Climate Risk and its Political Impact in Kashmir Conflict[1]
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Abstract

The objective of this paper is to highlight the types of stresses that politics and society may bear as a result of shocks to nature dealt by climate change. Taking the 2014 Jammu and Kashmir Floods and subsequent process of political shifts in the state as an example, it will examine the recent Kashmir conflict in terms of the "new risk" of natural disaster caused by abnormal meteorological phenomenon. In doing so, it will analyze the possibility of medium-to-long-term political impacts of new climate risks that overlap with existing security risks in conflict region.

Introduction

As interest in global environmental issues has risen in recent years, there has been a rising need for research related to climate change in not only natural science, but also social science. This reminds us of the need to explain the question of how environmental factors such as climate and political conditions in human society interact. The British sociologist Anthony Giddens emphasized the importance of not only climate change itself, but also *the politics of climate change*, which reflects the strong interest in this issue (Giddens, 2011).

The objective of this paper is to highlight the types of stresses that politics and society may bear as a result of shocks to nature dealt by climate change. Furthermore, the paper will consider how the stress of natural disasters may become an additional risk in spurring social instability, political

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[1] Jammu and Kashmir was one of the Princely States that comprised the British Raj in India. During the Partition of India and Pakistan, its territory was not placed in either new state, thus becoming the source of territorial conflict. In 1954, the Jammu and Kashmir Constituent Assembly on the Indian side elected to join India, after which the area was incorporated under the Indian administrative authority of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Due to its unique circumstances leading up to its accession into India, the state was granted certain special status and autonomy in the Indian Constitution. However, in 2019, the Indian government revoked these constitutional rights and dismantled the power of the state. Taking into consideration the period of the case described, this article shall, in principle, use the name "the state of Jammu and Kashmir." The use of "Kashmir" shall refer to the overall conflict issues and refers to the region including the land in the former princely state. Additional explanations shall be included in other cases.

upheaval, state instability, and military friction in regions already handling conflict. Understanding the influence of climate change to existing political processes contributes to understanding the risks posed to the people in a vulnerable position living in the conflict-affected regions.

In order to analyze the risks stemming from the relationship between existing conflicts and climate change, this paper will focus on the case of flooding in the Indian Jammu and Kashmir state in September 2014. In addition, the paper will focus on the medium-to-long-term processes witnessed in the change of power in the state from the milestone of this flooding and the changes to the state's political status after this disaster. The 2014 floods brought significant damage to the lives of the residents of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. At least 1.2 million people were directly affected, and approximately 300 people died or remain missing due to this flooding (Pandit, 2014). According to a report by Sphere India, a platform comprised of NGOs that provide humanitarian support in and outside of India, this was the most severe flood disaster in the past 60 years (Sphere India, 2014). Heavy rains from a monsoon between September 2 and 6 caused the Jhelum River, one tributary of the Indus River, to flood. As a result, a total of 52.47% (42.50 km^2) of the area surrounding the Dal Lake located in the capital Srinagar city in the Kashmir Valley suffered flooding damage (Ahmad et al., 2020).

Facing an unprecedented natural disaster, the state government was late to respond, leaving many cut-off residents who evacuated to their roofs waiting for days for rescue. The flooding struck not only the Indian side, but also stretched into the Pakistani side of Kashmir and its downstream regions. However, still bearing the long history of the Kashmir conflict, India and Pakistan did not cooperate with one another in these regions to provide cross-boundary rescue and aid. Furthermore, international support was made difficult due to the nature of this region as a hotbed for conflict (Kanth and Ghosh, 2015). The multi-layered risks created by climate change in the Indus River Basin represent a threat to international security to the neighboring countries engaged in this border conflict in the Kashmir region. Climate change also causes a two-sided risk to the people in a vulnerable position who are directly impacted by this damage. Even if a natural disaster occurred due to abnormal weather patterns, such as the case of the 2014 floods, the people in this region could not receive international aid because the land is the source of a border conflict between India and Pakistan.

As a result of the poor response to the disaster by the state government, the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference (JKNC), the regionally based ruling party, which historically had been the central figure of the party politics in the state, lost many seats in the December 2014 state Legislative Assembly election. In its place, the Jammu and Kashmir People's Democratic Party (JKPDP) became the largest party and the nationally based Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) expanded its seats to become the second-largest party. The BJP becoming the second-largest party through the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly election was a first in the history of the state politics. Earlier that year in May,

the BJP was victorious in the Indian general election and took control of the central government. Behind that wave of momentum, it emerged as a major party in the state. Since then, the central BJP government's interference in the management and decision-making in the state politics gradually increased. Due to its history, the state of Jammu and Kashmir had been granted special autonomy in the Indian Constitution. However, the BJP sought to revoke these provisions. In August 2019, the BJP government approved a resolution to revoke Article 370 and Article 35A of the Indian Constitution, *partitioning* the state of Jammu and Kashmir into two union territories.[2] This incident not only caused grave political upheaval in the Kashmir Valley, but also incited heightened international tensions with neighboring countries involved in the Kashmir conflict and spurred political instability in the region.

