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TITOLO TESI

Influence of Eco-Destructive Ideologies on Environmental Communication in Workplaces in Italy and Pakistan

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Abstract

This study critically examines the influence of eco-destructive ideologies embedded in flood narratives during the floods that affected Pakistan in 2022 and Italy in 2023. Using a framework that combines principles of ecolinguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), this research explores how eco-destructive ideologies embedded in media narratives can influence environmental communication in workplaces. Given that workplaces are central to societal functioning, the study investigates how politically framed hegemonic narratives of utilitarianism and economic growth shape workplace responses to climate-related disasters. It argues that eco-destructive stories obscure the urgency for climate action and may contribute to inaction in the workplace, sustainability policies and practices. By analyzing flood narratives in Italy and Pakistan, this research highlights how ideologies manifested in media discourse, often employed as political tools, impact organizational responses during extreme weather events. The study is based on a corpus of news articles from *Dawn*, BBC, ANSA, *The Independent* and DW, focusing on linguistic patterns such as metaphors and passivization. These patterns reveal how divisive political agendas, from both far-right and leftist perspectives, externalize blame, frame floods as "natural", "bad weather" or inevitable, and politicize the discourse to downplay climate change's role in floods. The study finds the key "eco-destructive ideologies" identified through analysis of the dataset: the attribution of climate change to "bad weather", conspiracy theories, the exclusion and/or stigmatization of Indigenous and marginalized peoples, sensationalism, economic growth imperatives, and the conceptualization of floods through religious and apocalyptic schemas. The findings indicate that ideological frames in flood narratives in both contexts favour short-term economic priorities over sustainable and ecologically suitable solutions. For instance, in Pakistan, these stories or ideological frames perpetuate stereotypes and overshadow the voices of diverse Indigenous communities while prioritizing dominant political discourse. Similarly, in Italy, flood narratives amplify dominant political discourses, creating a vacuum that allows climate skeptics to promote conspiracy theories and undermines the impact of climate change on floods. Furthermore, this study delves into the internal ideological divides within Italy, particularly between political actors and environmental activists, which influence organizational and societal responses and contribute to polarization and social divides. Following the principles of ecosophy of this study and incorporating suggestions proposed by Prof. Daanish Mustafa, whom I interviewed for this study, it is concluded that the harmful narratives shaping our understanding of climate change and floods can be challenged, resisted and transformed into narratives that promote ecological justice, inclusivity and long-term resilience and ensure a sustainable future for all communities and forms of life in our shared environmental and social systems affected by climate change.

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Introduction

The stories we live by define people's relationship with larger ecosystems upon which our lives depend. Master narratives can shape our attitudes, dictate policies, inform scientific inquiries, and influence societal responses to climate emergencies such as floods. The unprecedented rains and historic floods of 2023 in Emilia-Romagna, Italy, caused significant loss of life and the displacement of thousands. These events sparked debates about their origins and the role of climate change across politics, media, and society. Within this debate, ideological frames in media narratives attributed the floods to conspiracy theories, "bad weather", corruption, administrative and policy failures, and conceptualized floods through religious and apocalyptic schemes. Some media outlets, such as ANSA, framed these events simplistically as the result of "bad weather". Similarly, during the historic floods in Pakistan in 2022, which claimed about 1,700 lives and affected 33 million, mainstream media narratives prioritized internal political agendas, underreporting the national tragedy.

A total of 175 news articles were analyzed in this study. Of these, 130 English-language articles on the 2022 Pakistan floods were drawn from *Dawn*—Pakistan's oldest and largest English-language newspaper—and the BBC, including official reports published by the Government of Pakistan and international agencies such as the World Bank and UNICEF. For the 2023 Italy floods, a smaller corpus of 45 English-language articles published by BBC, *The Independent*, DW, and ANSA between August and September 2023 was examined, reflecting the more limited availability of English-language coverage for the Italian case.

This research examines how eco-destructive ideologies, including divisive political agendas from both far-right and leftist perspectives, manifest in flood narratives and impact workplace sustainability policies in Italy--a country which has been recognized as a climate change hotspot (DW, 2023; BBC, 2024). Despite its vulnerability to extreme weather, Italy's climate change discourse remains contested, with far-right politics and environmental ideologies vying for dominance across social, political, and environmental spheres. Adopting an ecolinguistic perspective, this study employs Arran Stibbe's framework, from *Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology, and the Stories We Live By* (2021), to identify and resist eco-destructive frames in media narratives or stories. Using Stibbe's (2021) framework, it is argued that these harmful narratives can be replaced with environmentally beneficial stories (Augustyn, 2024) from a particular personal ecosophy. Through this lens, the study argues that eco-destructive stories that influence environmental communication in workplaces can be challenged and resisted in order to promote ecological justice and inclusive workplace practices that support all forms of life.

Structure of Thesis

My thesis has been divided into four chapters, beginning with an introduction, followed by the development of my theoretical framework based on the principles of Ecolinguistics, Critical Discourse Analysis and my own ecosophy. The last two chapters present the analysis and findings and are followed by a set of general conclusions.

Chapter One provides an in-depth understanding of Ecolinguistics as an emerging interdisciplinary discipline at the meeting point of ecology and linguistics. It examines definitions, principles, and key strands of ecolinguistics, focusing on its application within linguistics. The two primary strands – Haugenian and Hallidayan (Zhou, 2022) – are discussed, highlighting their foundational, technical, and ideological differences. The chapter reviews the contributions of major theorists to the evolution of Ecolinguistics as a theoretical framework, including country-specific developments, key publications, and notable conferences. A comprehensive discussion on Arran Stibbe's ecolinguistic framework, which is central to this study, is included to establish a suitable theoretical foundation. The chapter also outlines the study's objectives and structure. Methodologically, it argues that Ecolinguistics can be utilized either as a method or an approach while exploring its connections with Critical Discourse Studies and emphasizing major approaches within this intersection. The chapter concludes by presenting Ecolinguistics as a dynamic and evolving framework, adaptable for analyzing complex environmental challenges and addressing eco-destructive ideologies.

Chapter Two outlines the core principles and features of the methodological approach that integrates Van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with ecolinguistics. It describes various procedures developed by Critical Discourse Analysts, demonstrating their application in analyzing dominant media narratives about floods and uncovering underlying discursive patterns. The chapter also discusses the challenges, limitations, orientations, aims, and objectives of CDA, including a brief commentary on its criticisms as an approach. Furthermore, it reviews the ideological aspects of media and political discourses through the lens of CDA. The chapter concludes by detailing data collection methods, the formation of my ecosophy, and a theoretical framework for this study.

Chapter Three focuses on discourse and the environment. It highlights the prevalence of dominant discourses in commercial, political, media, and environmental communications. In commercial communications, greenwashing, its origins, and the "sins" identified by TerraChoice – an advertising consultancy for environmental marketing headquartered in Ottawa, Ontario – are discussed. The chapter also outlines recent EU directives and Italian legislation related to greenwashing, emphasizing ethical considerations. Additionally, it documents ideologically charged hegemonic political and media narratives during floods in

Italy and Pakistan, leading to the next chapter, which delves into the development of CDA as a discipline, its key concepts, Ecolinguistics, and the development of a framework for my study.

Chapter Four, the most articulated and critical section of the present study, offers insights into the socio-historical analysis of flood narratives and highlights the systematic marginalization of Indigenous communities, such as the Kalash, through dominant media discourses. It highlights and resists the unecological ideologies embedded in these flood narratives in media that actively undermine local communities and their ecological importance. This study's findings reveal that these communities' ecological values and contributions are either stereotypically portrayed or completely erased from media narratives. The chapter examines narratives ranging from political discourse to environmental activism, by focusing on media strategies and linguistic features such as passivization, nominalization, metaphor, erasure, backgrounding, authorization and gaslighting that perpetuate ideological frames identified in this study. It also explores eco-bordering, securitization and eco-fascism, situating these concepts within the rise of populist and far-right politics in Italy and heightened securitization in Pakistan. In this regard, I have highlighted the consequences of these developments and their influence on environmental communication in workplaces in Italy and Pakistan. Chapter four also demonstrates how ideologies in volunteer organizations disrupt flood relief efforts by shifting attention from human lives to issues like corruption and ethnic biases, and linguistic divisions. To deepen the analysis, I interviewed a local Sindhi journalist, Nisar Khokhar, to understand how the media endorses stereotypes, and Prof. Daanish Mustafa, an expert and faculty in critical geography at King's College London with a key role in several international organizations, for insights into gender roles, water politics, and climate change's broader ideological underpinnings, applicable also to the Italian context. Their perspectives informed this chapter's argument for promoting inclusive and ecologically conscious narratives. It emphasizes integrating marginalized groups, particularly women, into policymaking and flood management to promote ecological justice. The chapter advocates for de-escalation between extreme left- and right-wing ideologies in Italy, proposing sustainable and respectful coexistence as a path toward ecological harmony. Overall, this chapter highlights the key "eco-destructive ideologies" identified through analysis of the dataset: the attribution of climate change to "bad weather", conspiracy theories, the exclusion and/or stigmatization of Indigenous and marginalized peoples, sensationalism, economic growth imperatives, and the conceptualization of floods through religious and apocalyptic schemas.

The conclusions briefly summarize the main arguments and findings of this study, including recommendations.

Research Objectives

- To examine the role media plays in shaping and endorsing environmentally destructive master narratives:

The present study examines how the media frames climate-related weather events, particularly floods, and assesses how these master narratives contribute to eco-destructive ideologies that influence workplaces. It also explores the role of media in trivializing climate change narratives and their implications for proactive climate change initiatives.

- To examine the influence of eco-destructive ideologies on flood narratives, such as growth, polarization, and populism – and their broader implications for communities in wider social contexts:

The current study aims to assess how media narratives surrounding climate change and floods contribute to the marginalization of communities and undermine their ecological and social importance. It also aims to investigate how political ideologies and media framing intertwine to shape corporate actions to climate change, particularly in flood-prone regions.

- To explore the implications of hegemonic ideologies – such as eco-fascism and eco-bordering – in climate change discourse and their role in shaping workplace dynamics:

This study explores how eco-fascist ideologies, shaped by media and political discourse, can influence workplace communication and attitudes towards marginalized groups, particularly climate migrants.

- To propose alternative stories to live by:

Drawing on the understanding of research and analysis of media and political discourse and expert opinions, the central aim of the present dissertation is to recommend positive stories that promote inclusive, ecologically responsible stories to live by. It advocates the promotion of ecological justice within workplaces, as they are an integral part of society that is also affected by floods and other climate change-related events.

Chapter 1: Introduction to Ecolinguistics

1. Ecolinguistics Defined

Ecolinguistics is considered an emerging interdisciplinary field in the 21st century. Since its origin, there have been several attempts to define it and its approach and related concepts. The current study will present the term "ecolinguistics" as a dynamic and interdisciplinary field of study and refer to some famously acknowledged definitions. To begin, the "linguistic" aspect of ecolinguistics aims at providing the "sophisticated analysis" of language features that shape, reconstruct, disseminate and counter our worldviews, whereas the 'eco' part provides a "sophisticated ecological framework" in order to study the influence of the worldviews in impacting ecosystems that life depends on (Stibbe, 2014:19). Hence, according to Stibbe (2021) ecolinguistics is "the study of the role of language in the life-sustaining interactions of humans with other species and the physical environment" (p.203). Similarly, the International Ecolinguistics Association (IEA) argue that ecolinguistics can help researchers examine "the role of language in the life-sustaining interactions of humans" with fellow beings in a larger environment" (International Ecolinguistics Association, n.d.). The IEA also outlines two major aims of ecolinguistics: (1) "to develop linguistic theories which see humans not only as part of society but also as part of the larger ecosystems that life depends on" and (2) "to show how linguistics can be used to address key ecological issues, from climate change and biodiversity loss to environmental justice" (International Ecolinguistics Association, n.d., see www.ecolinguisticsassociation.org). Fill (1998) defines ecolinguistics as an emerging sub-discipline of linguistics that examines how language features influence our understanding of the world, and development and can provide potential solutions to the rising ecological challenges and environmental degradation.

1.1 Origin of Ecolinguistics

As stated by Fill (2018) and Chen (2016), the term "ecolinguistics has its origin in Haugen's (1972) work on the Ecology of Language. This particular work introduces this field as interdisciplinary. Ecolinguistics, due to its interdisciplinary nature, has been studied on cultural, linguistic and environmental grounds. Fill (1998 and 2018) traces the first usage of ecolinguistics as he believes it was a Brazilian scholar – Hildo Honorio Couto – who was able to find out by whom the term "ecolinguistics" was first used and when. Couto (2007) notes that Claude Hagège introduced the term ecolinguistics in 1985 in his seminal work entitled *L'homme de paroles (ecolinguistique)*, while another scholar, Salzinger (1979) wrote "ecolinguistics" in his 1979 article entitled "Ecolinguistics: a radical behaviour theory

approach to language behaviour" (as cited in Fill, 2018:12). Joe Darwin Palmer (1974) first used this term in his article, "Language Ecology", where Palmer introduced a novel field known as "Ecolinguistics", however, ecolinguistics had already been used before. Fill (2018) explains that Adam Makkai informed Couto that it was actually Einar Haugen who proposed the term "ecolinguistics" verbally at a Chicago conference in 1972 (Couto, 2007:49, as cited in Fill, 2018:12).

1.1.1 Traces of Ecolinguistics

The first traces of ecolinguistics date back to the 1980s, when scholars started to question the role language could play in the environmental crisis. Writers like Fill (1993) wrote about the connections between language, experience and gender and questioned if the linguistic belittling of women parallels the devaluation of nonhuman fellow beings (Dunayer, 2001). For this linguistic investigation of the environmental crisis, new analytic methods were employed, leading to the emergence of ecolinguistics (Muhlhausler and Peace, 2006:472). Ecolinguistics began based on a holistic view of the world expressed by philosophers like Gregory Bateson, David Bohm and Frederic Vester. It can be argued that ecolinguistics adopts a holistic perspective on the world, integrating diverse disciplines such as biological ecology, the humanities and social sciences to understand environmental challenges. The main concepts of the field are diversity, networking, dialectics and interrelation. That is why it is not strictly uniform in its theory and methodology (Fill, 1998:3). Considering its holistic approach, Matos (2017) envisioned that ecolinguistics would serve as a discipline of "creating peace through language" (Matos, 2017, as cited in Fill, 2018:07).

To understand ecolinguistics as an interdisciplinary field, it is important to know its origin and its link with studies about Language and Ecology. Fill (2018) additionally finds that Ernst Haeckel (1866) introduced the term "ecology" to describe the relationship between plants and animals. To study the connection between ecology, language and geography, Voegelins explains that researchers will need to adopt an inclusive approach to pay attention to every language of a certain geographic location to understand the connections.

1.2 Language and Ecology

A metaphorical connection between ecology and language laid a foundation for ecolinguistics. Particularly when Haugen (1972) delivered a talk in 1970 on the interaction between languages and metaphorically described the relationship between languages as the language and environment. This statement marked the beginning of what is today known as Haugen's approach in ecolinguistics. Fill (1998) adds that Michael Halliday, another eminent scholar, gave a different perspective on ecology and language scholarship. In 1990, at the AILA

conference, Halliday emphasized the "connection between language on the one hand and growthism, classism and speciesism on the other, admonishing linguists not to ignore the role of their object of study in the growth of mental problems" (Halliday as cited in Fill, 1998:3). Since the publication of the text of Halliday's address, entitled "New Ways of Meaning", the interest has grown in ecolinguistics to explore how language influences environmental issues. In this research area, environmental discourse is studied from an environmental linguistic perspective. Still, in a broader sense, such studies fall within the spectrum of general ecolinguistic principles and frameworks (Fill, 1998:7).

These two talks are considered to have marked the beginning of two strands within ecolinguistic approach:

1. Ecology is comprehended through metaphors to understand "language(s) in an environment" (Haugen, 1972 as cited in Fill:7);

2. "Ecology is understood in its biological sense; the role of language in the development and aggravation of environmental (and other societal) problems is investigated; linguistic research is advocated as a factor in their possible solution" (Halliday, 1992, as cited in Fill, 1998:7).

In the following passages, a detailed section will be dedicated to both major theorists to offer comprehension of these two strands within ecolinguistics. For now, the next section details the analysis regarding ecology and metaphor.

1.2.1 Ecology as Metaphor

The significance of Haugen's ecological metaphor attracted the attention of many authors in the 1980s and became famous among scholars. Several book chapters and scholarly articles were published where the word "ecology" was clearly connected with language. To name a few, the following are some of the most popular book chapters and articles:

 Mackey 1980: "The ecology of language shift"

 Bolinger 1980: ch. 15 – "An ecology of language"

 Hagège 1985 pp. 146f. "Écolinguistique"

 Haarmann 1986: *Language in ethnicity. A view of basic ecological relations*

The above-mentioned works explain how biological ecology has been studied in languages besides English. These studies also use ecological concepts like 'environment', 'language world system' and 'interaction' to assist the new perspectives to study psycho and sociolinguistic phenomena. Moreover, the ecological aspects of language in a Haugenian approach paved the way for important research areas at critical times as some languages were

disappearing quickly. Fill (1998) adds it is a type of approach which appeals to the experts in linguistics to contribute to saving endangered languages and to embrace the "cause of linguistic diversity".

Furthermore, researchers from the University of Bielefeld expanded the important concept of adapting methods, notions and principles from biological ecology to the analysis of language and later developed ecological linguistics (ökologische Sprachwissenschaft). Among these researchers, Finke (1983, 1993 and 1996) is the most important person who transferred Tansley's (1935) proposal of ecosystems to language mechanisms. He was also inspired by the ideas on ecological communication introduced by Niklas Luhmann. Likewise, scholars, including Trampe and Strohner, studied metaphors to describe language change alongside its interaction with the environment (Trampe, 1990:155).

1.3 Two Major Approaches in Ecolinguistics

It is known that ecolinguistics is inclusive; it strives to understand the relation between language, ecology and society. Apart from these commonly understood notions, Haung and Chen (2017) argue that ecolinguistics can be interpreted through various aims and objectives, highlighting its diversity as a discipline. Specifically, in recent times, with the contribution of Stibbe and Chinese ecolinguist Huang, ecolinguistics has offered new theoretical, practical, and ideological stances. Still, these stances have been conflicting at times. As mentioned earlier, ecolinguistics has developed within two different strands, which intersect and unify at some point (Ha, 2022:142). In this section, I will write about the major theorists in ecolinguistics and their ecological approaches. LeVasseur (2015) identifies three theoretical strands within ecolinguistics that are both interconnected and distinct: the "Haugenian tradition", the "biolinguistics tradition", and the "Hallidayan tradition". In this connection, the next section will present the similarities, differences, unification, and points of departure amongst these strains within ecolinguistics.

1.3.1 The Haugenian Approach

It was collectively shared by Fill (2018), Ha (2022) and Kumar (2019) that ecolinguistics has its traces in Haugen's understanding of language and metaphors as the interactions between language and environment. Owing to this, the "Haugenian tradition" refers to Haugen's works, which consider language to be part of a larger ecological system based on natural ecology and the human mind, an interaction where society and the physical environment meet. Research conducted on the Haugenian tradition by Steffensen and Fill (2014) outlines a four-stage "ecology" where language exists. First, language is situated in a metaphorical ecology that exists in the brain of a "multilingual" speaker. In the second stage, it is argued that language

can be traced within natural ecology, including the society where people speak and share the language. In the third stage, according to Steffensen and Fill (cited in Ha, 2022:110), language exists in a "sociocultural ecology" which forms our identities and social structures. Finally, in the last stage, language, according to Steffensen and Fill (Ha, 2022:110), is situated within a "cognitive ecology", shaped by the interconnectedness of biological entities.

Fill (2018) believes it was Haugen and Voegelins who, for the first time, linked ecology with language. The establishment of this metaphorical connection between language and ecology led to studies related to the interaction between languages and their cultural environment, as well as the interaction between languages in a geographical location and the brain. Generally speaking, "Haugenian Ecolinguistics" addresses a wide array of issues, metaphorically viewing the relationship between language and environment like ecology and its ecosystem. In this context, Haugenian strand of ecolinguistics considers endangered languages as endangered species that need protection and preservation to prevent marginalization of linguistic languages. In Haugen's words (2001:59), language ecology "covers a broad range of interests within which linguists can cooperate significantly with all kinds of social scientists towards an understanding of the interaction of languages and the users". He further adds that his language view is not one-dimensional; instead, his perspective examines the diversity of all languages to explore the role language can play in serving our society and ecosystems.

In this context, Couto (2007) mentions the contributions of the following writers who have used "ecology" to examine language: William F. Mackey (1980) "The Ecology of Language Shift", Harald Haarmann (1980) *Multilingualismus: Elemente einer Sprachökologie* and Norman Denison (1982) "A Linguistic Ecology for Europe" (see section I-4 of Couto 2007:47-63).

Interestingly, "Language and ecology" – also known as the "Haugenian approach" – has been criticized for the language and ecology metaphor (Zhang, 2022:143). This topic has received more linguistic attention recently. For example, Garner's (2014) "epistemological" understanding of language as an ecological phenomenon, Kravchenko's (2016) biocognitive phenomenon and language as a symbiotic phenomenon by Steffensen (2018).

In contrast to Haugen's language perspective, the "biolinguistic tradition" takes an explicit approach to examine the relationship between language and ecology within larger social contexts where some languages prevail while others face extinction, much like biodiversity. Nettle and Romain (2012) introduced this concept and used "biolinguistic diversity" first time. They actively advocated preserving marginalized communities, alongside their culture and language, to safeguard the ecological knowledge of these communities. This serves as a counterstrategy against power structures that undermine other languages and promote English as *the* lingua franca.

Chen (2016) argues that the bio-linguistic perspective within ecolinguistics is more popular than other strands. This metaphorical concept of language diversity has been exceedingly employed by researchers from language planning and anthropological linguistics (LeVasseur, 2015). Additionally, like "Haugen's tradition", the "biolinguistic tradition" has also been criticized for its "biomorphic" concept. For instance, Pennycook (2004) highlights the potential drawbacks of using metaphors in studies focused on language policies. He warns that the metaphors people have political tendencies, and it can be reflected in their usage.

1.3.2 The Hallidayan Approach

After almost twenty years after Haugen's paper and talk during the 1972 conference[1], the link between language and ecology was again furthered. This time the proponent was Michael Halliday, whose approach was not metaphorical, unlike Haugen's. Halliday talked about the ways language influences us and our biological environment. In this section, I will talk about his talk delivered in Greece in 1990, mention his contribution towards the development of ecolinguistics, and quote from his printed works.

Chen (2016) finds that, in the late 1990s, ecolinguistics was first recognized as a separate discipline and came to be known as distinct from sociolinguistics. Halliday's central thesis is centred around "linguistic anthropocentrism", which can be comprehended in the following ways: first, we talk about nature, and non-humans from a utilitarian perspective. It reflects "utilitarian anthropocentrism" underlying everyday communication. Second, environmental problems are usually augmented by discourses triggering unecological behaviours.

Halliday's major work, entitled "New Ways of Meaning: the Challenge to Applied Linguistics" gives different perspectives on Applied Linguistics, including various topics such as humans and their relationship with larger ecosystems. Halliday (2001:179) additionally explores Benjamin Lee Whorf's perspectives and adds that language actively shapes our relations and carries potential "consequences" of language's influence on humans and their environment (Fill, 2018:10).

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[1] The 1972 conference is mentioned in the literature without a specific title. In search of the title of the conference, I emailed Arran Stibbe, who responded: "I haven't heard about a 1970 conference. Ecolinguistics is usually said to have started in 1990 with Halliday's AILA conference speech. Isn't that the one?" (personal communication, 17-November 2022)

The following are some of the consequences mentioned by Halliday, as cited by Fill (2018:10):

> Our languages **construe resources** like air, water, soil, coal, iron and oil as **unbounded**. There are languages, e.g. the Hopi language, in which for water, soil, coal etc. always a certain measure has to be given – e.g. *a barrel of oil, a seam of coal, a reservoir of water* (Halliday, 2001:194, as cited in Fill, 2018:10).

> Language creates **discontinuity** between ourselves and the rest of creation, because many words are reserved for humans, such as *think, act, do, assess*. Through this, Nature appears as passive (Halliday, 2001:195). "The language makes it hard for us take seriously the notion of inanimate nature as an active participant in events" (Halliday, 2001:194, as cited in Fill:2018:10).

> The grammar [!] "promotes the ideology of growth or growthism" (Halliday, 2001:196), i.e. the growth of anything human at the cost of nature or what we call the environment. The growth-word is always the neutral word: we say "how big?" – never "how small?", "how long?" – never "how short?". "The grammar of 'big' is the grammar of 'good', while the grammar of 'small' is the grammar of 'bad'. The motif of 'bigger and better' is engraved into our consciousness by virtue of their line-up in the grammar" (Halliday, 2001: 194, as cited in Fill:2018:10).

In conclusion, in his critique of language, Halliday (2001) suggests that our obsession with growth and the materialistic quest for the so-called unlimited resources needs to be replaced with humanity's interconnection with the natural world. It is interesting to note that "ecological" appears only once in Halliday's paper when he suggests that the people who are ecologically aware should be categorized as normal compared to the people who are "eccentrics" (Halliday, 2001:193). Furthermore, Steffenson and Fill (2014:9) explain that Halliday's main point in ecolinguistics is to understand if patterns in language have any influence on our survival and other species.

For this reason, scholars such as Fill (1998) reckon that ecolinguists should also examine the "anthropocentrism" embedded in language, which creates a distinction between humans and the rest of the natural world. Verhagen (1993:117) questions whether language can be used to promote biocentric perspectives to prevent the increasing influence of anthropocentric views on our language and world perspectives. In a similar vein, Goatly (1996) suggests that frameworks from other disciplines, such as critical discourse analysis, could help us address anthropocentrism and challenge the centrality of humans in our

ecosystems. Fill (2018) finds that the term "*ecoliteracy*" was coined in the 1990s to spread language awareness and its role in the relationship between humans and their environment. According to Fill (2018), David Orr, in his *Ecological Literacy: Education and the Transition to a Postmodern World* (1992, as cited in Fill,2018), became the first person to use "*ecoliteracy*". Later, Capra, who also established the Center for Ecoliteracy in Berkeley, California, developed ecoliterary as a concept to explore the linguistic influence on the environment (as cited in Fill, 2018).

M.A.K. Halliday is also popularly known for his Systemic-Functional Linguistics. However, he is referred to here for his analysis of the role language can play in shaping the relationship between humans and both living and non-living beings. By investigating this complex relation, he finds out why people tend to perceive Nature as passive and think Nature does not have an active role. He argues that some words are reserved for humans, which makes speakers think that nature is passive. Fill (2020) explains that Halliday argues language creates a distinction between humans and other fellow living and non-living beings because certain terms such as "think" and "act" are exclusively linked to humans. Such words make humans rational and active. Also, they make speakers consider nature as inactive (p. 239). For this reason, Fill (2020) coined the word "con-vironment" to emphasize the unity and togetherness between humans and Nature.

Most importantly, Halliday is best known for this critique of 'growthism'. He was one of the first to criticize the fact that an ideology centered on growth, which makes us want to be larger than our neighbours, ultimately results in conflicts amongst nations. For this reason, Fill (2020) calls him "Peace Linguist" and asserts that it was Halliday who found out that language makes us believe that "growing, being large and fast are better than staying the same, being small and slow" (p. 239).

In addition, Halliday (2001) shows how underlying systems in language construe some ideologies like speciesism and racism. Halliday spreads awareness that language is responsible for climate change and for reducing the Earth's species. He demonstrates how language causes damage to humans, animals and plants by separating humans from all other creatures in the ecosystems. Language also prioritizes humans and defines what is beneficial for humans, undermining other living beings. For this reason, plants are always mentioned for their usefulness to humans and weeds for their harmfulness. Fill (2020) explains that our language dictates our worldviews, but it should be remembered that humans do not dominate the environment; instead, we are part of the larger natural environment. According to Fill (2020), the following are some of the most frequently quoted paragraphs from Halliday's talk delivered at the World Congress of Applied Linguistics held in Thessaloniki:

- "Our grammar (though not the grammar of human language as such) construes air and water and soil, and also coal and iron and oil as 'unbounded' – that is, as existing without limit. In the horizons of the first farmers, and the first miners, they did. We know that such resources are finite." (Halliday 2001: 194, as cited in Fill, 2020)

- "Language creates discontinuity between ourselves and the rest of creation, also because many words are reserved for humans, such as think, act and do. Through this, Nature appears as passive" (cf. Halliday, 2001: 194 f.). Language "imposes a strict discontinuity between ourselves and the rest of creation, with 'ourselves' including a select band of other creatures that are in some semantic con- texts allowed in" (Halliday, 2001: 195, as cited in Fill, 2020).

- "Useful and harmful – these are two contrasting words or opposites, as we call them. Halliday (2001: 194) showed that all opposites have a negative and a positive pole."

- "The quality of a thing means either 'how good or bad it is' or 'the fact that it is good', but never 'the fact that it is bad'." Similarly, size means both 'how big' and 'being big'. "The grammar of 'big' is the grammar of 'good', while the grammar of 'small' is the gram- mar of 'bad'. The motif 'bigger and better' is engraved into our consciousness by their line-up in the grammar." (Halliday, 2001: 194 as cited in Fill, 2020). Halliday calls this "the ideology of growth or growthism" (2001: 196; see also Stibbe 2015: 83 f.).

1.4 "Overshoot Day" Celebrated

An important study has revealed that some Arab countries and the USA had already used up their natural resources in 2019. In the same year, July 29th was declared "Overshoot Day". It is believed that, on this day, the whole earth had yielded up its resources. Thus, "we would need almost two planets to yield enough resources for humans", and the use of words such as "resources is of course anthropocentric because it sums up all things useful for humans in one word" (Fill, 2020:242).

Even before the development of ecolinguistics, the unlimited growth of the world and the usefulness of the earth were discussed, as is evident from the following:

- R. Carson's book *Silent Spring* (1962) highlights insecticides for killing animals. For this reason, she called them 'biocides'.
- The Club of Rome was founded in 1968, which also published a book in 1972 entitled *The Limits of Growth* by Dennis and D. Meadows.
- 1970 was declared the European Conservation Year.
- America celebrated first Earth day in April, 1970. This came as the realization after one of the astronauts, who had landed on the moon 1969, captured photographs of the earth from the moon. These pictures took the world by storm because the pictures showed the earth as "a violable body" surrounded by a very thin atmosphere. One of these photographs was named "earthrise" and made the world realize that it was important to protect the world (Fill, 2020:242).

All these developments did not explicitly address the role of language until Halliday came on the stage to highlight the role language could play in the degradation of climate and ecosystems. In his talk in 1990, he revealed that our world view is shaped by eco-destructive expressions like "unmatched growth rates", "traffic is expected to grow", and "output fell sharply" (2001:193). Fill (2020) further notes that people associate "growing, becoming faster, and getting higher with GOOD and falling, being lower and slower with BAD" (243). Halliday (ibid) suggests that we could leverage the power of language by reversing the associations, making "shrink" the positive term and labelling "growth" simply as a negative, thus utilizing the influence of grammar. Two more scholars also spoke against "growthism" before Halliday. Schumacher, who authored *Small is Beautiful* (1973), refers to Gandhi's minimalist philosophy of *less is more*. M.K. Gandhi is known for his environmental philosophy as he famously stated, "The Earth provides enough to meet the needs of every person, but not the greed of every person". It is suggested that there should always be a limit to growth. The second philosopher who preceded Halliday in discussing "growthism" is Kohr. Kohr (1986: 15) argues that the primary issue with growth is not ideological, but "dimensional", and cites Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, suggesting that if Hamlet were alive today, he would not ask "to be or not to be", but rather "to be small or not to be at all, that is the question" (p. 15).

1.5 Hallidayan Approach in the 2020s

According to Zhang (2022), many studies were conducted in ecolinguistics from a Hallidayan approach, demonstrating how language plays its role in ecological issues. The central idea of all studies was to improve language use to benefit everyone and avoid using language in un-ecological ways. The following are some (incomplete) scholarships on the Hallidayan approach and proposed methodologies: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) and Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA). The first has originated

the eco- critical approach to investigate systems in grammar. These frameworks were combined with qualitative or quantitative methods to study different ecological issues.

Criticism against unlimited growth increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, since many people realized that the idea of unlimited growth had led to bigger problems. Historian Philipp Blom, in his interview with Robert Treichler on 8th April 2020, said (Fill's translation): "Suddenly we are influenced by a virus which we do not see nor taste nor smell, but which can nevertheless kill us. We are no longer sublime above Nature, but we are in the middle of it." This means that the coronavirus pandemic provoked different debates about Nature and testified to Halliday's critique of growthism (Fill, 2020:243).

1.5.1 "Con-vironment", Not Environment

Halliday (200) states that language creates a subtle distinction between humans and other forms of life, and thus, Nature is called our environment (in German "Umwelt"). This word makes us normally accept that we are surrounded by our environment, and it is for us to use this environment. Following Halliday's ideas, Fill (2020) suggests that we should not talk about our environment, but about our "con-vironment" (in German "Mitwelt", cf. Meyer-Abich 1990), a word which shows that all living and non-living beings together make up what we call Nature (p. 243).

1.5.2 Intersection and Unification

With the sudden surge in ecolinguistic studies, it was observed that both approaches similarly possess similar qualities and functions. These studies also indicate that ecolinguistics will no longer be known for the split between the Haugenian and Hallidayan approaches (Zhang, 2022:145); instead, these strands of ecolinguistics make it an interdisciplinary field. In this connection, Stibbe (2021:74) argues that for ecolinguistics to gain recognition as a credible discipline within the ecological humanities, it will need to explore ecology beyond studying ecology as a metaphor. Stibbe further proposes to start with language and then delve deeper into exploring the role of language in shaping our relationship with other species in a larger physical and natural environment. Likewise, both approaches are problem-oriented and borrow concepts from ecological studies. Huang and Li (2021) study similarities between these major strands within ecolinguistics. These approaches share research methods and a framework of linguistics, it is recommended by Haung and Li not to consider them as two separate approaches.

1.6 Other Important Theorists/Scholars in Ecolinguistics

Diverse scholarships ranging from animal studies to news discourse have been analyzed from ecolinguistics perspectives. Different frameworks were also employed in these studies. Hogben (2008) examined commercial discourse and analyzed advertising to highlight how greenwashing takes place (Stockle and Molnar, 2017). In a similar vein, Stibbe (2005) and Halliday (2001) investigated linguistic patterns in economics discourse to uncover how certain linguistic features are applied to frame the ideology of growth. In a very similar fashion, two more very important researchers also used environmental discourse to highlight language use and framing strategies (see Alexander, 2010; Harré et al., 1999) for details. Besides these works, Fusari (2018), Stibbe (2012a) and Goatly (2006) explored discourse related to animals to understand the embedded language ideology in animal discourse and nature (Knight, 2010). In addition to these specific discourses, Doulton and Brown (2009) and Ihlen (2009) extensively researched climate change discourse from ecolinguistics perspectives on how language in climate change can influence people. Whereas Muhlhausler (2003) and Goatly (2001) researched metaphors. In 1988, Wilhelm Trampe wrote his Ph.D. dissertation entitled "Aspects of Ecological Linguistics", published in 1990.

1.6.1 Arran Stibbe

Arran Stibbe is considered one of the key figures and contributors to the development of ecolinguistics (Kumar, 2019). Stibbe is best known for his book *Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology and Stories We Live by* (2015-22), where the expression "we live by" is borrowed from Lakoff and Johnson (1980). In the latest edition, he gives more explicit definitions and adds to the key concepts and frameworks. The book offers an in-depth introduction to the emerging and interdisciplinary field of ecolinguistics and explains how language can influence our worldviews, thinking and consequently affect our behaviour (Ghorbanpour, 2021:1).

Stibbe believes that the role of ecolinguistics is to go beyond the mere criticism of "destructive discourse", and search for "beneficial" discourses as alternatives that encourage people to protect the environment. To accomplish this goal, he proposes Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA) as a framework to investigate environmental discourses and replace destructive discourses with beneficial ones. For this reason, he is one of the few scholars who have added a moral element to ecolinguistic studies. In addition, when it comes to ecolinguistic concepts and methodologies, Stibbe gives the most explicit definitions. He defines ecolinguistics and talks about resisting problematic stories. In Stibbe's (2015) words, "ecolinguistics analyzes language to reveal the stories we live by, judges those stories according to an ecosophy, resists stories which oppose the ecosophy, and contributes to the search for new stories to live by" (p.183). Stibbe writes that ecolinguistics follows an "ecosophy" as its

main framework (Chen, 2016:109). According to Stibbe's definition, an ecosophy is a researcher's stance, whether scientific, ethical or moral, and it sets the criteria by which worldviews are judged. A researcher may analyze a text scientifically by employing an ecosophy as a framework. Shallow claims are frequently made to sell products under the so-called tag "eco-friendly". As for the ethical or moral stance of a researcher, an ecosophical framework could be employed to analyze texts on ethical and moral grounds. For example, for Animal Rights and Environmental Ethics, activists take the ethical and moral grounds to call for an end to excessive animal abuse and slaughter. We live by different stories, and we are influenced by those ideological stories. To know whether these stories are harmful, an ecosophical (philosophical) framework ought to be employed to judge those stories from a scientific, moral or ethical lens.

1.6.1.1 Ecolinguistic Approach to Critical Discourse Studies

Arran Stibbe has modelled ecolinguistic analysis with Critical Discourse Analysis as a framework. While explaining the ecolinguistic approach to critical discourse analysis, Stibbe (2014:117) states that ecolinguistics examines various discourses, ranging from consumerism to nature poetry; it also challenges the dominant discourses that promote ecological harm and highlights those that advocate for respectful relationships with the natural environment. Many authors apply the CDA as a framework (Van Dijk, 1993; Wodak, 1996) to critically examine texts addressing environmental issues. Moreover, ecolinguistics questions the hegemonic relations between the oppressor and the oppressed, since it aims at empowering the oppressed, including non-human beings and future generations.

1.6.1.2 Function of Ecolinguistics

According to Stibbe (2014), the function of ecolinguistics is a) to question the "stories" that underlie our "unsustainable" civilization, b) to reveal the problematic stories that lead to ecological destruction. Then, c) to strive for social justice, and d) to seek new (beneficial) stories that are best suited to the conditions of the world we live in. *Stories*, according to Stibbe (2014:118), are not stories "in the traditional sense of a narrative, however, but rather discourses, frames, metaphors and, in general, clusters of linguistic features that come together to convey particular worldviews" (p.118). To explain this phenomenon in depth, Halliday (2001) informs us that "there is a syndrome of grammatical features which conspire ... to construe reality in a certain way; and it is a way that is no longer good for our health as a species" (p. 91).

Ecolinguistics focuses on the "stories we live by," or the mental models shared within a culture that shape how people relate to their environment (Stibbe, 2015:5). To clarify the scope of "we," I asked Arran Stibbe directly via email. He said, "It's unclear exactly who 'we'

refers to in certain situations, but it's just shorthand for 'stories in the minds of multiple individuals across a culture" (A. Stibbe, personal communication, April 04, 2025). In this study, "we" refers specifically to the journalists, policymakers, and audiences whose flood narratives in Pakistan (2022) and Italy (2023) are under analysis. These are localized stories from both countries prevalent in news articles, which likely influence workplace communications. Therefore, this study focuses on the stories people in both countries live by. Stories, according to Stibbe, are "Of key interest are mental models that are shared widely within a culture because these models are likely to have a strong influence on how the culture treats the ecosystems that support life. These are the stories 'we' live by, where 'we' refers to members of a particular cultural group, usually one that the analyst is part of. However, ecolinguistics does not focus on just one culture but searches for new stories to live by in traditional and indigenous cultures around the world. If the analyst is not a member of these groups then these can be described as *stories we could live by*" (A. Stibbe, personal communication, April 04, 2025).

Likewise, Muhlhausler (2003:91) writes that "grammatical constructions have developed in the more recent past that might encourage language habits which have contributed to our present environmental crisis" (p. 91). To explain this further in detail, Goatly (2001) states that "ordinary language, especially the transitive clause, is inadequate to the representation of the world demanded by…ecological theory" (p. 203). In contrast with Halliday's view that the problem exists in features like "nominalization", Goatly criticizes the way clauses split in our world into "agent" and the affected participants.

For Stibbe (2014), ecolinguistic studies differ from each other in terms of depth analysis, motivation, objectives and sophistication. However, some commonly shared characteristics of an ecolinguistic approach to discourse analysis are mentioned below:

> Discourses are examined to reveal how language features create worldviews and "cultural codes" which reflect a community's collective values, norms, and beliefs (Gavriely-Nuri, 2012), as cited in Stibbe (2014). A dominant ideology that considers unlimited economic growth as a top priority is a typical example. Ideologies like these which shape our worldviews, are accessed from an ecological philosophy, also known as ecosophy. This philosophy integrates scientific insights into "other organisms" and their environment with ethical considerations about the ecological importance of survival and explains "whose survival and flouring matters" (Stibbe,2014:120). Stibbe (2014) further explains that an ecolinguistics study seeks to highlight eco-destructive discourses that conflict with personal ecosophy and its principles; the ecosophy promotes discourses that support life-sustaining conditions. Its aims are designed for practical application as it raises awareness about the role language plays in ecological impact, as it can shape

policy, guide development and inspire the redesign (or production) of discourses that align with ecological values (Stibbe, 2014:120-219).

Every critical study follows an explicit or implicit philosophy to assess discourses. The philosophy is based on the ethical vision of where society should go. Normally, Critical Discourse Analysis-related studies are based on the values which care for oppression, social injustice, and exploitation (van Dijk, 2008). For instance, Gavriely-Nuri (2012), as cited in Stibbe (2014), offers this framework for a "culture of peace". It supports "values, attitudes and behaviours based on the principles of freedom, justice and democracy, all human rights, tolerance and solidarity" (Stibbe:2014, 83). Similarly, another study conducted by Hiscock (2012) explains how over-exploitation and scarcity of natural resources work as one of the main factors which could lead to war. Ecolinguistics aims to employ ethical frameworks that keep ecological and social dimensions under consideration. For this reason, Stibbe refers to Naess's (1996) term "ecosophy", which Stibbe (2014:124) finds relevant for "describing frameworks that ecolinguistic studies use to judge discourses against" and he goes to explain ecosophy as "a philosophy of ecological harmony ... openly normative it contains norms, rules, postulates, value priority announcements *and* hypotheses concerning the state of affairs ... The details of an ecosophy will show many variations due to significant differences concerning not only the 'facts' of pollution, resources, population, etc. but also value priorities" (Naess, 1996:8, as cited in Stibbe, 2014).

1.6.2 Honorio do Couto

Honorio do Couto is an important figure in ecolinguistic circles. He is the person who suggested Arran Stibbe should create an online platform for ecolinguistics, which is now known as the International Association of Ecolinguistics (IAE) and is currently administered by Arran Stibbe. Couto also created a website and a journal known as *Ecolinguística: Revista brasileira de ecologia e linguagem* (ECOREBEL), in which he has translated articles written by famous writers such as Fill (Fill, 2015:1). In this section, Couto's contribution to ecolinguistics will be described/ summarized.

Fill (2018:17) shares that, for Couto, "ecolinguistics is not simply a branch of linguistics, but rather a way of looking at the world and of bringing harmony into our world" (p.17). This approach to ecolinguistics was later explored further in many countries, including China. Couto familiarized himself with ecolinguistics during his research at the City University of New York (1997-1998). This stay provided him with the opportunity to take part in different conferences and symposia on ecolinguistics. After that, he got his survey of ecolinguistics published, entitled *Ecolingüística: estudo das relações entre língua e meio ambiente* (Couto,

2007). He was the first to postulate a clear difference between "Endoecology", "Ethnoecology", "social Ecolinguistics" and "Ecology of languages" (Fill, 2018:18)

In addition, Couto (2007:42) has defined the ecolinguistic concepts like Ecolingüistica – study of language and environment – and Ecologia Lingüística – study of language and ecology – also known as "Environmental Linguistics"; Ecologia da língua – study of relations between language and our physical, mental and social environment. Fill (2018) further documents Couto's major works and informs that Couto wrote publications on ecolinguistics, e.g. *Linguística, Ecologia e Ecolinguística: Contato de Línguas* (Couto, 2009). In addition to this, he researched Creole languages (Couto, 1994) and *A Língua franca Mediterrânea* (Couto, 2002, as cited in Fill, 2018). Alongside being the main initiator of "Ecosystemic Linguistics", he founded the Brazilian Encounter of Ecolinguistics (EBE). Due to Couto's contributions, many symposia and conferences have been organized in Brazil, including the Encontro Brasileiro de Ecolinguística in August 2016, at the Universidade de Brasilia (Fill, 2018).

1.7 Ecolinguistics in the 21ˢᵗ Century

In the year 2021, ecolinguistics celebrated its 50ᵗʰ birthday if Haugen's (1971) epoch-making work "The Ecology of Language" is considered as its beginning. In the same year, ecolinguistics got more attention because the entire world was fighting against the COVID-19 pandemic. During these struggling years, environmental issues were considered more serious, and it was collectively realized that the world was not prepared to face the consequences of environmental degradation and global disasters. Therefore, the last couple of years have worked as an urgent wake-up call, as people were urged to change their priorities towards "ecological integrity". This is where ecolinguistics attracted the attention of academia, and people were informed to collectively take necessary measures with "social accountability" (Halliday, 1990; Zhang, 2022:141).

Since the early 2000s, several other contributions have been made within the spectrum of ecolinguistics. A series of studies related to theoretical aspects of ecolinguistics as an emerging field were published in high-impact factor scholarly journals such as *Critical Discourse Studies*, *Language Sciences* and *Discourse and Communication*. Moreover, the foundation of the "language and ecology forum" (http://www.ecoling.net/, now known as "The International Ecolinguistics Association") provided a crucial platform for researchers from many countries to communicate, network and collaborate. The publication of textbooks like *Language of Environment, Environment of Language: a course in Ecolinguistics* (2003) and *Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology and the Stories We Live by* (2015) paved the way for ecolinguistics to enter the classrooms for research students (Chen, 2016:108).

1.7.1 Evolution of Ecolinguistics

In the 21st century, ecolinguistics has evolved greatly. As per Fill (2018), this evolution has not been the one intended by Darwin, which centers on the survival of the fittest and on the desire of each species to become bigger and more powerful, so that more resources of the earth could be utilized by it. With an exceedingly increasing world population, urbanization, and emission of CO_2, it was argued that the ecosystem of life would face the consequences in terms of "more people-less food". This alarming notion came to be known as "global warming" (recently known as climate change). At that point, it became the appropriate moment for evolution to shift toward a new path and give rise to the ecological movement and an ecological perspective on language, which eventually came to be known as ecolinguistics. According to Fill (2018), the emergence of ecolinguistics represents a step in human evolution, not in Darwin's sense of growth or expansion, but rather in maintaining everything in its current shape and size, without aiming for expansion. This preservation idea was best explained in the book *Small is Beautiful* by Schumacher (1973); this iconic view was furthered by Halliday's critique of growthism. So, this evolution does not intend to get bigger and bigger, but rather it aims at qualitative development (12).

1.7.2 Evolution of Ecolinguistics in Different Countries

Couto (2013) and Fill (2018) document how ecolinguistics went in different directions in each country, which increased the number of publications about it. Research communities, associations and platforms have joined hands to address the role of language and ecology and thoughts on actions to bring about the changes. Despite being a relatively new discipline, ecolinguistics may be considered an ideology for understanding global issues (Fill and Penz, 2018). This section documents some significant developments in ecolinguistics worldwide amongst research communities.

Starting with **Austria**, a German *Introduction to Ecolinguistics* was written in 1993 (Fill, 1993; Couto, 2007:51). After two years, the first conference on ecolinguistics was held in 1995. After the success of this conference, it was planned to have an ecolinguistic conference every five years, which also provided a platform for many participants and scholars from many countries to share their research. Amongst many researchers, the most significant contribution was made by scholars from the University of Graz, who explored ecolinguistics in the sense intended by Haugen and Halliday. Among these Graz scholars, Hermine Penz deserves to be mentioned for her investigative study on discourse about global warming and climate change (Fill, 2018:13).

Another researcher who deserves to be discussed here is Reinhard Heuberger (2003) from Innsbruck. His critique of anthropocentrism in the language used to describe animals is worth mentioning. His articles specifically focus on how animals are defined and described in dictionaries like the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*. The investigation of dictionaries by Heuberger exposes anthropocentrism in dictionaries because animals are mentioned for their usefulness to humans. For example, the word "*trout*" is defined as "a fish that lives in rivers, lakes etc. and is good to eat," or "*pig*" as "a farm animal that is kept for its meat" (Heuberger, 2003: 96). However, it is important to mention that recent editions of such dictionaries and an online Internet dictionary such as *Wikipedia* do not describe animals for their anthropocentric usefulness anymore. It is safe to say that ecolinguistics may have brought about this positive change (Fill, 2018:13). In **Austria**, two important conferences were held in 2010, which featured Hildo Honorio do Couto and Roberto Lestinge. Couto delivered a talk on *What is the Environment of Language*. Some years later, in 2015, Couto spoke on *Ecological Discourse Analysis* in Graz. This talk was more important in terms of research and philosophy because he connected ecolinguistic thought with Naess's *Deep Ecology* and M.K. Gandhi's minimalist philosophy (*Less is more*). According to Fill (2018), these ecological ideologies seek harmony and co- coexistence, unlike the notorious Marxist thought, which aims for a long-awaited conflict. It was proposed that the aim of using language should be to avoid conflict and strive for peace. And that is why Couto opted for "Positive Discourse Analysis" alongside Critical Discourse Analysis.

In Denmark, Robert Phillipson emerged as a leading figure after the publication of *Linguistic Imperialism* (Phillipson, 1992 and 2009). In this unique dissertation, Phillipson questioned the hegemony of English in educational institutions in Europe and encouraged multilingual education. The same approach was also supported by Fill (2018), who believes ecolinguistics should be multilingual because it is based on the pillars of diversity and interaction. Zhang (2022) notes another European country where some radical changes occurred in the domain of ecolinguistics. In Denmark, Steffensen and Cowley (2021) pioneered the "distributed language movement" and introduced the concept of languaging. They linked language with ecology and introduced ecolinguistics to the life sciences. They consider language as a part of nature and argue that "people coordinate by drawing on bioecological experience" (p. 148). In the **USA**, with President Trump in power, it was a big challenge for environmentalists and researchers to counter his anti-environmental and radical views. However, topics such as "Ecolinguistics and Language Planning" (Kaplan, 2017) and "Religion, Language and Ecology" (LeVasseur, 2017) were included in the scholarship. Salikoko Mufwene, a professor at the University of Chicago, is worth mentioning here for his research on language evolution through an ecological lens. Einar Haugen and Adam Makkai, though not Americans, have also taught in the USA.

Ecolinguistics was explored most in **Great Britain** in 2021. New theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches have been added to ecolinguistic scholarship. The University of Liverpool organized the Fifth International Conference on Ecolinguistics in the same year. Environmental activists and research scholars from the humanities and natural sciences used this opportunity to exchange ideas to address the environmental crisis concerned with language and ecology. Many researchers from the UK have contributed to ecolinguistics, but in England, the Gloucestershire-based ecolinguistic community administered by Arran Stibbe has made and continues to make an impact in the field through the International Ecolinguistics Association (IEA). This platform, created by Stibbe on Couto's suggestion, is made up of 31 countries and has more than 400 members from all over the world. This impactful online research community offers collaborations and articles, including a course on The Stories We Live By (Roccia and Hampton, 2021). The founding member of this platform, Stibbe, talks about his journey from being a linguist to becoming an ecolinguist in his recent work. His ideas strive for an active, diverse community in ecolinguistics (Zhang, 2022: 147). A separate section of this chapter has already been written about Stibbe's contributions to ecolinguistics.

A group of active research scholars were involved in exploratory activities in **China**. This energetic ecolinguistic community localized ecological issues and introduced Chineseecosophies. Specifically, at the two Chinese universities, viz. South China Agricultural University, led by Huang Guowen and Beijing Foreign Studies University, led by He Wei, researchers proposed a localized theoretical framework and methodological approach to investigate the role of discourse in aggravating, hiding or solving ecological problems. In this connection, *Harmonious Discourse Analysis* was suggested by Haung Guowon for the diversification of ecolinguistic studies in the Chinese context (Huang and Zhao, 2021). The team members of Huang's team were involved in researching the influence of language in society (Zhang et al., 2021).

In **Nigeria**, the Nigerian Ecolinguistics Association has been working as an active community. Scholars from different universities, such as the University of Lagos, Benue State University and the University of Nigeria, have been contributing by organizing international conferences and publishing articles in the *Nigerian Journal of Ecolinguistics* and *Environmental Discourse*. In the year 2021, this community organized an International Conference themed *Language and Politics of Environmental Ethics in the Era of COVID-19 Pandemic* and also published a couple of journal issues in which Fill's article entitled "Ecolinguistics as A Science for Peace" was published. In this article, Fill (2021:2) advocates for the inclusion of languages from other parts of the world, particularly Africa. This statement stands for the diversity of ecolinguistics as an emerging field (Zhang, 2022:149).

Another country where ecolinguistics flourishes is **Australia**. Michael Halliday and Peter Muhlhausler are the two best-known contributors from Australia who are known to almost every reader in the field of ecolinguistics. German-born and Oxford graduate Peter Muhlhausler (1999, 2003 and 2017) has been working on different linguistic features of South Australian Aboriginal languages, along with Joshua Nash, for the revival of minority languages. Additionally, he worked as an editor for different publishing houses. The best-known book which he edited is *Ecolinguistics Reader* (Fill; Muhlhausler, 2001), featuring articles and texts written by famous scholars like Haugen, Goatly, Finke and Mackey (Fill, 2018:16).

1.7.3 Scholarships Worldwide in 2021

In the field of ecological discourse analysis, researchers globally have broadened their horizons in a wide array of study areas. In Egypt, scholars explored textbooks from ecolinguistic perspective (see Hamed, 2021) and for an ecolinguistics analysis of religious texts, see El-Wakeel (2021). In other parts of the world, local scholarships were added to ecolinguistics from Switzerland (see Hase et al., 2021), Argentina (see Forte, 2021), and Pakistan (see Ahmed et al., 2021). Ecolinguistics is still a young field; scholars have analyzed various social issues, making it an interdisciplinary field. According to Zhang (2022), scholars in Singapore (Cavallaro et al., 2021), Russia (Shelestyuk, 2021), Bangladesh (Sultana, 2021), and Germany (Doehler, 2021) have conducted studies on language and ecological grounds.

Current methods and existing frameworks have been applied to many studies related to ecological discourse analyzes under ecolinguistics. Amongst these studies, Zhang (2022) provides a comprehensive summary of research on various topics from nature to animal rights. For example, Chen et al. (2021) discuss the relationship between nature and language and analyze the ways nature is presented. Likewise, Abbamonte (2021) explores how language is used in discourses concerning sustainability and recycling. Sustainability discourse is further explored in detail by Fine and Love-Nochols (2021), who study how climate change discourse is viewed from an ecolinguistic perspective. In the South Asian context, Hameed (2021) has conducted research on animal rights from an ecolinguistic perspective to highlight linguistic features. In addition to sustainability discourse and animal rights, Zhdanava et al. (2021) add scholarship to this by adding activism discourse and investigating vegan campaigns. Besides this, more researchers applied ecolinguistic perspectives to examine textbooks (see Farooq and Umar, 2021) and literary texts (Alves, 2021) to present ecolinguistic themes and analyzes. To integrate ecolinguistics with digital studies and spaces such as news and websites, Cheng and He (2021) employ ecolinguistics perspectives to study news media, and similarly, Niceforo

(2021) has conducted a comprehensive study of linguistic features in institutional announcements. In a similar vein, it is important to credit Mliless et al (2021) for their work on films and documentaries as they employ ecolinguistics principles in their analyzes. Besides the contributions of the above-mentioned scholars, Misiaszek (2021) deserves to be credited here for their interesting work on the discourse related to COVID-19 and its ecological consequences. Stibbe (2021) has also acknowledged the contribution to ecolinguistics from diverse perspectives and recognized it as an emerging international movement. Stibbe has rightly pointed out this because these valued contributions address current important issues.

1.7.4 Ecolinguistics Conferences during the COVID-19 Pandemic

During the COVID-19 pandemic, all spectrums of life, including academics, shifted from onsite to online. Despite many problems caused by lockdowns across the world, online platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams provide an opportunity to network, reflect, andinspire. Taking advantage of this crisis, many organizations and universities organized online conferences to exchange thoughts on different linguistic and ecological problems**.** Therefore**,** contributions in terms of the exchange of ideas, knowledge, wisdom, research and feelings from individuals, groups of scholars and research communities have helped the cause of ecolinguistics keep going. This section provides a record of some major events that took place in the year 2021-22 and contributed to the development of ecolinguistics.

The year 2021 hosted many significant events, which greatly contributed to ecolinguistics as an emerging field of study. One such event, which I must mention here, is the Fifth International Conference on Ecolinguistics (also known as ICE-5) in the **United Kingdom**; unlike other major events, this conference was held virtually by the University of Liverpool in the UK from April 12 to 14. It became popular among researchers for its theme, *Ecolinguistics in Action: Tackling Real-world Issues,* which emphasized the urgency of addressing environmental challenges, drawing inspiration from Swedish environmental activist Greta Thunberg's statement, "as if the house is on fire because it is". This conference was different from previous ICE conferences, respectively organized in China and Denmark, which explored ecolinguistic principles and trends in ecolinguistics; the conference in the UK emphasized the urgency of climate action to address environmental crises and seek positive alternatives through a peaceful movement: ecolinguistics. Researchers from Asia, America, Europe and Australia gathered to share critiques over 'misconceptions and misrepresentations' in discourses coming from campaigns, movies, literature, and media reports and proposed novel ideas to spread awareness about a wide array of issues from animal activism to eco-literature.

Apart from ICE, several other national and international conferences, seminars and symposia were organized all over the world to address the impact of linguistic patterns in ecological discourse; the idea was to address environmental crises at home and beyond. To this end, scholarly contributions were also made in **Italy**; for example, the University of Ferrara organized an international workshop in May 2021 entitled *Changing the (Culture) Climate with Ecocriticism and Ecolinguistics* to discuss the ways ecolinguistics could change the discourse on climate change. Keynote speakers at this workshop came from different countries and multidisciplinary backgrounds and discussed ideas on several diversified topics such as eco-identity, eco-theatre, and eco-poetry (Zhang, 2022:151).

Zhang (2022) adds that many conferences were held in Europe during these times. Another conference that needs to be cited here is a two-day online International Ecolinguistic Conference organized by Łomża State University of Applied Sciences in **Poland** in June 2021. To become ecologically aware of the academic and intellectual space by overcoming prejudices and confrontations, the conference explored various topics on "language process, ecolinguistics extensions and transdisciplinary routes in the 21st century".

Outside Western countries, international conferences were also held in other continents. To discuss the issues in language and politics, Zhang (2022) writes that the Nigerian Ecolinguistics Association collaborated with the International Ecolinguistics Association (IEA) to organize *Language and Politics of Environmental Ethics in the Era of the COVID-19 Pandemic* in **Nigeria** from September 8th to 10th, 2021. This conference contextualized ecolinguistics to explore ways to address prevalent local issues.

In Asia, **China** was the main centre where ecolinguistics flourished. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, new theoretical frameworks and ecosophies were explored to localize ecolinguistics. This was followed by some international conferences and symposia, including the 6th National Symposium on the *Strategic Development of Ecolinguistics* in Beijing, in June 2021. This symposium precisely documented the research, progress and breakthroughs achieved by the China Association of Ecolinguistics in 2020 and aimed at the development of ecolinguistics by conducting training programs and further research on local and global environmental issues. The China Association of Ecolinguistics has been actively involved in developing ecolinguistics as a discipline to drive change through actions and has organized numerous international conferences and workshops to advance frameworks in ecolinguistics.

In **Pakistan**, RIPHAH International University held an online International Conference themed *Ecolinguistics and Ecological Narratives* from March 9th to 10th, 2022. The keynote speakers and panel discussions included some renowned international researchers such as Arran Stibbe, George M. Jacobs, Hildo Honorio do Couto and Peter Makwanya. The latest ecolinguistic topics concerning eco-solidarity, eco-literacy, eco-pedagogy and ecological

stories were explored during the conference.

The most recent edition of the International Conference on Ecolinguistics (ICE-6) took place in **Austria** at the University of Graz from September 21 to 24, 2022. Its theme, *Language, Time, Sustainability: Ecolinguistics For, With, After, and Against the Future*, was discussed by prolific scholars such as Alwin F. Fill, Peter Muhlhausler, Andrew Goatly, and Barbara Adam.

