

# The Role of Climate Change in Conflict in Africa

Carolyn Kathure Njiru, Mutheu Immaculate, Adhiambo Audrey

(School of Humanities and Social Sciences, United States International University-Africa, Nairobi Kenya  
[cathurecarol@gmail.com](mailto:cathurecarol@gmail.com))

(School of Humanities and Social Sciences, United States International University-Africa, Nairobi Kenya  
[immy.mutheu@gmail.com](mailto:immy.mutheu@gmail.com))

(School of Humanities and Social Sciences, United States International University-Africa, Nairobi Kenya  
[audreyadhiambo0@gmail.com](mailto:audreyadhiambo0@gmail.com))

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## Abstract:

How has climate change affected the dynamics of conflicts in Africa? Existing exploration demonstrates that climate change can build the danger of conflicts or essentially adjust the elements of existing conflicts. This article addresses the issue in regard to the primary efficient audit of both quantitative and qualitative methods. We assess the degree the literature gives coherent clarifications that distinguish important systems, actors, and results. The article discusses contribution of climate change to violence in African citing different examples and specific situations where climatic factors impacts lead to conflict. The effect of environmental change is progressively explained as one of the most genuine

security threats in future and a far more prominent risk to the world's stability than terrorism. For a few, current clashes for instance in Darfur may be partly because of climatical change. It is contended that environmental change incorporates the danger of reshaping the landscape, worsening sustenance, water and vitality shortages and adding to destabilization, unregulated populace developments and tension. Regardless of whether natural changes actuate expanded challenge between users of scarce resources. Drawing on recent instances on conflicts between pastoralist communities in eastern Africa, the move from expanded challenge over resources to open conflict relies on existing adapting limits of social orders and the strategies, establishments and procedures that characterize access to resources.

*Keywords* —Conflict, Climate Change

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## **Background of the Study**

Climate change is a fairly new phenomenon that only begun a couple of decades ago and has resulted to one of the most devastating phenomena to hit the earth and a matter that requires the outmost urgent address. The Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is a worldwide treaty adopted in May 1992 and later ratified in March 1994. It characterizes climate change as the difference in atmospheric air which is attributed to human movement and development that alters the composition of atmosphere despite of atmospheric air fluctuation that is seen over comparative periods of time (UNFCCC, 2006).

The African continent is among the most studied worldwide with regards to climatic and environmental changes and its impact on conflict. Various contextual and quantitative studies have been done to determine the beginning of common agitation, war and conflicts in Africa. For instance, critical changes in rainfall designs and continuous dry seasons in Kenya, Sudan, and Southern Ethiopia undermined pastoralists' livelihood especially arid areas, starting fierce clashes where pastoralists were compelled to share out limited water and pastoral fields. Droughts in Uganda cows producing districts prompted the rise of food cost by 200% and constrained more than 1.5 million to move because conflicts. Compounding the circumstance, armed herders from neighboring Sudan moved into Uganda looking for suitable grazing fields and water. Together, these models delineate the strains that can emerge between groups, when climatic conditions pulverize essential resources. (Boko et al, 2007)

Conflict can simply be defined as the struggle for something between two or more parties. For conflict to occur there must be different parties, a struggle for example a

disagreement, and what is being struggled over for instance the ideology of democracy, water as a resource among others. Karl Marx a German scholar defines conflict as competition for resources that are scarce. The implication of this is that the wealthy and rich will fight to protect, keep and gain more resources while the poor will do anything to acquire them. That social institutions like the education system mirrors this framework; this challenge subsequently the imbalances helps in keeping up with the inconsistent social class and structure. German sociologist Max Weber agreed with Karl Marx yet additionally was of the conclusion that economic incongruities, political power imbalance and social structure result to conflicts (Crossman, 2019)

