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The Potential Impact of Demographic Changes in Geopolitical Landscape

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Abstract

In an era marked by swift demographic changes, the population of a country emerges as a crucial source of power and progress, shaping the future geopolitical landscape. This paper explores the dynamic interplay between evolving demographic elements and their intricate relationship with geopolitics. Through a synthesis of compelling cases and data-driven analysis, the paper provides fresh perspectives on the geopolitical ramifications of demographic transitions. The research incorporates a literature review, establishing the significance of population as a determinant of national power, offering a comprehensive overview of global demographic changes, and presenting an empirical analysis that underscores the role of demographic shifts as catalysts for geopolitical consequences. The study, grounded in political demography theory, integrates demographic aspects with geopolitical implications. Employing qualitative analysis, the research utilizes both numerical and non-numerical data from secondary sources to establish connections among variables. Overall, the

discussion underscores that demographic shifts, ranging from declining population growth in certain nations to youth bulges in others, will exert profound impacts on the worldwide geopolitical landscape. It emphasises the necessity for nations to proactively address demographic challenges, through strategic policies that prioritize workforce development, social welfare, and international alliances. This proactive approach is deemed essential for ensuring sustained economic and military capabilities amidst the evolving geopolitical scenario.

Keywords: Demography, geopolitics, political demography, power, population.

INTRODUCTION

A global change is on its way, not in a quiet manner but with a shout. Many scholars are assessing the geopolitical ramifications in the different parts of the globe examining profound alterations in different domains. One factor seems discreetly changing with a gradual impact on geopolitics, which is population, an important element of national power (Sempa, 2012). A conventional thought relating to populace and power is that *more is better* (Sprout & Sprout, 1945). This meant, and still means, more soldiers to fight and more people for the economy. Nevertheless, Thucydides and Malthus enlightened with a counterargument to conventional thinking: *too many will be catastrophic* (Barsbai et al., 2017). However, across the world, countries are facing changes regarding fertility, ageing, migration, and other demographic phenomena. There is no doubt that in a few years, many countries will succumb to small and old populations as the developing world adheres to the Malthusian and neo-Malthusian ideas (Barsbai et al., 2017).

There are scholastic debates about the primacy of hard power (military and economic) as realists say or soft power has taken prominence as internationalists contend. The large standing armies, some argue, have become obsolete, but the Russia-Ukraine war and Hamas-Israel conflict has made it clear otherwise. If the traditional element of national power is considered to be outmoded, then the demographic changes may not matter, but if the countries do not stop resorting to the conventional way of warfare, the population changes will matter the most in future (Gamlen, 2019). Also, the rise of technologies has spurred arguments about the replacement of human beings; however, can these advancements achieve unquantifiable human elements of knowledge, optimism, spirit or others?

Presently, many countries have experienced or will experience demographic decline and ageing in diverse forms which in the future shall determine the geopolitical prospect. Hence, it is important to examine how the international or regional alliances will form or which regional power will become a global one or which global power will fade. Nations such as the United States, Russia, Japan, China, and India, alongside several European, Southeast Asian and selected African states, serve as prime exemplars of this phenomenon. Ageing populations in Russia and Japan, for instance, have prompted concerns about economic sustainability and military capabilities (Klein & Mosler, 2021). Meanwhile, China's demographic dividend, with a youthful population [but unfortunately declining], has underpinned its rapid economic ascent and regional assertiveness (Noesselt, 2018). In parallel, India's youthful demographics [and rising] are positioning it as a potential global player (Balachandran, 2020). Similarly, Russia, with its ageing population and territorial concerns, faces challenges in maintaining its geopolitical influence (Klein & Mosler, 2021).

In contrary, Southeast Asian nations grapple with demographic transitions that hold implications for regional stability and economic development (Ananta & Arifin, 2014). African states, characterized by rapid population growth, represent both opportunities and challenges for global actors seeking resources and markets (Canning et al., 2015). Also, small states across various regions are impacted by demographic changes as ageing populations and declining birth rates affect workforce dynamics and economic sustainability (Klein & Mosler, 2021). Geopolitically, these demographic shifts can lead to challenges in defence capabilities, influence regional power dynamics, and may necessitate strategic alliances for economic resilience. Understanding these demographic shifts as an imperative for crafting effective geopolitical strategies, as they shape a nation's economic vitality, military capabilities, and regional influence, demographic changes wield profound influence over geopolitics, as evidenced by a global landscape marked by shifting power dynamics and strategic realignments.

This study shall explore the realities of new demographic changes and what will be the ramifications of those alterations to the geopolitical scenario of the globe. The main

question that the paper examines is: *is less good or worse than more?* The research takes into account the nature of power in the modern world which is still largely influenced by traditional elements of power, a realist assumption. The study is aimed at analysing the demographic changes of countries like the USA, Japan, China, India, Russia, some European, Southeast Asian and a few African countries. Ultimately, the paper predicts the future geopolitical repercussions in the globe.

