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Securitisation of the Climate Crisis in Pakistan's Media Discourse: A Case Study of Glacial Melting

Abstract

This paper will discuss the ways the Pakistani print media and the governmental communication discuss glacial melting and the crisis of climate change as a threat to national security during 2022-2025. The study presents the use of scientific evidence in justifying securitised narratives through qualitative analysis of Dawn, The Express Tribune, official statements, NDMA alerts, and research findings regarding Dawn. The melting of glaciers is always projected as a threat to water security, economic stability, hydropower, as well as to the safety of people. These frames are strengthened by government rhetoric to support the need to adapt, institutional change, and finance climate change. All in all, the paper is a valuable addition to the existing body of literature on the theme of climate securitisation in the Global South because it proves that the constructions of climate change as a nation-survival issue are a collective effort by Pakistani media and state actors.

Keywords: Climate Securitisation, Glacier Melting, Pakistani Newspaper Media, Framing of National Security, Communication of Climatic Risks, Pakistani Hindu Karakoram Himalaya, Climate Discourse, GLOF Hazards, Water Security, Environmental Government.

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Title

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Abstract

This paper will discuss the ways the Pakistani print media and the governmental communication discuss glacial melting and the crisis of climate change as a threat to national security during 2022-2025. The study presents the use of scientific evidence in justifying securitised narratives through qualitative analysis of Dawn, The Express Tribune, official statements, NDMA alerts, and research findings regarding Dawn. The melting of glaciers is always projected as a threat to water security, economic stability, hydropower, as well as to the safety of people. These frames are strengthened by government rhetoric to support the need to adapt, institutional change, and finance climate change. All in all, the paper is a valuable addition to the existing body of literature on the theme of climate securitisation in the Global South because it proves that the constructions of climate change as a nation-survival issue are a collective effort by Pakistani media and state actors.

Keywords:

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Introduction

The mountain ranges that are found in the north of Pakistan have turned out to be one of the most pressing environmental and security issues in the country. Accelerated ice melting has been recorded by scientific surveillance by ICIMOD, NASA, and the Pakistan Meteorological Department in the Hindu Kush-Karakoram-Himalaya region, where more than 7000 glaciers provide water to the Indus River system. Authorities refer to such glaciers as the third pole of Pakistan, which is why they are so strategic (Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination

(MOCC, [2025](#)). Their withdrawal jeopardizes the water runways that are helpful to the agricultural sector, hydropower, and urban consumption, and the print media draws attention to the danger by connecting scientific data to national vulnerability. Express Tribune has positioned glaciers as the largest asset of the country that is currently melting rapidly (Arif, [2025](#)), whereas Dawn relates increased melt to the floods, water shortage, and a hard-to-manage government (Panhwar, [2025](#)). Such stories are supported by recent calamities, such as the 2022 floods, repeated GLOFs, and destructive monsoons. The climate risks are also urgent, as demonstrated by the Dawn 2025 report about flash



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floods and evacuations in Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Taj et al., 2025). Glacial melt is securitised within the discourse of the government, where it is portrayed as a challenge to water security, economic stability, and the survival of humans. The language of climate change as a survival issue, which was used by Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, is a good example of a language that has found a way into official communication (MOCC, 2025). Integration of scientific knowledge, media discourses, and political debate gives a good foundation to examine the securitisation of climate in Pakistan.

Purpose and Scope

This research is aimed at examining the construction of glacial melting as a national security issue in the Pakistani print-media discourse on the topic during the period between January 2022 and December 2025. The study targets two of the leading national newspapers with a high agenda-setting potential, Dawn and The Express Tribune, and government publications, and the notification of the crisis that explicitly informs media reporting. The universe will consist of news stories, opinion pieces, and analysis, as well as governmental statements that mention the glacial melt, GLOFs, or water security, climate-related disasters, and national climate policy. The research is not speculative on unconfirmed data and only cites published scientific literature and content that has been verified by the media and official reports.

Research Questions

1. How do the Pakistani print-media sources construct the concepts of glacial melting and the entire climate crisis as a matter of national security and policy urgency?
2. How do government representatives and media discourses use persuasive methods to build the idea of glacial melting as a national security dilemma in Pakistan?

