

A Micro Application of Diamond's Framework on *Collapse* to Swat, Pakistan (1949-2010)

Abstract:

The research work aims at to apply Jared Diamond's framework on societal collapse to the specific case of Swat Pakistan, from 1949 to 2010. It seeks to analyse various social, political and environmental factors in the historical context which triggers the rise and fall of the Princely State of Swat and its befitting impacts on the current generation. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used by combining archival research, interviews with locals, print media sources, field work and data analysis of socio-economic and environmental indicators. There are many geo-political reasons for the up-scale civil unrest in the area but the unregulated and mismanagement of natural resources after merger of the Swat State into Pakistan has played a major role.

Keywords: Jared Diamond; Collapse; Swat state; Wālī; Environment

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Introduction

In this study, Diamond's five point putative frameworks, described in his book 'Collapse' for the success or failure of any society, would be applied to Swat, Pakistan. The main reason behind the rise of the Swat state was its unique geographic location and blessing environment which was masterly utilized and sustained by its last farsighted and visionary ruler Mian Gul Jehanzeb, commonly known Wālī Sahib (hereafter be referred by this name) (1949-1969). After merger of the Swat State with the government of Pakistan, the system and hierarchy developed by the Wālī for this purpose was replaced by incompetent, irrational and corrupt system, which culminated in the form of religious militancy (2007-2009) and super-flood (2010), in the area.

Wālī Sahib took very rational and calculated steps and wielded all powers in respect of natural resources and more specifically, forests and maintained balance between a private ownership and the state property. Consequently, the people considered and recognized the state as owner or at least co-owner. For better administration he issued his own orders and decrees and created a complete hierarchy for its execution. For the execution and implementation of the orders, he used both "top- bottom" and "bottom-up" approaches. Accordingly a "silviculture" was vastly promoted which have had far reaching effects on economy and ecosystem. In 1969, Swat merged in Pakistan and Wālī was divested from power and authority. With the end of the Wālī's rule, the governmental set-up was changed drastically. The well-organized check and control system established by the Wālī for the sustainability of the ecological system was replaced by a complicated, ineffectual and corrupt system. Sense of "collective responsibility" in common populace was died down with the passage of time. Therefore, they resorted to illicit felling and smuggling of the forests. This modus operandi brought forth huge demographic and environmental changes in the area, which have been manifested in the form of high spell of draught or unusual rainfall, flood, soil erosion and fragility and disorder of aquatic life. These ecological damages, consequently led to civil unrest. The religious motivated revolt and uprising of the people during 2007-2009 and

subsequently the super flood of 2010 in the area are the classic example of man-made and natural catastrophe.

Theoretical overview

Jared Diamond is an American academician and geographer. He is one of the most distinguished experts in the field of evolutionary biology, and his work has proven highly influential in informing public discourse on a range of environmental and social issues. He argues that it is not possible to blame a society's collapse solely on environmental damage — there are always other factors. However, there is a five-point framework for attempting to describe any putative collapse. They are: (1) environmental damage (2) climate change (3) hostile neighbor (4) friendly trade partner (5) a society response to environmental challenge.¹ According to Diamond, the first four may or may not prove decisive in a society's collapse, but the fifth factor always proves significant. Environmental damage will depend not just on a native population, but also on the inherent fragility or resilience of a given environment. Historically, at least, climate change has been another factor that was beyond a population's ability to control.²

The presence or absence of hostile neighbors is another factor that can tip the balance of a society succeeding or failing. Often, a society will be able to hold off its enemies when it is strong, but succumb when it is weakened for environmental reasons. "Hence, collapses for ecological reasons often masquerade as military defeats."³ Similarly, Friendly trading partners can also play a huge role in whether a given society meets its challenges. For instance, most societies depend heavily on trading partners to secure vital resources, but a weakened trading partner can greatly weaken one's own society.

