



THE DYNAMICS OF INTER-STATE RELATIONS AND THE CHALLENGES OF CROSS-BORDER CONFLICTS: THE NIGERIA-BENIN EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

Interstate relations between Nigeria and the Republic of Benin centered much on the issues of cross-border security; illegal migration; porous border arrangement; and the harmonization and integration of states policies toward

Keywords:

Interstate Relations, Border Conflicts, Border Security, Economic Cooperation, Lolo and Madecali national development. However community cross-border conflict between Lolo and

INTRODUCTION

Since independence, Nigeria seeks to maintain cordial relations with all its immediate neighbors. It also strives to have good relations with other countries in the West African sub region known as the Good Neighbor Policy (Akinterinwa and Ate, 2011:12). In other words, this guiding principle is one of neighborliness and friendship. The intent is to help resolve conflicts in the West African sub region and to stabilize relations with its immediate neighboring countries. Several factors have shaped and influenced the Nigerian foreign relations anchored in its foreign policy

Madecali straddling impacts of the border regional goals while the two states present conflict to the reducing bi-national a challenge to both borderlands tensions between interstate relations communities. The states. Finding shows and socio-communal study employs the that, the conflict interactions. Even qualitative research witnessed mass though, all the ethnic method which displacement, groups in the border involves In-depth upsetting of civilians, lived in varying interviews and Focus miserable life degrees of cross- Group Discussions condition and cultural cooperation (FGDs). While FGDs deplorable situation as and ethno-linguistic were conducted in people of Tungan- integration, border each community; Kungi were forced to conflict erupted in primary data was flee their homes, land, 2009 over the disputed collected from the and resources. This area of Tungan-Kungi. officials in the Benin study recommends The conflict was based Embassy, Nigeria. The that authorities should on territorial claim paper adopts the establish a joint- over boundary and a Functionalist theory of mechanism for competition over international peaceful coexistence in scarce resources. This boundaries which collaboration with paper analyzes the assumes that, local traditional/ local nature of inter-state informal networks authorities in the relations between the allow local authorities mediation and two states and the to coordinate common negotiation process.

Since independence, Nigeria seeks to maintain cordial relations with all its immediate neighbors. It also strives to have good relations with other countries in the West African sub region known as the Good Neighbor Policy (Akinterinwa and Ate, 2011:12). In other words, this guiding principle is one of neighborliness and friendship. The intent is to help resolve conflicts in the West African sub region and to stabilize relations with its immediate neighboring countries. Several factors have shaped and influenced the Nigerian foreign relations anchored in its foreign policy agenda. The evolution of Nigerian foreign relations was based on factors

which include the decolonization process; party politics and Nigerian federalism, regionalism; the state of the economy and economic development; the problem of domestic unity as well as the nature and the structure of the external environment that is, Africa and the international community (Izah, 1991). Elsewhere in West Africa, Nigeria has always pursued the Big Brother foreign policy with its neighbours of which Benin is a part. The Big Brother foreign policy had its foundation in the initial thrust of having Africa (West Africa in particular) as the focal point of Nigeria's foreign policy, and was driven by the perception of Nigeria being the Big Brother to several African nations less endowed with economic resources and manpower development, and those threatened by environmental and political instability (Eddy and Kingsley, 2013:100-104).

However, the Nigerian government shortly after independence was in a dilemma over the costs and dividends of the prevailing foreign policy thrust of Big Brother or, in effect, good neighbourliness (Ate, 2011: 86) in the conduct of its with its immediate neighbours. The Nigerian government's good neighbourliness foreign policy towards the immediate neighbours had seriously encouraged irregular migration of nationals from Benin seeking improved socio-economic welfare into Nigeria. In other words, this foreign policy, driven by the natural resources endowments in Nigeria made the federal government to accommodation of aliens from Benin. This paper analyzes the character, nature and pattern of inter-state relations between Nigeria and Benin from independence of both countries to date. It presents the interactions between these two states in a chronological order stressing points of cooperation as well as those of tension in their inter-relationship. The study also examines the nature of community cross-border conflict between Lolo and Madecali communities of Nigeria and Benin Republic and its impacts to the borderlands communities.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the functionalist theory of international boundaries originated from the theory of integration proposed by David Mitrany and later developed by Stoddard (2002). The theory takes off on the premises that certain research endeavours could not be effective if restricted to formal institutions, but they must spread to include informal groups and organizations. Functionalism involves the employment of sociological and anthropological techniques and conceptual frameworks in the understanding of certain political phenomena which traditional political science techniques alone would not be able to adequately address. It provides tools for the analysis of informal, non-institutional politically relevant activities; it reduces value orientation to an insignificant degree; it is concerned principally with what happens, and not such ethical judgment as what ought to happen (Jones, 1967:10).

