



Climate change as the global security risk factor: A case study of darfur, Sudan

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Abstract

Climate change (CC) is the present reality of the planet earth. It brought several negative effects. Among them 'conflict' is being considered as one. Though there is enough debate on CC as a direct causal effect on conflict. But the evidences that are occurring as the direct manifestation of CC cannot be ignored either. Forced migration due to extreme weather conditions is one of those parameters. It is taking the shape of a global security risk by contributing and igniting civil wars and conflicts in several regions. This study will focus on the case of Darfur, Sudan. The continuous civil war stricken region poses a serious threat to the region and lapse of severe human rights. The role of the international community and the national government will be covered as well. The study will debate as to how far the link between CC and conflict is valid and true.

Keywords: climate, security, peace resolution, human rights, migrations, forced displacement

1. Introduction

Climate Change (CC) is a reality which is unavoidable and perhaps something which needs immediate attention action of the global community. The present status of this situation is that institutions and governments are finding it very difficult to cope with the challenges CC is creating. These challenges are hindrances to the stability of the states and their societies. In the present scenario these challenges are increasing in manifold. As a result CC is deemed as the "threat multiplier" which is taking toll on the stability of the fragile societies by aggravating social tensions and conflicts. United Nations Special Envoy Jan Egeland was the first person to suggest the UNO to conduct research and studies on CC being a factor for security risks in the Sahel Region. In the year 2008 as a result the UN finally started its maiden study on the region as 'ground zero' as it is characterized by extreme weather conditions and a population which is vulnerable. In the 2009 UNEP (United Nations Environmental Program) in a detailed study on how CC has influenced the livelihoods, migration and the continuous conflict which keeps rising in the region and published a report titled "Livelihood Security: Climate Change, Migration and Conflict in the Sahel (2011)" which has led to the recognition of 19 hotspot areas which has shown that CC has affected the resource availability leading to the previously mentioned consequences. Since then there has been debates, discussions and attempts to prove that CC directly leads to armed conflicts and thus is a global security risk factor. This study will specifically take the case study of the Darfur, Sudan. The study will broadly focus on the various security risks CC poses in a region and also attempt to establish a direct link between them. The study will also take up the role of various organizations in tackling such threats. It is a well-known truth that CC is potentially dangerous and the peril keeps growing with each passing day. The scientific studies support the fact that if not acted immediately it will be too late to save the planet from obvious destruction. Now that is something

which will naturally occur but what will add fuel to the fire are the possible chaos and instability CC will trigger. The fact that CC and security threat are related directly is subjected to heavy debate with a group of scholars claim to prove it while the other group denies any such link between the two. There are factors like communal intolerance and ethnic cleansing between the two groups of the local Africans and the Arabs. Now what cannot be denied is that there are indirect links between CC and security threat. An example drawn from India of the water riots that have started in different parts of the country for example in Bundelkhand, Uttar Pradesh where reportedly very few water sources remain which happens to be the cause of tensions in the rural interiors. There are sufficient possibilities that soon CC will become a direct cause for global security concern. Due to the anthropogenic CC the earth's atmosphere and hydrosphere is undergoing changes which will affect the natural resource balance and it will lead to the decrease of availability of resources. Now with limited resources there will be drought and desertification which will lead to intensified competition for resources. And this, when compounded by pressures like rapid population growth, tribalism and sectarianism, could result in armed violence. As there are intensification of meteorological disasters the poor and weak societies of the third world nation will become more vulnerable to political instability.

