

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Climate change has become an urgent global issue, with impacts that transcend environmental boundaries and affect social, economic, and political aspects across the globe. This phenomenon not only alters weather patterns and ecosystems but also exacerbates resource inequality, triggers mass migration, and increases the potential for conflict in vulnerable regions (Action U. N., 2024). One of the most affected regions is the Sahel in Africa, which includes countries such as Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania, Senegal, Nigeria, Sudan, and Eritrea. This region faces serious challenges due to climate change, including extreme drought, land degradation, and water crises, which are exacerbated by global temperature rise and rainfall variability. These conditions have led to a scarcity of vital resources such as water and fertile land, triggering tensions between communities, such as between farmers and herders, and exacerbating regional instability due to competition over increasingly limited resources (Committee, 2023).

The Sahel region, located at the border between the Sahara Desert in the north and the tropical savannah in the south, is an ecologically vulnerable transition zone highly susceptible to climate change. Geographically, the Sahel stretches 5,900 kilometres from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea, covering semi-arid areas with low and unpredictable annual rainfall, typically between 200 and 600 mm (Yang , Gao , Lei, Meng, & Zhou, 2022). The Sahel ecosystem is characterized by grasslands, shrublands, and scattered acacia trees, but environmental degradation has transformed this landscape into barren land in many areas. According to a report by data from the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), about 45% of land in Africa has experienced some degree of desertification, of which 55% is at risk of further desertification, reducing the productivity of agriculture and livestock farming (Institute, 2024). The Sahel's population, estimated to exceed 500 million by 2025, largely depends on subsistence agriculture and nomadic livestock herding, making them highly vulnerable to climate change (Menon, 2025). This environmental crisis is exacerbated by high poverty levels, with 70% of the population living below the international poverty line, as well as in some countries (Paul, 2022).



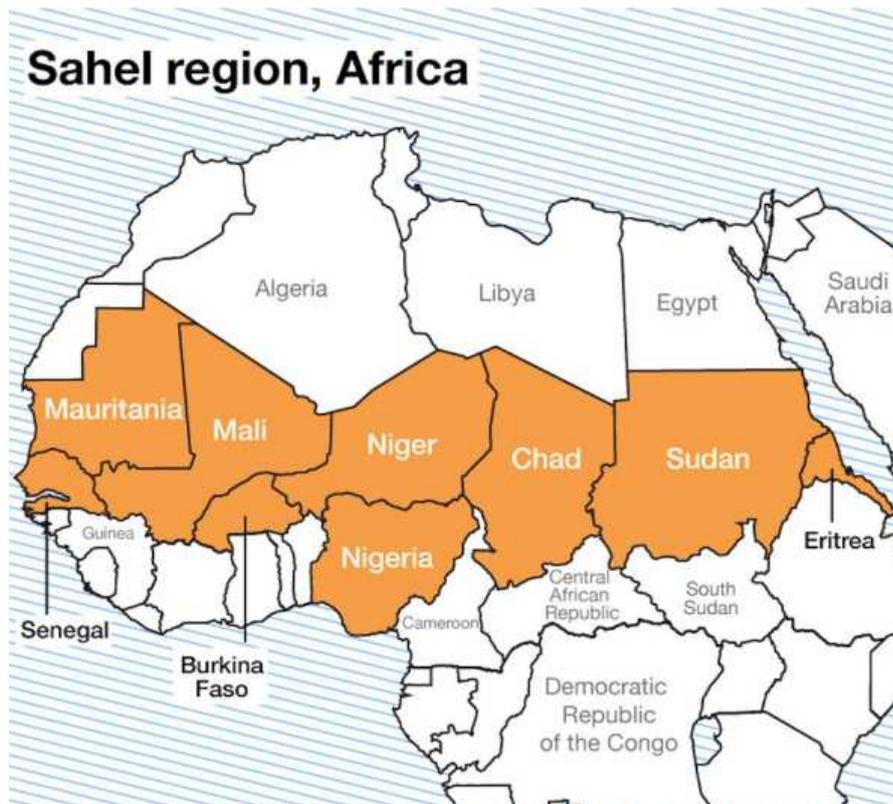


Figure 1.1 Sahel Region Map
 Source: www.theconversation.com (2020)

According to the latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), global temperature increases have heightened the frequency and intensity of extreme weather phenomena, such as prolonged droughts and seasonal floods, which directly impact food and water security in the Sahel (Adil, Eckstein, Kunzel, & Schafer, 2025). Data from the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) shows globally, the average temperature increase is now around 1.3 to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, with 2024 recorded as the warmest year on record. The WMO projects an 80-86% chance that global temperatures will exceed 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels in at least one year between 2025 and 2029, and a 70% chance that the five-year average for 2025-2029 will exceed 1.5°C (Pavlinec, 2025). Recurring droughts, such as those that occurred in 2010–2012, have destroyed crops and caused mass livestock deaths, exacerbating food insecurity. UNEP notes that over 80% of the Sahel's population depends on agriculture and livestock farming, which are highly vulnerable to climate change. As resources

between ethnic groups or communities often arise, such as disputes between farmers in Mali over access to fertile land. In addition, the crisis has triggered a new wave of “climate refugees”, with millions of people leaving their villages for neighboring countries, which in turn has sparked new social tensions (Hocquet &



Davis, 2022). A 2024 report from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that more than 2 million people in the Sahel have been displaced due to climate impacts and related conflicts (Web, 2024).