1.7.5 Contributions from Women Scholars: A Brief Overview

Ecolinguistics is an inclusive and interdisciplinary field in its essence and approach. The aim of ecolinguistics is the betterment of living and non-living beings, and its main concern is to benefit everyone regardless of gender, nationality and ethnicity since environmental crises do not discriminate, but they affect all alike. Fill (2018) emphasized the diversity and inclusivity of ecolinguistics and acknowledged the contributions of men and women alike who have added significantly to the scholarship. As this section is about female contributions, I will refer to the works of female ecolinguists who, through their female perspectives, have published some important works. In this connection, Hermine Penz, who has co-edited the famous *Routledge Handbook of Ecolinguistics,* deserves to be mentioned for her contribution to ecolinguistics. Rachel Carson is another female writer who must also be mentioned here for her book *Silent Spring* (1962), also admired by Couto in his *Ecolingüística.*

Florence Voegelin's research focusing on Native American languages significantly added to the development of ecolinguistics, because of this particular work, ecology in connection with languages was used for the first time. Brigitte Nerlich in England, Tove Skutnabb-Kangas in Denmark, and numerous women scholars in Brazil have made significant contributions to ecolinguistic research. In addition, many women have participated in the plenary discussions at the conferences in Brazil. In IV EBE at Fortaleza, it was noted that more women than men were participating. Adelaide Chichorro, an ecolinguist from Portugal, participated in a conference in Graz in the year 2000. Francesca Zunino from Asti (Italy) organized a conference on ecolinguistics. According to Fill (2018), the *Routledge Handbook* (Fill; Penz, 2017) is contributed to by 50% of female authors. He also claims that ecolinguistics is the only science in which more women are conducting research than in other sciences (14).

1.7.6 Some Noteworthy Publications

This part of my study enlists some groundbreaking books and a research article from a high-impact factor journal, which are considered to be the most significant in the development of ecolinguistics as an interdisciplinary research area. As emphasized the development of ecolinguistics in 2021, I must refer to the same year again because the second edition of Arran Stibbe's epoch-making book *Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology and the Stories We Live By* (2021) came out in 2021. This latest edition gives new directions to ecolinguistic research. This version of Stibbe's book contains more "explicit definition", "updated framework", and more "comprehensive frameworks and mythologies". This volume also offers topics on the latest trends and issues in ecolinguistics. As per Zhang and He (2016), the first edition of this book provided a crucial "breakthrough" because it offered ecolinguistics frameworks to analyze linguistic features of the dominant stories we live by in our contemporary world.

In the latest edition of his book, Stibbe (2021) provides a more precise definition of ecolinguistics, describing it as "the study of the role of language in the life-sustaining interactions of humans with other species and the physical environment" (p. 203). He emphasizes the relevancy and practicality of ecolinguitics, and regarding the methodology, Stibbe advocates for the use of narrative analysis and harmonious discourse analysis. Interestingly, this edition also has a chapter entitled "Narrative", which is highlighted as the most significant and impactful of all story types. Additionally, it explores how ecolinguists can contribute to addressing urgent ecological challenges, including those posed by COVID-19.

Another important work was written by He Wei Gao Ran and Liu Jiahunan, entitled 生态话语分 新发展研究 *(Shengtai Huayu Fenxi Xinfazhan Yanjiu, 'New Developments of Ecological Discourse Analysis')*. Like Stibbe's (2021) book, this book exemplifies Ecological Discourse Analysis as a toolkit of ecolinguistics (He et al., 2021). It provides ecolinguistics' theoretical understanding alongside its importance in explaining how discourses can spread ecological awareness and eco-friendly behaviours. While highlighting the merits and relevance of this book, Zhang (2022) suggests that the most significant aspect is its ecosophy; its ecosophy emphasizes a harmonious structure of relationships, interactions between humans and nature, human relationships, and various social dynamics. It highlights the importance of respecting natural laws and recognizes humans as an integral component of the natural world (He et al., 2021:51 as cited in Zhang, 2022).

Another writer whose work has been praised in ecocolinguistic domains is Anthony Nanson, for his work *Storytelling and Ecology: Empathy, Enchantment, and Emergence in the Use of Oral Narratives* (Nanson, 2021, as cited in Zhang, 2022). It reveals how oral storytelling can help ecological changes. Nanson explains how the art of storytelling can

potentially counter hegemonic discourse coming from powerful "vested interests". It is discussed in the book how storytelling can help spread knowledge and ecological awareness (Zhang, 2022:155).

A journal that is worth mentioning here is *Ecolinguística: Revista Brasileira de Ecologia e Linguagem* (ECO-REBEL). With Couto as an editor in the team, this journal aims to promote Ecosystemic Linguistic thoughts. The journal investigates language "exoecologically and endoecologically". So far, in three volumes, it has been published on various topics on social, mental and natural interaction between language and the environment. Couto et al. (2021) had the most significant article published, entitled "Ecosystemic Discourse Analysis (EDA)". EDA explores attitudes and perceptions of life and highlights the ecology of communicative interactions (Couto et al., 2021: 10 as cited in Zhang, 2022). Apart from this high-impact journal in ecolinguistics, contributions came from other journals such as *The International Journal of Bilingualism* also published exclusively on the current trends in ecolinguistics (Zhang, 2022:157).

1.8 The Future of Ecolinguistics

In this section, new orientations, challenges and issues of ecolinguistics and its future will be discussed.

1.8.1 New Orientations of Ecolinguistics

Besides the high-impact journals and books, ecolinguistics was employed in different disciplines, making it a multidisciplinary field. Stibbe (2017) suggested going beyond the critical analysis of discourses to make ecolinguistics more practical and meaningful in the present times, as he introduced Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA). As mentioned, researchers in PDA study discourses to promote linguistic features that support life and sustainability in order to promote these beneficial discourses. In addition to this, with increasing interest in green products and eco-literacy, Stoke and Molnar (2017) studied greenwashing in commercial communication to highlight the ways corporations mislead customers to sell their products. With interdisciplinary contributions and approaches, it can be argued that ecolinguistics has become an integral part of broad applied linguistics. It is therefore safe to claim that ecolinguistics is multidisciplinary and is on its way to becoming an "evolutionary" movement in the 21st century. It is evident and expected from research publications, symposia, and conferences organized by different communities and bodies in 2021 that this development will continue and may elevate Ecolinguistics to a different level. Furthermore, ecolinguistics is also applied to connect discourse with images and investigate them from an ecolinguistic perspective. Hansen's (2017) work entitled "Using Visual Images to Show Environmental

Problems" can be considered an important example. Fill (2018) explains how Hansen's essay shows how images of Nature and Industry can improve environmental problems caused by humans.

In addition, the research coming from environmental studies, biological studies, and sociocultural and cognitive studies is expanding theoretical and methodological approaches. Thus, according to Zhang (2022), ecolinguistics is expected to emerge as a field of research that can go beyond linguistics' limits and boundaries and become a science in its own right. The same prediction was already made by Steffensen and Fill in 2014. However, it is feared that ecolinguistics may be considered as an ill-defined discipline which lacks focus and coherence. That is why more linguists will be welcome to join the debate in the future to provide a clear and unified understanding of ecolinguistics in terms of its aim, objectives, scope and methods (Zhang, 2022:158).

As argued by Halliday, language can create disconnection. So, addressing this issue will demand researchers to look beyond the traditional approaches of ecolinguistics. Peter Finke (2018) envisions a positive role ecolinguistics would play in creating peace through dialogue. Following the same path, Fill (2020) hopes that ecolinguistics will become a science which deals with climate change, but also with war and peace.

1.8.2 Challenge(s) for Ecolinguistics

Ecolinguistics is essentially inclusive and is known as a global and collective movement which aims for the welfare and betterment of all. This ecosystem also creates a challenging situation for the field itself because scholars who come from socio-economically diverse backgrounds are underrepresented. To be more specific, like in other social sciences and humanities, scholars from the Global South are likely to encounter challenges such as immigration, funding, and logistical issues. These difficulties can lead to limited participation from many scholars. As an emerging field, ecolinguistics risks missing out on the ecological wisdom, knowledge, and diverse practices that researchers from these regions could contribute to the Western academic discourse. To address these issues (including many more), Chen (2016) proposes the promotion of ecolinguistics in multilingual countries to include non-Western discourses and scholarships to broaden the horizons of ecolinguitics. By doing this, Chen (2016) argues that translation can also play a role in introducing knowledge in different contexts because Chen believes that the future of ecolinguistics is in its anti-hegemonic commitment.

1.8.3 Green Communication and Discourse

Fill (2018) writes that one of the main challenges of ecolinguistics is to limit "greenwashing". With increasing competition among businesses, eco-labelling in production is also increasing; this is where "greenwashing" and shallow environmentalism take place to exploit customers in the name of "sustainability". A wide array of dominant discourses, like environmental discourse, the discourse of sustainable development and greenwashing, carry theso-called environmental claim. Harre et al. (1999) call this type of discourse "greenspeak" (Stibbe, 2014:126). To debunk the so-called environment-friendly tag, Fill recommends multimodal approaches to investigate discourse in close association with images, for example, a beef ad in an Austrian newspaper (*Kronenzeitung*, October 26, 1997), which presents animal meat "with lots of love". Plus, the image in the ad shows a green landscape but no animals. Also, in Brazil, "meat production" is made to look green by labelling it as plant production, or by using expressions like "Spa Bovino". It claims to have raised animals in a so-called resort where animals live happily. Claims like this frame their beef production practices as green and sustainable (Fill, 2018:18). It should be noted that animal rights activists have criticized many farms for greenwashing and bad conditions where animals are raised. Owing to this, Goatly (1996) comes up with an interesting prediction; he believes that the time will come in the future when language will be changed by its users to adopt new ecological insights and proposes the concept of "deep ecologization" to counter greenwashing practices. It argued further that this philosophy may help address the lexical items and linguistic features in commercial discourse to highlight greenwashing (Fill, 1998:12).

1.8.4 What Will/Should Ecolinguistics Do in the Future?

Peter Muhlhausler and Adrian Peace (2006:473) compile a record of the main issues in environmental discourse and enlist the following future ones to be addressed by ecolinguistics:

> It was argued to precisely study to what extent discursive practices influence the natural environments. To understand this, one major problem is that public discourse selectively focuses on a narrow range of environmental aspects. Furthermore, it is uncertain if the anthropocentric nature of our languages can be mitigated through intentional language planning. Muhlhausler and Peace (2006) also highlight that the effectiveness of environmental discourse in addressing the global environmental crisis is still not well understood.

Muhlhausler (2020:8) emphasizes the inclusion of some research topics in ecolinguistic studies

to expand its horizons in the future. To this end, he highlights issues such as the negative effects of tourism on the environment, which have been excluded. In addition to this, another topic he believes has been excluded from an ecolinguistics study is the mass migration of humans and animals. Besides these topics, the ecological consequences of military activities and conflicts have also not been included in the mainstream ecologuistic research.

1.9 Critical Language Awareness vs. Language Correctness

An important question within the ecolinguistic spectrum is whether the ecolinguistic criticism of language should strive to change language or whether language users should be educated with critical language awareness. Fill (1998) holds that many ecolinguists are against the idea of 'ecological correctness' because they find it old-fashioned and conservative. Reproducing eco-friendly words is not going to be successful (Muhlhauster and Peace, 2006) because it did not work before. That is why this correct approach should be replaced with Critical Language Awareness, according to Halliday and Stibbe (2014). However, it is yet to be determined whether ecolinguistics should address the issues in language or its use; another similar question that is often debated is to what extent ecolinguistics can spread language awareness. I support the second approach: greater language awareness is more important and more rewarding than criticizing language use.

In summary, Stibbe (2014, 2015 and 2021) believes that ecolinguistics will need to develop more comprehensive theoretical frameworks in the future to judge destructive ideologies and replace them with alternative, "beneficial" ideologies. In this regard, linguistic communities, along with researchers from different disciplines, must play a role in tackling the significant contemporary challenges facing our world, as issues such as class inequality, dominant ideology growth, species extinction, pollution, and even war are not solely concerns for biologists, physicists, or sociologists to study and seek solutions. These problems also fall within the scope of applied linguistics, which, while not offering definitive solutions, can provide valuable guidance and frameworks for addressing them (Halliday, 2001:199).

Chapter 2: Theoretical Background

2. Introduction

The following chapter focuses on Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA), detailing its objectives, development, key frameworks and significance to the current research. It mentions the main theorists of CDA and their contributions to the field of critical discourse studies. In addition, this chapter introduces an ecosophy and its objectives to develop an overall argument needed for this study. The methodology and theoretical framework are also briefly addressed in this chapter.

2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis: An Overview

The rift between those in power and the forces opposing it has always been a matter of concern and debate in the academic research community, especially in modern society, where humans (and non-human animals as well, from an ecolinguistic perspective) are controlled by various institutions in many ways. Such institutions maintain their power through consent produced by discourses and present power as an integral part of society. This natural formation of unbalanced power leads to social inequalities and ultimately systemic control over human life and freedom. Owing to this unequal power relation, there has been a long struggle between the oppressors and the oppressed to control the interpretation system of language (Golbasi, 2017). Fairclough further explores the dominance of the status quo that exploits public institutions to change and manage discourse practices as *technologizing discourse* (Fairclough, 1995: 3-87, emphasis in the original). This systemic control over discourse and unbalanced power share is framed through different discursive strategies such as manipulation, censorship, limited access to information, and so on. At the institutional and organizational level, policymaking, monitoring, moral policing and exploitation of socially discursive practices facilitate the status quo to maintain its power and legitimize it in society. Interestingly, much of this is done through language. The resistance to these unjust ideologies is the agenda of CDA.

CDA was initially understood as an analytical approach to research discourses, critically *or* the study of negative/problematic discourses. CDA, as an organized method of analysis, formally began in 1991 when a group of scholars, namely Teun van Dijk, Norman Fairclough, Gunther Kress and Ruth Wodak, met at the University of Amsterdam to discuss their search for critical studies. During this historic two-day symposium, they extensively and critically discussed the theories, agendas, and frameworks needed for CDA research (van Leeuwen, 2006; Wodak and Meyer, 2016).

As stated above, CDA has long been considered a critical study of language, with Norman Fairclough credited for coining the term Critical Language Study in his famous book entitled *Language and Power* (1989). Introduced as a deliberate critical approach to the discourse, CDA aims to expose negative aspects of discourse that intend to favour the powerful. Van Dijk (2015) suggests that CDA is an analytical research approach that mainly focuses on the ways social power and inequalities are legitimized and reproduced. It analyzes how some discourses are produced in a certain manner to normalize social injustice and inequality in society. As its approach is *dissident*, critical discourse analysts explicitly uncover and question inequalities in the social and political context. Therefore, CDA can also be considered a social movement by political discourse analysts. Due to its broad agenda and scope, there has often been confusion surrounding CDA and its method. Van Dijk explains a misconception linked with CDA, i.e. that it is not a special method of conducting discourse analysis. Rather, CDA is cross-disciplinary in its approach; different methods from other humanities and social sciences can also be used in CDA (Wodak and Meyer, 2008; Titscher et al., 2000). That is why, to avoid any confusion, van Dijk (2008) recommends using a broader term − *Critical Discourse Studies* (henceforth, CDS) − to emphasize the methodological inclusiveness of CDS. For this type of research, many approaches may be employed in the critical study of texts and talks. However, many researchers still prefer referring to this research area as CDA. CDS see "language as social practice" (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997) and considers the "context of language use" very crucial.

CDA as an analytical research practice does not go in just one direction, but it is a perspective that can be traced in many other discourse studies like Conversation Analysis, Rhetoric Studies and Multimodal Discourse Analysis. In short, CDA is a discourse study with an *attitude* (van Dijk 2015: 466). This attitude allows discourse analysts to go beyond the traditional approaches and extend their focus to other areas of discourse studies. Its characteristics are found in the critical thinking of the Frankfurt School before World War II (Drake, 2009; Rasmussen and Swindal, 2004). The recent emphasis on discourse originated with the critical linguistics movement that emerged in the United Kingdom in the 1970s, at the University of East Anglia; this movement was promoted by many scholars, including Roger Fowler (Fowler et al., 1979). To explain the connection between critical linguistics and CDA, some scholars write that critical linguistics is a sub-theory of linguistic enquiry that emerged from Halliday's systemic functional linguistics, aiming at encouraging linguistic analysts to go "beyond formal description and use it as the basis for social critique" (2006:291). With the critical developments in sociolinguistics, stylistics and social sciences in the early 1970s, CDA started having its parallel fields (Birnbaum 1971; Calhoun 1995; Wodak 1996). Similarly, Blommaert and Bulcaen (2000) trace its emergence in the later parts of the 1980s as a programmatic development in European discourse studies led by Norman Fairclough, Ruth

Wodak, and Teun van Dijk. As mentioned earlier, CDA, as a diverse method of research, has its social and philosophical foundations in the humanities and social sciences, including Western Marxism that influenced CDA's core framework (Golbasi, 2017). It has been, since then, considered one of the most influential and sought-after domains of discourse studies. Finally, CDA can be characterized as a reaction against the prevalent and dominant "uncritical" traditions of research in generative and structural linguistics.

The following section presents some of the general principles of CDS:

2.2 Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis

Before discussing the principles of discourse analysis, it is important to clarify what is not the focus of this type of research. It does not simply study the structures of discourse or its description of how discourse is formed without social context. Rather, it aims to understand and explain social issues and political problems. The analysis of these social issues often involves multiple academic disciplines, making it multidisciplinary. It explains social problems and discourse structures by looking at how people interact in society and the wider social system that influences these interactions. To be precise, CD A for van Dijk (2015: 467) examines the "ways discourse structures enact, confirm, legitimate, reproduce, or challenge relations of power abuse (dominance) in society".

CDA has emerged as an umbrella and holistic term for a special approach to the enquiry of text and talk. Emerging from critical linguistics and socio-politically aware and oppositional methods of studying language, CDA investigates discourse and communication. Like many other fields, it is not easy to precisely determine the practices, aims, theories or methods of CDA (van Dijk, 1995). However, Dijk (1995) summarizes Fairclough and Wodak's (1997, as cited in van Dijk, 1995) major arguments for CDA in the following list:

1. CDA addresses social problems.
2. Power relations are discursive.
3. Discourse constitutes society and culture.
4. Discourse does ideological work.
5. Discourse is historical.
6. The link between text and society is mediated.
7. Discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory.
8. Discourse is a form of social action.

CDA has multiple agendas and fundamental principles. From a linguistic stance, CDA offers an analysis of linguistic and semiotic aspects embedded in language. Language use and the choice of specific linguistic patterns are often deliberate because they intentionally exclude and include humans and their actions as per speakers' interests and agendas. It also considers social

structures (like the education system) and culture as dialectical, meaning discourse and social structures and culture influence each other. They actively shape and reshape one another from time to time. Therefore, CDA aims at understanding this dynamic relationship and analyzes how language influences and (more importantly) is influenced by society and culture. CDA attempts to interpret and explain language, involving a dynamic process that allows studies to have diverse perspectives (Wodak, 1996; Fairclough and Wodak, 1997). To reveal the discursive essence of social and political power relations, CDA maintains that discourses operate ideologically.

2.2.1 Aims of Critical Discourse Analysis

Van Dijk (1995: 18-19, emphasis in original) identifies some of the main aims of CDA:

- CDA is a *problem − or issue-oriented* study, as it aims at addressing and solving a problem(s) without strictly relying on a particular theoretical framework. Unlike paradigm-oriented research, CDA is open to any method from other disciplines if it is apt to effectively address complex social problems like sexism, racism, social inequality, political polarization and censorship. A CDA approach does not have to remain under the boundaries of one discipline and theoretical framework. The complexity of issues requires critical discourse analysts to draw on different methodologies from multiple disciplines. Furthermore, CDA does not intend to categorize itself as a special school of thought, but rather as a guided *approach, position or stance* to the study of text and talk.

- To understand social problems or issues, CDA is *inter or multidisciplinary*, due to its emphasis and focus on the relation between discourse and society in a larger context. CDA has been considered a part of critical studies in humanities and social sciences, such as political science, psychology and sociology. Owing to this, critical discourse analysts investigate issues emanating from feminism, gender studies, and politics.

- CDA studies can critically look at *all levels of and dimensions of* discourse, e.g. style, rhetoric, speech acts, semantics and pragmatic strategies, to name a few. However, CDA studies are not exclusively concerned with the verbal aspects of discourse; they may also pay heed to other *semiotic* aspects of communication, like pictures and films.

- While analyzing the role of discourse in the social context, CDA lays much emphasis on relations of *power, dominance and inequality* and how they are *reproduced or resisted* by the members of social groups or individuals through text and talk. CDA focuses on how language and discourse (communication) are

used to enact, normalize, legitimize, or question power structures and ways of dominance and resistance across different social relationships of *class, race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, language and age*. Thus, through its resistant stance, CDA aims to expose and resist the underlying ideologies that are instrumental in the reproduction of dominance and social inequalities.

- Out of many result-oriented aims of CDS, including describing and explaining power structures, CDA studies primarily aim at uncovering, revealing and disclosing what is not explicitly visible in the social relations maintained by discursive dominance and their underlying ideologies. These ideologies are often framed in the natural order. For this reason, CDA precisely examines how the strategies of *manipulation, legitimation, and the manufacture of consent* are employed to influence people's minds and their actions in favour of the powerful.

- Therefore, by uncovering the discursive methods of mind control and its social and psychological influence, CDA takes a critical and resistant stance *against the powerful and the elites,* who use their power to oppress marginalized communities. CDA also takes a position in *solidarity* with the dominated (weak) groups and proposes counterarguments to challenge and resist the discursive practices of the dominating (power) groups.

While the blueprint of CDA is available for researchers, it is important to note that not all CDS strictly follow these criteria for various reasons. A lack of perspectives from the global South worth mentioning here, as most CDA studies follow a Western critique of CDA as an approach (see Shah, 2023 for CDS and Southern feminisms). Nonetheless, the above-mentioned criteria (out of many more not mentioned here) can equip a discourse analyst to differentiate their approach from other work on discourse. CDA primarily approaches discourse with an *attitude* to oppose hegemonic structures and strategies as well as their cognitive and social conditions and consequences, with an explicit intention to resist elite discourses. Therefore, given the nature of the topics under study, CDA tends to extend its approach(es) beyond the traditional methodological frameworks of observation and description. Its methodological flexibility allows researchers to incorporate another criterion, i.e. *critical adequacy*. This makes it possible for critical discourse analysts to presuppose social norms and values, thereby introducing a social or political set of ethics based on their *ecosophy*[2] (their ethical and moral philosophy of what they consider right or wrong). However, it should be noted that such a deliberate choice of ethics (ethical framework) is often a matter of criticism: it is considered biased and therefore subjective by scholars and commentators who believe that research should be objective and avoid taking an explicit stance against the status quo. In other words, critics

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[2] See page 74 for ecosophy of the present study

of CDA argue that it is not very scientific due to its intentional political position. However, van Dijk (1995) defends CDA against this critique and contends that the scholars' stance and enterprise are an integral part of social and political life, thus, the theories, methods, problems and data selection in discourse studies have always been political. Contrary to other disciplines and frameworks, CDA takes an explicit oppositional stance: it does not tend to imply or approach an issue under a disguise.

Considering the general principles of CDA, its aims and challenges, this chapter will also cover some theoretical aspects of CDA, its limitations, and how certain dominant groups control text, talk, contexts, and ultimately the human mind. In addition, it will briefly discuss CDA's flexible and multidisciplinary theoretical framework and present a theoretical framework suited for the current study. This chapter will also document the data collection process and explain the choice of specific data and methods employed in this study.

2.3 Applications in Critical Discourse Analysis

Furthermore, van Dijk (1995) recommends theoretical and descriptive aspects of approaching discourse and texts to fully understand the strategies of domination, manipulation, inequality and nominalization underlying text and talk. Prevalent major social and political problems/issues, for instance, racism and patriarchy, can be taken under analysis to expose *how* certain ways of inequality are expressed, enacted, passivized, normalized, and ultimately reproduced by discourse and texts. An effective study of CDA should have conclusions, offer practical solutions and propose further recommendations, rather than merely providing descriptions and explanations. Given that CDA is an evolving and developing method, it is difficult to maintain that all its criteria will be strictly followed in the present study. CDA is more than a scholarly practice; rather, it is also a broad scholarly *program of research* (van Dijk 1995: 20).

CDA separates itself from critical linguistics due to its broader concepts and agendas. It goes beyond traditional approaches to linguistic features in isolation and focuses on discourse in a socially situated position. To explore this approach in depth, Fairclough (1992) explains that CDA aims to integrate linguistically focused discourse analysis with relevant social and political theories about language and discourse and offer a framework suitable for social science research. Similarly, van Dijk (2009) views critical discourse analysis as problem-driven, emphasizing its focus on addressing social issues and challenges rather than merely analyzing discourse and its characteristics.

2.3.1 On Political Stance

As mentioned earlier, such a directed focus on social issues often arises from a firm, politically motivated commitment of critical discourse analysts. According to van Leeuwen (2006: 293), researchers in CDS consciously take a position and unapologetically defend their critical stance on a certain issue. To explain the objectives and interests of CDA, Valvason (2020) informs that researchers usually work through a critical lens to challenge the structural construction of social and political issues such as racism (van Dijk, 1991) and feminism (Lazar, 2005). Wodak and Meyer (2016:7) divide this political commitment and work into two areas. The first, which emerges from the Frankfurt School, bases its argument on a social theory according to which CDS tends to critique and change social issues in a broader sense compared to the conventional ways of merely providing descriptions and explanations of social issues. In continuation, CDS additionally offer critical knowledge that can aid people in understanding discursive practices and reflecting on their lives.

2.4 Issues in Critical Discourse Analysis: Writing Critical Discourse Analysis

Writing critical discourse analysis is one of the main challenges for discourse analysts, especially when they write about nominalization and passivization in discourse, and therefore, all discourse analysts face a paradoxical situation (Billig, 2008). This means that critical discourse analysts examine language, and they must also use language to make informed decisions while doing their investigations. They have no other way of investigating the language without using language as a tool to present their arguments. It is not possible to analyze discourse use without language. Therefore, critical discourse analysts cannot possibly keep their own language separated from their theorization about discourse, and this is their major challenge. Researchers in discourse studies aim to analyze language with an attitude and an intention to expose the strategies of power and problematic ideologies underlying language. For this reason, Billig (2008) questions the authenticity of the language that researchers use to present their theses, as their language can also be ideological and "even corrupt". By corrupt, he implies that language used by researchers is not only influenced by their personal and political biases but may also be intentionally misleading. Ironically, critical discourse analysts investigate language to expose bias underlying language, while their language can also be criticized for promoting an ideological bias.

While CDA continues to evolve and develop, researchers in this field will have to keep this challenge in mind: it is an inevitable problem. This is why critics will also continue to highlight similar issues in CDA (Widdowson, 2004) and some even question CDA's agenda and values (de Beaugrande, 2006), amplifying similar voices. Similarly, some analysts in CDA, such as Wodak (2009) and Billig (2000 and 2008), have been reflective of their own language and have been their own critics as well. This step is considered encouraging because critical discourse analysts should not avoid doing a critical review of CDA and other discourse studies if they want to be critical in true essence (Billig, 2000 and 2008). In addition, Wodak (2006) encourages productive conversations on CDA and agrees with the idea that there is a lot to talk about CDA. Biling (2008: 784) advises that critical discourse analysts must pay close attention to their own language use. Since writing in CDA goes beyond traditional stylistic concerns, it is an important consideration for analysts who emphasize the central role of language in perpetuating ideology, inequality, and power.

For example, it needs to be acknowledged that nominalization and passivization are crucial aspects of CDA. These techniques enable discourse analysts to understand how nominalization functions ideologically by deleting the agency and reifying processes. These techniques have played a significant role in the development of critical discourse, as is evident in Roger Fowler's early works. Fowler, along with his colleagues, followed Halliday's concepts to show how patterns of texts can reproduce ideologies. Halliday's understanding of language helped scholars like Fowler to develop and extend the scope of CDS and continue to do so, particularly in the analysis of nominalization. The early works of Fowler et al. (1979) further explained how a deliberate preference for noun phrases over verbs, as well as the passive voice over the active voice, was usually based on ideological grounds. These techniques were also exposed in newspaper headlines (Fowler, 1991) that would read: "Attack on Protestors". It was then demonstrated how such headlines intentionally delete the agents (subjects) of the specific action, i.e. who the *attacker* is in the headlines mentioned above. This makes it hard, or perhaps even impossible, for readers to understand who attacked the protestors. This strategic objective is achieved by omitting the agent and using the passive voice. For this reason, critical discourse analysts investigate language to expose strategies like nominalization and passivization and finally resist the ideologies that favour the powerful. All these discursive strategies are enacted by using the language itself. So, as mentioned earlier, critical discourse analysts must pay attention when employing the technique of nominalization in their analysis, to be mindful of their own language use. Furthermore, Billig (2008) suggests that critical discourse analysts need to use "simpler, less technical prose that ascribes action to human agents" (p. 785).

2.5 Dialectical Relation, Ideology, and Power in CDA

CDS are based on dialectical relationships that view discourse as a product of situations, institutions and social structures. At the same time, these dialectical relationships are studied and interpreted from many different social and political points of view: one that stands out from all others is Michel Foucault's (see Foucault 1966 and 1981). CDS analysts critically study these dialectical relationships that are embedded in the discourse in order to uncover the way *ideology, power and hegemony* are concealed (Fairclough, 1989). Therefore, it is important to understand what ideology means in most of the CDS. It has been defined several times, but in CDS, ideology differs significantly from other research areas. Van Dijk (1998:8) defines ideologies as forming the foundation of the shared social representations within a group. So, the ideologies actively enable individuals, as group members, to structure their many social beliefs about what is true, good or bad, and right or wrong, guiding their actions accordingly.

Furthermore, critical discourse analysts are interested in understanding how ideologies function in day-to-day matters of life. Fairclough (2003) explains that ideologies are depictions of certain aspects of the world that help reinforce and sustain power dynamics, domination, and exploitation. In this way, examining texts (news in my case) plays a key role in analyzing and critiquing ideologies. Moreover, in CDS, ideology is typically considered the foundation of the social representations shared among group members in society. These ideologies influence individuals and groups, shaping their beliefs and perceptions of what is good or bad and guiding their actions accordingly.

2.5.1 Are Ideologies and Power Different or Closely Linked to Each Other?

As stated earlier, ideologies are belief-driven, influence people's actions, and ultimately help them in managing and maintaining their power within society. So, ideologies and power are not two separate entities: they are rather deeply "intertwined". CDS argue that ideologies often justify power structures within societies and actively conceal social inequalities. For similar reasons, unbalanced power can shape ideologies, and ideologies reinforce power in turn. This is the main argument and prime focus of CDS, as they investigate *how* discourse reflects this relationship between power and ideology. These power relations legitimize prevalent social relations and differences of power.

2.5.2 Ideology in Critical Discourse Studies

Ideology, due to its broad and complex concepts, needs a multidisciplinary approach. Van Dijk (2008:193-94) has presented the following points:

a) Destutt de Tracy is credited with proposing ideology as a "science of ideas" at the end of the 18th century. However, De Tracy's notion of ideology was met with a negative reputation and was later considered a "false consciousness" by Marx. This negative perception of ideology influenced the academic study of ideology and its political uses and applications until recent times. Traditional studies of ideology often neglect its discursive and cognitive dimensions, even though ideologies are rooted in mental representations and are primarily conveyed and reinforced through text and communication. As a result, modern, multidisciplinary approaches to studying ideology should integrate a theory of ideology as a form of social cognition, a theory of discourse's role in its reproduction, and an understanding of the functions ideology serves within society.

b) That is why no theory should define ideologies as inherently negative. Ideologies are shared socially by both the dominant groups to legitimize their power abuse and by the "weak" to resist marginalization, for example, feminism is an ideology against another dominant ideology, i.e. patriarchy. Ideologies, for CDS, are not mere social beliefs; they are rather essentially fundamental values and beliefs that shape identities and worldviews. Ideologies, including freedom, justice, and equality, can equally well be exploited for vested interests or used to protect freedom of the press and democracy.

c) Moreover, ideologies can also be considered the foundation of a group's positive self-image, maintained by important categories like desired identity, values, actions, norms and resources with other groups. These ideological structures often rely on polarization between the positive image of "Us" (the ingroup) and the negative "Them" (the outgroup). This polarization is based on a binary relation. Professional ideologies, like journalistic, are characterized by news-making, values like press freedom, objectivity, fairness and classified sources of information. They, too, influence the relationship between journalism, the state, and their news. Media outlets directly owned by politicians and businessmen influence reporting. In some cases, media houses avoid reporting on certain issues because they receive funding and advertisements from corporations, and this is why they protect their interests. Moreover, in some countries, the media are not fully independent in their reporting, due to state censorship and oppression.

d) Ideologies are more apparent in some shared social norms within society. Like, a discriminatory ideology may shape racist and stereotypical perceptions of immigration,

integration and crime. These shared attitudes are more evident within a group context and the influence of such ideologies often cancels neutral evaluations of social issues and legislations.

e) Attitudes towards immigration, the death penalty and divorce are often generic and abstract. They may be generally accepted. In addition, these views may be shaped by other different (often conflicting) ideologies and personal experiences, unlike "relatively stable social group attitudes, personal opinions are unique and contextual" (van Dijk 2008:193) Personal views are situational and depend on the individual and contexts.

f) Furthermore, "ideologically influenced personal opinions about concrete events (such as the war or a terrorist attack) are represented in mental models, held in Episodic Memory (part of Long-Term Memory, as part of people's personal experiences)" (van Dijk 2008:194). Ideological discourse is guided by such ideologically biased mental frameworks and may therefore influence all aspects of discourse, for instance, its syntax, topics, tone, meanings, style and interactional strategies.

g) CDS take interest in underlying ideologies in discourse because they influence social attitudes as well as personal opinions.

h) Discourses do not usually express ideologies explicitly but through precise group attitudes about social problems as well as personal opinions on certain events. This is heavily influenced by communicative situations as personally interpreted by speakers based on their context models. These context models can lead to the blockage or modification of (amplification) embedded ideologically constructed concepts, especially as language users adapt to the audience, situation and other circumstances.

Furthermore, CDS analysts note that power is not always fairly distributed in society, and this imbalance often gives rise to the hegemony of one group over another. Fairclough (1989) argues that language conveys power and ideology. In the same vein, Wodak (2001: 2) acknowledges that CDS are mainly focused on "analysing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language." What this means is that Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) seek to critically examine how social inequality is conveyed, represented, established, and justified through the ways we use language or form discourse. At the same time, van Leeuwen (2006: 290) argues that discourse can be legitimate and produce social issues such as oppression. In this connection, the researchers in CDS should critically point out the role discourse can play in this and challenge structural issues.

2.6 Theoretical Frameworks in Critical Discourse Studies

As already established, CDA is not one-dimensional and follows no fixed framework. Considering some general aims of CDA mentioned in this chapter, it can be maintained that it may adapt to many theoretical approaches and types. These types may have diverse theoretical and analytical outlooks. For example, critical conversation analysis follows a different framework compared to news reports or teacher discourse in educational settings. However, keeping in mind the common perspective and broad aims of CDA, it is still possible to find overall "conceptual frameworks that are closely related" (van Dijk, 2015: 468).

Within the scope of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), most analyzes focus on how specific discourse structures contribute to the reinforcement of social dominance in conversations, news reports, or other genres and contexts. Therefore, many researchers in CDA will use and rely on typical vocabulary and concepts such as *power, dominance, hegemony, ideology, class, gender, race,* and *structure*. Apart from this terminology, CDA studies will also use other typical discourse analytical terms.

The following section focuses on some common concepts and forms a theoretical framework for the present study.

2.6.1 Macro vs. Micro

Van Dijk (2015: 469) explains that elements such as language use, discourse, verbal interaction, and communication operate at the micro-level of the social order, while concepts such as power, dominance, and inequality among social groups are generally associated (and socially constructed) with the macro-level analysis. This distinction between macro and micro levels of analysis may help CDS researchers analyze how interactions influence each other at different levels in social dynamics. This also means that CDA must bridge the gap between micro and macro approaches, such as institutional, structural and interactional. In daily interactions and experiences, the macro and micro levels formulate one unified whole. For example, a racist speech delivered in parliament represents a discourse at the interactional micro-level of social structure and debate within a society. Wodak and van Dijk (2000) inform that discourse can also play a role in shaping laws or perpetuating racism on a broader, macro-level. To analyze and bridge the gap between social macro and micro levels, van Dijk (2015) suggests examining the relationships between members and groups, actions and processes, contexts and social structures.

2.6.2 Power as a Tool

Besides ideology, another very important concept in many critical discourse works is power, particularly the social power of groups (or institutions) (see Wrong, 1979). Social power exists in control. Some groups have (more or less) power if they can somehow control the acts and minds of other groups, including members of their group. Such control of minds is used as a power base to abuse this power and exploit it as a privilege to access limited social resources, like force, status, information, knowledge, money and "culture", including different forms of public communication (Mayr, 2008).

There are various types of power depending on their resources and exercise: coercive power of the military and the mob exercises its power in terms of violence. Similarly, the rich have power because of their wealth and money; the "persuasive power" of parents, teachers, or journalists (based on knowledge, information or authority) can be exercised to control minds and shape perceptions. More importantly, power is not always absolute: groups may control other groups to some extent in particular situations or social contexts. For example, a judge can control people only in his or her courtroom, and a teacher exercises his/her power to control students only in the classroom. In developing countries, governmental officials can only control the public if they are in their offices, or politicians through their legislative power, or especially when they address an emotionally charged (energetic) crowd. They mobilize them or even incite violence. Given the context-specific nature of exercise and abuse of power, dominated or weak groups, to some extent, may accept, comply with, or even consider such power legitimate and "natural".

For Gramsci (1971), the power of dominant groups can be incorporated into laws, habits, rules, norms and even a "general consensus" and therefore he called it *hegemony*. Since there may be a so-called general consensus, power does not have to be exercised in its absolute discretion or abusive manner. It is also enacted in several "taken-for-granted" day-to-day actions of life (Foucault, 1981), for example, the typical cases of sexism or racial slurs can be observed in daily life as if they were normal, as they are often socially accepted. To understand the relationship between discourse and power, it is important to be able to have access to specific forms of discourse such as politics, media, and education: this is itself a powerful resource (van Dijk, 1996) because not everyone has equal access to information.

As mentioned earlier, action is controlled by the mind; when dominant groups or even individuals can influence people's minds, like their attitudes, ideologies, knowledge and information, then they may indirectly control their specific actions. This is made possible through the strategies of *persuasion and manipulation* (van Dijk, 2015). Therefore, those who have access to specific information, knowledge and discourses have the potential to indirectly

influence the minds and actions of others, including their ability to interact with each other in social as well as political contexts, like climate change debate, immigration, and divorce. That is why politically controlled people fail to interact rationally, as they are often driven by their ideologies, for instance, climate change deniers.

To examine these complex power dynamics, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) research, including this study, seeks to uncover how dominant groups exert control over the text and context of public discourse. It explores the strategies used by these groups to influence the thoughts and actions of less powerful groups and investigates the impact of such manipulation. Additionally, it analyzes the features of the discourse produced by powerful entities, such as media organizations and governments, and examines how these features contribute to the misuse of power (van Dijk, 2015: 470).

2.6.3 Control of Text Leads to Control of Minds

As discussed in this chapter, several factors contribute to the power of a group or institution but having access to or control over public discourse and communication serves as a significant symbolic resource (van Dijk, 2015). This exclusive access to knowledge puts certain groups in a powerful position where they can engineer and control social issues in the personal and everyday businesses of society as a group. The majority of people actively control everyday conversation with family, colleagues and friends whereas they are, to a certain extent, targets of public text or discourse, for instance, media news, professors, police, state, officers, bureaucrats and other institutional authorities that temper and censor information and shape their beliefs and ultimately influence their actions. As maintained earlier, power is not always absolute and is not equally distributed even within power groups. Elites can have exclusive access to information and ways to construct and influence public discourse. This influence over public discourses is context-specific and may differ in nature, for instance, the way professors control scholarly discourse is different from the ways journalists control media discourse. Similarly, priests/clergy's management and influence on religious discourse are different from politicians' influence on policy and other politically specific discourse. Concisely, "*we here have a discursive definition (as well as a practical diagnostic) of one of the crucial constituents of social power*" (van Dijk, 1996, as cited in van Dijk 2015:470, emphasis in original).

Since these typical concepts of discourse access and control are broad, it is one of the major aims of CDA to document power dynamics and their misuse. Discourse includes both text (words spoken or written) and context (a situation in which communication takes place) or "communicative events", and therefore, "access and control may be defined both for the relevant categories of the *communicative situation*, defined as c*ontext*, as well as for *the*

structures of text and talk" (van Dijk, 2015: 471, emphasis in original). Correspondingly, it is important to note that managing and controlling the communicative situation includes control over either of these categories, for instance, determining the time and place of a communicative situation. For example, professors and teachers decide the time and place of an exam and who qualifies to take an exam. Likewise, by monitoring information, facts, and knowledge, journalists or governments censor media discourse and shape public opinion. In a similar vein, Matoesian (1993, as cited in van Dijk, 2015) explains how police officers define a communicative situation of interrogation and even misuse their power in these situations when trying to obtain a desired confession from a suspect.

Furthermore, apart from controlling communicative events, dominant groups and institutions can have authority over different aspects of text and talk, including their structures. Both written and spoken forms of communication may be under their control. For example, governments in developing countries decide what newsworthy topics are and actively censor information and media news, including banning social media platforms like X (formerly Twitter) in Pakistan, China and Iran. Likewise, editors and publishers in the Western media may have the authority to decide to prioritize "negative" aspects of immigration in the media and "ignore or ban topics about white elite racism" (van Dijk, 1991). Another example is given by Graber (2003), who highlights how politicians, even in democratic countries, justify censorship of particular news information based on "alleged" national security, as it happened in the United States after 9/11. A lot of control over discourse is context-specific or topic-specific; still, those positions of power or authority may influence rhetorical devices, vocabulary, narratives, sentence structure, and syntactic style. For instance, weak speakers may be asked to lower their voices or power groups, even humble them, by mocking or patronizing language; they can use sarcasm and jokes to ridicule the ideas or suggestions proposed by weak groups, making them feel inferior. In corporate hierarchies and political powers, for example, a seasoned and influential politician might overshadow a less experienced politician or a mid-career professional. A powerful politician may use influence, sources and rhetorical skills to dominate the discussion, making a less experienced (less powerful) individual insignificant and ineffective. In short, powerful individuals and institutions can potentially control different aspects of text, context and talk to some extent, and their power may be used to exploit other people in social as well as political contexts

2.6.4 Mind Control

Controlling texts and their structures and talk is an important way of exerting power, but, more importantly, controlling minds through discourse is "more effective" and it is a fundamental method of reproducing dominance and hegemony. The former may happen directly, but the latter is usually done indirectly. Controlling discourse, especially media discourse, is aimed at shaping opinions, setting narratives, attitudes, and ideologies, including public behaviour. To analyze the relationship between discourse and cognition, van Dijk (2008) proposes a socio-cognitive approach to conduct CDA to examine social structures of power to understand how mind control is related to discourse. To understand the impact of discourse in the production and reproduction of racism, for example, the socio-cognitive approach takes three dimensions under consideration, namely the structures of text, mind and society. Analyzing how minds are influenced requires presupposing the difference between personal memory and "socially shared 'semantic' memory. Critical discourse analysts assume that 'episodic' memory may represent personal experiences as 'multimodal mental models'" (Lindegren-Lerman 1983, as cited in van Dijk, 2015). In communication, these mental models (also known as situation models) represent people's understanding of the events or situation. These mental models are unique based on the experiences of events or situations. Therefore, understanding these mental models is essential for CDA researchers to analyze how discourse can influence minds by shaping subjective representations. Furthermore, interpreting discourse about a specific event, such as news reports and stories, involves examining various linguistic features. News reports contain discursively placed topics, arguments, and metaphors that influence the substance, topics, and structures of mental models in ways that align with the speakers' intentions. This influence is evident in various forms of communication, as maintained by persuasion research (O'Keefe, 2002). Speakers or writers employ a discursive strategy called *manipulation* (van Dijk, 2006) to control discourse in their favour, disregarding the recipients' or the audience's interests.

2.6.4.1 News Reports and Mind Control

News and parliamentary debates of politicians can influence information and knowledge on a specific topic and shape the opinions and personal mental models of targeted recipients. In addition, commonly shared ideologies and behaviours can be manipulated through argumentative strategies in news reports. Narrative building is employed by repeated coverage of political or media discourse about a specific event in a deliberate manner and is typically grounded on exaggeration and generalization of topics like immigration and terrorism (Forest, 2009).

The discursive control of situation models depends on various factors, such as attitudes, ideologies, and persuasive and manipulative structures of text and talk. As a result, "authoritative" and "credible" media professionals are likely to have the public accept their narratives, beliefs, stories and opinions (Nesler et al., 1993). Furthermore, media news often does not represent the other side of the story, which prevents alternative beliefs from being raised. Consequently, the public often does not have access to contrasting the viewpoints, beliefs and knowledge needed to challenge and question the media narratives they frequently receive.

In addition to examining the contextual influence on the interpretation of text and talk, van Dijk (1991 and 1993) explains that CDA particularly studies how discourse structures can shape specific mental models and general representations of recipients and manipulate their beliefs. The following section lists examples of dominant discourse about immigration as investigated by Van Dijk (1991, 1993, and 2015, emphasis in original):

- *News Headlines*: news reports set agendas, build narratives, and convey semantic macrostructures (also known as main topics) as chosen by journalists, who can shape "preferred macrostructures" readers' mental models. For example, a protest may be framed as a violent act or disruption of social order or as a fundamental right given by democracy and exercised by the demonstrators. Likewise, a violent attack can be labelled as a courageous act of resistance against the misuse of power by the state or as an act of terrorism. Negative actions of immigrants or minority groups often make the headlines of news reports, while framing immigration as an "alien invasion" or "Asylum Seekers", "Boat People" and "Illegal Immigrants" (Doherty and Lecouteur, 2007). Entman (1993) provides a comprehensive case study of framing in media studies and explains how media frames can shape the audience's perception and affect the interpretation of news events. These media frames focus on the aspects of the events while omitting others, to build narratives and shape public opinion because a slight change in headlines, for example, "protest" or "riot", can create a much difference and ignite different reactions. Additionally, Entman (1993: 52) explains that framing means choosing certain parts of reality and making them more noticeable in a message. This process is adopted to promote a specific understanding of the issue, explain its cause, offer a moral judgment, or suggest a solution for the situation being described.

- *Implications and presuppositions*: implications and presuppositions are influential and instrumental elements of discourse that aim to present "facts" that may not be true, but the way they are subtly presented makes them appear factual, making it difficult for the audience to check their authenticity, which often leads to misinformation and creates biased actions, for example when politicians and media bluntly describe the *violence* of

protestors or the *criminality* of minorities (van Dijk, 1993 and 2015), often without proper evidence. This creates tension amongst communities, and it is more evident when the media or political description of immigrants' neighbourhood is not different from a crime scene, or when the media avoid reporting on the systematic racism while reporting, instead, about "ghettos". Similarly, Fairclough (1989) shows how language is instrumentalized for social control and power so that politicians, media or individuals in power can use language to maintain their dominance and social inequalities through strategies like implications and presuppositions.

- *Metaphors*: van Dijk (2015:474) writes: "Metaphors are powerful means to make abstract mental models more concrete. The abstract notion of immigration may be made more concrete, and hence more threatening, by using metaphors such as *waves* of immigrants – thus creating fear of drowning in immigrants among the other citizens." Furthermore, Cisneros (2008) adds that rhetorical theory and cognitive science suggest that metaphors are not just decorative language; they are powerful tools that influence political behaviour and thinking (Francis and Christ, 2004). Metaphors form conventional understandings by linking new ideas and events with previous or already existing cultural assumptions, stereotypes and experiences (see Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). They go beyond mere functions of figures of speech or stylistic elements: they actively play an instrumental role in how we understand and interpret new ideas based on our previous experiences and knowledge. In addition to serving as essential cognitive tools, they also work as tools in forming and contributing to our perceptions of texts, meaning-making and the rhetorical situations in which they are used (Stern, 2000). More importantly, contemporary media (and political discourse) use metaphors like "invasion" or "disease" and draw on images and languages in order to appeal to "environmental catastrophes such as pollution and waste in making arguments about immigrants" (Cisneros, 2008: 574).

- *The lexical expression*: lexical expressions used by people in power can influence knowledge and opinions in the mental models of recipients. Therefore, immigrants are often categorized and classified as "illegal" or "undocumented" in political discourse, and this shapes public opinion on this issue, too. Media discourse plays an instrumental role in building these narratives, shaping public perceptions and linking immigration with "terrorism" and a threat to "Christian values".

- *Passive sentence structures and nominalizations:* they may often be employed to hide or minimize the (brute) force used by state actors, such as police, military or paramilitary. Therefore, media discourse (and political discourse) may mention certain events without specific details, often hiding agents. They may talk about discrimination with no reference to who discriminates against whom. Similarly, media discourse may

inform protesters of being attacked but may not identify who attacked the protesters. A deliberate deletion of agents through passive sentences can shape public perception and finally influence the public's attitudes towards specific social and political issues.

2.7 Media Discourse and Critical Studies

Critical analysis of media discourse was initially a part of critical communication studies and, later, it gained an important position in CDA. The critical perspective on media discourse was introduced by the Glasgow University of Media Group (1976, 1980), which published a series of "Bad News" analyzing televised reporting in the coverage of different issues, from industrial strikes to the media coverage of AIDS. Simultaneously, the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, headed by Stuart Hall, contributed to the development of critical multimedia discourse studies, as the institute also studied the media's role in "policing the crisis" and its racist tendencies (Hall et al., 2013). Similarly, more studies expanded this critical perspective: one example is Cohen's (1980) study of the "moral panic" about the "mods and rockers" produced(and reproduced) by the British tabloid press. In the late 1970s, Roger Fowler and his colleagues studied media discourse critically from a linguistic perspective, arguably the first one its kind. They highlighted how the media used different sentences, including passive or active, to present minorities (or outgroups), such as black youth, in a negative way, and at the same time attempted to downplay the negative acts of the authorities (see van Dijk, 1988 and 1991 for details). It is also cautioned in their study that such a strategic and ideological portrayal of minorities can enhance the negative representation of outgroups. Fowler continued critical works and aligned his approach with British cultural studies that defined news as a product of political, economic and other cultural aspects. Additionally, he focused on the linguistic "tools" for the analysis of lexical structure and speech.

2.7.1 Critical Media Studies

Media discourse has been examined from various CDA perspectives: from the communicative contexts of news to broadcast genres (van Dijk, 2015). These studies have investigated media discourse from different critical perspectives and related it to systematic analysis, such as lexicon, topics, metaphor, modality, news schemas, presupposition, rhetorical figures, and multimodal analysis. In addition, several case studies of media discourse have been conducted to investigate the coverage of political and social issues from the war in the Middle East to the terror attack on the World Trade Centre (van Dijk, 2015). Others, including islamophobia, racism and globalization, have been studied from a discourse analytical standpoint.

Van Dijk (2008) finds a similarity between the studies of discourse and communication on theoretical and analytical grounds, especially while analyzing news. In other words, one area where communication studies and discourse meet is the theory and analysis of the news. Like communication studies, critical news analysis also considers the news as a socially situated text or talk. Since the 1970s, news discourse has been studied by experts in linguistics, semiotics and discourse studies whose focus was on news structures, but they did not pay much attention to the relevance and importance of contextual aspects of communication, like ideology and sociology of news production, and how people understand the news and interpret information and knowledge from the news.

Modern news studies have a lot in common with the study of ideology (this is why a detailed section has already been written about ideology, see section 3.5.2). Beyond studying anecdotal accounts of news and journalistic experiences, contemporary news studies were initially focused more on the social aspects of the news than on cognitive and discursive. It was not until the 1980s that systematic discursive and cognitive approaches to investigating and understanding news structures were developed. To analyze dynamic aspects of the news, van Dijk (1988: 194) proposed "a multidisciplinary theory of news, featuring a theory of news schemata defined by conventional categories of news discourse as a genre and social practice: Summary (Headline, Lead), New Events, Previous Events, Context, Commentary, and related categories that globally organize the (macro-level) topics of news reports in the press".

2.7.2 News Stories and Stories

It is interesting to note that, although "news stories" and "stories" are both considered narratives, they do not follow the same structural pattern or schematic superstructure. Regular stories often follow a chronological order, whereas news stories (reports) are organized and arranged in order of their relevance, importance and other factors, like urgency. This is particularly evident in headlines, news tickers and leads, which present the summary or most important parts of the news. The narrative part of the story in news reports is delivered in "instalments", with the most important aspects of the story coming first as priority, followed by less important details. To understand the ideological aspects of news reports, Bell (1991: 217, as cited in van Dijk, 2008) urges researchers to approach news reports beyond content analysis, to analyze how news may "misreport" or "mispresent" events due to ideological influence. Therefore, Bell emphasized the importance of developing a more explicit linguistic discourse analysis of the news. He then presented a case study of climate change coverage in which reports were reviewed by experts to determine if the news was accurate. The findings showed that only 29% of the stories were completely accurate, 55% slightly inaccurate and 16% inaccurate.

2.7.3 Politics in Climate Change News

Due to polarization and political narratives, media reporting on climate change has become a serious issue. Ideological dimensions of climate change media news coverage are usually either inadequate or politicized, especially during times of natural disasters. Ideological influence and political narratives can significantly affect media discourses on climate change (Carvalho, 2007). Media outlets promote politically backed ideologies and play an instrumental role in the reproduction of power structures and often downplay counter-narratives. McCright and Dunlap (2011) present a case from the United States, showing how political polarization has influenced media news coverage of climate change and shaped the public perceptions of climate change as a result. Similarly, Nisbet (2009) shows how framing climate change politically can impact public engagement in different ways. Apart from quantitative studies of misrepresentation, it is interesting to conduct an ideological analysis of the news to see how it distorts the "facts" as presented by the source (van Dijk, 2008: 195). One typical way is "overstatement", which is a broad category of "overgeneralization", like "stereotypes" and "prejudices" issues. These could often be done to highlight the bad characteristics of minorities or exaggerate the "good actions" of ingroups, which may also be presented sensationally. This is a strategy employed by the media with the assumption that readers take an interest in such narratives. This is where media discourse can be dramatic and exaggerated. In his study, in addition to misrepresentation, Bell (1991) found many misquotations, inaccuracies and misediting.

2.7.4 News, Ideological Discourse and Analytical Perspectives

The analysis of news structures shows where and how ideologies are likely to influence news reports. A sociocognitive approach explains how embedded ideologies are most likely to influence attitudes and how the personal mental model of journalists about news events may influence news-making, such as news writing or interviews. It has already been argued that news-making activities (or news-making processes) are controlled by the particular context models of the journalists when it comes to various political and social situations. Ideological influence on the news is shared by editorial boards as well, as their ideologies are very similar to reporters and their sources.

Research also suggests that dominant political ideologies in many countries are also reflected in the media, explaining the difference in the reporting of the same international events. Geopolitical interests of the states also influence news reports about particular events/topics and may distort events to shape public perceptions through narrative building. Like the ingroups vs outgroups pattern, media reporting varies depending on a country's

political as well as strategic relationship with other countries, as enemy states and allied states. For example, Pakistani media avoids reporting on the Uyghur crisis in China (The Washington Post, 2021), an ally, but actively and frequently covers the "atrocities" against Muslims in Kashmir by India, an old adversary (Dawn, 2021).

A critical stance, when applied to the study of language, discourse and news discourse, is essential in understanding structures and ideologies. Therefore, it is safe to state that a discourse analytical approach to the news can provide a strong and explicit stance for a socio-political study of media discourse, and, in this sense, a critical stance is an important step forward in discourse analysis. According to van Dijk (1989), the discourse analytical study of the news provides a detailed examination of news structures as a particular discourse genre. As it goes beyond traditional "superficial" content analysis of media "messages", the discourse analytical approach attempts to provide a thorough analysis of the structural aspects that make a type of text news. To understand this news-making, it is important to present how news articles in the press follow a certain schema. This structure includes a Summary (Headline and Lead), Main Event, Background, Context, Verbal Reactions and Comments. This schema, including its main topic content, is deliberately arranged in order to present the most important, relevant and interesting facts first, with less important information in the later parts of the text.

In addition, the processes in which journalists produce news can also be investigated through discourse analytical perspectives. A discourse approach suggests that all news-making is about text processing, which involves information gathering, compiling and interpreting from various sources. Journalists gather information and news from "source discourse", meaning that news events do not simply occur, but they also need to be sought by journalists. They may even rely on rumours, stories, press releases, documents, pressers, interviews, agendas and messages from their sources. After paying attention to news production and news processing, a discourse analytical perspective aids a more explicit approach to the news, as it aims at paying attention to the cognitive and social processes of reading, social uses of news and news information (van Dijk, 1988 and 1989).

Reading processes enable readers to effectively use both external information from the text and context, as well as from their own existing knowledge and beliefs. This process often leads to the creation of two types of representations: one from the text itself and a "situation model." A situation model is a mental representation of what a text is about, like an event or action. Compared to the "real" situations that we see and experience, situation models are subjective and can be biased, like mental models and individual perspectives. They are structured by a fixed schema that includes categories such as Setting, Participants and Events. Models present our personal experiences, and we use them to understand and interpret the news. These models are important with respect to their cognitive relation to news

understanding. These models may help explain how the public acquires information and opinions from the media. Likewise, readers, reporters and editors have partial models of news events (van Dijk, 1989) and these models influence their reporting.

2.7.5 Climate Change Stories in Media Reports

Increasing interest in media influence on the social and political attitudes towards climate change has led to a spike in academic inquiries into the relationship between climate change and the media (Norton and Hulme, 2019). A major research focus in climate change and environment is within the critical analysis of media discourse: news coverage of environmental problems and their portrayal in media reports play an important role in shaping public perceptions, understanding, opinions, policy designs, decision-making and overall attitudes towards climate change (Jabeen, 2024). Researchers have added significant scholarships to explain how media discourse can shape public perceptions of climate change. In the same vein, scholarly studies approach this topic using various theoretical frameworks and methods. Bruggemann and Engesser (2017) have examined the ways journalists frame climate change in certain contexts to highlight bias. Likewise, Carvalho (2005) explains the diverse ways in which politicians frame climate change risk to influence public opinion. The discursive strategies politicize climate change and gaslight certain aspects of climate change. This can also be done by journalists for their political and ideological affiliations (see Elasser and Dunlap, 2012 for details). In addition, the growing focus on climate change has extended to examining the cognitive frames employed by journalists in various countries (Engesser and Bruggemann, 2015) and analyzing media narratives related to climate and international development (Doulton and Brown, 2009). In this context, the present study, in its analysis of media news coverage of the devastating floods in Pakistan in 2022 in local and international news reports, compared with the news coverage of floods in Emilia-Romagna in Italy in 2023. For the last few years, the media has given much space to climate change, and thus its coverage has also produced different discourses that emerged from or are the reflection of particular ideologies, perceptions and convictions on climate change. Discourse, in general, is a broad concept, defined in detail in the present chapter from different perspectives, but Michel Foucault's (as cited in Hajer and Versteeg, 2005:175) understanding of discourse as "ideas, concepts and categories through which meaning is given to social and physical phenomena" (2005:175) is particularly relevant to the present study. Environmental topics are presented in various ways in the media. Environmental discussions comprise many distinct discourses, both similar and contrasting for political gains (Dryzek, 2013). Therefore, detailing discussions and analyzing climate change stories in the media can help expose ideas and underlying "destructive" ideologies that not only hinder climate change action(s) but also influence our attitudes towards climate change. Such timely and urgent studies may help us find "beneficial" stories

that can guide humans to better living conditions (Doyle, 2011; Stibbe, 2015). However, to find environmentally friendly stories that respect all forms of life, it is crucial to resist "destructive" stories and replace them with stories that respect all forms of life.

2.8 Ecological (Critical) Discourse Analysis and Environmental Communication

For Stibbe, the essence of ecolinguistics is to question the stories that undermine current unsustainable civilization, with the intent to expose stories that are not working well and are leading to ecological destruction and social injustice. Another aim of ecolinguistics, according to Stibbe, is also to find "new stories" that work in a better way to address current environmental and social issues in the world. Stibbe (2014:117) explains that these stories should not be considered traditional narrative stories. These stories can be discourses and metaphors that we live by and actively shape our perceptions of reality, with certain linguistic features to make worldviews. Stibbe (2014) offers a detailed overview of ecolinguistics and highlights the benefits of its linguistic aspect, which analyzes how worldviews are created, maintained, spread, and challenged. Also, the "eco" aspect provides a thorough ecological framework to examine how these worldviews either support or threaten the conditions necessary for life (Stibbe, 2014:117). Further to this, it is important to note that in the present study, eco-destructive stories are the ideological frames embedded in news articles. The stories we live by are the media narratives about floods in Italy and Pakistan, which influence workplace communication. These stories are part be environmental communication at workplaces such as newsrooms and NGOs, which are constructed by media strategies such as backgrounding, anonymization, authorization, erasure, passivization and so forth.

