



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Humanitarian Crisis and Intervention: Securitizing Environmental Challenges in Pakistan**

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**ABSTRACT**

The issue of environmental security has become a threat and gained momentum since the end of the cold war. Climate change leads to environmental crises such as water scarcity, droughts, food shortages, and economic loss. This paper seeks to evaluate the environmental crisis of Pakistan as well as provide insights for overcoming this issue. This paper is a theoretical study that uses the methodology of discourse analysis and implements the framework of RSCT in redefining security. Therefore, this research is an attempt to answer what are the challenges to the environmental security of Pakistan, how climate change is affecting the different sectors in Pakistan as well as highlights the measures to tackle Pakistan's environmental security challenges. This paper broadens the definition of security from military aspects to humanitarian aspects. The security of the environment is essential for states because it can give rise to other issues such as economic loss for states and other violent conflicts. Environmental insecurity can badly influence the socio-economic conditions of Pakistan. The economy has also declined due to water scarcity agriculture sector is affected. Therefore, environmental insecurity poses a direct threat to Pakistan's national security.

**Keywords:** Climate Change, Environmental Security, Insecurity, National Security, Pakistan, RSCT

**Introduction**

The problem of environmental security has become known and became more considered during the Cold war. Though it existed before the cold war in the 1970s, it gained momentum in the post-cold war. In recent times, environmental security is important as the security of borders. Though in the 1970s and 1980s, Pakistan raised the environmental issue at the international forum, many efforts were not made at that time. So, Pakistan has faced environmental insecurity for the last three decades. The security of the environment is essential for states because it can give rise to other issues such as economic loss for states and other violent conflicts. Environmental insecurity can badly influence the socio-economic conditions of Pakistan. The economy has also declined due to water scarcity agriculture sector is affected. Therefore, environmental insecurity can pose a threat to the national security of Pakistan. This research paper attempts to analyze Pakistan's environmental security issues. This study intends to understand the concept of environmental security. The study aims to analyze different challenges to environmental security in Pakistan. This study intends to evaluate the implications of climate change on different sectors of Pakistan. This research would provide some manageable solutions to tackle Pakistan's environmental security issue.

Environmental security is an important component of human security. As far as the issue of climate change and environmental degradation is concerned, it can diminish the economic prosperity of a state, which plays a major role in its military capacity and material power. In most third-world countries, like Pakistan, natural resources and environmental services tend to be important factors for economic growth and employment rate such as ecosystem or agro-system. As the problem of climate change and environmental degradation are nontraditional security issues, this research will help the students of IR to understand the impacts of nontraditional security issues (such as environment and climate change is one of them) on states.

The term security usually refers to the defense of sovereign states against violent attacks from others. The environment refers to the natural world as a whole especially as affected by human activity (Rafi, 2001). The term environment is the aggregate of the situations during which an organism must survive or maintain its life process. It influences the expansion and development of living forms (Josh, 2018). The term security was expanded in the 1990s to include economic, environmental, and human securities. Environmental security interprets both, ecological processes as direct or contributing factors that prompt insecurity (Scott, 2015). Three styles of linkages are discussed between environment and security. First is that environmental degradation directly prompts conflicts. Second is that environmental dilapidation exerts negative impacts on ecological security and human security. Third is that human activities directly pose negative impacts on the environment (McDonald, 2015).

Pakistan is facing various environmental challenges, which constitute serious threats to humans well as the environment. The main driver of these environmental threats is climate change. For Pakistan, environmental security and climate crisis are non-traditional threats. Climate change has diverse impacts on the economy of the state, environment, health, agriculture, and overall. Pakistan has not achieved the UN's prescribed target of 25 percent of forest cover in its total area. Air pollution is another important issue that is devastating our environment. The use of plastic bags is also one of the biggest issues because a single plastic bag takes hundreds of years to degrade and it creates pollution (Huma, 2018). Thus, Pakistan is facing such kinds of various issues and they all have negative impacts on its economic growth of Pakistan. These issues have led Pakistan to a food and water-scarce country along with many others.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Realist's Perspective on Environmental Security**