Demographic Dynamics and Geopolitics: A Historical context

Political Scientists have regarded population as the element of national power far before the debates left the classrooms and reached the parliaments, ministries, and international organisations. When Lenin (1923) said “[...] the outcome of the struggle will be determined by the fact that Russia, India, and China, etc., constitute the overwhelming majority of the population of the globe” (Sempa, 2012, p. 59), revealed the future course of geopolitics to be centred on these countries. There is no doubt that geography remains an important element of national power, but the character of government, economy, natural resources, national cohesion, and *people* also are significant determinants of national power (Sprout & Sprout, 1945). Notably, it is true that one single element does not make a country a global power.

From the analects of history, it can be said that the countries with large populations and geography like Imperial Russia, Imperial Germany, and the United States have proven themselves to be great powers (Brzezinski, 2004). Similarly, in the present context, India and China are the two countries with large populations and geography. However, history also shows that small countries (in terms of geography) like Britain and Japan with relatively small populace have become great powers and Australia with a large geography and small population have not been able to achieve that status (Brzezinski, 2004). Although there is no formula for measuring the great power status nor the geopolitics, the relative distribution, organisation, and decline of the population have affected the great power balance (Buchanan, 2002). Frank W. Notestein (1944, p. 23) noted that “differences in rates of growth of nations have powerful effects on economic life, political climate, and military potential, [...] analysis of the future military potential requires a careful evaluation of prospective changes in population.”

Furthermore, Sir Halford John Mackinder (1904, p. 29) in his seminal work *The Geographical Pivot of History* wrote “the actual balance of political power [in the world] at any given time is [...] the product [...] of geographical conditions, both economic and strategic, and [...] of the relative number, virility, equipment, and organization of the competing peoples.” Understanding the significance of population in the balance of power, he wrote, “Man Power [...] is in these modern days is greatly dependent on organisation”. Similarly, Mahan (1965) in his book *Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783*, recognised population as a very important element of national power. In the quest to explain the connection between population and geopolitics, German scholar Friedrich Ratzel and the Swedish political scientist Rudolf Kjellen introduced these ideas in academia formally with the introduction of concepts such as *Geopolitik* (geography and the state) and *Demopolitik* (population and the state) (Ratzel, 1923/2022; Björk & Lundén, 2021). There is very convincing logic that with a growing population, states will seek to expand the living spaces affecting the geopolitics.

Among the modern scholars who have contributed to the knowledge regarding the connection between geopolitics and population is Nicholas Spykman. He explained that “[...] to get a certain picture of the relative strength of nations by noting the distribution of population density in the world” (Spykman, 2007). However, he was aware that the power of a nation cannot solely be determined by the population but has to be equated with industrial

production, political organisation, national cohesion and others (Spykman, 2007). Likewise, George F. Kennan realised that with the rise of large-scale warfare and sophisticated weapons due to technological changes, “military strength on a major scale [...] can be produced only in a limited number of parts of the globe: in those regions where major industrial power, enjoying access to raw materials, is combined with large reserves of educated and technically skilled manpower” (Kennan, 1966, p. 68). Adhering to the same idea, Harold and Margaret Sprout (1945) pointed out that the logical point of analysing the power of the state would be population.

Moreover, Samuel P. Huntington (1996) in his book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* repeatedly pointed out the remarkable rates of population growth regarding the ‘resurgence of Islam’. However, in the contemporary world, there has been a decline of the great powers and the rise of a new order in this century. The reasons for the power shifts have been explained by George Weigel as a mistake committed by the Europeans, which he calls “demographic suicide” (Weigel, 2005, p. 10) which has been supported by Patrick J. Buchanan; he states, “the cradle of Western Civilization will have become its grave” (Buchanan, 2002, p. 39). One thing they have in common is that the population vacuum surely will not remain unfilled. Therefore, as Jennifer Dabbs Sciubba (2010, p. 117) said, there shall be “twofold epochal change taking place [in global geopolitics]: the transfer of the centre of gravity of the world economy from the Atlantic to the Pacific [...] and the rise of a ‘second nuclear age’ in Asia and with it, the concomitant end of three centuries of Western military superiority”.

Thus, from the above review of literature, it can be concluded that there is a huge connection between the changing demographics and geopolitics. And, it makes it important to analyse the consequences of present population shifts impacting the global order. The scope of the paper is, thus, determined by the new demographic and geopolitical realities. As there are research gaps in examining the modern relative demographic decline ultimately undermining national power in the long run, this paper attempts to observe the contemporary demographic trends in the world impacting the never-static geopolitical phenomenon as there shall always be a connection between the two; hence, making Lenin right about the trends.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Considering the varying population structures in the present world, the urgency to find the interface between political science and population studies has encouraged the paper to adopt the theoretical framework of *political demography*. Political demography is the systematic study of meso- and macro-level drivers of politics due to population changes (Vanhuysse & Goerres, 2021). Simply, it is the study of population dynamics and their effects on polity and policy processes (Goldstone et al., 2012). It considers that the ever-shifting demographic changes are the vital shaper of the political and sociological outlines of the world (Vanhuysse & Goerres, 2021). This theoretical lens shall provide the research, first and foremost, to explore, synthesise and summarise key demographic developments in different countries in various parts of the globe; and second, to speculate the geopolitical repercussions as a consequence of population alterations.