The fifth factor, how a society chooses to respond to

¹ Jared Diamond, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Failed or Succeed* (New York: Penguin Group, 2005), pp. 11-15.

² *Ibid.*, p. 11.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

environmental challenges, depends on a civilization's economic and political institutions, along with its cultural values. Societies can fail to recognize such challenges, ignore them, adopt futile or counterproductive responses, or, on occasion, succeed in meeting environmental challenges through conservation and technological and other innovative solutions.⁴

Brief History of Swat

The recent history of Swat begins with the Yusufzai Pathans who invaded and, subsequently, governed the region in the 16th century, defending it successfully against several waves of invaders. A dramatic turn in Swat's history came about in September 1917, when Miangul Abdul Wadud, proclaimed Swat an independent state.⁵ The Wālī is credited with consolidating the state. He put efficient government machinery in place and undertook a large number of development projects. He instituted a land settlement system and brought the forests under state management. He signed the Instrument of Accession in 1947 and Supplementary Instrument of Accession in 1954, with the government of Pakistan. Swat state was finally merged into Pakistan in 1969. Swat residents consider the rule of the Wālī as the 'golden period' in the region's history.⁶

Physical Geography

The Swat Valley, almost entirely lying in Malakand Division, covers an area of 8,220 square kilometers. The valley lies in Hindukush mountain ranges, but climatically it resembles Himalaya, hence the geographers usually termed these mountains 'The trans – Himalayas'. The River Swat flows through the length of the valley from northeast to southwest. The valley is wider to the south and narrows down toward the north.

⁴ Ibid., p. 15.

⁵ Sultan-e-Rome, *Swat State (1915-1969): From Genesis to Merger, An Analysis of Political, Administrative, Socio-Political and Economic Developments* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 22.

⁶ Fredrick Barth, *The Last Wālī of Swat: An Autobiography as told to Fredrik Barth* (London: White Orchid Press, 1985), p. 49.

The residents evolve a very complex farming system and settlement pattern owing to the spatial and enormous seasonal variation and thus heavily dependent on the indigenous natural resources. The settlement pattern in the Swat valley is characterized by population concentration in the valley bottom, gradually thinning out toward the periphery. Different ethnic groups occupy different environmental niches and their settlement patterns are specifically adapted to their natural resource utilization pattern. In general, the powerful and well-off (Yousafzai Pukhtuns mainly) are concentrated in the valley bottom, while the subordinate classes (tenants and Gujars) occupy the sloping areas.⁷

The Wālīs' Period (1949-1969)

On 12th December 1949, the then ruler of the Swat State, Miangul Abdul Wadud, abdicated in favour of his son and heir apparent Miangul Abdul Haq Jahanzeb. Miangul Jahanzeb, who became the next ruler of the State the same day, was not unmindful of the importance of the income generated by the exploitation of the forests' resource to the State and was at the same time aware of the need for conservation. Under the Instrument of Accession (1947) and Supplementary Instrument of Accession (1954) the Wālī became the sole authority for making and execution of laws regarding natural resources.⁸ He took into confidence the landowners by giving 10 % royalty which later rose to 15 %⁹ - thereby accepting that the state was not the sole owner. In 1956, the Wālī issued regulations for granting timber to local residents on reasonable and accommodative price. The rates were fixed for different trees like, deodar, kail, spruce and long leaved pine and people from the entire State were divided into different groups and different rates for the same kind of trees were fixed for the different

⁷ Inam-ur-Rahim and Alain Viaro, *Swat: An Afghan Society in Pakistan, Urbanisation and Change in a Tribal Environment* (Karachi: City Press, 2002), p. 34.

⁸ Sultan-e-Rome, "Forestry in the Princely State of Swat and Kalam (North-West Pakistan): A Historical Perspective on Norms and Practices," Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research, North-South (NCCR), IP6 Working Paper No. 6, (2005), p. 12.

