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I N S I D E

Storms and Stability:

The Security Sectors' Role in Climate Security

Air Vice Marshal Dr Mahmud Hussain

Fleeing the Storm:

Climate Security and Migration in South Asia

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Democracy in the Age of AI:

A Critical Analysis of Opportunities and Threats

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An Examination of the Social Costs of Sri Lanka's Sovereign Default

Rehana Thowfeek



Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies
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Original write-up between 6000 to 8000 words not published or submitted elsewhere, may be submitted to the Editor of the journal. The Chicago Manual of Style should be followed in the write-up placing notes either at the bottom of the page (footnotes) or at the end of the essay (endnotes). Table, map and diagrams should be placed in separate sheets.

Contributors are requested to enclose short biographical note and abstract of the article.

The views expressed in the articles published in the Journal not necessarily represent the views and policies of the Editorial Board or the Institute.

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Editor's Note

In this edition of *Peace and Security Review*, we present a compelling collection of articles that engage with some of the most pressing challenges confronting contemporary societies. These contributions span a wide range of subjects — from the security dimensions of climate-induced migration and the institutional role of the security sector in confronting climate change to the human costs of economic collapse and the democratic implications of artificial intelligence. Together, they reflect the increasingly complex and interlinked nature of peace and security in the twenty-first century.

The first article, *'Storms and Stability: The Security Sector's Role in Climate Security'* by Air Vice Marshal Dr Mahmud Hussain, provides a strategic analysis of climate security through the lens of the Copenhagen School's securitization framework. Using the Bhola Cyclone of 1970 as a historical reference point, the author demonstrates how the failure to respond to climatic disasters can produce catastrophic political and security consequences. The article argues that while climate security demands a transnational cooperative response, it has been increasingly politicized in ways that disadvantage developing nations — particularly in the South Asian region, which bears the greatest burden of climate vulnerability while contributing least to greenhouse gas emissions. Drawing attention to the tensions between the scientific and political agendas of climate action, the author calls on South Asian states to forge unified regional strategies for climate adaptation and mitigation, and urges the security sector to take on a more substantive role in developing cooperative frameworks for climate resilience.

The second article, *'Fleeing the Storm: Climate Security and Migration in South Asia'* by Iffat Anjum, examines the nexus between climate change and human displacement in South Asia, with a particular focus on Bangladesh. The paper argues that the securitization of climate-induced migration, rather than facilitating protective frameworks, has reinforced state-centric approaches that exclude climate migrants from formal legal recognition and protection. This has resulted in militarised borders, xenophobic treatment, and widespread human rights abuses in host regions. Grounding her analysis in qualitative and explanatory methods, the author draws on both global projections and on-the-ground realities to demonstrate the scale of the challenge — with Bangladesh alone projected to face the internal displacement of over eighteen million people by 2050. The article advocates for a regional cooperative framework that replaces the state-centric paradigm with a human-centric approach, prioritizing the rights and resilience of climate-displaced communities.

The third article, *'Democracy in the Age of AI: A Critical Analysis of Opportunities and Threats'* by Ainun Nishat Chowdhury, offers a timely and incisive examination of the dual nature of artificial intelligence's impact on democratic governance. The study traces how AI technologies are simultaneously enabling greater civic participation, improving administrative efficiency, and strengthening electoral transparency, while also facilitating disinformation, deepfakes, algorithmic bias, and cyberattacks on democratic institutions. Drawing on the theoretical lens of technological determinism, the author situates these developments within a global context before focusing on the particular vulnerabilities facing Bangladesh, where democratic institutions remain nascent and technological literacy is uneven. The article calls for inclusive regulatory frameworks and robust ethical oversight to ensure that artificial intelligence advances rather than erodes the democratic cause.

The fourth article, *'An Examination of the Social Costs of Sri Lanka's Sovereign Default'* by Rehana Thowfeek, investigates the far-reaching human consequences of Sri Lanka's unprecedented

sovereign default in April 2022. Drawing on the existing literature on the social costs of default and early empirical evidence from Sri Lanka, the paper examines the deteriorating health, nutrition, and food security outcomes that have followed the country's economic collapse. The author highlights that a growing proportion of Sri Lankan households are food insecure, with marginalised and vulnerable groups bearing a disproportionate burden. The migration of skilled health professionals further compounds adverse outcomes, particularly for children. The article argues that while Sri Lanka has demonstrated notable macroeconomic resilience in the years since its default, the social costs remain under-addressed, and targeted policy intervention is urgently required to avert long-term and persistent damage to human development indicators.

We trust that this collection of articles will provide readers with nuanced and rigorous analysis of these vital international issues, and that it will stimulate deeper reflection on the interconnections between economic security, technological governance, environmental displacement, and regional cooperation. These contributions enrich the ongoing scholarly conversation and underscore the imperative of developing evidence-based and human-centred responses to the multifaceted challenges of our time.

Major General ANM Muniruzzaman, ndc, psc (retd.)

Editor

Storms and Stability: The Security Sectors' Role in Climate Security

Air Vice Marshal Dr Mahmud Hussain¹

Abstract

The new framework of “securitization” considers five sectors for security analysis: military, environmental, economic, societal, and political. These five sectors are interdependent. The impacts of the security vulnerability of one produce negative effects on one or more of the others. Some analysts describe environmental security as the “ultimate security” paradigm. Climate security is a subset of environmental security. Its major implications are in terms of global warming, flooding, loss of land, migration, identity crisis, and poverty. Many fear that climate change will have a fatal result on human civilization unless addressed immediately. At the global level, it consists of two agendas: scientific and political. This article argues that the politicization of climate security only brings peril to human survival. Climate crises are transnational problems, unlike the military security sector, which works on the principle of a zero-

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sum game. South Asia is the worst-affected region in the international system. Therefore, South Asian countries must begin working together as a unified bloc to adopt joint efforts on climate adaptation and mitigation.

Keywords: Security, Securitization, Politicization, Greenhouse (CO₂) Emission, Climate Adaptation and Mitigation, Regional Dynamics, South Asia, International System.

1. Introduction

The **Great Cyclone of 1970** (also known as **the 1970 Bhola cyclone**) is the deadliest recorded human disaster in recent history. The high surge of the water level due to the storm flooded the low-lying plains of the Ganges Delta. The probable death to the storm was anything between 300,000 and 500,000².

The cyclone had an unforgiving consequence on the frustrating statehood of Pakistan. General Yahya Khan, the leader of the Martial Law, was harshly criticized for the government's delayed action and poor handling of the cyclone relief operations. Bitterness felt in East Pakistan swelled into a forbidding grief. The international media focused on the discrimination towards East Pakistan. The leftist parties boycotted the 1970 Pakistani general elections. This allowed the Awami League to win a landslide victory in East Pakistan. But the anger of East Pakistanis did not subside that had its root in the apathetic attitude shown by the West Pakistani rulers during the cyclone. *The Vortex* by Scott Carney and Jason Miklian describes how Yahya Khan's indifference to the Bhola Cyclone sparked the 1971 Bangladesh War of Liberation³. The cyclone allowed East Pakistani people to make a political choice. The outcome was a national security disaster for Pakistan resulting in its dis-integration. Thus was changed the geo-strategic configuration of the Indo-Pak sub-continent.

The Bhola incident leaves a lesson which is 'failure to respond to climatic onslaught effectively at the state level can have adverse impacts on political security'. Climate is an interplanetary issue whose scope reaches beyond our atmosphere into space. Climate

² David Longshore, *Encyclopedia of Hurricanes, Typhoons, and Cyclones*, 3rd ed. (New York: Infobase Holdings, 2020), 215; Manash Ghosh, *Bangladesh War: Report from Ground Zero* (New Delhi: Niyogi Books Pvt. Ltd, 2021); Leanna Garfield, "The 16 Deadliest Storms of the Last Century," *Business Insider India*, September 13, 2017, <https://www.businessinsider.com/worlds-deadliest-hurricanes-last-century-2017-9>; Julian Francis, "Remembering the Great Bhola Cyclone," *Dhaka Tribune*, November 9, 2019, <https://www.dhakatribune.com>.

³ Scott Carney and Jason Miklian, *The Vortex* (India: HarperCollins, 2022).

does not merely determine the environmental conditions, but also conditions human civilization⁴. It is closely related to, and a subset of the environmental security, which is about the geographical stability of land, sea, air and space, and the paradigms that give these entities their security legitimacy. Climate security and environmental security are coterminous. The organizing concept for both of them is the existential threat to human lives. However, wherever there are humans, there is politics. It is this political aspect of climate phenomenon that makes the security sectors' role so important to develop a framework of cooperation among states.

2. Methodology

This study is based on historical facts as case studies and for data interpolation related to climate disturbances. The study is qualitative in nature, and has an *epistemic* worth concerning policy options at national and regional levels. The data for this article come from secondary sources, such as books, documents, articles, and internet information with charts, diagrams and statistics.

The methodology constitutes five steps. First, how climate is "securitized" in the broad spectrum of *security problematique*. Second, an attempt is made to understand how climate is perceived at different cognitive levels. Third, how the logic of threats and vulnerabilities to climate proliferates into the regional and global arena. Fourth, the reason why it is important to pressurize the military to take on climate security as a serious issue for developing concepts, strategies, and partnerships. The fifth step includes some recommendations for the security sector's role in climate security.

3. What is Security, and Its Relevance to Climate

Security is about survival. It is the most vital need of our civilization, and the fundamental principle to recognize the existence of our universe. The Peace of Westphalia has reiterated the importance of two things: nation-states and their citizens. If states survive, then citizens survive, and if citizens survive, then states

⁴ Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), 76.

survive. This relationship between states and citizens is interdependent. This binary complex is useful for highlighting the fact that we would like to see security as objectively given, as well as embedding inside it an “ontological” truth.

Buzan *et al.* take the wide framework of security. There are five security sectors that work at individual, state, and global levels⁵. These sectors are political, military, economic, societal, and environmental. This article is mainly concerned with the environmental sector, which is not wholly subjective. The environmental security issues play out in the encroachment of economic and societal issues as well as political and military agenda.

Not every threat or vulnerability can be called a security problem. In the climate sub-sector, if there is a need to securitize, then the issues must meet something much more substantive than just any threat or vulnerability. These issues must have “referent objects”, that is, threats to whose existence demand emergency measures. The range of possible referent objects in the climate sector is very large. These can be as varied as the survival of living things like individual species of mankind, animals, plants, and marine population to physio-geographical features of terrain, lakes, and forests⁶. Threats and vulnerabilities that connect these referent objects with the underlying *security problematique* result in catastrophic human migration, loss of land, and disruption of the ecosystem. This amounts to destroying the existing structure of human civilization. There are several theories about the ruin of the Indus Valley Civilization, including the invasion by nomadic Indo-Aryans and earthquakes. But by studying the paleo-climate sets of data, climate change has proved to be the most likely cause.

⁵ Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde, Security, 27.

⁶ Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde, Security, 23.

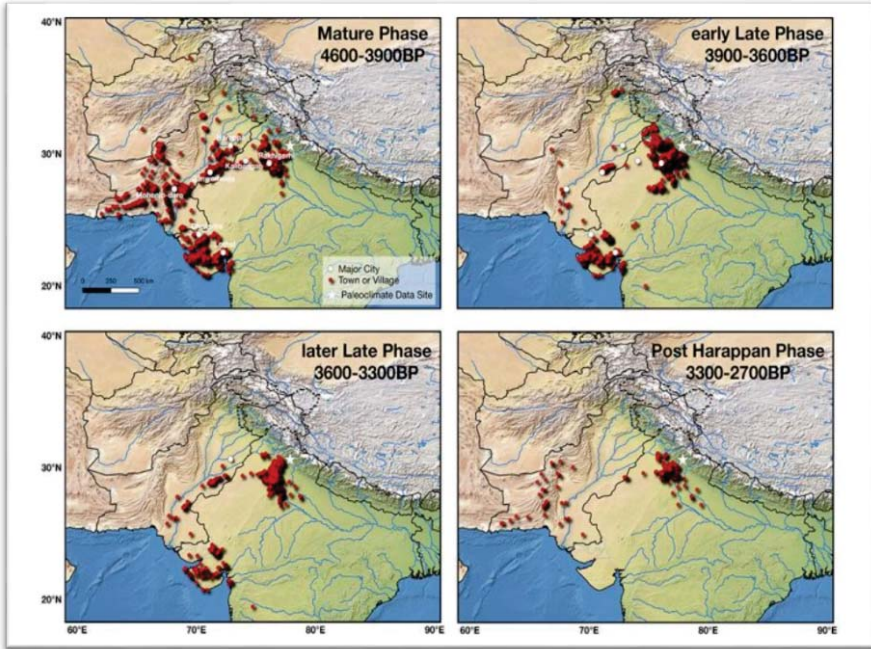


Figure 1: Settlements of the Indus Valley Civilization at Different Phases.

(Source: RIT Assistant Professor Nishant Malik developed a mathematical method that shows climate change likely caused the rise and fall of the ancient civilization. September 5, 2020. Credit: RIT)

4. Cognitive Level Analysis of Climate Security

Myers describes environmental security as “ultimate security” miles away in a distant continent has shaped our fear of the climate as “global threat”^{7,8}. Climate, being a prime referent object, is everywhere on the list of environmental disasters, most notably cyclones, floods, sea level rise, drought and famine. In that sense, climate holds the key to environmental security. Undoubtedly, climate plays a significant role in the discourse of societal and

⁷ Norman Myers, *Ultimate Security: The Environmental Basis of Political Stability* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1993).

⁸ Edward Lorenz, “Does the Flap of a Butterfly’s Wings in Brazil Set Off a Tornado in Texas?” (address to the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Washington, DC, December 29, 1972); archived at <https://blogs.surrey.ac.uk/physics/2013/01/16/does-the-flap-of-a-butterflys-wings-in-brazil-set-off-a-tornado-in-texas/>.

economic security. As the spatial limit of the environment on land and sea boundaries is marked by the territorial integrity of a state, it has claims to the political and military agenda, but climate defies any such notion of sovereignty. The American Mathematician and Meteorologist Edward Lorenz's deduction of the "Butterfly Effect" to the phenomenon of tornadoes as influenced by minor disturbances such as a butterfly flapping its wings.

One of the most cognitive features of climate security is how we perceive the ontological dimension of its existence. The notion of climate security includes two different agendas: one is scientific and the other, political. The rational reply of the scientific agenda is to fight global warming, which results from CO₂ greenhouse gas emissions. It computes how the maximum energy is to be got with the minimum emission of greenhouse gases. The answer is *decarbonization*. If global warming is the effect of "insecure climate", the cause is CO₂. The idea is to keep the rise in global temperature well below 2 °C, which is the pre-industrial standard. But the problems still exist. Even if we are able to halve the greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and bring them to zero by 2075, the world would still be sufficiently warm to be at risk because the global-warming-CO₂ gas, already emitted, will remain trapped in the atmosphere for a long time. It is not enough that greenhouse gas emissions are reduced; at some stage, we have to debunk it.

The 2012 *World Bank* report considers a rise of 2 °C the maximum the world could reasonably adapt to, and a rise of 4 °C will be fatal for global security⁹. This truth must grow in our minds as the scientific agenda presently is providing more compelling reasons to worry about climate security, and the states as securitizing actors with an interest in it must become more influential. This is where the political agenda comes into play. But the political agenda is fraught with complex biases. The complexity of the political agenda depends on how much the rich countries are willing to come to the rescue of the poor countries.

⁹ Steven Pinker, *Enlightenment Now* (London: Penguin Books, 2019), 136.

When the political debate is launched on the issue of climate security in different fora, the attitudes displayed by the developed and the developing worlds unnecessarily make for hostile parties. The agenda is set in a manner that the poor or rich countries are held accountable in the same manner for the emission of CO₂. This premise unjustly ignores the proliferation spread by the rich world during its development phase in the past. The regulations instituted to reduce CO₂ emissions are sometimes severe. One tilted example is the market-based carbon-trading strategy in the global aviation industry. Unlike the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which carries out the world nuclear oversight, there is no such supra-national body to challenge the recalcitrant state of CO₂ emitters. China, the US, and India alone account for more than half of the world's CO₂ emissions (Figure 2).

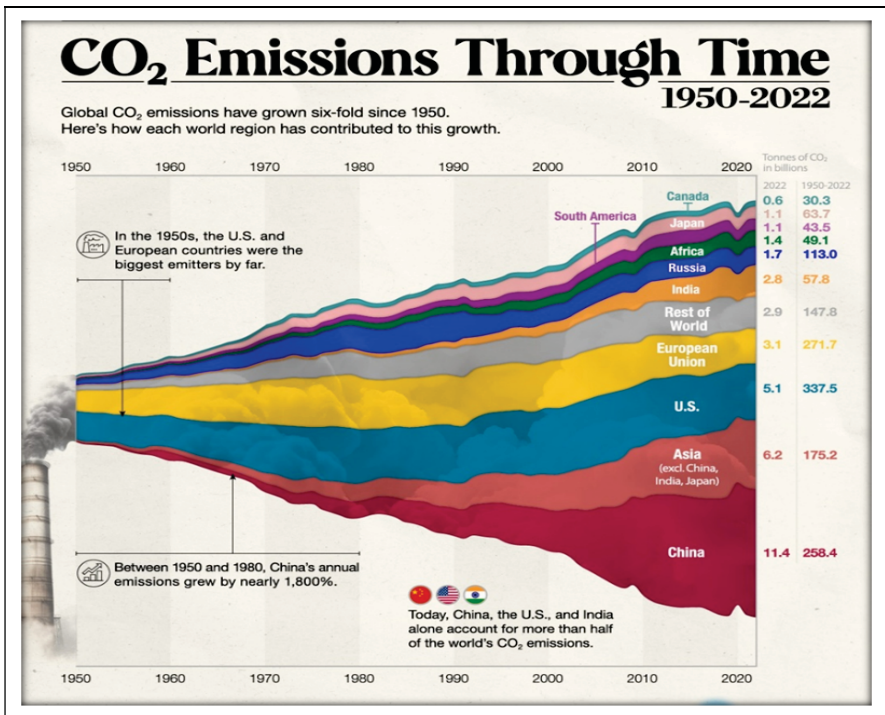


Figure 2: Emission of Greenhouse Gas CO₂ by Continental Measure

(Source: Selin Oguz, <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/global-co2-emissions-through-time-1950-2022/>. December 11, 2023, downloaded 11 February 2025.)

No man deserves more credit than Saleemul Huq, the biologist and climate activist from Bangladesh, for taking the political agenda to its moral height. At every United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) till his death on 28th October 2023, he was there. The attitude of the rich countries infuriated him. For him, the terms “loss and damage” were euphemisms, for he really wanted to replace them with “liability and compensation”. But neither Europe nor the United States would accept the terms, let alone the incriminating word “reparations”. The attitude of the rich countries is indirect enough to annoy the poor. They want to give money as loans on a repayment basis. This money, which they want earmarked for mitigation, such as wind and solar power, could turn a profit, not for adaptation. The rage still continues as the polluters turn a blind eye to the plight of the poor countries.

At COP 26, Saleemul Huq brought a Bangladeshi woman farmer to talk to the delegates. Female farmers are the poorest of the poor. She talked about her distress due to climate change. There was a need for the richer countries to listen to other victims of rising seas, soaring temperatures, and strengthening storms. Then only they might come to recognize the true weight of “damage and loss”¹⁰.

The other sweep of *decarbonization* is carbon trading, as we have cursorily mentioned above. It puts carbon pricing in the market. It charges people and companies for the damage they do when they dump carbon in the atmosphere, either as a tax on carbon or for the purchase of carbon credits as a national cap¹¹. Carbon taxes, to be honest, hit the poorer countries in a way that cut across their economy. In that case, it violates the UN-mandated Sustainable Development Goals of ending poverty and hunger in all forms.

Decarbonization faces a setback when Donald Trump, who has called climate change a Chinese hoax, announced that the United States would withdraw from the landmark Paris climate agreement. It has struck a blow to the worldwide efforts to combat global

¹⁰ “Adapt or Die,” *Economist*, December 2, 2023 (obituary on Saleemul Huq).

¹¹ Pinker, *Enlightenment Now*, 136–150.

warming. It also distances the US from its international obligation. Trump is in charge of the world's leading economy. Experts fear that other countries, especially China and India, the biggest emitters of greenhouse gas after the US, could use it as a reason to put off their own obligation to check carbon emission¹².

Securitizing moves in terms of decarbonization at the global level have been limited. Great powers flirting with their pledge to reduce CO₂ emissions and contribute to the "global climate fund", climate security has resulted in considerable politicization. Other security sectors operating at the global level seem to overwhelm the epistemic scientific agenda that drafts and securitizes the environmental agenda.

The Green Climate Fund (GCF) is the world's climate fund for the developing countries. It mobilizes capital to strengthen institutions and bring transformative change in dealing with climate issues. It does so by building partnership networks to deliver impact on climate security. Twenty-five countries have pledged \$9.3 billion to support the Green Climate Fund—a UN initiative—during the 2024-2027 period. This is a substantial amount, but less than the contribution made four years ago. That time the governments of twenty-eight countries pledged \$9.8 billion to help developing nations become greener and protect people from the impacts of climate change, but it was still less than the what was needed¹³.

¹² Mathew Daly and Seth Borenstein, "Trump Signs Executive Order Directing US Withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement," AP News, January 21, 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/trump-paris-agreement-climate-change->.

¹³ Green Climate Fund, Status of Pledges (December 8, 2023), <https://www.greenclimate.fund>.

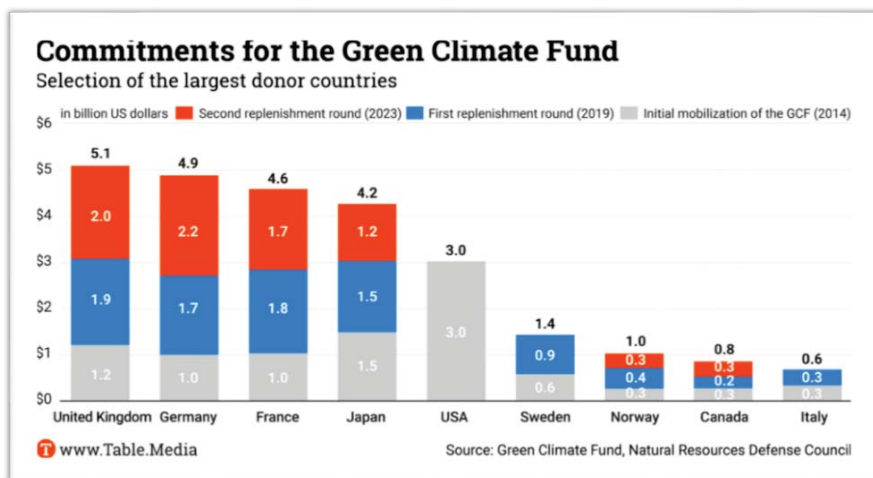


Figure 3: Green Climate Fund Commitments by the Rich Countries

(Source: GCF (2023) *Status of Pledges*, December 8, 2023., downloaded 14 May 2026.)

Success in securitizing climate has occurred mainly at the local level and at times, with significant results. In 2021, when floods drowned 200 people in wealthy Germany, the usual seasonal cyclone in Bangladesh caused only 34 deaths¹⁴. When cognitive and moralistic mind-sets blend to forge a unity, political and scientific agenda overlapping environmental security are likely to converge on consensus.

