

**THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON THE RISE OF BOKO HARAM
INSURGENCY IN THE NORTHEAST OF NIGERIA.**

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ABSTRACT

Climate change has become an area of concern in the entire world. Every part of the world is bedevilled with one aspect of climate change abuse or the other. It could be Drought, Desertification, Ocean encroachment, Erosion, Flood, Earthquake, Landslide, Pollution and others. The case of Lake Chad is that of Drought and Desertification which has led to the drastic decrease and shrinking of the lake over time. This has affected economic activities such as fishing, farming, herding; brought about unemployment, unbridled migration coupled with lack of committed leadership to resuscitate and manage the lake which is critical for promoting employment for the teeming population around the North-East, Borno state in particular. The objective of this research however, is to determine the impact of climate change on Lake Chad Basin and how it contributes to the recent Boko Haram crisis in the North-East of Nigeria. Findings include that the condition of Lake Chad has affected agricultural activities given rise to hunger, poverty, loss of jobs, and reduction of economic power of the citizens as well as uncontrolled migration which has fuelled Boko Haram conflict. Primary data were sourced from questionnaire and interview with the internally Displaced Persons in FCT, Abuja (IDPs) with findings that the condition of Lake Chad has affected agricultural activities given rise to hunger, poverty, loss of jobs, and reduction of economic power of the citizens as well as uncontrolled migration which has fuelled Boko Haram conflict. Based on these findings, the research however concludes that Climate Change has great impact on Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast of Nigeria. It therefore recommends amongst others, the effective and efficient collaboration of the affected state governments with federal government in providing adequate infrastructures in the northeast to help solve the problem of unemployment since Boko Haram had been taking advantage of high rate of unemployment within the zone to increase their capacity by day.

Keywords: Crisis, Crisis Management, Insurgency, Terrorism, Peace Building

INTRODUCTION

Over the years in most part of the world such as China, natural disasters were seen as “divine messages” however of recent, abrupt atmospheric changes have captured public attention, influenced human affairs and reshaped global politics of the environment (Leonard and Mintzer, 1994). Climate change is a global issue that attracts a lot of international attention. It was first discussed in the World’s political forum in 1988 when the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) set up the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), an expert body that would assess scientific information on climate change (World Nuclear Association, 2015)

The link between climate change and conflict world over could be traced to its impact on the ecosystem. Desertification, Drought, Flood, land and coastal Erosion, Pollution of all sorts (air, land and sea) are all climate change affects which one way or the other are detrimental to human and to the entire ecosystem. Experts predicted that the Nigeria’s climate is likely to see growing shifts in temperature, rainfall, storms, and sea levels throughout the twenty-first century and that poor adaptive responses to these shifts could help fuel violent conflict in some areas of the country (Sayne, 2011).

The Lake Chad’s current situation is the effect of climate change. It has brought massive famine as a result of low agricultural activities, unbridled migration and even unemployment which to a large extent have contributed to conflict in the North East region of the country including that of Boko Haram that is currently ravaging Nigeria as a nation. The water level of Lake Chad was considered normal at 40.3km³ before 1970 however, between 1970 and 1975, the lake started experiencing untold drought that led to its reduction in size (27.3km³). Subsequently from 1980s through 1990s the size of the lake took another dramatic decrease to 17.7km³ and 12.7km³ respectively.

According to Olojo (2013), Adebayo (2014), Umar (2011) and Liolio (2013) in their research findings, unemployment, social deprivation, poverty and lack of equitable distribution of wealth were the major causes of Boko Haram conflict in the northeast of

Nigeria. This study however went further to investigate the relationship of those challenges to the Lake Chad climate change and the increase in the Boko Haram crisis. Being that the two variables of discourse namely Climate Change (Lake Chad) and Conflict (Boko Haram) are situated in the same location, this study noticed that as the climate change bites harder on Lake Chad through drought and desertification resulting to dramatic reduction of the lake, the capacity of the insurgent group increases day by day. The irony of the entire situation is that the lake which normally should have been a source of succour to the indigenes has become a frustrating agent to them and Boko Haram group turned to be beneficiary of the inability of the lake by serving as alternative to the helpless, motivating them with cash, loans and accommodating their interest thereby increasing its capacity.

As far as the northeast of Nigeria is concerned, Lake Chad has been the main source of livelihood to its large and growing population. This however means that the maintenance and sustenance of this great lake is of great importance to the inhabitants. Having been affected by the scourge of climate change over time, it therefore became a cause for concern as the region no doubt is experiencing the ripple effect of this dramatic change.