⁹ Ibid.

groups, according to their needs. With the passage of time when population pressure was increased, the Wālī issued another code of conduct in 1968, in order to keep the natural resources intact. For example, in the same order, as quoted by Rome, by stating 'this is my order' that:

Those people shall not be granted trees in the coming year who received a grant of trees in the current year. But trees shall be granted first to those to whom trees were not allocated last year and who need them. If there are surplus trees left over, then these shall be granted to the remaining people who need them. A person to whom trees are granted for local need in the local forest can neither sell its timber nor give it to someone else. If the same is proved against him, he will pay a fine of Rs. 50/- per sleeper. In future no one will either keep stock of construction timber without need nor should apply for it. In case it is proved that timber has been kept by someone as stock for construction and he has no immediate need for, the timber will be forfeited by him.

The Wālī also took steps to conserve and to protect the forests and agro-forests trees. He even banned not just the selling of trees standing in agriculture fields but also cutting their branches without taking prior permission from the State authority.¹⁰ Similarly, strict rules were made for the owner of the tobacco furnaces and bricks kiln in order to use minimal level of firewood and to lessen the chances of air pollution.

In the same way, some steps were taken to put an end the practice of conversion of forestland into land for cultivation.¹¹ Therefore, converting land, both covered by forests and deforested, into agricultural land was banned, and special permission was made mandatory to be able to do so. In order to get check and control on the forests and to make sure the transparency, the Wālī made rules concerning export timber from the State.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 15.

¹¹ Gideon Kruesman and Lorenzo Pelligrini, "Institutions and forest management in the Swat region of Pakistan", *Nature's Wealth*, vol. 2 (April 2013), p. 234.

Different tools and techniques were introduced in order to insure the execution of rules regarding the forests, for quick and efficient results. For this purpose heavy fines were imposed by breaching any rules and regulations concerning the forests. The Tahsildars and Hakims were made responsible for and entrusted with the duties over the forests, came under their jurisdictions. Collective local responsibility, to either surrender or point out the culprit, or to pay collectively the fine in cases of unauthorized felling and lopping or burning trees and setting fire to the hills and forests, also worked well as a tool.¹² Besides punishments, the Wālī also adapted good techniques of reward, in order to fulfill the bona fide requirements of the local populace like extracting charcoals, medicinal plants, herbs shrubs and morels.¹³

Post-Swat State Period (1969-2010)

In 1969, Swat State merged with Pakistan under the Regulation I of 1969,¹⁴ and thus Wālī was divested from power and authority. For administrative and related purposes the former Swat State was given the status of district. The powers and functions of the Wālī now delegated to Deputy Commissioner, subject to the general supervision and directions of the Provincial Government. In the new situation, all the well-established hierarchy by the Wālī, in the form of Swat Forest Department (SFD), was integrated into the Provincial Forest Department (PFD).¹⁵

In 1972, the Provincial Government unilaterally declared that, “all forests situated in the former State of Swat shall be the state property (subject to payment of 15 % of their income as royalty to the local right holders).”¹⁶ In 1975 another Regulation was passed

¹² Ibid., p. 35.

¹³ Sultan-e-Rome, *Forestry in the Princely State of Swat and Kalam* (North-West Pakistan), p. 16.

¹⁴ Sultan-e-Rome, *Swat State: from Geneses to Merger*, p. 101.

¹⁵ Sultan-e-Rome, *Forestry in the Princely State of Swat and Kalam* (North-West Pakistan), p. 17.

¹⁶ Sultan-i-Rome, “Land Ownership in Swat: Historical and Contemporary Perspective,” in *Land Tenure and Resource Ownership in Pakistan*, eds. Zabta Khan Shinwari and

and the said forests were declared “protected forests” and thus the concessions of the right holders in the form of royalty were further restricted.

