The Geopolitical Impact of Conflict on Food Security in Nigeria

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The Geopolitical Impact of Conflict on Food Security in Nigeria

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SIT: International Politics and Multilateral Diplomacy

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Abstract

Nigeria is a country on the rise, and considered the leader of Africa. By 2050, the population is estimated to reach 400 million people, which would make it the third most populous country in the world. However, conflicts and food insecurity threaten the prosperity of the country. Many have heard about these threats to human security, such as Boko Haram, flooding, and the Russian-Ukrainian war. The root causes and contributors to these crises must be investigated, to better understand the direction they are headed. It is important to understand what the main drivers of food insecurity in Nigeria are, as well as the main conflicts in and impacting the country. This paper seeks to analyze the intersectionality of the two subjects, analyzing the geopolitical impact conflict has on food security, but also acknowledging the impact food security has on conflict. Further, this paper analyzes solutions and approaches presented by various experts in an attempt to hypothesize how these crises are best approached and addressed.
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I. Introduction

Food security is a growing problem in Nigeria. The right to food is acknowledged in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as part of the right to an adequate living standard (UDHR Article 25 Section 1). Nigeria is by far the most populous country in Africa, as well as the most populous nation of Black people; one in four black in the world are Nigerian. By 2050 the Nigerian population is estimated to reach 400 million, which will be the third most populous country in the world. It is important that there are measures in place and resources available to support this growing number. Many factors impact the security of food in Nigeria, such as gender, education, and climate change. For the purpose of this paper, I will examine the impact of conflict on food security. There are many forms of conflict in and affecting Nigeria, from internal disputes between people groups over resources and land, to attacks from a growing terrorist group, to external wars among other nations. Food security already presents a crisis for the country, as well as the growing number and magnitude of conflicts. When coupled together, it exacerbates the dilemmas already happening, and puts the human security of Nigerians at even greater risk.

II. Literature Review

Much has been studied about food security in Nigeria, as well as much about conflicts there. Much qualitative and quantitative data is available. However, there is a gap of knowledge on the intersectionality of the two; it is often clear there is some form of connection, however this connection is analyzed in relation to one specific issue, rather than holistically.

The existing literature echoes one another that there is a problem in regards to the security of the country. Nigeria struggles involve various conflicts which impact the food
security for their people. The farmer-herder conflict involves a violent struggle over territory and land use between farmers and herders in the north of Nigeria (Ezenwa and Stubbs, n.d.). The nomadic herders migrate for their cattle to graze but limited fertile land pushes them into the farmers' crops. The Russian-Ukrainian War has halted crucial trading imports for Nigeria including wheat and cooking oil (Balana et. al., n.d.). The wheat supply has shrunk and the oil prices have risen. Boko Haram, a Nigerian-based terror group, forcibly drives out communities (Ome and Casimir 2015), thus shifting the supply and demand for resources. The displaced people will overwhelm the next community’s food security. Farmers abandon their land, further decreasing the food supply.

Food security is also a clear issue the country is facing. Nigeria has struggled with poverty and food security for years, and the statistics are grim. “In the 2021 Global Hunger Index, Nigeria ranks 103rd out of the 116 countries with sufficient data to calculate 2021 GHI scores. With a score of 28.3, Nigeria has a level of hunger that is serious” (Global Hunger Index). As of 2021, over 40% of the population was considered impoverished, which translates to about 83 million people (World Bank). The same source cites that “on average 4 out of 10 individuals in Nigeria have real per capita expenditures below 137,430 Naira per year”, which is currently equivalent to about $320 USD. Although Nigeria has received much humanitarian aid to combat the food security crisis (Onyeiwu, n.d.), the proper infrastructure is not in place to create permanent change. Although poverty and food insecurity are a problem found around the entire country and in every state, Northern Nigeria has been the most affected. The Borgen Project (Agostini, n.d) finds that between “the three northeastern states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe, almost 4.5 million people are now at risk of hunger. Of that 4.5 million, more than 700,000 are at imminent risk of starving to death”. These numbers only reflect three of the 36 Nigerian
states, and the data from the remaining 33 do not reflect a more positive reality. There are various things that can create more obstacles to obtaining and maintaining food security. One such thing is climate change, as discussed in Adekunle and Omosebi (n.d.) and Idumah et.al (2016). Changes in the environment affect food production or the people of the land, causing a strain of food supply and access. Governmental shortfallings, as discussed by Oderinde et.al (2022), such as lack of preparedness and neglect of certain regions, also contributes to the growing crisis.

