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Pakistani Citizens' Escape Reasons from a Climate Change Point of View Through the Example of the Kashmir Region

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Abstract

The aim of this chapter is to monitor the effects of migration to the European Union, primarily to Hungary caused by, among other things, climate change, in relation to the Pakistani citizens from the Azad Jammu and Kashmir province of Pakistan, as well as its future impact on the European Union and Hungary.

First I analyzed the main reasons of the Pakistani refugees for seeking asylum and their number among the total number of asylumseekers. The first part of the paper presents some statistics made available by the institutions of the European Union and the Hungarian authorities. In the following part of the publication the history of the Kashmir Region is presented, followed by the problems based on the religious and economical background of the conflict. Unemployment and overpopulation are the two most serious economic problems of the regions.

In the third part of the study I introduce an overview of the problems created by climate change in Pakistan, in particular the Kashmir Region. Based on the above-mentioned problems, I conclude that we will face a new, ever increasing wave of migrants from Pakistan, and its Azad Jammu and Kashmir province in the next decade.

Keywords: Kashmir, Pakistan, climate change, over-population, water conflict, religious war, unemployment, migration, refugees

Preliminary remarks

Over the last few years, almost every day we could hear about migration from the Asian and African continent to Europe, which became massive in its scope after the events of the Arab Spring in 2011. The management of migration challenges is increasingly urgent for the organizations and offices dealing with migration issues. At the state, regional and expert meetings and discussions, it became evident that problem-solving at the European level should not specifically address the resettlement of the refugees arriving here but primarily about exploring the root of the problem and its handling which in this case means the effec-

tive responses to wars, economic problems and climate change. In this publication, I study one of the segments of the above: the migratory flow that affects Hungary's safety, narrowing down the problem to one country of origin, in particular reflecting to its climatic reasons.

In the background of the migration of Pakistani citizens from the Kashmir region there are mainly ethnic, religious and safety problems. Since the British withdrawal and the evolution of new states, the region is characterized by continuous tension. For the time being, it is rich in water resources, however, the distribution and treatment of water is problematic. Religious reasons – the majority of the population of Pakistani-controlled Kashmir is Muslim – provide a basis for the conflict which have not been settled satisfactorily by the leaders of the states in the region. The other factor contributing to the conflict – as another root cause – is the climate change whose negative tendency exacerbates the situation: due to the water conflict the region's safety is becoming more unstable, therefore people who live there flee their homes because of the conflicts and the unliveable environment.

In the last few years, Hungary has been affected significantly by the migratory flow. According to the European Union statistics, Pakistani citizens ranked 4th regarding filed asylum applications whereas according to Hungarian data they ranked 2nd. Our country is apparently very much affected by the migratory flow from Pakistan, so I consider it important to shed light on the causes by which Hungary can prepare for not progressively reducing migratory pressure.

Pakistani illegal/legal border crossers in Hungary and in the European Union

Between 15 September 2015 and 12 June 2016, the number of asylum applications filed in Hungary was 19,697¹ of which 2988 persons were Pakistanis. In the nationality rankings of the applicants, Pakistanis are in the 2nd place. Analyzing the statistics submitted by the member states of the European Union we can see that Pakistani applicants appeared in significant numbers in front of the asylum offices of the member states. In case of Pakistani applicants, the ratio of both the recognition as a refugee and as someone being eligible for subsidiary protection is particularly low while the ratio of the rejected is significant,² since in Pakistan none of the reasons listed in the Geneva Convention as a basis for refugee status exist (Eurostat, 2016a; 2016b; 2016c). Specifically in this regard no statistics have been compiled neither by the Eurostat, nor at the Hungarian Immigration and Asylum Office, though the latter has a data base which collects the answers to questions relating to the countries of origin according to which people who arrived from Azad Jammu and Kashmir mentioned religious tensions and armed conflicts as the reasons for their flight.

¹ The official statistics of the Immigration and Nationality Office sent by e-mail.

² According to the statistics of the EU member states, in the final quarter of 2015, as regards for Pakistanis, the 27% of the applicants are provided with some kind of protection.

Kashmir

■ The divided Kashmir



Figure 1
The Kashmir region

Source: MIEHLE et al., 2012: 90.

The administrative parts of the Kashmir region: Azad Jammu/Northern Areas (as part of Pakistan), Azad Jammu and Kashmir (as part of India), and a smaller area of the region that belongs to China.

The historical roots of the conflicts of the Kashmir region

The discord between India and Pakistan has been the trigger for three serious armed conflicts, two of which was fought for Kashmir. Kashmir consists of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir region at the north-west of the Himalayas, Ladakh, Baltistan, and Gilgit. British India, as part of the British Empire, in 1947, at the dissolution of the colonial empire, was split into the Hindu-majority India and the Muslim-majority Pakistan. Jammu and Kashmir princely state with a special status was an exception from this division, having a Muslim-majority population and Hindi leaders headed by Maharaja Singh who preferred to become independent and remain neutral between the successor dominions.

