BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CLIMATE CHANGE AND CONFLICTS: THE CASE OF THE ISLAMIC STATE OF IRAQ AND SYRIA (ISIS)-MOZAMBIQUE INSURGENCY IN CABO DELGADO AND ZIMBABWE

BY

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF PEACE AND GOVERNANCE IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MASTER OF SCIENCE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS DEGREE.

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Abstract

The study sought to assess the relationship between climate change and conflicts with a particular focus on the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)-Mozambique insurgency in Cabo Delgado and its implications for Zimbabwe. The research aimed to investigate the nuanced pathways through which environmental stressors fuel instability and analyze the regional security spill-over risks. The study employed a qualitative research approach utilizing a case study research design to understand the subjective meanings participants ascribe to the climate-conflict nexus. Guided by an interpretivist philosophy, the study utilized purposive sampling to select a sample of 12 participants. The study participants consisted of key government officials, including the Director of Legal and Consular Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the Ambassador of Mozambique to Zimbabwe, and the Director of Climate Change in the Ministry of Environment, as well as community leaders, religious leaders, agricultural officials, and residents from affected provinces. Data collection methods included Key Informant Interviews and the analysis of documentary sources such as NGO reports and policy documents. The study found that climate change acts as a "threat multiplier" rather than a direct cause of conflict, significantly exacerbating socio-economic vulnerabilities such as livelihood disruption and food insecurity. Findings revealed that ISIS-Mozambique skill-fully exploits these climate-induced fragilities and state governance failures in their recruitment narratives, offering material alternatives to marginalized communities. Furthermore, the study identified a credible spill-over risk to Zimbabwe through channels such as refugee movements, cross-border illicit trade, and the potential radicalization of youth in climate-stressed border regions. The study concluded that there is a significant relationship between climate change shocks and insurgent recruitment patterns, where environmental degradation creates a desperate pool of recruits. It was concluded that communities perceive a direct link between climate vulnerability and marginalization, fueling grievances that legitimize resistance. Additionally, the study concluded that regional security is interconnected, meaning the environmental and security crisis in Cabo Delgado poses a multi-faceted threat to the broader SADC region, including Zimbabwe. The study recommends that the government and international actors recognize climate change as a critical national security threat and integrate climate adaptation into conflict prevention strategies. It is recommended that stakeholders implement community-led initiatives for climate adaptation, such as climate-smart agriculture and youth employment programs, to reduce vulnerability to recruitment. Finally, the study recommends enhanced regional intelligence sharing and cooperation among SADC member states to manage cross-border security threats and humanitarian flows effectively

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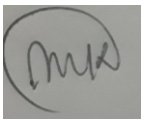
Supervisor: 

Signed……



Chairperson

Signature ....……

Dedication

To my family, thank you for standing by me with love, prayers and endless support. This effort is a heartfelt thank you for believing in me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I begin with heartfelt thanks to Almighty God, whose grace and mercy guided and inspired me. I'm deeply grateful to my supervisor, for his dedication, time, and relentless support. To my family and friends, thank you for your endless support and spiritual backing. I also appreciate the Department of Peace and Governance, Bindura University of Science Education , my International Relations colleagues and the university fraternity for their encouragement, assistance, and contributions to this research.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACSRT – African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism

AMISOM – African Union Mission in Somalia

AU – African Union

BUSE – Bindura University of Science Education

CIMAC – Centro de Integridade e Combate à Corrupção (Mozambique)

CAN – Center for Naval Analyses

COP – Conference of the Parties (UN Climate Change)

CSO – Civil Society Organization

DRR – Disaster Risk Reduction

EU – European Union

FAO – Food and Agriculture Organization

FARC – Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia

FRELIMO – Frente de Libertação de Moçambique

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

GHG – Greenhouse Gases

IDP – Internally Displaced Person

ILO – International Labour Organization

IOM – International Organization for Migration

IPCC – Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

ISGS – Islamic State in the Greater Sahara

ISIS – Islamic State in Iraq and Syria

ISIS-M – Islamic State in Iraq and Syria – Mozambique

JNIM – Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin

MENA – Middle East and North Africa

MFA – Ministry of Foreign Affairs

NCC – National Council of Churches

NDS 1 – National Development Strategy 1

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

NPA – New People's Army

OCHA – UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

ODI – Overseas Development Institute

RENAMO – Resistência Nacional Moçambicana

SADC – Southern African Development Community

SAMIM – SADC Mission in Mozambique

SDG – Sustainable Development Goal

SIPRI – Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

UN – United Nations

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

UNEP – United Nations Environment Programme

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNFCCC – United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNODC – United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

USIP – United States Institute of Peace

WHO – World Health Organization

ZIMSTAT – Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency

ZWL – Zimbabwean Dollar (local currency)

Contents

Abstract 2

Declaration form 2

Dedication 4

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 5

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms 6

CHAPTER ONE 1

1.0 INTRODUCTION 1

1.1 Background of the Study 1

1.1 Purpose of the Study 2

1.2 Statement of the Problem 3

1.3 Objectives of the Study 4

1.4 Research Questions 4

1.5 Assumptions of the Study 4

1.6 Significance of the Study 5

1.7 Delimitations of the Study 7

1.8 Limitations of the Study 7

1.9 Definition of Keywords 9

1.10 Dissertation Outline 10

CHAPTER TWO 11

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK 11

2.1 Introduction 11

2.2 Theoretical Framework 11

2.2.1 Ecological Conflict Theory (Homer-Dixon, 1999) 11

2.2.2 Relative Deprivation Theory (Gurr, 1970) 13

2.3 The Relationship between Climate Change Shocks and Insurgent Recruitment Patterns. 15

2.4 The Perceived Grievances as to how Communities Link Climate Vulnerability, Marginalisation and Conflict. 21

2.5 The Insurgent Narrative on how Insurgent Groups Exploit Climate Induced Fragility. 26

2.6 The Regional Security Implications on the Spill-Over Risk to Neighbouring Countries. 30

2.7 Summary 34

CHAPTER THREE 35

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN 35

3.1 Introduction 35

3.2 Research Philosophy 35

3.3 Research Methodology 35

3.4 Research Design 36

3.5 Population and Sample 37

3.6 Sampling Method 37

3.6.1 Purposive sampling 38

3.7 Data Collection Methods 38

3.7.1 Key Informant Interviews 39

3.7.2 Documentary sources 40

3.8 Validity and Reliability 40

3.9 Data Presentation and Analysis 41

3.10 Ethical Considerations 41

3.11 Summary 42

CHAPTER FOUR 44

4.0 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS 44

4.1 Introduction 44

4.3 The Perceived Grievances as to how Communities Link Climate Vulnerability, Marginalization and Conflict. ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

4.4 The Insurgent Narrative on how ISIS-Mozambique Exploits Climate Induced Fragility. ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

4.5 The Regional Security Implications on the Spill-Over Risk to Zimbabwe. ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

CHAPTER FIVE 51

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH 51

5.1 Introduction 51

5.2 Summary 51

5.3 Conclusions 53

5.3.1 The Relationship between Climate Change Shocks and Insurgent Recruitment Patterns ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

5.3.2 The Perceived Grievances as to how Communities Link Climate Vulnerability, Marginalization and Conflict ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

5.3.3 The Insurgent Narrative on how ISIS-Mozambique Exploits Climate Induced Fragility..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

5.3.4. The Regional Security Implications on the Spill-Over Risk to Zimbabwe .....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

5.4 Recommendations 53

List of References.....59

APPENDICES.....63

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The interplay between climate change and conflict has increasingly gained attention within scholarly discourse, highlighting a complex nexus where environmental degradation exacerbates social tensions and violence. Global studies indicate that climate factors such as drought, rising sea levels, and extreme weather can catalyze conflicts, particularly in vulnerable regions where resources are scarce (De Juan & Ignite, 2021). Researchers like Ide and Mahran (2022) have explored how climate change acts as a "threat multiplier," intensifying pre-existing vulnerabilities and grievances, thus leading to violence.

The global discourse surrounding climate-related conflicts has surfaced various case studies, but the specific dynamics in relation to non-state actors, such as terrorist groups, remain critically under-examined. Focusing on the African continent, scholars have highlighted the important role that climate change plays in heightening conflicts, particularly in fragile states. The work of Selby and Zomer (2019) emphasizes that climatic stressors contribute to the destabilization of societies dealing with historical grievances and underdevelopment. For example, in regions of Sub-Saharan Africa, the interplay between water scarcity and population pressures has led to increased tensions and conflict over territorial and resource claims (Mastrorillo, 2016). Such exploration foregrounds the need for a geographically nuanced understanding of how climate change aggravates conflict dynamics across diverse political and socio-economic contexts.

At a regional level, the Southern African context reveals specific case studies, such as the ongoing Cabo Delgado insurgency in Mozambique, which has been significantly influenced by environmental factors. Mkhize and Ndhlovu (2023) argue that climate-induced resource scarcity, along with economic marginalization, contribute to the appeal of extremist ideologies in regions like Cabo Delgado. The insurgency's rise intersects with challenges related to governance, where the state's inability to address socio-economic grievances is compounded by environmental pressures (Isaak, 2022). The situation in Zimbabwe underscores how climate stressors affect agricultural output and create conditions ripe for civil unrest, potentially serving as a recruitment tool for violent groups (Nyoni & Chikozho, 2021).

In the local context of Cabo Delgado and Zimbabwe, the relationship between climate change and the rise of violence is starkly evident. In Cabo Delgado, the 2017 insurgency has roots in local grievances exacerbated by climatic shifts that have adversely affected fishing and farming livelihoods, leading to increased youth discontent (Jordaan & Pohl, 2020). In Zimbabwe, prolonged droughts and erratic rainfall patterns have led to food insecurity and economic hardships, compelling the population to seek radical solutions amidst political failure (Makoni, 2024). These local realities illustrate how climate change does not merely act as a background factor but interacts dynamically with local socio-economic conditions to forge pathways toward conflict. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing effective interventions and policies aimed at fostering resilience in vulnerable communities.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The study seeks to assess the relationship between climate change and conflicts with particular focus on ISIS-Mozambique insurgency in Cabo del Gado and Zimbabwe.

1.5 Statement of the Problem

This research investigates the critical and under examined role of climate change as a threat multiplier in fueling the violence insurgency in Cabo Del Gado, Mozambique led by the ISIS affiliated group known as ISIS-Mozambique. This is a problem because conventional security and humanitarian responses are failing to address the root causes. Treating the insurgency as purely a military or ideological threat, while ignoring the climate driven desperation that feeds it leads to unsustainable and costly interventions. The armed conflict location and event data project (2023) recorded a tenfold increase in violent events in Cabo Del Gado between 2019 and 2021, with fatalities rising from under 100 to over 1500 in the same period. The conflict has caused over 4000 fatalities and 1 million tons of staple food crops lost due to displacement and farm abandonment (Dein 2020). This is a problem to the local population of Cabo Del Gado as they are the primary victims, facing a triple threat of violence, climate disaster and displacement. They suffer from loss of life, livelihood and homeland. Furthermore, this is a problem to the governments of Mozambique as the problem threaten the sovereignty and economic stability of the nation jeopardizing $60b liquefied natural gas which is central to its economic development plans. To Zimbabwe, it is a problem as it faces a direct security threat from conflict spill over and a strain on resources from potential refugee inflows. The effects of the problem are that widespread famine like conditions exist. The UNFP (2023) states that over 1.15 million people in Cabo Del Gado were facing displacement and climate ruined harvests. Another effect is that the insurgent group has solidified its control over territory exploiting the vacuum left by a state unable to provide climate resilience or security. This makes military solutions increasingly ineffective.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1. To analyse the relationship between climate change shocks and insurgent recruitment patterns
2. To examine the perceived grievances as to how communities link climate vulnerability, marginalization and conflict.
3. To investigate the insurgent narrative on how ISIS-Mozambique exploits climate induced fragility.
4. To assess the regional security implications on the spill over risk to Zimbabwe.

