



RESEARCH PAPER

Strategic Securitization: Climate Change in the National Security Narratives of Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Strategic securitization represents a deliberate policy approach where states frame environmental risk as a national security threat to achieve diplomatic, economic, and political interests. Climate change has the potential to cause significant uncertain impacts, undermining human security, state survival, and increasing the risks of conflict and instability between states. Climate change is framed as a hard security concern or a strategic opportunity in major powers such as the US, China, and Russia, but Pakistan's securitization of climate change remains partial, reactive, and development-centric. This qualitative, cross-comparative study analyzes how major powers frame their security priorities, uses discourse analysis and narratives comparison as research methods to identify patterns and differences in strategic narratives, and explores the security implications of climate change and its impacts on the national security of Pakistan. The theoretical framework discusses securitization theory, strategic securitization, and constructivism theory to analyze the changing dynamics of non-traditional security threats. This exploration examines strategic actors and narratives that influence Pakistan's climate security positioning and contends that securitization of climate change in Pakistan is beginning to emerge through climate diplomacy by using vulnerability as a leverage point for climate finance and justice.

Keywords: Strategic Securitization, Climate Change, Constructivism, National Security, Pakistan, Climate Diplomacy

Introduction

Strategic securitization refers to the deliberate and calculated use of security language to elevate an issue. States use this approach to influence international negotiations (Balzacq, 2011). Strategic securitization of climate change involves deliberate framing of climate risks as national security threats to achieve political or diplomatic objectives (Boas & Rothe, 2016). Climate change is universally acknowledged as a global threat and is no longer confined to environmental discourse (Sarwar & Farid, 2025). It has entered the realm of high politics and national security. There is no uniformity in how nations define, prioritize, and respond to their security dimensions. These inconsistencies could lead to fragmented global action, undermine international cooperation, and intensify geopolitical rivalries. Climate change is represented as an epic threat to the national security of Pakistan (Ashraf & Adnan, 2022). Pakistan is highly vulnerable to climate change due to weak governance, heavy debt, and regional instability, which necessitates a strategic response. Pakistan has not systematically embedded climate threats into its core national security narratives. The lack of institutionalized climate security discourse stands in contrast to Pakistan's increasing exposure to floods, droughts, and water scarcity. While major powers like the United States of America (USA), the European Union (EU), China,

and Russia have incorporated climate change into their national security strategies with varying strategic intentions. There is a vacuum in Pakistan's national security documents explicitly framing climate change as an existential or strategic threat. Yet, Pakistan's approach reflects donor-driven securitization, ad-hoc institutional responses, and a reactive posture to transboundary and disaster-related risks rather than developing an integrated climate security doctrine. This exploration seeks to understand how major powers frame climate change in their national security discourses and what insights it reveals and conceals for Pakistan. It explores the role of foreign actors, domestic institutions, and political instability in shaping Pakistan's climate-security nexus. It argues that Pakistan's climate security discourse is weakly securitized, strategically fragmented, and heavily influenced by external actors, resulting in policy paralysis at a time of escalating ecological and geopolitical risks. It also argues that diverging securitization narratives reveal climate-security paradigms that impact global cooperation on climate governance (Ashraf, 2021; Nadeem, et. al., 2023; Ashraf, Adnan, M. 2022; Ahmed, et. al., 2021).

Climate change is increasingly securitized in global discourses. Therefore, the objectives are to compare cross-national securitization trajectories, to evaluate Pakistan's response relative to its threat landscape and global trends, and to examine the implications for regional climate security. Many studies have examined Pakistan's climate vulnerability and adaptation strategies, but few studies explicitly analyze the strategic securitization of climate change within its national security paradigm. Therefore, this article bridges this gap by analyzing the cross-national securitization of climate change and proceeds with research methodology, literature review, theoretical and philosophical frameworks, followed by a cross-national comparison and an analysis of climate change as a security dilemma.

Literature Review

The linkage between climate and conflict is debated. Major nations have begun addressing climate change as a significant non-traditional threat. This shift signifies a securitization of climate change, transforming it from a developmental issue to a matter of national survival and geopolitical stability (Brauch, 2009; Floyd, 2010). Smith & Vivekananda argue that climate is a 'threat multiplier' (Smith & Vivekananda, 2009). Climate Risk Index 2025 reveals that Pakistan is among the top 10 countries most affected by climate-related disasters (Germanwatch, 2025). Mustafa highlights how floods, glacier melt, and water scarcity interact with fragile governance and regional insecurity (Mustafa, 2013). Environmental degradation can fuel conflict in weak states (Ali, 2003; Gleditsch, 2012). Sattar argues that the 2010 and 2022 floods displaced millions, yet were followed by little strategic recalibration of national security policy (Sattar, 2022). Securitization theory argues that issues become security threats when framed as existential dangers requiring emergency measures (Buzan, Wæver, & de Wilde, 1998). Western states like the USA and the EU have increasingly securitized climate change in defense policies. Climate security debates in South Asia focus on water conflicts between India and Pakistan (Akhter, 2015; Afzal, et. al. 2020; Khan, et. al, 2022; Farid & Ashraf, 2025). Khan argues that Pakistan's National Security Policy 2022-2026 acknowledges climate change as a non-traditional threat, marking a discursive shift (Khan, 2022). Climate remains marginal in defense planning. India-centric security narratives dilute climate urgency.