In October 1947, Pakistani-supported armed forces invaded the Kashmir region. The maharaja asked for a military support from India and immediately joined the Indian Union and let Delhi take control of defence, transport and foreign affairs. Pakistan opposed this step and declared it unlawful since according to Pakistan the maharaja ignored the will of the Muslim community, constituting the majority of the population. So Pakistan sent armed men into the region. In order to prevent the outbreak of the war, the UN mediated between the parties, which resulted in a ceasefire in January 1949 and the delineating of a temporary border line which the parties mutually recognized: almost two-thirds of the total area of approximately 223 thousand square metres – together with the capital Srinagar – came under the direct rule of India, while slightly more than one-third of the area was brought under Pakistani administration. Muzaffarabad became the capital of the Pakistani Kashmir area, and the region got a new name: Azad Kashmir. In 1957, despite the fact that the larger part of Kashmir was under its jurisdiction, India annexed the whole region by renaming its own region (Jammu and Kashmir), defying thus the decision of the United Nations Security Council (WILHELM *et al.*, 2016).

The next episode of the conflicts affecting the two countries was the construction of the highway of strategic importance in 1959, which was started by China, during which Chinese troops entered the north-west part of the Kashmir region and occupied the Aksai Chin plateau of Ladakh which belonged to India and also a strip of land that belonged to Pakistan. The next event was the Sino-Indian War in 1962 which was lost by India. “For the time being, 45% of the former Jammu and Kashmir princely state belongs to India, one-third to Pakistan, and the remaining part is controlled by China. Their aggravated conflict escalated into open warfare again in 1965 and 1971. As a result of the latter, Bangladesh got detached from Pakistan” (TERASZ, 2001).

The economic conditions of the region

Pakistan is traditionally an agricultural country: agriculture is accounting for 21% of the GDP and employs 45% of the total workforce (Ministry of Finance, Government of Pakistan, 2011). This is outperformed only by mining and the textile industry within the industrial sector (Economy Watch Content, 2010). The 62% of the population lives in rural areas thus it is directly or indirectly linked to agriculture. The water, which is important in terms of agriculture, is available in this region in abundance through the rivers arriving from the Himalayas, however, in addition to the warm weather in the southern provinces the biggest problems are caused by the significant amount of rain, the plunging rainfall and water scarcity (SARWAR, 2014). The dwindling water that is delivered from the northern rivers to the south through the drainage system provides for 90% of the water demand of the Pakistani agricultural lands. This is the biggest challenge for Pakistan’s agriculture since the rainy period occurs during monsoon; however, lately these periods were characterized either by major floods or low rainfall.



Figure 2
The Indus River System

Source: <https://dineshdhapudkar.wordpress.com/2015/09/22/drainage-system-of-india/>
 (23.05.2016)

In the Kashmir region, however, big streams that take their sources from the Himalayan glaciers provide safe water supply for Pakistan as a whole, but despite the system of sewerage there are only a low number of water reservoirs in the country, therefore plenty of fresh water enters the Arabian Sea unutilized. The valley of the Indus branching off from the glaciers in the Himalayas is shared by several countries: Pakistan enjoys the utilization of 60% of the river's catchment area, while India has only 20%, according to the *Indus Water Treaty*. In the water treaty signed in 1960 Pakistan and India shared the use of the Indus river system and the limitation of water yield (World Bank, 1960). The parties more or less adhere to the agreement; however, based on its content, Pakistan's fear has been confirmed namely that in case of war India can turn off the tap (SAYFO, 2009).

The melting of glaciers of the Himalayas has accelerated, too. Some researchers believe that at the current pace of climate change (GROSSMANN, 2015) by 2035 glaciers would melt as a result of which, for example, Pakistan would practically be left without drinking water. Due to the melting of the glaciers, certain cities and regions suffer from depopulation which process has already begun. The inhabitants of the affected areas will become internally displaced people or, according to pessimistic Pakistani scenarios, due to the warmer and more unbearable climate, set off in the direction of other continents.

In Pakistan, unemployment has been around 6% for years. As regards to local wages, I would mention the basic salary of unqualified employees at the bottom of the wage pyramid which is 12-13 thousand Pakistani Rupees per month (PAYCHEK, 2016), equalling about 150 Euros.³ Regarding unemployment, a factor worth mentioning is population growth. According to the prognosis of the experts, the population of Pakistan will rise from the current 188 million to 300 million by 2050. The country is the 5th most populated in the world, and according to projections it would retain this position until 2050 (Express Tribune, 2015). Taking into account the negative effects of climate change, the unemployment rate would rise leading to social tensions and further exodus.