III. Methodology

A. Research Question and Focus of the Study

This paper seeks to analyze and dissect the correlation between food security and conflict. I expect to find a positive correlation, as well as a two-way relationship between the two subjects. It is important to address this intersectionality and seek ways to reduce these threats to human security. Nigeria is the leader of Africa, and it is important that Nigeria can become a champion of sustainable advancements and growth. This paper will analyze the main drivers of food insecurity, followed by the main conflicts in or impacting Nigeria. It will then evaluate the impact they have on one another, and conclude with proposed solutions and approaches presented by experts.

B. Research Methodology and Approach

This paper uses qualitative research methodologies to seek the answer to the research question: What is the geopolitical impact of conflict on food security in Nigeria? Various forms of secondary sources were used, such as peer-reviewed academic journals, information obtained
from government databases, as well as publications from international organizations. These secondary sources were used to better understand the context of conflicts and food security in Nigeria. These secondary sources were key in understanding the background and fundamental components of these two topics to better prepare me for the interviews I conducted, which served as my primary resources.

For this project, I went with an interview-heavy approach. I also worked to obtain interviews from experts based in Nigeria. Although many based in Switzerland could have provided me with an international lens regarding the subject matters, I also wanted people within Nigeria who could offer their insight based on their personal experience. It was important for my project to include non-western lenses, and expand beyond the usual American- and European-oriented sources available.

The experts interviewed were selected based on their expertise in fields related to food security or conflict in Nigeria, or preferably both. Over the course of 15 days, ten interviews were conducted. All interviewees were informed of the purpose of the paper, and nine of the ten interviewees gave their consent to have their name attached to their statements included in this project. They were given the option to remain anonymous as well. Interviewees had the option to decline the interview or any questions they did not wish to answer. Five of the interviews were conducted in-person, and the experts were as follows: Dr. Jubin Goodarzi, Associate Professor / Deputy Head of the International Relations Department at Webster University Geneva; Dr. Michael Beevers, Associate Professor of Department of Environmental Studies at Dickinson College (USA)/Visiting Fellow at the Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding, Graduate Institute (Geneva); Ms. Elizabeth Rushing, Managing Editor of the ICRC’s Humanitarian Law and Policy Blog; Mr. Ted Bikin-Kita, Independent Consultant, former Senior
Civil Servant and University Lecturer; and Dr. Mohamed Mahmoud Mohamedou, Deputy Director, Professor of International History and Politics, and Director of Executive Education at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies. Five of the interviews were conducted virtually over Zoom or WhatsApp, with one of the experts based in the United States, and the other four experts based in Nigeria. The experts were as follows: Dr. Ekin Birol, Adjunct Professor at Georgetown University, previously Senior Research fellow at the International Food Policy Research Institute; Dr. Abass Babtunde Yusuf, Deputy Country Director for GAIN Nigeria; Anonymous, Manager for Sahel Consulting; Dr. Mercy Lung’aho, Consultant - Food Security and Nutrition Policy for the FAO and Biomarker and Anthropometry Lead for the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture; and Dr. Chris Agoha, Country Manager – Nigeria, for the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue. The diversity of experience and background among the interviewees offered me a variety of viewpoints that helped me see the multidimensional aspects of conflict and food security in Nigeria, as well as equip me to better analyze the subjects through a geopolitical lens.

There were also three interviews scheduled that fell through, as well as interviewees and organizations that I reached out to however got no response from, such as the World Food Program (WFP), the Permanent Mission of Nigeria to the United Nations in Geneva, the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), and the World Bank. Although I would have obtained useful and informative insight from these prospects, I had plenty of interviews and insightful comments, so I felt it was not a hindrance to my project to not have conducted more interviews.

III. Background

A. Main Drivers of Food Insecurity in Nigeria
There are different factors that diminish the security of food for the people of Nigeria. Market access and inflation play a major role. Many people either do not have access to food, or the food they have access to is not of enough nutritional or caloric value to provide them with food security. “...Rising food costs impose caloric losses at the retail level, as, on account of the constant change in food prices, consumers are in limbo as to what to purchase” (Oderinde et. al, 2022). Dr. Lung’aho echoes these concerns, saying “It doesn’t matter the diversity in the market if you can’t access it”. She shared 70% of households in Nigeria are food insecure, and food prices are too high. It is important to have both the buying power, but also food that is diverse and nutritional.