Climate Change has resulted in significant losses in the national security components, posing a serious threat to the national security of Pakistan (Aslam et al., 2024). Shafi argues that if environmental degradation leads to a deep-rooted human security crisis in Pakistan, if apt and timely measures must be adopted by the government (Shafi, 2021). According to Chaudhry, Pakistan's security discourse should prioritize environmental security (Chaudhry, 2022). She argues that there is a need to prioritize the proper adaptation measures of climate change in Pakistan. Mahmood explains that climate

change is altering the hydrology of the Indus River Basin. This is a critical source of water for Pakistan and India, and it further complicates their complex relationship (Yaseen, et. al., 2016; Mahmood, 2025). According to Khan and Durrani, climate change exacerbates water scarcity is leading to conflicts over shared water resources with bordering states. They explain that deforestation and soil erosion contribute to reduced agricultural productivity, which can lead to food insecurity and economic instability (Khan & Durrani, 2023). Many states mention climate in their national security, but still, they treat it as a low priority and devote less than a quarter to climate change (Wik et al., 2025). Global efforts are urgently encouraging to mitigate the disastrous impacts of climate change. Pakistan faces a complex set of risks, including diplomatic isolation, technological divergence, and a legal limbo (Farid & Ashraf, 2025).

The securitization of climate change has emerged as a national security issue due to its impacts on human displacement, resource scarcity, and geopolitical instability. The concept of climate as a 'threat multiplier' suggests that climate change exacerbates existing security risks, particularly in fragile or conflict-prone regions (CNA, 2007). The United States has been a global leader in integrating climate considerations into defense and security planning. USA's National Security Strategy 2022 and Quadrennial Defense Review 2014 reflect a sustained approach to embedding climate within national defense narratives (Dale, 2014; NSS, 2022). Like the USA, the EU securitizes climate through moral and legal authority, embedding it in instruments like the European Green Deal. Betsill and Corell argue that the framing of climate as a global responsibility in the EU is central to its identity as a norm entrepreneur (Betsill & Corell, 2017). On the contrary, China presents a different model of climate securitization. In China, environmental governance is framed through the lens of ecological civilization and domestic stability. According to Qi and Wu, China avoids western-style militarized securitization, focusing instead on green development and energy security (Qi & Wu, 2013). This comparison provides Pakistan as an illustrative case of a climate-vulnerable state with weak institutional securitization. Climate is rarely integrated into Pakistan's defense planning, despite the country's recurrent climate disasters.

Material and Methods

This qualitative, cross-comparative study analyzes how major powers frame their security priorities, using discourse analysis and narrative comparison as research methods.

Theoretical Framework

This theoretical framework discusses strategic Securitization, Securitization Theory, and Constructivism Theory to examine the climate change and national security narratives of Pakistan.

Securitization Theory

This framework examines how certain issues are framed as existential threats. Securitization theory argues that security is not an objective condition but a social and political construction achieved through speech acts and discursive practices (Buzan et al., 1998). It argues that climate change becomes a security concern while elite actors frame it as an existential threat that legitimizes extraordinary measures. The securitization theory framework employs constructivist perspectives, highlighting how climate threats are socially constructed within national policy narratives (McDonald, 2008).

Core Concepts of Securitization Theory

The Securitization Process

Securitization occurs when an issue is presented as an existential threat and requires emergency actions outside normal political procedures. It involves three key stages:

- Identification of a threat: a securitizing actor defines an issue as an urgent danger
- Speech Act: the actor declares the issue a security threat using dramatic language
- Acceptance by the Audience: the audience/public must accept the framing for securitization to succeed.

The Securitizing Actor and Audience

- Actors: States, Politicians, Media, NGOs, that frame issues as threats
- Audience: Public, Voters, courts, that must accept the securitization

Security as a Speech Act: Declaring something as a threat

Securitization is performative; saying something makes it real in politics. If the audience rejects the framing, securitization fails (Wæver, 1995). Buzan & Wæver highlight that securitization can occur in multiple domains such as military, political, economic, societal, and environmental (Buzan et al., 1998; Balzacq, 2019). This paper discusses the environmental sector of security and highlights climate change as a security issue. The application of securitization theory in state policies describes a security paradigm. For example, the United Nations (UN) frames climate changes as a security threat to push for global action. The EU's securitization of migration justifies strict border policies. These examples explain why some issues get extreme responses while others are ignored because language and power shape security policies.

