

COMMUNITARIANISM AND THE RISE OF INSECURITY IN AFRICA (NIGERIA)

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Abstract

As our world is fast becoming a global ‘one-village’, there are resounding ethical merits in embracing cosmopolitan sensibilities and allowing every human person the opportunity to exercise their rights of free movement. However, the nagging questions are, on what premise should the principles that regulate our national borders be hinged? Should the principles be more cosmopolitan, being in line with the global trend of the world becoming a one-village? On this note, humanity can be seen as a single ethical community belonging to a single polity. On the other hand, Should the principles be more responsive to the present threat of insecurity emanating from extremists’ ideologies? The desire to unleash terror and destroy the values of human communities is quite noticeable in the world today. This paper argues that from a communitarian world view, the present world order is constituted by an array of sovereign states whose responsibilities are limited to those who are members within their territories. Individuals belong to communities and the communities to which they belong have the special responsibility to care for them, because in communitarian terms ‘distributive justice presupposes a bounded world within which distribution takes place’. Governments of nations have a responsibility to protect those who are members, and must ensure that irrespective of the trend of globalization and trans-national migrations, those who are citizens must be protected and their security given assurance.

Introduction

In the past few decades, after the cold war, the international community of nations has been working hard to make countries see the need for each other. They have made collective efforts to open up barriers and barricades that make most parts of the world inaccessible. In the midst of poverty, inequality and war being experienced in various parts of the globe, belonging together as one is something most people arguably would cherish. Considering the impacts of globalization, the rise of giant technological companies situated at various corners of the globe and the emergence of artificial intelligence, national borders are being transcended in various ways. Goods produced in remote China villages easily make their ways to the west coasts of Africa in a flash. The world has become a global village, a one world where international borders are physically existent but at times can be irrelevant. Some liberal thinkers have developed a more cosmopolitan outlook from the perspectives of freedom and equality; such liberals have shown that it is people’s right to cross national borders as it is an exercise of the right of free movement.

However, as the whole world is grappling with the rise of violence and insecurity, such cosmopolitan sensibilities are brought into question and the need for communitarian values like the defence of borders arises.. ‘Membership’ is something important for human societies to function properly, and the need to control our national borders properly becomes incontrovertible. Security threats and breakdown of social order becomes inevitable in any country with porous borders, hence the need for philosophical Communitarianism to provide the basis on which national border principles are anchored.

Cosmopolitan sensibilities in a Globalized world

The relevance of international borders is constantly being challenged since the advent of Globalization, a process which is often understood as “an increase in interconnections or growing interdependence on a world scale.”¹ In this way, there are increasing cross-border flows of goods, services, money, people, information, and culture.² Arguably, the borders of nation states do not look as rigid as they were prior to the era of globalization. Simply put, globalization entails an expansion of the range of possible commercial activities. Acts of buying, selling, producing, borrowing, and lending that used to be ruled out by geographic, technological, or legal barriers have now become practical.³ In this way globalization has become an “expansion of the range of possible commercial activities. No matter the perspective one takes, the idea of globalization presents an interconnected world, as Anthony Giddens has rightly put it; we all live in one world” we are acting as a global society and this can be applied to economics, politics and all social structures. One can say that the existing boundaries that previously separated nations and cultures, both politically and economically, are quickly evaporating and socially people are not separated by much.⁴

In the process of our world becoming one, various objects and experiences are dispersed to people inhabiting various corners of the world, and in this sense, it is crystal clear that there is interconnectivity between nations and this is facilitated to the degree that people across nations often operate with similar bureaucratic, mechanical and legal arrangements.⁵ This entails homogenization with worldwide cultural, economic, legal and political convergence, people doing things following the same procedures. In this way, the world is gradually becoming a one world, prizes of goods becoming the same everywhere with the use of United States Dollars, British Pounds and Euros as the operating currencies.

Consequently, what happens in the east affect the west and what happens in the north affect the south and vice versa. One can say that the trans-national character of world politics can make it increasingly complex for sovereign nation states to be in full control of their territories. It is remarkable that the dividing line between domestic and global affairs are becoming thinner and hard to find. Narrowing this down to international borders, as it concerns human mobility, there are growing cosmopolitan sensibilities, based on a liberal egalitarian platform, advocating for free movement of people across international borders.⁶ Here, the essence of such

¹ James H.Mittelman, *Whither Globalization*, London: Routledge, 2004, p.4.

