

## Resource and Environmental Insecurity in the Lake Chad Region

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### Abstract

Geography has become a major determinant of geopolitics. The nature of a country's geography has direct influence on the foreign policy posture of the said country. A state naturally does not live in isolation hence it cannot be separated from the direct and indirect influence of neighbouring countries. This study is focused on the Lake Chad environment and the insecurity therein. This study focused on the push and pull effect of resources, insecurity and diplomacy in the Lake Chad environment. It found that agriculture was badly affected following the recession of the Lake Chad. Again, the mass migration of the people to the Lake Chad and their inability to eke-out a living there as well as national insecurity due to Chadian Civil War, Cameroonian Civil War and Islamism insurgency caused widespread irregular migrations into neighbouring countries. The study recommends increased multi-lateral engagements aimed at managing and transforming the deteriorating Lake Chad environment that has become overtaken by insecurity and resource depletion.

**Key Words:** Resource, insecurity, environment, diplomacy & Lake Chad

### Introduction

World history is filled with Lakes that has directly influenced the regional politics, security and diplomacy amongst states. The Lake Chad is one of those geographical gift of God to mankind that has high diplomatic and environmental influence on nation building and diplomacy amongst states. It was the vitality of the Lake Chad that made the neighbouring countries that are influenced by the lake to establish the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC).

The LCBC is designed for the joint socio-political and economic gain of member states. The supreme organ of the body is the Heads of States of member nations that meets every four

years since 1994. During the Fourth Summit Meeting of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, held in Lagos from 21<sup>st</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> April, 1983, the Commission agreed to institutionalize the meeting of LCBC Heads of States to be held every two years (Ibrahim, 1987). "Apart from having adequate information on the hydrological data of the Basin, the Commission was formed to encourage regional co-operation and integration" (LCBC, nd:1). The strengthening of the Lake Chad Basin Commission through the appointment of high level personnel, and the conduct of a number of feasibility studies, on planned projects can better be understood better from the region's eagerness to develop joint beneficial efforts and ventures. Such multilateral and sub-regional arrangement complemented bilateral trade, economic, industrial and diplomatic relations (Alaba, 1977:41). The importance of the Lake and the Commission made countries to contribute towards ensuring that the geopolitical influence of the Lake remains positive. In 1979, Nigeria donated N600, 000 to the Lake Chad Basin Development fund (Ani, 2012). "Though Nigeria has been playing leadership role in terms of funding the Commission as it contributes 52% of the annual budget of the Commission, however, it has not been very consistent in honouring this obligation and is currently in arrears of annual contributions in the sum of ₦298,210,212.60" (LCBC, nd:3).

The Commission has the Regional Agricultural Training School in Ngala, Borno State, Nigeria, which has recorded the continuous inflow of students from Chad and other Lake Chad member states. They go there with their material culture and learning materials, settle in their new learning environment peacefully while enjoying the integrative value of students and staff, that has multi-national background. The role of the Commission in enhancing the economic position of member countries cannot be neglected. The importance of the Commission has led to the support that they have received from other international governmental agencies. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has carried out a feasibility study on the road network linking Nigeria, Cameroon and Chad. The UNDP and FAO identified interest in the development of many projects. Unfortunately, the Lake Chad environment has been infested by all manners of changing insecurity that negatively affects the geopolitics of the region. Ani and Ojakorotu (2018) listed the challenges to including stealing, kidnapping, prostitution, arms smuggling, irregular migration as well as the recent activities of the Boko

Haram sect that has made life hell-like in that environment. This study focuses on the dynamics of relations between resources and environmental insecurity in the Lake Chad environment. The economic implications of the push and pull effects that follows cannot be neglected. That is because most political decisions are motivated by economic necessities. They essentially become economic policies though arrived at and determined by the political intentions of the national leaders operating within the international system (Adeniran, 2007).

