RESEARCH ARTICLE

IMPLICATIONS OF NIGERIA-NIGER BOUNDARY DEMARCATION

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ABSTRACT

The creation of Nigeria-Niger common boundary cannot be treated outside the larger history of colonialism. The intrusion of the colonial powers in to Africa and their desire to achieve the greater possible benefits of the land, labour and capital of foreign land has indeed affected Africa negatively. The resultant effect of this is the division and disruption of lands and tribes of Africa into different socio-economic and political formations, living side by side. It also destroyed the continuity nature of several natural regions of Africa. This paper examines the implications of boundary demarcation between Nigeria and Niger, making of the border, nature and dynamics of economic activities carried out between Nigeria and Niger Republic.

INTRODUCTION

The interaction between Nigeria and Niger living side by side with one another operating as a separated independent political entity largely depends on the benefits each country derives from the interaction either economically, politically, educationally or socio-culturally. It is contingent upon this argument that the New World Order is perceive as a powerful force that is ever increasing the inter-connectedness of the global community. New World Order particularly on cross border activities are promoted by free trade activities of international organization, desire of central states to promote certain interest and activities of regional organizations. Equally, shared culture, ideology, geography and history of the two countries living side by side as experienced in many North and West African states particularly in the border areas were tribes of the same origin and history found them selve divided by colonial imaginary borders (Zartman, 1995). The area identified with high level of cross border activities between border communities in West Africa is the Nigeria-Niger border land. The two states shares border of about 1,500 kilometers (the largest border in Nigeria), vast, open and densely populated (National Boundary Commission, 2007).

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The two countries are colonial creations, social, economic, and political relations between their communities pre-dates the colonial rule. For example, what is today considered to be Northern and Southern Nigeria is what Paul (1999) referred to as 'Hausa land Divide', this was because the communities of the two countries have for centuries shared similar socio-economic, cultural and geographical aspects and have been part of the kingdoms of Hausa land. Despite their division in to two parts of the two independent countries or entities, the states particularly their border communities continued to enjoy warm relationship.

METHODOLOGY

This paper is an extract from my dissertation submitted for the award of Master of Science (M Sc) Degree in International Relations at University of Maiduguri. Therefore, the data is predominantly empirical rather than speculative. The data was obtained through a thorough and careful examination of the existing literature on Nigeria-Niger relations from 1980 to the current period of the relations, (i.e when the dissertation was written). Therefore the sources of data included textbooks, journals, magazines, newspapers, internal sources, government publications and personal interviews.

Border Security: Decalo (1998) defines border security as the "provision of security of the geographical boundary of a political entity or legal jurisdiction, such as government or sub-

national administrative division. Border security may however set up buffer zones and can either be fully or partially controlled and may be crossed legally or at designated border check points. Guo (2004) further stresses that border or boundary security does not only exist between two states but also between other forms of political units that may be visible or invisible, either marked with stones or fortified. Guo classifies borders as either natural or artificial. It is said to be natural when natural objects such as mountains, lakes and seas form barriers between states. Artificial borders are however man made, consisting of artificial barriers such as stones, walls or even lines. Artificial borders may also be geometrical using the longitude and latitude lines across the globe. Borders may also be cultural when culture separation formed the basis for border creations or demarcation of nation-states.

Security: There is widespread consensus that the term security is ambiguous. There is no generally acceptable definition of security. Security as an important concept is generally linked with the improvement of threats to cherished principles, particularly the survival of groups, individuals or objects in the future. Therefore, security involves the ability to pursue cherished social and political objectives. According to Paul (1999), "there is a correlation between security and survival". Whereas survival is a vital condition, security is viewed as safety, confidence, freedom from danger, fear, and doubt, among other human problems. However, security as a concept is futile without a critical discourse of something important to secure. Indeed, security could best be understood when situated within the context of a referent object. It is pertinent to note that in human history, the focus of security has been people-oriented (Booth, 2007). Some scholars in international politics have however argued that when thinking about security, states should be the most important factor. On the other hand, some scholars have challenged this position by arguing that any scholarly discourse on security should accord priority to human beings since without reference to humans, security is of no value (Moses, 1999).

National Security: For Decalo (1998), national security is tantamount to national interest. National security is predicated upon economic security, energy security, environmental security, food security, among others. The definition given by Buzan (2009) gives a better understanding of the concept. He states that national security embodies the sovereignty of the state, the inviolability of its territorial boundaries and the right to individual and collective self-defence against internal and external threat (cited in Anyadike, 2013). For Ejike and Oti (2012), it can be described as the sum of the efforts, energy, intelligence, commitment and the use of institutions (and their products) to enforce and ensure adequate protection of interests, people and properties of a nation. It also involves the overall protection of a nation's integrity and sovereignty through the use of economic resources, diplomacy, power projection and political power. Put differently, national security encompasses the sum of what a nation does in order to safeguard itself as a sovereign entity as well as ensuring the protection and well-being of its citizens, institutions, interests, development plans, economy, landscape, national image and independence.