Through this theoretical framework, the study takes into consideration demographic megatrends like the variations of population growths, regional population density, and international migration rates. The framework also facilitates to relate the political consequences especially power balances which further provides a window to examine military powers and geopolitical balances. The study primarily, in terms of geographic scope, takes case study analysis of the countries like the USA, China, Russia, Japan, India, some European Southeast Asian, and African states encompassing important macro regions. By taking these countries, the study is attempting to analyse the pattern of demographic impacts

on contemporary geopolitics. The above-mentioned states have maximum demographic changes along with potential power structures, thus, are taken into consideration. Some countries which are not taken into consideration for the research are only for research convenience.

Methodologically, the research is qualitative where numerical data are also used to justify the claims of geopolitical changes. The data is collected employing secondary means through reports, policy papers and via other forms of reliable sources, and presented in the tabular and pictorial format where possible. The report takes the data related to demographic changes mainly after 2015. The present geopolitical changes in different parts of the globe are analysed to construct a relationship between demographic trends and geopolitical changes. Power indicators like military and economy are taken into consideration to track the future geopolitical repercussions and global power shifts.

Population as a Source of National Power

Population, as an element of national power, holds a pivotal role in shaping a nation's strength and influence on the global stage. Population size, often considered the most tangible aspect of demographics, serves as a fundamental indicator of a nation's potential power (Walt, 1985). A larger population provides a larger labour force, which can drive economic growth and military strength (Brzezinski, 2004). However, population size alone is insufficient to gauge a nation's power accurately. The age distribution within the population is equally critical. A youthful population, characterized by a high percentage of working-age individuals, can contribute significantly to economic productivity and military recruitment (Sempa, 2012).

Moreover, the quality of a population matters as much as its quantity (Sempa, 2012). Human capital, including education, skills, and health, plays a pivotal role in determining a nation's productivity and innovation capacity (Sempa, 2012). Beyond economic factors, the population also influences a nation's military power (Walt, 1985). A larger population can support a larger military, which is often crucial for national defence and security (Walt, 1985). However, the quality and training of military personnel are equally vital. Nations that invest in the professional development of their armed forces can leverage their population's potential more effectively (Brzezinski, 2004). Demographics also have political implications. A diverse population can enhance a nation's diplomatic and soft power capabilities (Sempa, 2012). Countries with multicultural societies often have broader networks of influence and can connect with various regions and cultures effectively (Sprout & Sprout, 1945). The USA, with its diverse population, leverages this advantage in its diplomatic relations and global cultural influence (Brzezinski, 2004). Demographic factors also intersect with geopolitical considerations (Walt, 1985). Population dynamics can drive migration patterns, influence resource allocation, and even trigger conflicts. For instance, youth bulges in certain regions have been linked to political instability and conflicts, underscoring the importance of understanding demographic trends in conflict analysis and resolution.

Thus, a nation must recognise the significance of demographic factors in shaping its future. Strategic investments in education, healthcare, and workforce development can enhance a nation's human capital and economic competitiveness. Moreover, understanding the complex interactions between demographics and other elements of national power is essential for crafting effective domestic and foreign policies in an increasingly interconnected and dynamic global landscape. Overall, the population is a multifaceted element of national power. While population size is a key determinant, the age distribution, human capital, and quality of the population are equally critical. The economic, military, political, and geopolitical implications of demographics underscore the complex role that population plays in a nation's power equation.

Global Synopsis of Demographic Change

The global demographic landscape is undergoing profound transformations characterized by a constellation of factors. Notably, there is a discernible shift toward an ageing population in many advanced economies, attributed to declining birth rates and extended life expectancies (Mavroudi & Nagel, 2016). In contrast, several emerging economies and regions, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Asia, are experiencing youth bulges, marked by a high proportion of young people entering the workforce, offering both opportunities for economic growth and challenges in providing adequate employment and education opportunities (Charles-Edwards et al., 2023). These demographic changes, alongside variations in fertility rates, and migration flows, collectively contribute to a complex and dynamic global demographic landscape, necessitating nuanced analyses to comprehend their far-reaching implications for geopolitics, economies, and societies worldwide (Charles-Edwards et al., 2023).