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study adopts the theory of insecurity flow model. The theory was primarily developed by Moskowitz and Kang (1997) to explain the flow of insecurity across computers. According to Moskowitz and Kang (1997:61) “an insecurity flow is similar to fire spreading through the entire forest”. The theory argues that the failure of security or password allows insecurity to flow into another protection domain. A protection domain contains groups of related components. In this study, the protected domain and its related component is the collection of sovereign states with an interconnected geopolitical border within the Lake Chad Basin (Ani & Ojajorotu, 2018). The Lake Chad environment has high geopolitical influence that the snowball effect of terrorism has spread across Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon and Chad. Again, the concentric cycle influence of the Lake Chad environment on border states is such that the rise of one form of epidemics keeps every other states within that geographical area on high alert due to the regular historic cases of different forms of security threats that have spread from one country to another within the Lake Chad geography.

It is popularly stated that nearly all the states in Africa are affected by relatively high level of economic and other forms of insecurity (Werthes, Heaven & Vollnhals, 2011). That is due to the fact that many countries in Africa, especially those in the Lake Chad region lack the necessary forms of security culture, safety and sustainable peace that is needed for human security. Unfortunately, when these basic standards of peace and security are aborted, there will be flow of insecurity from one sovereign state to another, thereby breaching the internal peace of those states within the concentric cycle in geopolitical analysis of Lake Chad states.

## **The Lake Chad Environment and Agricultural Insecurity**

Dr. Vincent Sagna, a Consultant of the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the United Nations has stated in 1987 that the Lake Chad, had been declining “in the past 11 years, tumbling from 128,900 tonnes in 1975 to about 31,334 tonnes in 1985” (Emenari, 1987). He argued that fishing efforts were also reduced as a result of Chadian conflict and hostilities, which limited the activities of fishermen on the Lake Chad. The Sahelian drought, which started in 1972 and aquatic weeds covering parts of the lake affected the socio-economic activities of Nigerians, Cameroonians, Nigerian and Chadians in the Lake.

The geographical problems associated with agricultural under-development are apparent in the Lake Chad Basin. Among them include dry climate, lack of water control and storage facility as well as the total absence of technological and human materials for proper watershed management and the remote location of the Lake, coupled with lack of good road and transportation facilities. Hence, the easy access to markets for agricultural products is therefore denied.

In 1986 the shrinking of the Lake Chad reduced the quantity of wheat and barley production which directly affected the production of beverages and beer in Nigeria. The situation was compounded because at that time, the Federal Government of Nigeria banned the importation of wheat. Consequently, many breweries in Nigeria approached the Lake Chad Research Institute to assist them embark on massive production of barley at the Lake but Malam Danjuma Mohammed, a then senior official of the Lake Chad Research Institute “disclosed that efforts to meet the demands of the breweries had been aborted by the receding waters of Lake Chad, which made it impossible for the institute to embark on massive production of grains for commercial purposes” (Unegbu, 1986). The Chad Basin and Rural Development Authority (CBRDA) as well as the Lake Chad Research Institute (LCRI) were negatively affected during the years the Lake Chad dried up.

The worst hit by the recession of the lake is the lake is the CBRA.

The General Manager, Alhaji Bunu Sheriff Musa, said the authority lost an opportunity to produce 30, 000 tonnes of wheat... New

Nigerian investigation showed that the Lake Chad Research Institute (LCRI) was also affected by the receding of the lake. Its fisheries centre in Malam Fatori was closed down because of the difficulty in obtaining species regularly. The acting officer in-charge of Baga research station, Mr. Francis Odunze, said the institute's fisheries school in Baga could not procure samples of fresh fish daily and that the Limnology Section, of the station which studies the physical phenomenon of lakes and pond life also found it difficult to get to the lake to take water samples for analysis (New Nigerian, 1986:1).

