

THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON NIGERIA'S FOREIGN POLICY AND REGIONAL RELATIONS

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Abstract

Climate change poses significant threats to Nigeria's environment, economy, and regional relations. Rising temperatures and erratic rainfall patterns exacerbate droughts, floods, and desertification, impacting agriculture and food security. The contraction of Lake Chad fuels resource competition and migration, straining relations with neighbouring countries. Nigeria's foreign policy now prioritises climate diplomacy, leveraging international agreements like the Paris Agreement to access climate finance and technology. This study examines the impact of climate change on Nigeria's foreign policy and regional relations, highlighting the need for a comprehensive approach to address its far-reaching implications. The research adopts a qualitative design, analysing secondary data from reputable sources, including government publications, international treaties, and academic databases. Key findings indicate that climate change has become a central theme in Nigeria's diplomatic discussions, shaping international cooperation and security strategies. The country's participation in the Paris Agreement serves national interests, attracting climate finance, technology, and capacity-building support. However, gaps remain in domestic awareness and implementation. The study recommends strengthening regional cooperation, integrating climate-resilient agriculture into economic diplomacy and securing international partnerships to mitigate climate impacts. It also emphasises the need for interdisciplinary research approaches, focusing on climate-migration links and

localised adaptation strategies to inform effective policies. By addressing these challenges, Nigeria can enhance its resilience to climate impacts and ensure sustainable development.

Keywords: Climate Change, Nigeria Foreign Policy, Regional Relations, Paris Agreement, Climate Diplomacy, Environmental Degradation.

Introduction

Climate change has transcended environmental boundaries to become a defining challenge for Nigeria's national security and diplomatic architecture. As a major economic power in Africa, Nigeria faces severe environmental disruptions – including desertification, biodiversity loss, and water scarcity – which directly undermine its agricultural base, threaten food security, and lower the standard of living.¹ These domestic pressures, coupled with rising socio-economic instability and health risks, have necessitated a fundamental shift in how the state manages its international engagements to mitigate these newfound threats.² Consequently, the Nigerian government is compelled to redesign its diplomatic strategies, moving from traditional frameworks toward a more proactive, climate-sensitive approach.³

Central to this transformation is Nigeria's participation in international climate agreements, such as the Paris Agreement, which now serve as pillars for the country's global climate diplomacy. By actively engaging in these forums, Nigeria seeks to align its foreign policy with global emission reduction targets while advocating for climate justice. However, the efficacy of this participation is often measured against the reality of domestic implementation, where governance challenges can create a disconnect between international pledges and on-the-ground outcomes. Internationally, countries like those in the European Union have demonstrated

how climate diplomacy can shape negotiation agendas and foster robust partnerships⁴, providing a model for Nigeria as it seeks to elevate its voice within global environmental governance.

Regionally, Nigeria's role in climate governance is critical to the stability of the West African sub-region. The Lake Chad Basin serves as a poignant example of the intersection between climate security and diplomatic necessity; environmental degradation here acts as a threat multiplier, exacerbating resource scarcity and deepening regional instability. This crisis necessitates proactive, collaborative management protocols – a domain where ECOWAS cooperation on climate-related issues is increasingly vital.⁵ Furthermore, climate-induced migration across West Africa, driven by extreme weather events like flooding and regional desertification, has become a primary driver of cross-border tensions. As fragile states struggle to cope, these dynamics impact foreign policy goals, making it essential for Nigeria to lead in regional efforts that promote sustainable development and collective environmental management.⁶

Ultimately, the climate crisis functions as both a catalyst for conflict and an opportunity for regional cooperation. While some nations may prioritise short-term economic gains over long-term sustainability, Nigeria's foreign policy response must integrate climate adaptation into its national interest. By strengthening institutional frameworks and fostering community-driven initiatives, Nigeria can enhance its resilience while contributing to regional peace).⁷ This study aims to explore the impact of environmental challenges – specifically desertification, flooding, and resource scarcity – on Nigeria's foreign policy, national interests, and its diplomatic relations with neighbouring states, providing a comprehensive analysis of how the nation navigates this complex, climate-influenced geopolitical landscape.

