



## ***Unraveling the Willow Project's Impact on Human Rights: An Inquiry into International Legal Perspectives?***

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### **Abstract**

*This article aims to examine human rights violations resulting from the U.S.-led agenda as a national strategic project, specifically the Willow Project. This project is a consequence of Saudi Arabia's participation in multilateral cooperation among developing countries, with Saudi Arabia being the largest oil trading partner and the United States serving as the oil supplier. The focus of the issue centers on the Willow Project, a U.S. drilling initiative conducted in the State of Alaska, with global environmental impacts that infringe upon human rights. The research employs a normative-empirical method, prioritizing international law, encompassing concepts, principles, and doctrines as legal sources to address the legal issues related to human rights violations. The Willow Project influences the United States' policy direction, fulfilling the country's energy needs through oil drilling, thereby affecting global climate change and posing risks to the international community. The substantial carbon emissions generated can contribute to rising Earth temperatures, potentially leading to the emergence of new diseases due to extreme weather conditions.*

**Keywords:** Human Rights Violations; Global Environmental Impact; Willow Project.

**How to Cite:** Gunawan, Y. Farhansyah, B.Y. & Nurhaifa, R.F. (2023). *Unraveling the Willow Project's Impact on Human Rights: An Inquiry into International Legal Perspectives?*. Jurnal Mercatoria, 16 (2): 209-220.

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## INTRODUCTION

The United States of America, as a superpower country, has a great influence on other countries. This cannot be separated from the internal interests of a sovereign country covering economic, social, cultural, and political aspects. In this study, the researcher raises an issue pertaining to human rights, the United States as a national strategic project, namely the Willow Projects, and the domino effect of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia joining an association of multilateral cooperation of countries in diverse developing and developing fields. The BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) are the world's leading economies (Schwartz et al., 2023).

The collaborative relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia, a pivotal supplier of crude oil, has taken a transformative turn with Saudi Arabia extending its cooperation to BRICS. This shift presents the United States with the intricate challenge of ensuring a stable domestic oil supply, guarding against potential instabilities that could reverberate across various sectors within the country. In response to this multifaceted dilemma, the United States has strategically initiated the Willow Projects—an expansive drilling operation in Alaska comprising 219 points, an endeavor unfolding amidst the intricacies of the geopolitical landscape on the international stage (Gajurel & Chawla, 2022).

While the Willow Project stands as a potential solution to immediate oil needs, its environmental ramifications are a cause for considerable concern. The drilling activities associated with the project carry the risk of habitat disruption, leading to potential displacement of wildlife. Moreover, water pollution may ensue from the release of drilling-related chemicals, while air pollution is anticipated through the emission of volatile organic compounds and particulate matter. The project's

contribution to climate change, stemming from fossil fuel extraction and burning, raises additional environmental apprehensions. Concurrently, construction and operational activities pose risks of soil degradation, and the resultant noise and light pollution may disrupt wildlife behaviour. The potential for accidental spills further compounds the environmental risks, with the overall impact contingent on specific project details and the efficacy of implemented mitigation measures.

Within the broader discourse, two pivotal issues demand urgent attention: the pursuit of progress and certainty in climate improvement. The imperative for cooperative frameworks between countries, whether realized through global, regional, or individual foundations, becomes increasingly apparent as we confront these pressing environmental challenges. Despite the strides made by the United States in meeting its oil needs and the forces of globalization propelling technological advancements, there exists a noteworthy misalignment—a lag—in societal attitudes toward climate responsibility. The right to a healthy climate emerges as a fundamental freedom shared by all, underscoring the critical need for a collective commitment to environmental stewardship as we navigate the intricate nexus of energy demands, geopolitical considerations, and the imperative for sustainable global futures (Bersin & Zoback, 2022).