## **Statement of the Problem**

Climate change is a global test that has prompted various conventions and mitigation measures being put in place. However, Africa as the continent that faces the direst consequences yet has the least impact on climate change gets the least attention. On global sphere the effects of climate change are as of now being felt. There are significant and progressively serious dry periods in East Africa, extraordinary floods in West Africa, exhaustion and deforestation in woodlands of Central Africa, and an increase of oceans causticity and typhoons in southern coast of Africa. The enormously modified extreme climate and weather patterns have compromised food security and agricultural productions as over 90% of the people depend on agricultural production for survival, health, and water and energy security resulting to a risk to the harmony, strength and development of the state which can prompt conflict. A good example to show how climatic changes have played a

great role in escalating conflict is the war around Darfur region which has been portrayed as the principal present day environmental change struggle. The region has varied ecological zones from arid deserts to semi-tropical climate and the people inhabiting the area are farmers and. Before the war broke out in 2003 there were already tensions over the resources as grazing and farming land was increasingly decreasing and the situation was not made any better with the decrease in yearly precipitation recorded and the advancement of the Sahara Desert southward by a mile each year. Therefore, these tensions spilled over and became one of the causes of the conflict.

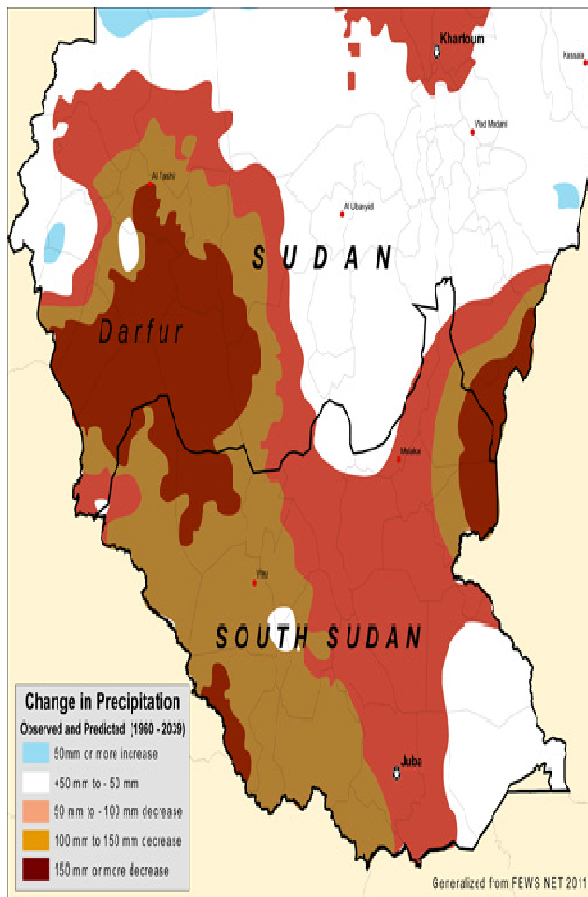


Fig.1 Source: ("Climate Change Profile South Sudan", 2018)

### Significance

The impacts of a global warming alteration on the landscape regularly lead to

geopolitical changes that take steps to destabilize areas, similar to the Horn of Africa. These effects are now adding to expanded state fragility and security issues in key regions around the globe strife for instance in Africa. Climate change by altering the world's physical landscape, is additionally changing the geopolitical landscape. Africa is especially vulnerable, given a blend of auxiliary fragilities and the huge exposure to environmental change risks. This raises the probability of contention and flimsiness on the African continent while drought and extreme climatic conditions are not new. Further, the rate of progress and the diminishing in recuperation time between extreme climatic conditions will put extra weights on African governments, thus making states to experience instabilities and conflicts more likely.

## Theoretical framework

### Environmental Conflict Theory

The most outstanding strand of the environmental conflict theory originates from crafted by Thomas Homer-Dixon (1994). His contention begins from the reason that the world's renewable resources are getting to be scarcer through three primary procedures: Human action diminishes the sum or nature of an asset quicker than that asset is restored, populace development decreases the measure of asset accessible per individual lastly changes in the manners in which assets are dispersed in a given society can fortify inconsistent access to accessible assets between gatherings (Beswick & Jackson, n.d.). Scarcity is a relative idea. While a sufficient asset may exist in a given framework, its conveyance can make restricted or across the board shortage. Improvement procedures, which are prescribed by givers and worldwide

monetary organizations as an end-result of help to creating states, require the development of specific kinds of economies (Dietz, 2011).

