

Climate Diplomacy In Indo-Pak Relations

Dost Barrech¹, Munir Ahmed², Sohail Anwar³, Aftab Aslam⁴, Dr. Mir Sadaat Baloch⁵, Rida Ejaz⁶

¹Lecturer, Department of International Relations, University of Balochistan (UOB), Quetta

²Lecturer, IR Department, BUIITEMS

³Lecturer, Department of International Relations Balochistan University of Information Technology, Engineering and Management Sciences

⁴Deputy Registrar, University of Makran, Panjgur

⁵Assistant Professor, Institute of Management Sciences, University of Balochistan, Quetta, Balochistan, Pakistan

⁶Bachelor of Science in International Relations, BUIITEMS Quetta

Abstract

The non-traditional threats posed by climate change to India and Pakistan are projected to be far greater than traditional threats in the near future. India is ranked as the fifth most vulnerable country to climate change, while Pakistan is ranked as the seventh most vulnerable. With sea levels expected to rise by 15-38 centimeters in India by 2050, major cities such as Kochi, Kolkata, and Mumbai are at risk. By 2030, over 40% of Indians may not have access to safe drinking water. The severe consequences of climate change will have long-lasting effects not only on India and Pakistan but also on the entire South Asian region. Between 1990 and 2008, over 750 million people, nearly 50% of South Asia's population, were affected by disasters, leading to nearly 230,000 deaths. India and Pakistan bear a greater responsibility to engage in climate diplomacy to protect this critical region from the anticipated dangers of climate change. Therefore, this paper will explore the effects of climate change on India and Pakistan and examine how climate diplomacy can be an opportunity for both nations to abandon their traditional hostility and initiate a new era of cooperation to address the impending threats of climate change.

Keywords: Green House Gases, Agriculture Sector, Heatwaves, Floods, Reforestation, Green Economy.

Introduction

In today's international political landscape, states are increasingly witnessing the devastating effects of climate change. Ostensibly, climate change appears to be a bigger threat than conventional threats engulfing the entire world in its grip and causing economic, political and social losses. The US is believed to have been the largest emitter of carbon gasses. The amount of greenhouse gases generated by taxes in a single US state exceeds that of the entire African continent. Most notably, per individual in the US annually produces more than 20 tonnes of greenhouse gases in the environment. However,

it would be utterly unfair to blame the US as the real culprit for producing more greenhouse gases. Both the US and China are the largest emitters of greenhouse gases. Following the US and China, other developed nations within the G-20 group are also recognized as major contributors to greenhouse gas emissions, which contribute to climate change. (Joshua S. Goldstein and Jon C. Pevehouse). Humans are the culprit, destabilizing the global biosphere, taking excessive resources out of the environment, pumping back into it in massive quantities of waste and altering the composition of water as well as the environment. (Yuval Noah Harari, 2018)

On the other hand, the ramifications of climate change are far larger for developing countries. South Asia is one of the most vulnerable regions of the world to climate change. Against this backdrop, Pakistan is the world's 7th most vulnerable country to climate change. According to the European Union data, Pakistan merely emits less than 1 per cent of the world's planet-warming gases. The incumbent Prime Minister of Pakistan Shehbaz Sharif in his addresses to the 77th session of the United Nations General Assembly at the UN headquarters on September 23, 2022, unequivocally said to the world that climate injustices are done to Pakistan while latter makes little contribution to global warming but confronting its worst consequences. PM Shehbaz Sharif also offered an olive branch to New Delhi emphasising that coping with climate change, promoting peace, progress and stability were prerequisites for the region. Shehbaz appealed to the world that "Why are my people paying the price of such high global warming through no fault of their own?"

He also accentuated that "Nature has unleashed her fury on Pakistan without looking at our carbon footprint, which is next to nothing. Our actions did not contribute to this." (Anwar Iqbal, 2022) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Pakistan's Foreign Minister while giving an interview with CNN said that to be frank, the industrialization of wealthy nations that led to climate change has resulted in the people of Pakistan, the citizens of Pakistan, paying the cost with their lives and livelihoods. (Rachel Ramirez, 2022).