1.4 Research Questions

1. Is there a relationship between the occurrence of extreme climate events, including cyclones and droughts, and subsequent increases in insurgent recruitment and attack frequency in Cabo Del Gado?
2. How do local populations in Cabo Del Gado perceive the relationship between climate-induced livelihood loss, government marginalization, and their vulnerability to insurgent recruitment?
3. In what ways does ISIS-Mozambique strategically frame and exploit climate-related grievances and state failures in its propaganda and recruitment narratives?
4. What are the potential pathways for the spill over of the climate-exacerbated insurgency from Cabo Del Gado into Zimbabwe, given Zimbabwe's own climate vulnerabilities?

1.5 Assumptions of the Study

1. The study assumes that the ISIS-Mozambique insurgency will spill over into Zimbabwe.
2. The study assumes that the conflict is multi-causal and climate is a meaningful variable.

1.6 Significance of the Study

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1.6 Significance of the Study

Southern African Development Community (SADC)

The study will be of immense benefit to the SADC community by providing a robust and empirical evidence base that allows the regional bloc to formally incorporate climate change risk assessments into its conflict prevention frameworks and mission planning strategies. By understanding the nuanced relationship between environmental stressors and insurgency in Cabo Delgado, SADC can move beyond purely military interventions to develop more strategic and forward-looking regional responses that address the root causes of instability. This comprehensive understanding is crucial for the regional body to design early warning systems that account for climate anomalies as precursors to conflict, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of missions such as SAMIM and ensuring that regional peace-building efforts are resilient to future environmental shocks.

Donor Agencies and International Organizations (UNDP, AU, and EU)

International organizations and donor agencies, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the African Union (AU), and the European Union (EU), will benefit significantly from this research as it serves as a powerful case study to articulate the argument that climate adaptation finance is fundamentally a form of conflict prevention finance. The

findings will assist these agencies in policy formulation and resource allocation, helping them to direct more targeted financial and technical resources to fragile states like Mozambique and vulnerable neighbours like Zimbabwe. By demonstrating the clear link between climate vulnerability and insurgent recruitment, the study provides the necessary evidence for these donors to shift their focus towards integrated programs that simultaneously address environmental degradation and human security, thereby maximizing the impact of their development assistance.

Ministries of Defence and State Security (Mozambique and Zimbabwe)

For the Ministries of Defence and State Security in both Mozambique and Zimbabwe, this study offers critical evidence to justify and guide the development of integrated climate security policies that go beyond traditional military tactics. The research highlights the necessity of formally linking disaster response mechanisms and climate adaptation budgets directly to national security planning, ensuring that environmental threats are treated with the same urgency as conventional security risks. This knowledge will enable security agencies to better anticipate how climate-induced displacement and resource scarcity can create security vacuums or infiltration routes, allowing them to proactively secure borders and vulnerable communities against the spill-over effects of the insurgency.

1.4 Civil Society and Humanitarian Organizations (NGOs)

Civil society groups and humanitarian organizations operating on the ground will benefit from this study by gaining a deeper understanding of the complex drivers of the conflict, specifically how environmental grievances fuel violence. This insight is vital for NGOs to improve their own operational security protocols and to refine their community engagement strategies to ensure they are conflict-sensitive. By understanding the local climate-conflict dynamics, these organizations can design interventions that do not inadvertently exacerbate tensions and can

better support community resilience against both environmental shocks and insurgent narratives.

1.3 Academics and the Research Community

Finally, academics and the broader research community are key beneficiaries, as this study contributes to the growing body of knowledge regarding the nexus between climate change and conflicts, serving as a vital referral point for future studies. By documenting the specific case of the ISIS-Mozambique insurgency and its implications for Zimbabwe, the research fills a gap in the literature regarding climate security in Southern Africa. It provides a theoretical and empirical foundation for scholars to further explore related areas, testing new hypotheses about how environmental change influences non-state armed groups in different geopolitical contexts.

1.6 Delimitations of the Study

This study is delimited to the Cabo Delgado province in northern Mozambique as the primary locus of the conflict. The analysis of regional spill-over effects is specifically confined to the Manicaland province in eastern Zimbabwe, which shares a strategic border with the conflict-affected region. The research will not conduct a detailed analysis of the entire Mozambique-Zimbabwe border, nor will it extensively cover the national-level politics of either country beyond their direct relevance to the Cabo Delgado conflict. The study focuses on the period from 2017 to 2024. This timeframe is selected to capture the initial emergence of significant insurgent attacks in 2017, the major climate shocks of Cyclones Idai and Kenneth in 2019, the peak of the insurgency, and recent international interventions. Events prior to 2017 are excluded from the primary focus and will only be referenced to provide necessary historical context, nor will the study project into the future beyond evidence-based risk assessment. Conceptually, the study is delimited to investigating climate change primarily as a 'threat

multiplier' or exacerbating factor within a complex conflict ecosystem. The core analytical focus is strictly on the interaction between climate vulnerability and specific conflict dynamics such as recruitment and displacement. Therefore, this study will not treat climate change as the sole or primary cause of the conflict, nor will it conduct a deep theological analysis of the insurgent group's ideology, except where such ideology directly intersects with climate-related grievances.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

The study encountered several limitations that had the potential to affect the scope and findings of the research. Firstly, some study participants were initially reluctant to share sensitive data regarding climate change, conflict, and socio-economic indicators in Mozambique and Zimbabwe. To mitigate this challenge, the researcher assured the participants that the information was strictly for academic purposes by presenting the ethical clearance letter from the University authorizing the study. Secondly, the study faced challenges regarding data availability across different government departments in Zimbabwe and Mozambique. The researcher countered this limitation by utilizing documentary sources to complement key informant interviews, ensuring a robust gathering of information through triangulation. Additionally, time constraints presented a limitation to the extensive research process. This was managed by adjusting the research schedule and timelines to effectively meet the deadlines of the study. Finally, acknowledging that the interpretation of qualitative data is inherently subjective, the researcher made deliberate efforts to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, effectively managing personal perspectives and biases.

1.9 Definition of Keywords

Climate Change: According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2021), climate change refers to a change in the state of the climate that can be identified by changes in the mean and/or the variability of its properties and that persists for an extended period, typically decades or longer. In the context of this study, climate change refers to the long-term alterations in temperature, precipitation patterns, and extreme weather events in Mozambique and Zimbabwe primarily driven by anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions, and its cascading effects on the environment and human societies.

Conflict: Galtung (2019) defines conflict as a situation in which actors pursue incompatible goals. Within this study, conflict encompasses violent and non-violent disputes over resources, land, political power or identity in Mozambique and Zimbabwe which are potentially exacerbated by the impacts of climate change.

Vulnerability: Birkmann (2016) defines vulnerability as the degree to which a system, subsystem, or system component is likely to experience harm due to exposure to a perturbation or stress. In the context of this research, vulnerability refers to the susceptibility of communities and ecosystems in Mozambique and Zimbabwe to the adverse effects of climate change, influenced by factors such as poverty, inequality, and weak governance.

Resilience: Folke et al. (2010) define resilience as the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change so as to still retain essentially the same function, structure, identity, and feedbacks. For the purposes of this study, resilience refers to the ability of communities and ecosystems in Mozambique and Zimbabwe to adapt to climate change impacts, mitigate conflict risks, and maintain essential functions and structures in the face of environmental stress.

1.10 Dissertation Outline

Chapter one: Introduction- This chapter provides the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research objectives, research questions, assumptions, significance, delimitations, limitations, ethical considerations, definition of keywords, and organization of the dissertation.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework-This chapter reviews relevant literature on the climate-conflict nexus, focusing on climate change impacts in Southern Africa, pathways through which climate change exacerbates vulnerabilities, the role of governance, and the effectiveness of existing adaptation strategies.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology and Design-This chapter details the research design, methodology, data collection methods, sampling strategy, data analysis techniques, and ethical considerations employed in the study.

Chapter 4: Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Findings-This chapter presents the findings of the study, including both quantitative and qualitative data, and discusses the implications of these findings in relation to the research objectives and the existing literature.

Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, Recommendations and Areas for Further Research-This chapter summarizes the key findings of the study, draws conclusions based on the evidence, and provides recommendations for policy, practice, and future research aimed at building resilience and promoting peace in Southern Africa.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The chapter reviews literature that is related to the study. The review establishes the lineage of the present study. It locates and contextualises the study the study in the existing body of knowledge. This helps to understand what other studies have looked at before and the gaps that the present study may address so as to grow the body of knowledge on the topic under consideration. The review is done in line with the research objectives of the study. The theoretical framework guiding the study is also discussed and justified in the context of the chapter.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The theories that guided the study are discussed below.

2.2.1 Ecological Conflict Theory

Ecological Conflict Theory by Homer Dixon (2000) pertains to climate change and conflict and is a contemporary application of broader theories exploring the relationship between environmental scarcity and social conflict (Scheffran, 2011). Homer-Dixon (2000) initially focused on resource scarcity as a driver of conflict and this view of resource scarcity leading to conflict was later supported by Matthew and Scheffran (2011). The emphasis of Ecological Conflict theory is on the role of environmental stress which is seen as often resulting from resource scarcity and in turn exacerbates existing social, economic and political tensions, thereby increasing the risk of conflict (Homer-Dixon, 2000). The core tenet of the theory is that climate change leads to the degradation and depletion of natural resources like water, arable land and fisheries (Homer-Dixon, 2000). Scarcity can be absolute or a genuine reduction in the resource or relative where resource distribution inequities intensify existing divisions

(Scheffran, 2011). Ecological Conflict Theory recognises that environmental scarcity does not affect all populations equally (Matthew, 2009). Pre-existing social inequalities such as class, ethnicity or gender determine who has access to resources and who bears the brunt of environmental degradation. Marginalized groups are often disproportionately affected, leading to grievances and resentment (Scheffran, 2011).

Environmental stress can undermine the capacity of states to provide essential services, manage resources equitably, and resolve conflicts peacefully (Smith, 2019). This can lead to a breakdown of law and order, creating opportunities for non-state actors and exacerbating existing tensions (Matthew, 2009). Climate change-induced environmental degradation can force people to migrate, leading to competition for resources and services in host communities and potentially exacerbating inter-group tensions (Smith, 2019). Ecological Conflict Theory highlights the existence of feedback loops. Conflict can further degrade the environment, leading to increased scarcity and further instability, creating a vicious cycle (Scheffran, 2011). Climate change does not cause conflict directly. Instead, it acts as a threat multiplier, worsening existing economic, social and political stress thereby resulting in conflict.