² Mauro F. Guilen, ‘Is Globalization, Civilizing, Destructive or Feeble?, A Critique of Five Key Debates In the Social Science Literature’. *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 27, 2001, pp.235-260

³ Timothy Taylor, ‘The Truth about Globalization’, *Public Interest*, Spring, 2002, pp. 24-44.

⁴ Anthony Giddens, *Run away World: How Globalization is Reshaping our Lives*, New York: Routledge, 2000, p. 7.

⁵ Jan Art Scholte, *Globalization: A Critical Introduction*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2005, 2nd Edition, p.114.

⁶Mel Gurtov, *Global Politics in the Human Interest*, Boulder : L. Rienner Publication, 1988, p.28.

cosmopolitan assumption is the idea of equal moral worth of human persons, i.e. that all human beings have equal moral worth irrespective of their nationality or membership. On such premise, there are a range of ethical arguments that promote common humanity, freedom, equality and social justice beyond the erected human borders. Such arguments have been advanced to defend movement of people across border.⁷

In this style of visualizing a common humanity, each individual is as important as the other, no one person has more value than the other. Based on this, each individual's right must be protected and all should have equal opportunities irrespective of what one is ascribed by birth. In this understanding, free movement of people across international borders is considered a rights' based argument, such is seen as a basic human right. But can a nation really survive in a regime where it does not have full control of its borders? How can our local communities, which we have built overtime, be sustained in a scenario where our borders are not secured?

Considering how the world is evolving, any argument that subscribes to open borders will probably not hold waters in a situation of rising insecurity, especially in African countries like Nigeria. It may be quite liberal to allow people move in and out of a country and ECOWAS countries facilitating easier movement of people in the sub-region, but the true question is whether these movements are coming at a cost? Generally, the world is becoming more and more insecure, and dangerous people who may threaten democratic values are finding their ways into countries of their choice unnoticed.

Insecurity and National Borders

Are nation states in full control of the events in their territories anymore? This is the question that would definitely need an answer in a world that is constantly opening up and making everything accessible in a way that established borders are transcended. Globalization and the quest for being more cosmopolitan are leaving us with a world that has become to a large extent uncontrollable, in other words, "a runaway world". It makes the world a place where violent conflicts seem imminent due to the fact that various ideologies and interests constantly clash. On this ground, destructive people harness the loopholes created through porous borders, establishing their networks and reaching out to virtually every corner of the globe.

One can say that it is undeniable that the embrace of some cosmopolitan sensibilities and the process of globalization have in some ways positively changed the way we live, but it can on the other hand over time make people to be aliens in their communities. It is incontrovertible that when states lose full control of their borders, security becomes a very big issue. Presently, the world is witnessing a scenario where people with weird and extremist tendencies easily move to any part of the world where they can fight collectively to impose their ideology and dominate others.

Most international borders in Africa were drawn by colonialists who had absolutely no clue concerning the interrelations of local communities along the border lines. In Sub-Saharan Africa, there are visibly ethno-linguistic relationships between nations. For example, there are some tribes that are found in more than one country, and these tribes feel more connected to themselves than they are connected to the nation states where they belong. It is obvious that

⁷ Robert Goodin, "Free Movement: If people were Money" in *Free Movement: Ethical Issues in Transnational Migration of People and Money*, edited by Brian Barry and Robert, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press. 1992, pp.6-22 ;

relationships exist between some tribes in Nigeria and Niger Republic. Such can also be said between Nigeria and The Republic of Benin. It is crystal clear that between Nigeria and her neighbors there are manned established borders, but at the same time, there are large numbers of unmanned border lines, making people to often straddle along and beyond identified borders.

In West African sub region, Nigeria is seen to have vast areas of borders that are left unmanned and unattended. In many cases, these border lines are unreached with practically with no surveillance. In such situation, several things can go wrong, like cross border movement of people, who come undocumented, and thereby becoming a burden to the already saturated Nigerian populous communities. It is obvious that dangerous people are taking advantage of lack of effective check on our borders in rural places, thereby actively eroding our local communities and making some parts of the country more like hotspots of banditry and therefore ungovernable.

Aside from crossing unmanned borders, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) governments in a concerted effort facilitate easier cross-border movements of citizens. This is something that should be viewed on a positive note, especially as it promotes legal migration. However, it is evident that these states are weak in properly documenting citizens, considering the unfavorable socio-economic woes of the states involved. It is apparent that the porous nature of borders in the sub-Saharan Africa has in recent years become a real security threat to the existence of the nation states in this sub-region.