Realism implements a conservative definition of security which is traditionally the mainstream approach in security that considers the state as a referent object and takes security to be achieved using force. According to realists, the issues of the environment are related to the issues of 'low' politics. For realists, military security is the issue of 'high' politics. According to Lacy realists tend to create a hierarchy of threats, classify threats by distinguishing between them and legitimize agenda of the security (Trombetta, 2008, pp. 585-600). States can calculate the costs and the benefits to maximize their benefits. (Al-Rodhan, 2008, p. 337). So, among other global threats, climate change is also a global threat or an issue that affects the lives of the people and the way states behave and interact with others. Since the 1970s, climate change has become the focal issue amongst others. In the recent decade, it is the hottest and most considerable issue on an international political forum (Heffron, 2015, pp. 6-7).

According to realists, they focused on the states' security and power maximization. They claim that at the expense of other states, other states seek to gain power. There are different views of offensive and defensive realism on the issues and threats of climate change. Offensive realism claims climate change threats as an opportunity for states to boost their defense capabilities. According to offensive realism, one of the unavoidable results of

states existing in an anarchic world is the “Tragedy of Commons” (Heffron, 2015, pp. 9-11). It is a term that was used by American ecologist Garrett Hardin (1915-2003) in 1968. According to him “The commons” includes natural resources that do not fall under sovereign jurisdiction. It may include public pasture land, lumber, oil, the atmosphere, high seas, deep ocean floor, the global atmosphere, and many other common resources (Hardin, 1968). The focus of realism has always remained on relative gains. A realist does not believe in cooperation but in case of issues related to the environment cooperation between states is essential. Realists claim that cooperation between states always cannot exist because one state will gain more as compared to the others. Realist argues that states are not only concerned with the maximization of their absolute gains but are concerned with the gains which are relative to the gains of others (Sofer, 2015).

### **Non-Traditional Security Paradigm**

Non-traditional security (NTS) includes the encounters to the survival of the people, states, and their well-being that occurs primarily from non-military sources, such as the crisis of climate change, people smuggling, drug trafficking infectious diseases, transnational crime, resources scarcity, natural disasters, and food shortages. NTS is also known as human security. Before and during the cold war era, the mainstream concept of security was the security of the state and its borders. In 1994, **the UN's** Human Development Report (HDR) highlighted the importance of a shift in the security agenda which was focusing on territorial integrity and security. This report stressed focusing on people’s security rather than the security of borders. This report identifies seven main areas of human security which are as;

- i.** Political Security
- ii.** Personal Security
- iii.** Economic Security
- iv.** Environmental security
- v.** Community Security
- vi.** Health Security
- vii.** Food security

NTS threats are also known as non-military threats. This includes climate change, environmental degradation, and piracy. Health issues, transnational crimes, human and drug trafficking, energy and water issues, disaster management, corruption, and terrorism. These issues are a challenge to the survival of the individuals, states, and their well-being.

### **Copenhagen School of Security Studies**

The Copenhagen School of security represents a shift from the traditional definition of security and emphasis on the non-military aspects of security and places particular focus on NTS studies. Ole Wæver, Barry Buzan, and Jaap de Wilde are theorists associated with this school include (Copenhagen School (international relations), 2020).

The Copenhagen School believes that security is about survival. Theorists from this school of thought argue that when something is presented in a way that poses an existential threat that needs to be dealt with instantly and with extraordinary measures, it becomes a security issue. Before the Copenhagen School, there was little debate on the issue of the environment. The Copenhagen School dealt with the issue of the environment. For years, they analyzed the debate on security in Europe over emerging environmental issues and then Buzan recognized the environment as one of the sectors. These theorists deny the

concepts of traditional theorists. They have given three different concepts to analyze issues as compared to the traditional theorists, which are as follows;

- ❖ Sectors of security
- ❖ Regional Security Complex Theory
- ❖ Securitization theory

### **Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT)**

RSCT is defined as “a set of states whose major security insights, concerns and perceptions are so intertwined that their problems of national security cannot be rationally analyzed or fixed in isolation”. The states generate the structure of a security complex within that region through their security perceptions and interactions with each other (Buzan, 1998). As far as regional complex theory is concerned, it entails that states have more threats from the states within the region. This can be applied to the Pakistan factor because due to geographical proximity to India, Pakistan faced the issue of smog. It is believed in Pakistan, that factor of smog in Punjab, Pakistan was due to excessive smoke from Indian industries which also gave rise to the issue of smog in Pakistan. So, within a region, it is a nontraditional security threat from an external border.