Through the damage of the floods and the subsequent events, the fragility of the conflict region of Kashmir became clear. It shows the gravity of an existing risk of conflict compositely intertwining with a climate risk of natural disasters caused by extreme climate events.

The first section of this article will outline the traditional and non-traditional security risks in the Kashmir conflict. The second section will review previous research and examine the possibility of political shifts resulting from adding a new risk of natural disaster caused by abnormal meteorological phenomenon to these existing security risks. The third section, using the case study of the 2014 Jammu and Kashmir floods, will analyze how much social stress natural disasters placed on the region in the conflict structure and how these risks influenced their politics. The fourth section will focus on the political trends from the state Legislative Assembly election held after the floods in 2014 to the dismantling of the statehood of Jammu and Kashmir in 2019. By viewing the partisan political upheaval in the state during this period, one can consider how climate risks, as a milestone in the history of the Kashmir conflict, impacted the mid-to-long-term circumstances in this region. In conclusion, from the case study examined, it will consider the complex effects produced by climate risks in conflict regions.

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[2] The Indian Constitution was executed on January 26, 1950. Unlike other articles that were debated in the Constituent Assembly after deliberations by the Drafting Committee, Article 370 (Article 306A at the drafting stage) was discussed from May to October 1949, primarily between Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India, and Sheikh Abdullah, Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir. The draft of this article was approved on October 17. The Jammu and Kashmir was the only state that negotiated the conditions for joining the union of India. According to Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, with the exception of foreign affairs, defense, and communications, which were placed under the jurisdiction of the central Indian government, certain autonomy was granted to the state and India recognized its right to have its own state constitution. Article 35A was inserted into Appendix I of the Indian Constitution by Presidential Order in 1954. This article restricted the rights for employment under the state government, acquisition of real estate, and reception of scholarships to only those permanent residents of the state recognized by the state Legislative Assembly (Noorani, 2011). The decision to revoke Article 370 and Article 35A from the constitution has been criticized for being forcibly executed without the political agreement of the regional residents nor sufficient national debate on the topic. Prime Minister Modi of the ruling BJP government, however, emphasized that these articles were the source of nepotism and separatism in the state. He justified the decision of revoking them by claiming that it would lead to the development of the region by the government (Press Information Bureau, Government of India, 2019).

1. Traditional and Non-Traditional Risks in the Kashmir Conflict

Throughout history, the borders and territorial sovereignty of Kashmir has been a bone of contention between India and Pakistan or India and China. The region has been the site of direct or indirect military clashes or crises. Three wars have been waged between India and Pakistan. The First Indo-Pakistani War broke out in 1947-48 immediately after the Partition. The Second Indo-Pakistani War broke out in 1965. The Third Indo-Pakistani War broke out in 1971 (this war was caused by the independence of Bangladesh, but both armies fought battles in the Kashmir region and this conflict was the cause of the agreement over the Line of Control (LoC) for Kashmir in the Simla Agreement). In addition, military conflicts erupted on the Siachen Glacier in the Kashmir Himalayas in the 1980s and the Kargil conflict occurred in 1999. In recent years, the Indian army conducted "surgical strikes" in 2016 and Indian and Pakistani air forces engaged in a dogfight along the border of disputed Kashmir in 2019. A border conflict between China and India broke out in the Aksai Chin region of northeast Kashmir in 1962. Since then, the region has been under de facto control by China. In June 2020, skirmishes erupted between Chinese and Indian soldiers around the area of the Actual Line of Control, resulting in casualties. In September, this conflict led to the first "warning shots" fired since 1975 (Gupta and Gan, 2020). This is a history filled with the traditional national security risks of "conflict unending," "protracted conflict," and "enduring rivalry," developing within the international tensions of neighboring countries regarding the Kashmir region (Ganguly, 2000; Brecher, 2016: 77-80; Diehl et al., 2005; Vasquez, 2005). These sorts of national conflicts are historic and traditional security risks, but as referred to above, they are not necessarily *old* risks.

Across the history of the Kashmir conflict, it was not only traditional security risks that threatened the lives of normal residents in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. From its history, the state has had relatively calm political movements that sought a plebiscite to determine the political affiliation of Kashmir. However, when the central Indian government took repeated efforts to chip away at the self-determination of the state, and when the state government that had voiced the dissatisfaction of the people toward the central government began to work closely with it, armed struggle by militant groups demanding independence for Kashmir erupted and became more frequent from 1989 on (Ganguly, 1996; Ganguly, 1997; Behera, 2000; Widmalm, 2002). In the 1990s, members of the *mujahideen* who battled the Soviet military in Afghanistan entered Kashmir through Pakistan after the Soviet Union retreated in 1989. These people came to be commonly called *Arab-Afghans* (Yamane, 2012; Hirose, 2005). During this period, armed groups began to emerge in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, primarily comprised of foreign nationals such as Pakistani and Arab-Afghans. These insurgents used guerilla tactics against the Indian army and police forces, even involving the areas where normal citizens resided (Ganguly and Kapur, 2010; Inoue, 2005). From 2000, armed

