



Climate Change and Identity Politics in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to explore the implications of climate change on identity politics in Nigeria. It also sought to critically identify the ways to manage identity politics in Nigeria. The study adopted Eco-violence theory approach. The central idea of eco-violence theory suggests that alteration in environment has a way it affects how people relate socially. The study employed a qualitative technique. Secondary data was used. Critical and logical analysis were adopted. The study concludes that climate change has a way it forces different groups to connect while the implications of the connection has a way it deepens identity politics in Nigeria. To effectively address this issue, there is need for the utilisation of effective conflict transformation system. In line with the results recommendations made were: the need to review the current constitutional provision on indigeneity/settler (or residency); the agricultural sector should be adequately developed and access to land cum market given needed attentions; Climate change adaptation strategies should be put in place by the government in order to reduce climate change related pains on the citizens; and effective inclusionary policies should be put in place.

Keywords: Climate change, Farmers, Herdsmen, Identity politics, Indigeneity, and Settlers.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Identity politics is a challenge for many African countries. Olayode (2016:245) asserted that usually when there are conflicts in most African countries, then there are identity politics like it happened with Hutus and Tutsis in the Rwandan genocide; Janjaweed Arab militia and African tribes in the Sudan civil wars; different clans in the case of Somalia. Blench (2003:2) in Conroy (n.d.:5) & Alubo (2009:8) added the example of perennial clashes between farmers and pastoralists in Nigeria. Alubo (2009:8) particularly asserted that there are spate of identity based conflicts virtually all over Nigeria.

Olayode (2016:246) wrote that since the the end of the civil war, Nigeria has been witnessing recurring incidents of identity politics which continue to claim thousands of human casualties Wonah (2016:7) noted plethora of identity politics between: Aguleri versus Umuleri, Eleme versus Okrika, Ife versus Modakeke, Ijaw versus Itsekiri, the seemingly perennial identity politics in some parts of Plateau State and the unimaginable horror unleashed upon the Nigerian populace by the Boko Haram sect in the guise of religious fanaticism.

Amidst all these, there are also many environmental challenges facing Nigeria, including deforestation, reduced agricultural production, declining food security, increased incidence of both flooding and drought, and of spreading disease (Tologbonse & others, 2010:127 in Conroy, n.d.:26). The implication of this if nothing is done is that the situation could hinder national integration efforts as well as a threaten the corporate existence of Nigeria.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

There is a discussion among scholars on the likely connection between climate change and identity politics. Homer-Dixon (1991) in Conroy (n.d.:15) wrote that the connection between identity politics and climate change is one that has been postulated by researchers for many years. However, Benjaminsen & others (2012) in Conroy (n.d.:26-27) noted that the data on identity conflict is difficult to connect to

climate changes at the moment due to the way conflicts are coded. Using human security implications as yardstick, Roma (2008:323) seen in Conroy (n.d.:26) concluded that there is a connection between climate change and identity politics. Also supporting this connection, O'Brien & Leichenko (2003) in Odock (2012:100), while employing political economy approach, liken climate change to a social process which allocates benefits and burdens, empowers some groups and dis-empowers others. Conroy (n.d.:8-9) declared that issues that may be reported as ethnic or religious clashes often have their roots in struggles over scarce land or resources. Scholars such as Homer-Dixon (1994) & Shiva (2002) in Conroy (n.d.:15) believed that significant climate changes would have implications on identity politics. Conroy (n.d.:16) wrote that conflicts due to climate change is more likely in areas of the world with identity politics.

The main thrust of this study is to investigate the above discourse by answering these questions:

- 1) What are the implications of climate change on identity politics in Nigeria?
- 2) How to effectively manage identity politics in Nigeria?