Resource tensions in the Sahel are not only local in nature but also have an international dimension, given the complexity of interstate relations and the involvement of non-state actors such as armed groups and transnational criminal organizations. Groups such as Boko Haram and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) have exploited social and economic instability to expand their influence, recruiting young people who have lost their livelihoods due to environmental crises (Action C. f., 2024). This crisis has also exacerbated the vulnerability of communities to radicalization, as evidenced by the increase in violent incidents in areas such as Timbuktu and Gao in Mali. In this context, climate diplomacy has emerged as a strategic approach to preventing conflicts triggered by climate change. Climate diplomacy refers to cross-border cooperation efforts between countries, international organizations, and non-governmental actors to address the impacts of climate change through negotiation, resource sharing, and the development of adaptation and mitigation policies. This approach includes initiatives such as cross-border water resource management, investment in environmentally friendly technologies, and strengthening the international legal framework to support climate resilience.

For example, initiatives such as the Paris Agreement (2015) and the COP26 Summit in Glasgow, Scotland, emphasise the importance of global collaboration to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and provide funding for vulnerable countries such as those in the Sahel. The Paris Agreement, signed by 196 countries, sets a target to keep global temperature rise below 1.5°C and provides USD 100 billion per year in funding to support climate adaptation in developing countries (Change, 2020). Additionally, programmes like the Great Green Wall Initiative, launched in 2007 by the African Union, aim to combat desertification by planting an 8,000-kilometre green belt across the Sahel (UNCCD, 2020). By 2024, this initiative had restored over 20 million hectares of land and created thousands of jobs, demonstrating the potential of regional cooperation to reduce resource pressure and prevent conflict. However, the success of

ains limited by the challenges, such as inconsistent funding and local conflicts
mentation.



l efforts, the international response to the climate crisis in the Sahel still faces
enges. Coordination between countries is often hampered by political and

economic differences, while funding for climate adaptation programmes, such as those promised through the Green Climate Fund, is often insufficient or delayed. A 2023 report from the OECD shows that only about 70% of the funds promised for climate adaptation have actually been disbursed, with most allocated to projects in Asia and Latin America, not Africa (Programme U. N., 2023). Additionally, the complexity of conflicts in the Sahel, which involve non-state actors such as armed groups and criminal organizations, adds to the difficulty of implementing diplomacy-based solutions. Recent phenomena, such as the global food crisis exacerbated by supply chain disruptions and geopolitical conflicts, further underscore the urgency of strengthening climate diplomacy. A 2024 report from the World Food Programme (WFP) notes that more than 30 million people in the Sahel face acute food insecurity, which increases the risk of social and political tensions (Programme W. F., 2024).



Figure 1.2 Climate Change Condition in the Sahel Region
Source: www.odi.org. (2023)

On the other hand, the involvement of non-governmental actors has shown significant potential in supporting climate diplomacy. Civil society organizations, such as Oxfam and Action Against Hunger, have been active in providing humanitarian assistance and promoting climate-resilient agricultural practices in the Sahel. Religious communities also play a role, as seen in Indonesia through the Muhammadiyah Climate Center, which promotes environmental community-based climate action. A similar approach could be adopted in the religious leaders have considerable influence in local communities. This multi-approach is important for building community resilience to the impacts of climate change, using the potential for conflict through dialogue and cooperation. However,



climate diplomacy in the Sahel context still needs to be thoroughly evaluated, particularly in terms of its ability to address the root causes of resource tensions and facilitate long-term solutions.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the role of climate diplomacy as an instrument of conflict prevention in the Sahel region, with a focus on the international response to resource tensions caused by climate change. This study will explore how climate diplomacy mechanisms, such as multilateral agreements, regional initiatives, and the involvement of non-state actors, can reduce the risk of conflict in the Sahel. In addition, this study will examine the effectiveness of current international responses, including the challenges and opportunities in implementing a climate diplomacy approach amid complex geopolitical and social dynamics. Thus, this thesis is expected to provide new insights into how climate diplomacy can be a strategic solution to prevent conflict in regions vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, while contributing to the literature on the relationship between the environment, security, and international diplomacy.

1.2. Research Problem

Climate change has exacerbated social tensions in various vulnerable regions, including the Sahel region of Africa. This situation shows that climate change is not only an environmental issue but also a factor that triggers security instability. This study identifies several problem formulations that guide the focus of the research. The following are some of the issues that can be formulated:

1. How is the role of climate diplomacy in responding to and preventing resource-related conflicts in the Sahel?
2. How have responses been made by the international community (countries, international organizations, NGOs, etc.) to the issues of climate change and resource conflicts in the Sahel?
3. To what extent is climate diplomacy effective as an instrument for conflict prevention in the Sahel region?



Objective

Above problem statements, the objectives of this research are as follows:

1. To analyze the role of climate diplomacy in responding to and preventing conflicts triggered by resource tensions due to climate change in the Sahel region.
2. To identify and evaluate the responses of the international community, including countries, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), to the issues of climate change and resource conflicts in the Sahel.
3. To assess the effectiveness of climate diplomacy as an instrument for conflict prevention in the Sahel region, taking into account the existing challenges and opportunities.

1.4. Research Benefits

The benefits or uses that the author hopes to obtain through this research are as follows:

A. Theoretical Benefits

1. **Development of International Relations and Climate Diplomacy Literature:** This research enriches the study of international relations, particularly in the field of climate diplomacy, by analyzing how this approach can be used as a tool for conflict prevention. This research also broadens the understanding of the relationship between climate change, security, and resource conflict dynamics.
2. **Contribution to Environmental Conflict Theory:** By exploring the Sahel case, this research provides new insights into how climate change exacerbates resource tensions and how diplomacy can be a solution, thereby strengthening environmental conflict theory.
3. **Mapping the Role of Non-State Actors:** This research makes a theoretical contribution by analyzing the role of non-state actors, such as NGOs and local communities, in supporting climate diplomacy, which is often overlooked in traditional international relations literature.

B. Practical Benefits

1. **Policy Guidance for Stakeholders:** The results of this study can serve as a reference for governments, international organizations, and NGOs in formulating more effective diplomacy strategies to prevent conflict in the Sahel, including cross-border management and climate adaptation funding.