These methodologies have prompted expanded interest for certain assets, for example, oil, which has thus caused more noteworthy utilization of non-sustainable assets, exhausting all out stores. They have likewise urged creating states to import harvests, for example, wheat or rice, having diminished generation of indigenous nourishment crops so as to deliver money crops for fare. Through procedures, for example, escalated utilization of horticultural land, the consuming of non-renewable energy sources and overfishing, assets are utilized and their quality exhausted quicker than they can be restored by characteristic procedures, causing shortage (Raleigh, Jordan, & Salehyan, 2008).

To comprehend why shortcomings, lead to struggle in certain unique situations however not in others requires a comprehension of the manners by which assets are overseen and appropriated. The 'asset revile' postulation is an endeavor to bring issues of condition and administration together in clarifying the danger of fierce clash in a general public with huge mineral riches (Percival & Homer-dixon, 1998). It displays a twofold revile of poor administration united to flippant monetary conduct firmly identified with debasement encompassing high worth assets, for example, oil. As indicated by Richard Auty (1993) the asset revile likewise alluded to as a Catch 22; those nations which have generally high saves of important mineral assets and in this way their financial way to create experience lower levels of monetary development and less advancement (Brock, 2012).

There are additionally numerous nation and locale contextual analysis investigating joins between asset plenitude and strife in nations,

for example, Angola and Nigeria (Le Billon 2001; Frynas and Wood 2001). Le Billon's political nature approach analyzes how assets are socially developed and distinguishes what specific attributes may lead an asset to help a warlord endeavor or a military upset. While ecological factors, for example, asset plenitude or shortage may influence clashes, they do as such in an unforeseen as opposed to a deterministic. This adjusts motivating force structures for elites and residents alike. Along these lines, ecological methodologies require a thought of other investigative viewpoints from entomb bunch elements to ethnographic methodologies and asset development on the off chance that they are to improve one's comprehension of why clashes happen and show how it is molded (Percival & Homer-dixon, 1998).

### ***Environmental Scarcity Theory***

The environment scarcity theory depends on the compositions of Thomas F. Homer-Dixon who tests different speculations on the connection between nature and rough clashes far and wide. He contends that natural shortage is brought about by three things, shortage of recharge capable assets like crisp water, rich soils, populace development and inconsistent social conveyance of asset. In the event that the asset decreases the less it is accessible to the entire populace. At the point when there are populace development assets are rare for everybody subsequently the assets accessible are shared among many. While inconsistent circulation implies a few gatherings get a bigger bit of the asset. The quality and amount of inexhaustible assets falls the amazing move assets to support them leaving the helpless. (Percival & Thomas, 1998.)

The supposition that will be that inexhaustible assets seldom cause asset wars between states however non-sustainable

assets, for example, oil or coal does. In any case, interstate wars happen over sustainable assets particularly when it is stream water this happens when downstream riparian is exceptionally reliant on waterway water. This theory further implies that ecological shortage at the same time increments monetary hardship and upsets key social establishments prompting common difficulty and insurrection. It additionally prompts an expansion in budgetary and political requests on the administration. For instance, to alleviate the loss of these inexhaustible assets the administration should burn through cash to repay this might be through water system frameworks for example. To the elites who depend on asset extraction this asset misfortune implies their monetary solidness has been hindered hence they go to the state for remuneration (Various, 2012). This ecological shortage likewise grows peripheral gatherings who are poor to depend for assistance from the legislature. The administration thusly is over extended.

