

Climate change and its impact on rising a competitive behavior between state and non-state actors in Africa

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Abstract

Over the last decade, the rise of conflicts and tensions in many areas of Africa has been noticeable due to the changing climate circumstances in Sahel and central Africa. The Social Conflict in Africa Database (SCAD) examines the effects of deviations in rainfall on various types of social and ethnic conflicts. The results of this database indicate the strong interconnections between the dramatic decrease in rainfall and the political conflicts, whether on its larger scale -state conflicts- or its smaller scale – Ethnic and non-state actors-. In the same vein, It has been noticeable that the harsh climate conditions in Africa push states to adopt a competitive political behavior that aims to protect water resources. In this regard, the Chad Basin region has been severely impacted by climate change, leading to the shrinking of the lake and increased instability and insecurity in the region. Chad basin climate change worsened food security and political marginalization, which exacerbated existing tensions and drove recruitment to Boko Haram. Competition over water resources shared by multiple nations, like the Nile river basin has perpetuated a competitive behavior between the states; for instance, The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) has created severe tensions with Egypt, claiming that dam policies would remarkably decrease water resources of the Egyptian nation.

The fact that climate change causes conflict is well-established in various disciplines of social sciences. However, little investigation has been done to scrutinize the changing behavior patterns of the states and non-state actors vis-à-vis the changing circumstances of climate in Africa. Through this paper, we tend to argue that climate change not only perpetuates violence and conflicts but also changes the behavior of the state and non-state actors to adopt a competitive behavior, seeking to protect or to take over resources with open strategies that might include using force to keep the status Quo. Climate change based on this view would first cause increasing resource scarcity and would also change the behavior of state and non-state actors by motivating geopolitical competition.

Keywords: climate change, Africa, social conflict, state behavior