



ROLE OF LEGISLATURE IN CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION AND RESOURCE CONFLICT PREVENTION

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Abstract

This paper examined the role of legislature in climate change mitigation and resource conflict prevention. The likelihood that resource conflicts and climate change are related is becoming more widely acknowledged. Dramatic shocks brought on by climate change are worsening migration, natural disasters, and conflicts nationwide. It has provided the humanitarian, security, and intelligence communities credible basis to establish a nexus between natural resource conflict and climate change, with states in northern and southern Nigeria facing increasingly more nuanced perspective. Securitization theory is adopted for this paper. It holds that political issues that are deemed dangerous, menacing, threatening, alarming, and other extreme security issues by a securitizing actor who possesses the institutional and social power to elevate the issue above politics needed to be addressed immediately. Secondary data acquired from symposiums, seminar papers, journal articles, monographs, periodicals, and textbooks were utilized in the study. The data was gathered and analyzed using the content analysis. This paper concluded that climate change and resource conflict are not mere environmental concern but significant economic, social and security issues as well which threaten national productivity, exacerbate poverty and inequalities and imperil human and national security. It recommended for Nigeria's legislature to provide requisite legislative framework to allow for transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy to mitigate climate change as well as adoption of more efficient agricultural practices as a way to prevent resource conflict.

Keywords: *Climate change, Conflict, Legislature, Mitigation, Prevention, Resource Conflict,*

Introduction

Earth's natural environment is essential for human communities and the ecosystem to survive. It supplies the carbon dioxide that plants require and the oxygen that animals breathe. The ecosystem also controls weather patterns and other aspects of the climate. Along with being home to many wildlife species and the bionetworks necessary for their survival, it is also essential for the provision of food and water for all living things (Ugbem, 2019). Regrettably, this natural environment is currently being overtaken by severe problems related to climate change and the



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misuse of natural resources. According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), human activity has changed nearly 75% of the Earth's surface, putting millions of plant and animal species on the endangered list (Onuoha, Ojewale & Akogwu, 2023). Through land deforestation for infrastructure development, agriculture, industrial complexes, human society has consistently overused nature's resources throughout history. At the moment, climate change is believed to exacerbate environmental degradation faster than ever before, hence aggravating the problems of soil erosion and desertification. (Durrani, Bwala, & Ibrahim, 2024).

Considering its extensive effects on human livelihood, climate change poses some multidimensional security implications for many nations. According to Goodman and Baudu (2023), the term *threat multiplier* was invented in 2007 by the Secretary General of the International Military Council on Climate and Security and the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA) Military Advisory Board, as a way to reiterate the growing global concern over climate change. This phrase foreshadows how the effects of climate change interact with and may intensify preexisting threats and other sources of instability, thereby influencing security risks. Without a doubt, one of the biggest threat to humanity today, particularly to a country as Nigeria that happens to be a developing country within the Global South, is climate change (Durrani, Bwala, & Ibrahim, 2024). The country has been severely affected by the adverse externalities of climate change resulting in devastating floods that swept across a number of regions in late 2022, disrupting livelihoods, displacing millions of people and leaving casualty in its trail. The climate of Nigeria has clearly changed over the last few years, with periods of exceptionally dry or rainy seasons interspersed. This has led to rising temperatures, flooding, sea level rise, drought and desertification, land degradation, depletion of freshwater resources, and a decline in biodiversity. Conflicts between Nigerian farmers and pastoralists over water and grazing area have also affected national security. In many parts of the world, including Nigeria, where a combination of rapid population growth, increasing urbanization, ongoing environmental degradation, the rise of violent extremist groups, and a lack of social infrastructure has led to a perfect storm of insecurity, climate change has emerged as an existential threat to national security. Nigeria is especially vulnerable to climate change in the areas of public health, water resources, agriculture and food security, and urban and rural settlements. Coastal areas and areas prone to erosion and desertification in the country's southeast and north, respectively, are the most vulnerable. Although everyone is at risk,



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the most vulnerable populations are urban poor people, farmers, fishermen, the elderly, women, and children (UNHCR, 2024). Nonetheless, mitigation and adaptation have been identified as the two main categories of climate change responses.

