

Conflict Management in Post Climate Change Induced Disaster

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ABSTRACT	ARTICLE DETAILS
This article examines the often-overlooked relationship between disasters and conflict arguing that effective crisis governance requires a more integrated strategy. While disasters clearly disrupt communities, their potential to ignite to worsen social tensions is frequently underestimated. The study finds that climate change acts as a threat multiplier-- particularly in vulnerable nations-- by driving resource scarcity, displacement, and institutional strain after major environmental events, thereby raising the risk of violent conflict. Analyzing post-disaster cases where foreign intervention and inter-agency rivalry complicated relief efforts, the research highlights how competition over resources and differing priorities can become dangerous flash-points. Shifting focus to disaster-specific contexts, the paper advocates for proactive conflict management strategies into preparedness, response, and recovery phases. The central argument is that building social resilience and ensuring coordinated recovery depends on recognizing and addressing these conflict dynamics-- ultimately transforming disaster management into a tool for fostering stability rather than a precursor to discord. KEYWORDS: Disaster Governance, Climate Security, Disaster Resilience, Post-Disaster Conflict, Integrated Crisis Management	Published On: 22 July 2026 Available on: https://ijmir.com

INTRODUCTION

Disasters are events that severely disrupt the regular functioning of a community, surpassing its ability to cope with the available resources. Disaster management constitutes a comprehensive and strategic framework that integrates multidisciplinary approaches involving governmental and non-governmental agencies, as well as, other stakeholders, and encompasses the phases of preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation across both natural and human induced disasters. It seeks to minimize the loss of life and property by mitigating the disruptions to communities and the environment during and in the aftermath of disasters. The ultimate goal of disaster management is to reinforce societal resilience and preparedness capacity to effectively cope with multiple challenges posed by different types of disasters.

Conflict management involves the process of handling disputes, disagreements, or conflicts in a way that minimizes negative impacts and promotes constructive outcomes. On the contrary, climate change-induced disasters management is a complex phenomenon that must be considered as part of micro analysis for conflict resolution specifically identifying the root causes of conflicts. As large-scale natural disaster intensify due to the severe impacts of climate change, the likelihood of conflicts and tension increases, driven by social, psychological, and economic pressures such as competition for limited resources, internal displacement, and strained national capacities. The natural disasters heighten the risk of violent conflict across the short, medium, and long term particularly in low- and middle- income countries with moderate to high levels of inequality, mixed economic systems, and sluggish economic growth (Nel & Righarts, 2008). Effective state-led conflict management strategies, integrated within the context of disaster preparedness, response and recovery frameworks are crucial for minimizing the spillover effects of disasters that can trigger conflicts, thereby fostering social resilience. Managing conflict during climate change-driven disaster requires a coordinated, comprehensive, integrated and contextual approach that accounts for the interplay between natural disasters, climate change and conflict dynamics. During disaster management, after identifying the root causes of conflict dynamics, stakeholders can more easily reduce potential harm, strengthen resilience, and ensure smooth, coordinated recovery in disaster-affected regions.

In the aftermath of any disasters, conflicts may emerge as a result of multiple factors, including the vested interests of foreign powers, divergent priorities, inequalities in resource allocation, and complexities in decision-making processes. Hurricane Katrina, which hit the U.S. Gulf Coast in 2005, provides an illustrative example. There were conflicts and controversies related to the government's response. The issues raised were slow emergency response, inadequate coordination, and disputes over resource

allocation and distribution (Thomas & Waterman, 2008). Also, in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan, 2013, there were conflicts over the distribution of aid and resources. A dispute arose among foreign aid organizations, local governments, and affected communities. Differences in priorities, cultural understanding, and decision-making processes led to challenges in providing timely and effective assistance (Army P., 2013). The main areas for my research problem are conflict between different levels of governments, among various agencies and organizations, and involving foreign military interference in disaster response.

The purpose of this study is to understand the conflict through disaster-specific lens in reference to climate change-induced disasters. It examines how such disasters breed conflicts and how conflict management operates within the disaster management process. It is important to note that while conflicts arise during mega-scale disasters, cooperation and solidarity among affected communities and international organizations are also common responses. Effective disaster management and conflict resolution strategies are essential in mitigating the adverse impacts of disasters and fostering peace and stability in their aftermath.

