

DOES RAPID URBANIZATION POSE A GREATER THREAT THAN CLIMATE CHANGE?

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OUTLINE:

1- Introduction.

Thesis statement: Rapid urbanization poses a greater threat to humanity than climate change. Despite being reversible and localized, rapid urbanization is a precursor that has instigated and is worsening the impact of climate change.

2- Rapid Urbanization and Climate Change are Intertwined.

3- Rapid Urbanization is a graver threat.

a- Over population and pollution deteriorates living conditions

b- Urbanization is linked to high carbon emissions

c- Less space for living results in slums and poverty.

d- Results in strain on available resources.

e- It is a localized and reversible threat.

4- Climate Change is an Existential threat.

a- Results in large scale human and economic cost.

b- Frequent extreme weather events result in uninhabitable conditions

c- Causes large scale internal displacement and food insecurity.

d- Massive destruction of available resources

e- It is a global and irreversible threat

5- Rapid Urbanization Amplifies Climate Change

- a- Ill urban planning exacerbate impact.
- b- Deforestation accelerates global warming.
- c- Loss of agricultural land and biodiversity creates limited food.
- d- Urbanization is causal factor of climate change
- e- It amplifies and exacerbates climate change.

6- Conclusion.

History repeats itself. Who can get it more than Pakistan. The 2022 floods painted a picture of grave reality that Pakistan is among top ten countries vulnerable to climate change. Still, the flash floods caused by cloud burst in major city & cities of Rawalpindi, Islamabad and Lahore reminded the inefficiencies of the governance in urban settings. Rapid urbanization is a greater threat than climate change itself as it is more localized. Though it is reversible still over crowding, population outburst and pollution are its result. Moreover, rapid urbanization contributes to higher level of carbon emission in the environment. However, climate change is a giant problem in its own regard. It is global and irreversible. It affects all and cause a huge economic and human loss to its affectees. It drives the affected population towards displacement and food insecurity. Despite these challenges, rapid urbanization is graver than climate change as it is a causal factor to climate change. Faulty constructions, lack of proper

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sewage system, deforestation, high carbon emissions amplifies the impact of climate change. Hence, rapid urbanization poses a greater threat than climate change. Despite being localized and reversible, rapid urbanization is a causal factor that has instigated and is worsening the impact of climate change.

Urbanization is the process by which people mobilize towards cities in search for better jobs and living conditions.

Industrialization of economy has initiated these urban settlements. Since then, more and more people are migrating internally to urban centers. Rapid urbanization is the

urbanization where incoming population is more than available resources and space and

The rate of influx is so fast that it gives no respite to city administration to cope with it.

Rapid urbanization is intertwined with climate change. Climate change is the change

in global climate over certain time. It is measured by recording extreme weather

events, temperature rise of globe and of sea level, and a general shift in weather

cycle like early monsoons. This threat knows no boundaries and is very mercurial.

Both of these are existential threat to humanity.

Rapid Urbanization is a graver threat as it results in over population and pollution. The urban sprawl caused by huge

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influx of people leaves with little space to accommodate large population. Currently as per. United Nations record in 2023, total 55 percent of global population is urban and the percentage is ~~at~~ expected to reach 68 by 2050. Population has a direct link with pollution, if it lacks ^{civic} sense. For example, Japan is one of the least populous country and contributes less to pollution (land, air or water) than India which is the most populous country. The pollution causes many communicable diseases, thus, lowering the life expectancy of public. Hence, rapid urbanization is a greater threat to humanity.

Along with pollution, rapid urbanization ~~cause~~ causes higher level of emissions in atmosphere. The carbon emission from commute, industries and other industrial activities pose danger to not only environment but also human life. For example according to a report of World Bank, cities contribute around 70 percent of global emission due to fossil fuel burning. These emissions result in global warming and raise the temperature of globe. In return, global warming is making urban centers less inhabitable due to island heat effect. Thus, higher levels of carbon emissions due to rapid urbanization are making cities more prone to effects of global warming.

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Moreover, more people's influx will need appropriate resource to live a life. But rapid urbanization does not provide for space to arrange for resource equivalent to pollution. It results in strain on available resources. More people compete for already available resources. This makes livelihood of most of people impossible or difficult. For example, recently, images and videos of tunnel people emerged on online platform which depicted the deplorable state of living of the underprivileged in New York City. When population outgrows the available resources, the conditions of living become worst. It makes a person susceptible to disease and hunger that can lead to death. So, insufficient resource because of rapid urbanization makes the livelihood of people difficult.

Besides these challenges, rapid urbanization results in congested urban areas. Urban sprawl can lead to expansion of cities that will use available land and the interiors of city, due to low maintenance, takes shape of slums. Those people who cannot afford a decent living can will end up in slums, which are the breeding ground of disease and illness. Moreover, congested areas make the habitats more prone to disasters and the damage is manifold. Attempts to expand cities in short

time can result in defective infrastructures that can further exacerbate the consequences. This was seen in recent rains when roads of Islamabad city-sector E was collapsed. Therefore, rapid urbanization is a far more dangerous to human safety and life than environment change.

Lastly, rapid urbanization is a localized threat. It targets the overpopulated cities and the vulnerable population living in it. But by contributing a higher ^{level} of carbon emissions, it impacts ~~life~~ ^{lives} of all. Mostly, poor people or people below poverty line are the immediate victims of rapid urbanization but its impacts are generational. Hardly, people far slump will get a chance of decent living in a well-established city area. So, it is a graver challenge to humanity than climate change.

