

Natural Resource Conflicts and Peace Building in Africa: Towards Resolving Herdsmen-Farmers Conflicts in Nigeria's North-Central Geo-Political Zone

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Abstract - The main objective of this study is to examine the relationship between globalization, resource conflicts and peace - building in Africa, with particular emphasis on Nigerian's north-central geo-political zone. The wave of globalization that has swept across the world with its attendant socio-economic and political consequences lies at the heart of this study. The debate that is raging currently amongst intelligentsias, public analysts, and the international community points to the fact that the global system has suffered increasing setbacks occasioned by the impacts of globalization and contestation for scarce natural resource endowments. The changes that have emerged for several decades in both developed and developing nations, with the latter having a greater share of repercussions, have remained largely daunting. The multiplier effects of these changes have resulted to worsening crises situations, with fast growing rate of intra-state and/or trans-regionalized networked conflicts, which is why Africa and indeed Nigeria, has become hotbed for contestations recently. This work adopts qualitative approach as method of investigation. This work relies on classic works of experts in the broader discipline of globalization and conflict resolutions, the essence of which is to clearly define ways of ensuring absolute peace in Nigeria's north central zone. The paper observes that guaranteeing peace- building requires the adoption of both vertical and horizontal approaches as templates for the realization of peace objectives.

Keywords: Globalization, Natural, Resources, Conflicts, Peace Building

I. INTRODUCTION

The contending scholarly debates the world over about the effects of globalization on the economies of not only developed entities; but particularly those of Third World (Nigeria inclusive) have been on the increase. The contention points to the fact that though, the world system is currently tied together in a whole web of economic, social, political and cultural bond, there is more to this mutual relationship than meets the ordinary eye. From Valaskakis (1999) point of view, the evolution of globalization on the global stage right from the early stage (1400- 1750), a period that marked the dissolution of Christendom and the off-shoot of nationalism in Europe, to the initial incipient phase of internationalism and universalism around 1750-1875, still in Europe as well as the take-off epoch (1875-1925); the latter been the period that marked the emergence of world wars, migration,

international exchange, among others. These global trajectories, coupled with the struggle and contestations for global hegemony by the superpowers, and particularly, between the United States of America on the one hand, and the former Soviet Union on the other. All of these have congealed to advance the world with a more or less sophisticated global setting as is being currently witnessed. To be sure, the calamities and uncertainties that have been experienced in the world lend themselves to the dramatic changes that have taken place overtime- from space exploration to increased technological advancements, and all what nots.

The multiplier effects of globalization, no doubt, have overstretched its limits and the corresponding pressures some of these have had on the environment portends grave dangers to humanity and natural resource endowments generally. In the light of the aforementioned Adnan (2012) asserts that the environmental consequences of globalization have brought about significant changes in, for example, atmospheric properties where the planet is increasingly being tampered with. Thus, from the emission of what is generally referred to the Greenhouse Gases (GHGS) (emission from industrial plants such as cement factories, automobile industries, transportation outfits (train and locomotive stations); agricultural production companies; bush burning, gas flaring, petro – chemicals industries such as those of Shell Petroleum, Elf, Agip, Chevron and many others. To most skeptics, the burgeoning efforts of some of these chemical substances have had and indeed, are still impacting dangerously on the atmosphere, thereby propelling global warming to immensurable magnitude.

For the benefit of hindsight, it can be recalled that the shift from the primitive system to a more or less sophisticated new world order, and marked by new developments in industrial revolution, especially around the 1980's have brought about the new normal. The transformation from the primitive socio-economic setting (mostly with the production of iron and steel) to knowledge intensive industries as well as the evolution of global system of communication, digital economies, emergences of hi-tech transnational and/or Multinational Corporations (MNCs), all have in one way or the other changed the direction of the world system.

For obvious reasons, it can be said that a whole range of new issues have surfaced in the international system; and that some of the supposed challenges have befallen African States largely due to its poor global status, poor leadership, widespread corruption amongst the few opportunistic elites; ill-informed followership and the overall high level of ignorance among the African citizens. To a very large extent, some of the side effects of globalization, unarguably, are common and prevalent around the African continent. They are, among other things, issues of environmental concerns, air pollution, fossil fuel depletion, climate change and lots more. The (climate change), until recently, was scarcely known or heard of in terms of much implications it has had on both the people and resources.