50 years ago, Lake Chad covered 20,000km² – almost a fresh water sea. With the drought of the 1970s and 80s, it shrank very rapidly to approximately 2000km². This had considerable human consequences, many living by the lake had to move away, and many had to find new work” (Institut de Recherche pour le Development-IRD, 2016)

Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) and UNEP have attributed the reduction in size to be greatly caused by; Climate patterns attributed to the European air pollution having shifted rainfall pattern further south. This makes the region dryer and not allowing the lake to replenish. Water usage such as damming and irrigation method is inefficient. Based on the climate pattern, United Nations and even the Nigeria government have declared the condition of this lake an ecological catastrophe. Nigerian government has equally linked this to the incessant conflict of Boko Haram in the North Eastern part of the country. As Shehu (2015) pointed out:

with the prolonged drought and desertification, lake Chad is now one tenth of its original size, leading to poverty due to the failure of agriculture and fishing causing instability in the region that the insurgency of the Boko Haram has been able to cash in upon (Shehu, 2015).

Report of the LCBC has it that in 2012, the population of Lake Chad inhabitants was estimated at 45 million with the Nigerian part of the basin harbouring about 22million (Lake Chad Basin Commission) This is against the figure of about 10million inhabitants of the three north eastern states all together that was declared during the 2006 national census (NPC, 2006 census). This is an indicator of rapid population growth of a little above 100% chasing a limited source of living. For some years now, North Eastern part of the country and in translation the entire country has been experiencing high and constant rate of conflict from the insurgent group popularly known as Boko Haram. This group's activities are concentrated in the state of Borno where the historic lake Chad Basin is located at the western axis of Chad.

The persistent shrinking in size of Lake Chad which has been identified as an important means of livelihood for the people of this area has reduced the agricultural activities (farming, fishing and animal husbandry), increased migration coupled with government neglect, have contributed to the recent conflict of Boko Haram in the region. This has called for concern as this conflict is not only affecting the northeast but the entire nation, Africa and the globe. Lake Chad Basin Commission which was set up in 1964 for the management of this lake has not been able to bring lasting solution to its tragic disappearance. The broad objective of the study is to determine the political and economic impacts of climate change on Lake Chad Basin which to a large extent have contributed to the recent crisis of Boko Haram in the north eastern part of Nigeria;

The study also tried to determine the significance level of impact between Lake Chad-induced low agricultural activities and conflicts in the northeastern part of Nigeria; between Lake Chad-induced migration of citizens and the conflicts in the North Eastern part of Nigeria and roles of the government and the conflicts in the North eastern part of Nigeria. The main

objective of this study is to determine how climate change has contributed to the rising insurgent activities in the northeast and determine ways and means of assuaging this issue in order to return peace and development in the region.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the theory of Structural Functionalism. This is a sociological theory that attempts to explain why society functions the way it does by focusing on the relationships between the various social institutions that makes up society (e.g., government, law, education, religion, etc). Conflict is built into the particular way societies are structured and organized (Enwere, 2015). This theory posits that social systems are collective means to fill social needs. In a normal social set-up, each individual is to contribute for the development of such society. There has to be division of labour which shows the indispensability and interdependence of persons and institutions for proper functioning of an ideal society. This is the view of Emile Durkheim (Durkheim, 1982: 70-81) who saw society as a functioning organism.

This can also be related with Conflict theory (commonly associated with Karl Marx (1818–1883). Based on the dialectical and materialists (Malia, 1998: 35) accounts of history, Marx opposed the myth that the rich earned their wealth through hard work and education, while the poor are lacking in skill and initiative. This myth sees the social problems as the shortcomings of individuals rather than the flaws of society. Marx however in his class theory wanted to correct this kind of idea positing that the rich rather get richer by enslaving the poor. It was based on this class struggle that Marx supported the proletariat to rise up against the capitalist and overthrow the capitalist system. Marxism posited that capitalism, like socioeconomic systems, would inevitably produce internal tensions leading to its own destruction. Marx advocated a radical change, where proletariat revolution would bring about equality and freedom from the ruling class. In Structural conflict theory, conflict is built into the particular ways societies are structured and organized. The theory looks at the social problems like political and economic exclusions, injustice, poverty, disease, exploitation,

inequality as sources of conflict (Enwere, 2015). From this we notice that where equity and justice are lacking in any society there is bound to be conflict.

