrust in the Western mind (Ehrlich, 1997, p.1). The Indian example was used to instil fear in the minds of the Americans about the repercussions of overpopulation, which can lead to the fall of civilisation. Decades later, while Ehrlich's presumed reality was not as much of a loud explosion as he anticipated it to be, his intention had done its job of viewing the population issue in association with an apocalypse and familiarising the hesitating world of the need for the hour: adhering to control measures. Ehrlich's work had carried enough bass and popularised the population factor as a security issue.

Historically, India had its fair share of population fluctuations, influenced by multiple famines and epidemics, including the Bengal famine in the years 1769–1770, upon which the Company levied high taxes and tariffs that resulted in the deaths of almost 10 million people, pushing the surviving into absolute poverty (Mallik, 2022). In the years following, from 1770 to 1990, 25 million Indians perished due to recurring famines, as opposed to the mere 5 million resulting from wars from all over the world (Tharoor, 2018). Many factors, such as better living conditions, satisfying health facilities, decent earnings, and biological immunisation, contributed to a dive in the mortality rates during the early to mid-twentieth century, from about 1920 to 1945, paving the way for the real shoot-up after independence. The partition would see the nuances of population statistics change in nature and its later years, owing to communal riots and agitations and a series of socially instigated decline factors such as sex-specific abortions, political instability, inadequate family planning, continued contraceptive measures, and more, the growth would still stagnate. The first official family planning program was introduced in 1952, based on the results of the 1951 Census. Despite the efforts, the population would still grow from 360 million to 440 million in the next Census of 1961 (Gaur, 2022). Female and male sterilisation were introduced, along with the establishment of a separate Family Planning Department in 1965. The

Fifth Five-Year Plan was established by launching the National Population Policy in 1976 and raising the marriage age, as mentioned in the Sharda Act 1929. In 1977, India would have 620 million people trodding its land, a dramatic increase of over 10% during the decade (Bird, 1977). As a means of positive reinforcement, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and her son, Sanjay Gandhi, would sterilise over 8 million men and women in just a year in exchange for necessities and attractive rewards, dragging the refusers to clinics without mercy (Gupte, 2017). In the 1991 Census, the population had climbed to 843 million, and many discussions would continue for a decade, none of which would bear fruit until a new population policy was implemented in 2000 (Chaudhry, 1992).

Prime Minister Narendra Modi mentioned the “population explosion” as a recognised issue the country faced in 2019 and appreciated nuclear families. The term “population momentum” describes India’s population growth,” which denotes that the population continues to grow despite the fertility rate falling. This phenomenon allows the population to multiply for centuries despite the low fertility since even “if fertility rates were reduced immediately to the level of replacement (that is, one daughter per woman), the population of the country would not stabilise until the year 2050” (Sinha, n.d.). India's trend is expected to continue for decades, even while the growth rate

decelerates. The distribution of fertility rate is disproportionate nationwide, further elaborating the development disparities among states. India’s population growth is opposed to China’s falling population due to their preventive measures, which ensured India overtook the most populous country at some point in 2023. Goli and Jain (2020) argue that 1.65 billion additional births resulted from non-adherence to family planning methods from 1990-2016. They also point out that sustained implementation of family planning initiatives can avert around 1.9 billion births, assuming the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) remains stable at 1.8 births per woman until 2061 (Goli & Jain, 2020). The reason for such an explosion can be multifaceted, not in any specific order:

1. As a side effect of development, death rates can be significantly reduced, and life expectancy can increase, leading to a minor fall in birth rates, but only in the long run. The gap between birth and death ages is projected to be a huge portion of the population. India’s development phase after the famines justifies this. Development referred to educational facilities, spreading awareness, effective vaccines in the health care sector, and advanced living standards with clean sanitation and nutritious food.
2. Urbanisation and industrialisation and resultant migration into cities did not disrupt fertility rates in Indian families, albeit the births

were slightly less in urban areas. (Sinha, n.d.)

