



Critical issues and challenges to sustainable development in Africa

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Introduction

This special issue of the *Ikenga: International Journal of the Institute of African Studies* is an outgrowth of the 2020 edition of the International Conference of the Faculty of the Social Sciences, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The theme of the conference, Critical Issues and Challenges to Sustainable Development in Africa, captures the essence of the current research and pedagogy in social sciences and other allied disciplines across the world. The 1987 World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) report, otherwise called the Brundtland Commission Report, defines sustainable development as the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future

generations to meet their own needs (Brundtland, 1987). Sustainable development has four interconnected dimensions: society, environment, culture, and economy. Consequently, sustainability is a paradigm for thinking about the future in which environmental, societal, political, and economic considerations are balanced in pursuing an improved quality of life and livelihood (Elliott, 2013; Mensah, 2019).

This special edition reinforces the imperatives of engaging with a plurality of political, economic, security, health, and environmental issues that bedevil the quest for sustainable development and seeking solutions to these challenges, especially during the outbreak and spread of COVID-19 pandemic (Ozili, 2020; Varin, 2022). The topics interrogated in

this special issue centre on the fundamental challenges that less-developed economies grapple with in their efforts to mainstream the principles of sustainability in their development interventions and practices amid the additional burden imposed by climate change, COVID-19 pandemic, insecurity (especially Boko Haram insurgency, rural banditry, kidnapping for ransom), population displacement and economic recession. Hence, this special collection features articles drawn from different thematic areas within the broader subject of sustainable development discourse. As Table 1 shows, these topics range from climate change, including its mitigation and adaptation measures, as well as its relations to rising armed violence in the Sahel region. The issue also features articles on counterterrorism in the Lake Chad region, the Boko Haram insurgency, internal population displacement, internal security and basic education, and their overall influence in the Lake Chad Basin region. Contributions focusing on violence also include those interrogating banditry and the Zamfara State amnesty programme, and the notion of the 'Fulanisation' of kidnapping and ethnic profiling of criminality in Nigeria. This issue also features articles on the weaponisation of social investment programmes, and the pull and push

factors of urbanisation and rural development in Nigeria.

The nexus between climate change and insecurity has been established in the literature (e.g., Cabot, 2017; Odoh & Chilaka, 2012; Onuoha, 2010; Onuoha & Ezirim, 2010). Existing studies on the security implications of climate change in Africa gained increased attention in 2007 following robust discussions by the African Union, the United Nations Security Council, and the Conference of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol.

Although it has been recognised that climate change in itself cannot lead to conflict in the sense of direct violence (Nwangwu et al., 2020; Nwangwu & Enyiazu, 2019), experts in environmental security such as Baechler (1999) and Homer-Dixon (1999) have established causal links between climate change-driven environmental scarcity and violence. Regarding broad geographical regions, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has found that Africa already is grappling with the adverse effects of climate change and global warming and will likely continue to experience more changes in the years ahead (IPCC, 2007, 2022). The diverse impacts of climate change pose wide-ranging challenges to vulnerable African communities. Although the impacts of

climate change on the continent are many and varied, they have manifested as a security threat by amplifying natural resource conflicts, inducing forced population movement (migration), exacerbating livelihood collapse (food insecurity), and aggravating state fragility (political instability). It is not surprising, therefore, that there is a growing number of studies exploring and establishing the nexus between climate change-related environmental stress and violent conflicts, such as insurgency, peasant farmer-nomadic herder conflicts, and banditry, among others (e.g., Cilliers, 2009; Adano & Daudi, 2012; Agwu et al., 2022; Cappelli et al., 2023).

Special issue: Specific findings and concluding argument

This special issue contains 10 well-researched articles that were carefully selected mainly from the papers presented during the 2020 edition of the Faculty of the Social Sciences, University of Nigeria, Nsukka International Conference. The first article by Ajaero et al. (this issue) uses news stories on climate change discourses in Nigeria and South Africa to show that media framing influences public perception of climate change mitigation and adaptation measures. The study found that the major sources of news stories on climate

change, in descending order of ascendancy, are reporters, experts (private individuals), and agency reports, while the adaptation frame was the most used, with some news stories employing both the adaptation and mitigation frames. In sum, the study found that the predominance of the adaptation framing clearly shows the commitment of the African media to mobilising the public and relevant stakeholders to collectively combat the effects of climate change. Next, Akogwu et al. (this issue) situated their study within the nexus between climate change and terrorism, wherein they examined the impact of climate change on the Boko Haram recruitment drive in Nigeria. They affirmed that the violent extremist group had continued to take advantage of the drastic effects of climate change in the region to recruit foot soldiers whose operations have wreaked devastating impacts on the security of lives and the socio-economic development of the North-East region. They surmised that climate change only exacerbates the existing livelihood opportunities of residents of northern Nigeria, thereby heightening the people's vulnerability to recruitment by Boko Haram. Consequently, the study suggested that relevant authorities should intensify efforts at safeguarding the available environmental resources in

the North-East by protecting forests, promoting healthy agricultural practices, and investing hugely and sustainably in the conservation of Lake Chad.