To provide a global synopsis of demographic changes, the study takes the reference of powerful states in contemporary world like the United States and Russia, rising powers such as China and India, European powers namely France, Germany, and the United Kingdom, Southeast Asian powerhouses including Malaysia, Indonesia, and Philippines, and African states in particular South Africa, Nigeria, and Egypt. The study realises that there are other nations which can be taken as an instance to represent global demographic summary but the aforementioned states are only representations of the region. The countries listed in Table 1 are the states with significant economic, military, and geopolitical influence, making their demographic trends pivotal in shaping worldwide political and strategic landscapes. Their diverse demographic profiles offer insights into the multifaceted challenges and opportunities associated with population dynamics on a contemporary global scale.

Table 1
Rate of Population Change (2015-2023)

Country	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
China	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.3	0.1	0.0	-0.0	-0.0
Japan	-0.2	-0.2	-0.3	-0.3	-0.4	-0.5	-0.5	-0.5	-0.5
India	1.2	1.2	1.1	1.1	1.0	0.9	0.7	0.7	0.9
Russian Federation	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.0	-0.2	-0.5	-0.0	-0.3
United States	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.6	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.5
France	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2
Germany	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.0	-0.1	-0.0
United Kingdom	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
Malaysia	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.1	1.1	1.1
Indonesia	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.9	0.8	0.6	0.6	0.8
Philippines	1.8	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.6	1.6	1.4	1.5	1.5
South Africa	2.4	-0.4	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.1	0.9	0.8	0.9
Nigeria	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4
Egypt	2.1	2.0	2.0	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.6	1.5	1.5

Note. Adapted from

<https://population.un.org/dataportal/data/indicators/51/locations/156,818,356,360,392,458,566,608,643,710,840,250,276,826/start/2015/end/2023/table/pivotbylocation>

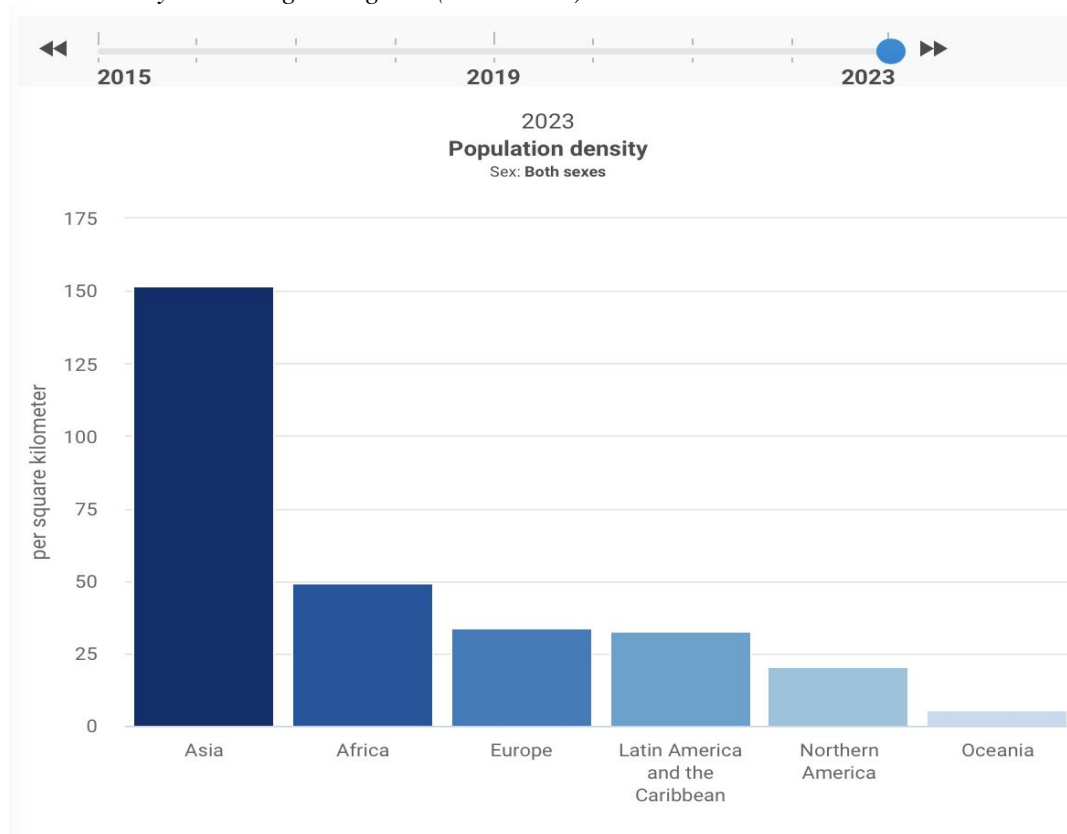
Population dynamics vary significantly among China, Japan, the USA, and Russia. China, the world's most populous nation, has experienced a gradual slowdown in population growth due to stringent family planning policies (Weber & Van Mol, 2023). Conversely, Japan faces a declining population primarily due to low birth rates and limited immigration, resulting in an ageing society (Weber & Van Mol, 2023). In the USA, population growth

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remains relatively stable, driven by a combination of births, immigration, and demographic diversity (Weber & Van Mol, 2023). Likewise, Europe is characterized by diverse population change rates, with some Western and Northern European countries experiencing slower population growth or even declining due to low birth rates and ageing populations (England & Azzopardi-Muscat, 2017). In contrast, several Eastern and Southern European countries are grappling with population stagnation or declines driven by factors such as emigration and economic challenges (England & Azzopardi-Muscat, 2017).