It is sometimes believed that some foreigners from neighboring countries can acquire authorization for entry through illegal means and falsification of documents. Equally, people allege that mercenary fighters and other armed people gain access into Nigeria for political purposes, an indication that non-citizens in Nigeria may be used to interfere in Nigerian politics. Other countries who are Nigeria's neighbors like Chad, Niger, Cameroon, Ghana, Benin equally have complains of Nigerians crossing their borders for other purposes and sometimes becoming antisocial.

One can say that in the ECOWAS sub-region, although nation-states are in control of their borders, there are myriads of unmanned border lines as there are various points where borders are easily breached, thereby giving anyone including people with criminal intent the opportunity to operate. Security threats have always been a problem to our nation-states in the sub- region, and terrorists are likely to be harnessing the loopholes in our borders to improve their ability. In this way, they can conduct extremely lethal attacks, sustaining their global network of associates and sympathizers⁸ As many parts of the borders in the sub-region appear unmanned and porous, there seem to be an emergence of new kinds of unpredictability, risk, and uncertainty in our nation states.

Security is a necessity for the existence of any nation-state and when there is insecurity the livelihood of citizens are at serious risk and the nation itself is at risk of breakdown. Nigeria as a country has extremely porous borders and it is the reality which may have to accept. Unarguably, such porous borders are directly aiding illegal arms proliferation, and at the same time dangerous criminals from different parts of the world have the potentiality to stroll into the country. This should raise the level of insecurity to a frightening height as people living in border towns are would become more apprehensive, due to armed banditry and terrorism.

Furthermore, the reverberating question for countries like Nigeria is how the existent shared nationality can be more meaningful in providing security for those who are members. One of

⁸ David Miller, *On Nationality* , Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995, p. 460.

the advanced arguments justifying border restrictions in immigration ethics is that borders should be closed for the sake of public order and social stability.⁹ This sounds particularly convincing in our day where democratic states have been constantly threatened by fundamentalists of opposing ideologies. For example, terrorist groups like Boko Haram, ISIS and the rest have caused lots of damages against democratic states.

States see public order as a necessity; it is needed to guarantee the protection of the civil rights of citizens who ought to be protected. The belief is that when nations leave their borders unguarded, the number of those coming might overwhelm the capacity of the society to cope. This inability to cope can eventually lead to “chaos and a breakdown of public order.”¹⁰ When borders remain open, there is the danger of a deluge of people swamping the state and posing a threat to public order and social stability.

This assumption has proved to be so popular and socially accepted because of its security orientation and also its susceptibility to complete social breakdown which makes everyone a victim.¹¹ Security in our present world has always been of primary concern and states ought to reformulate their border policies in response to new developments in terrorist campaigns so as to successfully keep unwanted people away.

In a classic article, “The Clash of Civilizations”, Samuel Huntington argued that the great division among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be a clash of cultural ideologies. States with different civilizations will go into conflict as they vie for control of international institutions and for economic and military power. This depicts the inherent tension in our present world. This will lead to a clash of different civilizations as they battle for supremacy.¹²

Therefore, people consent to the idea that it is the duty of governments to protect their territory and population against any threat to social stability. A further concern that mass movement of undocumented people threatens social stability and public order arises when people see the possibility of a state losing its ethnic balance or migrants generating some sorts of social or political upheaval due to their large numbers.

Again, the survival of democratic institutions rests on the fact that states are in full control of its border. This is based on the fact that the state has to do all it can in keeping out those with “subversive political intentions. Failure to do so most likely will lead to the demise of democratic values. Furthermore, porous borders would let in people who are fundamentally

⁹ Veit Bader, ‘The Ethics of Immigration’, *Constellations* 12(3), 2005 pp.331-349.

¹⁰ Joseph H. Carens, ‘Migration and Morality: A liberal Egalitarian Perspective’ in *Free Movement: Ethical issues in the Transnational Migration of People and Money*, ed. Brian Barry and Robert Goodin University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State university Press, 1992, pp.25-47

¹¹ Garrett Hardin, ‘Lifeboat Ethics: the Case Against Helping the Poor’ In *Psychology Today* 8: 1974, pp.38-43.

¹² Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilization and Remaking of World Order*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996, p.57.

anti-liberal in outlook, and whose presence would threaten the survival of domestic liberal democratic institutions.¹³

It sounds plausible that nations should protect their borders as proper surveillance at the borders is needed to keep out those whose presence would be a threat to other people's liberty. It is also a threat to the values we cherish, for example our democracy. Democracy as an association of citizens is set up by the people for the benefit of all who are "members", and therefore, this would favour any restriction on those whose presence would trample democratic values. Any Liberal democratic state is like an association of citizens, a 'club membership' in Walzer's terms, which cannot afford to welcome those who are threats to members. Therefore, present members have the right to determine who can be future members.¹⁴ As a result, one can be excluded from being a member of any democratic institution if one's presence can be a threat to the freedom of others or to the institution itself.

