

Climate of Fear and Food Insecurity in Africa

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Introduction

The end of the Cold War was thought to be an end of history. End of history, not only in the form of liberal international system as postulated by Francis Fukuyama, but also an end of history from holistic perspective where sustainable development would be the order of the day. What *perestroika* and *glasnost* brought to Africa amount to misery, poverty, maldevelopment and a lacuna in the area of economic opportunities. To most states in the continent, clouds of war, conflicts, banditry, kidnapping and politics of zero-sum-game pervade the atmosphere. The end result of this comes directly to the down-trodden people who are the majority and stay in the countryside. A few states did not taste the bitter pills of instability, but this does not mean that they enjoy food security. The imposed neoliberal international economic relations subjected Africa to the level of “beggar-thy-west” policy where humanitarian aid continue to feed the continent. This was in the form of producing what Africans hardly consume, but consume what they do not produce. Instability that these attributes generate are lingering in the continent in the form of climate of fear. This commentary focuses on the impact of instability on food security and how the continent is coping with the same. Relying on secondary sources of data and embedded liberal theory, with some flavours of social constructivism, the paper concludes that electoral system that are indigenous to the continent’s environment will promote sustainable food security and by extension, food sovereignty.

Wole Soyinka (2005) in his *climate of fear: the quest for dignity in a dehumanized world* examined how “Army of God” polluted the globe

with religious fundamentalism; the effects that is causing political instability between *us* and *them*, another form of Afrophobia/religiophobia/Islamophobia as captured by Amusan and Mchunu (2018). Human productivity and performance in whatever venture is naturally limited by the atmosphere of fear, danger, and instability. Instability creates tendency of uncertainty, insecurity, and anarchy, which in turn, disrupt productive activities of states (Kah 2017; Onwusirib *et. al.*, 2015; Pate 2014). The African state in its current form is laden with instability caused by war, conflicts, insurgency, banditry, kidnapping, and activities of gunmen (Christakis 2013; Mlambo & Dlamini 2019). The unending crisis in some African countries - Central African Republic (CAR), Congo, Libya, Mali, Nigeria, South Sudan, among others - buttress the fact that Africa is a potential source of climate of fear (Ngoh 2013; Gegout, 2018). Some of the daily news making the internet rounds of deadly attacks in some African states, especially, Libya, Nigeria and South Sudan are unspeakable and destructive of human development (Kah 2017; Onwusirib *et. al.*, 2015). The killing of rice farmers in Borno State, Northern part of Nigeria by Boko-Haram armed members not only threatens food security of the country, it subjects farmers into fear, which in turn, inflict on them psychological trauma (Amusan & Ejoke, 2017). This has implications for food insecurity in terms of quantity and quality of food required for nourishment.

Africa is supposed to be stable and safe for it to be free from problem of hunger and mal-nutrition. But its abysmal performance in the attainment of the SDGs two (No hunger, food security and sustainable nutrition) is partly attributed to overwhelming cases of instability that characterises the continent's polity (Imaseun 2015; Kah 2017). Thus, to achieve this feat (SDG 2), Africa needs to be stable to boost agricultural food production. However, the current situation where insurgents and bandits hold sway defeats the chances of meeting the SDG 2. The insurgents' attacks on markets, livestock holding does not only reduced income from sales of livestock, but prevents

attempts at future agricultural food production (Kah 2017). Many large-scale farmers have resorted to switching their farming job for other safe ones, for fear of being killed or rendered bankrupt by violent herders and bandits.

In a bid to address the climate of fear, measures have been designed and implemented by African leaders and governments at regional, sub-regional, and national levels to address instability-induced food insecurity problems. At the national level, there are several intra-state measures specifically established to tackle instability problem. For instance, in Nigeria, there is the Joint Task Force Codenamed Operation Restore Order/Hope (JTF-ORO) (Akubor & Okolo 2019; Amusan 2014), in addition, there are regional based community security forces (Amotekun, Eastern Security Network-ESN, Civilian Joint Task Force-CJTf among others) (Akubor & Okolo 2019) specially formed to tackle insecurity. These security forces are established to complement the conventional security forces in Nigeria. Similarly, other conflict-prone states in Africa, like Cameroun (Multipurpose Intervention Group of the National Gendarmerie-GPIGN), Chad (Chadian Nomadic National Guard), Libya (Libyan Arab Armed Forces) among others aim at atmosphere of serenity for sustainable development. Also, at the regional and sub-regional levels, the African Union (AU), Southern African Development Community (SADC), Economic Community of the West African States (ECOWAS), and others security measures were taken to address Africa's insecurity.