Environmental communication can help us understand workplaces as an integral part of societies through its focus on the role media and communication can play in shaping environmental beliefs and perceptions. Likewise, it can shape how people understand and respond to environmental challenges. In this connection, this study is an attempt at showing how linguistic features are used in news articles to construct, represent and communicate floods in Italy and Pakistan through CDA and ecolinguistics. Environmental communication in workplaces actively surrounds climate change, human-animal relationships, ethics, and other everyday stories related to food production, climate-induced migration, activism, consumerism and consumption (University of Brighton, https://www.brighton.ac.uk/research/postgraduate-research-degrees/programme-areas/environmental-communication.aspx). Therefore, ideologically framed stories in news articles are considered part of environmental communication in this study. In this way, these are the stories we (the people in Italy, Pakistan and beyond) live by; stories that are constructed by hegemonic individuals to frame climate-induced floods as divine punishment using metaphors, results of policy failure, corruption, or "bad weather".

2.8.1 Ecolinguistics

Some scholars consider ecolinguistics a mere analysis of texts which are about the environment. However, for Stibbe (2014: 118), from the perspective of researchers in CDS, the most relevant approach to ecolinguistics involves a literal interpretation of ecology, as "the life-sustaining interactions of organisms (including humans) with other organisms and the natural environment". This stance examines how discourses influence our interactions with each other in a larger ecological system. With these objectives, ecolinguistics aims to understand the ways language shapes and is shaped by our ecological relationships and judge whether these relationships are sustainable. To analyze climate change stories, the framework for the present study is based on Stibbe's (2015) ecolinguistic approach, which synthesizes ecolinguistics with CDA to explore how language reflects and shapes the relationship between humans and their environment (Norton and Hulme, 2019). This conceptual framework is essential because CDA is grounded on a thesis that the ways people construct meaning, interpret and use language have consequences for human life (Dryzek, 2013), including implications for fellow non-human beings.

2.8.2 Critical Discourse Analysis and Ecolinguistics

Together, CDA and ecolinguistics share a critical stance on the role of language in shaping our ideologies and worldviews. While CDA focuses on social issues, ecolinguistics is interested in addressing environmental concerns. Norton and Hulme (2019), as well as Nerlich and Koteyko (2009), develop similar frameworks and acknowledge their relevance in investigating climate change stories. The "Ecolinguistically-oriented CDA" analysis of news articles is different from other similar research to assess the role language can play in climate change communication, as it includes various theoretical frameworks from linguistic and cognitive disciplines (Norton and Hulme, 2019). In the context and focus of the present study, in a CDA frame (Fairclough, 2013), the workplace becomes the site of discursive practice: the arena in which media-produced "stories we live by" are recycled, contested, or transformed. This study theorizes workplaces yet employs a practical approach to enable understanding of complex and ideologically framed stories in media discourse to highlight the role of environmental communication in workplaces to raise awareness. Informed by CDA, this study highlights how eco-destructive ideologies can influence public opinion, favour policies and may even lead to conflicts and division within societies. Individuals in workplaces are involved in workplace practices, and they actively produce and are part of the environmental/workplace communication. Thus, their level of awareness about environmental issues and politics cannot be ignored. The present study does not interview individuals, but it theorizes their workplaces in a broader society where eco-destructive ideologies become part of their workplace

communication and practices. Haer, Botzen, and Aerts (2016) demonstrate that protective action in flood-risk contexts depends less on raw information and more on the patterns of communication within individuals' social networks—who they trust, who they talk to, and which stories gain traction (Haer et al., 2016). Based on this, it can be conceptualized and argued that the influence of eco-destructive stories on workplace communication can hinder climate action and initiatives.

2.8.2.1 Ecological Discourse Analysis:

Ecological discourse analysis aims to conduct a critical analysis of discourse. This approach involves the analysis of discourses within an ecological framework that examines their effects on the life-sustaining systems (Alexander and Stibbe, 2014). Ecological discourse analysis is part of ecolinguistics (Valvason, 2020). Ecolinguistics "combines ecology and linguistics" (Alexander and Stibbe, 2014: 104) and may employ a variety of approaches through different methods (Steffensen and Fill, 2014). In general, ecolinguistics may be considered the study of "the relation between language and environment" or a study of linguistic diversity (Fill and Muhlhausler, 2001: 3).

Regarding the connection between language and the environment, ecolinguistics bases itself on the argument that discourse can influence "life-sustaining relationships among humans, other organisms and the physical environment" (Alexander and Stibbe, 2014: 105). Ecological discourse analysis borrows concepts from several other disciplines, including linguistics and anthropology, to expose how destructive ideologies impact our attitudes towards the physical environment.

Stibbe (2015) proposes to "judge" discourses, based on their positive and negative merits and impact on the environment, as *destructive, ambivalent or beneficial* against the ecological framework adopted (and also developed) by ecolinguists (Stibbe, 2015). In unecological discourses, "the ideologies they convey oppose the principles of the ecosophy"; ambivalent discourses "contain some aspects which align with the analyst's ecosophy and some which oppose it"; beneficial discourses, instead, "convey ideologies which can actively encourage people to protect the systems that support life" (Stibbe, 2015: 28-30).

Besides the ecological aspects of ecolinguistics, its characteristics and aims are similar to traditional CDA (Stibbe, 2014). One of the main ways CDA contributes to social change is by spreading awareness in order to encourage social movements, which Stewart (1999:91) names "self-direct social movements." Interestingly, these self-directed social movements are initiated and fueled by people who consider themselves marginalized and are "struggling primarily for personal freedom, equality, justice, and rights". CDA works by exposing how some of the common-sense assumptions embedded in society's prevailing discourses "serve" to

maintain unequal power relations. Stibbe (2014) explains that ecolinguistics works similarly by revealing how common beliefs in capitalism harm ecological systems. It also provides evidence and resources that these communities can use to support their social movements and work toward positive change.

Considering this theoretical framework, the present study employs CDA to examine how media news framed floods in Pakistan and Italy and to uncover the underlying ideologies within those media stories. The stories of corporate farming, polarization of climate change, attribution of climate change-induced floods to "bad weather", exclusion of Indigenous communities from mainstream news and securitization of climate change are considered hegemonic in this study. It is argued that these stories are prevalent in Italian and Pakistani media and political discourses. These discourses (stories) are considered dominant discourses since the ideologies they convey oppose the principles of ecosophy of this study.

Historically, they have favoured those in power and are constructed to maintain the power structures. They exclude local communities, local voices and lived realities. For example, Stibbe (2021) considers the mainstream economic discourses as the most influential ones, these discourses are constructed to define our relationship with nature and each other. Similarly, discourses of mainstream advertisement are aimed at consumerism because they reinforce the idea of dissatisfaction and suggest that this dissatisfaction can be dealt with through new purchases and therefore it becomes hegemonic through its ideology of "purchasing products is a path to happiness" (Stibbe, 2021:23). Similarly, other stories also become hegemonic because they carry eco-destructive ideologies. Politicians, owners of media houses, and corporates may not explicitly own these stories, but they are discursively framed, promoted and encouraged through mainstream news articles. One of the effective ways of dealing with these destructive discourses is through resistance (Stibbe, 2021). As written earlier, CDA is employed in this study to examine how media news framed floods in Pakistan and Italy and to uncover the underlying hegemonic ideologies within those media stories to resist destructive stories. The resistance is achieved by Critical Language Awareness (Fairclough, 1992).One of the effective ways of dealing with these destructive discourses is through resistance (Stibbe, 2021). As written earlier, CDA is employed in this study to examine how media news framed floods in Pakistan and Italy and to uncover the underlying hegemonic ideologies within those media stories to resist destructive stories. The resistance is achieved by Critical Language Awareness (Fairclough, 1992). Raising awareness about the hegemonic aspects of stories in linguistic patterns can lead to the resistance of destructive stories and, alternatively, create opportunities for beneficial stories that support systems on which life depends. If those responsible for creating and reinforcing destructive discourses, such as media houses and politicians, do not tend to change, then the critical language awareness can be redirected to put pressure on them and their institutions by raising awareness of the public in their capacity as

voters and customers (Stibbe, 2021:24).

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The study includes official narratives from the government of Pakistan, sourced from relevant ministries such as the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, as well as official press releases and post-disaster reports. Additionally, it incorporates news coverage from national Pakistani media and international news articles. Furthermore, the study aims to present a comparative analysis of how Pakistani and Italian media reported on floods within their respective countries. This comparison is particularly pertinent given the severe and historic flooding experienced by both countries in 2022 and 2023, which were also reported by the international media. The study also seeks to analyze the stories of international media coverage of these natural disasters, assessing whether there are any ideological differences in the reporting.

2.9 Theoretical Framework of Ecolinguistics

CDA focuses on textual and linguistic features of language, highlighting how these elements convey meaning and how discourse relates to specific social, political, and cultural contexts (Carvalho, 2007). Ecolinguistics has been chosen for this study because it is also considered a form of CDA that connects the study of language with ecological concerns (Fill and Muhlhausler, 2001). CDA analyzes linguistic patterns of discourse and focuses on how power relations are constructed and reinforced in society (Fairclough, 2013). On the contrary, ecolinguistics aims to explore the whole language system (Steffensen and Fill, 2014). Broadly speaking, ecolinguistics aims to highlight the connection between environmental issues and their social aspects, as well as the impact of environmental degradation on people and non-human life in the present time and future generations (Sedlaczek, 2016). Researchers in social science and linguistic studies combine ecolinguistics with other disciplines in different ways because of its broad concept, which argues that "human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it" (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, as cited in Norton and Hulme, 2019: 115). Therefore, our worldviews and attitudes towards the physical world are actively shaped by the way we use and perceive language, because the way we use language can influence our actions in a way that can either protect or destroy the world that life depends on.

This study adapts Stibbe's concept of ecolinguistics as a way of "questioning the stories that underpin our current unsustainable civilisation" (Stibbe, 2014:117). As mentioned earlier, this framework, drawing on the essence of ecolinguistics, adapts Stibbe's ecolinguistics framework and forms an "ecosophy" to judge the stories according to the principles expounded in Stibbe (2015:17).

Table 1 presents the elements of Stibbe's "ecolinguistic framework":

Table 1: Criteria for an ecolinguistic study of the stories we live by, sourced from Arran Stibbe (2015:17).

The Stories We Live By		
Story Type	**What it is**	**What to look for**
Ideology	How the world was, is and should be, in the minds of members of a group	Discourses, i.e., characteristic language features used by members of a group
Framing	The use of a source frame to structure a target domain	Trigger words that bring a particular source frame to mind
Metaphor	A framing where the source frame is from an imaginable area of life	Trigger words that bring the source frame to mind
Evaluation	A story in people's minds about whether an area of life is good or bad	Appraisal patterns which represent things positively or negatively
Identity	What it means to be a particular kind of person	Forms of language that characterize people
Conviction	Whether a particular description is true, certain, uncertain or false	Facticity patterns that represent a description as true, uncertain or false
Erasure	That something is unimportant or unworthy of consideration	Patterns of language which erase or diminish

According to Stibbe (2015), our lives are controlled by the stories we live by because these stories may carry symbols, certain linguistic features, and metaphors; therefore, they have an impact on how people interact with other forms of life, including the natural world (Kamila and Prawira, 2023). Likewise, Forte (2020) believes that if these stories encourage people to harm the natural world or motivate unecological actions, these stories are "destructive", whereas if these stories encourage protective and sustainable habits and behaviours towards nature, they are classified as "beneficial" stories. A major goal of ecolinguistics is to resist destructive stories and seek positive (beneficial) stories (Stibbe, 2015). Furthermore, Stibbe suggests that ecolinguistics can analyze pervasive linguistic patterns that can influence how people interact with each other. Additionally, ecolinguistics can investigate the "stories we live by", including the mental models that impact people's actions and are often considered the main reason behind the current environmental crisis (Kamila and Prawira, 2023)

Against this background, the framework for this study combines ecolinguistics and CDA to analyze news article discourse. While CDA aims at "analysing hidden, opaque, and visible structures of dominance, discrimination, power, and control as manifested in language" (Wodak and Meyer, 2015: 12), ecolinguistics uncovers hidden stories and judges if these stories motivate people to protect or harm the ecosystem which life depends on (Stibbe, 2020).

2.9.1 Data Collection

Regarding data collection, Meyer (2001) highlights a particular approach that critical discourse analysts often employ when they select texts for their research. Researchers in CDS rely on texts that serve their ad hoc purposes; hence, they usually collect texts selectively. Therefore, CDS analysts do not study randomly collected data. They deliberately search for texts that can serve the purpose of their research needs and objectives. The data collection process involves initially collecting a set of texts, analyzing and assessing them to identify if they carry key issues and information, and then going on to search for similar or supporting texts that can validate the initial hypotheses. Such a data collection method allows researchers to ensure a rigorous and evidence-based approach to their critical analysis and support their findings to reach conclusions. Meyer (2001) further adds that CDS researchers do not always ascertain how statistically or theoretically representative their data, or chosen texts, are. Their focus is on carefully collecting texts that contain requisite features of discourse, intending to delve deeper into aspects of language use and its implications for power. Against this background, I initially downloaded 300 English-language articles on floods from five outlets—*Dawn*, BBC, *The Independent*, DW, and ANSA—using primary keywords ("floods in Pakistan," "floods in Italy") and secondary terms ("corruption and floods," "climate change floods"). After deduplication and a close-reading relevance screening, the final corpus comprised 175 articles: 130 on the 2022 Pakistan floods and 45 on the 2023 Italy floods. Rather than using software, I conducted an entirely manual thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework: familiarization, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and producing the report. Due to these English-only limitations, a manually coded corpus may privilege Western metaphors and exclude vernacular narratives (Halliday, 1994). Future research should incorporate Urdu and Italian sources to capture a fuller range of "stories we live by".

2.9.2 Methods

As far as CDS is concerned, a wide array of methodological options is employed by critical discourse analysts (Valvason, 2020). Due to CDS's interdisciplinary nature, CDA practitioners borrow their methodology from social theory on one hand, for example, van Leeuwen (2008), while, on the other hand, some follow a more grammar-oriented approach (e.g. Fairclough 2003). Such diversity in CDS confirms that there are possibly no uniform model methodological frameworks available and that "no unitary list of analytical tools can be produced for critical discourse studies" (Valvason, 2020:30). Research within the framework of CDS is typically qualitative (2001), which requires researchers to be rigorous and pay more attention to textual details as compared to quantitative discourse studies. The present study also follows a qualitative method of study, as a qualitative method in CDS allows researchers to analyze non-numerical data ranging from texts to interviews. These methods are designed to understand underlying meanings, patterns, themes, and discursive strategies in discourse (see Silverman and Marvasti, 2008; Wodak and Krzyżanowski, 2008 for qualitative research).

2.9.3 Ecosophy

Furthermore, in ecological analyzes of discourse, the ecological framework is formed based on a personal ecological philosophy. Stibbe (2014: 118) adapts Naess's concept of personal ecosophy to evaluate the stories and their potential impact on our worldviews, proposing to form "an explicit or implicit ecological philosophy (or ecosophy)". According to Stibbe (2014:118), this ecological philosophy is based on how living organisms, including humans, rely on interactions with one another and more importantly their physical environment for survival. This framework also includes ethical perspectives to understand the importance of survival. Ecolinguistic studies are based on various ecosophies and philosophical/ethical frameworks: all these frameworks incorporate ecological and social dimensions. To understand the relevance of "ecosophy" to ecolinguistic analysis of discourses, we need to look at what Naess means by the term ecosophy:

> By an ecosophy I mean a philosophy of ecological harmony…openly normative, it contains norms, rules, postulates, value priority announcements and hypotheses concerning the state of affairs ... The details of an ecosophy will show many variations due to significant differences concerning not only the 'facts' of pollution, resources, population, etc. but also value priorities (Naess 1996:8, as cited in Stibbe, 2014).

2.9.3.1 Process of Forming Own Ecosophy

According to Stibbe (2014:120), it is up to ecolinguists to critically explore philosophies that are "out there" in the literature and view them based on the worldly personal experience of humans, to develop "own ecosophy through combining them, extending them or creating something entirely new" (2014:120).

2.9.3.2 My Ecosophy

I therefore developed my own ecosophy, combining two ecosophies on the principles of media studies on ethical grounds, and Sindhi cultural values (see section 4.2). My ecosophy aims to highlight and challenge the politicization and securitization of climate-change discussions in both internal politics and local and international media narratives about catastrophic events—such as floods and droughts in Italy and Pakistan—and to investigate whether these narratives frame such events outside political debate and polarization. If these narratives are neutral and ethical, they will be judged as "beneficial" from a positive discourse analysis perspective. If these narratives or stories do not align with my ecosophy, they will be considered "unethical" and "harmful" to the environment in an Italian and Pakistani context. This is achieved by conducting an ecosophical analysis of media discourse—focusing on linguistic strategies such as passivization, nominalization, obfuscation, metaphor, lexical choice, anonymization, backgrounding, authorization, and erasure—to reveal how flood narratives embody eco-destructive ideologies (utilitarianism, growth-at-all-costs, ideological division, conspiracy theories, attribution to bad weather, exclusion, stigmatization and conceptualization of floods through religious or apocalyptic schemas) to systematically downplay climate change's role. By contrasting these findings against ecosophical values of relationality, ecological justice, and long-term resilience, I argue that such narratives obstruct meaningful climate action by influencing environmental communication in workplaces. The ecosophy of this study also resists stories of extreme ideologies of the right-wing and left-wing, which can endanger climate change discourse. In addition, it highlights stereotypes and biases embedded in flood narratives, which stigmatize local communities and attribute floods to religion and apocalyptic views.

In light of the ecosophy of the present study, I adopt Stibbe's idea of ecosophy to highlight dominant discourses which are also harmful to the environment (for example, if these discourses work against the principles of the ecosophy of the current study), or "alternatively to seek out and promote discourses which could potentially help protect and preserve the conditions that support life" (Stibbe, 2014:119). I will also determine whether these discourses, or stories, align with the values of ecosophy and propose positive stories to live by.

Regarding the analysis process, Stibbe (2014) suggests that it should begin with describing how linguistic features are put together in discourse to present a "particular worldview", followed by "judging the worldview against the ecosophy". In this case, the present study aims to judge media narratives, or stories, against an ecosophy developed for this particular study. Moreover, if the narratives align with the principles of my ecosophy, they will be considered "beneficial". On the other hand, Stibbe (2014:121-122) explains that the discourses which "stand in active opposition to the ecosophy ... are judged as negative discourses, ecologically destructive discourses, or using a simplistic traffic light metaphor, as discourses which get a red light" (Stibbe, 2014: 121-122).

Chapter 3: Discourse and the Environment

3. Introduction

With increasing concerns for climate change amongst the public, governments, non-profit organizations, and commercial organizations have doubled their environmental efforts and continue to do so worldwide. They extend their environmental messages through green campaigns to appeal to the consciousness of the public, including their voters, sympathizers, or customers (Righetto, 2020). People intend to favour a more sustainable lifestyle to lessen the effects of climate change, and they have been urging their governments to take the necessary measures to address environmental challenges and problems worldwide. According to the EU progress report on climate action (2021), 63% of Italians want the national government to tackle climate change. A similar survey[3] on climate launched by the European Investment Bank (2021) entitled *81% of Italians are in favour of stricter government measures to tackle climate change* reveals that 91% of Italians feel that climate change has a significant impact on their everyday lives. 88% consider climate change and its consequences to be the biggest challenge of the 21st century. Interestingly, 86% of the Italian participants consider the climate emergency to be more important than their government does, and 72% would favour taxes on products that contribute most to global warming, whereas 55% of the Italian respondents are concerned that their country will "fail" to reduce its carbon emission by 2050. According to the same survey, Italians are now experiencing the "impact of climate change in their daily lives far more than other Europeans do (91% vs. 77%)" (EIB, 2021:2). This is why, according to EIB Vice-President Ambroise Fayolle, "Italians are requesting stricter measures and tools from public authorities in order to help them combat climate change" (statement published in EIB Climate Survey, p. 2).

Since the rise of buzzwords like "eco-conscious", "eco-warriors", and "eco-tribe" in commercial discourse, marketers have sold the slogan first, and only afterwards justified the product. This strategy positions corporations and social organizations as substitutes for local governments by showing their environmental efforts to the public. CDA argues that such moves shape what counts as legitimate environmental actions and whose voices are heard (Fairclough, 2013). It is worth noting that not all social (and commercial) organizations are concerned about climate change: in fact, some include this environmental concern as part of

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[3] The European Investment Bank launched the fourth edition of the EIB Climate Survey, a thorough assessment of how people feel about climate change. The first release of the 2021-2022 EIB Climate Survey explores people's views on climate change in a rapidly changing world. The results of this release focus on citizens' perceptions of climate change and the actions they expect their country to take to combat it. Climate Survey aims to inform the broader debate on attitudes and expectations in terms of climate action. More than 30,000 respondents participated in the survey between 26 August and 22 September 2021, with a representative panel for each of the 30 countries polled

their capital, social media campaigns, and exploit it to boost the sales of their products and services. Conscious of the commercial benefits, many firms appear green by launching green marketing and green campaigns to appeal to the customers who are willing to pay extra to buy green products. "Green-lifestyle" is promoted as a solution to our environmental challenges for commercial interests by advertising companies. Is the so-called green lifestyle possible without buying more products? This question remains unaddressed in such campaigns. An important aspect of such green commercial campaigns is the use of "sustainability", a term defined by many and agreed upon by a few. Apart from being vaguely used in commercial communications, the concept and definitions of sustainability are often argued. Originally defined as meeting present needs without compromising future generations by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987. On the other hand, Greenpeace defines it as a way of using "resources that could continue forever". The concept of *forever* can be questioned for its possible exaggeration and unrealistic promise. Besides this, advertising discourse may use sustainability to promote consumerism. Oxford Languages (n.d.), the dictionary data provider used in Google Search, defines *sustainability* as the ability to maintain something at a certain level. However, it uses "the sustainability of economic growth" as an example sentence. It is interesting to note how "economic growth", and "sustainability" are used in the same sentence to frame that economic growth (one of the most dominant stories according to Stibbe) is possible alongside sustainability. Against this background, it is argued in this study that such green commercial campaigns promote eco-destructive ideologies like consumerism and employ terms like sustainability vaguely to market their products. In this chapter, I will discuss corporate discourse, ideologies and their influence on climate action and behaviour.

3.1 Green Advertising: The Rise

The concept of green advertising started appearing and became more popular during the Great Recession in the 1970s. During these times, people realized that resources were not 'unlimited', and their actions had ecological consequences. This is where commercial organizations started to respond to the prevalent demand by launching green marketing campaigns (Haytko and Matulich, 2008). The rise in green advertising was well received by green consumers who had started considering green products to be serious compensation for their actions towards the environment. They changed their buying habits by focusing on the environmental side of the products and adopted a better way of living. It was the time when brands which were not green started being avoided, as they were called out for being unethical and unsustainable. This resulted in a "deliberately fraudulent communication by some companies to the detriment of the consumer" (Righetto, 2020:18). Therefore, green advertising and campaigns followed a certain communication style which contained words like

"environmentally friendly" and "sustainable" and gave the impression to the consumers that the businesses were thinking green.

In connection with the timeline of green advertising and products, it is important to note that the first acknowledged use of "environmentally friendly" is found in the Oxford English Dictionary in 1971 in a reference to environmentally friendly bicycles:

environmentally friendly *adj.* (esp. of a product or process) designed, produced, or operating in a way that minimizes harm to the natural environment; (of a person, organization, industry, etc.) adopting measures that minimize harm to the environment; not harmful to the environment; (cf. FRIENDLY *adj.* 7c).

Thesaurus »

1971 *Guardian* 18 Nov. 5 Encourage the use of 'the healthy and environmentally friendly bicycle'.
1984 *Christian Sci. Monitor* 6 Apr. 9/3 The factory means jobs. There is no factory without emissions. It just has to be as environmentally friendly as possible.
1990 *Health Guardian* May–June 6/2 She's now an environmentally-friendly housewife and mother who makes regular trips to the bottle bank *en-route* to shopping for organic vegetables.
2009 *Guardian* 25 Apr. (Money section) 2/5 Not sure how environmentally friendly smoke from a chimenea is.

(Hide quotations)

Figure 1: The first significant use of the term "environmentally friendly" as found in the Oxford English Dictionary in 1971.

Since its first appearance in the English language, we can observe the rise in its usage:
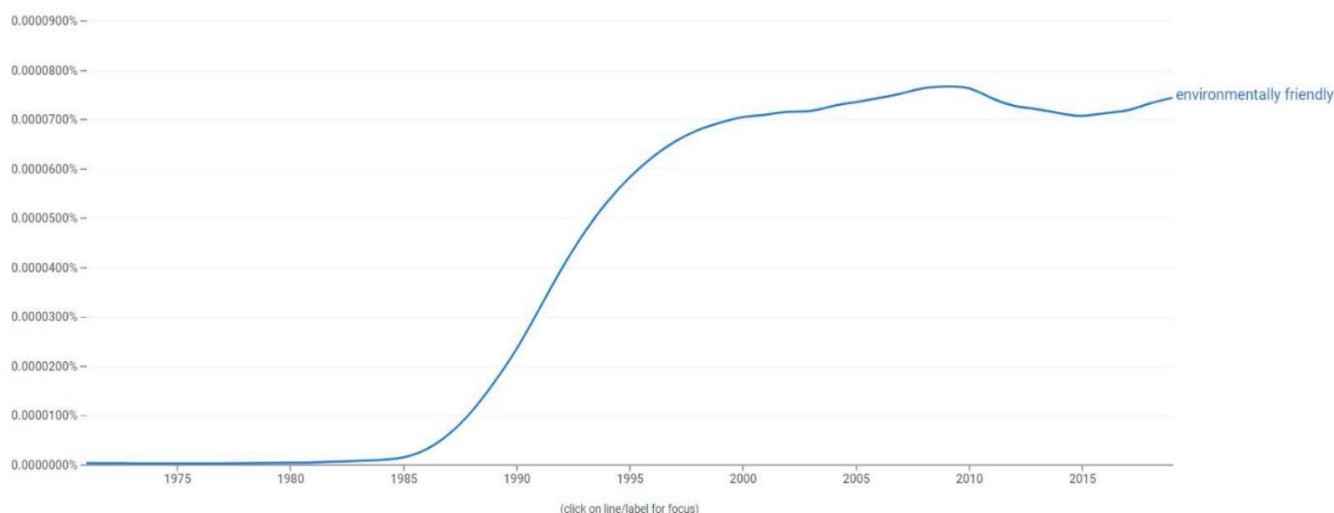
Figure 2: Google Ngram Viewer shows the rise in the use of the term "environmentally friendly" from the early 1970s to 2015.

With the rise of green consumerism, the exploitation and exaggeration of "small" efforts made by commercial organizations also increased. A wide array of strategies was adopted to give the consumers an impression of being green. To do that, the inclusion of irrelevant information in advertising was increased. In addition, the use of colours (ideally green) and images was employed to communicate, regardless of the organizations' actual actions and ideologies. Over the years, these strategies were further developed to look "green", "organic", "natural", "friend of the earth and people" (Righetto, 2020:18) and so forth.

3.1.1 "Green" as a Modifier

With the increasing demand for green products, it is crucial to observe how the word "green" has been used over the past few years. For this reason, the following table shows Google search lists of the top 25 nouns most frequently modified by "green" in 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023. Words that are used to mean "not harmful to the environment" or "related to environmentalism" are marked in bold in 2018, 2019, and 2020. In the span of a few years, a rapid change can be noticed in the description of words. Words like "tea", "jersey", "flag", "jacket", "vegetable", and "bin" have been replaced in the following years.

Top 25 nouns most frequently modified by 'green' on Google Search					
2018	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**
Light	Light	Light	Energy	Energy	Energy
Space	Space	Space	Jobs	Jobs	Jobs
Card	Card	**Energy**	Buildings	Technology	Technology
Energy	**Energy**	Card	Growth	Growth	Growth
Tea	Tea	**Hydrogen**	Economy	Economy	Economy
Jacket	**Belt**	**Recovery**	Investments	6th Products	6th Products
Bean	Bean	Zone	Technology	7th Businesses	7th Businesses
Belt	Jacket	Tea	8th Products	Transportation	transportation
Flag	**Bond**	**Bond**	9th Business	Infrastructure	Infrastructure
Bond	Flat	Bean	Cities	Finance	finance
Screen	**Economy**	Shoot	Transportation	Manufacturing	Manufacturing
Dress	Dress	**Belt**	Infrastructure	Companies	Companies
Vegetables	**Technology**	**Economy**	Finance	Solutions	Solutions
Eye	Screen	**Job**	Manufacturing	Initiatives	Initiatives
Technology	Eye	Screen	Development	Investments	Investments
Bin	Area	Jacket	Policies	Markets	Markets
Building	**Job**	**Technology**	Solutions	Deals	Deals
Onion	Building	Flag	Initiatives	Bonds	Bonds
Shirt	Shoot	List	Funds	Investments	Investments
Room	**Infrastructure**	**Infrastructure**	Jobs	Sectors	Sectors
Jersey	Leaf	**Revolution**	Technologies	Industries	Industries
Grass	Room	Area	Industries	Jobs	Jobs
Area	Vegetable	**Project**	Sectors	Projects	Projects
Field	Shirt	Waste	Bonds	Innovations	Innovations

Leaf	Bin	Jersey	Standards	Standards	standards

Table 2: Nouns most frequently modified by the word "green" from 2019 to 2023 according to Google search results, Ngram Viewer: https://books.google.com/ngram, Wordnet: https://wordnet.princeton.edu and Oxford English Dictionary: https://www.oed.com.

Significantly, from the year 2020 onwards, the term "green" has frequently been used broadly to describe concepts that are sustainable and environmentally friendly or have some kind of social impact in addition. This shows that the rise of environmental concerns has led to the "greening" of surrounding words. That is why terms like "green businesses", "green products", or "green investments" appear more frequently.

In 2021, the terms "product" and "business" came in the top 10 for the first time, with the complete disappearance of words like "card", "jacket", "area" and "screen" from the list in 2021 and the following years.

In the year 2022, the list is almost the same as in 2021, except for the words "markets", "deals" and projects", jumping up in the list. Importantly, it is worth noting the further progress of words like "products" and "business" in the top 10, which ranked 8th and 9th in 2021 but moved from 8th and 9th to 6th and 7th in 2022 and 2023.

Additionally, a few more significant changes took place in the list, e.g. the word "companies" replaced "building" in the top words, while "funds" was replaced by "innovations" in the top 25 words. This indicates that environmental concerns are increasing and "green" is likely to grow in the coming years, as it is being increasingly linked with sustainability and environmentalism to protect the environment and promote green consumerism. While the use of "green" to describe the environment and sustainability is a positive development, because we need to take sustainable actions and follow an environmentally friendly lifestyle, it also raises concerns about greenwashing, as green consumerism is expected to increase.

Green advertising, according to Banerjee et al. (1995, as cited in Righetto, 2020: 18-19), occurs when an ad meets one or more of the following criteria:

1. "explicitly or implicitly addresses the relationship between a product/service and the biophysical environment;
2. promotes a green lifestyle with or without highlighting a product/service;
3. presents a corporate image of environmental responsibility" (as cited in Righetto, 2020: 18-19).

These criteria were acceptable as green marketing in the past, but they have become problematic in recent definitions of green marketing. However, a more recent definition of green marketing by the American Marketing Association (2016) is not very different, as it defines green marketing as a strategy to advertise products that are perceived to be safe for the environment.

A study by the European Commission (2014) found that over 70% of the advertisements examined included at least one green claim, while 78% of the products featured at least one green claim related to their packaging. This shows the significant prevalence of green claims in green products. Thus, the European Commission is proposing new rules to crack down on greenwashing, including requiring companies to be more transparent about their environmental impact (European Commission, 2022). A study conducted by the University of Oxford found that 95% of environmental claims made by companies are misleading (2022). Greenwashing as a global industry is worth $1 trillion, as per the estimation made by the Global Sustainable Investment Alliance (Global Sustainability Investment Alliance, 2022). In the UK alone, the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) received over 2,000 complaints about greenwashing in 2021, up from 1,500 in 2020 (Advertising Standards Authority, 2022). This shows the growing intensity of greenwashing as a global market.

3.1.3 Danish Consumer Ombudsman

According to the Danish Consumer Ombudsman report (2011), environmental claims can be of the following (to mention a few) categories:

1. General claims
2. Environmental claim with explanations
3. Ethical claims

Each of these claims is discussed in a separate section below.

3.1.3.1 General Claims

These are claims[4] with little or no explanation about how the product or service is "sustainable", or "environment friendly". Such claims do not demonstrate how the product is beneficial to the environment, but they claim to be green without mentioning the life cycle analysis (LCA[5]) of the product or a third-party assessment. Based on the guidelines of the Danish Consumer Ombudsman (2011 and 2014), commercial marketing that carries false information and a Commercial practice that excludes its material information will be labelled as misleading (Nyilasy et al., 2014:167-68). These guidelines have been put forward for the protection of

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[4] The Danish Consumer Ombudsman (2014) defines the term 'claim(s)' as the use of statements, information, symbols, images, labelling schemes and certificates, etc., used in the marketing of products and activities to boost sales, directly or indirectly (p.7).

[5] An LCA can help to identify the main environmental impacts of a product over its entire life cycle, from raw material extraction to disposal, from "cradle to grave".

consumers against misleading and unethical marketing in the Danish market. So, statements like "green", "fair", "gentle", and "ethically correct choice" will be considered misleading if the requisite information is not provided. Life cycle assessment refers to the phases which products go through from "cradle to grave". The claim may be true, but if it does not specify *how* sustainable the product will be considered a misleading commercial practice.

3.1.3.2 Environmental Claim with Explanation

These claims are the statements which give the impression that the product is not very harmful to our environment. In short, they claim to have a "reduced environmental impact" factor. These claims may contain obfuscation jargon and provide a brief general explanation of the product with no specific information about its life cycle analysis.

3.1.3.3 Ethical Claims

As mentioned by the Consumer Ombudsman, it is not easy to give, in clear words, an "unambiguous" definition of ethics. "Ethical claims" are statements which give the impression that the manufacturing of the product meets generally accepted ethics such as animal welfare, the safety of workers, nature protection, child labour and corporate social responsibility (CSR)[6], including social work and donations. Based on their ethical considerations and responsibilities, the brands would ask the consumers to *make an ethical choice and* buy their environmentally friendly products.

Over the years, with the increasing number of green consumers, some companies have been forced to pursue a green approach, while many businesses find this an opportunity to rebrand themselves and increase the sales of their products and services. Businesses that follow an "eco-friendly" approach also engage in "green communication". However, their green communication is not supported by the facts; this is where deception comes into play: greenwashing. In the following sections, I will define greenwashing, its types, and mention some famous cases of greenwashing.

3.1.4 Greenwashing

The Oxford English Dictionary defines the verb *to greenwash* as "(a) To mislead (the public, public concern, etc.) by falsely representing a person, company, product, etc. as being environmentally responsible; (b) to misrepresent (a company, its operations, etc.) as environmentally responsible".

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[6] Corporate Social Responsibility is a management concept in which companies include social and environmental concerns in their business operations and interactions with their stakeholders (United Nations Industrial Development Organization).

Oxford Reference defines *greenwash* as a term (combining *green* and *whitewash*) that environmentalists use to describe the activity (for example, by corporate lobby groups) of giving a positive public image to environmentally unsound practices.

Figure 3: Definition of "greenwash" as a verb along with its different uses chronologically.

Interestingly, the sentences in the figure explain how the definition of *greenwash* and its usage has changed over the years.
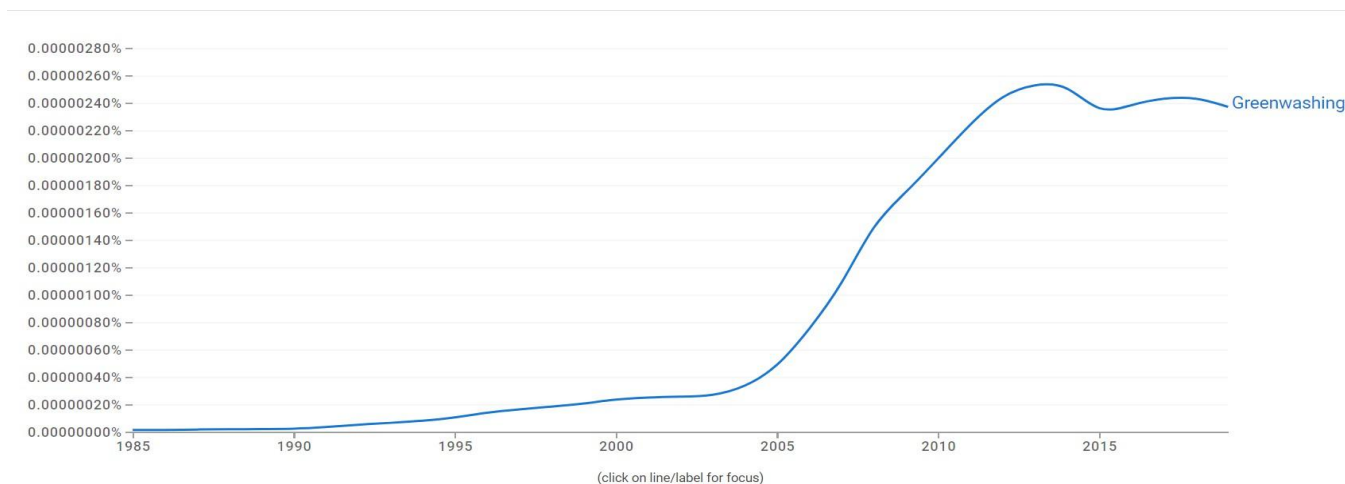
Figure 4: The usage of "greenwashing" chronologically and its rise from the 1980s to 2015, sourced from Google Ngram Viewer.

3.1.5 Save the Towel; Greenwashing Coined

Jay Westerveld, an environmental activist, coined the term *greenwashing* in 1986 in his critical essay entitled *Greenwashing: When Environmentalism Goes Sour*. It was first published in the magazine *Environmental Ethics*. Westerveld wrote it to debunk the "save the towel" movement propagated by hotels during those times (Becker-Olsen and Potucek, 2013). In the essay, he criticizes the hotel industry for its practice of asking guests to reuse towels as part of an environmental initiative–greenwashing.

In the mid-1980s, as cited in Righetto (2020:20-21) and Motavalli, (2016), Westerveld stayed in a South Pacific hotel room, and he found a card with an interesting message that read: "*Save Our Planet: Every day, millions of gallons of water are used to wash towels that have only been used once. You make the choice: A towel on the rack means, I will use again. A towel on the floor means, 'Please replace'. Thank you for helping us conserve the Earth's vital resources*". The card was thoughtfully designed with the three green arrows that make up the recycling symbol (Motavalli, 2016). It appeared ironic to him and a little suspicious because hotels were big polluters. He thought the hotel's green message did not match their actions and that they were trying to look green by giving an impression to the customers that they were worried about the environment and thus interested in saving water. However, he knew that the hotel "wanted to save money by not washing those towels" (Righetto, 2020:20-21).

Though the term *greenwashing* was coined in 1986, greenwashing as a practice existed before. In this respect, the classic example of a misleading campaign is Chevron's in 1985, when the oil company launched a campaign entitled "People Do". The campaign was launched to create an environmentally friendly image for the company. The company went on to win the Effie Advertising Award in 1990, and, in the same year, it was taken as a case study at Harvard Business School. But soon after their "People Do" campaign, Chevron was questioned about its actual work. It was found that the company was not taking those so-called environmental initiatives of its own will. It was also revealed that the oil giant was violating the Clean Air Act and was criticized for "dumping 18 billion gallons (about 68,137,380,000 litres) of toxic wastewater into Ecuadorean rivers and spilling roughly 17 million gallons (about 64,351,970 litres) of crude oil into the ancestral territory of six indigenous tribes" (Cherry and Sneirson, 2012). A few years later, the same company came under criticism for another similar campaign entitled "We Agree". The company spent millions of dollars to enhance its image and propose itself as eco-friendly (Atlantic, 2010).

Many theorists have tried to identify different forms of greenwashing to explain this marketing concept. For example, Waller and Conaway (2010) described how the framing and composition of environmental communication could mislead consumers. They describe how Nike used framing messages to defend itself from allegations of unethical work conditions. A slightly different example is given by Parguel, Benoit and Russel (2015), who explain how natural elements are used in advertising to evoke emotions. They also coined the term "executional greenwashing" to demonstrate how a company implies being "green" without explicitly claiming to be environmentally friendly with the aid of colours and symbols.

3.1.6. Reverse Greenwashing

As the competition among green businesses continues to increase, marketing strategies can go wrong. Some businesses deliberately greenwash, whereas others stoop to reverse greenwashing. On the one hand, greenwashing is about providing limited or selective disclosure of information about the product. On the other hand, in reverse greenwashing, one business projects its products as superior to a competitor's products. In doing so, inaccurate, unsupported, or outdated information is provided to make negative claims about the competing brands or their life cycle analysis, for instance, plastic vs. Eco bags. In Lane's (2012) words, greenwashing contains incomplete (or hidden) information about the product, which aims to present the product's owner or its service as environmentally friendly, such as energy-efficient appliances or a lesser environmental impact of the waste materials. Unlike greenwashing, reverse greenwashing targets the competitor. In other words, reverse greenwashing contains false, deceptive, or derogatory claims about the negative or more harmful impact of competitors' products on the environment.

3.1.7 Green Ads Gone Wrong

Lane (2012) gives the example of ChicoBag's reusable shopping bags. The company's bags are celebrated as eco-friendly because of their durability and reusable quality over competitors' single-use plastic bags. To market their reusable bags effectively, ChicoBag emphazises the difference between their reusable bags and single-use plastic bags of other brands. The comparison focuses more on plastic bags and presents them as a bad and unfavourable choice over green reusable ChicoBags. These claims and comparisons could be justifiable or not, real, or misleading: the essence of reverse greenwashing lies in the presence of a villain or antagonist in a comparative advertising environment.

Given the infamous image of plastic bags, ChicoBag set up a separate section called "Learn the Facts" on its website. The dedicated section provides information on the ways plastic bags harm our environment. In addition to this, the company has designed a "mascot", a human-sized Bag Monster covered with plastic bags from head to toe, who symbolizes one individual's annual plastic bag consumption, which amounts to up to 500 plastic bags in a year. Due to ChicoBag's endless rants about plastic bags, the company's competitors sued ChicoBag in 2011. According to the plastic manufacturing companies, ChicoBag's claims were vague and did not provide substantial evidence. To resolve the dispute, companies signed an agreement, and ChigoBag pledged not to "cite archived websites" of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to prevent citing invalid information. Fast forward to 2023, ChicoBag has launched a green campaign called "*A little bit* BETTER". According to the ChicoBag website, "Little Bit

Better (LBB) is an initiative celebrating people and organizations doing things just a little bit better to make a better future for all of us" (for more information, see https://www.chicobag.com/lbb).

3.1.8 Drivers of Greenwashing

Greenwashing is a complex phenomenon. The motivations behind it are external, internal and organizational (Delmas and Burbano, 2011). They are further described as:
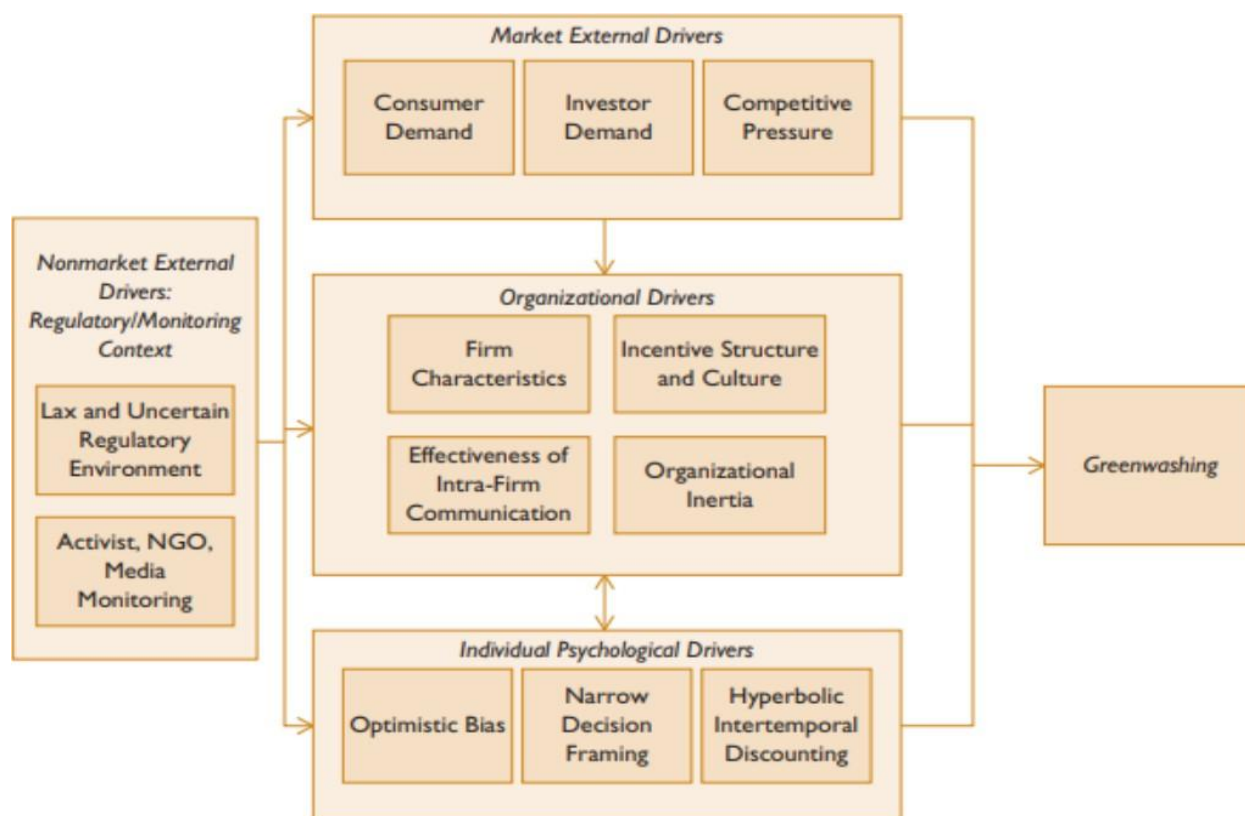
Figure 5: Drivers of greenwashing, and how different factors contribute to greenwashing, sourced from Delmas and Burbano (2011).

3.2 TerraChoice's Seven Sins of Greenwashing

Greenwashing has already been defined in this chapter. Now let us look at some of the ways and strategies which brands use to greenwash. In 2007, TerraChoice[7] published a report called *The Seven Sins of Greenwashing*, which identified seven different types of misleading environmental marketing claims. The report was widely influential and helped raise awareness of greenwashing. TerraChoice categorized such strategies as "sins", defined some of the most frequent and commonly used ways of greenwashing in commercial practices and

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[7] TerraChoice is an advertising consultancy for Environmental Marketing. It is a Canadian environmental marketing agency and a subsidiary of UL Environment. TerraChoice was founded in 1994 and has its headquarters in Ottawa, Ontario.

communication and called them "Sins". As defined by TerraChoice, the following are the seven sins of greenwashing: "1) the hidden trade-off ("suggesting a product is 'green' based on an unreasonable narrow set of attributes without attention to other important environmental issues"); (2) no proof; (3) vagueness; (4) irrelevance; (5) fibbing; (6) the lesser of two evils ("claims that may be true within the product category, but that risk distracting the consumer from the greater environmental impacts of the category as a whole"); and (7) false labels" (Diffenderfer and Baker, 2011: 25).

The Seven Sins of Greenwashing

In the course of assessing thousands of products in the United States and Canada, TerraChoice Environmental Marketing categorized marketing claims into the following "seven sins of greenwashing":

1 **Sin of the hidden trade-off:** committed by suggesting a product is "green" based on an unreasonably narrow set of attributes without attention to other important environmental issues (e.g., paper produced from a sustainably harvested forest may still yield significant energy and pollution costs).

2 **Sin of no proof:** committed by an environmental claim that cannot be substantiated by easily accessible supporting information or by a reliable third-party certification (e.g., paper products that claim various percentages of postconsumer recycled content without providing any evidence).

3 **Sin of vagueness:** committed by every claim that is so poorly defined or broad that its real meaning is likely to be misunderstood by the consumer (e.g., "all-natural").

4 **Sin of irrelevance:** committed by making an environmental claim that may be truthful but is unimportant or unhelpful for consumers seeking environmentally preferable products (e.g., "CFC-free" is meaningless given that chlorofluorocarbons are already banned by law).

5 **Sin of lesser of two evils:** committed by claims that may be true within the product category, but that risk distracting the consumer from the greater health or environmental impacts of the category as a whole (e.g., organic cigarettes).

6 **Sin of fibbing:** committed by making environmental claims that are simply false (e.g., products falsely claiming to be Energy Star certified).

7 **Sin of false labels:** committed by exploiting consumers' demand for third-party certification with fake labels or claims of third-party endorsement (e.g., certification-like images with green jargon such as "eco-preferred").

Adapted from: *The Seven Sins of Greenwashing: Environmental Claims in Consumer Markets*

Figure 6: Types of greenwashing aka Seven Sins of Greenwashing identified by TerraChoice, Richard Dahl (2010).

3.2.1 The Sins of Greenwashing: Home and Family Edition 2009

TerraChoice published a report in 2009 entitled *The Sins of Greenwashing: Home and Family Edition*. It aimed to study the environmental claims made by the products placed in big stores in the markets of Canada and the US. The study concluded that 98% of the products assessed were guilty of at least one of the "sins" of greenwashing. According to Reuters (2009), "TerraChoice's survey of 2,219 consumer products in Canada and the U.S. shows that 98% committed at least one sin of greenwashing and that some marketers are exploiting consumers' demand for third-party certification by creating fake labels or false suggestions of third-party endorsement". The report also found that certain products were more likely to be greenwashed than others. For example, 100% of the toys and 99.2% of the baby products surveyed were guilty of some form of greenwashing. It is distressing to note that products which are likely to be greenwashed are the ones that are "among the most common of products in most households" (Dahl, 2010:250). Interestingly, the TerraChoice 2009 report found that the most common sin of greenwashing was the Sin of the Hidden Trade-off: selective disclosure of information. This sin was found in 66% of the products surveyed. Other common sins included the Sin of No Proof (45%), the Sin of Vagueness (41%).

3.2.2 The Federal Trade Commission

As the green product business continues to bloom, it is becoming more difficult to avoid greenwashing. The inclusion of obfuscation makes it difficult for consumers to understand the environmental claims in the advertisement. As a result, consumers are getting skeptical of such eco-friendly claims. To overcome this, organizations like TerraChoice and consumers have been putting in efforts to identify greenwashing in social and commercial practices to spread awareness and debunk fake environmental claims, e.g. www.greenwashingindex.com (Diffenderfer and Baker, 2011). However, these initiatives are limited because they cannot legally bind the businesses to follow their guidelines. We live in an eco-conscious society, and people like to buy green products to feel good about themselves and the environment. "Green" is good for business. Therefore, it becomes important for governments to protect their citizens from greenwashing and for consumers to exercise their consumer rights. In this connection, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) revised its guidelines to help companies avoid greenwashing and protect consumers. In this connection, the Federal Trade Commission revised its guides and conducted a workshop in 2008 to study green consumer reactions and analyze how people see green advertising. Moreover, in 2010, the FTC wrote advisory letters to around 78 brands of garments and textiles, warned them against their deceptive practices and informed them that they were violating laws.

3.2.3 Laws and Guidelines

The FTC issued its first guidelines, called *Green Guides,* in 1992; they were updated and revised in 1996 and 1998, and the most recent update came in 2012. The FTC's *Green Guides* (1992) work as guidelines to provide "1) general principles that apply to all environmental marketing claims; 2) how consumers are likely to interpret particular claims and how marketers can substantiate these claims; and 3) how marketers can qualify their claims to avoid deceiving consumers" (https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/topics/truth-advertising/green-guides).

Followings are some of the most common examples of environmental claims that are covered by the FTC Green Guides: "Biodegradable", "Biodegradable", "Compostable", "Recyclable", "Made with recycled content", "Energy efficient", "Water efficient", "Non-toxic" and "Safe for the environment".

3.2.4 FTC's charges against some brands

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) charged K-Mart, Tender Corp., and Dyna-E International with falsely labelling their disposable plates, moist wipes, and compressed dry towels as "biodegradable". The FTC accused these three companies of deceiving consumers by claiming that their products were environmentally friendly when they were not. In August 2009, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) filed lawsuits against four more companies for deceptive labelling and advertising of clothing and other textiles. According to the FTC, the companies Pure Bamboo, LLC, Sarni Designs, LLC, CSE et al., and the M Group falsely claimed that their products were made of bamboo fibre when they were made of rayon. The FTC also alleged that the companies made other misleading claims about their products, such as claiming that they were environmentally friendly and hypoallergenic (for more Federal Trade Commission cases and their details, see https://www.ftc.gov/enforcement/cases-proceedings/terms/1408). Many states followed the Federal Trade Commission's Green Guides and introduced their versions of laws and guides for fair advertising and consumer protection. Florida, for example, followed the Florida Deceptive and Unfair Trade Practice Act, which prevents unfair trade practices in business. Likewise, California adopted the Consumers Legal Remedies Act (CLRA). However, according to critics and scholars, including Diffenderfer and Baker (2011), these green guides have many loopholes that can easily be exploited by corporations to avoid legal actions and still enact greenwashing, because they do not hold much legal value or the force of law. Therefore, green guides "provide advertisers with a safe harbor to avoid lawsuits for unfair or deceptive environmental advertising" (p.23). It is harsh to say that these guides only help providers escape the law. Advisory opinions and guidelines spread awareness, and that is why there has been private enforcement in consumer ombudsmen and courts by competitors, consumers, and individuals. In 2011, Honda was sued by a customer named Heather Peters for misleading advertising about the mileage of the 2006 Honda Civic Hybrid. She argued that Honda had promised that the car would get up to 50 miles per gallon, but she was only able to get 29 miles per gallon. Peters filed a small-claims lawsuit against Honda in California and won in 2012. She was awarded $10,000 in damages to compensate her for the difference in gas mileage (ThePress Democrat, 2012). According to Diffenderfer and Baker (2011), in July 2007, Sony claimed that Panasonic was misleading its customers by claiming that its plasma televisions were environmentally friendly with the "No Lead. No Mercury. No Worries" campaign. Sony challenged the idea that plasma TVs use more power than LCD televisions, and therefore, they are not environmentally friendly as advertised by Panasonic. The National Advertising Division (NAD) also agreed with Sony and ruled in Sony's favour. The National Advertising Division ruled that Panasonic could not

describe its plasma televisions as "environmentally friendly".

3.3 Greenwashing in Corporate Environmental Campaigns

Likewise, Nestlé was charged with greenwashing in 2014 for promoting its environmentally friendly designed Nespresso disposable coffee pods, which only had a negligible waste reduction impact. In the same vein, some people called Unilever to account for misleading consumers about its environmental record. A Twitter campaign accused Unilever of greenwashing for its partnership with The Guardian newspaper to host a sustainable living online engagement platform. People wrote that Unilever is not as sustainable as it claims to be. These campaigns did not truly reflect corporations' environmental impacts (Bowen and Correa, 2014).

In her book *After Greenwashing: Symbolic Corporate Environmentalism and Society*, Bowen (2014) observes that the traditional ways of greenwashing may be declining because of the efforts of organizations like TerraChoice and the activists who have launched independent initiatives to debunk greenwashing (see www.greenwashingindex.com). However, broader symbolic ways of corporate environmentalism are actively increasing and are more prevalent. In 2014, Mazda faced controversy as its campaign drew accusations of greenwashing. The company collaborated with Dr. Seuss to market its SkyActiv technology, using the iconic cartoon character, The Lorax, to "speak for the trees". It should be noted that the main idea of this campaign was to promote Mazda's SkyActiv technology with a "Certified Truffula Tree Seal of Approval" endorsed by the charming cartoon animals (Gillespie, 2012). People held that Mazda used the Lorax to sell its cars, though the cars were not as environmentally friendly as the company advertised. However, Mazda defended its campaign, arguing that the campaign aimed to raise awareness of environmental issues. In addition, Mazda maintained that they had also donated to Dr. Seuss Enterprises to support environmental education programs.

With a limited research approach on a complex issue like greenwashing, it is not likely that the organizations and researchers, including social media, will stop "big business" in its fraudulent greening. It is expected that corporate and firms' strategies will evolve with time. Similarly, activists and researchers will have to change their approaches and broaden their horizons when looking at corporate environmentalism. To study firms' environmental performance and their green campaigns, scholars need to redefine greenwashing and look at it from a broader and more sophisticated angle. This is also an ideal opportunity for researchers of natural sciences to partner with scholars from social sciences to study the implications of greenwashing, as it was recommended by Bowen (2014), to go beyond the limited concepts and understanding of greenwashing in current academic scholarship to study "symbolic corporate environmentalism". Precisely speaking, past research on greenwashing suggests that greenwashing is "(1) an information disclosure decision, (2) deliberate, (3) initiated by

companies, and (4) beneficial to firms and costly to society" (Bowen and Correa, 2014:109). This limited understanding of greenwashing is beneficial: it allows researchers to study greenwashing behaviour, and it is aimed at focusing on the specific environment-related claims, such as claims that advertise or promote a product as "biodegradable" or "carbon neutral" when it is not (Du, 2014).

3.3.1 Symbolic Corporate Environmentalism

Bowen (2014) takes an interesting direction to highlight the symbolic and superficial corporate green commitment and defines these practices as collective meanings and representations associated with environmentally motivated changes implemented by managers within organizations. In this way, the so-called environmentally friendly initiatives are promoted through campaigns aimed at promoting corporations' commitment to sustainability; their concern is not to reduce their environmental impact but to brand themselves as champions of the environment.

3.3.2 Greenwashing vs. Symbolic Corporate Environmentalism

Greenwashing is a deliberate and projected attempt to mislead consumers about environmental practices, whereas symbolic corporate environmentalism is relational. Symbolic corporate environmentalism is a broader concept that involves different actors and stakeholders, indicating the cultural and social meanings attached to corporate environmental actions. Internal corporate ideologies hardly affect their stakeholders and their policies (Delgado et al., 2012). For example, a firm may possess an ideology or a policy against reducing its greenhouse gas emissions, but the company would still possibly engage in symbolic corporate environmentalism by donating money to environmental organizations or funding environmental events, like in Madza's case (see 2.3). As argued before, it is becoming hard to differentiate between closely related strategies of greenwashing and symbolic corporate environmentalism and sustainability; also, the limited research on the difference between greenwashing and symbolic corporate environmentalism and sustainability has also created more confusion. Independent researchers and organizations have made many efforts to identify and curb greenwashing, but they have not been enough because the confusion over the symbolic corporate environment still exists. Corporations appoint private firms to communicate their environmental commitments on their behalf. The websites of some corporations have dedicated special sections for their environmental stories and carefully written blogs, which highlight one aspect of the commitment while completely ignoring (or undermining) the harmful activities of the corporations. With the lack of research on the difference between greenwashing and symbolic corporate environmentalism, the exaggeration

of corporate environmental stories (blogs) makes it difficult for customers to identify greenwashing. According to Montiel and Delgado-Ceballos (2014), some researchers' approaches to symbolic corporate responsibility may have given justification and legitimation to biased and shallow corporate green policies. This leads to the presence of greenwashing in corporate environmental research and practice, too.

3.3.4 Environmental Unconventional Campaigns and Protests

Environmental activists believe that the traditional communicative methods used to address environmental issues are not effective. So, they employ a "social guerrilla" messaging strategy to draw the attention of green supporters. However, Peverini (2013) is skeptical about this tactic because it is too simplistic to accept that the goal of "social guerrilla" environmentalism is to raise public awareness of environmental issues using such dramatic methods. Rather, its goal is to shock the public, whose individual experiences are far removed from this drama.

3.3.5 Climate Change and Activism

Given such a steep increase in green messaging, corporations and activists have become competitors. If corporations employ innovative ways to "seduce customers", activists also feel forced to adopt such seductive strategies to position their importance in society. Peverini (2013) suggests that the activists will need to be proactive to debunk subtle strategies of greenwashing. Activists and non-profit organizations employ fear-appealing campaigns, dark humour, dramas, theatre, and visual graphic imagery (slaughtering of animals) to draw public attention. Communication in these campaigns manipulates the public attention and strikes the audience emotionally with shock.