The Functionalist theory views boundaries as points of “differential converters” to ameliorate socio-economic and political differences between people and institutions across international boundaries. It is based on “the doctrine of mutual necessity or symbiotic reciprocity, which promotes cooperation and integration” (Stoddard, 2002:45). It acknowledges and employs informal functions and affinities between people straddling a bi-national boundary. This becomes important when the people across the boundary are of the same stock that the delimitation of the boundary had partitioned in the first instance. Asiwaju (1984) refers to such groups as vivisected, that is, de-linked parts of the same body which would always seek reunification, or at least, some form of re-linking. The perspective promotes permeable boundaries, which allow unfettered mutual cross-boundary interchanges. In other words, the Functionalist approach views boundaries from the perspective of the people whose interests are secondary or ignored in the statist approach.

The Functionalists view frontier networks as continuous trans-boundary linkages, the so called “cultural borderland”; a permanent non-state system for coordinating activities of contiguous cultural areas separated by colonial boundaries (Olujimi, 2010:46). Since boundaries in Africa are

colonial impositions with little or no regard for pre-existing boundary situations, local trans-boundary cooperation usually subsists in spite of the structurally-induced strictures imposed by states. Thus, there are three fundamental postulations of the Functionalists on boundaries (Stoddard, 2002:62), namely:

1. A contemporary nation-state is made up of a sundry array of interest groups and social classes as well as a complex mosaic of ethnic, racial and religious categories

2. Trans-boundary interfaces involving cultural, economic, political and ideological influences preserve important channels of communication between local populations straddling international boundary. These local informal networks allow local authorities to coordinate common regional goals while reducing bi-national tensions between the states.

3. Whenever centrist structural policies for the borderland are ineffective, local functional practices are employed in attempts to find solutions to current border problems. Regional and local jurisdictions, more familiar with chronic boundary irritations are more appropriate to support functional policies which reflect realistic solutions to boundary problems.

The Functionalist approach with its focus on historical, social and cultural linkages and affinities of the people as well as its view of frontier networks as continuous trans-boundary linkages have proved to be very useful in the contemporary globalized system as well as inter-state relations. As many inter-state boundaries in West Africa are colonial creations with little or no regard for pre-existing boundary situations, local trans-boundary cooperation usually subsists in spite of the structurally-induced strictures imposed by states. However, as boundaries remain central to the essence of the state and inter-state relations remain a preserve of the central authorities of the state, the Functionalist fails to explain the reasons for communal conflicts along border frontiers. In other words, they did not address the issues of identity settlement, identity belonging and the claim of ownership over geographical spaces along border communities.

Research Methodology

The researcher undertook a qualitative research method (which involves In-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions FGDs) in order to gain a broader understanding of the nature of interstate relations between Nigeria and Benin Republic and how community cross-border conflict affects such relationships. The study was carried out in Lolo and Madecali border communities of Nigeria and Benin whereby individual interviews and FGDs took place in each community straddling the two countries. Primary data was collected from affected communities of Lolo and Madecali as well as officials in the Benin Embassy, Nigeria. The number of key informant interviews with officials from the Benin Embassy was selected based on the special knowledge they have on the subject matter. The research also makes use of secondary sources which addresses the trends in interstate relations between Nigeria and Benin Republic. The study also utilize official records from the two countries toward preventing border conflict, promoting and enhancing inter-state relations and socio-economic development; as well as relevant information from published and unpublished documents. The researcher however, was able to deduce from the perceptions of the Lolo and Madecali border communities, the nature of the border conflict between the two settings and its impacts on inter-state relations between Nigeria and Benin Republic.

The Nature and Dynamics of Interstate Relations

Inter-state relations have become a regular pattern of interactions among states particularly after the end of the cold war. Critical to the understanding of inter-state relations, Wendt (1994:391) writes that “it is a process in which states engage themselves in cooperation and to a larger extent, integration with other states, which will bring them all the time closer together”. In this loose definition, the term inter-state relations gives equal consideration to both cooperation and integration. The balanced interpretation of inter-state relations is also evident in Baylis, et al.,’s work (2008), as “a process by which states or nation-states, usually in the same

geographic region, agree to cooperate and share responsibility to achieve common goals that requires coordinated or collective action”.