1.2 Objectives of the Study

Generally, the focus of this study is climate change and identity politics in Nigeria. The specific aims of the study include to:

- 1) Explore the implications of climate change on identity politics in Nigeria.
- 2) Critically identify the ways to manage identity politics in Nigeria.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study adopted Eco-violence theory as theoretical framework of analysis. The idea of eco-violence is traceable to Homer-Dixon and has continued to gain more attention (Gleditsch & Urdal, 2002 in Conroy, n.d.:16). Central in eco-violence theory is the explanation that what alters an environment will ultimately alter the established constraint on social conflict of the people (De Soysa, 2002:397 in Conroy, n.d.:16). Homer-Dixon sees conflict deriving from climate changes as belonging to three categories; (i) Simple-Scarcity conflicts, (ii) Group-Identity related conflicts, and (iii) Relative Deprivation conflicts (Homer-Dixon, 1991 in Conroy, n.d.:16).

According to Homer-Dixon & Blitt (1998) in Conroy (n.d.:18), a decrease in renewable resources when there is population growth will result in unequal resource access, thereby increasing scarcity for certain identity group. This situation can reduce economic productivity for the identity group experiencing the scarcity and for the other groups as well as the national economy. The affected group will likely migrate to new lands. Migrating groups often trigger identity politics when they move to new areas, while decreases in wealth can also trigger deprivation conflicts.

2.2 The Concept of Climate Change

Reputationally, IPCC (1995); Epstein (2002); Colwell & Patz (2005); Batie (2008); Augusto & others (2009) as cited in Odock (2012:98) defined climate change as “a wicked problem” and “a threat multiplier to health”. According to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (1992) in Ebele & Emodi (2016:2), climate change refers to a change attributable in a way to human activity which affects the global atmospheric composition over a comparable period of time. Similarly, the International Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) (2007) and Adebayo (2011) in Tsojon (2017:179) posited that climate change refers to statistically significant variability or change in the mean state of climate, which could persist for decades or longer period (see also, IPCC, 2007 in Odock, 2012:100). Odock (2012:99) simply described climate change as an unfolding drama.

Related to this is the factors causing climate change. Scholars like Odjugo (2010:47); Adebayo (2011), Farauta & Apagu (2011) in Tsojon (2017:179) submitted that climate change has been found to occur due to human (anthropogenic) and natural (biogeographical) factors. Bast (2010) quoted by Tsojon (2017:179) liken the natural factor to terrestrial causes such as the alteration in the orientation of the earth, extra-terrestrial causes, such as in solar activities (variability), planetary motion, cloud formation and albedo, bio-thermostat and ocean current. The human causes according to Adebayo (2011) in Tsojon (2017:179), include the emission of green house gases (GHGs) and aerosols changes in land use and

depletion of the ozone layer through various human activities such as industrialisation and agriculture and land clearance.

Also of interest is the dimension of the impact of climate change. According to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC, 2012) cited in Nwokeoma & Chinedu (2017:172), climate change is a complex problem which has consequences for all spheres of existence on our planet. Tersoo & Ogochukwu (2014:39) observed that climate change had increasingly reduced the space available for engaging in agricultural practice, manifested in the shrinkage of water formations (lakes), drying up of grazing lands and loss of arable land to desertification. Idowu, Ayoola, Opele, & Ikenweibe (2011:146) declared that climate change has capacities for increases and decreases in rainfall resulting in floods, landslides and droughts, melting of polar ice-caps, thermal expansion, surges acidification of oceans with resultant oceanfront flooding which can degenerate into population displacements, communal crises, forced migrations (promoting ecological refugees) among other effects. To Fankhauser & Stern (2016:2 & 7), climate change can fundamentally redraw the map of the planet, and where and how humans and other species can live, if unchecked. Also, Ebele & Emodi (2016:2) stated that climate change could lead to the displacement of people and create serious social upheaval. Conroy (n.d.:25) views it as a potential threat multiplier for future conflict among different identity groups.