From the classic works of Odoh and Chilaka (2012), the global system has continued to witness changes and variation in temperature, precipitation and changes in wind directions, respectively. While we put all these blames at the corridor of globalization, Odoh and Chilaka have contended that human activities sometimes can remotely be responsible for these occurrences. For example, human factors such as the orchestration and emission of Greenhouse gases we mentioned earlier in this paper can be injurious to the atmosphere. It is a single most useful factor for which the atmosphere has continued to absorb and emit infrared substance as well as radiation or heat through the use of fossil fuel materials. It is on this premise that the Fourth Assessment Report (AR4) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (APCC) earlier in 2007 cautioned that unless, and until drastic measures were enunciated and put in place, the climate system at the turn of the 21st century was going to suffer. Some of these projections, no doubt, have come to fruition as we can see everywhere in not just Africa, but particularly in Nigeria. The watershed year 2007 becomes critical in this assessment because it was at this point that regional and international bodies such as the Africa Union (AU) and the Security Council of the United Nations deliberated on the security off-shoot of climate change as it affects nations of the world.

Conversely, and in furtherance of this singular mission to understudy climate change and its effect on the global space, the Durban, South African Convention as well as the 17th meeting of the Conference of the parties to the Kyoto Protocol later in November 2011 became paramount. Although greater part of intellectual studies and resources has been committed into the course of global climatic change and how to forestall the menace, very clearly, not much has been achieved. Nations have continued to grapple with environmental disasters ranging from excessive heat, ocean surge, hurricane, flooding, earthquake, tsunami and many others. The resultant effects of all this is monumental deaths, migration crisis, displacement of persons and animals (as in the case of cattle-herders conflicts around Africa); destruction of farmlands and many others. Empirical figures from extant

literature reveal that since the turn of the 20th century, there has been dramatic rise in temperature occasioned by climate change. For instance, IPCC (2007), Ezirim and Onuoha (2008) claimed that the average global temperature in the 1950s have skyrocketed to over 0.1 degree Celsius on an average of one decade, while snow covers have dropped by about 10%. Similarly, Ezirim and Onuoha went further to allude that while the ice thickness in the world's northern hemisphere has spiraled by over 40%, the frequency and intensity of droughts, storms and the degree of dry winds have increased, just as sea levels in most climes have risen by over 20 centimeters high. The aftermaths of all these is that nations will bear the brunt if nothing is done to salvage the precarious atmosphere conditions.

The problem of this investigation therefore revolves around the question of why, in spite of the huge investments by government and other stakeholders to resolve environmental challenges, Nigeria still grapple with these problems. Again, what is the relationship between globalization, natural resource conflicts and the challenge of building the peace, not only in Nigeria, but also in the North central geo-political zones. This paper sets out to address these daunting questions in turn.

II. CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

A. Globalization: The concept of globalization is fraught with contradictions and depends largely on the ideological standpoint of the scholars involved. For most scholars, globalization is a term used to study the interrelationship between the west metropole (typically those of Europe, North America and other emerging capitalist states) in relations to the South peripheral states. what this means is that globalization paints a picture of how much Third world economies (Africa and other developing countries) can sustain itself economically, socially, politically, technologically or otherwise, within the context of western industrial economic supremacy.

Drawing from the arguments above, Levit (n.d) cited in Basu (2012) maintained that globalization is a generic term which can be used to mean some level of integration of a number of nation states and its people who want to be collectively defined economically, politically and to a large extent, culturally, and yet exist as on single global entity. In this broad sense, we can say that though, globalization is synonymous with internationalization. However, the argument here still remains that while internationalization is laddened with foreign policy variants such as undue bureaucracy, incrementalism and time factor, globalization has effectively dismantled some of these barriers, and hence, the world space has been submerged into a more or less, smaller or larger global community.

On the other hand, and to be able to situate our discourse in a proper perspective, it is important for this paper to

delve into the dynamics of resource conflicts as it relates to globalization. As noted earlier in the preceding sections of this study, it has been said that while globalization itself serves enormous socio-economic benefits to humanity, quite a number of the world problems are associated with globalization including conflicts. The Nigerian state, like most parts of Africa such as Niger, Mali, Central African Republic, among others, have had its share of the problems occasioned by globalization. This goes to explain the fact that conflict is an enduring aspect of the wider dynamics of globalization. In today's world, virtually every conflict situation is tied around the fall out of changes brought about by globalization.

According to Adekunle and Adisa (2010), insists that the conflict experienced currently in Nigeria is an off-shoot of globalization. To Adekunle and A disclaimed that:

Whenever there is conflict between, say, sedentary peasant farmers and pastoralist herders, it is normally seen from the prisms of scarcity of resources, which is part and parcel of the intricacies of globalization and all it portends (my emphasis) (2000) (n.p).

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: THE ECO-VIOLENCE THEORY

This paper adopts eco-violence thinking as theoretical underpinning. The theory was propagated by Homer-Dixon and Blitt. Dixon and Blitt (1998) noted that human existence is contingent on the availability of resources, and that scarcity of resource endowment could lead to conflicts.