Two different dimensions of interstate relations were identified by scholars (Best and Christiansen, 2008; Olson, 2002; Lindberg 1971; and Schmitter 2006) namely: formal and/or informal centered on the areas of cooperation and integration. Economic cooperation between states can occur on three levels. Co-ordination usually involves the voluntary alignment of national policies and investments in certain sectors of the economy. When states relate and co-operate in the field of economic policies and remove tariff barriers, they create opportunities also for actors in the private sector to initiate cooperation or activities that cross national borders. Thus, Harmonization is a higher level of cooperation, and it usually involves harmonization of national legislation or the adoption of common legislation (Lindberg, 1971). On this level, all legislation is still national, and all policies and instruments are nationally controlled and implemented, although they might be regionally agreed. Integration is the highest levels of economic cooperation in inter-state relations. In a regionally integrated market, “some of the traditional decision-making powers of nation states have been handed over to the regional level, and regional rules and decisions supersede national legislation”. Furthermore, at least some economic policies are formulated on the regional level (Lindberg, 1971).

Relations amongst states in general are processes which involve different phases towards an “ever-closer community” (Deutsch et al., 1957:29). It can occur at three levels: the international level, regional level, and/or national or state-to-state level. The nature of the international system determines the room for manoeuvre that the participating states enjoy. This can vary over time, and therefore structural changes of the international system have a direct impact on inter-state relations processes.

The Regional/inter-regional level refers especially to the effect of the European integration process on other integration processes. Similarly, the post-cold war period saw the significance of security relations among

states in regional or sub-regional arrangement in order to address the issue of “regional security complex” as developed by Barry Buzan (Buzan 1991). In Central America for instance, the collection of entities formed the independent states of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica and thus led to the creation of the Central American Integration System (SICA). In other words, it comprises a number of small countries with a common history, a relatively high degree of common identity where nationalism grew (Balaam and Dillmaan, 2011:34).

Also, several agreements on “peace and security” as well as negotiation on free-trade (the US-Canada; US, Canada and Mexico), led to the establishment of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994, covering issue of “agriculture and accompanied by a supplementary agreements on labour and the environment” while deepening cooperation in “drugs, corruption, terrorism, hemispheric security, sustainable development, and the environment” became the major concern of the contemporary inter-state relations (Best and Christian, 2008: 438-440). The Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR) was created in 1991 by Argentina and Brazil, together with Paraguay and Uruguay with focus on “Common External Tariff (CET)” supporting major projects in “transport, energy, and communications” (Schmitter, 1970:21; Chwieroth, 2007:448). Within the Africa continent, research (Adepoju, 2005; ECOWAS Annual Reports 2000, 2001, 2004, 2005) have shown that, the nature and the complex composition of African societies enhanced member-states to develop and promote strong relations mostly in political, economic, socio-cultural and security. In other words, strong relations among states transformed the pattern of political and economic realities of the region as is evident in the formation of Regional Economic Communities apart from the wider African Union. Their common targets include: fighting colonialism; reduce the level of economic dependence from the western imperialist countries; eliminate poverty; develop a strong and stable democratic society etc; for the betterment of their citizens.

The final level of relations among states is the “national or state-to-state level”. According to Milward (1992:5), relations among states were

initiated because nation states were facing both internal and external pressures. In other words, inter-state relations emerge as a logical response to problems that are too big for one state to solve by itself or problems caused by the actions of one country having the spill-over effects. The pattern of relations across political frontiers varies (in nature, scope, and character) from region to region depending on the nature of the states involved, as well as their historical background and cultural contexts.

Trends in Interstate Relations Between Nigeria and Benin Republic

Three distinct phases have been identified by scholars (Olujimi, 2010; Ola, 2012; Omede, 2006) in analyzing the inter-state relations between Nigeria and Benin Republic are as follows:

Tension Between France's Neo-Colonial Interest and Nigeria's Anti-Imperialist Stance in the Continent

Right from the beginning of independent statehood, Nigeria sought actively to carve a niche for itself in Africa, but more especially in the West African sub-region. To the Francophone bloc, Nigeria's economic ambition which sought to exploit the West African sub-regional integration was considered with trepidation. To France and its ambitions in Africa, Nigeria was the major stumbling block and France guided its African satellites to oppose and undermine Nigeria's ambition at every turn (Olujimi, 2010:205). For instance, the earlier initiatives, sponsored by Nigeria, towards the creation of a common market in West Africa were frustrated at every turn by the Francophone elements of the sub-region, especially with the French sponsorship of the Communauté Economique de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (CEAO). It was within such inauspicious milieu that Nigeria-Benin relations began.