Pakistan is facing extreme weather events that threaten food, water, and national stability. The securitization of climate change involves framing it as an existential threat to justify emergency policies and international aid in Pakistan. However, climate change has already been securitized in Pakistan as a national security threat by securitizing actors such as government and military personnel. The NSP 2022 and the Green Pakistan Initiative military-led afforestation campaign both explicitly link climate change to security risks. Politicians in their rhetoric claim that climate change is a bigger threat than terrorism by using speech acts. Military officials in their speeches argue that water scarcity could lead to conflict with India. Moreover, Pakistani media outlets frequently portray climate disasters as catastrophic threats. The Pakistani public/audience has accepted climate change as an existential security threat due to extreme weather events. This securitization has positive effects, including creation of climate ministries and disaster authorities. Pakistan secured funding for flood recovery. The Pakistani military now engages in flood relief, water management, and reforestation. However, the negative effects of, water dispute with India could escalate due to securitized rhetoric. Pakistan's response is still reactive rather than proactive.

Strategic Securitization

Strategic securitization emphasizes deliberate framing by political actors to pursue power, legitimacy, or funding. This framework refers to the deliberate and context-driven use of security language by actors to achieve specific political, institutional, or material objectives (Balzacq, 2005). Strategic securitization highlights the calculated, instrumental, and power-oriented aspects of securitizing moves, unlike the original securitization theory developed by the Copenhagen School, which treats securitization as an inter-subjective process (Stritzel, 2007). This framework, developed by Thierry Balzacq in his article *The Three Faces of Securitization* argues that securitization must be understood as a strategic process that includes:

- The goal of the securitizing actor
- The cultural and institutional context
- The use of tools such as discursive, symbolic, coercive

Strategic Securitization Core Components

These are the following core components of this framework (Balzacq, 2011):

Securitizing Actor

Entities that make the securitizing move, such as political elites, the military, and bureaucracies. For example, a government ministry declares climate change a national threat.

Audience

The group that needs to accept the securitizing acts. For example, international donors, domestic elites, and voters

Strategic Intent

Purpose behind securitization: gain legitimacy, attract resources, and suppress dissent. For example, climate framing to unlock global climate finance or control opposition.

Context

It involves the political system, institutional structure, and discursive traditions. For example, authoritarian VS democratic systems will shape how securitization works.

Instrumental Tools

It involves language, narratives, symbols, policy moves, threat framing, and legal instruments. For example, calling floods existential threats or declaring a climate emergency.

This framework invented the instrumentality of security language. Unlike Copenhagen's speech act theory that relies on audience acceptance, strategic securitization emphasizes that actors use security language strategically to:

- Influence decision-making
- Access emergency powers
- Redirect political debates
- Secure material resources

Therefore, strategic securitization is deeply context-sensitive. It examines institutional routines, discursive environment, and cultural predispositions. Balzacq argues that securitization is more likely to succeed when it resonates with audience expectations, institutional mandates, and historical narratives. For example, Pakistan or Bangladesh may frame climate change as a national security threat to access global climate finance or justify military involvement in disaster response. This securitization is strategically aimed at donors, global forums, or to expand the bureaucratic power of climate-related agencies.

Table 1
Securitization Theory VS Strategic Securitization

Feature	Copenhagen Securitization	Strategic Securitization
Primary Mechanism	Speech act and audience acceptance	Strategic intent of actors and contextual tools
Focus	Linguistic framing	Political use of framing + tools + context
Security as	Intersubjective process	Instrument for political gain
Role of Audience	Central to success	Secondary, may be bypassed or manipulated
Theoretical	Constructivist, influenced by speech act theory	Realist–Constructivist hybrid
Agency	The speaker's role is limited to initiating securitization	Speaker is a political strategist navigating institutions and audiences
Examples of Use	Declaring terrorism as an existential threat to justify policy	Framing climate change as a security issue to gain aid or control discourse
Applicability	Developed for Western liberal democracies	More applicable to the Global South and hybrid regimes

In sum, strategic securitization matters in Global South contexts. It is useful for analyzing developing countries or postcolonial states where threats are framed differently than in the West. Political elites may use security framing to access funding or suppress dissent. A South Asian state might securitize floods not just for preparedness but to legitimize foreign policy moves or attract investment under climate risk. Pakistan is a textbook case of strategic securitization in climate politics. Pakistan is one of the most climate-vulnerable countries globally (Sarwar & Farid, 2025). Climate change has only recently been framed as a non-traditional security threat in official discourse. In Pakistan's case, key elements of strategic securitization are:

- **Securitizing Actor:** Government of Pakistan (Politicians, Ministers, and Ministry of Climate Change)
- **Security Narrative:** Climate change as a 'non-traditional threat' linked to food insecurity, floods, water scarcity, and internal displacement
- **Strategic Goals:** Access to climate finance, legitimize state intervention, and enhance international profile as a frontline climate victim
- **Discursive and Material Tools:** National Security Policy (2022-2026) formally recognized climate change as a national threat (GoP, 2022). Use of the term like 'existential threat' in diplomatic forums and media.
- **Audience and Target:** It involves external and internal audiences. The external audience and target are Global North donors, the IMF, World Bank. Internal targets include public opinion, political opposition, and provincial governments.

According to this framework, the Pakistani state seeks to mobilize international aid, justify extraordinary interventions, and strengthen bureaucratic control over environmental planning by securitizing climate change. Pakistan's climate security discourse is not merely reactive or humanitarian. It reflects strategic motives aligned with donor engagement and institutional empowerment. The security framing positioned Pakistan as a victim of global inaction, not national mismanagement. This aligns with strategic securitization. Pakistan's a public mobilization angle, reinforcing that the securitization is elite-driven (Ain, et. al., 2024). Strategic securitization in Pakistan is embedded in weak civilian institutional capacity, aid dependence, and high disaster frequency. This mirrors Balzacq's theory emphasis on contextualized, instrumental, and power-driven securitization rather than mere discursive acts. In Pakistan, public acceptance is not central because securitization is often elite-constructed and elite-targeted. The public is typically a passive audience, not an active participant. Therefore, national discourse around climate security remains bureaucratic and external-facing, rather than mass-mobilizing. However, securitization of climate change in Pakistan is less about mass persuasion and more about strategic positioning. It exemplifies how fragile

states instrumentalize climate discourse to achieve external legitimacy and internal institutional gains.

Constructivism

According to Adler, constructivism emphasizes how threat perceptions are shaped by identity, norms, and institutional contexts rather than objective factors (Adler, 2013). It is a theoretical approach in International Relations (IR) that argues that the key structures in the state system are not material but ideational. It emphasizes the social construction of reality. According to Wendt, the structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces (Wendt, 1999).

Core Assumptions of Constructivism

- **Ideas Matter:** Norms, beliefs, and identities shape state interests
- **Interests are constructed, not given:** States do not have fixed interests. They emerge from social interaction
- **Anarchy is socially constructed:** The meaning of anarchy depends on intersubjective understandings (Wendt, 1992; Berger & Luckmann, 2023)
- **Agents and structures are mutually constitutive:** States shape, and are shaped by, the international system (Wendt, 1999)
- **Norms influence behavior:** International norms constrain and enable state actions (Finnemore, 1996).

Key Concepts in Constructivism

- **Norms:** Norms are shared expectations about appropriate behavior. International norms shape state behavior (Finnemore, 1996)
- **Identity:** Identity determines how states perceive each other as friends, rivals, or threats. For example, USA relations with the UK VS North Korea are different due to constructed identities.
- **Socialization:** states learn and adopt behaviors through interaction with institutions (Kratochwil, 1991). Post-colonial states are adopting liberal democratic institutions for legitimacy.
- **Intersubjectivity:** The international system is made of shared understandings, not objective facts. As Wendt said, Anarchy is what states make of it.

It explains how climate has been securitized through evolving norms (Detraz & Betsill, 2009). Climate justice and common but differentiated responsibility became accepted global ideas. When applied to climate security, constructivism helps explain how and why climate change is framed as a security issue, especially in Pakistan, where the material vulnerabilities are clear. But the discursive framing and institutional responses reflect deep social constructions of threat and responsibility. Therefore, climate change becomes a security threat when political and societal actors construct it as such. The framing of climate change as a non-traditional security threat is not inevitable. It has evolved through public speeches by political leaders, reports by ministers, and engagements at global forums. Discourses in national media are portraying floods, heatwaves, and glacier melt as existential challenges. These discourses are not natural consequences but intentional and socially mediated constructs aligning with constructivist assumptions.

As discussed above, constructivism emphasizes that state interests are not fixed. They emerge through identity and norms. Therefore, Pakistan's normative identity as a 'victim' state often constructs itself as a climate-vulnerable and low-emission country. This

identity helps frame demands for climate justice and global responsibility. Pakistan has actively engaged in global climate diplomacy and has internalized the international norm that climate change is a global security challenge. Through this lens, Pakistan is not merely reacting to climate change, but it is actively shaping and reshaping what climate security means in the Global South. These three theories show that Pakistan's securitization of climate change is not purely reactive to environmental threats. It is shaped by strategic intentions and enabled by socially constructed norms and identities. It demonstrates the discursive and institutional politics behind framing climate as security. Therefore, this theoretical framework reveals that in Pakistan, securitization serves both internal and external agendas and ideas, and speech acts produce policy realities.