Meanwhile, India is unlikely to remain immune to the devastations of climate change, it is the fifth most vulnerable climate prone country. (Esha Roy, 2019). If both India and Pakistan in the future remain unprepared for the foreseen challenges of climate change and will endure irreparable economic, political, social and cultural losses. It seems that climate change may actually be a blessing in disguise for the long-standing rivalry between India and Pakistan, as it

has opened up opportunities for shared interests and cooperation between the two nations. They are impelled to promote climate diplomacy which is the need of the time that can save us from further severe damages. Above all, climate diplomacy will nib in the bed of the enduring rivalry between Pakistan and India.

Research Methodology

The proposed research study will utilize a mixed methods approach that incorporates both primary and secondary sources. To gather primary sources, the study will conduct interviews with public officials, analyze government archives, and consult civil society organizations. Secondary sources will include research articles, review articles, and biographies. Data collection methods will rely on documents such as policies, bulletins, newsletters, policy statements, as well as responses obtained through interviews.

Implications of climate change on Pakistan

Pakistan geographically is located at the highest disaster risk level. The country in 2019 was ranked 18 out of 191 countries on the Inform Risk Index. It has resultantly been witnessing frequent floods and heatwave destruction. The agriculture sector is a fuel of the economy contributing 23 per cent to the GDP and creating 45 per cent of jobs in Pakistan. However, the agriculture sector is the most vulnerable to natural hazards. (Climate Change Knowledge portal). Flooding caused by climate change is not a new phenomenon in Pakistan. The land of pure is vulnerable to maximum natural hazards. It is prone to earthquakes, drought floods, cyclone storms, heavy monsoons and famines. As far as the report of the Federal Food Commission is concerned, Pakistan since 1947 has experienced 28 super riverine floods. The aforementioned floods killed 13,262 precious human lives and affected nearly 616,558 square kilometres of land. The persuasive and immediate outcomes of the disaster will be felt in the shape of

unemployment, displacement, health crises, infrastructure damages, loss of lives, water and food scarcity, outward migration, livestock losses, loss of social capital and destruction of crops. (Mansoor Raza, 2022)

Floods of 2022 in Pakistan so far alone have affected 33 million people and caused a great deal of damage to houses, public infrastructure and crops. The estimated damage of the flooding to Pakistan's economy so far is USD30 billion dollar. It is worth mentioning here that the total foreign export of Pakistan is USD31 billion dollar. The likelihood of further flooding may put Pakistan at a disadvantageous position. U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres while visiting the affected areas of Pakistan said that he had never seen such horrific destruction caused by climate change and reiterated that Pakistan was drowning in both debts and floods. Guterres appealed to the world to support Pakistan in such a crunch time and maintained that today it was Pakistan tomorrow that might be another country. By warning the world, Guterres said that "As we continue to see more and more extreme weather events around the world, it is outrageous that climate action is being put on the back burner as global emissions of greenhouse gases are still rising, putting all of us everywhere in growing danger." (The Washington Post, 2022)

Flood devastations have been experienced in the most productive and fertile land of Pakistan. According to preliminary estimates, nearly 45 per cent of agricultural land in 2022 have been ruthlessly destroyed, 65 per cent main crops of the country including 70 per cent of rice were swept away in the flooding and more than 3 million livestock perished. (Sarfray Ahmed, Dr. Siraj Bashir & Mumtaz Ali, 2019) Pakistan is extremely likely to import food, importing food will increase inflation and exacerbate the balance of payments. Prior to the floods, food inflation was expected to be at 26 per cent which currently has culminated into a 500 per cent increase. The poor segment of society will bear the brunt,

floods and inflation will plunge them into further excruciating hardships. (The News, 2022)

Pakistan in 2022 witnessed the worst form of heatwaves. During the last six decades, the warmest March on record was observed in the country, breaking the record for the month of March. The country in the pre-monsoon period particularly during May underwent extreme high temperatures. In its latest Sixth Assessment Report, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) cautioned the South Asian countries that the heat waves were forecasted to be extreme and intense in the prevailing century in South Asia. Temperatures of Jacobabad and Nawabshah at end of April 2022 touched 49 Celsius resulting in 65 deaths. The heatwaves of 2022 stood out for three legitimate reasons. First, it reached early, encompassed a large area and continued for a long duration. (Dareen Abughaida, 2022)