struggle in the state gradually decreased. This was mainly due to the fact that the Pakistani government used the mantle of the U.S.-led *global war on terror* and banned these militant groups, and the Indian government used continuous strict policing measures and took severe counter-insurgency strategies. However, stuck between the insurgency of the militant groups and the suppression of security forces, the local communities remained politically isolated and ravaged by humanitarian violations and criminal acts. Even now, the people are suffering from violence due to excessive securitization in the conflict-structured society. Their sense of helplessness, torment, and anger toward the government remains deeply entrenched (Sakuragi, 2008; Hirose, 2011). In 2009, a rape and murder in the Shopian district of southern Srinagar and the subsequent slipshod handling of this case by police led to a wave of protests (Mattoo, 2009; Duschinski and Hoffman, 2011; Fazili, 2014: 218-219). In 2010, innocent civilians were killed by security forces on suspicion of being militant members in the Machil area outside the Kupwala district. This "Fake Encounter" incident spurred mass protests, primarily among young people, in the Kashmir Valley. At least 120 people died in the following five months due to the security force's efforts to crush this unrest (Ahmad, 2017). In 2016, when Burhan Wani, a young commander of the local militant group Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, was killed by security forces, a large-scale funeral and mass protests were held in the valley. Protests in the form of stone pelting also broke out, leading to at least 90 fatalities and thousands of injuries from the clashes with security forces. At least 130 people lost partial or full vision during these clashes due to the use of pellet guns by the security forces (Jamwal, 2016). This history of violence in the state represents a non-traditional security or *human security* risk that differs from the conflict between countries described before. This is a characteristic of "protracted social conflict" (Azar, 1986; Azar, 1990; Mahapatra, 2018).

As such, there was a dual-layered structure of traditional and non-traditional risks in the Kashmir conflict. This is the context that is the premise of understanding the politics of the 2014 floods and afterwards. As Venugopal and Yasir (2017) accurately point out, "the sudden crisis triggered by a natural disaster was layered over what was a protracted, pre-existing political crisis" (Venugopal and Yasir, 2017: 425).

2. Review of Previous Research: Climate, Disasters, and Politics

2-1. From Environmental Security to Climate Security

Debates attempting to expand the concept of security from the perspective of the environment that surrounds human society have raged among experts in these fields for many years. For example, Johan Galtung criticized the traditional thinking about security that separated environment and

security fields, arguing the interaction of the three goal-directed systems of environment (ecological balance), development (social and human development), and military (prevention of war) are not in opposition to the principles of security. "In broad terms the homosphere depends on the biosphere and would disppear [sic] without it" (Galtung, 1982: 16, 99-101). As Renner wrote, "environmental degradation or depletion usually is one of a series of stress factors that, in complex cause and effect, may combine to trigger violent confrontation or exacerbate already raging conflicts" (Renner, 1996: 75).

In recent years, changes have occurred to the way of thinking about the environment and security. Margaret Beckett, former British Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, placed global warming as a pillar of U.K. diplomacy. During her October 2006 speech after taking her post, she touched on the idea of "climate security" and raised the issue of the large-scale structural changes of global warming as a new shape of agenda for international security to the international society. In April 2007, 55 countries expressed their opinions during an open discussion in the United Nations Security Council about climate change and security that Beckett presided over. The issue of climate security developed within following discussions in the General Assembly. A June 2009 resolution of the General Assembly asked the Secretary-General to produce a report on "Climate change and its possible security implications." In respond, the Secretariat-General published the same-named report in September (UN General Assembly, 2009a, 2009b; Yonemoto, 2011: 169-175).