Relatedly is how to manage Climate change. Harmeling (2014:15) stated that climate change is man-made, therefore it required man to contain it. Tersoo & Ogochukwu (2014:39) recommended the need for better adaptive measures to manage the negative impacts of climate change. Alluding to this, Moellendorf (2015:182) noted that mitigation policies can reduce exposure to risk, adaptation policies provide resources for protection, compensation policies could make up for the costs a person has suffered due to insufficient mitigation or compensation. The difficulty in these policies, however, is that they required credible evidence as justification that losses were due to climate change. Mcguian & others (2002) in Ebele & Emodi (2016:2) observed that the presence of high adaptation technologies/techniques, proven and successful research policies, mechanised agricultural system and wealthy economy are ways developed countries have managed climate change. Conroy (n.d.:28) suggested that effective political leadership was needed to address certain fundamental implications of climate changes. In the context of this study, climate change refers to desertification, drought and environmental degradation as well as flooding which affect the environment and can degenerate into population displacements.

2.3 The Concept of Identity Politics

Distinquishing identity and politics, Wonah (2016:4) asserted that identity finds expression within the context of identifiable interests, availability and distribution of resources; while politics is the allocation of resources through institutionalised means for the harmonisation and protection of the various interests. Alubo (2003) in Alubo (2009:3) viewed identity politics as a basis for determining who is in and who is out and hence there are contentions and struggles to maintain the status quo by those favoured and for change by those left out in the cold. Furthermore, Alubo (2009:2) described identity politics as the process of categorising and de-categorising people into groups on the bases of shared and presumed similarities. He added that, more often than not, such similarities may be based on assumptions and stereotypes rather than actual reality.

In relation to this is indigeneity/settler concept. Egwu (2003:37) in Alubo (2009:16) asserted that “as one moves out of his/her local government of “origin”, where he/she can lay claims to and authenticate his/her “indigeneity” of a state, the quality of citizenship diminishes”. Egwu (2009) in Alubo (2009:4) noted that indigeneity of a state is conferred on a person whose parents or grandparents were members of a community indigenous to a particular state. Defining a settler, Alubo (2006) and Ibrahim (2006) in Alubo (2009:4) both agreed that it referred to the individual whose ethnic genealogy is elsewhere, even if such individual was born in a particular state or living there. Furthermore, Alubo (2009:4) noted that a settler is regarded as a stranger, a sojourner, or a bird of passage who would ultimately go “home”. Critical of indigeneity/settler, Ejobowah (n.d.:1, 11 & 12) stated that it provides room for the inclusion of those groups that hitherto would have been excluded but also provides room for the exclusion of those groups

that hitherto have been included from citizenship rights. Ejobowah (n.d.:13) declared that indigeneity to most of the states is a firewall against domination by other groups.

Closely related to this is the concept of ethnicity. Kelman (2007:64-65) in Olayode (2016:244) likened ethnicity to an identity which inevitably occupies a great space within the political arena and also it is the easiest and most natural way for people to mobilise around basic human needs such as security, food, shelter, economic well-being, inequality, land distribution, autonomy, and recognition. Worthy of note is the cause of identity politics. Olayode (2016:245) wrote that identity politics generally emerge from the resulting inequitable access to power and resources and not from an intrinsic hatred.

Relatedly is how to manage identity politics. Beaud (2002) in Ejobowah (n.d.:3) and Paul Adujie (2009) in Afolabi (2016:14) both agreed to the liberal idea of citizenship through residency which suggests that the home state of an individual should be where the individual chooses. Commenting, Alubo (2009:15) asserted that individual should belong to a civic rather than an ethnic space with the adoption of residency as operative term rather than origin. Considering the fundamentals, Afolabi (2016:14) remarked that the constitution should be made to unequivocally and explicitly state that the home of a citizen is the place that he/she found conducive for residence and livelihood. According to Call (2003:828-829) seen in Olayode (2016:246) there is need to utilise effective conflict transformation which highlight differences in a constructive way, and at the same time improves mutual understanding. Again, Alubo (2009:16) and Olayode (2016:246 & 248) both submitted that responsive government will provide infrastructural development cum services as an effective inclusionary policy.

In the context of this study, identity politics is used to include divisions based on collaboration and support, ethnics, ethnic thinking and mobilisation, religions, or tribes capable of degenerating into conflicts and divisions with other groups.