3.3.6 Fear-Appeal Campaigns

Environmental fear-appealing campaigns attempt to take the public by surprise with some unexpected or graphic images. This combines both visual and verbal strategies to attract the gaze of passersby and motivate them to take the necessary action. Most of these fear-appealing campaigns show the consequences of environmental problems, like climate change and biodiversity loss, and they are aimed at evoking doomsday-like scenarios. Some of the common examples of fear-appealing campaigns could be a child breathing polluted air and coughing, a billboard that shows a polar bear standing on melting ice and houses being flooded by rising sea levels or floods.

These social campaigns also use irony and consist of warnings, suggestions and condemnations to address environmental issues. Peverini (2013) explains the process of this

social advertising and finds that such advertising often becomes a matter of public debate about the ethics of representing serious issues in comical ways. Because using humour or strong language to highlight a genuine issue could lead to unexpected controversies, people holding certain values may consider that humour ridicules these issues and makes them look less serious.

Be as it may, the battle between non-profit organizations (NPOS) continues to happen. NPOs use irony and humour to highlight corporations' so-called environmental practices. Greenpeace's campaign against Volkswagen is a typical example of how NPOs can use irony and humour to question corporations' green claims. In this campaign, Greenpeace includes the Star Wars saga to make a series of parodies to expose Volkswagen's environmental claims. For instance, in one of the parodies, Darth Vader is choking a man to death, while a voiceover announces "Volkswagen: The dark side of green". After some years, Greenpeace sued Volkswagen for its green claims in 2021.

3.4 Aesthetic Green Marketing

The greening of businesses is at its height, but its environmental effects have always been under debate. Consumers are also getting skeptical about the greening of businesses and their environmental communication. This challenging situation puts corporations in a position to reproach their green advertising in a cleverer way to attract green consumers. This is where an aesthetic turn in green marketing takes place to sell green aesthetic products to consumers with environmental ethics. Aesthetic quality is added to green products to spread awareness and motivate consumers to take environmental actions and follow a sustainable lifestyle. Aesthetics can be defined as the study of beauty and perception (Goldman, 2001), and it has been called the mother of ethics by Brodsky (1988: 17). It initially began as a discipline of philosophy to study ethics and knowledge, but it has now extended to the study of arts and beauty. Corporate aesthetic green advertising uses both subjective and objective aesthetics to sell corporate products. However, it should be noted that some companies use aesthetics as a tool in green advertising, like an "added quality" to greenwash their products and deceive customers.

This eco-marketing appeals to the ethical identity of green consumers. Since environmentally conscious green consumers are led by their personal ethics and principles, an aesthetic touch is given to "natural" (Todd, 2004) and environmentally friendly products to lure the new lot of green consumers, who like to buy products with an aesthetic look or appeal.

3.4.1 How do Companies Strategize their Aesthetic Green Ads?

To sell their aesthetic green products, companies target customers who care for the environment and have ideological values. Advertising companies rely on two marketing strategies to advertise their products:

1. The companies give exaggerated notions of beauty to emphasize the positive aspects of their green products

2. Along with the performance of the products, they add environmental aesthetics.

Such advertisements tend to connect individual traits of personality with ecology. This section presents the ideology of aesthetic green products, their discourse and implications on health and the environment.

With the rise in ecological concerns and an increase in green consumerism, it will be difficult to control the over-consumption of green products. As it has been noted by Todd (2004), more people recycle than vote for president in the United States. However, the environmental impacts of green consumerism are regularly debated. For example, in the US, on one hand, some people believe that green consumerism positively affects American consciousness and turns into green because it meets consumer expectations and gives profits to businesses (see Hailes 1998). On the other hand, some people disagree and argue that green consumerism does not highlight the "root cause of environmental problems because it does not encourage a decline in consumption (Todd, 2004:87). Rather, green consumerism favours corporate greenwashing that is aimed at misleading consumers about its environmental and sustainable commercial practices (Stauber and Rampton, 1995). Some people believe that seeking absolutions for their unsustainable actions through the purchase of eco-friendly products may weaken efforts towards climate action. Purchasing green products supposedly works as a substitute for people's social and environmental obligations. This ideology undermines consumer genuinely green consumption and distracts them from thinking about the environmental impact of the rest of their consumption habits and other regular activities.

3.4.2 Green Consumer Values and their (UN) awareness of over-consumption

Sustainable marketing is a unique way of looking at the production cycle and its responsible consumption. According to Fuller (1999), businesses should produce less because our resources are limited. Corporations need to follow sustainable commercial practices, which should be more than just money-making strategies. They need to help customers make better choices about the value of our ecosystems. Fuller (1999:5-6) claims that small environmental actions make a substantial difference because sustainable marketing is a social obligation (p. 5-6). In other words, sustainable advertising should promote a more sustainable world for all

humans and their fellow beings. Its aim should be to change the way we live, perceive nature and consume products. My research supports Fuller's suggestions about responsible marketing and consumption and adds some questions, like: What is the ideology of green consumer goods? What are the limitations of the green lifestyle? Is it not ironic that the people who are concerned about environmental issues are promoting green consumerism in pursuit of a green lifestyle, which itself can have far-reaching environmental effects? Should people who spend extra money to purchase green products be blamed? Or do the corporate actors who manipulate eco-conscious consumers need to be held accountable? By looking at the ideologies which influence sustainable marketing and its commercial discourse, I will highlight some corporate ideologies and political ideologies surrounding the climate crisis in the subsequent sections.

3.5 Eco-Consumer Identity and Ideology

Green consumer products are more than just goods: they represent ideologies and therefore promote an ethics-based market with an aim to attract consumers who are already motivated by their environmental ideologies (Todd, 2004). That is why green products can be considered symbols of corporate ideology and consumers' beliefs. So, this type of advertising, better known as "eco-advertising" or "green advertising", creates a complex ethical identity for the green consumers. It can also be argued that big corporations rely on consumeristic frames and present themselves as green companies because going green is profitable. Green consumers are driven by their ideologies and environmental concerns. Green consumerism offers people a visible way to enact their environmental values through the purchase of eco-friendly products. Companies leverage this by cultivating an "eco-friendly" brand identity designed to attract self-identified "eco-tribes" and "eco-warriors." Yet these consumerist practices often deliberately mask deeper issues—overconsumption, token environmentalism, and greenwashing—by equating purchase with genuine sustainability. Because the limitations of what constitutes a truly green lifestyle remain undefined, its real-world impact is hard to measure. Consequently, eco-consumer identity functions primarily as a marketing strategy to enhance product visibility and drive sales in an increasingly competitive market.

3.5.1 Personal Care Products

Green consumer products and personal care products include some of the most widely sold products, for example, those that are presented as a necessity by brands to address the consumers' basic need for personal hygiene: e.g. shampoo, hair gel, miracle creams and perfumes. These personal care products could also reveal consumer habits, consciousness, and ideologies. Consumer well-being and personality are often the tagline of these personal care

products. For instance, some products promise improved self-image and are advertised to make consumers beautiful and successful. In short, personal products are advertised to improve customers' appearance, which leads to success in personal and professional life. For example, Tom's of Maine's "Natural Care" philosophy emphasizes caring for both the body and the community, linking environmental values to personal care. This commitment is reflected in their slogan, "conservation, restoration, stewardship" (Tom's of Maine, 2003). Todd (2004) points out that when personal care products include aesthetics, they attract more customers, including green customers. Corporate actors are aware of green consumers, and that is why they add aesthetics to personal care products, because it is understood that someone who cares for nature will endorse brands which promise to take care of the environment. In this way, corporations influence how people think about natural resources and consume them in diverse ways (Todd, 2004:90). Personal care products, along with aesthetic appeal, include ethical and environmental claims. Corporations claim that they are aware of the environmental and social effects of their products. Sustainable marketing ethics claims toreduce the social and environmental impacts of their products, e.g. life cycle assessment of products and fair labour practices. It also protects people from being deceived by hollow environmental claims. In this connection, Hawken (1993) emphasizes the vital role of corporate responsibility in addressing the social and environmental consequences of human consumption. He identifies three core aspects of this responsibility: the resources and energy extracted from ecosystems ("what it takes"), the outcomes of industrial production processes ("what it makes"), and the by-products or waste generated ("what it wastes") (Hawken, 1993:1). As stated earlier, advertising follows certain marketing strategies to promote corporate ideologies and consciousness. Big businesses incorporate common values in their campaigns, such as honesty and community welfare, to promote brand image and act as "citizen brands". Businesses are aware that eco-conscious customers expect corporations to adopt green policies. Thus, these businesses exploit this expectation and market their green policies and ethics and act as defenders of the environment.

Todd (2004) explains that the way corporations position themselves through their commercial discourse reflects their ideology, and people who share those values are likely to purchase the company's products or services. As mentioned earlier, these brands celebrate consumerism instead of reducing it and making customers feel good about their "responsible" consumption. Some businesses attach community links to their products and claim, e.g. "Our values: never doubt that a group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world, indeed it's the only thing it ever does" (Body Shop, 2003). It needs to be understood that our responsibility towards society and nature does not end if we buy green products. Green consumerist ideology suggests that it does: buy green products as a substitute for your social responsibility. Corporations make consumers assume that they will take care of the

environment. Moreover, corporate green consumerism attempts to project the image of a community whose members look after each other.

3.5.2 Greenwashing and Its Effects on Health

Green product advertisements frequently portray a sustainable lifestyle as both essential for our era and the solution to today's environmental challenges. Different companies see this as business capital and turn it into a new modern trend: green consumerism. They present a variety of products under eco-friendly tags, supported by the promised environmental benefits of those products. The new greening of brands comes along with many vague, uncertain, and hollow claims of greenwashing. Greenwashing has several problems: public confusion is one of the main problems caused by greenwashing, but Dalh (2010) argues that, according to critics, greenwashing can also potentially harm public health. Likewise, Sea Going Green (2020) warns against greenwashing and its effect on social and public health because "environmentalism has become a trend" and this trend may have "a dark side". Corporations trick people into believing their environmental claims, but people and their families are exposed to harmful toxins (Purehaven, 2023).

3.5.3 Malaysia Palm Oil

The company Malaysia Palm Oil advertised a television commercial in 2008 proposing itself in generic terms as eco-friendly; a voice-over stated "Malaysia Palm Oil. Its trees give life and help our planet breathe and give home to hundreds of species of flora and fauna. Malaysia Palm Oil. A gift from nature, a gift for life" (as cited by Friends of Earth, see https://friendsoftheearth.uk/nature/palm-oil-end-exploitation-big-business). Regulatory bodies and independent organizations such as Friends of the Earth Palm pointed out that Oil advertisements, like Rainforest Action Network, and palm oil plantations have harmful environmental impacts, like species extinction, pollution from the burning of land, and habitat loss. The U.K. Advertising Standards Authority nodded in agreement, concluded that the advertisement was a clear violation of advertising standards and ruled that Malaysia's oil production did not benefit the environment.

In addition, a report entitled *Malaysian Palm Oil: Green Gold or Green Wash* (2008) was published by Friends of the Earth International. It reveals the misleading claims advertised by the Malaysian palm oil lobby and finds it unsustainable because "oil palm plantations are expanded at the expense of tropical forests, contrary to the claims by the Malaysian palm oil lobby" (2008). It was also supported by Rainforest Action Network (2011), which found out that Malaysia's "sustainable" palm oil is just "pure greenwash" because it undermines RSPO's (Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil) assessment oil certification and creates its own

certification. For similar reasons, the Dutch energy corporation Shell was criticized in 2008 by the authorities for misleading the public about its project in Canada. Shell advertised its massive $10bn oil sands project in northern Canada and claimed its project was about a "sustainable energy source". However, the Advertising Standards Authority found that Shell's strip-mined method uses larger amounts of energy compared to normal oil operations (research shows that production of oil from tar sands could cause up to eight times more emissions compared to other normal oil production), and that is why it causes more carbon dioxide emissions, contrary to Shell's claim (The Guardian, 2008).

3.6 The Italian Legislation about Greenwashing: An Overview

Before 2014, there was no clear legislation to directly address greenwashing in Italy. Instead, the Antitrust Authority was (and still is) responsible for monitoring and investigating. If needed, it would sanction any misleading claims advertised by companies for selling their products or services. In the absence of any specific laws, greenwashing was thought to be a form of misleading advertising, and it was first mentioned in Italy through the European directive 84/450/EC in 1992. This directive was combined with the Italian Consumer Code in the chapter on unfair commercial practices (articles 20-23) through the legislative decree number 206 of September 6, 2005 (Righetto, 2020:34). The Advertising Self-Regulatory Institute published a new code of conduct in 2014 for businesses that included specific regulations about greenwashing. In the 58th edition of the Corporate Governance Code of Commercial Communication, article 12 proposed a first reference to the abuse of terms that recall environmental protection: Advertisements claiming or suggesting environmental or ecological benefits must rely on accurate, relevant, and scientifically proven information. These messages should indicate which specific aspects of the promoted product or activity the stated benefits pertain to (IAP, 2014, as cited in Righetto, 2020).

In 2018, the Italian National Unification Body issued UNI EN ISO 14026, the current regulation to address greenwashing. The UNI EN ISO 14026: 2018 norm puts forward the standard concepts and regulations for communication of the environmental impacts of products in business-to-business and business-to-consumer communication (as cited in Righetto, 2020:34). According to it, businesses should provide information in detail about labels, advertisements, and blogs, which should be readable and available to the customers.

It has already been mentioned that greenwashing can be falsification (see the "Sins of Greenwashing" categorized by TerraChoice, section 2.2), and Righetto believes that the regulations have been ineffective in Italy to counter greenwashing on the Italian and European markets. However, there have been a few cases of antitrust authority sanctions for greenwashing practices in Italy. One of the most famous cases is the case of Uni Diesel + for

its "green diesel" campaigns: Uni was fined 5 million euros for deceptive advertising. Authorities found that Uni's campaign to advertise its "green diesel" was misleading, contrary to its claim of a 4% reduction in consumption and 40% gaseous emissions (Righetto, 2020: 39). Another popular company, San Benedetto, was fined 70,000 euros in 2010 for claiming its plastic bottle was as a "friend of the environment" in its commercial messages. Later, another famous case in Italy is Sant'Anna, also a mineral water producer, which was fined 30,000 euros in 2012 for exaggerating its eco-friendly "Bio Bottle" in its advertisement. The company advertised exaggerated environmental values for its Bio Bottle than its actual values. Righetto (2020) argues that larger companies are often fined by the antitrust authority, while many other companies, comparatively smaller but equally involved in greenwashing, escape the law. However, sanctioning and fining corporations is one of the many ways to address greenwashing and its environmental impact on larger ecosystems. It is equally important (more so in some cases) to educate consumers, as consumers also need to fight against greenwashing and climate change. Commercial communication relies on images and, of course, language. If corporations use power and money in the form of funding and lobbying, climate change concerns may be exploited for commercial purposes, and it is expected that green consumerism will increase, despite consumer skepticism. This study does not categorically discourage the public from buying green products or services, as we must spread awareness and encourage the public to reduce their consumption habits and also change the way they talk about climate change. At the same time, customers should be provided with ample information about the products by corporations to distinguish green advertising from greenwashing. In this way, businesses that are deeply committed to the environment will be encouraged.

3.7 Ecolinguistics and Corporate Discourses

The climate crisis is often arguably regarded as the most significant challenge humanity has ever encountered (Cavicchioli et al., 2019). Given its seriousness, the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2022) highlights that climate change poses risks not only to humans but also to all living beings across the planet. In a similar vein, Fløttum (2017) emphasizes that, because climate change cannot be directly perceived through the senses, language becomes the primary means through which people can understand and gain knowledge about this intricate issue. Similarly, Fill (2001) points out the deep connection between discursive practices and environmental degradation. Thus, Cunningham et al. (2022:1) recommend studying environmental discourses to "reveal the variety of perceptions and to examine the progress in societal thinking about these impending challenges" (2022:1). I have already discussed how corporate discourse uses climate change in its commercial communication to sell products. In the following section, I will explore political and environmental activist

discourses. Understanding how these hegemonic discourses describe climate change is important because producers of both are major actors in society: they influence the public debate and shape public perception.

In this connection, Cunningham et al. (2022) created two language corpora, one for activists and one for politicians, to analyze hegemonic discourses from an ecolinguistic approach. The findings of their study reveal that activist discourses are anthropocentric in essence and primarily lay emphasis on the harmful effects of climate change on human beings. Activists also associate climate change with other issues of ecological and social justice. As compared to politicians, activists use strong language to talk about the harshness of climate change, its urgency and the need to call for action. On the other hand, politicians' discourse on climate change is influenced by finance, economy and industry, meaning politicians talk about climate change concerning its impacts on the economy, finance, industries, and politics, but there is hardly any link between climate change and humans in political discourse.

3.8 Polarization over Climate Change, Politics and Textbooks

With the rise of right-wing and far-right politics in Europe and beyond, academic attention to climate change communication has increased in the last few years, especially after the climate crisis has been framed as a security, economic and technical issue. These right-wing ideologies infiltrate into workplace communication, including media houses. Gruber (2025) argues that far-right ideologies often obstruct climate action in many different ways. In her book *Climate Politics in Populist Times: Climate Change Communication Strategies in Germany, Spain, and Austria* (2025), Gruber writes that global discourse on climate change has become "pervasive" in society. Mainstream political discourse in Europe on climate change indicates climate obstruction and denial, and therefore, there is a "stark contrast" between the intention of mainstream political powers to address the climate crisis and the "obstructionist rhetoric" used by their far-right political opponents. In such a polarized political environment, the media's partisanship also reflects similar trends. In this way, understanding media discourse can provide profound insights into how media houses and politicians frame the climate change narrative in Italy and Pakistan.

Politicians, activists, media, and corporate groups' discourses are particularly important when it comes to climate change. Every group is driven by its own agenda, ideology and benefits. Their ways of addressing the same environmental crisis are debated for the kind of discourse and rhetoric they use to talk about climate change and its impact on the economy and national security. For example, politicians have complex concerns about climate change; they link climate change with security, economics, terrorism, migration and corruption. Corpus Assisted Discourse (CAD) Analysis conducted by Cunningham et al. (2022) shows

that politicians are short-sighted when it comes the climate change discourse or climate action because their views are characterized by "short-term thinking tied to electoral success" (2022: 8), whereas activists are concerned with the long- term challenges and consequences. Their goal is to bring the public face-to-face with the reality and severity of climate change. However, hyper-environmental activism also invites counterarguments.

Politicians have typically been cautious about acting on climate change. Their actions have been slow, and this issue has divided politicians and their political agendas for a long time. Instead, they have polarized climate change (Wong-Parodi and Feygina, 2021): one recent example is the former President of the United States, Donald Trump, who repeatedly calls climate change a "hoax" and has been mocking its seriousness. He frequently uses hyperbolic irony in his speeches and tweets, in which he makes exaggerated or sarcastic statements about climate change to appeal to his supporters (Abbas, 2019).

Another world leader, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, said there is "no climate. We have changed. Our habits have changed. Our habits have got spoiled. Due to that, we have destroyed our entire environment", he made this statement while speaking to students and answering their questions via video conference at the Sacred Hearts University (India Today, 2014). PM Modi suggests that there is no climate change, but people have less tolerance and "spoiled" habits. To support his argument, he gives the example of elderly people who complain about winters and say they feel colder compared to the previous year(s):

> Climate change? Is this terminology correct? The reality is that in our family, some people are old… They say this time the weather is colder. Actually, the chill is not more. Due to their age, their tolerance has become less. That is why they feel colder, he concluded (India Today, 2014, NDTV, 2014 and The Guardian, 2014).

An article entitled "Is Narendra Modi a climate skeptic?" published by *The Guardian* (2014), questions PM Modi's environmental commitment and his views, which have changed over the years. According to the article, "India's PM used to call climate change action a moral duty, now he tells students 'Climate has not changed, we have changed'" (The Guardian, 2014). The ideological position of these groups is embedded in the language they use to talk about climate change. Therefore, it is essential to understand how these groups create discourse, what their underlying ideology is, and how they exploit language as a tool to form ideological frames. This knowledge can help audiences engage with their messages in a more critical and informed manner (Cunningham, 2022). MP Modi's speech is a classic example of literal denial (Cohen, 2001).

In his book *States of Denial: Knowing About Atrocities and Suffering*, Stanley Cohen (2001) identifies three types of denial commonly found in society. The first is *literal denial*, which involves outright rejection of facts — for instance, claiming that climate change is not happening. The second is *interpretive denial*, where actors acknowledge the facts but reinterpret them in ways that diminish their significance. An example of this would be arguing that rising CO_2 emissions are beneficial because they promote plant growth. The third type is *implicatory denial*, which occurs when individuals, institutions, or states accept the reality of climate change but fail to take appropriate action. They often obscure or defer responsibility despite recognizing its moral, psychological, or political weight (Gruber, 2025).

Another relevant example of interpretive denial appears is a Pakistani textbook Grade 5 English textbook lesson on floods, titled "Floods, Blessing in Disguise":

> The floods during the monsoon season in 2010 affected people in all the four provinces of Pakistan. Thousands of people lost their family members, relatives or friends. Thousands, in fact hundreds of thousands, become homeless. Huge areas of land were flooded, and the crops were destroyed. People lost cattle, chickens, and other sources of income. But people had faith in Allah. They did not give up hope. Soon, things started to change for the better for many of them.

> Floods were a blessing in disguise for Haseena Mai. She was a widow and a mother of three children. Before the floods, she worked as a maid in people's houses to feed her children. During the worst floods in Pakistan's history, Haseena lost her house and her job. Then, one of the non-governmental organisations (NGO) started work for the flood affected people gave her 50 hens with feed eggs. By the time water receded, the hens were big enough to lay eggs. Haseena sold the eggs, then she bought more feed and also more hens. She now owns a small poultry farm and earns around Rs. 30,000 each month. Haseena has become an inspiration for the men and women in her area.

> Haseena is not alone her success. There are others also who did not give up when faced with disaster. They kept up their hopes and fought for a better life even when everything was lost.

This textbook teaches young children to be positive and look at the bright side even when "everything is lost". The textbook indoctrinates a typical Pakistani view on natural and climate induced disasters that shifts focus from structural, policy and broader issues of climate change to personal struggles, sufferings, test and punishment from divine. This lesson is a textbook example of interpretive and implicatory denial (Cohen, 2001) under the disguise of moral education. This is the central interpretive denial in this lesson. A catastrophic event that displaced hundreds of thousands is reframed not as the outcome of governance failures, weak infrastructural, or climate change, but as a personal turning point of one individual whose success story is taught while thousands affected by floods are erased. This ideological framing obscures structural critique and teaches young children to be hopeful in disasters without critically engaging with any events. Another discursive strategy employed is the lexical choice

like "blessings", "did not give up hope" and "inspiration". This conveniently shifts focus trauma, loss, and emotional tone to individual resilience and "faith". It individualizes responsibility of disasters through indoctrination.

In addition, climate change is completely erased; this erasure is achieved without mentioning "climate change" or any causes of floods. From a CDA perspective, this is a classic example of backgrounding and erasure (van Dijk, 2000). The text silently excludes climate change drivers and treats disaster as a "natural" phenomenon and disconnects from long-term patterns. When state produced textbooks treat disasters in this way, the greatest number of students are not exposed to the systemic nature of crisis or to the idea that these floods could worsen due to the environmental degradation. Furthermore, it is important to emphasize that this textbook continues to be used in classrooms as of 2025. Notably, Haseena Mai's reported monthly income of PKR 30,000—framed as a success story in the lesson—is actually below the minimum wage for unskilled workers in Pakistan, which stands at PKR 37,000 in 2025.

More dangerously, discourse uses religion and moral uplift to shift attention as it says "But people had faith in Allah. They did not give up hope…". This discursive function uses religion to invoke a sense of divine test, not a climate crisis. This takes away the responsibility of state and human activity as it puts people's faith on the driving-seat. This standpoint mirrors implicatory denial as it acknowledges the harm caused by "disaster" but locates the appreciate response in patience, faith, resilience and moral strength rather than in action and policy.

Further to this, the discourse silencing and tokenism to frame Haseena Mai's story as a representative of flood victims as "She has become an inspiration…" to generalize and silence dissent. Such token success stories are framed to whitewash state responsibility. As mentioned earlier, an isolated "success" story aided by an "NGO" is framed as inspirational, but the majority remains unmentioned who remain displayed, probably unemployed. They are mentioned in numbers only. Millions affected during floods are treated as a statistic in the lesson which is designed to be taught to young children. This ideological indoctrination in curriculum socializes children into accepting environmental disaster as normal and unavoidable. It also conditions children to find "blessings" in disasters such as floods and thereby normalizing suffering and denying climate injustice.

The discursive employment of positive individualism and religious consolation and narrative erasure shifts attention away from structural and ecological realities. From my ecosophical perspective, this story undermines collective ecological responsibility and replaces critical engagement with passive endurance. Therefore, such eco-destructive urgently need to be challenged and reframed to promote eco-literacy, systemic awareness, and a commitment to climate justice.

3.9 Language, Climate Change and Hegemonic Discourses

Over the years, ecolinguistics has developed into an interdisciplinary field and has many strands. Thus, it is open to different frameworks, but there has always been a call for a unified framework which allows researchers to look at language itself from an ecological perspective, giving rise to a more organic way of understanding language itself (Abraham, 1996, as cited in Stibbe, 2012).

Ecolinguistics has questioned the traditional ways of talking about nature; it sees language as more than a tool to communicate. Stibbe (2012) and Steffenson and Fill (2014) argue that language shapes our worldviews around us because we depend on language to talk about our surroundings. Ecolinguists argue that the way we talk about nature influences our language as well as our relationship with nature. Finke's (2008:75, as cited in Steffenson and Fill, 2014) understanding of language is that it works as a "linking system between culture and nature" has been studied by ecolinguistics in many ways. In this connection, Muhlhausler's (1996) ecology of language is employed as a framework to study how people's use of language can contribute to the degradation of the natural environment.

Stibbe (2012:5) explores hegemonic discourses which contribute to environmentally harmful behaviour and says that these dominant discourses are so powerful and prevalent that it is difficult to avoid them. He believes politicians or media cannot stop these harmful discourses; these hegemonic discourses can only be curtailed by corporations, but businesses are trapped by these harmful discourses. He laments that corporations are also promoting the destructive stories we live by (2021). These hegemonic discourses do not consider anyone responsible but indicate that it is simply the way things are, e.g. growth is necessary, and it is in our best interests that we utilize nature for our benefit. Halliday (1990) has also discussed this "growth-is-good" ideology, showing that it is one of the most hegemonic ideologies and is always exploited by corporations.

Fairclough (2006) identifies various hegemonic and neoliberal discourses, which vie for dominance. These discourses are subsequently presented by the media in a manner that, according to Steffenson and Fill (2014:9), can have detrimental effects on the "survival and wellbeing of the human species as well as other species on Earth". These hegemonic discourses are prevalent in our society and influence our language and the way we describe nature. As stated earlier, Halliday (1990) was one of the first to discuss the hegemonic discourse of "unlimited growth". This rhetoric suggests that material growth is the only way to make our lives better and therefore to be happy, so we should consume more, while other discourses are neoliberal, meaning that they support the idea of a free market. According to this ideology, a free market is the way to solve our problems and make our lives better.

Stibbe (2012:12) proposes to challenge hegemonic discourses through language planning and offers a framework to understand how they work so that we could address them accordingly. He emphasizes the need to develop critiques of these environmentally harmful discourses so that we can seek to replace them with eco-friendly discourses. To achieve this goal, it is important to challenge the traditional ways of talking about nature and find better ways to talk about our environment and our fellow beings, as we are part of the same ecosystem that life depends on.

3.9.1 The Use of Active and Passive Voice in Political Discourse

A corpus analysis of political discourse shows that politicians tend to use passive voice while talking about climate change. They ignore the agents and distance themselves from the actions and their consequences. Language can influence our behaviours and attitudes; this detached approach to climate change would have undesirable effects on public behaviours towards environmental attitudes (Qirko, 2021). Findings show that political discourse overlooks the natural and social factors of organizational climate change in discourse. In fact, it shows that the politicians have lost control over climate change. Whereas activists use strong language to protest and call for immediate response to control and fight climate change (Cunningham et al., 2022:15). Their discourse is authoritative, e.g. Greta Thunberg (see BBC 2020, "Greta Thunberg: Who is she and what does she want?" Available from: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-49918719 and Naz et al., 2022).

3.9.2 Language and Its Influence

Cognitive psychology and linguistic research show that language influences thought and attitudes. Future decisions related to economy and health are influenced by grammatical tenses, depending on how these are used to indicate the future in various languages (Ayres et al., 2020), because the way different languages encode the future using grammatical tenses can influence how people make decisions about the future. Likewise, the understanding of other concepts like gender and cause and effect is influenced by the differences in how we understand language (Wolf and Holmes, 2011). According to the research on movements to de-gender pronouns and other lexical items in English (Bigler and Leaper, 2015), language can also potentially lead to differences, not only within languages but also differences in the way we think. Changing the ways we perceive gender can also change the way we talk about it, e.g. using gender-neutral pronouns can reduce gender bias and discrimination.

Finally, the way people talk about the future, gender and cause and effect can influence the way they perceive these concepts. More importantly, it does not happen in different languages only it can also happen within the same users of language.

3.9.3 Metaphors

The findings of a study conducted by Thibodeaux and Boroditsky (2011) reveal how metaphors can also influence thought. During an experiment, participants were provided with two different descriptions of the word "crime", described as a "beast" and as a "virus". Interestingly, participants put more emphasis on law enforcement to address a crime when the "beast" metaphor was used to describe a crime. This shows that the deliberate use of metaphors can shape people's thoughts.

3.9.4 Can Polysemous Words Influence Thought?

Vocabulary.com defines "polysemy" as "when a symbol, word or phrase means many different things, that is called polysemy" and Oxford Learner's Dictionary describes polysemous as "having more than one meaning". So, it can be argued that multiple-meaning words can create vagueness between language and thought. For instance, "Church", a polysemous word, can influence how people think, because "Church" can be used to refer to a building, *the church has burned down,* and *the church has lost many members*, as in the sense of organization (italics in original, Foraker and Murphy, 2012)

More examples include words like "berry", "seed" and "root", which differ in traditional and scientific canons (Laferrière, 1987). Larson (2011:12) argues that these words have complex interpretations because of their multiple meanings. A fine example is "animal," as it can be used in positive and negative senses, e.g. "a filthy animal" is used as negative and "thinking animal" is positively used to indicate quality (Bryson, 2001).

For this reason, scientific discourse on animals has been widely discussed because of its dry and detached approach to describing species in general. It is argued that such a detached tone of language can negatively influence behaviours towards animals. But informal and non-scientific language can also have a negative effect on the relationship between humans and other species. A good example in this regard is "germ", which is discussed in association with "filth and disease" in informal and non-scientific terms, often undermining its beneficial attributes (Rook and Stanford, 1998). Also, "bug," when used to describe a software error or traditionally used to indicate all insects associated with illness, can create confusion and "barriers" to the appreciation of these organisms (Liberman, 2005; Spring, 2006). Likewise, Chandrasena (2014) points out that "weed" can be a problematic word in one context, but it is given importance when used as a valued crop in another context.

Borkfelt (2011) argues that many critics have come to the conclusion that giving names to animals (pets included) can positively affect our relationship with animals and may change our behaviour towards them. The way we use words to describe animals can significantly influence our behaviour towards them. According to Small (2012), many researchers believe that using words like "cute" to describe species can encourage conservation effects.

Neotenous traits in animal descriptions elicit similar natural responses, and many languages appear to have specific terms for "cuteness". However, interestingly, definitions differ culturally: arguably, no word from any language can elicit the same reaction emotionally. For example, "cuteness" elicits "aww" reactions in the English language (Buckley, 2016). Can the word "cute" evoke the same emotional reaction in other languages and different contexts? Probably not, because language evolves, and meanings also change with time. Nittono (2016) adds that the concept of "kawaii" in the Japanese language (an equivalent to "cute") may also mean "pathetic" because it was historically described as something disgusting.

Accordingly, anthropomorphic animal descriptions can influence our attitude towards them. Like in commercial advertisements, anthropomorphizing animals and enabling them to possess human-like qualities can elicit conversation-related efforts (Qirko, 2021; Brown, 2010). However, it should be noted that the rendering of animals with anthropomorphized images and descriptions will have its consequences, e.g. expecting animals to have social capabilities which they do not have (Root et al., 2013). A consequential representation of animals in commercial and social advertising as if they possess human-like qualities is problematic and will, unfortunately, continue to negatively affect human and non-human relations. Specifically, predators are often anthropomorphized in negative ways, such as coyotes being described as "brazen" or "wily". However, it is feared that such attributions may result in a limited public understanding and engagement with conservation management (Alexander and Quinn, 2012).

Morris and Qirko (2020) propose that using kin terms for animals can also make us feel connected with the animals and have a positive impact on our actions to protect them. Morris and Qirko cite an example when changing a single word in a detailed description of a fictitious salamander, from little "swimmer" to little "sister", pleasantly affected survey participants' will, because people are often disinterested in environmental studies.

Boyd (1993:522-523) identifies many problems caused by linguistic "imprecision", e.g. polysemous words, and proposes being careful while using them. While addressing this problem, he contends that the solution is to make terms precise along with their specific meanings and, if necessary, in certain cases, omit the terms. This abandonment of terms has been suggested by many researchers, while linguists like Stibbe (2012 and 2021) do not endorse this solution. Simply because how many terms will we abandon? Not all terms have the same

meaning, and meanings differ culturally. So, simply abandoning terms or replacing them is not the solution. The problem lies within our ideologies, or in the stories we live by in Stibbe's words; thus, changing the words may not help in the future, but challenging the way we use language can make a difference. Learning the right way to use language to describe our environment and fellow beings will have a positive impact on the ecosystems that our lives depend on. For this reason, people in diverse fields must contribute to "get the language right", as warned by Armstrong (2002). And this, according to Qirko (2021:7), "seems like sensible advice more generally".

3.10 Development of Artificial Intelligence

With the rapid advent of AI models like ChatGPT, there is the possibility that destructive discourses and narratives will increase. Large Language Models (LLMs) will soon become one of the main sources of stories and discourses in commercial communications. Individuals and businesses are already using AI to create their advertisements, generate articles, and write blogs. AI-generated texts could potentially promote ecologically destructive discourses in bulk, and this would be one of the major environmental challenges in the future. In this connection, Vallego (2023) stresses the incorporation of linguistics and ecolinguistics into AI development to prevent the emergence of destructive ideologies. AI is inevitable, and incorporating ecolinguistics into AI development is a step forward to promote environmental values and resist hegemonic discourses. In addition to this, generating AI images and texts in developing countries is likely to present a Western or Northern-centric view of climate change because most AI software is developed in first-world countries and may not be equipped with the local environmental challenges of middle- and lower-income countries. This is why it can be maintained that using AI software to generate images and texts to promote green products will present a foreign perspective on climate change. For example, an intern at a Pakistani advertising agency is likely to get dying polar bears and melting glaciers stories from AI software if she takes assistance from AI to develop a concept for an environmentally friendly brand. Manvi et al. (2024) argue that Large Language Models are geographically biased. Therefore, such AI-driven Western tropes can risk reinforcing the very eco-destructive ideologies that shaped media coverage of the 2022 Pakistan floods. Pakistan's mainstream media often neglected climate explanations in favour of political and economic angles and left the public under-informed about root causes like deforestation and governance failures. If AI replicates these narrow frames—amplifying polar-bear issue rather than local flood narratives of loss, resilience, and accountability—it will further marginalize the voices of the most affected communities and promote consumerist "solutions" that do nothing to address systemic vulnerabilities. In this way, AI-generated "green" discourse could become another technology of selling and masking eco-destructive ideologies under a sustainability rhetoric

while failing to engage with the real stories we need to live by. Moreover, from a CDA perspective, this bias is at the level of social practice and reinforces a global ideology that equates "environmentalism" with polar-region imagery rather than with the lived experiences of flood-affected communities.

3.11 Climate Change Narratives in Media

Political and corporate ideologies are further propagated and endorsed by the media. The media is the source of primary information for people, and narratives in print and electronic media shape public discourse. According to Michael Mann (2023), a climate scientist and faculty at the Penn Centre for Science, Sustainability, and Media, a major challenge that journalists face is the "flooding of our airwaves, cable news, radio and social media feeds with disinformation" (Michael Mann in Penn Today, 2023) and most of it is funded by polluters. Stibbe (2015) argues that the way forward is to challenge hegemonic narratives and replace them with eco-friendly. i.e. positive narratives. Humans have inclined narratives since ancient times, and that is why we communicate our ideologies through narratives. However, this is exploited by corporations and politicians because their narratives are voiced and promoted through the media. To challenge this narrative in the rhetorical battle, Mann (2023) suggests that "we have to make use of allthe key tools for information exchange. And there is none more important than compelling, factual, and effective storytelling" (Penn Today, 2023).

3.11.1 Impact of Media Narrative on Everyday Life

The media is turning into an omnipresent force because it is considered the primary source of information/disinformation about a variety of issues and has a major influence on our lives. The media, funded by corporations, decides the narratives, makes people famous or infamous, introduces the latest fashion trends and promotes consumerism. From toothpaste to snacks before sleeping, everything is advertised in the media, which is part of our lives. Expectedly, it is also the main source of information about environmental issues. Ferrucci and Petersen (2018) argue that people are influenced by media narratives because the way media frames climate change action has an impact on their attitudes. Likewise, Elias (1990) believes that knowledge is gained from experiences and observations, but we also gain knowledge from media communication, and thus through media reports. So, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the media actively shapes our understanding of the issues in our surroundings, including environmental issues. How the media portrays the environmental crisis and constructs narratives about it greatly influences our responses to these issues, influencing the actions we take and the decisions we make in response. Concerned for similar reasons, Mann (2023) expresses his worries that climate change is spinning out of control because of "doomism" and

"doom and despair have been shown to lead disengagement". He continues: "Bad actors have turned to other tactics to keep us addicted to fossil fuels, fanned the flames of doomism, and discrediting solutions" (Penn Today, 2023). To understand more about hegemonic discourses in media narratives, the following sections present a detailed analysis of media narratives during floods in Pakistan and Italy.

3.11.2 National Media Narratives during Floods in Pakistan

Pakistan remains the 8th most vulnerable country on the global index of countries enduring most of the global climate crisis. Yet the country remains one of the smallest polluters, with less than 1% of the global carbon emission levels (Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 2022). Pakistan is a country where climate change and the issues related to it do not have adequate space in political or media narratives, regardless of its vulnerability. Political and economic instability coverage overshadows any issues related to the environment. Corporate actors, including powerful real estate, also play a significant role in shaping public opinion in Pakistan through media narratives. According to Imran Khan, the former Prime Minister, real estate is the "biggest mafia in Pakistan": he said this while addressing people in a video, and he added, "You can't imagine how powerful they are" (Dawn, 2022).

3.11.3 Narratives

During the Pakistani national media reporting of floods in 2022, different political and corporate narratives were dominant over climate change-related narratives. As stated earlier, the way the media presents issues influences our thinking and decisions. Media narratives, during flooding in Pakistan, undermined climate action and communication. It was noticed that the reporting on floods was quickly dropped, and staged reporting was preferred for political reasons. The media, as we will see in Chapter 4, was severely criticized for its ill-considered coverage of floods.

3.11.4 "Too little, too late"

A lack of proactive media reporting of floods was considered "too little too late", a larger portion of the population in Pakistan was timely informed. As per Kiran (Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 2022), the media narratives focused on the internal political rift and ignored flood-related news. The floods seemed to be marginalized in public discourse, resulting in less emphasis on flood-related reporting when compared to the coverage of political rallies.

3.11.5 Polarization over Climate Change in Pakistan

Pakistan is no different to India or America, where political leaders create confusion over climate change (see section 2.8). However, Pakistan's dynamics are a little different when it comes to polarization over climate change, for two reasons:

1. The media explicitly undermines climate change stories or gives them little space.
2. Pakistan does not have climate change deniers or their narratives.

Rather, there are climate change-ignorant individuals in Pakistan who do not think climate change *is* a problem. It is considered a foreign problem, which is unfortunately more dangerous. National media is a major contributor to constructing climate change denier narratives. The mediadiverted attention from the floods in 2010 and 2022 and have been serving as a tool to politicize climate change. For example, according to a news article entitled "Floods: India using water as a weapon against Pakistan" published by Business Recorder in August 2023, "The Modi regime is using water as a tool for spreading chaos in Pakistan as it diverts river courses during monsoons to release too much water toward Pakistan, causing floods and destruction" (Business Recorder and Kashmir Media Service, 2023).

3.11.6 Natural Calamities and Media Reporting

3.11.6.1 2005 Earthquake

The national media in Pakistan has a history of understating natural disasters since the 2005 earthquake. During natural disasters, it gives more space to dominant political narratives and diverts attention from natural calamities to controversial and ill-informed alleged issues of corruption and governance. For example, in October 2005, when an earthquake flattened towns and villages across Pakistan, killing early 80,000 people, the media was busy reporting political narratives which only focused on the country's former President Musharraf (VOA, 2009; Hassan, 2011).

3.11.6.2 The 2010 Floods

Similarly, another president of Pakistan, Asif Ali Zardari, had to face extreme criticism for his official trip to the West during the floods in 2010. Hassan (2011) argues that the untimely criticism of Zardari in the national media undermined climate action, increased public anger and affected rescue operations. Instead of focusing on flood relief operations, the media and political actors and analysts criticized the president of the country and the country's policies on Afghanistan. Mufti (2010) in her article entitled "Playing politics with Pakistan's floods relief"

informs that the devastation caused by the floods has been examined through the narratives of terrorism and corruption—topics frequently associated with Pakistan due to its image deficit. Mufti further adds that this shift in rhetoric diverts attention away from the floods themselves and the vulnerability of the affected population. Moreover, the narratives during the floods in 2010 could further be understood from the titles of the following news articles published in different international news channels:

1. Zardari returns home to face criticism over devastating floods (France24, 2010);
2. Pakistan Floods: army steps into breach as anger grows at Zardari (The Guardian, 2010);
3. Asif Ali Zardari denies Pakistan floods crisis bungling (The Guardian, 2010);
4. Pakistan's Zardari rejects criticism of foreign trip (Reuters, 2010);
5. Pakistan President Zardari Tries to ease flood anger (BBC, 2010);
6. Pakistani President comes home to flooded country (DW, 2010);
7. Zardari returns to flood-stricken Pakistan (CNN, 2010);
8. Pakistan's Zardari visits UK amid spat, floods (NBC, 2010);
9. Pakistan Leader Faces Fury over Floods (The New York Times, 2010);
10. Zardari returns to floods-stricken Pakistan to face mounting criticism (The Independent, 2010).

3.11.6.3 The 2022 Floods

Most recently, in 2022, the media chose to focus on the Asia Cup and politics during floods (Ghulam Mustafa, KTN, 2022). Because of this media attention to a cricket tournament, the tragic floods remained under-reported. Anti-government rhetoric in some media also contributed to the perception of corruption. It is evident that the media narrative during the floods in 2010 shaped public thinking and turned them against the government. The same was repeated in 2022.

Polarization shapes journalists' views and becomes a tool to set the political agenda through media reporting. Another media narrative during the floods was of alleged corruption, which turned a natural disaster into a political disaster, and this has an impact on relief operations and donations. For example, some TV channels reported that the nets and food items which came as donations from the US were sold at higher prices in the market. This was repeatedly discussed and reported, forcing U.S. State Department spokesperson Ned Price to respond in an official statement about the alleged corruption: "This is something we take very seriously, not only in Pakistan but anywhere around the world where American taxpayer dollars are implicated and when there is an urgent humanitarian interest at stake" (OCCRP, 2022). According to a news article published in The Diplomat (2022), entitled "Pakistan's Floods Are a Man-Made Disaster", the devastation in Pakistan wasn't solely caused by climate

change; it was also the result of corruption, ineffective governance, poor planning, and flawed water management systems. The author also criticizes Pakistan's climate change minister, Sherry Rehman, for avoiding discussions about her government's lack of preparedness and inadequate regulation of floodplains and blames her for changing the discourse. Meanwhile, the mainstream national media diverted attention to topics like sports, political controversies, and allegations of corruption.

Meanwhile, the official narrative of the government of Pakistan was that it was the wrongdoing of big polluters and Pakistan had been punished for their wrongdoings. This could be argued, but there is a high possibility that it portrayed climate change as a foreign problem in Pakistan, which could further weaken climate change action in the country and keep it out of public discourse.

3.12 Discourse and Climate Change in Italy

Italy also has challenges of sustainable management and climate change. According to the surveys conducted by Eurobarometer, Italy presents an important case study for two reasons:

1. The country has sustainable management challenges.
2. Italians are not concerned about climate change mitigation (as Cited in Ferrucci and Petersen, 2018).

9% of the participants from Italy consider climate change as a concerning crisis for the European Union (Special Eurobarometer, 2015, 435), but this data may be challenged because it is old, while new surveys, e.g. Climate Survey by the European Investment Bank (2021) indicate that 88% of Italians consider addressing climate change and its impacts to be the greatest challenge of the 21st century (p.2). The debate over the authenticity of climate change and its impact still remains political. This leads us to talk about the recent flooding in Italy in May 2023 and media narratives.

3.12.1 Floods in Italy

In May 2023, Emilia-Romagna, a northern Italian region, was hit by the worst floods. Ann Hughes (Euronews, 2023) writes that six months' worth of rain fell in 36 hours (about 1 and a half days), which caused more than 300 landslides and affected roads and fields. Italy was hit by the worst floods in a century, with the highest death toll from a flood in 100 years, The Guardian (2023) reported. Gushing waters displaced more than 36,000, claimed 14 lives and flooded streets, with the government proposing a one-billion-euro aid package to help affectees (ANSA, 2023).

3.12.2 Media Narratives

Unlike the media narratives during the floods in Pakistan, the media narrative in Italy was of devastation and resilience during the floods. The media narratives focused on the intensity and scale of floods, describing them as the worst in the country's history and highlighting the economic loss caused by the floods in billions of euros. In addition to the economic loss, the media gave coverage to the people who were affected by the floods: their stories of losing homes and businesses and family displacement were some of the main stories. The media gave special attention to the resilience of affectees and volunteers, who saved lives (La Repubblica, 2023).

The following are some examples of Italian media headlines during the floods:

1. Emilia-Romagna Floods: Death Toll Rises to 14 (Corriere della Sera).
2. Emilia-Romagna Floods: Thousands Evacuated as Region Battles Worst Flooding in History (The Guardian).
3. Emilia-Romagna Floods: Italy Declares State of Emergency as Region Reels from Devastating Floods (Euronews).
4. Emilia-Romagna Floods: Heroes Emerge as Rescue Workers Race Against Time to Save Lives (La Repubblica).
5. Emilia-Romagna Floods: Government Unveils €1 Billion Aid Package to Help Those Affected (ANSA).

3.12.3 Political Narratives

However, the environmental impact of the floods was contested and politicized, erupting into a debate, both online and offline, over the role of climate change. According to Euronews (2023), some scientists and activists find that the cause of such severe flooding was climate change because severe drought in Emilia-Romagna had "parched, compacted soil has reduced capacity to absorb water", whereas politicians believed "poor river maintenance was the culprit". The political narrative was of blame, polarization, and accusation, with the coalition government blaming the previous government for its failure to invest in flood prevention actions, whereas the opposition lashed out at the current governing coalition for ineffective response and inadequate preparedness. According to some experts, instead of debating the role of climate change, attention should be given to the real issue: "If a river bank breaks, it has nothing to do with climate change. It's a problem of maintenance", Paride Antolini, president of the Geological Society in Emilia-Romagna, told the Italian press. Blaming climate change for the destruction is overlooking the actual program, he concluded.

"Italy should invest in floodplains and dams rather than the football stadiums. This country

throws away opportunities. The money is there, and we don't spend it," Renzi, ex-prime minister, told the Italian press. Euronews (2023) reports that the former prime minister's government allocated €8.4 billion to the issue in 2014, but hardly any of this money was used before his [Renzi's] administration ended. In 2018, the funds were redirected into Italy's post-pandemic Economic Recovery Plan. On the other hand, Matteo Salvini, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Infrastructure and Transport, said that the "previous government did not invest enough in flood prevention. This is a disaster that could have been avoided". The blame game continued with the government and opposition blaming each other.

Based on these statements in the media, it can be argued that the political narratives of recent floods in Italy and Pakistan were polarized. The present study does not aim to defend or blame any individual, government official or political leader. However, it raises the concern that the polarization of the climate crisis can create difficulties in raising public awareness and having constructive debates in the media about the causes of climate change and the ways to prevent disasters in the future.

As compared to the local and international media narratives during the floods in Pakistan, the media narrative during the floods in Italy was comparatively positive and played a crucial role in raising awareness of the disaster and organizing support for the flood-affected. The media in Pakistan remained divided, failed to raise public awareness, and focused more on political rivalries and cricket matches, which took away the focus from flood affectees. Moreover, it swiftly reduced reporting time on the floods, which resulted in disinformation and confusion. The media narratives during the floods in Pakistan gave more importance to the alleged charges of corruption in flood relief funds, which was reflected in international media narratives (see https://www.occrp.org/en/daily/16888-us-responds-to-alleged-corruption-in-pakistan-s-flood-relief-efforts and https://thediplomat.com/2022/09/pakistans-floods-are-a-man-made-disaster/). The dynamics of Italy and Pakistan are quite different, but the impact of climate change on people remains the same: it affects everyone with no discrimination. Politicians do politics to stay relevant, but the role of the media and ethical reporting is the same. The readers are encouraged to look at some of the titles of articles and headlines published by local and international media about this natural disaster in Pakistan and Italy, cited in this study (see sections 2.11.7.2 and 2.12.2), as it can show quite clearly the contrasting nature of the media narratives of floods in the two countries.

Chapter 4: Discourse, Media and Climate Narratives

4. Introduction

The concept of climate change has grown increasingly complex as political, religious, and cultural narratives shape its meaning, giving it new perspectives and purposes. While science may explain the causes of climate change, it does not help people fully understand its meaning; climate change may mean many different things to different people (Hulme, 2009). In his book, *Why We Disagree About Climate Change* (2009), Hulme acknowledges the scientific consensus regarding the changes in the world's climate patterns, as presented by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). However, after studying climate change through linguistic, political, and religious lenses, he finds no clear consensus on what climate change means to people, as it holds different meanings for different individuals depending on their identity and contextual location. For instance, natural hazards and calamities in Pakistan are often interpreted as divine punishment for wrongdoing (Aslam et al., 2022), and the media echoed such narratives during the floods in Pakistan in 2010 and 2022. Many took to social media and interpreted the causes of floods based on their political and ideological affiliations. When there is so much chaos surrounding a disastrous event, it becomes the state and media's responsibility to address the causes of the tragedy. However, the state narratives in Pakistan seemed to be oblivious to local issues, as it constructed a narrative to frame floods as an imported problem imposed on Pakistanis. This situation allowed local politicians and media to attribute the floods to a rival neighbouring country, India, and accuse it of waging a "water war". This popular narrative was so ingrained in political media narratives that it led the High Commission of India in Islamabad to publicly address this issue and urge Pakistan's print and electronic media to stop the "negative propaganda" against India regarding the floods.

This demonstrates the polarization and complexity of climate change discourse in Pakistan. As a result, climate change is largely seen as a foreign issue in Pakistan, left for Western countries to address. Furthermore, Sherry Rehman, Minister of Climate Change, blamed wealthy nations for their polluting activities, which she claimed caused the worst flooding in Pakistan, demanding justice and reparations from richer countries to help Pakistan recover from its losses (Wibisono, 2023:146; The Guardian, 2022). According to the minister "rich polluters owe reparations to Pakistan" (The Atlantic, 2023). However, many internal and external commentators and observers blamed Pakistan's government for corruption and mismanagement (Khan and Siddiqui, United States Institute of Peace, 2023; OXFAM International, 2011).

The current chapter presents ecolinguistic perspectives and analyzes of media constructions of floods in Pakistan and Italy. It employs Critical Discourse Analysis to unpack underlying ideologies in narratives, resisting unecological ideologies embedded in media narratives. The analysis relies on 130 news articles collected from July 2022 and September 2022, published by *Dawn* and BBC about the massive floods that hit Pakistan. Launched by the founder of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, in British India in 1941, *Dawn* is the oldest newspaper in Pakistan and the largest English-language newspaper in the country. According to the BBC, *Dawn* is also considered Pakistan's most credible English language publication. This reputation for authenticity and credibility makes *Dawn* a suitable and reliable source for this study. Furthermore, *Dawn*'s international recognition enhances its role in shaping discourse and offers a unique local perspective on floods in Pakistan, complementing the foreign perspective provided by the BBC. To analyze the news representation of floods in Italy, providing a comparative perspective on these two events, 45 articles published by the BBC, DW, and ANSA (in English) between August and September 2023 were collected. In contrast, 130 articles were collected on the floods in Pakistan, as a significantly smaller number of English-language articles were available for the Italian floods. This difference in the size of the corpora is primarily due to the limited coverage of the Italian floods in English-language media, which posed a constraint. However, the focus of this study is on the comparability of the sources and narratives of floods rather than the size of the two corpora. It is also important to note that this research does not employ corpus linguistics or any other quantitative methods where the size of the datasets would be methodologically significant. Instead, the study adopts a qualitative approach and focuses on the narratives and linguistic strategies used in the articles to explore how floods are represented in national and international English-language media.

This chapter provides a detailed analysis of these news articles, identifying narratives of resistance, misery, helplessness, bravery, corruption and many more. In addition, it offers a comparative analysis of flood narratives in Pakistan and Italy, with particular emphasis on narratives and ideologies. Through the lens of ecolinguistics and critical discourse analysis, this study explores how the media employ linguistic choices and framing to construct contrasting narratives around the same phenomenon in two distinct cultural contexts. This approach highlights thematic differences and reveals how language and discourse can influence public perception of natural disasters globally. Following Stibbe's ecolinguistic approach, this chapter also emphasizes positive stories, using Positive Discourse Analysis judged against a personal ecosophy (see section 2.9.3.2). In addition to a detailed examination of the linguistic aspects of news articles, this study exemplifies some of the common framings of floods in media narratives. It also argues how media narratives can shape public perception towards climate change and emphasizes the role language can play in representing marginalized communities. My study does not explain natural disasters from a scientific viewpoint, but it

focuses on the way people, including medical professionals and policymakers, talk about natural disasters and how their thoughts are represented through the media to set narratives around natural disasters which ultimately influence the local people and their thoughts about natural disasters such as floods.

To conduct this study, the following research questions were used as guiding forces to understand underlying ideologies, language use and agenda-based reporting:

a. How do the media narratives about floods differ in language use about floods in Pakistan from Italy, specifically in terms of passivisation, framing and metaphors?

b. What unecological ideologies are present in media narratives about floods, and how can they influence public behaviour and perception of climate change?

c. How do media narratives about the floods in Pakistan and Italy reinforce hegemonic ideologies to undermine environmental responsibility and climate change?

4.1.1 Contextual Overview of Floods in Pakistan

In the summer of 2022, between July and August, Pakistan was faced with unprecedented rains that claimed 1,700 lives, one-third of whom were children and affected 33 million people. Following the "monsoon on steroids", as described by the UN Secretary General (see section 4.2.17.), one-third of the country was under water, displacing almost 8 million people countrywide (NDMA, 2022). During this tragic summer, torrential rains and urban flash flooding resulted in an uncontrollable disaster unleashed on a massive scale that pushed the country at least ten years into the past regarding its financial and agricultural situation. According to the Post-Disaster Need Assessment (PDNA) report, following the impact of the floods, poverty in Pakistan is likely to increase by 3.7 to 4%, forcing between 8.4 and 9.1 million Pakistanis into poverty. Moreover, 94 districts were declared "calamity-hit" by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) in October 2022. This accounts for more than half of all districts in Pakistan, particularly in the provinces of Sindh, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). These are among the 25 poorest and most underdeveloped districts in Pakistan, and the floods hit 19 of these deprived provinces, exposing vulnerable communities in these poverty-stricken parts of the country.
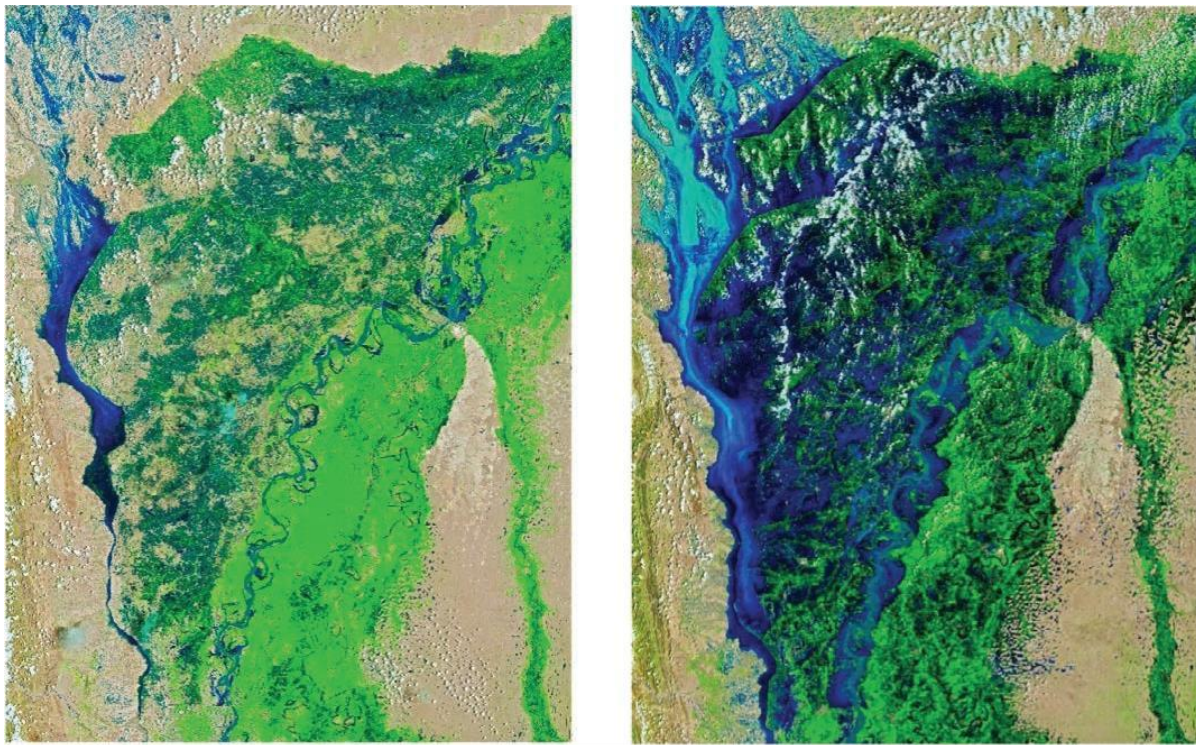
Figure 7: The extent of floods between August 4 and 28, 2022. Source: NASA Earth Observatory images by Joshua Stevens, using Landsat data from the US Geological Survey and VIIRS data from NASA EOSDIS LANCE, GIBS/Worldview, and the Joint Polar Satellite System.

Floods are not something that Pakistanis are unfamiliar with. Before the 2022 floods, Pakistan went through disastrous "super floods" in 2010. According to the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UNHabitat) country report published in 2023, Pakistan is ranked as the 5th most vulnerable country to climate change in the world according to the Global Climate Risk Index. This also means that Pakistan is likely to experience more frequent extreme weather events like the deadliest floods in 2022. There have been indications that the country has been experiencing changing weather patterns, increasing temperatures, droughts, sea level rise, glacial melts, glacial lake outburst flooding and loss of biodiversity (Government of Pakistan, Nationally Determined Contributions, 2021).

4.2 Socio-Historical Background of Flood Narratives

In the summer of 2022, Pakistan experienced its wettest August since 1961. The Sindh and Balochistan provinces were hotspots of unprecedented rains, floods, droughts and seawater intrusion. The impacts of climate change have increasingly affected human and economic development, and they are likely to continue in the future. According to the Pakistan Meteorological Department (2022), research on attribution indicates that the five-day maximum rainfall, which is a measure of heavy precipitation, of Sindh and Balochistan, was around 75% more intense than it should have been if the climate had not warmed by 1.2 °C. Pakistan had already been reeling from a crippling economy, political instability, internal security threats from terror outfits like TTP (Tahreek and Taliban Pakistan), an energy crisis

and the impacts of COVID-19. The 2022 flooding further exposed the country's internal structural and systematic challenges, including a lack of infrastructure, structural and institutional manipulation and inequalities. Ineffective and limited capacity to manage natural hazards has also been significantly exposed, allowing for work reform and preparing for future hazards. Climate-induced floods also damaged schools in Pakistan, forcing children out of school for years. Data from the provincial Education Departments of the respective provinces show that more than 30,389 schools were partially damaged or destroyed during the floods: 19,808 schools in Sindh, 7,439 in Balochistan, and 2,096 in Punjab. In addition, more than 5,492 schools were used to shelter flood victims nationwide (VSO, 2022). This means schools for more than 2 million children in Pakistan were inaccessible after the flooding hit the poorest parts of the country (UNICEF, 2023). Children and women were forced out of schools and homes and were forced to take shelter. Human Rights Watch (2022) notes that at least 650,000 pregnant women and girls were also affected by the severe flooding, exposing more than 5.4 million Pakistanis to rely on contaminated water from ponds and wells.