Russia, on the other hand, is grappling with a stagnant population largely attributed to low birth rates and high mortality rates (Adam, 2023). These divergent population trends have far-reaching implications for each country's economic vitality, social systems, and geopolitical positioning. Similarly, India is experiencing population growth, with a substantial youth demographic (25.3% of the total population in 2022) (Weber & Van Mol, 2023). Factors such as high birth rates and improving life expectancy contribute to this rapid population expansion, shaping the nation's economic and social dynamics (Adam, 2023). Also, Southeast Asia exhibits varying population change rates, with countries like Indonesia, the Philippines, and Malaysia experiencing moderate growth (Taagepera & Nemčok, 2023). In contrast, many African nations have some of the world's highest population growth rates, driven by high birth rates, contributing to a youthful population, urbanization challenges, and economic opportunities (Taagepera & Nemčok, 2023).

Figure 5
Population Density according to Regions (2015-2023)



Note. The image was created using the database management system. From the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, United Nations, 2023. (<https://population.un.org/dataportal/data/indicators/54/locations/903,935,908,904,905,909/start/2015/end/2023/metadata/metadataindicators>).

The Potential Impact of Demographic Changes in Geopolitical Landscape

The concentration of the global population in different regions has profound implications for world politics. Regions with dense populations, such as East Asia, South Asia, and Africa, hold significant political and economic weight due to their sheer numbers (Taagepera & Nemčok, 2023). This concentration shapes the distribution of global power, influences voting blocs in international organizations, and impacts trade dynamics. Additionally, it drives migration patterns, affecting geopolitics by contributing to refugee crises or labour flows. However, it also presents challenges related to resource allocation, environmental sustainability, and social stability. Conversely, regions with low population density, like parts of North America and Australia, often have vast resources and geopolitical influence (Weber & Van Mol, 2023). Understanding these demographic dynamics is critical for policymakers to navigate a rapidly changing global landscape.

Table 2

Net-Migration Flow (2015-2023)

Country /Area	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
China	-155	-153	-181	-297	-303	-34	-200	-311	-310
Japan	150	157	164	177	184	88	88	100	100
India	-475	68	-220	-562	-593	-35	-302	-487	-486
Russian Federation	385	373	350	337	334	341	321	942	-136
United States	1222	1449	1378	1201	1158	676	562	999	1000
Asia	-2395	-2113	-2495	-2340	-2466	-2092	-1504	-1462	-1487
Europe	1308	1346	1433	1583	1728	1436	1418	789	792
Africa	-191	-1147	-680	-815	-717	-202	-547	-540	-535
Latin America and the Caribbean	-431	-146	-286	-341	-427	-164	-274	-175	-162
North America	1454	1770	1739	1619	1550	871	757	1247	1249
Oceania	255	289	289	295	332	151	151	142	143

Note. Adapted from

<https://population.un.org/dataportal/data/indicators/65/locations/156,840,356,643,392,908,903,935,904,905,909/start/2015/end/2023/table/pivotbylocation>

Migration trends to/from China, India, Japan, Russia, and the USA hold major inferences for world politics. China and India are experiencing notable emigration, particularly skilled professionals seeking better opportunities abroad, which contributes to their diaspora's influence on global politics and trade (Mavroudi & Nagel, 2023). Japan, with its ageing population, has explored immigration to address labour shortages, signalling a shift in its traditionally homogenous society (Mavroudi & Nagel, 2023). Russia, on the other hand, faces a substantial influx of labour migrants from Central Asia and Eastern Europe, impacting its social fabric and regional influence (Charles-Edwards et al., 2023). The USA remains a global magnet for immigration, shaping its demographic diversity and soft power while fuelling debates over immigration policies (Beckley, 2018). These migration dynamics influence international diplomacy, trade relations, and cultural exchange, highlighting the interconnectedness of migration and world politics.