Despite these measures, Africa is still increasingly unsafe for investment in food chain value. The displacement of farmers and irregular migration to escape from conflicting zones in part of Africa is the bane of the continent's high score (30-50, that is, alarmingly too high) in hunger and undernourishment perception index (FAO *et al.*, 2017). The increasing rate of hunger and mal-nutrition is due to the rise in conflict-affected countries, which in turn, is the leading cause of famine and malnutrition. The latest FAO data (2020) shows

that Africa hosts 256 million hungry people due to rising cases of food insecurity, and may not be able achieve the SDGs two (no hunger) in 2030. Conflict, which sometimes creates an atmosphere of fear contributes to unfavourable statistics on food security in Africa (FAO 2020).

The continent's food security project is affected by instability; the idea of killing in the name of God or forceful conversion of people from their faith by religious fundamentalists are not only threatening, they sometimes caused long term perpetual desperation. This tends to scare famers away from farming. Majority of African farmers are now potential refugees in neighbouring African states due to incessant attacks by Islamic insurgents (Mlambo & Dlamini 2019). This is in contrary to what the Holy Qur'an (Sura 2, Al-Baqarah 256) dictates that there is no compulsion in religion. The fear of being kidnapped while conveying farm produce to markets, grossly affects consumers' access to, and utilization of food. Onwusiribe *et al.*, (2015) report that the incessant crisis of kidnapping in Northern Nigeria halts supply of food to the Southern part. Besides, it has negative effect on exportation, as many of the cash crops have either been set ablaze or stolen by ravaging bandits and insurgents. This has undernourishment implication with untold health challenges in the midst of unemployment and disguised employment that pervades the continent (Imaseun 2015; FAO 2020; Global Hunger Index 2020). These scenario ginger this paper as an intervention aimed at advancing new knowledge on how Africa can navigate its insecurity problem to boost food security.

Many studies (Dubagat 2013; Hemen 2013; Kah 2017; Ngoh 2013) investigated the organic linkages between instability and food insecurity, this paper examines further how the twin issues impact on psychological disruptive aspect. This paper unlike other studies, argues that an attempt to proffer solutions to allay Africa's climate of fear is instrumental to boosting of food security, as it is envisaged that an inquiry into how induced food insecurity will stimulate evidence-based findings and policy directions that could significantly address Africa's

food insecurity challenges. It is in the light of the foregoing that the paper interrogates the implications of political topsy-turvy on food security in the continent. The next section examines the challenges of insecurity and an agent of food insecurity as discussed below.

Insecurity, Instability, and Food Insecurity: A Conceptual Review

It has been established and well documented that a conflictual environment is detrimental to productive activities (Cards, 2019; FAO 2015). It will be deceptive to expect improvement in human conditions in an insecure environment of fear and anxiety which in the long run scare people from engaging in their normal routinized activities including agricultural food activity. Conflict takes heavy toll on food security (Onwusiribe et al., 2015; Willett 2001). Rural farmers are the prime object of both internal displacement and seeking for refuge in neighbouring states as the case of South Sudan in Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya, DRC and CAR; the same is applicable in Nigeria as sedentary farmers have to relocate to Benin Republic due to the herders' incursion in the Ibarapa area of Oyo state in the country (Ajayi 2021; Gegout 2018; Okunlola 2016; Vickers 2013;). Insecurity and instability are the feeling of danger, uncertainty, risk, and fear that tend to hinder the progressive reasoning and performance of people and country. Africa's major security problem is provoked by conflict or violence caused by fundamentalists and bandits with direct negative impacts on food security and food sovereignty of a nation (Epule *et al* 2012; UN 2011).

For instance, forceful encroachment by Boko-Haram insurgents into farm holdings to kill and loot farm produce is enough to discourage farmers from farming during planting season. Evidence, from the foregoing shows that insecurity and instability are social problems caused by conflict, war, insurgency, and activities of bandits, fundamentalists, and ethnic militias. The cause of insecurity has been blamed on factors such as governance failure, greed of warlords, religion-fanaticism, the uncontrolled proliferation of small arms,

hunger and poverty (Amusan 2015; Collier, 2000; FAO 2020; Idike & Agu, 2014; Malmbo & Dlamini 2019).