Beyond the climate change-security connection, Iwuoha et al. (this issue) interrogated the complicity of the Nigerian state in distorting and undermining the counterinsurgency campaign against Boko Haram terrorism. The study identified three levels of state complicity that have combined to weaken the counterterrorism engagements in the Lake Chad region, namely information compromise, amnesty programme complicity, and military intelligence complicity. Given these levels of state complicity, the authors argued that it is not surprising that internal peace and security have been undermined in the Lake Chad region while transnational terrorism in the area has continued to fester. Similarly, Aina (this issue) contended that the counterinsurgency measures against Boko Haram terrorism in the Lake Chad Basin region have been evasive. Drawing from previous studies that focused on the origins, causes, attacks, and consequences of the activities of the violent extremist group, Aina (this issue) investigated how Boko Haram and ISWAP's influence operations, particularly in contested territories, are

intended to win the 'hearts' and 'minds' of local communities. Hence, the study found that countering these influence operations through people-centred governance that brings the state closer to these local communities remains key to winning the "soft" war, which is essential to ultimately degrading, dismantling and defeating the insurgents in the Lake Chad region. Further, Egbuta (this issue) interrogated the efforts of state and non-state actors in managing Boko Haram-induced internal population displacement in Nigeria. Needless to say, one of the consequences of the Boko Haram insurgency and associated counterinsurgency operations in the affected states in northern Nigeria is the challenge of population displacement. Egbuta (this issue) posited that the prolongation and exacerbation of the Boko Haram insurgency increased internal population displacement. The study indicated that the absence of a functional policy on displacement and the attendant deplorable and increasingly worsening state of displaced persons camps in the affected states in Nigeria have worsened this situation. The study concluded that the relevant authorities should expeditiously formulate and implement a policy on internal population displacement to serve as a framework for managing population

displacements in Nigeria. Also on the Boko Haram sub-thematic focus, Okolie et al. (this issue) investigated the impact of internal security on basic education in North-East Nigeria. The study revealed that the high rate of out-of-school children in North-East Nigeria is due to constant Boko Haram attacks in the region. Besides the loss of human lives, destruction of public infrastructure and internal population displacements, the insurgency has also impinged negatively on the provision of basic education in the region. Vandalism of public infrastructure, especially electricity facilities, in most parts of Borno State and its environs, has exacerbated power surges with the attendant exposure of schools to security risks. Given the destruction of schools and the abduction of schoolchildren and teachers by daredevil Boko Haram terrorists and bandits in the North-East, Okolie et al. (this issue) surmised that access to affordable basic education has not only retrogressed but also the realisation of Goal 4 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is threatened.

Adibe et al. (this issue) investigated how institutional weaknesses of sub-national authorities make amnesty ineffective as a conflict management strategy in Nigeria.

With particular reference to Zamfara State, the study averred that weak institutions have further exacerbated insecurity in the state by creating opportunities for both state and non-state actors to exploit the amnesty deal for bandits to enrich themselves. The study recommended that human security imperatives be prioritised in order to guarantee the sustainability of the security of lives and livelihood opportunities in Zamfara State and beyond. On the other hand, Ojo & Ojewale (this issue) argued that the dominance of kidnapping for ransom 'enterprise' in Nigeria by people of Fulani ethnic origin has accounted for the criminalisation of the ethnic group. However, the study concluded that the Fulani pastoralists, just like their non-Fulani compatriots, have also experienced kidnapping orchestrated by the Fulani bandits. Accordingly, it becomes challenging to criminalise an ethnic group when people from the same ethnic origin experience kidnapping for ransom and suffer from everyday attacks by the Fulani bandits. The study, therefore, suggested that kidnapping for ransom should be considered and treated as a national security challenge and addressed jointly by the different nationalities in Nigeria.