5. Regional Dynamics of Climate Security

After the local, comes the regional factorization of climate security. The debates on climate security are usually driven by the principle of co-operation pitted against predisposition to conflict. Climate politics are ruled by the political power structures despite the fact that its *negative externalities* impact upon the contending parties mutually. The logic of climate security is about threats without enemies come so easily. It is even more complex when the political division of the regional states is based on “imagined choice” of national identity. To

¹⁴ “How Germany’s 2021 Floods Could Have Been Even Worse,” University of Reading, July 8, 2025, <https://www.reading.ac.uk/news/2025/Research-News/How-Germanys-2021-floods-could-have-been-even-worse>; Nirapad (Safety First for Bangladesh), disaster statistics, 2021.

get a detailed assessment of security dynamics of climate sector involving military, economics, societal and politics, Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde's framework of security analysis is implemented; but actions by states hardly follow the utilitarian model¹⁵. So, regional cooperation involving climate security needs empirical research, and case by case issue-based approach to environmental problems. But cooperation does not recommend the following sequence of questions to be kept in mind:

How does the climate security manifest itself in time and space to the regional states? This involves mainly the scientific agenda of the issue area. Bangladesh is a lower riparian country, and its three great rivers—the Ganges, the Brahmaputra and the Meghna—form a veritable floodplain. Bangladesh is considered small only because it is surrounded on three sides by India. Actually, it is vast: a veritable aquatic culture where getting around by boat and vehicle can take many days¹⁶. China and India are the upper riparian countries, and can play the hydro-hegemon to Bangladesh.

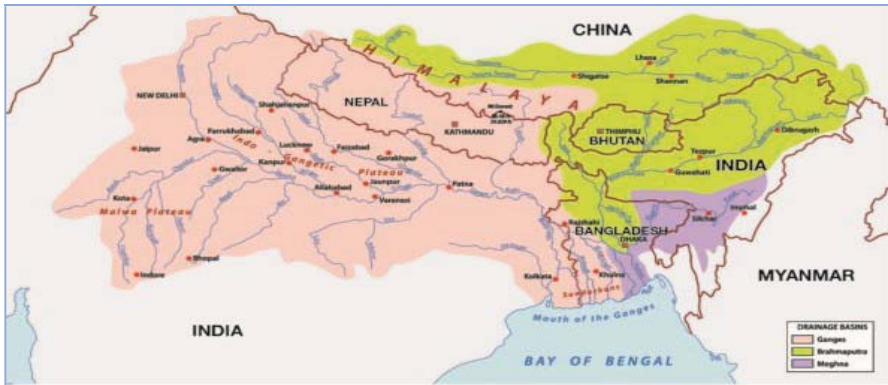


Figure 4: Combined catchment areas of the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna rivers

(Source: Rainer Lesniewski / Shutterstock, downloaded 14 February 2025)

¹⁵ Gwyn Prins, ed., *Threats Without Enemies: Facing Environmental Security* (London: Earthscan, 1993).

¹⁶ Robert D. Kaplan, *The Revenge of Geography* (New York: Random House, 2013), 20.

The other example of hydro-politics in South Asia is the emergent water security complex between India and Pakistan over the Indus, Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej rivers. So, at what point are we talking about the floods as a “securitized climate framework” that involves the states’ trans-national political agenda. So, rivers are a contentious subject for all the regional countries. Rivers are the chess pieces, the dynamic movement of which can be artificially controlled by the powerful country for its political gain.



Figure 5: Hydro-Politics: Indus, Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas and Sutlej rivers.

(Source: CSS Forum, downloaded 14 February 2025)

- b. Who are the veto and functional actors? In other words, who is causing the problem. Is it the government or the civil society or the local populace? This is an economic and social issue. There is also a strong trace of geo-politics underlying the energy requirements of the developing countries. On the other hand, the developed world is capable of compelling energy-deficient countries to accept life-threatening power plants. The 1320-megawatt Rampal Power Plant in Bangladesh is an example of geo-politics testing the nerves of climate security. Despite the global scientific agenda’s opposition, the government’s political agenda moved ahead with this coal-based project with the

support of the Indian government¹⁷. The signing and later cancellation of a 1,320 megawatt of coal-fired power plant with a Chinese company in the island of Moheshkhali in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, is another example of political and scientific agendas being at crossroads. In the poverty-related forms of economic security, the issue of climate and global warming is linked to the "veto" speeches of the population and government-energy caucus nexus. If we make a list of the securitized vulnerabilities to Bangladesh, climate and environment pose an overwhelming challenge to its population¹⁸.

- c. How much is a climate-related issue area linked with the regional and global scientific agenda? In migration-related forms due to sea-level rise, the issue of societal security gets structurally linked with the potential victims and their neighbourhood areas. Clearly, this issue develops into a regional subset of the international system. In South Asia, countries like Bangladesh, India, and the Maldives are highly vulnerable to rising sea levels. The Indian Ocean is warming faster than other seas compared to the global average. By 2100, South Asia is predicted to be the most affected region in the international system. This has a profound cost on the economic and displacement concerns of the victims across South Asia, resulting in their "identity crisis", a societal security agenda. This linking of climate vulnerability with identity crisis of the displaced population is not merely related to problems inside one's own country, but can also have spill-over effects into the neighbouring countries. It is further aggravated by the fact that the victims of climate disasters have turned out to be willing settlers seeking for permanent habitat in their new locale. 10-50

¹⁷ Preetha Banerjee, "Rampal Coal Power Plant and Environmental Opposition," 2021.

¹⁸ Golam Mohammed, ed., *National Security of Bangladesh*, BISS Journal (Dhaka: Bangladesh International Institute of Strategic Studies, 2019), 22–29.

million people will be under the sea level in South Asia by 2100¹⁹.

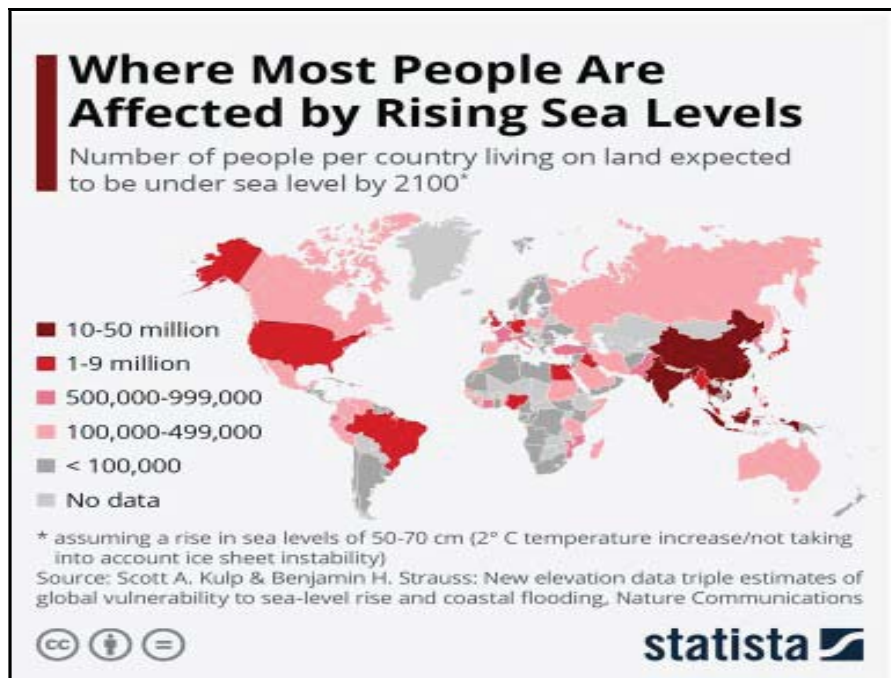


Figure 6: Global Sea Level Rise by 2100

(Source: google.com.search? Statista, downloaded 14 February 2025).

Securitization always involves political choice. When South Asian governments are engaged in dialogue, their talks are dominated by terrorism, border clashes, and perhaps trade imbalance. They almost assuredly lack focus on the biggest crisis facing South Asia: climate security. Political masters tend to forget how much they are at the receiving end of the “climate injustice”. If we divide the world into two blocs, rich and poor, we find that the rich has caused most of the climate change, and the poor is suffering the worst. The responsibility of South Asia in climate destruction is minimal. While the G20 countries are jointly responsible for 80% of global emissions, South Asia with 25% of global population of 180 million is responsible for 9-10% with India alone accounting for 7%. Bangladesh and Pakistan have been collectively responsible for less

¹⁹ Statista, global sea-level rise projections, 2025, <https://www.statista.com>.

than 1.5%²⁰. This suggests that South Asia as a bloc is in a unique position to claim its rightful reparation from the rich world pretending to be environmental leader.

South Asia receives the lowest in climate adaptation financing²¹. South Asia will gain a lot if it constructs a structural regional approach to climate change. It is well past time for Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan, along with Afghanistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, and the Maldives, to begin region-wide dialogue on climate adaptation and mitigation. There is a strong securitization argument in favour of South Asia to Western countries to pay climate reparations for economic and environmental sectors. But for such a position to assume real geo-political significance, South Asian leaders must make the case as a unified bloc.

Unlike the military security sector, that of climate is not a zero-sum game. By nature, the climate crises are transnational. It may be better to distinguish such phenomena as acts to prevent the instinct for politicization. With timely management of potential problems, panic politics can be avoided²². There is an urgency for permanently altering the character, meaning and substance of international relations in South Asia as well as significantly raising the neighbours' joint capabilities to limit the damage caused by climate change. It is a mistake on the part of South Asian leaders to see climate security through the lens of an independent perspective. Climate, as a security complex, structures a set of these nations whose climatic phenomena and concerns are so interlinked that their national environmental insecurities cannot be reasonably analyzed and resolved apart from one another.

²⁰ Ahsan Butt, "It's Time for South Asia to Talk Climate," US Institute of Peace, October 2022, https://scholar.google.com/citations?view_op=view_citation&hl=en&user=7Uoj-ecAAAAJ&citation_for_view=7Uoj-ecAAAAJ:iH-uZ7U-co4C.

²¹ United Nations Environment Programme, *Adaptation Gap Report 2023* (Nairobi: UNEP, 2023).

²² Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde, *Security*, 87.

In that case, climate security stands apart from other types of security sector—military, economic, societal and political—in perceiving the existential threat to common man.

6. Climate Security and the Military

One area of the security sector is noticeably absent from countries' plan to stop climate change is the world's militaries. United Nations does not require states to report on carbon emissions from their armies, warships, weapons and aircraft, particularly fighter jets. It is an irony that whether armed forces should *decarbonize* is left to the decision of individual governments. Notwithstanding our desire for peace, war is ostensibly a perpetual feature of the modern age. So, it is long overdue that military emissions should be counted toward each country's climate target. Scientists and other climate experts have raised the alarm about the "military black hole" in the global emission counting²³. In 2022, in the scientific journal *Nature*, a group of scientists and policy experts recorded their statement as follows:

"Military emissions need to be put on the global agenda. They must be officially recognized and accurately reported in national inventories, and military operations need to be decarbonized."

Among the biggest consumers of fuel, militaries account for 5.5% of global greenhouse gas emissions which is quite high²⁴. But this figure also seems under-estimated. As Israel-Gaza conflict has exceeded 30 million tons of carbon emission²⁵, and Russia -Ukraine War has generated 311 million tons of CO₂ in the last four years²⁶.

²³ Chelsea Harvey, "Warfare's Climate Emissions Are Huge but Uncounted," Climatewire / Scientific American, June 1, 2024.

²⁴ Stuart Parkinson and Linsey Cottrell, "Estimating the Military's Global Greenhouse Gas Emissions," Conflict and Environment Observatory (London: Scientists for Global Responsibility, 2022).

²⁵ Benjamin Neimark et al., "Israel-Gaza Conflict Carbon Emissions Exceeded 30 Million Tons," One Earth 9, no. 3 (March 20, 2026), <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2590332226000497>.

²⁶ Agata Pavlinek, "War in Ukraine Has Generated 311 Million Tonnes of CO₂," Wodne Sprawy, February 25, 2026, <https://wodnesprawy.pl/en/war-in-ukraine-generated-millions-t-of-co2/>.

Researchers from the Climate and Community Institute (CCI) estimated that the initial 14 days of bombardment in Iran conflict produced over 5 million tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e), exceeding Iceland's annual emissions of around 4.28 million tons²⁷. The US military with more than 700 bases worldwide, its emissions are the largest rivaling the entire annual output of some smaller nations, like Norway and Sweden²⁸.

From the foregoing data, we can extrapolate that war is an environmental threat to human existence, and in most countries, military would be one of the biggest polluters as would seem probable from the carbon footprint of the militaries shown in figure 7.

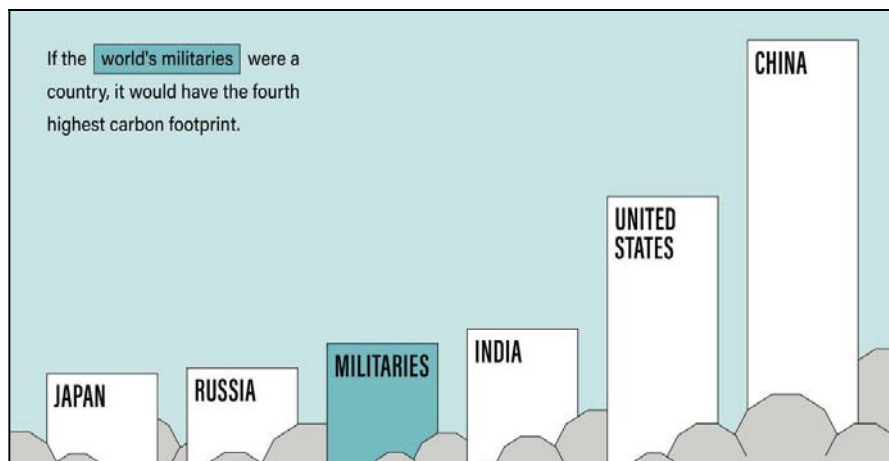


Figure 7: Comparing the Military Carbon Footprint on Global Scale

(Source: Conflict and Environment Observatory, November 2022, downloaded 17 February 2025)

²⁷ Preetha Banerjee, "Conflict in Iran Generated More Emissions in Two Weeks than Iceland Does in a Year," Down to Earth, March 22, 2026, <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/environment/conflict-in-iran-generated-more-emissions-in-two-weeks-than-iceland-does-in-a-year-new-analysis>.

²⁸ Harvey, Chelsea. 2024. "Warfare's Climate Emissions Are Huge but Uncounted." Scientific American. June 1, 2024. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/warfares-climate-emissions-are-huge-but-uncounted/>.

The big question is how to balance between a sustainable environment and a credible defence. Heavy military platforms use high power energy sources. These are the combat tanks, the naval vessels and (most forbiddingly) the fighter aircraft. In these areas, alternative energy sources are not available. Here, the military sector's role need to be focused on working with the civil sector and the defense industries. So, the interface between the military and the civilian is the most important issue to address climate change.

There may be many interfaces between climate, climate change, security, and the military. Like any global system, there are three levels of interface subject to climate security as follows²⁹.

- a. The first level is global. This level looks at climate change in terms of three other main drivers of change: resource scarcity, population growth, and geopolitical fragmentation. These drivers have vast latent security cost and can accelerate frictions leading to conflicts. This makes climate change a matter of international security. At this stage, dealing with climate change directs the military's role toward conflict prevention. But to most militaries, climate security seems unfamiliar and an abstract thing. The future military planners would do well to their National Security Strategy by including *epistemic*, functional, and geographic role and capacity building of the armed forces to deal with climate change in an international environment.
- b. The second level is regional. Fragmented countries are often vulnerable places with poor governmental institutions and economies. Not to let climate change act as a risk multiplier, regional militaries must not use their mindset to reflect a "securitization" of the disasters. This is a problem because armed forces may end up doing more harm than good if they mistake a disaster for a security threat or an opportunity to exploit a neighbour's vulnerabilities. Good neighbourly relations always help militaries to produce the maximum

²⁹ Georg Frerks, Rinze Geertsma, Jeroen Klomp, and Tom Middendorp, *Climate Security and the Military* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2023).

succour with minimum local resources in terms of the humanitarian role of the military in climate security. So, regional militaries forming a climate-security nexus is in their national interests. This facilitates proactive, coordinated, and sufficiently resourced adaptation and mitigation to climatic changes in the region as opposed to ad hoc and reactive responses to unanticipated events. NATO, for example, is developing mitigation and adaptation policies and has announced its goal to be a net-zero organization by 2050.

- c. The third level is local. The military can play several roles in dealing with climate change. In the first place, there is the intelligence estimate from forecasting and early warning. This estimate should contain the security effects of climate change. If climate change is estimated as a risk multiplier, it should be integrated into risk models. This helps other departments to build a more comprehensive view for the planning of mitigation and adaptation programs. It becomes imperative for the military to see that a climate security strategy becomes part of the whole-of-government approach.

For years, the military's role in coming to the aid of civil power in fighting climate-related disasters has proved vital in saving human lives and property. Recent phenomena of global warming, water scarcity, food insecurity, and large-scale migration both within and from the state have underlined the formulation of new security strategies to deal with climate change. So to perform that role, a modern military needs to be equipped with knowledge of climate science, environment-friendly weapon platforms, and above all, a mindset for continuous dialogue and cooperation with all stakeholders.

7. Recommendations

Extrapolating the arguments placed in this article, the following recommendations are made, which are relevant to the Bangladesh Military:

- a. The military should develop a National Security Strategy (NSS), including climate security as a main driver of change to the environment.
- b. The Climate Strategy as part of the NSS should be comprehensive. The military, relevant government departments, and humanitarian organizations should work in coordination for intelligence sharing and for evolving new sectoral strategies.
- c. Military institutions must give importance to climate science and its related subjects as part of their professional development and education, the way studies on peacekeeping operations are attributed in military schools.
- d. The military should act in cooperation with the industries to allocate funds for research and development for innovating self-sustaining military platforms.
- e. Climate change is a transnational problem. The regional militaries should continuously learn from each other's experience of local climate change impacts, and involve themselves in joint training and exercises, which would also help them to effectively participate in international humanitarian assistance. They should feel the necessity of establishing a regional institute of climate studies for the military personnel, like BIPSOT (Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operations and Training).

8. Conclusion

This article has looked into national security in a comprehensive manner. In doing so, it has made use of Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Jaap de Wilde's framework of security analysis as a useful tool of deduction to the methodology of "securitization". Five security sectors are operating at local, regional, and international levels. These sectors are: military, environmental, economic, societal, and political.

The environmental sector is considered the "ultimate security" *problematique* as it is associated with human suffering across the transnational spectrum. Climate security is a subset of

environmental security. Climate security manifests itself in multiple phenomena such as climate change, global warming, floods, cyclones, etc. The effects are a human catastrophe in loss of land, famine, migration, and ultimately, poverty. States have been known to politicize climate change, thereby creating friction and conflicts among states, groups, and societal identities.

The article argues that the military is one of the largest emitters of CO₂, but it is also one of the most important institutions of the state. With proper knowledge and mindset, it can play a most vital role alongside other instruments of civil and human agencies in developing strategies to cope with climate change. For the future, the military's role in climate security is immense. As such, the paper has put forward some recommendations for the Bangladesh military to consider in its involvement with climate security measures at local, regional, and international levels.

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Fleeing the Storm: Climate Security and Migration in South Asia

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Abstract

This paper examines the nexus between climate change and human migration in South Asia. South Asia ranks among the most vulnerable regions to climate-induced migration today. Climate-induced migration triggers both traditional and non-traditional security concerns within this region, intensifying internal and cross-border tensions. This paper has incorporated qualitative and explanatory methods to underscore the challenges of securitization narratives of climate-induced migration in South Asia. This paper argues that securitization of climate-induced migration limits the development of a legally binding and comprehensive regional climate-induced migration framework. Instead, it reinforces a state-

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centric approach which excludes climate-induced migrants from formal accreditation and legal protection, resulting in militarized borders, xenophobic treatment and human rights abuse in host regions. South-Asian regional counterparts should collaborate to combat the shared burden of climate-induced migration through effective instruments and regulatory mechanisms. A shift from a state-centric approach to a human-centric approach is required to achieve actionable and sustainable policy pathways toward climate resilience.

Keywords: climate change, climate-induced migration, climate security, securitization, regional climate migration regime, human-centric approach, climate resilience.

1. Introductory Note

“On this side of the riverbank, I stayed on a boat for two years. [...] It was really difficult to stay on the boat for two long years with my children. After a lot of requests, we got this piece of land to build a house. But Cyclone Amphan again made me homeless. [...] There is no safety for me and my family. I don’t know where I would go with my kids! There is no place for us to go.”²

Nur Nahar, from the cyclone-prone southern region of Bangladesh, articulates her firsthand experience of the devastating reality of ‘human mobility’ generated by climate-induced disasters. She lost her home three times due to coastal storms, and finally, Cyclone Amphan of 2020 left her with nothing that could be considered a ‘home.’ Now, along with her husband and three children, she is forced to move between tents and boats. The only question that matters to her is where to move next. Unfortunately, the story of Nur Nahar mirrors the reality of millions of climate-induced migrants displaced across Bangladesh each year.

For decades, climate experts have been converging around the debates of the irreversible human-induced impacts of the Anthropocene on the chemistry of the climate system.³ While arguments and counter-arguments persist about whether climate change is a hoax or an undeniable reality and to what extent it is anthropogenic, one fact has become evident: the impacts of climate change extend far beyond feeling too hot, too cold, too dry or too windy.⁴ The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has acknowledged population movement or forced human migration as the single greatest impact of climate change since 1990. Both slow-

² Daisy Brickhill, “This Mother Lost Her Home and Livelihood to Rising Seas. Now She Has Nowhere to Go,” *Nexus Media News*, September 23, 2024, <https://nexusmedianews.com/family-lost-home-bangladesh/>.

³ Richard Fisher, “Why It’s Proving Difficult to Define the Official Dawn of the Anthropocene,” March 7, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20240306-why-its-proving-difficult-to-define-the-official-dawn-of-the-anthropocene>.

⁴ Frank R. Spellman, *The Science of Climate Migration*, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1201/9781003295211>.

onset climate processes, such as ozone layer depletion, sea level rise, salinization, water scarcity, desertification and sudden climate events, such as droughts, floods, storms, cyclones, landslides, and river erosion, have facilitated sky-rocketing levels of climate-induced migration worldwide. Along with these climate drivers, non-climate determinants such as governance systems, societal cohesion, assimilation, and community-level resilience also shape the extent of vulnerabilities experienced by climate migrants. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) and IPCC have projected that by 2050, climate-induced migration (CIM) could surpass 200 million globally and, in extreme scenarios, even reach one billion. This indicates that by 2050, one in every 45 people might need to relocate due to climate-induced processes or sudden disasters.⁵

As a result, climate-induced migration (CIM) has triggered traditional security threats, such as conflict over resources, displacement and instability, as well as non-traditional security threats, including economic insolvency, food insecurity, health crises, personal security concerns, etc., for affected stakeholders at multiple degrees. South Asia, due to its geopolitical vulnerabilities and huge population hub, has been accredited as one of the most bedeviled hotspots for climate-induced migrants at present. ActionAid has anticipated that by 2030, 37.4 million people might be displaced within this region and by 2050, the number is projected to surpass 62.9 million alarmingly.⁶

Thus, CIM has emerged as a nascent challenge for Bangladesh, where two-thirds of the land lies less than five meters above sea level. Every year, around seven lac people are displaced in Bangladesh as rivers frequently eat up entire households and surroundings or cyclones destroy homes and livelihoods, often leaving people homeless. Projections unfold that by 2050, CIM in

⁵ Oli Brown, *Migration and Climate Change*, IOM Migration Research Series, 2008, <https://doi.org/10.18356/26de4416-en>.