2. Improved International Coordination: This research identifies challenges and opportunities in the international response, thereby helping to improve coordination among states and non-state actors in addressing the resource crisis in the Sahel.
3. Global Relevance: The findings of this study can be applied to other regions facing similar challenges due to climate change, providing a practical model for the use of climate diplomacy as a tool for conflict prevention in vulnerable areas.

1.5. Conceptual Framework

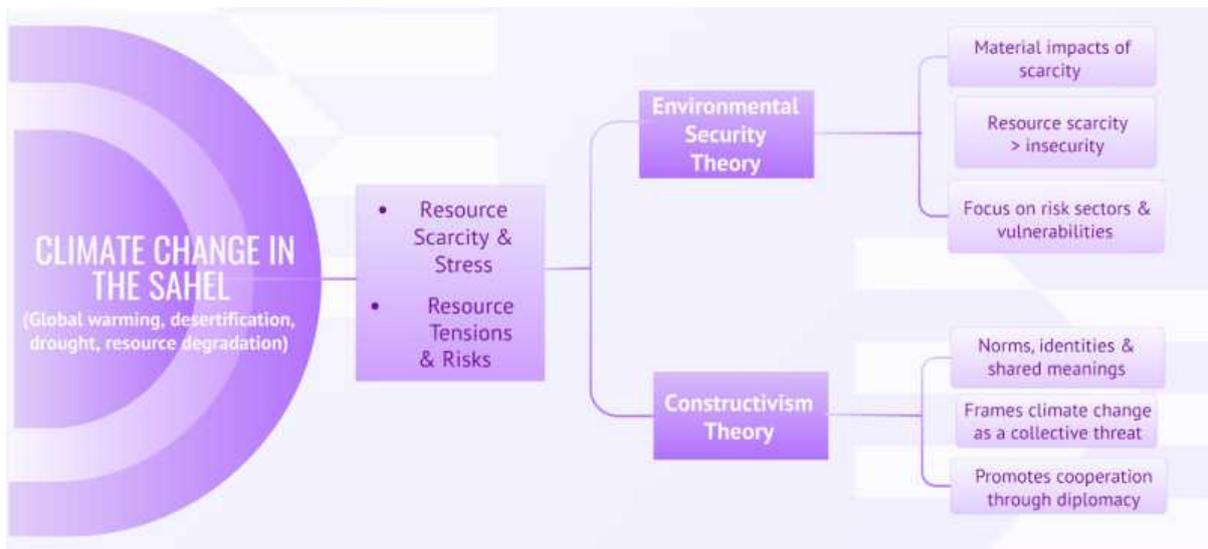


Figure 1.3 Conceptual Framework
Source: Made by the author

There are two main theories used in this study to analyze the role of climate diplomacy as an instrument for conflict prevention in the Sahel region amid resource tensions caused by climate change: Environmental Security Theory and Constructivism Theory. Environmental Security Theory serves as an initial lens for understanding how climate change, such as extreme drought and land degradation in the Sahel, creates non-traditional security threats by triggering resource scarcity that exacerbates social and political tensions. In contrast, Constructivism Theory focuses on the role of ideas, norms, and shared identities in shaping state behaviour and international cooperation.

Within the context of the Sahel, constructivism helps explain how global climate diplomacy, such as the Paris Agreement, UNFCCC and regional agreements, are influenced by conceptions of environmental responsibility, collective identity, and mutual interests. It highlights that cooperation or conflict is not determined solely by material



resource scarcity but also by how actors interpret and construct their interests in relation to climate change.

By combining these two perspectives, this study captures both the material impacts of environmental change and the social dimensions of climate diplomacy, offering a comprehensive framework for analysing conflict prevention efforts in the Sahel region. The following is the theoretical framework used in this research:

A. Environmental Security Theory

Environmental security theory is a conceptual framework in international relations studies that views environmental degradation as a serious threat to human security and state stability. This approach emerged in the early 1990s, particularly through the work of Thomas Homer-Dixon (1994), who highlighted that environmental damage such as drought, desertification, pollution, and degradation of natural resources can trigger insecurity (Masara, *Environment-Conflict Nexus: The Relevance of Thomas Homer-Dixons Environmental Conflict Theory in Africa*, 2021). These threats are not in the form of traditional military attacks but rather non-traditional security threats, threats originating from non-military factors but with the potential to trigger political instability, social unrest, and even armed conflict. Essentially, environmental degradation is seen as a driver of instability because it can disrupt the availability of basic needs such as clean water, food, and shelter.

In a global context, this theory explains that climate change exacerbates already fragile environmental conditions, creating a multidimensional crisis. Environmental damage forces communities to adapt quickly, but such adaptation is often hindered by poverty, weak infrastructure, and limited state capacity. As a result, environmental degradation not only affects ecological aspects but also has implications for the economy, health, migration, and regional security. This requires a broader approach to security, involving cross-sectoral and cross-border cooperation.

The situation in the Sahel illustrates the relevance of the environmental security theory. This semi-arid region is facing rising average temperatures, declining rainfall, and intensified drought. The direct impact is reduced soil fertility, shrinking water reserves, and declining agricultural productivity, which is the backbone of the local economy (Gianesello & Giamberini, 2019). Communities that are highly dependent on subsistence agriculture and pastoralism are becoming increasingly vulnerable to climate shocks. When limited



resources are unable to meet the needs of a growing population, social tensions rise, triggering local conflicts and threatening regional stability.

More than just an ecological issue, this phenomenon has given rise to climate-induced displacement, famine, and increased inter-community violence, such as conflicts between farmers and herders. Thus, environmental security theory offers a crucial analytical lens for understanding that the crisis in the Sahel requires a response that is not only technical or environmental but also diplomatic, political, and security-based. This approach encourages policy integration that combines climate adaptation, sustainable resource management, and the development of regional cooperation mechanisms to prevent future conflicts.