Figure 8: Official statistics of the losses caused by the floods in 2022.

Pakistan floods situation report

1,100+ Deaths
1,600+ Injured

325,000 Houses destroyed
733,000 Houses damaged

735,000 Livestock lost

2 million Acres of crops affected

Getty Images

Source: Pakistan Government, UN, 30 Aug 2022

BBC

The extent and scale of massive flooding were unimaginable by most in the country, including officials.

Figure 9: A comparison between the scale of floods in Pakistan the size of the state of Colorado 2022.
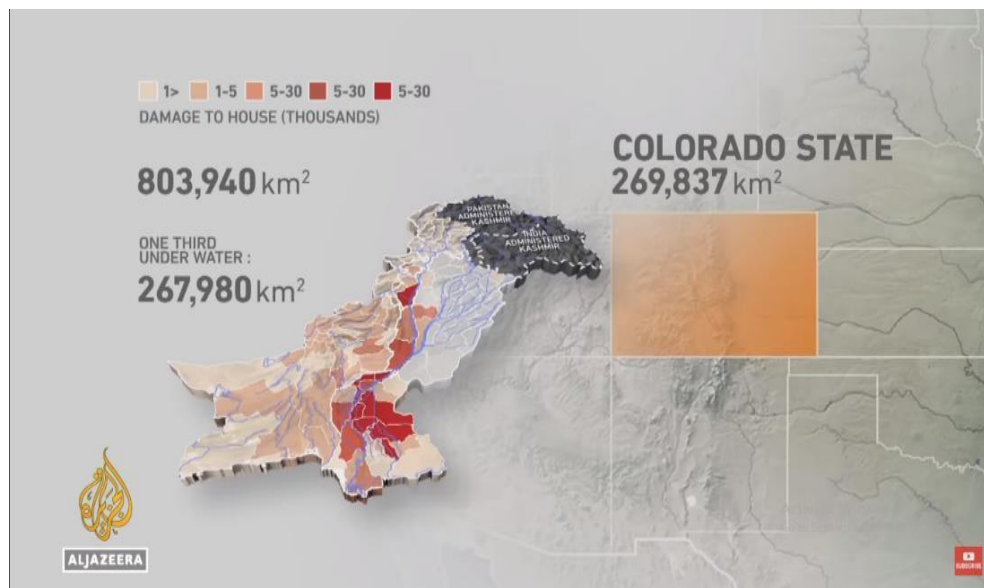
Source: the government of Pakistan in the Al Jazeera documentary

During such a massive calamity, when the country needed an immediate unified national response, political voices within Pakistan remained divided, minimizing the scale of the floods and their impact on the people. The floods were politicized, and mainstream national media diverted attention from the floods and covered different political and sports-related news, using ideologically structured media narratives. Against this background, the chapter presents an analysis of the competing constructions of floods in media narratives in Pakistan in 2022 from an ecolinguistic perspective, marginalization of local communities and a brief overview of water politics. A comparison with a similar event affecting Italy in 2023 and 2024 is also presented in section 4.4.

4.2.1 A Great Deluge: Balochistan

Balochistan is Pakistan's largest yet poorest province. With the fewest seats in the National Assembly of Pakistan, the province remains absent from the national dialogue and state narratives. The situation in Balochistan has worsened in recent years, with increasing insurgency (Tanner, 2019), a lack of political representation, and bad governance. When the floods hit the province, 70% of Balochistan's population was affected, the largest number of people in the country (The Independent, 2022). People in Balochistan strongly feel that they are deliberately ignored and that the people living on the mainland do not realize how serious their grievances are. A teenage activist from Balochistan, Yusuf Baluch, told the BBC (2022) that structural inequalities in Pakistan are making life difficult for people in Balochistan. He believes that "People living in cities and from more privileged backgrounds are the least affected by the flooding".

While talking about the exploitation of local resources by corporations and people's reactions, he explains:

> People have the right to be angry. Companies are still extracting fossil fuels from Balochistan, but people there have just lost their homes and have no food or shelter (2 Sept. 2022).

Yusuf's account of the situation in Balochistan speaks volumes. While the Pakistani state and corporate mainstream media often highlight the beauty of Gwadar and Balochistan's virgin beaches to promote tourism in the province, Balochistan's majority population, already marginalized and underrepresented, feels neglected and exploited. This marginalization hinders meaningful efforts to address climate change challenges in the region. To gain insights into floodwater management, the role of local communities in water management and water politics in South Asia, I conducted a remote interview on Microsoft Teams with Prof. Daanish Mustafa [i] on 26 September 2024. Prof. Mustafa, a professor of critical geography at King's College London, echoed similar concerns about Balochistan and the impact of the floods. He pointed out that Baloch's primary concern is the safety of their family and the protection of their rights. He questioned the effectiveness of teaching climate change in the Balochi language, suggesting it would not lead to any substantial change in their situation. "Even if all Baloch unanimously declared that the floods were caused by climate change, would it improve their circumstances?" he asked. Professor Daanish advocated equal treatment and rights for marginalized communities and called for their inclusion in discussions on ecological issues. He emphasized the importance of drawing on their local ecological knowledge to develop a sustainable water management policy to mitigate the effects of the floods. "We cannot fight or control the floods. We must shift away from the mentality of controlling water. This colonial approach needs to change. The authorities need to learn how to effectively manage floods", he concluded (02 Sept. 2024).

As it is in the essence of ecolinguistics and of the principles adopted in the ecosophy of the present study, and endorsed by Professor Daanish, mentalities need to change. Instead of controlling nature, we need to learn ways to manage the floods. Corporate interests will simply go on using climate change to control nature and exploit it, for example, through so-called "green" infrastructure and "green" initiatives: this, however, is not genuine environmentalism, but greenwashing. Additionally, the political construction of the floods to set a political agenda is likely to continue in the future, especially in South Asia, and the media are going to weaponize their discourse by arming their journalism with war terminology (see sections 4.2.19, 4.2.22 and 4.4.11). Besides many other structural reforms, Pakistan will also need to address the powerful elite control of the media, resources and system in general. Nisar Khokhar, a local Sindhi journalist whom I interviewed on 22 August 2024 in Hyderabad Sindh, advocated equal and fair treatment of all citizens of Pakistan and urged the government to

build the capacity to support poor, marginalized religious and ethnic minorities and ensure their protection and rights. In addition, the media should also act as the voice of vulnerable people, especially from rural and underdeveloped parts of the country (Hyderabad, 2024). Vulnerable communities often suffer more in Pakistan due to climate change, deforestation and land grabbing, e.g. in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province. To learn more about the effects of the timber mafia on the local communities in KP, I sent a few questions via email to an Assistant Professor of Geography, Kamal Hassan, who has been working on the effects of deforestation on minorities in KP. The full text of Dr. Hassan's interview is included in the Appendix.

4.2.2 Stereotypes and Linguistic Divide in Sindh through Media Rhetoric

Karachi, the first capital of Pakistan until 1956, used to be a Sindhi and Hindu majority city of the United India before partition. According to *The New Yorker*'s article (22 Jun. 2015) entitled "The Bloody Legacy of Indian Partition", there was a 47.6% Hindu (all Sindhis) population in Karachi in 1941. As of 2020, the provincial capital of the Sindh province has only 10% Sindhi- speaking population, followed by 45% of the Urdu-speaking population whereas the second major ethnic group is Pashtun (25%), Punjabis (10%) while the rest 10% are Baloch, Kashmiris, and migrants from Afghanistan, Myanmar and Bangladesh (Dawn, 2020). Verkaaik (2016) writes that the newly formed Muhajir Qaumi Movement (MQM), now called the Muttahida Qaumi Movement, began its political journey by shaping a strong linguistic and ethnic identity for former migrants from India (still known in Pakistan as Muhajirs). It is worth mentioning that the term "Muhajir" comes from the hijra, or Islamic migration and symbolizes Muslims joining a larger religious community. In the early years after Pakistan's creation, the term was mainly used to encourage sympathy and harmony between migrants and local communities. However, over time, it became closely tied to a political identity that stood in strong opposition to other ethnic groups like Sindhis and Pashtuns. Politicians in Karachi use xenophobic framing to spread hatred through political rhetoric. For example, the MQM convener Khalid Siddiqui, while addressing a political gathering in 2021, warned that the domination of the "Sindhi-speaking, rural Pakistan People's Party" will not be acceptable anymore in Karachi. Siddiqui demanded Karachi be declared as a separate province from the rest of rural Sindh, as he believed it was the only way to prevent the "total destruction of Karachi".

4.2.3 Karachi *and* Sindh*: Karachiites* and Linguistic Divides

In continuation of this polarization, mainstream media often frames Karachi as a separate city from rural Sindh by using terms like *Karachi **and** Sindh* (The Express Tribune, 2020). Similarly, the residents of Karachi identify themselves as *Karachiites* – people who were born and raised in Karachi. They, the Urdu-speaking community, also known as Muhajir, use *Karachiites* to separate themselves from the other citizens who live and work in Karachi. This identity of *Karachiites* is linguistic and ethnic, and oftentimes politically used. *Karachiites* developed this counter-identity to separate the Urdu-speaking Muhajir community from Sindhis and Sindh. In Pakistan, anyone who lives in Sindh is known as Sindhi: similarly, anyone who lives in Punjab is known as Punjabi, regardless of what language they speak. This is purely a provincial identity. To avoid the Sindhi tag or any association with the province of Sindh, *Karachiites* formed this urban linguistic identity to be better known as the inhabitants of Karachi, not Sindh, which they consider rural and uneducated. Besides this, Karachi and Sindh framing, mainstream media and politicians from Karachi use *Interior Sindh* to refer to other cities of the Sindh province. This frames Karachi and Hyderabad (another Muhajir Urdu-speaking majority city) as the mainland and urban part of the country, again to emphasize their separation from the Interior Sindh. Interestingly, this idea of division is not formed based on the geography of Sindh as it may sound, rather it is mainly framed to stand aloof from the rest of the Sindh province and the Sindhi identity.

Mainstream national media often reinforces the idea of Karachi as a separate, urban entity distinct from Sindh. This portrayal is frequently criticized by Sindhi nationalists, who perceive it as a deliberate discursive strategy by the dominant media to normalize Karachi's separation from Sindh on politically motivated ethnic and linguistic grounds. This bias is evident in *Dawn's* article, "Flood victims feel neglected by govt, looked after by NGOs at camps in Karachi*"* (31 Aug. 2022), which describes the flood victims' relief camp as a "temporary town" set up on the outskirts of Karachi's urban beauty, subtly framing the victims as outsiders encroaching upon the city's aesthetic. The article further endorses stereotypes through its portrayal of makeshift living conditions in schools and colleges repurposed as relief camps. The stereotypical description of schools and colleges used as relief camps constructs a picture of flood victims as aliens who dry their ralli[8] "over the boundary walls" while "verandah grilles are used to hang children's clothing. Clotheslines tied from grille to grille and pillar to pillar are depicted as filled with large cotton shalwars and shirts drying out in the open"

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[8] Ralli quilts are traditional quilts hand-made by women from the rural areas of Sindh. Ralli is a hand-made (it takes three to four months to make one ralli) gift for weddings and are considered a precious textile piece in the dowry collection for women. Ralli quilts are used as bedsheets and are often proudly preserved by mothers for their young daughters as marriage gifts and for guests.

(Dawn, 2022). These descriptions contribute to a discourse that frames flood victims as disrupting Karachi's urban space while diverting attention from systemic issues such as state neglect and structural inequalities. By focusing on domestic activities like drying clothes, the narrative prioritizes aesthetic order over the socio-political context of the victims' suffering. This reflects how dominant narratives construct and sustain inequalities, a central concern of my theoretical framework.

Since the early 1980s, the residents of Karachi have often complained about the presence of other ethnic groups from smaller cities and rural Pakistan in Karachi. They usually refer to Sindhis and other linguistic groups as *Ghair Mukami* (outsiders/ non-residents of Karachi). *Dawn's* description of the flood relief camp suggests this idea. It frames the flood victims' presence in Karachi as outsiders who have taken shelter in the city's schools and colleges. This othering of ethnic groups as outsiders often has political motivations behind it and has resulted in tensions amongst the citizens (Verkaaik, 2016). The city has remained divided on an ethnic and political basis for more than a decade and has been used as a "battleground" for violence. Yacoobali (1996) presents a detailed analysis of how this city has had ethnic violence for years. The discourse of ethnicity in Karachi often naturalizes polarities between "us" and "them", which usually leads to violence. One example of this riots that erupted following the death of a Muhajir student in a bus accident. Many people, including politicians, framed this accident as an act of ethnic violence and blamed the reckless driving habits of Pashtun bus drivers. Recently settled in Karachi, the Pashtun had taken control of the transport business. Later in 2010, more than 200 people were killed when an MP, Raza Haider from Muttahida Qaumi Movement (formerly known as the National Movement for Refugees, now as the United National Movement), was killed in a gangland-style killing in Karachi. In this environment, *Dawn's* description of relief camps for flood victims who mainly came from the rural areas of Sindh to take shelter in Karachi can promote this discourse of othering. The unnecessary emphasis on the ethnicity of flood victims in *Dawn's* description exaggerates stereotypes and may lead to the othering of flood victims. For instance, the following sentence from an article frames the Sindhis in a negative light: "Some local city folk, who speak Sindhi, also try to get inside the school building for free meals, but the guard turns them away" (Dawn, 2022). This portrayal labels one community as exploitative, relying on free resources rather than contributing meaningfully.

The dominant Pakistani mainstream media normalizes stereotypes attached to some ethnic groups like Sindhis and Baloch. The portrayal of the Sindhis in mainstream Urdu media has been controversial in Pakistan. For example, Anwar Maqsood's television show for Urdu media entitled "Aik Sindhi Ka Interview" (A Sindhi's Interview), aired in 2018, stereotypically presents Sindhis. In this episode, as an interviewer, Maqsood asks what his Sindhi interviewee has for a living and, in response, he says, "Nothing, I don't need to work because I am Sindhi".

This implies that Sindhis do not work because they are lazy and not hard-working. However, it is not highlighted that Sindhis typically grow their vegetables, own cattle and trade locally, which is their main source of income. Unlike urban people, villagers do not "work" in the conventional sense of formal employment, due to their self-sustaining practices. Additionally, this episode presents a political and racist description of Sindhis who enjoy lavish lifestyles, engage in different vices, and sometimes even die to avoid paying debts. It is important to note that death here refers to another harmful stereotype, which suggests that Sindhis fake their death to avoid paying debts. This portrayal not only reinforces negative stereotypes but also trivializes and stigmatizes an entire community. The episode calls the Sindhis *jahil* (illiterate) and lazy, endorsing these ethnic stereotypes. Likewise, singer Saif Samejo, in an interview with *The Express Tribune*, highlighted the systematic portrayal of the Sindhis and other ethnic groups in Urdu mainstream media and Anwar Maqsood's Loose Talk[9] in a negative light:

> They (Anwar Maqsood and Moeen Akhtar) had episodes where Moeen Akhtar appeared as a Bengali or Pashtun. It's nothing new and I have been speaking out about this for years, but no one cares. Our media and films always showed a bandit wearing an Ajrak[ii], which is a sign of ultimate respect in our culture. The Sindhis even welcomed immigrants during the time of Partition with an Ajrak. Diversity is the strength of Sindh, which is the only diverse region in Pakistan (The Express Tribune, 2018).

I agree with Saif Samejo in describing Sindh as the most diverse region of Pakistan. Sindh has deep roots in pluralism and secularism, dating back to the Indus Valley Civilization[iii]. It is also the land of Sufi saints and poets, such as Shah Abdul Latif, who championed peace, harmony, and coexistence (The Nation, 2024). Sindhi culture is celebrated for its secular ethos, religious diversity, and tolerance. Despite the rise of extremism in other parts of the country, Sindhi Muslims join Sindhi Hindus in celebrating Hindu festivals like Diwali, reflecting a spirit of unity. Sindh is also home to Pakistan's largest Bengali and Bihari communities, as well as its largest Hindu population in Umarkot city. Umarkot (formerly known as Amarkot, named after its non-Muslim heritage before being renamed Umarkot) is the only Hindu-majority city in Pakistan and is in Sindh.

Ali Gul Pir, another comedian, also expressed similar views and argued that Maqsood should not have promoted these generalizations about the Sindhis. Ali further feared that labelling the Sindhis as lazy would reinforce stereotypes and stigmatization in society. "There is a way to go about criticizing society or people. But what concerns me is that nobody else in his team saw the problem in this video. Why should a renowned artist reinforce the same

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[9] A television comedy-show in which Anwar Maqsood (host) interviews Moeen Akhtar (guest) who dons various personalities

stereotypical ideas and divide people when we are going past the ethnic and sectarian conflicts here?" he concluded, in *The Express Tribune* (2018).

Mainstream media treat all Sindhis as supporters of the Pakistan People's Party and selectively highlight negative news from Sindh. *Dawn* (22 Aug. 2022) presents an extreme political narrative of the floods that questions the performance of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) provincial government in the Sindh province and highlights "incompetence and bad governance, which turned the situation more disastrous", while also generously touching on the "devastation unleashed by downpours and flooding". Besides framing nature as an antagonist force that unleashes downpours and causes devastation, *Dawn* amplifies the political divide while building on another extreme, by quoting the MQM party that has been critical of the PPP and links its bad governance with Sindhi linguistic and ethnic identity. According to the MQM, "The situation in Sindh is more critical due to the bad governance of the PPP. The civil administration in Sindh has badly failed, and the people have been left at the mercy of donor organizations and charities. The situation calls for greater effort with sincerity and honesty" (Dawn, 2022). From an ecolinguistics perspective, this narrative may foreground a political power struggle rather than focusing on the environmental factors and diverting attention from broader climate change issues to local power struggles. However, some politicians, regardless of their ethnicity, have been controversial and rightly criticized for their actions during national emergencies. One relevant example is discussed in the following section.

4.2.4 Manzoor Wassan's Venice in Flooded Sindh and Photo Sessions

Pakistani politicians have been blamed for public stunts in times of crisis, such as COVID-19 and the floods. Pervez Hoodbhoy, a nuclear physicist and social activist, compared former President Zardari's "vacations in Europe" with Manzoor Wassan's "tour" of the flood-affected areas in Khairpur, Sindh.

Manzoor Wassan, a former minister for Home Affairs of the Sindh province and member of Zardari's PPP (Pakistan People's Party) visited flood-affected areas in interior Sindh and made controversial remarks during his interview with Geo News, where he compared the flood situation to Venice, Italy recalling his vacations in Venice. In the interview, Wassan is seen on a boat with reporters, recalling how the scene in front of him reminds him of his trip to this Italian city:

> You can see for yourself – if you've ever been to Italy, this is Venice's scenery, the way there are villages, houses submerged in water. The same kind [I saw] when I had visited Venice, Manzoor Wassan (Geo News, 2022).

Former home minister Sindh's remarks were called "tone-deafening" by the media and social

media users. A social media user tweeted, "Meet Mr. Manzoor Wassan Sahab, who is in love with Venice, Northern Italy's top tourist attraction. After horrible destruction from rains and floods in Sindh, he has found similar, unique, magical and spectacular scenery in Khairpur creative genius explains here" (Dawn, 2022). When politicians make careless remarks while talking about serious devastations such as the floods in Sindh, it indicates the gap between people and the politicians who are elected to represent them and raise their voice for their cause. Their interactions with the victims are seen from a sarcastic viewpoint. For example, another social media user said, "The poor people affected by floods have no idea that Manzoor Wassan is not here for help but to tour Venice" (Dawn, 2022). Pervez Hoodbhoy similarly argued that politicians are at fault for these situations because they prefer "cheap showbiz and bash[ing] each other instead of staying with the people affected and helping with the emergency relief". He then criticized the political leadership for their inability to reach meaningful results and for engaging in mere symbolic activities for public attention in a relief circus show, according to Hoodbhoy, including "star performers included Shahbaz Sharif on the high trapeze with Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari and Murad Ali Shah swinging just below" (Dawn, 3 Sept. 2022). There has been a series of events like these when the politicians in Pakistan have been called out for engaging the victims for media attention instead of addressing the actual issues. Owing to this reason, a flood victim's family turned down the compensation provided by the government in 2014. *Dawn's* article (11 Sept. 2014) entitled "Flood Victim's Family Returns Down Compensation Money" reported that the family did not accept compensation money from the government in the Punjab province, condemning the government's lack of sympathy and inability to recover the dead bodies of the deceased who had drowned in flash floods in Punjab. Insensitive political stunts greatly harm genuine relief efforts and contribute to constructing negative narratives and division. This attitude also reflects a missed opportunity, as a crisis could allow the nation to collectively make efforts and stand in solidarity and unity with fellow countrymen.

4.2.5 "I Am Happy with Whatever You Have Provided Me. Thank You"

Mainstream media narratives do not usually consider stories from smaller cities and rural areas worthy of attention. Minority groups in Pakistan remain unheard of until they go to the large cities to demand their rights. In some cases, religious and ethnic minorities, including the urban poor, are forced to leave their homes due to security, colonial state laws and unemployment (Human Rights Watch, 2024). The Land Acquisition Act of 1894 allows the government to grab public land for the so-called public interest. Governments in Pakistan have often used this law to displace local populations to develop private housing societies for the rich and elites. DHA (Defence Housing Authorities), Pakistan's largest urban property developer run by the military, has often benefited from this Land Acquisition law. In recent years, minorities have

been forced to migrate when they are affected by natural disasters and calamities. Particularly, marginalized groups from undeveloped and smaller cities are forced to migrate to larger cities like Karachi, Hyderabad, and Lahore, where they can attract the attention of the authorities and take shelter. However, they are often described as outsiders and face discrimination. This could be observed, for example, during the 2010 floods, when a member of the provincial assembly (Punjab) said, while briefing the national and international media, that aid workers were being "attacked" by desperate and "starving" flood victims (BBC, 2010). Flood survivors are mainly from rural areas and similar cities in Pakistan, so they are an easy target for this kind of stigmatizing stereotyping.

4.2.6 "Living Here is Miserable. Our Self-respect is at Stake"

The unbearable conditions and lack of facilities in the relief camps are not emphasized in media narratives. Flood survivors are often relocated to government schools and remain unattended for weeks. Due to these deteriorating conditions, Fazal Malik (one of the flood victims living in the relief camp) told AFP that the camp where his family were staying was overcrowded with nearly 2,500 people (30 Aug. 2022). The emotional and psychological experience of living in relief camps is not emphasized. Many, like Fazal, feel insulted by the inhumane treatment of their families and the impossibility of going back to their homes. As argued in this study, meagre political events occupy screens for hours in Pakistan, while more serious issues, like living in relief camps, often go unnoticed and unreported. Flood survivors often appear in the background when an important politician or a diplomat visit flooded areas, and they are even considered ungrateful outsiders in the relief camps in urban areas. A similar framing of flood survivors is evident in *Dawn's* (2022) articles. Flood survivors are described as "these people", who have come to the cities with their ungrateful behaviours and unlimited needs. For instance, flood relief workers in Karachi expressed frustration over the ingratitude of flood victims. One worker complained about how difficult it was to "please" those in the relief camps. A mother, who overheard this conversation between the media and relief workers, responded with "I am happy with whatever you have provided me. Thank you". This reflects a stereotype that the Sindhis from rural areas are hard to "please". Another aid worker similarly remarked that they had been doing everything they could, but flood victims still wanted more and felt "they are not looked after properly". Framing flood victims as ungrateful while underpinning their ethnicity promotes stereotypes and may turn citizens alien to their behaviours and needs. In *Dawn's* article entitled "Flood victims feel neglected by govt, looked after by NGOs at campsin Karachi (31 Aug. 2022), it is again indicated that flood victims are ungrateful and do not appreciate the food that they are given. As one flood victim says, "They bring us warm food, which we cannot digest. It is too spicy, and it makes our children sick. We want to go back, but we can't. So, it would be helpful if they provided us with rations, oil and tea instead of

biryani [iv] so that we can cook our own food," while the aid worker argues that they had been providing breakfast and dinners but the "people (implied to be ungrateful) want more… and they are not even pleased to see the gifts people donate for them". The same article does not emphasize the challenges, emotional difficulty and traumatic experience of leaving one's home, city and everything else behind. Like typically dominant narratives, *Dawn's* article presents an urban-centric view of relief camps. In addition, narratives in this article present flood victims as aliens in the food capital of Pakistan, who do not appreciate "naan, qeema [v], and chicken". They are viewed as outsiders who do not like or even appreciate the city's favourite spicy food items, like biryani.

The ecosophy of this study does not uphold this othering and framing, as it is not ethical and moral. Instead of mobilizing the nation to come forward in aid of their countrymen and women, this narrative endorses a set of stereotypes and frames flood survivors as outsiders in Karachi, who have taken shelter in its schools and colleges. Flood survivors who are framed as "ungrateful" have been forced to evacuate their homes and leave their belongings behind, and even their dietary needs and requirements are framed negatively: while people in Karachi may like spicy and oily food, people taking refuge in flood relief camps and their children are not used to eating this type of food. They usually eat homegrown and organic foods, and hardly ever dine out, but their avoidance of eating unhealthy food is simplistically described as ungrateful behaviour.

The attitudes and narratives surrounding flood victims in Pakistan reveal the pervasive influence of eco-destructive ideologies that extend beyond environmental harm to shape social and workplace dynamics. For instance, one of the volunteers interviewed by *Dawn* in the article entitled "Flood victims feel neglected by govt, looked after by NGOs at camps in Karachi" (31 Aug. 2022) finds the local residents of Karachi "well-behaved and worthy of consideration" compared to flood victims from rural areas and smaller cities of Sindh. The volunteer stated that he would not "turn anyone (from Karachi) away who is hungry" because "at least they (Karachiites) appreciate us more than the flood victims taking refuge here (non-Karachiites from other parts of Sindh)". This discriminatory attitude highlights how eco-destructive ideologies, such as urban ethnocentrism and hegemonic narratives, influence workplace dynamics, including humanitarian settings like flood relief camps. In such spaces, these ideologies frame communication and decision-making, often marginalizing vulnerable groups. The volunteer's perception reflects a dominant ideology that otherizes flood victims from rural Sindh as ungrateful and undeserving, showcasing how such biases can shape organizational communication and attitudes.

Contrary to these narratives, Abdul Razzak, a flood survivor from Larkana, points out the disconnect between relief efforts and the actual needs of displaced communities. "Look, you may mean well, but your spicy food is intolerable for our stomachs. We cannot digest your tandoori naan, too. There is this very kind polio worker, Seema Baji, who comes here with donated clothes for us as well. But she only brings jeans, pants, and shirts. We don't wear such clothing. We wear shalwar kameez only", Razzak explained. This statement underscores the exclusionary nature of eco-destructive ideologies that permeate workplaces and other organizational settings. The urban-centric focus in relief efforts disregards the cultural and dietary needs of displaced rural populations while also revealing a lack of ecological and social awareness. This exclusion is further reinforced by media narratives that often fail to address the lived realities of minority groups and endorse stereotypes and othering narratives. Journalist Nisar Khokhar points out that Pakistan cannot address critical challenges like climate change without first tackling structural inequality and poverty (22 Aug. 2024). Flood survivors, already burdened by grief and uncertainty, deserve respectful treatment and representation in media and workplace narratives. The plight of the Sindhi and Baloch populations, alongside the existential threats faced by the Indigenous Kalash Tribe, highlights how eco-destructive ideologies influence communication and exacerbate marginalization.

In the following section, I present a case of the Kalash and their oppression, further exploring how eco-destructive ideologies impact communication and representation in workplaces.

4.2.7 Kalash under Climate Change and Oppression

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Agency enlists challenges that marginalized sections of society, including women, daily wagers and Indigenous communities face in Pakistan, such as discrimination, lack of opportunities, and access to resources and information. Religious and ethnic minorities are often financially challenged and come from modest backgrounds in Pakistan, and therefore, they are excluded from the national dialogue. According to the *Lowy Institute* (2023), the population of the Kalash, the smallest minority group in Pakistan, who have preserved their traditions, rituals and religious identity for 2,300 years (Atalayar, 2021) and are fighting for their own survival in the mountainous valleys between Pakistan and Afghanistan at an altitude of 2,500 metres, has shrunk to just 3000 people. "People who lost their lands are forced to buy food", says Saifullah Jan Kalash, an environmental activist who lives in Rumbur Valley. "Those who lost their herd have to buy milk, and those who lost their orchards are now going to cities in search of employment to pay for these necessities" (Dialogue Earth, 2023). Kalash and other religious minorities do not have access to political power and quality education. Limited job opportunities and climate change

disasters exacerbate their issues. Therefore, local authorities should include these members of society in climate mitigation plans. The UN body for Refugees also expects the Pakistani authorities to ensure marginalized communities are taken on board in decision-making processes and have equal access to information and requisite support to take part in social and other meaningful activities. This process requires hearing these marginalized sections of society and their equal representation in political and social activities. However, the current urban landscape of mainstream media in Pakistan is centralized, and its narratives of local communities are based on stereotypes. *Amnesty International* raised concerns regarding the existential challenges that minorities and Indigenous communities face in Pakistan, especially in rural areas. It demanded that the government ensure the safety of vulnerable communities that are frequently hit by climate change. Despite security threats from militant and extremist groups, minorities in Pakistan are under-represented and next to missing from the official or national dialogue of the state in the mainstream media.

The loss of Kalash culture is also the loss of ecological knowledge and wisdom that this community has been preserving for centuries. Their plight is hardly reported in mainstream Pakistani media. For instance, *Dawn* did not report anything about the Kalash community in their flood-related media reports in 2022. Dominant political discourses override all other discourses in the Pakistani media. The Kalash and Baloch plight is one prime example of this hegemonic approach to news selection. They are equally important citizens of the state, but they have been missing from the mainstream Pakistani media to date. Their knowledge and ecological importance are world heritage and should be protected. One way would be to address structural inequality, poverty and stereotypes in media narratives that shape public opinion.

Additionally, the Kalash tribe have been facing economic challenges, aggravated by climate change. They have been forced to convert to Islam and revoke their religion, language and culture. Repeatedly, the Taliban and other extremist groups have been forcing the members of the Kalash tribe to leave their religious practices. Nicolas Bay (The Parliament, 2018) holds that the EU, as an important trade partner of Pakistan, should play its role in holding the authorities in Pakistan "accountable for their apathy" regarding the Kalash. The Kalash community are based in Chitral, which has been hit by floods in 2010, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2020, 2022 and 2023. According to the Pakistan Met Department, the annual mean temperature in Chitral rose by 0.9 °C between 1991 and 2022. The Kalash have relied on farming as their major source of income. Still, the impacts of successive flooding, deforestation, and timber mafia have increased economic challenges for Indigenous communities and forced them to migrate to urban areas in pursuit of jobs. "We used to have enough dry fruit, wheat and corn for the whole year. Now, I buy all these things", Shahidin, a villager interviewed by *The Third Pole*, recalls owning forty walnut trees that were destroyed by the floods in 2015 (The Third Pole, 2022). Many villagers, like Shahidin, who either used to be farmers or owned fertile land, have

become customers. Due to the loss of lands and the lack of financial support, many young women convert to Islam by marrying Muslim men for financial support and better living conditions (The Parliament, 2018). It can be argued that this conversion is still forced because of the impacts of climate change and the lack of support from the state of Pakistan. The Kalash people, traditionally reliant on farming as their primary source of income, are exposed to the compounded effects of climate change. Longer summers, glacier melting, and frequent floods are not only destroying cultivable lands, orchards, and irrigation systems but are also contributing to the degradation of forest belts and alpine meadows, critical for their agricultural lifestyle and ecological balance (Ecoclub.com, 2010). This ecological disruption has forced many Kalash men to migrate to urban areas in search of financial opportunities, leaving women and children behind in vulnerable circumstances. The impact of climate change is exacerbated by governmental neglect and inadequate policies. Despite the Kalash culture's intrinsic value assigned tobiodiversity, the state has failed to take adequate measures to protect its unique way of life. This includes the absence of initiatives to restore damaged agricultural land or provide alternative livelihoods. Furthermore, the government has not addressed the threats posed by the timber mafia, whose activities continue to devastate the valley's environment. The lack of state-supported educational and cultural institutions further undermines the Kalash community. Without community schools or centres to develop skills aligned with their traditions, the younger generation is left without means to preserve their heritage. Additionally, government schools do not offer a substitute subject such as ethics to non-Muslim students, so Kalash are forced to study compulsory Islamic studies in order to pass an exam that takes place each year. This indirectly pressures them into religious conversion. According to Akram Hussain (in The Washington Post, 2018), a social worker who is "the sole Kalash survivor in his family", after the death of his mother, his father married a Muslim woman and converted:

> When a Muslim teacher warns you that you're an infidel and will be burned in hell, a kid can't evade this threatening influence," he said. "I was told by my Muslim teachers to read [Islamic verses] that say it is compulsory to become a Muslim. But we don't pressure our youths about our Kalasha beliefs (The Washington Post, 2018).

Furthermore, government schools do not teach Kalash their local language, forcing Kalash children to receive their education in Urdu and English. The Kalash people, in addition to their native language, Kalasha, once spoke Badeshi. Like Kalasha, Badeshi is an Indo-Aryan language that was spoken in the remote mountainous valleys of northern Pakistan. However, while Kalasha is still spoken, Badeshi is now classified as "extinct". According to the BBC (2018) documentary entitled "The language only three men speak", there are only three speakers of the Badeshi language left in the world. Younger generations show little interest in

learning the Badeshi language and prefer speaking more dominant languages like Urdu. This preference is primarily due to formal education being conducted in Urdu and television content, including news and entertainment, being exclusively broadcast in the dominant Urdu language. According to Said Gul, one of the Kalash speakers of the Badeshi language, there used to be nine to ten families who spoke the Badeshi language. However, when men from these families married women from other regions who did not speak the language, they started communicating in Urdu and Pashto instead of the Badeshi language. This shift contributed to the decline of Badeshi, leading to its near extinction. The three remaining speakers, all men, fear that the language will vanish entirely once they pass away. It is important to highlight that the BBC documentary on the Badeshi language was released in 2018. Before this, there waslittle to no coverage of this dying language in Pakistan's mainstream media. A few articles emerged immediately following the documentary, e.g. "Swat's Ancient Language Breathing Its Last", written by *Dawn* (10 Jan. 2018), but since then, no further reports have surfaced about the three individuals identified as speakers of Badeshi. This lack of follow-up suggests that, while Badeshi speakers still exist, their language is either extinct or on the brink of extinction, as reported by the BBC in its documentary. This lack of follow-up also underscores a broader issue of neglect toward minority languages and communities in Pakistan. The plight of the Kalash people offers a striking parallel. While their native language, Kalasha, is still spoken, it also faces challenges from linguistic marginalization and cultural and religious assimilation pressures. Like the Badeshi language, Kalasha risks being overshadowed and forgotten if no active measures are taken for its preservation. This highlights the urgent need for consistent media attention and governmental support to safeguard Pakistan's rich linguistic and ecological knowledge embedded in these languages. But the government's failure to ensure the safety of Kalash residents and their supporters has discouraged NGOs and international organizations from assisting them. In 2002, a Spanish ethnographer, Jordi Magraner, who lived with the Kalash for 10 years, was found dead with his throat slit along with his local servant. Later, in 2009, a Greek scholar, Athanasion Larounis, who had the Kalash school built, was kidnapped by the Afghan Taliban.

Figure 10: A group of Kalash women celebrating their cultural festival.

Source: https://khybernews.tv/three-day-spring-festival-begin-in-kalash/

Figure 11: Prince William and the Duchess of Wales visiting flood-affected Kalash

 Source: Neil Hall

4.2.8 Why in its Midst was the Mind of Man Placed?

More than a century ago, the great Bengali language poet Rabindranath Tagore (1984) questioned the fierce and "brute madness" of cyclones that struck Bangladesh, asking, "Why in its midst was the mind of man placed?" (Time, 1991). This question remains relevant to Pakistan, a country devastated by terrifying floods in 2010 and 2022. While my study may not provide an answer to this question, it explores the media positioning and representation of human beings concerning floods. While there was a strong mutual consensus about the scale and devastating impact of the floods in Pakistan, many people, including independent observers, activists and politicians, disagreed regarding the extent to which the terrifying impact of the floods was avoidable. An important question in this debate was to what extent society or climate change was to be blamed for the impacts of the floods. Additionally, many

also questioned whether it is possible to leverage structural social changes to tackle climate change and prevent new floods, rather than merely relying on foreign relief funds.

Before we talk about the common media narratives of the floods in Pakistan, it is important to have an idea of how media framing works.

4.2.9 News and Climate Change Discourse

The Pakistani media is notorious for prioritizing political reporting and maintaining an urban-centric focus on three major cities – Lahore, Islamabad, and Karachi – over many other significant issues such as health, education, welfare, and climate change. Munim and Arsalan (2022) analyzed media coverage of the 2022 floods in Pakistan to investigate whether similar patterns existed during the floods. Given Pakistan's vulnerability to natural hazards, the role and responsibility of the media become even more crucial in creating narratives, framing climate change, and raising awareness. It is also expected to mediate between the public and emergency service providers, ensuring the timely dissemination of accurate information during and after disasters. As the "fourth pillar" of the state and democracy, the media is expected to provide unbiased information, responsibly report on hazard warnings, and share the needs and concerns of people affected by natural disasters. It serves as a facilitator and mediator between the state and the public. However, the Pakistani media has been criticized for its ill and inadequate coverage of the floods during this catastrophe. Munim and Arsalan (2022: 8) identified urban bias in the media coverage of the floods, with Karachi receiving 52.5% of the news headline space, more than any other city in the country. They analyzed a sample of news headlines from major channels, such as ARY News, Geo News, and *Samaa News,* to investigate the frequency of flood-related coverage in primetime headlines and talk shows. They found that flood-related news was not among the top five headlines in 57.7% of the bulletins, and only 18% of the bulletins featured floods as the first headline. The headlines that mentioned the floods hardly explained why the country was experiencing such extreme flooding. The term "climate change" was rarely mentioned and, even when it was, it lacked explanation or context. Additionally, their study confirmed that flood-related news was not a priority for the media with most reports being briefly mentioned at the end of the headlines. This trend was followed by all major news channels, highlighting the media's apparent lack of interest in massive disasters.

News discourse is influential in many ways. It can potentially influence our shape perceptions and endorse hegemonic ideologies through discursive strategies such as erasure, passivization and nominalization. It could communicate and frame issues in ways that construct narratives to achieve agendas. Debate in media news and talk shows plays a crucial role in contributing to the narratives surrounding climate change-related issues, and sometimes the

absence of debate about climate change is also a very subtle way of undermining the importance and urgency of climate change in developing countries. As a compelling source of information, it plays an instrumental role in constructing narratives and shaping the public opinion and perceptions of climate change. News discourses frame climate change contextually and may gaslight[10] it (Latif, 2020) by promoting contemporary political challenges attached to climate change (Joelsson, 2023). Gaslighting is used as "a political strategy that utilizes deceptive and manipulative use of information, which destabilizes and disorients public opinion on political issues concerning the public" (Latif, 2020: 44). Since the early 1980s, there has been an ongoing debate about effective climate change communication and its role in shaping public opinion. Additionally, a debate regarding the causes and implications of climate change has been going on in several countries, examining how news may employ anthropocentric ideas to influence public perceptions. To what extent human involvement and human activity have been an influencing factor in climate change is an ongoing debate. For this study, we refer to Calarco (2020:18), who defines anthropocentric ideas that place humans at the centre of everything and consider them the most important actors in existence, undermining the environment and its value in larger ecosystems that all lives depend on. This perspective views nature as something exclusively reserved for human use, allowing humans to benefit from natural resources as if they were unlimited, therefore undermining the broader impact of the exploitation of nature and its effects on the planet. Such human greed has severe and far-reaching consequences.

Moreover, disbelief in human impact on the environment is endorsed in the media (Moser, 2010). Calarco (2020: 18) explains anthropocentrism as "the view that human beings (in opposition to animals and other nonhuman beings) are of supreme importance in ethical, political, legal, and existential matters" (2020: 18). This view is further propagated in news articles and media coverage of climate change, as humans write them from their perspectives, which usually erases nonhuman fellow-beings. These human-centric perspectives gaslight human involvement in climate change but serve human interests and place them as morally superior beings. Media news employs this framework to maintain human centrality and politicize the climate change debate. Calarco (2022) states that "anthropocentric ideas, attitudes, and dispositions are enacted through a robust and interlocking series of practices and institutions" (p. 20). The news media is one of those powerful institutions that sets agendas and narratives for people to talk about. In Pakistan's case, the media were criticized for ignoring flood victims and prioritizing a cricket match (Hasan, 2022). While observers started questioning the role of the media in its flood reporting, many politicians and religious scholars

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[10] The Oxford English Dictionary defines gaslighting as an "action or process of manipulating a person by psychological means into questioning his or her own sanity" (2016).

argued with their counter-narratives and justified the floods on religious grounds. This debate also gained international attention from UN bodies and charity organizations. This gave rise to many varying competing constructions of floods and climate change in Pakistan, including social media, where users questioned the causes of the floods in Pakistan (Wibisono et al., 2023).

The following section presents a detailed analysis of some of the competing narratives and constructions of floods in Pakistan:

4.2.10 Inevitability vs. Avoidability of Disaster (Dove and Khan, 1995)

An article published by the BBC (Fihlani and Wright, 2022), entitled "Pakistan Floods: Desperation and Displacement in Sindh Province", presents the construction of floods by Pakistan's Prime Minister Shahbaz Shareef as inevitable:

> **The Prime Minister of Pakistan has said the "magnitude of the calamity" is bigger than expected, after visiting flood-hit areas** (bold in original).
>
> Shehbaz Sharif was speaking from Sindh province, external - which has had nearly eight times its average August rainfall.
>
> The floods have killed nearly 1,000 people across Pakistan since June, while thousands have been displaced - and millions more affected. As the BBC drove through Sindh, there were displaced people in every village. The full scale of the devastation in the province is yet to be fully understood - but the people described it as the worst disaster they've survived. Floods are not uncommon in Pakistan, but people here said these rains were different - more than anything that's ever been seen. One local official called them "floods of biblical proportions".
>
> When a mobile truck pulled over, scores of people immediately ran towards it. Children carrying other children made their way to the long queue.
>
> One 12-year-old girl said she and her baby sister had not eaten for a day.
>
> "No food has come here, but my sister is sick, she has been vomiting," the girl said. "I hope they can help." The desperation was evident in every community. People ran towards car windows to ask for help - anything. On one of the main streets out of the city of Sukkur, hundreds of people have settled.
>
> Many of them walked from remote villages, and were told that help is easier to get in the urban areas. But there's not much difference here. On Friday, PM Sharif said 33 million people had been hit by the floods - about 15% of the country's population. He said the losses caused by floods this season were comparable to those during the floods of 2010-11, said to be the worst on record. The country

has appealed for more international aid.

Sindh, it's not that local authorities are not trying, but they admit that they are out of their depth. The provincial government says this is a "climate change catastrophe" and that the people of Pakistan, especially in the poorer communities, have been the worst affected. The solutions will not be quick - acres of land are waterlogged and the water is not receding fast enough for any rebuilding to take place here.

There's not much to do for the people but to wait - wait for the rains to stop, wait for the water to go down, wait for more resources to be allocated to these kinds of communities.

In the meantime, life continues to be difficult.

The PM said the "magnitude of the calamity" was bigger than expected. He made this statement after visiting flood-affected areas while talking to the media. While the article states that floods are not "uncommon" in Pakistan, the officials believe that rains are "different" and that they have never seen anything like that before. Building on the inevitability of the floods, one local government official calls the flood a "flood of biblical proportions". Government officials unanimously maintained one narrative across all provinces, including the central government in Islamabad. Their narrative was based on two arguments:

1. The floods were inevitable.
2. Richer countries are responsible for the devastation caused by massive floods and must pay climate reparations to Pakistan.

Since the media was already not prioritizing the floods as newsworthy, the government constructed a narrative of the inevitability of the floods, blocking any discussion on the government's role and constitutional responsibilities. By not highlighting the government's role and responsibility in flood management, the Pakistani controversial private media partnered with the government's ideology and strategically suppressed the voices of marginalized communities in Pakistan. The members of PMLN (Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz) demanded that rich nations be held "accountable" and argued that "humanitarian aid" must be redefined as "climate reparations" (Dawn, 2022). Additionally, a local and international debate about moving away from colonial engineering and water approaches in Pakistan and other postcolonial countries emerged (see section 4.2.14).

However, there were a few activists and politicians within the Pakistani political spectrum that presented a counter- competing narrative. One such counter-narrative came from Ammar Ali Jan, founder of Haqooq-e-Khalq Party (People's Rights Party), who acknowledged the involvement of richer countries in polluting the environment, in an article entitled "Culpability for the Pakistan floods rests with the Pakistani government and rich countries", and added:

> The Pakistani state, too, remains culpable for the dispossession of its people in the wake of the floods. We need to change the narrative on climate change. The grassroots collective aims to hold the Pakistani government accountable for rights promised in the country's constitution (Aijazi, 2022).

4.2.11 Ammar Ali Jan and Left-Wing Voices

Jan is a self-proclaimed Marxist and the General Secretary of a left-wing political party who believes that "Democracy should work for everyone, not just the privileged few". Jan and his party claim to be committed to "dismantling elite privileges, reforming key sectors, and redirecting resources to benefit all Pakistanis", with an added focus on "economic justice, sustainable development, and social welfare".

A news anchorperson on PTV (Pakistan Television, State-sponsored) defended the government's stance on the inevitability of the floods and said, "Even if we had built dams, we would not have saved destruction" (PTV, 2022). His statement indicates that the government used state missionaries and resources to construct a narrative that justified the destruction caused by the floods and purposefully skipped the government's responsibility. This was also observed off-screen; for example, in Sindh, the local authorities said they were trying to help people on the ground but also admitted that they were over capacity given the inevitable floods (Fihlani and Wright, 2022). The Sindh government representatives called the floods a "climate change catastrophe" while speaking to foreign media. In addition, they admitted that the government was helpless because:

> There's not much to do for the people but to wait – wait for the rains to stop, wait for the water to go down, wait for more resources to be allocated to these kinds of communities (Fihlani and Wright, 2022).

"In the meantime, life continues to be difficult", the BBC (Fihlani and Wright, 2022) concludes. Government officials built on this narrative on and off camera while sending out a message to the public that it was beyond their capacity to protect them. Noticeably, these messages appeared in the media when the floods had already hit more than twenty million people. There was rarely any coverage of the floods in June and July, with politics dominating

public discussion and forums (Hassan in Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 18 Nov. 2022). Likewise, Jan writes:

> The first-time floods became the main headline on a Pakistani channel was August 23. By this time, more than twenty million people had already been affected, making it the worst natural disaster in the country's recent history (Jacobin, 03 Nov. 2022).

When people were left to suffer underwater, the government and media were just focusing on internal politics. However, there were a lot of voices within and outside the country who questioned the role of the media and the government's constitutional role that guarantees people's protection by the elected government. Under these circumstances, the government started to describe the disaster as unprecedented, something they could not control because it was beyond their capacity, something they had no control over. International and local observers have agreed that the rain was unprecedented, but they questioned the scale of devastation caused by the floods. In their opinion, the intensity of devastation could have been avoided if the government had taken responsibility for protecting its people by proactive measures, such as managing waters, spreading early warnings, and using the media as a tool to educate people to send out flood alerts, but the government was too busy with its own political goals. Later, when they realized they could not ignore flood victims, due to public pressure on social media, they started to describe the floods as being of biblical proportions and the magnitude of the calamity to convey the extraordinary nature of the event as something they had no control over, and that was inevitable. According to the BBC and other foreign media persons, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif "dismissed" any criticism that his government had been receiving for being slow to respond when the floods first hit in early June. He pledged to learn from the floods and said:

> We will certainly learn from our experience, but the global community should stand by us today, it's a yawning gap between our requirements and what we are receiving till this point in time (BBC 21 Aug. 2022).

Similarly, a news anchor-person on PTV (Pakistan Television- state-sponsored) defended the government's stance on the inevitability of the floods and said, "Even if we had built dams, we would not have saved destruction" (PTV, 2022). His statement indicates that the government used state missionaries and resources to construct a narrative that justified the destruction caused by the floods and purposefully skipped the government's responsibility. This was also observed off-screen; for example, in Sindh, the local authorities said they were trying to help people on the ground but also admitted that they were out of capacity given inevitable floods (Fihlani and Wright, 2022).

The Sindh government representatives called the floods a "climate change catastrophe" while speaking to foreign media. In addition, they admitted that the government was helpless because:

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4.2.12 Victims of Climate Change or Bad Governance

An article entitled "Victims of Climate Change or Bad Governance" by *Dawn* (02 Sept. 2022) highlights structural issues in Pakistan that led to devastation while acknowledging the change in weather patterns and raises questions of accountability:

> The devastation from the recent rains has been of gargantuan proportions. Over 1,000 people have been killed, and hundreds of thousands of livestock and acres of land have been washed away. Infrastructure lies in tatters. The economic costs run into billions of dollars. Who, or what, can Pakistanis blame?

It centres around five men "scrambled onto a big rock in the middle of the suddenly gushing torrents in the Dubair stream, they wrapped ropes around their bodies, hoping they could use them to be pulled through to safety. But they couldn't move" (*Dawn*, 2022).

Figure 12: Screenshot from a viral video showing five men stranded by flash floods for over three hours, waiting to be rescued before they were washed away by gushing waters in upper Kohistan.

This video went viral on social media platforms and depicted the situation of Pakistanis in a nutshell: stranded and *Waiting for Godot*[vi]. This video showed the helplessness of the Pakistanis during the floods and captured a large portion of Pakistanis "caught between the wrath of extreme weather events and the incapacity of governance" (Dawn, 2022). Pakistan has been facing extreme weather events, but the question is: to what extent is the incapacity of governance or poor governance contributing to the devastation caused by the floods? Why do natural hazards turn into tragedy and devastation? Does poor governance turn natural hazards

into natural disasters? These are questions worth looking into. Will changing narratives around climate change improve governance and help public accountability? The present dissertation may not be able to answer all these questions, but it will comment on the last question. In this specific case of five men washed away by flooding, it is apparent that this tragedy could have been avoided if there had been any help from the government. The fact that there was no sight of government officials led people to ask if the government was waiting for foreign aid to even rescue its people. The absence of government and media coverage might have suggested that they couldn't care less about people's safety. It angered the public and prompted discussion online and offline, where people criticized the government's failure to rescue flood victims. According to the same article by *Dawn*:

> A large part of the development infrastructure developed since the 1960s has been washed away or has become dysfunctional. All this has happened mostly in talukas[11] that have already fallen behind on development indicators. It will take years, perhaps decades, to undo some of the economic and social losses (Dawn 02 Sept. 2022).

These aspects greatly contributed to the devastation and may have been avoided if the officials had employed proactive approaches. Likewise, the BBC (05 Sept. 2022) highlights similar problems of weak infrastructure and irregular construction of hotels on the riverbanks that crumbled "like cardboard boxes the fury of raging waters, simply swept away" (Dawn, 2022). It is important to note that phrases such as "fury of raging waters", "nature's wrath", and "hell was unleashed" lay more emphasis on the intensity of the floods than on the responsibility of regulatory bodies that were supposed to control illegal constructions on the riverbanks. This framing may shift the public's attention from an integral issue of illegal and unregulated construction on riverbanks to shaping people's perceptions of disasters. This framing may get people to believe in the divine or supernatural element in the "fury of raging waters". The occurrence of floods induced by climate change is contested. Some people claim that floods are unconnected with climate change and associate floods with other factors such as illegal construction; however, poor governance and the political framing of climate change in the media also act as threat multipliers, with equally consequential effects on the environment and people. Together, these factors can have severe unecological outcomes. Poor governance and media framing, which absolve officials of responsibility, affect the poor and marginalized. It can be argued that removing the government's accountability from news framing can lead to further human tragedy and environmental disaster, because it can allow those in charge to not take full responsibility and perpetuate the narrative that such disasters are inevitable.

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[11] Taluka is a subdivision of a district, a unit of land administration headed by a government civil servant, Assistant Collector grade-I.

4.2.13 Media Data Analysis

Journalists juggle with words strategically and may have removed human agencies in climate change disasters to obscure the government's responsibility, using passive voice or metaphors that make devastation appear natural and uncontrollable. This framing often favourably removes powerful corporations and governments from action through passivisation: for example, news headlines tend to use phrases like "Floods Ravage Pakistan", "Nature's Fury Unleashed" or "Angry waters wash away homes". Instead of stating, "The government failed to build adequate flood defences", the Pakistani media wrote (Dawn, 2022), "Flood defences were not built in time", which obscures who is responsible for this failure. Such subtle shifts in linguistic framing may obfuscate public accountability by making it unclear who should be held responsible. Furthermore, these frames may indicate a divine element in these natural disasters and construct them as an uncontrollable force of nature, while only emphasizing the economic damage caused by the floods and rarely mentioning why the infrastructure could not mitigate the damage. National and international charity-based organizations tend to naturalize disasters using emotional and metaphorical language. For instance, an article published by UNICEF entitled "A School Submerged in Nature's Wrath" frames disaster as something beyond the human capacity to control or manage. Likewise, former Bangladeshi Prime Minister Khaleda Zia framed cyclones as an inevitable part of life in Bangladesh while downplaying her government's role in planning mitigation.

4.2.14 Climate Change Did This: Dominant Discourse

Extreme environmental hazards are becoming increasingly common in many countries in the world; simultaneously, it is getting easier for corporations and governments to label every environmental problem as climate-induced, especially in developing countries where governments tend to shift and divert attention from their failure and place responsibility for climate mitigation actions on richer countries. In countries where the media are compromised and owned directly by politicians, like in Pakistan, there is a nexus of powerful property tycoons, politicians and media houses. Therefore, media communication is used as a tool to frame natural hazards as climate events, something that corporations and governments are more and more likely to do for almost every natural hazard. This climate labelling dominates coverage in all forms of media communications, endorsing the political construction of disasters. Popular media often propagates a dominant discourse of blaming climate change for everything (Shewly et al., 2023), which Hulme (2011) defining this practice as "climate reductionism". For example, in countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan, whenever there is a natural hazard, instead of investigating why it turns into a disastrous event, many

state and non-state actors tend to downplay the government's constitutional responsibility in disaster management and use framing to indicate religion and regional politics as central to those climate events. Such political construction of climate change may deflect attention from avoidable losses and consider climate change "responsible for every negative event while obscuring human responsibilities and the need for reducing vulnerability" (Shewly et al., 2023: 2). On a different note, Mostafa et al. (2019) explain how local media, international media and independent bodies report signs of salinity intrusion and its connection to climate change in Bangladesh. Conversely, some countries exploit state machinery and resources to construct a narrative of climate victimhood, using the IPCC as a proxy (Shewly et al., 2023), rather than investing in research to find evidence to support and substantiate the actual impacts of climate change (Nadiruzzaman et al., 2022).

This political framing of the climate change narrative oversimplifies and undermines the complexity and multilayered issues that lie within climate-induced weather events. This one-dimensional approach to weather events takes attention away from other possible aspects of natural hazards. Shewly et al. (2023) call these narratives misleading because they are based on false premises that convey the idea that governments are helpless and that there is not much they can do to reduce or minimize damage caused by natural hazards. Kelman (2022) argues that catastrophes happen when marginalized and poor people are at risk. It is also important to investigate why certain social groups are more exposed to the risk of natural disasters. The blame-it-on-climate-change approach framing is a framing strategy that attributes natural disasters primarily to climate change without evidence or acknowledging other possible factors, like a failure of policy or ill-preparedness. This perspective can diverge from people's experiences and problems faced by the people affected by such disasters, who may find other factors responsible for the disaster, like poor infrastructure. By putting more emphasis on the inevitability of natural disasters, this approach can only favour politicians and government officials in power responsible for risk management and disaster preparedness, while also deflecting scrutiny from issues like inadequate planning or policy failures. However, even if we accept that climate change is at least partly caused by human activity, the ultimate responsibility still lies with policymakers. Politicians and governments have played a major role in creating or failing to address the conditions that worsen climate change, whether through harmful policies, ideologies or weak environmental protection. In this way, the blame-it-on-climate-change approach not only deflects accountability for disaster preparedness but also shifts attention away from those responsible for contributing to climate change in the first place. This framing enables those in power to avoid meaningful action on both immediate and systemic issues and leaves the public gaslighted into expecting less accountability. Dominant discourse often erases them and their needs to be addressed. Because many people are fatalists and attribute their successes and failures to luck, political and religious framing of natural

hazards adds another layer to their perception of natural hazards and directs the sense of worldly accountability to God or other higher supernatural order (Zaman, 2021). This climate reductionism, as Hulme calls it, exposes the vulnerability of marginalized communities and gives more leverage to powerful politicians to misguide the public. Likewise, a BBC (30 Aug. 2022) article reports that the heaviest summer rain is "blamed by the government on Climate Change". Interestingly, the BBC spells "climate change" with capital initials, as if it were a proper name or a title. This strategy of using capital initials may give an impression of emphasizing its significance or treating Climate Change as a proper noun, in a similar way to the spelling of "Holocaust" and "Cold War". This use of capitalization could also suggest a sense of greater objectivity, as if "Climate Change" were a formal scientific term that can subsequently be abbreviated as an acronym. Such a strategy could also reinforce a scientific consensus on the reality of Climate Change and maintain objectivity. On another occasion, the BBC (03 Sept. 2022) presented a state narrative that was perpetuated by the government's Minister of Planning and Development, Ahsan Iqbal, who admitted that the country did not have the necessary resources to manage this unprecedented crisis and said, "The flooding was the worst climate-induced disaster in recent world history". Apart from political statements, two of the BBC articles analyzed for this study provide an overview and explanation of flooding in Pakistan from a more scientific approach, discussed briefly in the following sub-section.

4.2.15 Pakistan's Geography and Scientific Argument

The inevitability of this disaster was also attributed to Pakistan's geography by foreign accounts. An article published by the BBC (Rannard, 02 Sept. 2022) entitled "How Pakistan floods are linked to climate change" presents this perspective, missing from local domestic voices within Pakistan. It approaches the floods and the impacts of climate change from a scientific perspective, providing explanations by researchers. An important aspect shared in the article is that "Pakistan has more glacial ice than anywhere outside the polar regions". Alarmingly, these glaciers are melting rapidly due to climate change. Moreover, Pakistan is located at the epicentre of "two major weather systems": one "causes high temperatures and drought, like the heatwave in March, and the other brings monsoon rains". According to Saeed, a climate impact scientist, Pakistan's situation is a "wake-up call" for the world (BBC):

> Pakistan's government and the UN are attempting to reduce the risks of these sudden outburst floods by installing early-warning systems and protective infrastructure.
>
> In the past poorer countries with weaker flood defences or lower-quality housing have been less able to cope with extreme rainfall. But climate impact scientist Fahad Saeed told BBC News that even a rich nation would be overwhelmed by

the catastrophic flooding this summer.

"This is a different type of animal - the scale of the floods is so high and the rain is so extreme, that even very robust defences would struggle," Dr Saeed explains from Islamabad, Pakistan. He points to the flooding in Germany and Belgium that killed dozens of people in 2021. Pakistan received nearly 190% more rain than its 30-year average from June to August - reaching a total of 390.7mm. He says that Pakistan's meteorological service did a "reasonable" job in warning people in advance about flooding. And the country does have some flood defences but they could be improved, he says.

People with the smallest carbon footprints are suffering the most, Dr Saeed says.

"The victims are living in mud homes with hardly any resources - they have contributed virtually nothing to climate change," he says. The flooding has affected areas that don't normally see this type of rain, including southern regions Sindh and Balochistan that are normally arid or semi-arid.

Another reason for devastation, scientists explain, could be that most of the population living along the mighty Indus River, which often floods during monsoon rain. Researchers predicted that the average rainfall is likely to increase in the future due to climate change. In addition, Pakistan is even more susceptible to the impacts of climate change due to its "immense glaciers". As global temperatures rise, glaciers are rapidly melting in the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa regions of Pakistan, leading to the formation of over 3,000 new lakes, accordingto the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in a BBC News report. The UNDP also warned that approximately 33 of these glaciers are at risk of sudden rupture, potentially releasing millions of cubic meters of water and debris, and putting 7 million people in danger (BBC, 2022).