DISASTERS INDUCED BY CLIMATE CHANGE AND CONFLICT

Even in ancient history, climatic-induced natural disasters-- including flash floods, massive flooding, tsunamis, hurricanes and earthquake-- have consequently produced major political consequences. Major natural disasters have historically reshaped the political landscapes of the affected countries as evidenced by events such as the Indian Ocean tsunami (2004), the Haiti Earthquake (2010), the Gorkha Earthquake (2015), the Turkey- Syria Earthquake (2023), and ongoing drought and desertification across regions of Africa, including South Sudan, Rwanda and the Sahel. These events have been variously attributed to halting colonial expansion, fuelling resistance to corrupt or incompetent regimes, entrenching authoritarian rule, and escalating ongoing conflicts and insurgencies (Nordqvist & Krampe, 2018). As natural disasters lead to conditions of concentrated resource scarcity, it is appropriate to pursue the societal dynamics that result from disaster-induced scarcity along both conceptual and empirical avenues. The environmental security school links natural disasters to broader societal issues: environmental degradation leads to economic decline and inequality resource capture and ecological marginalization (Homer-Dixon T., 1994). Natural disasters have three main factors-- motives, incentives, and opportunities-- that shape their immediate and long term impacts. These include increased inequality, competition, weakening of state, which give rise to grievances. Together, these factors act as fuel for violent civil conflicts (Nel & Righarts, 2008). In many cases, pre-existing conflicts escalated following a climate change-induced mega disaster. The 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami severely impacted the Aceh and large coastal areas of Sri Lanka. Both regions had existing secessionist conflicts. After the tsunami, the belligerents took advantage of weak governance during the disaster management, effectively running a de facto government and regaining their power (Billon & Waizenegger, 2007). Now, the issues giving rise to conflicts during natural mega disasters have been identified as follows:

Scarcity of Resources: After any climatic change mega scale disaster, there is a scarcity of basic needs in most of the developing and third world countries. Governments may struggle to respond effectively and may require assistance from the international community; however, such assistance is frequently insufficient. In such circumstances, divisions may emerge between groups competing for control over scarce resources, commonly described as the “haves” and the “have-nots.” According to the Marxist theory, the class struggle may emerge as a direct consequence of dialectical materialism. The impact is manifested in the economic structure of society, leading to the formation of two distinct classes; the rich and the poor. Competition between these classes for limited resources gives rise to class struggle and social conflicts. Moreover, social and cultural disparities also play a significant role triggering conflict within society, as such gaps generate grievances related to unequal access to resources. Those who have access to power, and resources will receive services, whereas those who lack such access will struggle finding ways to obtain them. There is also potential for looting and seizing opportunities for those who were looking to destabilize and take control over the state.

Conflicts arising from the scarcity of resources are not uncommon and may manifest at various levels, ranging from local disputes to international tensions. Examples of such resource-based conflicts include water scarcity in the Middle East, land and grazing rights in Sudan, fisheries disputes in South China Sea, deforestation and land use in Amazon rainforest, competition over mineral resources in the Democratic Republic of Congo and fresh water disputes in Nile river basin.

Social and Cultural Tensions: In diverse and heterogeneous societies, social and cultural disputes may escalate into serious violent conflicts during the post-disaster management phase. This can result from various factors, including competition over scarce resources and identity-based tensions within society. Climate change-induced natural disasters have been analyzed as a potential risk factors for ethnic and communal violence, in some cases leading to crimes against humanity (Sunga L., 2014). The Rwandan conflict on Hutu and Tutsi has also been examined through the lens of climatic-induced conflict. Increased drought and reduced food productivity intensified competition for resources between these groups, ultimately contributing to the outbreak of genocide (Homer-Dixon T., 1994).

Security Concerns: The sources of conflict are often linked to weak security structures and fragile condition of states during disaster management. In such contexts, struggles for power and authority frequently become central to conflict dynamics. Since the 1990s, the issues of security and conflict have increasingly been examined through the lens of climate change and its impact on natural disasters as potential drivers of conflict. The concept of “Climatization of security” emphasizes how climate change reshapes the understanding of security within the field of International Relations (Baysal & Karakaş, 2017). Following the

development of this perspective, the relationship between terrorism and climate-induced disasters has been closely studied, particularly in terms of psychosocial factors. These impacts often exacerbate existing social vulnerability thereby creating conditions conducive to terrorism. Furthermore, the complex relationship between climate change and terrorism may lead to an escalation of violent conflict through self-reinforcing processes characterized by feedback loops (Asaka, 2021). Indeed security challenges and violence have intensified in many developing countries due to climate-induced natural disasters. The 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami in Aceh, Indonesia and the coastal area of Sri Lanka serve as notable examples demonstrating how natural disasters can exacerbate pre-existing conflicts, including ethnic violence in Indonesia and the secessionist movement led by Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka (Billon & Waizenegger, 2007).