As one essential organization for the international discussion of climate change, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) established the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 1988. Experts from each country participate in the IPCC, an international organization that conducts scientific and technical analysis of climate change, measures the social and economic impact, and comprehensively evaluates academic knowledge and governmental policies related to measures to mitigate it. It publishes an integrated report every five or six years and received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007. The report of Working Group II (WGII; evaluating the impacts, adaptation, and vulnerability to climate change) in the newest Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) from 2014, displayed the following image (Chart 1) as the core concepts to the discussion of risk assessment for climate-related risks.
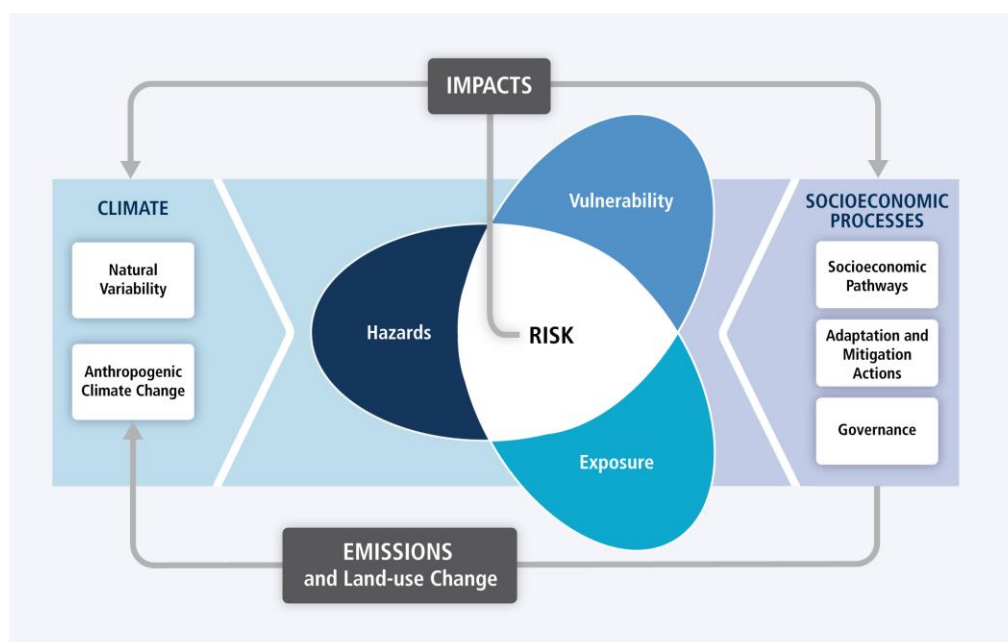
Chart 1: Illustration of the interaction of climate-related hazards with the vulnerability and exposure of human and natural systems

Source: From WGII Report (IPCC, 2014: 3)

According to Chart 1, changes to both climate systems and socioeconomic processes drive hazards, exposure, and vulnerability and climate-related risks are generated by their interaction.[3] For the focal point of this article, it is important to note how these risk mechanisms have impacts significantly *on* the conflict regions and Kashmir politics in particular.

2-2. Research into Climate Change of the Kashmir Himalayas

In recent years, attention has been paid to climate change in the Kashmir Himalayas. This mountainous area possesses a complex terrain, massive glaciers, and glacial lakes. It has experienced trends of warming air temperatures and vulnerabilities of highland ecosystems and biodiversity. The Himalayas are a freshwater source that shapes the hydrologic characteristics of the Indus River and bear socioeconomic impact. From these perspectives, multiple experts in geology have reported about the Kashmir Himalayas as a hotspot for climate change risks (Shafiq et al., 2016; Bhutiyani et al, 2010; Rashid et al., 2015; Sharma et al., 2013; Bhutiyani et al, 2007; Shafiq et al., 2019a).

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[3] In the field of climate change and natural disasters, the terms "hazard," "exposure," and "vulnerability" are often used. These concepts shape interdisciplinary and comprehensive frameworks, but their definitions are diverse and there is no single united definition. This article will not enter the debate regarding their definitions. However, the following will be adopted as a general understanding. Hazards are threats caused by sudden or chronic environmental changes. Exposure is the degree to which a region or people is exposed to environmental changes. Vulnerability will be supposed to be high when a region or people are exposed to the threat of environmental changes and unable to adapt to such threats effectively due to social circumstances. See (Shiozaki, Kato, 2012) for more discussion related to the definition of these terms.

It has been pointed out that the Kashmir Valley is facing a long-term trend of warming. While there is a report that identifies the trend of lower minimum temperatures before the monsoon season (March to May) in the western Himalayas in the latter half of the 20th century, most of the research indicates a trend of overall rising temperatures in the Kashmir Himalayas region (Yadav et al., 2004; Bhutiyani et al, 2007; Shafiq et al., 2019a). According to research by Islam and Rao (2013), the annual average air temperature of the entire valley increased between 1961 and 2005 (Chart 2). In particular, during a thirty-year period (1961-1990), there have only been 16 instances when the average annual temperature has been recorded to be 11°C or warmer. However, during a fifteen-year period (1991-2005), this phenomenon has been encountered 13 times. They concluded that this showed the alarming increase of air temperatures in the study area (Islam and Rao, 2013).
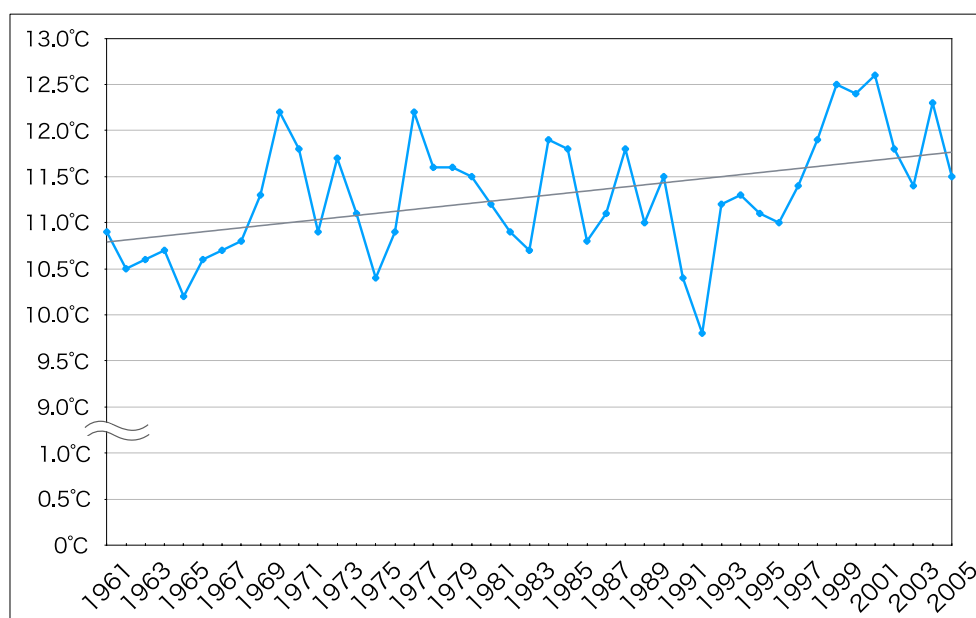