Relations between Nigeria and Benin were in cordial in the early independence period because linguistic and ethnic commonalities drive intimate cross border interaction between the two states. This encourages natural economic ties and generates business between the two countries. Few months after independence, Nigeria concluded treaty agreements

with Benin within the context of its foreign policy of “emphasizing and building upon cultural links which already exist” (Asiwaju, 2011:12). These treaties included “the Nigeria-Dahomey Convention on Common Frontier Posts (NDCCFP)” as well as “the Visa Abolition Agreement (VAA)”. Although, Nigeria and Benin signed a joint agreement in 1962 establishing a common custom tariff along their shared boundaries (an agreement aimed at creating a common market for the two countries in order to speed up the integration agenda), it should be noted that, in 1961, relations with Benin were put in jeopardy following the diplomatic face-off between Nigeria and France occasioned by France’s atomic weapon test in the Sahara, in spite of opposition led by the independent African states. Nigeria severed diplomatic relations with France and further banned French aircrafts and ships from its territories (Aluko, 1977).

In the midst of the instability leading to the Nigerian Civil War in 1967, Benin closed its diplomatic post in Lagos along with those in Kinshasa and Accra in what its authorities termed a “Diplomatic Reorganization (DR)” (Aluko, 1977:37). Meanwhile, in the outbreak of the Civil War, France actively supported the break-away Republic of Biafra and influenced its Francophone satellites to support the secessionist republic. Benin, Cote d’Ivoire and Gabon were some of the Francophone countries which supported Biafra’s secession from Nigeria (Adams, 2012:14).

As the instability in Nigeria led ominously towards a total outbreak of war, Benin in the spirit of African brotherhood, sought to mediate through its foreign affairs minister in the conflict, but to no avail. The conduct of the civil war later strain the relationship between the two countries as Nigeria accused Benin of complicity with France over the latter’s support for the breakaway Biafra Republic. The allegation stemmed from the permission Benin granted to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to use its territory as a transit point for the airlifting of relief materials to Biafra (Alkali, 2003). Besides the weakening of Nigeria’s economic embargo on Biafra, Nigeria accused the ICRC of clandestinely shipping weapons and other logistic supports to Biafra under the cover of humanitarianism (Yakubu, 2014).

Since then, Benin has committed itself to the ideals of La Francophonie as it hosted La Francophonie Summit in Cotonou in 1995. The major decision of the summit was a commitment by the Heads of State and Government to concentrate the operating agencies' activities on the five major cooperation programs of La Francophonie: freedom, democracy and development; culture and communications; knowledge and progress; economics and development; and La Francophonie in the world (Olujimi, 2010:204). This threatened the level of official visits to Nigeria following the commitment of Benin to the ideals of La Francophonie.

The Era of Cooperation and Interdependent Relationship

The second phase of the inter-state relationship between Nigeria and Benin began immediately after the Nigerian Civil War in 1970. This was accomplished with the task of revamping the war-ravaged economy as well as viable foreign policy that revolves around the strategic importance of neighbouring communities along border regions. In other words, the Nigerian authorities acknowledged the strategic importance of Benin to Nigeria's economic progress, politics and security being the "gateway" between it and the rest of the West African sub-region (Nuamah, 2003)

However, following the overthrow of the Beninese president who had permitted the ICRC the use of Cotonou port as a transit point during the Nigerian civil war, a three-man Presidential Council from Benin made an official visit to Nigeria in June 1970 during which commitment to the re-opening of the Beninese embassy closed in 1967 was made. Subsequently, in August of the same year, Nigeria's head of state reciprocated the visit and a Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance was signed (TFCMA); heralding the beginning of particularly mutually beneficial and buoyant inter-state relations (Asiwaju, 2011:12; Aluko, 1977:34).

Similarly, a Trade Treaty termed Nigeria-Benin Trade Treaty (NBTT) was concluded in 1971 between the two countries whereby agreements were reached in the areas of economic harmonization. This treaty spurred the growth of trade relations between Nigeria and Benin although, the bulk of exchanges across their international boundary are mostly unrecorded

(through smuggling) (Asiwaju, 2015:12). Nigeria sought the assistance of Benin to divert Nigeria bound ships to the Cotonou port as a result of the Nigeria's cement armada of 1975. During this period, Nigeria's main ports were clogged with countless ships with hardened cement owing to congestion emanating from excessive government order of cement for the burgeoning construction industry (Olujimi, 2010:209). But the Nigeria's Third National Development Plan included the revamping and expansion of six ports which have been able to handle all of Nigeria's import export transaction leading to the end of the transit arrangement with Benin (Olujimi, 2010:210). In July 1976, Nigeria and Benin signed a Technical Cooperation Agreement (NBTCA) under which joint venture projects (like the Save Sugar Company and the Onigbolo Cement Company) both sited in Benin Republic, were established. Nigeria also granted an interest-free loan of over One Million Pounds (£1m) to Benin for the reconstruction of the Porto-Novo-Idi-Iroko road in almost the same period (Asiwaju, 2011:13).