The concept of climate encompasses a spatial unit comprising all entities, conditions, and living beings, including humans and their conduct influencing nature, resistance, and governmental support to both humans and other living entities (Gunawan, 2021). Nature safety, denoting a collaborative and appropriate endeavor to safeguard climate elements and prevent contamination, encompasses a spectrum of regulatory, utilization, control, support, supervisory, and legal

enforcement measures. The rapidly evolving field of ecological law serves not only as a legitimate assurance for the local U.S. domain but also significantly as a developmental approach involving "resilience experts," "progress specialists," or "change agents" (Basseches *et al.*, 2022).

Recognition of the paramount significance of climate for humanity must be grounded in an understanding of fundamental freedoms, often referred to as basic liberties. These rights, inherent to individuals from prenatal existence, are bestowed by a higher authority rather than any specific state or institution and hold universal applicability. In a globalized context, these basic liberties find their roots in historical documents such as Magna Carta 1215 in England and the universal declaration of human rights on December 10, 1948 (Martinez & Iglesias, 2022).

Acknowledging the imperative nature of environmental respect for all living beings is integral to cohabiting on Earth without causing harm or pollution. The question of why the environment should be safeguarded is a profound inquiry rooted in the purpose of human civilization on Earth. While this commitment to environmental preservation is often initiated by both developed and developing nations, disparities emerge due to differing priorities. Developed countries pivot towards prioritizing environmental concerns, whereas developing nations grapple with the delicate balance between fostering economic and industrial growth and environmental conservation, often perceiving it as a "sacrifice" (Abbass *et al.*, 2022).

In connection to these discussions, the author adopts the title "Analysis of International Legal Perspectives Regarding the Willow Project's Impact on Human Rights" with the aim of expanding academic legal perspectives. This title signifies an intent to enhance scholarly understanding, particularly focusing on Human Rights and

the role of international law as a regulatory framework and value system safeguarding nature from potential environmental harm. It underscores the juridical guidance provided by international law, serving as a beacon amidst contemporary challenges, especially in the burgeoning awareness of the necessity to protect the environment (Nada, 2022).

The Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, can be also a crucial role in shaping the context and evaluation of the Willow Project. The summit, officially known as the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), held in 1992, aimed to address global environmental challenges and promote sustainable development. The principles and objectives outlined during the Earth Summit emphasized the integration of economic, social, and environmental considerations in decision-making processes.

Considering this framework, the Earth Summit's role in relation to the Willow Project lies in providing a set of international standards and expectations for sustainable development and environmental protection. The Willow Project's alignment with or deviation from these principles could significantly influence how it is perceived on an international scale. The summit's emphasis on balancing economic growth with environmental and social considerations may serve as a benchmark for evaluating the project's adherence to global sustainability goals. Therefore, the Earth Summit's role is instrumental in shaping the broader context within which the Willow Project is assessed, emphasizing the importance of aligning development initiatives with global environmental and social objectives.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

The research adopts various research methods within the realm of international law. The research draws the statutory

approach. This approach involves a detailed examination of relevant statutes and legal provisions to analyze the legal implications of the Willow Project on human rights within the international legal framework.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

International law, comprising a comprehensive set of juridical rules and values that govern the conduct of states, particularly influential nations like the United States, holds a pivotal role in shaping geopolitical decisions and policies. This significance is underscored by the intricate interplay witnessed when Saudi Arabia's collaboration with the BRICS nations, driven by oil commerce, creates a domino effect influencing the United States' pursuit of alternatives to meet its domestic oil demands. The resulting initiative, the Willow Project, involving drilling in Alaska, exemplifies the intricate connection between geopolitical strategies, energy needs, and the profound environmental repercussions that extend globally (Jaffe *et al.*, 2022).

The Willow Project, conceived as a solution to the complex issue of ensuring a stable oil supply for the United States, entails drilling in Alaska and holds profound consequences for the worldwide environment. This initiative, undertaken amidst a global geopolitical predicament, reflects the intricate interplay between geopolitical strategies, energy needs, and environmental impacts, highlighting the delicate balance required in navigating these interconnected realms (Li & Guo, 2022).