Chart 2: Trends of annual average temperature in the Kashmir Valley (1961-2005)
Source: Created by author based on figures by (Islam and Rao, 2013: 38)

There are also reports of long-term fluctuations in the amount of past precipitation in the Kashmir Valley. According to multiple statistical studies, the annual precipitation in the Kashmir Valley is trending down overall, including in differing terrains, such as mountains, foothills, and flood plains (Shafiq et al., 2019b; Bhutiyani et al., 2010). On the other hand, in research analyzing the predicted changes in future rainfall in the Kashmir Himalaya region based on multiple Representative Concentration Pathway (RCP) scenarios described in the Fifth Assessment Report of the IPCC, an increase in annual precipitation was predicted in each RCP, with the highest rate of increase predicted in the autumn season (Shafiq et al., 2019c). While one cannot be certain what fluctuations may occur to precipitation patterns in the Kashmir Himalayas now and in the future, it is clear that the changes

to this pattern are influencing the hydrologic cycle of the region in various ways. For the vulnerable mountain environment of the Kashmir Valley, which possesses multiple glaciers and glacial lakes, these changes pose direct risks of flooding and damaging the ecosystem. As Majaw (2020) points out, the volumetric flow of Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs) and flash floods cause severe damage by stealing lives and spurring soil erosion. They also damage the assets, agricultural lands, and essential infrastructure of the valley. Furthermore, the melting of snow and the escalation of monsoons contribute to flood disasters in Himalayan catchments (Majaw, 2020: 180).

2-3. Study of *Disaster Politics*

It has already been noted that interest in climate change politics and climate change security has risen in recent years. Even in the field of disaster research, the relationship between climate factors and the shape of society or politics have become a frequent focal point. In this field, discussions have played out from the perspective that "disasters are by nature social events, not merely physical ones" (Tierney, 2019: 4). According to Hannigan (2012), while there are arguments about how much to recognize the degree of causality between politics and disasters, the major line of thinking in modern disaster research dictates that "a disaster constitutes a process rather than a single event, and is primarily traceable to "vulnerabilities" caused by chronic poverty, inequality, corruption, and government inaction" (Hannigan, 2012: 16). As Pelling (2003) points out, "(t)he socio-economic and political consequences of disaster are shaped to a great degree by the pre-disaster characteristics of the urban economy and polity" (Pelling, 2003: 45).

On the other hand, disaster events stemming from climate change related crises represent "tipping points" that produce "a distinct moment of challenge to established values and organisational forms that embody power relationships" (Pelling, 2011: 95). Furthermore, disasters "unmask the nature of society's social structure, including the ties and resilience of kinship and other alliances. They instigate unity and the cohesion of social units as well as conflict along lines of segmentary opposition" (Oliver-smith, 2002: 9). According to Walch (2018), the typhoons that struck the Philippines in 2012 and 2013 weakened anti-government forces in the conflict region. For at least the recovery period after the disasters, it was reported that the disaster events actually had "pacifying effects" (Walch, 2018a). Because the nature of disaster politics unfurls in various ways depending on different circumstances in different regions, natural disasters may create the opening for political and humanitarian behavior that helps to repair the cleavages between fragmented social groups. These scenarios for political compromise, however, are not necessarily representative, and in other cases, violence can intensify (Klitzsch, 2014).

Therefore, "disasters are mobilised and framed in different ways that spawn political and social conflict" (Siddiqi, 2018: S168). For example, in the cyclone disaster that struck East Pakistan

(currently Bangladesh) in 1970, which was said to be the worst of the 20th century, late aid efforts by the West Pakistan government of that time led to greater damage to the region. This spurred anger and dissatisfaction among the people of East Pakistan and deepened the political divisions between East and West Pakistan. Following this, political upheaval and a war for independence occurred, ultimately resulting in the new country of Bangladesh (Togawa, 2020). To put it simply, "disasters are prime events for understanding politics" (Guggenheim, 2014: 7).

The case of the 2014 Kashmir flood will be considered below based on the points described above.