The Darfur region of Sudan, the largest country of the western part of Africa, is a volatile and ridden with conflict and humanitarian crisis. The region has borders with Libya, Chad, and Central African Republic. The region has a population of six million majority of them happens to be rural. There are a number of ethnic and linguistic groups in the region. The groups are both Arabic and non-Arabic speaking and they are Fur, Masalit, Zaghawa, Tunjur, and Daju which are non-Arabic speaking and Rizaiaq, Missairiyya, Ta'isha, Beni Helba, and Mahamid, which are Arabic speaking. The ethnic groups are also from West

African, such as Hausa, Fulani, and Borno. All these groups share the same physical and cultural characteristics. The history of Darfur region enumerates the system of intermixing between these groups by migration and intermarriages. The ethnic terms are used are based mainly on occupational label. For example the Arab population is mainly engaged in animal husbandry whereas the native African non-Arab speaking groups are engaged in farming and agriculture. Stated that there are cross exchange of occupations as well between these two broad ethnic sections (Sikainga, 2009, 1) ^[5]. Hence the identity labeling in the conflict of the Darfur region is misleading and baseless. As he is quoted "All parties involved in the conflict—whether they are referred to as "Arab" or "African"—are equally indigenous, equally black, and equally Muslim."

The Darfur crisis has been triggered by CC and environmental degradation which has threatened to trigger several kinds of conflicts unless steps are taken to avoid such crisis. There has been a well low intensity and amount of rainfall. Now with that the water bodies dried up and this was a source of water for the agriculturalist and herders alike (Borger, 2007) ^[7]. Now this crisis has sparked tension between the two groups who have started to quarrel over the remaining water resources which were held by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005 between Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement. E.g the Nuba tribe, in the southern part of the country was in a verge of war with the Arab population who are nomads and cattle grazers pushed southwards into their territory by drought and are cutting down trees to feed their camels.

2. The potential links between climate change and conflict in Darfur

Keeping in mind with the above situation the UNEP's findings indicate links between climate and conflict and not only that it is established that CC effects stability of a single place but also it can spread to the other areas as well. The UNEP findings mention that the Sahel region dropped almost 70 percent of crop yields as well. To quote Achim Steiner, "It illustrates and demonstrates what is increasingly becoming a global concern. It doesn't take a genius to work out that as the desert moves southwards there is a physical limit to what ecological work out that as the desert moves southwards there is a physical limit to what ecological systems can sustain, and so you get one group displacing another." There are also incipient conflicts in Chad "at least in part associated with environmental changes", and to growing tensions in southern Africa fuelled by droughts and flooding.

The connection between CC and conflict has five different connecting factors as pointed out by the United Nations. They are lapse in human rights, economic underdevelopment, unsuccessful adaptation measures, forced displacements and natural resources availability. The following discussion will try explaining the plight of Sudan especially the Darfur region within the framework of the above factors.

2.1 Human rights

The Darfur conflict has real human rights implications in the year 2003. About nearly two million people got displaced and faced acute human rights violation. Between 200,000 to 400,000 deaths occurred due to the conflict. This situation had CC connotations as due to uneven distribution of resources initially led to the conflict among various other factors. There is an extra stress for

Sudanese people post-conflict because the lingering effects of poverty, post-conflict recovery and environmental degradation. Several bills are passed pertaining to safeguarding human rights and the environment (Addaney, Boshoff and Olutola, 2017) ^[8].

2.2 Economic underdevelopment

The economic underdevelopment is one of the factors connecting CC with conflict. With uneven distribution of resources the economic development of the Sudanese population fluctuated. This fluctuation caused poverty and desperation. The Darfur region has climate-sensitive economies and such regions and states are and will be experiencing economic underdevelopment due to CC effects and also it will act as a "threat multiplier" adding to the existing burdens. The region is already experiencing droughts and desertification which give rises to intensified competition for resources giving rise to conflict (Webersik, 2010).