Climate change does not discriminate between rich and poor, as Rahat Indori said:

> Lagegi aag to aayenge ghar kai zad me,
>
> Yahan pe sirf humara makan thori hai.[vii]

Nevertheless, in the past, poorer countries, mostly with weaker flood management and defence have been affected severely by climate change impacts. But this does not mean any country has immunity to the impacts of climate change. Saeed, a researcher on climate impacts, warns that rich nations may be overwhelmed by the impacts of climate change in the future. For instance, flooding in Germany and Belgium in 2021 killed more than 200 people and over a dozen in Italy in 2023. More recently, over 220 casualties were reported in Spain after parts of Valencia and Catalonia were severely affected by floods and torrential rain in late October 2024. These floods were widely linked to a climate emergency, with Spanish Prime Minister

Pedro Sánchez describing them as the worst natural disaster in Spain's recent history and pledging all necessary resources to support those impacted. However, not everyone agrees that climate change is the leading cause of such disasters. In Spain, as in much of Italy and Europe in general, conspiracy theories surrounding climate change have gained traction, with many viewing climate change as a fabricated or exaggerated issue pushed for political or economic gains, especially on social media. This debate, alongside the government's inadequate and delayed response to the national crisis, sparked anger among residents in the hardest-hit areas, such as Paiporta. This frustration escalated in an angry crowd throwing mud at the prime minister and other officials, including regional president Carlos Mazón, King Felipe VI, and Queen Letizia, while shouting, "Killers! Get out!". According to *The Independent* (04 Nov. 2024), Valencians criticized the lack of early warnings and held the government responsible for human and material losses. Meanwhile, government officials acknowledged the public's anger but blamed the mud attack on a minority of right-wing groups. Mayors from the affected towns and municipalities have been "pleading with officials to send help as soon as possible," reported *The Independent*. Guillermo Luján, the mayor of Aldaia,

expressed his frustration: "We're very angry, and we're devastated. We have a town in ruins. We need to start over, and I'm begging for help. Please help us".

While explaining the scale of the floods in Pakistan, Saeed described them as a "different type of animal" that would dislodge "very robust defences". He also added that Pakistan received almost 190% more rain than its recent 30-year average from June to August, exceeding a total of 390.7 mm (Rannard in BBC 02 Sept. 2022). In addition, another article entitled "Climate change: Pakistan floods 'likely' made worse by warming" (BBC, 21 Sept. 2022) provides a more in-depth and balanced analysis of the floods from a scientific perspective. It argues that scientists believe "global warming is likely to have played a role in the devastating floods that hit Pakistan". The World Weather Attribution [viii]experts believe climate change "may have increased the insanity of rainfall" (BBC, 2022). It is important to note that these scientists do not comment on the floods, or the destruction caused by the floods. Additionally, it is reported that there were many "uncertainties in the results": therefore, the group of researchers were not able to ascertain a firm connection between climate change and related aspects of floods. They also "believe there's roughly a 1% chance of such an event happening in any coming year". While the article was published in 2022, the flooding did hit Pakistan again in 2024. An important article entitled "Two Years After Deadly Floods Hit Pakistan, It's Happening Again", published by *The New York Times* (2024) provides a detailed analysis of the floods in 2024. If we look closely at this situation, we can notice that scientific predictions are contradicted by weather events within a span of a few years. While scientists predicted that there is roughly 1% of such calamity happening in Pakistan in "any coming year", heavy rainfall broke out again, causing flooding in the country. This time, rainfall broke

a 44-year-old record in Lahore and killed at least 30 people (Reuters 2 Aug. 2024).

Going back to the BBC article, which also comments on the political aspects of the floods in Pakistan, politicians had been pointing to the element of climate change as a significant factor contributing to "the desperate scenes". In contrast, "the picture is complex", the BBC writes. This article seems to negate the political construction of flooding that affected more than 33 million people. The inevitability narrative is countered by the scientific commentary in this article, and it also uses neutral (to some extent) and cautious terms to maintain arguments like "say", "believe" and "likely" when talking about climate change factors in the flooding. It is further argued that assessing "extreme rainfall" in Pakistan is difficult because of Pakistan's location, which is on the edge of "the monsoon region where the rainfall pattern is extremely variable from year to year". One more complicating factor consists in the impact of rare weather events like "La Niña[ix], which also played a role in the last major floods in Pakistan in 2010". From a foreign perspective, it is indicated that there may have been a significant role in climate change in the floods, but it is not specified to what extent. For example, Friederike Otto, from Imperial College London, said, "Our evidence suggests that climate change played an important role in the event, although our analysis doesn't allow us to quantify how big the role was" (BBC, 2022). On the other hand, from the local perspective of *Dawn* and the official government, the scientific aspects of the floods are not highlighted. More emphasis is laid on the inevitability of the floods that destroyed the country. Through this perspective, the government's constitutional responsibility is obfuscated, leading to another debate over climate change – Global South vs. the Global North debate. This debate is discussed and analyzed in the following section:

4.2.16 Global North vs. Global South Narratives

With increasing evidence that global warming may be responsible for natural hazards, climate change has become a highly political (Hajer and Strengers, 2012) issue with social and economic stakes (Shewly et al., 2023). It has seemingly come to a point where less-developed countries are investing in constructing narratives to highlight evidence of the global North's contribution to global warming, although the narratives from the global North itself point out other indicators such as poverty, poor infrastructure and corruption in less-developing countries as the main contributors to the devastation caused by natural hazards. A BBC article (3 Sept. 2024) informs that the rains Pakistan is facing have been predicted by scientists for years, and history shows that rainfalls have gotten very severe in certain parts of the world since "humans started emitting large amounts of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere". This article presents a generic viewpoint that mentions involving all humans in emitting greenhouse gases without informing who the major contributors to this environmentally destructive activity actually are.

A BBC article published in 2021 entitled "Who will pay for the damage caused by climate change?" by Gerretsen sheds light on this issue and presents narratives from both times that were presented at the United Nations' Global Change dialogue in Glasgow:

> At the United Nations' global climate talks in Glasgow in November, developing countries fought hard for a dedicated loss and damage funding facility, a formal body set up under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to provide new financial support to affected nations. But the final Glasgow climate pact made no reference to climate finance to address the rising costs of losses and damages in developing countries. Instead, rich nations said they would establish "a dialogue" to discuss "arrangements for the funding of activities to avert, minimise and address loss and damage".

During this conference, developing countries tried to build a case for a "dedicated loss and damage funding facility" to work under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to give new financial assistance to the nations affected by climate change-induced disasters. However, Glasgow Climate Pact did not explicitly agree to provide financial support and pay compensation to developing countries for their losses. Instead, rich nations said they would establish "a dialogue" to discuss "arrangements for the funding of activities to avert, minimise and address loss and damage" (BBC, 2021)**.**

According to *Friends of Earth*[x], the United Nations-led Climate Pact failed to deliver the "ambitious, bold and justice-led solutions to the climate crisis that we needed". An article entitled "COP26: 3 ways the Glasgow Climate Pact fails us – and excludes justice", explains why the Pact suffered a massive setback from the public due to its failure to build a strong case for developing countries. Additionally, like Global South, Friends of the Earth argue and explain that money is needed:

> To address the increased risk faced by countries in the Global South, to finance services such as providing compensation for losses, adequate climate information, risks and needs assessments as well financial tools to support social protection schemes. Years and years of systemic, structural racism and colonialism have left the Global South extremely vulnerable to the impacts of the climate breakdown.

The UK-based non-profit organization adds another dimension to an already complex debate over climate change degradation, seen in quite different ways by the two parties. It blames the years of systemic exploitation, structural racism and colonialism of the less-developed countries by rich nations for their vulnerability to the impacts of climate change. This is a popular narrative of victimhood in many former colonies, such as India and Pakistan, where politicians still exploit this rhetoric of colonialism to downplay their governance failure. However, the effects of structural colonialism are not contested in this study and should be

investigated in future studies. Politicians, like the Prime Minister of Barbados, Mia Mottely, argued that the failure to provide "critical" financial assistance to the affected communities was "immoral" and "unjust":

> At the climate talks, Barbados' Prime Minister Mia Mottley told world leaders that asking countries on the frontlines of the climate crisis, like small island states, to pay for climate damages is "like asking the passengers of a car crash to pay for damages, rather than the driver".
>
> "Failure to provide critical finance is measured in lives and livelihoods in our communities," Mottley said, adding that she felt it was "immoral" and "unjust".

She further added that expecting frontline countries, small islands, to pay for climate damages is "like asking the passengers of a car crash to pay for damages, rather than the driver". This debate over liability and compensation for loss and damage has taken a very complex political turn, which Adelle Thomas, a senior Caribbean research associate at Climate Analytics, calls "a political taboo" (BBC, 2022). In the political debate over the term "climate reparation", it can be argued that wealthy nations, which have contributed the most to environmental pollution, are concerned about being accountable for the damage they have caused over the decades. Therefore, they are not in favour of the inclusion of loss and damage frameworks in any legally binding document or an international agreement. For example, in the Paris Agreement in 2015, the United States "pushed for a clause to be added which stated that the accord does not involve or provide a basis for any liability or compensation". Similarly, the US and EU blocked their proposal for a loss and damage funding option in Glasgow. Recently, the United Nations secretary general also contributed to the debate on climate change by urging world leaders to come forward and help the "generous" people of Pakistan who were facing a "monsoon on steroids".

4.2.17 Monsoon on Steroids

In his famous dramatic speech, while launching an appeal for aid, the UN secretary-general said:

> Pakistan is awash in suffering. The Pakistani people are facing a monsoon on steroids, the relentless impact of epochal levels of rain and flooding. The Climate catastrophe has killed more than 1000 people, with many more injured. Millions are homeless. Schools and other facilities are being destroyed. Livelihoods are shattered, critical infrastructures wiped out and people's hopes and dreams have washed away. Every province of the country has been affected. In my prior

position as High Commissioner for Refugees, I witnessed the enormous giving spirit of Pakistani people. Welcoming and protecting millions of Afghan refugees, and in many cases sharing their limited resources. It breaks my heart to see these generous people suffering so much. In response to the devastation, the government of Pakistan released funds, including immediate cash relief. But the scale of needs is rising like flood waters and requires the world's collective and prioritized attention. The UN is issuing a fresh appeal for $160m to support the response led by the government of Pakistan. These funds will provide 5.2m people with food, water and sanitation, emergency education, protection and health support. Dear friends, south Asia is one of the world's global climate crisis hotspots. People living in these hotspots were 15 times more likely to die from climate impacts. As we continue to see more and more extreme weather events around the world, it is outrageous that climate action is put on the back burner, as the global emissions of greenhouse gases are still rising, putting all of us, everywhere, in growing danger. The Government of Pakistan has asked for the international community's help. Let us work together to respond quickly and collaboratively to this colossal crisis. Let us all step in solidarity and support the people of Pakistan in their hour of need. Let's stop sleepwalking towards the destruction of our planet by climate change. Today, it is Pakistan. Tomorrow, it could be your country. Thank you.

The UN chief's speech made headlines worldwide, prompting a debate both online and offline, with many questioning the government of Pakistan's ability to manage the floods despite being a nuclear-armed country. António Guterres's emotional video message on August 30, 2022, includes his personal experience in Pakistan and his recent visit to flood-affected areas. His speech has a personal touch, using pronouns such as "I" (once) and "my" (twice). It also relies on inclusive "we" (once) and "us" (three times) to indicate collective responsibility in providing aid to Pakistan and warning others who may be affected by climate change. In the last two sentences, his address becomes engaging and invokes a sense of fear as he says, "It could be your country". In his video message, while drawing an analogy between rising floodwaters and the increasing scale of needs, he passivises and obfuscates the involvement of countries and corporations that have put climate action "on the back burner". He also warns about rising global emissions of greenhouse gases, which put everyone in "growing danger," but he does not mention who is responsible for these emissions. It is interesting to note that the climate catastrophe is framed as an active force that "has killed more than 1,000 people, with many more injured". However, the human agency behind this climate catastrophe is blurred. By framing climate change as an antagonising force that "kills", Guterres shifts the focus away from systemic human activities and commercial exploitation of nature by corporations– considered culprits for climate change. Furthermore, the use of inclusive pronouns, such as "we" and "us", may underscore a sense of collective responsibility, yet Guterres' conscious

exclusion of culprits behind the deteriorating environment diverts attention from the real problem of human involvement. The UN chief's analogy between rising floodwaters and growing needs presents an anthropocentric worldview, where human suffering is emphasized, without focusing on ecological responsibility.

4.2.18 "We Are Suffering from It, but It is Not Our Fault at All"

The Prime Minister of Pakistan, Shehbaz Sharif, told local and international reports during a press conference that they were suffering from an imported problem – climate change, according to an article entitled "Pakistan not to blame for climate crisis-fuelled flooding, says PM Shehbaz Sharif" in *The Independent* (Baloch and Carrington, 2022):

> Pakistan is not to blame for a climate crisis-fuelled disaster that has flooded much of the country, the prime minister has said, as he made a desperate plea for international help in what he said was the "toughest moment" in the nation's history.
>
> "We are suffering from it but it is not our fault at all," Shehbaz Sharif told journalists on Tuesday afternoon at a press conference where his climate change minister referred to the flooding as a "climate catastrophe".
>
> "We are dealing with a situation I have not seen in my life," Sharif said. "More than one million houses are damaged or destroyed. Seventy-two districts of Pakistan are in calamity and all four corners of Pakistan are underwater and more than 3,500km [2,175 miles] of roads have been washed away. Around one million animals have died.

During the same presser, the Prime Minister described the floods as a "climate catastrophe" which was affecting Pakistanis extremely. "We are dealing with a situation I have not seen in my life," the PM said. "It is the toughest moment in the history of Pakistan… Now I say without fear, I have not seen such devastation in my life," he told the journalists. "We request the international community to come and help us and stand by us at this hour". While assuring that there would be transparency in funds and donations, he tried to recover from the trust deficit (see section 4.2.19). The official state narrative of Pakistan was mainly constructed on this rhetoric. Sherry Rehman, the country's climate change minister, is the main force behind the construction of this argument. She actively built this strong case for Pakistan that got global attention. While speaking to journalists, the minister said towns in Pakistan had become "oceans and rivers" and added that, within a few months, Pakistan had gone straight from droughts in Sindh and Balochistan to severe floodings, meaning the country was on the "front of unfolding climate catastrophe" (The Guardian, 2022).

Following this rhetoric, more government officials told local and international media that Pakistan was "paying the price for global climate change, despite only contributing to a small proportion of global emissions" (BBC, 30 Aug. 2022). They called climate change justice

into question and criticized rich countries for their lack of support. Their construction of the floods was based on the global responsibility to financially help Pakistan as a matter of justice. Likewise, during his visit to Pakistan in September 2022, the UN secretary-general called global leaders to come forward and help Pakistan as a matter of justice, not of solidarity or generosity. In continuation of this effort, the United Nations and the government of Pakistan co-hosted an international conference entitled *The International Conference on Climate Resilient Pakistan* that took place on 9 January 2023. It was attended by stakeholders, government officials and the private sector to help Pakistan rebuild after the impacts of the floods had sent the country into misery and despair. According to the organizers and hosts, the conference had two objectives:

1. Present the Resilient Recovery, Rehabilitation, and Reconstruction Framework (4RF), which lays out a multisectoral strategy for rehabilitation and reconstruction in a climate-resilient and inclusive manner.

2. Secure international support and forge long-term partnerships for building Pakistan's climate resilience and adaptation (UNDP).

Many international bodies and the private sector stakeholders "pledged" to help Pakistan during the conference.

Figure 13: Statistics on donations pledged at the conference in Geneva.

While people in Pakistan were expecting their government to hear their appeal and anguish, the government was expecting the international community to listen to their appeal and send climate reparation money (a euphemism for donations). Many developed countries do not accept this rhetoric and may find it difficult to accept the fact that they have historically been responsible for the environmental devastation that has caused devastation. By agreeing to pay climate reparation money, they would indirectly admit that they are at fault. This may not suit many countries' global political positions. Owing to such reasons, for example, the US said it will not "under any circumstances pay reparations to developing countries hit by climate change-fuelled disasters" (Slow, 2023). According to the BBC article entitled "US refuses climate reparations for developing nations":

> The US says it will not "under any circumstances" pay reparations to developing countries hit by climate change-fuelled disasters.
>
> Climate envoy John Kerry made the remarks at a Congress hearing before flying to China to discuss the issue. Some countries want major economies- which produce the most greenhouse gases - to pay for past emissions.
>
> A fund has been established for poorer nations, but it remains unclear how much richer countries will pay. Mr Kerry, a former secretary of state, was asked during a hearing before a House of Representatives foreign affairs committee whether the US would pay countries that have been damaged by floods, storms and other climate-driven disasters.
>
> "No, under no circumstances," he said in response to a question from Brian Mast, the committee chair. He was speaking days before he was due to travel to Beijing to meet with officials to discuss issues around climate change, including plans for this year's UN climate conference, COP28, which will take place in Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates, in November.
>
> Although the agreement was billed as one of the major successes of the summit, there are still many details that need to be ironed out, including how much richer nations will pay and how money will be distributed. A series of meetings have been taking place this year aimed at addressing these issues. Developing nations - which are disproportionately impacted by climate-related impacts - have called for guaranteed compensation from developed countries, who they say are historically responsible for climate change through their high emissions of greenhouse gases.
>
> Richer countries recognise the need to contribute greater funds towards the issue, but framing the payments as reparations is controversial, with some claiming it is a divisive term.
>
> Developing countries also argue that finance targets to address the issue of climate change are too low.

Climate envoy John Kerry, a former secretary of State, made these remarks at a Congress hearing session when he was asked by the House of Representatives foreign affairs committee whether the United States would provide financial assistance to countries affected by the impacts of climate-induced disasters, such as floods and storms. "No, under no circumstances", he replied. At the Sharm el-Sheikh Climate Change Conference (COP 27) in November 2022, over 200 countries agreed to create a loss and damage fund, financed largely by the developed countries, to assist "vulnerable" nations rebuild. This came as a result of the case brought by less-developed countries, in which they argue that those responsible for greenhouse gases should pay for their emissions, including those released in the past. A BBC article (2023) frames this as a case between "poorer nations" and richer countries" and concludes:

> Richer countries recognise the need to contribute greater funds towards the issue, but framing the payments as reparations is controversial, with some claiming it is a divisive term. Developing countries also argue that finance targets to address the issue of climate change are too low.

The controversy surrounding framing financial support as "reparations" is understandable, as it could threaten the interests of global corporations and may turn out to be detrimental to the ambitions of polluting industrial nations. However, the BBC article quoted above frames this issue as a conflict between "richer countries" and "poorer nations", adding complexity. By doing so, it fails to differentiate between those affected by climate change and nations allegedly responsible for global emissions. This framing represents a passive avoidance of the significance of the countries directly impacted by climate change. Rather than distinguishing between the complainants and those allegedly responsible for global emissions, the debate over compensation between developed and less-developed nations is reduced to a conflict between "rich countries" and "poor nations", devaluing the experiences of climate-affected countries. This framing increases mistrust and disparities, as seen in Pakistan's case, where accusations of corruption in flood relief funds led to a halt in aid and donations.

4.2.19 Alleged Charges of Corruption

An article published in *Dawn* 2022, entitled "Trust the State?" asks:

> SHOULD citizens trust the Pakistani state with relief efforts and donations in the aftermath of these devastating floods? This is a common question, and one that was asked after the 2005 earthquake and the 2010 floods as well.

> The fact that this question is being asked shows a trust deficit between Pakistani citizens and public institutions — not just those tasked with relief work, but the

'government' more broadly. Among some segments, at least, donating to NGOs, welfare organisations, individual relief workers, and political parties seems to be preferable over donating to the government.

What is the basis of this distrust? The simple answer is any actual, tangible experience with most government departments is sufficient to leave a person deeply sceptical of public authorities' commitment towards social welfare. This is particularly true for marginalised groups — such as households of the urban and rural poor, and religious, gender and ethnic minorities. Priced out of market-based solutions for basic services, such groups have no option but to turn to the state and face disappointment. Evidence from other contexts also suggests that the increased likelihood of these groups experiencing hardship during calamities and crises can further erode trust.

Dawn refers to this as a "common question" with "should" written in capital letters to emphasize their framing, frequently raised during the 2005 earthquake relief efforts and the 2010 floods. In this section, I will analyze how skeptically framing flood donations can lead to a trust deficit and consequently harm flood victims. The construction of mistrust within the narrative of flood relief not only negatively impacts the incumbent government, but it has far-reaching effects on its power and image. This article's construction of a narrative that questions the integrity of the state of Pakistan regarding its ability to distribute donations with transparency highlights a discursive strategy that diverts attention away from the present tragedy to the past tragic events to normalize skepticism and raise more questions. Additionally, it legitimizes skepticism without evidence, while calling a skeptical enquiry a "common question". It raises public doubt and indirectly shapes the perceptions of the state's incompetence and irregularities in managing public money. This labelling comes from a well-known newspaper, which is also the largest English-language newspaper in Pakistan −*Dawn*. This allegation is further amplified by the international media, which cite local Pakistani media, as we see in the examples below. Then again, more Pakistani media channels started citing international media, and this circle continues, harming the country's image. Pakistan has long faced challenges due to its international reputation, exemplified by its placement on the grey list[12] of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) [xi]for increased monitoring from 2018 to 2022, and previously in 2008-2010 and 2012-2015. Being on this unbecoming list, Pakistan is often associated with accusations of terror financing, corruption, and money laundering, which severely impact its credibility. Pakistan took years to implement FATF's frameworks to

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[12] Jurisdictions under strict monitoring are rigorously implementing the framework provided by FATF to address strategic deficiencies in their regimes, aiming to curb money laundering, terror financing, and corruption.

address these issues to get itself out of the grey list, but negative headlines that frame Pakistan as untrustworthy, especially during floods, can harm the country's image globally. It is also important to emphasize that these framings reinforce perceptions of corruption and instability in the country. For instance, Pakistan ranks 133rd on the Corruption Perception Index (Transparency International, 2024), a statistic often selectively echoed by international media. This negative portrayal in the media creates broader issues for Pakistan, such as geopolitical isolation. Furthermore, international watchdog organizations like FATF have been criticized for being politically compromised. It can be argued that organizations like the FATF and the IMF (International Monetary Fund) serve as tools for powerful nations to exert control over others. For example, John Perkins, in *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man* (2004), discusses such tactics, revealing how financial institutions are used to put pressure on states for strategic interests (The Nation, 2022). Similarly, Javaid's (2022) study entitled "Arm Twisting through FATF. A Case Study of Pakistan" provides details on how FATF has been employed to influence Pakistan's policies, illustrating the geopolitical underpinnings of such actions. In addition to FATF, political discourse from rival nations further exacerbates Pakistan's challenges. For example, in 2016, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi used the BRICS[13] summit in Goa to isolate Pakistan, indirectly accusing it of being the "mothership of terrorism". Without explicitly naming the country, he accused the neighbouring country of promoting terrorism and told international leaders that, "Tragically, the mothership of terrorism is a country in India's neighbourhood" (The Guardian, 2016). PM Modi further induced global and regional leaders to unite against Pakistan, ensuring Pakistan's isolation in the international community through political rhetoric. More importantly, Pakistan's strategic geopolitical location plays a dual role in shaping its image. While it can be maintained that its position may allow it to assert influence in regional power politics, such as during the War on Terror in Afghanistan or the Trade War with China, it also badly exposes the country to economic crises, political instability, and negative international narratives. This dynamic complicates Pakistan's efforts to improve its global standing, as both external pressures and internal vulnerabilities continue to grow.

The following are some examples of news headlines from a Google search obtained from simple keywords like "corruption and floods in Pakistan":

- "Pakistan is Flooded with Corruption" in *Diplomatic Courier*, September 2022.

- "Why Pakistan Is Drowning: Pakistan's flooding is a combination of corruption, mismanagement, and climate change" in *The United States Institute of Peace*,

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[13] BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) is an intergovernmental organization which consists of 9 countries and was formed to identify investment opportunities.

September 2022.

- "Flooded with Corruption: Pakistan's Relief Effort" in *The Washington Post*, January 2023.

- "As Pakistan floods, fears of corruption undermine relief" in *Fair Planet*, September 2022.

- "Global concerns erupt after massive corruption in Pakistan's flood relief surfaces" in *ANI*, October 2022.

- "Corruption, neglect and insurgency hurt flood relief in the Pakistani province of Balochistan" in *Gulf Today*, November 2022.

- "Pakistan's Floods Are a Man-Made Disaster**:** It's not just climate change – corruption, bad governance" in *The Diplomat*, September 2022.

- "Corruption in relief funds occurs again in Pakistan" in *Morung Express*, October 2024

- "Reports of massive corruption, looting of flood relief to Pakistan from Washington serious, says US" in *WION*, October 2022.

- "One-third of Pakistan was under water recently but corrupt politicians are busy looting foreign aid" in *Times Now World*, October 2022.

Dawn's article, published in September 2022, adopts a skeptical tone towards the state, creating an impression of untrustworthiness. The title, "Trust the State?", functions as a rhetorical question and presents itself as a "common sense question" but leaves the subject ambiguous. Interestingly, the lack of an explicit subject in the title of the article may create ambiguity and further confusion and skepticism. It does not vividly tell us *who* should trust the state. Is it the people in Pakistan or the international community? Or donors who were already skeptical of the country due to an image deficit? This ambiguity sets the stage for further skepticism, fuelled by political rhetoric and media narratives. For instance, in an August 2022 BBC interview, before Dawn's article in September, a local opposition politician claimed that the government was looting donations. This statement fuelled political debates and amplified distrust within Pakistan. Despite these claims and all the political noise, investigative reporting by Geo News revealed no evidence of corruption in flood relief efforts. According to their fact-check article "No Evidence to Support Politician's Claim of Corruption in Flood Aid", international organization staff confirmed that no complaints of corruption had been received. However, *Dawn's* article appeared to have catalyzed reactionary reporting in international media, reinforcing skepticism. Articles such as "Pakistan: Data Reveals Corruption in the Delivery of Foreign Aid to Flood Victims*"* by *Asia News International* (ANI, 2022) cites "local media reports" about irregularities, but they fail to specify their sources. Similarly, ANI's (2022) "Global Concerns Erupt After Massive Corruption in Pakistan's Flood Relief Surfaces" misreports the 2005 earthquake as a flood. Due to pressure and ratings, factually incorrect

articles may pass the editorial process and scrutiny, but many media outlets deliberately employ a clickbait[14] strategy to attract views. For example, *Times Now News*'s (2022) article entitled "One-Third of Pakistan Was Under Water Recently, But Corrupt Politicians Are Busy Looting Foreign Aid" frames all politicians as corrupt while cautiously adding "allegedly". Clickbait, as a by-product of online journalism, has become a trend that relies on sensationalism to attract viewers into clicking ostensibly free news articles (Khawar and Boukes, 2024), but in fact, it is paid for by advertising traffic on websites. For this reason, prominent journalists, like Piers Morgan, utilize sensational titles, buzzwords, and thumbnails. The *Times Now* News (2022) article writes, "Corrupt politicians are allegedly plundering relief aid". It employs a popular discourse that frames all politicians as "corrupt" while using a slightly cautious approach by including "allegedly plundering relief aid". Articles like these may have achieved the desired views, but they could also negatively contribute to Pakistan's image and prompt another diverting debate, as was evident from *Dawn's* article. *Dawn's* article "Trust the State?" was published in early September 2022, which may have significantly given rise to cyclical and reactionary reporting from international news articles, mostly published in late September and over the following months.

The narrative of institutional mistrust in local media and political rhetoric badly affected flood relief operations and further damaged the country's image, resulting in an image deficit. When there is a trust deficit between citizens and public institutions, then for some social segments of society:

> At least, donating to NGOs, welfare organisations, individual relief workers, and political parties seems to be preferable over donating to the government (Dawn, 2022).

Dawn's article frames government institutions negatively and suggests that donating to NGOs and other organizations is preferable over contributing to the Pakistani government. This framing is detrimental and harmful to the country's appeal for reparations money and fund collection schemes such as the Prime Minister's Flood Relief Fund.

However, according to the oldest English-language newspaper in Pakistan (launched in 1941 by the founder of the country, Muhammad Ali Jinnah), distrust between the public and government was mainly the result of "tangible experience with most government departments" that is enough to leave a person "deeply sceptical of public authorities' commitment towards social welfare", with "ideology and politics" more reasons to not trust the government. When Pakistan's "oldest newspaper", which "enjoys a great deal of credibility with the country's journalist community, readers and civil society" (Reports Without Borders), frames the

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[14] Something (such as a headline) designed to make readers want to click on a hyperlink, especially when the link leads to content of dubious value or interest (Merriam-Webster, https://www.merriam-webster.com/).

Pakistani institutions as untrustworthy, local donors, including international bodies, are likely to be hesitant before offering any money to the Pakistani government. Politicians also exploit this based on their respective political and ideological stances. For instance, opposition parties warned the public not to contribute to the government's flood relief food, as the politicians from opposing parties accused the incumbent government of incompetence and corruption (Dawn, 2022).

Similarly, the military establishment in Pakistan has promoted anti-politics rhetoric for the last 65 years as it has directly governed the country three times through military coups in 1958, 1977 and 1999 (Nayar, 2007). During flood relief operations, the army establishment uses the space left by the government to present itself as a truly serving and competent organization, compared to democratic institutions. For example, during the floods in 2010, the army was hailed and championed as public anger was rampant against President Zardari (The Guardian, 2010). Likewise, during the floods in 2022, the tradition continued, as it was reported that Pakistan could again head towards soft military rule (Diplomatic Courier, 2022) or a hybrid regime. This perception is often shaped by some journalists, army-backed politicians and political commentators, who frame the military as the only disciplined and organized institution capable of managing crises effectively. Such biased representations, while not universally accepted, gain popularity during political and natural disasters, where the perceived inefficacy of civilian governments is highlighted, and democracy is framed as a Western system inappropriate for Pakistan. This framing carries significant consequences, as the effects of this representation are multifaceted. Internally, it increases public skepticism in the democratic system and elected governments and creates a sense of dependency on the military for crisis management. Internationally, it reinforces Pakistan's image as a politically unstable country where government is weak and incapable. However, this framing may weaken the army as an institution in the long run, as it allows the army to muddle into politics and simultaneously allows politics to infiltrate the army. Siddiqa's book *Military Inc. – Inside Pakistan's Military Economy* (2016) examines the case of Pakistan's military economy, its business and political interests and the consequences of the army doing business for the Pakistani economy and political system. The author has also argued that merging the military and corporate sectors may affect the military's professional skills and capacities. The military's corporate interests are linked with politics, which weaken the democratic and public institutions in Pakistan, undermining the civilian government's legitimacy and disrupting the balance of power, allowing the military to consolidate political influence – a dynamic that has been described as a "key driver of political dysfunction since independence" (Diplomatic Courier, 2022). In critical times, such political and media accusations and framing may or may not always be accurate and substantiated, but these allegations shape public opinion and perception towards their democratically elected governments and sully the country's image worldwide.

Dawn is somehow correct in highlighting the commonly accepted and popular perception that politicians and governments are corrupt, and this rhetoric is amplified in political rallies and TV talk shows in Pakistan. Many people in Pakistan justify tax evasion because they say they do not know where their taxes might end up. Following this perception, it may be acceptable to make assumptions about the people's attitudes towards the government but in times of calamity, when the country is expecting the world to collectively rescue Pakistan, it would be important to collectively send a positive message to the rest of the world from inside Pakistan. However, the newspaper uses Pakistan's previous performance to question its integrity in the present and justifies skepticism, as it writes:

> *The Pakistani state's past performance in managing calamities of various sorts is*
> *not abysmal, given existing capacity levels* (Dawn, 2022, Italics in original).

While many people are more likely to offer their Zakat[xii] to charity organizations or other social welfare organizations, it can be argued that the state is the largest organization with all resources and access to critical information, compared to different charities and NGOs. After building a case where people are unlikely to trust the state's moral integrity and, therefore, they would be more willing to offer their donations to non-state organizations, *Dawn* concludes:

> It's hard to deny the mountain of evidence for the general lack of trust as well as
> the reasons for its existence. In this context, citizens are well within their right to
> donate to any civil society or political actor that they think can provide assistance to
> those impacted by a disaster. Getting money, relief goods and other resources to
> those who need it the most is the need of the hour (2022).

Getting relief goods and services to flood victims was the most important thing to do during the crisis. Together, media frames and political statements got this issue repeated and highlighted all over the media, and it reached the officials in the United States. When the U.S. State Department spokesperson, Ned Price, was asked what measures the US government were taking to ensure transparency in the distribution of relief funds in Pakistan under the pretext of alleged corruption, he said, "This is something we take very seriously, not only in Pakistan but anywhere around the world where American taxpayer dollars are implicated and when there is an urgent humanitarian interest at stake". He further explained that US officials were monitoring relief operations on the ground in Pakistan through a proper mechanism body known as DART (Disaster Assistance Response Team), which has its members in flood-affected areas to ensure American taxpayers' money reaches the deserving people (Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, 2022).

Dawn (2022) may justify its claim by blaming the government for its failure in better preparing for the floods as it considers it "entirely legitimate to suggest that much of the damage is partially because the government failed to do its job in the months and years

leading up to the disaster – by not having adequate systems in place, by encouraging risk-inducing development, and by underfunding solutions that combat climate change". However, legitimizing a perception of corruption in the name of common skeptical questions will not help the country or Pakistanis because the country already suffers from the perception of corruption. Reports of the trust deficit within the country could only trigger more reactionary international news reports that negatively frame not only the country but also flood victims and relief operations and efforts during a disaster. Other media framings, such as "fighting climate change", heavily rely on war terminology, which was yet another dominant narrative of floods in Pakistan: for example, the way *Dawn* wrote "combat climate change" could have implications for the country and its institutions.

This is not the first time Pakistan has suffered from an image deficit during a crisis. In the 2010 floods, UN aid agencies told international news that relief operations were underfunded. Despite the United Nations' repeated appeals for donations, aid agencies found it difficult to convince donors of the urgency and severity of the disaster. "I just don't think the world has realized the magnitude of this now because this story has just been slowly increasing. It doesn't have the drama of an earthquake that impacts a huge number of people all at once", Bill Berger, USAID's official in South Asia, told the BBC. With a 'war on terror' in Afghanistan, it was difficult to remain neutral in 2010, and this affected Pakistan's image and global position as well. Extremism was on the rise in the northern areas of Pakistan that bordered Afghanistan and maintained a sympathetic outlook on the Taliban. According to a BBC article (2010), "Aid agencies have blamed Pakistan's 'image deficit' for the shortfall, as potential donors fear the funds would be diverted into extremism in the country". But many argued that the UN had to do more to convince donors that the money was not "going to go to the hands of Taliban", Melanie Brooks, the representative for Care International, told the AFP news. The spokeswoman further explained that it was unfair to stop relief operations and donations just because of the country's image, as flood victims are mothers, fathers and children. Assertions like money going into the hands of terror outfits add another layer to the complexity of the issue – it also provides an opportunity for opposition political parties within the country to exploit this narrative to gain political advantages. As mentioned earlier, the perception of corruption is more harmful than corruption itself. There was a fear of donation money going into the hands of the Taliban in 2010 and money not being properly utilized in 2022. In both cases, this increased the trust deficit between the global North and the global South. Actual issues related to flood victims and climate change mitigation were thus sidelined by more politically acknowledged issues, like corruption and irregularities in money management. It is interesting to note that, in 2022, there were no concerns about money going into the hands of the Taliban, despite the fact that they were still in charge of the government in Afghanistan. Additionally, there were no foreign security forces in Afghanistan compared to

2010, when the narratives of the war on terror were more visible and dominant. During the 2010 floods, the main concerns were about possible terrorist actions against the security forces in Pakistan that were busy with relief operations. A US official told the BBC that the Taliban were planning to carry out terror activities against foreigners "participating in the ongoing flood relief operations in Pakistan" (26 Aug. 2010). However, there were no attacks, and the top US military told the AFP news that they had seen "no security threat" and appreciated the security measures taken by the Pakistani army. The media framed the country as a negative force that prompted discussions on security issues, not denying the seriousness of the security threats but using fear of attacks to undermine entire food relief campaigns and operations that affected flood victims and added to their misery.

4.2.20 Terrorism and Religion During Disasters

For example, the then UK Prime Minister David Cameron, during his official visit to India, used this frame to blame Pakistan for "exporting terror". The timing and place of this statement made it even more controversial and spicy for corporate media. The more the press discussed this issue, the less they talked about the floods. This case shows that framing a country in a negative light during a calamity will only attract opposing voices and promote division. The Pakistani High Commission in the UK also feared that the comments made by the UK Prime Minister about Pakistan "exporting terror" would divert people's attention from donating to the flood victims. In a similar vein, Pakistan's ambassador to the UN also added that relief operations and donation campaigns had "suffered" after PM Cameron's statement. On the other hand, the Taliban in the tribal areas of Pakistan described the floods as God's punishment on people for electing a non-religious government and induced people to not accept anything from Western donors. In both cases, it can be argued that politics and extremism downplayed the importance of climate change discussion. Literature shows that climate change exacerbates conflicts, and the people affected by climate change are vulnerable to terror recruitment and violence (see United Nations Presser, 2021). Vivekananda, Schilling, and Smith (2014) present a case of the Lake Chad Basin, which, due to climate change, has experienced shrinkage. This environmental problem has led to poverty, violence and vulnerability, also including terrorist recruitment in the affected communities. Similarly, Kelley et al. (2015) studied the link between climate-induced drought in Syria and the subsequent civil war and terror activities. Raleigh et al. (2015) explored how drought and famine in Somalia contributed to violence. Additionally, Lytle (2017) studied the role of climate change as an active contributor to terrorism in Nigeria and Pakistan. Instead of putting efforts together to present a counter-narrative to those extremists, the political leadership created space for miscreants like the Taliban and other extremist groups to spread their propaganda.

Religious commentators often persuade people to view natural disasters through a religious lens. Hoffman (1999) argues that disasters can often challenge people's perceptions of the world and influence their rationale for calamities. Similarly, to understand this, more disaster research focuses on how individuals interpret disasters and how this understanding shapes their behaviours during the recovery process following a disaster (Azim and Islam, 2016). As indicated previously, just as the Taliban used the floods to influence people's behaviour during the 2010 floods, similar attempts were made in 2024, during the floods and storms in Pakistan, by a religious Pakistani professor, Syed Ahmed Rashid, in his Facebook post. In his Facebook post, he framed the conflict between Palestine and Israel to blame the Pakistani people and their government for the lack of action and support for the Palestinian people and claimed that storms "surrounding the country were a punishment" from God. During the monsoon season, when the government warned citizens about the possible storm, on his Facebook profile, he said: "Don't overthink it; just consider how, when Israel was doing everything in Palestine, everyone remained silent... and now the storms have surrounded you". On the other hand, an Israeli American Rabbi, Yosef Mizrachi, also called out on Americans for dancing in support of the Palestinians during a rally and said that the storms and rains in Florida and the floods in New Orleans were sent by Hashem (God) as a punishment.

Figure 14: A screenshot from a video uploaded by the Turkish Radio and Television (TRT) on their Instagram page.

Source: https://www.instagram.com/trtworld/reel/DBBLc5nCe5k/
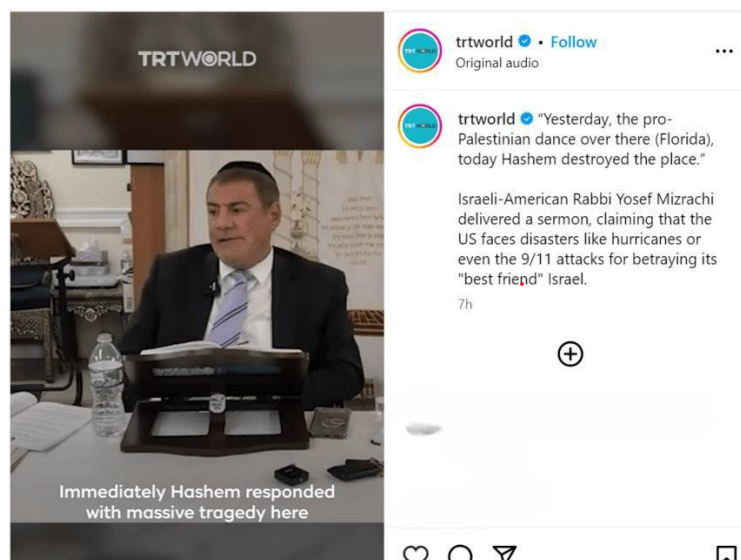
It should be emphasized that such emotionally charged framing can be harmful within the context of climate change and natural disasters. This ideological harm can affect social and public spaces, such as workplaces, where these religious figures are equally respected and followed by people. This destructive ideology redirects the narrative from addressing the tangible and immediate causes of disasters – like climate change or poor governance – to framing them as moral retribution or cosmic justice. Corporate media in Pakistan also

prioritized internal politics, apart from religious polarization. The following section presents an overview of the narratives of domestic politics during the floods in 2010 and 2022.

4.2.21 Internal Politics and Linguistic Bias in the Media

The Pakistani media has been criticized for ignoring general public-related issues and focusing more on political issues on a regular basis. In the 2010 floods, national Pakistani media focused more on President Zardari's untimely visit to the United Kingdom compared to the flood victims. Talk shows and news headlines centred around his visit and shifted focus away from the flood-related discussion to a more political issue. Rescue operations were either not reported or described in a negative light. Instead of mobilizing the local population and international organizations in support of flood relief operations, the Pakistani media highlighted anti-government sentiments and framed the government as incompetent and untrustworthy (Hassan, 2011). This further increased the trust deficit between the state and its people (discussed in section 4.2.19), and took an absurd turn when anchorpersons, who were flown by state helicopters to the flood-affected areas, started reporting the absence of government machinery in flood-affected areas and claimed that they were the first to reach and report (Hassan, 2011). Similarly, it can be observed that mainstream Pakistani media identically covered the 2022 floods. Hassan (2022) notices there were "lapses" in media coverage of the floods, where reporting was "often forced or staged". This manner of reporting was considered "too little too late" due to ongoing political rallies in the country's Punjab province by Imran Khan, who had been forced out of his government through a vote of no confidence. It was also pointed out that national Pakistani Urdu media delayed reporting of the floods because they were more interested in covering Imran Khan's political gatherings in Punjab (South Asian Voices, 2022). My study highlights this bias in media narratives and reporting of the floods, indicating media priority and bias. *The South Asian Voices* (2022) also pointed out bias within Pakistani Urdu media towards other less-developed provinces, such as Sindh and Balochistan. The country's status quo is mostly from the Punjab province; therefore, Pakistan's news often originates from the Punjab province. To get a local take on this issue, on 22 August 2024, in Hyderabad, Sindh, I interviewed Nisar Khokhar, a local journalist from the Sindh province who has been critical of bias in the national media in Pakistan. When asked about his views on this claim, he retorted:

> The dominance of Punjabi influence from central Pakistan and Karachi within Sindh often leads to the prioritization of affairs from major cities like Lahore, Islamabad, and Karachi. Even smaller cities in South Punjab also struggle to receive equal attention from the centrist Pakistani media. The bias against smaller cities in Sindh and Baluchistan is even more evident. Pakistani Urdu media often shows a significant bias against these provinces, which was especially clear

during the floods. Journalists appeared more focused on covering what politicians were wearing, eating, or saying at rallies in Lahore and Islamabad, rather than reporting on whether flood victims had access to necessities like food or shelter (Hyderabad, August 2024).

Another senior Sindhi journalist, Ghulam Mustafa, the director of Kawish Television Network (KTN), shared similar views during his interview with the *Institute of Commonwealth Studies* (2022):

> The Punjabi and Karachi-dominated mainstream media's bias was obvious because the floods affected some remote areas of Sindh, Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The floods victims' story was not making money while ratings were going up for the political rallies (Lahore, October 2022)

Unfair and under-reported coverage of flood victims in the media demonstrates structural inequalities and ethnic bias within the country. Ignoring Indigenous communities, especially in Sindh, PKP, and Balochistan has ecological consequences. They are already ignored by state policies and remain vulnerable to climate change. It is significant to note that the mainstream media has a major proportion of its news in the Urdu language. Urdu is the national and official language of Pakistan, but only 7.8 % of Pakistanis can speak Urdu (Translators without Borders, 2022; Imminent, 2020). The majority of Urdu speakers live in urban Pakistani areas, like Karachi and Hyderabad.
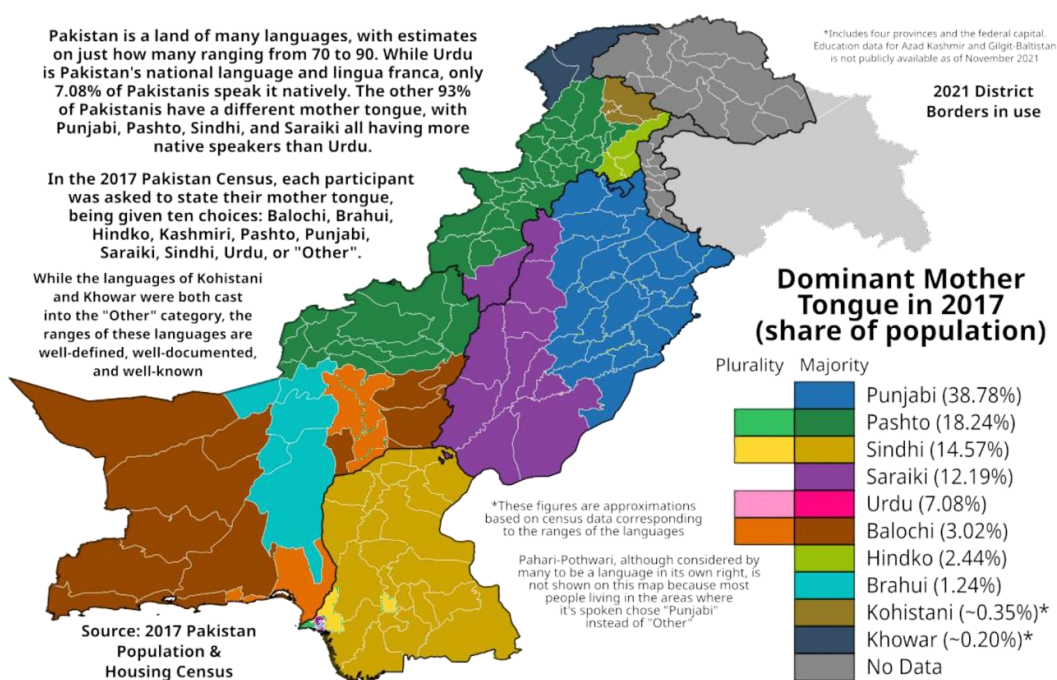

Figure 15: A linguistic map of Pakistan. Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2017_Pakistani_census

In the same interview referenced above with Nisar Khokhar (22 Aug. 2024), I asked him if language bias was an issue in media reporting. He answered:

> The dominance of the Urdu language has always been a dividing force in this country. Our establishment wanted to impose the Urdu language on East Pakistan to replace the Bengali language. We all know what happened after this. East Pakistan is now known as Bangladesh today. Bangladesh was created in 1971. So, imposing a dominant language sows the seeds of division. Our centrist mainstream media works as a tool to suppress minorities in this country, unfortunately. This has always been evident in media reporting. This bias is evident in the way local Sindhi journalists struggle to get their stories aired by Urdu media in Karachi, as their submissions are often rejected. The Urdu-language media avoids broadcasting stories in other regional languages. During the floods, Urdu media journalists came here (Sindh) for reporting, but they did not speak the language, so they staged reporting. They do not have access to people or their language. They additionally do not understand their needs. The result is local voices, and their rights are not taken care of by mainstream Pakistani media (Hyderabad, August 2024).

A senior Sindhi journalist, Ghulam Mustafa, also highlights underlying politics in the linguistic landscape within the Pakistani mainstream in his interview published in *Reuters* (2022):

> Language has a major sway in Pakistani media. Urdu is the national language and news in that language carries weight. Punjabi is another dominant language because stronger politicians are from the Punjab province. Sindh is the only language in Pakistan that has its own script [other than Urdu], and it includes Karachi, the commercial capital, where many media houses are headquartered. And yet we have to make twice the noise to make ourselves heard.

> Let me give you an example of how influential national media is when it comes to the floods. Sindhi media was the first to report from the province's third largest city Sukkur and we said that there was no place for the water to reach the ocean. When we started reporting on this, provincial chief Murad Ali Shah did a press conference and appealed to the Urdu media to please cover the floods in Sindh so that the federal government sent help and they could appeal to the international community.

As mentioned previously, the media prefers political news to sideline minorities in the mainstream national narratives. Flood victims from Sindh and Balochistan do not represent a powerful class; they are already marginalized and face systematic and social issues like poverty and lack of representation. This study upholds Nisar Khokhar's views that local communities

lack support and that their needs are not heard due to linguistic and ethnic bias. In 2022, mainstream media gave more screen time to the cricket match between India and Pakistan that was being played in the Middle East. Flood-related news and discussions were taken off-screen in the mainstream Pakistani media, giving space to cricket-related discussions and debates, and this was also reflected on social platforms like Facebook and Twitter (now known as X). The public was therefore engaged in sports and internal politics within Pakistan in times of national crisis. The more mainstream media talks about these topics, the more social media engagement and response will be generated. For similar reasons, politicians are often blamed for lacking empathy towards flood victims. For example, Pakistan's president, Asif Ali Zardari, was heavily criticized for his untimely official visit to the UK in 2010. Some Pakistani-origin UK politicians refused to meet President Zardari, citing a lack of sympathy for his people back in the country. According to Mahmood (BBC 03 Aug. 2010), a British politician of Pakistani origin and a former Member of Parliament, as well as Shadow Minister for Europe, the president of Pakistan should have stayed with the people during the environmental calamity rather than "swanning around" in a foreign country. He also expressed concerns that the president's absence could be exploited by extremist groups like the Taliban to gain support and acceptance. Ishtiak Ahmed, of the Bradford Council of Mosques, also believed that Zardari should have stayed in the country (BBC 3 Aug. 2010). Another local MP in the UK, Khalid Mahmood, blamed the president for not having enough "empathy or sympathy" with flood victims, leaving millions of his countrymen in flood waters to go overseas. The same happened during the 2022 floods: a local minister from Sindh, Manzoor Wassan, was blamed and criticized for lacking sympathy, due to his declaration that the flood situation was actually similar to the scenery of Venice.

4.2.22 War Narratives and Water Terrorism

As Whorf (1956) argued, language change can transform our appreciation of the Cosmos. This whole narrative of fighting climate change conveys the idea that "defeating" the opposition is the only way to win the "battle". Media rhetoric, as it is visible in expressions used by *Dawn*, e.g. "battle climate change" and "combat climate change", creates a sense of urgency to win this "war". But is it working well? In her book entitled *The Argument Culture: Stopping America's War of Words* (1998), Tennen argues that popular military and sports metaphors lead us to view everything through the lens of conflict –us vs. the other side. She argues that this approach "limits our collective imagination about what we can do to fix complex problems" (The Guardian, 2018).

At present, war frames are common in our media and political narratives and often go unnoticed because the media and politicians have already been "fighting" wars on poverty, terrorism and drugs for a very long time, so the public has become inured to the use of these

expressions. The war against poverty or drugs, however, has not been successful and has almost turned into a fruitless argument because this "us-versus-them" narrative turns people away from logic and into the realm of emotion and values. As the conflict drags on without resolution, partisans become increasingly bewildered by the other side's beliefs and actions" (The Guardian, 2018). For example, in the US, calling people "climate change deniers" has only led to further division within society. Weaponizing flood narratives by labelling mitigation efforts as combating and battling may not help ecological lifeforms in Pakistan and Pakistani people, but the thought may prevail that combating climate change requires military rule and action. This war mentality was proposed by Climate Mobilization[15] to spread awareness and prompt action as was done during the Second World War, when "Shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the US had overhauled its economy and society for the war effort. Government spending soared from 30% of the economy in 1941 to 79% at the peak of the war in 1944. With a shared sense of national purpose, people made sacrifices for the common good. They planted victory gardens, bought war bonds, and rallied to produce the tanks, planes, and machine guns needed to fight a global war" (The Guardian, 2018).

This rhetoric may still be effective in the Western context, but not in the Pakistani context, where people in the country are often reminded of the potential attack by a larger rival neighbouring country – India. Politicians and the military establishment frequently use this war narrative to obfuscate many other more important issues like unemployment, poverty and poor health and education systems. This aggressive framing gives rise to more regional politics and polarization, e.g. "water terrorism".

4.2.23 "Water Terrorism"

Political pundits have been speculating that a war could break out between India and Pakistan over control of water resources (Varnakomola, 2022). Both South Asian countries have fought three wars over Kashmir since partition in 1947, which many argue is a conflict over water rather than land. Be it a cricket match or a skirmish at LOC (Line of Control)[16], nuclear-armed countries have been rivals for decades. India's advantageous upstream position (United States Institute of Peace, 2023) and Pakistan's being an "epicentre of terrorism" – in the Indian External Affairs Minister's words – have been an integral part of the conflict. However, recently, both countries have been involved in what the United States Institute of Peace calls a "Dangerous Game in the Indus Basin".

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[15] The Climate Mobilization is a grassroots environmental advocacy organization focused on driving large-scale political action to combat global warming (https://www.theclimatemobilization.org/).

[16] The Line of Control is a 460-mile-long military control line that divides the disputed region of Jammu and Kashmir between Pakistan and India.

4.2.24 India vs. Pakistan over Indus Water

Tensions have increased between India and Pakistan since 2014 when the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came into power and took a strong public position against Pakistan regarding water-sharing with its downstream neighbour. Tensions started rising in the Indus Basin in 2019 when the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, publicly announced that his country would stop "every drop" of water in the Rivers Ravi, Sutlej, , which the Indus Waters Treaty [xiii]assigns to Indian uses — from flowing into Pakistan" (United Nations Institute of Peace, 2023). Statements like these give rise to fears of being kept thirsty to death or being drowned in flood waters in case of excessive and untimely water release from an upstream neighbour. Tensions rise dramatically between both countries when elections approach, as most campaign speeches are based on this fear of a neighbour. Warmongers, including right-wing political parties and some media outlets and journalists from both India and Pakistan, perpetuate fear by "beating the drums of war" and employing war metaphors, accompanied by relentless, battle-charged rhetoric. Similar scenes were on the rise again in the Pakistani media during the floods, as it was also an election year.

News anchors and local politicians started blaming India for water terrorism and drowning in Pakistan. In response, the High Commission of India in Islamabad (Pakistan) released a public statement citing "negative propaganda against India on floods" in the Pakistani media:

> There are allegations being made in the print and electronic media of India being responsible for the floods in Pakistan through the release of excessive quantities of water from its dams upstream. There have also been claims of India waging a 'water war'. The press release further said that there was no reality in those 'false, misplaced' assertions and informed that 'both India and Pakistan are vulnerable during intense precipitation in the Himalayan region during extreme weather conditions' and therefore allegations of "waging a 'water war'" bear no relation whatsoever to the reality on the ground and are unwarranted (Indian High Commission in Islamabad).

More recently, in April 2025, the Indian government unilaterally withdrew from the Indus Water treaty as a response to a terrorist attack in the Indian administered part of Kashmir to teach Pakistan a "lesson" for allegedly supporting terrorists. Pakistan has denied allegations and considers blocking Pakistan's share of water "an act of war". However, this is not the first time India has been blamed for waging a water war against a downstream neighbour. After Bangladesh was submerged in floodwater that affected more than 5 million people in August 2024, India was again blamed for this, but this was by another neighbour– Bangladesh.

Massive floods hit Feni, in southeast Bangladesh bordering India, and hit 11 districts, affecting millions. According to a CNN (27 Aug. 2024) article entitled "Millions in this country are stranded by flooding. Many blame their neighbour", Bangladesh is no stranger to floods and cyclones either, but this time, "flood took them (Bangladeshis) by surprise – and people here blame officials in India". Locals, including flood victims and volunteers, told CNN reports that India had released water from the Dumbur dam without any warning. Shoriful Islam, a volunteer and IT worker who had returned to his hometown from Dhaka to assist in rescue operations, angrily told CNN:

> We hate India and this is Indian water. They opened the gate, but no information was given (CNN, 27 Aug. 2024).

This prompted an immediate response from the Indian government, as the Minister of External Affairs spokesperson "debunked" and rejected CNN's report for "holding India responsible for the floods in Bangladesh and said the report was "misleading" and "factually incorrect". He further stated that:

> We have seen the (US media house) report on the flood situation in Bangladesh. Its narrative is misleading and suggests that India is somehow responsible for the floods. This is factually not correct and ignores the facts mentioned in the press releases issued by the Government of India clarifying the situation (India Today, 31 Aug. 2024).

This debate emerged after a former Bangladeshi Prime Minister, Shaik Haseena[17], fled to India for refuge after her government was toppled by student-led protests that turned into a nationwide movement against the former PM's 15 years of rule in the country. After Haseena's ouster and refuge in India, the Indian Media blamed the Pakistani spy agency ISI (The Print, 7 Oct. 2024) and the American CIA for "fuelling unrest in Bangladesh" (Daily Excelsior, 10 Aug. 2024). During all this chaos, politics played a part in diverting attention from the floods to regional and internal politics. My study comments on conspiracy theories which were prevalent during floods not only in Pakistan, but also in Italy (see section 4.4), and which were politically floated and used to blame the enemy. A similar situation characterizes Bangladesh's case, where attention was diverted and all focus shifted to India from the actual flood victims in Bangladesh. It highlights how dominant discourse undermines climate change and flood victims, especially in South Asia, but also in the so-called "developed" North, as we see in section 4.4. Using water as a weapon for political gains will harm climate mitigation and

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[17] See "What's happening in Bangladesh? Student protest that led to PM Sheikh Hasina's ouster explained": (https://www.independent.co.uk/asia/south-asia/bangladesh-protests-reason-sheikh-hasina-resignation-muhammad-yunus-b2593920.html.

negatively affect people's perception of climate change. During the floods in Pakistan in 2022, politics took over the climate change debate, leaving flood victims and their media coverage unattended.

Within two years, the same happened in Bangladesh in 2024, where flood victims were overshadowed. In both cases, war narratives dominated the screens, and climate change factors were mainly undermined in discussions. The situation is even more sensitive in Pakistan, as war terminology in the Pakistani media can shape opinions and send a pro-military rule message to Pakistani people who have always been told that politicians are corrupt and therefore only one institution (the army) is capable of running the country. As proposed on 8th October 2024 (Reuters, 2024) by the Chief Minister of Punjab, Pakistan and India should work on "climate diplomacy" to control climate-related issues, like air pollution, which affects both. Both countries have been suffocated by air pollution because nine Indian and one Pakistani city have ranked as the top ten most polluted cities in the world. South Asian countries also ranked as the most polluted countries in the world, with Bangladesh on top of the list, followed by Pakistan and India, respectively (IQAir, 2023). These countries have also been frequently hit by floods, but political narratives overshadow climate change discourse, and polarized war narratives in the media influence the public opinion in these countries, keeping them away from climate change-related discussions. Therefore, my study proposes that the media and politicians drop their metaphorical weapons in favour of peaceful metaphors, such as "building bridges", "healing the wounds of conflict", "finding common ground", "planting the seeds of understanding", and "fostering dialogue".

4.2.25 Metaphors in Flood Discourse

These peace metaphors are more effective because they promote collaboration and collective responsibility. Additionally, they draw on the language of harmony, the primary goal of ecolinguistics, along with unity and resolution, to foster mutual respect and understanding. This approach to language use can potentially emphasize cooperation and reconciliation, paving the way for peace. Compared to war metaphors, peace metaphors can reduce tensions, encourage dialogue, and inspire unity. Specifically, media discourse and political rhetoric can promote peace metaphors to effectively de-escalate conflicts, frame issues constructively, and inspire meaningful dialogue and peaceful change.