Over the past century, rising temperatures have had an increasingly detrimental effect, mostly because of the buildup of greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere.

However, Nigeria has demonstrated its unwavering commitment to addressing climate change issues when the parliament passed the Climate Change Bill in 2021, which was later signed into law by the President. The Climate Change Act of 2021 provided a legal structure for the creation of a National Council on Climate Change. The Council has the authority to decide on all matters pertaining to climate change, and to establish enabling policies. Salihu (2019) posits that through this action, the Nigerian Parliament has provided the country with a constitutional framework for a push towards net zero between 2050 and 2070. Furthermore, the creation of the National Council on Climate Change (NCCC) by the Act has enabled the country in its drive for coordinated action in order to meet its climate change goal.

Nigeria's legislature plays a crucial role in establishing the nation's overarching development vision and creating sensible environmental policies that support it, working in tandem with the National Council on Climate Change. The constitutional responsibilities of representation, legislation, and oversight frame the significant roles that parliaments play in advancing climate action. As the people's representatives, lawmakers are in the best position to interact with their constituents and push for their demands to be actualised by the government (Nkechinyere, Yero, Odele, & Macaulay, 2021). Among other things, this entails creating laws and regulations that support climate change adaptation and mitigation, the growth of renewable energy sources, and the improvement of energy security and access. The national assembly should have elective oversight in addition to its legislative authority to guarantee that the laws it enacts are adequately financed and carried out and that the people it represents are informed and involved in these decision-making procedures. Lawmakers can accomplish these goals and advance equitable, sustainable development that effectively addresses climate change by using a variety of apparatuses. Parliaments do more than just enact laws to combat climate change. In certain developed democracies, parliaments actively support their governments' goals through



deliberations, committee summonses, action scrutiny during oversight missions, and funding appropriation.

While appropriate senate and house committees work to figure out pathways to achieving these, the Nigeria's legislature has a key role to play in ensuring that all stakeholders play their part. This could take the form of oversight and continuous monitoring and evaluation of the processes.

Methodology

Secondary data is used in this research. As a result, material on the subject was acquired from symposiums, seminar papers, journal articles, monographs, periodicals, and textbooks. The data was gathered and analyzed using the content analysis.

Theoretical Framework

The theory that was adopted for this work is the securitization theory. It was developed by the Copenhagen School and it is so called because most writings emerged at the Conflict and Peace Research Institute (COPRI) in Copenhagen in the 1990s with scholars such as Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, Jaap de Wilde, among others (Eroukhmanoff, 2018a). Securitization theory holds that national security policy is not predetermined but rather is carefully selected by politicians and other decision-makers. According to securitization theory, political issues that are deemed dangerous, menacing, threatening, alarming, and other extreme security issues by a securitizing actor who possesses the institutional and social power to elevate the issue above politics need to be addressed immediately. Because security issues are not merely present, securitizing actors must express them as problems. For instance, making climate change a national security threat turns it from a minor environmental issue to one that demands attention, such as reducing industrial emissions. Securitization theory challenges traditional approaches to security issues by arguing that they are not intrinsically dangerous but rather only become security issues when a securitizing actor labels them as such (Fierke, 2015).

The defining features of securitisation theory as captured by Eroukhmanoff, (2018b) are:

- i. Securitisation theorists determined five sectors: the economic, the societal, the military, the political and the environmental sector. In each sector, a specific threat is articulated as threatening a referent object. For example, in the societal sector, the referent object is identity, while the referent objects in the environmental sector are the ecosystem and endangered species.