### **Securitization Theory and Environment**

The Copenhagen School elaborated the securitization theory although Ole Wæver initially developed it. It was a constructivist theory of security heavily influenced by the speech act linguistic philosophy. Theory's basic argument revolves around the logic that “objective threats do not exist, but instead political communities transform problems into security problems through successful speech acts, and this transformation results in how those issues are dealt with” (Koukos, 2019, p. 17). The theory of securitization refers to a policy in which a government prioritizes extraordinary measures for a particular issue while declaring it as an existential threat. Politicization enables extraordinary measures to be used in the name of security. When something is presented as an existential threat to a referent object, it is called a securitizing move and the issue is securitized only when it is accepted by a large audience as a threat that needs to be tackled in an urgent situation. Securitization is an “inter-subjective process” and is socially constructed (Buzan, 1998). It is an ongoing negotiation between securitizing actor, who puts the issue on the agenda, and the audience, who has the choice to accept or reject the given agenda (Šulović, 2010, p. 4). The goal of securitization studies is to gain an increasingly accurate understanding of who securitizes, on what issues and under what circumstances (Wilde, 1998, p. 32).

Traditionally, the referent object of security has remained the state, this notion has transited with other referent objects. For instance, after the cold war, the security of borders was no more concerned with states, but the states' concern moved toward the security of the environment. Environmental protection and security became the main agenda of states. While applying the theory of securitization, the environment is a referent object, which should be protected by some extraordinary measure. According to Copenhagen School, “Two different agendas are the most striking features of the environmental sector: a scientific agenda and a political agenda.” The Scientific agenda deals with natural sciences and non-governmental actions. “The authoritative assessment of the threat is known as scientific agenda.” The political agenda is both governmental and non-governmental agenda (Buzan, 1998, p. 71). As far as securitization theory is concerned in Pakistan, it is not recognized yet because the public has not fully realized the securitizing moves and they do not consider climate change yet an existential threat. That's why the process of the securitizing environment in Pakistan remains incomplete.

### **Literature Review**

Simon Dalby argued that security in this contemporary era deals with two things. One is the technical matter and the other is the social construction of fear of some definite threats. He defined human security according to the UNDP, which encapsulated a broader security agenda to move beyond the traditional perception of security. He concluded human security in two dimensions "safety and protection". Safety from chronic threats such as natural epidemic, disease, hunger, and repression. Secondly, human security means protection from sudden and hurtful disruption in the patterns of daily life (Dalby, 2009).

Nina Granger in her article has explained security, environment, and environmental security. She defined security as the protection of individuals as human beings. The entire human environment must be taken into account to preserve security. To define environmental security, she has developed a link between security and the changes in the environment by human beings. Environmental security and environmental sustainability have become part of high politics (Græger, 2019). Like Buzan and Weaver, she has also focused on the securitization of the environment.

Lorraine Elliott has explained that states are facing different kinds of environmental challenges which may include pollution such as air and water, deforestation, Gases emissions, loss of biodiversity, ozone depletion, and others including the degradation of marine ecosystems. Insecurities faced by people due to environmental harm have come through the increased vulnerability of resource scarcity, diseases, health burdens, and food insecurities. According to her, environmental security has become an significant pillar of human security and has been used as a synonym for climate change (Elliott, 2015). Bruce Vaughn in his article has analyzed the impacts of environmental degradation on Pakistan. Due to climate change, Pakistan's economic sources are affected badly as it has been a water-stressed country (Vaughn, 2010). So, the long-term impacts on Pakistan's water resources of climate increase the challenges for Pakistan's water sector. Pakistan faces natural disasters which often lead to the displacement of the population and damage to infrastructure in countries like Pakistan.