We do not need to "fight" floods, climate change, or neighbouring countries. Instead, we need to focus on managing floods more effectively. To gain insights into floodwater management, Prof. Mustafa (see section 4.2.1) emphasized the importance of drawing on local ecological knowledge and Indigenous wisdom. He mentioned how some Indigenous communities historically embraced natural phenomena, such as praying for floods and rains or

worshipping volcanoes. For instance, communities in Bangladesh often live near floodwaters and have developed techniques to utilize them effectively for cultivating rice paddies, showing the value of local knowledge in adapting to environmental challenges. We do not win every battle with weapons, and framing climate change as a "war" has significant ecological and social consequences. War discourse may normalize military expenditure and undermine other important public sectors like health and education. For example, military training and warfare cause significant pollution, as, according to the *Conflict and Environmental Observatory* (2020), military vehicles, aircraft, and logistics operations rely heavily on traditional oil-based energy. The CO_2 emissions generated by the world's largest armies are reportedly "greater than many of the world's countries combined" (Conflict and Environmental Observatory, 2020). Militaries are estimated to contribute approximately 5.5% of all global greenhouse gas emissions. Besides emissions, military activities also pose other ecological risks. For example, weapon testing, wrecked ships and submarines, and damaged offshore oil infrastructure can severely contribute to marine pollution and affect marine life. Moreover, in countries such as Pakistan, Egypt and Iran, a significant portion of the annual fiscal budget is allocated to purchasing military hardware and weapons. This often leads to reduced investment in critical public sectors like health and education. In Pakistan, for instance, the defence budget is 1,523 billion rupees, which accounts for 17.5% of total government expenditure and 2.2% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). By comparison, only 1.91% of GDP is allocated to education (Dawn, 2024 and The Financial Express, 2024).

War metaphors often prioritize immediate, combative solutions that can sideline holistic and sustainable approaches. For instance, aggressive infrastructure projects aimed at "fighting" climate change may harm ecosystems and ignore the nuanced needs of local communities. Recently, in Sindh, the central government announced plans to construct six canals over the Indus River (*Sindhu Dharya* in Sindhi). This decision prompted widespread protests across Sindh, with local communities, including poets, writers, and the Sindhi Women's Movement, who came in large numbers to oppose the project. They criticized the government's plan as a colonial development model and expressed concerns about its ecological consequences and the displacement of communities who have lived along the Indus River for generations. The largest rally took place in Karachi, where protesters carried banners with slogans such as *Save Sindhu, Save Climate,* and *Save Sindh,* opposing corporate farming and the colonial construction models.

Charles Eisenstein, in *Climate: A New Story* (2018), suggests reframing the discourse with positive narratives, such as discussing how renewable energy transitions create jobs and foster community resilience. To be precise, investing in community and small-scale renewable energy projects can empower local communities while fostering economic growth. For instance, initiatives such as rooftop solar installations create employment opportunities for

local contractors and small business owners. These projects can also enable locals to sell the electricity generated on their rooftops. In the Indian city of Lucknow, for example, residents were able to sell electricity at 43% below the central market price, allowing other residents to buy affordable and locally produced clean energy that also reduced their electricity bills. Moreover, the installation and construction of renewable energy systems, such as wind farms and solar farms, require skilled labour, and create further job opportunities. Operations, maintenance, and logistics for these systems also provide ongoing and sustainable employment for local communities. Therefore, instead of increasing defence budgets and waging wars, countries must invest in empowering local communities while also strengthening relations with neighbouring countries through people-to-people dialogue and collaborative initiatives to elevate people from poverty. In particular, countries like India and Pakistan that have fought wars since 1947, according to some estimations, have spent over $1.7-2.1 trillion over the past 75 years (South Asia Citizens Web, 1999 and The Express Tribune, 2019). It is important to note that over 1.1 billion people live in acute poverty, with India having the highest number of poor people/ citizens (234 million), followed by Pakistan (93 million), as per the UN's Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2024. According to the UNDP report, countries at war have higher levels of poverty and deprivation and experience "multidimensional poverty". This indicates the consequences of conflicts and war. Therefore, countries must invest in community and small-scale renewable energy projects that can help empower local communities. Additionally, projects like the installation and construction of renewable energy systems require skilled labour for wind farms and solar farms. In addition, operations, maintenance and logistics can also create jobs for the local communities. *The International Energy Agency* (2023) reports that many countries are taking initiatives to fund local community-based clean projects. For example, the Italian National Recovery and Resilience Plan allocated EUR 2.2 billion to support energy communities and self-consumption. The initiatives taken by the people are often designed to benefit people. Their initiatives are like corporate interests, which are often designed for corporations rather than communities. Therefore, local energy communities can play a vital role in maximizing socio-economic empowerment. Eisenstein (2018) emphasizes changing the climate narratives and discourse from war to positivediscourses as he rightly cautions that framing climate change within a war scenario risks reinforcing "partisanship" and divisions (The Guardian, 2018). Instead of preparing for a metaphorical war, former colonies in South Asia can decolonize their approach to water management by emphasizing cooperation and inclusiveness. This means moving away from top-down, militarized strategies and involving Indigenous communities in all aspects, from early warning systems to sustainable drainage design. Such an approach fosters collective responsibility, respects ecological boundaries, and builds long-term resilience against climate challenges.

4.2.26 Decolonize Water

The 2010 floods exposed unsustainable development in water management along the Indus. Pakistan's prevalent development models are colonial, which has led to more damage. Prof. Mustafa (The Third Pole, 2022) urges Pakistani policymakers to change their colonial mindsets on water and adopt local knowledge and wisdom. To decolonize water, he recommends, it is important to recentre practices associated with water at local Indigenous levels. After this, he argues that it will be possible to go beyond the colonial mindset and obsession with mega projects. The irrigation department and other relevant departments that work on water management are obsessed with the concept of "mega-projectivities". Prof. Mustafa calls this a "deadly disease caused by modernity and a blind commitment to colonial thinking and practices" (Mustafa in The Third Pole, 2022). This approach needs to be decolonized to adopt local knowledge and practices that have been followed by Indigenous communities for centuries. The current infrastructure development on the Indus, including dams and barrages, has "served to exacerbate the flood pulses of the basin's rivers" in Sindh. Prof. Daanish further found that colonial engineering has replaced high-frequency-low-intensity events (once ecologically beneficial) with low-frequency-high-intensity events that have also contributed to the destruction in Pakistan during the floods in 2022.

He then briefly provided an overview in the following words:

1. The credibility of the warning, by engaging local communities through schools and civil society in data collection and information sharing. The warning system would also learn from vernacular practices of forecasting and experiential meteorology.
2. Actionable practicality, by engaging local communities in vulnerability assessments and floodplain mapping to chart out who can take what action in the event of an emergency, paying particular attention to intersectional gender dynamics (Prof. Mustafa in The Third Pole, 2022).

Daanish Mustafa (2022) emphasizes prioritizing women, gender minorities and marginalized communities as the recipients and administrators of aid. In Pakistan, the patriarchal ethos in relief aid distribution only increases the marginalization of women and children who need it the most. Relief aid operations are administered by men who throw heavy bags of rations at women, and this often results in mismanagement and deadly stampedes. In 2023, at least five people, including two women, were killed in stampedes at a government's free flour distribution site in Pakistan (Reuters 30 Mar. 2023). Under these circumstances, it is important to utilize the strengths and capacities of women to include them in the administration and distribution of aid. Beyond relief and aid operations, women, particularly from rural areas, should be employed by the government to benefit from their ecological knowledge and

wisdom. They understand and own their land because they have lived for generations in those areas and have been working in the fields for years. Prof. Mustafa (2022) believes that women are the "greatest custodians and scholars of their land", and the government should "benefit from their wisdom" by having some "humility and deprogramming of the colonial mindset" because "decolonised water is the only hope going forward in a climate-changed present" (Mustafa, 2022, Dialogue Earth). Literature shows that community engagement and women's participation as stakeholders in disaster management have been effective. For example, Alam and Rahman (2014) present a case of how Bangladeshi women actively contribute to disaster preparedness and response activities during floods using their local ecological knowledge. Similarly, the government should make inclusive policies and have faith in local ecological knowledge and women to "combine the insights of modern science with experiential local environmental knowledge and cosmologies" (Mustafa, 2022 in Dialogue Earth).

This proactive approach will include "actionable" and comprehensive early warnings in "jargon-free vernacular languages which are comprehensible to everyone, particularly women and marginalised communities". As in Bangladesh, policymakers should connect with farmers who live on riverbanks to prioritize effective drainage systems and believe in local knowledge because "every farmer or even local child knows which way the water flows". Thus, their input is necessary. The government in Pakistan will also have to monitor real estate development on floodplains and prevent new construction sites by housing societies and hotel groups. Floodplains are better used for public parks and given back to the rivers, especially wetlands. Prof. Mustafa also recommends government "find some new textbooks which are not written by dead white men" and reintroduce geography and environmental sciences as subjects in the school curriculum in local languages. This study endorses the idea of localizing climate change and seeking ecological wisdom from local Indigenous communities, but it does not categorically reject knowledge and books written by "dead white men". Perhaps the best way to reach out to the masses in Pakistan would be to translate English books into local Pakistani languages, as Prof. Daanish did not recommend any local books, probably because there is a dearth of scholarship on disaster management and geography in local Pakistani languages.

This debate may continue, but the ecosophy of this study is more focused on giving voice to the Indigenous communities, like Kalash, (Ayub et al., 2015) who are facing existential problems in Pakistan due to climate change and lack of representation and are missing from the mainstream media narratives. One way Professor Daanish recommends achieving this aim is by changing our approach to water. My study endorses the idea of localizing climate change and seeking ecological wisdom from local Indigenous communities because the floods have also badly affected them.

4.3 Linguistic Aspects of Flood Narratives

4.3.1 Pristine Nature, Tourism and Litter

The provincial governments of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and Balochistan advertise their native lands as tourist destinations by emphasizing their "pristine nature". Their televised and web-based advertisements present carefully curated images of "untouched nature," portraying the region as free of human impact. According to Smith (2024), "untouched nature" is a stereotype often used to depict pristine environments where "human presence or impact is not (easily) identifiable". These representations exclude the Baloch people, the rightful inhabitants of this land, to frame Balochistan as a prosperous and inviting tourist destination. This deliberate erasure of local populations serves to downplay the realities of poverty and underdevelopment, creating a "soft image" of the region. From an ecosophical perspective, this narrative separates the land from its people, prioritizing external economic interests over the lived experiences and ecological relationships of the Baloch. The focus on untouched landscapes reinforces colonial ideas of nature as valuable only when free from human presence, ignoring the interdependence of communities and their environment.

Smith's (2024) explanation of "untouched nature" helps to understand how this discourse works. While green tourism campaigns erase local populations to present an idealized image of nature, the same state narrative uses flood imagery to portray impoverished people surrounded by the destruction caused by climate change. This contrast is striking in green tourism, where locals are erased; in disaster narratives, instead, they are hyper-visible as helpless victims of climate change. These flood images antagonize climate change as the primary culprit for their suffering, while deflecting attention from the structural neglect and deteriorating living conditions that have persisted for decades in Balochistan. Moreover, from an ecolinguistic perspective, these contrasting representations reveal how language and visuals are used to manipulate narratives. The state constructs tourism campaigns that depict prosperity and environmental purity, while carefully selecting disaster imagery that frames people in flood water to evoke sympathy and international aid. In both cases, the voices and agency of the local people are erased, reducing them to passive elements of the state's agenda. The less privileged populations of Balochistan and Gilgit-Baltistan are treated as "litter" that may spoil the soft image of green tourism but are displayed in disaster narratives to highlight their vulnerability.

This duality reflects the state's corporate-driven priorities, where tourism is commercialized at the expense of local communities, and disasters are exploited for political and financial gain. These representations challenge us to consider how dominant narratives can be deconstructed to place the voices of marginalized communities at the centre, acknowledge their ecological knowledge, and address the systemic inequalities they face.

Figure 16: Pristine nature advertised by the government of Pakistan's SIFC (Special Investment Facilitation Council). Source: SIFC website https://www.sifc.gov.pk/news/297

The green tourism advertising campaign of Pakistan, led by the *Special Investment Facilitation Council* (SIFC), erases local populations from its narrative. *The Green Pakistan Initiative*, part of the military-driven SIFC, uses colonial-era laws such as the Land Acquisition Act of 1894 to grab lands from Indigenous communities under the pretext of "increasing productivity" and "transforming barren land into fertile ground". The Gilgit-Baltistan campaign, a contested region between India and Pakistan, subtly includes military imagery. For instance, Figure 4.10 features a military helicopter, although its small size may make it difficult to spot it. Subtly positioned in the middle, just above the trees, the helicopter symbolizes the military presence in the region, while supposedly sending out a message of safety and authority to potential investors. However, the promotional poster's focus on military imagery erases the local populations – the rightful stakeholders of these lands. Gilgit-Baltistan and Balochistan's Tourism, Sports, Culture, Archaeology, and Museums Departments mirror this strategy in their green tourism campaigns. These initiatives present pristine nature as unspoiled and devoid of human presence. Local populations are deliberately erased and depicted metaphorically as "trash" that may "ruin" the curated narrative of untouched landscapes. This removal allows privileged classes and corporations to access these lands under the guise of green tourism.

Smith (2024: 17) argues that pristine nature is irrelevant in sustainability discourses because such portrayals erase both human presence and the Anthropocenic realities of landscapes. The SIFC tourism campaigns construct this pristine nature by actively hiding human impact through techniques like framing cameras away from trash. According to Smith (2024), "untouched nature" is a visual strategy that excludes humans from the frame, creating an idealized, trash-less version of nature. Unlike untouched nature, the concept of "self-in-nature" includes a lone human figure immersed in the environment (Smith, 2024: 5). However, this narrative is absent from these campaigns, which prioritize erasure over connection. The

untouched nature narrative not only ignores Indigenous communities but also silences the environmental impacts of corporate-driven exploitation, presenting a sanitized and misleading vision of these regions. By removing local populations and their living realities, these campaigns perpetuate the state's corporate and colonial interests while sidelining ecological and social justice. This narrative portrays untouched nature as pristine and ignores the ecological and cultural histories tied to these lands while marginalizing the very communities that have sustainably lived on them for generations.
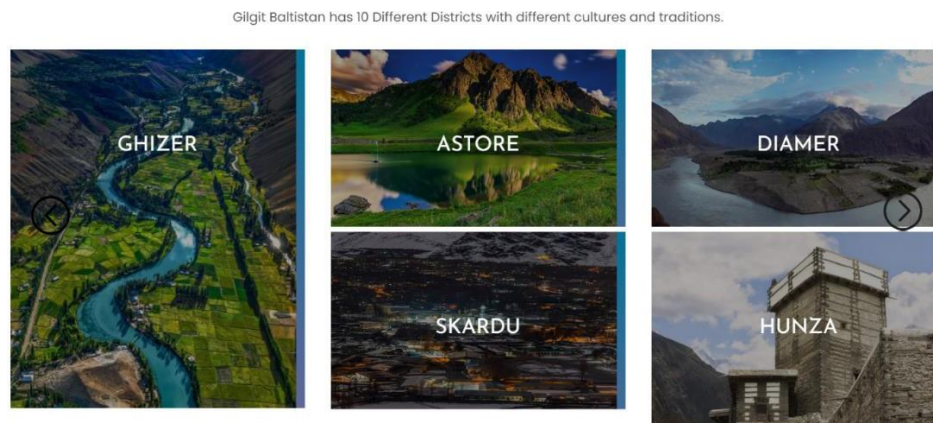

Figure 17: An excerpt from a catalogue of Gilgit Baltistan's tourism department. *Source: https://visitgilgitbaltistan.gov.pk/*

4.3.2 Marketing Flood Victims and Animals in Official Narratives

The token representation of marginalized communities is evident in the visuals used to seek donations. When I asked Professor Daanish for his views on reparation money, he responded:

> Does a Baloch, Sindhi, or Kalash know anything about this? A farmer who lost his cows and goats due to the floods, would he ask Germany to pay for his loss? Does he even know there's a country called Germany? These are not laymen's issues. Teaching them the climate change debate only confuses them. The local governments hide behind such endless debates to delay action. Educate them, treat them as equal citizens, and show some sympathy. Exploiting their plight and poverty to receive donations will not effectively solve this issue. Climate change vulnerability, inequality, and poverty are fundamentally local issues of the land of Pakistan that we call Pakistan.

Pakistan, historically known as the "land of the pure", was supposedly founded to treat all citizens with respect. In Pakistan, people do not just refer to "Pakistan" as a country or a name of the country, they proudly mean "the land of pure". However, the country harbours severe structural inequalities that treat its citizens, such as the Baloch and Sindhi, with indifference. These inequalities are most apparent in times of national disasters. The portrayal of these communities in disaster relief campaigns highlights their tokenization – reducing complex

socio-political issues to an image that serves corporate and state interests. This exploitation of their poverty to secure donations does not address the underlying inequalities that fuel vulnerability and suffering before even floods hit.

These dynamics reflect the main concerns of my theoretical framework and ecosophy. The exploitation of marginalized communities for donations perpetuates their erasure in discussions of climate change, framing their vulnerability as a spectacle for external aid rather than a pressing local issue. This also aligns with Smith's (2024) critique of "untouched nature" imagery, where human presence and impact are erased to maintain a sanitized and corporate-friendly image.

Figure 18: A cover photo of the International Climate Resilient Pakistan Conference co-hosted with the UN in Geneva, 2023. In the picture, children can be seen standing barefoot, while two men guide their bull out of flood waters. Source: International Climate Resilient Conference Pakistan, https://www.undp.org/international-conference-climate-resilient-Pakistan

Being trapped in nature is an integral part of the government narrative that shows flood victims coming out of flood waters, taking whatever they can on their shoulders. The images are deliberately chosen to evoke empathy, but these inhabitants are often blurred or completely erased from the tourism campaigns. Unlike the "self-in-nature" representation, which shows humans, not facing the camera, immersed in "untouched nature", these people are depicted as trapped in nature and in need of help/ donations from foreigners. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2021, as cited in Smith, 2024) argue that images displayed in public always have ideological implications. It can be argued that publicly displayed images are ideologically constructed: the government of Pakistan advertises "untouched nature", for instance, through the image of virgin beaches in Balochistan and similar.

The concept of "anti-litter", as defined by Smith (2024: 5), refers to an image that depicts "improperly discarded" trash in the environment. This concept can be applied to the marketing of flood victims trapped in nature, used strategically to mobilize donations both

locally and internationally. However, when we examine the case of Manzoor Wassan's village in Khairpur, Sindh, the idea of "anti-litter" can arguably be applied. In this case, his village is seen as a "poor Venice", a place the minister would not wish to visit. This comparison underscores the discomfort the minister feels – not because of the environmental destruction or human suffering – but because of the presence of flood victims, their bodies, and the ruins of their homes disrupt the idealized views of Manzoor Wassan that he associates with beauty and tourism. In this context, the "anti-litter" concept is not about removing physical trash from pristine nature but about erasing the disturbing images of flood victims. Rather than evoking empathy for the environmental degradation or human hardship caused by the floods and poverty, the focus shifts to removing unsettling images of flood victims and their misery from the minister's memory of picturesque vacations. This reflects an important and deeper ideological agenda that prioritizes aesthetics and sanitization over addressing the root causes of environmental and social crises. Unlike traditional environmental discourses that use anti-litter imagery to evoke concern for the environment and promote action, the anti-litter narrative in this case does not call for structural reform or social justice. It seeks, instead, to clean up the disturbing image of flood victims that disrupts a narrative of "untouched" beauty. This resonates with Smith's (2024) critique of "pristine nature", where human presence – especially the vulnerable and marginalized – is erased to maintain a sanitized and corporate-friendly image of the environment. In this case, flood victims are not seen as part of the environmental narrative, but rather as an intrusion that must be removed to restore the imagined purity of the landscape. This not only erases the lived experiences of the marginalized Baloch and Sindhi but also obscures the underlying structural inequalities and environmental injustices that exacerbate their suffering. Thus, the application of the anti-litter concept here reveals a stark disconnect between the political interests of the state and the lived realities of flood victims. While tourism campaigns promote an idealized version of nature, free from human impact, the flood images tell a different story.
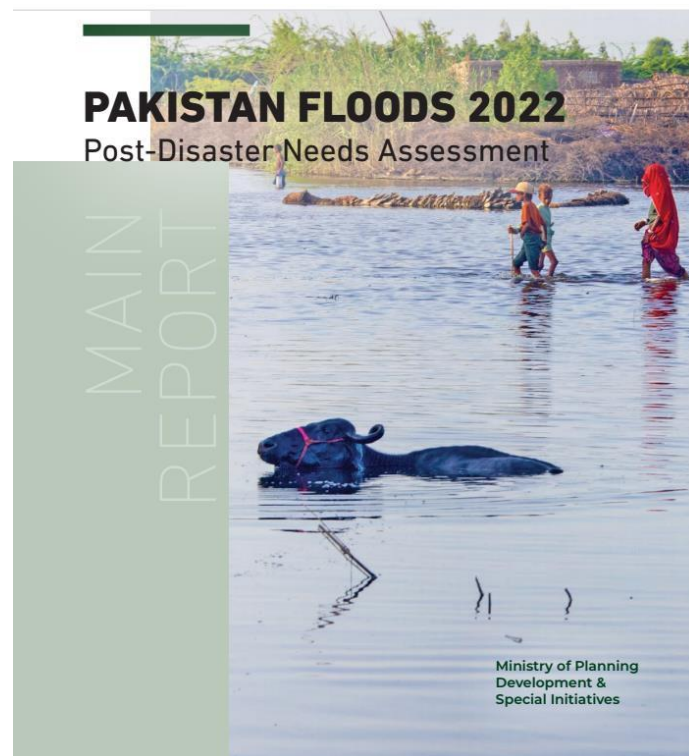
Figure 19: A cover photo of the International Climate Resilient Pakistan Conference co-hosted with the UN in Geneva, 2023. In the picture, children can be seen standing barefoot, while two men guide their bull out of flood waters. Source: PDNA Report cover page https://climatepromise.undp.org/research-and-reports/187akistan-floods-2022-post-disaster-needs-assessment

4.3.3 Ecological Implications of Anthropogenic Narratives from Ecolinguistic Perspectives

It is important to note that both official visuals of the floods by the government leave some space for animals. Aimed at reaching international donors and organizations, cows and buffaloes have been used in visuals to emphasize the impacts of the floods on the economy. The majority of *Dawn's* articles analyzed in this study hardly ever mention the effects of the floods on animals, but when they do, they use "livestock" and describe them with words like "loss" for their demise. Likewise, the official statistics of the government of Pakistan, including the Post-Disaster Need Assessment Report 2022 and the International Climate Resilient Conference 2023, use photos of animals to indicate the financial losses flood victims have suffered by losing their "livestock" due to the floods. The ecosophy of this study does not view animals from a utilitarian point of view, which would consider animals as valuable only if they are advantageous to humans.

Both *Dawn's* and BBC's narratives focus mainly on the human suffering and economic loss caused by damaged roads and broken bridges. These narratives do not address the more general yet equally important ecological impacts of the floods. The government and mainstream media narratives briefly mention "livestock", providing no analysis of ecological degradation, loss of environment and its importance for the lives of local communities and other forms of life that human life depends on. Anthropocentric narratives of the floods only

highlight human suffering in a political context and emphasize infrastructural loss and damage over environmental and biodiversity considerations and consequences. For instance, the BBC (19 Sept. 2022) mentions solely and exclusively that "livestock" lost in the floods was a "key income". However, the local narratives of people are different. They value their animals, love them and look after them, not because they are financially important to them but for their co-existence and companionship beyond anthropocentric worldviews. They would sacrifice their lives to save their animals because they raise them like their family members and live together in ecological harmony. In the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, the daughter of Muhammad Fareed, one of the flood victims, drowned in flood waters because she was out collecting leaves for her goat (BBC 28 Aug. 2022). In *Dawn's* articles (31 Aug. 2022 and 2 Sept. 2022), the human and animal bond were briefly and superficially mentioned, while emphasis was placed on economic loss. However, in the same articles, flood victims could be observed as more emotional in expressing their views about the death of their animals, without emphasizing their economic importance and utility. Jazib Ali from Sindh uses more direct words to say "My goats have drowned" without prioritizing their economic importance to his life. He did not use words like "livestock" to indicate their relationship primarily on economic grounds. Similarly, Mauj Ali, another flood victim from Sindh, was seen "mourning" the death of his buffaloes. While flood victims express and share emotional bonds with their animals and are seen mourning, the corporate media narrative frames this in a specific economic-related construction, like the following sentence from *Dawn* (2 Sept. 2022): "Hundreds of thousands of livestock have been lost (during the floods), leaving people hapless and poorer". The ecological relation between flood survivors and their animals is less emphasized in these articles.

4.3.4 Animal Cruelty in Pakistan and Positive Discourse Analysis

The anthropocentric use of language to describe animals in Pakistan can increase animal cruelty. In recent years, animal cruelty has increased in Pakistan for different socio-economic and political relations and reasons. Birds, donkeys and dogs have been used in political rallies to target and humiliate political opponents in Pakistan during election campaigns. For example, the Pakistan Tahreek e Insaf Pakistan (PTI) party workers assaulted a donkey and almost beat him to death during a political gathering. This happened after the leader of PTI had repeatedly been calling supporters of the opposition party "donkeys" (The Express Tribune, 2018). During the election campaign rally, the donkey had the names of opposition party members written all over his body, and people used this donkey to express their anger. According to the Ayesha Chundrigar Foundation (ACF), the animal was "beaten to a pulp, punched in the face and abdomen several times, nose broken, kicked all over...". The political party workers left the donkey covered in rope marks with a vehicle rammed into him (The Express Tribune, 2018).

This incident shows how badly animals are treated in the country and their place in society. There is a lack of empathy towards animals in public discourse and the dominating relationship people have with animals in Pakistan. More recently, a powerful feudal[xiv] in Sindh chopped off the leg of a young camel because she was grazing on and "damaging some crop" on the landowner's fields. He did this to teach the farmer a lesson because this baby camel belonged to him (The Friday Times, 2024). Somar Khan, the owner of the camel, while speaking to the journalists in Sanghar (a city in Sindh), said that his camel had gone missing. Later, he was informed by other villagers about his camel's gut-wrenching condition, where a part of his camel was missing, and blood was dripping from half of her leg.

According to the World Animal Protection and Voiceless Animal Cruelty Index, the Cruelty to Animals Act (1890) and The Halal Authority Act (2015), laws about animal welfare in Pakistan are outdated and reflect no scientific and cultural understandings of animal welfare. Therefore, the organization advises the government to work on animal welfare policy to ensure the humane treatment of animals in the country.

4.3.5 Anthropocentric Narrative during the Floods in 2022

Dawn's article details the economic and infrastructural loss, while at the same time gaslighting and downplaying the loss of valued human lives. The anthropocentric view of the event reads:

> Climate change has emerged as Pakistan's foremost existential threat. It is now at the heart of our national security paradigm. As we have seen, floods are triggered by climatic changes and they cannot be brushed aside simply as a one-off event.

> The loss of human lives aside, they have washed away our precious infrastructure — bridges, roads, hydropower plants, check-dams, irrigation schemes and other community infrastructure. They have also severely dented food security and our economy in general.

> As noted, the 2022 floods are unusual and a fundamental departure from our typical riverine floods. Moving forward, there are three possible scenarios:

> The Optimistic Scenario: This may well be a freak event year, and we may not have similarly serious non-riverine floods for several years or decades. We were not anticipating these floods but, in future, we will be better prepared. We will, therefore, have better management in the future. The Pessimistic Scenario: Such floods will become more frequent but we will not draw any practical lessons — as we did not from the 2010 superfloods. We will live with the changes in the monsoon pattern as a New Normal, but continue with Business As Usual (BAU) practices. The Worst-case Scenario: These non-riverine floods will occur more

regularly but they will also be accompanied by high riverine floods in the Indus and its tributaries. This will make the floods deadlier and costlier, because there will not be any fundamental changes in our approaches and preparedness.

The fundamental principle of this study's ecosophy aims at exposing and resisting this unecological use of language. It may appear normal because we are inured to discursive strategies like normalization and passivization that are widely used in corporate texts, governmental and media discourse that prioritize economic loss over precious human and ecological loss.

Following the principles of ecolinguistics and the ecosophy of this study, the sentence should have been *damaged to infrastructure aside, precious human lives were lost*. However, in its original form, the frame gives priority to infrastructure over precious human lives, by downgrading the "loss of human lives aside" as a secondary concern. It is a typical utilitarian worldview and bias that values material and economic structures like bridges, roads, and dams over human well-being and their importance. From an ecolinguistic and ecocentric perspective, human lives are an integral part of the larger ecosystems that life depends on. Humans construct this critical infrastructure, and they can rebuild it, but shifting focus away from human loss projects material loss as more tragic than human loss. Minimizing the value of human life and reducing animals to mere "livestock" reflects an unecological worldview that separates humanity from its environment. This devaluation has significant consequences for underdeveloped societies like in Pakistan, leading to social inequality, environmental degradation, and the erosion of a holistic ecological ethic that values all forms of life.

The framework for this study is concerned with the interrelation of humans in the environment and proposes to use language in ecologically friendly narratives that put human lives and animal welfare at the centre of a harmonious environment. Unlike this, mainstream narratives that use the word "precious" for infrastructure instead of human lives are also destructive for the norms of society and ecological systems. This indicates a value judgment that implies material needs are more important for society. In addition to this, ethical norms of society are compromised in narratives like this, which are based on corporate interests. Ethically, it is unacceptable to downplay human lives in favour of dominant interest groups that prioritize economic concerns and view nature as a commodity. This attitude gaslights human loss and may also project an idea that the government will rebuild "precious infrastructure" while belittling human value. This passivisation of human suffering was achieved by sidelining it as a secondary concern while downplaying the accountability of the government. In contrast with this, the ecosophy of this study believes that human lives are irreplaceable, while infrastructure can be rebuilt. In many communities, like flood survivors who care for their animals, both human and animal lives are regarded as the highest priority.

Like flood survivors' views, the ecosophy of this study follows a human-first approach to infrastructure.

4.4 Floods in Italy

In May 2023, a region in Northern Italy, Emilia Romagna, faced extreme flooding, following three separate heavy downpours on the 2nd, 10th, and 16th of May. Bologna, Ravenna, Forlì-Cesena and Rimini were affected most by the floods, claiming at least 17 lives, and causing 8.5 billion euros worth of damage (Reuters, 2023; The Guardian, 2023), which have been described as the most severe in 100 years. Michele De Pascale, the mayor of Ravenna, one of the most affected cities, told the BBC (18 May. 2023) that his city had been struck by the worst disaster in a century. He described the floods as a catastrophe which had caused widespread destruction of homes and infrastructure. Following the tragic floods in Italy, criticism of authorities grew louder, prompting mixed reactions from the public. Some blamed the inaction of the previous governments, while others pointed fingers at unregulated building construction/ development. In this section, I will examine how media narratives reinforce the hegemonic ideologies to undermine environmental responsibility, awareness and climate change. In addition, this section will analyze the language used in the description of flood narratives and compare narratives of Pakistani and Italian floods. According to the European Investment Bank Survey (27 Oct. 2021), 79 % of Italians, regardless of their age and political affiliation, believe climate change and its consequences are the greatest challenge of the 21st century. Despite what the survey indicates, Italy is set to experience more frequent flooding in the future. As highlighted in the article "Mitigating the Impact of Climate Change and Flooding in Italy" on PreventionWeb (5 Jan. 2022), 9.8% of Italy's territory is vulnerable to flooding. Due to its location, Italy is highly susceptible to climate change, with projections showing an increase in average temperatures and a rise in extreme heat events, further exposing the country to natural hazards and making it more vulnerable to climate-related disasters in the future (Climate Change Knowledge Portal, 2022) Over 29,500 km² of land, covering 82% of municipalities, is at risk of flooding, affecting six administrative regions: Calabria, Trentino-Alto Adige, Molise, Basilicata, Umbria, and Valle d'Aosta. In addition, 2.6% of the territory faces a high risk of flooding, with 30% of municipalities being flood prone. This means that 6% of the Italian population lives in areas that are at risk of flooding (PreventionWeb, 2022). This situation reflects the ongoing climate change debate in Italy's political arena, where conspiracy theories and denialism continue to undermine collective efforts to address the crisis effectively. In the following section, I will examine the media narratives of floods and politics in Italy, to provide a point of comparison with what we have seen in the previous sections of this chapter about Pakistan.

4.4.1 Climate Change?

During the floods in May 2023, Forlì was forced "on its knees, devastated and in pain" according to Mayor Gian Luca Zattini (BBC, 18 May 2023) and, likewise, the mayor of Ravenna Michele De Pascale told media that his city had become "unrecognisable" due to the destruction caused by flooding. While many were overwhelmed by the floods, many others blamed unregulated construction sites for the destruction (DW, 2023). An article entitled "Italy's deadly floods can't be blamed on climate change" (Baxter, 2023) argues that rainfalls in Italy were a unique weather event, which is expected to occur only once in 200 years. It was therefore deemed unlikely that such severe rainfall would occur again anytime soon. This article builds on the narrative that the authorities should look for other factors that led to destruction by overlooking the impact of climate change or its role. In the study conducted by Dr. Friederike Otto and her team at the Grantham Institute – Climate Change and the Environment at Imperial College London (2023), it was found that rainfall in Northern Italy had not shown a significant increase or decrease over time. This suggests that the amount of rain itself is not the primary factor contributing to the flooding in the region. However, many have been inclined to link flooding to climate change, particularly due to the severity of the damage caused. As highlighted by Baxter (2023), the extensive destruction has pushed people to frame the event as a consequence of climate change, despite the lack of conclusive evidence that rainfall patterns are drastically changing. The article "Limited net role for climate change in heavy spring rainfall in Emilia Romagna" (World Weather Attribution, 31 May 2023) offers a similar perspective and suggests that while the flooding was severe, it was not directly caused by increasing rainfall linked to climate change. Instead, the connection to climate change is often made in response to the devastating economic destruction caused by the floods. The widespread damage, including the loss of infrastructure and livelihoods, makes it easier for people to attribute the crisis to climate change as a way to explain the scale of the disaster.

Although this framing emerges outside Italy, people within Italy still frame devastating flooding in light of climate change: for instance, Professor Marco Marani, from the University of Padua, said: "Extreme events are becoming more frequent and will increase with the increase of global warming" (BBC, 2024), while others consider it part of some conspiracy. While conspiracy theories have been debunked or countered by organizations like Factanews, the debate over the impact of climate change on recent flooding in Italy and Spain is growing. Especially with the rise of social media, it will remain difficult to counter these narratives of denialism. Growing public awareness of climate change and its authenticity has become a vital part of political discourse and media narratives, particularly in countries like Italy that are vulnerable to natural disasters. Natural disasters do not occur and disappear in isolation, but they leave many questions and doubts unanswered, as well as cause substantial

human and economic losses. Societies react immediately when the economic impacts of disaster are felt or even predicted, e.g. in the form of concerns, doubts and even skepticism. However, these concerns are often economic concerns, and the scale and magnitude of disasters ultimately lead to the question of climate change. When disasters of such magnitude occur, the public often looks for broader explanations that can account for not just the immediate effects but also the long-term changes affecting the environment and economy. Therefore, economic devastation intensifies this search for explanations, making the link to climate change more compelling for some. This narrative frames the event within a larger discourse of climate urgency and responsibility, which has gained traction in recent years as climate change concerns have escalated globally.

Scholarship within Italy does not seem to subscribe to this idea, as many researchers, like Professor Marco Marani, while speaking to Corriere del Veneto, said that "There is strong scientific evidence" that extreme weather events are getting more frequent: therefore, he emphasized that water defences "must be revised to understand the real risk we are facing". He further added that people cannot escape the impacts of climate change because climate change is unstoppable. Prof. Marani presents a counter-narrative that attributes severe downpours and flooding to climate change and puts emphasis on the idea of accepting the reality of climate change and the need to prepare for similar extreme weather events in the future. The BBC article entitled "Italy hit by flooding after heavy rain" (17 May. 2024) talks about rainfalls so severe that they had never been seen before e.g. 130mm of rain in a single day in Milan, adding that local observers in Italy agree on the fact that such rain intensity had not been recorded for the month May in the last 170 years. Similarly, some areas of the region of Emilia-Romagna received half of their average annual rainfall in just 36 hours. The mayor of Ravenna, Michele De Pascale, told the RAI public radio that 17 May 2023 was the worst night in the history of Romagna (BBC, 2023).

According to the local residents of Emilia Romagna, the flooding was unprecedented, and they hoped that it would not happen again. A 72-year-old resident told the BBC that they had "had floods before, but it has never been this bad as far as I can remember" while he removed mud from his basement, which used to be his son's souvenir shop, after the flood had washed away souvenirs worth thousands of euros. "It was a very bad 48 hours. Water and mud took over our whole village", Roberta Lazzarini, 71, another resident, told the BBC. "Our community is broken", said Ines, who runs a local cafe. "We felt completely cut out, isolated, some of us were truly terrified" (BBC, 18 May. 2023). The narratives of residents are not political but of fear, disappointment and emotions, as residents are more worried about the well-being of their community and safety.

Many have been trying to indicate that Italy needs a national framework in response to the impacts of climate change. Civil Protection Minister Nello Musumeci warned that "tropical conditions had already reached Italy, with 20cm of rain falling in 36 hours, and in some areas up to 50 cm. Soils that remain dry for a long time end up becoming cemented, drastically limiting their capacity to absorb water" (BBC). Minister Musumeci pointed out that no regional dams have been built for the last 40 years and emphasized the need to change the approach to hydraulic engineering. The construction of new dams, according to Prof. Mustafa, is colonial and based on narratives of unlimited development. While dynamics may be different in the Italian context, the connection with postcolonial Pakistan appears quite clear, as neither researchers like Mustafa nor the local communities in Sindh, including members of civil society, poets and activists, accept the idea of new dam constructions put forth by Minister Musumeci. One feature that is very common between these two countries is the dominance of political narratives. The Pakistani case has already been discussed in detail, while the following section briefly discusses political narratives during floods in Italy.

4.4.2 Political Discourse and Floods

The opposition leader of the Democratic Party, Elly Schlein, told the BBC (18 May. 2023) that the entire political system was responsible for the disaster because politicians did not do enough to "address challenges posed by climate change". Schlein, former vice president of Emilia-Romagna, blamed the successive governments for failing to address the country's vulnerability to extreme weather events like flooding and droughts. Apart from politicians, some helpless citizens affected by floods, such as Lino Lenzi, 80, blame local authorities for their failure to dredge rivers in previous years:

> I've lived here for 70 years, and I've never seen anything like this. The water is everywhere. We've had to get rid of the water with everything we've got: buckets, pots and pans. No one has shown up to help. We've received zero help from the government or local authority (BBC, 2023).

4.4.3 "Blow To the Stomach"

The BBC's reporting mainly focuses on the helplessness of residents and local administration, while also highlighting the ongoing blame game in the political arena. In another article, entitled "Tuscany storm and floods ravage central Italy leaving six dead" (3 Nov. 2023), a similar narrative is constructed:

> Regional governor Eugenio Giani described the heavy rain as "unprecedented in the past 100 years and, after a cabinet meeting, Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni

declared a state of emergency for the worst-hit areas of Tuscany.

The mayor of Prato, Matteo Biffoni, described overnight events as a "blow to the stomach". Floods left entire areas submerged and the ground floor of the town's Santo Stefano hospital was partially flooded.

The west coast was lashed by waves reaching 3.5m (11ft 5in), and Milan was hit by flooding for a second time this week, three days after the River Seveso burst its banks. The storm also caused damage in the north-eastern region of Veneto, where one person was missing and Governor Luca Zaia said 160mm of rain had fallen in 24 hours.

Further east, there were red weather alerts in Slovenia and Croatia. Forecasters warned of high winds, hail and thunderstorms and authorities in Slovenia warned of one of the strongest cyclones in the past 10 years.

It reports declarations by the regional governor of Tuscany, Eugenio Giani, who describes heavy rain as "unprecedented" in the past 100 years. The local authorities and administrators were taken aback by the severity of the floods, which, according to the mayor of Prato, Matteo Biffoni, were "a blow to the stomach".

Fraser-Baxter (2023), in an article published by imperial.ac.uk, entitled "Italy's deadly floods can't be blamed on climate change, finds study", considers "existing human-made vulnerabilities" responsible for the impacts of flooding:

> **Climate change is not to blame for the recent flooding in northern Italy, according to a new study by World Weather Attribution** (Bold in original)

> In May, three separate rainfall events brought a prodigious amount of rainfall to the northern Italian region of Emilia-Romagna. Hundreds of landslides and widespread flooding devastated homes, infrastructure, and farmland, with damages totalling more than €300m. At least 17 people died, and thousands of people were displaced from their homes. The severity of the damages led many to link the flooding to climate change.

> However, after analysing rainfall records dating back to 1960, World Weather Attribution researchers led by Dr Friederike Otto, Senior Lecturer at the Grantham Institute – Climate Change and the Environment at Imperial College London, found that spring rainfall is neither increasing nor decreasing in Emilia-Romagna.

> On publishing their study, the scientists say the flooding was caused by highly unique and unusual weather conditions when three huge rainfall episodes descended on northern Italy in a short period of time.

This article attempts to challenge the people who "link the flooding to climate change", citing a researcher who finds that "spring rainfall is neither increasing nor decreasing" in Emilia-Romagna. It presents its argument in a way to counter the argument with a scientific argument to posit that climate change cannot be blamed for the flooding in Italy. While the article undermines local scholarship and voices from Italy that link severe floods to climate change, it weighs arguments presented by the "scientists" who vaguely suggest that some unexplainable weather conditions are reasons why there was huge rainfall in Emilia-Romagna in a short period. Fraser-Baxter (2023) privileges the authority of World Weather Attribution scientists, especially Dr. Friederike Otto of the Grantham Institute, to claim that "spring rainfall is neither increasing nor decreasing in Emilia-Romagna," thereby challenging any link between recent floods and climate change. This authorization of global experts simultaneously erases Italian researchers and community voices who situate the floods within broader trends of extreme weather linked to climate change. The repeated reference to "highly unique and unusual weather conditions" employs nomination to mystify causality and deflect systemic critique. From a CDA perspective, this discursive strategy reflects a neoliberal "expertocracy" (Fairclough, 2013), in which distant scientific authority overrides local knowledge, research and scholarship and undermines "stories we could live by" that emphasize collective resilience and ecological accountability.

It moreover cites another individual who mockingly says that disasters do not fall from the sky:

> While the rainfall was unprecedented, existing human-made vulnerabilities worsened the impacts of the flooding.
>
> "Disasters just don't happen from rain falling from the sky," explains study co-author Roop Singh from the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre.
>
> "Land-use changes and urbanisation can play a very important role in events such as this one."
>
> Since the 1960s, the rapid development of urban areas in the Emilia-Romagna region has increased flood risk because dense concrete areas have limited space for water drainage and the researchers say that a long history of flooding suggests there is a need to build resilience to future flooding. Both heatwaves and drought are becoming more intense in Italy with climate change.
>
> Ms Singh says the flood response should have a "holistic review of how the climate has already changed in the region and future projections of changes."

Roop Singh of the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre "mockingly" reminds readers that "disasters just don't happen from rain falling from the sky", and shifts focus from atmospheric extremes to "existing human-made vulnerabilities". The article frames Singh's argument as an explanation for deadly floods in Italy. This authorization of Singh's voice in this article privileges an institutional expert over meteorological data and local scholarship, while erasing the unprecedented nature of the rainfall event. By nominating land-use change and urbanization as the principal culprits, the article backgrounds the role of climate change in intensifying both heatwaves and droughts in the region—yet Singh's call for a "holistic review" ironically omits any emphasis on the exceptional severity of the three back-to-back storms. Such discursive framing risks gaslighting the public: it downplays the agency of extreme weather in favour of social factors, thereby attempting to divert attention from systemic climate drivers at a time when denialism still persists in Italy and beyond in Europe.

Similar harmful narratives were constructed by another article entitled "Limited net role for climate change in heavy spring rainfall in Emilia Romagna", published in *The World Weather Attribution* (31 May 2023). Under its "Main Findings" in a bold section, the article attributes the deaths caused by floods to age, foregrounding victims' reduced mobility and reluctance to evacuate homes rather than extreme rainfalls:

> While the full profile of the impacts on human life and livelihoods has yet to be analysed, initial assessments show that the floods and landslides caused 17 fatalities and displaced roughly 50.000 people. The majority of the deceased were elderly and died in their homes, in many cases linked to either reduced mobility or reluctance to evacuate. These deaths highlight how pre-existing vulnerabilities such as disability and limited risk perception exacerbated the impacts in the region.

This downplays the role of floods by arguing that "The majority of the deceased were elderly and died in their homes, in many cases linked to either reduced mobility or reluctance to evacuate". While this narrative may emphasize the need to take proactive measures to quickly rescue the elderly, attributing deaths solely to other factors, while constructing narratives that downplay natural causes, such as heavy rainfall, risks undermining the actual scale of the floods. This account employs nomination—specifically calling out elderly vulnerability, to background the meteorological severity of the floods. I argue that by attributing fatalities primarily to reduced mobility and evacuation reluctance, the text erases the agency of the heavy rainfall itself, and shifts blame onto individual behaviour and social vulnerabilities. From a CDA perspective, this framing aligns with a broader tendency to depoliticize environmental disasters and diverts attention from systemic factors, such as climate-driven

intensification and inadequate infrastructure planning, and therefore delays meaningful policy responses. Such approaches can shift blame and obscure systemic issues, ultimately delaying meaningful action and perpetuating ineffective responses to future disasters.

4.4.4 Who is to Blame for Disaster? "Man-Made Disaster" or Authorities?

As *World Weather Attribution* seems to have found the heavy rainfall in Emilia Romagna is not likely to happen each year, with a likelihood rate of just about 0.5%, it concludes that it will remain the same, "with or without human-caused climate change". A year later, in 2024, similar severe heavy rain created a "worse situation than in May 2023", said Interim Governor Irene Priolo, when Emilia Romagna was struck with yet another spell of flooding and landslides (ANSA 20 Oct. 2024).

An online article entitled "Italy floods trigger blame game", published by Politico (Roberts, 2023), reports that 94% of the Italian municipalities are the risk of flooding and landslides, leaving more than 8 million people living in these areas at risk but the worst flooding in a century has triggered blame change in Italy:

> The worst floods in 100 years have triggered finger pointing over Italy's slow progress in stabilizing its land and soil despite throwing billions at the problem. Torrential rains following months of drought have caused floods in the northern and eastern regions of Emilia Romagna and Le Marche that have killed at least 14 people and left an estimated 20,000 homeless. Dozens of cities and towns were submerged and thousands of landslides occurred after around six months' rain fell in 48 hours. Pierluigi Randi, the president of Ampro, the association of weather experts, said it was the worst flood to affect Italy in a century.

> The floods sparked a torrent of questions about why vast amounts of funding allocated for structural works to counter hydrogeological instability has never been used. Over the past 20 years, 11,204 projects worth €10.5 billion have been financed in Italy. But only 4,800 of the projects, worth €3.6 billion, were completed, according to ISPRA.

> **The money is there …**

> Italy's problems in spending investment funds in time are nothing new. It came second-bottom in the European Union for its use of EU cash, having spent only 62 percent of the budget allocated in the 2014-2020 programs by the end of December 2022, according to data published on the European Commission's Cohesion Data portal.

> In 2014, then-Prime Minister Matteo Renzi's government allocated €8.4 billion to mitigate hydrogeological risk, but little of that money was used before his administration came to an

end, and Giuseppe Conte's nationalist government of 2018 canned the project. The funds remain largely unspent and were added to Italy's post-pandemic economic Recovery Plan funded by the European Commission. Renzi said hydrogeological works should be the government's top priority. "Italy should invest in floodplains and dams rather than the football stadiums. This country throws away opportunities. The money is there and we don't spend it," he told SkyTG24 on Thursday.

A report by Italy's Court of Auditors has blamed the slow progress on hydrogeological works on a lack of project managing capability and technically capable people in local governments.

After the worst floods in 100 years "triggered finger-pointing over Italy's slow progress in stabilizing its land and soil despite throwing billions at the problem" (Politico, 2023), media and politicians began to question the government's willingness to effectively utilize money reserved for resilient infrastructures. Politico uses a lexical chunk, "throwing billions at the problem" to imply the inefficiency and lack of strategy by the government(s). However, according to Istituto Superiore per la Protezione e la Ricerca Ambientale (ISPRA), for more than the last two decades, "11,204 projects worth €10.5 billion have been financed in Italy. But only 4,800 of the projects, worth €3.6 billion, were completed" (Politico, 2023). This data first indicates that Italy does not have a money problem; second, there is a lack of transparency or inefficiency in the use of this money. However, this could also be due to the complex bureaucracy and inconsistency of the governments holding office. For example, former prime minister Matteo Renzi's government allocated 8.4 billion euros "to mitigate hydrogeological risk, but little of that money was used before his administration came to an end, and Giuseppe Conte's nationalist government of 2018 canned the project" (Politico, 2023). Renzi criticized the government for its inability to act and emphasized that hydrogeological works should have been the government's top priority:

> Italy should invest in floodplains and dams rather than the football stadiums. This country throws away opportunities. The money is there and we don't spend it, Renzi told SkyTG24 (18 May. 2023). The former prime minister defended the mayors by saying, "We must not blame local administrators; they are on the front line".

Through the nomination technique, this article does not name victims and communities; they are largely unnamed and aggregated into statistics, for example, "20,000 homeless," "dozens of cities". In addition to this, backgrounding blurs the extraordinary rainfalls of "six months' rain in 48 hours". There is hardly any comment on climate change as a factor. The article erases the role of global warming in intensifying extreme weather and maintains a narrow policy debate

about fund allocation rather than climate resilience. It overshadows the discussion on floods by reporting "unspent funds". This shifts focus from climate change to administrative inefficiency, integrity and transparency, recurrent themes in the Pakistani case of floods. Like media reporting on floods in Pakistan, blame allocation takes over actual discussion in Italy. Former government officials are given a voice to blame the current government. Moreover, neoliberal managerialism is emphasized. According to this article, financial under-expenditure and bureaucratic incompetence align with a neoliberal critique of state inefficiency, implying that better managerial practices, not structural or policy changes, are the solution. Another debatable aspect of the article is hegemonic "common sense". The assertion: "the money is there… we don't spend it" constructs a "common-sense" narrative that Italy's only problem is spending its budget. This may frame losses and destruction induced by climate change as a political problem resulting merely from ineffective management of funds.

Through the nomination of expert voices, backgrounding of climatic causation, and a narrow blame framework focused on administrative failings and political differences, the article seems to reproduce a managerialist ideology that actively sidelines climate-change accountability. This discursive framing steers public debate toward questions of spending efficiency rather than systemic ecological adaptation, thus limiting the "stories we could live by" in responses to flood risk.

This debate takes an ideological turn with left and right-wing ideologies competing against each other. An ideologically driven comment can be found in an article entitled "Floods and Landslides in Italy: a man-made disaster" by Marianne Arens (29 May. 2023) published by the World Socialist Web Site. It critiques current prime minister Giorgia Meloni, who "trudged through the area in rain boots, shedding crocodile tears". Arens (2023) also criticizes Stefano Bonaccini, Emilia Romagna's regional president, when the floods hit that area. The "leftists" (the PD, previously the PCI) governed Emilia Romagna for almost 78 years, but did virtually nothing to prevent floods and other disasters. The writer further argues that "corruption, greed and indifferences" were some of the main contributors to the disaster. The way forward, the writer suggests, is to replace capitalism with socialism (World Socialist Web Site, 2023). This ideological construction of flood narratives is discussed in the following section.

4.4.5 The Left vs. The Right-Wing Ideologies

The Spectator's (22 May. 2023) article entitled "Who is really to blame for Italy's devastating floods?" by Nicholas Farrel, the author of *Mussolini: A New Life* (2003), frames the ongoing debate between left-wing and right ideologies in Italy:

Many on the left are blaming not just man-made climate change for the catastrophe but even Italy's right-wing prime minister for what has unfolded on her watch. The guru of the Italian left, Roberto Saviano, author of the cult book about the Neapolitan Mafia *Gomorrah*, tweeted: 'To deny climate change as this government does (…) is a deadly serious act thanks to which today thousands of Italian citizens (…) are paying a heavy price.'

Such a statement is frankly ridiculous. Meloni has been in power for only seven months – and the left were in power before her, more or less of continuously since 2011. But anyway, while she, like so many of us, might wonder if climate change really is man-made, or if green solutions will actually change the climate, she does not deny it is taking place.

It is hard to blame her when the UN's IPCC itself – the climate change oracle – is far from clear about the nature of the beast, as a close reading of its much vaunted 2021 report reminds us. Even with 'strong and sustained reductions' in the global carbon footprint, it concludes, 'it could take 20-30 years for global temperatures to stabilise.'

So even with net zero, we are probably stuck with extreme weather events, says the IPCC, as the temperature will merely stabilise and not come down. Or am I missing something?

As for the damage done by these floods, if anyone is to blame it is the left, not Meloni. Why? Because since the Second World War, Emilia-Romagna has been the left's stronghold where it has governed regionally and locally, first via the Partito Comunista Italiano (PCI) and now its heir the Partito Democratico (PD). Italy's communists were so proud of how they ran the economy in the Emilia-Romagna that they even coined a phrase to describe it: Il Modello Emilio-Romagnolo (the Emilia-Romagna Model). Theirs was an early, albeit more hard left version of the public-private partnerships promoted by Bill Clinton and Tony Blair when they launched their Third Way.

Clearly, this model has failed to provide sound flood defences. And nor did it provide the much-needed reservoirs to receive flood water in case of emergencies. As a recent front-page headline in the right-wing newspaper *Libero* proclaimed: 'Sotto Acqua Il Modello PD!' ('PD Model Under Water!').

There is a well-known Italian proverb which is apposite – 'Piove, governo Ladro!' – whose literal meaning is: 'It is raining, the government are thieves!' Whatever happens, even when it rains, it is always the government's fault. It was a favourite catch phrase of Italy's most famous communist thinker Antonio Gramsci, whose major contribution to Marxist ideology was to argue that the aim should be to take over above all not the means of production but the means of thought. But blaming

Meloni for these floods – rather than those who failed to build adequate flood defences – simply won't cut it.

It begins by drawing a parallel between prime minister Giorgia Meloni's abrupt departure from the G7 summit in Hiroshima and a climate change activists' protest consisting in pouring black dye into the Trevi Fountain in Rome. The activists attributed the floods to the government's support for fossil fuels, adding another layer to the competing flood narratives.

Farrel (2023) defends the prime minister against the left, who, he argues, are blaming "man-made climate change for the catastrophe" on her. Then he talks about a tweet by Roberto Saviano, the writer of the "cult book about the Neapolitan Mafia *Gomorrah*", whom he calls a "guru of the Italian left":

> To deny climate change as this government does ... is a deadly serious act thanks to which today thousands of Italian citizens ... are paying a heavy price (Farrel's translation of Saviano's tweet).

Farrel calls this tweet "frankly ridiculous" because he argues that Meloni had been in power for just seven months, compared to the "left" who were in power before Meloni, continuously since 2011. While Farrel is entitled to hold his political opinions and preferences, gaslighting climate change and denying its reality is harmful. He says:

> While she (Meloni), like so many of us, might wonder if climate change really is man- made, or if green solutions will actually change the climate, she does not deny it is taking place. It is hard to blame her when the UN's IPCC itself – the climate change oracle – is far from clear about the nature of the beast.

The Spectator article reflects a conservative framing of climate change that raises doubts about its anthropogenic causes and questions the effectiveness of green solutions. By framing climate change as ambiguous and uncertain, this narrative shifts focus away from collective responsibility and systemic reform. Within my theoretical framework, such framing serves to downplay accountability and weaken the urgency of addressing climate-related challenges, particularly in policy and workplace contexts where unecological ideologies like this have a great influence. Especially in Italy, where workplaces are intertwined with economic and environmental policies, this framing can have far-reaching consequences for larger ecosystems that life depends on. By questioning whether climate change is man-made or if green solutions can make any difference at all, such narratives discourage proactive measures in sectors already vulnerable to environmental risks. This resistance can particularly affect regions like Emilia Romagna, where workplaces rely on infrastructure that is increasingly exposed to climate-induced disruptions, and will remain so at least for some years, as has already been discussed in this study. If skepticism dominates public and governmental discourse, it could

result in underinvestment in disaster preparedness, renewable energy, and sustainable industrial practices. It may even lead to the cutting of budgets or more politicization of environmental policies. For employees, this might mean unsafe working conditions, temporary closures, and even job losses during extreme weather events. For example, the 2011 floods in Thailand disrupted supply chain industries which caused layoffs as many factories could not resume production.

Calling the IPCC "the climate oracle" is a very strong critique that suggests that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is ambiguous and inconsistent in its understanding and conclusions about climate change. The IPCC is considered an authoritative source on climate science and directs policies in many countries related to climate change. Politicizing and casting doubt on its approach to climate change can have consequences. In addition, the assertion that the IPCC is "far from clear" indicates that there is ambiguity in the scientific understanding of climate change and also questions whether human activities play a role in aggravating it. Ideologies like these can undermine green initiatives, as they not only cast uncertainty on the credibility of IPCC research, but also fuel inaction, conspiracy theories and denialism. As argued in this study, this ecologically destructive ideology can influence not only public attitudes and communication, but also actual workplace practices.

Climate science denial is part of mainstream political and media discourse. Interpretive and implicatory denial with the use of subtle lexical choice and synonymic drift make disaster appear "natural", "blessing" and result of "bad weather" because '[c]limate science denial is by far the most coordinated and well-moneyed form of science denial, constituting the backbone of the opposition to environmentalism and environmental science in general' (Björnberg et al., 2017: 235 as cited in Gruber, 2025). This study is informed by environmental communication and ecolinguistics. Precisely, I am guided by critical discourse analysis (CDA), an approach that is essential in understanding text production and reception. Combining both informs this study's approach to provide insights into how ideologically framed eco-destructive stories are inscribed in the linguistic aspects of news articles (McMurry et al, 2019). Following Cohen's (2001) framework, it is argued that Farrel's use of sentence-level, grammatical and lexical choices are not ideologically neural as he employs Implicatory and interpretive denial (Cohen, 2001). Overall, in Italian as well as Pakistani case, it is found that these mostly news articles pass over without comments on the ecological causes of disasters. These texts are "ecophobic" because they are predominantly interested in human world, they feature non-human world as incidental, utilitarian or reject it. Unlike the "ecophilic" texts which actively speak for the non-human world with patience, "ecophoic" texts erase non-human aspects of world (McMurry et al, 2019:16).

Mainstream politicians, journalists and corporations often employ sentence transitivity to frame a collective responsibility and trap people in "eco-neutral bubbles". They regularly say "We're all environmentalists now" or "ADM feeds your food business") (McMurry et al, 2019:20). From a CDA and ecolinguistic perspective, it is important to remember that language does not passively point to objects or help us connect for routine. Language actively also defines our roles for us. Imperative mood and synonymic drift highlighted in this study indicate that language is used to influence and spread eco-destructive ideologies. Commotion in mainstream media and bleating world of politics are part of environmental communication as they set roles for us, and channel power through language. Farrel normalizes the doubts and confusion surrounding the human impact on climate change. He actually frames climate change as a "beast" that cannot be understood; it is the way it is – without human impact. As for the destruction by floods in Emilia Romagna, he continues:

> If anyone is to blame it is the left, not Meloni", because the left has historically governed Emilia Romagna since the Second World War, via "the Partito Comunista Italiano (PCI) and now its heir the Partito Democratico (PD). Italy's communists were so proud of how they ran the economy in the Emilia Romagna that they even coined a phrase to describe it: Il Modello Emiliano-Romagnolo (the Emilia Romagna Model).

But now this model, Farrel says, has "clearly failed" to provide flood defences and hence, according to an article's headline by Libero "Sotto Acqua Il Modello PD!" (PD Model Under Water!) (Farrel, 2023).

4.4.6 Rise of Right-Wing Agendas

The climate change debate has shifted significantly in Western countries, particularly in Europe, with the growing influence of far-right parties on government. These parties often exploit climate change by linking it to migration, framing it as a security threat. Consequently, Western nations are channelling resources and efforts into assisting countries impacted by climate change, not solely for humanitarian reasons, but also to curb the so-called "climate exodus" toward their borders. This interplay between climate security and migration has fueled the emergence of eco-border policies, where environmental concerns intersect with border security strategies. With the rise in power across Europe, it has become crucial to observe how these parties frame climate emergencies. Since outright climate denial has become "residual" in many countries, right-wing parties have adopted what Bettini and Casaglia (2024) describe as the "domestication" of climate. This reframing connects climate change with migration and border security, steering discourse towards "eco-bordering" or "eco-fascism". While humanitarian narratives frame "climate refugees" as victims needing protection, the notion of

"climate exodus" is discursively weaponized to tighten border security and reinforce racial divides.