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- ii. The central idea of securitization is the referent object, which is the object under threat and must be protected. Given that some professionals oversee security and others receive it, security creates an unequal balance of power among people
- iii. Central to securitisation theory is showing the rhetorical structure of decision makers when framing an issue and attempting to convince stakeholders to lift the issue above routine politics. In order to convince authorities to take extraordinary measures, the securitising actor must draw attention and often exaggerate the urgency and level of the threat.
- iv A security threat is considered to have occurred when the public collectively agrees on the nature of the threat and supports taking extraordinary measures. If stakeholders reject the securitiser's speech, then this becomes just a securitization step and the securitization has failed.
- v. Successful securitization makes security the domain of exception, giving the securitizing entity, usually the nation-state, the power to decide when to overthrow the democratic framework and the power to manipulate the public

According to the Copenhagen School, decisions must be made about which problems should be classified as security threats. In this sense, a problem's classification as a security issue is determined by what various individuals subjectively perceive to be security threats rather than by its objective characteristics. Nothing is a security issue in and of itself; rather, it is an issue that only qualifies as such when it is designated as such. The Copenhagen School then contends that speeches and representations made by pertinent political actors ultimately shape the meaning of security in modern global politics (Wæver 1995; Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde 1998)

Climate Change and Resource Conflict in Nigeria

Conflict over resources and climate change are two of Nigeria's current issues. The likelihood that resource conflicts and climate change are related is becoming more widely acknowledged. Maslin, Lang & Harvey (2018) claim that this correlation has led to the media using terms like *climate refugee* and *environmental migrants* to convey the severity of the issue and how it has resulted in people escaping their homes due to climate-driven conflicts. Dramatic shocks brought on by climate change are making migration, natural disasters, and conflicts worse nationwide. It has provided the humanitarian, security, and intelligence communities credible basis to establish a nexus between natural resource conflict and climate change, with states in northern and southern Nigeria facing increasingly more nuanced perspective. As a result of its exacerbation of risk factors



that lead to resource conflict and national instability, climate change has been referred to as a threat multiplier.

As a vulnerable country in Africa, the impact and indicators of climate change are evident in Nigeria. A growing population, rising urbanization, and long-term environmental degradation have led to a dangerous level of regional rivalry over dwindling resources like fresh water, sea food, and arable land in Nigeria. Conflicts are already occurring in many parts of the nation, including specifically, the northeast, middle belt, and coastal communities, as a result of the increased competition for resources brought on by climate change. Uexkull (2016) research on climate change and security has revealed that the risk of violence is highest in communities that depend heavily on agriculture and have significant levels of ethno-political exclusion. Using this standpoint to analyze data on nations that suffered water shortages previously or were projected to suffer from water shortages, based on their history of violence and agricultural dependence, Busby (2022) discovered that 20 countries, many of which are in the Sahel, including Nigeria, were perpetually at risk of conflict and humanitarian crises. In late 2018 and early 2019, 11 of these 20 countries experienced significant short-term water deficits. While this can be classified as a rudimentary measure of risk factors, it however provides helpful direction for assessing how climate vulnerability leads to heightened security threats for all countries.

Northeast Nigeria has had a protracted climate change crisis with its resultant resource conflict. The region is particularly susceptible due to its heavy reliance on rain-fed agriculture, a practice that has witnessed a disruption by changing weather patterns and severe climatic conditions giving rise to droughts, floods, and heatwaves which have left a broad and largely unintended socio-economic consequences (Oyewo, 2024). The fact that Lake Chad, which was once one of the biggest freshwater bodies in Africa and had provided livelihood for roughly 30 million people, is rapidly disappearing is no longer news. Since the 1960s, the water body has decreased by 90% as a result of overuse and the consequences of climate change. With the loss of livelihoods, conflicts between farmers and herders became frequent. In pursuit of water, families who depended on the lake began to relocate to other regions. A distinct and intricate humanitarian crisis, one of the worst in the world, also surrounds the basin. Half a million children are suffering from severe acute malnutrition, over 5 million are fighting to get enough food to survive, and 2.3 million people are displaced throughout the region.