Experts believe that Pakistan's vulnerability to climate change has intensified by its proximity to India and China. Both industrialized states are causing the rapid melting of glaciers in the Himalayas. Burning of fossil fuels and excessive utilization of forests have released sufficient greenhouse gases polluting the atmosphere causing floods, wildfires, droughts and tropical storms in South Asia in general, Pakistan in particular. The frequent hot and dry weather in Pakistan affects the production of crops, and orchards and decreases the water reservoirs. The frequent melting ice in the Himalayas increases the likelihood of floods. In the past decade, there has been a significant deterioration in the air quality. The large areas of Pakistan are in jeopardy of extreme fires causing economic, political and social losses. (South China Morning Post, 2022). Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) in its latest summary opined that frequent high temperatures damaged wheat production, the prices of wheat will enhance exponentially. Soaring food prices even are higher in Pakistan than across the world. (Faiza Ilyas, 2022)

Senator Sherry Rehman, Federal Minister for Climate expressed that climate change was a matter of national security for Pakistan. It will as a threat multiply, increasing the risks of vulnerabilities and moving the country towards growing competition over scarce and depleting resources. She added. (The News, 2022) To read her statement between the lines, it can be argued that climate change is a bigger threat to Pakistan than traditional threats. Climate change-relevant incidents are threatening grains and wheat. Islamabad has already been importing rice, wheat and sugar in large proportions. There is the possibility of food insecurity in the country. The 2022 heatwaves resulted in an unprecedented surge in electricity demand, leading to power shortages for power plants.

The economy of Pakistan has been heavily impacted by climate change, with predicted losses to the country's GDP ranging between 6 to 8 percent. Due to water scarcity and high temperatures and other pertinent climate change-related events in 2022, Pakistan is likely to confront with 10 per cent reduction in wheat production and a 20 per cent reduction in mangoes. The country currently bears the brunt of the wheat crisis and imports wheat from Ukraine. The crisis in Ukraine will only exacerbate concerns within the country due to import of the wheat. So far, Pakistan's wheat requirement is estimated to be 30 million tons but the production of wheat according to agriculturalists is unlikely to exceed 26 million tons due to ultra-high temperatures and extreme drought in March 2022. (M. Waqar Bhatti, 2022)

Growing water scarcity in Pakistan

Currently, water scarcity is considered one of Pakistan's most critical issues. The country is believed to be the most water-stressed nation in South Asia, and it is projected to experience severe water scarcity by 2025. (Huma Yousaf, 2020) Experts believe that the country's dependence on a single river is exceedingly

dangerous. The Indus River system accounts for nearly 96 per cent of Pakistan's total water renewable resources. The impacts of climate change on the Indus River system cannot be ruled out. (Nazam Maqbool, 2022)

Pakistan is already experiencing the impacts of the water crisis, with approximately 30 million people in the country lacking access to clean water. In 24 major cities of the country, 80 per cent masses lack access to clean water while nearly 16 million slum dwellers of Karachi which is the largest city in Pakistan are deprived of clean water. The UN in its report says that presently three billion people face water shortages across the globe while one billion people face severe hunger. Water crises have been ranked by the Global Risks Report of the World Economic Forum as the third most global destructive risk to humanity. The World Bank report demonstrates that Pakistan's water scarcity occurs due to an outdated irrigation system, poor water resource management, as well as poor water service delivery through municipal units. Experts are of the view that burgeoning population growth and the ageing water infrastructure are also attributed to water scarcity. Melting glaciers will further add fuel to the fire (Mian Ahmad Naeem Salik, 2022).

The consequences of climate change for India

Climate change has affected not only Pakistan but the entire South Asian region, including India. The region of South Asia is connected with the Himalayan peaks of Nepal and Bhutan having a fertile delta of Bangladesh, the jewel-like islands of Sri Lanka, the peninsula of India and the Maldives in the Indian Ocean. The physical landscape of South Asia is greatly climate prone and experiencing a rapid array of climate change, encompassing rising sea levels, glacial melt, saline water intrusion coastal soil erosion and heatwaves. The region faces abnormal monsoons and intense storms that have exacerbated natural

disasters in recent years. The region has more than 600 million absolute poor. The world more than half the poor masses live in this part of the world who are significantly relying on climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture, traditional fishing and forestry. (Asian Development Bank)

While, India is the world's 5th most vulnerable country to climate change. The sea level in India by 2050 is forecasted to rise by around 15–38 centimetres affecting major cities like Mumbai, Kolkata and Kochi putting regional growth at stake. It is exceedingly exposed to land erosion nearly 26 per cent coastline is prone to erosion losing approximately 450 hectares of land each year. (World Bank 2009). The heat waves of 2022 affected both India and Pakistan badly. Scientists are of the view that heatwaves in India will further intensify nearly by 15 per cent by 2030. According to a McKinsey report "heatwaves translate into a projected 2.5 per cent to 4.5 per cent, or \$150 billion to \$250bn, the risk to the country's gross domestic product".