4.4.7 Environmental Protests in Italy

Particularly in Italy, with its incumbent coalition government and its inclination towards anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies, climate change impacts are increasingly reduced to domestic matters. The Italian government has a long track record of securitizing migration with alarmist rhetoric, framing it as a crisis or invasion. Political parties in Europe increasingly portray climate change as a domestic border security issue, tied to fears of a climate exodus. Bettini and Casaglia (2024) caution that this framing serves to block meaningful climate action while advancing anti-migrant and xenophobic agendas. Italy has also emerged as a focal point for both climate denialism and activism. Rising controversial protests by environmental activists, such as attacks on iconic art in Rome, Florence, and Vatican City, highlight frustrations with governmental inaction on the climate crisis. The Italian legislature responded by passing stricter penalties for vandalizing cultural heritage, escalating debates over activism methods. Mayor of Rome Roberto Gualtieri called for a truce, stating, "The fight against climate change is necessary, but not with these methods that pollute the environment". In contrast, activists from Last Generation defended their actions. Luca Trivellone, a representative of Last Generation, justified vandalism attacks in conversation with EL PERIODICO, and blamed the inaction of the government:

> In 40 years of international meetings and activism, nothing concrete has been achieved against climate change. Just words. We are heading towards a planet with a three-degree increase in temperature. This will have devastating consequences for generations to come. That is why we are taking these non-violent actions (CE Noticias Financieras, 2023).

When asked why the Trevi Fountain had been attacked particularly, he answered:

> There is a statue in the background there that represents the health that water provides, because water is life, and seeing the black of our charcoal in the water represents that we are being killed by the poison of the fossil industry. That's why we wanted to put the focus there.

4.4.8 Climate Change, Displacement and Eco-Bordering

Climate-induced displacement is recognized as one of the possible risks highlighted in discussions around environmental security (White, 2011). This classification of migration as a security threat poses significant challenges, especially as many countries in the Global South face escalating climate disasters and forced migrations. Narratives of climate-induced displacement have been popularized with fears of replacement by foreign populations (Bettini and Casaglia, 2024). The apocalyptic description of mass migration from the global South to the global North is seen as a threat to local values and culture, human security included. Apocalyptic migration narratives often frame displaced populations from the global South as threats to cultural identity and resources in the global North. For example, the "numbers game" (Brown, 2008) and predictions of climate migrants are used to incite xenophobia and justify securitized climate policies. Linking these numbers with security, climate change, and resources is problematic (Selby, 2014). The concept of connecting migration with security threats serves as a tool to militarize and securitize climate change, furthered by an assumption that these displacements lead to political instability and conflicts (Hough, 2021).

This argument is further mobilized with the Great Replacement conspiracy theory, which again is based on the fear that white populations are being replaced by non-white immigrants. Bettini and Casaglia argue that right-wing ideologies seem to reject climate science as "elitist, leftist, liberal, and inaccessible knowledge" (2024: 7). Due to this ideological difference, the current coalition government parties in Italy have criticized "ideological approaches" to climate change as alarming. For example, in Italy, right-wing parties focus more on extreme weather events such as floods, droughts, and landslides, outside climate alarmism, which they consider floated by the left. This "conceptual response" lays a foundation for a "reasonable approach" to oppose the "ideological extremism" of "green" and "leftists" (Bettini and Casaglia, 2024: 7). The Italian government has oftentimes exploited Italy's geographical location as a "point of entrance to the EU" – a tool to impose stringent border security. With Italy considered a hotspot of climate change in Europe, the government is likely to impose eco-bordering to justify "more bordering and racism, with more explicit forms of eco-fascism becoming mainstream" (Bettini and Casaglia, 2024:8).

This ideological difference in the approach to climate change and its science is further noticeable in the statements of politicians in parliament sessions that present:

> 'climate ideology' as an old, regressive, and unsustainable position that needs to be overcome by a "productive ecology" and the "protection of national interests" (Lampis, FdI Session 198, 20/11/23, as cited in Bettini and Casaglia, 2024: 7).

Therefore, the way forward is to:

> invest on "energy independence" and the safeguarding of "our country's beauty" (Messina, FdI Session 45, 30/01/23), through "a clear strategy of energy politics and environmental politics" that does not "penalise Italian businesses" (Donzelli, FdI Session 73, 22/03/23, as cited in Bettini and Casaglia, 2024:7).

These approaches to climate change are likely to make climate change a domestic issue, outside its global impacts. The process of domestication of climate change involves reducing climate change impacts to the national level, to serve and protect the interests of the nation and security. The nation's businesses and its citizens are promised priority while cutting ties with international agreements and environmental bindings.

4.4.9 Piove, Governo Ladro! (It is raining, the Government are thieves!)

Farrel (2023) argues that it is normal in Italy to always blame the government for whatever happens, "even when it rains". But blaming Meloni for these floods "rather than those who failed to build adequate flood defences – simply won't cut it" he concludes. While many agree with Farrel's political arguments, downplaying human impact on the environment is dangerous. This framing can fuel climate change denialism and conspiracy theories. For example, the news article entitled "Is deadly weather being 'supercharged'? by Ross Clark (18 Nov. 2024, Spectator) begins "So that's it then" and ridicules the Guardian for exaggerating the impact of climate change and casually saying "Never mind that humans were around to witness multiple ice ages". Denials identified in this study are highly relevant to the eco-destructive ideologies examined in this study. Within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis and ecosophy, it was explained and highlighted how denials are often embedded in media and political narratives surrounding floods. Literal denial manifests in narratives that ignore the scientific consensus on climate change or confuse it and often refer to extreme weather events as mere "bad weather". Interpretive denial is reflected in discourses that downplay the severity of floods by framing them as localized or manageable events, or by emphasizing their benefits to agriculture or to a few individuals as "blessings". Thereby these eco-destructive stories diminish the urgency of climate action. Implicatory denial is particularly visible in narratives where governments, businesses, or institutions acknowledge climate risks but continue to promote policies of economic growth and development at the expense of sustainability. This denial operates discursively through strategies such as passivization, nominalization, backgrounding, and erasure, which obscure agency, responsibility, and the socio-political causes of climate disasters. By revealing these patterns in news articles, the study finds that such denial mechanisms embedded in flood narratives contribute to climate inaction, especially within workplace policies and organizational responses.

4.4.10 Conspiracy Theories and Climate Change

The 2023 report entitled "Floods in Italy, drought in Spain, but the disinformation is the same", published by the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO[xv]) presents a detailed analysis of conspiracy theory narratives that persist in Europe and contribute to climate denialism. According to the report, three Spanish fact-checking organizations, Maldita, Newtral and Verificat, contributed to the study and concluded that the main narratives about climate change following droughts involved some conspiracy theories and climate change denialism. One of the main narratives in Spain regarding heat, drought and forest fires was to accept extreme heat and drought as typical Spanish weather phenomena, because "it has always been hot in Spain in the summer, and ... the media are alarming the population by using very intense colours in the weather forecast maps". This harmful narrative promotes an ideology that there is nothing strange about extreme weather, and climate change and its impact are exaggerated. Similarly, as mentioned earlier, Ross Clark's (2024) article downplays the impact of climate change and deaths related to climate change. Like Spain, the main narrative about the floods in Emilia Romagna was that floods were deliberately caused by humans, not by climate change (Facta.news). Another conspiracy theory kept floating in Italy about the unusual flight direction of an aeroplane that was linked to cloud seeding, which allegedly caused flooding in Emilia-Romagna. However, according to the EDMO report and Facta.news, (2023), the aircraft took an unusual route simply because "it was filming the 'Giro d'Italia'", Italy's popular cycling race competition. The report further adds that cloud seeding has nothing to do with flooding and cannot cause such meteorological events as in Emilia-Romagna. Another very dominant theory, which was prevalent on social media during the floods in Italy, was about the opening of the Ridracoli dam. As per this theory, flooding was caused by the opening of Ridracoli dam, located in the province of Forlì-Cesena, which was blamed for causing widespread destruction in this area. This story contends that the water reservoir was full to the brim after rains; therefore, to manage the water dam, its gates had to be opened to empty it a little, which resulted in flooding the Romagna area. Facta.news reports that this was a false story because "the volume of controlled water released was about five hundred times less than the 350 million cubic meters of water that fell on the most affected area of Emilia Romagna". These narratives indicate that dominant stories are prevalent in many countries, including Pakistan and Italy. Both countries experienced the worst flooding in their respective living memory and records. Located in different parts of the world, Italy and Pakistan are the hotspots of climate change-induced extreme weather, such as floods and droughts. In this connection, the following section briefly presents a comparison of the flood narratives between Italy and Pakistan.

4.4.11 Dominant Flood Narratives in Italy and Pakistan

From a linguistic perspective, political discourse from both countries was loaded with war terminology. For example, the governor of the Veneto region described the rain as a "water bomb". Italian weather discourse and news also frequently use metaphors such as "bomba d'acqua", "sciabolata artica" and "grandine killer" to talk about the severity of the weather. Similarly, government officials in Pakistan relied on words like "battle", and "combat", and Dawn described floods as "monsters". This happens in Italy too, with heatwaves which the media typically associates with the names of mythological monsters, for instance, Caronte, Minosse, and Cerbero. In addition, floods in both countries were described as "tragic", and "devastating" by international media such as the BBC and The Independent. The discourse included metaphors to describe the impact of floods, such as "blow to the stomach", and "(Forlì) was forced on its knees, devastated and in pain" in Italian political discourse from the mayor of Prato and Mayor Gian Luca Zattini. Likewise, the narratives of Pakistani floods included "hell was unleashed", "the mercy of harsh weather" and "monsoon on steroids" to emphasize the scale and intensity of the disaster caused by floods. Besides metaphorical language and war terminology, conspiracy theories emerged as dominant discourse, which downplayed the reality and impact of climate change. Cloud seeding and dam water were represented, especially by social media, as causing floods in Emilia Romagna, whereas India was blamed for "water terrorism" by the people and media in both Bangladesh and Pakistan. Moreover, media narratives of floods in both countries pointed out the possibility of irregularities and a lack of transparency in flood funds. Opposition political parties and the media use previous events to indicate corruption in the present. When the local mainstream starts reporting on previous corruption to indicate the possibility of irregularities and corruption in the present time during natural disasters, then the foreign media will also speculate. For example, former Venice Mayor Orsoni's arrest for an alleged corruption inquiry in connectionwith the flood barrier. Furthermore, regarding floods in Italy, *Agenzia Nazionale Stampa Associata* (ANSA) described heavy rains as "bad weather" at least three times in ten articles studied for this chapter. For example, the titles of the following ANSA articles, "Landslides and floods, bad weather alert in Liguria" (16 Oct. 2024) and "Bad weather hits Italy – storms in South till Tuesday" (19 Oct. 2024), use "bad weather" vaguely without making a clear connection with climate change. For example, one article says, "Bad weather returned to Liguria Wednesday with rivers breaking their banks and roads flooded across the northwestern Italian region" (ANSA, 2024). However, one article entitled "Extreme weather events rose 22% in 2023" (ANSA, 2024) does indicate the impact of climate change but confuses it with "Extreme heat or bad weather have led to the death of 31 people and caused billions of euros in damage to property, infrastructure and crops" (ANSA, 2024). In another article, ANSA writes that many Italian cities have "reportedly borne the brunt of the bad weather". I argue that the lack of

clarity and local voices can cause an information gap in the global media and political discourse, which can be exploited by foreign media, politicians and conspiracy theorists to push their agenda and create further confusion surrounding climate change.

Another similarity between narratives of floods in Italy and Pakistan was the acknowledgement of unprecedented flooding that followed extreme droughts. In 2022, the hottest year was recorded in Italy (The Guardian, 2023), with the largest cities experiencing the warmest weather in more than 50 years (Reuters, 2024). Similarly, Jacobabad, a city in Sindh, became the hottest city on earth with temperatures reaching 51 °C on 14 May 2022 (Reuters, 2022). Having experienced extreme heatwaves and droughts, both Italy and Pakistan went from dry weather to the unprecedented rains and worst flooding of their respective history, which also got people thinking about how some areas could have droughts followed by rains and flooding. These unusual weather events made many people in Pakistan wonder if God was punishing them for their sins. For example, a survey by Gallup Pakistan [18] in 2011 revealed that 54% of Pakistanis believe that the recent climate changes are a punishment from God (Gallup, 2011). This survey was conducted after the 2010 floods, and it indicated that more than half of Pakistanis believed that flooding and other extreme weather events were acts of God, with just 22% saying it was due to global warming. However, another survey by Gallup Pakistan (26 Sept. 2024) found that "81% of Pakistanis believe that climate change has exacerbated the severity of flooding in Pakistan". If we follow the indicators of this survey, most Pakistanis did not link floods with religion in 2022 and did not deny the impact of climate change. On the contrary, Facta.news reported that climate change denialism is still widespread in Italy because many stories floated during the floods in Italy claimed that "the heavy rains and floods prove that there is no drought in Italy and that it is not a problem because it could not rain during a dry period". Pakistan may have climate change ignorance, but despite its nagging issues in key areas like education, health and economy, it does not have climate change denialism.

Additionally, in both countries, many attribute parts of the disaster to unchecked and unregulated construction on riverbanks and in areas prone to flooding. According to the mayor of Modigliana, Jader Dardi, some houses were built where they should never have been built, i.e. directly in the path of a potential landslide. "We have to rebuild concerning the natural landscape and terrain", he concluded (DW, 2023).

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[18] Gallup Pakistan, the Pakistani affiliate of Gallup International, is a leading survey research and consultancy firm in Pakistan. (https://gallup.com.pk/about).

Both Professor Marco Marani and Professor Daanish Mustafa emphasize managing climate change and changing approaches towards water management. They do not talk about "fighting" climate change, which is an important step towards changing approaches to climate change. Prof. Mustafa recommends abandoning colonial approaches in favour of water management and recommends a strong official response to illegal and unregulated construction on floodplains. Likewise, Gabriele Bollini, a Sustainable Design and Planning Expert at the University of Modena, informs that rivers have been squeezed into ever-higher, narrower banks to make space for houses, industries, and agriculture. He also talks about his work with the local administration, where he was often asked by counsellors to move the blue line (from high-risk area maps) to allow their friends to build. "This is the problem! When politics does things like these, it is not looking out for the public interests or the interests of future generations but serves to interest of a few" he concludes (DW, 2023).

Besides undermining climate action, these stories significantly influence public perceptions, foster confusion and contribute to divisive political discourse. What amplified the tragedies in both countries and what can be learned from these floods is growing ever louder and should neither be forgotten nor underestimated.

4.5 Climate Change, Workplaces, and Eco-Destructive Narratives

Despite being two different countries on two separate continents, Pakistan and Italy have faced the same extreme weather phenomena. Floods in Emilia Romagna and Sindh sparked disinformation narratives emerging as dominant discourses and stories fuelled with destructive ideologies that influence workplaces and other public spaces. These ecologically destructive narratives and ideologies gaslight climate change, fuelling climate denialism on religious and political grounds. This ideological framing in media discourse shapes the public's ability to critically engage with news, which can often lead to a "willing suspension of disbelief", where individuals accept information at face value without scrutiny. This state of mind hinders the informed decision-making process and also endorses polarized viewpoints, consequently affecting the societal fabric and collective response to critical issues such as climate change. In Sindh, the framing of floods as divine punishment overshadowed systemic issues such as poor infrastructure and policy failures, which directly impacted workplaces and industries, including agriculture and humanitarian settings, like relief camps. This narrative can prevent meaningful dialogue around sustainable farming practices or equitable disaster relief and leave many workers in the informal sector, particularly women, further marginalized. It can be understood that these ideologies have also contributed to a lack of workplace accountability, where the focus has shifted away from systemic solutions to individual resilience or religious debates, where many framed floods in the religious light. This pattern, observed in Pakistan, has parallels in Italian workplaces, e.g. in Emilia Romagna, where the floods were framed by

Italian media as merely a result of "bad weather," with ANSA using this term repeatedly in its coverage.

This narrative downplayed the role of climate change and fostered skepticism about its urgency, particularly within the workplace and industry-specific contexts. Agricultural workers, whose lives depend on climate-sensitive systems, were left vulnerable, as the narrative shifted blame to natural variability rather than systemic failures. According to the agricultural union Coldiretti, prolonged droughts threaten more than 30% of Italy's agricultural production (5 July. 2022, BBC). Moreover, the tourism industry, particularly in Rimini, suffered significant losses. However, discussions around climate-resilient infrastructure mainly remained absent from workplace and industry-level responses, with political narratives dominating space. This reluctance to acknowledge climate change as a critical factor delays necessary adaptations and further exposes workers to risk. The Independent (17 Oct. 2024) highlights that Italy's lack of preparedness for climate-related disasters exposes significant gaps in both public policy and workplace practices. The article entitled "It's shameful and I won't pay it': flood-hit Italians rage against insurance call" notes that only 6% of homes and 5% of businesses are insured against natural disasters in Italy. This shows Italy's lack of preparedness for climate-related extreme weather events, which expose significant gaps in public policy and workplace practices. This situation highlights how inadequate disaster planning affects livelihoods, particularly in sectors like agriculture and tourism. For workplaces, this lack of insurance coverage has direct implications. Businesses without adequate protections risk closure after disasters and leave many employees vulnerable to job loss and economic instability. The absence of systemic safeguards also spreads fears of insecurity, as workers and employers alike struggle to recover from the financial losses caused by climate-induced catastrophes.

This study has primarily analyzed the narratives of floods as presented in mainstream Pakistani media. However, striking parallels between the political and media discourse in Italy and Pakistan are evident in the narratives explored in this chapter. Both contexts exhibit dominant political narratives and eco-destructive ideologies, such as "blame-it-on-climate-change- change" rhetoric, which influence public perceptions and societal responses. As demonstrated throughout this study, climate change does not discriminate – it impacts everyone regardless of their beliefs or geographical location. Workplaces, as essential parts of society, are significantly affected by climate change in both countries. When floods devastate agriculture, critical infrastructure, and housing, the consequences inevitably travel to workplaces. These spaces, where individuals spend considerable portions of their lives, become arenas for discussing the impacts of climate disasters and might even work as social clubs for a few. Conversations among colleagues, often triggered by personal experiences or media narratives, are influenced by dominant ideologies, including eco-destructive ones. Such stories, shaped by political agendas and oversimplified attributions, can lead to the spread of

misinformation and hinder critical discussions.

4.5.1 Vulnerability of Populations and Structural Inequality in Workplaces

Workplaces cannot function effectively if employees live in unsafe areas or face the ongoing repercussions of natural disasters. Italy and Pakistan, both identified by scientists as climate change hotspots, are genuine examples of this vulnerability. The destruction caused by floods disrupts the physical and social stability necessary for productivity. For many individuals, workplaces are not just professional spaces but also places of social interaction where personal and communal challenges, including those stemming from climate crises, are shared and discussed. In this way, workplaces serve as microcosms reflecting broader societal narratives. The prevalence of eco-destructive ideologies in flood reporting influences these discussions and shapes how employees perceive and address climate-related challenges. Recognizing this dynamic underscores the importance of fostering informed and constructive communication within workplaces to mitigate the adverse effects of harmful narratives and promote resilience against climate change.

As can be observed from the narratives of floods in Pakistani mainstream media and the BBC, flood victims felt they were left alone and not taken care of. A similar trend can be identified in the public sentiment captured in Italian narratives of floods in Emilia-Romagna, where flood-affected individuals expressed anger at being "left alone to deal with the consequences of climate change". This frustration reflects a broader narrative of neglect and political inaction, which extends into workplaces where climate resilience remains a low priority. The typical "blame game" or classic "Piove, Governo Ladro!" between left-wing regional authorities and Giorgia Meloni's far-right government complicates these challenges, as it takes attention away from actionable solutions. Therefore, such dynamics illustrate the influence of eco-destructive ideologies that prioritize short-term political gains over sustainable planning. Within workplaces, these ideologies can hinder investment in resilience measures, such as retrofitting infrastructure or establishing employee support mechanisms.

Furthermore, floods in Pakistani media and political narratives are mainly described as a supernatural force, super floods, and a punishment from the heavens in the form of angered waters. Such narratives are not confined to Pakistan; Italian media and political narratives of floods also heavily relied on these frames, by describing extreme rains and floods as "water bombs" and "killer hail", i.e. rainfall that can force cities and communities to their knees and leave them recognizable. In such situations and contexts, eco-destructive ideologies promote a state of inaction by normalizing the denial of climate change or framing it as an uncontrollable external force. In workplaces, this ideology manifests itself in decision-making processes that neglect sustainability measures. For example, in industries reliant on fossil fuels, narratives

undermining climate change have been used to resist the green transition: using these narratives not only harms the environment but also leaves workers unprepared for shifts in employment markets driven by European green policies. This is evident in the reluctance to invest in renewable energy projects, increasing job insecurity among fossil fuel workers. Therefore, it is extremely important to understand that the communication dynamics within workplaces can further exacerbate this issue. The narrative of "outsiders" or less deserving groups fosters discriminatory practices. Flood relief camps and recovery efforts often reflect this bias in the Pakistani case. The media prioritized the dominant group's perspectives and marginalized flood victims' needs and voices. A parallel can be drawn with Italy, where workplaces exclude immigrant workers. For instance, agriculture and domestic labour face comparable challenges where eco-destructive ideologies frame them as outsiders or less deserving of fair treatment. This alienation is evident in workplace communication, where their voices and needs are often excluded, and decisions are made without considering their realities. These practices reflect how workplaces, both in Pakistan and Italy, can reinforce structural inequalities through biased communication and a lack of cultural awareness. This discriminatory attitude highlights how eco-destructive ideologies, such as urban ethnocentrism and hegemonic narratives, influence workplace dynamics, including humanitarian settings like flood relief camps. In such spaces, these ideologies frame communication and decision-making, often marginalizing vulnerable groups.

4.5.2 Skepticism and Denialism in Workplaces

Agriculture lands were severely affected by floods and heat waves in Pakistan. In a similar way, floods in Emilia-Romagna destroyed vineyards and farms, which threatened the livelihoods of scores of workers not only in agriculture but also in the tourism industry in Rimini, which suffered significant financial losses. In this connection, ideologically motivated media statements by the *Spectator* that the UN's IPCC itself are not reliable about the impact and reality of climate change can delay the green transition. This could also result in a lack of investment in renewable energy projects and make workers in fossil fuel industries more vulnerable to job losses, as European policies increasingly favour clean energy. Additionally, such skepticism has the potential to influence public attitudes, shaping how both employers and employees perceive environmental responsibility. A narrative that minimizes the urgency of climate change may actually discourage workers from advocating greener workplace policies or supporting initiatives aimed at sustainability. In industries central to Italy's economy, such as agriculture and tourism, this could lead to delays in adopting practices necessary for long-term resilience. Ultimately, framing climate change in this way risks not only delaying meaningful action but also leaving workplaces and communities unprepared for the increasing challenges posed by environmental crises. It reinforces a cycle of inaction, where skepticism

about responsibility justifies a lack of investment in solutions and makes already vulnerable systems and communities even more exposed to climate-related risks.

Table 3: A summary of flood narratives and their ecological implications.

Words	Narrative	Impact	Source	Ecological Implications
Biblical proportions	Religious: official narrative	Affected parts of Pakistan	BBC	Religious framing to shift focus away from accountability.
Hell was unleashed	Cosmic: official narrative	On Sindh	BBC	Religion is used to undermine climate action.
Super floods	Supernatural: official narrative	Hit poor in Sindh	BBC	The inevitability of floods beyond human control.
Different Animal	Uncontrollable: official narrative	Affecting Pakistan	BBC	Unexpected brutal floods could not be predicted and had never been experienced before. Thus, the government cannot be blamed.
Nature's wrath	Punishment and Anger: official narrative	Pakistanis	Dawn	Religious layer implied to indicate people may have been punished for their sins.
Great floods	Uncontrollable: official narrative	Caused devastation	Dawn	More powerful floods than the government cannot be prepared for.
Battle climate change	War: media narrative	Almost impossible for Pakistani Govt	Dawn	Weaponizes climate change discourse and may legitimize military involvement in the democratic systems in Pakistan.
Combat climate change	War: official narrative	Imposed on Pakistan Government	Dawn	Suggests that Pakistan may need the mighty Pakistani military to win this "battle" for them.
Monster floods	Supernatural: media narrative	Washed away houses	Dawn	Antagonizes nature and climate change that kills and affects people's lives.
"Raging waters" used twice	Anger and punishment: media narrative	Affected 33 million	Dawn and BBC	Villainous floods derailed the country's population, including children.
The mercy of harsh weather	Religion and divine: media narrative	Pakistanis	Dawn	The government has left people to suffer and expect mercy from an angry nature.
Wake-up call	Urgency: official narrative	World	Dawn	Proactively calls for collective action from the rest of the world amid the alarming situation in Pakistan
The mammoth, unrelenting rains	Supernatural: media narrative	Destroyed homes of millions	BBC	Mega floods and the unimaginable scale of rains can destroy anything and everything on their way.
Monsoon on steroids	Abnormality: United Nations narrative	Affecting generous Pakistani	UN	Climate change-induced floods are affecting generous Pakistanis who once helped others. Now the world must help Pakistan. But the article does not mention who put the monsoon "on steroids".
Colossal crisis	Catastrophic: United Nations narrative	Prevalent in Pakistan	UN	The incumbent government cannot recover alone from the crisis as it is beyond its capacity.
The hell unleashed by the heavens	Religion: official narrative	The government was not prepared for hell	Govt. in BBC	People may have been responsible for angering the heavens, therefore the government cannot be held accountable for people's bad deeds.

Whammy of climate-related disasters	Destruction: media narrative	Made millions homeless and left without shelter	BBC	Powerful and awful disasters are caused by climate change, but the article does not mention who is responsible for the climate change that is affecting millions in Pakistan.
Gut-wrenching floods	Painful suffering: local health workers' narrative	Floods could kill thousands	Aid worker in BBC	More misery and suffering due to flood waters, lack of facilities and marginalized women and children at great health risk.
Imran khan thundered	Politics: media narrative	Imran Khan delivered speech to target the government	Dawn	Politicizes climate change and natural events and vocabulary.
The weather overnight was like a "water bomb"	War: official narrative	Flooded with water bombs. Official Italian narratives.	BBC	It relies on war terminology to convey the insanity of the rains while also indicating the inevitability of water falling from the sky. Nature waged war with the Italian administration. And it implies that the administration is helpless.
The Mayor of Prato, Matteo Biffoni, described overnight rains as a "blow to the stomach"	Painful and violent: official narrative	A blow to the stomach and flooded hospital. Official Italian narrative	BBC	Invokes the element of violence in rains and floods that can hit the sensitive parts of society and critical infrastructure like hospitals.
Floods described as tragic by F1 president and CEO Stefano Domenicali	Melancholic and emotional: official narrative	This caused the tragedy in Imola and Romagna.	BBC	It relies on emotional vocabulary to frame the devastation caused by floods as tragic. Personal experience is also reported and a solidarity message sent out by cancelling the much-awaited F1 race.
Historic floods left Ravenna unrecognizable, the mayor of Ravenna, Michele de Pascale	Devastation: official narrative	Damaged Ravenna and left it unrecognizable, official Italian administrative narrative.	BBC	This narrative frames Ravenna as suffering because of flooding. It is no longer recognizable to the local administration. This introduces a personal element as if the administration had spent years building this city and the floods had washed away all of its charm. The floods are framed as an entity that will affect your loved ones.
The mayor of nearby Forlì, Gian Luca Zattini, said his city was "on its knees, devastated and in pain"	Pain and Suffering: official narrative	Floods that forced Forlì to its knees, devastated and in pain	BBC	This narrative attempts to humanize the city's devastation, and frames it as having been forced on its knees by floods. This also indicates that the residents of Forlì are in pain, as the floods have caused huge devastation.
The mayor of Castel Bolognese described floods as "catastrophic".	Painful: official narrative	Affected communities	BBC	The government cannot be prepared for such catastrophic floods.
Rains described as "bad weather" three times	Just bad weather	Led to disruption in Italy	ANSA	Framing extreme rains and floods as just bad weather indicates downplaying the role of climate in these rains and floods. Bad weather cannot kill and dislocate millions. Such narratives have ecological implications, but using a relatively
				mild negative adjective, like "bad", downplays their impact.
Grandine killer	Violent	Kills people	Libero Quotidiano	Frames hailstorms as an entity that can kill innocent people, including children, and antagonizes the weather.

Caronte	God-like weather reference to Greek mythology	Transports people into danger	Italian Media	Sensationalizes heatwaves to evoke immediate attention using their beliefs.
Described as earthquake by the mayor of the town of Serra Sant'Abbondio, Ludovico Caverni	Violent, sudden and uncontrollable force	Killed many innocents. Official state narrative.	RAI	This metaphor intensifies the impact, force and incredibility of floods which were beyond the local administration capacity to handle.
Sciabolata artica		Sudden severe spells of cold weather.	Il Giornale and Quotidiano.net	These metaphorical expressions may also shift focus toward immediate weather phenomena rather than the broader context of climate change, potentially downplaying the role of global warming in creating more frequent and intense extreme weather events.

4.6 Ecosophical Implications

The Italian and Pakistani media frames nature as an antagonistic force that "unleashes downpours" and "causes devastation". This is a typical example of a dominant discourse that renders an anthropocentric metaphor, reinforcing a dualistic relationship, where nature is the antagonist that humans cannot tame, despite "combating" and "battling" hard. Such anthropocentric metaphors and frames present nature as a "resource" which is there to be exploited and used, or as a destructive and uncontrollable villainous force that causes devastation. From my ecosophy perspective, this framing of natural disasters reflects local political and human-centred views that purposefully intend to overlook the links between human actions, climate, and ecological degradation. *Dawn* mostly reinforces narratives of division rather than collective responsibility and failures in managing the floods, while respecting ecological harmony between nature and humans. The ecosophy of this study does not believe in presenting nature as a controllable force behind devastation, nor does it believe in the framing of Man vs. Wild in the world, but it advocates a harmonious relation between nature and humans that respects life in forms, shapes and sizes. This ecosophy does not favour the idea of "controlling" nature, which would bring us back to the dominant discourse: this dominant mindset and approach to nature as a commodity has not worked and will most likely not work in the future. Based on these principles, the ecosophy of this study also advocate equal treatment of all living and non-living beings on which our lives depend. It aims to highlight narratives that deliberately undermine the ecological importance of Indigenous communities and ethnic groups by erasing them from state and mainstream media discourse. Furthermore, according to the ecosophy of this study and broader ecological terms, these frames undermine animals as they aim to construct a worldview that places humans in a superior position where they can exploit the environment for their benefit. My ecosophy first exposes these unecological frames in dominant discourses and stories we live by and then

endorses an equal respect relationship between humans and all forms of nature from environmentally friendly ecolinguistic perspectives. Through these relationships, according to the present study's ecosophy, we can resist dominant discourses and media narratives to replace unecological frames with more beneficial stories that are beyond ideological and political viewpoints. These stories view extreme weather events such as floods outside the internal political rift and promote unity in the national crisis. This transition in our approach and framing will require due process, time and consensus. As established in this study, climate change does not discriminate, but marginalized people remain more vulnerable to its risks, due to lack of social and economic resources, as mentioned earlier. It will require a collective response from society to protect Indigenous communities, their ecological value and knowledge through social, ethical, political and above all environmental dialogue. These are the core values of the ecosophy of the present study that aims at a sustainable and harmonious future that respects all forms of life.

Conclusions

Misleading media frames, such as trivializing climate change as "bad weather", obstruct environmental progress and influence societal structures, shaping the distribution of resources, opportunities, and vulnerabilities. In Italy, such framing undermines proactive planning and diminishes workplace resilience, perpetuating cycles of vulnerability and inaction. Skepticism and denialism, fuelled by conspiracy theories, shift the focus away from actionable solutions, creating ideological divides that complicate policymaking and delay efforts to address climate challenges. Consequently, workplaces, as microcosms of societal systems, remain ill-prepared for escalating climate challenges. These dynamics highlight the need for fostering ecological awareness and constructive communication within workplaces to mitigate the impact of harmful narratives. Moreover, addressing issues like greenwashing and ensuring genuine sustainability commitments are crucial for building resilience against climate change. Ultimately, this study demonstrates that media narratives significantly shape societal responses to climate disasters. It calls for a shift from eco-destructive ideologies to narratives rooted in ecological justice and inclusivity, ensuring that workplaces and communities are better prepared for future challenges posed by climate change.

The study also discussed how short-sighted environmental stances in the media can downplay climate change impacts. For example, referring to climate change as "bad weather" trivializes its long-term and systemic nature. This misleading media frame gives the impression that extreme weather events are isolated and random occurrences rather than symptoms of a broader climate crisis. Misleading media frames do not merely obstruct environmental progress, but also shape societal structures, influencing how resources, opportunities, and vulnerabilities are distributed. In Italy, framing climate-induced disasters as isolated incidents or purely natural events undermines proactive planning in workplaces and communities. Public awareness of climate change is critical for implementing sustainable policies, so this short-sightedness can lead to inaction and confusion, both at the individual and institutional levels in Italy. Moreover, these ideological framings influence workplace communication and policies, shaping the public's ability to engage critically with environmental challenges. It is also acknowledged that not all workplaces will be affected by harmful narratives, particularly those with strong sustainability commitments and policies. Such workplaces may resist eco-destructive ideologies. However, the potential to be influenced by harmful narratives, as well as the risk of exploiting them through shallow sustainability claims, commonly referred to as Greenwashing also exists. This underscores the importance of fostering genuine environmental awareness and critical media literacy within workplaces to counteract these risks.

The study has given particular attention to misleading political and media narratives that create confusion surrounding climate change and ultimately lead to the emergence of conspiracy theories. Both Italy and Pakistan are predicted to experience extreme weather events in the future, due to their respective geographical locations. As climate change related to extreme weather events are likely to increase, misinformation/disinformation related to them will also spread, leading to many questions and ambiguities (European Fact-checking Standards Network, 01 July. 24). Therefore, exposing and resisting these misleading narratives will also become extremely important, with many trying to disassociate extreme weather conditions, like severe flooding and heavy rains that struck Pakistan and Italy, from climate change. It is important to mention that, during my research on this project, I have noticed that denialism and conspiracy narratives have increased, with the rise of populism and polarization in societies. It can be predicted that these divisive and polarizing narratives will spread and influence the masses, including workplaces. As found in this study, these narratives are ideologically motivated and they can undermine and even downplay climate change in some cases, as can be seen, e.g. in a *Spectator*'s article in which the UN's IPCC itself is described as "the climate change oracle" and depicted as far from clear in its outlook on climate change. Such narratives can be detrimental to our environment and the collective efforts for its protection.

In the span of three years during my studies, Pakistan experienced the worst flooding in its history in 2022, which was again followed by more extreme flooding in 2023 and 2024. Meanwhile, in Italy, where I have been living since June 2022, in Emilia-Romagna, Italy's worst flooding also occurred in May 2023, and again in 2024. In 2024, Spain also suffered from tragic floods, reflecting the increasing global prevalence of such disasters. In Pakistan's case, poor infrastructure was blamed for destruction, but Spain, Italy and many other European countries are comparatively well-developed, and the severity of the floods still washed away houses and damaged infrastructure. To talk about the unpredictability of increasingly extreme weather events, both Italy and Pakistan went from extreme drought to severe historic flooding that claimed many lives and arguably left traumatizing impacts on people's lives forever. It should also be mentioned that both countries also experienced the warmest days in their history, with Jacobabad in Pakistan becoming the hottest city in the world in May 2024; later, the city was also flooded, as discussed in the article entitled "From furnace to flood: world's hottest city in Pakistan now under water" (2 Sept. Reuters).

The study also emphasizes alternative narratives, like the ones proposed by Professor Daanish Mustafa, professor of critical geography at King's College London, co-author of Pakistan's first climate change response strategies and main author of the UNDP five-year flood response strategy for Pakistan. Prof, Mustafa advocates the inclusion of Indigenous communities in the national dialogue and demonstrating faith in their ecological wisdom and

knowledge. These steps are crucial to preparing for future floods without resorting to developmental models, which Professor Mustafa describes as colonial. Therefore, he stresses the need for decolonized approaches to water management, ensuring solutions that are inclusive and rooted in equity. This study underscores the urgent need to move beyond simplistic blame and fragmented responses, advocating narratives that foster ecological justice and inclusivity in addressing the escalating impacts of climate change.

When viewed through a comparative lens, the study finds that, just like immigrant and low-wage workers in Italy, the Pakistani Indigenous populations Kalash and Baloch, who were already struggling for survival and respectful co-existence, have been forced into extreme economic challenges by climate-related disasters such as floods. Findings in this study show that marginalized communities like Kalash and Baloch are excluded from the mainstream media and governmental discourse, and their Indigenous lands are exploited and advertised by the state in the name of green tourism and cooperative farming (often used as a euphemism for a less intensive version of corporate farming).

This study emphasizes the importance of India and Pakistan addressing their shared water challenges through negotiation. Although the focus of this research does not include India's flooding experiences, it is worth noting that India faces severe floods almost annually. In order to negotiate, this study proposes that both India and Pakistan will have to surrender their warmongering metaphors and adopt peaceful metaphors for harmonious co-existence. To achieve a peaceful co-existence, they will need to invest in their local populations rather than in weapons. Strangely, both countries spend a lot of money on buying and making weapons, but they depend on foreign aid to help flood victims and build climate-resilient infrastructure to withstand climate change. They need to adopt climate diplomacy and help each other to manage deadly smog which has been called an ecological apocalypse (Business Standards, 2024; Eco-Business, 2019; The Times of India, 2024). This study also brings attention to the war terminology used in the media to describe weather events, and one of the core conclusions in this respect is that the approach to climate change should change in an ecolinguistic direction also as concerns the use of war discourse and metaphors. More precisely, it is recommended, as similarly voiced by experts like Prof. Mustafa and Prof. Marani, not to "fight" or "battle" floods or climate change, but to "manage" flood water as a way to move forward.

In light of these findings, this study has noted that the language used in the media and political discourse primarily relies on sensationalism. In political climate emergency discourse, the threat of a so-called "climate exodus" often emerges and leads to racial bias and labelling of climate migrants in a variety of contexts, including workplaces. Eco-bordering and eco-fascism are likely to increase in the future in many European countries. This will likely extend beyond media rooms and political offices and make its way to workplaces where immigrant workers

may be targeted. As discussed in the study, the climate change debate is at risk of becoming a battleground between extreme ideologies of the right-wing, left-wing and environmental activists, further disturbing coexistence. This practice of forcing my ideology on your ideology will eventually become a tug-of-war, where one party might force another to fall, heading towards more division and polarization.

The evidence suggests that, as in the case of Karachi's relief camps, flood victims were forced to migrate to Karachi in search of shelter and security became targets of racial and ethnic labelling. They were deemed "others", or non-Karachiites, accused of invading local schools, and described as ungrateful by local volunteers. Within the same nation, flood victims from rural Sindh were stereotyped as lazy and accused of exploiting resources. These biases escalated, with a political party in Karachi propagating conspiracy theories that migration from rural Sindh was an attempt to alter Karachi's demographics. These instances reflect a broader pattern of exclusion that aligns with the concept of eco-borders – where environmental disasters and displacement become pretexts for reinforcing physical, social and ethnic boundaries. Such dynamics resonate with Italy's right-wing policies, where migrants and marginalized groups are often framed as burdens on resources or threats to national identity. With environmental crises amplifying socio-political tensions, the overlap between xenophobia and ecological concerns risks becoming more visible. This may allow right-wing governments in the world, particularly in Italy, to exert direct influence on workplaces by encouraging discriminatory and exclusive policies in the face of resource management. In this respect, it is argued in this study that re-labelling flooding or climate change as a security issue will permit governments to legalize extraordinary measures that are otherwise not possible to achieve under normal circumstances. Militarization of climate change, for example, poses existential threats to democratic institutions in countries like Pakistan, where hybrid regimes already exist. With the military directly taking charge of climate policies under the pretext of climate security, Indigenous communities like Kalash are likely to suffer more because they live near the Afghan border. The analyzes in this study demonstrate that the plight of Baloch and Kalash has been completely erased from the national dialogue, despite their constant sufferings from economic, security and climate-related problems. In addition, the militarization of climate change could lead to war between countries: for instance, India and Pakistan have been on the brink of war for a long time due to water politics, and this study has presented arguments on the ecological consequences of war.

The ideology of development has also been discussed in the study. As observed in floods media narratives, economic losses were more emphasized than human lives. In fact, the loss of human lives was reduced to their numbers, i.e. the narratives of the floods merely mentioned the number of people killed during the floods as statistics, bringing economic losses into the spotlight while sidelining human loss. This priority is the reflection of political

discourse, which bases itself on the premise of economic development as the ultimate goal of society. However, this study highlights that economic stability and growth do not translate into democracy, peace, or well-being for the population. As Nida Kirmani, professor of sociology at the Lahore University of Management Sciences, tweeted:

> Growth is often uneven, and 'stability' is often forced in by dictatorial regimes through anti-people policies

Therefore, the priority must be economic justice, not growth. This study resists the ideology of growth at the cost of the local ecosystem, as exemplified by the building of dams and canals on the Indus River.

As was found in this study, in the aftermath of floods, media narratives focused on economic losses, portraying the disaster through the lens of financial impact rather than human and environmental suffering. This framing, which prioritizes economic growth over ecological sustainability, is rooted in a broader ideology of development that sees growth as the primary indicator of progress. By framing the flood as an economic setback, rather than a humanitarian crisis, the media promotes a development-centric worldview that often ignores the disproportionate suffering of marginalized communities.

This emphasis on growth is further reinforced by political discourses that link national stability, security and economic development to mega-infrastructural projects, such as dams and irrigation systems, which have been argued to contribute to the severity of flooding. These dominant narratives, yet praised by the media, blur the role of systemic exploitation, such as illegal logging and deforestation by the timber mafia and the displacement of local populations. Consequently, these narratives promote a model of development that disregards ecological balance and social justice, creating a further divide in society. The obsessive focus on economic growth, without consideration for environmental and social justice, reinforces a cycle of marginalization for the communities that are most affected by climate change. With these growth models, the vulnerability of marginalized communities increases, as they are forcibly removed from their lands by the state, for instance, through exercising Land Acquisition laws and other forms of power.

In contrast, alternative narratives, such as those advocated by ecologically conscious scholars like Daanish Mustafa, argue for a community-led approach to development, as this approach does not surrender ecological resilience to economic growth. This approach, as argued in this study, emphasizes the importance of environmental justice and the need for policies that prioritize sustainability over short-term economic gains, because constructing dams to manage is homoeopathic; it does not solve the problem but serves the interests of power groups. It is also emphasized that the master narrative of development and growth functions as a powerful tool in shaping public opinion and often aligns with dominant political

and economic agendas. These narratives are not merely used as tools for communicating, as narratives of "growth is good" also shape scientific inquiry and innovation (Guske et al., 2019).

Another significant finding of this study is the influence of religious and apocalyptic framings of climate change, which shifts the narrative from systemic accountability to moral or divine blame. In Pakistan, floods are exploited by religious figures to highlight societal "sins", while in Italy, similar discourses are used to rationalize climate disasters. This framing diverts attention from scientific solutions and downplays the tangible impacts of climate change. Within workplaces and newsrooms, these ideological bias shapes the discourse and prioritizes sensationalism and moralistic blame over actionable insights. Such narratives undermine efforts to address climate challenges holistically and reinforce eco-destructive ideologies that affect workplace dynamics. Similarly, in Italy, the far-right government's rhetoric around climate disasters links with nationalist and eco-fascist ideologies. These narratives frame environmental crises as threats that justify controversial policies, particularly targeting migrants who are depicted as burdens rather than victims of climate-induced displacement. This discourse, rooted in denial and exclusion, mirrors patterns observed in Pakistan, where religious or ideological framings undermine collective action and accountability.

The implications for workplaces in Italy, especially in sectors dealing with environmental and humanitarian challenges, but also with tourism, are significant. These ideological biases shape workplace communication and decision-making, discouraging diverse perspectives and inclusive approaches to sustainability. For instance, the framing of migrants as environmental threats reinforces hierarchical and exclusionary structures, preventing workplaces from fostering the innovation and resilience necessary to address complex climate challenges. Such parallels highlight how eco-fascist and apocalyptic narratives perpetuate cycles of ecological and social vulnerability across national and professional domains, reinforcing the central argument of this study.

This study finds that climate change has become a divisive battleground between the Global South and the Global North, each blaming the other for its consequences. While the Global South argues that the Global North's historical pollution is the root cause, the Global North, in a defensive stance, redirects the narrative towards issues like governance failures, corruption, and weak infrastructure in the South, discursively positioning these as primary culprits in climate-related disasters. The same ideological patterns can be observed within Western countries, including Italy. Here, the far-right frames climate change as a left-wing invention or an inaccessible elite agenda, while the left emphasizes urgent climate action. This ideological arm-wrestling reduces climate change to a rhetorical nail hammered by competing ideologies, often leading to sideline actionable solutions. In workplaces, these polarized narratives influence decision-making and communication strategies, reinforcing inaction and

blame-shifting. The study concludes that dismantling these ideological barriers is essential to fostering collaborative, inclusive narratives. One of the key conclusions of this study highlights the growing fear of potential climate change censorship in the future. Social media platforms have already begun censoring climate change-related discussions through algorithms, limiting the scope and reach of these dialogues. The domestication of climate change narratives further narrows the discourse, reducing its global significance and localizing its impact. In this context, hyper-environmental protests, such as ink attacks on historical monuments in Italy, risk being exploited by governments to justify restrictive legislation. Such measures could curtail climate change-related protests and censor public discussions under the guise of maintaining order. These tensions between addressing climate change and framing activism as disruptive could lead to ideological divides and restricted environmental discourse, especially in far-right political contexts where such rhetoric is amplified and authoritative.

This study argues that workplace ideologies are not immune to these dynamics: workplaces are the ultimate area of society that is affected by climate change, as they are heavily controlled and influenced by the policies, attitudes and moods of society. Workplaces are not empty spaces, but places where individuals engage, perform and represent themselves as integral members of society. In right-wing environments, there may be a reluctance to adopt sustainability practices, due to either censorship or ideological opposition. On the other hand, extreme left-leaning ideologies might push for sustainability measures that alienate other stakeholders. Therefore, the study concludes that fostering and promoting open dialogue and resisting censorship is crucial to ensuring that workplaces remain proactive spaces for climate action. Such an approach can encourage balanced discourse, avoiding extreme polarization while addressing critical environmental challenges collaboratively.

Building on this critical perspective, the study emphasizes the need for positive stories to live by. These include promoting female participation, amplifying the voices of Indigenous communities, and recognizing their ecological knowledge and contributions. These narratives advocate their inclusion in national dialogues and policies to address gender imbalances in climate change strategies and relief efforts. Additionally, the study proposes peacebuilding through engagement, dialogue, and climate diplomacy, with a strong emphasis on depoliticizing climate change debates. While resisting the growth ideology, it underscores the importance of strengthening critical infrastructure and prohibiting construction on floodplains or natural waterways.

In conclusion, the study calls for de-escalating the ideological tug-of-war between right- and left-wing climate change narratives. The efficacy of right-wing approaches should be judged by their actions rather than through polarized rhetoric. One of the key steps toward a sustainable future is to depoliticize climate change and liberate it from the grip of ideological extremes. While green activism arose as a counter-response to hegemonic systems, it must

remain cautious not to evolve into a dominating ideology itself. A balanced, inclusive approach is crucial to promoting sustainable practices and addressing climate challenges without entrenching further ideological divides. While the master narratives of growth, political gains, and security are actively celebrated in the media by journalists and politicians as indicators of well-being, the approach to climate change is often reactionary and limited. It is recommended to reframe the narrative of climate disasters, not as isolated events, but as results of deeper systematic issues that need to be addressed by society.

As a society composed of diverse individuals and communities, we must collectively determine whether to address the prevailing master narratives or continue to embrace them uncritically. Addressing these narratives will require an alternative framework that promotes ecological justice, inclusivity and long-term resilience and ensures a sustainable future for all communities and forms of life in our shared environmental and social systems affected by climate change.

Limitations and Recommendations

This dissertation examines two climate-induced weather events in Pakistan (2022) and Italy (2023), with a focus on news articles covering these events. More recent flood events in Italy in 2024 were also incorporated to enhance the analysis. Still, the focus and scope of this analysis remain limited due to the significantly smaller number of articles available in the English language on floods in Italy. To deepen the understanding of the political and ideological narratives surrounding the floods, I analyzed articles from *Dawn*, ANSA, and BBC, and secondary data from grey literature. Over 200 news articles were analyzed from an ecolinguistic perspective to uncover and challenge dominant narratives. The analysis predominantly focused on the linguistic elements of these narratives, with a few images published by the government of Pakistan also included. While this dissertation argued how dominant narratives influence (and could continue to influence in the future) workplaces, it did not delve deep into the socioeconomic, health, and psychological implications embedded in the news discourse surrounding floods. Future research could benefit from expanding this analysis to include these dimensions. Furthermore, the incorporation of multimodal analysis and corpus-assisted techniques would offer a more nuanced perspective on how flood narratives are constructed and disseminated. These areas present promising avenues for future exploration in the field.

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Appendix: I

To learn more about the effects of the timber mafia on the local communities in KPK, I sent a few questions via email to an Assistant Professor of Geography, Kamal Hassan, who has been working on the effects of deforestation on minorities in KPK. The following are my questions and his answers:

Interview with Dr Kamal Hassan

Question No.1. How do you think the activities of the timber mafia and illegal logging have impacted Indigenous communities in Pakistan, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK)?

The timber mafia and illegal logging in Pakistan, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), have had severe environmental, economic, social, and cultural impacts on Indigenous communities. Deforestation in areas like Swat Valley, Hazara, and Chitral has worsened soil erosion, reduced biodiversity, and increased the risk of landslides and floods, while also disrupting forest ecosystems vital for food, medicine, and fuel. The loss of forests, exacerbated by climate change, further harms agriculture and water resources. Economically, Indigenous groups like the Gujjars and Kohistanis face unemployment, poverty, and displacement due to the timber mafia's monopolization of forest resources. Socially, illegal logging intensifies marginalization, displaces communities, and fosters insecurity through violence and corruption. Culturally, the destruction of forests erodes traditional knowledge and undermines Indigenous cultural identity. Watershed degradation caused by deforestation worsens water scarcity and quality, affecting rural communities' access to safe water. Overall, these illegal activities have led to significant environmental degradation and economic marginalization, threatening the livelihoods, culture, and well-being of Indigenous groups in KPK, making effective forest management and law enforcement essential for their protection.

Question No. 2. To what extent has illegal deforestation contributed to the frequency and intensity of climate-induced disasters, such as floods, in KPK?

Illegal deforestation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Pakistan, has significantly increased the frequency and intensity of climate-induced disasters, particularly floods. The removal of forest cover disrupts ecosystems by eliminating natural flood barriers, leading to increased surface runoff and destabilizing soil, which in turn causes landslides and worsens river sedimentation. This accelerates flash floods, especially in mountainous regions prone to heavy monsoons. Deforestation also alters the hydrological cycle by reducing evapotranspiration and groundwater recharge, leading to drier conditions and erratic rainfall, which intensifies both droughts and floods. The release of stored carbon

through deforestation amplifies climate change, resulting in higher temperatures and more extreme rainfall, further worsening flood risks. In KPK, the 2010 and 2022 floods, among the most devastating in the region's history, were exacerbated by deforestation, which weakened the landscape's ability to absorb excess rainwater and heightened the destructive potential of these events. This degradation of forest ecosystems diminishes their natural resilience and undermines the ability of local communities to adapt, making them increasingly vulnerable to climate shocks. Urgent reforestation, sustainable forest management, and stricter enforcement of environmental laws are needed to mitigate these impacts.

Question No. 3. What are some specific challenges that Indigenous communities in KPK face as a result of deforestation, and how does this exacerbate their vulnerability to natural disasters?

Indigenous communities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Pakistan, face significant challenges due to deforestation, which increases their vulnerability to natural disasters like floods, landslides, and droughts. The loss of forest resources disturbs traditional livelihoods that rely on fuelwood, grazing land, and non-timber products, while soil degradation and reduced water availability threaten agriculture and livestock. Deforestation removes natural barriers against floods and landslides, increasing erosion, sedimentation, and destroying homes and farmland. Additionally, disrupted water cycles diminish groundwater recharge and degrade water quality, increasing water scarcity. Climate change, amplified by deforestation, brings more extreme weather events, rising temperatures, and prolonged droughts, further straining the resilience of these communities. The cultural and ecological knowledge of Indigenous groups is also eroded as traditional practices are disrupted, leading to cultural displacement and weakening of adaptive capacities. Food security is compromised as wild foods become scarcer, while reliance on external resources increases vulnerability. Limited access to infrastructure and disaster mitigation resources and insufficient government support further exacerbate their risk. Deforestation also introduces new health risks through disease exposure and malnutrition. Addressing these challenges requires sustainable forest management, stronger legal enforcement, and the inclusion of Indigenous communities in environmental governance to mitigate their vulnerability and strengthen resilience to natural disasters.

Question No. 4. Do you believe that there is a direct connection between deforestation caused by the timber mafia and the increased severity of flooding in the region? If so how?

The deforestation caused by the timber mafia in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Pakistan, is directly linked to the increasing severity of flooding in the region. The large-scale illegal logging activities have led to the loss of forests, which naturally absorb and

regulate rainwater, leading to increased surface runoff, soil erosion, and sedimentation in rivers. This reduces the land's ability to manage heavy rainfall, resulting in higher water levels and a greater risk of flooding. The removal of trees also destabilizes soil, causing erosion and sediment build-up in rivers, further reducing their capacity to handle floodwaters. Additionally, deforestation disrupts the hydrological cycle, causing flash floods as compacted, barren land cannot absorb water effectively. Climate change, exacerbated by deforestation, intensifies these challenges by increasing the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, such as heavier monsoons. The unchecked activities of the timber mafia, coupled with weak law enforcement, have decimated forested areas that once acted as natural flood barriers, contributing to the devastating floods of 2010 and 2022. Addressing this issue requires stronger forest protection, reforestation, and reducing the influence of the timber mafia to restore the natural defenses that forests provide.

Question No. 5 How do Indigenous knowledge systems perceive and address environmental degradation, such as deforestation? Are there examples of traditional practices that could help mitigate these impacts?

Indigenous knowledge systems provide sustainable ways to combat deforestation and environmental damage by treating nature as a connected system, where the loss of forests affects the balance of ecosystems and harms cultural, spiritual, and economic well-being. Practices like agroforestry, selective logging, terracing, reforestation, and protecting sacred groves help protect biodiversity, prevent soil erosion, and maintain water cycles. These methods focus on caring for the land to ensure resources are available for future generations. Indigenous communities also use controlled burns and traditional irrigation techniques to manage land sustainably, reduce disaster risks, and protect ecosystems. Combining these traditional practices with modern conservation methods can greatly improve forest management and help fight deforestation, especially in places like KPK, where illegal logging has caused serious environmental damage.

Endnotes

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[i] Daanish Mustafa (hereafter referred to as Prof. Mustafa) is the co-author of Pakistan's first climate change response strategies and the lead author of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) five-year flood response strategy for Pakistan. Additionally, he has contributed to policy-related work with the Department for International Development (DfID), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Stimson Centre, and the United States Institute of Peace (https://www.kcl.ac.uk/people/daanish-mustafa). Dr. Mustafa is a highly regarded academic and critical commentator on water politics and the illegal water market in South Asia. Drawing inspiration from Hannah Arendt's insights and post-structuralist principles on performative politics, his research spans topics such as gender performativity, violence, and the cultural politics of urban horticulture in Pakistan. He has been invited to share his expertise on water politics and the decolonization of water in South Asia as a guest speaker by the Government of Pakistan and prestigious institutions, including the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) and Habib University of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Karachi. In addition to his academic contributions, Dr. Mustafa has offered expert commentary to popular platforms such as Naya Daur TV and *The Print*, a leading digital English news outlet in India. He has also appeared as an analyst on VOX News, an American news channel, and has been interviewed by Indian digital media, including Rabio News Network and South Asia Nadi Sambad (River Relations). Most recently, Dr. Mustafa collaborated with ClimArts to produce a documentary on climate storytelling, furthering his commitment to bridging academic research and public engagement.

[ii] Ajrak, a traditional block-printed fabric, is a symbol of Sindhi identity. It is worn by both men and women and represents pride and glory. For Sindhis, Ajrak is more than just a piece of fabric; it holds deep cultural and emotional significance. It is commonly gifted at weddings and during times of mourning. In some families, Ajrak is wrapped around the bodies of deceased men as a coffin. Men wear it as a turban or shawl, while women use it as a scarf. The history of Ajrak dates back to the Indus Valley Civilization, as the sculpture believed to be the Priest-King wearing Ajrak was discovered at Mohenjo-Daro (see Priest King at https://smarthistory.org/the-priest-king-sculpture-from-the-indus-valley-civilization/). The name Mohenjo-daro in Sindhi is reputed to signify "the mound of the dead". The archaeological importance of the site was first discovered in 1992 by R.D. Banerji, an officer of the Archaeological Survey of India, under the direction of John Marshall (see https://www.harappa.com/mohenjo-daro/mohenjodaroessay). Mohenjo-Daro was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1980.

[iii] Indus civilization, the earliest known urban culture of the Indian subcontinent. The nuclear dates of the civilization appear to be about 2500-1700 bce, though the southern sites may have lasted later into the 2nd millennium bce. Among the world's three earliest civilizations the other two are those of Mesopotamia and Egypt the Indus civilization was the most extensive (https://www.britannica.com/topic/Indus-civilization).

[iv] An Indian dish of meat, fish, or vegetables cooked with rice flavoured especially with saffron or turmeric (Merriam-Webster https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/biryani). Among Pakistanis and Indians, the origin of Briyani is contested but, according to the BBC, it originated in Iran and travelled to India along with Moghal Emperors, pilgrims and soldiers. Regardless of its origins, Pakistanis and Indians have made Briyani their own. Especially in Pakistan, people like to eat Briyani after Friday prayers.

[v] Naan is soft and fluffy bread traditionally cooked in a clay oven, whereas Naan qeema is fluffy bread filled with spiced minced lamb filling. In rural Pakistan, Naan bread is considered heavy and unhealthy as people prefer homemade *roti* flatbread. Qeema naan is typically eaten for breakfast in urban Pakistani cities like Karachi and Lahore.

[vi] *Waiting for God·ot* (1955) is a play by the Irish writer Samuel Beckett about two men, Vladimir and Estragon, waiting for a third man, Godot, who never comes. The play is a typical example of the Theatre of the Absurd, and people use the phrase 'waiting for Godot' to describe a situation where they are waiting for something to happen, but it probably never will (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, https://www.ldoceonline.com/).

[vii] Translation: "When the fire breaks out, many homes will come under its flames, it's not just my (our) house here". This reflects a broader sense and shared vulnerability and collective responsibility according to which crises or disasters affect everyone, not just individuals.

viii The World Weather Attribution (WWA), founded in 2014 by Dr. Friederike Otto, Dr. Geert Jan van Oldenborgh, and Climate Central, is an academic collaboration focused on studying the influence of climate change on extreme weather events such as heatwaves, droughts, and storms. WWA works with scientists globally to quantify how climate change affects the intensity and likelihood of these events using different methods like weather observations and computer modelling (World Weather Attributions source: https://www.worldweatherattribution.org/about/).

ix La Niña is a climate pattern that describes the cooling of surface-ocean waters along the tropical west coast of South America. La Niña is considered to be the counterpart to El Niño, which is characterized by unusually warm ocean temperatures in the equatorial region of the Pacific Ocean" (National Geographic source: https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/la-nina/).

x Friends of the Earth is a leading environmental organization working to create a sustainable future, that fights for climate justice through grassroots campaigns and legal action, whether using the law to stop fossil fuel projects or pushing for greater rights to protect nature and our environment (https://friendsoftheearth.uk/).

xi The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is an intergovernmental organization established in 1989 to develop policies and set international standards for controlling and curbing money laundering, terrorist financing, and other threats to the global financial system (FATF: https://www.fatf-gafi.org/en/the-fatf/who-we-are.html

xii Zakat is the third pillar of Islam. It requires Muslims to give 2.5% of their qualifying wealth each year to help other Muslims who need it across a range of categories. Zakat is both a spiritual duty and a vital part of the Islamic social welfare system (Islamic Relief UK, https://www.islamic-relief.org.uk/).

xiii The Indus Waters Treaty was signed in 1960 after nine years of negotiations between India and Pakistan with the help of the World Bank, which is also a signatory. The negotiations were the initiative of former World Bank President Eugene Black. Seen as one of the most successful international treaties. Former U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower described it as "one bright spot ... in a very depressing world picture that we see so often" (The World Bank, https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/sar/brief/fact-sheet-the-indus-waters-treaty-1960-and-the-world-bank).

xiv The term "feudal", commonly associated with the Middle Ages, is frequently used by the mainstream media in Pakistan and politicians to describe the class system in Sindh, to suggest that the region continues to operate in the same way as in the medieval period. This term is used to highlight the concentration of power among a small elite, often landowners, who dominate local politics and resources. However, this usage oversimplifies the socio- political structure of Sindh, reinforces stereotypes of the region as backward and neglects the complexities and changes in its political landscape.

xv The European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO) works to strengthen and enable collaboration among a multidisciplinary community of stakeholders tackling online disinformation (https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/european-digital-media-observatory).