The Nigeria-Benin Joint Border Commission (NBJBC) however was reactivated in 1981 to control smuggling, illegal aliens, and harassment of people (Johnson, 2014:214). In spite of the border closures and the forceful expulsion of illegal aliens in the early 1980s, Nigeria was able to conclude the "Quadripartite Extradition Treaty (QET)" with Benin, Togo and Ghana in 1984. The treaty was aimed at securing Nigeria's border against fleeing fugitives and to ensure their repatriation (Alkali, 2003). Thus, in 1988, a major international conference was jointly organized by the two countries to brainstorm on issues of cross-border cooperation and security (CBCS) (Asiwaju, 2011:13). In that same year, Nigeria granted Benin emergency financial relief to assist in that country's economic crisis. The relationship between these countries for the latter part of the 1980s and early 1990s was conducted within the context of West African integration.

The Era of Co-security and Co-prosperity Relations

Even though, Nigeria's relations with Benin in the period 1993-1999, centered on "incessant border disputes among neighbouring communities"

(Omede, 2006:9) from the late 1990s onwards, the relationship between Nigeria and Benin according to Asiwaju (2014) was a period characterized by the acknowledgement of growing interdependence both in terms of security and prosperity, the so called “co-security” and “co-prosperity” relations. In this period, “boundary and military relations (BMR)” (Babatunde, 2014:11) remain the major topics of discussions in analyzing the dynamics of inter-state relations between Nigeria and Benin. Benin thus became “an escape corridor for anti-government element which caused a lot of concern among official circles in Nigeria”. It also witnessed the activities of Beninese gendarmes who forcefully collect taxes from Nigerians along the Nigeria-Benin border villages as well as the incessant removal of the Nigerian flag (a sign of their occupation), threatened the pattern of security relations between the two countries (Alkali, 2003). Similarly, the period saw how networks of informal socio-economic ties and cultural linkages between Nigeria and the Benin was strengthen particularly, in the Lagos-Seme border that link the two countries together. For Blum (2014:3-4), cross-border vitality linking numerous local markets and big cities of Porto Novo, Cotonou and Lagos as well as Badagry, Seme Podji has been a focal point of economic activities along the region. Apart from being an essential transport vein in the ECOWAS sub-region, the route serves as an essential part of the Abidjan-Lagos transport and migration corridor.

Cross-Border Relations between Lolo and Madecali Communities of Nigeria and Benin Republic

Socio-Economic and Historical Context

Due to the ethnographic nature of Lolo and Madecali which are traced to the Illo ancestries and to their close proximity to the Nigeria-Benin-Niger tri-point on the River Niger in the Borgu area, the borderland of both communities were situated along Dole-Kaina of Niger Republic and Bakain-Wuya along River Niger in north-western area. Based on interview conducted with the respondent, it is clear that, the Lolo-Madecali border

region is located in the north-western Nigerian lowlands, bordering the Malanville Commune of Benin (Interview, 30/03/2017).

As an area of old Borgu, Lolo-Madecali border stretched from the north-western part of present-day Nigeria to the north-eastern part of present-day Benin Republic. It stretched from Illo to the north in Kebbi State of Nigeria, to Malanville Commune to the west in Benin Republic (Mangut, 2013:1). Both the Lolo-Madecali people still share similarity in cultural traits and language despite their divergent domiciliation. Starting in the late nineteenth century the British and French worked to expand the dominion of their colonies of Nigeria and Benin respectively.

Be that as it may, the splitting up of Lolo-Madecali communities into smaller units started from the partition of Africa following the Berlin Conference of 1884 and 1885. Thus France secured Malanville and almost two-thirds of Borgu Kingdom territories in the present-day Benin Republic while the remaining portion went to the British in present-day Nigeria (Brownlie, 1979:171; International Boundary Study, 1969: 6-12). The British on their part named their own portion as Borgu Province and further split it into a northern and a southern division. It was however in the administrative reorganization of 1991 that the Northern Division was cut out and it became Borgu Local Government Area in Niger State while Illo and Kaoje became Bagudo Local Government Areas in Kebbi State (Mangut, 2013:2).