Climate change plays a large role on the food security of a country. Nigeria is split into six different geographical zones, and climate change plays a different role in each of them. “The South-South and South-West geopolitical zones for example, are mainly affected by sea level rise and deforestation-induced change, the South-East zone is affected mainly by erosion, flooding and land degradation, the North-Central is affected by changes due to deforestation and over-grazing, the North-East by drought, desertification and heat-stress and the North-West is also affected by drought, desertification and heat stress” (Okoli and Ifeakor, 2014). Loss of land and lack of access to water and resources is one of the biggest vulnerabilities Nigeria faces that contributes to food insecurity (Anonymous Interview). The encroachment of the Sahara Desert upon grazing land in the northern states forces livestock and their caretakers further south, searching for land to feed on. This impact will be discussed in further detail later in the paper. The shortage or surplus of water affects food security in different ways. In a report studying the impact of climate change on food production, “the results showed the strong influence of rainfall as a key determinant of the level of agricultural production and by extension on food security
attainment in Nigeria” (Idumah et. al 2016). Excessive rain or mismanagement of water reservoirs can lead to flooding. Flooding will destroy crops and land, causing a decline in the supply of food available. Flooding will also displace people and force them to move, and the areas where there is a large influx of people may not have the resources or food available to support this growing population. Flooding also destroys infrastructure, often barring or delaying the transport of food to the markets by making roads unnavigable or markets inaccessible. On the other hand, lack of water inhibits the growth of crops, and supply of water for people to drink. This will often force communities to migrate to new areas, which puts a strain on the resources and new land inhabited, similar to the effects of those displaced by flooding and other climate-related crises (Dr. Lung’a ho and Dr. Birol). Change in temperatures also plays a major role on food security. Whether the geographical climate is tropical or a savanna, the country is generally hot year round. However due to the effects of climate change, we have seen extreme temperatures on both ends of the spectrum. There have been areas in the North recording temperatures as high as 112 degrees Fahrenheit, and some of those areas also recorded temperatures as low as 44 degrees Fahrenheit (Olewuike 2019). “Where temperature and heat levels increase, the efficient storage and preservation of food becomes a distressing issue as most food items are easily subjected to spoilage” (Oderinde et. al, 2022). This variance in temperature and climate, coupled with changes in water supply, create an environment of uncertainty of supply. There is no doubt that crops will be negatively affected, but the exact detrimental cause changes by year and region.

There is also a lack of infrastructure that further complicates the access to food. The quality of roads and ease of access getting to the markets is a big inhibitor of food security. Large quantities of food are not able to be disbursed to the populations that need it most, and often the
roads may not be suitable for such long-haul transport, and by the time the food arrives it is often spoiled or infested. Lack of access to food often leads to communities living off humanitarian aid. Although they receive food from this, aid is simply a bandage, and there must be sustainable solutions in place to tackle the food security crisis (Dr. Yusuf). For communities able to produce their own food, there is not always the technology to improve and protect production, such as adequate drought protection, seeds, irrigation and tools needed to produce and sustain a crop (Dr. Birol).

Lastly, conflict is another key driver of food insecurity in Nigeria. These threats come from various actors in various forms, but each threatens the human security of Nigerians, beyond just food security. In the next section, the primary conflicts that are in and affecting Nigeria will be discussed, followed by an evaluation of the impact these conflicts play on the food security of Nigeria.

B. Main Conflicts In and Affecting Nigeria

Boko Haram and Insurgent Groups

Arguably one of the biggest conflicts affecting Nigeria today is the insurgency in Northern Nigeria by the terrorist group Boko Haram. Per Dr. Mohamedou, the rise of Boko-Haram can be described in two phases. The group did not actually surface until around 2002, and although they were assertive and disruptive, they were not violent– phase 1. But as the government becomes more repressive, in 2009 we see the start of the violence that the group is known for today– phase 2. Their radicalization is a response to the radicalization of the state (Mohaedou). Boko Haram is now expanding nationally and internationally. They have gained media attention recently for the kidnapping of girls from schools and the ambush and total
destruction of villages and all their inhabitants (Mr. Bikin-Kita). Although some may think this issue is only concentrated in the north of Nigeria, people of bordering nations such as Cameroon and Niger also suffer at the hands of Boko Haram. Dr. Agoha shared that many offices in Abuja were shut down for a few weeks, due to a potential threat from Boko Haram of an attack on the city. They are a great threat to the lives of many, and unless one is a member (Botha and Abdile 2017), they are likely at risk.