3.   2014 Kashmir Floods and *Disaster Politics*

From September 2 to 6, 2014, extremely heavy rains fell due to a monsoon, causing landslides and wide-spread flooding in the Kashmir Valley. The levees broke in many of the low-lying areas of Kashmir, including the central city of Srinagar, and the Jhelum River, Chenab River, and many other tributaries to the Indus River reached dangerous water levels. In Most of the areas of the Kashmir Valley were seriously impacted by the flooding, including Anantnag, Pulwama, Baramulla, and Srinagar. Nine wards located in the topographically low regions and in the proximity of the Jhelum River were completely inundated during the time (Ahmad et al, 2019). From September 4, the rainfall spread across a wide range of the state, and between the 4th and 6th, many regions experienced over 100 mm of rainfall a day, with localized rainfall that exceeded 200 mm a day (Ray, et al., 2015). The flooding directly impacted at least 1.2 million people, and the number of fatalities and missing persons was around 300. Citizens in the flooded regions were forced to evacuate their homes, but they were left for several days waiting for rescue, without food, water, or a means of communication.

This flood highlighted *disaster politics* reflected in the internal tension in the state as an area of "protracted social conflict." A survey conducted immediately after the floods pointed toward the anger of the citizens regarding the lack of early detection system, poor preparation, absence of government response, activities of voluntary mutual aid groups by the local youth, opposition to the military, awareness of discrepancies in aid within the region, feelings of unfairness, and anger toward the national media (Venugopal and Yasir, 2017). Furthermore, there were scenes reflecting the international tensions between India and Pakistan regarding Kashmir, such as the lack of international aid to survivors. Moreover, a person related to the militant groups that had previously committed trans-border terrorism attacks in Kashmir engaged in the active aid operations in the disaster-stricken areas of Pakistan, while simultaneously promoting anti-India propaganda. What is clear here is that this was a manifestation of a composite crisis in which the traditional and non-traditional risks of the Kashmir

conflict were combined with the new risk of natural disasters.

The lack of disaster planning and preparation was symbolized by the dysfunction of the state government immediately after the flooding. In fact, as Omar Abdullah, Chief Minister of the state at that time, himself admitted, "my secretariat, the police headquarters, the control room, fire services, hospitals, all the infrastructure was under water" (Ghosh, 2014). As a result, prompt relief efforts by the state government were difficult. By September 4, when the flood warnings were issued to the entire state, several districts in the south had already submerged. Mobile phone services were also affected by the flooding, leaving many inhabitants fragmented for several days and unable to contact each other (Sharma, 2014). Ironically, when Omar Abdullah used social media to tell his people to wait for rescue, saying "Please don't panic, we will reach you, I promise," that "promise" did not reach many of the people affected by the disaster (Varma, 2021: 62).

While the state administration was paralyzed, the Chief Minister requested aid from the central Indian government for the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and Indian army and air force. On the other hand, local youth volunteers took on the major part of the aid and rescue efforts on the ground. Within the political circumstances of the oppressed and deeply divided Kashmir society, these two aid groups would be in opposition in other circumstances within normal conflict. The stereotypical "angry young man" of Kashmir from the 1990s was the symbol of resistance against the Indian security forces. The activities of the local youth volunteer groups, bearing this identity and an organizational network, were recognized as the most proactive in rescuing and supporting many survivors (Venugopal and Yasir, 2017).

Framed within these emotions, there were reports of several "stone-pelting" incidents against soldiers engaged in rescue efforts (*BBC*, 2014). Regardless of whether it was an act spurred by dissatisfaction with the slow progress of the rescue efforts in disastrous situation, or it was an act resulting from the intersection of politics and resistance, one cannot ignore the history of the sentiment of the citizens living in Kashmir, which is called the "world's most militarized zone." Because it is none other than the people of Kashmir who are still exposed to complex risks, forcing them into a vulnerable position.

Kanth and Ghosh point out the risks in the society of Kashmir as a conflict region.

"While India denied the need for international humanitarian aid in the aftermath of the Kashmir floods, restricting the entry of humanitarian supplies and relief workers, and minimising the scale of the humanitarian crisis, after the earth quake in Gujarat (2001), India welcomed international aid, including from the UNDP, and three hundred international organisations were based out of the devastated town of Bhuj alone. The dramatic differences in the Indian state and media responses to these disasters begs the questions of why disaster hazards in some parts of

its territory are treated with greater seriousness and concern than others, and the ways in which the lives and human rights of politically insurgent subjects are further marginalised within the nation centric political imagination" (Kanth and Ghosh, 2015: 10).

On September 7, Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India, visited the state to assess the damage. He called it a "national" disaster and ordered additional aid funding and an immediate increase in relief activities. Since the areas affected by the flooding were not only on the Indian side, Modi proposed trans-border support to Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister of Pakistani (*The Economic Times*, 2014). However, no mutual relief cooperation between India and Pakistan realized due to security concerns in the Kashmir region.