Additional challenges may internal displacement and migration, loss of legitimacy across local, provincial and central governing bodies, political instability, psychological and mental health challenges, and an information and communication vacuum. The main challenges for policymakers at international, regional and national levels involves addressing the environmental and climatic drivers of increased migration, particularly due to the adverse effects of sea level rise, drought and other large scale climate-induced disasters (Victoria Mence & Alex, 2017). Evidence from the Middle East shows that the region is highly vulnerable to climate change, facing challenges such as rising temperature, water and food scarcity, sea level rise, and increased intensity of extreme weather events. Such climate-induced large scale disasters can aggravate regional instability leading to mass refugee migration, and creating conditions favorable for terrorist organizations. Climate change can significantly affect infrastructure, equipment, and weapon systems, as well as, health and preparedness levels of military and security personnel (Efron, 2021). Human mobility and displacement due to frequent flooding have become significant challenges in the region, particularly in the context of Bangladesh. The Indian states of Meghalaya and Assam, located in the northeast, have been reported to host populations considered climate-induced disasters refugees from Bangladesh (Albuja & Cavelier, 2011).

Government Ineffectiveness: In aftermath of disaster, the local or national government may prove to be incapable of responding effectively, which can evoke frustration and anger within the affected populace. Such a breakdown in governance capacity that may result in a power vacuum or a weakening of established governing structures, thereby creating opportunities for both militant or non-militant, to exploit the situation. A pertinent illustration occurred in 2005 when Hurricane Katrina exposed inadequacies in the response effort of United States government sparking civil unrest and widespread criticism subsequently (Guire & Schneck, 2010).

Ethnic and Political Divisions: Pre-existing ethnic or political divisions within a country can be exacerbated during and in the aftermath of large-scale disasters. There may be disharmony among the groups due to inadequate relief efforts. For instance, the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami led to tensions in Sri Lanka, where ethnic divisions played a role in post-disaster conflicts. The ethnic cleavage between Tamils and Muslims was already deep rooted and was further intensified by the unequal distribution of resources in aftermath of the tsunami (Klitzsch, 2014).

In the post-disaster phase, above-mentioned issues need to be addressed to prevent the conflict of any nature. As the disaster management is a multidisciplinary approach, coordinated efforts among the key stakeholders--governmental or non-governmental, at both national and international levels--play a pivotal role. Among these, the national military plays a crucial role in disaster management, particularly in responding to large-scale disasters and emergencies (Billon & Waizenegger, 2007). The involvement of military is often a part of coordinated, holistic effort alongside civilian agencies and organizations. To stabilize the situation, the military may be employed for search and rescue operations, medical assistance, supply and distribution of relief materials, logistics and transportation support, infrastructure repair, command and coordination, security and law enforcement, disaster preparedness and training, as well as, international assistance (Army N., 2015). Militaries carry out their duty in humanitarian aid and disaster response in close coordination with civilian authorities, humanitarian organizations, and local communities to ensure an effective, efficient, and respectful response to disaster management globally. In addition, the military's involvement should be guided by the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence prioritizing the welfare and dignity of disaster-affected populations (OCHA, 2007). The role of the military in disaster and conflict management is further described as follows:

Military in Disaster and Conflict Management

During the post-disaster phase, the mobilization of military is common in both regional and international levels in accordance with the Oslo Guidelines (1994). The military dimension in the humanitarian assistance is widely recognized as a global practice. However, during large-scale disasters, military personnel may themselves be affected both physically and psychologically alongside damage to military equipment, infrastructures, and supply and logistics networks. Such impact may reduce the military's capacity for both disaster response and conflict management. The conflict may escalate if there are warring factions in a state, as such warring parties may opportunistically seek to benefit from the relative weakness of legitimate forces. Nevertheless, military are the last resort of any state during the time of crises, whether by natural disasters or other conflicts (Billon & Waizenegger, 2007). It has consistently played a crucial role in disaster management, particularly in restoring normalcy in the aftermath of disasters and preventing the emergence of conflict. Here are some key roles and contributions of the military for the management of any conflict that may arise during the disaster management:

Conduct of Search and Rescue Operations:

Military personnel are vigorously trained in various search and rescue tactics, techniques and procedures and have access to specialized and advanced teams and equipment, such as light, medium and heavy search and rescue teams accredited by International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG, 2020), rescue helicopters, drones, sophisticated technical search and rescue radars, remotely operated vehicles, scuba diving including swift water search and rescue equipment such as sonars which can be critical in locating and rescuing victims trapped or stranded during disasters, including mega earthquake, flash floods, mass floods and tsunamis or hurricanes.

Medical Assistance:

Military medical teams, including emergency medical response teams, field and mobile hospitals, can provide emergency medical care to disaster victims during mass casualty situations (INSARAG, 2020). They are equipped to handle mass casualties and can set up medical facilities in affected areas where healthcare infrastructures may be overwhelmed.

