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Dangers of Herders and Farmers Conflict to National Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

The seemingly non-stopping and increasing conflict between herdsmen and farmers has become worrisome and most apt for national discuss especially in the middle belt, north central Nigeria. Most media outlets both local and international have reported aching stories around the conflict with accounts powered by ethnic and religious undertones. Consequently, this has led to unfathomable increase in misunderstandings and level of distrusts among ethnic groups in Nigerians. The conflicts have demonstrated high potential to exacerbate the insecurity and food crisis particularly in rural communities where most of the conflicts are localized, with reverberating repercussions nationwide. Fulani Herdsmen has been ranked as the fourth deadliest terrorist group in the world by the 2014 Global terrorism Index. Thousands of people have been killed, communities have been destroyed and so many farmers and herdsmen have lost their lives and property in an extended orgy of killings. Nigeria has about 19 million cattle, much of it in the hands of herdsmen. The tension in the country is now so high that grazing should be limited to states which are more receptive to the Fulani people or are of predominantly Fulani ethnic group, such as Adamawa, Kebbi, Sokoto, Zamfara, Bauchi and Jigawa states. Therefore, it is the main thrust of this paper to ascertain causes of herdsmen and farmer's conflict, implications of herdsmen and farmer's conflict for national development as well as evaluation of government efforts to control herdsmen and farmer's conflict in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Conflict, Farmers, Grazing, Herdsmen, Security, Ranching*

Introduction

The activities of the Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria over the recent past have become an issue of national concern. Hence, there are ongoing wars at the grassroots in the central and Southern states of the country. Nigeria as a nation is under a severe internal socio-economic and security threat. At a more general glance, the threat has economic, political and environmental dimensions. Each of these dimensions has greatly affected the nation's stability and can be traced to the Fulani herdsmen and farmers clash. Conflicts between Fulani herdsmen and farmers in the past were solely due to overlap of farmlands with cattle routes where farmers grow crops in the routes.

According to Food and Agricultural Organization (2011) the establishments of demarcated rangelands and cattle corridors allow the livestock to access water points and pastures without inflicting damages in croplands. Djire (2014) stated that the absence of good governance and the increase in the level of poverty creates avenue for conflicts. Both customary and statutory land management system are not often responding adequately to the teeming insecurity the changes bring. This implies that herdsman usually graze over areas outside farm lands which is an acceptable norm ages ago. Their movements are opportunistic and follow pasture and water resources in a pattern that varies seasonally FAO (2011). However, increase in population, drying of waterholes, shifting in rainfall pattern leading to drought as a result of the changing climate affects both sectors of agriculture.

But, recently, this conflict has escalated and taking another dimension of ethnic and religious differences with little or no effort from the Nigerian government towards addressing the grave situation at hand. Hence, the problem is how to settle the conflict between the two and sort a lasting solution and bring to abrupt end the killings and lose of numberless lives being wasted in the clash. Recently, there have been escalations of reported attacks by Fulani herdsman who brutally kill natives of the invaded farming communities including women and children in various states across the country. The Fulani herdsman armed with sophisticated weapons usually attack their target communities at the time they are most vulnerable such as mid-night or on Sundays when they are in their churches, killing people indiscriminately, mostly women and children, burning houses and looting properties.

The north central have been the worst hit of late having tasted the devastating attacks by the Fulani herdsman with heavy toll in human lives and property and still counting their loses. Most worrisome is the brutality and impunity with which the assailants operate without regard for the law and the sanctity of life coupled with the inability of the Nigeria Police and even the military taskforce to defend the victims mercilessly slaughtered in their homeland. The conflict between the Fulani herdsman and the farmers usually arise when the former invade community farmland with their cattle and let them graze unrestricted both on cultivated and uncultivated land thereby destroying valuable food and cash crops which are the mainstay of the host communities. When the communities try to resist them and request their exit, the Fulani herdsman become violent and attack the community sometimes with the aid of hired mercenaries from the neighboring countries like Chad, Niger, Mali and Cameroon.

Conceptual Clarification

For better understanding of the subject matter it becomes necessary to clarify some key concepts like conflict, national development and security

Conflict

Conflict was originally used to mean “strike at another, to fight with an enemy or to do battle with an opposing force”. Today it equally means to be antagonistic towards others or to be in sharp disagreement with others. The term ‘conflict’ can be used in two senses. It refers to an incompatibility in a multi-party or multi issue situation, in other words, a state of affairs in which two or more irreconcilable views or options are posited towards the solution of a particular problem. In the second sense, conflict refers to the violent expression of this incompatibility of irreconcilability. Albert (2002) defined conflict as “any divergence of interests, objectives or priorities between individual, groups, or organizations or nonconformity to requirements of a task; activity or process”. Geoff MacDonald, Zanna, and Holmes (2000) perceived of conflict as a situation between two or more persons in whom one individual feels that another person has negatively affected, or is about to negatively affect him or her. Three elements are very prominent in this definition of conflict. Duncan (1975) opined that conflict implies some types of hostility and some desires to do harm which may be considered an extreme case of competition. Conflict is different from competition, although competition may result in conflict.