When national governance is weak in disaster-affected areas, it has been reported that organizations comprised of militant and rebel groups may provide a certain level of stability and order within the community (Walch, 2018b). One example of such force is Hafiz Saeed and his charity organization Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD), which conducted rescue and support activities in the regions downstream of the Indus River on the Pakistan side that were damaged by the Kashmir floods. Saeed is co-founder of the hard-liner militant group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT: responsible for multiple trans-border terror attacks in the Jammu and Kashmir state from the 1990s, as well as the November 2008 Mumbai terror attacks). The JuD is regarded as a front organization for the LeT. This group established its own camp and provided food and medical supplies to the displaced families (*Hindustan Times*, 2014). While conducting support activities, Saeed called the 2014 floods an attack by India against Pakistan. On social media, he called the floods "Indian water terror" and the "new war weapon of India."[4] This example shows the various ways that existing confrontational international relations risk been politically stimulated in the wake of the natural disasters.

As observed in the case of the 2014 Kashmir floods, issues of extreme natural phenomenon, such as heavy rains and flooding related to climate change, government failure, growing dissatisfaction among the people, nuanced friction with activities of army, aid and propaganda by militant groups, the limits of international aid cooperation, and others demonstrated the composite old and new risks facing Kashmir. Adding an entirely new dimensional risk of a natural disaster by climate change to the historical context of existing risks in the form of territorial conflict and suppression of human rights produced a short-term effect of *disaster politics*.

Looking back on the history of the Kashmir conflict, there were several crucial events that swayed the nature and path of the conflict afterward. Starting with the independence of India and

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[4] The Twitter account that Saeed used at that time is now frozen. The text of the posted messages come from Wayback Machine, a service provided by NPO, Internet Archive, that collects and archives past digi tal information on the Web (https://web.archive.org/web/20140916194351/https://mobile.twitter.com/HafizSaee dJUD, Last accessed: January 30, 2021).

Pakistan, followed by multiple wars and armed conflicts between the countries, the 1990s armed struggles in the valley, and then the demise of the state of Jammu and Kashmir by India in 2019. In this sense, the Kashmir conflict has had several "turning points." The flooding was a qualitatively different event from these turning points, but looking at political developments following them, obviously it was the distinct moment as a *milestone* that weighed heavily and cannot be ignored in the history of the conflict. The composite risks posed by natural disasters to the Kashmir conflict must be understood within this context.

4. Transition of State Politics after the Floods and the Development of Control from the Center

4-1. 2014 Jammu and Kashmir State Legislative Assembly Election

Just three months following the floods, in November and December 2014, the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly election was held according to schedule. Many political actors tried to frame the disaster from their political positions. The opposition parties of the state, the Jammu and Kashmir People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), strongly criticized the insufficient aid structure and disaster countermeasures of the state's ruling coalition, comprised of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference (NC) and the Indian National Conference (INC), as well as Chief Minister Omar Abdullah in particular. The BJP, a Hindu nationalist party, had only won a small number of seats until then in the state, where the majority of citizens are Muslim. However, after gaining momentum in their victory in the preceding May 2014 Indian general election, they campaigned actively in the state legislative election. BJP successfully prioritized appealing to voters in the Jammu region, where Hindus make up a majority, and the Ladakh region, where many Buddhists reside. At the same time, they attempted to divide the dominant Muslim votes of the Kashmir Valley by sparking tensions between Sunni and Shia factions (Swenden, 2015: 232).

In the backdrop of a poor disaster response, the Omar Abdullah-led NC only claimed 15 of the 87 total legislative seats, falling to having only the third most seats (losing 13 seats compared to the previous election). In its place, the PDP won 28 seats (up seven seats) to become the largest party, and the BJP claimed 25 seats (up 14 seats) to take the position of the second-largest party. INC won 12 seats to become the fourth-largest party (down five seats). The leaders of the state separatist groups called for voters to boycott the election, but the voting rate was 65.52% (Election Commission of India, 2014). Looking at the results of the 2014 state election, the anger of voters and a political swell caused by the floods possibly have had some impact on the change of administration in the state.

After the December election, none of the major parties had secured a majority of the legislative seats and negotiations to form a ruling coalition were fraught. However, in March 2015, the new PDP-

BJP coalition government formed, led by the veteran Kashmir politician, Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed (PDP). It was the first time that the BJP was part of the ruling coalition in the state government. Prior to the state election, in May 2014, the BJP administration led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi took power in the central Indian government. Having taken power in both the central and state governments, the Modi administration gradually increased its political interventions into the state politics.

4-2. Governor's Rule to President's Rule: The *partition* of the state of Jammu and Kashmir

For many years the BJP had called for the revocation of the special autonomy granted to the state of Jammu and Kashmir in the Indian Constitution. In August 2019, the Modi administration decided to revoke Articles 370 and 35A of the Indian Constitution, partitioning the state of Jammu and Kashmir into two union territories. Internal state politics shifted greatly up until this decision by the central government, which can be said to be a "turning point" in the history of the Kashmir conflict.