Statement of the Problem

The impact of climate change on Nigeria's foreign policy and regional relations is increasingly profound, yet it remains hindered by a persistent gap between international commitments and domestic implementation.⁸ While Nigeria has actively aligned its foreign policy with global climate frameworks—most notably the Paris Agreement—scholars have identified a significant disconnect between these high-level international pledges and the reality of domestic action. This inertia is primarily attributed to deep-seated governance deficits and institutional weaknesses that impede the translation of policy into practice.⁹ Although there has been some progress in renewable energy and emission reduction initiatives, these efforts are often viewed as more rhetorical than practical, underscoring a critical need for the more effective utilization of international donor funds and domestic resources.¹⁰ This lack of substantive progress is further compounded by inadequate strategic planning and insufficient capacity building, which limit the country's ability to respond to pressing environmental threats such as flooding and desertification.

Furthermore, the domestic consequences of climate change have evolved into complex regional challenges. Environmental degradation, particularly in the Niger Delta, exacerbates existing resource conflicts, fuels social inequality, and creates security vacuums that complicate Nigeria's regional leadership and peacekeeping responsibilities. The current absence of robust, community-driven, and participatory governance models continues to undermine the efficacy of Nigeria's diplomatic engagements in the West African sub-region. To bolster Nigeria's global standing and ensure regional stability, there is an urgent necessity for the state to strengthen its institutional frameworks, promote

economic diversification, and rigorously align its climate policies with overarching national development goals.¹¹

Methods

This study adopts a robust qualitative research design centred on the systematic application of document analysis to critically examine the complex nexus between environmental stressors and Nigeria's diplomatic outcomes. To ensure a comprehensive and replicable foundation, the research employs a meticulous search strategy across reputable academic databases—including Google Scholar, JSTOR, and ResearchGate—and institutional repositories, most notably the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA) archives and official government portals. By utilising precise Boolean operators to isolate pertinent literature published between 2010 and 2026, the study curates a final corpus of 45 core documents, comprising 15 primary institutional sources, such as the Climate Change Act 2021, the nation's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and Lake Chad Basin Commission communiqués, alongside 30 secondary academic sources.¹²

These documents are subjected to a rigorous, three-stage thematic coding process involving open, axial, and selective coding, which is meticulously documented in a formal codebook to minimise researcher bias, ensure data reliability, and prevent definitional drift. Through this systematic methodology, fragmented environmental patterns—such as recurring flooding, desertification, and localized resource-based conflicts—are synthesised into broader, high-level thematic clusters, such as climate-induced security challenges. This analytical framework ultimately facilitates a deep, context-driven interpretation of the widening tension between Nigeria's ambitious rhetorical international commitments and

the tangible, practical implementation of its Afrocentric foreign policy, offering vital insights into how these environmental pressures shape the nation's strategic interactions and long-term stability within the West African region.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Environmental Diplomacy Theory

Environmental Diplomacy Theory focuses on how environmental issues—such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and transboundary pollution—redefine the nature of power, negotiation, and cooperation between sovereign states. At its core, the theory posits that ecological challenges are no longer peripheral concerns but are central to national security and foreign policy frameworks. Unlike traditional diplomacy, which focuses on territorial or military gains, environmental diplomacy is driven by the management of global commons and the mitigation of “threat multipliers” that do not respect national borders. The theory suggests that the interdependence created by shared ecosystems compels states to form international regimes, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), to create predictable rules for resource governance and emissions reduction.¹³

In the context of developing nations like Nigeria, Environmental Diplomacy Theory emphasises the intersection of Climate Justice and Economic Diplomacy. The theory highlights a North-South divide, where developing countries argue that their right to economic development—often through fossil fuel extraction—must be balanced against the environmental standards set by historically high-emitting industrialized nations. Some scholars ¹⁴ note that this theory is often tested by power imbalances within international

regimes; while these frameworks provide a platform for Nigeria to advocate for the \$300 billion annual climate finance goal established at COP29, they can also reflect the interests of more powerful states that pressure weaker nations to adopt restrictive environmental policies.¹⁵ Ultimately, Environmental Diplomacy Theory suggests that the success of regional stability, particularly in areas like the Lake Chad Basin, depends on the ability of neighboring states to transition from zero-sum resource competition to collaborative, rule-based environmental management.¹⁶