B. Constructivism Theory

Constructivism theory is a theoretical framework in international relations that emphasizes the role of ideas, norms, identities, and social interactions in shaping state behaviour and international cooperation. Emerging prominently in the 1990s through scholars like Alexander Wendt, constructivism challenges the assumptions of traditional theories such as realism and liberalism, which often reduce international politics to material power or institutional mechanisms. Instead, constructivism argues that the international system is socially constructed, meaning that state interests, security priorities, and patterns of cooperation or conflict are shaped by shared meanings rather than predetermined by material conditions alone (Mengshu, 2020).

In the context of climate diplomacy and conflict prevention in the Sahel region, constructivism provides an analytical lens to understand how climate change has gradually been reframed from a purely environmental problem into a shared security concern. The growing recognition that climate-induced challenges such as drought, desertification, and resource scarcity can destabilize societies has influenced the emergence of new global norms around environmental responsibility and cooperation. For instance, international frameworks like the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and regional initiatives such as the Great Green Wall are not simply policy tools



the necessity; they are also products of constructed narratives about collective interdependence, and sustainability (Schipper, Revi, & Preston, 2022).

These narratives are particularly relevant. Severe climate impacts have created competition for water and arable land, contributing to rising conflicts between farmers and

herders, widespread migration, and heightened regional instability. However, how states, international organizations, and local communities perceive and interpret these challenges significantly shapes their responses. Through diplomatic processes, actors redefine their identities from isolated, resource-competing states to members of a shared environmental security community. This is evident in cross-border cooperation on adaptation funding, early-warning systems, and sustainable resource management, where collective action stems not only from necessity but from a socially constructed understanding of mutual dependence and common threats.

Critically, constructivism also highlights the role of discourse and framing in climate diplomacy. The way climate change is talked about as a human security crisis, a development challenge, or an existential threat directly influences policy choices, funding priorities, and regional strategies. By understanding how these narratives evolve, constructivism explains why some diplomatic initiatives succeed while others falter: it is not only about material resources but about whether actors accept, internalize, and act upon shared norms and values.

Thus, in this thesis, Constructivism Theory serves as a crucial analytical tool to explore how climate diplomacy operates as both a process of negotiation and a social practice. It reveals that preventing climate-induced conflicts in the Sahel requires more than technical adaptation measures; it depends on building common identities, fostering mutual trust, and institutionalizing cooperative norms. By viewing climate diplomacy through this lens, the study underscores that effective conflict prevention is achieved when states and communities collectively construct climate change as a shared security challenge, transforming potential competition into opportunities for collaboration.

1.6. Research Methods

A. Type of Research

This study uses a descriptive-explanatory qualitative approach. A qualitative approach was chosen because the topic discussed is complex and involves socio-political dynamics that cannot be reduced to mere numbers or statistical data. Issues such as climate diplomacy,



, and the responses of international actors require a deep understanding of the
s, and relationships between actors. Through a descriptive approach, this
describe the objective conditions regarding the impact of climate change in
the forms of resource tensions that have emerged, and the steps that have been

taken by the international community. Meanwhile, an explanatory approach is used to explain the relationship between climate change and potential conflicts, as well as how climate diplomacy is carried out as an instrument of conflict prevention.

This research is a case study, with the Sahel region as the main focus because it is one of the areas most vulnerable to climate change and humanitarian crises. Data was obtained through literature studies covering international organization reports, policy documents, scientific journals, and relevant news articles containing information about diplomatic interventions and geopolitical conditions in the Sahel. To strengthen the validity of data, the researcher will also conduct a literature review at the National Library of the Republic of Indonesia and gather official records relevant to the research topic. Furthermore, interviews will be conducted with diplomats or representatives from the Embassies of West Africa, Nigeria, and Sudan in Indonesia to gain first-hand insights into the perspectives, challenges, and strategies of countries directly involved in the Sahel region.

B. Data Collection Technique

This study employs qualitative data collection methods through three main techniques, namely library research, documentary analysis, and semi-structured interviews. These techniques were chosen because the research focuses on gathering data from both secondary literature and official perspectives that are relevant to the issues of climate change, resource conflicts, and international diplomacy.

Library research was conducted by reviewing academic literature such as peer-reviewed journal articles, books, research reports, and publications from credible international institutions including the United Nations (UN), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the African Union, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) actively involved in addressing climate and conflict issues in the Sahel region. To strengthen this process, the researcher will also conduct an extensive literature review at the National Library of the Republic of Indonesia to access comprehensive references, both national and international, that support the theoretical and empirical study.



documentary analysis was used to interpret the content and meaning of relevant texts, reports, official diplomatic documents, and international news articles. This approach enabled the researcher to identify patterns, themes, and strategies used by international

actors in applying climate diplomacy as a conflict prevention instrument. After collection, data were organized thematically into categories such as climate impacts, resource conflicts, and diplomatic responses. To ensure accuracy, source triangulation was conducted by cross-checking information from multiple credible references.

Semi-structured interviews will also be conducted with diplomats or representatives from the Embassies of West Africa, Nigeria, and Sudan in Indonesia. The purpose of these interviews is to gather first-hand insights and perspectives from countries that are directly affected by the climate–conflict nexus in the Sahel region. These interviews will help contextualize secondary data, validate findings, and capture the diplomatic narratives that cannot be fully obtained through literature and documents alone.

The selection of all data sources followed specific criteria, namely relevance, credibility, and timeliness. Sources were included if they directly addressed the nexus between climate change, resource tensions, and diplomacy in the Sahel; originated from recognised academic, governmental, or international institutions; and were published within the last 5 years, except for classical theories considered foundational to the research. Supplementary data such as statistical indicators from the World Bank, UNDP, FAO, or IOM, as well as satellite imagery and desertification maps from UNEP or WMO, were also considered to provide empirical context and strengthen the analysis.