In a larger picture, Asia and Africa often serve as significant sources of emigration due to economic disparities and political conflicts (Charles-Edwards et al., 2023). The resulting global dispersion of diaspora communities wields considerable influence on international diplomacy, trade, and remittances, linking their host countries to geopolitical developments in their regions of origin (Charles-Edwards et al., 2023). In contrast, North America, especially the United States and Canada, remains attractive to immigrants, contributing to the enrichment of cultural diversity and labour force dynamics (Gamlen,

2019). These immigration patterns spark policy debates, influence electoral politics, and have direct consequences on trade relations, as immigrants often become crucial consumers and contributors to innovation in these destination countries (Gamlen, 2019). Also, Europe experiences complex migration trends marked by both intra-European mobility, driven by economic opportunities and regional stability, and immigration from outside the continent, often influenced by factors like conflict and humanitarian crises (Charles-Edwards et al., 2023). These migration dynamics have led to debates over integration, security, and social cohesion, shaping the political landscape and policy discussions across the European Union and individual countries.

Besides, Latin America and the Caribbean experience a dynamic interplay of emigration and intra-regional migration. Emigration from countries like Mexico to the United States is a well-known phenomenon with implications for bilateral relations and border security (Adam, 2023). Intra-regional migration within Latin America influences regional stability and economic cooperation, with countries like Venezuela witnessing mass emigration to neighbouring states due to political instability (Acemoglu & Restrepo, 2017). Meanwhile, Europe faces the complexities of being both a destination and a source region for migration, leading to diverse integration, security, and social cohesion challenges (Mavroudi & Nagel, 2023). These migration trends collectively underline the central role of migration in shaping global politics, from foreign policy considerations and humanitarian responses to international cooperation and cultural exchanges.

Demographic Shifts as a Catalyst for Geopolitical Changes: Empirical Analysis

The global synopsis of demographic changes depicts that it is easier to notice singular events- the Russia-Ukraine War, Israel-Hamas conflict, and the COVID-19 pandemic- than changes that take place over time. The latter, however, significantly changes societies, economy, and politics (Balachandran, 2020). Hence, demographic changes are slow but powerful and inexorable. Considering the decreasing growth rate of many countries, it can fairly be estimated that the working populace in the 2040s will be extremely low; thus, defining the national power of each nation bearing in mind their small contribution to the economy or military sectors (Goldstone et al., 2012; Sciubba, 2010). The declining population growth in China and Russia, coupled with plummeting fertility rates in middle-income countries, raises concerns (Acemoglu & Restrepo, 2017).

While the USA relies on immigration to sustain its workforce, Japan faces a diminishing population (Acemoglu & Restrepo, 2017). Conversely, Southeast Asian states with high population growth rates contribute to their economic growth (Balachandran, 2020). India is anticipated to surpass China in working population by 2030, potentially benefiting its booming economy (Balachandran, 2020). The classical texts like *The History of Peloponnesian War* by Thucydides do explain that nations experiencing demographic decline conduct their affairs cautiously (Holmes, 2012). The nature of alliances, influenced by demographic changes, can cause strategic shocks globally (Brzezinski, 2004). As declining demographic power seeks strategic partners with growing military strength, the concentration of population in Asia and the Pacific region makes rising powers, including India and Southeast Asian states, crucial partners for the QUAD members and China in the future geopolitical landscape (Brzezinski, 2004).

India's demographic advantages, including fertile levels and a competent working age structure, position it for strong economic growth, contradicting past predictions of population hindering development (Schottli, 2022). India is presently facing a 'demographic dividend' where its active population is growing and the dependents are lessening, and policies addressing outdated labor laws, enhancing women's workforce participation, and investing in skilled manpower can capitalize on this trend (Schottli, 2022). The favourable demographic

trends fuelling India's economy pose potential competition for wary countries like China (Bekkevold & Kalyanaraman, 2020). Geopolitically, India's demographic future offers opportunities for new alliances and power projection (Bekkevold & Kalyanaraman, 2020). Additionally, India's military modernization benefits from demographic trends, evidenced by an increase in the number of fighting-age men amid a thriving economy (Schottli, 2022), marking India as a pivotal player in the shifting geopolitical scenario in Asia.

Contrary to India, Russia faces concerns over declining population indicators, particularly in youth recruiting, impacting both the quantity and quality of its military (Galeotti, 2019; Feshbach, 2012). The number of high-school graduates joining the military has plummeted compared to the USA and other European countries (Feshbach, 2012). Although the Russian military is trying to expand its recruitment base from Chechnya and former Soviet countries along with the use of private militaries as witnessed in the present Russia-Ukraine crisis, this depicts the degrading military power of once a great nation (Galeotti, 2019). The challenge of transitioning from a million-man military to voluntary forces raises questions about maintaining workforce and social welfare systems, potentially impacting Russia's economic power and geopolitical influence (Galeotti, 2019).