Environmental Diplomacy Theory is profoundly relevant to this study as it provides a critical framework for understanding how ecological crises have transitioned from peripheral concerns to the core of Nigeria's national security and regional interactions. The theory posits that trans boundary environmental stressors, such as the shrinking of the Lake Chad Basin and erratic flooding along common borders, create a shared vulnerability that traditional territorial diplomacy cannot address in isolation. Instead, these threat multipliers compel Nigeria to engage in continuous negotiation and rule-making with its neighbours to prevent resource-based conflicts and manage climate-induced migration across the West African sub-region. By framing climate change as a diplomatic priority, the theory explains how Nigeria strategically uses international regimes like the Paris Agreement to practice green diplomacy, positioning itself as a regional leader that advocates for climate justice while balancing its domestic reliance on oil revenue with the global imperative for a sustainable energy transition.¹⁷ Environmental Diplomacy Theory can be applied to examine how Nigeria navigates the tension between its domestic environmental vulnerabilities and its international diplomatic obligations, focusing on the negotiation processes, coalition-building strategies, and the challenges of mainstreaming climate

concerns into the nation's Afrocentric foreign policy. This theory effectively highlights how Nigeria attempts to leverage its diplomatic machinery to secure international climate finance and technical cooperation while managing the socio-political fallout of environmental degradation.

The Regime Theory

The Regime Theory, an international relations approach, explains cooperation among states by highlighting regimes' role in mitigating anarchy and collective action problems. It suggests that regimes facilitate cooperation, coordination, and interest harmonisation among nations, despite the anarchic international system.¹⁸ Nigeria, alongside 195 countries, has joined global efforts to address climate change, setting aside differences to achieve a common goal. The Paris Agreement, with 196 parties, exemplifies this cooperation, with nations committing to mitigate and adapt to climate change.¹⁸ The Regime Theory provides a suitable framework for understanding Nigeria's participation in this global initiative, highlighting the role of regimes in fostering cooperation amidst anarchy.

Regime Theory provides a robust analytical framework for understanding how international norms, rules, and decision-making procedures – such as those established by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement – shape Nigeria's foreign policy and regional interactions. Proponents of the theory argue that these international regimes facilitate cooperation by reducing transaction costs and providing a structured environment for states to address collective action problems like global warming. For Nigeria, participating in the climate regime allows the nation to align its "Afrocentric" foreign policy with global standards, leveraging the regime's transparency and finance mechanisms to advocate for climate

justice and the \$300 billion annual climate finance goal established at COP29. However, critics of Regime Theory contend that these frameworks often reflect the power dynamics and interests of dominant Western states, potentially pressuring developing nations like Nigeria to curtail oil-based economic growth in favour of emission targets set by more powerful global actors. Consequently, Nigeria's regional relations are increasingly defined by its ability to navigate these regime-imposed constraints while collaborating with neighbours in the Lake Chad Basin to manage the shared environmental "threat multipliers" that challenge regional stability.¹⁹

Regime Theory offers the necessary lens to assess the efficacy and constraints of the international and regional frameworks to which Nigeria is a signatory, such as the Paris Agreement and the Lake Chad Basin Commission mandates. By applying Regime Theory, the research can evaluate the extent to which these institutional regimes influence Nigeria's domestic policy reforms, identify the systemic gaps that contribute to the "rhetoric-versus-practice"²⁰ implementation deficit, and determine how regional institutional structures facilitate or hinder collective responses to transboundary climate threats like resource-based conflict and forced migration. Together, these theories allow for a holistic interrogation of how Nigeria not only interacts with external governance regimes but also how those regimes shape, and are shaped by, the country's evolving regional security and diplomatic priorities.

