



Climate Adaptation Challenges and Urban Insecurity



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by Saleem Janjua

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I. Introduction

In light of a range of difficult domestic problems, including terrorism, poverty, poor governance, Saleem Janjua writes "climate change looks, at most, a less important issue in Pakistan to be dealt with. However, climate change - by re-sketching the maps of water availability, food security, disease occurrences, land use and coastal boundaries - may have severe implications for country's overall security and stability."

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II. Policy Forum by Saleem Janjua

Climate Adaptation Challenges and Urban Insecurity

In developing countries, climate change poses a serious challenge to social, environmental and economic development. The review of literature (Nguyen et al., 2013; Adger et al., 2003; Handmer, 2003; and Kates, 2000) indicates that adaptation to climate change is more relevant and crucial to the developing countries because their economies are more dependent on climate-sensitive natural resources, and because they are less able to tackle the impacts of climate change. Yamin et al. (2005) are of the view that the people who will be exposed to the worst of the impacts are the ones least able to cope with the associated risks. Populations in developing countries generally develop a number of coping mechanisms (e.g. diversification of crops, changing sources of income, migration and social networks of support) in order to live with climatic variations and uncertainty. Roy et al. (2006) consider that these adjustments or adaptations mostly take place in an informal way as people in developing countries have a very little access to formal support through public sector. Further, the rapid changes in the climate (e.g. extreme events) present an additional challenge to the development of adaptation mechanisms in developing countries. The people in Pakistan, one such developing country, are also considered among the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

Reducing vulnerability to climate change in recent years has become an imperative issue and is at the forefront of any sustainable development policy agenda both in developed and developing countries. It is, therefore, important to find ways and means by which communities in Pakistan may be enabled to adapt to climate change. However, these days Pakistan is considered one the world's most complex geopolitical areas - one struggling with terrorism, poverty, poor governance, and many other related issues. Pakistan's domestic problems extend beyond its borders and have a widespread impact on regional and global security. Against this milieu, the increasing scientific evidence backing up the speed and scope of climate change looks, at most, a less important issue in Pakistan to be dealt with. However, climate change - by re-sketching the maps of water availability, food security, disease occurrences, land use and coastal boundaries - may have severe implications for country's overall security and stability.

While the future of Pakistan's security and economic conditions is still uncertain given terrorism, poverty, corruption and other issues, what is clear is that Pakistani local governments continue delivering services to their people under all such prevailing conditions. Also, changes in climate continue affecting the Pakistani local governments (urban, rural and coastal) by changing conditions of various types of infrastructure including; built systems (roads, bridges, water and sewage networks etc), natural systems (watersheds, forests etc.) and human systems (health, education, human welfare etc.).

Related to all the challenges (mentioned above) faced by Pakistan, I consider that actions taken to tackle climate change will, of course, only ever be a small portion of the overall efforts. However, there is much that Pakistani governments (federal, provincial, and/or local) can do along with various stakeholders to adapt to the impacts of climate change. With this in mind, I am of the view that best possible opportunities (learning dimension for climate adaptation) need to be explored for climate change adaptation at the local government level in Pakistan. The efforts should be made to bridge the gap between 'theoretical' and 'practical' aspects of organizational change for climate adaptation which could enable climate adaptation learning and action in any urban Pakistani local governments.

III. References

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