⁶ Indrajit Bose and Harjeet Singh, "Roadmap to a Framework for the Protection of Climate Migrants," ActionAid International, October 18, 2021, <https://actionaid.org/publications/2021/roadmap-framework-protection-climate-migrants>.

Bangladesh alone will surpass 18 million, revealing that one in every seven Bangladeshis will be forced to relocate by climate processes or events.⁷

This paper examines the nexus between climate change and human migration in South Asia, focusing precisely on Bangladesh. It underscores the urgent need for sustainable policy pathways to build climate resilience and establish regional CIM regimes to combat climate-induced security challenges.

2. Research Question

-) How far does climate change facilitate human migration in South Asia, particularly Bangladesh?
-) In what ways does climate-induced migration generate security threats in Bangladesh?
-) How effectively have national, regional and global frameworks addressed the intersection of climate-induced migration and security in South Asia?

3. Objectives of the Study

-) To explore the nexus between climate change and human migration in South Asia, particularly Bangladesh.
-) To highlight the security threats driven by climate-induced migration in Bangladesh.
-) To examine the effectiveness of national, regional and global climate-induced migration regimes in South Asia.

4. Problem Statement

“Climate change influences human migration. Sometimes, the influence is direct and obvious. Sometimes, its influence is more subtle. Sometimes climate’s influence is nested so deeply in interwoven chains of past events that we no longer notice how it has shaped where, how, and why we live in the places we do.”⁸

⁷ Brickhill, “This Mother Lost Her Home and Livelihood to Rising Seas. Now She Has Nowhere to Go.”

⁸ Md Rafiqul Islam, “Climate Change, Migration and Conflict in Bangladesh,” Routledge & CRC Press, 2024, <https://www.routledge.com/Climate-Change->

Professor Dr. Robert McLeman has meticulously identified the complex interplay between climate change and human migration. Climate change is globally accredited as a direct threat and a ‘threat-multiplier’ to hundreds of other challenges.⁹ Forced human displacement induced by climate change has emerged as a crucial determinant in orchestrating the economic-security equation in South Asia. The intersection of climate change and human migration is critical and often unpredictable. It is challenging to interpret the intricate correlation as a simple proposition where 01+01 equals 02. A direct linear correlation between climate change and human migration cannot be established either from the perspectives of victims or the stakeholders.

For instance, consider a farmer whose land is frequently disrupted by cyclones, storms and salinity in consecutive years. After decades of vulnerabilities, the farmer decides to relocate to a more prolific region for better harvesting. Now, what will be counted as the responsible driver behind his migration? Would it be an environmental push factor or an economic pull factor? Thus, overlapping multiple determinants and subjective realities complicate the nexus between climate change and migration. Again, the ability to migrate requires both mobility and resources, so the most severely affected people by climate change may not always afford the means to migrate. So, weighing the drivers behind migration using environmental versus economic lenses is complicated. Affected communities themselves often struggle to identify the specific forces generating their displacement, making it difficult to accumulate reliable data while establishing an interplay between climate change and climate-induced migration (CIM).¹⁰

Migration-and-Conflict-in-Bangladesh/Islam/p/book/9781032554273?srsltid=AfmBOoopkM0xeLneFZiniRRhqkqtp5S_JWELyzfLSDHmvVX8VupI1awi.

⁹ United Nations, “Calling Climate Change Direct Threat, Multiplier of Many Others at General Assembly Event, Secretary-General Stresses Need for Urgent, Decisive Action | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases,” March 23, 2017, <https://press.un.org/en/2017/sgsm18470.doc.htm>.

¹⁰ Brown, *Migration and Climate Change*.

Policy makers also sometimes hesitate to address this dual interplay. It is often much easier to attribute human migration to economic factors than to acknowledge the roles of climate-related reasons. CIM is perceived as an ambitious analytical approach amid such uncertainties, which poses a psychological barrier for both the victims and the responsible stakeholders. These limitations hinder the integration of climate change in migration policies, especially when CIM remains in its intense stage today. This analytical gap becomes a significant obstacle as the number of climate-induced displaced people continues to elevate. The surge of people forced to relocate to new destinations often overburdens these areas, leading to resource scarcity and human rights abuses. Cross-border migrants face more severe repercussions as they are frequently subjected to criminalization without any legal protection frameworks. In many cases, CIM remains an invisible, under-researched and inadequately addressed issue by states and non-state entities. In the absence of reliable and convincing data, the actual extent of the challenge remains ambiguous, further compounding the manifold challenges driven by CIM.¹¹

The Global Climate Risk Index (GCRI) has recently declared South Asia as a ‘hotbed’ of climate-induced migration. From March to May 2022, extreme temperatures, particularly heat waves, have claimed the lives of 90 people in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan alone. According to the GCRI, Bangladesh ranked as the seventh most climate change-affected nation in 2021, while Pakistan recently topped the list in 2025. Other regional counterparts have also exhibited severe vulnerabilities due to climate-induced risks over the past decade.

Table 4.1: Global Climate Risk Index (GCRI) Rankings: South-Asian Countries Among the Top Ten Most Affected Nations, 2018-2025. (self-compiled by author, source GCRI)¹²

¹¹ Bose and Singh, “Roadmap to a Framework for the Protection of Climate Migrants.”

¹² “Climate Risk Index 2025.”

South-Asian Member State	2025 CRI (1993-2022)	2021 CRI (2000-2019)	2020	2019	2018
Bangladesh	-	7 th	-	9 th	-
India	6 th	7 th	5 th	-	6 th
Pakistan	1 st	8 th	-	-	-
Nepal	-	10 th	-	4 th	-
Sri-Lanka	-	-	-	2 nd	4 th

The GCRI has projected a 30-fold increase in the risk of heat waves in South Asia in the coming years, further intensifying existing challenges.

5. Conceptual Framework

The following concepts have been used to formulate the arguments of the study:

5.1 Climate Change

Climate change can be conceptualized as the shift from present to future climate conditions.¹³ In its Fourth Assessment Report, the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) defines climate change as long-term variations (typically a decade or longer) in climate patterns, including weather, global atmosphere composition and average temperatures. These changes can be driven by natural fluctuations (natural processes and events) and amplified by anthropogenic or human-induced activities.¹⁴

5.2 Climate-induced migration (CIM)

Migration has long been a substantive mechanism for coping with climate change and environmental stressors.¹⁵ Climate change

¹³ Charlotte Werndl, “On Defining Climate and Climate Change,” *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 67, no. 2 (January 18, 2015): 337–64, <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjps/axu048>.

¹⁴ L. Bernstein et al., IPCC, 2007: Climate Change 2007: Synthesis Report, 2008, <http://pure.iiasa.ac.at/id/eprint/8667/>.

¹⁵ Brown, *Migration and Climate Change*.

influences the process of human mobility or migration both in direct (climate processes and events) and indirect manners (threats associated with climate processes and events).¹⁶ Climate change-induced migration or climate-induced Migration (CIM) incorporates an image of people moving due to their subjection of these direct and indirect climate-change driven factors, such as sea-level rise, droughts, river erosion, landslides or threats associated with such events.¹⁷

5.3 Forced Climate-Induced Migrants

Climate-induced migration incorporates both forced and voluntary movements where climate change acts as a driving factor, often intersecting with other factors such as economic hardship or conflict. Forced climate-induced migrants are individuals who are compelled to leave their homes and relocate to new areas due to existential threats posed by immediate climate disasters or long-term climate processes.¹⁸

5.4 Voluntary climate-induced migrants

Individuals who choose to leave their homes and relocate to new destinations in response to climate change, seeking better opportunities or adapting to climate stresses, are categorized as voluntary climate-induced migrants. Voluntary climate-induced migration often intersects with economic driving factors of migration. At times, the term is perceived with negative connotations and is projected to focus more on pull factors from the destinations than on environmental push factors from the origins. Thereby, voluntary climate migration is often blurred with economic migration and sometimes controversially termed as ‘asylum shopping’, which means earning better lifestyles in destinations than CIM.¹⁹

¹⁶ Spellman, The Science of Climate Migration.

¹⁷ Ingrid Boas, Climate Migration and Security, 2015, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315749228>.

¹⁸ Brown, Migration and Climate Change.

¹⁹ ibid

5.5 Climate-induced Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Individuals displaced within their own country due to climate-induced drivers such as immediate climate disasters or slow climate processes will be entitled to climate-induced Internally Displaced Persons or climate IDPs.²⁰

5.6 Climate-induced Cross-Border Migrants (CBM)

Individuals displaced across national borders to other countries due to climate-induced drivers, such as immediate climate disasters or slow climate processes, will be classified as climate-induced cross-border migrants.²¹

5.7 Climate Change Refugees or Climate Refugees (CCR)

Some scholars portray climate-induced cross-border migrants as climate refugees or climate change refugees. Frank R. Spellman depicts climate change refugees as individuals displaced from their traditional homelands owing to substantial threats against their secure livelihood posed by climate drivers, including landlessness, soil erosion, salinity, droughts, agricultural stress, biodiversity depletion, and extreme weather events.²² Climate experts who resonate with the term climate refugee argue that i) primarily, these displaced persons are seeking refuge and ii) adopting this terminology would be plausible to earn broader public acknowledgement and policy attention.²³

5.8 Definitional Challenges of Climate Refugees

‘Climate refugee’ has emerged as a contested term to address climate-induced migrants. There prevail some conceptual and legal challenges while using the term:

- a) First, international regimes concerning the status of refugees, such as the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951 and its Additional Protocol of 1967, do not incorporate climate-induced persecutions.

²⁰ ibid

²¹ Brown, Migration and Climate Change.

²² Spellman, The Science of Climate Migration.

²³ Brown, Migration and Climate Change.

- b) Furthermore, climate-induced migrants are primarily relocated within their national territories. Without cross-border movement, they will be classified as climate-induced Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Therefore, defining climate-induced migrants within refugee frameworks will overlook the internal challenges and need for adaptation.
- c) Moreover, accreditation and repatriation are integral components of the legal recognition of refugees. However, in cases of climate-induced displacements caused by events such as landslides, river erosion and sea-level rise, returning to one's place of origin would not be a viable option. Where rivers have already eaten up households or landslides have already engulfed livelihoods and surroundings, repatriation for victims seems a utopia.²⁴
- d) Existing refugee regimes are already overwhelmed by the influx of political refugees and IDPs, such as those registered by UNHCR. Incorporating CIMs into these frameworks of refugees would require reallocation of available instruments, mechanisms and resources, which are insufficient to address existing burdens.
- e) Thus, due to these prevailing challenges, climate-induced migrants are being excluded from the existing frameworks of refugees, which means that millions of climate IDPs and climate cross-border migrants are not being subjected to
 - i) Formal recognition
 - ii) Formal refuge
 - iii) Legal protection
 - iv) Human Rights Protection²⁵

5.9 Climate Evacuee (CE)

Some climate experts use the term 'climate evacuee' to avoid criticism. However, climate evacuees primarily incorporate

²⁴ Brown, Migration and Climate Change.

²⁵ *ibid*

temporary or immediate movements within national territories, such as temporary displacements caused by Cyclone Amphan or Hurricane Katrina. It does not generally address more significant situations, including permanent, long-term or cross-border climate-induced migration.²⁶

5.10 Environmental Migrants (EM)

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) advocates for a more comprehensive definition within the framework of Environmental Migrants:

“Environmental migrants are persons or groups of persons, who, for compelling reasons of sudden or progressive changes in the environment that adversely affect their lives or living conditions, are obliged to leave their habitual homes, or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, and who move either within their country or abroad.”²⁷

5.11 Climate Migrants or Climate-Induced Migrants

To effectively establish the interplay between climate change and human migration, many scholars use the terms climate migrants, climate change migrants or climate-induced migrants. This paper also adopts the term climate-induced migrants to avoid legal challenges and for its wider acceptability. However, terms like climate migrants or climate-induced migrants i) tend to emphasize more on pull factors from the destinations rather than push factors from origins ii) often incorporate negative connotations, decreasing the extent of severity faced by affected people iii) exempt international regimes or communities from addressing legal recognition, basic-services and protections for climate-induced migrants iv) do not establish binding frameworks that oblige states to recognize and protect their rights.²⁸

²⁶ ibid

²⁷ Brown, Migration and Climate Change.

²⁸ Bose and Singh, “Roadmap to a Framework for the Protection of Climate Migrants.”

5.12 Climate Security

Climate security refers to the intersection of climate change and security discourse. It acknowledges that climate change, including slow climate processes such as sea-level rise, salinization, desertification, ecosystem degradation and extreme climate events such as heatwaves, floods, cyclones, droughts, and storms, generates both traditional and non-traditional security threats. These climate-induced processes and events intensify economic instability, health crises, water inadequacy and food scarcity. They also escalate conflict over resources, geopolitical instability, social tensions, mass migration and even outbreaks of armed violence. Since the inception of comprehensive environmental frameworks such as the Stockholm Conference in 1972 and through its successor environmental regimes such as the Rio Earth Summit, Brundtland Commission, UNFCCC, Agenda-21, Kyoto Protocol, Paris Agreement, Conference of Parties (COPs), climate security has emerged as a central element of non-traditional or human security.²⁹ Moreover, Robert Kaplan established a direct interlink between climate change and traditional security in his influential and contested work, ‘The Coming Anarchy’ of 1994.³⁰ He has argued that environmental degradation or climate stressors could trigger resource conflicts over food and water scarcity, large-scale migrations, political instability, social unrest, group conflicts, and even armed conflicts, primarily in the Global South, with potential spillover impacts on the Global North. The IPCC has similarly advocated that climate change can indirectly increase the risks of violent conflicts. Thus, the securitization of climate change posits itself as a comprehensive security challenge (incorporating traditional and non-traditional security threats) which requires immediate and extraordinary policy responses.³¹

²⁹ Boas, *Climate Migration and Security*.

³⁰ Robert D. Kaplan, “The Coming Anarchy,” in Indiana University Press eBooks, 2000, 34–60, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt2005tk7.8>.

³¹ Boas, *Climate Migration and Security*.

5.13 Securitization of Climate-Induced Migration (CIM)

The Securitization of Climate-Induced Migration (CIM) depicts the framing of climate-induced migrants as a security threat within the security domain, which requires extraordinary political and policy intervention to address these threats. According to the Copenhagen School of securitization theory, CIM is constructed as a security threat through speech acts induced by stakeholders such as political leaders, environmental regimes and the media, with validation from the public to justify these extraordinary interventions. This securitization often portrays climate-induced migrants as potential drivers to trigger social and political conflicts and instabilities, leading to militarized borders, state-centric restrictive policies, non-assimilation, xenophobic attitudes, hate crimes, and their exclusion from legal and human rights protections. The Global South is depicted as a fragile, vulnerable and CIM-prone area where large-scale population mobility will induce substantive social chaos and emanate tensions and instability in its neighboring counterparts. Consequently, the securitization of climate-induced migrants fosters a sense of otherization, reinforcing the rift between the Global South and the North. This process induces regional tensions, limits the development of regional frameworks to address CIMs and deepens the disbandment between the stable Global North and conflict-prone Global South, amplifying existing North-South gaps. Ultimately, securitization of CIMs shifts the focus towards a security-centric approach, deviating from a human-centric lens in shaping CIM governance.³²

5.14 Sustainable Climate Resilience

Sustainable climate resilience denotes the capacity of any entity or system, including society, communities, states, ecosystems, and infrastructures, to weigh, prepare for, respond to, adapt to and recover from climate vulnerabilities induced by climate processes and catastrophic events while maintaining its basic functions and fostering long-term well-being and sustainability.³³

³² ibid

³³ Alexandra Jonker and Amanda McGrath, "What Is Climate Resilience?," IBM (IBM, January 29, 2025), <https://www.ibm.com/think/topics/climate-resilience>.

5.15 Regional Climate-Induced Migration (sCIM) Regimes in South Asia.

Regional CIM regimes incorporate shared rules, regulations, norms, institutions, frameworks, mechanisms and instruments negotiated among the member states of South Asia to address climate-induced migration as a collective body while assessing the problem from a regional level.

6. Methodology of the Study

The study has incorporated qualitative methods to generate its arguments. It is explanatory in nature. It has collected and compiled data from secondary literature, including peer-reviewed books, journal articles, newspaper articles, annual reports of national, regional and international organizations and their existing frameworks to address the interlink between climate-induced migration and security. This study incorporates descriptive analysis techniques to analyze and compare the findings of the study. Due to time constraints, limited manpower and resource scarcity, primary data could not be collected or analyzed to complement the arguments of the paper.

7. Findings and Analysis

The findings of the study tend to offer critical insights for stakeholders and policymakers engaged in addressing climate-induced migration and security challenges in South Asia.

7.1 Nexus Between Climate Change and Human Migration

The first acknowledgement of the paper is to accredit a concrete interplay between climate change and human migration. Climate change is a potential driver for human mobility, and the nexus between climate change and population movement is undeniable. Both climate processes (e.g., sea-level rise, salinity, desertification, etc.) and climate events (e.g., cyclones, river erosion, landslides, etc.) push people to relocate either on temporary terms or permanently.

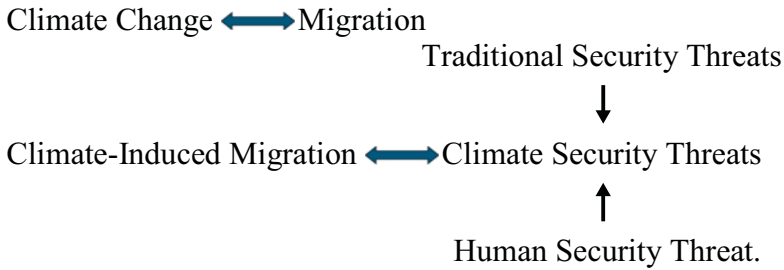


Figure 7.1: Nexus Between Climate Change and Human Migration (self-developed by author)

However, the process of climate change triggering human migration cannot be examined through any simple direct proposition such as 01+01-02. Sometimes, it is tricky to identify the driving factors behind human migration. Climate stressors or climate-induced terrors are often intertwined and overlapped with economic pull factors. As a result, policy instruments to deal with climate-induced migration (CIM) should be adaptive rather than linear.

CIM is a long-term and enduring process. It is often easier and more flexible to associate economic factors as potential drivers behind human migration, overshadowing the ramifications of climate stressors. Thus, environmental stressors frequently overlap and intersect with economic factors. This needs to be carefully identified.³⁴ Large-scale CIMs often induce security concerns spanning both traditional and non-traditional security domains. Mass displacement due to climate stressors not only undermines freedom from want and freedom from fear but also intensifies heightened military tensions and political instability. Some climate migration experts have identified the Global South as the primary and disproportionately vulnerable region to the surge of climate migration-induced security threats. Despite a comparatively lower contribution to climate change and being the least equipped region to adapt to climate fluctuations, the Global South bears the greatest burden of climate security. Consequently, it emanates spillover instabilities for the Global North as well. South-Asia, as one of the most CIM-affected regions globally, faces incredible challenges to navigate this climate change and migration nexus in recent decades.³⁵

³⁴ Bose and Singh, “Roadmap to a Framework for the Protection of Climate Migrants.”

³⁵ Spellman, *The Science of Climate Migration*.

7.2 Security Threats Driven by Climate-Induced Migration (CIM) in South Asia

South Asia is considered a global hotspot for Climate-Induced Migration (CIM). The frequency and intensity of climate IDPs and cross-border climate-induced migrants are alarming in this region. Due to geopolitical vulnerabilities, geographical determinants, and notable population hubs, South Asia evidenced 7.9 million and 3.6 million human displacements in 2015 and 2016, respectively. More alarmingly, the number and scale of these displacements have skyrocketed here due to frequent floods, droughts, landslides and heat waves in recent years. South-Asian major migration corridors are between India-Pakistan, Bangladesh-India, India-Nepal and Afghanistan-Pakistan. South-Asian countries serve as both origin and host regions for these CIMs subjectively.³⁶ It is projected that by 2050. South Asia might host around 40 million climate-induced migrants in extreme scenarios³⁷.

Due to geographical proximity, cultural cohesion and societal ties, South-Asian CIMs are often displaced internally within their national boundaries or migrate to their neighboring countries, increasing the regional migration burden. For instance, the Asian Tsunami of 2004 resulted in the death of around 2 lac people and around 4 lac people were displaced. However, most of these climate-induced migrants sought refuge primarily within Asia rather than reaching up to OECD countries, ultimately resulting in the need for regional burden-sharing mechanisms. Due to existing cultural and ethnic ties, coastal farmers, forced to wrap up their households abruptly, are more likely to seek refuge within regional neighborhoods, ultimately overburdening South-Asian regional counterparts who are comparatively less responsible for emissions of carbon and greenhouse gases. Most internal climate-induced migrants end up in overcrowded urban slums where competition

³⁶ Stellina Jolly and Nafees Ahmad, *Climate Refugees in South Asia*, International Law and the Global South, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-3137-4>.

³⁷ Michael Kugelman, "Climate-Induced Displacement: South Asia's Clear and Present Danger," Wilson Center, September 30, 2020, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/climate-induced-displacement-south-asias-clear-and-present-danger>.

over essential resources such as water, food, jobs and sanitation systems is intense. Climate-induced migrants thus increase pressure on urban settings and public services, adversely affect economic growth, trigger group conflicts, intensify health crises and limit access to educational and societal integration in their host regions.³⁸

More critically, cross-border climate-induced migrants in South Asia are frequently criminalized and subjected to xenophobic treatments, leading to arrests and deportation, with little room for social cohesion and assimilation in host countries.³⁹ There are no legal protection mechanisms to address their security concerns, and they have negligible or no access to fundamental services. Many endure terrible working conditions, limited access to education, and societal integration and frequently experience human rights abuses in new destinations.⁴⁰

7.3 Security Threats Driven by Climate-Induced Migration (CIM) in Bangladesh

The IPCC has identified Bangladesh as one of the most climate-vulnerable countries in the world. Due to geographic location, riverine features, floodplains, and low-lying positions as a lower riparian state in the Ganges basin, Bangladesh is frequently vulnerable to cyclones, coastal storms, floods, river erosion, droughts, and salinity intrusion. Apart from these climate processes and events, extreme weather phenomena, such as heat waves, have emerged as a new challenge. One of the most crucial impacts of these climate processes and events is CIM in Bangladesh. Overpopulation, uneven development and unplanned urbanization have intensified the extent and vulnerabilities of climate-induced migrants in Bangladesh.⁴¹ Every year, approximately 07 lac climate-induced migrants are relocated from cyclone-prone areas such as Khulna, Shatkira, and Bagerhat and river-erosion prone areas such as Shariatpur, Madaripur, and Faridpur towards the capital and

³⁸ Brown, Migration and Climate Change.

³⁹ Jolly and Ahmad, Climate Refugees in South Asia.

⁴⁰ Bose and Singh, "Roadmap to a Framework for the Protection of Climate Migrants."

