THE POLITICAL ORIGINS OF MISSING WOMEN
Pramod Kumar Sur
Asian Growth Research Institute (AGI) and Osaka University

Motivation
- India is the first country to experience an inflated sex ratio at birth (SRB) favoring men (Chao et al. 2019)
- Only country to have a higher SRB starting in the 1970s

These facts are interesting and puzzling at the same time because:
- Sex-selection technology was not available in the 1970s (Anukriti et al. 2021)
- Extremely high level of fertility-rate

Descriptive Evidence
Population by Sex and year of Birth: Raw Data (1991 Census)

Population by Sex and year of Birth: 5 Year Moving Average

Heterogeneity by State
States with lower sex ratio earlier likely to experience inflated SRB

Potential Mechanism: Infanticide
Infant Deaths between 0-7 days: (Sample Registration System)

Research Question
- What explains such a phenomenon in India?
- Explore the political origins of Missing Women

Context
Examine the legacy of forced sterilization during "the Emergency": a draconian family planning policy implemented between April 1976 and January 1977
- Implemented by the government
- Sterilization of individuals (of productive age) with more than 2 children
- Use of force: Eg., by police and other government officials
- Extensive evidence of disincentives, coercion, and misinformation for sterilization

Main Findings: DID Estimates

Summary
- Study the political origins of missing women in India.
- Document that a short-term policy implemented by the government in the past can induce significant changes in the sex ratios and initiate long-term persistent effects.
- Examine Forced Sterilization: a family planning policy implemented between 1976-77
  - The Short-lived policy led to an increase in the ratio of boys to girls.
  - Document a sharp rise in the death rate of infants less than 7 days.
  - The enduring legacies persist in the long run.

Sex Ratio and Fertility

Why Forced Sterilization impact Missing Women
Combination of Factors
- The same political party continued to remain in power (except 1977-79)
- Forcible nature: by the government
- Cultural practices: Son Preference, patriarchy