Literature Review:

Evidence Scientific: Retreat of the Glaciers and its Media Reporting

The media accounts that have been written about the climate vulnerability of Pakistan are highly reliant on scientific evaluations. In 2023, the report by ICIMOD, which is often used in The Express Tribune, states that Pakistan is losing glacier mass at 30 to 50 percent of what it was in the 1990s, with estimates showing that the glaciers will be reduced by up to 80 percent of their original volume by 2100. Similar findings by NASA satellite cameras of the years 2022 to 2024 show that glaciers like Siachen, Baltoro, and Biafo are melting 10 to 40 meters each year, almost twice as much as was lost in

the past decades (Arif, 2025). These results are also highly shown in the newspaper reports as they are repackaged to reflect the risks at the national level, such as flood risks, prolonged water shortage, and hydropower generation instability. The formation of 3,044 glacial lakes in 2023, compared to 2,420 in 2018, is reported in PMD data in the Express Tribune, with 33 of these glacial lakes being high-risk lakes and able to cause GLOFs (Arif, 2025). Such statistics have an empirical basis for media accounts about the glacial area as a time bomb. The increase in the glacial lake pressure is not just a geological or hydrological issue but a security risk that is likely to result in population displacement and infrastructure damage, as well as in economic shocks (Zhang et al., 2024).

Causes of Rapid Glacial Melting

In the press, soaring temperatures, deposition of black carbon, and unpredictable snowfall have proven to be the main causes of the increased glacial melting (Ahmed, 2025). In the report published by the World Bank in 2023, cited in the press, it is mentioned that since 1960, the temperature in Pakistan has increased by 1.3 °C, approximately two times the global mean. The heatwaves, including the 53 °C in Jacobabad, are put in the context of contributing directly to the high rate of melting (Arif, 2025). The extra 20-30 percent melt acceleration is concentrated on black carbon deposition by UNDP (2024), especially the burning of brick kilns and crop residues. The results of IUCN on the decreased amount of snowfall strengthen the fears that the glaciers are not getting enough snowfall in winter to restore the hydrological cycle of the Indus Basin. Dr. A very well-known quote, by Amina Khan, the ice will not wait until perfect solutions are found, places the scientific community as a key figure in the call to action on the national level (Arif, 2025). According to Tariq (2025), the newspapers are always ready to present the glacial meltdown as a humanitarian emergency and a security risk in the long term. Short-term risks encompass regular GLOFs, flash floods, and the collapse of infrastructure. The article by Taj et al. (2025) records the flooding in July 2025 in Gilgit-Baltistan, during which disasters caused by cloudbursts killed several individuals, swept away bridges, ruined schools and wheat depots, and displaced hundreds of tourists, and declared an emergency.

Government Discourse and Securitisation of Institutions

The event of the World Day of Glaciers by the Ministry of Climate Change (2025) can be taken as a major textual point of securitised climate discourse. The statements of Minister Aurangzeb present glacial melting as a danger to the economic stability and access to water of the country, as well as intergenerational sustainability. The geopolitics of declining glaciers are also highlighted by State Minister

Dr. Kharal, who argues that there is a need to engage in transboundary co-operation with China, India, Nepal, and Afghanistan. The existence of phrases like critical survival issue, time is running out, and glaciers are the key to national water security is indicative of a rhetoric pattern that is meant to mobilise concern among the people and justify policy interventions. These utterances are directly copied in the news, and they demonstrate how the speech acts of government are transformed into criminals of securitisation. By defining climate change as an existential threat, political leaders place themselves in a right of legitimate authority to act in an emergency (Popovski, 2024).

The Media as Securitising Actor

Though the government is the cause of the securitising language, the media coverage enhances it. Alternatives to the problem of the melting ice sheets mentioned in The Express Tribune include a National Glacier Rescue Mission, a Glacier Protection Act, and technological experimentation, including drone-based monitoring, artificial snowmaking, and glacier cover. By so doing, the press frames glacial melting as a humanitarian or environmental emergency but as a national resource that needs to be fiercely defended.