This suggests that conflicts may occur without any specific reference to competition, as it could occur as a result of breakdown in the mechanism of decision-making. On this view DeCenzo (1997), described conflict as whenever two individuals come together, there are bound to be disagreements at time. Thus, many scholars contend that conflict is inevitable in social life process; for conflict occurs even in the best of human societies (Shehu, 2007 cited in Uzuegbunam, 2010). It was in this line of thought that Durkheim (1958) cited in Haralambos and Holborn (2008) opines that “crime is an inevitable and normal aspect of social life, it is an integral part of all healthy societies, it is functional”. Chinwokwu (2012a) argues that “the functionality of crime (in this case conflict) in a society such as ours has to be viewed seriously because of the social and psychological problems it has caused to many victims”.

Conflict is a friction which may exist whenever two or more persons come into social relationship or interaction with one another. It is an inherent and unavoidable part of human existence entrenched in the pursuit of irreconcilable interest and goals by different groups. Conflict is a situation in which people, groups or countries are involved in a serious disagreement or argument. Conflict is a necessary process of life. Within the individual, there is always conflict of thoughts, choice and interest, to mention but a few. This is known as intra-personal conflict. This not only makes decision taking difficult, but also has been identified as one of the major sources of stress. On the other hand, the inter-personal conflict occurs between individuals, group members of an organization and states. Conflicts can also be either constructive or destructive. If conflict is properly managed or resolved, there will be peace. If on the other hand, resolution and reconciliation fail, the conflict will degenerate to chaos, crisis or war (Ifeanyi, 2006).

However, sometimes these differences can grow to enormous proportions where they become detrimental to the involved parties and the environment. When that occurs conflict is present. Fischer defined violence (conflict) as any random or organized act that seeks to determine, delay, or otherwise influence a process through threat, verbal intimidation, hate speech, disinformation, physical assault, forced "protection," blackmail, destruction of property, or assassination (Fischer 2002).

National development

Nwogu (2009) opined that a country's wellbeing is dependent on its economic development. Igweh (2008) in Nwogu (2011) stressed that the most suitable definition of development may be that which is based on the experiences of the developing countries. According to him, development means reduction in the levels of poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and income inequality. However, Nwogu (2009), emphasized that national development which is defined as the "attainment of a number of ideas of modernization such as a rise in productivity, social and economic equity, and improved institutions of values". The main objective of economic development is to raise the standard of living and the general wellbeing of the people in an economy where almost everybody can be self-reliant. It involves changes in the structure of an economy that includes:

- Emphasis on developing manufacturing industries as opposed to agriculture.
- Movement of labour from rural to urban industrial areas and

- Less reliance on imported goods in preference to home produce goods ie made in Nigeria goods.

Gboyega (2003) captures development as an idea that embodies all attempts to improve the conditions of human existence in all ramifications. It implies improvement in material well being of all citizens, not the most powerful and rich alone, in a sustainable way such that today's consumption does not imperil the future, it also demands that poverty and inequality of access to the good things of life be removed or drastically reduced. It seeks to improve personal physical security and livelihoods and expansion of life chances. Adelman (1995) believes that development is usually taken to involve not only economic growth, but also some notion of equitable distribution, provision of health care, education, housing and other essential services all with a view to improving the individual and collective quality of life (Adelman 1995). National development therefore can be described as the overall development or collective socio-economic, political as well as religious advancement of a country or nation.

Security

According to Zainab (2014), the word "security" originated from the Latin word "*Securus*". "*Se*" means "without" and "*curus*" means "uneasiness". That implies that 'security' originally meant freedom from uneasiness, or a peaceful situation without any risks or threats. Mesjasz (2004) asserted that "security" has a wider range of meaning including "to feel safe", and "to be protected", and is used to describe a situation without any risks or worries. Buzan (1991) quoted in Omadjohwoefe (2013) sees security as political, economic, social and environmental threat that affect the individual as well as the state at national and international levels. To other scholars, security is the absence of threat to acquire values or tendencies that would undermine national cohesion and peace as criteria for the determination of the meaning of security. Security is the condition or feeling of safety from harm or danger, the defense, protection and absence of threat to acquire values (Oladeji & Folorunso 2007). The concept 'security' generally is a crosscutting and multi-dimensional concept which has over the last century been the subject of great debate. Security has been seen as a situation where a person or thing is not exposed to any form of danger or risk of physical or moral aggression, accident, theft or deterioration. Zainab (2014), posited that some security experts argued that the concept of security has always been associated with the safety and survival of the state and its citizens from harm or destruction or from dangerous threats. This conception generally holds that the state is the only institution with

the primary responsibility and power for the safety of its territory and its people (Zabadi, 2005). Security is simply means a situation which allows individuals in a society to go about their daily activities without any form of threat to lives and property.