Farmer-Herder Conflicts

For decades, there has been an ongoing conflict between farmers and herders, predominantly in the north of Nigeria. These conflicts stem from disagreements over land use and allocation. Each group has their interests at heart, causing an instinctive response for competition rather than cooperation. “The quest for dominance and power becomes the currency rather than consensus” (The Accord). This issue is further exacerbated by the encroachment of the Sahara Desert on Northern Nigeria. The desertification is pushing the herders further south, onto the lands of the farmers. The decrease of available grazing land has led to an increase in invasions (Dr. Lung’aho, and Anonymous). “For example, farming along the Benue River accounts for over 20000 tons of grain annually. This same area is also fertile ground for herdsmen to feed their cattle. Thus, farmlands within the river bank areas are the most affected by the movement of the herdsmen – resulting in a number of clashes” (The Accord). These conflicts have grown increasingly violent and weaponized, which will be further explored in a later section. It is important to note that while the herders are often the perpetrators, they are also sometimes the victim. The Conversation opts to use the term eco-violence, because “it is neutral and takes the focus off the identities of the conflicting parties and what they do for a living”.
Banditry

Banditry has been on the rise in recent years. These bandits are not defined by any one group or classification; they could be part of Boko Haram or stem from another group, they could be herders or even farmers. Bandits will often kidnap or ambush a farm or group of people, demanding ransom money. If the people or their connections are unable to pay, they will kill the person or keep them enslaved. The price on the heads of the hostages is decided based on their social standing and connections. Those more well-connected and wealthy will have a higher price tag, as there will often be an effort by their people to raise the money to release them. The reverse is unfortunately also true. Those poorer may have a smaller price tag, however they may not have the connections able to help negotiate their release, or their connections do not have the financial ability to pay their release, resulting often in the murder of the hostage. Unlike the two primary conflicts discussed above, which are often connected to a specific region or demographic, banditry occurs across the country, in different states and among different people groups and demographics.

The Russian-Ukrainian War

Although not a local issue, the Russian-Ukrainian war has had a sizable impact on Nigeria. The start of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict dates back to 2014. There was a revolt in Ukraine in response to the government’s delay in signing an agreement with the EU. Former Ukrainian president Yanukovych was pressured by Russia to not sign it and was ousted by the Ukrainian Parliament soon after (Kirby, 2022). For the past eight years, tensions have remained tight between the two countries. The most recent major development to this year-long conflict occurred on February 24th, 2022, when Russia invaded Ukraine. (Kirby, 2022). According to the
Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, there have been about 11,000 recorded civilian casualties in the country. This only takes “verified incidents” into consideration, so the actual number is most likely “considerably higher” (United Nations). The war has affected more countries than just the two parties directly involved. Around the world, inflation and prices of necessities such as oil and food have skyrocketed, affecting the economies of many countries. This conflict has also threatened food security in predominantly African nations, Nigeria being one of them (Kwaw et. al. 2022).

IV. The Geopolitical Impact

A. The Impact of Conflict on Food Security

These various conflicts present threats to the human security of Nigerians across the country. Whether threats of loss of life, devoid of clean water, or basic poverty, the effects of conflict are felt by everyone. The impact of conflict on daily life is not a new concept. This section seeks to address the gap in the intersectionality of conflicts and food security.

Boko Haram forcibly displaces people, further aggravating the food security crisis. The displacement often results in camps springing up around the country for internally displaced people. There is often not enough food or resources available to support the recent influx of migrants, and they are sometimes difficult to reach due to the proximity of the terrorist organization (Ms. Rushing). Sometimes humanitarian groups are unable to access these groups due to threats to their own lives. Further, it is difficult to help those internally displaced people in need, when it is challenging to count and locate them. Insurgent groups strike fear in people and can inhibit them from going about their normal daily lives. There is fear of the destruction of the markets and common areas, resulting in a surplus of supply with no demand, or a surplus of
demand with not enough supply. Farmers may not return to their farms and tend to their crops, for fear of being kidnapped or killed (Anonymous and Dr. Yusuf).