⁴¹ Islam, Climate Change, Migration and Conflict in Bangladesh, 2024.

divisional cities.⁴² It is anticipated that by 2050, the number of climate-induced migrants in Bangladesh will surpass 18 million, and in its extreme scenarios, might even reach 50 million⁴³. Furthermore, one in every seven Bangladeshis might be displaced due to climate change.⁴⁴ Currently, around 2000 climate-induced migrants head towards the capital, Dhaka, daily from diverse disaster-prone areas of Bangladesh.⁴⁵

Cyclone Amphan serves as the latest reminder to highlight the impacts of climate events on human migration. Amphan is considered one of the deadliest storms in the region, which displaced nearly 03 million people and destroyed around 02 million homes in May 2020. Similarly, in 2009, Cyclone Aila evacuated around one million people in Bangladesh.⁴⁶ In 2009, after the submergence of Bhola Island, half a million Bangladeshi people were evacuated, and some of them reached up to neighboring India, where they have constantly experienced legal criminalization and threats of deportation to their homes, which actually did not exist anymore.⁴⁷ Back in 1998, the monsoon flood induced the worst flooding experience in the living memory of Bangladesh, which submerged two-thirds of the country for around two months. This catastrophic event left around 21 million people homeless in Bangladesh.⁴⁸ In contemporary Bangladesh, the recent flash floods of 2024 have displaced approximately 5 lac people, both temporarily in evacuation shelters and permanently.⁴⁹

⁴² Brickhill, "This Mother Lost Her Home and Livelihood to Rising Seas. Now She Has Nowhere to Go."

⁴³ Islam, *Climate Change, Migration and Conflict in Bangladesh*, 2024.

⁴⁴ Brickhill, "This Mother Lost Her Home and Livelihood to Rising Seas. Now She Has Nowhere to Go."

⁴⁵ Sadiqur Rahman, "How Bangladesh Is Supporting Climate Refugees," December 8, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20231206-how-bangladesh-is-supporting-climate-refugees>.

⁴⁶ Kugelman, "Climate-Induced Displacement: South Asia's Clear and Present Danger."

⁴⁷ Jolly and Ahmad, *Climate Refugees in South Asia*.

⁴⁸ Brown, *Migration and Climate Change*.

⁴⁹ "Bangladesh: Eastern Flash Floods 2024 Situation Report No. 02," UN Bangladesh, August 29, 2024, <https://bangladesh.un.org/en/277637-bangladesh-eastern-flash-floods-2024-situation-report-no-02>.

Not limited to the challenges of human security, according to the propositions of Robert Kaplan, CIMs generate conflicts over resources such as space, water and food in host regions, destabilize social structure, and escalate violence and tensions in overpopulated regions like South Asia and particularly in Bangladesh.⁵⁰ Large-scale human displacements not only amplify food and water scarcity in divisional cities but also fuel group disputes and intensify Transnational Organized Crimes (TOCs), including human trafficking, arms trade and drugs trafficking at the national and regional levels.

7.4 Gendered Dimensions of Climate-Induced Migration (CIM)

Climate-induced migration (CIM) creates gendered disparities in families and society, disproportionately impacting women within affected communities. Specifically, CIM underscores women in a double-jeopardized position affecting their decision-making capacity, leadership, health, well-being, mobility, quality of life, economic and political rights, and escalating their vulnerability to Violence against Women (VAW), including sexual exploitation.

Due to prevailing societal stereotypes, women are often perceived as economically weaker, inferior and less powerful members in families and societies than their male counterparts. This existing lower economic and societal status intensifies the vulnerabilities of women as climate-induced migrants. In traditional societal structures, system subjugation restricts and limits women from taking leadership and decision-making roles in families and societal settings. For instance, due to existing societal, religious and cultural norms and stereotypes of the South-Asian sub-continent, women are not allowed to exercise their decision-making authority in families or societies even in the absence of the male members. As a result, when men are out-migrating to address the vulnerabilities of climate stressors, mostly women remain unable to make independent decision over household production or livelihood without approval from their absent male counterpart or their natal kin.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Kaplan, "The Coming Anarchy."

⁵¹ Bose and Singh, "Roadmap to a Framework for the Protection of Climate Migrants."

Women's access to machinery, participation in agricultural or industrial works, and access to education, pursuit of enlightenment and personal development are still considered taboo or discouraged in many South-Asian societies. Regressive traditions such as honor killing, female circumcision, rape, marital rape, inequitable economic opportunities, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) are accepted realities in the many societal settings of Pakistani, Afghanistan, India and Bangladesh. Amid such scenarios, women as climate-induced migrants are more frequently exposed to societal taboos, impoverishment, economic marginalization, limited decision-making authorities, SGBV and transnational-organized crimes (TOCs). Thus, CIM double-victimizes or jeopardizes women primarily as climate-induced migrants and further marginalizes them due to their stereotyped gender identity.⁵²

7.5 Effectiveness of National Climate-Induced Migration Regimes (CIMRs) of Bangladesh

South-Asian regional counterparts have incorporated subjective adaptation and disaster-response strategies and frameworks to address the vulnerabilities of climate-induced migrants. Bangladesh has achieved several milestones in this area.

In line with the UNFCCC guidelines, Bangladesh adopted its long-term National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) in 2005 and updated its mechanisms in 2009. It also introduced the Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP) in 2009. The Climate Change Trust Fund (CCTF) was established in 2009, followed by the Bangladesh Climate Change Resilience Trust Fund in 2010. Additionally, the Disaster Management Act of Bangladesh was initiated in 2012, and Climate Change Adaptation measures were incorporated in 2015.⁵³ After extensive planning, Bangladesh launched a National Adaptation Plan (NAP) in 2019 and submitted it to UNFCCC in 2023. The NAP aims to align adaptation strategies with national and global priorities, including the SDGs, Delta Plan 2100, and upgrading Bangladesh from an LDC to a middle-income country.⁵⁴

⁵² *ibid*

⁵³ Jolly and Ahmad, *Climate Refugees in South Asia*.

⁵⁴ "National Adaptation Plan (NAP)," UNDP, n.d., <https://www.undp.org/bangladesh/projects/national-adaptation-plan-nap>.

Bangladesh introduced its first National Plan for Disaster Management (2010-2015) to address climate-induced vulnerabilities. Subsequently, it was updated in its second National Plan for Disaster Management (2016-2020) and later in the third National Plan for Disaster Management (2021-2025), which is currently in effect. In addition, Bangladesh inaugurated the National Strategy on Internal Displacement in 2021, and in line with the Paris Agreement, Bangladesh submitted its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to limit carbon emissions and adapt to climate change. Further, to advance these strategies, Bangladesh has implemented notable practical initiatives such as the Local Government Initiative on Climate Change (LoGIC) and Local Adaptation Plan of Action (LAPA), the Bhola Island Resilience Project and resilient farming initiatives such as floating gardens.⁵⁵

Table 7.5 Developments of Climate-Induced Migration Regimes in Bangladesh (self-compiled by author, source UNFCCC).^{56,57}

Year	Strategy/ Framework
2005	National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA)
2009	a) Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP) b) Climate Change Trust Fund (CCTF) c) Updated NAPA
2010	Bangladesh Climate Change Resilience Trust Fund
2010-2015	First National Plan for Disaster Management
2012	Disaster Management Act of Bangladesh
2015	Climate Change Adaptation
2016-2020	Second National Plan for Disaster Management

⁵⁵ Jolly and Ahmad, Climate Refugees in South Asia.

⁵⁶ Jolly and Ahmad, Climate Refugees in South Asia.

⁵⁷ “National Adaptation Plan (NAP).”

2019	Initiated National Adaptation Plan (NAP) ⁵⁸
2021	a) Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) b) National Strategy on Internal Displacement
2023	Submitted National Adaptation Plan (NAP) ⁵⁹
2021-2025	Third National Plan for Disaster Management
Ongoing	a) Local Government Initiative on Climate Change (LoGIC) b) Local Adaptation Plan of Action (LAPA) c) Bhola Island Resilience Project d) Resilient farming mechanisms, including floating gardens
Ongoing	a) Active international collaboration with UNHCR (since 1970s), UNOCHA (since 1990s), and UNFCCC (since 1990s) b) negotiates in global forums to develop binding mechanisms to address CIMs c) advocates UNFCCC to recognize climate-induced migrants as ‘Universal Natural Persons’. ⁶⁰

Bangladesh and the Maldives have advocated for the establishment of concrete and legally binding frameworks to address CIMs. Bangladesh has also negotiated in international forums to push for the recognition of climate-induced migrants as ‘Universal Natural Persons’ within the framework of UNFCCC.⁶¹ Bangladesh has collaborated with the Executive Committee (EXCOM) of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (UNHCR) and the

⁵⁸ ibid

⁵⁹ ibid

⁶⁰ ibid

⁶¹ Jolly and Ahmad, Climate Refugees in South Asia.

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) since the 1990s, primarily to address the massive influx of the Rohingya Refugee crisis. In 1998, UNOCHA initiated the United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement to address the challenges of IDPs. Despite active collaborations, Bangladesh has not implemented these guiding principles to address the challenges faced by climate-induced IDPs. Bangladesh neither signed nor ratified the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Additional Protocol. Existing frameworks are largely non-binding, while no effective regulatory mechanisms are witnesses for implementation.⁶²

Despite achieving substantive milestones, a noticeable mismatch persists between existing CIMRs and the expected objectives of sustainable CIMRs. Bangladesh has yet to negotiate any dedicated framework, instrument or mechanism to address the challenges of CIM. While immediate disaster management frameworks can address sudden and extreme climate events, they are insufficient to deal with the vulnerabilities induced by slow-onset climate processes, which are often under-addressed. Existing international regimes are largely non-binding, and Bangladesh has not yet resonated with the dedicated frameworks for refugees.⁶³ The existing disaster regimes lack dedicated provisions for CIM. These frameworks primarily focus on sudden and extreme climate hazards, whereas CIMRs need to be more comprehensive and dedicated to addressing the impacts of slow climate processes on human migration. A robust framework to address CIM is absent in Bangladesh, leading to fragmented responses to the challenge.⁶⁴ Existing CIMRs also lack concrete and time-bound monitoring mechanisms. Thus, a dedicated mechanism to address CIM has emerged as a compelling demand to bridge the gap and combat the asymmetry.

⁶² *ibid*

⁶³ *ibid*

⁶⁴ Brown, *Migration and Climate Change*.

7.6 Effectiveness of Regional Climate-Induced Migration Regimes (CIMRs) in South Asia

South Asia is widely recognized as a disaster hotspot and a key generator of climate-induced migrants each year. Consequently, regional counterparts are the primary host countries for South-Asian cross-border migration. It is somewhat utopian to think of a solution for climate-induced migrants without the establishment of a regional platform. Thereby, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is considered a potential platform to induce regional burden-sharing mechanisms while addressing the challenges of climate-induced migration (CIM).

Since its inception, SAARC has initiated several mechanisms to address the challenges. The SAARC Meteorological Research Centre in Dhaka was established in 1995. The SAARC Environment Action Plan was negotiated in 1997. The SAARC Coastal Zone Centre Management (SCZCM) was established in 2005 in the Maldives. The SAARC Centre for Disaster Management and Preparedness in New Delhi was established in 2006. The SAARC Climate Declaration and the SAARC Action Plan were adopted in 2007, in collaboration with the respective National Action Plans (NAPs) of member states. A virtual network, the South Asian Disaster Knowledge Network (SADKN), was established in 2006 to share regional knowledge, resources and experiences in disaster management. Additionally, SAARC developed the Comprehensive Framework on Disaster Management (CFDM) in 2007 to combat disaster-induced threats. The SAARC Forestry Centre was established in Bhutan in 2008. An Intergovernmental Expert Group on Climate Change was established in 2010 to monitor the effectiveness of existing action plans with limited regulatory capacity.⁶⁵

Table 7.6 Developments of Climate-Induced Migration Regimes in Bangladesh (self-compiled by author, source SAARC).⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Jolly and Ahmad, Climate Refugees in South Asia.

⁶⁶ *ibid*

Year	Strategy/Framework
1995	SAARC Meteorological Research Centre
1997	SAARC Environment Action Plan
2005	SAARC Coastal Zone Centre Management (SCZCM)
2006	a) SAARC Centre for Disaster Management and Preparedness b) South Asian Disaster Knowledge Network (SADKN)
2007	a) The SAARC Climate Declaration b) SAARC Action Plan c) SAARC Comprehensive Framework on Disaster Management (CFDM)
2008	The SAARC Forestry Centre
2010	Intergovernmental Expert Group on Climate Change ⁶⁷

Despite these diverse efforts, South Asia still struggles to achieve resilience regarding CIM. South Asia has not initiated any regional or sub-regional protection mechanisms for climate-induced migrants so far. SAARC member states noticeably vary in terms of their approach to CIM protection. The Maldives and Bangladesh have strongly advocated for the recognition of climate-induced migrants and the implementation of CIMRs within South Asia. The Maldives, a severely climate-vulnerable member of SAARC, has been negotiating in regional and global forums for decades to initiate a regional agreement on CIM. However, such initiatives are still in their embryonic stages. In contrast, other SAARC member states, such as India, have shown much reluctance and demonstrated legal challenges while acknowledging refugees and CIMs.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Jolly and Ahmad, Climate Refugees in South Asia.

⁶⁸ *ibid*

However, except for Afghanistan, no SAARC members have ratified the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Additional Protocol. So, cross-border CIMs are often criminalized within this region. Existing frameworks are largely non-binding, with no concrete monitoring systems, making them symbolic and ornamented.⁶⁹ While initiatives such as the SAARC Joint Commission on Refugees or the South Asian Model Law on Refugees exist based on burden-sharing principles, they have not made significant progress since 2004. Despite initial ambitions, the bilateral and geopolitical tensions have paralyzed the formulation of a comprehensive and actionable regional framework. Enhancing these initiatives with effective monitoring mechanisms can pave the way for greater regional resilience. Moreover, the initiatives fail to recognize climate-induced migrants within refugee frameworks. This highlights the requirement for proper conceptualization and policy responses regarding CIM. As a comparatively less responsible but highly affected region by climate stresses, South Asia can assert a collective southern voice through collaborative approaches to advocate for climate justice while negotiating with the Global North for climate aid, debt and financing.⁷⁰

A regional protection mechanism or an alternative framework is urgently needed here. Models like the Colombo Process, which addresses the vulnerabilities of labour migrants through regional governance from sending countries, could be expanded to incorporate climate-induced migrants in South Asia.⁷¹ The Temporary Protection Directive of the EU model can also be mirrored to provide immediate protection to climate-induced migrants in South Asia. Comprehensive and dedicated collaboration, like the Global Compact for Migration or the Nansen Initiative, can be mirrored at regional levels to address these contested challenges.

⁶⁹ *ibid*

⁷⁰ Jolly and Ahmad, *Climate Refugees in South Asia*.

⁷¹ Katherine Walla, "How South Asian Countries Can Protect Their Migrant Workers Abroad - Atlantic Council," Atlantic Council, September 8, 2022, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/how-south-asian-countries-can-protect-their-migrant-workers-abroad/>.

South Asia, a region which is highly contested on account of not addressing the vulnerabilities of political refugees formally, is also suffering from the death of climate-friendly policies dedicated to climate migrants.⁷² South-Asian countries lack a comprehensive, formal and dedicated legislative mechanism to address the vulnerabilities of climate-induced migrants. Specific attention to CIM regimes is noticeably absent here. None of the member states has initiated a comprehensive CIM framework. Existing frameworks are noticeably outdated and legally non-binding. Recent developments are substantially negligible in this regard. Existing frameworks have mostly become ornamented due to reluctance, ball-passing tactics and bureaucratic deadlocks. Proper knowledge of climate education and climate justice is not widely disseminated here. In the absence of a comprehensive framework and effective monitoring system, the responses to address CIM in South Asia remain fragmented.⁷³

While the initial decades showed some promising advancements, regional geopolitical and bilateral unrest in contemporary decades have made the prospects of a comprehensive regional framework utopian. Over time, SAARC has been claimed to be weakening politically and structurally. Thereby, existing CIM regimes within South Asia fail to produce concrete results. South-Asian counterparts have yet to recognize climate climate-induced migrants, leaving them excluded from protection mechanisms. Existing conventions, declarations and action plans remain non-binding and lack a precise focus on CIMS. Many policies are still not operational, and others are yet to be ratified. Even existing regional initiatives lack effective regulatory and monitoring mechanisms, portraying them as more symbolic paper tigers.⁷⁴

⁷² Kugelman, "Climate-Induced Displacement: South Asia's Clear and Present Danger."

⁷³ Jolly and Ahmad, *Climate Refugees in South Asia*.

⁷⁴ Bose and Singh, "Roadmap to a Framework for the Protection of Climate Migrants."

7.7 Effectiveness of Global Climate-Induced Migration Regimes (CIMRs) in South Asia:

Since the inception of the first comprehensive environmental framework, such as the Stockholm Conference in 1972 and through its successor environmental regimes, including the Rio Earth Summit, Brundtland Commission, UNFCCC, Agenda-21, Kyoto Protocol, Paris Agreement and Conference of Parties (COPs), the international community has attempted to address the impact of climate change at diverse levels. To recognize the contested interplay between climate change and human migration and to limit the vulnerabilities of climate-induced migrants in South Asia, several initiatives have been introduced at the international levels.

The UNFCCC has collaborated with the Least Developed Countries and Developing Countries of South Asia to facilitate their climate adaptation strategies through programmes such as the National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) and National Adaptation Plan (NAP). Most eligible South-Asian members have already submitted their NAPA and NAP to UNFCCC to advance their journey towards climate resilience. Further, COP-28 is remarked as a milestone for facilitating a collective southern voice in environmental negotiations. It initiated a dedicated loss and damage fund to aid climate-driven disasters in vulnerable regions. While the Global North has historically resisted such initiatives due to their concerns about burden-sharing for higher carbon emissions, this milestone, after approximately 30 years of negotiation marked a successful expression of a collective Southern voice to secure economic assistance to address extreme weather events.⁷⁵

Table 7.7: South-Asian commitments towards NAPA and NAP with UNFCCC (self-compiled by author, source UNFCCC)⁷⁶⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Rahman, “How Bangladesh Is Supporting Climate Refugees.”

⁷⁶ “Submitted NAPAs,” United Nations Climate Change, n.d., <https://unfccc.int/topics/resilience/workstreams/national-adaptation-programmes-of-action/napas-received>.

⁷⁷ “Submitted NAPs From Developing Country Parties | NAP Central,” United Nations Climate Change, n.d., <https://napcentral.org/submitted-naps>.

South-Asian Member State	NAPA Submitted to UNFCCC	South-Asian Member State	NAPA Submitted to UNFCCC
Bangladesh	2005, updated 2009 ⁷⁸	Sri-Lanka	2016
Bhutan	2006	Nepal	2021
Maldives	2006	Pakistan	2023
Afghanistan	2009	Bhutan	2023
Nepal	2010 ⁷⁹	Bangladesh	2023 ⁸⁰

UNFCCC and recent negotiations at COPs have addressed the specific needs of climate-induced migrants. As part of this, Equity and Justice Working Group Bangladesh (EquityBD), and other civil society groups have advocated to recognize climate-induced migrants as ‘Universal Natural Persons’, highlighting the need to address their security concerns. Expanding the definitional purview of political refugees to incorporate climate-induced migrants meets substantial resistance as critics warn that doing so might open the ‘refugee flood gates’ overburdening the national borders. Comprehensive and dedicated regimes such as the Global Compact for Migration or the Nansen Initiative are appreciated as positive advancements towards acknowledgement and accreditation. Furthermore, the World Bank initiated the Climate Adaptation and Resilience for South Asia project in 2020.⁸¹ However, these advancements are largely non-binding and are perceived as soft-law initiatives with minimal implementation and monitoring mechanisms.⁸²

⁷⁸ “Bangladesh Experiences With the NAPA Process,” United Nations Climate Change, n.d., <https://unfccc.int/topics/resilience/workstreams/national-adaptation-programmes-of-action/ldc-portal/country-experiences-with-napa-process/bangladesh>.

⁷⁹ “Submitted NAPAs.”

⁸⁰ “Submitted NAPs From Developing Country Parties | NAP Central.”

⁸¹ Kugelman, “Climate-Induced Displacement: South Asia’s Clear and Present Danger.”

⁸² Jolly and Ahmad, *Climate Refugees in South Asia*.

Despite such promising developments, critics argue that the advancements remain at their infancy level when addressing CIM from a global perspective. The path towards sustainable climate resilience in South Asia remains contested due to the absence of a formal definition, dedicated CIMRs and unified legal protection mechanisms for these climate-induced migrants at the international level.⁸³

7.8 Securitization of Climate-Induced Migration (CIM)

Climate-induced migration (CIM) is often framed through the lens of national security threats. Let alone legal protection, even acknowledgement is not available to attribute CIM and to address the rights of climate-induced migrants. Thus, selective securitization of CIM poses a significant bottleneck in developing a comprehensive CIM regime. Critics argue that the Global North often focuses on securitizing CIM instead of addressing the root causes behind climate vulnerabilities, such as industrialization and carbon emissions. By declaring CIM as an existential threat and associating it with fear-based narratives, policymakers are often deterred, ultimately delaying CIM-related negotiations. Fear-based narratives alienate key stakeholders rather than fostering cooperation. As a result, securitization of CIM results in restrictive migration policies, militarized and fenced borders, xenophobic treatment, non-assimilation and a lack of comprehensive frameworks to address the vulnerabilities of climate-induced migrants. Consequently, millions of people who have crossed the border due to climate vulnerabilities and climate-induced threats of persecution are criminalized, deprived of legal protection and excluded from basic services. This, in turn, blocks opportunities for cooperation at national, regional and global levels preventing the development of a comprehensive CIM regime. Ultimately, the state-centric approach to securitization generates a challenging environment for negotiating CIM regimes, deepening divisions and mismatches within international frameworks such as the Kyoto Protocol and COP 28 & COP29.⁸⁴

⁸³ Brown, Migration and Climate Change.

⁸⁴ Boas, Climate Migration and Security.

8. Towards Sustainable Policy Pathways

While advancing the sustainable policy pathways to address climate-induced migration (CIM), the prerequisite step is recognizing the interplay between climate change and human migration. Climate change influences human migration to varying degrees. The extent, frequency and associated threats of CIM need to be acknowledged. Given this reality, the formal recognition of climate-induced migrants is undeniable. Scholars debate differing perspectives on conceptualizing climate-induced migration. Some advocate for integrating the CIM domain into the existing 1951 Refugee Convention as an additional protocol, while others propose establishing a dedicated UN convention to address CIM vulnerabilities. Regardless, formal acknowledgement is a prerequisite factor to address CIM.⁸⁵ A state-centric securitization approach to CIM would only multiply the challenges and limit the scope for legally binding regional and global comprehensive frameworks. Instead, a dedicated national-level commitment and comprehensive regional framework are necessary to protect the vulnerabilities of climate-induced migrants. South-Asian regional counterparts should collaborate to combat the shared burden of climate-induced migration by developing actionable instruments and time-bound regulatory mechanisms. To achieve this, regional dialogues must facilitate formal acknowledgement of climate-induced migrants while aligning with the propositions of climate justice.⁸⁶ Ultimately, shifting from a state-centric approach to a human-centric approach in dealing with CIM is required to achieve actionable and sustainable policy pathways toward climate resilience.

9. Conclusion

The interplay of climate change and human migration is complex but concrete. Climate change induces climate-induced migrants, generating both traditional and non-traditional security concerns.

⁸⁵ Jolly and Ahmad, *Climate Refugees in South Asia*.

⁸⁶ Bose and Singh, "Roadmap to a Framework for the Protection of Climate Migrants."

South Asia as a declared hotspot of climate-induced migrants, still securitizes narratives of climate-induced migration (CIM), perceiving the challenge from a state-centric approach. It has not acknowledged the legal and humane protections of climate-induced migrants. State-centric approaches to CIM limit the scope for any legally binding regional CIM regimes. South-Asian regional counterparts should collaborate to combat the shared burden of climate-induced migration through effective instruments and regulatory mechanisms. A shift from a state-centric approach to a human-centric approach is required to achieve actionable and sustainable policy pathways toward climate resilience.