The Ecological Conflict Theory provides a robust framework for understanding the complex relationship between climate change and conflicts in Mozambique and Zimbabwe for several reasons. Mozambique and Zimbabwe by extension is highly vulnerable to climate change impacts, including droughts, floods, and sea-level rise (Mensah, 2019). These impacts are already affecting resource availability and livelihoods, creating conditions ripe for conflict. Ecological Conflict Theory allows for analysis of how these specific climate-related stressors interact with existing social, economic and political vulnerabilities in the region (Moyo, 2020). The theory directly addresses the crucial role of resource scarcity in driving conflict. Southern Africa is a region with significant water scarcity and climate change is expected to exacerbate this problem (Mensah, 2019). Ecological Conflict Theory helps to understand how competition

for water and other resources can fuel tensions between different groups. Mozambique and Zimbabwe are two countries characterised by high levels of inequality, with significant disparities in access to resources and opportunities (Gauteng, 2018). Ecological Conflict Theory emphasizes how these inequalities exacerbate the impacts of climate change and increase the risk of conflict for marginalized communities.

Many countries in Southern Africa including Mozambique and Zimbabwe face challenges related to governance and state capacity. Ecological Conflict Theory highlights how environmental stress can further undermine state institutions and create opportunities for non-state actors to exploit grievances and mobilize support for violence (Gauteng, 2018). The theory provides a holistic framework for understanding the complex interplay of environmental, social, economic and political factors that contribute to conflict (Moyo, 2020)t. It allows us to move beyond simplistic explanations and develop a more nuanced understanding of the drivers of conflicts in Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Employing Ecological Conflict Theory allows this study to be more theoretically grounded and to be comprehensive in its analysis of the relationship between climate change and conflict in Mozambique and Zimbabwe leading to more effective policy recommendations for building resilience and promoting peace. The theory allows the researcher to see beyond immediate triggers and examine the deeper structural forces at play thereby assisting the design of effective long term solutions.

2.2.2 Relative Deprivation Theory

Relative Deprivation Theory by Gurr (1970) is used in the study to complement Ecological Conflict Theory. The theory helps in understanding the relationship between climate change and conflicts, particularly in the context of the ISIS-Mozambique insurgency in Cabo Delgado and Zimbabwe. Relative Deprivation Theory was propounded Gurr (1970). The theory posits

that conflict arises when individuals or groups perceive a significant discrepancy between what they believe they are entitled to or their expectations and what they are actually able to obtain through their capabilities (Gurr, 1970). This perceived gap or the feeling of being "relatively deprived," leads to frustration and resentment, which can then escalate into collective action, including violent conflict (Gurr, 1970). In the context of climate change, Relative Deprivation Theory provides a lens for understanding how environmental stressors can exacerbate existing inequalities and fuel social unrest (Salehyan, 2008).

Climate change impacts, such as droughts, floods and resource scarcity often disproportionately affect vulnerable communities and this further widening the gap between their expectations and their capabilities (Salehyan, 2008). For example, prolonged droughts can decimate agricultural livelihoods, leading to food insecurity and economic hardship. If communities perceive that the government or other actors are failing to address these challenges adequately or are even benefiting from the situation while they suffer, feelings of relative deprivation can intensify (Brencati, 2011). Climate change-induced migration can lead to competition over scarce resources in new locations, generating intergroup tensions and potentially violent conflict. Homer-Dixon (1999) argues that environmental scarcity, intensified by climate change, can lead to "resource capture" where powerful groups monopolize dwindling resources, further marginalizing vulnerable populations and exacerbating their sense of relative deprivation. This can create a fertile ground for recruitment by extremist groups who promise to address grievances and restore a sense of dignity and justice (Salehyan, 2008).

Ecological Conflict Theory highlights the role of environmental degradation and resource scarcity as drivers of conflict. However, it sometimes falls short in explaining why these environmental stressors lead to violent conflict in some areas but not others (Brencati, 2011). Relative Deprivation Theory fills this gap by providing a framework for understanding

the psychological and social processes through which environmental stresses are translated into collective action (Mazo, 2020). In Cabo Delgado, example, the discovery of natural gas promised economic prosperity for the region. However, the benefits of this resource boom have largely failed to trickle down to the local population, while climate change impacts are increasingly threatening their traditional livelihoods of farming and fishing (Mazo, 2020). This creates a situation of acute relative deprivation, where communities feel that they are being denied their rightful share of wealth and opportunity, while simultaneously facing increasing environmental challenges (Mazo, 2020). This sense of injustice has been exploited by ISIS-affiliated insurgents, who offer a narrative of empowerment and redistribution of wealth. In Zimbabwe, recurrent droughts and land degradation have disproportionately affected rural communities, while perceptions of corruption and inequality fuel resentment against the government (Moyo, 2020). Mazo (2020) highlights how climate change can exacerbate existing inequalities, creating grievances that are then exploited by political entrepreneurs to mobilize support for violent conflict. Relative Deprivation Theory acknowledges the role of perception and social comparison in shaping individual and group behaviour (Gurr, 1970). Climate change is not simply an objective environmental phenomenon; its impacts are mediated by social, economic, and political factors.

2.3 The Relationship between Climate Change Shocks and Insurgent Recruitment Patterns.

The intersection of climate change, socio-economic vulnerability and violent conflict is increasingly recognized as a critical area of study (MacDonald, 2013). The underlying premise is that climate change-induced environmental stress such as droughts, floods and resource scarcity can exacerbate existing grievances and create opportunities for insurgent groups to recruit disenfranchised populations (Hendrix & Salehyan, 2012). However, the relationship is not deterministic; rather, climate change acts as a ‘threat multiplier’ (McDonald, 2013). This

amplifies existing social, economic and political vulnerabilities that make individuals more susceptible to recruitment. A crucial element is the disruption of traditional livelihoods, particularly in agrarian societies (MacDonald, 2013). When farming becomes unsustainable due to erratic rainfall or land degradation, individuals may turn to alternative sources of income, including joining insurgent groups who promise financial stability or access to resources (Hendrix & Salehyan, 2012).

The displacement caused by climate-related disasters can weaken social cohesion and create ungoverned spaces where insurgent groups can operate more easily, presenting themselves as providers of security and justice where the state has failed (Johnstone & Mazo, 2011). The existing literature offers a range of theoretical frameworks to understand this complex relationship. Resource scarcity theory suggests that competition over dwindling resources, driven by climate change, can lead to intergroup conflict and provide incentives for individuals to join insurgent groups to secure access to these resources (Homer-Dixon, 1999). Political ecology perspectives emphasize the unequal distribution of environmental burdens and benefits, arguing that climate change disproportionately affects marginalized communities, fuelling resentment and creating a sense of injustice that can be exploited by insurgent groups (Watts, 2000).

The grievances theory highlights how climate change can exacerbate existing social and economic inequalities, leading to widespread dissatisfaction with the government and creating a fertile ground for insurgent recruitment. For example, Raleigh (2010) has shown how droughts in Africa have been linked to increased levels of political violence, suggesting that climate change can undermine state legitimacy and create opportunities for insurgent groups to mobilize support (Raleigh, 2010). The work by Theisen (2012) complements this analysis by examining how climate-induced migration can lead to competition over resources in host communities, further fueling tensions and increasing the likelihood of conflict. However, a

significant limitation of much of the existing research is its reliance on broad-scale statistical analyses, which may mask the complex and context-specific dynamics at play. While large-N studies can identify general trends, they often fail to capture the nuances of local-level interactions and the specific mechanisms through which climate change influences insurgent recruitment (Moyo, 2020). For example, studies focusing on Africa or Asia often lack granular data on specific climate impacts, livelihood strategies, and the motivations of individual recruits. There is also a tendency to treat insurgent groups as monolithic entities, neglecting the diversity of motivations and ideologies within these groups. For example, the case of Boko Haram in Nigeria, as studied by (Okeke & Gidado, 2016), has shown that the motivations can range from political to religious. This is a limitation that undermines an analysis that fails to consider that complexity.

Studies on specific regions are, therefore, limited to an assessment of an isolated impact. There are other studies such as those focusing on the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda, which fail to acknowledge the complexity of factors that can lead to conflict and that are at times not limited to climate change and conflict (Vines, 2005). The present study aims to address these limitations by adopting a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative analysis of climate data and conflict events with qualitative case studies of insurgent recruitment patterns in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. The present study argues that a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between climate change and insurgent recruitment requires a focus on the specific ways in which climate-related environmental changes interact with local socio-economic and political contexts. The aim is to conduct fieldwork in affected communities to gather data on local perceptions of climate change, livelihood strategies and the motivations of individuals who have joined insurgent groups. The study seeks to analyse the recruitment strategies of ISIS-Mozambique and other insurgent groups to understand how they exploit climate-related grievances. This will be done through building on the strengths of existing

literature by incorporating insights from resource scarcity theory, political ecology, and grievances theory (Moyo, 2020). In light of the limitations of past research the study focuses on the specific mechanisms through which climate change influences insurgent recruitment and adopting a bottom-up approach that prioritises local perspectives and experiences. The potential outcomes of the study can be quite significant. The study will provide a more nuanced understanding of the complex relationship between climate change and insurgent recruitment (Ncube, 2021). The study will identify specific vulnerabilities and resilience strategies that can be targeted by policymakers and development practitioners. It will also inform the design of more effective interventions to prevent and mitigate climate-related conflict.

Studies focusing on specific insurgent groups reveal varying findings and highlight the importance of context-specific analysis. For example, research on the Taliban in Afghanistan has suggested a link between drought and increased recruitment. Benjaminsen and Selboe (2021) argue that prolonged droughts in rural Afghanistan have eroded traditional livelihoods, leading to increased poverty and desperation, which the Taliban has exploited by offering financial incentives and alternative sources of income to potential recruits. This aligns with resource scarcity theory (Homer-Dixon, 1999), which posits that competition over dwindling resources can fuel conflict and incentivize individuals to join insurgent groups. However, other scholars caution against overstating the role of climate change in the Afghan conflict. Leezenberg (2020) argues that the Taliban's recruitment is primarily driven by political and ideological factors, such as opposition to the government and the presence of foreign forces, and that climate change is merely one of many factors that contribute to the overall instability. These discrepancies in findings highlight the need for more nuanced research that considers the interplay between climate change and other socio-political drivers of conflict.

The case of ISIS in Iraq and Syria further complicates the picture. Gleick (2014) argues that prolonged droughts in the region contributed to the Syrian civil war, creating a power

vacuum that ISIS exploited to gain territory and recruit members. However, this view has been challenged by scholars who emphasize the role of sectarianism, political repression and foreign intervention in the rise of ISIS (Cockburn, 2015). While climate change may have exacerbated existing grievances and contributed to the overall instability, it is unlikely to have been a primary driver of ISIS recruitment. Indeed, studies focusing on the motivations of ISIS recruits have found that ideology, a sense of belonging and the promise of adventure are often more important factors than economic hardship or environmental stress (Neumann, 2015). This underscores the importance of understanding the specific recruitment strategies and narratives employed by insurgent groups. In Syria and Iraq, ISIS effectively leveraged social media to disseminate propaganda, recruit foreign fighters, and exploit existing social divisions. Therefore, while climate change might have played a contributing role, the core of ISIS's appeal lay elsewhere. However, other schools of thought and theorists disagree. According to environmental security theory, for example, environmental degradation and resource scarcity can lead to social unrest, weaken state capacity and create opportunities for non-state actors, including insurgent groups, to fill the void (Barnett, 2003). This is in contrast to political economy frameworks, which emphasize the role of unequal power relations and access to resources in shaping conflict dynamics.