## **How Climate Change Has Contributed To Conflicts And Insecurities In Africa.**

Climate change is one underlying drivers of conflicts round the world, it winds up in food deficiencies, compromises individuals' livelihood, and can displace an entire populace. Where governments can't deal with the strain or assimilate the stuns of a consistently evolving climatical changes, dangers to the stabilities of states and social orders will exclusively increase. The effects of worldwide environmental change affect every nation. The increase in recurrence of extreme climate occasions like hurricanes, rapidly spreading fires and droughts compromise food availability, migration and endanger employments, thus it impacts

increment in the risk of conflicts, poverty and hunger. Below are some impacts of climatic change and how they lead to conflict.

### ***Rain patterns***

According to the research that was carried out by Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory it was reported that the difference in the amount of rainfall that is received in different places is greatly influenced by the activities of human being on the earth. The economic activities of human being produce heat trapping emissions and gases that completely deplete the ozone layers has greatly affected the different distribution of rainfall. The report from the laboratory confirms that the increase in temperatures on the earth causes the regions that receive a lot of rainfall to continue receiving more rainfall and the regions which are dry those that receives little rainfall to continue doing so. The rainfall patterns have been influenced by the external factors such as the greenhouse gases that are ever increasing on the earth which is influenced by human activities in the agricultural regions of the earth. The difference in the rainfall pattern causes the regions which receives very little rainfall to have very low production of food that influences negatively the economy of the people and eventually leading to poverty and conflict that arises as a result of people moving from one region to another in such of greener pastures added that these effects are observed occurring simultaneously in different locations of the world is a very strong evidence that the activities of human being is the main contributor. (Butler and Gates, 2012).

### ***Poor Institutions***

The poor institutions in many countries are greatly caused by the political activities which have a great impact to the changes in

the climate that is usually experienced. Poor development by the government is the main cause of the poor institutions we have around. Institutions are the main bodies which address the main challenges facing the societies but poor institutions hinder good problem-solving abilities. The main causes of corruption in many of the countries especially the African countries is the issues of corruption, with high percentage coming from the government bodies and sectors. One of the main effects that is brought about by corruption is pollution of the environment. The pollution usually emerges from vehicles, manufacturing industries and institutions. The pollution most of the time is in form of pollution of water, land pollutions and the most common air pollutions. Corruption from the governments come about when they allow such industries that pollute the air and environment to continue their operations in the country. The industries usually emit untreated and very harmful waste materials in the air and in the rivers. If corruption is not there the industries will be producing treated waste that is less harmful to the environment and less toxic substances. When the gases are released into the air, they destroy the ozone layer of the atmosphere which leads to adverse climatic conditions such as desertification and excess amount of rainfall in certain regions. With corruption in leading to poor institution, it always results to high level of poverty and conflicts among institutions and the government sectors. (Adano, et al. 2012)

### **Over reliance on agriculture**

The Near East and North Africa (NENA) are mostly among the influenced by the effects of environmental change. Small scale farmers are among the mostly affected by climatic changes on account of their immediate reliance on atmosphere and natural resources, relative poverty, and

frequently poor access to supportive and security networks. Past research on the effects of climatic change in the NENA district has concentrated on general adjustment measures that are fundamental and fitting for the region, or concentrated on explicit issues like water, domesticated animals or organizations. The environmental change drifts in Africa will bring about the immediate danger of decreased production and profitability for small scale farmers and the indirect danger of imperiled jobs for the farmers, particularly if there are limited alternatives for expansion. In general, farmers in rain fed mixed farmers probably going to be the most seriously affected by the impacts of environmental changes. (Baechler, 1999)