3. The average family structure constitution changed, hence the number of children in the family and the total fertility rate.
4. Child marriages were common in India, ever so prevalent after the Child Marriage Prohibition Act, with women bearing children as young as 15 to 19 years of age, as per customs.
5. Ignorance and lack of availability of contraceptive methods were prevalent in society, leading to additional pregnancies. This can be read with conservatism, religious and moral, where not only abortion is considered a sin, but procreation is encouraged.
6. Literacy is another factor. The most populous states, like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, have fewer literate people, as opposed to states like Kerala, where the population is lower and literacy is high. A lack of literate and career-oriented women in the 20th century boosted population growth.
7. The earlier trend of having more members in an agriculture-based family and engaging in farming-related activities until the rise of the middle class can be associated with the steady growth in population in the late 1900s. The subsidisation has interestingly catered to their desires to have more children than to uproot from poverty, hence pushing

them into a perpetual state of “populous poverty.”

8. Traditionally, Indian families viewed children as assets and income-generating human capital for the future. More offspring meant they had additional access to acquiring money, pulling them out of poverty, and securing wealth for future generations.

The second decade of the century began by facing the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the pandemic, deaths reached a rate of 1 death per 2574 inhabitants (New York Times, 2023). The birth rate followed the falling trend since 2011, remaining comparatively unchanged in the last four years with 16.42 live births per 1000 citizens, yet being the lowest value, it ever touched (O'Neill, 2023). Similarly, the fertility rate remained mildly static from the previous year at 2.03 children per woman and at its lowest (O'Neill, 2023a). This low reflects not on its population growth but on its age structure. Its inherent childbearing characteristics, and hence its population momentum, largely depend on the population of women in their reproductive years (Blue & Espenshade, 2011). In the case of India, the replacement fertility level, referring to each generation passing down the same number of children born to their previous generation, has fallen in urban areas to 1.6 children per woman owing to education, especially among women, and the eradication of poverty levels (Arora, 2021). Economic advancements, stability in the unemployment rate, and overall

better living conditions have contributed to life expectancy declining to 67.5 years for men and 69.5 years for women. However, it is the lowest since 2014, stressing that giving due attention to income and graded inequalities and their implications on sustaining life cannot be compromised anymore (Iyer, 2021).

According to UN DESA, India is now the most populous country in the world with a population of 1.42 billion, overtaking China, and that too with a growing trend, unlike that of China's population, which shall plummet owing to their erstwhile population policies (United Nations, 2023).

The Dimensions

Below, various facets are analysed to draw the population as a security issue. It is seen through the lenses of environmental, national, and human security, along with good governance practices.

1. Environmental Security

The population growth rate is at 1 per cent annually. The increase indicates that there will be environmental impacts as it puts pressure on resources and their exhaustion. There have been rising concerns over land exploitation, cutting down trees, desertification and urbanisation. According to a study by Nature Journal, there are 35 billion trees in India, which shows that each Indian citizen will have 24 trees to themselves. Reading this, along with complex factors such as the standard of living, clean water, sanitation and

air pollution, especially in densely populated cities like Delhi and Mumbai, implies proper resource planning (Prakash, 2022).

The Ehrlich threat was tackled in India in the 1960s with the initiation of the Green Revolution (Frontline, 2022). However, it is to be considered if such a bold advancement is possible without spiralling into the unearthing of several other issues such as soil erosion, overuse of toxic pesticides, related land degradation, and contamination of water bodies. Urbanisation requires that its benefactors possess lower fertility rates and more productivity, yet it takes a severe toll on human rights and environmental factors. Megacities ought to turn into slums and poverty hubs. Sustainability must be thus synonymously addressed with development. The focused development, however, projects an urban-rural divide that further intensifies the income gaps, along with education, occupation opportunities, technological advancements, amenities, etc.