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Resource scarcity brought on by climate change can intensify intercommunal conflicts and result in risky competition for land and grazing areas. As these resources become less available, communities may resort more to violence to protect their livelihoods, which would further entrench the cycle of conflict by serving as a conduit for the spread of small arms and light weapons throughout the Sahel and for recruitment into terrorist organizations (Ide, 2017). According to Frohlich & Brzoska (2015), severe weather can erode state capacity and governance, making it more challenging for governments to effectively respond to conflicts. The influence of climate change on resource conflict in Northeast Nigeria is significant and multifaceted, exacerbating existing tensions and contributing to the complex interplay of factors that drive violence and instability in the region.

Nigeria's Middle Belt region has experienced aggravated clashes between farmers and pastoralists especially in the Benue and Nasarawa states, with some half a million people being displaced because of a reduction in the availability of natural resources within the region. Violent clashes were recorded even as the United Nations Climate Change Conference otherwise known as COP2024 opened in Baku Azerbaijan. This problem has persisted over the past decade as climate change continues to disrupt traditional livelihoods and intensify competition for dwindling supplies of water and productive land. The intersection between climate change, conflict and forced displacement. It warns that more frequent extreme weather can aggravate tensions and weaken social cohesion, intensifying the root causes of conflict and instability. Meanwhile, extreme weather events such as floods and drought are compounding the threats faced by people in Nigeria's Middle Belt, a region with high-to-extreme exposure to climate-related hazards, and nearly half of all forcibly displaced people are bearing the burden of both conflict and the adverse effects of climate change. The scale of this problem is set to grow as climate-related hazards intensify over the coming decades.

Environmental degradation and conflict between locals and Multinational Oil Companies were once seen as foremost Niger Delta issues resulting out of oil prospecting and exploration within the region, however, clashes between locals and migrating pastoralists is starting to gain attention (Pind Foundation, 2020). This increase in violence is tied, to a large degree, to land use, natural resource scarcity, and disruptions in traditional lifestyles. While these conflicts have miscellaneous immediate causes, changes in climate pattern are cross-cutting factor among all of them. Climate



change is precipitating increased temperatures and is giving rise to encroaching desertification that is resulting in migration down South for pastoralists from the North. Also rising sea levels is leading to coastal degradation and disruption in activities in the agriculture and fishing sectors which consequently triggers volatility in food prices, and more frequent and violent conflicts in the region.

Nigeria's coastal communities have regularly been submerged as a result of climate change that has triggered constant flooding. About 200 villages in the Niger Delta region are expected to be displaced if sea levels rise by 0.2 meters, while a rise of more than one meter is predicted to flood most of the Niger Delta and drive up to 80% of its inhabitants to higher ground (Onuoha, 2023). Flooding-related distress displacement is already driving people into the hinterland, where they strain limited resources like land and increase the likelihood of conflict in the communities they reach. Flooding-related displacement has resulted in resource competition among communities. By decreasing the availability of marine resources that many people rely on, climate change fuels conflict in coastal communities. The ability of the coastal population to fish is being impacted by sea level rise, erosion, and temperature changes in the water, which are causing fish stocks to migrate. In West African coastal communities, violent disputes over fishing grounds are not new, but as sea levels rise as a result of climate change, these disputes will increase in frequency and lead to more conflict in the Niger Delta region.

Weather-induced relocation down south among pastoralists has also increased incidents of violent conflicts within Nigeria's coastal areas. Such conflicts previously concentrated in the middle-belt region between pastoralists and farmers has in recent times gradually spread down to the south of Nigeria, especially over water and grazing land. Desertification and drought induced by climate change are undermining livelihood sustainability in northern Nigeria, forcing Fulani pastoralists to migrate southwards in search of greener pastures where they end up contending for available scarce resources with their host communities in Bayelsa, Delta, and Cross River states, among others (Pind Foundation, 2020).