2.4 Climate Change and Identity Politics

Conroy (n.d.:19) wrote that identity politics is several steps removed from climate changes, but is inextricably linked to them through causal chains. Similarly, Nordås & Gleditsch (2007:631), De Soysa & others (1999) in Conroy (n.d.:19) noted that climate change can result into reduction in access to the natural resources, threaten livelihoods, and increase divisions; all of which will provide conducive environment for identity politics to thrive. In the same vein, Ezirim & Onuoha (2008) in Conroy (n.d.:19) wrote that the connection between climate change and identity politics does not seem immediately evident, which is perhaps its most dangerous trait; climate change has a very real impact on livelihoods, social order, peace and stability, which may not be directly ascertained. Conroy (n.d.:28) stated that the climate change can exacerbate and produce new conflicts between and among different groups especially when political leadership have not effectively addressed the multiple implications of climate change and the citizens' rights.

Also, Haines & others (2006) in Ebele & Emodi (2016:8) wrote that temperature and rainfall dynamics may increase the distribution of disease vectors such as dengue, malaria and incidence of diarrhea disease (Haines & others, 2006 in Ebele & Emodi (2016:8). Reuveny (2005:4-5) in Conroy (n.d.:25) submitted that due to climate change, identity politics can manifest in these competing effects: the pastoralists and farmers may compete over land, migrants and residents may compete over jobs, and that environmental migration from rural to urban areas is another fault line of competing effects.

Alluding to this, Kirby (2008) and World Bank (2010) in Odock, 2012:99) both agreed that climate change also has deep political implications for all concerned. Also, Hulme (2009) in Odock (2012:99) noted that approaching the problems of climate change from a purely scientific, technological, or geographical will not be able to capture the rich complexity of the subject.

According to Kartha & Baer (2015:5), the challenge of climate change highlights human interdependence, and the need for vision and solidarity that can support human quest for comfort and sustainable development without compromising human rights. Furthermore, Ayo (2009) in Agbebaku (2015:1) noted that the quest for comfortability and sustainable development has sped up the impact of climate change on identity politics.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a qualitative approach. Secondary source materials were employed and subjected to critical analysis to ensure consistency of their content. Content and logical analysis were basically used for the study.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 The Implications of Climate Change on Identity Politics in Nigeria:

Recounting the 2012 flood disaster, Taiwo-Obalonye (2012) in Nwokeoma & Chinedu (2017:173) stated that Nigeria witnessed the worst impact of climate change ever since its existence as a country given that all the 36 states in the Federation suffered from it one way or the other. Indeed, Nwokeoma & Chinedu (2017:173) wrote that not only was the incidence declared a national emergency but that as much as ₦17.6 billion was used to support the victims cum relevant agencies by the Federal Government.

Reflecting on the climate change related pains presently borne by the South-South zone, Odock (2012:108) noted that the role played by the South-South zone of Nigeria as host to the huge Nigerian oil industry is not without excruciating challenges and pains in gas flares, deforestation, and environmental degradation (see also, Jaeger & others, 1993 in Odock (2012:108). Park (2011) in Odock (2012:108) remarked that the region today risks statelessness going by the present form and shape of oil exploration and exploitation activities as it is now a commonplace to witness communities with threatening erosion, flooding, and acid rains among others.

Agbebaku (2015:6) wrote that in most of the South-East states, the effects of environmental degradation and challenges is a function of the wind and rainfall pattern in that region for example, in the past two decades these areas have been prone to coastal and gully erosion as well as forest degradation. The implications of these is the loss of farm lands, a major livelihoods of the locals.

The Federal Ministry of Environment Abuja, (2004) and Obioha (2008) seen in Ebele & Emodi (2016:7) both remarked that the Northern zone takes the threat of desert encroachment at a very fast rate of 30 hectares per year, occasioned by fast reduction in the amount of surface water, flora and fauna resources on land. African Technology Policy Studies Network cited in Conroy (n.d.:23) reported that the Sahara desert already occupies 35% of land mass in Nigeria, and is creeping southward at a rate of 0.6 kilometres a year at the same time that deforestation is taking place at 3.5% per year.