Carbon emissions from personal infrastructure or factories that produce for the masses worsen the quality of natural resources and lead to severe disabilities and other health issues. Climate changes also affect the coastal and maritime domain, threatening ocean health. Overfishing, illegal mining, trawling, and irresponsible coastal tourism hinder maritime growth and pollute the ocean.

However, two factors come as a consolation to the worries: one, that the population of India as such is not a significant contributor to global carbon emissions. Studies show that the top 10% of emitters are accountable for total CO₂ emissions, all inhabiting regions other than South Asia, which places India's population boom in a safe space globally (Cozzi et al., 2023). Two, India's globally recognised policies towards a sustainable future. India sets an example by cutting emissions, and India's Cooling Action Plan sets precedence on the international platform. The UNDP released a best practices guide based on the Indian indigenous and traditional sustainable growth techniques titled "India's Journey Towards Sustainable Cooling" in January 2024, proving that India is conscious of its roots of the environmental issues and is taking action to overcome it (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2024).

2. Human Security

According to the UNDP Human Development Report, human security is "freedom from fear and want." It touches upon the security of hunger and diseases and the safety of housing, economy, food, health, environment, community and violence of any kind (UNDP, 1994). The governing body of a democracy is accountable to its citizens for providing these facilities and rights and aiming for the best possible living standard. As the population increases, it becomes difficult to

address the needs related to healthcare, education and infrastructure. The pandemic had crowded cities like the capital, wailing due to inadequate hospital infrastructures and medical equipment. According to a Knight Frank India report, India lacks 24 lakh hospital beds to reach the desirable fraction of 3 beds per 1000 people. Although states are improving their literacy rates, which was 77.7% in the 2017-18 survey, hardly 5% growth compared to the 2011 survey results, the OECD 2017 noted that 71% of the adults do not acquire upper secondary education (OECD, 2019). On the economic front, this implies that there are less skilled professionals. The country's lack of quality higher educational opportunities is leading the youth to fly across the globe.

About 40 per cent of the country's population are born between 1997 and 2012 and are of young working age. The OECD report stated that India's tertiary educated youths will constitute over one-fifth of the share of such educated across OECD and G20. This is a huge advantage for the country's economy, as it denotes a growing interest in progress and development, a vision that the country shares. On the other hand, a dearth of job opportunities awaits them as they finish secondary or college education. The recent pandemic sweep witnessed an additional 230 million people fall back into the BPL category (The Wire, 2021). According to the Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy,

about 7 million people lost their jobs in the second wave (The Wire, 2021a). India's unemployment rate fell from 8.1% in August to 7.1% in September 2023, almost two years after the pandemic. The labour participation rate (LPR) saw a contrast of decline in the rural area as opposed to the urban hike, with an average decrease in the total LPR from 41.9% in August to 40.9% in September (Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy Pvt. Ltd [CMIE], 2023). The character and the unemployment mode make it harder to define it; the dilemma of jobs drops, and the lack of them makes it difficult to see them as permanent or temporary. Employment generation to satisfy the population needs to be a priority for state and central governments, ideally collaborating on schemes and sponsored programs.

Unemployment and food insecurity go hand in hand. Food scarcity and insecurity are non-traditional human security threats with unplanned and unregulated population growth. According to the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) report, about 40.6% of the Indian population had to face food insecurity ranging up to a chronic level in 2019–21 (Jolly, 2022). Coupled with malnutrition, congested living conditions, acute climate issues, and unequal production and consumption of industrial and agricultural products, a growing population is a concern that could be a direct cause of poverty. In 2022, India stood at a solid 107th rank in the Global Hunger

Index out of the 121 countries (Times of India, 2022). In the newest report, India fell several ranks below and bagged the 111th globally. However, the Indian government has dismissed the report, pointing to the fact that the methodology used to derive the data is faulty and the criteria are biased. If so, India has a long way to go in terms of the nourishment status of the country, which stood at 18.7 per cent, according to the Poshan Tracker, a tool employed by the government (The Indian Express, 2023).