A delicate balance which the Wālī had created between the State and the local residents greatly hampered by these restrictions, as the bona fide needs of the locals like, burning of lime, timber for constructions and herding of cattles, created unrest in the civil society. The local population therefore resorted to illicit felling or started purchasing the illicitly extracted and smuggled timber so as to avoid the complex and red tape system.¹⁷ This sorts of situation was further galvanized by Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, Prime Minister of Pakistan, when he announced in a public meeting, held at Swat, in 1973 that “the hills belongs to you people. You are free. Go, cut and bring the wood to meet your needs.”¹⁸

Furthermore, the unwise decision of the provincial government to declare the forest, ‘government property’ aggravated both land-owners and non-landowners. The former resorted to clear the forestland for conversion into agriculture land to earn money on one hand and on the other side the cleared land would no longer be considered the property of the provincial government, and hence the land would be considered the undisputed property of the owner. Whereas the latter deemed it appropriate to benefit from the lawlessness by felling as many as trees as they could.

The change in the social and political system which came abruptly after the merger of the State, the high growth rate of the population and the influx of money from abroad stimulated construction work both for residential and commercial purposes.¹⁹ This resulted in a huge increase in the use of, and demand for, timber

Ashiq Ahmad Khan (Peshawar: Ethno-Botany Project, WWF, Pakistan, 2002), p. 138.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 142.

¹⁸ Malik Ali Muhammad, “Working Plan for Upper Indus Kohistan Forests of Swat District (1972-73 — 1981-82),” (n.p., n.d.), p. 2.

¹⁹ Sirajuddin Swati, *Sarguzasht-e-Swat* (Urdu) (Lahore: Al-Hamra Academy, 1970), p. 53.

and also firewood; the new fashion of using Deodar and Kail wood as tiles on the walls of both residential and commercial buildings has its own effect on the process of deforestation.

The Pak-Swiss Kalam Integrated Development Project (KIDP) also, in a way, contributed to the depletion of the forests' natural resources due to promoting scientific methods for, introducing and promoting off-season vegetables like turnips, fresh beans, cabbages, cauliflower and new varieties of potatoes. As these vegetables and potatoes proved more productive and cash-generating compared to the maize crop previously cultivated in the area which was both cheap and less productive, this gave impetus to the cutting down of trees and clearing forests to convert forestland into agricultural land and thus get more space for sowing and producing the off-season vegetables and potatoes.²⁰ Moreover, they also earned and still earn extra from the timber extracted by felling trees to clear the land for agricultural purposes — for them two birds are killed with one stone.

Table 1: Change in quantity of natural resources in Swat (1965–2005).

Natural resources	increase/decrease	change %
conifer forests	Decreases	-62
oak forests	Decreases	-75
agriculture land	Increase	+29
pasture land	Decrease	N/A
Water	Decrease	-53

Source: SDPI survey, 2006.

Better Management and Sustainability of Natural resources and its Implications

The better management and sustainability of natural resources enhance the chances to maintain the ecosystem balance and also

²⁰ Shaheen Rafi Khan and Shahrukh Rafi Khan, "Assessing poverty–deforestation links: Evidence from Swat, Pakistan," *Ecological Economics*, vol. 68, no. 10 (2009): p. 210.

development of the area. The Wālī of Swat rationally used the indigenous natural resources for the generation of income in order to develop the socio-cultural and religio-political conditions of the people. For example, the literacy rate in Swat, as the Census of Pakistan 1951, shows was highest in the then NWFP, now KP, for both male and female.²¹ Similarly, for providing better health services, many hospitals and dispensaries were opened in various localities, in which free medicines and food had to be offered for both in-and-out-patients.