The context of Ecuador and Nigeria presents different dimensions of the climate-conflict nexus. In Ecuador, research by Bebbington and Bury (2009) highlights how climate change, coupled with resource extraction, impacts indigenous communities. Climate change induced glacial melt and deforestation exacerbated by mining and oil extraction disrupts traditional livelihoods, land use, and access to water (Bebbington & Bury, 2009). This marginalisation can create grievances that could potentially be exploited by social movements or, in more extreme cases, insurgent groups, though Ecuador has not seen widespread insurgency directly linked to climate change. Instead, social and political mobilization has taken the form of

indigenous-led protests and resistance against extractive industries, as well as calling for land reforms (Sawyer, 2004). In Nigeria, the desertification of northern regions and the drying up of Lake Chad have led to increased competition over land and water resources between farmers and herders (Okeke & Gidado, 2016). This has fuelled violent conflict and created opportunities for groups like Boko Haram to recruit disenfranchised youth. Climate change and its impacts are intertwined with broader issues of governance, corruption, and ethnic tensions in Nigeria, making it difficult to isolate the specific role of climate change in driving recruitment. However, studies by Onuoha (2010) suggest that Boko Haram has exploited climate-related grievances by providing alternative sources of income and justice to marginalized communities, further reinforcing the idea that climate change can act as a 'threat multiplier' in conflict-prone regions. The nuances found in these cases further highlight the limitations of theoretical perspectives.

The reviewed literature reveals several key findings. Climate change can exacerbate existing vulnerabilities and create opportunities for insurgent groups to recruit members, particularly in regions with weak governance, social inequality and a history of conflict (Onuoba, 2010). The specific mechanisms through which climate change influences recruitment are context-specific and depend on a range of factors, including the nature of climate impacts, the socio-economic conditions of affected communities, the recruitment strategies of insurgent groups and the political and ideological landscape (Ncube, 2021). Significant gaps remain in the existing literature. There is a need for more rigorous empirical research that uses mixed-methods approaches to examine the relationship between climate change and insurgent recruitment at the local level. The debate around the relationship between climate change and insurgent recruitment is shaped by different theoretical perspectives. Resource scarcity theory emphasizes the role of competition over dwindling resources in driving conflict, while political ecology perspectives highlight the unequal distribution of

environmental burdens and benefits (Sibanda, 2019). Grievances theory suggests that climate change can exacerbate existing social and economic inequalities, leading to widespread dissatisfaction and creating a fertile ground for insurgent recruitment. Environmental security theory emphasizes the broader implications of climate change for national and international security, while critical security studies challenge the securitization of climate change and emphasize the need to address the underlying social and economic drivers of vulnerability (Brown, 2020).

2.4 The Perceived Grievances as to how Communities Link Climate Vulnerability, Marginalisation and Conflict.

The nexus between climate vulnerability, marginalization, and conflict is increasingly understood through the lens of perceived grievances. Communities that perceive themselves as disproportionately affected by climate change, while simultaneously experiencing political and economic marginalization, are more likely to harbour grievances that can be exploited by conflict actors (Dube, 2019). These perceived grievances are not solely based on material deprivation but also on a sense of injustice, exclusion and a lack of agency in decision-making processes (Le Billon, 2001). For example, research by Adger (2010) demonstrates that communities' perceptions of fairness in resource distribution and disaster response significantly influence their willingness to cooperate and maintain social cohesion in the face of climate-related shocks. When climate change impacts are viewed as the result of unjust policies or a lack of government support, they can fuel resentment and create a fertile ground for conflict. The work of Watts (1983) on peasant societies emphasizes that vulnerability is often a product of historical and structural inequalities, making climate impacts seem like a continuation of existing injustices. As such, understanding how communities perceive and frame these connections is vital. Warner (2011) emphasizes the central role that perceptions

play in the relationship. In his analysis, communities may perceive climate change as a threat due to disruptions to their livelihoods and well-being, thus, leading to resentment and potential for conflict (Warner, 2011). It is, therefore, important to assess the role played by grievances.

Theoretical frameworks offer different lenses through which to examine this nexus. Framing theory, for example, suggests that the way in which climate change and its impacts are framed by different actors can influence public perceptions and mobilize support for specific actions (Entman, 1993). If climate change is framed as a threat to livelihoods and cultural identity, it can resonate more strongly with marginalized communities and increase their sense of grievance. (Entman, 1993). Political ecology emphasizes the power dynamics that shape access to resources and expose certain groups to greater climate risks (Bryant & Bailey, 1997). In this view, climate change exacerbates existing inequalities and reinforces the marginalization of vulnerable communities (Bryant & Bailey, 1997). Social identity theory suggests that group identity and social comparison play a significant role in shaping perceptions of injustice and fuelling conflict (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). When marginalized communities perceive that their group is unfairly disadvantaged by climate change, it can strengthen their sense of collective identity and increase their willingness to engage in conflict. This is further supported by Stewart (2008) who argues that horizontal inequalities such as inequalities between culturally defined groups, are a key factor in driving conflict. When climate change exacerbates these inequalities, it can lead to increased tensions and violence (Stuart, 2008).

However, current research has several limitations. Much of the existing literature relies on aggregate-level data and correlational analyses, which make it difficult to establish causal relationships between climate vulnerability, marginalization and conflict (Moyo, 2020). There is also a tendency to treat marginalized communities as homogenous groups, neglecting the diversity of experiences and perceptions within these communities (Scott, 1985). Furthermore, the role of agency and resilience is often overlooked, with communities being portrayed as

passive victims of climate change rather than active agents in shaping their own destinies. The issue of "perceived" grievances is particularly under-explored (Sibanda, 2020). Studies often assume a direct link between objective climate impacts and conflict without adequately considering the mediating role of community perceptions, narratives and interpretations. As such, this is the point of entry for a critical analysis of the nexus between climate vulnerability, marginalization and conflict. Scheffran et al., (2012) outlined that there is a gap in assessing the specific mechanisms through which climate change intersects with other factors to generate perceptions of grievances and trigger conflict.

The present study argues that understanding how communities perceive and interpret climate impacts and how these perceptions are shaped by historical and socio-political contexts, is crucial for explaining the complex relationship between climate change and conflict. The study will build on the strengths of existing literature by drawing on framing theory, political ecology, and social identity theory to develop a more nuanced understanding of the factors that shape perceived grievances. It will also incorporate insights from resilience theory to examine the adaptive capacity of communities and the role of local knowledge and innovation in mitigating climate risks. The study will address the limitations of past research by focusing on the specific mechanisms through which climate change interacts with marginalization to generate perceptions of grievance, and by adopting a bottom-up approach that prioritizes local perspectives and experiences. The study will also pay attention to the diversity of experiences within marginalized communities and the role of agency and resilience in shaping their responses to climate change. In this regard, it is imperative to build on the work of Ostrom (1990) on collective action and self-governance. It shows the need to understanding how communities can effectively manage their resources and build resilience in the face of climate change. Sen (1999) suggested addressing the root causes of vulnerability and empowering communities through education, healthcare and economic opportunities as dealing with

limitations of past studies. This creates more just and equitable societies, which, in turn, will be more resilient to climate change and less prone to conflict.

Several studies have focused on specific conflicts and insurgent groups, offering varying perspectives. In Afghanistan, for example, Benjaminsen and Selboe (2021) argue that climate change-induced droughts exacerbate existing vulnerabilities, particularly among rural populations, leading to increased poverty and desperation. The Taliban, in this context, exploits these grievances by presenting themselves as providers of stability and justice, offering financial incentives and alternative sources of income. However, this viewpoint is challenged by scholars like Leezenberg (2020), who contend that the Taliban's recruitment is primarily driven by political and ideological factors such as opposition to foreign forces and the central government. Climate change, according to Leezenberg (2020) merely acts as one factor among many contributing to overall instability. The debate highlights the complexity of disentangling the specific role of climate change from other drivers of conflict. Studies by Metcalf (2015) demonstrate that access to water and land rights is deeply intertwined with tribal affiliations and historical power dynamics, making it difficult to isolate the impact of climate change on perceived grievances. Rather, the perceived grievances are often shaped by pre-existing political, social and economic structures, and climate change often works as a multiplier.

The case of ISIS in Iraq and Syria further complicates the relationship between climate vulnerability, perceived grievances and conflict. Gleick (2014) suggests that prolonged droughts in the region contributed to the Syrian civil war by exacerbating water scarcity and food insecurity, creating a power vacuum that ISIS exploited. This perspective is supported by Kelley et al. (2015), who argue that the severe drought in Syria between 2006 and 2010 contributed to social unrest and ultimately the civil war. However, these views are countered by scholars who emphasize the role of sectarianism, political repression and foreign intervention in the rise of ISIS (Cockburn, 2015). Lustick (2015) argues that the Syrian civil

war was primarily driven by political grievances and a breakdown of state authority, with climate change playing a relatively minor role. Lustick (2015) further notes that ISIS recruited heavily from marginalized Sunni communities who felt excluded from the political process, highlighting the importance of political grievances over environmental factors. Therefore, there is an active debate on the degree to which climate vulnerability directly translates into grievances exploited by ISIS or whether political and social grievances are the primary drivers. Moreover, the influence of religious ideology cannot be discounted as recruits are often drawn to ISIS due to their extreme views and a sense of belonging (Neumann, 2015).

In Ecuador and Nigeria, the interplay between climate vulnerability, marginalization and perceived grievances manifests in distinct ways. In Ecuador, indigenous communities often bear the brunt of climate change impacts, which are compounded by extractive industries and land degradation (Lustick, 2015). Bebbington & Bury (2009) have documented how climate change-induced glacial melt and deforestation disrupt traditional livelihoods and access to water, increasing the vulnerability of indigenous populations. However, perceived grievances are primarily channelled through social movements and indigenous-led protests rather than armed conflict (Sawyer, 2004). The main drivers are grievances related to land rights, environmental protection and political autonomy. There is less evidence of insurgent groups exploiting climate-related grievances in Ecuador, suggesting that other forms of social and political mobilization are more prevalent (Sawyer, 2004). In Nigeria, the desertification of northern regions and the drying up of Lake Chad have led to increased competition over land and water resources, contributing to farmer-herder conflicts and providing opportunities for groups like Boko Haram to recruit disenfranchised youth (Okeke & Gidado, 2016). Onuoha (2010) suggests that Boko Haram has exploited climate-related grievances by providing alternative sources of income and justice to marginalized communities. However, the conflict is also deeply rooted in religious extremism, ethnic tensions and socio-economic inequalities

(Campbell, 2011). Therefore, while climate vulnerability may contribute to perceived grievances and increase the risk of recruitment, it is difficult to isolate its impact from other drivers of conflict. The existing findings also suggest that while insurgents may frame their actions in terms of environmental grievances, they also may be doing so in order to gain support or legitimacy from marginalized communities (Bakke, 2005).

It may be noted from the above review that climate vulnerability can exacerbate existing grievances among marginalized communities, increasing the risk of conflict. The specific pathways through which climate change influences perceived grievances and recruitment are context-specific, depending on the interplay of political, economic social and environmental factors (Dube, 2020). Insurgent groups often exploit climate-related grievances by framing their actions as responses to injustice and offering alternative sources of income, justice, or protection. However, the existing literature also reveals several gaps. There is a need for more granular, localized studies that examine how climate change impacts are perceived and interpreted by different communities. There needs to be more information about how insurgents develop their recruitment strategies and target recruitment for those who are most affected by climate change.