India's socio-ethnic composition is diverse and complex. Indian society has been a victim of various political, ethnic and secessionist violations. Sambanis (2001) explains that the prevalence of poverty, state incompetency and bad governance leads to conflicts. India's environment harbours a mixed pot of classes, castes, religions, ethnicities and cultures. According to the National Crimes Records Bureau (n.d.), there was an increase of 1.2 per cent in crimes against the tribal community in 2021 than in 2020. In 2023, the National Commission for Women (NCW) recorded 28,811 cases of violence against women and children, spanning from sexual crime, dowry harassment and rapes (Press Trust of India [PTI], 2024). The ethnic clashes in Manipur between tribes and the Haryana riot between religious communities draw out the length to which differences and diversity are not tolerated in the country. Resulting in fatalities and injuries, these violence also instil

hostility among the citizens. Political violence leads to severe human rights violations and makes society hard to inhabit. However, conflicts tend to be more evident in institutionally weak countries. India's democracy and constitution thus is a cornerstone to curtailing violence and conflicts in the country to some extent.

The population growth affects the country internally as a human rights security issue. India's GDP has witnessed tremendous growth in the past few years, and it is forecasted to grow 7% in the financial year 2024-25 (Ksheerasagar, 2024). India harbours dire wealth inequality and impending overall growth in society. This questions the positive impacts of economic prosperity reaching the citizens fairly. Additionally, the widening gap makes it hard for the marginal groups to advance. It also raises questions about implementing population policies that affect women unequally.

3. National Security

A few years after Ehrlich terrorised the world of Delhi, the city saw a 50% climb in population in a decade (World Population Review, n.d.). The cause of such a count was the result of migration. Both inland and outward migration are to be closely examined; the search for job opportunities primarily causes both. India witnessed about 450 million internal migrations, according to the 2011 Census. Uttar Pradesh and Bihar had the most migrant outgoing, at around 37% of the total migration. Delhi and Mumbai invited the most migrants. Almost one-third of the

population of these cities are migrants (Jha & Kawoosa, 2019). In parallel, the outflow of Indians keen to be expatriates holds a huge percentage of youth in its statistics. Foreign income sources are the backbone of any developing country, and remittances to India have the potential to resolve its social security issues. India, therefore, should cautiously tread when it comes to any relations or riffs with popular countries that attract the Indian youth, as the foreign government may target the emigrant population at the heights of tensions. The recent Indo-Canadian diplomatic standoff has strained the Indians in Canada, especially the Sikh population and the student community (Sehgal, 2023).

As with the case of refugees, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2023), as of February 2023, more than 49,000 refugees have sought asylum in India. The data mentioned is only the registered data of asylum-seekers from Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Tibet, and Afghanistan. A moral dilemma is involved in treating refugees: whether to look at them as a responsibility or a burden, as mentioned earlier. The discomfort caused by their presence in the local soil stems from demographic changes and the loss of habitat, jobs, and resources, which creates paranoia. On the other hand, the impact of this on refugees comes in the form of exploitation of their skills, status-based segregation, and

discrimination. Refugees do not have a policy framework to protect them or identify them as legitimate citizens. This clash is fueled by the refugee population's helplessness of finding a job that suits their profile and lack of necessary documentation to prove their merit, which leads them to work for minimum wages, threatening society with unemployment. Implementing the National Register of Citizens (NRC) on a minute scale in Assam until 2014 sparked debates and discussions on the status and rights of refugees nationally (Azad, 2018).

Climate refugees and their displacement within the country and from neighbouring countries spark tensions in the lives of the population. In the "State of India's Environment- 2022" report, from 2020 to 2021, India was the fourth country to witness climate change-induced migration, with no less than three million people compelled to flee their homes. The trend is anticipated to continue, thanks to the climate issues and their impending global impact. It is estimated that India will see 45 million forced migrants from their homes because of climate disasters by 2050 (Krishnan, 2023). The incoming, occupying, rehabilitating, and community-building that the climate refugees would undergo can burden the stakeholders and the welcoming region, not to mention the psychological effect on the population. The unpredictable nature of climate change also reflects on climate refugees, and India needs to

adopt policies ahead to take the worst hit it can impose on the country.