Philosophical Framework

This philosophical framework analyzes climate change and national security in Pakistan. This framework is grounded in relevant ontological, epistemological, and ethical positions.

Ontology

Ontology refers relational, contextual, and socially constructed understanding of security. Security is not absolute but shaped by actors, perceptions, identities, and discourse. Climate threats are not self-evident but interpreted. Here, ontology asks: what kind of security does climate change constitute for Pakistan? Therefore, climate change in Pakistan is a relational threat, not just an environmental issue. It emerges from interrelations between society, governance, environment, and global systems. The non-traditional security paradigm views threats as arising from vulnerabilities in food, water, health, and governance rather than traditional military aggression (Tadjbakhsh & Chenoy, 2007). Climate change poses systemic risks to Pakistan's state capacity and societal resilience.

Epistemology

Epistemology explores how narratives and discourse shape perceptions of climate and security (Interpretivism). It addresses: how is knowledge about climate and security constructed in Pakistan?

Interpretivism: Pakistan's climate security discourse is best understood through an interpretivist lens, which prioritizes meanings, symbols, and narratives over purely empirical data (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2015). This approach frames that state frames climate change as a threat multiplier, disasters are used to justify security measures, and political actors construct themselves as climate victims. **Constructivist epistemology** reveals that Pakistan's NSP 2022-2026 adopts language aligned with global climate norms, reflecting how epistemic communities shape state behavior. Knowledge about climate security is socially constructed through global norms, media, and diplomatic framing.

Ethical Foundations

Climate change poses moral and existential risks, and securitizing it must not legitimize militaristic responses at the cost of equity and justice. Ethical considerations: What should be done? Who is responsible? Climate justice and responsibility highlight Pakistan contributes less than 1% of global greenhouse Gases (GHG) emissions, yet faces severe climate impacts (Germanwatch, 2025). Therefore, ethical frameworks are central to Pakistan's argument at global platforms.

Table 2
Philosophical Dimensions

Philosophical lens	Application to Climate Security in Pakistan
Ontology	Climate change is a systemic, relational threat to national identity, development, and state stability.
Epistemology	Knowledge is constructed through discourse, global norms, and symbolic politics—not just climate science.
Ethics	Emphasizes justice, intergenerational responsibility, and moral accountability of major emitters to vulnerable states

This framework allows researchers to go beyond material impacts and examine how climate security is framed, justified, and contested. It also opens space for normative claims. For example, Pakistan's right to adaptation finance or the obligations of richer nations to prevent regional destabilization.

Cross-National Comparison

United States of America

The USA frames climate change as a threat multiplier. The USA's National Defense Strategy identifies climate change as a central component of future security risks (DoD, 2022). Historically, the USA has debated the seriousness of the threat posed by climate change since the 1990s. Climate change as a security threat occurred in the USA's National Security Strategy 1997. For the first time, the National Security Council in 1997 argued that environmental threats such as climate change, ozone depletion, and the transnational movement of dangerous chemicals directly threaten the citizens (NSC, 1997). Climate change became a major issue under the Obama administration for the USA military. According to the National Security Strategy 2010, the danger from climate change is real, urgent, and severe, and will lead to new sufferings, from famine, natural disasters, and degradation of land. The US has implemented a mix of federal, state, and local policies to address climate change. Climate policy fluctuates significantly across administrations due to partisan divides. The US has been one of the most prominent global actors in securitizing climate change and conceptualizes climate not just as an environmental or development issue but as a national and global security threat. Quadrennia Defense Review 2008 reaffirmed that climate change will exacerbate geopolitical instability, particularly in fragile states (Daggett, 2010). National Security Strategy (NSS) places climate change at the center of the US security and foreign policy. According to NSS, climate change is the existential challenge of our time (White House, 2022). From a strategic securitization perspective, the US uses it to justify defense planning and resource allocation for climate resilience, expand diplomatic influence through climate finance and green alliances, and support climate-related military deployments.

Table 3
US: Climate Change Policies (EPA, 2023; US Congress, 2022)

Legislation/Policy	Content & Climate Relevance
Clean Air Act (CAA)	Interpreted to regulate CO ₂ post- <i>Massachusetts v. EPA</i> (2007)
Inflation Reduction Act (2022)	\$369 billion for climate mitigation and energy security
Executive Order 14008 (2021)	Calls the climate crisis a core national and foreign policy issue
DoD Climate Risk Analysis (2021)	First U.S. defense document dedicated solely to climate security

The US uses global climate diplomacy as a geopolitical strategy to counter China's influence and expand soft power, especially in Africa and South Asian. US military bases are climate-proofed. Climate-related logistics and energy resilience are considered vital to force readiness.