For example, from an American perspective, John Isbister argues that when immigration is not restricted it might destroy institutions or values in the U.S. that are of transcendent importance. Democratic institutions should have overriding importance. Unsecured borders might destroy something that is vital not only to Americans, but also to foreigners and potential immigrants.¹⁵

Since there can be possible threats to public order and liberal democratic values, restrictions on immigration are seen to be morally justified because, from the point of view of "liberty" and "welfare", an unregulated movement of people makes everyone worse off.¹⁶ Public order is important for the existence of any nation; no one would want his country to descend into disintegration and chaos.

The Relevance of Philosophical Communitarianism in our Time

Communitarian philosophers always emphasize the connection between the community and individual. In such connection, the individual person is a product of the community and the individual's personality and identity are molded by his or her relationship to the community. Even though individuals exist in the communities, communitarians would emphasize the interest of the societies or communities over that of the individual persons.

Philosophical Communitarianism would oppose classical liberalism on its belief that our communities are built on the voluntary acts of individuals who willingly come together to give community its relevance. Communitarians are particularist, emphasizing the moral obligations people should have to their families, communities. Communities are bounded worlds within which distribution takes place, in communities people are committed to dividing, exchanging,

¹³Joseph H. Carens, "Aliens and Citizens: The Case for Open Borders" in Kymlicka W (ed) *The Rights of Minority Culture*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, pp.331-349.

¹⁴ Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defence of Pluralism and Equality*, New York: Basic books, 1983, P. 35.

¹⁵ John Isbister, 'Are Immigration Controls Ethical?,' in *Immigration: A Civil Rights issue for the Americas* edited by Susanne Jonas and Susanne Dod Thomas, Wilmington Delaware: Scholarly Resource publication, 1999, P. 90.

¹⁶ Myron Weiner, *The Global Immigration Crisis: Challenge to States and Human Rights*. (New York: Harper Collins., 1995, p.93.

and sharing of social goods first of all among themselves.¹⁷ In other words, membership becomes very important as those who belong to the community enjoy a special privilege which non-members do not enjoy. Hence, communities are like “clubs”¹⁸. For communitarians, values and beliefs exist in public space, and debates about cherished values can comfortably take place in public space.

In the developed liberal states, that have established welfare systems, it is increasingly apparent that borders have guards and the guards have guns. Armed border guards are only the most obvious way in which these states fortify their borders against unwanted immigrants. However, there are ranges of other ways, from visa controls to internal surveillance of migrants, which developed states deploy. Rich nations see this practice as ethically defensible based on various ‘communitarian’ ‘nationalist’ or ‘nativist’ assumptions which in essence are all ‘particularistic’ in style.¹⁹

From a particularist world view, the present world order is constituted by an array of sovereign states whose responsibilities are limited to those who are members within their territories. Thus particularistic assumptions that necessitate strict border restrictions find their ethical defences in communitarian ethics like Michael Walzer’s, especially his idea about “membership”²⁰. A liberal nationalist like David Miller similarly points out that one of the features of nationality is that it is an identity that embodies historical continuity and the historic national community is a community of obligation.²¹ The fact that people belong to the same community or nation creates obligations towards one another and this obligation is a priority in relation to all other things. Hence, people are born to inherit this obligation which they continue to fulfill towards their contemporaries.

Consequently, people should be morally concerned with those who are physically near or emotionally dear to them, and this is considered to be legitimate. Individuals belong to communities and the communities to which they belong have the special responsibility to care for them because in Walzerian terms “distributive justice presupposes a bounded world within which distribution takes place.”²² Communities and nations will have the right to be organized according to their own premise and left without intrusion on how they want to be organized. They can genuinely prevent other people from being part of them, such a right in communitarian terms is an essential requirement for justice.

Acquiring membership of any political community is not pervasively subject to the constraints of justice. The right of a sovereign state to close its border to those unwanted is seen to be beyond the global justice discussion as those who are outside the boundaries do not share in the community’s “good” and can only share in it when they are allowed by those who are

¹⁷ Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*, 31

¹⁸ Ibid. 40

¹⁹ Veit Bader, ‘The Ethics of Immigration’ in *Constellations* 12,(3), 2005, pp.331-349.