The underlying assumption of eco-violence thesis goes to explain the fact that when resources are scarce (land, water, mineral resources, among others); and because of excessive demands by several competing interests and social groups, there is bound to be conflict.

Conversely, the increasing demand or unequal distribution of resources brought about by environmental hazards could result to deprivation and violence on the affected population as the case may be. Scarcity of resources can be propelled by factors such as climate change, increase in population, and many other environmental challenges. This is what has happened in the recent past in most African countries, and especially with the shrinking of Lake Chad region.

The Food and Agricultural Organization (n.d) has been quoted as saying that of the 30 million people living in Lake Chad region, competition for water resources is worrisome. Again, the drying and depreciation of the Lake Chad Basin is a major driver of conflict. To be sure, it has been alleged that fish production alone has declined to 60 percent in terms of production level, while pastoralist activities have been downgraded giving rise to increasing shortage of animal feeds, general bio-diversity and lack of food for livestock. According to the United Nations Secretary General, Amina Mohammed, over 2.3 million inhabitants in

Africa have been displaced; over 5 million persons cannot access food while a colossal amount of individuals and the vulnerable groups (especially women, children and the aged) currently suffer from acute malnutrition.

However, the eco-violence theory has been heavily criticized for its simplistic approach to the explanation of the subject matter of group or inter-group relations and violence. For most of the conflicts experienced, not only in Nigeria, but in Africa generally, the issue of scarcity of resources has been highly insignificant as causative factor to conflicts. Instead, what has been the bane of conflict is the way and manner some of those resources have been misappropriated through the instrumentality of self-aggrandizement, indolence, banality, greed and avarice by the elite and/or opportunistic class. The tendency to continue to accumulate resources have basically sidelined the general interests of the already impoverished masses, who in turn, are being manipulated by the same political bigots to cause mayhem all in the name of tribal or religious conflicts. Nonetheless, the theory has also become relevant because it gives a bigger picture of the reality of lack of focus and direction on how Africans, and indeed, Third World countries have continuously failed to sufficiently tap its own resources to be able to manage and sustain its teeming populace ever since the advent of democratic institutions, and shortly after the military interregnum in the early 1960s and beyond.

IV. NATURAL RESOURCE CONFLICTS: A FOCUS ON NIGERIA'S NORTH-CENTRAL GEO-POLITICAL ZONE

Quite a number of writings by experts and intelligentsias on the ravaging incidences of conflicts in Nigeria recently, and particularly, those of the crop farmers and herdsmen have been worrisome. To be sure, crop farmers here is used to refer to persons or groups actively involved the production of crops such as ginger, tomato, yams, among others. On the other hand, herdsmen are farmers who engage in rearing of animals such as cattles, sheep, goats, pigs, donkeys, camels and general animal husbandry. The most widely known categories of pastoralists (animal rearers) are the Fulanis, who occupy a vast portion of Northern Nigeria of Sokoto, Katsina, Kano, Maiduguri and most parts of Nigeria's North-East region.

However, it is not out of place to say that with advent of the current drive for economic diversification in Nigeria, coupled with the tendency to meet up with family needs, not all herdsmen in Nigeria are Fulanis (Erunke, 2021). What this means is that a good number of Nigerians and tribesmen such as the Tivs of Benue state, Jukuns of Taraba; Mada and Gwandara of Nasarawa and many parts of settlers around Kaduna, Enugu, Cross River, Plateau, Ebonyi, among other states of the federation are more or less herdsmen. Although this position is debatable, but the fact still remains that ascribing the Fulani tribe to cattle herding is a misnomer in this present global world where everyone

strives to survive in the midst of skyrocketing inflation, unemployment and overall economic instability.

However, it can be said that while it is a truism that some sections of the Nigerian society have been part and parcel of animal husbandry, not much have been heard in terms of gruesome attacks on settlements due largely to the struggle and contestation for land, forage or other natural resources. On the other hand, what has become problematic is the upsurge in the sequence and frequency of attacks and bloodshed in several quarters in the country with majority of researchers and public analysts pointing accusing figures on the Fulani herdsmen.