Based on observation and interview conducted with community leaders, two ethnic groups (namely, Dendi and Zarma) consider themselves natives to the area. Thus, other ethnic groups like the Hausa and the Fulani are present in the area. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) conducted with community leaders vindicates that, the Fulani and some few Dendi graze their cattle on the either sides of Lolo and Madecali. They also engage in simple cultivation. Community leaders in the area opined that all the ethnic groups lived in varying degrees of cross-cultural cooperation and ethno-linguistic integration. The Dendi married Zarma girls; Hausa boys were given Zarma girls too; the Zarma lived in the nearby Dendi villages straddling Lolo and Madecali; milk and grain were thus exchanged, which

benefited all the groups. There was frequent intermarriage, exchange of cattle and mingling of settlements. (Interview, 30/03/2017).

Thus, the Lolo-Madecali area is been known for Deni and Zarma with different means of survival. The agrarian Zarma had developed a more centralized political system, consisting of village heads led by nobles known as Myer, whereas the agro-pastoralist Dendi were led by clan chiefs called Lonzon, and the Hausa were more egalitarian with traditional socio-political organizations. This is captured in an interview conducted with community leaders in both communities who stresses that. although they are linguistically interrelated and engage in various forms of social and economic exchanges, they nevertheless form distinct ethnic communities, the Dendis are peasant farmers of rice, maize and millet; the Zarmas are predominantly cultivators; while the Hausa practice transhumance pastoralism (Interview, 31/03/2017). Also, they all combine fishing actives along the banks of River Niger close to the area.

The major trading activities in the border region of Lolo and Madecali is farming (mainly rice, maize and millet); fishing along the River Niger cutting across Bakin-Wuya, Dole-Kaina and Lolo; as well as cattle rearing and ranching (cattle for farming mainly cows; and others for rearing) (Interview, 30/03/2017). In other words, they are predominantly pastoralists, fishermen and cattle-rearers. Observation from the field clearly indicates that, from the south-west of Lolo (about fifteen kilometers), to the north-east of Madecali (along the right bank of River Niger) is a small settlement called Tungan-Kungi (the disputed settlement between Lolo and Madecali notably known as a small community of farmers and fishermen). Tungan-Kungi is so sensitive to both Lolo and Madecali leading to border conflict in 2009.

The Disputed Area of Tungan-Kungi

The community cross-border conflict between Lolo and Madecali erupted on March 1st, 2009 over the disputed area of Tungan-Kungi straddling the two communities of Nigeria and Benin. The border conflict was based on territorial claim over boundary, lack of clear delimitation and demarcation

of the borderlands, communal identity along with national identity as well as competition over scarce resources (mainly, farmland). The disputed area called Tungan-Kungi is a border settlement between Lolo and Madecali. It is a small settlement with rich natural resources which attracts attention by the two communities. Strategic resources particularly the large expanse of fertile land and huge surface rendered the region best suited for agricultural development.

Historically, those in control of political authority in Tungan-Kungi are the Zarma while those in major trading activities are the Kenga-Kwai and Kenga-Kwaira but the real residents of Tungan-Kungi are the Dendi (Interview, 30/03/2017). Participants who participated in the FGDs with the former residents of Tungan-Kungi indicate that, these various groups inhabiting the area pursue diverse livelihood strategies including farming, fishing and cattle rearing. However, the area is contested to both communities each claiming right of occupancy and claim over farmland.

The Impacts of the Lolo-Madecali Community Cross-Border Conflict

Some of the consequences of the border community conflict between Lolo and Madecali are humanitarian crisis, socio-economic etc. The data sought are analyzed as follows:

The Humanitarian Impact

The Lolo-Madecali border conflict posed a challenge to both Benin and Nigeria's ideals to peaceful co-existence, good neighborliness, and their adherence to the relevant provisions of the ECOWAS Treaty and its Protocol on Free Movement of Person, the Right of Residence and Establishment as well as the African integration initiatives which emphasizes the significant role of boundaries in inter-state relations and cooperation (AfDB, 2011:15). In other words, humanitarian impact of the conflict is of considerable significance within the two communities. Information obtained from the field shows that the community cross-border conflict between Lolo and Madecali over Tungan-Kungi led to displacement, upsetting of civilians, miserable life condition, deplorable

situation as people of Tungan-Kungi were forced to flee their homes, lands, and resources. Victims of the conflict who participated at the FGDs conducted in Lolo points out that, by March 2009, there were about 3 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps in-and-outside Nigeria, one third being in Lonzon Primary School, Lolo.

