

HOW HAS THE POST-COLONIAL CONTEXT OF SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA AFFECTED THE REGION'S RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE? AN ANALYSIS OF THE LAWS IMPLEMENTED BY SOUTH AFRICA, KENYA AND GHANA.

INTRODUCTION & OBJECTIVE

Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is a geographically, ecologically and culturally diverse region that consists of forty-six countries. Despite only producing 4% of global carbon dioxide emissions it remains one of the planet's most vulnerable regions to climate change (Fields, 2005). In my paper, I detail ecological imperialism in SSA and discuss how post-independent SSA has positioned itself in terms of environmental governance. I also provide three case studies' contradictory responses to climate change and how they link back to the colonial experience.

POST-COLONIAL CONTEXT

SSA's colonial history of exploitation and extraction has created structural disadvantages which are evident through the region's neo-colonial policies, inadequate provision and access to public services, weak governance structures, dilapidated infrastructure, existing gender and cultural norms, lack of potable water and food security, reliance on foreign aid and prevalence of poverty. These conditions have reduced the region's adaptive capacity to tackle climate change (Connolly-Boutin & Smit, 2016; Parks & Roberts, 2006). SSA's current approaches to environmental protection have been significantly influenced by its colonial past. This is evident through the region's current environment conventions, existence of national parks, private property rights, exclusion of indigenous perspectives and resource exploitation practices (Kameri-Mbote & Cullet, 1997).



SOUTH AFRICA

Climate change is posing threats to South Africa's health, infrastructure, water resources, ecosystem services, food security, poverty levels and biodiversity (Ziervogel et al., 2014). In response, South Africa devised a Carbon Tax Act (2019) to ensure the country shifts to cleaner energy, however, their simultaneous pursuit of mining through its Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act (MPRD) of 2002 fails to support their efforts to protect the environment. The Carbon Tax Act works to incentivize large polluters to adopt cleaner technologies to evade higher costs of production, decrease the demand for fossil fuels and encourage the use of renewables (National Assembly of South Africa, 2019). However, the MPRD expands mining and petroleum development, produces greenhouse gases, nationalizes the country's minerals and marginalizes local communities (Murombo, 2013).



KENYA

As a consequence of climate change, Kenya is experiencing greater food insecurity, rates of hunger and migration, livestock deaths, water stress and resource-based conflicts (Ndambiri et al., 2012; Njiru, 2012). To combat this, in 2016 Kenya implemented a National Climate Change Action Plan (NCCAP). This plan aims to minimize the risk posed by climate-related disasters, improve food, nutrition and water security, increase forest cover to 10% of the country's total land area, ameliorate the resilience of human settlements and health sectors to the effects of climate change, better the country's waste management system, enhance the use of renewables and energy-efficient technologies as well as establish sustainable transport systems (Kenya Ministry of Environment and Forestry, 2018). Despite the progress being made by the NCCAP, Kenya's Forest Act continues to fuel colonial agendas by encouraging the sale of forest produce for export, excluding indigenous peoples from their land, allowing private land to go unprotected and failing to conduct environmental impact assessments or stakeholder consultation processes before developments on forested land (Mwangi, 1998).

GHANA

In Ghana, climate change is worsening the country's agricultural production, food security, poverty rates, fish stocks, supply of groundwater, the spread of diseases and occurrences of natural disasters (Asante & Amuakwa-Mensah, 2014; Dumenu & Obeng, 2016). In response, Ghana implemented its 2011 Renewable Energy Act which set a target to increase renewable energy outputs and require distribution utilities and bulk electricity consumers to ensure a proportion of their energy is generated from renewable resources. The money generated from the Act's Fund is used for the provision of capacity building, financial incentives, production subsidies, equity participation as well as renewable energy infrastructure and research (Parliament of the Republic of Ghana, 2011). Unfortunately, this piece of legislation has had limited success in Ghana because the country's 1983 National Petroleum Corporation Act is promoting the production and exportation of upstream oil and gas activities and ensuring the longevity of foreign corporate extraction of Ghana's oil resources (Adadzi et al, 2020; Langan, 2018; Osuwu, 2018).

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The case studies of South Africa, Kenya and Ghana evince how the post-colonial context of SSA has affected the region's response to climate change as laws that promote carbon taxes, afforestation, disaster preparedness, improved food, water and nutrition security, and the use of renewable energy exist alongside those with antagonistic agendas that encourage resource monopolization and exploitation, corruption, environmental devastation and the marginalization of indigenous peoples. In the post-independent era, two key factors have impacted environmental governance, and consequently the response to climate change. First, the replacement of Europeans with African elites has maintained hierarchies and colonial governance structures. Second, the influence of Western corporations in enacting legislation favourable for resource exploitation continues to grow. The combined effects of these two situations have contributed to the weak and contradictory responses to climate change. "The formally independent countries of Africa need to apply their efforts to rectifying all this exploitation rather than doing favours to the descendants of the former colonial intruders" (Attfield, 2020, p.290).