



AFRİKA'DA İKLİM DEĞİŞİKLİĞİ

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Book review

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CLIMATE CHANGE IN AFRICA

ÖZ Camilla Toulmin'in *Climate Change in Africa* (Afrika'da İklim Değişikliği) adlı eseri, iklim değişikliğinin Afrika kıtasındaki etkilerine ilişkin mevcut literatüre önemli bir katkı sağlamaktadır. Kitap genel itibarıyla küresel ısınmanın Afrika kıtasındaki etkilerini araştırmaktadır. Toulmin, Afrika ülkelerinin, ortaya çıkmasında hiç katkıları olmayan bu kriz karşısındaki durumlarını gözler önüne sermektedir: iklim krizine katkıları neredeyse hiç bulunmayan Afrikalı devletler, diğer devletlere kıyasla iklim krizinden daha fazla etkileneceklerdir. Afrika halklarının çıkarlarının ve taleplerinin uluslararası platformlarda güçlü devletler tarafından susturulması ise mevcut adaletsizliği daha da derinleştirmektedir. Kitapta, ekonomik gücünün yetersiz olması nedeniyle, uluslararası platformlarda Afrika ülkelerinin nasıl görmezden gelindiği ve sorunlarını küresel gündeme getirmelerine nasıl izin verilmediği detaylı bir şekilde ele alınmaktadır. Özetle, kitap iklim krizi karşısında susturulmuş bir kıtanın sesi olması açısından büyük bir öneme sahiptir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Afrika, İklim Değişikliği, Adalet.

ABSTRACT Camilla Toulmin's *Climate Change in Africa* makes a significant contribution to the literature, since there is little published on the impacts of climate change on Africa. The book investigates into the impacts of global warming on the African continent. Toulmin frequently underlines in her book that although African countries' contribution to the climate crisis is minimal, the African continent will be the most affected one compared to other continents. She adds that such injustice is reinforced in international platforms by silencing the African peoples' interests and demands. Since the African countries lack economic power, their voices are often neglected in international platforms, and they are not allowed to bring their issues to the international agenda. Overall, the book gives voice to a silenced continent in the face of the climate crisis.

Keywords: Africa, Climate Change, Justice

Climate Change in Africa, by Camilla Toulmin, focuses on the impacts of climate change on Africa. Toulmin, in the Introduction (Chapter 1), convinces her readers that this book is quite timely, as it delves into the ongoing climate crisis in a much-neglected continent. Africa often remains a voiceless actor in climate negotiations. According to Toulmin, although the continent is seven times larger than the EU and three times the size of China, such a vast continent is largely overlooked in discussions on global warming. To underscore this neglect by the international community, the author writes such a significant book focusing on a timely issue.

At the international level, the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), created by the World Meteorological Organization and the United Nations Environment Programme in 1988, operates as the authoritative body responsible for investigating into the impacts of climate change. In Chapter 2, Toulmin focuses on the reports of the IPCC to demonstrate this scientific body's findings on Africa. Toulmin shows that according to the IPCC reports, Africa is one of the most vulnerable continents to the climate crisis (p. 16). Under the international legal regime, African countries hold no emission reduction responsibilities since they have barely contributed to the climate crisis. However, under the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities," regardless of their economic development levels, all countries are expected to tackle the climate crisis.

The book in each chapter focuses on a critical theme concerning the African continent. Chapters 3 and 4 focus on water and food issues, respectively. According to the IPCC's reports, all models on Africa show that the continent will warm in this century and will be frequently hit by heatwaves (p. 23). As a result, annual rainfall will decrease drastically in much of Mediterranean Africa and in northern and southern Africa. Decreases in precipitation levels will be accompanied by a food crisis. Global warming will have detrimental effects on farming, livestock, fisheries, and wild foods. The important issue is that 70 percent of Africans live in rural areas, and agriculture holds a significant place in their income. Therefore, a food crisis might lead to civil unrest on the continent. As seen in 2007-2008, the increase in cereal prices led to riots in Africa. Thousands of people took to the streets and protested the large increase in food prices. Thus, the issue immediately turned into a political matter and created political instability and chaos across the continent. Toulmin demonstrates the link between global warming and political and economic stability in Africa in detail. She examines the African food riots of 2007-2008 and points out the likelihood of such incidents in the near future if no measures are taken immediately.