The farmer-herder conflicts are detrimental to security of food, as food supply is being destroyed by the herders. Farmers are being killed, so there are less people left to grow the food and care for the land, albeit the population continues to rise and more food is needed to sustain more people. Dr. Agoha shared that these confrontations have become increasingly violent. Instead of just being armed with machetes, they now carry AK-47s as well. Innocent farmers are either killed for their crops, or driven off their land for fear of their lives. The crops needed to help feed the country are now being consumed by cattle. Farmers are either dead or unable to continue farming, both of which lead to fewer contributions to the market supply of available food. This often leads to forced displacement, where farming communities must choose between fleeing or death. The new areas they resettle in are often overcrowded and do not have enough resources to sustain the population, causing further food insecurity (Dr. Birol).

Banditry also impacts the food security crisis. There is less money for already impoverished people to use for food, if their money is constantly going towards paying ransoms. There is already poor infrastructure and roads, which results in even more heightened risks of banditry if there is no fast or safe route to travel and transport the food to markets or communities (Anonymous).

The Russian-Ukrainian war has led to a rise in inflation and food prices. According to a 2022 global crisis country brief by the International Food Policy Research Institute, “Palm oil and wheat prices increased by 56 and 100 percent in real terms, respectively, between June 2021 and April 2022”. Nigeria imports 99% of their wheat, the majority of which comes from Russia
and Ukraine. Wheat is a staple for many foods in Nigeria, and the decrease in wheat supply has adversely affected the food available (World Bank). The rising price of gas is also affecting food security. Cooking gas is becoming more and more expensive, and for the impoverished trying to survive off less than $2 a day, affording cooking gas is not possible. They therefore turn to alternative, cheaper means for cooking, such as firewood, kerosene, and charcoal. However, these are detrimental for the environment, leading to an increase in emission of greenhouse gases and deforestation (Abdulrahman, 2022). The war has also had a big impact on fertilizer, which is widely used in the agricultural sector. An estimated 20% to 50% of Nigerians obtain their living from agricultural production, and fertilizer is a staple for many. In the same brief by the International Food Policy Research Institute as mentioned above, they state that, “rising fertilizer prices may cause some farmers to reduce their use of this input, leading to lower agricultural production and higher prices for many locally grown crops” (IFPRI). as well as decrease the quality of food available as the focus will be on producing and selling as much as possible.

Per the title of this paper, the subjects are examined through a geopolitical lens. It is therefore important to note how state failure, a conflict in and of itself, takes these other conflicts and worsens the food security situation. A state fails its people when it is able to provide for their basic needs(Mr. Bikin-Kita). Current Nigerian president Muhammadu Buhari is Fulani, which is the primary ethnic group which makes up the population of herders in northern Nigerian. Some feel he hasn’t done enough to address the farmer-herder conflicts because he feels more sympathetic to the herders. This could be an empowering tool for the herders to continue their invasions (Dr. Agoha). Many members in the government are also from the North, so there may be a slower urge to condemn the conflict from the administration as a whole. There is also lack of representation and proper allocation of resources among states. This ties into the rising
secessionist movements, currently stemming in the Biafran region, where there was previously a
civil war lasting from 1967 to 1970 (Nwaubani), as well as in the Delta region, where some call
for emancipation (Dr. Agoha). Both regions are not proportionally represented in the
government, and do not receive their adequate share of government funding and attention. For
example, the Niger Delta is the oil-producing region, yet do not hold high positions in the
Department of Petroleum Resources. The Niger Delta region has suffered greatly in recent years.
This area is rich with oil, which the government mines and exports. However this industry
destroys the environment in the process: farm land is destroyed through the drilling for oil, and
oil leaks kill the fish, weakening the fishing industry. Those in the area face both a degradation
of the place they live, but also not adequate enough compensation or support from the federal
government to address these issues. The government also has lots of economic power in Africa,
however does not seem to use it to their advantage. If they wanted to, they would be able to buy
a surplus of rice and wheat to store, and have on hand when most needed. However, it does not
seem that there is a long-term plan for preservation and storing. Many times have arisen where
the government is questioned if they did all they could to help the people of Nigeria, both in
regards to protection from conflicts and food insecurity. Governmental reform and action will be
discussed in a later section, addressing the gaps the government should fill.