C. Data Analysis Technique

The data analysis technique used in this study is qualitative analysis with a content analysis approach. Content analysis is a method used to identify, categorize, and interpret the meaning of data obtained, especially from documents, reports, and literature relevant to the research topic. This approach allows the researcher to explore the meaning contained in the text and relate it to the theoretical framework used. In its application, the researcher will go through several stages of analysis, namely: (1) data selection, which involves filtering and selecting data that is most relevant to the research focus related to climate diplomacy and resource conflicts in the Sahel region, using criteria such as relevance, credibility, and timeliness; (2) data organization, which involves organizing the collected information into thematic categories based on issues such as the role of international actors, forms of conflict, and climate diplomacy strategies, supported by a coding process to classify



themes; and (3) drawing conclusions, which involves compiling a final interpretation of the analyzed data to answer the research questions and support the research objectives.

To ensure the credibility and validity of the findings, this study applies source triangulation, a process of cross-checking information from multiple credible and independent sources to minimize bias in interpretation. For example, statistical data from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) will be verified with reports from other institutions such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), or peer-reviewed academic journals. This method strengthens the reliability of the analysis by confirming that findings are supported by consistent evidence from diverse perspectives.

In addition, data gathered from semi-structured interviews with diplomats or representatives from the Embassies of West Africa, Nigeria, and Sudan in Indonesia will be incorporated into the analysis. The interview transcripts will be coded thematically and compared with findings from documentary and library research, allowing for a deeper understanding of the diplomatic narratives and practical challenges in implementing climate diplomacy. Furthermore, all stages of interpretation in this study will be consistently linked to the theoretical framework that underpins the research.

Specifically, findings will be analyzed through the lens of the Environmental Security Theory and Constructivism Theory; this theoretical grounding ensures that the analysis is not only descriptive but also explanatory, allowing the research to contribute to both academic understanding and practical strategies for preventing climate-induced conflicts in the Sahel region.



CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Environmental Security Theory

Environmental security theory is a significant conceptual framework within the field of international relations that broadens the traditional understanding of security by incorporating environmental factors as critical determinants of human and state stability. Emerging prominently in the early 1990s, this theory was notably advanced by scholars such as Thomas Homer-Dixon (1994), who argued that environmental degradation, including phenomena like drought, desertification, pollution, and the depletion of natural resources, constitutes a profound threat to security. Unlike conventional security threats that are primarily military in nature, environmental security highlights non-traditional security challenges that arise from ecological stressors but have far-reaching consequences for political stability, social cohesion, and even the outbreak of violent conflict (Zhang, 2025).

At its core, environmental security theory posits that the deterioration of the natural environment undermines the availability and accessibility of essential resources such as clean water, food, and shelter. This scarcity can exacerbate existing vulnerabilities within societies, particularly those heavily reliant on natural resources for their livelihoods. The theory thus shifts the focus from state-centric military threats to a more holistic understanding of security that includes environmental sustainability as a prerequisite for peace and stability. It recognizes that environmental degradation can act as a “threat multiplier”, intensifying pre-existing social, economic, and political tensions (Cullum, 2024).

In the contemporary global context, the theory gains even greater relevance as climate change accelerates environmental degradation and magnifies its impacts. Climate change acts as a catalyst that worsens fragile environmental conditions, leading to complex, multidimensional crises. Communities affected by these changes often face the urgent need to adapt to shifting ecological realities. However, adaptation efforts are frequently constrained by poverty, inadequate infrastructure, and limited governance capacity, which hampers effective responses (Safdie, 2024). Consequently, environmental security concerns encompass ecological damage to encompass economic instability, public health challenges, and broader regional security risks. Addressing these challenges requires



integrated approaches that transcend traditional sectoral boundaries and promote international cooperation.

The Sahel region in Africa exemplifies the practical application and urgency of environmental security theory. This semi-arid zone is experiencing rising temperatures, decreasing rainfall, and more frequent and severe droughts, which collectively degrade soil quality, reduce water availability, and diminish agricultural productivity, the mainstay of local economies. The livelihoods of communities dependent on subsistence farming and nomadic herding are increasingly jeopardized by these environmental stresses. As natural resources become insufficient to support growing populations, competition intensifies, leading to heightened social tensions and localized conflicts. These conflicts often manifest as clashes between farmers and herders, disputes over land and water rights, and broader communal violence.

Beyond immediate ecological and economic impacts, the environmental challenges in the Sahel have precipitated climate-induced displacement and food insecurity, further destabilizing the region. This complex interplay of environmental degradation and social conflict underscores the necessity of viewing security through an environmental lens. Environmental security theory thus provides a critical analytical framework for understanding that the Sahel crisis cannot be resolved solely through technical or environmental interventions. Instead, it demands a multifaceted response that integrates diplomatic efforts, political solutions, and security measures. Such an approach advocates for policy frameworks that combine climate adaptation strategies, sustainable resource management, and the strengthening of regional cooperation mechanisms to mitigate conflict risks and promote long-term stability.

In summary, environmental security theory enriches the discourse on security by emphasizing the interconnectedness of ecological health and human well-being. It challenges policymakers and scholars to recognize environmental degradation as a fundamental security issue that requires comprehensive, cross-sectoral, and transnational strategies. By doing so, it contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the sources of conflict and instability in the



particularly in vulnerable regions like the Sahel, where environmental and security issues are deeply intertwined.