### **Poverty**

As climate events exacerbate, individuals are threatened by the progressively steady changes, for example, increasing temperatures and declining rainfall. Conflict is the major driver of poverty in the world. What's more, it's worsened by environmental changes this is by intensifying existing ecological, social, political and financial difficulties, climatic change increases the probability of rivalry and struggle over resources, thus the likelihood of escalating existing clashes. Dry spells droughts alone have had effect on more than 1 billion individuals in the most recent decade. This has led to, disruption of livelihood, pushed families from their homes and pushes individuals into poverty. Furthermore, Western Africa are basic areas for concern. Their consolidated populace of amazingly poor individuals (assessed at 310 million as of 2018) is more than twice the size of the remaining population of the extremely poor people (evaluated at 150 million individuals in 2018). In view of current patterns, the quantity of individuals who are amazingly poor in the two areas is

anticipated to keep expanding. (Deschênes and Greenstone, 2007)

### **Migration**

Dry seasons, combined with different variables, are expanding weight on individuals in Africa, greatly affecting the people without or incapable to move to resource rich areas, decrease in rainfall in the Horn of Africa, and increments in outrageous climate conditions, will probably expand the rate and size of movement of people from their settlement areas. As indicated by Robert McLeman of Canada's Wilfrid Laurier University, he notes that countries that are politically delicate are the undoubtedly prone to future climate related constrained migration. In fact, of the twenty most astounding positioned nations that are considered fragile states, twelve are arranged in regions of the South Asia, Middle East, and Africa, where environmental change is required to make increase degrees of water shortage. That incorporates five nations of the Horn: Eritrea, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan. Heatwaves and summer temperatures surpassing 35°C will be the norm. The results will be loss of lives from flooding and other disasters such as, food insecurity brought about by declining agricultural profitability and productivity hence rising the likelihood of conflicts and mass migration (Conway G, 2009)

### **A glance at how Climate has contributed to conflict in Northern Kenya**

The prediction on the effects of global warming increases the caution on enormously dangers of violent conflicts over limited resources, for example, freshwater and arable land, dry climatic conditions prompts shortage in pastoral fields and

water, this in turns leads to conflicts for instance, when people in a specific region are compelled to move from a drier territory to a less familiar region, where there are odds of meeting with a another group of people in search of similar resources meaning increase in competition leading to conflicts.(Gray, 2000)

The nomadic pastoralists of Northern Kenya, have found themselves constrained and restricted as they continued looking for pastures and water subsequently an expansion in the occurrences of violent conflicts between pastoralist and farmers because the pastoralists infringe farmlands in search of water and grazing field. This is on the grounds of the spreading desert connected to climatical change leading to drying of water corridors and diminishing pasture during the dry seasons. The contention is systematic as pastoralists move from their region to Northern regions thus are attacked by different groups from outside the locale for instance the attack on Oromo from Ethiopia. (Omosa, 2005)

Herders by large are known to be at the main issue of Kenya conflict particularly the nomadic pastoralists. They are distracted with interminable quest for grazing field and water for their animals. They move along territories which controlled by different groups thus resulting to conflict and pressure over the resources. Low and unreliable rainfall characterizes the climatic example of arid and dry regions of Northern Kenya areas which described by a low and unreliable rainfall patterns averaging around 200 mm every year. The sporadic rainfall makes the Northern Kenya vulnerable to dry spells leading to drought. The Northern Kenya has ha pattern of drought in each 5 – 10 years per decade since 1960s. Food unavailability in many parts of the Northern Kenya result into lasting famine, in a

nutshell, sustenance instability, starvation and drought leads to conflicts as individuals strive to survive. (Adan and Pkalya, 2005)

## **How change in Climate has Effect on Conflicts and Insecurities in Africa**

### ***Resources Competition***

In certain territories, environmental change means more prominent challenge in acquiring common resources; this challenge can possibly expand vicious clash. Procedures around the acquisition of fundamental necessities water, energy and food are probably going to progress toward becoming portrayed by battles on the other hand, control and use of assets which are controlled by powerful people. Access to crucial necessities will be an issue for the unlucky and the less fortunate, this being the case the poor and the marginalized will accept any significantly jobs for survival, thus straining assets accessibility and developed found in poorer regions, but they are easily accessed by those that can bear the cost of them (Brock, 2012). This noticeable disparity expands risks of brutal clash amongst the competition groups...