The USA's demographic exceptionalism, driven by immigration and higher birth rates among minority groups, aims to transform the labour force, consumer markets, and economic landscape (Lee, 2022). A diverse workforce fosters innovation, enhancing global competitiveness (Mokry, 2023). However, realizing the full potential requires investments in education and workforce development (Lee, 2022). Moreover, an ageing population presents challenges to social welfare and healthcare, impacting long-term economic sustainability (Beckley, 2018). Demographic changes influence military recruitment and force composition, with greater diversity enhancing adaptability and effectiveness against global threats (Beckley, 2018). Yet, shifts may affect willingness among younger generations to serve, impacting force size and readiness. Geopolitically, the U.S. must navigate these changes for continued global leadership, emphasizing diversity and social cohesion to maintain strength on the world stage (Lee, 2022). Strategic approaches are crucial for preserving economic and military power in an interconnected and competitive world (Beckley, 2018).

Similarly, demographic changes in European countries are reshaping the geopolitical landscape, with Western and Northern European nations facing challenges from ageing populations and declining birth rates (Nitoiu & Sus, 2019). In contrast, Eastern and Southern European countries experience population stagnation or decline due to emigration and economic hardships, impacting regional development and political stability (Czaika et al., 2023). Migration patterns are influenced, making Europe a destination for immigrants, triggering debates on cultural integration, social cohesion, and security concerns (Czaika et al., 2023). While immigration addresses labour shortages, it fuels political and policy shifts, potentially straining political relations and regional cooperation (Bachmann & Bialasiewicz, 2020). The flow of refugees into European countries has the potential to strain political relations, domestic stability, and regional cooperation, thereby exerting a significant impact on European geopolitics (Czaika et al., 2023). Moreover, varied demographic profiles contribute to economic disparities, influencing discussions on fiscal solidarity and cooperation within the European Union (Bachmann & Bialasiewicz, 2020). These disparities can lead to social and political unrest, as seen in protests and populist movements in some Eastern European nations.

Once a thriving economy, Japan grapples with a rapidly ageing population and declining birth rates, resulting in a shrinking workforce and increased reliance on social welfare (Klein & Mosler, 2021). This demographic shift is already affecting Japan's economic productivity and competitiveness (Klein & Mosler, 2021). With fewer young workers, there's a potential shortage of skilled labour, hindering innovation and growth

(Hennings & Mintz, 2018). This demographic shift negatively impacts economic productivity, competitiveness, and innovation due to a potential shortage of skilled labour (Hennings & Mintz, 2018). In future geopolitical theatre, Japan's economic challenges can weaken its position as a global economic powerhouse. A reduced economic footprint may limit its ability to influence international trade agreements and financial institutions (Klein & Mosler, 2021). Additionally, Japan's ageing population may divert resources from defence and security initiatives, potentially impacting its role in regional security dynamics (Hennings & Mintz, 2018). Urgent policy measures are crucial to address these challenges and ensure long-term economic and geopolitical influence.

Nevertheless, a region positively impacted due to its demographic change is Southeast Asia. Southeast Asian countries like Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam and others are experiencing a youth bulge, marked by a growing working-age population, making them attractive for labour-intensive industries and investments (Ziegenhain, 2021). This demographic advantage has the potential to propel economic growth, expand consumer markets, and bolster the region's economic prowess. Effectively managing this demographic shift is crucial, necessitating investments in quality education, healthcare, and employment opportunities for the burgeoning youth population (Ananta & Arifin, 2014). Additionally, addressing income inequality and promoting sustainable economic practices are pivotal for long-term stability and prosperity (Ziegenhain, 2021). Overall, the collaborative efforts within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) position the region as a potential global economic powerhouse, particularly in the Indo-Pacific. In terms of military power, some countries in Southeast Asia are modernizing their armed forces to respond to evolving security challenges (Wu, 2021). Leveraging the demographic dividend, these countries aim for a larger and technologically advanced military, potentially influencing regional defence capabilities and altering power alliances (Wu, 2021). The evolving demographic landscape in Southeast Asia attracts strategic interest from major powers, leading to potential geopolitical competition and influence in the region (Ziegenhain, 2021). Consequently, these demographic changes present both opportunities and challenges, shaping the region's economic and military power on the global stage.

Similarly, African nations have an opportunity to play a significant role in future geopolitics, driven by rapid population growth and a youthful demographic profile (Qobo & Mzyece, 2023). Realizing economic potential hinges on effectively harnessing the youth population through education and job opportunities (Qobo & Mzyece, 2023). Successfully investing in youth, promoting economic diversification, and enhancing economic power could position African countries as attractive markets for global investors. Demographic changes also impact military dynamics, with the youth bulge serving as a source of recruits, enhancing military power (Kornegay Jnr, 2020). This gives them opportunities to become more influential players on the global stage as their regional initiative- African Union (AU) has been exceptional contemporarily. African countries' strategic importance and resources could attract increased interest from major powers, shaping the dynamics of geopolitics in the region and impacting Africa's position on the global stage (Kornegay Jnr, 2020). African nations, particularly those like Nigeria, South Africa, and Egypt, may capitalize on these demographic trends, garnering increased interest from major powers and shaping the geopolitics of the region, influencing Africa's global position (Kornegay Jnr, 2020).