10. Future Directives of the Study

The nexus between climate change and human migration cannot be simplified to a $2+2=4$ equation as it incorporates complexities that data alone cannot fully capture. Identifying the depth and diversity of the challenge requires delving into the lived stories and subjective narratives of affected communities. However, converging around predetermined frameworks or depending entirely on numbers might provide a distorted picture of the climate-induced migration problem. The voice of affected communities must be central to understanding vulnerabilities and prescribing sustainable policy pathways. Therefore, a multi-method qualitative research technique incorporating narrative analysis and a grounded theory approach could be essential to unfold the real-life threats experienced by displaced people. Telling, retelling, transcribing and analyzing should be incorporated as methods of data collection from affected communities. Thus, vulnerabilities can be identified while uncovering stories through building trust and confidence from people who may themselves remain unaware of the intricate connection between climate change and their migration.

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Democracy in the Age of AI: A Critical Analysis of Opportunities and Threats

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Abstract

As artificial intelligence (AI) rapidly alters the political landscape, the impact on democracy is both fostering and concerning. AI is changing the way power is exercised and contested, from enhancing public involvement and strengthening government to spreading misinformation and compromising electoral integrity. The article analyzes the dual nature of AI's impact on democratic regimes, providing an in-depth look of both global developments and the specific challenges affecting Bangladesh. This paper aimed to emphasize the sensitive balance between the potential benefits and drawbacks of AI in democratic government.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence (AI), Democracy, Electoral Integrity, Disinformation, Misinformation, Deepfakes.

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1. Introduction

In an era of rapid technological advancement, artificial intelligence (AI) has become an influential factor shaping the structure and functioning of contemporary democracies. Technology is becoming more and more integrated into the procedures that control public life. Both enormous opportunities and formidable problems arise from the incorporation of AI as democratic societies adjust to digital revolutions. AI has the potential to improve public conversation, promote inclusive participation, and accelerate governance. On the other hand, it can exacerbate monitoring, facilitate misinformation, and compromise the integrity of elections.

Power, agency, and accountability are some of the key issues raised by this emerging interaction between AI and democracy. From algorithmic biases altering democratic transparency and representation to AI-generated deepfakes impacting electoral impressions, these issues are not only theoretical; they have already started to influence current political dynamics. In politically emerging nations like Bangladesh, where democratic institutions are still being established and knowledge of technology is relatively low, the challenges are particularly high. The democratic system and larger civic space now have new vulnerabilities as a result of the unrestricted dissemination of politically charged fake content, AI-generated disinformation, and targeted Cyber attacks. AI has the risk of becoming a weapon for manipulation and control rather than empowerment in the absence of robust regulatory frameworks or ethical oversight.

The article explores how AI can both strengthen and weaken democratic governance, accountability, and participation in order to evaluate its contradictory effects on democratic systems. The first part of the discussion explores how AI can be used to strengthen democratic participation. The dangers of manipulation and misinformation made possible by AI are then discussed, with special attention to the Bangladeshi context. The paper concludes by considering the pressing need for inclusive regulation and ethical governance to guarantee AI advances rather than undermines the democratic cause.

2. Significance of the Study

In order to understand the complex and dynamic interaction between artificial intelligence and democratic institutions, this study is crucial. As artificial intelligence (AI) technologies become more prevalent in political processes, they bring up important issues about accountability, transparency, and citizen participation. By analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of artificial intelligence (AI) in democratic governance, this study contributes to a better understanding of how emerging technologies can either reinforce or undermine democratic values.

3. Research Objective

The primary goal of this research is to critically investigate the complex relationship between artificial intelligence and democracy, with an emphasis on how AI's incorporation into political processes both can encourage public engagement and pose significant risks to democratic integrity.

4. Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative and analytical method. This research includes content analysis of secondary sources such as books, journals, papers, and digital content. The first section explores the positive and negative effects of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on democratic systems worldwide. The second section focuses on Bangladesh. Here, it is explored how AI effects democratic processes, governance, and political communication in the country. The final section seeks to find balance between AI's dual realities by examining how its benefits and dangers coexist. Secondary data is thoroughly analyzed to ensure its depth and effectiveness. The analysis is critical and context-sensitive throughout.

5. Literature Review

With AI technologies having a growing impact on democratic systems, the relationship between AI and democratic governance has emerged as a critical area of academic study. There are two opposing viewpoints in the literature, whereas some academics

emphasize how AI can revolutionize democratic values, others warn against its abuse, which could have unexpected and significant effects on democratic institutions and practices.

A realistic viewpoint on the incorporation of AI in voting systems is offered by Maine and Esiefarienrhe (2024).² Their research indicates that artificial intelligence (AI) has the potential to significantly improve voting processes. In this case they mentioned about the increasing operational effectiveness, transparency, and strengthening election security. According to the authors, these advantages are subjective as it is critical that electoral stakeholders use AI ethically. They show their concern regarding the issue that in the absence of moral principles and legal protections, the risks might surpass the possible benefits. In order to guarantee accountability, transparency, and equity in the application of AI, they emphasize the necessity of strong governance frameworks. Voter data protection, disinformation detection and algorithmic bias avoidance are given particular consideration. The authors argue that appropriate application of AI can promote democratic objectives by preserving electoral integrity in the era of digitalization.³

In a briefing to the European Parliament, Adam and Hocquard (2023) reflect such concerns by looking at how the development of AI has presented democratic societies with new difficulties, particularly in relation to voting procedures.⁴ There has been a significant rise in concerns about AI's impact on politics throughout the recent decade. The authors list a number of fundamental dangers connected to AI

² Maine, Itumeleng Michael, and Bukohwo Michael Esiefarienrhe. "The Impact of Artificial Intelligence, Ethical Implications and Technologies on the Electoral Process." *E-Journal of Humanities Arts and Social Sciences*, December 24, 2024, 3211–19. <https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.202451641>.

³ *ibid*

⁴ Adam, Michael, with Clotilde Hocquard. "Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council Establishing a Framework for Setting Ecodesign Requirements for Sustainable Products and Repealing Directive 2009/125/EC." *European Parliament Briefing*, July 2023, 1–10. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/751478/EPRS_BRI\(2023\)751478_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/751478/EPRS_BRI(2023)751478_EN.pdf).

technology, including the possibility of privacy and intellectual property rights violations by AI systems, unclear data collecting and training procedures, and ambiguous decision-making processes. AI's ability to spread disinformation and false information on a concerning scale is particularly alarming. Such capacities have the potential to undermine public confidence, promote political polarization, and spark violence especially in already fragile democracies. Even with such risks, Adam and Hocquard believe AI can still be a force for good in democracy as long as it is supported by strong ethical, legal, and technological protections.⁵

Zidouemba (2025) broadens the focus to global governance and emphasizes how AI could threaten the fundamental principles of democracy, the rule of law, and human rights, especially in low- and middle-income nations (LMICs).⁶ Governments in several of these areas are using AI tools more frequently to handle public affairs and make policy decisions. Even though these instruments might improve administrative effectiveness, they frequently give rise to serious questions regarding accountability, fairness, and the right to political involvement. Author stresses the need to find a balance between upholding democratic norms and embracing technological advancement. He supports stronger ethical guidelines and legal frameworks to guarantee AI is applied sensibly, without violating people's rights or escalating inequality.⁷

An empirical study on BallotBot, an AI chatbot created to inform California voters on ballot measures during the 2024 referendums, presented by Ash, Galletta, and Opocher (2025), who used a more experimental approach.⁸ According to their research, participants'

⁵ ibid

⁶ Zidouemba, Moussa Theodore. "Governance and Artificial Intelligence: The Use of Artificial Intelligence in Democracy and Its Impacts on the Rights to Participation." *Discover Artificial Intelligence* 5, no. 1 (February 3, 2025). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44163-025-00229-5>.

⁷ ibid

⁸ Ash, Elliott, Sergio Galletta, and Giacomo Opocher. "BallotBot: Can AI Strengthen Democracy?" *SSRN*, January 1, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5168217>.

capacity to respond to in-depth questions on the ballot was much enhanced by having access to BallotBot, especially for voters who lacked sufficient knowledge. The chatbot also improved consumers' engagement with the electoral process, decreased the perceived difficulty of obtaining political information, and helped cut down on overconfidence. The study shows how AI technologies can be useful tools for improving political knowledge and engagement in democratic societies provided they are designed transparently and impartially, even though it had no direct impact on voter turnout or preferences.⁹

Karnani (2024) offers a more thorough explanation of how AI may improve democratic administration.¹⁰ He mentioned about promoting efficiency, diversity, and openness in governmental processes. He argued that through the automation of repetitive tasks, efficient resource allocation, and improved public service delivery, artificial intelligence (AI) has the potential to create government systems that are more responsive and focused on the needs of its citizens. By facilitating easier access to public interaction platforms, it can also encourage civic engagement. For successful integration of AI in democratic settings, he stresses that ethical concerns, data security, and the mitigation of systematic prejudice should be considered. Cross-sector collaboration between policymakers, developers, and civil society actors are crucial if AI is to promote democratic growth rather than undermine it.¹¹

In contrast, Coker (2025) concentrates on the more dangerous geopolitical aspects of artificial intelligence and cyber operations.¹²

⁹ ibid

¹⁰ Karnani, Ashok Kumar. "AI Empowerment in Democratic Governance: Enhancing Participation and Efficiency." *Journal of Data Acquisition and Processing* 39, no. 1 (May 2024): 993–1001. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.754968>

¹¹ ibid

¹² Coker, James. "Top 5 Nation State Cyber-Attack Trends," March 17, 2025. <https://www.infosecurityeurope.com/en-gb/blog/threat-vectors/top-nation-state-cyber-attack.html>.

His research emphasizes the growing use of cyber capabilities as a weapon by authoritarian governments, including North Korea, China, Iran, and Russia, for strategic and political ends. These governments, which at first concentrated on surveillance and information theft, have started launching damaging cyberattacks against democratic institutions and public infrastructure in other countries. One of the biggest obstacles to preventing these acts is the anonymity they provide. Such capabilities pose a serious danger to international political stability and democratic resilience, particularly when paired with AI-driven disinformation campaigns.¹³

When combined, the body of current literature presents a complex picture. AI has the ability to improve democratic processes by boosting productivity, openness, and involvement, but it also comes with significant threats, such as bias, manipulation, monitoring, and undermined confidence. Modern democracies have the issue of utilizing AI's benefits while putting robust protections in place to preserve democratic institutions, values, and practices in a world that is becoming more complicated and digital.

6. Theoretical Framework

An important analytical framework for understanding the changing effects of artificial intelligence (AI) on democratic systems is provided by the theory of technological determinism. According to this theory, technical advancements are significant forces that accelerate social, cultural, and political change rather than just being instruments made and utilized by people.¹⁴ According to this viewpoint, technology has a significant impact on political life and governance by influencing institutional dynamics, societal structures, and human behavior.

¹³ ibid

¹⁴ Wyatt, Sally. "Technological Determinism: What It Is and Why It Matters." In *Technology Ethics: A Philosophical Introduction and Readings*, edited by G. J. Robson and J. Y. Tsou, 26–33. New York: Taylor and Francis, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003189466-6>.

Technological determinism in the context of democracy indicates that emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, radically change how democracies operate and develop. The use of AI in fundamental democratic processes, including voting, political communication, public debate, decision-making, and monitoring, is growing. Politicians' communication with the public, citizens' information consumption, and the creation and execution of policies are all impacted by these technologies.¹⁵ AI-driven algorithms, for example, are being used to automate administrative tasks, select digital material, and censor political statements on social media. Even if these advancements have the potential to improve efficiency and communication targeting, they also bring up significant issues around disinformation, social media networks, algorithmic bias, and public opinion manipulation.

Furthermore, democratic values like accountability, openness, and privacy are threatened by the use of AI in data collecting and surveillance. AI may unintentionally (or purposely) endanger civil liberties and democratic participation when used by governments and commercial organizations for voter profiling or anticipating crime.¹⁶ Therefore, the notion of technological determinism enables us to analyze critically how AI both promotes and may undermine democratic government. It challenges academics and policymakers to think about how much power societies actually have over technological advancement and what steps need to be made to protect democratic principles in the AI era.

7. Conceptual Framework

Throughout this paper, many concepts and terminologies are used to highlight the complexities of the research topic. This section seeks to clarify the basic concepts that are essential for understanding the connection of artificial intelligence and democratic processes.

¹⁵ Koniakou, Vasiliki. "Technological Determinism and Democracy in the Governance of the Logical Layer of the Internet | Determinismo Tecnológico E Democracia Na Governança Da Camada Lógica Da Internet." *Revista Publicum* 5, no. 2 (December 16, 2019): 36–72. <https://doi.org/10.12957/publicum.2019.47200>.

¹⁶ *ibid*

Democracy is fundamentally about the people owning the government. Systems where individuals elect representatives to exercise their political will are frequently linked to it. But the idea of democracy is much broader than elections. The term originated in ancient Athens, combining the Greek words *demos* (the people) and *kratos* (power or authority), and its origins can be found there. But it was decades of continuous collective struggles for fairness, representation, and inclusivity that led to the evolution of modern democratic institutions.¹⁷ People all throughout the world have had difficulty getting their views heard and gaining political legitimacy. The majority of democratic systems in existence today are relatively new, with many being under a century old, but they nevertheless operate on the basis of core ideas like fairness, legitimacy, free will, and power distribution.

The rapid growth of artificial intelligence (AI), a revolutionary force that has the power to alter human decision-making, is occurring concurrently with this political evolution. Artificial intellect (AI) is a group of technologies that resemble human intellect in ways including learning, reasoning, creativity, and self-solving problems. AI-enabled systems are able to sense their surroundings, identify language and things, respond, predict, and even take action without human oversight.¹⁸

Generative AI, a sub-type of AI that produces original text, image, video, or audio output, is one of the most mentioned developments in AI today. Deep learning and machine learning are two fundamental AI disciplines on which this technology is based. While deep learning, a more sophisticated sub-field, uses layered neural networks to replicate the complex decision-making processes of the human brain, machine learning enables algorithms to identify patterns and make judgments based on data.¹⁹ These developments have expanded the use of AI in

¹⁷ Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House. "Defining Democracy: What Is Democracy? - Explore MoAD," n.d. <https://moadoph.gov.au/explore/democracy/defining-democracy>.

¹⁸ Stryker, Cole, and Eda Kavlakoglu. "Artificial Intelligence." *IBM* (blog), June 4, 2025. <https://www.ibm.com/think/topics/artificial-intelligence>.

¹⁹ *ibid*

political, social, and economic domains, posing significant concerns on their consequences for democratic government.

AI presents significant threats to the integrity of democracy even as it presents encouraging prospects for improving administrative effectiveness, transparency, and involvement. The spread of false and misleading information is one of the most concerning issues. While disinformation involves intentional manipulation intended to manipulate, misinformation is the unintended transmission of misleading data. Using propaganda techniques to destabilize enemies or stabilize regimes, governments have become some of the most common producers of misinformation.²⁰ These manipulation attempts have become more sophisticated and widespread, especially on digital platforms.

The usage of deepfakes, or artificial intelligence (AI)-generated synthetic media that accurately mimics the look, voice, and facial expressions of actual people, is a concerning example of this misuse. Deepfakes have been used more and more as a political weapon to act as public figures, generate false statements, and mislead the public, even though they can be used for creative or beneficial purposes.²¹ By blurring the distinction between fact and fiction, these hyper-realistic fabrications damage political discourse and public confidence in information sources.

The increasing danger of election hacking, a generic term used for a variety of online tactics designed to manipulate or interfere with election procedures, is closely tied to this. In severe circumstances, it may involve changing the election's real outcome.²² However, organized disinformation campaigns, bot-generated content, and targeted disinformation on social media platforms are the most

²⁰ The Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression. "Misinformation Versus Disinformation, Explained," n.d. <https://www.thefire.org/research-learn/misinformation-versus-disinformation-explained>.

²¹ BBC Newsround. "Deepfake Technology: What Is It, How Does It Work, and What Can It Be Used For?," May 15, 2024. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/69009887>.

²² Donnan, Lisa. "What Is Election Hacking? - Option3." *Option3* (blog), April 20, 2021. <https://option3.com/what-is-election-hacking>.

common types of election intervention, with the goal of influencing public opinion, undermining voter confidence, or causing chaos. Hackers sometimes obtain sensitive voter registration databases and alter data to confuse voters and delay them at polling places.²³

Malicious software, or malware, is a further crucial component of this digital danger landscape. It is purposefully created to damage or take advantage of computer systems. Malware used in cyberattacks can be used to access private political information, interfere with communication, or facilitate more extensive types of online disruption during election procedures. Although such attacks are frequently motivated by financial interests, their impact in a democratic setting can reach the stability and legitimacy of political regimes.²⁴

A comprehensive understanding of the contemporary democratic landscape requires combining these ideas, which range from the fundamentals of democracy to the technological aspects of artificial intelligence.

8. Potential Positive Side of AI in the Democratic Process

The application of artificial intelligence (AI) has the potential to transform and strengthen democratic processes if it is used with consideration and ethics. In this world of political division, disinformation, and civic disengagement often impose strain on democratic institutions, artificial intelligence (AI) can be positioned as a strategic promoter of equity, transparency, and participation rather than as a danger. Instead of weakening democracy, AI can be used as a tool to increase public policy-making, promote inclusive discussion, and increase civic involvement.²⁵ The difficulty not only remains in controlling AI to avoid harm but also in controlling its use in a better way that strengthen democratic principles.

²³ *ibid*

²⁴ Fortinet. "What Is Malware? How to Prevent Malware Attacks? | Fortinet," n.d. <https://www.fortinet.com/resources/cyberglossary/malware>.

²⁵ European University Institute. "Can AI Strengthen Democracy? Professor John Tasioulas Weighs Risks and Rewards," n.d. <https://www.eui.eu/news-hub?id=can-ai-strengthen-democracy-professor-john-tasioulas-weighs-risks-and-rewards&lang=en-GB>.

8.1 Enhancing Civic Participation and Deliberation

Increasing public participation is one of the most potential uses for AI in democracy. Technologies based on AI can bridge the gap between complex policymaking and citizens' daily interactions which enables more inclusive and meaningful civic engagement. AI can be used to classify public feedback for policymakers and simplify policy statements into easily understood language. This technological capability is particularly important in situations where policymaking is often biased or unclear.²⁶ AI can increase the transparency and participation of civic processes. This basically facilitates public debates, clarifies bureaucratic or technical terminology, and resolves false information. This also helps policymakers in understanding input from a variety of groups. It can help find marginalized voices, making sure that people who are usually left out of traditional political platforms like women, indigenous peoples, rural communities, and linguistic minorities have their opinions heard.²⁷ In order to help decision-makers, algorithms can be directed to identify representational imbalances.

8.2 Inclusive Technological Development and Democratic Empowerment

By promoting inclusive technological growth artificial intelligence (AI) can enhance democratic processes. AI can significantly boost participation and improve policy outcomes when incorporated into public consultation frameworks. When properly developed, AI-assisted platforms can reduce complex viewpoints, highlight areas of agreement, and emphasize marginalized viewpoints that are frequently ignored. These tools can improve governance's legitimacy and accountability. Taiwan serves as a strong example of this potential. In order to increase political participation, the Taiwanese government explored technology means after the 2014 Sunflower Movement, which was a turning point for civic

²⁶ ibid

²⁷ ibid

mobilization.²⁸ As a result, the open-source platform pol.is was created for large-scale, structured public discussions. It is used by citizens to express their views on a range of subjects, such as pandemic response and transportation policy. Pol.is stands significant for using artificial intelligence (AI) to map opinion groupings, evaluate communication patterns, and identify areas of agreement without giving preference to polarizing or dominant narratives.²⁹

Large language models (LLMs) have been incorporated into pol.is more recently. It enables users to communicate with AI agents that represent various ideological perspectives.³⁰ By explaining the reasoning behind various points of view, these AI models aid citizens in understanding opposing ideas. This promotes civic literacy and empathy. Besides that, it also reduces political polarization. The flexibility of AI-enabled participatory models is shown by the platform's engagement of about 12 million users, or nearly half of Taiwan's population.³¹

Democratic AI integration must go beyond user involvement and encompass the advancement of the technology itself. The topic of who controls AI becomes crucial in a time when the majority of large-scale AI systems are under the hands of authoritarian governments or strong private organizations. Taiwan, which has spent more than \$7 million to create its own national large language model, offers another significant example.³² Ensuring that AI research is in line with local civic ideals and interests rather than

²⁸ IMF. "Fostering More Inclusive Democracy With AI by Landemore," December 1, 2023. <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/fandd/issues/2023/12/POV-Fostering-more-inclusive-democracy-with-AI-Landemore>.

²⁹ *ibid*

³⁰ *ibid*

³¹ *ibid*

³² Schneier, Bruce, Nathan Sanders, and Norman Eisen. "How Public AI Can Strengthen Democracy." *Brookings*, March 4, 2024. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/how-public-ai-can-strengthen-democracy>.

external economic or geopolitical goals, this project is not just technical; it is presented as a democratic protection.³³

Alignment Assemblies were introduced by the Collective Intelligence Project in collaboration with Taiwan's Ministry of Digital Affairs, led by Audrey Tang. To co-design ethical AI frameworks, these advanced forums bring together developers from firms like OpenAI and Anthropic, members of civil society, and regular people.³⁴ In terms of AI governance, this concept offers a unique example of democratic co-creation. Democratic societies may fight off monopolistic control and guarantee that AI stays a tool for the common benefit rather than private power by incorporating it into deliberative systems and funding publicly responsible models of AI research.

9. Artificial Intelligence and the Crisis of Democracy

Artificial Intelligence or AI, while offering many benefits, also poses significant challenges, especially to democratic systems. It can be used to deliberately influence elections and public opinion through rapidly disseminating fake news and false information. AI-powered deepfakes have the potential to produce convincingly fake videos which mislead voters and harm people's reputations. Preexisting biases may be strengthened by AI algorithms, which would unfairly treat particular groups and endanger social justice. Individuals' trust in political processes is weakened by the inconsistency of AI decision-making, which lowers accountability and transparency.³⁵ The values of free and fair governance as well as democratic institutions are at risk of being undermined by this misuse of AI technology.

³³ *ibid*

³⁴ *ibid*

³⁵ Noti, Aday. "How Artificial Intelligence Influences Elections and What We Can Do About It." Campaign Legal Center, February 28, 2024. <https://campaignlegal.org/update/how-artificial-intelligence-influences-elections-and-what-we-can-do-about-it>.

9.1 Artificial Intelligence in Manipulation of Elections and Political Processes

A new age of electoral manipulation has been brought about by artificial intelligence, which has changed how elections are conducted as well as how voters view politicians. Malicious actors are increasingly using AI-driven technology to manipulate political outcomes worldwide, which has alarming consequences for the foundations of democracy.³⁶

AI is now frequently used to disseminate false information to lower the percentage of voters. Advanced technologies can produce and spread misleading information on the time and location of elections. It can even deter people from casting a ballot altogether. An AI-generated robocall that resembled President Biden's voice advised voters not to cast their ballots by claiming that they should "save" their vote for the main election in November. This was an alarming case that took place before the 2024 New Hampshire primary election.³⁷ AI-generated communications from seemingly reliable sources can thus be used as a weapon for fabrication and control. Artificial intelligence has also been used to create synthetic proof of election-related misconduct, such as destroying or tampering with ballots. The public's confidence in the integrity of elections might be severely damaged by these fabricated images and audio samples. Election officials may be the target of violence as a result. In order to undermine vote counting and certification procedures, AI can generate false confessions from candidates or misleading data even after voting is over. This was seen in the 2020 U.S. presidential election.³⁸

Election hacking has already been significantly impacted by AI on a global scale in recent years. AI-generated fake media were propagated in Slovakia and Argentina in an attempt to influence public opinion.³⁹ An AI-generated image of the late dictator

³⁶ ibid

³⁷ ibid

³⁸ ibid

³⁹ ibid

Suharto, who passed away in 2008, was used in a video published by the political party Golkar in Indonesia to support their candidates. As Suharto's son-in-law was elected president, the deepfake went viral online, raising severe concerns about the power of fake endorsements and fabricated memories.⁴⁰ People's perceptions of political reality are being altered by AI-generated information. AI clones of political leaders, including Vice President Kamala Harris, have been deployed in phony ads in the US to promote partisan viewpoints.⁴¹ Trump even shared a cartoonish AI graphic that looked like Taylor Swift supporting him, but was obvious that she didn't.⁴² Such content gets propagated by social media platforms, which enable misinformation to spread rapidly and widely, often without accountability.