With over 2 million people displaced due to the unprecedented climate-related effects, Nigeria has experienced its worst flooding in over ten years. The 2022 floods, which were triggered by heavier rainfall attributed to climate change and the release of excess water from the Cameroon's Lagdo dam, affected most of the country's 34 states and are a major cause of human mobility and forced



migration. The country's flood-prone areas have been particularly affected, including Anambra, where 526,215 people were displaced in addition to other states, and Bayelsa, which was the most severely affected, with 700,000 people displaced across 300 communities and villages (Stromsta, 2024).

With 4.2 million people at risk and floods again severely affecting a number of state in 2023, the repercussions of environmental and climate change-related disasters are only expected to get worse. Those who have already been forcibly moved or have limited mobility will continue to be disproportionately affected by flooding. Children and young people are especially vulnerable to the consequences of those calamities; additionally, they experience marginalization and exclusion due to their age (Office of the High Commissioner United Nations Human Rights, 2022).

Role of National Assembly in Climate Change Mitigation and Resource Conflict Prevention

Nigeria's National Assembly hold the power to drive significant change in climate mitigation and resource conflict prevention. Through comprehensive laws, policies, and oversight, it can shape a sustainable future while fostering peace and stability. Effective legislative action, coupled with stakeholder engagement and international cooperation, remains vital in tackling these global challenges. The legislature is key to achievement of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change as well as associated climate change resolutions and targets, hence it has an enormous role to play in extenuating the harsh effects of climate change in order to ensure that the country met its long-term climate objectives. It has a wide range of operational mechanisms at its disposal to enable it carry out these tasks and to promote inclusive, sustainable development that successfully tackles climate change (Onuoha, 2023).

Although the Land Use Act puts limitations on the length the National Assembly can go to making the required changes to addressing resource conflict, the legislature however has a responsibility to forestall clashes among the country's populace. It also has become imperative for Nigeria's lawmakers to have a clear understanding of the dynamics of climate change and its threat multiplier effect, and securitize and elevate it from a minor environmental issue to one that demands serious attention. Members of parliament must endeavour to address this as urgent policy matter and in an operational manner. Ensuring sustainable stable livelihoods is a primary objective of government, and changing climate is increasingly becoming determinative in this regard (Oyewo, 2024)



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As a law making institution, the National Assembly holds a prerogative in conjunction with the executive arm in setting Nigeria's wider development goals, and in developing comprehensive environmental policies in support of set objectives. These comprise in shaping policies and creating a regulatory framework that enhances mitigation of climate change conditions, adaptation to the phenomenon, development of renewable energy potential and energy transition, as well as provision of value-added energy availability, accessibility and affordability among others. As part of their core-mandate, it is the duty of lawmakers to prepare, discuss and adopt laws that relate to climate change and its mitigation. Parliamentarians should create a framework for realistic emissions reduction targets, regulate industries to reduce carbon footprints, and set viable energy efficiency standards.

Concomitant with their legislative functions, Nigeria's National Assembly has a duty to offer elective oversight to ensure that there exists adequate budgetary provision for implementation of every bill that has scaled through its legislative processes. The legislature should ensure that funding for climate-related initiatives, such as research and development of clean technologies, climate adaptation projects, and disaster preparedness is not disrupted. They should as well provide financial incentives and support for businesses and individuals to adopt sustainable practices. In this direction, senate and house committees alongside experts on the field must work closely together to arrive at realistic ways to accomplishing these.

The leadership of the national assembly holds a duty at ensuring that all interested party perform their duties in this mission with a high sense of patriotism. This could take the form continued and sustained monitoring and evaluation of the processes as a matter of urgent importance and high priority for the national assembly. Furthermore, parliament owe citizens a responsibility to ensure that funds necessary to galvanise the process are appropriated at every budgetary cycle. Similarly, parliament should make certain that each annual budget and supplementary budget estimates forwarded by the Executive undergoes comprehensive evaluation so as to affirm that adequate attention is accorded sustainable mitigation mechanisms aimed at addressing climate change.