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

The Concept of Foreign Policy

The concept of foreign policy lacks a universally accepted definition, prompting reference to various scholarly

interpretations describe foreign policy as a range of activities states undertake to influence other international actors and promote national objectives globally, implying a power dynamic among actors pursuing self-interest. It as the guiding principles governing a state's interactions with the international environment.²¹ views foreign policy as a nation's reaction to external stimuli, encompassing friendly, aggressive, or neutral responses. This reactive nature suggests that Nigeria's engagement with the Paris Agreement, including signing and ratification, constitutes an expression of its foreign policy.

Foreign policy refers to a state's program of decisions and actions in relation to its external environment, aimed at achieving long-term and short-term objectives, shaped by its domestic environment.²² notes that foreign policy is a struggle for influence, while ²³ defines it as a system of activities to change other states' behaviour and adjust to the international environment. It involves ways states attempt to change and succeed in changing other states' behaviour.²⁴ views foreign policy as a state's actions towards the external environment, influenced by domestic conditions.

Nigeria's foreign policy post-independence prioritised leadership in African affairs over national development, with ²⁵ noting two key characteristics: it was an external manifestation of sovereignty and reactive to external forces rather than a strategic tool for addressing national issues. This approach stemmed from historical context, with Nigeria's early foreign policy engagements driven by the East-West conflict, limiting its use as an instrument for economic transformation, a pattern that persisted until the end of the 20th century.²⁶

The Concept of Climate Change

Climate change, a pressing global issue, refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns, primarily driven

by human activities since the 1800s, such as burning fossil fuels.²⁷ The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) defines climate change as a change which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and an addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods.²⁸ The rapid rate of climate change in recent times poses a significant threat to humanity, affecting every aspect of life.²⁹ The severity of its impact necessitates urgent attention and sustainable solutions, prompting world leaders and civil society to build international partnerships to address the challenges.³⁰

The Concept of Regional Integration

Regional integration is a multifaceted process where contiguous states collaborate to remove trade, investment, and movement barriers, aiming to create a unified market.³¹ Driven by economic growth, stability, and security needs, it involves economic agreements and political cooperation, often seen as a strategy to cope with global challenges and foster development. Regional integration faces challenges like varying commitment levels and governance needs, with success varying across regions.³² Africa's integration efforts, intensifying post-WWWII, still face hurdles, while Europe's model shows differentiated integration. Effective governance and balancing national and regional interests are critical for success, making regional integration a vital strategy for growth and stability.

The Concept of Climate Diplomacy

Climate diplomacy refers to international negotiations, agreements, and cooperation among nations to address global climate change issues, involving governments, international organisations, and NGOs working together to mitigate

greenhouse gas emissions, adapt to climate impacts, and support sustainable development. The aim is to establish binding or voluntary commitments through treaties like the Paris Agreement, promoting collective interest of member states. However, challenges persist, including conflicting national interests, mistrust between developed and developing countries, and enforcement of commitments. Success depends on compromise, transparency, and real political will. The UNFCCC governs the global climate diplomacy regime through the Paris Agreement, with key milestones from COP29 including climate finance (\$300 billion annually by 2035), carbon market advancement, loss and damage funds, and gender inclusion. Nigeria, a party to the Paris Agreement, actively participated in COP29, advocating for climate justice, securing climate finance, and pushing for stronger global commitments for African and developing nations.³³

Contextual Literature

Climate change has become a pivotal issue in international politics, redefining global alliances, trade, and diplomacy. For developing nations like Nigeria, the Paris Agreement presents both opportunities and challenges. Adopted in 2015, the agreement aims to limit global temperature rise and promote sustainable development through nationally determined contributions (NDCs). Nigeria's foreign policy prioritises Africa, economic diplomacy, and national interests, but climate change now demands environmental sustainability be integrated into its framework. Despite signing and ratifying the Paris Agreement, implementation and its impact on foreign policy decisions remain uncertain. ³⁴The Paris Agreement, adopted in 2015, aims to combat climate change by limiting global warming to well below 2°C, preferably 1.5°C, through nationally determined contributions (NDCs).³⁵ Key provisions

include temperature goals, a transparency framework for monitoring progress, and support for climate adaptation and finance in developing countries.³⁶ While praised for its inclusive approach, critics argue the voluntary nature of NDCs may hinder effectiveness in achieving climate targets.³⁷