There is an unusual influx of fake photos, videos, and audio recordings due to the rapid rise of generative AI technologies, many of which are freely available. These instruments have been employed to divide societies, mislead voters, and attack political rivals.⁴³ The International Panel on the Information Environment reports that over 215 cases of AI were documented in 2024 alone, accounting for over 80% of worldwide elections.⁴⁴ Particularly on the far right, which has risen in recent elections in Germany, Poland, and Portugal, the technology has strengthened anti-government sentiment and widened social and party divides.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Bond, Shannon. "How AI Deepfakes Polluted Elections in 2024." *NPR*, December 21, 2024. <https://www.npr.org/2024/12/21/nx-s1-5220301/deepfakes-memes-artificial-intelligence-elections>.

⁴¹ *ibid*

⁴² *ibid*

⁴³ Myers, Steven Lee, and Stuart A. Thompson. "A.I. Is Starting to Wear down Democracy - The New York Times." *The New York Times*, June 6, 2025. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/06/26/technology/ai-elections-democracy.html>.

⁴⁴ *ibid*

⁴⁵ *ibid*

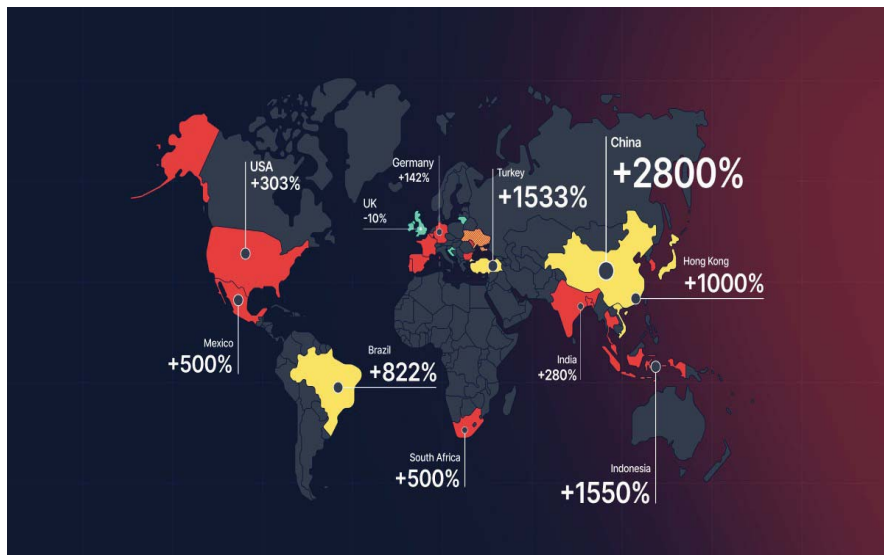


Figure: Deepfake Cases Surge in Countries Holding 2024 Elections (Source: Sumsb Research)

According to Sumsb's Q1 2024 verification and identity fraud data, deepfake-related incidents increased significantly worldwide, with significant rises in both election-related and non-election-related countries. Vietnam, the United States, China, Spain, Germany, Ukraine reported the most deepfakes found during this time. A significant year-on-year (YoY) increase in deepfake activity was noted in a number of countries with 2024 elections, including the United States (303%), South Africa (500%), Mexico (500%), Moldova (900%), Indonesia (1550%), South Korea (1625%), and India (280%). A number of countries experienced huge year-over-year increases inside the European Union, when legislative elections were held in June 2024: Bulgaria (3000%), Portugal (1700%), Belgium (800%), Spain (191%), Germany (142%), and France (97%). Countries without elections in 2024, such as China (2800%), Turkey (1533%), Indonesia (1550%), Singapore (1100%), Hong Kong (1000%), Brazil (822%), Vietnam (541%), Ukraine (394%), and Japan (243%), experienced a significant rise in deepfake cases. However, deepfake activity decreased in a few nations that held elections in 2024, including as the UK (-10%), Croatia (33%), Ireland (-40%), and Lithuania (44%). These results showed a

growing incidence of AI-driven identity fraud worldwide and the increasing link between political processes and technical abuse.⁴⁶

In certain cases, the role of AI has had a direct impact on election results. A strong example comes from Romania, where a court had to declare a re-election after AI-driven disinformation campaigns altered the results of a presidential election. False news stories and manipulated videos in Poland fueled concerns of Ukrainian interference and terrorist acts, which were ultimately linked to Russian influence activities.⁴⁷

AI has been actively used by authoritarian governments to influence elections overseas. AI-generated content has been used by Russia, China, and Iran to support politicians who share their views or to cast doubt on democratic systems in general.⁴⁸ These actions seek to raise doubts on democracy in general as well as negatively impact certain outcomes. AI has also been utilized to clone political candidates for political campaigns in democracies like India.⁴⁹ These uses further blur the line between authenticity and fabrication, making it more difficult for voters to distinguish between manipulation and truth, even if they are frequently meant to inspire party workers and expand outreach.

Ultimately, artificial intelligence worsens preexisting issues rather than causing new ones. Polarization is increasing, mistrust is growing, and manipulators have doors for large-scale public opinion manipulation. When used in the wrong way, AI-generated content can be particularly dangerous due to its speed, accessibility, and reality.

⁴⁶ Sumsb. “Deepfake Cases Surge in Countries Holding 2024 Elections, Sumsb Research Shows.” *Sumsb*, June 5, 2024.
<https://sumsub.com/newsroom/deepfake-cases-surge-in-countries-holding-2024-elections-sumsub-research-shows/>.

⁴⁷ Myers, Steven Lee, and Stuart A. Thompson. “A.I. Is Starting to Wear down Democracy - The New York Times.” *The New York Times*, June 6, 2025.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/06/26/technology/ai-elections-democracy.html>.

⁴⁸ *ibid*

⁴⁹ *ibid*

9.2 AI-Enabled Cyberattacks in Disrupting Democratic Processes

The digital sphere has emerged as a frontline in the global struggle for influence and power in today's interconnected world. Russia, China, Iran, North Korea, and other anti-Western nation-states have increasingly used cyber capabilities for espionage as well as to influence and undermine its geopolitical rivals' democratic processes.⁵⁰ Cyber operations are now not only about gathering intelligence rather many of these attacks are now intentional attempts to undermine democratic institutions, affect election results, and destabilize societies.

Cyberattacks were formerly used to steal private data from organizations, opposing countries, or critical infrastructure. There has been noticeable shift in recent years toward deeper political and destroying strategies. State-sponsored cyber attackers are increasingly conducting operations that directly disrupt democratic processes, particularly during crucial times like elections. These activities are becoming more localized as states concentrate their resources in regions that are most strategically important.⁵¹

Microsoft's 2024 Digital Defense Report shows that 75% of Russian nation-state cyberattacks targeting NATO member states or Ukraine occurred between July 2023 and June 2024. China, on the other hand, targeted 72% of its cyberattacks in Taiwan, North America, and several of Southeast Asian nations.⁵² These efforts frequently aim to undermine democratic integrity and national security by targeting political parties, election infrastructure, and crucial services.

The widespread impact of cyber interference in the political process can be seen by particular incidents. For example, the Czech Republic openly accused China of being responsible for a

⁵⁰ Coker, James. "Top 5 Nation State Cyber-Attack Trends," March 17, 2025. <https://www.infosecurityeurope.com/en-gb/blog/threat-vectors/top-nation-state-cyber-attack.html>.

⁵¹ *ibid*

⁵² *ibid*

cyberattack on its Foreign Ministry in May 2025.⁵³ In the same year, Russian hackers used malware-infected HTML apps to conduct an espionage campaign against Tajikistan's government, educational, and research institutions.⁵⁴ At about the same time, it came to light that a Turkish espionage cell was using a messaging app's zero-day vulnerability to monitor Kurdish military units in Iraq.⁵⁵ This is an example of how cyber technologies may be used to obtain real-time intelligence and impact combat areas.

Following a number of hacks that compromised critical systems, UK government agencies, and even the Electoral Commission, the UK's National Cyber Security Centre stated China to be the biggest cybersecurity danger.⁵⁶ In a concerted reaction, the US, UK, France, Germany, and their allies issued a warning about a Russian effort that targets military and supply chains that aid Ukraine and other NATO nations.⁵⁷

Hackers with ties to Algeria broke into Morocco's National Social Security Fund in April 2025, exposing the financial and personal data of around two million people connected to roughly 500,000 companies.⁵⁸ Meanwhile, U.S. regulators disclosed that sensitive information about financial institutions was exposed when more than 100 individuals at the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency had their communications spied on for over a year.⁵⁹ These cases show how cyberattacks affect public confidence in the security of personal data in addition to disrupting governance.

⁵³ "Significant Cyber Incidents | CSIS," n.d.
<https://www.csis.org/programs/strategic-technologies-program/significant-cyber-incidents>.

⁵⁴ *ibid*

⁵⁵ *ibid*

⁵⁶ *ibid*

⁵⁷ *ibid*

⁵⁸ *ibid*

⁵⁹ *ibid*

The activities of North Korean cyber-operatives have also been growing. They launched espionage, stole data, and coerced former employers by pretending to be remote workers and gaining access to European government and defense systems.⁶⁰ Their strategies have become increasingly complex, mixing social manipulation with conventional malware approaches to obtain sustained access to sensitive networks.

Iranian hackers used custom backdoors and hacked emails to enter their targets in March 2025 as part of cyber espionage operations against Yemeni telecom providers and Iraqi government organizations.⁶¹ Earlier, in January 2025, Russian hackers used operations based on fabricated diplomatic documents, some of which were supposedly agreements between Germany and Central Asian nations in order target Kazakhstan's diplomatic institutions.⁶² At about the same time, after the Italian Prime Minister reaffirmed support for Ukraine, a pro-Russian hacker group took credit for pulling down websites linked to the Italian government. Russia's hostility for Ukraine has also entered the online sphere. According to Ukrainian officials, Russian cyberattacks against important sectors such government services, energy, and defense increased by 70% in 2024, totaling more than 4,300 occurrences.⁶³

According to the Taiwan's National Security Bureau, the number of Chinese groups attempting cyberattacks every day has alarmingly increased which reached 2.4 million in 2024. Government and telecommunications networks were the main targets of these attacks. The number of verified incidents rose by 20% over 2023.⁶⁴ Stealing confidential information and undermining critical national infrastructure was a clear motivation.

⁶⁰ *ibid*

⁶¹ *ibid*

⁶² *ibid*

⁶³ *ibid*

⁶⁴ *ibid*

Russian hackers took over a Pakistani hacker group's infrastructure back in December 2024 and used it as a launching pad to target military and political institutions in South Asia. Attacks have sharply increased, especially in India, where official records show that between 2019 and 2023, cyber-attacks against its government entities increased by 138%.⁶⁵

In 2024, Russia claimed to have launched an attempt to interfere in Romania's elections. Just before the presidential election, hackers disrupted Romanian election systems with over 85,000 attacks and posted credentials on cybercrime sites.⁶⁶ Another example of election hacking occurred when Iranian hackers entered into Donald Trump's 2024 campaign and tried to distribute stolen materials to the Biden-Harris team, which reportedly turned them down.⁶⁷ These violations occurred at a time when U.S. officials became more concerned about foreign interference in American elections, particularly from China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea.

Similar dangers were present in Germany. A few days before elections for the European Parliament, the Christian Democratic Union was the target of a significant cyberattack in June 2024. Russian hackers have previously launched a cyberattack on the ruling Social Democratic Party. Therefore, the party takes measures by temporarily disabling certain parts of its IT system.⁶⁸

In May 2024, Pakistani cybercriminals deployed phishing emails which appeared like official documents to spread malware targeting India's defense and government sectors.⁶⁹ In a similar way, Indian cybersecurity companies discovered plans in September 2023 by hacker groups from Pakistan and Indonesia to use DDoS attacks and widespread website attacks to disrupt the G20 Summit in India.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ ibid

⁶⁶ ibid

⁶⁷ ibid

⁶⁸ ibid

⁶⁹ ibid

⁷⁰ ibid

These occurrences are not limited to major powers or the Global South. The national election agency of Ecuador announced in August 2023 that cyberattacks had come from China, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Russia, and Ukraine. Distant voting systems were interrupted by these attacks.⁷¹

Taking an additional look, a DDoS assault in August 2022 crashed down the website of the Finnish Parliament during its session. It was believed that this incident was a component of a larger Russian cyber campaign against Finland for its NATO ambitions.⁷² In the same month, a major cyberattacks destroyed Montenegro's government IT systems. It caused telecommunications and airport operations disruption and forced the country's energy provider to turn to manual operations.⁷³ The president's office and digital ID services were among the prominent government websites that were impacted by a DDoS attack in April 2022 which indicates that Estonia was also vulnerable to similar attacks. Many interpreted these hacks as retaliation for Estonia's open opposition to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.⁷⁴

There has never been a clearer connection between cybersecurity and democratic functionality. Voter registration, information distribution, and ballot handling all depend on secure technologies. These are essential to today's elections. It is seen the threat to these systems is growing. Nations like France, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom, DDoS attacks have been directed at political parties during election seasons.⁷⁵ These assaults seek to undermine public trust in election results in addition to interfering with services. The frequency and scope of cyberattacks aimed at elections have increased. The percentage of national elections impacted by

⁷¹ ibid

⁷² Fortinet. "Recent Cyber Attacks | Fortinet," n.d.
<https://www.fortinet.com/resources/cyberglossary/recent-cyber-attacks>.

⁷³ ibid

⁷⁴ ibid

⁷⁵ The Cloudflare Blog. "Exploring Internet Traffic Shifts and Cyber Attacks During the 2024 US Election," November 11, 2024.
<https://blog.cloudflare.com/exploring-internet-traffic-shifts-and-cyber-attacks-during-the-2024-us-election/>.

cyber-attacks increased from 10% to 26% between 2015 and 2022.⁷⁶ About 25% of the targets were NATO members, while 35% were OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) members.⁷⁷ The majority of the ascribed operations in this area are carried out by China and Russia, which employ strategies like disinformation campaigns, vulnerability detection, DDoS attacks, and illegal access to voter records.⁷⁸

The threat landscape has significantly grown since the emergence of generative artificial intelligence. Synthetic text, audio, video, and image content can be produced using generative AI and used as a weapon for manipulating public opinion. One of the most dangerous uses of this technology is deepfakes. Despite the inclusive principles of his government, President Joe Biden was caught on camera saying racist statements in February 2023 in a fake video.⁷⁹ In a different instance, pro-Chinese agents discredited American officials by spreading false information using AI-generated images.⁸⁰ Voters find it more and more difficult to distinguish reliable information when such strategies blur the boundaries between fact and illusion.

These influence operations aim to decrease voter turnout, delegitimize political rivals, and divide communities along ideological lines in along with spreading false information. False information can be widely shared by foreign actors using AI-generated material, reaching millions of people in just a couple of minutes on digital and social media platforms. Although generative AI has the potential to be innovative and efficient, its incorrect application in political settings threatens the stability of democracies around the world.

⁷⁶ Canada, Communications Security Establishment. "Cyber Threats to Canada's Democratic Process: 2023 Update - Canadian Centre for Cyber Security." Canadian Centre for Cyber Security, December 6, 2023. <https://www.cyber.gc.ca/en/guidance/cyber-threats-canadas-democratic-process-2023-update>.

⁷⁷ *ibid*

⁷⁸ *ibid*

⁷⁹ *ibid*

⁸⁰ *ibid*

10. AI and Its Impact on Bangladesh's Democratic Process

Concern over the connection between politics and artificial intelligence (AI) is growing as Bangladesh prepares for its upcoming general election. Deepfakes and AI-generated videos are spreading quickly. It is changing the digital landscape in ways that threaten the integrity of democracy. AI tools are being used more and more by political actors to propagate lies, manipulate public opinion, and instigate social unrest.⁸¹ This technological change is exacerbating long-standing weaknesses in the nation's political system in the absence of enough institutional and legal protections.

AI-generated, politically controversial content has dramatically increased on social media platforms in recent years. These consist of videos that are effectively transformed to show public figures acting controversially or making offensive remarks. Since mid-June 2025, at least 70 fake political videos have been found, with over 23 million views, according to independent fact-checking website Dismislab.com.⁸² These videos, which frequently used emotional appeals, religious narratives, sarcastic attacks, and unsupported allegations to influence viewers to support particular political parties, featured entirely imaginary characters. Targets have included well-known individuals like Former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, BNP Acting Chairperson Tarique Rahman, and Professor Muhammad Yunus. A public warning from Professor Yunus' Press Wing warned people to be cautious of deepfakes after one of the edited clips allegedly showed him endorsing gambling.⁸³

The availability of AI tools makes this tendency more dangerous. Almost anyone with a smartphone and internet connection can now create realistic deepfakes with simply via platforms like HeyGen, DeepFaceLab, and Synthesia. With a few clicks, a video that accurately replicates a real person's voice, appearance, and gestures

⁸¹ Shawon, Ali Asif. "AI-Generated Videos Stir Political Storm Ahead of Bangladesh Elections." *Dhaka Tribune*, July 18, 2025. <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/election/386757/ai-generated-videos-stir-political-storm-ahead-of>.

⁸² *ibid*

⁸³ *ibid*

can be created without any technological knowledge.⁸⁴ Despite its strength, this technology accessibility has turned into a disruptive tool when applied unethically.

Bangladesh has yet to enact specific regulations governing artificial intelligence, despite the rise in false information produced by AI. There is space for uncontrolled exploitation because of the legal vacuum. The foundation is provided by constitutional safeguards such the right to life, liberty, privacy, and freedom of expression, which are listed in Articles 27, 31, 39, 40, 42, and 43.⁸⁵ However, these protections have not been defined to address issues linked to artificial intelligence. While there is some room for addressing digital harms under existing laws such as the Penal Code of 1860, the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulation Act 2001, the ICT Act 2006, the Right to Information Act 2009, the Pornography Control Act 2012, and the Cyber Security Act 2023, none of them are specifically designed to address the complex nature of artificial intelligence and synthetic media.⁸⁶ The Digital Security Act does not specifically address deepfake technology, despite being broad and frequently criticized for its overreach.⁸⁷

Guidelines on the use of AI in political campaigns have not yet been released by the Bangladesh Election Commission, which is already overburdened with concerns about funding campaigns, poster restrictions, and the enforcement of the code of conduct. In a country that is particularly vulnerable to disinformation efforts due to low digital literacy, a highly politicized media landscape, and millions of first-time internet users, this lack of action offers severe potential dangers.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ ibid

⁸⁵ OLD BAILEY. "LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF ARTIFICIAL INTILIGENCE IN BANGLADESH - Old Bailey Chambers." *Old Bailey Chambers* (blog), January 13, 2025. <https://oldbaileybd.com/legal-framework-of-artificial-intelligence-in-bangladesh>.

⁸⁶ ibid

⁸⁷ Shawon, Ali Asif. "AI-Generated Videos Stir Political Storm Ahead of Bangladesh Elections." *Dhaka Tribune*, July 18, 2025. <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/election/386757/ai-generated-videos-stir-political-storm-ahead-of>.

⁸⁸ ibid

An alarming increase in gender-based and cyberviolence has also been attributed to the misuse of AI. Cyber Support for Women and Children (CSWC) reported that 29 cases of abuse enabled by AI were documented between January and June 2025.⁸⁹ These included sexual harassment, blackmail, and online sharing of private recordings and pornographic content produced by artificial intelligence. Seventy-six percent of the victims were female, and 21 percent were little girls. The fact that men made up only 3% highlights how gendered these crimes are. Of the victims, 41.3% were students, 20.7% were housewives, and 27.5% were not recognized by occupation. Multiple layers of abuse, including blackmail using explicit videos of children as young as eight or twelve, were present in over 70% of the cases that were reported.⁹⁰ These crimes are more difficult to investigate and deal with because of their growing complexity and severity.

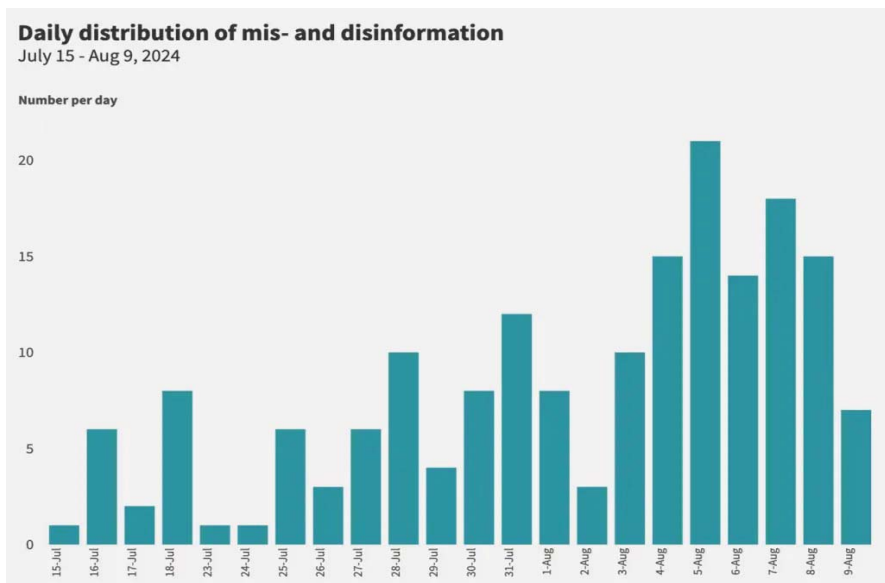


Figure: Daily Distribution of mis- and disinformation During the Student-led Mass Movement (Source: Techglobal Institute)

⁸⁹ Correspondent, Staff. "Offenders Now Weaponising AI." *The Daily Star*, July 8, 2025. <https://images.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/offenders-now-weaponising-ai-3935251>.

⁹⁰ *ibid*

During the month-long student-led mass movement that resulted in Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's resignation, the risks of AI-powered misinformation were also made clear. Online misinformation increased dramatically in line with the protests. Researchers examined 179 pieces of disinformation content that were posted on Facebook, YouTube, and X between July 15 and August 9.⁹¹ These included death scams directed against protest leaders, character assassinations, and fake news reports. In an effort to generate panic and weaken the movement, at least 36 rumors focused on the rape and death of student protesters.⁹²

A state-imposed internet shutdown from July 18 to July 23 that restricted 4G services to 2G, interfered with fixed-line internet, and banned access to major social media and messaging platforms exacerbated to this disinformation issue. The blackout continued until July 30 even after a partial restoration, forcing people to use VPNs where they were frequently more vulnerable to false information.⁹³ Nevertheless, according to Meta's Ad Library, \$33,992 USD was spent on 1,986 political ads during this time, 97% of which promoted pro-government viewpoints. Despite independent media coverage of police brutality, these advertisements attempted to place the blame for violence on opposition groups and "third parties."⁹⁴

Incidences of communal violence were fabricated or exaggerated through the use of deepfakes and AI-edited content. There have been reports of reusing old films and modified media to fabricate scenarios of widespread attacks on Hindu minorities, which has caused confusion and fear. These inter-communal tensions were implicated in at least 232 deaths, exacerbating an already tense

⁹¹ Tech Global Institute. "How Online Disinformation Fuels Religious, Ethnic and Sociopolitical Tensions During Bangladesh'S," January 9, 2025. <https://techglobalinstitute.com/research/how-online-disinformation-fuels-ethnic-and-sociopolitical-tensions-during-bangladeshs-regime-change>.