As mentioned above, after the 2014 state election, the PDP-BJP coalition government was formed, led by Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed (PDP). However, when Sayeed passed away of an illness in January 2016, both parties once again struggled to agree to continue this coalition, leading to the state adopting Governor's rule. Governor's rule is a system enshrined in Section 92 of the Constitution of Jammu and Kashmir. Under this system, if the state government is unable to execute its duties of the constitution, the function of the state government is temporarily (up to six months) delegated to a governor. This has been imposed many times in the history of Jammu and Kashmir state politics. It was also imposed during the lengthy discussions to form a government after the 2014 state election. In April 2016, Sayeed's daughter Mehbooba Mufti (PDP) was inaugurated as Chief Minister of the state, and the PDP-BJP coalition government continued. Following this, however, the policies of both parties drifted even farther apart regarding the handling of large-scale popular demonstrations after the killing of Burhan Wani, a leader of a local militant organization.

In June 2018, the BJP announced that it was withdrawing from the coalition government. Mehbooba Mufti resigned as state Chief Minister because PDP could not maintain a majority in the state Legislative Assembly, and the Governor's rule was once again imposed. In August, the central Indian government appointed Satya Pal Malik, a politician in the BJP, as the 13th Governor of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The state governor has the right to intervene during chaos in the state administration or Legislative Assembly. Since the governor was usually someone not associated strongly with politics, this appointment was controversial. On November 21, Governor Malik rejected an appeal by PDP to form the next coalition government and dissolved the state Legislative Assembly based on his political opinion, noting that proposed coalition government would not be stable because it was not "comprise(d) of like-minded parties" (Wahid, 2018). The Modi administration received a

report from Governor Malik recommending that the central Indian government instill President's rule on the state. After the six months of Governor's rule, the administration decided to impose President's rule in the state. President's rule is the provision of Article 356 of the Indian Constitution. If the President, on receipt of a report from the Governor of a State or otherwise, is satisfied that a situation has arisen in which the state government cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Indian Constitution, the President may by proclamation: assume to himself the functions of the State Government; and declare that the powers of the Legislature of the state shall be exercisable by or under the authority of Parliament. If a new election is not called, this period of rule may continue for up to three years. The adoption of President's rule was the first time since 1996, when armed struggle by militant groups was intensifying in the Kashmir Valley in the 1990s.

The second Modi administration began after the BPJ won in a landslide in the May 2019 Indian general election. On August 5, it was suddenly announced that President Ram Nath Kovind had signed a Presidential Order revoking Article 370 and Article 35A in Appendix I of the Indian Constitution, which had ensured the special status of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Home Minister Amit Shah, a powerful figure in the BJP, submitted the "Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Bill" to the two houses of Parliament, where it was passed. After the President certified this order, the state of Jammu and Kashmir lost its special status and autonomy on October 31, and was *partitioned* into two new union territories.

This series of events and decisions led to severe political upheaval in the Kashmir Valley. During the political lockdown of Kashmir, thousands of local leaders, including politicians and humanitarian activists, were apprehended. Former Chief Ministers of the state, including Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba, were held for long period of time under house arrest (*BBC*, 2020). This situation also intensified international tensions with neighboring countries involved in the Kashmir conflict, and heightened the political instability of the region. China and Pakistan opposed the decision of the Indian government and as noted in Section 1, the border conflict of the Kashmir region between China and India flared up in July and September 2020 for the first time in decades.

Conclusion

This paper explored how the new risk of natural disaster stemming from climate change, including heavy rains and flooding in the Himalayas, posed additional crisis to the Kashmir people facing the double risk of international territorial conflict and "protracted social conflict." It also considered how these composite risks influenced the existing conflict and politics, and how they led to the medium-to-long-term result of the dismantling of the state of Jammu and Kashmir in India.

It is possible that climate change produces political stresses and creates security risks. However, these risks are not only produced by climate change alone. They are born from a composite of climate conditions that cause disasters and diverse social, economic, and political contexts. Therefore, "the effects of climatic events on outcomes of security significance are contingent on a variety of specific social, political, economic, and environmental conditions in affected places" (National Research Council, 2013: 135).

Even still, ignoring or underestimating the impact of climate change may result in inaccurately depicting the issue. In the case of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, the 2014 floods clearly led to changes in Kashmir politics. The history of Kashmir conflict has been shaped by individual highlights such as war, terrorism, and human rights repression, while it simultaneously constitutes a process in itself. This is also a history of the *vulnerability* forced upon the lives of the people of Kashmir through direct or structural violence. Considering that the Indo-Pakistani War, the armed struggles of the 1990s, and the 2019 revocation of state autonomy were decisive "tipping points" in the historic process of the Kashmir conflict, the moment of *disaster politics* caused by the 2014 floods was a *milestone* in Kashmir politics that existed between these tipping points. It was a significant phase that affected the direction of the future of the conflict.

The connection between climate change and the existing political processes are complex. These linkages make it difficult to generally predict the consequences they have on the specific security matters. However, analyzing the indirect and interactive aspects of climate change in conflict regions that possess their own social and political vulnerabilities may contribute to policy research to prevent conflicts. For this purpose, climate change security analysis requires a more delicate understanding of tangible political, social, and economic mechanisms.

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