2.2 Constructivism Theory

Constructivism theory is a prominent theoretical framework in international relations that emphasizes the central role of ideas, norms, identities, and social interactions in shaping state behaviour and international cooperation. Emerging in the 1990s, particularly through the influential work of scholars like Alexander Wendt, constructivism challenges the foundational assumptions of traditional theories such as realism and liberalism. While realism focuses on material power and security competition, and liberalism highlights institutional mechanisms and interdependence, constructivism argues that the international system is fundamentally socially constructed. This means that state interests, security priorities, and patterns of cooperation or conflict are not predetermined by material conditions alone but are shaped by shared meanings, collective identities, and evolving social norms (Aria, 2025).

At the heart of constructivism is the idea that the international environment is not an objective reality but a product of ongoing social processes. States and other actors interpret their environment through the lens of their identities and the norms they internalize. These shared understandings influence how actors define their interests and what they consider appropriate behaviour. For example, what one state views as a security threat may differ significantly from another's perception, depending on their historical experiences, cultural context, and social interactions (Ahmad, 2020). This perspective opens up possibilities for change and transformation in international relations, as norms evolve and new identities emerge through dialogue and interaction.

In the context of climate diplomacy and conflict prevention in the Sahel region, constructivism offers a powerful analytical lens to understand how climate change has been reframed from a purely environmental issue into a shared security concern. The Sahel, a region severely affected by climate-induced challenges such as drought, desertification, and resource scarcity, exemplifies how social constructions influence policy and cooperation. The growing recognition that these environmental stressors can destabilize societies and exacerbate conflicts has led to the emergence of new global and regional norms around environmental responsibility, collective action.



frameworks like the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and regional initiatives such as the Great Green Wall are not merely

technical or policy responses driven by resource necessity. Instead, they are deeply embedded in constructed narratives about collective vulnerability, interdependence, and the moral imperative to act together. These narratives shape how states and other actors perceive their roles and responsibilities, fostering a sense of shared destiny and common purpose (Petri & Karlas, 2025).

In the Sahel, the social construction of climate change as a security issue has influenced how states, international organizations, and local communities respond to environmental challenges. Severe climate impacts have intensified competition over scarce resources like water and arable land, fuelling conflicts between farmers and herders, triggering migration, and increasing regional instability. However, the responses to these challenges are not uniform; they depend heavily on how actors interpret the situation and their identities within the regional context. Through diplomatic engagement and dialogue, actors have begun to redefine themselves from isolated, resource-competing entities into members of a shared environmental security community. This transformation is evident in cross-border cooperation on adaptation funding, early-warning systems, and sustainable resource management. Such collective action arises not only from pragmatic necessity but also from a socially constructed understanding of mutual dependence and common threats.

Constructivism also highlights the critical role of discourse and framing in shaping climate diplomacy. The way climate change is discussed, whether as a human security crisis, a development challenge, or an existential threat, directly influences policy decisions, funding allocations, and regional strategies. These narratives affect which issues gain prominence, how problems are prioritized, and what solutions are deemed acceptable. By analyzing how these discourses evolve, constructivism explains why some diplomatic initiatives succeed while others fail. Success depends not only on the availability of material resources but also on whether actors accept, internalize, and act upon shared norms and values (Setiawan, 2025).

For instance, framing climate change as a security threat can mobilize political will and resources but may also militarize responses if not carefully managed. Conversely, framing it as a human rights issue may foster inclusive, cooperative approaches but risk the urgency of security implications. Constructivism encourages a nuanced understanding of these dynamics, emphasizing that the power of ideas and social meanings is central to climate diplomacy (Whitaker, Vivekananda, & Gomolka, 2025).



In this thesis, constructivism theory serves as a crucial analytical tool to explore climate diplomacy as both a process of negotiation and a social practice. It reveals that preventing climate-induced conflicts in the Sahel requires more than technical adaptation measures or resource management strategies. It depends fundamentally on building common identities, fostering mutual trust, and institutionalizing cooperative norms among states and communities. By viewing climate diplomacy through the constructivist lens, this study underscores that effective conflict prevention is achieved when actors collectively construct climate change as a shared security challenge. This shared understanding transforms potential competition over scarce resources into opportunities for collaboration and joint problem-solving.

In conclusion, constructivism enriches the study of international relations by demonstrating that the social construction of reality shapes how states perceive threats, define interests, and engage with one another. In the context of the Sahel, this theory provides valuable insights into how climate diplomacy can evolve to address complex environmental and security challenges through the creation of shared meanings, identities, and norms that promote peace and cooperation.

2.3 Previous Research

This review of previous research aims to identify previous studies related to climate change, environmental security, and climate diplomacy in preventing resource conflicts in the Sahel. These studies provide both a theoretical and empirical basis for this research and help understand the dynamics and developments of existing issues. By reviewing previous research, this study can gain deeper insights into the issues raised and identify research gaps that can be addressed through this study.

In recent years, the issue of climate change and security in the Sahel region has become a significant topic in international relations literature, particularly regarding its impact on food security, migration, and political stability. Furthermore, climate diplomacy, implemented through global mechanisms such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and regional initiatives like the Great Green Wall, has also been widely discussed in previous research, particularly in the context of its role as a conflict prevention



instrument. Therefore, these previous studies are highly relevant to providing a broader understanding of the various aspects related to this research.

Previous research has been crucial in providing insight into how climate change has shaped non-traditional security threats, how resource conflicts arise from environmental degradation, and how climate diplomacy is used by both states and non-state actors to respond to these challenges. In this context, several studies have highlighted the link between climate change, community-level conflict, and the involvement of international actors in fostering regional cooperation to build climate resilience in the Sahel.

The research conducted by Adama Dieng (2021) in the article "The Sahel: Challenges and Opportunities" highlights the complexity of the humanitarian crisis in the Sahel region, fuelled by a combination of armed conflict, climate change, and weak state governance. The article emphasizes that temperatures rising 1.5 times faster than the global average have exacerbated droughts, floods, and environmental degradation, triggering food insecurity, mass migration, and conflicts between groups such as farmers and herders. Furthermore, armed conflicts involving both state and non-state actors have killed thousands and displaced millions, exacerbating structural poverty in the region (Dieng, 2021).