Nigeria has been actively addressing climate change issues, aligning its efforts with the Paris Agreement. Under former President Buhari, Nigeria participated in every Conference of Parties (COP) and developed its Nationally Determined Commitments (NDC) to tackle climate change in key sectors like energy, agriculture, and waste management. Nigeria's Climate Change Act, 2021, provides a framework for climate change actions and establishes the National Council on Climate Change. The Paris Agreement aligns with Nigeria's foreign policy objectives, promoting international cooperation and respect for international treaties. Nigeria's participation in the agreement demonstrates its commitment to addressing climate change, a major challenge facing the country. The agreement has also promoted African integration and solidarity, with Nigeria pushing for climate justice and funding for African countries.

Nigeria's foreign policy has been characterised as Afrocentric, prioritising African unity and cooperation. Former President Buhari has been a strong voice for climate justice, advocating for African countries' rights to extract oil resources and access funding for climate change mitigation. However, there is poor awareness in Nigeria about climate change and the Paris Agreement, with many Nigerians unaware of the agreement's potential benefits.³⁸ The Paris Agreement has the potential to boost Nigeria's economy and promote sustainable development through funding, technology transfer, and capacity building. The agreement's provisions on financial assistance and technology transfer can support Nigeria's agricultural sector, promoting smart agriculture and reducing

losses. However, critics argue that the agreement may also perpetuate power imbalances, with developed countries influencing developing countries' behaviour.

Upon taking office, President Buhari prioritised addressing climate change to foster sustainable economic growth and reduce Nigeria's carbon footprint. Former Minister of Environment, Mohammed H. Abdullahi, hailed him as Nigeria's number one Climate Change champion.³⁹ The administration emphasised Africa's vulnerability to climate change, citing UN reports, and reaffirmed Nigeria's commitment to international carbon emission targets. The administration linked climate change to insecurity and economic challenges, seeking to address these issues through foreign policy. The administration strengthened regional relations, fought Boko Haram, promoted intra-African trade, and re-established ties with global powers like the US and China. These efforts aligned with Nigeria's foreign policy agenda, including commitments to the Paris Agreement. Nigeria's participation in the Paris Agreement serves national interests, attracting climate finance, technology, and capacity-building support. The agreement promotes African integration, climate justice, and international cooperation, aligning with Nigeria's constitutional foreign policy objectives. Despite policy efforts, climate change remains a significant threat, exacerbating conflicts, food insecurity, and economic challenges.

Nigeria's foreign policy has traditionally prioritised African unity, non-interference, and economic cooperation, but inconsistencies and capacity challenges have impacted its international standing.⁴⁰ Under the current government of President Tinubu, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has suffered a decline in capacity and influence, affecting policy shaping and presentation on the global stage.⁴¹ The current administration introduced a "4D" foreign policy framework

to enhance Nigeria's global projection,⁴² but initial actions have faced criticism, contributing to a perception of Nigeria as "diplomatically diminished."⁴³ However, Nigeria has a strong track record of regional integration, boundary dispute resolution, and security support in West Africa. The Tinubu administration's establishment of the Presidential Climate Action Committee (PCAC) and the Office of the Special Presidential Envoy on Climate (OSPEC) signals a shift towards centralised climate governance, aiming to position Nigeria as a regional leader in climate diplomacy.⁴⁴

Climate Change Impacts in Nigeria

Climate change in Nigeria manifests through various environmental challenges, including droughts, floods, and desertification, significantly impacting the country's ecosystems, agriculture, and socio-economic stability.⁴⁵ Rising temperatures and erratic rainfall patterns exacerbate these issues, leading to severe consequences for food security and human health. The effects are particularly pronounced in Northern Nigeria, where agriculture is heavily reliant on rain-fed systems. These climatic changes necessitate urgent mitigation and adaptation strategies to safeguard the environment and promote sustainable development.⁴⁶

Droughts and desertification are major concerns in Northern Nigeria, with increased temperatures and reduced rainfall leading to higher evaporation rates and desert encroachment.⁴⁷ This results in the loss of arable land, exacerbating food insecurity and rural poverty. Adaptive strategies such as climate-resilient crops and sustainable land management are recommended to mitigate these effects. Climate change has a profound impact on Nigeria's food security, with a unit variation leading to a 106% impact on agricultural productivity.