Methodology

The research design within this study is a qualitative

Thematic discourse analysis will be used to understand the nature of securitisation of glacial melting and the climate crisis in Pakistan's print media. The approach is grounded in the scholarship on environmental communication and considers the news media as an agent of creating meaning within the population. The data will include articles in the Dawn and The Express Tribune that were published between 2022 and 2025, and that focus on glacial melt, GLOF threats, hydrological instability, monsoon disasters, and climate policy. The government statements, the publications of the Ministry of Climate Change, and the NDMA advisories were also included in a bid to evaluate the interaction of governmental discourse with media framing. The texts were coded on securitisation, scientific framing, the urgency of policies, risk construction, and the language of crisis themes. The creation of the categories of coding occurred inductively by reading the sources closely, especially focusing on the official speech acts, because the theory of securitisation emphasizes the importance of the authoritative actors in determining the existential threats. Triangulation across sources helped to keep the interpretations based on verifiable evidence. The meaning of the frames is analyzed in the political and environmental context of Pakistan, as opposed to quantifying frames, in line with critical discourse studies of climate communication in the Global South.

Media Coverage of Glacial Melting and Climate Security in Pakistan (2022–2025).

Date	Source	Article Title	Type	Dominant Frame	Evidence Cited	Securitising Elements
October 7, 2025	The Express Tribune (Arif, 2025)	Icy gold: Melting away is the largest wealth.	Analytical commentary/blog	Scientific + National Security	ICIMOD (2023) rates of glacier mass loss.	Poses glaciers as national wealth that is threatened by existentialists; Pakistan as a visualized Climate Hero, but with imminent water disaster; promotes a Glacier Rescue Mission and Glacier Protection Act.
March 21, 2025	Ministry of Climate Change (MOCC, 2025)	Emphasis on glacial loss stemming from the quest to realise water security	Government policy statement	Policy Security + Economic Security	Statements from Federal Finance Minister Aurangzeb; UNDP	Declares climate change a “critical survival issue”; warns that glacier loss threatens national water

Date	Source	Article Title	Type	Dominant Frame	Evidence Cited	Securitising Elements
		and climate resilience.			poverty-impact data; glacier-fed water dependency estimates (60%)	supply, economic stability, and livelihoods; elevates glacier conservation to a strategic national priority
March 31, 2025	Dawn (Panhwar, 2025)	Agriculture: Indianising the great Indus.	Opinion/analysis	Hydrological Security + Governance	Indications of decreased Indus flows: dam, canal effects, seawater intrusion; vagaries caused by climate.	Presents the Indus River as an agricultural, delta ecosystem, and food security threat; cites poor stewardship + climate change as a national water security perfect storm.
January 27, 2025	Dawn (Soomro & Memon, 2025)	Flood management to melting glaciers.	Analysis	Hydrological Security + Disaster Preparedness.	PMD information on the contribution of glaciers to movements in the Indus; climate cosmetic raises in floods and droughts.	Indicates the connections between glacier melting and the long-term decrease in water supply and the growth of disasters; suggests structural changes in water management as national resilience interventions.
July 22, 2025	Dawn (Taj et al., 2025)	GLOF GB KP: PMD issues GLOF alert.	Crisis reporting	Human Security + Immediate Threat	PMD GLOF warning; NDMA death toll monsoon; eyewitness reports.	Portrays glaciated areas as crisis areas; focuses on life-endangering flash floods; declares a state of emergency and rescue missions. 2024
2024	NDMA (2024 Monsoon Report)	Monsoon Situation Report	Government disaster report	Humanitarian + National Emergency	National loss of life (234 as of July 22, 2025); damage to the infrastructure; effects of floods.	Strengthens climate-related insecurity; gives empirical information on how to treat monsoon disasters

Date	Source	Article Title	Type	Dominant Frame	Evidence Cited	Securitising Elements
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as a security issue at the national level.