For the benefit of hindsight, what has come to be known as herdsmen attacks dates back to the turn of the 21st century (Umoh, 2017). From Umoh's standpoint, there has hardly been any form of violent attacks ever recorded in most climes in Africa that has been ascribed to Fulani herdsmen. To most avid observers, history has it that what we do know about herdsmen, and particularly those of the Fulani/Fulde extraction is that they are so loving and do little or nothing to harm their next door neighbor. To Erunke (2021) corroborating the views of Umoh (2017) and others claimed that:

When we were growing up in the village, the Fulanis that I knew then were our friends, very dependable, nice and accommodating. They always come around our homes, teach us a bit of Fulfulde tongue, exchange cattle milk with my parents for other commodities like guinea corn or dried cassava, with which they use back home as source of edible food. We in turn, go visiting our Fulani friends in their settlements any time they have need to do a naming ceremony of their kids, or whenever there is a cattle, they want to sell to our people to use as meat in my community (2021, n.p).

What can be deduced from the excerpts above is the level of cordiality people have been having with the Fulani herdsmen in time past in Nigeria and elsewhere. What is not clear, however, is the presumed wave of strife and antagonism which is being perpetrated across the length and breadth of the continent, and particularly in Nigeria. The momentum of herdsmen attacks currently, and particularly around Nasarawa, Benue, Plateau, Taraba, Kogi, and Niger are alien and quite strange. According to Genyi (2014) it does appear that the rising embers of politics and the influence of politicians and the tendency of the opportunistic class to continue to exploit and plunder the nation of its resources has brought in many circumstantial variants into play. What this means is that politicians in Nigeria as elsewhere, rely so much on tribesmen to curry solidarity so as to get the needed sympathy and win elective positions. The role of the tribesmen, depending on who is in government at a time, is to ensure that plausible avenues are created to either subvert the good intentions of the opposition party or that some of attacks are part of the greater political strategies to exhibit tribal relevance or

simply sustain hidden ethnic agenda of some sort. In either of the two extremes, there has been continuous blame game trailing the activities of herdsmen, some of which can be seen to have political undertone.

What remains intriguing, however, is that of the over 120 million herders and pastoralists in the world, and 50 million of which resides in sub-Saharan Africa alone. Rass (2006) has further claimed that of all the world's herders found in many climes in Africa, such as the Khoihoi of Southern Africa; the Turkana of Kenya; the Ariaal herders in Somalia, among others. In these places, though the Fulanis are known to be larger in number, but the kind of attacks, apprehension and bloodbath that has been witnessed in Nigeria (even with the presence of Fulani herders in almost the same proportion) is unprecedented. The same story of mutual co-existence and harmony can be told of other African countries where the herdsmen exist such as Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Benin Republic, Chad, Egypt, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Ivory Coast, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, among others. Records show that no form of conflict has arisen due to struggle for natural resources.

On the farmers-herdsmen conflict in Nigeria's North-Central geo-political zone, Baba and Chaminda (2017) wrote that conflicts between farmers and herders have been around ever since the era of the military junta, but certainly before the inception of democratic rule in 1999. The International Crisis Group (ICG) (2018) reports that violence between Nigerian herdsmen and farmers has escalated with over 1,300 persons been killed in 2018 alone. The Crisis Group have alleged that while this conflict is essentially a land use problem between farmers and herdsmen, it has rather taken a more dangerous ethno-religious dimensions. Since the escalation of the violence in 2018, it has been said that over 300,000 people have been rendered homeless, while a vast majority of local farmers can no longer access their farms, accounting for food insecurity, hunger and high cost of living.

In one of the reports compiled by Bayo cited in This Day Newspaper (2020), opine that the statistical figures of the number of persons killed in Nigeria between 2017 and May 2020, herdsmen conducted well over 654 attacks. Similarly, the number of victims were put at 2,539, while several others were kidnapped. Corroborating cases of deaths brought about by herdsmen in Nigeria, Bazan (2019) had earlier reported that the increase rate of violence in sub-Saharan Africa is due largely to the ever increasing wave of terror attacks in Nigeria. To Bazan, insist that herdsmen are largely responsible for the majority of terror-related deaths in the country with fatalities stepping up to over, 1,158 representing a phenomenal increase from 261 and 308 percent, respectively.

Reports of conflicts across states making up Nigeria's north central geo-political zone has not been palatable. Daily News media is a washed with stories of herdsmen attacks

around Nasarawa state, and in villages such as Kadarko, Giza, Obi, and many others. Again, in Benue state, we have been living witnesses to gory sights of killings by herdsmen in and around Katsina Ala, Zakibiam, Aliede, Ukum, Guma, to mention but a few. The same story is being heard of extra-judicial killings going on in Niger state, Plateau. It can be said that for whatever reasons anybody may advance, less of such attacks have been reported in Kogi state. However, it can be said that in each of these conflicts, several hundreds of thousands of lives and property worth millions of naira have been lost.