Qurat-ul-Ain explained in her article that climate change which has global, regional, and national impacts. Climate change a major problem contributing to diverse national security aspects. These range from impact on internal stability to various dimensions of human security each requiring specific responses within a broad policy framework. Ministry of Climate Change (MOCC) was formulated to cope and combat the climate change in 2012 and prescribed various actions and policies (Qurat-ul-Ain, 2017). S. Amber in her article has explained that Pakistan has experienced life-threatening floods in the recent past. Extreme floods have increased and exposed Pakistan's socioeconomic conditions (Amber, 2014). S. S. Salma explains that the main reason for climate variations was spatial shifts in the rainfall patterns which directly affected water, agriculture, and disaster management sectors. They explained that Pakistan has been exposed to several natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, droughts, and heat waves (Salma, 2012). Over the past two decades, a recordable increase has seen in climatic events. About 40% of Pakistan's population is subject to everyday manifold adversities with changes in rainy events.

Q.Z. Rasul has outlined several reasons for climate change as natural and man-made or anthropogenic (Rasul Q. Z., 2011). In the natural reasons for climate change, he included natural variability, solar activity, volcano and oceans, and anthropogenic reasons including urbanization, aerosols, greenhouse gases, etc. Moreover, Global warming, temperature, and precipitation have increased in Pakistan in the last decades. Professor Salako analyzed that climate change has raised the issue of environmental security which is one of the seven important key components of human security. Human security entails that all individuals have liberty of what they want, equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights and freedom from fear (Salako, 2017).

Vladimir Sulovic highlighted that simply security refers to freedom from threats. He has given two approaches to the concept of security; one was the traditionalist approach and

the other wideners' approach. The traditionalist approach focuses on the realist perspective that considers the security of the state as the fundamental objective of the state (Šulović, 2012). The wideners approach focused on the broader perspective of security, which entailed that along with military security other sectors of security such as political, economic, societal, and environmental sectors, are equally important. The main proponent of this approach was the Copenhagen School of Thought. Hugh Dyer analyzed that the environmental issues have challenged the significance of different institutions and actors in international relations due to different environmental challenges and whether environmental security is part of international relations as an international issue (Dyer, 2001). M. Naseem Baig Sharif analyzed the impacts of environment-related issues like floods, on Pakistan. Floods had caused physical damage, causalities, and environmental issues (Sharif, 2013).

### **Challenges to Environmental Security in Pakistan**

Pakistan is facing different kinds of environmental challenges which pose a serious threat to environmental security. These challenges to environmental security include:

- Land Degradation
- Air Pollution
- Carbon Emission
- Unavailability of food
- Unavailability of clean water
- Deforestation
- Loss of Biodiversity
- Soil Erosion
- Global Warming and Green House Gases Emissions (GHGE)
- Severe Climate Change
- Use of Plastic
- Disposals of chemical waste from industries
- Environmental Degradation
- Economic dependency
- Political leadership lacks vision
- Absence of policy frameworks

Pakistan is a vulnerable hotspot for climate change. Environmental security in Pakistan is attributed to and is associated with climate change. These factors resulted in floods, soil erosion, deforestation, global warming all around the world and particularly in Pakistan. Pakistan is also facing the issue of water stress due to climate change. Water availability is becoming challenging for almost every sector in Pakistan ranging from the industrial to the agricultural sector. It is also challenging the environmental flows in particular (Javed, 2019, pp. 63-64). All these challenges pose a direct threat to the national security of Pakistan. Pakistan is already living under the debts and loans of world bank and IMF and has less to invest to cope the climatic crisis. On the other hand, Pakistan's neighbor

India is also playing a role in destabilizing the Pakistan's economy. India is controlling the resources of water under Indus Water Treaty. Pakistan is compelled to bear the disaster when Indian rivers water bring floods with them. India deliberately stops and releases water so that Pakistan faces severe floods that destroy crops and buildings. Another major challenge is migration of people from rural areas to urban areas. Pakistan's major cities have converted into mini countries. This is due to the lack of administrative bodies and the absence of policy measures. Pakistan's administrative bodies till today have not formulated and introduced any policy or framework which can address the issues of cities. Therefore, all the cities have become overpopulated and have a major role in increasing pollution and problems.