Findings

The use of scientific data to highlight the risks of existential climate change has been a central theme throughout the media corpus. The fact that the Express Tribune provides a wide reference to the 2023 report by ICIMOD and the satellite surveillance conducted by NASA in 2022-2024 provides a solid epistemic basis of securitisation. These facts are integrated in stories in which Pakistan is a singular state of jeopardy, its glaciers are in a state of irreversible deterioration, and are melting at an unprecedented rate (Arif, 2025). The media justifies political and popular panic by placing science as a system of warnings. The humanitarian crisis that Dawn reports highlights humanitarian issues associated with the meltdown of glaciers. Taj et al. (2025) reflect on cloudburst-related floods, fatalities in Gilgit-Baltistan, evacuations in large numbers, and roadblocks with the tone of emergency and crisis outburst. Meanwhile, the NDMA warnings of landslides and GLOF are mentioned to support the image of mountainous areas as areas of high susceptibility. The repeated themes of rescue missions, destruction of infrastructure, and abandoned people trigger a security frame, which portends human safety and state emergency management. Both newspapers mention the threats to the hydrological stability in the future. Panhwar (2025) cautions that the key ecological integrity of the Indus Basin might be impaired by the sudden melting of glaciers as well as improperly operated infrastructure, which will impact food security, delta health, and irrigation infrastructure. The Express Tribune is also perpetuating long-term risks by reiterating estimations of significant declines in the flow of the Indus water that would pose a menace to the national agricultural production and hydropower infrastructure. These stories make water shortage be strategic security issue. Securitising language is used over and over again by government officials. Federal Finance Minister Aurangzeb remarks that climate change is a national survival concern at the World Day of Glaciers 2025, and the loss of glaciers is associated with the collapse of Pakistan's economy and increased instability in the region (MOCC, 2025). Dr. Kharal highlights the fact that the disintegration of glacier masses also puts the lives of millions of people at risk and demands a joint transboundary action. Newspapers reproduce these speech acts verbatim, which makes official securitisation spread in the field of the population. Securitisation in the

media does not work only by bringing threats to the foreground; it is also manifested in the suggestions of incredible policy actions (Khan and Kaunert, 2024). Arif (2025) suggests designing a Glacier Protection Act, National Glacier Rescue Mission, technology-based interventions that make up blankets and artificial snowmaking, and the creation of a Glacier Protection Authority. These suggestions put the conservation of glaciers in the national security priorities that should be addressed through scientific creativity, as well as legislative response.

Discussion

The results indicate that securitisation of climate change in Pakistan is the process of discourse whose formation is influenced by both media and the state. Scientific evidence is of key importance, not only as a source of factual information but as a rhetorical device justifying a sense of urgency for state action. This indicates wider scholarship, which proves the power of scientific authority to bolster political crisis narratives. A dual-risk framing of glacial melt is a position taken by Pakistan Pakistani media, where glacial melting is framed as a present humanitarian crisis and a future existential crisis. This is in line with the global trends that extreme weather events are now the center of interest in terms of securitisation, which allows policymakers to rationalise the need to adapt (Raza et al., 2025). The news of the 2025 floods and frequent GLOFs contributes to the belief in the increasing instability of the climate. This framing is further institutionalised by government language, which talks about climate change as an issue that the nation must survive or glaciers as national assets that are of critical importance. This language puts the officials in the role of defenders of national security and justifies interventions such as surveillance systems, early warning systems, and transboundary collaboration (Somani, 2023). These plans indicate the focus of securitisation theory on the presence of political elites in the determination of existential threats. Another approach to securitisation is in the form of technical and legislative solutions, including glacier blankets, artificial ice reservoirs, and suggestions of a national glacier authority (Aman et al., 2025). It can be seen as a trend in South Asian climate communication where the risks posed by the environment are associated with technological advancement and national development

(Wang et al., 2024). Meanwhile, tension seems to be present in this discourse. Although the melting of glaciers is securitised, systemic problems, including mismanagement of water, unjust distribution, and unsustainable development, also appear in the analysis of the media, which indicates that securitisation is not the solution to more profound governance problems. All in all, climate securitisation in Pakistan can be said to be more strategic than reactive, overlapping with calls to international climate finance, institutional change, and positioning Pakistan as a frontline state in the global climate crisis.

Conclusion

During the period between 2022 and 2025, the glacial melting surfaced in the Pakistani print media as a

multidimensional security threat. The securitising frames of newspapers focused on scientific evidence, humanitarian crises, water governance issues, and national risks in the long run. Government actors supported these discourses by saying that the disappearance of glaciers was related to economic survival, water security, and national stability. By combining the efforts of media and state-based communication, climate change was created as an existential issue that necessitates exceptional policy intervention. This paper can help to advance the literature on climate-securitisation by demonstrating how Global South media enhance scientific and political discourses to render environmental degradation as a cause of sovereignty and social survival. Future studies may focus on securitisation in other types of media or the effects of these kinds of accounts on the views of the population and public policy.

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