In the same way, for better administration, a network of roads and telephones was established through the height and breadth of the area, under his jurisdiction. For example, in 1968, the total length of the roads were 600 miles (116 were metaled and the rest were undetailed) and in the same year, the total telephone exchanges were 17 with 597 connections.²²

Horticulture, cash crops and orchards were introduced in the area which gradually became part of the major exports of Swat, boosting the economic prosperity of the people. Tourism was highly developed in the area, and thus swat succeeded to attract a substantial numbers of tourists from all over the world. In 1968, the total numbers of rest house in Swat were thirty-nine.²³ In the same year, work on the Malam Jaba Skiing Centre was also started which is the first of its kind in Pakistan.²⁴

In the post-merger period, a widespread confusion, chaos and uncertainty created. The new set-up, mood of administration, mass management, corruption, insecurity and plunder of natural resources created havoc in the society. Sirajuddin Khan Swati, a native writer portrays the post-merger conditions of Swat in these words:

It is strange that ever since the merger of the former Swat State with West Pakistan, not a single grievance has been

²¹ Barth, *The Last Wālī of Swat*, p. 195.

²² Sultan-e-Rome, *Swat State: from Geneses to Merger*, p. 220.

²³ Abdul Qayyum, *The Charming Swat* (Lahore: Maqsood Publishers, 2000), p. 32.

²⁴ Sultan-e-Rome, *Swat State: from Geneses to Merger*, p. 265.

redressed on its merit and only those can get justice who can influence the administration or corrupt it. The new administration cannot show a single development project since the merger of Swat. Despite funds, with the present administration, the condition of schools, hospitals, roads, sanitation etc. is going from bad to worse. Wood for house construction is not available in market; although, the former State gave full facility to those persons who wanted to construct houses [translation mine].²⁵

After merger natural resources, especially, forests and emerald mines were hugely exploited. Forests were ruthlessly cut down and destroyed by contractors in collaboration with the officers and staff of the forest department, to squeeze more wealth from the land. This has caused mass deforestation and most of the hills in Swat have become barren causing environmental damage, soil erosion, disorder in aquatic life and biodiversity, destruction of the valley's natural and scenic beauty and its ecosystem, and with disastrous climate change.²⁶

With the passage of time anthropogenic pressure on natural resources quadrupled, which greatly disturbed eco-system of the area. This caused fluctuation in seasons, which appeared in the form of droughts and floods on regular bases. In order to sustain life the people of the hilly areas migrated to urban or semi-urban areas like Mingawara, Kabal and Matta etc. which on one side substantially affected the already scarce basic facilities and on the other hand created lawlessness, crimes, dacoits, robbery and most importantly created crisis of identity.²⁷ These practices bifurcated the society between the haves and have nots, which later on highly cashed by the Taliban in 2007-09.²⁸ Comparatively, the high ratio of the Taliban and quick talibanisation in these areas endorsed the fact.

²⁵ Sirajuddin, *Sarguzasht-e-Swat*, p. 72.

²⁶ Fazl-e-Rabbi Rahi, *Zamshudah Qabaili Riyasatu kay Masail* (Urdu) (Mingawara: Shoaib Sons, 1995), p. 18.

²⁷ Rahim and Viaro, *Swat: An Afghan Society in Pakistan*, p. 151.

²⁸ The Authors' personal observations.

The already fragile environment further degraded during the Taliban rule in Swat. Massive deforestation took place in various places and more specifically in Malam Jaba, Kalam, Lalku and Marghuzar sides, which were famous for tourist's resorts. According to a social activist, hailing from Swat, "in 2007, when militancy was on peak in Swat, at start, militants relied on 'donations' but later they started deforestation in the region to meet their financial needs."²⁹ According to local newspaper, "25 percent forest has been decimated during militancy in Swat"³⁰.