Logistics Supply and Transportation:

Logistics support and transportation provided by the military are critical components of humanitarian assistance and disaster management efforts. These logistical capabilities and transportation assets enable the rapid and effective response and deployment during disasters, ensuring that essential relief materials, equipment, supplies, and personnel reach disaster-hit regions in a timely manner. Key logistics support functions performed by the military during disaster management include airlift operations, establishment of logistics hubs and warehouses, supply chain management, engineering support, transportation security, maintenance of communication infrastructures and coordination with civilian agencies.

Aid Distribution:

During the time of disaster response and rehabilitation phase, military units can assist in the distribution of food, water, shelter, and other essential supplies to affected populations, adopting the humanitarian principle of impartiality and neutrality, which will help reduce the chances of dissatisfaction and discontent of the affected population due to biased behavior in aid distribution. The military's disciplined approach helps ensure fair and efficient distribution of aid.

Infrastructure Repair:

The military can help to repair critical infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, and airports, which are damaged during disaster to restore normalcy of affected communities. It is a critical aspect of disaster management, especially in the aftermath of natural disasters such as earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, and typhoons. Infrastructure reconstruction and repair at the time of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Haiti Earthquake in 2010, Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) in the Philippines during 2013, Nepal Earthquake in 2015, Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico during 2017, and Bara-Parsa (Nepal) Tornado in 2019 are some notable examples where military mobilized to support the repair and reconstruction work. Following Hurricane Katrina, which devastated the Gulf Coast of New Orleans, the U.S military, particularly the Army Corps of Engineers, played a pivotal role in repairing damaged infrastructures and flood control systems (Hurricane Katrina Response, 2005). Similarly, in the aftermath of the 2010 Haiti earthquake, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, including Nepali Army and U.S. military engineering Units, provided critical assistance in debris clearance, road rehabilitation, and the restoration of essential infrastructures through operation Unified Response (Southern Command, 2010). Likewise, following the extensive destruction caused by Typhoon Haiyan, the Armed Forces of the Philippines, in collaboration with international partners, made substantial contributions to the reconstruction of infrastructure, including roads and bridge (Army P., 2013). And, the Nepali Army launched an operation Sankatmochan (Crises Healer) along with international and neighboring militaries, those engaged in infrastructure reconstruction, especially in the resettlement of shelters in Gumsipakha, Gorkha, the epicenter of the devastating earthquake (Operation Sankatmochan, 2015). In contrast, about one thousand houses were rebuilt by the Nepali Army within a three-month period that were destroyed by a tornado in the Bara-Parsa region in 2019. These examples demonstrate how the military through its combat engineering capabilities and logistical resources can assist the national and international efforts to facilitate recovery and restore normalcy through holistic approach in disaster management. Such interventions also contribute to preventing the escalation of social conflicts that may emerge in the aftermath of disasters.

It is important to note that military involvement in disaster management should be conducted in close coordination with civilian authorities, humanitarian organizations, and local communities to ensure an effective, and respectful response. In addition, military engagement should be guided by the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence to ensure that conflict situations, whether ethnic- or resource-based, do not hinder the smooth implementation of disaster management processes. In this regard, the role of the state in both disaster and conflict management remains crucial.

RESPONSIBILITY OF A STATE IN DISASTER AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Many governments have, at times, utilized the chaotic condition created by large-scale natural disasters to preserve the existing political status quo against rival powers, particularly through major foreign involvement in relief and rehabilitation efforts. Although such external assistance can provide significant logistic support, it may also but it may also generate dissatisfaction and grievances of local population due to issues of mismanagement, unusual distribution of aid, and dispossession. Furthermore, disasters may evolve into matters of international geopolitical tension, thereby diverting attention from the immediate needs of disaster-stricken regions.

For instance, following the 2015 Nepal earthquake, the bilateral agreement between India and China to use the Kalapani tri-junction pass at Lipu-Lekh for trade generated significant controversy in Nepal as the agreement involved, territory claimed by

Nepal without the formal consent of the Nepalese government (Times, 2015). In response, the Government of Nepal issued diplomatic notes of objection to both countries regarding what it perceived as an infringement upon its territorial sovereignty; however, no substantial action was taken by the concerned authorities of either neighboring country.

CONCLUSION

To minimize the likelihood of conflict during the post-disaster management phase, governments at all levels must adopt comprehensive and conflict-sensitive strategies. The handling of socially sensitive issues should be carried cautiously through effective coordination and communication among the affected communities and disaster response stakeholders. Feelings of relative deprivation arising during the distribution of basic necessities should be carefully managed and monitored by the concerned authorities.

Moreover, proper resource management can enhance community resilience to disasters by strengthening security measures and integrating peace-building and conflict-prevention activities into disaster management frameworks. The impartial delivery of services by all sectors of society further contributes to strengthening the institutional capacity of agencies involved in disaster management. In addition, timely and reliable support from international community can play a significant role in reducing the risk of conflict escalation during post-disaster recovery period.

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