Away from the security-centred discourses, Ezugworie et al. (this issue) interrogated how Social Investment Programmes (SIPs) are weaponised to advance the wastage of state resources and cronyism in Nigeria. The study noted that the inability of the several SIPs to solve the hydra-headed problems of poverty and youth unemployment in Nigeria is rooted in the overriding logic of instrumentalising them for the enrichment of a few persons. Thus, the study concluded that SIPs are, in the main, a tool for settling political cronies and controlling dissatisfied youths. Among others, the study suggested that SIPs should be monitored by relevant civil society organisations and anti-graft agencies in Nigeria.

Lastly, Olise et al. (this issue) investigated the pull and push factors accounting for urbanisation and rural development in

Anambra State. The study found that congestion in Onitsha, Awka and Nnewi metropolises is a direct consequence of the influx of people from various rural communities in Anambra State and beyond due to a lack of social infrastructure and limited availability of employment opportunities. This finding is consistent with global trends. From 2015 to 2050, for instance, the world's urban population is expected to nearly double, in part because migrants from rural areas devastated by climate change are being driven to cities in search of economic and social stability (Blaine et al., 2022). The study recommended a) revamping the social infrastructure base of different rural parts of Anambra State, b) creating rural area-based entrepreneurship development schemes, and c) empowering the agricultural sector to keep rural dwellers gainfully employed.

Table 1: Summary Sheet

Author	Article Title	Methods	Units of Analysis	Sources of Data	Findings
Ajaero et al. (this issue)	'Mitigation is global, adaptation is local': An assessment of the framing of climate change in	Content analysis	News stories on climate change	Newspaper reports on climate change	Results show that a total of 90 stories were obtained from the four newspapers studied, with the straight news format as the most used story genre. The major sources of news stories on climate change were

	Nigerian and South African newspapers				the reporters, followed by experts/private individuals, and then agency reports. The adaptation frame was the most used, although some news stories employed both the adaptation and mitigation frames.
Akogwu et al. (this issue)	Climate change and terrorism: Exploring Boko Haram's recruitment in Nigeria	Qualitative research involving documentary method and interview techniques	Climate change and Boko Haram recruitment	Academic publications, official documents from Managing Exits from Armed Conflict (MEAC), and media reports	The study reveals that climate change generates and exacerbates productivity losses and livelihood collapse in northern Nigeria. Consequently, pervasive poverty and deprivation heighten the vulnerability of the affected population (particularly the youth) to recruitment by Boko Haram ideologues who promise them opportunities for a better life. Thus, the adverse effect of climate change on livelihood systems makes gullible youths to be easily enticed and recruited into the violent extremist group.
Iwuoha et al. (this issue)	Counter-terrorism in the Lake Chad Region: An analysis of	Qualitative research involving documentary evidence	Boko Haram Counter-insurgency campaign	Scholarly papers, official publications, and	The study identified three thresholds of state complicity in the fight against Boko Haram as (i) information compromise,

	the fragmented efforts in Nigeria's fight against Boko Haram	and content analysis		media reports	(ii) amnesty programme complicity (rehabilitation of Boko Haram members), and (iii) military intelligence complicity. These are primarily underpinned by the government's rehabilitation programme of 'repentant' Boko Haram terrorists, fragmentation of the military institution, complicity in cross-border arms movements, and so on. These acts undermine internal peace and security and perpetuate transnational terrorism in the Lake Chad region.
Aina (this issue)	Evasive counter-measures: Boko Haram's influence in the Lake Chad Basin region	Content analysis	Boko Haram's influence operations in the Lake Chad Basin region	Local and international news reportage on the influence operations of Boko Haram	The study unpacks Boko Haram's influence operations in the Lake Chad Basin region, which are intended to win the 'hearts' and 'minds' of local communities. It argues that effectively countering these influence operations would require people-centred governance that brings the state closer to these local communities.
Egbuta (this issue)	Boko Haram terrorism	Qualitative Research	Boko Haram insur-	Secondary and primary	The study found that the recent reduction in the number of IDPs