B. The Impact of Food Security on Conflict

Although the primary focus of this paper is on the geopolitical impact of conflict on food
security in Nigeria, it is also important to acknowledge the impact food security can have on
conflict as well. Although the causal effect from conflict leading to food insecurity is the most
obvious and detrimental, food insecurity can often lead to or further exacerbate previously
existing conflicts. This impact will be discussed in this section.
Boko Haram is one of the greatest threats to food security, as well as other forms of human security, to both Nigerians as well as populations of neighboring countries. A recruitment strategy used by the insurgent group is the guarantee of basic needs, such as food, education, shelter, and protection, upon one’s commitment to joining the insurgency. This promise of food and protection is often enough to persuade an impoverished or fearful person in a threatened region to pledge allegiance to the group, knowing if they do not, the odds they will die are likely. This then adds to the group’s size, increasing their manpower and reach, which furthers the conflicts and violence occurring daily.

Climate change affects the water and crops available, which in turn affects livestock. In the north of Nigeria, the Sahara Desert is moving further south every year, both encroaching upon arable land for farming, as well as pushing herders further south, as their cattle have no food to feed on, and not enough water to drink. A new habitat for them to move into may not readily be available (Okoli and Ifeakor 2014). This is the trigger of the farmer-herder conflicts: due to the lack of food for their livestock to graze on, the herders head to where they know there are crops available— the land of the farmers. If the area of the herders was food-secure and crops were plentiful for their livestock to feed on, there would be no need for the herders to move south and violently ransack the land of the farmers (Daniel 2021). Food insecurity triggers this conflict, however this conflict now triggers further food insecurity, as discussed in the section above.

V. Takeaways, Future Outlooks and Potential Solutions

Conflicts and food insecurity are two major crises in Nigeria, and the overlap and interconnectivity exponentially increase the negative impact they each have on the country. This
now begs the questions—what can be done to address these issues? The following ideas presented are an accumulation of solutions and takeaways from my discussions with various experts across various fields and disciplines, supported by previously suggested proposals from other sources. Many of the solutions and takeaways are interconnected; having one often leads to the other. Some solutions are geared more towards food security while others focus more on conflict resolution, while others provide a broader approach that can impact the two if implemented. There are many more solutions that could be elaborated on, however a few of the fundamental ideas were chosen. If more of these strategies and approaches are introduced, more positive change and room for growth will be fostered which will no doubt be a step in the direction of sustainable change.

**Dialogue and Community Building**

Dialogue and community building are key. Many times, conflicts and improper response to needs stems from the important conversations not happening. This can be seen with communities divided based on ethnic or religious group affiliation, or based on their livelihood, such as with the farmer-herder crises. There is a UN pilot program in place in Benue and Nasarawa States, in the Middle Belt region (Anonymous). This program seeks to foster community building and cooperation between farmers and herders. The coexistence can lead to benefits for both groups; the herders can provide animal manure as fertilizer for the farmers, and the farmers can provide feed for the livestock (Dr. Birol). There must be opportunities and spaces where these conversations can take place, and people can listen to the needs of one another.

**Bottom-Up Approach**
The need for a bottom-up approach was echoed by almost each and every expert. The people who are being affected by these various crises *must* be included in the conversation on how to properly respond. Time and time again, the top-down approach fails because the donors are not aware of the actual needs of the community, or give in their own interests. The people of the country best know their own needs and how to address their problems, not western nations or international organizations who see these countries as a charity case. Money given to the top of the pyramid, in this case the Nigerian federal government, is often lost or mispent due to corruption, and the people and areas that need it most do not benefit. The country is so vast and diverse, that there is no “one size fits all” solution (Dr. Mohamedou). This connects to the need for governmental reform. Because the national government is so far removed from the needs of local communities, there needs to be more power delegated to the state governments, who are able to better respond to the needs of their people (Dr. Yusuf). They can then delegate power to local governments as well, creating an enhanced system of federalism.