Focusing on the North-East, Agbebaku (2015:6) noted that one of the major challenges of climate change is how to combat desert encroachment and land bareness. The vegetation patterns are becoming thinner and striking. The Sahel savannah belt has been devoid from its natural state thereby exposing the areas to desert features and the incessant flooding of most rivers. Based on the above there have been incessant increased in atmospheric temperature and wind patterns in this region (Agbebaku, 2015:6).

Roma (2008:312), Odoh & Chilaka (2012:117 & 119) cited in Conroy (n.d.:23-24) both indicated that there were indications of land loss to about 35% due to climate change over 50 years and 400% increase in sand dunes over 20 years suggesting possibilities of desert encroachment around the core Northern states. Considering the issues behind the many clashes between herdsmen and farmers, Olanrewaju (2012) and Onuoha (2014) in Tersoo & Ogochukwu (2014:39) both noted that as farmers take up more of the river-bank for farms, they come into conflict with other users, especially the herdsmen who has been going to the riverside for many years to provide grazing for their cattle and believe they have inalienable right to the riverside. Tersoo & Ogochukwu (2014:39) noted that climate change-related shrinkage of lake Chad and desertification in the north have altered the seasonal movement of the herdsmen to the southern part during the dry season and move back to the North during the rainy season.

Conroy (n.d.:5) noted that prior to the twentieth century, the herdsmen were constrained to the semi-arid land in northern Nigeria, mostly due to the presence of trypanosomoses and other diseases that made cattle-rearing in more humid environments in the south impossible without significantly losses to the herds. Blench (2003) in Conroy (n.d.:8) and Onuoha (2014) in Tersoo & Ogochukwu (2014:39) both concluded that because of the deteriorating situation in the North, many herdsmen are now settling down in communities in the South to graze their livestock in recent years.

According to one pastoralist from Plateau state in Odoh & Chilaka (2012:113) as quoted by Conroy (n.d.:7),

Our herd is our life because to every nomad life is worthless without his cattle. What do you expect from us when our source of existence is threatened? The encroachment of grazing fields and routes by farmers is a call to war... wherever we turn we find the land reserved for our cattle to feast, taken over by farmers... It becomes difficult for our herds to move and graze without veering into crop fields... Once that happens, the farmers confront us and we have no option but to fight back.

On the part of the farmers, the complaints are similar in nature. One farmer from Sokoto state had this to say in Odoh & Chilaka (2012:121) as quoted by Conroy (n.d.:7-8),

In the past the migration use to be more in the middle of the dry season and after harvest but nowadays it is throughout the year. Worst of all during planting season, they (Fulani herdsmen) walk on seeds planted, and in most cases a lot of the seeds fail to germinate. This has caused huge loss to us. The damage is usually the cause of our conflicts with the herdsmen. It is a yearly battle between us.

Pointing out another classic example of identity politics between farming groups with different conceptions, Roma (2008) in Conroy (n.d.:9) noted that in Benue and Tarabe states, the Tiv practice a shifting cultivation pattern wherein they move from plot to plot each season, while the Jukun remain in the same farm plots year after year. When the Tiv encroach upon Jukun land, identity politics ensues. Brieger & others (2004:12) in Conroy (n.d.:12) noted that the violent conflicts in the south are not only caused by the actual destruction of resources and displacement from land, but also by the perceived destruction of agricultural resources by outside groups. Scholars like Elaigwu (2005), Alubo (2006), and Best (2007) as seen in Alubo (2009:1) all submitted that since the return to democracy in 1999, identity politics in Nigeria and its resultant implications have taken dangerous dimension.

