

A Flooded Pakistan: Climate Change or Bad Governance.

Outline

1) Introduction

2) Pakistan's high vulnerability to Climate Change resulting in unprecedented Floods.

a) Pakistan ranks among top ten vulnerable countries to climate change.

b) Pakistan paying a price for the carbon emissions of the developed countries.

c) High vulnerability to climate change coupled with least preparation worsening the situation.

d) Temperature rise in Pakistan is higher than global average resulting in glacial melts.

e) Alarming weather patterns due to climate change inducing flash floods.

3) Bad governance coupled with the natural disasters of floods exacerbated the destruction.

a) Government and relevant authorities paid no heed to the warnings issued by meteorological departments.

b) No lesson learned from devastating riverine floods of 2010.

c) Lack of long-term planning and flood-resistant construction codes in Pakistan.

d) Lack of operationalization and financing for disaster risk management.

e) Flooding exposed underlying institutional and systemic challenges like poor water resource management.

4) Catastrophic floods are a wake-up call for systemic changes to address the vulnerabilities to natural hazards:

a) Need for a resilient strategy against the impacts of climate change.

b) An all-inclusive approach bringing together different stakeholders of the society is need of the time.

c) Active utilization of bureaucracy and think-tanks to avert the climate crisis.

d) Role of international community to compliment Pakistan's own efforts in recovery from the disaster.

e) A better management of the water resources is needed.

5) Conclusion

Essay

The year 2022 proved to be a challenging one for Pakistan where at the start of the year, the country experienced a turmoil in politics and then an economic crisis was followed soon. By the mid of the year, the country was at the doorstep of a climate catastrophe when unprecedented floods started to seep from length and breadth of the country and by October, one-third of the country was drowned. Pakistan's high vulnerability to climate change was reported for a long time by international climate observers and yet there was a lack of preparedness prevailing at the home and not sufficient steps were taken to mitigate the upcoming destructions of the flood. Pakistan's vulnerability to climate change coupled with bad governance in the country exacerbated the catastrophes of the disaster. To this day, there is need felt for a resilient national level strategy to deal with

the future vulnerabilities of Pakistan to natural hazards.

The recent floods of 2022 didn't reveal all of a sudden like a metaphysical event but the bad omen of these catastrophes was conveyed well timely when Global Climate Risk Index ranked Pakistan the eighth most vulnerable country to climate change. Likewise, there was lack of preparedness by the authorities which is evident from ND-Gain Index, which ranks Pakistan at the twenty-seventh slot among countries which are least prepared to address the impacts of climate change. As a result of both of these factors — a sword of vulnerability to climate change and lack of preparation — Pakistan saw disastrous flooding and faced huge losses as a consequence.

Pakistan is not solely responsible for the devastating floods because Pakistan's contribution to the global greenhouse gases — a primary cause of climate change — is below one percent and to be more

precise it is only 0.4% as compared to 21.5% by USA and 16.4% by China. It is to say as if Pakistan is paying the price for the emissions of these developed countries. The same concern was highlighted by UN's Secretary General António Guterres during his field visit to Pakistan. He was of the opinion: "Humanity has been waging war on nature, and nature strikes back in Sindh, but it was not Sindh that has made the emissions of greenhouse gases." It is evident from the stance of UN Secretary General that international community do have a share in the cascading crisis of climate change faced by Pakistan.

The international community paved the way for climate change by ruthlessly injecting carbon emissions in the global climate. Whereas, at the home, on a national level Pakistan suffers from the dilemma of lack of long-term planning. There is a saying in English that "Digging of a well when the house is on fire." This proverb

fits well to the country's attitude towards every crisis. In May 2022, Pakistan Meteorological Department predicted an early monsoon bringing above-average rainfall in the country and warned of flash-floods. If the authorities have paid heed to the warnings issued by PMD, an integrated and comprehensive system of flood management could have been devised but it was not the case.

Another reason behind such devastating flood is that the temperature in Pakistan remained above global average for decades. Historically, Pakistan has been contributing less than one percent of the global warming gases and yet the statistics reveal that between 1959 to 2009, the temperature in the country has risen by 0.3°C per decade which is higher than the global average. This gradual warming resulted in frequent heat waves in parts of the country. As a result, there were glacial melts in the northern part of the country which

home to a large number of glaciers. Soon, flash-floods followed in the Indus river affecting populations on its banks.

Climate change also played with the weather patterns of the country disturbing these to an alarming extent. In a report issued by Pakistan's Ministry of Planning Development and Special Initiatives, in the summer of 2022, the country experienced its wettest August since 1961. Sindh and Balochistan provinces were subject to unprecedented rainfall, surpassing average monthly totals. The floods came on the heel of these excessive rainfall affecting almost 33 million people and more than 1,700 casualties were reported.