On food insecurity, it means lack of food in the right quantity and quality at all times for human consumption. Food security across the world has been established as a critical element of state security, as its absence can trigger the disruption of state peace and security (Amusan 2015; Clover 2013). It is an individual access (physical, social, and economic) to satisfactory food that meet their dietary needs to live a healthy life (USAID 2015). Amusan and Agunyai (2021) defined it, as ability of all humans to eat food at all times in good quantity, quality, and adequate nutrients for a healthy growth and development. It is a situation of food sufficiency with no hunger or fear of starvation and absence of hidden hunger (Kah 2017; Wawa 2018/2019). Africa remains the most largely affected continent by hunger and malnutrition (FAO 2020). Sub-Saharan Africa is worse hit by hunger, as it was confirmed in a report (Kah 2017) that five of the six countries ravaged by hunger were in the Sub-Saharan. It is also on record that the large number of malnourished people in Africa are far below global hygienic, sanitation and nutrient standard. FAO (2017) reports that the numbers of undernourished people in SSA rose from 220 to 224 million, representing 25% of 815 million people undernourished globally in 2016. From this report, it is obvious that a quarter of the world's undernourished people live in Sub-Saharan Africa, making it the region with the highest cases of malnourished people in the world.

Food insecurity, sometimes provokes conflict, a source of atmosphere of fear that discourages engagement in agricultural food production (Awodola & Oboshi 2015). It was specifically revealed that since the outbreak of Boko-Haram conflict, Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State, has lost its teeming marketing status, which makes it hub of business centre linking Nigeria, Chad and Cameroun (Awodola & Oboshi 2015). The incessant attacks by the religious fundamentalist coupled with the challenges of climate change on the Lake Chad are

the twin negative factors that perpetuate food insecurity with emphasis on fishing (once flourished Baga fish market has turned to a ghost town) and grain production in the North-East geo political area of Nigeria (Amusan 2013). Thus, it would be very difficult to cultivate land for planting of crops, under the perpetual fear that such cultivation will soon be forcefully looted by armed bandits. This accounts for the greatest problem confronting African farmers that is rarely investigated. It is highly devastating and traumatising to invest in agricultural food production, only to realise later that the entire farm produce is harvested to feed Boko-Haram insurgents and other bandits in the forest; hence aggravate atmosphere of helplessness and ravaging poverty (Muhammad 2015).

Implications of Climate of Fear for Food Insecurity in Africa

Fear is usually a psychological problem caused by a frightening experience, which in most cases is due to conflict (Amusan & Ejoke 2020; Obafemi & Galadima 2013). Conflict creates tendency of danger and risk, which in turn, inflict on victims' fear (Mbombo 2015). In the literature, fear as the bane of food insecurity is an aspect, that is rarely investigated. Unlike other factors that exacerbate food insecurity, fear is the real determinant of farmers productivity (Muhammad 2015). Evidence has shown that despite conflict and instability in some African states, some farmers still summon courage for agricultural food production (Kah 2017). This goes to show that it is the climate of fear and not the conflict that scares farmers from food production. However, it has also been argued that it is very difficult to see fearless people in the face of intense conflict (Muhammad 2015).

Climate of fear, which is displayed in form of avoiding any productive activity for fear of being kidnapped for ransom or killed. On several occasions, farmers would be forced to supply food to the final consumers or disruption in the total food chain due to the atmosphere of insecurity. In Nigeria for example, no region is safe, there is the perpetual fear of ravaging insecurity across the land. The

same is applicable to Kenya, Somalia, Somaliland, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Mozambique DRC, CAR, Mali and Chad to mention a few states that are contending with instability. The movement of people and food across various regions through the road has been difficult in recent times due to incessant case of kidnapping, bandits, and unknown gunmen. This has implication for food crisis and high price of food (Awodola & Oboshi 2015; Kah 2017; Onwusiribe et al 2015). Kah (2017), specifically notes that most pedestrian bridges in the Northern part of Nigeria have been bombed, vehicles conveying food supply are ambushed, harvested crops destroyed, and driver killed. This created further atmosphere of fear that prevents future food production.