National security should be addressed as an umbrella term that constitutes human security. When human security is in disarray, it becomes difficult to maintain national security. National security should be read by shifting the focus from external threats to internal ones. The population concern can proliferate into territorial disputes and interstate conflicts. The interstate and international migration in search of jobs impacts the demographic and economic constitution. In fact, according to ILO, migrants contribute 10% of the GDP (Kaushik & Campbell, 2023). This raises concern over the strain on the native population and the facilities provided to migrants. For holistic national growth, it becomes necessary to heed the population to balance the market and the nation's security.

4. Governance as a Dimension

Understanding the nuances of demographic changes is crucial for good governing practices. To equate the models of governance with development and growth, it is essential that population factors are brought under surveillance and a multifaceted approach is curated. The principles of governance, the most accurate terms in which good governance can be defined, consider a few parameters. These features are paramount to the citizens as part-takers, benefactors, stakeholders, upholders and pioneers of good governance in a democracy. Inclusive

participation of all the citizens becomes difficult as the population rises; numbers note that women's employment rate decreased by 10 per cent from 2004 to 2022, and only 39 million women are working as opposed to 361 million men. (Al Jazeera, 2023) Their political participation still has space for scope, with the passing of the Women Reservation Act 2023, which ensures 1/3rd reservation for women legislators.

Adherence to the rule of law is another parameter that measures good governance. Data shows that as of July 2023, more than 85% of cases are pending in district courts (4.4 crores out of 5 crore cases filed), out of which 50% are state-sponsored cases (TNN, 2023). Besides, the various facets of relations between bureaucracy and people stand at risk of their staggering percentages. Several officials that can be accommodated in the force to handle the huge population make it harder to govern the country. Transparency and responsiveness in the country are also under threat, as the Global Press Freedom Index 2023 (161 out of 180 countries) and Corruption Perceptions Index 2023 (93 out of 280 countries) denote. Bribery, nepotism, power play, and fair governance must be kept in check as the population soars. The lack of accountability of the authorities can also be noted on this front. The criminal backlog of the MPs elected to Lok Sabha and the general ignorance of the criminal records in which political goons are involved

elucidates how politics intertwines illicit and violent activities. These factors, along with strategies taken towards attaining equity, effectiveness and efficiency, layout good governance in the country.

Even within the country, the scale of differences at which the states are ranked based on HDI speaks volumes about the living conditions. Smaller and literate states and union territories are recorded high in terms of their score, such as Kerala, Goa, Chandigarh and Delhi, compared to the larger states with low HDI, such as Bihar, Jharkhand, and Uttar Pradesh. However, there is huge progress in the standard of living, with reportedly almost no state categorised under low HDI states. The country needs a consensus-oriented bottom-to-top policy to integrate growth and distribute benefits equally.

While a population soar impedes taking good governance to the last mile, some best practices can guide the system. Recognising that population growth is a dynamic process that cannot be halted but monitored and managed effectively is imperative. The country's economy benefits significantly from ensuring equal opportunities for both men and women financially. Increased involvement of local bodies in conjunction with the central government, an independent and unbiased press, morally ethical government servants, budget transparency, and a more efficient legislative system are essential to

address the challenges of population growth.

As derived earlier, the population can be defined as the dimensions of cause, consequence, and origin. Environment security threats, which are translated as resource depletion, pollution, habitual destruction, climate change, and waste generation, are impacted by population growth. The population factor accelerates these, and significant planning is lacking. Human security issues can also be related to environmental consequences, as a lack of resources can lead to conflict. Indian fishermen entering into the Sri Lankan territories has resulted in severe diplomatic rows and hence leading to a security crisis. Depletion of resources also leads to health issues like malnutrition, water-borne diseases and hunger. It can lead to a humanitarian and human rights crisis, like during the Bengal famine. Human rights issues and climate change issues are inherently in the purview of national security as they touch upon the legitimacy and sovereignty of a country. A mis-governed and weak nation is targeted by the international community and superior powers to meddle in and take advantage of their interests.