The country's rainfall patterns have become increasingly erratic, with more frequent extreme precipitation events, leading to far-reaching consequences for Nigeria's vegetative zones. Desertification has led to herder migration, conflicts with farmers, and recurring floods damaging crops and disrupting supply chains. Climate-related events cause food supply disruptions, leading to delayed market arrivals.⁴⁸ By 2100, climate change may lead to total losses in agricultural sectors of countries like Zambia, Niger, and Chad. Nigeria's GDP could shrink by 6-30% (\$100 billion to \$460 billion) by 2050 due to climate change impacts.

To address these challenges, Nigeria must prioritise climate-resilient agriculture, sustainable land management, and adaptation strategies. This includes promoting green technologies, community awareness, and coordinated efforts from policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders. By leveraging these opportunities, Nigeria can enhance its resilience to climate impacts and ensure sustainable development. Key strategies include implementing climate-resilient crops, improving water management, and supporting affected communities. With 83 million people in 46 countries needing emergency food aid, urgent action is needed to address Africa's food insecurity, exacerbated by climate change.⁴⁹

Climate Change and Nigeria's Regional Relations

Climate change serves as a critical driver of Nigeria's shifting relations with its neighbours, primarily by intensifying competition over dwindling natural resources. The dramatic contraction of Lake Chad has created a regional security sub complex involving Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, where environmental degradation undermines economic stability and fuels political friction. As the lake's water levels fall, the resulting scarcity has triggered large-scale climate-

induced migration, forcing environmental refugees and internally displaced persons across borders, which significantly strains diplomatic ties and regional cooperation.⁵⁰ This ecological crisis necessitates a multi-faceted approach, as the interplay between environmental stressors and socio-political tensions continues to foster instability across these vulnerable borders.

Empirical evidence suggests that these climatic shifts act as threat multipliers, particularly in Nigeria's North-Central and Middle Belt regions. Diminishing access to arable land, water, and fodder has intensified violent clashes between farmers and herders, as climate variability forces migratory groups into already settled territories.⁵¹ Similarly, in Northwest Nigeria, rising temperatures and reduced precipitation have been linked to a surge in armed banditry, as the fragility of the local environment creates a cycle of conflict that threatens broader national and regional stability.⁵² These conflicts are not merely internal issues but have cross-border implications that require synchronized management between Nigeria and its neighbours to prevent regional socio-economic collapse.

The vulnerability of specific zones, such as the Niger Delta, further complicates Nigeria's regional standing and domestic policy requirements. This region faces acute threats from rising sea levels and coastal erosion, which are worsened by the environmental degradation associated with oil activities.⁵³ Such ecological damage leads to the displacement of entire settlements and threatens the viability of shared maritime resources. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive policy frameworks that align with sustainable development goals while accounting for the unique socio-political contexts of the coastal and border communities.⁵⁴ Without urgent and integrated adaptation strategies, the

persistent degradation of these habitats will continue to undermine Nigeria's capacity for stable international trade and regional diplomacy.

While climate-induced challenges often spark tension, they also present unique opportunities for renewed regional cooperation through shared survival interests. The collective threat posed by the reduction of Lake Chad and erratic flooding—such as the issues shared with Benin—compels Nigeria and its neighbours toward collaborative resource management and unified environmental protocols. However, research indicates that many current mitigation strategies remain inadequate due to a lack of long-term planning and multi-stakeholder involvement.⁵⁵ To achieve lasting stability, it is essential to move beyond reactive governance and establish interdisciplinary action plans that treat climate resilience as a core pillar of regional foreign policy, ensuring that the quest for resource security leads to cooperation rather than conflict.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Diplomacy and International Climate Governance