Climate change, on the other hand, is more invasive than rapid urbanization. It is more catastrophic also. It inflicts large scale damage to economic and human life. For example, according to World Bank Report (2023), the 2022 floods of Pakistan has caused a total of 14 billion dollars economic loss and has affected 33 million people at large. This shows the large scale impact of climate change on human life and economy. Hence, climate change is more invasive and catastrophic

Along with damage, climate change is resulting in extreme weather events. It is becoming an existential threat due to extreme heatwaves, frequent wildfires, flash floods and torrential rains. For example, the California wildfire remained ablaze for 8 days and incurred heavy loss. Moreover, according to United Nations (2024) the ^{occurrence of} extreme heatwaves will double by 2050 if no intervention is done now. Hence, global warming is leading the climate change to result in extreme weather events more frequently, thus, endangering the life of humans and other animals.

Moreover, climate change has far-ranging impacts on future generations like internal displacements and food insecurity. As it is a generational threat and based on current trends, it is here to stay. Catastrophic weather events like floods, wildfires, heat waves rising sea levels forced the people to displace to a safe place inside a country. Its impacts are so far reaching that due to annual sea level rise, Indonesia is thinking of shifting its capital to Nusantara from Jakarta. Also, according to GRIP report (2025), over past decade (2014-2019) around 219 millions are displaced annually due to weather related events. Besides displacement, the torrential rains, storms

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unexpected precipitation and droughts are altering the food chain system. Climate change is moving the world towards food insecurity. As Global Hunger Trend 2024 highlighted that in 2024, 8.2 percent of the global population experienced hunger. (UNICEF; 2025). So Climate change is an existential threat that will have consequences reaching upto upcoming generations.

Climate change also destroy available resources rather than limiting their use. It is a serious threat as extreme weather events related to climate change like drought, floods, wildfires, altered weather cycle due to global warming destroy the already available resources. It not only damages human made infrastructure but it cause damages to crops, livestock and other major agricultural resource. As it was seen in 2022 floods of Pakistan, the floods destroyed agriculture, livestock and ~~the~~ food worth of 3.7 billions dollars. (Ministry of Finance; 2022) Therefore, climate change don't put a strain on resources rather it destroy them, causing a scarcity of the resources.

Lastly, Climate change knows no bounds or boundaries. It is a global challenge. What adds to it,

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urgent nature is that it is irreversible unlike rapid urbanization. It only knows one way and that is the forward way. Impacts caused by climate change can be mitigated but it cannot be reversed. It does not differentiate between rich and poor. Thus, climate change is a global existential threat.

Despite all these arguments, there are many incidents that support that rapid urbanization has exacerbated the consequences of climate change. Climate change implies large scale human and economic loss but it is mostly because of faulty construction and ill planning of urban expansion. Construction on the river banks and lack of proper sewerage system make the inhabitants of that area prone to floods and flash floods. Lack of alertness and systems and risk analysis make people unprepared for the challenge they are faced. This was seen in current pre-monsoon rains when half of Rawalpindi was inundated due to lack of alert and inform system. Thus, rapid urbanization is making the consequences of climate change worse.

Secondly, climate change is mostly manifested in temperature rise over the globe. This temperature rise is due to global warming caused by green house

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effect. The carbon emissions cloak the atmosphere to raise temperature of Earth.

Urban settings are major contributors of carbon emission in two ways. First is by burning fossil fuels in car, automobile electricity generation and industries. Second, by expanding cities to areas where forest cores are present. Forests are a buffer to climate change and are a great carbon sink. Deforestation for city expansion reduces the ratio of carbon sink, thus, increasing carbon emissions indirectly which accelerates global warming. Therefore, rapid urbanization is greater threat than climate change as it is not only contributing to it but also eliminating the natural buffers to climate change. Deforestation results in frequent heat waves and soil erosion in floods.

Climate change is posing the threat of food security to humankind but ^{rapid} urbanization is making availability of food more scarce. Rapid urbanization leads to expansion of cities and the land in proximity is used to build city structures. In case of Pakistan, mostly agricultural land is being lost to construction sites. This will leave with less land to cultivate crops which will lower the availability of food. Moreover, climate rapid urbanization causes biodiversity loss.

This biodiversity loss will reshape the landscape. For example, honey bees are dying due to ~~climate~~ less availability of trees and habitats. With their extinction, pollination will not be possible resulting in loss of many flora and fauna. Hence, rapid urbanization is a process that is impacting human lives in an adverse way.

In pre-Industrialization era, the temperature of Earth was ~~per~~ less than now. ~~There was~~ Resources were available readily. Pollution was less.

After industrialization, the adverse impact human activity has was an ~~enormous~~ enormous.

Industrialization sparked urbanization.

People preferred to settle in cities.

The current day challenges has further accelerated the process of urbanization. So, rapid urbanization is a causal factor to climate change.

More urbanization means more burning of fossil fuels which means more carbon emissions in atmosphere. The use of appliances like refrigerator, air conditioners and aerosol sprays means more Chlorofluorocarbons. Both these agents

are responsible for ozone depletion and global warming. There pre, urbanization once mitigated climate change and now rapid urbanization is exacerbating.

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to impact

In conclusion, rapid urbanization is amplifying climate change and its drastic impact. It is reversible and localized threat while climate change is a global existential crisis and is irreversible. But by working on something targeted and reversible, the adverse effects of climate change can be mitigated. Moreover, urban planning must be based on threat assessment in terms of climate change so that minimal loss will be inflicted in case of extreme weather events. There exists a correlation between climate change and rapid urbanization. Rapid urbanization is an independent variable which can be controlled and modified. While climate change is dependent variable. Change in urbanization policy will have direct influence on climate change as it is a collective responsibility and all humans are in it together. As United Nation Secretary General Antonio Guterres said, at COP-29.

It is either a climate solidarity pact or a collective suicide pact.