

GLOBALIZATION AND CONFLICT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: One important phenomenon which dominates discussion among statesmen, policy analysts, academia and international organization is globalization. Its effect traverses every stratum of a society. No nations on earth which does not experience the implication and manifestation of globalization due to the significant attached to it in contemporary times. Hence, it's not only about economic integration, but it also played fundamental role in conflict across states. The essence of this discourse is to examine the role of globalization in conflicts in Nigeria by examines the movement of arms across borders, information technology, social media influence and the role of multinational Corporations in conflict in Nigeria especially in the Niger delta region. The study adopts historical analysis and based the analysis on the use of primary and secondary sources, what cannot be denied is that globalization largely played pivotal role in the conflict in Nigeria and the entire world

I. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria, like others states in the world, has at various times been characterized by conflicts. If we observe closely, we will understand that some of these conflicts are not just completely local or national in causes, effects, escalation, resolution, and management. Some of them are influenced by external players and factors. In other words, globalization plays a part in some Nigerian conflicts. Conflict occurs in every stratum and levels of the society: among individuals, among groups, and even States. Suffice it to say that in any society in the world, conflict is inevitable, but it can be managed, and by managing it, human relations are managed. To understand the connection between globalization and conflict in Nigeria, we will structure our work accordingly:

Explaining the concept “globalization”

The term globalization has been increasingly used since the mid-1980s.¹ There have been arguments among scholars on the origins of globalization. Some scholars believe the origins to be in modern times, others trace it to the European age of discovery and voyages to the new world.² However, what is clear to scholars is that in the late 19th century and early 20th century, the connectedness of the world's economies and cultures grew very quickly.³ There have been many definitions of globalization by various people. In *The Consequences of Modernity*, Anthony Giddens defines it as:

*...the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa.*⁴

UNESCO also gave a very good explanation of globalization when the agency wrote that: *Globalization is the ongoing process that is linking people, neighborhoods, cities, regions and countries much more closely together than they have ever been before.*⁵

Robert Robertson, Professor of Sociology at the University of Aberdeen, an early writer in the field, defined globalization in 1992 as: *...the compression of the world and the intensification of the consciousness of the world as a whole.*⁶

From the various definitions, it is clear that a new socio-economic order is fast emerging and seems to be engulfing the entire planet. Advances in transportation and telecommunications infrastructure, including the rise of the telegraph and the internet are major factors in globalization, generating further interdependence of economic and cultural activities. In the year 2000, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) identified four basic aspects of globalization: trade and transactions, capital and investment movements, migration and the movement of people, and the dissemination of knowledge.⁷

Explaining the concept “conflict”

Just like globalization, there is no universal single definition for conflict. But for the purpose of our study, we will define conflict as disputes, disagreements, quarrels, fights, struggles, and wars between individuals, groups and countries.⁸ In every country, there is no complete agreement on how to share wealth, power and status

among individuals and groups, and how to effect necessary changes and reforms. Since individuals and different groups have diverse interests, the aim of some groups will conflict with those of others. Conflict occurs when deprived groups and individuals attempt to increase their share of power and wealth or to modify the dominant values, beliefs, norms or ideology. There are functional and dysfunctional conflicts. Dysfunctional conflicts are destructive and cause loss of lives, property, investment opportunities, hunger and starvation when open violence, wars, mass strikes, and other forms of disruption occur. On the other hand, functional or creative conflicts are constructive and reflect the differences and varieties of human opinions and activity which exists in any free society.

The Relationship between the Two Concepts

Globalization influences the expression of conflict in some ways including discovering and providing new resources over which to compete, disturbing and influencing local events, threatening deeply held values or symbols, etc.⁹ One good example of how globalization and conflict interact can be found in the story of 'conflict diamonds', where diamonds are used to fund military operations.

In Angola and Sierra Leone, the failure of the central government, insurgency campaigns, and the lack of external funding sources combined with the access to diamond mining regions to create a disaster. In Angola, UNITA lost financial support from the U.S. government after the cold war ended. To replace this funding, UNITA stockpiled diamonds and then used diamond sales to fund weapons purchases, in order to continue its war.¹⁰ In Sierra Leone the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) waged war with the central government for 11 years, beginning in 1992. The group relied upon diamond smuggling to support its military campaign. This campaign resulted in the death of nearly 20 000 people, and about 2 million people were displaced.¹¹

In a further twist, al-Qaeda is believed to use the 'conflict diamond' smuggling route to launder its own proceeds. It is alleged that al-Qaeda operatives purchased diamonds in Africa, exported them and converted them into cash.¹² A diamond on the finger of a casualty of the attack on the world trade centre may well have once been traded by al-Qaeda and mined by those working with RUF. Therefore, the global market in diamonds, interacting with the global arms trade, impacted local conditions in some places in the world, especially as was seen in Sierra Leone and Angola. In both countries the local conflict was fed, and new dynamics introduced.