Climate change has transitioned from a peripheral environmental issue to a fundamental pillar of Nigeria's foreign policy, characterizing a strategic shift toward green diplomacy. Under previous and current administrations, Nigeria has leveraged its Afrocentric mandate to champion climate justice, consistently advocating for the rights of African nations to access equitable climate finance and essential technical support. The enactment of the Climate Change Act (2021) and the centralization of climate governance under President Tinubu's "4D" framework demonstrate a clear intent to utilise environmental resilience as a mechanism for regional leadership. However, despite these high-level diplomatic

achievements, a persistent gap in domestic awareness regarding international obligations continues to threaten the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of these commitments.⁵⁶

Regional Relations and Trans boundary Cooperation

Nigeria's regional engagement is increasingly defined by the necessity of collaborative resource management. Because environmental stressors such as desertification and flooding transcend national borders, Nigeria's foreign policy is shifting toward prioritizing synchronized regional governance. This transition is essential for working effectively through institutional bodies such as the Lake Chad Basin Commission and ECOWAS. Future policy must move beyond the signing of high-level treaties; it requires the implementation of multi-stakeholder and localized action plans that specifically address the socio-economic vulnerabilities of border and coastal communities to ensure regional stability.

Security and Conflict Mitigation

Environmental degradation acts as a potent threat multiplier that exacerbates socio-political tensions and complicates security. The dramatic contraction of Lake Chad has necessitated a regional security sub-complex, forcing Nigeria to manage complex issues of cross-border migration and resource competition with Niger, Chad, and Cameroon. Furthermore, empirical evidence links climatic variability – specifically rising temperatures and reduced precipitation in the North-Central and Northwest regions – to increased armed banditry and intensified farmer-herder conflicts. Consequently, security and peacekeeping strategies must now integrate climate adaptation as a core component to address the root causes of these conflicts.

Economic Diplomacy and Sustainable Development

The economic stakes of climate inaction are severe, with projections suggesting that climate change could shrink Nigeria's GDP by up to 30% by 2050, necessitating a radical integration of climate-resilient agriculture into the nation's economic diplomacy. Current policy frameworks must prioritise securing international partnerships that facilitate technology transfer and the adoption of "smart agriculture" to safeguard food security.

Conclusion

Climate change poses significant threats to Nigeria's environment, economy, and regional relations. Rising temperatures and erratic rainfall patterns exacerbate droughts, floods, and desertification, impacting agriculture and food security. The Lake Chad's contraction fuels resource competition and migration, straining relations with neighboring countries.

Nigeria's foreign policy now prioritizes climate diplomacy, leveraging international agreements like the Paris Agreement to access climate finance and technology. The government has established institutions like the Climate Change Act (2021) and the Presidential Climate Action Committee to address these challenges.

However, gaps remain in domestic awareness and implementation. Nigeria must enhance regional cooperation, adopt climate-resilient agriculture, and secure international partnerships to mitigate climate impacts. Research should focus on interdisciplinary approaches, climate-migration links, and localised adaptation strategies to inform effective policies.

Recommendations

- i. Nigeria has committed to six environmental policy actions between 2016 and 2021. Despite having an

environmental policy in the 1999 constitution, implementation remains minimal. Effective implementation is crucial in addressing climate change, as insufficient action puts a vast population at risk. The government should prioritise funding for these policies to ensure their success.

- ii. Strengthen regional cooperation through bodies like the Lake Chad Basin Commission and ECOWAS to address Trans boundary environmental challenges. Centralise climate governance by continuing to strengthen institutions like the Presidential Climate Action Committee and the Office of the Special Presidential Envoy on Climate to drive Nigeria's climate diplomacy.iii. Integrate climate-resilient agriculture into economic diplomacy to safeguard food security and promote sustainable development. Pursue partnerships facilitating technology transfer, climate finance, and capacity-building support to address climate impacts.
- iv. Advocate for equitable global climate regimes that serve developing nations' interests and address power imbalances in international climate negotiations. Invest in data-driven research and localised adaptation strategies for high-risk zones like the Niger Delta and Lake Chad Basin to enhance community resilience.

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