Chapter 5 shows us that Africa's forests too are under threat due to global warming. Africa owns special biodiversity, and around 80 percent of the species within these forests are exclusive to this part of the world. Therefore, losing Africa's forests jeopardizes the preservation of vital biodiversity. Toulmin points out a very significant but often neglected issue: for Africans, forests might carry different meanings and hold different values (p. 79). Indigenous people's sense of meaning, identity, and purpose in life are inextricably linked with their environment. Trees, rivers, and animals make Africans' lives meaningful and completed. In short, African forests are deeply interconnected with the well-being and cultural values of

the people. As a result, the protection of the forests is quite significant for Africans, since without forests, their cultural rights would also be endangered too.

While tackling the impacts of climate change, city management plays an important role. Chapter 6 delves into this issue in great detail. Cities' infrastructure should be strengthened by their governors to make them climate-resilient. Considering the long-term impacts of climate change (floods, wildfires, landslides, storms), proper city management can save lives. Well-governed cities can better tackle climate-related risks and mitigate the impacts of the crisis on people. Toulmin reminds us that in Africa, people are mostly concentrated in rural areas. Since living in the city is costly, people often live in rural areas outside of official land and building regulations (p. 94). Such illegal settlements leave individuals vulnerable to the threats the climate crisis creates. According to Toulmin, illegal, shabby, and often weak settlements lack any protection from floods, wildfires, landslides, or storms. It should not be forgotten that there are two main methods of tackling climate disasters: mitigation and adaptation. Mitigation requires states to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, while adaptation requires states to strengthen their infrastructure to better tackle the impacts of global warming. In adaptation, city planning plays a significant role. African countries are quite behind in protecting their citizens from the climate crisis through urban planning, and thus, they need immediate support from other countries and the international community on the adaptation issue.

Chapter 7, which is the most interesting chapter in my opinion, focuses on the relationship between climate change and armed conflicts in Africa and beyond. Even though we cannot blame global warming - yet - for armed conflicts, it increases the likelihood of them by triggering their causes. Climate change might create economic instability, displace people, and deprive people of their livestock, fisheries, and food. Resource scarcity might lead to conflicts. For instance, lack of water or fertile soil might result in migration, and conflicts may arise between the "locals" and the migrants. Toulmin underscores that the United Nations Security Council also acknowledged the link between the climate crisis and international peace and security by holding its first-ever debate on climate change in 2007. Toulmin also shows some concrete examples illustrating how the climate crisis is already creating unrest. In Ghana, for instance, migrants faced harassment and were deprived of their lands (p. 120). Similarly, President Kountché of Niger lost his power as a result of food riots in 1987 in his country (p. 122). Such examples strengthen Toulmin's argument, and she convinces her readers that there is a link between the climate crisis and armed conflicts; therefore, the international community should be vigilant about this connection.

Toulmin once again points out in Chapter 8 that African leaders are left out of international negotiations, and their voices are often unheard by the international community. She also criticizes the fact that African countries, during the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) talks, act as part of "Group 77". According to Toulmin, being in the same league as China, India, and Brazil is not helping African countries raise their own issues. Toulmin suggests that African countries, like Small Island Developing States (SIDS), should create another union and act separately from "Group 77". She argues

that this would help African countries bring their interests, concerns, and demands to international platforms.

Toulmin, on the other hand, underplays structural and systemic issues in her book. Climate change is a multidimensional and complex problem, which lies at the center of global economic inequalities and injustices inherited from the colonial era. As a result, offering solutions to climate change without addressing these inequalities and injustices remains quite limited. In addition, Toulmin could have engaged more with the theoretical discussions regarding the climate crisis. This could have been a decision to make the book more accessible to a broader audience. However, especially the theoretical discussions regarding the issue of responsibility would have enriched the book considerably (see for instance Page 2006; Pellow 2007; Vanderheiden 2008). In contrast to her other book titled *Land, Investment and Migration: Thirty-five Years of Village Life in Mali*, this book includes no interviews or field study. Her analysis, without engagement with any theoretical or empirical data, makes the book's arguments rather weak.

CONCLUSION

Toulmin's book responds to a significant gap in the literature. There is little written about the impacts of the climate crisis on Africa. The continent has barely contributed to the crisis; however, it will be hit hardest by its detrimental effects. Toulmin points out this issue and aims to draw her readers' attention to this peculiar situation. She adopts a very understandable and clear language in order to reach people from every walk of life. Throughout the book, there are boxes containing interesting facts and examples. These boxes help the readers understand the issues clearly without being distracted from the main text. Her message is that Africa is already struggling with the impacts of global warming, to which it did not contribute. Economically and politically powerful actors should take historical responsibility for the climate disaster and support African countries in better tackling this disaster.

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