Majority of the victims highlighted the need for emotional and trauma healing among the residents of particularly Tungan-Kungi who were forced to leave their homes (Interview, 31/03/2017). Although, there is no any record of children who die in infancy, interview with youths from the affected area shows that many children have no access to education, and there are many others who keep struggling to survive. An estimated 20 people have crossed to Dole-Kaina, Bakin-Wuya and others to Kamba since 2009 (Interview, 31/03/2017).

Even though, attempt to provide emergency relief or technical assistance to the victims was delayed until Monday morning, the NBC of Nigeria in collaboration with the Kebbi state officials provides relief materials, trauma healing and first aid treatment. Observation from the field clearly shows that, the Federal Government of Nigeria through the National Boundary Commission (NBC) of Nigeria provides cloths and some necessary assistance to the victims in that, free houses were built to all with the exception of few, worship centre were constructed, public well, school and an engine for rice re-bagging is currently under construction. A snap picture of these items is provided at the appendix section. The victims also expressed that, even though, there were about 104 residents with fully constructed houses in Tunga-Kungi, all with the exception of 9, got their houses constructed in the new settlement (Interview, 30/03/2017). Some of the victims pointed out that, although there was some assistance which slowed down their migration, majority of them suffered from poverty, faced poor maternal health and malnutrition.

Forced displacement can itself fuel further instability, insecurity, and conflict. In other words, issues related to the status and return of IDPs also continue to be a source of tension within the borderland of Lolo and Madecali. Religious leaders who participated in the FGDs pointed out that,

the border conflicts worsened the level of insecurity in the area. (Interview, 03/04/2017). Although, many of the displaced persons have been resettled in Lolo town in recent years partly under the Nigerian NBC-funded projects, the need for farmland activities to support them presents a serious challenge. However, the provision of already limited government services also declined as qualified staff left or refused to work. In other words, neither should humanitarian dimension to the conflict between Lolo and Madecali be underestimated.

Also, feelings of persecution inflicted on residents of both communities; their families or relatives in the aftermath of the conflict came through interviews with the affected respondents. Fear of residents in Tungan-Kungi was also evident among some IDPs interviewed in Lolo and those who flee their homes, despite much-changed circumstances and official supports given to the victims. More individual obstacles include problems of reintegration with communities across the border.

The Socio-Economic Impact

The 2009 border conflict between Lolo and Madecali presents a challenge to Nigeria's policy in respect to boundaries and borderlands shared with its proximate neighbours. This is because cross-border trade and bilateral concern for inter-state cooperation, peace and sustainable development is threatened. The structure of trans-border trade in Lolo and Madecali presents the more general pattern of economic activities prevalent in the area. However, for the past 8 years of community cross-border conflict between the two settings, both Lolo and Madecali suffered a downward spiral of economic opportunity, largely owing to a decreased flow of trans-border trade.

The impact was clearly captured in an interview with respondents of both communities arguing that, the conflicts witnessed serious blow to Lolo and Madecali informal trade whereby cross-border good imports fell, which significantly reduce the income opportunities of local petty traders (both women and men), hence, affecting the border area economy in general. Before the conflict, it was argued by the respondents who participated in

the FGDs that, in every blessed day, they transport at least 10-15 vehicles of rice, foodstuffs etc crossing to Dole Kaina and Niger Republic. And at least 15 vehicles with modern wears are exported from Nigeria while heavy trucks of modern rice are imported from Benin respectively (Interview, 05/04/2017).

Also, local traders (including women) never recovered the bustling market that sustained them in previous years and wage-labor opportunities for local men decreased. Market women also expressed their feelings that, they previously supported themselves and their children solely through their market activities, but now, they turn to farming as a supplement to, or replacement of their trade (Interview, 05/04/2017).

Another significant impact of the conflict is with regards to both men and women income opportunities. Socio-economic instability in the region has been a leading factor. The damaging effects of border dispute led the Nigerian authorities to vacate the residents of Tungan-Kungi to new settlement in Lolo and to create an area intended to act as a buffer against communal conflict. Stretching along the border, this new zone received no supplies of products likely to interest neighboring communities. This was captured in a focus group interaction with businessmen who clearly points to the fact that, the conflict has a severe impact on the Lolo-Madecali's economy. The most crippling effect was that all imported goods, including most of the packaged and preserved goods that are important commodities sent from Benin to Nigeria doubled in price practically overnight (Interview, 05/04/2017). This led to increase in capital needs and decrease in profit of border traders.