Although flood is a natural disaster but mismanagement and bad governance significantly exacerbated the destructions. At regional level, South Asian Seasonal Climate Outlook Forum predicted an early monsoon in Pakistan and a subsequent warning of flash floods. If the government and concerned authorities had paid heed to that

warning, then an effective flood management plan could have been devised along with better rescue operations and relief efforts. However, the authorities in Pakistan work on the principles of rocket science, not because as if they work proactively but they don't work unless and until their tails are on fire.

Not so long but in the recent past, merely twelve years back, Pakistan was caught up in a same sort of situation when devastating riverine floods hit the country. After passing through a trauma of that scale, there was a need to learn from that experience and plan for a better future. Unfortunately, no lesson was learned from that disaster and the country was left on its own to face the nature. This ignorance in governance was translated in recent floods where history repeated itself.

Pakistan lacks long-term planning in the domain of disaster management which makes every incoming natural calamity worse. Without a proper future trajectory and present navigation

of the circumstances, it is very difficult to mitigate the amplitude of a disaster like flood. As of now, the rivers in the country still lack proper embankment which can prove helpful in managing a situation in case of floods. Likely, constructions at the bank of rivers and water passages are done under the nose of municipal authorities without proper approval of the infrastructure. In this regard, the example of the famous Honeymoon Hotel in Kalam can be observed where the same hotel was completely vanished in 2010 floods and it was again constructed and then destroyed again in 2011 floods. A question raises on the checks and balances of local municipal authorities.

Unfortunately, the climate change and its atrocities are not only the issue with Pakistan as the country is struggling fiscally for a long time. Resultantly, the country finds it hard to operationalize and finance its National Disaster Management Plan and National Flood Protection Plan. Without sufficient economic resources, the country's aspirations to manage disasters cannot be materialized. So the challenges

persist for the country in managing the natural catastrophes.

Likely, the institutional and systemic layout in Pakistan is very rigid as it fails to adopt with the challenges of the present. It is evident from a report of World Bank, published back in 2019 that Pakistan does not make the best use of its water. This mismanagement of the precious resource of water costs around \$12 billion or 4% of GDP annually. Resultantly, in the absence of mega dams and water reservoirs, the country face natural disasters like floods. Likewise, the last big dam was built in 2006 named as Mirani dam in the province of Balochistan but there is a dire need for more big projects.

It is now the time that Pakistan needs a resilient strategy to tackle the menace of the impacts of climate change. So, it becomes imperative for the government to ensure effective policy planning to prepare for the floods and other climate induced natural disasters. A strategy of managing response efforts and building

climate resilient infrastructures and community can also help the country to achieve a sustainable development.

In order to deal with the future calamities, there is a need to involve different stakeholders of the society. Bringing the civil society, government, private sector, academia and big brains around a common vision can help in this regard. Stakeholders engagement will be necessary to build a resilient strategy to tackle the crisis betterly. A unified effort can do a greater benefit to the society and it is logical as well because a natural disaster of flood effect everybody.

Similarly, the time today calls for an active utilization of the bureaucracy and think-tanks of the country. In this regard, bureaucracy needs to be more responsive and break their bubbles hindering them to connect betterly with the community. The impact of the role of bureaucracy's active engagement in the situation of a natural disaster can be gauged by the efforts of DC and ADC of

Newshehra in recent floods. ADC
Newshehra Ms. Durat-ul-Ain wazir
went personally door to door in the
effort of evacuating the vulnerable
population to rescue camps. The efforts
of these civil servants helped alot
in saving precious lives. So, there is a
need of such attitude in the
bureaucrats of the whole country.

As Pakistan is trapped in that
situation today mainly because of the
emissions of the greenhouse gases
by the developed nations, so an
ethical responsibility arises here on
part of global community to play
a role in complimenting Pakistan in
its efforts towards recovery. According
to Pakistan Floods 2022 (Post-Disaster
Needs and Assessment) Report prepared
by Pakistan's ministry of Planning
Development and Special Initiatives in
colaboration with Asian Development
Bank, European Union, UNDP and
World Bank, Pakistan suffered a
total loss of PKR 3.3 trillion and
it needs PKR 3.5 trillion for the
efforts of recovery. International
community needs to play a role in
this regard as it is difficult for a

developing country like Pakistan to deal on its own with a catastrophe of such magnitude.

Likewise, it becomes obligatory for the leaders and policy makers of Pakistan to devise a better strategy regarding water resource management. In this regard, the need to expediate the construction of ongoing Diamer Bhasha dam and Muhmand dam.

Large water reservoirs can help in dealing with the crisis of flood. Furthermore, there is a need for the development of a national consensus on the issue of Kalabagh dam and the opinions of experts should be given priority instead of political agendas of ethnic elements. Building better water management infrastructure is a guarantee for a flood proof Pakistan.

In conclusion, Pakistan's high vulnerability to climate change resulted in unprecedented floods throughout the country. The menace of the bad governance and mishandling of the crisis multiplied the destructions of the floods. At the end

of the day, Pakistan needs to take the catastrophe of these floods as a wakeup call and work towards a resilient strategy to avert the future crisis by improving governance.