4.2 Managing Identity Politics in Nigeria

Afolabi (2016:11) likens indigeneity-settler issues as the outcome of dual citizenship derivative in Nigeria. Remarkingly, Alubo (2009:16) noted that Nigeria is one country with many citizenships where some are citizens of some locations and not of others. Critically observing the 1999 constitution of Nigeria, Conroy (n.d.:28) remarked that due to the language in the constitution, certain rights are often denied some identity groups who are termed as settlers while the other group belong to the indigenes in a given setting. Similarly, Alubo (2009:15) noted that the current constitution is duplicitous in dealing with the indigene/settler question as it espouses universal criteria for Nigerian citizenship but also recognises indigenes for purpose of appointment of ministers. Ejobowah (n.d.:11) wonders why the current constitutional provisions adopt indigeneity in the place of residency which was the criteria used for defining membership rights among existing regions during the 1960 independence constitution.

Alubo (2009:4 & 6) noted that the problem is not the constitution per se but the translation of the provisions of the constitution into reality by providing material benefits to the citizens. Rasheed (2011) seen in Ejobowah (n.d.:14) stated that the proposal of a constitutional amendment which aimed to replace indigeneity with residency was initiated by former President Goodluck Jonathan in May 2011 but could not even get to the national assembly as it died as a proposal. Sarcastically, Alubo (2009:4 & 15) stated that all citizens are equal, except that being a settler or an indigene is a permanent identity as no provision is made for the former to convert to the latter.

Citing the Indian experience on the management of identity politics, Varshney (2009:22) wrote that the following were employed:

- i) Jus solis model of citizenship which gives priority to territory over blood lines;
- ii) Salad bowl which is a form of secular nationalism to address religion, and recognises diversities as central to the nation, and
- iii) Reliance on democracy to resolve conflicts.

More so, Varshney (2009:24-26) noted that Indian nation is not a community of blood, so to say, or “sons of the soil” but that birth in India or naturalisation stands as the sole legal criterion for the determination of citizenship in India. Differently, Beaud (2002) in Ejobowah (n.d.:3) observed that most federations in the western world, citizens of a component unit can become citizens of another through residency given

that they have commitment to the liberal idea of citizenship. Supporting this position, Afolabi (2016:14) remarked that the constitution should be made to unequivocally and explicitly state that the home of a citizen is the place that he/she found conducive for residence and livelihood.

Contributing, Brieger & others (2004:12) in Conroy (n.d.:12) suggested that the agricultural sector should be developed for the benefit of the people and that there should be improved access to land and markets. Considering the South-South zone, Hinchliffe (1996) in Odock (2012:108) submitted that the government should look beyond oil rent and begin to initiate climate change adaptation strategies in order to manage related climate change pains in the region. Making their inputs, Alubo (2009:16) and Olayode (2016:246 & 248) both submitted that responsive government will provide infrastructural development cum services as an effective inclusionary policy.

According to Call (2003:828-829) seen in Olayode (2016:246) there is need to utilise effective conflict transformation which highlight differences in a constructive way, and at the same time improves mutual understanding. Concerned with the entire country, Conroy (n.d.:28) suggested the need for effective political leadership to address the fundamental disconnect on land use rights in Nigeria.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary and Conclusion

The overall intention of this study was to describe climate change and identity politics in Nigeria. The specific aim of the study was to explore the implications of climate change on identity politics in Nigeria. It also targeted at critically identifying ways to manage identity politics in Nigeria. The study employed Eco-violence approach as its theoretical framework. The central idea of eco-violence theory suggests that alteration in environment can alter how people relate socially. The study adopted qualitative approach. Secondary method of data collection was essentially used. Critical and logical analysis were employed. The study concludes that climate change has a way it forces different groups to connect while the implications of the connection has a way it deepens identity politics in Nigeria. To effectively address this issue, there is need for the utilisation of effective conflict transformation strategy.

5.2 Recommendations

In line with results of this study, recommendations are hereby given as follow:

- 1) The current constitutional provision on indigeneity/settler (or residency) should be critically looked into for possible amendment. Residency appeared to be more favourable.
- 2) The agricultural sector should be adequately developed and access to land cum market given needed attentions.
- 3) Climate change adaptation strategies should be put in place by the government in order to reduce climate change related pains on the citizens.
- 4) Effective inclusionary policies to include provision of infrastructural amenities cum services should be adopted.

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