The "survival of the fittest" syndrome, explained by an English sociologist, Herbert Spencer, in his book *Principles of Sociology* occurs when there is an alteration in the condition of a society. Spencer's intention was to support a societal form of natural selection. Spencer argued that there is a natural tendency in society towards equilibrium. Thus, even when the conditions of the society are altered, the resulting changes to the social structure will balance out, returning the society to equilibrium (Spencer, 1896). The higher the level of integration between these intermediate groups, the more cohesive society will be as a whole. The absence of social cohesion can result in greater violence toward others. With Maslow's positive characterization of self-actualized personality as follows:

They perceive reality efficiently and can tolerate uncertainty; Accept themselves and others for what they are; Spontaneous in thought and action; Problem-centred (not self-centred); Unusual sense of humour; Able to look at life objectively; Highly creative; Resistant to enculturation, but not purposely unconventional; Concerned for the welfare of humanity; Capable of deep appreciation of basic life-experience; Establish deep satisfying interpersonal relationships with a few people; Peak experiences; Need for privacy; Democratic attitudes and Strong moral/ethical standards, there is hope for progress in societies if people are able to attain the self-actualization stage of their needs (Maslow, 1970).

However, the inability to meet needs throws one off balance and at this stage anything could happen. Anger and frustration set in. The distortion experienced in the acquisition of these basic and necessary human needs by the Indigenes of Lake Chad and the environs provoke what Maslow termed as "behavioural Responses". Lake Chad region, the people of Borno state and the entire northeast suffer neglect and social deprivation of basic amenities of life. The citizens were not able to help themselves from the daunting climate change ravaging the lake which they depend on for livelihood neither did the authorities show concern. The means of livelihood of the people living around the Lake Chad region drastically reduced.

Their socio-economic status changed to negative. The quantum of fish from the river from which they make a lot of money after selling was no longer as it was before. Farming activities also reduced due to drought, desertification and lack of technological improvement on irrigation. Their stream of income reduced. Life became bizarre and so frustrating. Having waited for years without intervention from the concerned authorities, many abandoned fishing, and farming searching for other means of livelihood. In the process many fell into the hands of the insurgents knowingly or unknowingly by accepting any offer that looks “handsome” especially that of Boko Haram.

Insurgent groups entice unemployed youths with cash and loans schemes. In a situation of lack many would certainly rush for such offer (Daily Trust, 29 April 2021). People tend to take their destinies into their own hands by any means. The protection they could not get, they provide themselves. The government loans that were not accessible to them were easily made available to them by insurgents. The poor see powerlessness, voicelessness as essential part of their poverty (Narayan, 2000). This group of people can only but resort to self-help in the best way they know assuming any name and form. Many migrate outside the country with frustration. Guess what could be in their minds- to equip themselves and return to their country to demand for their rights from the authority concerned certainly with force hence the strengthening of the capacity of the insurgent group. The same neglect has led the herdsmen to migrate down to the south and the resultant effect is everyday conflict with farmers whose farms are being destroyed by their animals. The farmer-herders crisis has become a frequent event in parts of the southern states especially in Benue (Agatu), Enugu, Delta, Abia, Ogun and others.

This shows that protection, provision or attention given to single individual or entity is actually for all. This explains the theory of needs of Abraham Maslow and the resultant effect was what Karl Marx advocated for in his class theory. In order not to “replace peace with conflict” (Enwere, 2015), government should ensure that basic needs of citizens are adequately provided for. Through the actions of the Boko Haram in the northeast, it is quite

obvious that the said militant group is against the Nigerian authority. This is actually the class struggle. This struggle indirectly occurs when we look at it from the perspective of how and what led the proletariats to abandon their peasant jobs and joined in fuelling the Boko Haram insurgency against the instituted authorities. One could interpret this action as a way of exhibiting their anger on the authority for an unjust treatment and neglect for years. For them it might mean a way to get the attention of the authority in the zone or totally to dethrone and enthrone their own government. Marx class struggle is brought to bear.

Before the present administration rescued the situation of captured towns of Borno, a report had it that by January 2015, the group had pushed out government forces and controlled four towns in Borno and Yobe states – Gwoza, Bama, Baga, and Gulani – an area spanning about 51,800 km² (Premium Times Nigeria, 24 July 2015). Many things could be attributed to the gut of the militants. Whatever be the reason, it could not be anything less than collapse in the social structure.

Overview of Climate Induced Variables and Conflict

The significance level between: Lake Chad-induced low agricultural activities and conflicts in the north-eastern part of Nigeria; Lake Chad –induced Poverty vis-à-vis Boko Haram Conflict; Lake Chad-induced migration of citizens and the conflicts in the north-eastern part of Nigeria and roles of the government and the conflicts in the north-eastern part of Nigeria has been dealt with in this study.

Lake Chad –induced Low Agricultural Activities vis-à-vis the Boko Haram Conflict in the North-East:

Sustainable social and economic development in Africa is necessarily based on development of its agricultural sector, which is major source of livelihoods for 70 percent of its population and 80 percent of its poor of the world - Africa, the north East and small island developing states - where agricultural water control has been critical and considered their future prospects (FAO, 2005).