2.5 The Insurgent Narrative on how Insurgent Groups Exploit Climate Induced Fragility

The exploitation of climate-induced fragility by insurgent groups is not a uniform phenomenon. Different groups, operating in diverse socio-political contexts, construct and utilise narratives that reflect their specific goals, ideologies and target audiences (Weinberg, 2010). In the Sahel region, for example, groups like Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) operate in areas heavily affected by desertification, drought and resource scarcity. According to Raleigh and Kniveton (2012) these

groups exploit the resulting grievances by presenting themselves as protectors of local communities and providers of essential services, such as water and food. They frame climate-induced hardship as a consequence of government neglect and corruption, thus justifying their violent actions. Ba (2018) highlighted that these groups capitalise on pre-existing ethnic and social divisions, using climate-related resource competition to exacerbate tensions and recruit new members. In contrast, in Southeast Asia, groups like Abu Sayyaf and the New People's Army (NPA) operate in regions facing deforestation, sea-level rise and extreme weather events. Renwick (2017) argues that these groups exploit climate-induced displacement and livelihood loss by offering alternative sources of income and protection to affected communities. They often frame their actions as resistance against government policies that exacerbate climate vulnerability, such as logging concessions and unsustainable development projects (Renwick, 2017). However, unlike the Sahelian groups, the Southeast Asian insurgents tend to focus more on economic and political grievances, with climate change serving as a secondary, albeit important, factor in their narratives. Further complicating the picture, Crost and Felbab-Brown (2016) highlight that these groups also capitalize on weak governance and corruption, using their control over resources and territory to enrich themselves and maintain their power. In addition, the groups are concerned with gaining popular support by presenting themselves as more effective governors than the existing government.

In Latin America, groups like the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and other drug-trafficking organisations have exploited environmental degradation and resource extraction to their advantage (Cross & Felbab-Brown, 2016). Romero (2003) explains that these groups operate in areas affected by deforestation, mining and oil exploitation, which have contributed to climate change and environmental degradation. They have often framed their actions as defenders of the environment and protectors of indigenous communities, while simultaneously profiting from illegal activities such as logging and mining (Romero, 2003).

According to Sanchez-Cuervo and Aide (2013) climate-induced changes in rainfall patterns and land availability have also exacerbated land conflicts and resource competition, creating opportunities for these groups to expand their influence. While FARC no longer operates as it once did, the narratives constructed surrounding environmental degradation and resource extraction continue to influence dynamics of power (Sanchez-Cuervo, 2013). Moreover, there are insights that can be derived from groups like the Shining Path in Peru, which exploit land and social inequality.

The theoretical debate surrounding the narratives of insurgent groups is shaped by different perspectives. Critical terrorism studies argue that the focus on insurgent narratives often overlooks the broader socio-political contexts that drive conflict and marginalization (Jackson, 2011). Political ecology emphasizes the role of power dynamics and unequal access to resources in shaping climate vulnerability and conflict (Watts, 2000). Framing theory helps to understand how insurgent groups construct their narratives to resonate with specific audiences and mobilize support (Snow et al., 2004). However, a major limitation of much of the existing research is its tendency to generalise about insurgent narratives, without adequately accounting for the diversity of contexts and the nuances of local-level interactions (Schuurman, 2019). Furthermore, there is often a lack of empirical evidence to support claims about the effectiveness of insurgent narratives in influencing public opinion and recruitment. It is also worth noting that what constitutes an act of terrorism varies amongst researchers (Eriksson, 2017). It is, therefore, challenging to assess and compare the degree to which these groups exploit climate induced fragility in order to cause harm. The present study aims to analyse the extent to which these narratives resonate with local communities and influence their attitudes toward the government and insurgent groups.

The exploration of how ISIS-Mozambique also known as Ansar al-Sunna or Al-Shabaab in Mozambique crafts its narrative to exploit climate-induced fragility requires a deep dive into

the group's propaganda, its interactions with local communities, and the socio-economic conditions in Cabo Delgado. An examination of their actions and messaging reveals a calculated strategy of exploiting the grievances and vulnerabilities exacerbated by climate change (Carmody et al., 2021). The narrative centres on themes of injustice, neglect by the state and the promise of an alternative governance system that provides security, resources and a sense of belonging (Botha, 2020). Scholars suggest that ISIS-Mozambique does not explicitly use climate change as a recruitment tool but rather exploits the consequences of climate-induced resource scarcity, displacement, and livelihood loss. For example, Bausch (2021) emphasizes that ISIS-Mozambique capitalizes on the desperation of communities affected by cyclones, floods, and droughts by providing immediate relief and protection, which the government often fails to do. This reinforces a narrative of state failure and highlights the group's capacity to address immediate needs. Theoretical frameworks from political ecology and environmental conflict offer insights into this phenomenon.

Political ecology emphasizes the unequal distribution of environmental risks and benefits, highlighting how marginalized communities often bear the brunt of climate change impacts while being excluded from decision-making processes (Bryant & Bailey, 1997). In this context, ISIS-Mozambique exploits the perception that the government and international actors are neglecting the needs of vulnerable communities, framing their own actions as a form of resistance against injustice (de Sousa, 2019). Furthermore, framing theory is relevant in understanding how ISIS-Mozambique constructs its narrative to resonate with local populations. By framing climate-related disasters as a form of divine punishment for the government's corruption and mismanagement, the group can mobilize support and legitimize its violent actions (Enli, 2017). Additionally, insights from social movement theory suggest that ISIS-Mozambique leverages pre-existing social networks and grievances to recruit members, particularly among marginalized youth who lack economic opportunities and feel

excluded from the political process (Snow et al., 2004). The narrative of providing a better life under a "just" Islamic system can appeal to those who have lost faith in the state's ability to provide for their basic needs. However, research on the narrative strategies of ISIS-Mozambique is still in its early stages, and there are several limitations in the existing literature. Much of the analysis relies on secondary sources and media reports, with limited access to primary data from the group itself or from affected communities. There is also a lack of in-depth qualitative studies that explore how the ISIS-Mozambique narrative is received and interpreted by different segments of the population (Morier-Genoud, 2020). Furthermore, most of the research on the Mozambique conflict focuses on the broader socio-economic and political factors driving the insurgency, with less attention given to the specific role of climate change and environmental factors (Ostby et al., 2021). There is a notable gap in understanding how ISIS-Mozambique directly or indirectly incorporates climate-related issues into its messaging and recruitment strategies.

2.6 The Regional Security Implications on the Spill-Over Risk to Neighbouring Countries

The linkage between climate change and violent conflict is increasingly recognized as a pressing global challenge. It is moving beyond simplistic environmental determinism to encompass complex interactions between environmental stressors and socio-political vulnerabilities (Homer-Dixon, 1999; Gleditsch, 2012). While climate change does not directly cause conflict, it can act as a ‘threat multiplier’ exacerbating existing inequalities, resource scarcities, and governance challenges, thereby increasing the risk of instability (Barnett & Adger, 2007). The review focuses on the intricate relationship between climate change and conflict, using the case of the ISIS-linked insurgency in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique and the related security implications for Zimbabwe, a nation already grappling with significant

environmental challenges. These cases illustrate the complex interplay of climate-related stresses, political instability and the potential for regional security threats.

Several theoretical frameworks attempt to explain the link between climate change and conflict. Homer-Dixon's (1999) resource scarcity theory posits that environmental degradation can lead to resource scarcity, triggering competition and conflict. However, this theory has been criticized for being overly deterministic and neglecting the role of social and political factors (Peluso & Watts, 2001). More nuanced perspectives emphasize the role of climate change in undermining livelihoods, displacing populations, and weakening state capacity, thereby creating opportunities for non-state actors to exploit grievances and mobilize support (Scheffran & Battaglini, 2011). Young et al (2014) argue that climate change increases the likelihood of conflict in already fragile states with weak governance structures. These studies, while insightful, often lack granular analysis of the specific local contexts in which climate change interacts with pre-existing vulnerabilities to trigger conflict.

The ISIS-linked insurgency in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique, provides a stark example of how climate change can exacerbate existing vulnerabilities and contribute to conflict. The region has experienced increased frequency and intensity of cyclones, floods, and droughts, leading to widespread displacement, crop failures and food insecurity (World Bank, 2021). These environmental stressors have disproportionately affected vulnerable communities, particularly those reliant on agriculture and fishing (Oxfam, 2020). According to Hendrix and Salehyan (2012) environmental degradation serves as a catalyst for social unrest, this has been used by insurgents to exploit grievances, recruit disenfranchised youth and gain control over resources (ACLED, 2023). However, the role of climate change in the Cabo Delgado insurgency is contested, with some scholars arguing that political marginalization, corruption and resource exploitation are the primary drivers of the conflict (Carmody & Taylor, 2016). This leads to the ongoing debate of what is the main cause of the conflict.

The convergence of climate change, conflict, and regional instability poses a significant threat to global security. While climate change's role as a direct cause of conflict remains debated, its capacity to exacerbate existing vulnerabilities and act as a 'threat multiplier' is widely acknowledged (Barnett & Adger, 2007; Scheffran et al., 2012). The ISIS-linked insurgency in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique, serves as a potent example of how climate-related stresses can fuel local grievances and create opportunities for extremist groups, with implications that extend far beyond Mozambique's borders. Several theoretical frameworks offer insights into the dynamics of conflict spill-over. Contagion theory suggests that conflicts can spread from one country to another through demonstration effects, imitation or shared grievances (Salehyan, 2009). Diffusion theory emphasizes the role of transnational actors such as rebel groups or terrorist organizations, in spreading conflict across borders (Sambanis, 2002). The neighbourhood effect posits that countries surrounded by conflict-affected states are more likely to experience instability themselves (Gleditsch, 2007). Climate change can exacerbate these processes by increasing the number of displaced persons, intensifying competition for resources and weakening state capacity in neighbouring countries, making them more susceptible to the spread of conflict (Johnstone & Mazo, 2011).

In Africa, climate change-driven conflicts have demonstrated the potential for regional spill-over. In the Sahel region, for example, desertification and water scarcity have fuelled competition between farmers and pastoralists, leading to localised conflicts that have spilled over into neighbouring countries through cross-border migration and resource disputes (United Nations Environment Programme, 2011). The Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria has also been linked to climate change-related environmental degradation, with the group exploiting grievances related to land and water scarcity to recruit members and expand its operations into neighbouring Cameroon, Chad and Niger (Benjaminsen & Ba, 2009). These examples highlight the importance of addressing the root causes of climate-related conflict and

strengthening regional cooperation to prevent spill-over (Hendrix & Glaser, 2007). Flint and Turner (2011) focus on the importance of local resource governance to help manage climate and resource shocks to prevent spill-over.