Under the leadership of President Joe Biden, the United States grapples with the implications of the Willow Projects policy, recognizing its direct impact on the world, particularly on international ecosystems crucial for addressing climate change. This endeavor prompts a warning from the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), emphasizing the imperative of

global efforts to protect and preserve the environment. The intersection of geopolitics, environmental sustainability, and international cooperation emerges as a focal point demanding careful consideration and comprehensive analysis (Marcus *et al.*, 2023).

However, the United States, bound by international law and specific regulations of international environmental law, faces complexities in its approach to the Willow Projects. International environmental law establishes the rights and obligations of states to respect the natural environment globally. Yet, the decision of the United States, notably under its withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, underscores the political complexities surrounding environmental policies. The withdrawal, influenced by various factors, including a shift towards traditional industries, highlights the intricate dynamics at the intersection of international relations and environmental concerns, underscoring the multifaceted challenges faced in aligning global environmental goals with national priorities (Weiskopf *et al.*, 2020).

The Importance of Economic Aspects  
The economic aspect is the main focus of President Donald Trump. The costs incurred by the US to follow the Paris Agreement influenced Trump's views on climate change. This started on November 8, 2016, just four days after the United States activated the Paris Agreement. Trump does not consider environmental issues as important and requires special attention. He has even changed many of President Obama's policies regarding environmental issues on the grounds that this could disrupt the US economy. Trump believes that China created global warming to undermine America's competitiveness. Additionally, during the 2016 election campaign, Trump promised to revitalize the coal industry, which he claims has been hampered by environmental regulations (Tonn *et al.*, 2021).

Aside from economic rewards, political considerations both inside and beyond the United States (United States of America) impact the decision to leave. On May 25, 2017, 22 Republican Senators, including Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, wrote to President Donald Trump, encouraging him to remove the United States from the Paris Agreement. Senators John Barrasso, head of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, and Jim Inhofe, renowned for his opposition to climate change, wrote the letter.

The majority of signatories to the letter are from coal, oil, and gas-dependent states in the United States. During the three election periods, 22 senators received more than \$10 million in campaign contributions from fossil fuel companies, regardless of political considerations. In the same week, no less than forty Democratic senators sent a letter to President Donald Trump urging him to keep the United States in the Paris Agreement, arguing that a US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement would diminish the nation's credibility and influence on the international stage (Lirong *et al.*, 2022).

The stubbornness of American conservatives has had a major impact on the political decision to withdraw from the Paris climate agreement. Conservatives and hardliners are not thinking about global warming, according to data from the Pew Research Centre. as the main problem. So the Willow Projects, which is a project of the United States (United States of America), violated the Paris Agreement even though they did not sign it but violated a juridical rule and values which are used as a special legal reference for international environmental law, which regulates various matters related to preservation and protection towards the environment which are recognized as civilized countries, a total of 196 countries recognize and agree to the Paris Agreement as a source of international law that must be obeyed

because it greatly affects the whole life of people who ratify the national law of each country with the aim of being a regulation governing related matters (Albalwi *et al.*, 2023).

America's political interests stem from pressure from the traditional energy industry. Regional representatives of the Senate and Congress are trying to advance their financial interests in the industry politically. This also suits President Donald Trump, who managed to also win sympathy from them during his past presidential campaign for Americans who will be out of jobs if the Paris Agreement is implemented flawlessly. President Donald Trump's leadership style is different from the previous President, Barack Obama. This is the right time for players in this traditional industry to advance their economic agenda in the political sphere. The world trend is about to start without conventional energy sources like coal and oil. The US cares about the oil and coal market it has (Wang *et al.*, 2022).

The reason for America's withdrawal from the US Paris Agreement was a decision based on the attitude of US President-elect Donald Trump and political pressure at home and abroad. The United States changed many environmental regulations during the Obama administration so that it succeeded in becoming a pioneer of climate change mitigation, namely the Paris Agreement, which had to end in the next government, which made the United States morally broken.