Agricultural activities can be classified as man's activities on crops, livestock, animals (wild and aquatic) and others. Aside desert encroachment and increase in population which

have reduced the farm land, farmers generally in the northeast are feeling seriously the adverse effect of climate change on Lake Chad. Due to persistent drought and irregular rainfall, irrigation technology becomes very pertinent. Agricultural activities depend on water for survival. The challenges confronting water control in agriculture vary among regions depending on their socio-economic and climatic conditions. Lake Chad region is known for its agricultural activities like fishing, herding, farming which attracts economic development, however as the lake shrinks most of these activities reduced and in the absence of other meaningful things to do to sustain livelihood, most families indulge in nefarious acts. With this, socio-economic development of the region is also reduced as there could be no significant development in any society without a peaceful atmosphere.

With water scarcity agriculture faces the challenge of producing more food for the world's growing population. More people chase little food. Demand for food becomes more than the supply leading to high cost in food price, hunger and starvation. Lake Chad inhabitants and in fact the North Eastern states that were booming in trade and agriculture are currently living on aids from individuals and donor agencies. As was reported by Guardian (2016):

Lake Chad - which suffers from cyclical droughts and floods - was once one of the world's largest lakes but has shrunk by 90 percent in the last 50 years. This, coupled with rising insecurity, has destroyed people's livelihoods including fishing and farming, reduced cross-border trade and left communities increasingly dependent on humanitarian aid (Guardian, 2016: 5).

The dearth of improved agricultural activities due to effects of climate change (drought and desertification) in Lake Chad has led to increased famine and poverty in the area and the rate of unemployment also increased making those affected vulnerable to the conflict agents. Herders have lost their animals due to drought. Wild animals, birds and many various species of fish have been lost.

Unemployment in Lake Chad and its Linkages to Boko Haram Insurgency

Unemployment is the absence of jobs for all who want them while the unemployed according to Jahoda is defined as all who have not gotten jobs but would like to have one or who when

they have no job are dependent on some financial support from whatever source for their livelihood (Jahoda, 1982: 13). Women and Youths are the worst hit of unemployment occasioned by the unfavourable condition of Lake Chad. Many women quit farming; youths quit fishing searching for what next to do to improve their standard of living. Most of them willingly or by enticement give themselves to Boko haram in exchange for money to keep their families' hopes alive.

Seeing the frustration and the increase hardship on inhabitants of the Northeast, Boko Haram recently was reported to have adopted the strategy of recruiting unsuspecting youths into their fold with loans. (Guardian, 2016: 4). The 2016 Abuja security summit has also blamed the impact of climate change for the unemployment and crime in the region urging LCDB to pursue goal of inter-basin water transfer project with the view of mitigating drought, re-establishing fishery, irrigation, navigation and above all restoring the lake's normal level (Shehu, 2019).

Lake Chad –induced Migration vis-à-vis Boko Haram Conflict

The smartest way to safeguard national sovereignty is to minimize the risks migrants face when trying to reach safety, and to maximize the means at their disposal to build productive lives – Peter Sutherland, UN SRSG for International Migration and Development. As Lake Chad shrinks leaving more islands, these Islands are being filled up by increase Population. Migration is a two-way activity. Immigration - Emigration. In the case of climate change in Lake Chad, immigrants from all over have come to settle down for different purposes namely trading, herding, fishing and other agricultural activities. Unfortunately, with harsh climate conditions and changes, these migrants are no longer meeting up with their basic needs, many got enticed with the Boko Haram's offer of fat bank accounts. Some migrated out of the country with grief of neglect in one's own country, also got attracted with the offer of some Islamic sects of Maghreb, got trained and indoctrinated to be against constituted authorities. As Kieran (2015) noted:

Lives have been wrecked, the economy is in tatters and terms of trade have been severely disrupted. Around 2.1 million of the 2.5 million displaced are living in Nigeria, while 400,000 have been forced across borders to seek refuge in or been uprooted within Cameroon, Chad and Nigeria, most are living with local communities, piling pressure on families already struggling to survive (Kieran, 2015).

International community has raised alarm on the plight of African migrants to Europe saying that the vast number of people displaced could fuel migration across the Mediterranean. Excerpts from UN humanitarian Coordinator for Sahel region, Toby Lanzer in Malta conference in 2015:

There is every chance that some of these people will seek refuge further afield," ... "The combination of abject poverty, environmental degradation and lack of opportunities for young people could also fuel further violence and insecurity in the region..." Given the vast numbers of youths in the Lake Chad Basin, the ground is ripe for extremist groups to go in and recruit..."..."Migration will become far more serious if we don't address underlying causes of poverty, climate change and violence (Kieran G, 2015).