### ***Livelihood insecurity and migration***

Climate change expands the human insecurity of individuals reliant on natural resources for their livelihood. Rising human insecurity can incite them to move or search out option, unlawful wellsprings of income, which thusly can likewise drive conflict (Moran, Mulugetta, & Raleigh, 2014). Where there is additionally resource shortage in the alternative location or occupation sector, there is an expanded risk

of conflict between the newcomers and the individuals who were there first. For instance, in northern Kenya, numerous nomadic pastoralists have gone to fishing on Lake Turkana as repeating dry season has decreased the suitability of keeping up cows' groups, prompting deadly clashes between adversary Kenyan clans and with Ethiopian fisher folk on the opposite side of the lake.

### ***Extreme weather events and disasters***

How a government responds to and gets ready for catastrophic events can increment or mitigate the risk of springboard to build harmony and increment strength. Fiascos put extra strain on effectively frail government frameworks, upset economic activity, and displace communities and conflict following such an occasion. In the most pessimistic scenario, government activity after a disaster can create complaints and increment the risk of conflict, while in the best case government activity can be a regularly require a huge scale humanitarian response which a frail state is less ready to oversee (Raleigh et al., 2008).

### ***Volatile food prices and provision***

Climate change, related to different factors, for example, population growth, rising energy costs, and the quick development of biofuel production from yields, has increased the instability of food supplies and costs the world over. While higher food costs don't generally prompt brutal clash, abrupt food prices are a noteworthy driver of civil distress and protest (Awojobi, 2017). High unemployment, just as social and economic marginalization likewise contributes to political instability with food prices revolts regularly utilized as a political apparatus to exhibit individuals' discontent.



## **Sea-level rise and coastal degradation**

Rising ocean levels compromise the viability of lives and livelihoods in low-lying territories. Increasingly continuous flooding and the danger of loss of region to the ocean increment the pervasiveness of displacement, relocation, and social agitation (Percival & Homer-dixon, 1998). Especially at risk are the little island states, which face the loss of their whole region, and urban areas based on river deltas and coasts, for example, Lagos in Nigeria, where flooding will majorly affect economic development and enormous, highly concentrated populations (Brock, 2012). Regional misfortune may expand migration, which thus can build rivalry for assets at times, this causes heightened pressures among transients and host conveys, expanding the dangers of contention.

## **Conclusion**

Climate change has massive influence on conflict as well as insecurity in Africa. Because of the changing weather patterns resources have become scarce and by de facto that Africa is categorized as sub-Saharan and 90% of the people rely on agriculture, adverse effects of change in climatic conditions globally are more prevalent compared to others. Hence conflict over obtaining the already scarce resources. Additionally, governments have often securitized and politicized climate change as a way to hold on to power which consequently adds to the indirect causes of conflict in the region. The significant interlinkages that exist between atmosphere related ecological change and brutal conflict must not be overlooked as the components that make social orders powerless against environmental change can likewise make them defenseless against fierce conflict (Seter 2016.). Our examination of the

writing when all is said and done and the subjective writing specifically, demonstrates the importance of methodically surveying how political and power relation lead to climate related brutal conflicts.

## **Recommendations**

- African governments should stop politicizing and securitizing climate change and instead work to find ways to adapt to the inevitable changes which are as a result of changes in climate.
- States should invest in increasing their forest cover to occupy large land mass in order to reduce the effects of climatic change.
- New agricultural methods should be adopted that require less inputs and yield more produce such as hydroponics.
- Strong institutions should be formed and tasked with finding ways to enforce measures that helps in adapting to climate change.
- Existing policies on climate change and necessary penalties should be implemented.
- States should create awareness on climate change and its effects.
- Infrastructure supplying water to dry areas should be developed such as boreholes.
- African states should take a stand and demand that countries which are producing toxins that affect the earth and in turn cause climate change to reduce their emissions and also grant compensation to them because most of the factors that are causing climate

change originate from the developed countries.

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