China

Climate change is increasingly securitized in China, but within a developmental and state-stability paradigm, not through the military lens. The framing of climate change

in China is strategic and technocratic, aligning with Balzacq's strategic securitization. China frames climate change as a long-term threat to sustainable development, food security, water resources, and energy supply. It is classified under 'non-traditional' security threats in policy documents along with epidemics and natural disasters (Bo, 2016). Environmental issues are linked to domestic instability, rural unrest, and migration. This phenomenon is seen as a threat to regime security. Gilley argues that China's climate governance is top-down, with securitization embedded in authoritarian environmentalism (Gilley, 2012). Institutional response and integration involves (Wu, 2023; Hepburn, 2021; Kong & Wang, 2022):

- National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) focuses on strategic planning, climate targets, and carbon pricing mechanisms
- Ministry of Ecology and Environment (MEE) is a central agency for emissions reduction and adaptation
- People's Liberation Army (PLA) works as a disaster response

The framing of climate and security in policy documents: (Kong & Wang, 2022; Wu, 2023)

- 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-2020) framed climate as part of ecological and energy security
- 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) introduced carbon peaking and neutrality goals as central to national development (Hepburn, 2021).
- China's National Climate Change Program emphasized adaptation, early warning systems, and rural resilience
- China's National Security Law 2015 includes ecological and resource security as pillars of national security

From a strategic securitization perspective, China uses climate discourse to expand global influence, particularly through the Green Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), participation in global negotiations, and climate finance in Africa and South Asia. Strategically, China vigorously aims to develop renewable energy to promote a green, low-carbon economic system. Ashraf reveals that climate change is a geopolitical issue and argues that an effective global climate regime can only be established through cooperation between the USA and China. In sum, China's approach emphasizes regional stability, global leadership, and long-term ecological modernization. This strategic securitization helps China to reinforce political legitimacy, expand geopolitical influence, and position itself as a responsible great power in the face of the global environmental crisis.

Russia

Climate change has not been fully securitized in Russia. Its security discourse treats climate largely as an economic and geopolitical opportunity. Climate change is embedded in a strategic narrative of expanding Russia's energy and geopolitical dominance in the Arctic (Baker, 2021; Devyatkin, 2023). Russia sees climate change as opening new maritime routes and energy reserves in the Arctic. Russia's soft securitization policy acknowledges threats like wildfires, drought, and permafrost. Here, Russian climate and security documents (Baker, 2021; Sergunin & Gjörv, 2020):

- National Security Strategy highlights climate change as a challenge to sustainable development, not as a hard security threat.
- Climate Doctrine of the Russian Federation focuses on adaptation and emission monitoring strategies, but security impacts are secondary

- Environmental Security Strategy (2017-2025) includes risks from environmental degradation but does not elevate them to national security threats.
- Arctic Strategy 2020 acknowledges climate change primarily in the context of military infrastructure and energy access.

Russia considers climate change as a domain for economic expansion and energy strategy, not a threat multiplier (Cherp et al., 2018). The Russian military does not actively integrate climate into its defense doctrine like China and the US, nor does it securitize climate in foreign policy forums. Strategic securitization of climate change in Russia frames it as an economic opportunity, not as an existential threat. Rowe argues that Russia's climate doctrine reflects a dual track policy, pragmatic adaptation, and strategic economic positioning (Rowe, 2020). International position and diplomacy point of view highlights that Russia participates in global climate agreements but often as a passive actor, opposes strong international monitoring, and emphasizes technological sovereignty (Myagkova et al., 2024). In sum, Russia's approach to climate change is marked by low securitization and emphasizes strategic adaptation, energy security over decarbonization, and economic growth through resource access. These factors make Russia a player among major powers in framing climate change within its national security architecture.

Table 4
Cross-National Insights

Country	Securitization Type	Key Actors Involved	Strategic Framing
USA	Military-Strategic	DOD, NSC, State Dept	Threat Multiplier, geopolitical stability
EU	Normative-Regulatory	EEAS, EU Parliament, CFSP	Global justice, rule-based multilateralism
China	Technocratic-Developmental	NDRC, CCP, State Council	Ecological civilization; energy governance
Russia	Desecuritization	Kremlin, Energy Ministry, Gazprom	Arctic opportunity: energy resilience
Pakistan	Reactive/Donor-driven	MoCC, NDMA, Planning Commission	Disaster response; donor policy alignment

Securitization of Climate Change in Pakistan

Climate change has been securitized in Pakistan due to its direct linkages with national security, economic stability, and human survival. Therefore, the securitization of climate change in Pakistan is driven by several factors:

- Water Scarcity and Food Insecurity
- Extreme Weather Events and Human Security
- Geopolitical Tensions
- Economic Stability
- Health Catastrophe

Policy and institutional response frames climate change as a threat multiplier in NCCP and establishes the Climate Change Council that reflects a security-oriented approach. However, Pakistan shows signs of partial securitization and frames climate as a justice issue in environmental diplomacy requiring aid and reparations from the Global North. As Sherry Rehman mentioned, Pakistan is a victim of global emissions and suffers disproportionately. Pakistan's diplomatic climate discourses emphasize vulnerability and call for climate reparations. This vulnerability narrative helps Pakistan attract aid but limits long-term security planning. Securitizing climate internally could help mainstream it in defense, planning, and intelligence sectors, but over-securitization risks militarizing developments.

Implications for Pakistan

US securitization of climate shapes global discourse, potentially influencing aid allocation and securitized development norms in Pakistan. Pakistan's engagement with US climate funds and multilateral donors reflects strategic alignment pressures. China's green diplomacy influences Pakistan via the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) (Rahim, et. al. 2018; Shah et.al. 2020). Climate diplomacy becomes a bargaining tool, especially after the 2022 floods, where Pakistan framed itself as a victim of Global North emissions. Russia's Arctic focus is less directly relevant but highlights regional asymmetries in climate threat perception. Pakistan lacks strong climate-security integration in defense planning and depends on external discursive frameworks to advance its climate diplomacy. Therefore, the challenge for Pakistan is to localize these narratives while avoiding securitization that militarizes or elite-captures the climate agenda.

Climate Security and Indo-Pakistan Relations

India and Pakistan have a long history of mistrust, broken promises, and territorial disputes (Ullah et al., 2022). Both are among the world's most climate-vulnerable countries and shared rivers and ecosystems make climate change a transboundary issue. The Indus Water Treaty (IWT) is cited most successful water-sharing agreement, having survived wars, diplomatic breakdowns, but recently climate change has challenged its resilience between India and Pakistan (Sarwar & Farid, 2025). Climate-induced resource stress is emerging as a latent risk factor in Indo-Pak relations. The IWT is under pressure due to climate variability, Indian hydro-projects, and the Kashmir conflict. India's upstream position and violent gestures are perceived as a national security threat by Pakistan. According to recent events, in April 2025, India suspended the IWT and launched autonomous drones, violating Pakistan's territorial sovereignty (Sarwar & Rashid, 2025). India poses a direct threat to Pakistan's national security due to its control over shared waters. India frames climate as a national development and security issue. Pakistan uses vulnerability framing in global forums and highlights Indian unilateral violations and propaganda about transboundary waters. Somehow, both India and Pakistan have incorporated climate change into their national security paradigm. India's violations of IWT by constructing dams and reducing water flows towards Pakistan have the potential to trigger a full-fledged nuclear war that could disturb the peace of the region. The securitization of climate change between border-sharing and water-sharing states offers potential opportunities for climate-related confidence-building measures. The political landscape of the world has shifted from traditional security to modern security paradigms. Therefore, India and Pakistan need to revitalize SAARC environmental agreements, redefine security narratives, and work for mutual benefits (Shahbaz & Muzaffar, 2025; Muzaffar, et. al., 2017). Both India and Pakistan have the potential to mitigate climate impacts by introducing Joint Glacial Research initiatives, early warning systems, and diplomacy on climate-peace frameworks. Several challenges hinder the way to peace, such as:

- **Kashmir Issue:** The Kashmir issue overshadows technical cooperation on shared rivers and glaciers
- **Trust Deficit:** Security mistrust undermines environmental cooperation
- **Aggressive Rhetoric and Diplomatic Weakness:** Politicians of India and Pakistan use aggressive rhetoric to gain public interest. Populist leaders polarize public opinion, which manifests as ideological distance and hostility (Sarwar & Aziz, 2025). Diplomatic officials rarely engage directly.

India and Pakistan both face common environmental challenges. In India and Pakistan, bilateral and multilateral dialogues could benefit from integrating climate resilience and environmental security as non-traditional security. Climate change offers an

opportunity to improve relations that lead to environmental peacebuilding. They share an urgent need to mitigate risks to protect public health, the economy, and regional peace. This comparison reveals potential pathways, enabling the region to draw lessons from the USA and China's experiences and develop into a community of practice and a normative power.