The threat of climate change-related conflict spill-over is not limited to Africa. In Asia, rising sea levels and extreme weather events are displacing populations and increasing competition for resources in the Mekong Delta region, potentially fuelling tensions between Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos (Busby, 2007). In the Middle East, water scarcity and desertification have contributed to instability and conflict in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, with spill-over effects on neighbouring countries through refugee flows, the rise of extremist groups and geopolitical competition (Gleick, 2014). In Latin America, deforestation and land degradation have led to conflicts over land rights and resources, with spill-over risks in the Amazon region, where illegal mining, drug trafficking and organized crime are rampant (Weinmann, 2017). The ISIS-linked insurgency in Cabo Delgado serves as a compelling case study of regional spill-over risks. The conflict has led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people, many of whom have sought refuge in neighbouring Tanzania, potentially straining resources and exacerbating existing tensions (Amnesty International, 2021). There are reports of foreign fighters from other countries joining the insurgency, raising concerns about the spread of extremist ideologies and the potential for terrorist attacks in the region (International Crisis Group, 2021). It is critical to analyse the specific channels through which the ISIS-Mozambique insurgency is contributing to regional instability and to develop targeted strategies to mitigate these risks (Campbell, 2022).

Despite the growing body of literature on climate change, conflict, and security, several limitations remain. Much of the research focuses on single case studies or specific regions, making it difficult to draw generalizable conclusions about the global dimensions of climate-related conflict spill-over (O'Loughlin et al., 2014). There is a lack of comparative research

that examines the similarities and differences in the ways that climate change contributes to conflict and spill-over in different regions of the world. Kallis (2011) shows how important it is to look at the problem globally. The present study aims to address these limitations by adopting a comparative approach, examining case studies from Zimbabwe and Mozambique. This research has the potential to provide a comprehensive analysis of the regional dimensions of climate change-related conflict spill-over.

2.7 Summary

The chapter has reviewed literature related to the study. The review established the lineage of the present study. It located and contextualised the study the study in the existing body of knowledge. This helps to understand what other studies have looked at before and the gaps that the present study may address so as to grow the body of knowledge on the topic under consideration. The review was done in line with the research objectives of the study. The theoretical framework guiding the study were also discussed and justified in the context of the chapter. The next chapter discusses the research methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

This chapter contains the research philosophy, research methodology, the research design, population sample, sampling method which is purposive sampling and data collection methods. It also contains sections on data presentation and analysis, research ethics and the chapter summary.

3.2 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy refers a system of beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge, (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2015). A research philosophy is very crucial because it shapes the methodology used and the type of knowledge obtained. This research is guided by the interpretivist philosophy in explaining the research topic, The Relationship between Climate Change and Conflicts. The Case of ISIS- Mozambique Insurgency in Cabo Del Gado and Zimbabwe. This philosophy is important because it allows the researcher to understand the problem from the point of view of those that are directly affected by the problem rather than introducing extraneous positions to be tested on the participants

3.3 Research Methodology

Research methodology is an articulated, theoretically informed approach to the production of data. Grix (2014) notes that methodology refers to the study and critical analysis of data production techniques and includes the strategy, plan of action, process or design that informs one's choice of research methods. In this study the researcher uses qualitative research methods such as interviews to interpret reality of climate change and conflict knowledge from the point of view of participants who make submissions about how they apprehend reality (Yin,

2015). Qualitative research posits that there is no singular and objective reality that may be known and verified by other researchers (Denzin and Lincoln, 2015). All that subjects and or participants engage in is the interpretation of reality. This is because individuals are under the influence of a number of factors that determine how they approach phenomena in the world. These factors may include but are not limited to the way they were brought up, the language that they speak, their level of education or where they come from among a number of factors.

3.4 Research Design

A research design is viewed as a structure with a strategy for how the research will be carried out. According to Yin (2013) case study research design is suitable with regards to an interpretive approach to data, where the researcher studies phenomena within their context and considers the subjective meanings that people bring to their situation of experience. The researcher will use case study research design. This is because the study seeks to narrow down on the relationship between climate change and conflict. This particularity in terms of research focus also allows the participant views to be captured and analysed. This is so for the present study which seeks to understand the subjective meanings of participants from Mozambique and Zimbabwe. A case study is chosen because it allows the researcher to understand a current problem within the context in which it is occurring and being experienced. In this case the researcher seeks to understand the relationship between climate change and conflict. Yin (2014) notes that a case study research method investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context as is the case with the researcher investigating the relationship between climate change and conflict in Zimbabwe and Mozambique. A case study provides holistic and in-depth explanations of the relationship between climate change.

3.5 Population and Sample

According to Rahi (2019), a population refers to all entities of interest to the study. The population for this study comprised residents of Cabo Delgado and Manicaland provinces specifically women, youths, farmers, and displaced persons who were targeted because they are the primary victims facing the triple threat of violence, climate disaster, and displacement. Additionally, the population included community and religious leaders chosen for their roles as mediators and observers of social cohesion, as well as local academic experts selected for their deep contextual knowledge of the region. These groups were collectively identified because they possess first-hand experience regarding climate change impacts on livelihoods and the resulting perceptions of marginalization that fuel insurgent recruitment.

A sample is defined as a systematic process of selecting a subset from a larger population to represent it in research. The study utilized a purposive sample of 12 participants, a size determined by the point at which data saturation was reached and further interviews replicated existing patterns. This sample specifically included high-level key informants: the Director of Legal and Consular Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to provide diplomatic perspectives on regional stability, the Ambassador of Mozambique to Zimbabwe to articulate the state's response to the crisis, and the Director of Climate Change in the Ministry of Environment to outline adaptation policies. The sample also included agricultural officials and community members to provide data on crop failures and resource scarcity.

3.6 Sampling Method

Sampling is the process of selecting a subset of the population that meets specific criteria to conduct a study. It is a systematic process of selecting a subset from a larger population to represent it in research (Lavrakas,2023).

3.6.1 Purposive sampling

Patton (2015) defines purposive sampling as a non-probability sampling method where researchers intentionally select participants based on specific characteristics, expertise, or relevance to the research question. This study involved a total of 12 participants who were selected using this method to ensure qualitative depth and stakeholder representation. The participants included residents from Cabo Delgado and Manicaland provinces—specifically women, youths, farmers, and displaced persons—who were interviewed to provide first-hand information on community history, social structures, and the direct impact of climate shocks on their livelihoods.

Additionally, the study targeted community and religious leaders, such as pastors and heads of Community-Based Organizations, to obtain information regarding community mobilization, social cohesion, and their roles as mediators during crises. Government officials, including District Administrators and representatives from the Ministries of Lands and Agriculture, were selected to provide insights into national policies affecting agriculture and disaster management. Finally, academic experts from the University of Zimbabwe and Eduardo Mondlane University were interviewed to provide deep contextual knowledge and validatory analysis of the region. This method was chosen because it allowed the researcher to gather rich, nuanced data until the point of saturation was reached, where new data no longer yielded additional insights.

3.7 Data Collection Methods

Data collection methods refer to the systematic approach and techniques used by a researcher to gather information required to answer the research questions. In this study, the researcher employed two specific methods to ensure triangulation and validity: Key Informant Interviews to gather primary data and Documentary Search to gather secondary data. This dual

approach allowed for the corroboration of field narratives with established policy documents and statistical records.

3.7.1 Key Informant Interviews

A key informant interview is a qualitative research method that involves interviewing individuals who have specialized knowledge or expertise about a particular topic. It is an orally administered survey designed to collect in-depth information through direct engagement with participants. In this study, a total of 12 participants were interviewed to capture diverse perspectives ranging from high-level policy insights to grassroots experiences.

To bridge the gap between national policy and local reality, the study engaged different categories of key informants, which explains the variety of participants linked to the purposive sampling method: High-Level Policy Officials: Interviews were conducted with the Director of Legal and Consular Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the Ambassador of Mozambique to Zimbabwe, and the Director of Climate Change and Environmental Management. These officials provided data on national security planning, diplomatic initiatives, and climate adaptation policies.

Local Community Experts: Residents from Cabo Delgado and Manicaland, including farmers, women, and small business owners, were interviewed because they hold informal authority and understand community history and social structures. Information sought from them included personal accounts of livelihood disruptions and local recruitment dynamics.

Community and Religious Leaders: Priests and pastors were interviewed as they are directly involved in community mobilization and often act as mediators, providing data on social cohesion and the exploitation of spiritual vulnerabilities.

Academic Experts: Academics from the University of Zimbabwe, Africa University, and Eduardo Mondlane University were interviewed to utilize their deep contextual knowledge and understanding of local languages to validate findings.

3.7.2 Documentary sources

Documentary research is a systematic investigation and analysis of existing records or documents to gain insights into research problems. In this study, documentary sources were used to complement and verify the data obtained from interviews. The specific secondary sources reviewed included the National Development Strategy 1 (NDS 1) of Zimbabwe, statistical data from Zimstat, the Traditional Leaders Act, and human rights reports from Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. These documents provided essential context regarding legal frameworks, demographic data, and independent assessments of the conflict.

3.8 Validity and Reliability

According to Creswell and Poth (2013), validity refers to the degree to which a sample of test items accurately reflects the test's content. Any measurement device must have it as a necessary component. It has to do with how suitable the tools used are in terms of methodological soundness. It shows how well the data collection and analysis for the study capture the reality being studied (Mahajan, 2017). Assessing the quality and acceptability of research is significantly influenced by its validity. To gather primary data, assess the study's validity of the study, and employ the panel of experts' judgment, semi-structured interviews were used. Based on the suggestions that were made, additional questions were included.

Reliability is the consistency, stability and repeatability of research measurement or findings, (Taherdoost, 2022). Creswell and Poth (2023), notes that a reliable method produces similar results under consistent conditions, ensuring that the data is dependable and free from random error. Mahajan (2017) comments that data that is dependable, genuine, trustworthy,

sure, infallible, authentic, and reputable. Reliability was ensured through structured interview guides, recording of how participants were selected, interviewed and analyzed to allow replication, sharing preliminary findings with a few participants to confirm accuracy and triangulation by comparing interviews with policy documents and academic studies.

3.9 Data Presentation and Analysis

Data presentation was defined as the organized and systematic display of collected information in visual, textual, or tabular formats to facilitate understanding and communication of research findings. In this study, data was presented using narrative descriptions supported by policy implementation timelines and qualitative excerpts. This narrative approach was utilized to vividly determine and portray the participants' experiences, knowledge, and perspectives regarding the study. The presentation was structured according to the research objectives to ensure a logical flow of findings.

Regarding data analysis, the researcher employed Thematic Analysis underpinned by inductive reasoning. Inductive reasoning was used to take detailed observations from the fieldwork and derive conclusions about larger, general occurrences regarding climate change and conflict. The process involved systematically examining, cleaning, transforming, and interpreting the raw data to extract meaningful insights. Specifically, the researcher organized and interpreted the qualitative data to identify recurring patterns, trends, and key findings. To facilitate this process, the data was analyzed manually using Microsoft Word and Excel to code transcripts and categorize emerging themes.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Research ethics are defined by Resnik (2023) as the moral principles, guidelines and standards that govern the conduct of research to ensure integrity, accountability and protection

for all participants, society and the environment. After seeking and obtaining approval from the University, permission was sought from the local authorities to interact with community members. Permission was also be sought from the official for the researcher to identify the participants and carry out the study. The researcher wrote another letter seeking permission to carry out data collection from residents from Cabo del Gado and Manicaland province, women, youths, farmers, small business owners and displaced persons, community leaders, leaders of community based organizations, religious leaders as priests and pastors, district administrators and ministries of Lands and Agriculture in both countries, local universities Including the University of Zimbabwe, Africa University in Zimbabwe and Uduardo Mondlane University in Maputo.