According to Ruchika Bhagat, Managing Director of NBC Advisors in New Delhi, India may face losses worth trillions of dollars due to climate change-related incidents in the upcoming years. Bhagat emphasizes that climate change is not a problem that pertains to the future but is a pressing issue of our time, with tangible and impactful effects. Meanwhile, the Chairman of the Indian Biogas Association, Gaurav Kedia maintains that "The overall impact of climate change on the economy is manifold as it will affect agriculture, infrastructure, as well as human health," (Rebecca Bundhun, 2022)

Kedia contends that the agriculture sector is crucial to India's GDP and is currently under tremendous pressure. The impending heatwaves will cause crop production to decline, exacerbating the impact on the country's GDP. Indian half population gets bread and butter from the agriculture sector. The sector is believed to have been accounting for nearly 20 per cent of the

GDP of the country. "India being an agricultural economy and already burdened with population overgrowth needs to take climate change seriously," Mr Kedia added. (Rebecca Bundhun, 2022)

Indian growing obsession with traditional threats negates the ramifications of climate change. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has cautioned Indian policymakers that the country will face imminent threats of climate change. The report maintains that the "impact of a 1.5C increase in global temperatures will disproportionately affect disadvantaged and vulnerable populations through food insecurity, higher food prices, income losses, lost livelihood opportunities, adverse health impacts, and population displacements" (Dost Muhammad Barrech, 2020)

India's population is increasing at a rapid speed, the country in 2050 is predicted to be home to approximately 1.6 billion people. The rise in population will enhance the demand for water, food and electricity. The foreseen threats of water are extremely likely to decrease the availability of water. India is the world's largest user of groundwater usage. More worrisomely, the country at the current juncture merely has four per cent world's total usable water resources. Inhabitants of the country since the 1960s lack access to pure water, food and sanitation. The steep rise in the heatwaves will further aggravate the economic and political woes of India. Climate change, growing population, urbanization, debilitating water mismanagement, and greater variability in precipitation are the genuine factors intensifying poverty and hunger.

To bear in mind, the Indian civilization was entirely dependent on irrigation. It is the first time in the annals of the country that it will confront severe water shortages. More than 40 per cent of Indians in 2030 will not have access to pure water. Every year nearly 200,000 Indians die because of polluted water. India must

contemplate the economic impacts of climate change and engage in climate diplomacy with Pakistan to address the non-traditional threats that pose a risk to both nations. (Modern Diplomacy, 2020)

Why is Climate diplomacy prerequisite in Indo-Pak Relations?

The climate crisis is widely considered as one of the biggest challenges facing humanity in the 21st century, with significant geopolitical and geo-economics implications for the entire world. The temperatures across the world are increasing by leaps and bounds due to the greenhouse gas emissions resulting in the rise of sea level, drying up water sources and threatening the lives and livelihoods of the people. Harsh weather, dangerous storms, deadly heat waves, unexpected weather, intense rain, uncontrollable wildfire and drought, have become more frequent and put the lives of people in jeopardy. The devastations of climate change are unimaginable, altering the complexion of international politics with the steep rise. (What is climate diplomacy).