One other implication of climate fear is panic buying of available food at a very high cost. Conflicting countries where famine is predominant are faced with the challenge of panic buying at exorbitant prices caused by hike in transport cost and paucity of raw food in the market (FAO 2017; Kah 2017; Nforngwa 2016). This is in addition to several amount of money spent on major highways to security forces who openly demand for money from drivers. All of these are added to the price of food, making it very difficult for people to access available food in the market (Awodola & Oboshi 2015; FAO 2020).

Coupled with the challenges of climate change and incapacitated of many African states to come with precision weather forecast, also questions of when, where and how to plant is another shortcoming in the age of el-Niña and el-Niño where draught and flooding continue to militate against food sovereignty in Africa. Many farmers lost their plant due to lack of rainfall, the major source of water for sedentary farmers. Irrigation that is common among large scale farmers has its own challenges as the food these farmers produce can hardly be found in the African market. They sell to multinational humanitarian organisations, turn their products to animal feeds and others for alternative fuel, bio-fuel (Brown, Hawkins & Doran-Peterson 2017). In Nigeria farmers have become prey in the hands of Fulani herders

who unlawfully encroached on farms in the southern part of the country with their cattle and eat up all crops, and sometimes kill the farmers who oppose them. This ugly circumstance does not only create fear, but threatens food production (Akubor & Okolo 2019). It leads to shortage of food not only in the market but in refugee camps across the country (Kah 2017). It was reported that because of the activities of Boko-Haram, Islamic State for West Africa Province (ISWAP) and Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) among others have created the atmosphere of fear that hinder food availability, accessibility and affordability.

The utilization aspect of food security is also not exempted from the problem of climate of fear. Food nutrition and nourishment are components of food security threatened by conflict and instability. This fear has made many farmers adopt inorganic farming practices to boost food quantity without adequate nutrients; a scenario that compromise human health (2017). Amusan (2017) specifically notes that, even though the Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs), which is aimed at modifying plants and animals for quantity food availability breed hidden hunger. This is a ploy to promoter multinational pharmaceutical companies as the case of Bayer dominated by Bill Gates (Bunarek 2018).

From the foregoing analysis, it can be deduced that climate of fear affects all the components of food security. Consequently, aggravating tendency of food insecurity. The fear to produce food in large quantity affect accessibility to and availability of food. Similarly, fear which hinders free flow of food supply to consumers is a threat to food security. And climate of fear that pushes farmers to substitute organic food for the inorganic one, is a potential source of undernourishment. All of these contribute to food insecurity in Africa.

Measures to Address Climate of Fear and Food Insecurity as a Matter of Conclusion

Peaceful atmosphere is a critical determinant of human development, because humans tend to be highly productive when their life is safe and secured. Peace is fundamental to the attainment of SDGs (especially Goal 2). To achieve peace and security, factors causing conflicts and instability need attention. The issue of governance failure that has been blamed for the cause of incessant conflict in Africa, can be corrected through the voting out of underperforming governments in subsequent elections by the citizens (Ilias 2015). This needs to be addressed taken into consideration the challenges of ethnicity, religious bigotry and challenges of populism that affect elections outcome in many states in the continent. Power of incumbency is another issue that needs to be addressed through political socialisation and political culture for a sustainable development. Besides, targeted government support for farmers to return to active food production is needed through security support in the countryside. There is also a need to create an enabling environment through fund availability from Agric banks with single digit interest meant primarily for farming with emphasis on food production. The feeling of compensation and protection from the government can boost the morale of farmers to return to agricultural food production. Dialogue with key members of anti-state organisations, especially the ones calling for secession through identifying their grouse against the state and immediately attend to their complaints will go a long way in healing and appeasing their minds against conflict.

There is a need for community policing, especially in rural areas to protect farmers from activities of bandits. This will enhance the effective control of forest reserves against invaders and terrorists. Furthermore, strong political will by African leaders will make a huge difference in tackling conflict and insurgency in some African states. This should also be replicated in assisting farmers with adequate facilities for food production.

To sustain this feat, Africa needs leaders with strong political will to dispel conflict and allay fears in the land in form of good governance promotion and inclusive government that foster a sense of belonging on Africans. If all Africans are exposed to idea that the continent's resources belong to all for the good of all and not for a few, the tendency of hostility and acrimony against the state will be reduced. The reduction in acrimony and hostility promotes togetherness and unity, which in turn, promote security and peace. Thus, with peace and security in the land, everyone, including farmers will be productively engaged. Peace, effective productivity and adequate supports from government will go a long way in enhancing Africa's chances of achieving food security.

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