Despite the challenges, the study also highlights strategic opportunities, such as the significant potential of the Sahel's youth population, which constitutes over 64% of the total population. If managed through improved education, employment, and economic development, this youth population can serve as social capital in countering violent extremism. Furthermore, the concept of "African solutions to African problems" is emphasized as a strategy to strengthen locally based solutions, encourage Sahelian leadership, and strengthen international humanitarian law and human rights norms.

This research study comprehensively discusses the multidimensional challenges facing the Sahel region, ranging from the impacts of climate change, food insecurity, migration, and armed conflict. Dieng emphasizes that the crisis in the Sahel is not only environmental but also social, political, and humanitarian. The article focuses on efforts to find strategic opportunities,



g the potential of the younger generation and strengthening African-based solutions to African problems).

Meanwhile, this thesis has a more specific focus, namely the role of climate diplomacy as an instrument for preventing conflict due to resource tensions in the Sahel. Unlike Dieng's, which emphasized the humanitarian challenges and development opportunities, this research analyzes how diplomatic instruments, both through global mechanisms like the UNFCCC and regional initiatives like the Great Green Wall, can be strategic tools in preventing conflict triggered by resource scarcity. Furthermore, this thesis utilizes the theoretical frameworks of Environmental Security Theory and Constructivism Theory, which position climate change as both a non-traditional security threat and a social phenomenon constructed through global norms, identities, and discourses. Thus, this research not only emphasizes the material impacts of climate change, as highlighted by Dieng, but also examines how climate diplomacy narratives are constructed and negotiated as a conflict prevention strategy.

In other words, while Dieng's (2021) research provides a macro overview of the complexity of the challenges in the Sahel, this thesis seeks to narrow its focus to the aspect of climate diplomacy as a strategic solution, while simultaneously filling the research gap regarding the effectiveness of international responses in reducing resource-based conflicts.

Research conducted by Mbow, Halle, El Fadel, and Thiaw (2021), in an article titled "Land Resources Opportunities for a Growing Prosperity in the Sahel", provides a different perspective on the Sahel region. The Sahel is often portrayed as vulnerable to climate change, land degradation, mass migration, and intergroup conflict. However, this article emphasizes that this narrative oversimplifies the Sahel's complexity and potentially overlooks the opportunities it offers. Mbow et al. highlight that the Sahel holds significant potential for sustainable development if its natural resources are managed appropriately. Land restoration, innovation in the agricultural and livestock sectors, and the utilization of non-timber forest products are identified as crucial pillars for strengthening economic resilience, reducing community vulnerability, and creating new jobs, particularly for the region's large young population (Mbow, Halle, Fadel, & Thiaw, 2021).

The article also emphasizes the need for a new narrative about the Sahel, not simply as a region of crisis, but as a space of opportunity that can support positive transformation. With a development approach, the Sahel can create green jobs, strengthen food security, and support community-based local economies. This approach is development-orientated, with an emphasis on security and improving community well-being. Therefore, Mbow et al.'s



research positions resource-based development as the key to breaking out of the cycle of environmental and social vulnerability that has plagued the Sahel region.

Compared to this thesis, the analytical focus differs significantly. Mbow et al.'s research places greater emphasis on technical-economic solutions in the form of agricultural innovation, sustainable resource management, and positive development narratives. Meanwhile, this thesis focuses on climate diplomacy as an instrument for preventing conflict arising from the increasingly scarce resources in the Sahel. In other words, while Mbow et al. highlight the development potential of the Sahel, this thesis places greater emphasis on the political and diplomatic mechanisms used by the international community to manage tensions arising from resource scarcity.

Furthermore, the theoretical approaches employed are also different. Mbow et al. do not explicitly employ an international relations theoretical framework but instead lean more towards development and environmental political economy perspectives. In contrast, this thesis specifically utilises environmental security theory and constructivism theory to explain two important dimensions. First, climate change is understood as a non-traditional security threat that exacerbates social tensions and resource-based conflicts. Second, climate diplomacy is analyzed as a socio-political practice shaped by global ideas, norms, identities, and discourses regarding shared responsibility in addressing the climate crisis. Thus, this thesis emphasizes not only the material impacts of climate change but also the social and constructive dimensions.

Research conducted by Bruno Charbonneau (2021), in his article "Counter-insurgency Governance in the Sahel", examines how international military interventions, particularly those led by France through Operations Serval and Barkhane, have shaped a new form of governance called "counter-insurgency governance". In Charbonneau's view, these counter-terrorism operations are not merely tactical-military in nature but also create political mechanisms that influence how Sahel countries govern and manage internal conflicts. Foreign interventions, initially claimed to be an effort to establish security stability to open up space for development, have instead created a paradox. Rather than addressing the root causes of conflict, military interventions have prolonged Sahel countries' dependence on external actors, diminished their autonomy, and normalised crisis situations as part of everyday governance (Charbonneau, 2021).



Charbonneau also critiques the security-development nexus framework, which assumes that military security will automatically create space for economic and social development. In practice, this nexus often fails because the resulting development is not inclusive and does not address the roots of societal vulnerabilities, such as environmental degradation, inequitable resource distribution, and weak political institutions. Therefore, this article asserts that military interventions in the Sahel have resulted more in crisis-driven governance and external security than in creating long-term solutions.

Compared to this thesis, Charbonneau's research has a very different focus. Charbonneau highlights traditional security aspects dominated by military and counterinsurgency logics, while this thesis emphasizes a non-military approach through climate diplomacy as an instrument for preventing conflict due to resource scarcity triggered by climate change. In other words, Charbonneau views military interventions as the primary actor in shaping political and security dynamics in the Sahel, while this thesis seeks to demonstrate that climate diplomacy, realized through global (e.g., the Paris Agreement and the UNFCCC) and regional (e.g., the Great Green Wall), can be a more sustainable alternative strategy for addressing the root causes of conflict.