Nigeria-Niger Boundary Demacation: The creation of Nigeria-Niger common boundary cannot be treated outside the larger history of colonialism. The intrusion of the colonial powers in to Africa and their desire to achieve the greater possible benefits of the land, labour and capital of foreign land has indeed affected Africa negatively. The resultant effect of this is the division and disruption of lands and tribes of Africa into different socio-economic and political formations, living side by side. It also destroyed the continuity nature of several natural regions of Africa (Decalo, 1998). The Anglo-French treaties of 1890, 1898, 1904 and 1906 were all treaties reached for the benefit of either British or France. During the end of 19th century, both powers have cast their eyes over Hausa land. To protect French intrusion, the British became pre-occupied with expanding its influence North ward from the coast while French was desperately in search of water route to connect both its Eastern and Western Africa holding and a corridor to link Zinder to Niamey. To avoid conflict, both agreed that the division should carry out based on historical, cultural conditions that divided the two traditional states of Sokoto caliphate and Niger. This led to three separate treaties over a period of fourteen years that eventually led to the creation of Nigeria-Niger boundary. The treaties were however, based on historical and geographical exaggerations that were unfounded and are not known even to Hausa states (Decalo, 1998). The first demarcation of the area was carried out on paper, without any of the colonial officials even visited the place. The lack of empirical knowledge of the area was what later triggered subsequent re-adjustments of the boundary into what is today. Decalo, (1998) noted that most of the British treaties with the French are based on concessions from French in other parts of their colonial world. For example, the British renunciations of a radius of 160 miles from Sokoto both South ward and East ward in three successive geometric lines toward River Kori in Niger was based on the French enunciation of its fishing right of new found land.

Decalo further stressed that, the claim by the British and French to keep Sokoto caliphate and Niamey intact, out of empathy cannot hold water. The division of larger states like Gobir and Sokoto caliphate and some part of the Sokoto caliphate (some in Nigeria and some in Niger) is a proof against their claim. Daura communities like Zango, which was opposed to the jihad are now found in Nigeria. It could be argued that colonialism has a history of divide and rule. Through history it has succeeded in dividing single socio-cultural and historical formations in to separate independent entities, living side by side. This is in order to stop or at maximum reduce the possibility of ethnic regrouping, and the power to resist their rule. Decalo (1998) pointed out that, it was for this reason that the French colonial authority moved it capital of administration from Zinder to Niamey. The reason is that, they fear the possibility of regrouping and attack from Hausa people of who still maintain close affinities with the Hausa people in Nigeria. Against this background, Fage's (2002) "Continuity and Change in Nigeria's Regional Policy" discussed the imperial powers of British and France decided arbitrarily, to partition the region under the agreement known as the Say-Barua line provisional International Boundary Agreement of 1890. Although controversial, the Say-Barua agreement paved the way for a number of Anglo/French conferences on border delimitation, the last of which was held in London on May 29, 1906, in it, the two colonial powers agreed that:

- the Border which demarcated Nigeria and Niger was a straight line sector joined the Niger tri-point at 13 degree 42'29" N latitude and approximately 13 degree 38"E

longitude, and the Benin tri-point at 13degree 05'N latitude and approximately 14 degree 05'E longitude;

- The ownership of the Islands was in accordance with the boundary division, and that the natives on each side of the River would have equal fishing rights;
- Inhabitant (of the area) transferred by the new boundary from the British to French territory or vice versa, could resettle across the boundary if they deserved.
- Fage (2002) further stressed that, despite the concerted effort made by the British and French not to disturb the existing socio-economic system, the border demarcation produced some negative efforts. First, it systematically eroded the very foundation and the structure of the traditional ties between the people and government of Nigeria and Niger. The imposition of artificial borders, defined in terms of latitude, longitude, geometric circle, and straight line.

Cross Border Communication

Communication is the life wire of any successful activity in any setting without effective and efficient communication, the socio-economic and political life of the people will be in disarray. Communication is the medium through which the people of Illela (Nigeria) and Konni (Niger) maintain their relationships as it is still through communication that the relationship is improved. A part from the road link, mobile phone services and dozens od bush routes that serve as a medium between the two communities together, Konni champion the control of two Radio station listened to by members of both communities. Radio in this area is the most widely listened electronic media. Like most Hausa societies of Northern Nigeria, this is virtually no home in Illela or Konni without atleast a Radio (Decalo, 1998). Radio therefore is the most effective and efficient means of public communication in the area.

Konni boast of two Radio stations, Anfani Radio and Sarauniyya Radio stations. Both radio stations provide a medium for social relations net working and enlightenment for the two communities. This however do not mean that they are the only media station listened to in the area, rather, they represent a medium through which local issues that affect the communities are well discussed. According to (Fage, 2002), they organize an air programmes that further strengthen the existing relations between the two communities. These radio stations carry out programmes such as cross border greetings between friends and relatives, cross border jokes between cousins or tribes (as in the case of Fulani and Gobirawa tribes). It is important at this point to note that jokes between cousins and tribes are an integral part of the history and culture of Hausa people. The station also air preaching sessions and Hausa musicals to enlighten and entertain members of the communities. It is interesting to note that, while the two stations are collated in Konni, most of the preaching and musicals played are Nigerians. Illela Local Government also patronizes these media houses more than it patronizes the state's owned radio (Rima Radio Sokoto). The media houses in Konni moreover treat both communities without discrimination. Instead the media station make discount to those in Illela due to the weak value of Nigeria's currency over that of Niger's CFA Franc (Fage, 2002).