Confidence in the United States as one of the world's largest emitters of carbon dioxide Commitment to mitigate climate change As mentioned earlier, this is no longer the basis for government decisions. This is also why Trump decided to withdraw the United States from the Paris Agreement, but Americans are even more aware of the urgency of environmental problems and more actively take initiatives to reduce their carbon emissions.

Regarding the environmental attitudes, the general public is also more concerned about the global environment than the interests of many local American industries (Hokayem, 2022).

The issue of nature is not another issue in the global world. Climate is one area that is dominant in global relations because it is very closely related to life on this planet. Furthermore, despite the absence of scrutiny and consideration from the public and the world. Awareness of global ecological lawsuits is emerging, in large part because climate has started to be addressed by local areas around the world. Some of the cases have prompted global local areas to focus on natural issues, especially those posed by human practices (Seddon, 2022).

Assembled Countries on Climate Meeting in Stockholm in 1972, the meeting was called the Stockholm Meeting. The first day of the session meets Stockholm on June 5 and is agreed to be World Climate Day. Various climate goals have been supported in the Stockholm meeting as reasons for action. One of them is the establishment of a unique organization within the United Nations entrusted with overseeing natural issues, particularly the United Nations Ecological Program (UNEP) located in Nairobi, Kenya (Prats *et al.*, 2023).

In 1962, the book "The Quiet Spring" was distributed by Rachel Carson, which influenced individual climate awareness. The relationship between people and their current State is unanimous. Whether their practice is of little value or slightly against the tide again, things are going to change the climate. Changes in nature will thus affect humans. So in their practice, one should focus on the nature of the climate because it is the premise and rule for achieving the goals of ecological administration. Ecological quality can be improved by reducing natural hazards. Efforts to reduce ecological hazards will magnify other existing hazards or once

again create a new hazard (Islam *et al.*, 2022).

Natural quality can be interpreted as an ecological condition proportional to personal satisfaction. The higher the level of personal satisfaction in a given climate, the higher the level of natural quality. Personal satisfaction depending on the satisfaction of essential needs arguably can be described as the level of satisfaction of the fundamental requirements in ecological conditions. The higher the level of satisfaction of these basic requirements, the higher the nature of the climate and vice versa (Rocque *et al.*, 2021).

Human rights cannot be separated from the discussion of equality. Equity, as a rule, allows individuals in the same way bound to be defended, arguing that shame is deadly to public activity and the public arena. The first and foremost reason for justice, as pointed out by Cicero, is to restrain someone from harming others, except those who have done wrong. While nature has given every living animal a sense to follow its life, away from misfortune, nature unites people with different people in a special bond through words (language) and life (Tampi *et al.*, 2022).

The legitimate teachings of Thomas Aquinas (1225-1275) were that humans are endowed with three essential obligations, which are the main centre of regular law, namely specifically following the lives of individuals (individuals and their subordinates), knowing the reality of God and maintaining coexistence in the public arena. According to Hugo Grotius, humans have a strong drive for society in quiet and efficient public activities according to the size of reason understanding. All creation is connected in complementary agreements, as an eternal contract. Standard equity depends on two trends:

1. Everyone must protect his life and fight against all destructive tendencies.

2. Everyone is allowed to make a living for himself, mastering what is useful for his life (Pérez-Liñán *et al.*, 2023).

Hugo Grotius as, an ally of humanism who views humans as humans, believes that humans have certain rights, and this applies to everyone in society. The idea of regular law, which is seen as objective, was put forward by John Locke (1632-1704). The substance of the regular principle of law, as Locke points out, is that whenever someone is conceived, they have the privilege of following their life. Therefore, all beings who are equal and independent may not mutually harm one another regarding life, welfare, opportunity or property and whatever is deemed reasonable for each person's survival, as far as maintaining his life and not deliberately leaving his place.

The three components are combined in an essential sense. Thus, rights are the standardization of intrinsic components in every person who practice is within the boundaries of equal rights and opportunities identified by their relationships between people or foundations. General freedom also means the rights inherent in humans depending on their temperament and the rights humans have as humans. Or some individuals say that basic freedoms are legal rights that each person claims as an individual. These rights are widespread and apply to everyone, rich or poor, male or female. These rights can be waived but can never be taken away (Moeckli *et al.*, 2022).