Measures Adopted by the Nation

India is expected to reach 1.5 billion by 2030 (Silver et al., 2023). The disparity in Asia, which harbours about 60% of the world's population but only covers 30% of land and generates 57% of the global GDP, is a

maths problem that does not favour the Indian economy in the long run, given that it does not apply involve its resources (National Geographic, n.d.; Seong et al., 2023; Worldometer, n.d.). As much as India is regarded as a doomsday place with its population on the rise, it is not as much of a "ticking bomb" as critics make it out to be, given certain mandates formulated.

First comes the identification of areas where effective human resources can be put to good use. India's demographic dividend leans towards a hopeful future. The proportion of the population in their youth below 35 years is 66% of the total population. (International Labour Organisation [ILO], 2012). If the right policies are brought out, giving importance to education, especially among the marginalised, vocational training, and job opportunities, the nation can widen its scope on many fronts; the economy is the foremost. Government-supported schemes such as Ayushman Bharat, Atal Pension Yojna, Deen Dayal Upadhyay -Gramin Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY), etc., have been introduced to the public. The health sector must be heavily invested to maintain its high life expectancy. Self-sufficiency can finally be thought of as an option without the lack of workforce in the days to come, and a country that initiates to take leadership, as in the case of the G20 Presidency and the bid for hosting Olympics 2036, promises to bring the spirits of the

youth up towards an optimistic future (Ghoshal, 2022; CNBC, 2023)

To ensure safe migration, the 2021 NITI Ayog Report has drafted the National Migrant Labour Policy (Katakam, 2021). Other efforts towards this are reported in the One Nation, One Ration Card (ONORC) project, Affordable Rental Housing Complexes (ARHC), the PM Garib Kalyan Yojna scheme, and the e-Shram portal. The Smart City Mission aims to achieve sustainable environmental impact and provide all citizens with a standardised quality of life by promoting city infrastructural development through smart solutions. They promote an inclusive approach focused on urban city welfare and its equitable reach to all its people.

India, according to the study of UN reports and popular critics, is in a dire pickle as it faces a low fertility rate simultaneously, with the Indian elderly population growing at the rate of 41% from 2021-2031 and reaching a number even more than that of children by 2046. (Perumal, 2023). However, some policies and agendas are working towards balancing this widening. Prime amongst them is the country's focus on its youth at present. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been vocal about the youth's role in the country. Addressing the Kaushal Deekshant Samaroh 2023, Modi underlined the significance of present-day India in the globe and the role of youth in realising it. "Today, the whole world believes that this century is going to be India's century", the Prime

Minister said as he praised the youth of India in this regard. Stating that while the elderly population is on the rise in many countries, he added how India is getting younger with each passing day. "India has this huge advantage", he urged that the world is focused on India for its skilled youth (Admin, 2023).

A statement regarding the National Population Policy was released in 2015, in which it estimated that India would overtake the Chinese population in 2022 by 10 million. The report said that the Family Planning Programme could curb the growth from 21.5% in 1991-2001 to 17.7% during 2001-2011, bringing down the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) from 3.2 in 2000 to 2.3 in 2013. Prerna Strategy, Santushti Strategy and National Helpline are mentioned in the Policy as counter-measures undertaken (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, 2015). The policy had hoped to tame the population before it overtakes China or at least evenly distribute the new demographic.