**Governmental Reform**

The topic of governmental reform was discussed with Dr. Agoh, Mr. Bikin-Kita, and Dr. Mohamedou, whose points all reinforce one another. There is much corruption among leaders, whether it be at the local or federal level, among government officials or law enforcement officers. The anonymous source shared about a local police system that people trust, because the officers come from within the community and have a stake there. There must be more localized care for people, as to prevent an abuse of power. There must be a fair and accessible electoral system. Elections are known to be violent and rigged, and the voice of the people is often silenced. The people of Nigeria want a change, but will the government in power interfere and stop that from happening in order to remain in power? There should be a disbursement of power
to state governments, and a better system of federalism (such as fiscal federalism). State
governments are better able to address issues specific to them. Those in an urban southern city
do not face the same conflicts and food security crises as rural farmers in the north, although they
may each face various forms or conflicts and food security. The government needs to be able to
and willing to bypass the markets to ensure food gets to the people and areas that need it most,
instead of profiting off of the food industry. If a government is not able to provide for the basic
needs of its people, it should be questioned why it is a government in the first place (Mr.
Bikin-Kita). There must also be better representation in the government of the different regions
of the country and the different people groups. Resistance often stems from a feeling of
oppression, so addressing that before the resistance turns into a violent conflict is in the interest
of the nation.

Self-reliance and Lack of Dependence

It was seen with the Ukraine war, and other wars, that Africa was one of the most hard hit
(Dr. Yusuf). Due to their wheat reliance and its rising prices, it became increasingly difficult to
get bread and other staples. There must be less reliance and more self-sustainability, so when
crises hit they are better prepared, and have a system to support them (D. Lung’aho). Part of this
means a movement away from foreign aid. There is too much of a reliance on outside aid to help
in times of need, which may make governments and leaders slower to develop their own
solutions for the nation, because it is assumed they will have access to outside aid whenever they
need it. Aid is often given because the donor wants something, not out of the goodness of their
heart. To avoid outside nations from meddling in their affairs, Nigeria must not be dependent on
others’ money.
**Ranching**

Ranches are a potential solution to combating the farmer-herder conflicts. Ranches are designated places for herders to raise their cattle and allow them to graze. This prevents them from migrating to the land of farmers and destroying their pastures and crops. The government had previously invested in grazing land for herders, however moved away from this initiative to focus on the oil industry (The Accord). However, herders are nomadic by culture, and many feel that ranches will leave them parked in one spot, and are repressive of who they are as a people group (Dr. Agoha). Ranches could also be further incentivized to encourage ranchers to visit and stay. The anonymous source discussed a pilot program advancing local dairy production. There was funding and efforts given to support the infrastructure of the area, such as through the provision of solar panels and boreholes. By improving their livelihoods, farmers would likely stay in the area. If something similar like this would be implemented on ranches, they may have a higher success rate. Herders may be more willing to stay if they will have access to shelter and sanitation. Nigeria also has much arable land (Dr. Beevers), so a reinvestment in the cultivation and growth of feed for animals will lessen the conflicts occurring among farmers and herders.

**Resilience**

Resilience is ingrained in the Nigerian history, people, and culture, and is also a key step to combatting the conflict and food security crises Nigeria faces. In the interview with Dr. Beevers, it was a key point that came up multiple times. A lot of issues tie back to resilience and preparedness, and training in resilience-building can help equip communities better for when conflicts arise. However, the problem with resiliency sometimes must be noted. When asked to characterize Africa in a positive light, many will describe Africans as resilient. But because
Africans are resilient, there is an expectation that they must always be resilient. But just because there is a history of resilience does not mean that is forever the future. Resilience is an excellent quality to however, however Africans, and for the purpose of this paper specifically Nigerians, must also have systems and safeguards in place so they must not always be resilient.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the geopolitical impact of conflict on food security in Nigeria plays a large role in the past, present, and future of the country. Threats to food security such as a failing economy, climate change, and lack of infrastructure, and conflicts such as insurgency, farmer-herder clashes, the Russian-Ukrainian war, and governmental failure, worsen the overall security situation in the country, and the overlap and intersectionality create a grimmer outlook. Conflicts impact food security through depletion of resources, destruction of land, and sabotage of market access and supply. It is important to also acknowledge the impact food security has on conflict through the deterioration of an environment, which often drives people to conflict. There are various solutions and outlooks for the future that aim to decrease the occurrence and magnitude of these crises, such as through dialogue and community building, governmental reform, and better resource usage. Although the statistics reflect a somber reality, if there is a commitment to the people of Nigeria and by the government, much-needed change can come, and create a more optimistic future.
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