The Willow Project's policy demands scrutiny for potential violations of various international legal rules and conventions related to the environment and human rights. This entails ensuring compliance with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) for biodiversity protection, adhering to the Paris Agreement commitments for climate change mitigation, and conforming to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands principles if wetlands are impacted.

Additionally, alignment with the Aarhus Convention for transparency and public participation, consideration of the Basel Convention for hazardous waste, and compliance with the Espoo Convention for transboundary environmental effects are crucial. The project must also adhere to the Stockholm Convention for the use of persistent organic pollutants and meet the requirements of the World Heritage Convention if located near a designated site.

A comprehensive evaluation, tailored to the specific nature of the Willow Project, is essential to ensure its alignment with these international legal frameworks promoting both environmental conservation and respect for human rights and sustainable development.

Consumption H. Weston argues that, throughout history and the point of view of basic liberties, three epochs show the logic between different philosophical schools, especially liberal and communist, in addition to the wishes of underdeveloped countries, which were recently autonomous from imperialism. Weston stipulates that "genuine" is a general and political right, described as more negative or free from state interference in seeking human peace (Articles 2-22 UDHR). The "second era" emerged from communist practices that positively characterized public liberties, necessitating the agency of a fully committed state to ensure equal support in the creation and dissemination of espoused values (Articles 22-27 of the UDHR).

The relationship between the Willow Project and human rights is multifaceted. Human rights considerations in this context encompass the potential environmental impact, particularly in relation to the right to a healthy environment. If the project activities pose risks to the environment, it may impact individuals' rights to live in a sustainable environment. Additionally, community rights are crucial,

encompassing the right to participate in decision-making processes, access to information, and the protection of cultural heritage if the project affects specific communities. Labor rights, including fair wages and safe working conditions, should also be a focal point if the Willow Project involves employment. Moreover, social and economic rights, such as housing and access to education, may be influenced by the project, and it should align with the right to development, contributing positively to sustainable development while respecting human rights principles and international legal frameworks.

In the meantime, the "third age" is described in Article 28 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that everyone has options regarding social and global demands so that the fundamental freedoms enumerated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights can be determined in their entirety. Among them are six rights, including the right to self-confidence; the right to repair; the option to participate in and use the "normal heritage of mankind" (regular assets, space, data and logic advancements, mechanical advancements, and social tokens); the right to harmony; the right to a healthy and adaptable climate; and the right to charitable guidance for disaster events (Pons *et al.*, 2022).

These rights are not recognized by law or certain societies, but because of their pride as human beings, they are not recognized based on skin colour, gender, language, culture, or nationality. It is the most personal substance with truth and equity in relation to the elements and collaborations of the various human and animal existences created by God. Rights have been carved since people were conceived and added to anyone. Among them are the rights to opportunity, animal rights, and human nobility, the choice to respect others, the right to the benefits of transparency and discretion, the choice to be free from fear, the right to life, the right

to be in-depth, the right to awareness, the right to harmony, the choice to give, a choice to get, a choice to guarantee and so on (Al Muhlim *et al.*, 2022).

Fundamental liberties are broad rights possessed by people exclusively as a result of their situation as human beings. This view concludes that race, gender, religion, social position, and nationality are not important in determining whether a person has basic liberties. This shows that these rights are applicable worldwide. One of the outstanding qualities of the general liberties that currently reign is that they are global rights. Consistency with these rights has been seen as an object of genuine global consideration and action (Diener & Mudu, 2021).

James W. Nickel states that: Public liberties are basically a set of rights with specific components, capacities, and goals. The rights components consist of the following: First, each right recognizes an association as the owner or holder. Second, the right is an opportunity or advantage. Third, a fully characterized right will recognize associations that should take part in providing opportunities or benefits that are differentiated based on the extent of the right. Fourth, the weight of a right determines its demand or significance according to different standards in the event of a dispute.