2.3 Unsuccessful adaptation measures

As Nimir and Elgizouli (2010), argued the Sudan government has formulated a number of laws pertaining to land use planning, soil conservation, forestry, wildlife protection, water and marine resources, coastal management, livestock, hazardous substances, four on energy and mining, environmental health and one on antiquities. The Environmental Protection Act, 2001 as formulated to overcome the problems of such conflicting and overlapping laws. Sudan also signed and ratified the UNFCCC on the 19th of November 1993 and committed itself to active cooperation within the global community to address the problem of CC. Sudan submitted its First National Communication in 2003. After that a National Program of Action (NAPA) was prepared in 2007 and is now implementing NAPA Priority Interventions to Build Resilience in the Agriculture and Water Sectors to Adverse Impacts of Climate Change in Sudan, besides developing the Second National Communication. However irrespective of all the efforts to build up a good resilience it is seen that Sudan's strategic planning is sectorial in nature. The whole planning system is led by limited groups of politicians and a few professionals. The planning hardly involves the common people and are not based on wide grassroots consultations and often subjected to poor implementation. The long-term solution to the vulnerability of Sudan communities and economic sectors to CC is effective mainstreaming of adaptation strategies into the national planning process.

2.4 Forced displacements

As UNHCR's COP22 happened it answered several questions asked about climate induced displacement. "There it was explained as a repercussion linked to CC which is not a future hypothetical but a reality of the present. As per UN statistics there is an annual average of 21.5 million people all over the world have been forcibly displaced by CC related hazards such as floods, storms, wildfires, extreme temperature." Now what implications does forced displacements in Darfur, Sudan has is a matter which needs to be discussed. According to Ramaix (2010) ^[2], the Darfur region has factors like desertification, famine or drought, natural disasters, all of which were more prevalent in Northern Darfur. Over the years but rainfall also declined drastically. Repeated years of droughts induced desertification and environmental degradation and damaged the ecological

balance, which once existed between sedentary agriculture and nomadic pastoralism. Thus, in Darfur, many migrants would have been pulled to the relative peace and prosperity of Southern Darfur. By the mid-1980s desertification had become so severe that even the poorest populations migrated to escape starvation. It is confirmed that the migration is an adaptation strategy. Consequently, a snowball effect took place, when the nomadic herdsman expanded the range of their circulatory migration routes and brought along their whole families in search of water. Throughout history, different Darfuri ethnic groups had usually cooperated and lived together. However, when resource scarcity became an issue, it led to an upheaval among pastoralists who could no longer maintain their nomadic way of life because of the lack of both grassland and water. By 1966, when the drought seemed at its worst, migration continued into areas in Southern Darfur populated by Christian and Animist populations. The two groups, even though competing over resources, traditionally depended on each other for survival. Pastoralists relied on the farmers' land and water, and farmers, in turn, relied on the nomads' herds to fertilize their land and carry their crops to market. Nevertheless, as the migrations towards the South continued, local officials imposed heavy taxes on the migrants. This aggravated the situation and led to rioting. Subsequently, tensions escalated as Southern officials fired on the rioters, killing more than 500. Muslim leaders in the North declared jihad against Southern populations in response, and one of Africa's longest and bloodiest civil wars erupted.

3. Steps forward

As per the above discussion the connection between CC and conflict cannot be denied. However the other factors which points out factors which are not climate related shall have to be considered as well. For example according to the the UN secretary-general, Ban Ki-moon, argued that "Almost invariably, we discuss Darfur in convenient military and political shorthand - an ethnic conflict pitting Arab militias against black rebels and farmers. Look to its roots, though, and you discover a more complex dynamic. Amid the diverse social and political causes, the Darfur conflict began as an ecological crisis, arising at least in part from climate change (Washington Post, 2007)."

4. Conclusion

It isn't clear whether there is much evidence for this link between climate change and conflict – there certainly seems to be no consensus within the academic literature. By carrying out a comparative analysis of ten countries of Africa in this context he has claimed that climate variations did not significantly impact the level of regional conflict or the number of total displaced people. The major driving forces on conflict were rapid population growth, reduced or negative economic growth and instability of political regimes. Numbers of total displaced people were linked to rapid population growth and low or stagnating economic growth. What he wanted to imply is that there are no single cause that actually causes conflict in Africa especially in the Eastern countries. The socio-economic factors were held more importantly responsible for conflicts other than CC (Maslin, 2018) [3].

However the connection cannot be denied altogether and given the current situation of global warming CC might become the sole factor for conflicts in near future.

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