Due to the low wages and mainly to the limited economic opportunities of the underdeveloped northern areas, people living there headed to economically developed countries to look for better opportunities. Active Pakistani employees work in large numbers in the Middle East and in Europe. Pakistani migration to Europe began in the 1950s. During that period the migrants' priority target was Great Britain: the constructions starting after World War I absorbed the newly arriving workforce, primarily coming from the Kashmir region and Punjab. At that time, for physical work people were not required to have appropriate qualifications, and primarily hard-working young men were needed by the British economy who were willing to work for low wages. Migration continued in the 1960s: by that time qualified or more educated Pakistanis had migrated to Great Britain and other states of Europe – primarily to Germany and the Scandinavian countries – within the framework of legal migration (YOUSEF, 2013). Pakistani migrants arriving in the recent period choose Europe as their place of residence due to conflicts and economic problems. This third migratory wave primarily takes place illegally, with the help of human smuggler networks. Some of them file asylum applications or enter the Schengen area legally, as a tourist or with student visas and after their residence permit expired they stay in Europe illegally (YOUSEF, 2013).

Climate conflict in the world and in the Kashmir region—conclusion

One of the primary concerns of the climate change, which has been accelerating in the last decades, is water scarcity and the inadequate distribution and treatment of water. Two-thirds of the Earth's surface is covered by water which is a constituent of the atmosphere as well. Fresh water in the polar icecap amounts to 3% of this water supply (1.4 billion km³) and only the remaining 0.5% is the available fresh water. So, as regards of its water supply, the Kashmir region is considered a great power – until the complete disappearance of the glaciers – which was realized by the powers that share the region.

³ www.x-rates.com/calculator/?from=PKR&to=HUF&amount=12000 (10.06.2016)

“The next war in the Middle East will be fought over water, not politics,”⁴ said Dr. Boutros Ghali, the then UN Secretary-General back in 1985 (BBC, 2003). This famous saying proved to be all too accurate, if we consider the recent events, including the Syrian war whose root cause was seen by experts decades ago the water crisis underlying the increasingly tense religious issue. According to the mean temperature data available for Pakistan and the rest of the world, temperature has risen sharply since 2000.

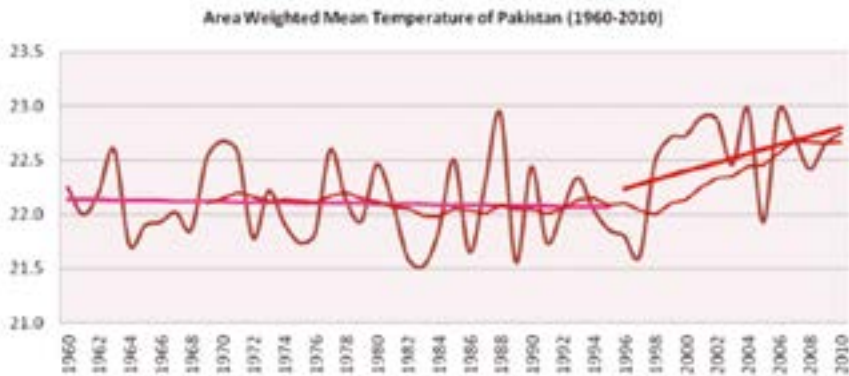


Figure 3

Weighted average temperature data in Pakistan between 1960 and 2010

Source: PMD (2012)

In the last decade, researchers observed warming on the territory of Azad Jammu and Kashmir as well and in this context raised awareness of the already mentioned glacier melting. In the light of the above, it can be said that environmental problems will generate further conflicts and regarding the already arisen conflicts further escalation can be expected in the currently unstable countries and regions as regards safety, as a result of which hundreds of thousands or millions of people will be forced to flee their homes.

Population growth breaks records: to date, Asia is the most densely populated continent, 60% of the Earth's population live here. The African population is growing fast, too: between 1975 and 2000 the continent's population nearly doubled to almost 811 million people, and researchers predict 2.2 billion inhabitants by 2050 in the economically underdeveloped areas which are most exposed to climate change. Consequently, millions of people are expected to leave the region in hope for a better life towards North America and Europe, including Hungary. Our country is currently considered a transit country; however, as Northern and Western European countries, which are in economically better positions, become saturated and social benefits provided for the marginalized mass of people are to be cut, Hungary may as well become a target country. For the reasons stated above – population growth, unemployment, armed conflicts due to water, unbearably warm periods – before long from the southern parts of Pakistan, and sooner or later from Azad Jammu and Kashmir regions in the northern part of the country as well, an increasing number of illegal migrants and asylum applicants are expected to arrive to Europe, including Hungary.

⁴ “The next war in the Middle East will break out because of water and because of politics.”

Based on the experiences gained in the last few months, it can be stated that the authorities of the European countries cannot filter out from the people arriving *en masse* those who fall within the scope of the Geneva Convention, nor can they solve the resettlement of the asylum applicants in the short term and their integration in the long term. In my opinion, the solution at the European level could be a peace process supported by the great powers of the world and the development and implementation of a climate plan with the involvement of the affected countries. The full completion of the peace process is only possible if all the problems are solved and not only managed symptomatically. Therefore, besides ending the war situation, it is necessary to resolve the ethnic and religious conflicts with an agreement between the parties and later to reduce the effects of the climate problems at the root of the conflicts which process may last for decades.

Resulting from the symptomatic treatment currently applied, we must be prepared for a new and even bigger migratory wave within one or two decades from Asia and Africa, and the number of the newly arrived might reach the current population of the European Union, approximately 500 million people.

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