In terms of theoretical approach, Charbonneau's article does not explicitly employ a classical international relations theoretical framework but rather departs from a critique of counterinsurgency practices and security governance. Meanwhile, this thesis utilizes Environmental Security Theory to highlight how climate change creates non-traditional security threats and Constructivism Theory to analyze how international norms, identities, and discourses shape climate diplomacy as a collective instrument for conflict prevention. Thus, this thesis provides a distinct analytical dimension by emphasizing how the Sahel crisis can be explained not solely through military intervention, but also through normative, diplomatic, and environmental interactions.

This comparison demonstrates the complementary contributions. Charbonneau's (2021) article is important because it demonstrates the limitations of a militaristic approach to managing the Sahel crisis and how external intervention can actually exacerbate instability.



This thesis fills this gap by offering a new perspective: climate diplomacy as a non-militaristic approach with the potential to build trust, reduce resource tensions, and strengthen governance. By emphasizing climate diplomacy, this thesis not only seeks to address the root causes of conflict in the Sahel as a result of resource struggles but also as an opportunity

to build new norms in international relations that place greater emphasis on collaboration, sustainability, and human security.

Research conducted by Amole et al. (2021) in the article "Livestock Feed Resources in the West African Sahel" highlights the significant challenges in providing livestock feed in the Sahel region, which is increasingly threatened by climate change, land degradation, and increasing demographic pressures. The article explains that traditional pastoral systems in the Sahel rely heavily on the availability of natural pastures and agricultural crops, but both are increasingly being eroded by prolonged drought, unpredictable rainy seasons, and land conversion for non-agricultural purposes. As a result, livestock farmers face serious difficulties in maintaining livestock productivity, which directly impacts food security, household incomes, and social stability. Furthermore, the study underscores that livestock feed issues are not merely technical but also have implications for increased competition for resources between livestock and farming communities, which often leads to social conflict at the local level (Amole, Augustine, Balehegn, & Adesogoan, 2021).

The article emphasizes that sustainable solutions need to be directed at integrating agriculture and livestock, utilizing feed processing technologies, and policies that support transboundary resource management. This approach can reduce dependence on feed sources vulnerable to climate change while also opening up opportunities to improve regional food security. The research by Amole et al. implicitly asserts that the fodder crisis is part of a broader structural problem in the Sahel, namely natural resource scarcity due to environmental and social pressures.

Compared to this thesis, Amole et al.'s research focuses more narrowly on the issue of fodder production and availability as a crucial factor in food security and social stability. Meanwhile, this thesis takes a broader perspective, namely climate diplomacy as an instrument for preventing resource conflicts in the Sahel. While Amole et al.'s research emphasized the technical and policy aspects related to the agriculture-livestock sector, this thesis places the issue within the framework of environmental security and constructivism theory, examining how climate change is understood as a non-traditional security threat and how global norms



pe international cooperation.

et al.'s (2021) article makes an important contribution in explaining one of
f vulnerability in the Sahel: the limited fodder that triggers local conflicts

between farmers and herders. However, this thesis fills a gap by demonstrating that this problem cannot be viewed solely from the technical aspects of agriculture but must also be understood within the context of climate diplomacy and cross-border cooperation. This extends the analysis from the micro level (food and livestock production systems) to the macro level (international mechanisms for managing the impacts of climate change and preventing resource-based conflicts).

Research conducted by Acosta et al. (2024), in the article "Climate Change and Health in the Sahel: A Systematic Review", provides a comprehensive overview of the link between climate change and public health in the Sahel region. Using a systematic review approach, this study identified that rising temperatures, increased frequency of droughts and floods, and shifting disease patterns have had serious impacts on health, ranging from increased risks of malnutrition and water-borne infectious diseases to increased susceptibility to respiratory illnesses. This article emphasizes that the climate crisis in the Sahel is not only an environmental issue but also a public health crisis that exacerbates social vulnerabilities, particularly among poor communities and vulnerable groups such as children and women (Acosta, Barrow, Mahamadou, & Assuncao, 2024).

Furthermore, Acosta et al. show that climate change in the Sahel has exacerbated health inequities due to limited health care systems, weak infrastructure, and the lack of adaptive capacity of local governments. A key finding of this study is that the health threats posed by climate change have long-term consequences for social stability and development, as sick and vulnerable communities face greater difficulties in economic participation, are more likely to be pushed into forced migration, and have the potential to increase social tensions at the local and regional levels. Thus, this article connects environmental issues with human security, emphasizing that health adaptation is a crucial component of climate resilience strategies in the Sahel.

Compared to this thesis, Acosta et al.'s research focuses more on the public health dimension of climate change impacts, while this thesis focuses on the role of climate diplomacy in preventing conflict due to resource scarcity. Acosta et al. view climate change primarily as a threat that worsens health indicators, while this thesis analyzes it within the framework of Human Security Theory and Constructivism Theory, viewing climate change as a security threat requiring diplomatic solutions and international cooperation. In



well-being, while this thesis expands the analysis to the political and diplomatic level, specifically how international actors develop norms and mechanisms for cooperation to manage the risk of conflict arising from the climate crisis.

This comparison demonstrates that, despite their different focuses, the two studies complement each other. Acosta et al. provide an empirical basis for understanding how the climate crisis impacts social and health vulnerabilities, ultimately exacerbating the potential for conflict. Meanwhile, this thesis emphasizes how climate diplomacy can serve as a strategic instrument to prevent the escalation of tensions through a transboundary and collective approach. Thus, this thesis not only strengthens the argument that climate change is a multidimensional threat but also demonstrates that climate diplomacy is a crucial pathway to a more comprehensive response to this challenge.