⁹² *ibid*

⁹³ *ibid*

⁹⁴ *ibid*

situation.⁹⁵ In overall, free speech, electoral integrity, and public trust are all seriously threatened by the unchecked application of AI in Bangladesh's democratic arena. Without immediate legislative action, strengthened oversight procedures, and public education campaigns, AI carries the potential of turning into a weapon for undermining democracy rather than a tool for empowering.

11. Bridging the Dual Realities of AI

Modern democracies face a paradox when it comes to artificial intelligence. On the one hand, technology offers an incredible chance to improve civic engagement by improving transparency and democratizing policymaking. On the other hand, it increases the possibility of manipulation, misinformation, and organizational distrust. The problem is not whether to entirely reject or embrace AI, but rather how to actively deal with these two realities through responsible governance, ethical development, and public empowerment.

Redefined control lies at the heart of this bridging effort. Due to its rapid development and wide range of uses, traditional regulatory and oversight procedures are unable to keep up with AI. Responsive control must give way to proactive co-creation in democratic societies, allowing a range of stakeholders to shape AI systems for the benefit of all.

Addressing the digital literacy gap is necessary for reducing the imbalance. AI-powered platforms can only increase engagement if people have the critical thinking abilities to decode complicated data and separate fact from fiction. Besides technical advancement, efforts must be made to broaden civic education on digital media and AI literacy. By doing this, societies empower citizens to be engaged in and controllers of AI-mediated public discourse, while also to being information consumers.

Innovation and security must be balanced equally. AI may accelerate policymaking and public consultation, but on the other hand its abuse in election manipulation and cyberattacks undermines

⁹⁵ ibid

the stability of democracies. In order to penalize negative use of AI without restricting genuine innovation, governments and international organizations must strengthen cybersecurity infrastructures by creating legal frameworks. Considering the global nature of cyber threats and disinformation efforts, cross-border coordination has become increasingly important.

Instead of creating whole new democratic problems, AI exacerbates those that already exist. Unjust representation, polarization, and mistrust are long-standing issues that AI accelerates and intensifies. In order to bridge the two realities, it is necessary to address underlying social and political divisions in addition to technical solutions. The governance of AI must be incorporated into larger initiatives to restore confidence, advance inclusion, and foster cross-cutting communication.

The idea of "bridging" implies a continuous procedure instead of a complete solution. Democracy and AI are continuously coevolving. Adaptive, flexible governance structures that continuously rebalance the opportunity-risk ratio are essential as new AI capabilities develop. Implementing this transparent, inclusive, and progressive methodology is crucial to ensure that AI is used to enhance rather than weaken the democratic process.

12. Conclusion

The dynamic interrelationship between democracy and artificial intelligence is symbolic of the deeper tensions between social values and technical advancement. Depending on how it is controlled, regulated, and incorporated into political processes, artificial intelligence (AI) can either be advantageous or disadvantageous to democratic governance. An organized, moral strategy that goes beyond immediate action is required due to AI's dual ability to both empower citizens and threaten democratic institutions. As AI develops further, democratic institutions must also change to make sure that new technologies are used as tools for inclusion, accountability, and justice rather than as tools for control and fragmentation.

An Examination of the Social Costs of Sri Lanka's Sovereign Default

Rehana Thowfeek¹

Abstract

Sri Lanka's unprecedented economic crisis and sovereign default have had a significant negative impact on the well-being of the people. Research shows that episodes of sovereign default leads to long-term and persistent impacts on several social aspects the country experiencing the default. While it has been only a short period since Sri Lanka declared sovereign default in 2022, there are early warning signs of deteriorating social outcomes, particularly on health, nutrition and food security. A growing number of Sri Lankan households are food insecure, with marginalised and vulnerable groups being more at risk. Other effects of the crisis like the migration of skilled professionals have impacted health outcomes, particularly among children. These warning signs are an early indication, that if unmitigated, Sri Lanka will be unable to achieve the kind of inclusive and sustainable economic growth necessary to charter the course of the economy out of its present state.

Keywords: Economic crisis, sovereign default, social costs, health impacts, Sri Lanka.

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1. Introduction

Sovereign defaults have been common throughout history. The occurrence of sovereign defaults in modern times peaked around the 1990s, with as many as over 55 nations experiencing sovereign default in the early 1990s.² The severe impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on the global economy exacerbated many existing economic vulnerabilities that led to a rise in the number of sovereign defaults experienced in the recent past.

The number of sovereign defaults since 2020 reached a record high, with 14 sovereign defaults occurring within the span of a few years, in comparison to just 19 sovereign defaults in the preceding 20 years.³ Among such defaulters, is Sri Lanka, an island nation in the Indian Ocean. Sri Lanka defaulted on its sovereign debt in April 2022 for the first time in its history. While Sri Lanka's default incident is not unique, there are several factors that make it quite a notable case.

Sri Lanka's debt to GDP ratio in 2022, its year of default, was a whopping 115% - one of the highest in the South and South-East Asian regions. On the other hand, its revenue to GDP ratio that year was an abysmally low 8%. With respect to low government revenues and high levels of debt, Sri Lanka's South Asian neighbours display some similarity.

For example, Bangladesh has a very low tax to GDP ratio (8.9% in 2022) like Sri Lanka and Maldives has a very high debt to GDP ratio (121.1% in 2022) like Sri Lanka. The combination, however, of extremely high levels of debt and extremely low levels of tax revenues were unique to Sri Lanka in the region.⁴ Additionally, as this was Sri Lanka's first time defaulting on its sovereign debt it was an unprecedented economic event.

² Hatchondo, Juan Carlos, and Leonardo Martinez. 2009. "Long-Duration Bonds and Sovereign Defaults." *Journal of International Economics* 79 (1): 117–25. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jinteco.2009.07.002>.

³ 2023. Fitchratings.com. 2023. <https://www.fitchratings.com/research/sovereigns/sovereign-defaults-at-record-high-29-03-2023>.

⁴ "https://www.imf.org/External/Datamapper/Profile/LKA." n.d. [www.imf.org](https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/profile/LKA). <https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/profile/LKA>.

Sri Lanka's sovereign default was marked by severe economic and social instability. Having run down foreign reserves in the hopeless pursuit of avoiding a debt default, the country had little to no foreign reserves to fund the imports of essentials into the country. This caused severe shortages in fuels, medicines, foods and cooking gas which led to widespread discontent among the people. This discontentment culminated in widespread people's protests which eventually led to the incumbent president, prime minister and cabinet all resigning from office.

The costs of default, which represent the costs that the sovereign faces when they default on their debt is important to understand. The costs of default, Hatchondo et al.⁵ are important to understand, because if there were no costs of default, there would be no incentive for a sovereign not to default. Much has been said in the literature about the costs of default; loss to economic output (GDP), its impact on inflation and cost of living and its impact on poverty and the inequitable impact on the poor. The literature is rich, too, on the costs of default regarding costs of borrowing, reputational costs, and financial and banking systems. However, the social and human costs of a sovereign default are an under researched area.

Recent efforts by Farah-Yacoub et al.⁶ have forayed into understanding the social costs of default. In their seminal findings, they find that, in a sample of 135 cases, a sovereign default leads to a cumulative negative gap in real GDP of 8.5%, while over the decade following the incidence of default, the average annual growth rate is one-percentage point below that of non-default countries.

⁵ Hatchondo, Juan Carlos, and Leonardo Martinez. 2009. "Long-Duration Bonds and Sovereign Defaults." *Journal of International Economics* 79 (1): 117–25. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jinteco.2009.07.002>.

⁶ Farah-Yacoub, Juan, Clemens Graf, Von Luckner, and Carmen Reinhart. 2024. "NBER WORKING PAPER SERIES the SOCIAL COSTS of SOVEREIGN DEFAULT." https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w32600/w32600.pdf.

Farah-Yacoub et al. also find that sovereign defaults have a significant negative impact on social and health indicators. In their research, they found that following a default incident, countries experienced a negative and disproportionate impact on infant mortality and life expectancy at birth; two indicators used as a proxy for health. In addition to this there is an increase in poverty and a decrease in access to nutrition post-default.

These findings are critical and indicate the large and substantial impact that sovereign default has on human lives and human security. In the period in the runup to Sri Lanka's default incident, the country was racked by severe and worsening economic conditions. Power cuts extended up to 13 hours a day, there were extreme shortages in fuel, cooking gas, food and medicines. National inflation, at its peak (in September 2022) was 73.7%.⁷

Almost one year following the announcement of default, Sri Lanka managed to secure a 4-year Extended Fund Facility program with the International Monetary Fund. It has, since then, negotiated and arrived at debt restructuring deals with domestic creditors and has nearly completed debt restructuring deals with bilateral and external private creditors. Nearly two and a half years since its default, Sri Lanka displays remarkable resilience, at least in terms of its macroeconomic conditions.

The social costs of Sri Lanka's default incidence, however, receives limited attention. The findings by Farah-Yacoub et al. form the foundation of this paper, in which we aim to contribute to the literature on the social costs of default by exploring the impact Sri Lanka's sovereign default has had on social indicators of Sri Lanka. While the time since its default is short, we have limited data to understand its long-term impact but coupling the impacts that can be observed in the short term with the literature already available we can make recommendations on what areas of society and economy that should be prioritized for urgent intervention.

⁷ "Headline Inflation, as Measured by the Year-On-Year (Y.)" n.d. https://www.cbsl.gov.lk/sites/default/files/cbslweb_documents/press/pr/press_20230123_inflation_in_December_2022_ncpi_e_0.pdf.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

That periods of economic crisis or downturns could have a negative impact on health, education and access to nutrition seem obvious and is documented in the literature. According to a World Bank research paper, when work opportunities are scarce and there is no access to credit, families would tend to reduce their food intake, even from the young children.⁸ Children may be pulled out of school. These nutritional deficiencies can have long-lasting impact, as evidenced by past crises worldwide. The paper finds that in poorer developing nations both health and education outcomes deteriorate during economic crisis. This pattern is consistent with evidence from Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Malawi, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. In middle income countries, health outcome deteriorates during crisis as found in Mexico, Peru, Nicaragua while schooling is unaffected as found in Brazil, Mexico and Peru.⁹

Hibrido¹⁰, for instance, finds that Ecuador's 1999 economic crisis led to a deterioration in early childhood development and that these effects persisted for 3-5 years afterwards. The study also found that the impacts to early childhood development were more severe among rural non-farmers and those without access to healthcare.

As assessment by Aytac et al¹¹ of the impact of the 2008 global economic crisis in Turkey found that workplace closures, lack of job opportunities, crime, poverty, homelessness and child labour all

⁸ "Lessons from World Bank Research on Financial Crises." n.d. Accessed June 14, 2026.
<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/749481468763470664/pdf/WPS4779.pdf>.

⁹ ibid

¹⁰ Hidrobo, Melissa. 2014. "The Effect of Ecuador's 1999 Economic Crisis on Early Childhood Development." *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 62 (4): 633–71. <https://doi.org/10.1086/676469>.

¹¹ Aytaç, Işık A, Bruce H Rankin, and Arda İbikoğlu. 2015. "The Social Impact of the 2008 Global Economic Crisis on Neighborhoods, Households, and Individuals in Turkey." *Social Indicators Research* 124 (1): 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.2307/24721645>.

increased due to the crisis. Those facing such strain due to the crisis displayed higher levels of stress and increased prevalence of physical and mental health problems. The impacts were also found to be more severe among those from lower income levels and vulnerable ethnic groups.

A national survey on living conditions conducted by leading universities and NGOs in Venezuela find that 64% of Venezuelans lost an average of 11kg in 2017 after Venezuela's 2017 default. Nearly 90% of the respondents reported insufficient households' income to cover the purchase of food and infant mortality had increased by about 70%. The study also observed an increase in the number of risky pregnancies between 2012 to 2017 to the lack of birth control.¹²

Much like Venezuela in 2017, Lebanon too defaulted in 2020. Due to lack of funds both these countries underwent severe fuel shortages and deprivations in access to energy. In 2019, Venezuela suffered nationwide black outs. In Lebanon's capital, Beirut, the government reduced the provision of electricity to 30 minutes a day in 2021, critically affecting those unable to afford private generators.

As documented by Paxson & Schady,¹³ Peru's economic crisis in the 1980's led to an increase in infant mortality rates of 2.5 percentage points, implying that an additional 17,000 more infants died than would have if the crisis had not occurred. A review by Karanikolos et al.¹⁴ found that the 2008 global financial crisis had negative

¹² Landaeta-Jiménez, Maritza, Fundación Bengoa, Marianella Herrera, Guillermo Ramírez, and Maura Vásquez. n.d. "Encuesta Nacional de Condiciones de Vida Alimentación I." Accessed June 14, 2026. https://assets.website-files.com/5d14c6a5c4ad42a4e794d0f7/5eb9bfda4ed90d3d4e8e08f8_encovi-2017.pdf.

¹³ Paxson, Christina, and Norbert Schady. 2005. "Child Health and Economic Crisis in Peru." *The World Bank Economic Review* 19 (2): 203–23. <https://doi.org/10.2307/40282214>.

¹⁴ Karanikolos, Marina, Pia Heino, Martin McKee, David Stuckler, and Helena Legido-Quigley. 2016. "Effects of the Global Financial Crisis on Health in High-Income Oecd Countries." *International Journal of Health Services* 46 (2): 208–40. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020731416637160>.

effects on mental health, and to an extent on non-communicable and communicable diseases and access to healthcare.

The World Bank finds that following the economic crisis in the late 1990s, real wages in Indonesia declined markedly, especially in the urban sector (Development Research Group, 2008). There was an observed gender disparity as well in those earnings from self-employment were also found to decline significantly for women and in the urban sector. The report also finds that the 1997 financial crisis has had a large adverse impact on the psychological wellbeing of the population. Over the crisis period there has been substantial increases in several aspects of psychological distress among both male and female adults across the entire age distribution.¹⁵

In addition to adverse impact on health, education and nutrition, economic crises and sovereign defaults can also lead to social and civilian unrest. For instance, following Greece's default protests and strikes were commonplace. As Hembruff states,¹⁶ even more worrying is the meteoric rise of the neo-Nazi party, Golden Dawn who despite being linked to a variety of racially motivated assaults, Golden Dawn is the third most popular party in Greece, commanding around 10% of popular support. In Ecuador, following its default in 1999, protests ensued in opposition to actions taken by the president. This ultimately resulted in the exile of President Jamil Mahuad and the formation of a People's Parliament.¹⁷

Therefore, the social costs of economic crises and sovereign default are numerous and Sri Lanka's situation warrants investigation.

¹⁵ "Lessons from World Bank Research on Financial Crises." n.d. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/749481468763470664/pdf/WP S4779.pdf>.

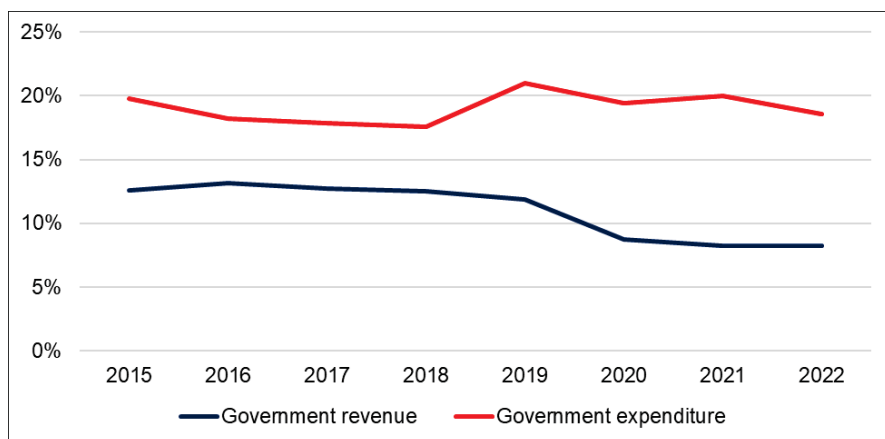
¹⁶ Hembruff, Jesse. 2013. "Critical Review: The Politics of Sovereign Debt." *Third World Quarterly* 34 (4): 710–25. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42002151>.

¹⁷ Bagwell, Stephen. 2023. "Repudiation and Repression: The Human Costs of Sovereign Default" *Social Sciences* 12, no. 3: 121. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12030121>

3. CAUSES OF SRI LANKA'S DEFAULT

Prior to examining the costs of default, it is necessary to understand the causes of Sri Lanka's economic crisis and sovereign default. Sri Lanka's sovereign default can be traced down to two root causes; its perennial fiscal and trade deficit. Despite experiencing economic growth post-war, the government's revenue failed to keep pace. Government revenue declined significantly over the past few decades, hitting a record low of 8.2% of GDP in 2022 (Figure 1). Yet, despite this declining revenue, Sri Lanka did not reduce its government expenditure in line either. Government expenditure continued to grow. This deficit was funded through the growth of debt, both domestic and foreign.

Figure 1: Government revenue and expenditure as a % of GDP (current market prices), Sri Lanka 2015-2022



Source: Annual Economic Review 2023, Central Bank of Sri Lanka

Export growth in Sri Lanka has been laggard due to an increased concentration of inward oriented policies. Sri Lanka's export basket has remained the same despite changes in the global economy; Sri Lanka relies heavily on a small basket of exports sent to a few select export markets. While export revenues stagnated, Sri Lanka's import expenditure continued to grow due to the demands of a growing middle-class.¹⁸ The growth in Sri Lanka's middle class,

¹⁸ "The Political Economy of Debt - the Asia Foundation." 2024. The Asia Foundation. October 10, 2024. <https://asiafoundation.org/publication/the-political-economy-of-debt/>.

combined with the government's debt financed post-war large scale infrastructure boom led to increased imports of consumer, intermediate and manufacturing goods.

In addition to this, Sri Lanka also failed to attract foreign direct investments despite its promising economic and social environment. Foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows languish below 2% of GDP.¹⁹ This failure to attract FDI's can be attributed to Sri Lanka's highly unstable policy environment, bureaucratic government institutions, weak institutional frameworks, poor governance, poor public investment in human capital development and the lack of infrastructure. Despite attempts by successive governments to attract FDI's, a failure to address the systemic issues that make Sri Lanka an unattractive investment destination meant that Sri Lanka could not rely on investments to stem the need for foreign exchange either.

Sri Lanka had begun relying increasingly more on commercial lending as its economy began to grow, rather than concessional loans from bilateral and multilateral partners.²⁰ By 2018, Sri Lanka's stock of International Sovereign Bonds (ISBs) had reached \$10 billion. While Sri Lanka was able to sustain this debt-financed growth in its economy by rolling over its debts, a combination of shocks in the recent past acted against Sri Lanka's making it impossible to continue to roll over old debt with new debt.

The constitutional crisis that occurred in late 2018 led to a drop in Sri Lanka's credit ratings which worsened once again with the Easter Sunday attacks in mid-2019. Following the electoral victory of the new president in late 2019, who made good on his promise to cut taxes, Sri Lanka's sovereign credit ratings fell once again as it became increasingly plain that the Sri Lankan government would be unable to meet its debt obligations due to its dwindling revenue.

¹⁹ World Bank. 2024. "World Bank Open Data." World Bank. 2024. <https://data.worldbank.org/>.

²⁰ "The Political Economy of Debt - the Asia Foundation." 2024. The Asia Foundation. October 10, 2024. <https://asiafoundation.org/publication/the-political-economy-of-debt/>.

This prompted the authorities to turn towards the only available sources of funds to continue to service debts – newly printed money from the Central Bank and the stock of foreign exchange reserves.

Further ill-advised policies like the overnight chemical fertiliser ban and fixing the exchange rate at an artificially low level made matters worse. Although it was marketed as an organic-agriculture drive its true intention was to reduce the demand for foreign exchange made matters worse. This strained domestic production, affecting crop yields and threatening food insecurity. Whereas Sri Lanka had been relatively self-sufficient in rice production, the fertilizer ban led to a drop in yields, necessitating imports to meet local demand, inadvertently mitigating any pressure on demand for foreign exchange that could have been alleviated from the ban in the first place.²¹

Fixing the exchange rate, going against market forces, led to a drastic reduction in inflows of worker remittances and export earnings as people could not get a fair rate in the formal banking system. This led to many moving to informal channels like *Undiyal* and *Hawala* to exchange foreign currency, reducing the amount of foreign exchange flowing into the formal system, further exacerbating the foreign exchange crisis and the availability of foreign exchange for essential imports.

The weak economic and governance foundations upon which Sri Lanka's economy had thus developed was incapable of absorbing the combination of bad policy decisions and external shocks that the country faced since 2020. Usable foreign reserves depleted to around \$50 million ('Sri Lanka Usable Reserves below Rs50mn, IMF Deal Six Months Away: Sabry', 2022), Sri Lanka was unable to pay for essential imports leading to severe shortages in fuel, gas

²¹ "Sri Lanka Resurfaces as Major Rice Buyer as Fertilizer Import Ban Leads to Output Decline." 2022. S&P Global Energy. 2022.
<https://www.spglobal.com/energy/en/news-research/latest-news/agriculture/021022-sri-lanka-resurfaces-as-major-rice-buyer-as-fertilizer-import-ban-leads-to-output-decline>.

and other essentials like food and medicines.²² The people of Sri Lanka faced 13-hour power cuts and long queues to access fuel and gas.

Despite the growing precarity of Sri Lanka's debt position in the backdrop of the growing economic and social instability, the government continued to avoid an International Monetary Fund programme and refused to declare a pre-emptive default. This culminated in Sri Lanka facing the worst economic crisis in its history.

The extreme economic and social conditions Sri Lankans faced led to mass protests and social unrest that eventually culminated in the formal declaration of default by the government on 12th April 2022. Since then, Sri Lanka has instituted a wide-ranging set of reforms aimed at recharting the course of the economy.

4. IMPACTS OF THE ECONOMIC CRISIS AND SOVERIEGN DEFAULT

Health, nutrition and food security

Decades of state-funded health and education for all, have led to Sri Lanka achieving levels of health and social indicators on par with many advanced countries and are well-above that of its regional peers. We can consider 2019 as the last 'normal' year (at least in terms of sovereign debt) prior to the onset of the economic crisis that eventually culminated in the country declaring default.

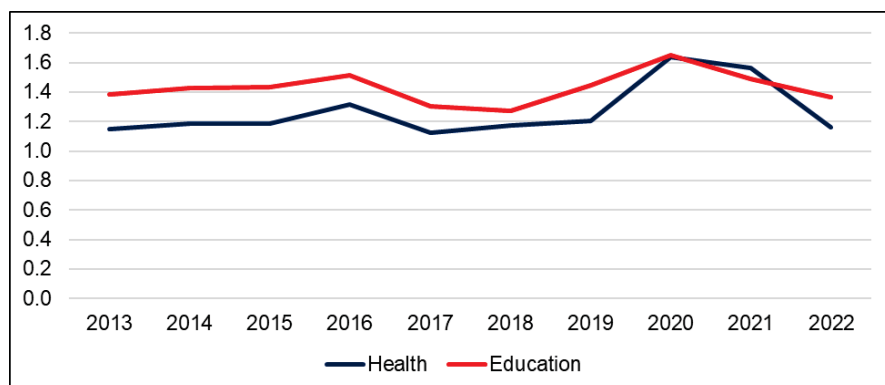
Life expectancy at birth was 76 years in 2019, having risen remarkably from just 61 years in 1960; infant mortality (1,000 live births) which was 68 in 1960 had fallen to 9.5 in 2019.²³ Sri Lanka has also made great strides in maternal health.