This trend of ecocide was further deteriorated by 'Pak-army' in 2007-2009 periods, when they willfully used huge amount of explosive materials in hilly area, in order to create terror and uncertainty. These careless measures were even carried on after the final phase of security operation against the militants. In plea of security reason, on both sides of the road, orchards and field trees were mercilessly cut down.³¹

This man-made catastrophe led to natural disaster in the form of super flood in the area, in 2010. According to living memories, it was one of the 'deadliest and century worst'³² flood in the area. The rain fall data of Swat indicate that the 4-day heavy precipitation during 27th to 30th July was higher than the monthly normal rain. In terms of damages, Swat was one the worst affected districts during this flood. According to the revenue department of district Swat, the death casualties were 86 and animal losses were 9,800. Similarly, 4000 houses were washed away and dozens of bridges uprooted.³³

²⁹ Fazal Mawla Zahid, "interview with the researcher," 15 October 2014, Udyana Hotel, Mingawara, Swat (Zahid is currently working as president of All Hotel Industry Association, Swat).

³⁰ Saifullah Buner, "lawlessness at peak in Swat," Frontier Post, Peshawar, November 15, 2008.

³¹ Parvez Shaheen, "Pak-Army: Ridiculous Orders", Express Tribune, September 10, 2009.

³² Atta-ur-Rahman and Amir Nawaz, "Analysis of Flood Causes and associated socio- economic damages in the Hindukush region," *Springer Science*, vol. 6 (May 2011), p. 1245.

³³ Ibid.

Analytical Review

Diamond's five point framework for the collapse of any society, more or less can be applied to Swat, Pakistan. In Wālīs' period, Swat was on the epic of its glory because of his enlightened and visionary policies regarding the utilization and conservation of natural resources. Due to this "on-the-spot management" he succeeded to sustain the ecosystem of the area and hence there were no marked environmental damage or climatic changes occurred in the area.

In the post-merger period, the hostile neighbor and trade partners in the form of provincial government and various logging companies respectively played its due role. For example, the Provincial government brought drastic changes regarding natural resources, by transforming customary laws into statutory laws, and also by ignoring the bona fide needs of the local population. Resultantly, the local revolted by sensing the poor check and control system from the "distant manager" (provincial government) and thus resorted to illicit using of natural resources. These dilapidated conditions were further ignited by the Provincial Forest Department by giving contracts to various logging companies who ruthlessly extracted forest reservoirs with the help of the local forest's staff.

The extermination of forests brought forth massive ecological changes in the area, which on one side highly bifurcated the society between the 'haves' and 'have nots' and hence disguised in 'religious militarization' in 2007-2009, and on the other side became a prime source of the super-flood, 2010. The unilateral decision of the government of Pakistan to merge Swat State in Pakistan reflects the "rational bad behavior" of the authority, as this decision had deprived the people from the benevolent and visionary leader and therefore brought destruction and catastrophe to the region. Another main factor of not perceiving the problem was the "creeping normalcy" or "landscape amnesia" which took decades before it rupture at the end.

Conclusion

In the progress and prosperity of Swat, the proper management, sustainability and conservancy of natural resources played a decisive role. The last Wālī of Swat very visibly and rationally devised a mechanism by mixing, “top-bottom” and “bottom-up” approaches for the conservancy of natural resources. This wisdom approach on one side created a sense of loyalty among the citizens for the State and on the other side fulfilled their bona fide requirements for the sustainability of better life. On the top of that, the formulation of flexible rules compatible with local customs and traditions and the formation of complete hierarchy for its execution saved the natural resources from illicit using. These intelligible steps led to sustain eco system and thus gave birth to economic and political stability.

In the post-merger period all the policies, mechanism and hierarchy devised by the Wālī, has been replaced by a distant, inefficient and corrupt system of the then NWFP now KP government. The new and alien system has neither the vision nor willingness to address the bona fide needs of the local population. Furthermore, the disastrous decisions of the provincial government by replacing customary laws with statutory laws and also by declaring forests as “state property” without taking into considerations the local needs and aspirations, created havoc and unrest in the society. These abnormal situations lead to class-struggle which was decisively manifested in religious militancy in 2007-2009 periods. Two millions people were forced to flee from the area and were made IDPs. These man-made destructions coupled with natural calamity in the form of super-flood 2010, which put at risk all the living inhabitants of the area.