Under such fragile circumstances, states are reassessing their foreign policies and pondering upon climate diplomacy to save this stunning planet from further destruction. Climate diplomacy at the current juncture appears to have been a buzzword. Climate diplomacy is based on the utilization of diplomatic tools to alleviate the negative impacts of climate change, reducing greenhouse gases, and bringing peace, stability and prosperity. It also involves bringing climate change agenda in foreign policy objectives aimed at strengthening multilateralism, confidence and peacebuilding. Climate diplomacy entails risk management strategies and preparing accurate risk assessments at a global strategic level. The above-mentioned objectives can be accomplished by prioritizing climate action with global and regional players, holding diplomatic dialogues, external policy instruments and public diplomacy. (Alexander Carius, 2017)

The climate diplomacy of Pakistan ought to construct a development model concentrating on adaptation, boosting engagement with India on the matter like technology and finance. The technological cooperation between Pakistan and India is likely to pave the way for economic gains and will cement regional engagement. By prioritizing its national interests, Pakistan needs to get engaged in the international process of climate change with the West as well as India. (Ali Tauqeer Sheikh, 2021). Prioritizing climate diplomacy in the foreign policy of Pakistan vis-à-vis India is a need of the time. Climate change ought not to be viewed merely from the environmental and economic point of view, it will also affect the strategic considerations of Pakistan. For Islamabad, prioritizing its neighborhood policy appears to be crucial in tackling climate challenges. To promote climate diplomacy with India, Pakistan is extremely likely to become a responsible regional leader as far as climate change challenges and projection of soft power are concerned. (Aimen Ayaz, 2020)

“The Ten Billion Tree Tsunami Programme” led by the previous government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf PTI was a much-needed effort for the projection of the climate diplomacy of Pakistan. The initiative of the former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan was appreciated by the world community to cope with the challenges of climate change. The UN Climate Change Conference which was held in 2015 maintained that “the only positive news coming out of Pakistan at the conference was KP’s ‘Billion tree tsunami’”. Meanwhile, Christian Science Monitor in 2016, confessed that “the plantation of 250 million saplings amid the continued deforestation since independence which reduced Pakistan’s forest cover from 33% to a mere 3-5%”. (Muhammad Bilal Farooq, 2017)

Robert D. Kaplan rightly argues that "to see the 21st century truly, one's eyes must learn a different set of aesthetics". He showed excellent research work claiming that threats of the 21st

century would be entirely different from those of the 20th century. According to Kaplan, the biggest threats of the current century are not posed by nuclear weapons, but rather by issues such as resource scarcity, overpopulation, disease, and environmental degradation. Kaplan's environmentalist approach is the only game in the town in the 21st century in International politics. Modern diplomatic presently holding conferences and summits to discuss climate change. (Robert D. Kaplan, 1994)

The degrading environment of the world has been impelling the statecrafts to deliberate on sustainability for their survival. The survival of plants requires a collective approach and making consultation among the states is becoming a matter of survival for mankind first time in history. India, on the other hand, cannot live in the isolation and must soon realize that climate diplomacy with Pakistan is a prerequisite not only for ending the enduring rivalry but also for saving mankind from the devastation of climate change. (Nick Mabey, Liz Gallagher, and Camilla Born, 2020).

The US leaves no stone unturned to contain China but has also realized the importance of the climate crisis, currently, desires to work with China to curb the climate crisis. The US president and Chinese president in November 2021 made unexpected cooperation on climate change at the COP26 climate summit. Both presidents reaffirmed that they could work together to mitigate methane emissions and other climate-related initiatives. Experts are of the view that such steps by two great powers will create the possibility of future cooperation in climate diplomacy. Steve Tsang a renowned professor and director of SOAS China Institute at the University of London articulates that "I think we previously liked to think that this was a Donald Trump problem, but it's quite clear that it's not specific to the Trump Administration and it's structural," (Amy Gunia, 2021)

US former president Barack Obama in 2014 with his Chinese counterpart XI reaffirmed their commitment to mitigate climate change. They asserted that climate change no doubt was one of the greatest threats to humanity. The two presidents also vowed to implement domestic climate policy, consolidate bilateral coordination and cooperation, climate-resilient economies, to promote sustainable development, low-carbon and the transition to green. New Delhi and Islamabad should get into introspection and ponder over the areas where the US and China are making cooperation. India and Pakistan need to learn a much-needed lesson from the US and China's cooperation in climate change to cement climate diplomacy. (The White House, 2015)

Suggestions

- "Climate change poses a greater threat than terrorism," as stated by David King. Therefore, it is imperative for Islamabad and New Delhi to recognize the significance of climate diplomacy in addressing the anticipated threats posed by climate change.
- To promote environmental sustainability, it is important for both New Delhi and Islamabad to work together towards reforestation efforts and transition to cleaner and more efficient sources of fuel for their economies.
- Collective agreements are needed in Indo-Pak relations, like the Sino-Japanese environmental cooperation, to plan innovative ways to curb climatic challenges.
- Both countries should work on establishing domestically alternative efficient energy sources.
- The Indus Water Treaty IWT ought to be renegotiated in such a way that could also include climate crisis and pollution on the Indus River.
- It is high time to reassess realpolitik in the foreign policies of both countries.