### **Analysis of Pakistan's Government Policies**

As far as Pakistan's policies are concerned, Pakistan was among the primary states in 1994, that signed the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The main objective of UNFCCC was to "prevent dangerous anthropogenic intrusion, stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere and stop them to interfere with the climate system".

### **Environment Protection Ordinance-1983**

The main objective was to establish institutions at Federal and Provincial levels. There are two aims of EPO. First is to establish federal environmental protection agencies at federal levels. Second aim to establish Pakistan Environmental Protection Council (PEPC) at both levels such as federal and provincial. EPO establishes the frameworks and hierarchies at the federal level which instructs the provinces to take extraordinary measures for climate issues.

### **Pakistan's Environmental Protection Agency (PAK-EPA)**

In 1993, Pak-EPA was established. It started to work with limited staff and resources. This agency performs a different function. With time, its functions and responsibilities increased and strengthened logistically and technically to tackle various environmental challenges (PEPA, 1997).

### **Pakistan's Environmental Protection Act 1997**

The objective of the Pakistan Environmental Protection Act 1997 was to facilitate the protection, conservation, rehabilitation, and improvement of the environment. This act works for the prevention and control of pollution, as well as establish a framework to combat environmental issues and the promotion of sustainable development.

### **National Climate Policy 2012**

The National Climate Change Policy of Pakistan 2012 provided a framework to counter the threats of climate change through mitigation and variation measures. It focused on the development of various sectors to improve them such as transport, health, agriculture, energy, forestation and water resources for the measure of mitigation and adaption. The main objective of this policy was "to move Pakistan towards climate resilient development" (Naeem, 2013).

### **Climate Change Policy (2014-2030) Framework**

In 2013, the Climate Change Division developed and devised a well-planned Framework for the Implementation of Climate Change Policy (2014---2030) with the assistance of the UNDP. It aimed to implement the objectives of NCCP by identifying activities, priorities, and institutions. This framework advises directions to ministries i.e,

federal and provincial, departments, and agencies to develop their implementation Action Plans. This document is designed as a 'living document'.

### **National Disaster Risk Reduction Policy 2012**

The objective of the National Disaster Risk Reduction (NDRR) policy was to form an integrated national capacity that would recognize and monitor the vulnerabilities and impacts of climate change. Moreover, its domain was also to promote development to address disaster risks along with environmental and climate change concerns (Parry, 2016). NDRR aimed to develop an infrastructure in which Pakistan rapidly builds its resilience against natural and man-made hazards, building a solid foundation for addressing disaster risk reduction in vulnerable areas. It diverted the attention to all the stakeholders of the society such as government involvement, civil society, and private sectors to work together to overcome the challenges (MOCC, 2013)."

### **Results and Discussion**

"Environmental security in an objective sense, measures the absence of threats to acquired values, in a subjective sense, the absence of fear that such value will be attacked." (Zurlini, 2008, p. 1351) Environmental security involves the identification of critical challenges while accomplishing an environmentally related set of actions to prevent man-made changes in the environment. It also reduces the effects of environmental disasters that can occur (King, 2007, p. 2). Pakistan is facing different kinds of environmental challenges which pose a serious threat to environmental security. These challenges to environmental security include air pollution, carbon emission, land degradation, soil erosion, deforestation, unavailability of food, unavailability or lack of access to clean water, loss of biodiversity, issue of severe climate change, use of plastic, disposal of chemical and other wastes, environmental degradation, Greenhouse Gases (GHGs) and global warming, etc.

As in Pakistan, environmental degradation, poverty, and population are increasing, food security needs an increased production, sustainable environment, and availability and access to food. Although several measures have been taken to deal with the issue of food security but do not completely diminish the problem and still Pakistan is facing the issue of food insecurity. Different factors are responsible for food insecurity in Pakistan. The gap between the demand and supply of food is one of the most important factors which contribute to the unavailability of food. This gap is linked to the production of food. The unavailability of physical infrastructure and poverty are also important factors. The unstable supply of food in the remote areas of Pakistan has also increased the issue (Aslam M. k., 2011, pp. 501-4).