Desert encroachment has been proven to be real and its consequences are visible across the country. There are visible sand dunes on Nigeria's Northern borders. This development is orchestrated by climate change stressors, and has led to the destruction of more than 200 villages with the villagers completely displaced (Vanguard Newspaper, 28 August, 2024). This is directly



linked to climate change which is shrinking Nigeria's landmass and dwindling natural resources. This is one of the underlying factor causing conflicts in the country among communities competing for greener and safer locations all over. At this point, collective effort has become crucial in finding a permanent solution to resolving the farmer-herder conflict. Cooperation between the legislature and the executive arm of government is fundamental to addressing the challenge. The solution to the problem should be multifaceted and collaborated. The effects of climate change are far-reaching; more proactive measures should be put in place by the National Assembly to address the situation.

Conclusion

Scientific evidence clearly shows that the planet is heating up and climatic conditions are shifting, leading to serious and possibly harmful effects. Climate change is worsening environmental problems such as deforestation, land degradation, freshwater scarcity, and pollution of air and water. Climate change is the major factor undermining the achievement of the SDGs sustainable development goals and a direct threat to Nigeria's efforts at reducing extreme poverty. Anticipated rises in severe weather events along with additional alteration in weather patterns could further jeopardize livelihoods if no action is taken. Climate change and resource conflict are not mere environmental concern but significant economic, social and security issues as well which threaten national productivity, exacerbate poverty and inequalities and imperil human and national security. Nigeria is projected to lose approximately \$460 billion by 2050 due to the impacts of climate change, equating about 20% of the nation's GDP (Vanguard Newspaper, 8 November, 2024). In fact, the 2021 Notre Dame Global Adaptation Index ranks Nigeria as the 53rd most-vulnerable country and the 6th least-ready country in the world to adapt to climate change.

The impact of climate change and resource conflict on Nigeria's environmental and socioeconomic systems is compounding the country's fragility risks. Longer lasting and more severe dry seasons and shorter more intense rainy seasons and other extreme weather patterns are exacerbating challenges confronting communities in both urban and rural areas of the country. Extensive cultivation and overgrazing have been compounded by desertification, rendering large swaths of land in northern Nigeria unproductive. Unpredictable and higher-intensity rainfall in southern Nigeria is resulting in a loss of crops and the displacement of communities. Depleting



environmental resources in every part of the country pose a serious food security challenge in the face of a rapidly growing population. As a result, growing desperation over food supply is driving resource conflicts across Nigeria. Evidently, farmer-pastoralist violence over the past decade has worsened and disrupted business operations across the country. The negative effect of climate change and resource conflict in Nigeria is rising and urgent action is needed to improve food and economic resilience to prevent deeper crises hence the country's legislature has a crucial role to play in climate change mitigation and resource conflict prevention. No doubt this challenge is quite an enormous one.

Recommendation

- i. To combat the looming crisis, Nigeria's legislature should provide requisite legislative framework to allow for transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy, as well as adoption of more efficient agricultural practices as a way to forestall farmer- pastoralist crisis. There is also a need to debate on the floor of the house importance of modern urban development best practices that allows for reduced energy consumption.
- ii. Climate change should no longer be cast as an environmental issue only, rather it should also be expanded to reflect its economic, social, and health implication on the country. Climate change impacts productivity, well-being of its populace and the functionality of its institutions. Even though Nigeria lacks capacity to reduce emissions, its legislative arm has capacity to understand the problem, debate the issues, create legislative framework for its mitigation and prepare the country towards expected changes and the transformation.
- iii. Climate change represents a political problem and Nigerians have to speak about it. We need to get our politicians to talk about and act on climate change. There is a need for citizens to engage politically, demanding action from their leaders on climate-related issue Nigerians to take responsibilities and learn to adapt to all forms of climate change
- iv. The Press as the fourth estate of the realm also has a role to play in supporting the efforts of the legislature in educating the public, driving policy change, empowering communities, and fostering resilience. Climate injustice in Nigeria provides a platform for the country's unique climate challenges to be heard and addressed, paving the way for a more informed and proactive nation.



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