The increasing lack of water in the Lake pushed people into hunting, black-smiting and pottery in order to survive. Works (1976:213) while writing on the Lake Chad stated that among the lake population were the Haddad, a scorned ethnic-caste of hunters, smiths and potters among the Kanembu. Budduma, Kanuri, and Hausa fishermen who entered the area using new techniques and technology. According to some authorities, banda (smoked fish) was introduced by Ibo merchants in the area, who handled a good deal of the new trade from Maiduguri. The Chadian Hausa, however, had been smoking fish for export for several years.

### **The Lake Chad and Environmental Insecurity**

The Lake Chad environment was traditionally characterised by high level human and animal activities. People continually migrated to the area in search for a living. The increased immigration led to increased unemployment and crimes on the host society, while showing that "there is a direct relationship between the rate of crimes and socio-economic status." (Amieyeofori, 1987). People from all the neighbouring countries did not only migrate towards the lake Chad but were forced to penetrate any country within the region that they believed that they could eke out a living from. There is equally no doubt that many Nigerians, Chadian Cameroonians and Nigeriens aided migrants into their country for domestic purposes. Many of them were after the number of houseboys and girls they will get from Niger, Cameroon and

Chad and not the repercussion it might have on the nation. Many rich men and women in Maiduguri employ Chadians as house boys and house girls.

It would be recalled that Nigeria socio-economic and security relations with her neighbours entered a difficult period due to the Nigeria-African foreign policy review of 1980, the economic crisis of 1980s, the challenge emanating from the expulsion of Nigerian Neutral Troops from Chad in 1979 as well as the expulsions of Chadians from Nigeria in 1983 respectively. John Garba (1981) wrote that without some degree of national consensus, Nigeria's porous borders is "encouraging certain invisible foreign forces to penetrate our inner circles and so plant discord among us as to reduce to a state of almost complete incapacity and render us ineffective in world forum where our African leadership role could vitally tilt the scales one way or the other". It has been shown earlier that Cameroonians, Chadians and people from Niger Republic were among the major actors in the Maitatsine conflict in Nigeria. The recent Boko Haram uprising, at its earliest stage in Nigeria also witnessed a number of jihadists that joined Muhammed Yusuf in the 2009 Jihad in Maiduguri. It was the some of the un-arrested jihadists that returned back to their country after the arrest and killing of the sect leader in Nigeria, to ensure that Boko Haram gets a stronghold in Chad, Cameroon and Niger.

Omede (2006:17) wrote that strategically, the neighbouring states of Nigeria "had over the years been engaged in series of exploitation of Nigeria's natural and economic resources" Nigeria equally did not only over-extend their act of 'making money' from Chadians, Cameroonians and Nigeriens, who were forced to continue to pay for the residential permit till the recent order by late President Yar'Adua, but they also created psychological trauma for Chadians who were arrested by the Nigerian immigration officers, at a time Chadians felt that the necessity of passport requirement has been scrapped by both sides.

The national insecurity in Chad had widespread snowball effect characterised by mass migration into Nigeria and the desperate need by Nigerians to promote peacebuilding as a way of managing the Chadian Civil War. Bolaji Akinyemi once described the Chadian crisis as "a sore that simply refuses to heal". Akinyemi further said that "if I had my way, I will treat the Chadian issue as the number one foreign policy crisis" (Akilu, 1989:52-53). The researchers position is

that Nigeria is the 'greater gainer' as she used her peace efforts in Chad to re-enforce the foundations for strategic socio- economic relations between the two countries. The Nigerian participation in the Chadian conflict has direct effect on the family units of the two countries. Some of the Nigerian soldiers that were sent on peacekeeping role in Chad entered into illicit affairs, "sacrificing" their marriages at home. When such relationships are started by the soldiers, no serious efforts are made to check them. This therefore created socio-economic impact that caused the breakdown of families on the long-run.

The impact of the Cameroon Civil War on the Lake Chad region has continued to grow. There is increasing migration of Ambazonians out of Cameroon using every route that they could asses. Many of them have penetrated the Lake Chad border area in search for security and new life. There, they surrender to any form of activity that is aimed at making a living. As the conflict continued to escalate and get intractable, with little evidence of sustainable peacebuilding, the neighbouring countries of Cameroon continue to bear the weight of the refugees and the irregular migrants that finds their way into their country in order to escape the violent conflict that is currently raving parts of the country.