Geographical Location of Illela and Konni: Illela is located between latitudes 13 40' North and 5 20' East. The local Government is one of the 23 Local Government of Sokoto state. It shares border to the North with Konni town of Tahoua region of Niger Republic. To the South, it is bounded to Gwadabawa Local Government Area. It also has border with Gada Local Government Area to the East and Tangaza Local Government Area to the West. It was created out of Gwadabawa Local Government Area in 1989. The Local Government has an area of 1, 049 kilometers. The population of Illela is estimated as 150, 498 based on 2006 census. Out of this 43.3 percent are male while 56.6 of the population are female.

Birnin Konni is located on latitudes 13-55' North and 5 20' East with eight kilometers North of Illela and Konni river. It is a community in the extreme part, South of Tahoua region of Niger Republic. It has an approximate population of 44,663 based on 2006 census. The contemporary importance of this town to Niger Republic lies in its vast arable land for cultivation and rearing. Its geographical position in Niger (bordering Nigeria) gives it economic advantage. A part from its road link to Illela, it also serves as an important link to important cities of Niger such as Maradi, Zinder and Niamey. Konni is situated as high plain, 560 meters above the sea level. It also covers an area of 661 kilometers. Illela borders the town to the South, Illela (Niger Republic) to the North, Madawa Local Government Area (Niger) to the East and Dogondutchi Local Government to the West.

Implications of Nigeria-Niger Boundary Demarcation: The division of Nigeria and Niger in to two distinct political entities by their former colonial masters is not without its consequences. Despite the demarcation of the boundaries the people of the two communities of Nigeria and Niger continue to relate peacefully, the border has, notwithstanding created abnormalities. First, despite the Kanuri and Hausa speaking languages have dominated the two communities the mode of language expression seems to be different. For example, those in Niger are influenced by French mode of expression and writing. Such difference has become instrument in the hands of Nigerians and Niger's immigration official in differentiating the citizens of the two states (Paul, 1999).

Colins (1999) also pointed out that the demarcation has affected settlement pattern in the area as it encourages migration of people from Niger border to the border area of Nigeria. The movement was triggered by many factors, most importantly, the strict and harsh taxation policies by French colonial authorities and the regular famine in Niger Republic in the recent past. The demarcation, however, became the basis for the establishment of border markets. Konni market in Niger attracts people every Saturday from different part of West Africa to selland purchase goods. The border therefore, supports socio-cultural and economic activities in the area and beyond. Smuggling and the problem of illegal immigrants are irritants that could threaten both Nigeria and Niger's trade. However, Nigeria and Niger share a common concern for political and economic stability, as a result of long established socio-cultural and political histories. Similarly, it has been established that political developments and economic policies in Nigeria has a pronounced impact on Niger Republic. Perhaps, even if such trends and policies of Niger have similar impact on Nigeria, it may not necessarily be at the same degree, probably due to Nigeria's economic strength as a major

market in Africa and the Niger second international customer after France (Booth, 2007). The Nigeria-Niger border is quite extensive and the problem associated with its administration appear to be not necessarily the lack of initiatives or efforts by the communities concerned, rather it is the apparent lack of political will by the central governments. Issues that pose problems administrative with respect to the management of the Nigeria-Niger border include the porous nature of the border area which encourages the smuggling of ban items out of and into the two countries. There is also lack of sufficient information of each other's policies concerning the administration of the border areas; even where such information exits, it is on informal and infrequent basis (Decalo, 1998). The level of formal economic ties among Nigeria and Niger is generally low, informal economic flows have always been significant and growing, it is unfortunately undertaken by private individuals, and the illegal flows of goods is done on massive scale (Buzan, 2009). It is a general belief by experts that smuggling activities command higher proportion of trans-border trade relative to the legal business transactions. It must be emphasized that detailed trade figures about local production are extremely hard to come by in Nigeria and Niger, because much goes on without any records especially in private informal sector which handles most of the trans-border trade (Fage, 2002).

Conclusion

The paper attempted to conceptualize the terms security, border security and unravel the implications of boundary damarcation between Nigeria and Niger Republic since the 1980's up to the time this work is written. It explored the issues of Nigeria's national security, geographical locations of Illila and Konni, cross border communities as well as making of the boundaries by the colonial elites. The paper submitted that there is the need to properly address the problems of national security system of the boundary between Nigeria and Niger. There is equally the need to checkmate the cross border activities and smuggling that seriously affect the communities that settled around the border the two countries shares.

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