In order to forestall the escalating stage, European Union announced a 1.8 billion-euro (\$1.94 billion) trust fund to tackle the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement in Africa (Arab Times, 2015: 9). The Role of Government in Curbing the Boko Haram Conflict vis-à-vis the Lake Chad Climate Change Situation. The UN assistant Secretary-General, Loby Lanzer in a Geneva Conference reiterated: "There's need to be a strategy for the Lake Chad region ... drawn up by the four governments, and it needs to address the development issues, how to resolve abject poverty, how to provide opportunities for members of the youth" (Miles, 2015).

Generally, North-Eastern part of Nigeria is so backward in terms of development. Economic growth and human development are indicators of development in any society. Each cannot be in isolation. "In the absence of substantial investment in the development of human capital in any country, sustained economic growth and development would only be a mere wish, never a reality" (Eigbiremolun, 2014). That is to say that such society should be able to produce goods and services such as education, health, employment, security both in quality

and quantity for poverty reduction. Every nation needs peace and stability in order to achieve development. According to UNDP report, economic growth must be constantly nourished by the fruits of human development, such as higher qualified workers capable of technological and managerial innovations along with opportunities for their efficient use; more and better jobs, better conditions for new businesses to grow, and greater democracy at all levels of decision making. Conversely, the report maintained, slow human development can put an end to fast economic growth (United Nations Development Program UNDP, 1996).

This is the case with Lake Chad and its environs, whose inhabitants are predominantly pastoral farmers and fishermen are suffering from climate change disorder due to lack of technological and managerial innovations on the lake and lack of efficient and effective usage of the water. In 1964, the four riparian Governments championed by the Nigerian leadership being privy of this circumstance surrounding the lake, established Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) whose primary mandate was to maintain the lake to its original status of 1960s (LCBC).

The LCBC budget is provided by member countries with the following participation rates: Nigeria 52%, Cameroon 20%, Chad 11%, Niger 7% and CAR 4%. However, not all countries pay their entire duty so LCBC has to cope with constantly lowering funds (Bontemps, 2013).

President Obasanjo during his democratic era of 1999 awarded contract for the assessment and revitalization of same lake (Vanguard Newspaper, 13 October, 2015). President Mohamadu Buhari in 2015 on his assumption to duty has also called for the audit report from the Auditor-General of the Federation, Mr Ukaru on the awarded contract which was said to have been submitted to the LCBC (*Thisday*, 2015). Despite other challenges facing the nation, President Buhari among other world leaders has declared the Lake's situation an ecological disaster (COP21, 2015).

Recently, some northern state governors namely Bauchi, Borno, Kano, Jigawa, Kano and Plateau states have teamed up to Fund the Hadeja Jama'are, Kumadugu Yobe Basin Trust Fund, as part of efforts to boost agricultural and economic activities in the areas around the

Lake Chad Basin. Under the initiative, the affected states are to contribute an initial take-off grant of N100 million (Adamu, 2015) while African Development Bank (ADP) announced its 2million Euro to the Trust Fund (African Development Bank, 2014). This is also in addition to the N850 million grants provided by the Federal Government. Though it is always better late than never, one would have imagined such intervention coming up in practical terms decades ago why wait till now? It is so worrisome. The entire nation is almost thrown in disarray because of the prolonged intervention of Lake Chad's climate change.

Abraham Maslow and McClelland's views on human needs were brought to bear in this paper. Needs are psychological or physiological insufficiencies that provoke some type of behavioural response (Enwere, 2015). Individual needs can range from weak to strong and can vary based on environmental factors, time and place. In practice, it is evident that as peoples' needs are met there is harmony, progress and development. Meeting the highest human needs would also mean building a strong and peaceful society.

CONCLUSION

Summarily, insecurity surrounding the condition Lake Chad has adversely affected the entire country and Africa. From the above, it can be seen that climate change issue in an area is issue all over. Climate change if unchecked can lead conflict as we have seen in the case of Lake Chad and Boko Haram. Insurgents take advantage of gaps that exist in the socio-ecological structure to inhabit such spaces.

It is recommended that government should encourage and support farmers through provision of credit facilities as well as soft loans to enable them concentrate on their farming activities since reduction in farming, fishing, livestock rearing and other agricultural activities have fuelled Unemployment in the northeast. There should an interface between military and civilian security forces to check the spread of insurgency in such environment. Additionally, there should be attempts to improve the environment through ecological activities and general infrastructural development.

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