While the capacity for rights is a vehicle for advancing widespread principles for governance, the point is to determine the characterization of rights that have high needs in various rights spaces, such as collective freedom, individual security, legal guarantees, and social equality. Consequently, this goal should be strived for by all countries (Kadmayer, 2022).

The notion of shared freedom over climate might have become clear when the Assembled Countries Meeting on Climate and People was held in Stockholm, Sweden, on 5-6 June 1972, which initiated the Stockholm Affirmation. This meeting is the



first stage of awareness in local areas around the world of the importance of ecological preservation as an important part of satisfying basic freedoms (Tinggi, 2022).

Good climatic characteristics cannot be maintained without regard to collective liberties, and basic liberties cannot be attained without a suitable and safe climate. Concern, security, implementation, and fulfilment of collective freedoms depend on a solid and proper climate (Gunawan, 2014). In disadvantaged biological systems, respecting and obtaining the rights to life, well-being, security, satisfactory food, and culture is unthinkable or practically difficult.

This is because humans are very important to biological systems. There is a very comfortable relationship between humans and the climate in general. From birth, people have been granted rights to a climate, including essential public liberties, natural equity guidelines, and reasonable access to the wellsprings of life (Swinburn *et al.*, 2022).

The association between humans and nature is a habit of life that cannot be separated until the cows come home. As givers of orders to public authorities, individuals must understand the basic rights that the State must fulfil. In line with that is the commitment of public authorities to fulfill and guarantee individual basic rights. The unclear idea of public authorities, both the central government and the environment, to seek government revenue has caused individuals to lose their right to freedom with the group (Lewlandy *et al.*, 2023).

Ecological awareness in the United States cannot be separated from the impact of global nature awareness. The world's climate is the climate as a whole, especially the host of life, where there is a mutual impact between living things and the climate in which they live (Lehmann & Titor, 2023). Worldwide natural awareness

is a type of public concern over some concerns that arise in several countries, in Japan and the United States, that the actual barrier to low ecological concern for local areas requires extraordinary techniques, more specifically by directing and even teaching individuals and providing advice must be supplemented with initial information about the strategy regardless of the subject matter to be communicated to the public since the 1950s, ecological problems have received attention from researchers, as well as from the general public and lawmakers (Waqar *et al.*, 2023).

Ecological issues are the United States' innovative advances with the Willow Project that have been recognized as effective by the human spirit and brain. The trigger for this concern is contamination by carbon emissions. The entire population seems stunned to see the ecological damage that is starting to get worse (Nilsen, 2023).

## CONCLUSION

Based on the above discussion, the study found that a comprehensive evaluation should consider potential violations related to various international legal rules and conventions. This includes examining the policy's compliance with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) for biodiversity protection, adherence to the Paris Agreement commitments for climate change mitigation, and conformity with the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands principles if wetlands are impacted. Additionally, alignment with the Aarhus Convention for transparency and public participation, consideration of the Basel Convention for hazardous waste, and compliance with the Espoo Convention for transboundary environmental effects are crucial factors to assess. The project must also adhere to the Stockholm Convention for the use of persistent organic pollutants and meet the requirements of the World Heritage Convention if located near a

designated site. A thorough analysis, adapted to the specific details of the Willow Project, is necessary to determine the extent of potential violations of these international legal frameworks that govern environmental conservation, human rights, and sustainable development. The United States is against international law because the Agreement has binding legal force. Apart from international geopolitics, it affects the ecosystem and environment of the world community. The conception of human rights to the environment is that humans are part of an ecosystem in which humans and the adjacent environment have a close relationship. The right to a decent and healthful environment as a human right has not received positive recognition at the international or national level, despite the existence of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, resolutions, and national positive law provisions.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to extend our heartfelt appreciation to the anonymous reviewers and colleagues for their invaluable contributions to the publication of this article. Their feedback and support have significantly enhanced the quality and impact of this work. Thank you for your unwavering support and valuable insights.

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