National Security Narrative of India and Pakistan

Pakistan recognizes climate change as a national security threat. Pakistan frames climate change as an existential threat to water, food, and energy security. Pakistan's national narrative on climate change emphasizes international cooperation and national preparedness. Its security implications increase reliance on external aid, affecting sovereignty and strategic autonomy. On the contrary, India frames it as a threat multiplier affecting economic growth, energy security, and food supply. Indian officials argue that climate change presents a complex security challenge intersecting energy, water, and food security with potential implications for internal stability and regional relations. An anarchic political system of the world compels states to prioritize survival and expansion of security measures to maintain a balance of power (Sarwar & Rashid, 2025). These non-traditional security threats encourage states to achieve security through collaboration. Therefore, India and Pakistan jointly could articulate a cooperative climate security narrative emphasizing shared vulnerabilities rather than zero-sum threats. Effective mitigation and adaptation require cooperative frameworks, balancing national interests with collective resilience strategies. India and Pakistan need to establish bilateral climate security dialogues under neutral frameworks and expand national security policy documents to include sections on environmental peacebuilding initiatives, resource competition avoidance, and disaster diplomacy.

Climate Diplomacy and National Security: Pakistan VS India

Environmental crises pose common threats to both India and Pakistan. Climate diplomacy offers both a challenge and an opportunity. Environmental concerns such as water scarcity, glacial melt, and extreme weather could serve as a platform for limited cooperation despite geopolitical tensions. Here are potential areas for cooperation, including data sharing, renewable energy, disaster preparedness, and technical exchanges. To mitigate the impacts, both nations need to foster friendly relations and include climate security in their diplomatic dialogues. Climate diplomacy remains a low priority amid broader tensions, but incremental steps could pave the way for stability. Third-party mediation can also present new ways and can encourage joint climate adaptation projects. However, success depends on depoliticizing climate issues and engaging local communities, rather than relying on top-down agreements. In sum, this research suggests that both India and Pakistan need to:

- Establish a climate security dialogue under SAARC, SCO, and the diplomacy track to build trust, identify shared risks, and set joint action points
- Update Indus Water Treaty, incorporate climate variability clauses to prevent escalation of water disputes due to changing hydrological patterns
- Promote climate peacebuilding initiatives to engage civil society and think tanks and build cross-border environmental cooperation narratives.
- Integrate climate security into military doctrine and recognize climate-related risks
- Establish joint disaster response protocols and national security policies
- Set up cross-border water commissions

Together, both India and Pakistan, through cooperation, can easily achieve victory over disastrous events. As discussed above, Buzan and Wæver suggest adopting new changing trends of security for the survival and peace. This cooperation also contributes to

economic growth by creating opportunities for trade, connectivity projects, and infrastructure projects (Rashid & Sarwar, 2025). Climate issues offer a neutral space for dialogue, but sustained cooperation requires depoliticizing climate action and diplomatic commitments. This collaboration also attracts the USA, China, and Russia for regional connectivity projects and trade agreements that will strengthen the economy and peace.

Conclusion

The intersection of climate change, securitization theory, and strategic securitization demonstrates critical insights into Pakistan's evolving national security landscape. For Pakistan, climate change represents a non-traditional security threat with tangible impacts on water resources, food, security, disaster management, and regional stability. Climate change is framed as a hard security concern or a strategic opportunity in major powers such as the US, China, and Russia, but Pakistan's securitization of climate change remains partial, reactive, and development-centric. The US employs climate-security discourse as a tool for international leadership and defense readiness. China incorporates ecological civilization into its national security planning. Pakistan's dependence on shared water with India, a long-standing rivalry, and a history of conflicts have been concerning and threatening for Pakistan's national security. Climate change remains partially securitized within India and Pakistan's national security narratives despite their shared vulnerabilities. Pakistan emphasizes vulnerability, focusing on climate justice and international aid. Pakistan is gradually integrating climate risks into national security frameworks. On the other hand, India's securitization of climate change leans towards a developmental and strategic resource perspective, emphasizing domestic resilience and global climate leadership. In India-Pakistan relations, the absence of formalized climate-security frameworks increases the risks of resource conflicts and mismanagement of transboundary water systems. To address these challenges, both nations have to think out of the box beyond fragmented and rhetorical securitization towards actionable strategic frameworks. There is a dire need to establish joint climate security dialogues, update transboundary water agreements, climate peacebuilding initiatives, and shared disaster response mechanisms for mitigating future security risks. This cooperation would strengthen environmental resilience and could serve as a confidence-building measure, helping to de-escalate broader Indo-Pak tensions through shared human security. It is necessary evolution of both nations' national security strategies in an era defined by global ecological disruption. For Pakistan, climate change must be seen as a foundational pillar of national security. Failing to do so risks exacerbating existing dilemmas and leaving Pakistan unprepared for the complex transboundary nature of threats.

Recommendations

This paper recommends that cooperation between states would strengthen environmental resilience and could serve as a confidence-building measure, helping to de-escalate broader tensions through shared human security. It is a necessary evolution for nations' national security strategies in an era defined by global ecological disruption.

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