In addition to the above, Informed consent was sought from the participants after carefully and truthfully informing them about the value and relevance of the study and how the findings of the study are to be used. Assurance was given to the participants that their responses would be treated with the confidentiality they deserve and would be used for no other purposes than for this study. The study ensured that the participants are aware of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. In addition, participants who chose to be anonymous were respected and assured that their identities will not be revealed. Finally, the study ensured that the findings are to be reported accurately and objectively and that the participants' identities are protected. These are some of the ethical issues that the researcher has to consider during the research.

3.11 Summary

The present chapter has sought to outline the research philosophy of the present study and located it in qualitative epistemologies of transactional co-constructed realities of interpretivism and relativist ontologies which construe reality as multidimensional. Following on setting out the research philosophy, the present chapter went on to identify the research

design of the present study. This was followed by demarcating the research population for the present study as well as the sample to be considered. The sample procedure for the present study was also outlined in the present study in addition to the instruments to be used in this study. The trustworthiness and authenticity of the research was addressed and the pilot testing method.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The present chapter is seized with the presentation, analysis and interpretation of data gathered through methods and instruments highlighted in the preceding chapter. Data was gathered through key informant interviews and documents from experts, leaders and community members from both Zimbabwe and Mozambique. The participants included the Director of Legal and Consular Affairs from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Zimbabwe), the Ambassador of Mozambique to Zimbabwe, and the Director of Climate Change and Environmental Management (Zimbabwe), alongside community leaders and NGO reports. This chapter presents data gathered through the said instruments. The data is made sense of through analysis and interpretation.

4.2 SECTION A: The Relationship between Climate Change Shocks and Insurgent Recruitment Patterns

To ascertain the relationship between climate change shocks and insurgent recruitment, the researcher posed the following question to the key informants: To what extent do climate change shocks, such as droughts and floods, influence the recruitment patterns of insurgent groups like ISIS-Mozambique?

The Director of Legal and Consular Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (Zimbabwe) stated:

> ‘From our perspective at Foreign Affairs, we observe that climate change, particularly severe weather events like prolonged droughts and devastating floods, doesn't directly cause insurgency but significantly exacerbates existing vulnerabilities. When communities lose their livelihoods – their farms are barren or fishing grounds are depleted – the desperation creates fertile ground for recruitment by groups like ISIS-Mozambique. These groups skill-fully exploit economic grievances and the lack of opportunity, especially among disaffected youth who see no future.’

The Ambassador of Mozambique to Zimbabwe observed:

> ‘In Cabo Delgado, the impact of climate change has been profound and undeniable, acting as a critical enabler for insurgent groups. We've witnessed a dramatic increase in extreme weather events which destroy agriculture and displace coastal communities, many of whom rely on subsistence farming and fishing.’

The Director of Climate Change and Environmental Management (Zimbabwe) noted:

> ‘Our data consistently shows that areas experiencing the most severe climate shocks – whether it's acute water scarcity driving pastoralists into conflict with farmers, or cyclones destroying entire villages also frequently correlate with increased social fragility.’

The three key informants consistently highlight an indirect but powerful link between climate change shocks and insurgent recruitment patterns. All participants agree that climate change acts as a significant multiplier or accelerator of existing vulnerabilities. The Director of Legal and Consular Affairs emphasizes how economic grievances create "fertile ground," while the Ambassador provides a localized perspective on how the destruction of agriculture makes unemployed men "highly susceptible. These findings largely resonate with contemporary academic literature on the climate-security nexus. Research consistently points to climate change as a "threat multiplier." For instance, studies by the UN Security Council (2020) and the International Crisis Group (2021) emphasize how climate impacts degrade livelihoods and weaken governance, thereby creating conditions ripe for radicalization. Moura et al. (2022) illustrate how coastal communities in Cabo Delgado have become more vulnerable to insurgent narratives following climate-related disruptions. The documentary evidence reinforces the interview data, painting a grim picture where climate shocks decimate livelihoods and shatter community spirit. As noted by the Pastor's Network, this creates a "spiritual and material vacuum" exploited by insurgents. This aligns with findings by the World Food Programme (2023) and FAO (2022), which link climate-induced agricultural failures to increased availability of recruits for non-state armed groups.

4.3 SECTION B: The Perceived Grievances Linking Climate Vulnerability, Marginalization and Conflict

The study sought to understand local perceptions regarding their vulnerability. The researcher asked: How do local communities perceive the link between their climate vulnerability, government response, and the ongoing conflict?

The Director of Legal and Consular Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Zimbabwe) stated:

> ‘Communities, especially in our dryer regions, perceive a direct connection between the increasingly harsh climate, their inability to sustain traditional livelihoods like farming, and a broader sense of governmental neglect. They feel that their pleas for assistance, for resilient farming techniques, or for alternative economic opportunities go largely unaddressed. This perceived abandonment, coupled with the daily struggle for survival due to climate shocks, fuels deep-seated grievances that can easily be manipulated.’

The Ambassador of Mozambique to Zimbabwe noted:

> ‘In Cabo Delgado, the communities profoundly link climate vulnerability... to their ongoing marginalization. They often perceive that the central government prioritizes large-scale resource extraction, such as gas projects, over the immediate and urgent needs of climate-affected populations.’

The Director of Climate Change and Environmental Management (Zimbabwe) indicated:

> ‘From our observations, communities experiencing severe climate shocks... often articulate a grievance rooted in perceived environmental injustice. They feel that their suffering is disproportionate, and that the resources for adaptation or recovery are not fairly distributed.’

The findings reveal that communities perceive a direct link between climate vulnerabilities and a sense of marginalization. The Ambassador highlighted the specific grievance regarding resource politics—where gas extraction is prioritized over climate relief—creating a sense of being "second-class citizens." The Director of Climate Change pointed to "environmental injustice" and unfair resource distribution.

These perceived grievances align with studies by the International Crisis Group (2021) and Peters et al. (2022), which highlight how the perception of central government neglect in resource-rich regions creates fertile ground for conflict. The concept of environmental injustice is also well-established in research by the IPCC (2022), which notes that marginalized communities often view climate impacts through the lens of existing inequality and governance failures.

4.4 SECTION C: The Insurgent Narrative on Exploiting Climate Induced Fragility

The study investigated how the insurgent group crafts its message. The participants were asked: In what ways does ISIS-Mozambique strategically frame and exploit climate-related grievances in its propaganda and recruitment narratives?

The Director of Legal and Consular Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Zimbabwe) indicated:

> ISIS-Mozambique effectively capitalizes on the narrative that the state is either incapable or unwilling to protect its own citizens from the ravages of climate change... Their propaganda often paints the state as a corrupt entity that abandons its people to fend for themselves against environmental calamities, thereby positioning themselves as the only viable alternative offering protection and justice in a time of crisis.'

The Ambassador of Mozambique to Zimbabwe said:

> 'The insurgents in Cabo Delgado are very cunning in their propaganda. They directly tell communities, especially after a major cyclone or a prolonged dry spell, that their suffering is a direct result of government neglect and corruption, or even divine punishment.'

The Director of Climate Change and Environmental Management highlighted:

> 'Our analysis indicates that ISIS-Mozambique's narrative often frames climate change impacts as a 'weapon' used by a corrupt system against the marginalized... They offer a false sense of agency and purpose to those who feel utterly powerless against both environmental degradation and perceived state abandonment.'

The data presents a cohesive picture of how ISIS-Mozambique exploits climate-induced fragility. A recurring theme is the narrative framing state failure as the cause of climate suffering. As noted by the Ambassador and the Village Head, insurgents validate this narrative by providing tangible solutions (food, water) that the state failed to deliver. The Faith-Based NGO reveals the ideological dimension, where climate disasters are framed as "divine retribution."

These insights strongly align with research by Peters et al. (2022) and Moura et al. (2022), which demonstrate the group's opportunistic exploitation of governance gaps. Adamo and Verhoeven (2022) similarly highlight how such groups weave environmental grievances into anti-state rhetoric to legitimize violence.

4.5 SECTION D: The Regional Security Implications of the Spill-Over Risk to Zimbabwe

The study assessed the threat to neighboring countries. The key informants were asked: What are the potential pathways for the spill-over of the insurgency into Zimbabwe, given the region's shared climate vulnerabilities?

The Director of Legal and Consular Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, indicated:

> 'The spill-over risk to Zimbabwe from the ISIS-Mozambique insurgency is a significant concern for our national security. We closely monitor the movement of people and goods along our shared border.'

The Ambassador of Mozambique to Zimbabwe pointed out:

> 'There is always the risk that as pressure mounts in Cabo Delgado, these groups might seek to establish new operational bases, recruitment grounds, or funding networks in areas perceived as more permeable or economically vulnerable, which could include border regions of Zimbabwe.'

The Director of Climate Change and Environmental Management (Zimbabwe) noted:

> 'Our analysis of climate change impacts in Zimbabwe reveals that our own eastern border regions... are highly susceptible to climate shocks like droughts and floods... This vulnerability could, unfortunately, become an attractive target for insurgent groups seeking to exploit existing grievances, recruit disaffected youth, or establish illicit resource extraction operations if they were to spill over.''

The data highlights a multifaceted spill-over risk. The Director of Legal and Consular Affairs emphasized the threat to economic lifelines like the Beira Corridor, while the Ambassador acknowledged the risk of insurgents seeking new bases when pressured. Crucially, the Director of Climate Change and the Environmental NGO highlighted that Zimbabwe's own climate-stressed border regions and shared river basins create vulnerabilities that could be exploited.

These findings align with the literature on conflict spill-over. Studies by the International Crisis Group (2021) emphasize the fluidity of non-state armed groups. Authors like Podder and Zickgraf (2021) emphasize how climate-induced resource scarcity in border communities creates ideal conditions for radicalization by external actors, confirming the validity of the concerns raised by the participants.

4.6 Summary

The chapter provided a detailed examination of the ISIS-Mozambique insurgency, analyzing the intricate ways in which climate change acts as a threat multiplier. The data presented from high-level government officials and community documents revealed that climate stressors translate into conflict drivers by pushing communities into poverty and desperation, which is then exploited by insurgents through sophisticated narratives of state failure and divine retribution. Finally, the chapter established that these dynamics pose a significant spill-over risk to Zimbabwe through shared climate vulnerabilities and economic

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

5.1 Introduction

The chapter provides a brief re-orientation to the research's central theme, the intricate relationship between climate change and conflicts, specifically examining the ISIS-Mozambique insurgency in Cabo Delgado and its potential spill-over effects into Zimbabwe. The chapter synthesizes the key findings from the preceding chapter, draw definitive conclusions based on the research objectives, offers actionable recommendations for various stakeholders and identifies avenues for future research to further deepen understanding of this critical nexus. It sets the stage for a comprehensive wrap-up of the entire research endeavour.

5.2 Summary

Chapter One set the stage by introducing the global context of climate change and conflict, before narrowing the focus to the specific case of the ISIS-Mozambique insurgency in Cabo Delgado and the regional security implications for Zimbabwe. It articulated the problem statement, established the research questions, outlined the study's objectives, highlighted its significance, defined its scope and provided a brief overview of the research methodology.

Chapter Two delved into existing scholarship on the climate-conflict nexus, examining various theoretical perspectives such as environmental security, human security, and grievance-based theories of conflict. It reviewed academic debates surrounding climate change as a "threat multiplier," explored concepts of fragility, vulnerability, and radicalization, and contextualized these within the African continent, laying the conceptual groundwork for the empirical analysis.