According to S.D., the National Security Strategy is awaiting its update, covering traditional and nontraditional security issues, including financial, economic, food, and energy insecurity. Pradhan (2023), "The objective of an NSS is to guide all agencies to act in a coordinated manner for the protection of national interests, which include inter-alia its citizens in India or outside, their welfare, territorial integrity, and sovereignty, and ensuring economic growth while

maintaining strategic autonomy in external affairs to pursue an approach that will help in achieving its objectives. It aims to ensure the whole-of-government approach to face future internal and external challenges and a combination of the two.” While policy analysts anticipate that prospects and agendas to counter-terrorism and other external threats such as Chinese expansionism, effects of regional conflicts, and extremism would be included in the Strategy, internal non-traditional security issues are not referred to or discussed.

In the Interim Budget, presented in February 2024, the financial minister announced a “high-powered committee to extensively consider the challenges arising from rapid population growth and demographic changes.” She elaborated that it would be dealt with in consonance with the Viksit Bharat (or developed India) goals. The speech referred to the postponed Census, unearthing the lack of reliable data on public health, employment, education, and other socio-economic parameters. (Chandramouli, 2024)

Conclusion

India has taken the leash into its own hands to be a *Viswaguru*. A country as old and as new has an example to set forth if it has to proclaim itself to be a “world teacher”. For the population to not be counter-current, India's policymakers have to act with immediate effect. Population growth should collaborate with economic and environmental development. There is no other alternative where

India will overcome the burgeoning population without collateral damage.

India has many models to adhere to, such as the SDGs, that give value to human and environmental security. The country also has parameters parallel to the global principles mentioned in the work. India is certainly moving forward on its terms, as it has since the time of the bipolar world. Presently, the countries in the Global North face a multitude of demographic predicaments, spanning from low birth rates to growing median age and, hence, decreasing working capital. In these matters, India has an advantage, as specified in the sections above, with the right demographic apparatus favouring its economic growth and development.

The number of citizens, especially the youth, leaving the country can work as a push and pull factor regarding its effect on India. The UN DESA in 2020 reported that the UAE, the US, and Saudi Arabia host the largest number of migrants from India, accounting for about 18 million people. Indian students preferred Canada due to its smooth immigration and perks, followed by the US, Australia, and the UK. India also holds the record for remaining the world's top recipient of remittances. India crossed the annual remittances mark of \$100 billion in 2022, becoming the largest remittance receiver in the world. (PIB Mumbai, 2023). The excess population displaces themselves, seeking better opportunities, which

can take some pressure off the country. However, this should be kept a tab over, ensuring the brain drain does not exhaust the talents and establishing cordial relations with foreign governments.

Within domestic politics, government-centric policies should shift to human-centric policies. Collaborating with the non-state entities working at the grassroots level, the state should incorporate a sensitised definition of human security on par with international viewpoints. While it is true that each nation will hold different parameters of measuring standards, it is important that the country also adheres to some of them. As in the case of SDGs, they are being indigenised by the Indian government by adopting different parameters through the Niti Ayog Report.

Following are some channels to ensure the population dilemma is dealt with properly:

1. Implementing a comprehensive population management program integrating family planning and reproductive health services, adhering to the country's recent announcement.
2. Revamp urban planning strategies to prioritise sustainable development, efficient infrastructure, and inclusive community spaces.
3. Launching targeted employment generation initiatives to address unemployment and boost economic opportunities.

4. Establishing a structured pathway from slums to education and from education to career development.

5. Introducing environment-focused initiatives, such as planting trees during a citizen's birth and death, to promote ecological sustainability and societal integration.

6. Promoting diversity awareness and fostering unity through educational programs and community engagement to demote violence and boost social cohesion.

7. Develop defined policies for refugees and migrants, including specialised job opportunities and equitable wages for the native and migrant populations.

A country's population becomes a non-traditional security issue if it is unaddressed and not included in policies. The best practice is tackling adversity head-on with a blueprint of various outcomes and remedies. There is a need for a holistic approach in terms of containing the overgrowth of the population of Generation Beta (to be born between 2025 and 2039) to reduce the strain on the country's resources and employ its strongest resources of all human resources. Sustainability is the key to mitigating the population impact, whether on the country's environment or the nation itself.

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