Nevertheless, China faces a looming challenge with its rapidly ageing population, a consequence of the decades-long one-child policy, resulting in a diminishing workforce, skewed sex ratios, and increased dependence on the elderly (Minzner, 2023). The financial burden of caring for China's elderly, many without pension coverage, is a pressing concern (García-Herrero, 2023). Referred to as an "inverted pyramid," China's demographic structure poses economic challenges, marking a departure from demographics as a historical advantage

(Noesselt, 2021, p. 118). While China's economic performance is influenced by various factors beyond demographics, the nation now grapples with population-related obstacles. Demography, formerly China's greatest ally, may eventually turn against it (Chang, 2012). A shrinking working-age population may pose recruitment challenges for the People's Liberation Army, although technological advancements could partially mitigate this. These demographic changes present a complex mix of challenges and opportunities for China's economic and military power, potentially impacting its global influence and role in regional security dynamics (Minzner, 2023).

Understanding current demographic patterns raises concerns about potential future conflicts. Shifting population densities may spark competition for land resources, altering existing trends and potentially giving rise to new geopolitical spaces for conflict (Libicki et al., 2011). While there is optimistic speculation that an ageing population promotes global peace, this assumption should be viewed cautiously given inherent human nature (Libicki et al., 2011). Examining the data presented in this paper, it becomes evident that countries lacking nuclear capabilities are witnessing economic growth due to the significant influence of population on national power (Barsbai et al., 2017). Although nuclear weapons can act as equalizers in densely populated nations, they underscore that shifts in military and economic power can reshape geopolitical trajectories (Barsbai et al., 2017).

Furthermore, the military's strength, encompassing infantry, naval, and air force components, is intricately tied to population size (Björk & Lundén, 2021). While measures like allowing immigrants into the national army or employing Private Military Companies (PMCs) may offer temporary solutions, their efficacy in real war scenarios, considering shifting loyalties, underscores Clausewitz's statement *On War's* assertion that national strength is a product of force and will. Despite technological advancements altering the nature of warfare, traditional military operations still necessitate manpower. Crucially, a robust military relies on a vibrant economy, which, in turn, hinges on a strong domestic workforce. In conclusion, empirical evidence suggests that changing demographics will significantly shape future geopolitical consequences.

CONCLUSION

The whole world is experiencing a historic and unprecedented demographic transformation in the twenty-first century. Two states, Japan and Russia, have gone through absolute demographic decline. There is still a question about the USA's demographic exceptionalism and China's rise considering its population constraints. However, India and, a few Southeast Asian and African states have drawn profound potential for economic and military transformation because of their burgeoning populace. Classical precedents depict that relative global populations have largely impacted great power politics. Different demographic phenomena including population growth rate, ageing populace, youth bulge, and others have significant impacts on the global balance of power because these are closely related to the economy and military power of the state.

The contemporary demographic trends depict that there will be a shift in geopolitical theatre, particularly in Asia and the Pacific region. The continent-sized countries (China, India, and Russia) in Asia and the Indo-Pacific region growing its geopolitical significance, and the demographic changes in these global areas will have future geopolitical repercussions. The global balance of power is static and difficult to predict; however, the slow but static changes in demography are certain to make an impact on societal, economic and political impact. Thus, the political demographic lens provides an analytical window to examine the potential impact of demographic processes in contemporary geopolitics.

Therefore, the study concludes that these demographic shocks have immense strategic effects owing to geopolitical implications. The data portrays that the decline of the youth

population in Russia will have a profound impact on its military power which has been evidenced through its present conflict with Ukraine where it has employed troops from other countries and private military firms. Additionally, Japan is facing similar concerns converting it into a setting sun in the East. China, on the other hand, faces demographic turmoil but as anticipated has not faced consequences as other countries in the first two decades of the century probably owing to its unique governance style; however, this century is not going to be an easy road.

Nevertheless, the American demographic exceptionalism boosted through immigration and population growth among minorities has aided the sustenance of its economy and military prowess. Likewise, India's positive demographic patterns are readying the working force in the coming years which will boost its economic growth and military modernisation. India's demographic trends will construct a different strategic landscape in Asia and the Indo-Pacific region. Similarly, few Southeast Asian and African states have shown parallel trends which could be an asset for them to enhance their economic drive through regionalism and in several cases military power as well. This will also enhance their geopolitical relevance and coverage in the future.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

MJP developed the research idea, reviewed existing literature relevant to the research topic and worked on conceptual framework, and the study methodology; drafted sections of the manuscript; interpret the results and drafted the empirical analysis component; incorporated feedback from the peer-reviewers; and finally proofread.

SN Collected all numerical data required and analysed the data; reviewed and edited the manuscript for clarity, coherence, and grammar; incorporated feedback from co-author and peer reviewers; ensured compliance with author guidelines, and designed all figures and tables.

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