Global warming is also one of the important factors. Due to global warming, temperature increases which results in droughts and floods. It has affected the production of major crops in different regions of Pakistan particularly Sind and Baluchistan faced a severe shortage of food (Naheed, 2010). Environmental degradation in Pakistan has become an individual, national and global threat. It is one of the world's biggest problems in the contemporary era. Developed states along with developing states are also facing this issue. Therefore, every nation is concerned with the degradation of resources for the sake of prosperity (Waqas, 2020). In Pakistan, environmental security is challenged by factors such as pollution, deforestation, water issues, food shortages, the use of plastic, and heat waves. Climate change as well as humans are responsible for creating these challenges, which are making the environment vulnerable in Pakistan. So environmental security in Pakistan, in the context of these challenges is very difficult to achieve and is impossible. Climate change constitutes a serious threat to the living standards of the majority of the population of Pakistan. Pakistan is a vulnerable hotspot for climate change. Environmental security in Pakistan is attributed to and is associated with climate change. It has resulted in floods, soil erosion, deforestation, and global warming, all around the world and particularly in Pakistan.



Over the last several years, these glaciers are melting at an alarming level in Pakistan due to climate change (Siddiqui, 2019). As Pakistan has a great number of glaciers and all are of great importance, this region is known as the “third pole” of the world. Due to the impacts of climate change, Pakistan has to face economic loss because Pakistan’s economy is agrarian and loss to agriculture mainly disturbs economic growth. In the floods of 2010, there was a massive decline in the GDP of Pakistan. In 2010 alone, the losses exceeded US\$ 9.6 billion. Since 2010, five consecutive floods resulted in more than US\$25 billion of economic loss in damages to different sectors of Pakistan (Zahra, 2016, pp. 508-513).

Pakistan is highly vulnerable to climate change because of increasing industrial development, which is the main contributor to pollution in cities. According to a 2015 report by Express Tribune, more than one million people from other cities and rural areas migrate due to high employment opportunities in Karachi. The majority of migrants come from areas affected by catastrophic floods caused by the melting of glaciers etc. It is more susceptible to heat waves. In 2015, severe heat waves struck Karachi while killing approximately 1200 people (Jaffery, 2018). According to the authority’s estimation, approximately 500 million gallons of wastewater are produced in Karachi daily. About 1/5<sup>th</sup> of wastewater comes from industries (Guriro, 2016). Pakistan’s government needs to prioritize environmental security and evaluate a policy to combat this threat.

## **Conclusion**

As discussed throughout this research, environmental security is a nontraditional security threat to the states. Since the 1970s-80s, the issue of environmental security and climate change has been a priority issue for states. As far as Pakistan is concerned, climate change acted as a “threat multiplier” for Pakistan. Pakistan is a state, already suffering from different issues like overpopulation, extremism, terrorism, unemployment, weak social setting, and last but not least corruption. Along with all these issues, the impacts of climate change made it more dangerous. Pakistan is facing severe challenges to environmental security due to climate change. Climate change has caused several issues including floods, droughts, land degradation, melting of glaciers, soil erosion, scarcity of resources such as water scarcity along with food insecurity and hunger, etc. in Pakistan. Although Pakistan has taken measures to tackle the issue of climate change, they are insufficient. Until the 1990s, Pakistan did not take seriously the issue of climate change and did not pay sufficient heed to the security of the environment.

Pakistan has mostly focused on its military side and the security of borders while leaving the state vulnerable to climate change effects. But in these two decades, many efforts have been done to tackle the issue of climate change. Climate change adaptation and mitigation measures have been taken by the government. Although Pakistan is doing a lot on the issue of climate change the setback is less public awareness. In most of the rural areas of Pakistan, people do not have enough information about climate change and its vulnerabilities. The Low level of awareness and knowledge has led to the unsustainable use of natural resources which are already under stress. The policies of the government will workable only when people would know to follow them. The environmental protection act of 1997 prohibited people to dispose of waste in open places not followed by the public and the government is doing nothing in this regard. Even the major cities of Pakistan, like Karachi, are facing most of the environmental issues and the provincial government along with the federal government is doing nothing.

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