Both states should realize the fact that their rivalry is socially constructed and should promote climate diplomacy to nib the bid their enduring hostility.

- Pakistan has changed its foreign policy from geopolitics to geo-economics. Islamabad desires to have cordial ties with New Delhi and the latter should not miss the bus by mending ties with the latter.
- South Asia stands out as the world's least economically integrated region, with even the African continent exhibiting greater economic interdependence. It is crucial for both nations to prioritize economic diplomacy to lay the foundation for the advancement of climate diplomacy.
- The international community commended Pakistan's initiative to establish the Kartarpur corridor, which has the potential to evolve into an economic corridor in the future. This corridor, if extended, could facilitate trade and commerce between Pakistan and India, fostering religious harmony and people-to-people connections while also promoting climate diplomacy.
- India is the second largest consumer of energy; it needs to mend ties with Pakistan to get land access to the Middle East and Central Asia. The interdependence of both countries, by and large, will promote climate diplomacy.
- The resumption of Sports diplomacy needs to be promoted to consolidate climate diplomacy.
- The old adage "seeing is believing" highlights the importance of showcasing the effects of climate change and taking practical steps to combat it through cinema. To promote climate diplomacy, it is crucial for both nations to establish exchange programs for their respective

film industries, enabling them to collaborate on projects that raise awareness about climate change.

- In order to make significant strides in addressing climate change and ultimately promote climate diplomacy, it is essential for both nations to prioritize cooperation in the area of research and development.
- There is a need for educational institutions in both countries to research to raise awareness and encourage debate about climate change.
- It is imperative for both nations to transcend mere rhetoric and take concrete actions to tackle the challenges posed by climate change.
- India and Pakistan need to learn a lesson from the US and China's cooperation in climate change with the aim of cementing climate diplomacy.

Conclusion

Security threats in the last millennia in international politics underwent rapid changes. Threats even after every decade witness a steep change. In the 21st century, climate change is definitely a bigger threat than a traditional threat. Developed states, presently, are obsessed with climate change making headways to cope with non-traditional threats. Meanwhile, Pakistan and India in the current arena of international politics are the unique both are preoccupied with enduring rivalry for the last 75 years, spending a whopping amount on their military expenditures. New Delhi and Islamabad have a strong inclination towards realism theory believing in the maximization of power at the expense of human development and prosperity of the region. It is very ironic, both states so far have not comprehended the critics of the realism theory.

Bringing home the critics of realism theory in the foreign policies of both countries, by all means, will improve ties. The genuine critics of the theory are the lack of economic interdependence,

the overshadowing of non-traditional threats and intra-state warfare. Suffice it to say that ignoring the critics of the realism theory has contributed to the perpetuation of hostility between the two nations for the past 75 years. However, the emergence of non-traditional threats, such as climate change, cannot be ignored any longer. Cooperation on such issues could pave the way for a new chapter of friendship between the two nations.

It is high time to observe the relationships between India and Pakistan through the prism of social constructivism theory which states that enmity and friendships are socially constructed. To save people of the South Asia from further destruction by climate change, India and Pakistan will have to construct climate diplomacy. Pakistan and India are the world's 7th and 5th most affected countries by climate change respectively. India and Pakistan are also the 2nd and 5th populous countries of the world and are massively dependent on the agriculture sector. Bear in mind, the agriculture sectors of both countries are the most vulnerable sectors to climate change. Pakistan's agriculture sector contributes 23 per cent to the country's GDP and creates 45 per cent of job opportunities while agriculture contributes 20 per cent to India's GDP. It, thus, is a naive approach to ignore the foreseen challenges of climate change.

As developed states shift their focus from traditional threats to non-traditional threats, it is crucial for Pakistan and India to follow suit. The promotion of climate diplomacy can serve a dual purpose, saving people from the devastating effects of climate change while also putting an end to the longstanding rivalry between these two arch-rivals. It is no longer an option for them to ignore the need for climate diplomacy.

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