

23. South Asia

= well definable by physical-geographic criteria

Location and physical borders

= *Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives* (Figure 1)

= most populous macro-region (22% of total world population vs. 3% of total land)

3 main physical-geographic regions:

1. *Himalayas*
2. *fluvial plains (Indus, Ganges + Brahmaputra)*
3. *Deccan plain and West/East Ghats*

= 1 of the poorest areas in the world ⇔ low salaries (incomes) and low education level, 1/3 of the population employed in agriculture

Himalayas = natural border of migration and agriculture => plenty of different nations and languages

2 main *nuclear powers*: India and Pakistan

Figure 1: South Asia



Main characteristics of South Asia

- 2 main river systems: Ganges + Brahmaputra and Indus, great *influence of monsoons*.
- 2nd main region in number of inhabitants (1st = China)
- demographic problems found nowhere else in the world
- underdeveloped countries, lack of food (occasional famine)
- underdeveloped, subsistence, less productive agriculture in comparison with other Asian countries
- mostly rural population (70-75% => URB = 25-30% - very low)
- strong cultural regionalization
- borders remaining from the colonial period
- India = world's most sophisticated, most complex federative (federal) country/state

Physical geography

SW monsoons (summer) vs. dry season (winter) => Bangladesh cca 10,000 mm of rainfall => lot of *floods*. Tropical rainforest = only small area ⇔ deforestation

Maldives + Andaman and Nicobar islands = in danger of global warming

Population

= low literacy rate: about 40%

= very *high natural increase* of population = 2-3% (20-30 per mille) – predominantly NE India – about 1000 inh./km², e.g.

- India + Pakistan = stagnation
- Sri Lanka = 1,7%
- Bangladesh = 1,9%
- Nepal = 3,3%

Calcutta = 50% of population lives in slums, in peripheral areas and nearby rivers

% HDP/% population =>

- World = 100
- USA = 448
- S Asia = 20

Language regions

- *Indoasian languages*
- *Dravidian languages* – S India
- *Austroasian languages* – West Bengal, NE India
- *Sino-tibetan languages* – Himalayas
- *Andaman languages* – Andaman and Nicobar islands

Religion

= compact region, but English divided S Asia into:

- *Muslim part* (Afghanistan, Pakistan – 95%, Bangladesh, Maldives)
- *Hindu part* (India – 80%)
- *Buddhist region* (Sri Lanka – 70% of population)

In other words, religion was main reason of conflicts ⇔ great diversity of society

Industries

= textile, wood-processing industry, agriculture (growing of rice, cereals, jute in Bangladesh)

Pakistan

= most populated Muslim country

Capital = *Islamabad*

Other large cities: *Karachi, Peshawar, Lahore*

Afghanistan

= oppression by Taliban for several yrs.

= traditional *strategic location* => cause of conflicts

= drug production

Capital = *Kabul*

Other large cities: *Kandahar, Herat*

India

= very diverse country (mountains vs. tropics)

= 2nd most populated country in the world, federation, democracy **but** *caste system*:

- Religion leaders
- Warriors
- Farmers
- Craftsmen

□ Untouchables (200,000,000 inh.) => no marriages between the castes

Big differences between rural and urban population. In cities, economy is very dynamic (Bangalore, Hyderabad, Punjab region) – computers, electronics, rocketry, movie industry, etc.

The worst conflict = *Jammu and Kashmir* (Figure 2) = peoples “of” Pakistan but politically belonging to India => conflicts (civil war and later India vs. Pakistan)

Figure 2: Jammu and Kashmir



Countries' statistics

Country	GDP/capita	Number of inhabitants
Afghanistan	200	28,000,000
Pakistan	480	147,000,000
India	440	1,034,000
Sri Lanka	840	19,000,000
Nepal	210	26,000,000
Bhutan	520	2,500,000
Bangladesh	340	135,000,000
Maldives	1,400	320,000

USD

