

PAKISTAN'S FLOODING AND WATER CRISIS

In the wider concern for the looming threat of climate change in South Asia, Pakistan has been at the forefront to experience extreme weather and unpredictable monsoon rains, the perfect combination for frequent floods and droughts. One major realization of this hazard is in the form of the country's annual struggles with monsoon showers from the months of July to September.

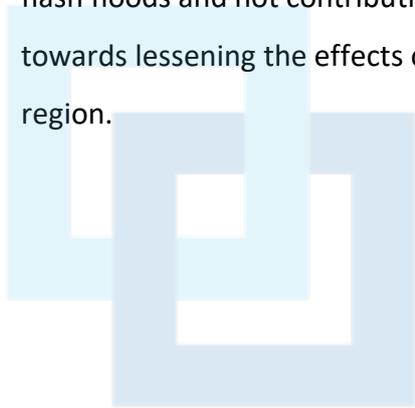
In 2009-2010, the country experienced its worst flooding in history, causing more than 1,900 deaths and affecting more than 17,000 villages. Where loss of life remains a grave issue, the effect on housing, people's source of income, future prospects and as a result the economy is immensely damaging for the developing country. However, it seems that this massively detrimental episode has done little to motivate the recent governments to act and invest in precautionary measures to prevent the severe flooding and resulting damage to life and citizen's economic welfare. Hence, the lack of acknowledgement to the climate change threat at state and institutional level.

Currently, the heavy monsoon season has affected the country in each province, making this an issue of national relevance. In the north-eastern part of the country, Azad Kashmir has experienced flash floods, mudflows and landslides, damaging about more than 100 households and together with the other provinces, 670 houses and 18 bridges have been damaged. With homes wiped out and transport links hindered, people have become displaced in their own cities and the total death toll has reached 225 and is still in counting. The coastal city of Karachi, deemed the industrial hub of Pakistan, alone has experienced very high levels of rainfall-induced flooding, preventing locals to attend to work and labour and consequentially draining the city's crucial contribution to the national GDP.

To further escalate the weather-bound tensions, despite the long-standing Indus Water Treaty and amidst regional security tensions over the Kashmir issue, India has released water from across the border which has entered the Sutlej River into Pakistan. This hostile move by the neighbouring rival has further displaced the people of the villages near Sutlej and resulted in the destruction of their crops. A clear violation of the water-distribution agreement as India did not communicate the pre-scheduled release of water, it has also refused to come to the table and has suspended prospects of negotiating the water-sharing

arrangement. Agricultural experts see this as an attempt to depress Pakistan's agro-based economy by using water as an instrument of war. This move is an act of communicating a threat to Pakistan's most important and vulnerable resource without direct diplomatic conversation between the two neighbours.

While the Pakistani government and army take to action upon the occurrence of annual flooding by issuing rescue teams and relocating citizen's to safe havens, the state will have to deliberate a long-term and sustainable plan to eradicate the damage of the recurring monsoon season. This plan should also include the modification of current infrastructure systems and future projects to deeply consider playing a role in preventing rural and urban flash floods and not contributing to them. Perhaps, a step in this direction can be a step towards lessening the effects of climate change in the country and the wider South Asian region.



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