²⁰ Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defence of Pluralism and Equality*, New York: Basic books, 1983

²¹ David Miller, *On Nationality*, Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press,1995, 23; see also David Miller, “The Ethical Significance of Nationality” *Ethics* 98, (1998):647-62

²² Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*, 31.

already members. Therefore, a nation is justified to restrict entry, even if such restrictions at the borders may violate the rights of those coming in.²³

Any nation should have more obligations to her fellow citizens than they should have to other people. Nigeria as a country must show special responsibility to those who by right are Nigerians, irrespective of their tribes. This conforms to the nationalists' assumption that "national members are morally permitted, and in some cases morally required, to show partiality for their nation and their fellow nationals."²⁴ Those who are "members" have a shared national identity, an identity which involves a strong sense of collective belonging characterized by a sense of relatedness and mutual exclusive sentiments of solidarity and sympathy.

In this view, communities deserve the moral right to arrange themselves in the way they want and lead their own different lives. Here, the idea of a community might embrace a nation-state²⁵ because; a nation can be seen as a community of people. A community's choice of life should not be interfered with, and there should not be any undue influence from other people in their communities organized on different premises²⁶

In this understanding, the idea of community is intertwined with justice; hence, the idea of distributive justice presupposes a bounded world within which distribution takes place: a group of people committed to dividing, exchanging, and sharing social good, first of all among those who are members. In this view, countries are like clubs; they need only admit whoever they wish. The community's decision on who can be their associate is impeccable. One can be admitted, and one can be excluded depending on what members would want. It is the members who define whom they are and who they can admit, but cannot be compelled to do so except under certain special circumstances

Those who are members see themselves as bound together having particularistic allegiances towards one another, therefore, deserving the right to membership restriction. This means that they can exercise their moral right to exclude anyone from sharing in the community's good through stringent immigration rules. Against this background, states feel they undeniably have the "right of exclusion", they feel ethically justified in placing restrictions at their borders or closing it entirely depending on the interests of those who are members.

On this foundation, a nation like Nigeria and other West African sub regions can properly defend their borders against unwanted people, because we live in "bounded worlds" and all border policies in these communitarian viewpoints find their ethical underpinnings. In this way Nigeria as a country can in actuality fulfill putative special responsibilities to her own citizens. A nation like Nigeria with massive population cannot successfully take care of the needs of her citizens if too many undocumented people for various unknown reasons are trooping in from unsecured borders. Border policies are anchored on philosophical communitarian principles like Walzer's which stresses the importance of border surveillance, such surveillance can make

²³ David Miller, *On Nationality*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995, p. 91.

²⁴ Shelley Wilcox, 'Culture, National identity, and Admission to Citizenship', *Social Theory and Practice* 30(4) 2004, pp.559-582.

²⁵ John Baylis John, and Smith Steve, , *The Globalization of World Politics*, 3rd Edition, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005, p.159.

²⁶ Robert Goodin, R., 'Free Movement: If People were Money.....,' in *Ethics in Practice* ed. Hugh Lafollette, Oxford: Blackwell, 1997, pp.563-567

distributive justice possible and then aid in social security and preservation of democratic values.

With the needs and rights of the community to the fore, border controls are meant to prevent social collapse and allow the exercise of special responsibility to fellow compatriots who are rightfully members. On the other hand, a secured border ensures public security of any nation and the protections of liberal values that have been built overtime.

Conclusion

International borders are important for the existence of sovereign nation states. Borders are being eroded due to surge of globalization and embrace of cosmopolitan values and this is clearly impacting relation among states. Although there are positives in the era of globalization and cosmopolitanism, security is fast becoming a problem and nations like Nigeria must brace to take responsibility in protecting her citizens by defending her borders properly. In this way, a bounded world would create better opportunity for distributive justice. Citizens of Nigeria who are rightful members deserve to be shown special responsibility and their communities must be properly secured against unwanted people. As a sovereign country, Nigeria must be committed to showing special responsibilities on those who are members of Nigeria and not just showing off by going to foreign countries to preach and enforce peace. The security of Nigerian citizens is paramount and supersedes any other thing.

Individuals belong to communities and the communities to which they belong have the special responsibility to care for them because in such communitarian terms distributive justice presupposes a bounded world within which successful distribution takes place. Governments of nations, like Nigeria, have a responsibility to protect those who are members, and must ensure that irrespective of the trend of globalization and the cosmopolitan sensibilities that it brings, those who are citizens have the assurance of security and protection of the community values which they cherish.

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