V. PREDISPOSING FACTORS TO HERDSMEN-FARMERS CONFLICT

The classic works of Verlunum and Essien (2017) has revealed that many factors than one, have been responsible for herdsmen-farmer's imbroglio. Aligning their thoughts with Verlunum and Essien, Adekunle and Adisa (2010) had earlier pointed out that factors such as lack of knowledge about grazing routes, depletion of soil nutrient and the desire to annex adequate grazing opportunities, all congeal to propel conflicts between both parties – herders and peasant farmers.

However, Ajene and Gyuse (2006) have differed on some of the predisposing factors that could snowball into conflicts. To Ajene and Gyuse, cited in the works of Atelhe and Chukwuma (2014), the causes of fracas between cattle herders and farmers could be political, economic, socio-cultural, or otherwise in orientation. Thus, they range from issues bordering on ownership and use of land resources, trespass, destruction of economic crops by cattles, ecological factors, criminality, lack of political will of the elite class (who of course, are supposed to be decisive in decision making during conflicts); politicization of conflicts and, essentially, the factor of religious sentiments associated with sensitive issues such as ethnic conflicts generally. All of these have constituted themselves into a huge pandoras box, the consequence of which has left the Nigerian state battered in all intends and purposes.

VI. CONCLUSION

What this work has done is to examine globalization as a subject matter of some of the challenges that the world has ever encountered and/or found itself. The paper established that there is a significant relationship between globalization on the one hand, and resource conflict question as it affects the Nigerian state. Of greater importance in this work is the extent to which the embers of globalization have blown across the world not just developed nations; but also underdeveloped and backward nations alike. The kind of results derived from globalization has come to stay with us as virtually nothing seems to be happening in order to nip these challenges in the bud. Of particular importance in this study is the way and manner the fall out of globalization has put greater pressures on the economic, social, political and otherwise, climate of the Nigerian north central region, with

very grave dangers it portends for the society. As earlier discussed in the study, so much energy has been dissipated by concerned citizens, stakeholders and public analysts alike, all geared towards redefining lasting solution to the quagmire that has bedeviled the north central geo-politics. To these researchers, a number of recommendations that can stem the tides of farmer-herdsmen conflicts in the affected areas, some of which includes the following will suffice.

First, government and all stakeholders in the nation-building project should come together, discuss and agree on the modalities for controlled grazing in not only in the affected north central states, but in Nigeria as a whole. The call for a ban on open grazing, which appears to have generated conflicts; and has been championed by Nigeria's South-South, South-East, and South-West Governors should be sustained. This way, it will be easier to easily identify erring herder's ad deal with recalcitrant ones accordingly.

Secondly, it will not be out of place to suggest also that the agitations for border control have hardly worked, and bandits infiltrate these loopholes, come into the country and cause mayhem. Government should as a matter of urgency, re-strategize, mobilize funds and build electric fence around the states bordering neighboring countries. This way, it will be easier to effectively man and control every form of entry and exist going on across borders. Aside this, there is need to create artificial dams that can cater for adequate alternative source of water for animals by African leaders, especially those around the Lake Chad region. The damages caused by drought have pushed herdsmen down south, some of whom have become major drivers of conflicts in several places in Nigeria and beyond.

Furthermore, there is need to restructure the nation's security architecture that will reflect the much cherished Federal Character Principles as it were. Lopsided appointments into the nation's security apparatus as is currently being witnessed can further aggravate tension and conflict. This is so because most herders who come around to destroy crops do so with reckless abandon. Some of the herdsmen could openly confront farmers in the field, threatened them with rifles and cutlasses, and, hence, allow their cattles to eat or graze on the farmer's crops without minding. The tendency is for some of these herders to openly make unguarded comments like "our brother is the one in power, Nigeria belongs to us for now... if you open your mouth to complain, we will kill you..." Some of these remarks are commonplace everywhere in Nigeria. These researchers are living witnesses to some of these threats, and these are more or less inimical to our much-talked-about cherished values and call for national integration.

Among other critical recommendations, the herdsmen-farmers imbroglio should be depoliticized; government should be seen to be committed towards genuine intentions to put a stop to the problems, devoid of rhetoric and lip-service. Again, there is need for proper documentation of immigrants coming into the country by the Nigerian

Immigration Service. Reports from various sources has it that most herders are filtering into Nigeria from countries like Mali, Somalia, Guinea Bissau, Niger Republic and many other countries. Some of them come in as mercenaries whose interest to fight for other herders or for pecuniary gains or yet, for other clandestine and ideological reasons. It is hoped that if all of these recommendations are considered and logically followed, there will be peace in Nigeria, and the question of conflicts between herders and peasants will apparently be unheard of in the nation and the affected states in the nations north central geo-political zones.

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