Causes of Conflicts in Nigeria

The major causes of conflicts and crises in Nigeria is the competition for resources.¹³ Resources as a cause of conflict refers to all forms of human possessions such as land, money, power and influence that are often limited in supply. This causes conflicts in three major ways:

- a. When it is not enough to go round everybody, people fight for the little that is available.
- b. People fight over resources when what is available is unjustly distributed or allocated.
- c. Poverty makes people to become pliable instruments in the hands of conflict entrepreneurs.

Poverty explains why unemployed youths are the cannon fodders of violent conflicts in different parts of Nigeria. People pay them to fight their cause. The Niger Delta crisis in Nigeria can be excellently used to illustrate the different aspects of resource-based conflict.

Another cause of conflict, most especially religious and ethnic alterations, is the differences in our value system. Some scholars often blame religious conflict on this factor, and the argument here is that people are engaged in religious conflicts because of religious differences (i.e. Muslim versus Christian). However, we must understand that values do not create conflict automatically. It becomes an issue in conflict when people try to force their value system on others, or when values are politicized. Examples are the western region crisis of 1962 and other run of events that led to the Nigerian civil war and the Kano Riot of May 1, 1953.

Psychological needs constitute another important cause of conflict. This refers to all forms of human sentiments by which or without which a gap could be created between individuals and groups. For example, everybody desires to be loved and respected. The absence of these could make a person to become agitated and troublesome. Other human expressions such as greed, pride, lack of respect, intolerance, etc are believed to have sparked off various conflicts and crises in Nigeria.

The last major cause of conflict is the manner we communicate and exchange information. In other words, how we exchange information goes a long way in determining whether a society will be peaceful or not. Our consideration of communication styles requires that we call special attention to how the media report could cause disagreement between individuals or groups.

The Link between Nigerian Conflicts and Globalization

During the second half of the 19th century, there was the Yoruba civil war, which led to turmoil, huge casualties and the disruption of economic activities. A subtle thing about the war was that European technology (guns) was greatly used in prosecuting the war. Although there were locally made guns as at that time, most of the guns used were gotten through trade with the Europeans. The effectiveness of guns in prosecuting the war led to higher loss of lives and properties than previous centuries. We could indeed argue that the socio-economic contact between the Yoruba's and the Europeans, stemming from the increase in globalization, made the war more fatal than the skirmishes that characterized wars in the previous centuries.

In Northern Nigeria, we had the Hausa city-states, which particularly thrived from the 15th century to the late 18th and early 19th centuries. But the political and religious status-quo changed after the jihad of Uthman Dan Fodio and his followers, many of whom were his tribesmen, the Fulanis. Dan Fodio was an educated Fulani Islamic scholar, who was much influenced by muslim teachings. Here, we could see the influence of religion in fuelling conflict in the north between the period of 1896 to 1904. The conflict was very fierce and violent. Therefore the contact some Savanna regional residents of West Africa continuously had with Arabs and Berbers shaped their religious ideology, and subsequently led to a dangerous conflict. Some scholars have argued that the Jihad of Dan Fodio also had some political undertone since Islam was not new to the Hausa states. The Islamic zeal of Dan Fodio even gave him the motivation to plan conquering Southern Nigeria, but that never came to fruition.

In the Eastern part of Nigeria, the political, economic and trade influence and dominance the British colonial masters tried to impose was a major reason for the Aba women riot of 1929. This conflict led to the gunning down of some women who took part in the protest by the colonial police. In the same East, colonization (a consequence of globalization) led to the installation of warrant chiefs; something that was alien to the Igbo people. This led to resentments, clashes, and was also a reason for the women riot.

The resistance to colonization by various Nigerian groups such as the Ijebus, the Benins, etc also stemmed from the globalizing colonial motive of the European powers. The colonial tendency of the European powers led to territorial intrusion which many African groups bravely resisted, but were unsuccessful.

The thirty months civil war in Nigeria is also another example of a globalizing influence, especially in its escalation. The arms the Nigerian government used in prosecuting the war was majorly supplied by Russia.¹⁴ Looking at the map, the distance between Nigeria and Russia is very huge. But since distances between countries have been shortened through international trade, information, communication, and transportation technologies, this should not be a surprise to us. There is hardly any African dysfunctionary conflict that occurs without the use of weaponry gotten from the Northern hemisphere. Some have even argued that some of these African conflicts are sparked off by foreign parties who would gain from the escalation of a conflict through the sale of arms and surreptitious exploitation of resources of the country or region under conflict.

In their quest to unravel the forces generating conflict in Africa, human-rights groups are closely scrutinizing Trans-National Corporations (TNCs), which are also forces of globalization. TNCs are not always responsible for the genesis of crises. But some of the deadliest conflicts that littered and continue to litter Africa's political landscape can definitely be traced to the expansion and domination of TNCs. This is especially true in extractive states where resources with global appeal, value, and markets are found. While the state's interest in generating revenue from these resources coincides with that of the TNCs, the latter's interest in maximizing profits conflicts with the welfare of the citizens. Thus, the state is caught between protecting a vital source of revenue, and defending the rights and privileges of its citizens. Most times, because of the greedy nature of those in government, they side with the TNCs against their citizens.¹⁵

For example, the oil-producing Niger Delta region is perpetually at war with the government and oil corporations. For decades, successive Nigerian governments have supported the TNCs that possess the capital, the technology and technical expertise to exploit the country's oil. The exploitation has resulted in serious environmental damage, developmental neglect, human-rights abuses, economic oppression, and inequitable resource allocation. These abuses, and the need for redress, are at the heart of the conflict. Although the Yar'Adua administration granted them amnesty in 2009, and promised to develop the region, even the effort for development made by his successor, President Goodluck Jonathan, is still not satisfactory to some Niger Delta communities. If care is not taken, the Niger Delta insurgency will be fully awakened again, and it might be worse. Suffice it to say that even the weapons used by the militants in the South South (Niger Delta area) are products of the connection between international trade, conflict and globalization.