### **Impact Analysis on Resources**

"The negative aspect of the (environmental) change has already threatened and undermined, not only the image of the state but have also undermined the growth of sustainable national development. The activities of livestock rearers in the North and the continuous felling of trees in the search of wood-energy have enhanced the spread of desertification" (Ani, 2011:221) in the Northern parts of the two states. The two states shared the same natural conditions of soil, climate and vegetation while experiencing locust swarms, famine and epidemic simultaneously, especially in their Northern regions.

The competition over the rich resources of the Lake Chad was a major cause of the crisis between Nigeria and Chad. Fish and access to water in the Irelands of Lake Chad became a major factor in bilateral and multilateral relations within the region. Nigerian government been unhappy with the attack on Nigerians by Chadians especially at the Lake Chad Islands reacted in a realist dimension. "However, without adequate notification to the neighbouring countries,

Nigeria closed all her borders from 24<sup>th</sup> April, 1984 to 28<sup>th</sup> February, 1986. Pleadings, even by land-locked Republics of Niger and Chad, which greatly rely on the Nigerian Coastal ports for most of their imports, did not yield any tangible result” (Barkindo, 2008; Barkindo 1993).

Akinyemi (1981:8-9) wrote that the lapses in Nigerian implementation of Chadian conflict resolution policies made Chadians to conclude that Nigeria was partial to some parties on the conflict. This made the Chadian government to decide that no country having borders with them would be involved in future peace-operation in Chad. It could be recalled that the Chadian government sent the Nigerian neutral troops back to Nigeria, over the allegation of lack of neutrality and forceful arrest and imprisonment of some Chadian leaders (Ani, 2012). The economic cost of Nigeria’s involvement in the Chadian crisis is yet to be computed in financial terms. However, it is known that the OAU only provided \$200,000.00 to the peace-keeping force whilst the total cost of the operation submitted by OAU secretariat, at the end of the exercise was N80, 000.000.00, at 1982-naira value (Ejiga, 1982). The OAU was unable to pay the money for obvious reasons and Nigeria had to write-of most of the debts (Akilu, 1989). The costs of despatching the Nigerian peace keeping force in 1979 under Colonel Magoro, the airlifting of the peace monitoring team, and the hosting of the Lagos and Kano conferences were indeed colossal to Nigeria.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study focuses on the push and pull effect of resources and insecurity in relation to how it affects the diplomacy and life of masses within the Lake Chad region. The study reveals that the Lake Chad was influential as a major source of individual, national and regional economy. The masses gathered there to eke a living from the flourishing farm and fishing industry before the receding of the Lake Chad. The Lake was also a major source of entry point to the countries that shared border in the region thereby raising its geopolitical influence, especially in the era of Matatsine, Chadian Civil Wars and current Cameroonians and Boko Haram widespread insecurity. The study therefor accounted for the bilateral and multilateral initiatives aimed at managing these challenges. The socio-cultural links amongst nations gives bilateral and multilateral relations a big push. Again, the relations among nations, which are often viewed as



purely political relations, are indeed, also economic relations since the perceived observable politics is determined by economic factors.

Finally, the study recommends that at both at the bilateral and the multilateral levels, the socio-cultural and economic aspects of diplomacy cannot be neglected. The countries within the Lake Chad region needs to work towards ensuring progressive peace and environmental management in the region. New technologies should be deployed in line with the global best practices of turning deserts to farmland as a way of reviving the rich agricultural heritage of the Lake Chad environment. It is only when such new environmental culture of regional transformation is attained that the army of unemployed youths that have become frustrated and active agents of insecurity, violence and terror within the border areas of the Lake Chad can gradually surrender to good life as against their current marriage with the forces of national and regional destruction in the Lake Chad environment.

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