²² Economy Two. 2022. "Sri Lanka Usable Reserves below Rs50mn, IMF Deal Six Months Away: Sabry." EconomyNext. May 4, 2022. <https://economynext.com/sri-lanka-usable-reserves-below-rs50mn-imf-deal-six-months-away-sabry-93809/>.

²³ "Statistics – Family Health Bureau. 2024" n.d. <https://fhb.health.gov.lk/statistics/>.

Sri Lanka outperforms its South Asian and low- and middle-income peers on many education indicators.²⁴ Interestingly, Sri Lanka has managed to achieve these enviable outcomes despite low public investment in both health and education. In 2021, the Sri Lankan government spent just 1.5 % of GDP on education (Figure 2), less than half of the world average of 4.2% of GDP (World Bank, 2024). Similarly, the government only spent 1.6% of GDP on health in 2021 while the world average was 6.52% of GDP (World Bank, 2024).

Figure 2: Government expenditure on health and education as a percentage of GDP, Sri Lanka 2013-2022



Source: World Bank Development Indicators and author calculations

While both systems are far from being perfect, Sri Lanka's state health and education systems are a matter of pride within the nation and have contributed to the overall upward social mobility of many Sri Lankans. However, as government expenditure on health and education was already low before the default event, the impact of the government's financial instability on the two sectors has been profound.

Sri Lanka's state healthcare system, which consists of hospitals, clinics and pharmacies distributed around the country depends a lot on imported hospital consumables and equipment, vaccines, and

²⁴ "School Entrance Age: Duration and Official Ages for School Cycle." n.d. https://www.epdc.org/sites/default/files/documents/EPDC_NEP_2018_SriLanka.pdf.

drugs.²⁵ The severe shortage of foreign currency had an adverse impact, therefore, on the availability of these items, thereby affecting the quality of care that could be delivered to patients.

The Epidemiological Unit of the Ministry of Health reports a 40% increase in the prices of medicines in April 2022, around the time of the announcement of default.²⁶ Out-of-pocket health expenditure has generally been below 50% of total health expenditure in Sri Lanka, but the unavailability of services in the State health care would have pushed people to spend more on out-of-pocket health than previous periods.²⁷ However, this level of expenditure would be impacted by the rising cost of medicines. Jayawardena et al.²⁸ find that the economic crisis has negatively affected medicine consumption among Sri Lankans, and that medicine non-adherence was worse amongst low-income Sri Lankans living outside Colombo.

While inflation has tapered since returning to tighter monetary policy after the default, the debasement of the Sri Lankan Rupee resulting from excessive money printing has meant that price levels are a lot higher than they used to be. In addition to this debasement, the Sri Lankan government replaced its policy of subsidising prices of utilities like fuel and electricity with a cost-reflective pricing structure, thereby leading to an increase in the prices of utilities that have cascaded into higher overall prices.

The index value of the National Consumer Price Index (NCPI) for June 2024 was 208.1, based on a base year of 2021 (index value for base year 2021=100). The index value of the NCPI for food groups

²⁵ “IMPACT of the ECONOMIC CRISIS on HOUSEHOLDS’ SOCIAL and ECONOMIC WELLBEING ROUND SEVEN FINDINGS BACKGROUND and OBJECTIVES.” n.d. <https://www.unicef.org/srilanka/media/3146/file/Summery.pdf>.

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ World Bank. 2024. “World Bank Open Data.” World Bank. 2024. <https://data.worldbank.org/>.

²⁸ Ranil Jayawardena, Wasana Kodithuwakku, and Piumika Sooriyaarachchi. 2023. “The Impact of the Sri Lankan Economic Crisis on Medication Adherence: An Online Cross-Sectional Survey.” *Dialogues in Health* 2 (December): 100137–37. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dialog.2023.100137>.

in June 2024 was 232.8 (base year 2021=100). This gives an indication of how much the purchasing power has been affected in Sri Lanka. Inflation, even at high levels, is not a problem if wages adjust in line with inflation. However, wages tend to be a lot stickier than prices, and therefore in Sri Lanka's case, with high inflation, there has been a severe impact on the ability of people to afford even the basic necessities.

Wage rate indices published by the Central Bank of Sri Lanka show that in both the public sector as well as the informal private sector real wage rates have fallen in comparison to their base years. A 2023 household survey on the impact of the economic crisis by the Department of Census and Statistics of Sri Lanka found that 60.5% of households report a decrease in household monthly incomes ('Household Survey on Impact of Economic Crisis – 2023', 2023).²⁹ Another survey by the UNICEF in Sri Lanka completed during October-November 2022 shows similar results, with 77% of surveyed households reporting a negative income on income due to the economic crisis (Impact of the Economic Crisis on Household's Social and Economic Wellbeing Round Seven Findings, 2022).³⁰

In both surveys, respondents reported facing higher levels of household expenditures. In addition to this, the household survey by the Department of Census and Statistics reports that nearly half (45.8%) of employed persons experienced a pay/allowance cut or income loss because of the economic crisis.

As a result of the impact the economic crisis has had on both household incomes as well as household expenditures, people have had to adopt to a variety of coping mechanisms to deal with the situation. The UNICEF survey reports that 89% of households had adopted at least one coping mechanism to pay for their basic needs,

²⁹ "Household Survey on Impact of Economic Crisis – 2023 | Daily FT." n.d. Wwww.ft.lk. <https://www.ft.lk/opinion/Household-survey-on-impact-of-economic-crisis-2023/14-756727>.

³⁰ "IMPACT of the ECONOMIC CRISIS on HOUSEHOLDS' SOCIAL and ECONOMIC WELLBEING ROUND SEVEN FINDINGS BACKGROUND and OBJECTIVES." n.d. <https://www.unicef.org/srilanka/media/3146/file/Summery.pdf>.

which include mechanisms like selling or pawning their belongings, borrowing money or using their savings, a marked increase from previous rounds of the same survey. The impact is more severe among households which rely on daily or weekly wage earners.

The impact on food consumption has also been severely affected by the economic crisis. The UNICEF survey reports that 78% of households had reduced their overall food consumption since March 2022, with over 80% of households reducing the consumption of food with essential nutrients like fruits and vegetables, dairy and protein foods like meat, fish and eggs.

A report by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) in September 2022 finds that around 8.7 million Sri Lankans were not consuming an adequate diet.³¹ (Special Report: FAO/WFP Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission to Sri Lanka, 2022). This marks a significant deterioration in food security, as an estimate of the same indicator by the Medical Research Institution found that only 3.4% of households had an inadequate diet in the third quarter of 2021.

Another study by Sooriyaarachchi and Jayawardena³² report similar findings; a reduction in the average number of daily meals consumed, a drastic reduction in the consumption of nutritious foods like milk, fish, meat and eggs as well as a significant reduction in fruit and vegetable consumption.

A study by Samantha et al.³³ estimates 46% of households to be moderately acute food insecure while another 8% are estimated to be severely acute food insecure by October 2022. Food insecurity, the

³¹ Special Report – FAO/WFP Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission (CFSAM) to the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. 2022. FAO; WFP; <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc1886en>.

³² Ranil Jayawardena, Wasana Kodithuwakku, and Piumika Sooriyaarachchi. 2023. “The Impact of the Sri Lankan Economic Crisis on Medication Adherence: An Online Cross-Sectional Survey.” *Dialogues in Health* 2 (December): 100137–37. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dialog.2023.100137>.

³³ Samantha, N P G, Prasanna Wijesinghe, Roshini Rambukwella, Ruvini Vidanapathirana, and D Perera. 2023. “Economic Crisis and Household Food Security Sri Lanka, 2022.” September 11, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.31481.65125>.

study notes, is worse in the estate sector with 67% of estate sector households being food insecure. The study also reports that the consumption of protein and iron rich foods has declined rapidly since late 2021. This is not surprising as the prices of protein and iron rich foods have increased sharply over the period (Table 1).

Table 1: Prices of protein rich foods on the third week of July in Colombo district, Sri Lanka 2018-2024

Price (Rs)	Third week of July - Colombo district						
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
1kg whole cowpea	280	291	391	739	762	916	1,006
1kg green gram	255	285	346	844	1,088	1,177	1,155
1kg kadala	272	238	250	311	801	615	550
1kg linna fish		398	526	524	888	1,001	876
1kg dried sprats	750	745	702	866	1,923	1,285	1,238
1kg beef	974	995	1,040	1,136	2,043	2,343	2,478
1kg broiler chicken	420	448	430	456	1,220	1,375	1,108
1 white egg	18	20	20	19	42	55	50
425g tinned fish	257	247	286	359	735	651	517

Source: Retail Bulletin, Department of Census and Statistics

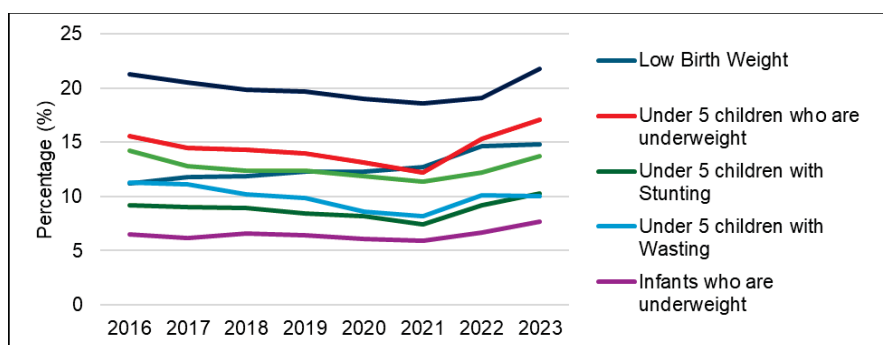
Due to the rapid increases in the prices of food, as well as having to cope with the increase in the prices of other expenses like education and health, Sri Lankan households use a variety of food coping mechanisms. The FAO/WFP study reports that 61% of households regularly used food coping mechanisms because their incomes were insufficient to buy the required amounts of food. Nearly 25% of households reported reducing the number of meals consumed while nearly half of households (46%) reported limiting portion sizes.³⁴ The situation is worse in the estate sector and in households with many family members or with a disabled family member or those households who rely on incomes from unskilled labour.

Households with pregnant or lactating women were also more likely to use food coping mechanisms than household without such women. The impact that such food coping mechanisms have on child nutrition indicators is significant as evidenced by data from the

³⁴ Special Report – FAO/WFP Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission (CFSAM) to the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. 2022. FAO; WFP; <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc1886en>

Family Health Bureau, Sri Lanka's apex body for maternal and child health. It shows an increase in low birth weights and malnutrition among children under 5 (Figure 3Figure 1). The trend prior to the default episode for many of the indicators was declining, however, a shift occurs in the year 2021 when economic conditions were depleting rapidly, with all indicators jumping significantly and continuing to persist into 2023.

Figure 3: Child nutrition statistics, Sri Lanka 2016-2023



Source: Family Health Bureau, Ministry of Health, Sri Lanka

The state nutrition programs suffered greatly due to the government's fiscal troubles. The Sri Lankan government's nutrition programme – Thriposha – aimed at pregnant and lactating mothers as well as for children under 5 years of age was reportedly affected by inconsistent supply and unavailability.³⁵

According to a study by WFP, the Thriposha supplement reduces the cost of diets by 20%. There have also been issues regarding the insufficiency of the amount allocated under the government's school meals program and the inability to redeem the government's food voucher program for pregnant and lactating women.³⁶

The increase in food and nutrition insecurity is alarming considering the fact Sri Lanka already faces serious health related concerns like the non-communicable disease (NCD) epidemic. According to the

³⁵ "Sri Lanka: Foregoing Meals to Make-Do: The Impact of Sri Lanka's Economic Crisis on Maternal Nutrition." n.d. Amnesty International. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa37/6872/2023/en/>.

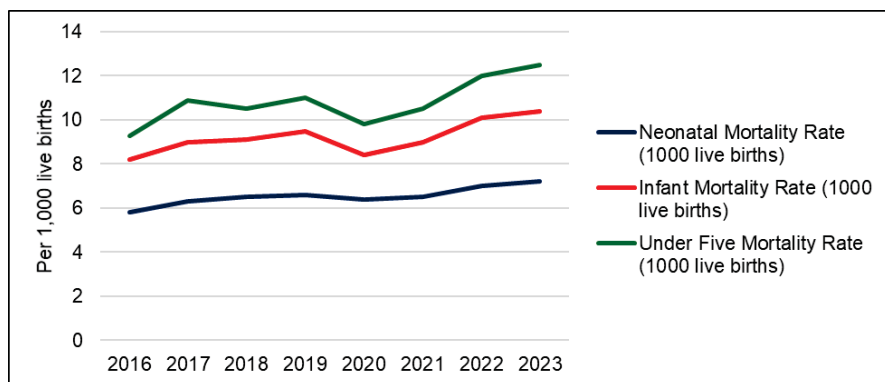
³⁶ *ibid*

Annual Health Bulletin of 2021, chronic NCDs accounted for 83% of deaths in the country. One of the main risk factors that contributes to the high prevalence of NCDs is the inadequate daily consumption of fruits and vegetables. According to a survey conducted in 2015, about 73% of adults did not consume the recommended servings of fruits and vegetables per day.³⁷

Coupling this low base consumption with the findings from newer studies such as by Jayawardena & Sooriyaarachchi³⁸ which observed a significant reduction in the consumption of fruits and vegetables is a signal of the potential further increase in the prevalence of NCDs.

Moreover, observing the trends in child mortality rates, there has been an uptick in the rate of neonatal, infant and under 5 mortality rates since the Covid-19 pandemic which began affecting Sri Lanka in 2020 (Figure 4). The rates have increased faster since the onset of the economic crisis.

Figure 4: Child mortality rates, Sri Lanka 2016-2023



Source: Family Health Bureau, Ministry of Health

While the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the rates of survival of babies cannot be discounted, the reduced investments into the

³⁷ “Directorate of Non-Communicable Diseases.” n.d. https://www.ncd.health.gov.lk/images/Annual_Report_2021-_Part_1.pdf.

³⁸ Ranil Jayawardena, Wasana Kodithuwakku, and Piumika Sooriyaarachchi. 2023. “The Impact of the Sri Lankan Economic Crisis on Medication Adherence: An Online Cross-Sectional Survey.” *Dialogues in Health* 2 (December): 100137–37. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dialog.2023.100137>.

healthcare sector, as well as the mass migration of skilled professionals like doctors and nurses is influencing this increase. Investigations show that there has been a stark reduction in the number of child specialists operating in the country due to migration. A number of neonatologists, for instance, who specialise in treating new-borns have migrated, the investigation finds, leaving a shortage of their skills needed in hospitals. Similarly, there is a shortage in the number of other paediatric specialists like neurologists and psychiatrists due to migration.³⁹

The migration of healthcare professionals extends beyond the paediatric sector. Trade unions report that nearly 25% of trained medical professionals have taken necessary action to migrate.⁴⁰ Another Al Jazeera investigation reveals that nearly 1,700 doctors, or nearly 10% of the doctors of the island, had left the country due to economic reasons.⁴¹

5. Other impacts

There has been a wide variety of social impacts that have been documented anecdotally, such as the impacts on education and access to electricity. A household survey on the impact of the economic crisis conducted by the Department of Census and Statistics, for instance, found that almost 55% of children aged 3-21 years had their education impacted due to the economic crisis.⁴²

³⁹ By Pamodi Waravita. 2024. "Child Specialist Migration: A Bleak Outlook for Children's Health." Latest in the News Sphere | the Morning. Liberty Publishers. February 18, 2024. <https://www.themorning.lk/articles/fQoOx6wVKa3xnGfFWzgt>.

⁴⁰ "Medical Brain Drain Worsens in Sri Lanka as 25% of Doctors Ready to Migrate - Report." 2025. Adaderana.lk. 2025. <https://www.adaderana.lk/news.php?nid=100016>.

⁴¹ Pathirana, Saroj. n.d. "'Fed Up': Doctor Exodus Bleeds Sri Lanka's Healthcare after Economic Crisis." Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2024/6/20/fed-up-doctor-exodus-bleeds-sri-lankas-healthcare-after-economic-crisis>.

⁴² "Household Survey on Impact of Economic Crisis – 2023 | Daily FT." n.d. Wwww.ft.lk. <https://www.ft.lk/opinion/Household-survey-on-impact-of-economic-crisis-2023/14-756727>.

According to the report, more than half (53.2%) took measures to either completely not purchase or reduce expenditure on new stationery. About 44% of those affected cut down on the purchase of new uniforms or stopped purchasing them altogether. Two in every 5 of those affected had reduced attending tuition classes.

School drop-out statistics, however, do not show a declining trend, and this can be attributed to the way in which school attendance is measured. A student is a dropout if he/she does not attend school for two consecutive months, however, according to a Sunday Times newspaper investigation, while the statistically-recorded dropouts have not grown significantly, the irregular attendance rate has grown due to the difficulties students and families face from the economic downturn.⁴³

In addition, there have been reports on a record high number of electricity disconnections due to inability to pay the bills (De Silva, 2024).⁴⁴ This is another negative social impact as access to electricity is a basic necessity. However, there is insufficient data available publicly to understand the real impacts on these measures. For instance, statistics on disconnections are not available in any reports available in the Ministry of Power & Energy website, nor are regular reports on student attendance available in the Ministry of Education website. So, whereas anecdotal evidence indicates a significant negative impact, it is difficult to assess the real impact that the economic crisis has had on these social indicators.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The rapid erosion of living standards in Sri Lanka since the onset of the economic crisis which eventually led to the country's first sovereign default is visible when observing trends in health,

⁴³ "Economic Crisis Throws Book at Education: Dropouts on the Rise." n.d. Print Edition - the Sunday Times, Sri Lanka. <https://www.sundaytimes.lk/240107/news/economic-crisis-throws-book-at-education-dropouts-on-the-rise-544434.html>.

⁴⁴ "Record High Electricity Disconnections in 2023 | Daily FT." 2024. Wwww.ft.lk. January 17, 2024. <https://www.ft.lk/front-page/Record-high-electricity-disconnections-in-2023/44-757415>.

nutrition and food security. There is further anecdotal evidence that suggests negative impacts on welfare on indicators related to education and access to electricity. Overall, this deterioration in living standards threatens Sri Lanka's prospects for a post-default economic growth which is both equitable and sustainable.

These problems require urgent action from the government to mitigate the possible long-term and persistent effects that may occur if such problems go unattended. Evidence from multiple studies show that an economic crisis and sovereign default episode can have long and persistent impacts. The erosion of food security, for instance, threatens both health and education outcomes as well as social stability. An unhealthy, malnourished and uneducated population cannot meaningfully contribute to deliver the kind of economic growth that Sri Lanka hopes for.

Coupling these observations with research that has been conducted on the impact of sovereign defaults and economic crises on these indicators, it is reasonable to assume that Sri Lanka could very well experience similar persistent impacts in the long-run. Therefore, urgent action is warranted. There are several policy measures which can be taken to immediately begin reversing these early, indicative trends.

In the immediate term, measures must be taken to boost food and nutrition security. Sri Lanka's inward-looking trade policies, for instance, includes a spate of tariffs and para-tariffs on imported food items and raw materials used in the production of food which makes production, as well as the prices of imported finished products more expensive. A removal of such tariffs and para-tariffs, and liberalising the country's import permit system would lead to an improvement in overall availability and affordability of nutritious food items.

Another immediate measure that must be taken is to re-align government budgets to substantially increase budget allocations to government nutrition programmes which target vulnerable groups like pregnant and lactating mothers, children, school children and those from income-insecure households. This, however cannot be

done without addressing the government's large expenditure problem. While the Sri Lankan government has embarked on a strong revenue consolidation drive which has levelled quite a burden on the public, it has failed to be as effective in consolidating government expenditures. State-owned enterprise reform, for instance, or even discussions on reducing the public sector workforce, have been glacial. Expenditure consolidation, therefore, is of high priority so that limited government budgets may be used for more urgent requirements like nutrition programmes.

In the medium to long-term, Sri Lanka's agriculture sector, which employs a significant proportion of the country's labour, but contributes marginally to the economy, is in need of sizable investments for modernisation. Traditional farming methods have made the sector uncompetitive and unable to meet local demand. Therefore, the government ought to step into facilitate investments to encourage technology adoption and a shift to modern farming practices. There are also several long-standing issues, such as ownership of land, which hinder the incentive to invest. These must be addressed in conjunction to facilitate growth of the sector with the objective of strengthening the country's food and nutrition security.

Out migration of skilled professionals like health and education workers have a detrimental impact on the outcomes of these sectors. The early signs indicate the size of the negative impact. While there is little that can be done to prevent the individual decision to migrate, measures must be taken to either retain or attract new workers into the sector. In addition to investing in training more healthcare professionals, Sri Lanka can also look at opening up the sector for foreign workers, which has thus far been a policy it has shied away from.

Regardless of the policy action necessary, the importance is the urgency with which action needs to be taken. While addressing these require significant public investment, a failure to do so could result in more persistent and long-term impacts which may become irreversible. For instance, a failure to address the severe food insecurity experienced at present could lead to a higher burden on

the state healthcare sector to provide treatments for increased non-communicable disease prevalence later on. Sri Lanka is still in a situation where it will be able to meaningful mitigate these impacts, therefore it must not miss the window of opportunity to do so.

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Economic Fragility as a National Security Risk: Implications for Bangladesh's State Resilience

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Farhana Rashid¹



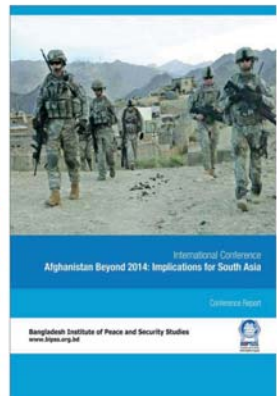
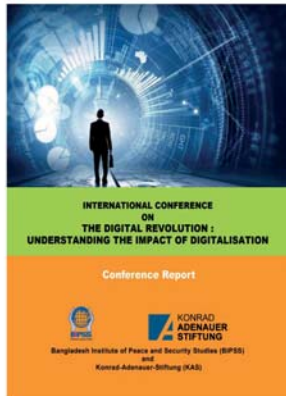
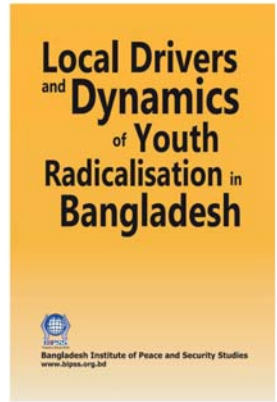
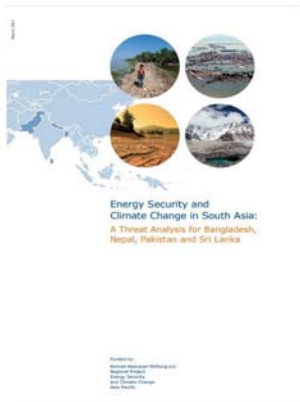
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Nabib Bin Zahid¹



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