The oil rich Bakassi peninsula was a theatre of constant, violent military clashes between the armed forces of Cameroon and those of Nigeria well over two decades. Up till today, tensions persist over its ownership despite the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruling in favour of Cameroon in 2002. The peninsula's geographical location suggests, and numerous prospection made by geologists and other scientists confirm Bakassi as being most likely the richest peninsula in Africa, comprising extensive reserves of oil, gas, and other important minerals. The colossal foreign exchange earnings from oil, as a result of very high demand of the commodity in the global economy caused belligerence and legal acrimony between the two countries regarding ownership of the land.

The Boko Haram threat and menace is another notable connection and example. What started as a national issue has grown into an international concern. Reports in the media have confirmed that the group has an international link with some terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda, al-Shabab and the Islamic State (formerly ISIS). Some members of the group are even trained outside the country, and their finance and weapons are also to a considerable extent externally gotten. For some times, they made a fool of the Nigerian military by overpowering them with their superior intelligence, tactics, and weaponry. The Nigerian government on its part has had to seek the support of the Western governments, particularly Britain, France, and the U.S.A.

Conclusion

From the discussions so far, it is clear that globalization has played a role in most of the country's major conflicts. While it is easy to point some accusing fingers to globalizing influence in escalating and influencing the shape of conflicts in Nigeria, we must also look inward and ask ourselves where we have gotten it all wrong. Some Far East and South East Asian countries were not even at par with Nigeria in 1960, but today they have overtaken Nigeria. Countries like South Korea, Malaysia, and Singapore have channeled and modulated the influence of globalization towards peace, conflict resolution and management, and socio-economic progress.¹⁶ They used what they have to get what they want, following the simple economic principle of utilizing comparative advantage. They gradually progressed from the primary industries to the secondary and tertiary industries through standard education and the commitment to the value of humanity. In Nigeria, we are still grappling with issues such as ethnicity, religion, resource sharing and distribution. In other words, as citizens, we are not yet united. I strongly believe a country gets the influence it wants globalization to give to her. Globalization has its positives and its negatives, and so it depends on what States, groups or individuals bargain for. One of the positive influences of globalization today is education, and there are many hitherto less developed countries that have embraced it, mastered it, and have continued to develop its application, using it to better the lives of their citizens.

If there is a globalizing influence in Nigerian conflicts, it is because Nigeria itself lacks a sense of unity and purpose. Globalization can also be used in averting conflict, resolving it, and managing it. It gets to a stage that a country becomes indispensable to other countries and the positive influences of globalization, that whenever a minor conflict wants to turn violent, people, groups and countries will unite together to prevent it because of their knowledge of the huge benefits they will gain from keeping that country peaceful and economically viable. Cases of this are Germany, South Korea, Malaysia and Singapore. The Iron and Steel industry in Germany, her agricultural industry, her services industry, etc are so essential to the survival or greatness of Britain, Europe and even other parts of the world.¹⁷ But to get to this level, Nigerians must imbibe a spirit of unity and purpose. In other words, the "National Question" needs to be resolved as soon as possible. Unarguably, most of our conflicts are derived/related to the issue of nationality.

In addition, we are to have our priorities and focus. Nigerians need to go beyond the level of ethnicity and religion towards embracing and practicing the value of humanity, whereby people are very concerned about the welfare of fellow men and see the danger in not protecting it. One of the avenues to achieve this is through mass orientation, formal and informal education. Surveys in 2013 revealed that majority of Nigerians are still illiterate. This is quite unfortunate given the fact that some of the so-called literates are still being referred to as educated illiterates. It is therefore important that most Nigerians get standard education, and our school curriculum should be vigorously channeled towards promoting humanity, creating employment, exploiting our resources, and making the best use of the gains of globalization. When these processes begin and are achieved, we will drastically reduce the conflicts that have characterized our political entity, and understand ways of managing conflict at all stratum of our society. But it starts with a consciousness and commitment to developing a spirit of unity and joint purpose. Our joint purpose should be the eradication of poverty; purposeful and useful education which lays strong emphasis on our major areas of comparative advantages such as farming, sport, tourism, and in addition humanistic values; and the gradual exploitation of the tide of globalization. (Sport and tourism can be veritable tools in reducing capital flight, fostering unity, and generating the interest of foreigners visiting or living in Nigeria). It is a gradual process that requires patience, focus, and planning. Let us use what we have to get what we want.

Endnotes

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