Chapter Three detailed the systematic approach undertaken to conduct the research. It described the research design which is qualitative case study approach, the methods used for data collection which included documentary data and key informant interviews the techniques for data analysis included thematic and narrative analysis, the ethical considerations were observed and any limitations acknowledged

Chapter Four was the primary empirical chapter, providing an in-depth analysis of the ISIS-Mozambique insurgency. It explored the socio-economic and political context of Cabo Delgado, meticulously detailing the specific climate change impacts such as droughts, floods and resource scarcity affecting the region. Crucially, it analysed how these climate stressors interacted with pre-existing vulnerabilities, governance failures and natural resource exploitation to exacerbate grievances and create conditions ripe for insurgent recruitment, thereby establishing the direct and indirect pathways linking climate change to the conflict. Chapter Five serves as the concluding section of the dissertation, synthesizing the key findings regarding the nexus between climate change and the ISIS-Mozambique insurgency while offering actionable recommendations for stakeholders. It summarizes the research journey from the study's inception to the empirical analysis, drawing the definitive conclusion that climate change acts as a significant threat multiplier that disrupts traditional livelihoods and exacerbates poverty, thereby creating a fertile ground for insurgent recruitment among marginalized youth. The chapter highlights that communities perceive a strong link between their climate vulnerability and state neglect, a grievance strategically exploited by ISIS-Mozambique's narrative to legitimize their cause and offer alternative governance. Furthermore, it identifies a credible regional security spill-over risk to Zimbabwe and the SADC region through refugee flows, illicit trade, and potential radicalization. The chapter concludes by recommending integrated policy responses for communities and governments,

specifically urging the formal linking of climate adaptation budgets to national security planning to address the root causes of instability.

5.3 Conclusions

The conclusions for the study were based on the research objectives.

5.3.1 The Relationship between Climate Change Shocks and Insurgent Recruitment Patterns

The study concludes that a significant and direct relationship exists between climate change shocks and insurgent recruitment patterns in Cabo Delgado. Climate-induced disasters, such as prolonged droughts and unpredictable floods, have severely disrupted traditional livelihoods based on agriculture and fishing, leading to widespread food insecurity, loss of income, and increased poverty. In an environment where the state's capacity to protect its citizens is perceived as weak and legitimate economic opportunities are scarce, marginalized youth become highly susceptible to the promises of economic relief and belonging offered by groups like ISIS-Mozambique. Consequently, the insurgency effectively capitalizes on the desperation created by climate vulnerability, framing their movement as a solution to immediate hardship.

These findings align with established literature which posits that climate change acts as a "threat multiplier" rather than a direct cause of conflict. Scholars like Hendrix and Salehyan (2012) and Homer-Dixon (1999) have long argued that environmental stress exacerbates existing vulnerabilities, disrupting agrarian livelihoods and incentivizing individuals to join insurgent groups for resource access. Furthermore, recent reports by the UN Security Council (2020) and the International Crisis Group (2021) corroborate that climate impacts degrade livelihoods and weaken governance, thereby creating conditions ripe for radicalization by non-state armed groups.

5.3.2 The Perceived Grievances as to how Communities Link Climate Vulnerability, Marginalization and Conflict

The research reveals that communities in Cabo Delgado explicitly perceive a strong linkage between their climate vulnerability, their marginalization, and the ongoing conflict. Local populations frequently articulate grievances connecting the failure of traditional livelihoods due to climate change with perceived governmental neglect, corruption, and an unequal distribution of wealth generated from natural resources. This sense of profound injustice, where communities feel excluded from development while bearing the brunt of environmental degradation, fosters an environment where violent extremism can take root as the state's inability to provide adaptive solutions is interpreted as proof of its uncaring nature.

This corresponds with the Relative Deprivation Theory propounded by Gurr (1970), which suggests that conflict arises when groups perceive a significant discrepancy between their expectations and their actual capabilities. Literature by Adger (2010) and Watts (1983) emphasizes that communities' perceptions of fairness in disaster response and resource distribution are critical, as vulnerability is often viewed as a product of historical and structural inequalities. Additionally, political ecology perspectives highlight how the unequal distribution of environmental risks reinforces marginalization, fueling resentment that can be exploited by conflict actors.

5.3.3 The Insurgent Narrative on how ISIS-Mozambique Exploits Climate Induced Fragility

The study concludes that ISIS-Mozambique strategically exploits climate-induced fragility within its narrative to gain legitimacy and recruit members. The group integrates the severe impacts of climate change into its propaganda, framing environmental disasters as either divine punishment for a "corrupt" government or as direct consequences of the state's failure.

By offering an alternative system of governance and immediate material assistance to dispossessed youth, the insurgency presents itself as a viable solution to problems compounded by climate change, allowing it to capitalize on existing vulnerabilities.

Previous literature supports this finding, noting that insurgent groups often construct narratives that reflect specific goals and target audiences by exploiting local grievances. Raleigh and Kniveton (2012) observed that groups in the Sahel frame climate-induced hardship as a consequence of government neglect to justify violent actions. Furthermore, studies by Peters et al. (2022) and Enli (2017) confirm that insurgents capitalize on "governance vacuums" by providing basic services and framing disasters as divine punishment to mobilize support and legitimize their authority.

5.3.4 The Regional Security Implications on the Spill-Over Risk to Zimbabwe

The research concludes that the spill-over risk of the ISIS-Mozambique insurgency to Zimbabwe and the broader SADC region is significant and multi-faceted. This risk manifests through channels such as refugee flows straining humanitarian resources, the cross-border movement of illicit goods and radicalized individuals, and the potential for insurgent ideology to inspire marginalized populations within Zimbabwe facing similar climate-related stresses. Consequently, the conflict in Cabo Delgado is not an isolated incident but a regional security concern requiring comprehensive, collaborative strategies.

This conclusion mirrors the tenets of Contagion Theory, which suggests that conflicts can spread across borders through shared grievances and demonstration effects. Literature by Johnstone and Mazo (2011) argues that climate change exacerbates these processes by increasing displacement and weakening state capacity in neighbouring countries, making them susceptible to conflict diffusion. Additionally, regional assessments by the International Crisis Group (2021) and the IPCC (2022) emphasize that climate-induced resource scarcity and

economic hardship in border communities create ideal conditions for radicalization, validating the concern for regional instability.

5.4 Recommendations

To the Government of Mozambique

The government is recommended to urgently address the root causes of grievances by ensuring the transparent and equitable distribution of benefits from natural resource extraction, particularly from the gas projects in Cabo Delgado. Fieldwork findings indicated that communities perceive a direct link between their marginalization, the extraction of wealth by the state, and their vulnerability to climate shocks. Therefore, revenue from these resources must be reinvested into public service delivery and climate-resilient infrastructure in the north to counter the insurgent narrative of state neglect and restore government legitimacy.

To the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Zimbabwe

The Government of Zimbabwe is recommended to proactively strengthen socio-economic resilience in the eastern border regions, particularly Manicaland, to mitigate the risk of conflict spill-over. Since the study identified that climate-induced economic precarity in border communities' makes youth vulnerable to recruitment, the government should prioritize youth employment schemes and climate-smart agricultural support in these areas. This "soft security" approach will reduce the pool of disaffected individuals susceptible to radicalization by proxy or cross-border infiltration.

To the Southern African Development Community (SADC)

SADC is recommended to formally integrate climate security risk assessments into its regional conflict prevention and mission planning frameworks. The study found that the insurgency exploits trans-boundary climate hazards and displacement flows. Therefore, SADC

should establish a regional early warning system that tracks climate anomalies alongside security data, allowing for coordinated, preemptive interventions that address both humanitarian needs and security threats before they escalate across borders.

To Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Humanitarian Agencies

NGOs operating in the region are recommended to shift their focus from purely emergency relief to long-term livelihood restoration and climate adaptation. The findings revealed that insurgents gain legitimacy by filling the "service vacuum" left by the state and aid agencies after climate shocks. To counter this, humanitarian actors must implement sustainable projects such as drought-resistant farming and water harvesting infrastructure—that restore community self-sufficiency and reduce the reliance on insurgent-provided resources.

To Local Community Leaders (Traditional and Religious)

Traditional and religious leaders are recommended to revitalize indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms and foster inter-generational dialogue to maintain social cohesion. The study showed that insurgents exploit the breakdown of traditional social structures caused by displacement and use distorted religious narratives to recruit desperate youth. Leaders must therefore create inclusive platforms where youth grievances are heard and addressed locally, rebuilding the moral fabric of the community to serve as a bulwark against extremist ideologies.

5.5 Areas for Further Study

This study focused on a qualitative assessment of the relationship between climate change and the ISIS-Mozambique insurgency in Cabo Delgado, specifically analysing recruitment patterns and the spill-over risks to Zimbabwe. Future scholars should build upon this by conducting quantitative research to statistically measure the correlation between

specific climate variables and conflict incidence, or by investigating the differential impacts of climate-conflict dynamics on gender.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Research Instruments

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade in Zimbabwe.

For:The Director of legal and consular affairs department.

1. How does Zimbabwe view the impact of climate change on regional stability and security?

2. Are there ongoing diplomatic initiatives between Zimbabwe and Mozambique regarding conflict management linked to climate change?

3. What role does Zimbabwe play in regional forums addressing climate change and conflict in Southern Africa?

4.How can bilateral or multilateral cooperation be strengthened to address the climate-conflict nexus?

5.What measures are there to ensure that Zimbabwe's foreign policy effectively addresses the challenges of climate refugees and associated legal implications?

6.How does Zimbabwe engage with international organizations (e.g., UN, AU, SADC) to enhance regional legal frameworks addressing the intersection of climate change and conflict?

7.Are there specific bilateral agreements with Mozambique or other neighboring countries that focus on cooperation in climate change adaptation and conflict resolutions?

Appendix A

The embassy of the State of Mozambique in Zimbabwe.

For:The Ambassador of Mozambique to Zimbabwe.

1. How has the Mozambican government responded to the socio-economic impacts of climate change in relation to security?

2. How can international partnerships address the intersections of climate change and conflict?

3.What are the measures being taken by the Mozambican government to mitigate the effects of climate change in conflict-prone areas?

4.What specific challenges does Mozambique face in securing international funding for climate change and conflict mitigation initiatives?

5.How does the Mozambican government incorporate indigenous knowledge and practices in developing climate adaptation strategies?

6.Are there specific programs aimed at empowering women and youth in Cabo Delgado to take active roles in climate resilience and conflict resolution?

Appendix C

The Ministry of Environment, Climate, Tourism and Hospitality Industry .

For: The Director of Climate change and Environmental Management.

1.What policies has Zimbabwe implemented to combat climate change and its potential conflict implications?

2.How is climate resilience integrated into national security planning in Zimbabwe?

3.Are there any assessments or studies being conducted that link climate change effects to security risks in the region?

4.What specific strategies are in place to enhance community awareness and preparedness for climate-related disasters?

5.How does the Ministry engage with local communities in developing and implementing climate adaptation measures?

6.What role does the Ministry play in fostering public-private partnerships for climate change mitigation and adaptation?

7.What specific programs or initiatives are being undertaken to support vulnerable populations affected by climate change?