The Diplomatic Impact

Despite the identity dimension of the border conflict between the two communities, interview conducted with senior officials from the Benin Embassy in Abuja shows that, both governments of Nigeria and Benin did not support the communal conflict. This is as a result of the strong political commitments of both states as well as popular supports from their diplomatic officials. A respondent pointed out that, they did not allow the

conflict to affect diplomatic relations between the two states (Interview, 09/05/2017). More importantly are the challenges the conflict posed to a country that sees itself as a model for regional integration with a well-developed functional cooperation, which is Nigeria. The Lolo-Madecali community cross-border problem is more than a civil conflict rather, a transnational affair due to its territorial dimension and boundary question. If the two communities are fighting with each other, automatically Nigeria is fighting with Benin Republic. It may present a threat to both states.

However, the conflict presents little or no threat to inter-state relations between Nigeria and Benin Republic. Instead, political achievements were recorded in the aftermath of the conflict where diplomatic negotiations were based on harmonizing positions between the two states. Interview conducted with officials clearly shows that, greater commitment was put in place with high consultation to ensure its compliance which made liaison and meetings easier between Abuja and representatives from the Malanville authorities (Interview, 09/06/2016). The more moderate line pursued in recent years by both states has been fully matched by peace on the ground.

To properly address the dynamics of the conflict and its spill-over effects on inter-state relations between Nigeria and Benin, interview conducted with officials from the Benin Embassy and the NBCs of both states shows that, negotiation is currently underway with stakeholders which include senior diplomatic officials, boundary surveyors, legal experts, geometric engineers and authorities of both states to facilitate contacts with the border communities in order to find a permanent solution to the conflict. As a result, peace process through coordinated action based on certain intermediaries (notably, NBCs) led to proper advancement. This is as a result of the long mutual understanding that existed between the two states.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Inter-state relations have become a regular pattern of interactions among states to address issues of common concern. In West Africa, relations

among states emerges as a logical response to problems that are too big for one state to solve by itself or problems caused by the actions of one country having the spill-over effects based on the nature of the political map of the region brought about by colonialism. It presents an outcome of deliberate political actions that have become so central and often inevitable to states in the region in the conducts of their inter-state relations. The pattern of relations across political frontiers varies (in nature, scope, and character) from state to state depending on the nature of the states involve, as well as their historical background and cultural context.

The Nigeria and Benin inter-state relations centered on the areas of cooperation and integration. Agreements based on functional (covering areas of transport), economic (trade and commerce), political (mutual support and commitment regarding the implementation of certain values), and cooperation in foreign and security policy (common positions on cross-border security) were reached. This new approach to inter-state relations stresses the importance of the communities straddling Nigeria and Benin rather than the distinctiveness between officials.

However, the Lolo-Madecali border of Nigeria and Benin testifies the fluidity of West African boundaries in that, it constitutes a challenge to the residents of the border communities. Because of the integrative forces of economic, socio-cultural and human interactions across the border communities, the border became central to socio-communal settings and interactions. Community cross-border conflict between the two communities erupted on March 1st, 2009 over the disputed area of Tungan-Kungi which presents a challenge to interstate relations between the two countries. While the 2009 border conflict did not result to a bloody confrontation, its impacts cut across humanitarian, socio-economic, etc. It led to displacement, upsetting of civilians, miserable life condition and deplorable situation as people of Tungan-Kungi were forced to flee their homes, lands, and resources. In other words, tensions over land rights (farmland) are strongly interconnected with tensions over citizenship. Strong attempt to resolve the border conflict were made by officials in

Nigeria and Benin Republic although, progress in facilitating the boundary demarcation exercise is largely been slow.

To this end, this study recommends that authorities in Nigeria and Benin Republic should undertake serious study of the process of returning the conflict communities to normalcy (the transition of the communities from conflict conditions to post-conflict conditions); establish a joint-mechanism for prevention, managing and resolving the border conflict; establish links with the sub-regional organisation such as the ECOWAS to have the capacity to intervene peacefully in border conflict management and to provide resources (financial and expertise) to support the countries' efforts to resolve communal conflict across their frontiers; and involve civil society and traditional authorities in the mediation and negotiation process. This is particularly important with regards to the reconstruction of the communities in the post-conflict situation, the integration of the various military forces across the borderland communities, the role of local authorities, and the reconstruction of the shattered economy. Most crucial is the immediate implementation of programmes to bring about reconciliation.

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