	and the burden of managing internal displacement in Nigeria: Is the end in sight?		gency and internal popular-tion displacement		suggests that the government's counterterrorism campaign is pushing Boko Haram attacks to remote locations, although the group is still very much potent and constantly changing its operational strategies. Amid the influx of people into IDP camps, the study argued that the absence of functional policy on displacement and the deplorable state of IDP camps have worsened the humanitarian conditions of the IDPs in the affected states of Northern Nigeria.
Okolie et al. (this issue)	Challenges of internal security and basic education in North-eastern Nigeria, 2014-2020	Qualitative research involving documentary evidence and content analysis	Boko Haram and manifestations of banditry and school-based abductions and killing of teachers in Borno and Yobe States	Scholarly papers from journals, books, official publications, and media reports	The study revealed that the high rate of out-of-school children in Northeastern Nigeria is a result of the constant attacks by Boko Haram. This hurts the provision of basic education in Northeastern Nigeria. In addition, most parts of Borno State have been experiencing power surges due to the constant vandalism of electricity facilities thereby exposing schools to security risk. The Boko Haram activities have also

					rendered pupils and students homeless leading to the increase in the number of IDP camps and closure of schools vulnerable to Boko Haram and bandit attacks.
Adibe et al. (this issue)	Banditry, institutional weakness and the Zamfara State amnesty programme	Triangulation of data from documentary method to ensure credibility of evidence presented	Bandit attacks and other manifestations of insecurity , such as kidnapping for ransom in Zamfara State during the period of amnesty	Independent media reports and official publications of organisations such as ICG, EASO, ACLED, UNDP and WFP. Previous scholarly publications on the subject matter were also used	The study found that the Zamfara State amnesty programme failed to de-escalate banditry in the state. Instead, the amnesty programme provided opportunities for some political actors and other stakeholders, like security agents, to profit from it in a manner that fuels insecurity in the state.
Ojo & Ojewale (this issue)	'Fulanization' of kidnapping: Ethnic profiling of criminality in Nigeria	Content analysis	Kidnapping for ransom and ethnic profiling	Scholarly articles, independent media reports	The paper argues that the domination of people of Fulani extraction in the kidnapping for ransom enterprise in Nigeria is being used as a reason to criminalise the ethnic group. However, the Fulani pastoralists have also experienced kidnapping orchestrated by the Fulani bandits.

					Hence, it becomes challenging to criminalise an ethnic group when people from the same ethnic origin experience kidnapping for ransom and suffer from everyday attacks by the Fulani bandits. The paper argues that kidnapping for ransom should, therefore, be considered a national security challenge and addressed jointly by the different nationalities in Nigeria.
Ezugworie et al. (this issue)	Weapons in the hands of the mighty: An examination of social investment programs in Nigeria, 2011 And 2021	Documentary method and Marxian Class Analysis	Social investment programmes	Scholarly papers, official documents and media reports	The study found that Nigeria's social investment programmes are weaponised in order to advance the wastage of state resources and promote cronyism in Nigeria. The article noted that the inability of SIPs to solve the hydra-headed problems of poverty and youth unemployment in Nigeria is rooted in the overriding logic of instrumentalising them for the enrichment of a few persons and for the control of many others. Thus, this study argued that SIPs are, in the main, a tool for settling political cronies and

					controlling dissatisfied youths.
Olise et al. (this issue)	Decongesting Anambra State metropolis: Exploring the pull and push factors of urbanisation and rural development	Documentary method, participant observation and content analysis	Urban congestion and rural development	Academic publications, participant observation and media reports	The study found that the congestion of Onitsha, Awka and Nnewi is a result of the influx of people from other rural communities in Anambra State and beyond. The study attributed the pull and push factors of rural-urban migration in the state to the lack of social infrastructure, employment opportunities and empowerment from the relevant authorities in the rural communities.

Conclusion

This special collection demonstrates that sustainable development in Africa will remain a pipe dream until all the identified critical issues are squarely addressed. As has been eloquently stated, the nexus between climate change and violent extremism will remain on the front burner of scholarly and public discourses in Nigeria and beyond because the prevailing crises of security, terrorism, population displacement, Boko Haram recruitment drive, peasant farmer-transhumant pastoral conflicts are partly associated with disruptions generated or exacerbated by climate change. The

setbacks suffered by the military-led counterterrorism in Nigeria need to be addressed to brighten the chances of defeating the insurgents and stemming the wave of internal population displacements and the menace of out-of-school children in the country. Also, the articulation and implementation of social investment schemes as veritable instruments of poverty alleviation should prioritise the inclusion of robust accountability mechanisms by relevant stakeholders to forestall their abuses by the ruling class. Lastly, the provision of infrastructure and other basic amenities for rural communities should receive

priority attention from the government to stem the rising cases of migration to, and congestion of, urban centres in Africa. In this way, African states will be more effective in addressing the

interconnected risks that climate change, rapid urban growth and economic fragility pose to human security and sustainable development.

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