Consequences of the herdsmen attack

The activities of the herdsmen can be divided into two namely positive and negative effects. The importance of the herdsmen activities cannot be overlooked despite the terror they cause and unleash in the country in recent past. Agriculture is one of the sustainable sectors of a nation's economy because it provides a source of food. In grazing cattle on the land, waste is a veritable source of manure to farm land hence, providing the useful organic fertilizer. This shows a symbiotic relationship between the herdsmen and the farmers as they depend on the other for growth and sustenance. Lives stocks are being grazed on the land after harvest. These cattle feed on the grass on the farm land. Farmers also allow the lives stock to graze on their land during the years of fallowing to give room for re-energizing the land. This arrangement warrants the lives stocks to feed on the remnants of crops and grasses on the land while the lives stock droppings on the ground fertilizes the land, enriching it and preparing it for greater yields when farming is resumed. Lives stock farmers provide the nation with milk and meat as a source of protein needed in the body. Lives stocks are ceremonial commodities hence, they are needed for presentation and cooking in social events.

The negative effects of the Fulani herdsmen activities across the nation are traumatic. Their inversion of communities, killings, maiming, mercilessly destroying farm land and burning houses has made the host communities flee their homes for safety. Fulani herdsmen leaders brazenly claimed the attack in Makurdi; describing it as a payback for cattle theft. This massacre cut across different areas of the Middle Belt- in Adamawa, Kaduna, Taraba, Plateau and Benue states. It is most disheartening to note that genocidal rampaged of well-armed herdsmen has become a threat to life and property of citizens in the country. One would ask "what are herdsmen doing with AK 47 rifle"?

However, the magnitude of destruction involved in the conflicts is yet another consequence. For example, the wanton destruction of lives and properties in the very recent invasion of Uzo Uwani people of Enugu state in Southeast Nigeria by these herdsmen. According to Ikezue and Ezeah (2017), more destructive incidents had earlier taken place in Agatu community

in Benue state and Dogo Nahawa in Plateau state in the North central geo political zone of Nigeria where hundreds of people including women, children and the elderly ones were allegedly butchered by these blood thirsty herdsmen. In these communities, houses were burnt down, churches demolished and properties looted and destroyed.

Causes of herdsmen and farmers clashes

Some factors can be traced as causes of the conflict between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria. Hence according to Okoli and AteIhe (2014), linked the causes to the theory of eco-violence, where environmental factors and exploitation and scarce resources leads to conflict and violence. Okoli and Iortyer (2016) noted that this may explain the dwindling grazing resources (land, pasture etc) and poor management of existing grazing reserves as culpable. According to National Population Commission (2012), the population growth rate in Nigeria per year is 3.2%. Therefore, more people will continue to compete for land hence, population is dynamic and ever increasing to land that is relatively static.

Consequently, global climate change is related to the conflict between herdsmen and farmers. According to Okoli and AteIhe (2014) due to global climate change and the contending desertification and aridity that has reduced arable and grazing lands, forcing herdsmen to move southwards in search of pasture for their lives stock. Iro (2010) noted that herdsmen are also competing with large-scale agricultural schemes that narrow the grazing lands. Tractors, herbicides and fertilizer usage have revolutionized agriculture in the country leading to more and more grazing lands being farmed extensively. Hence, farmlands increase to the detriment of grazing lands; animals can easily go into farmlands and destroy crops.

Other causes as identified by and Abass (2012) stated that blockage of waterholes by farmers and fishermen, crop damage by herdsmen lives stock and reprisal attacks on herdsmen and sedentary farmers when ethnic or religious disputes occur elsewhere also cause conflict. Rasak (2011) noted that allocation of grazing land as government layouts without compensation to the herdsmen, breakdown of law and order by taking side by local rulers or judges responsible for dispute resolutions is not left out in the causes. According to Bello (2013) stated that slow decline of ethnocentric, social cohesion and religious intolerance of leaders who are also sedentary farmers and conflict of cultures have also been highlighted as causes of conflict among between herdsmen and farmers.

Equally important to know as a major factor leading to the herdsman – farmers conflict is the astronomical increase in human population as well as livestock population. This, according to Adebayo, 1997, gave rise to an increase pressure on natural resources and a stiffer competition for available resources between farmers and herders. Also, Fabiyi and Otuunza (2016) are of the opinion that climate change has caused desertification in the far North and has led to extended drought. This has prompted the herdsman to move southwards in search of pasture for their results thereby leading to constant contact between the herdsman and local farmers resulting in more conflicts. They went on to state that the intensification of the Boko Haram crisis in the North in the last five years has caused nomadic Fulani herdsman to abandon their foraging grounds. Obviously, the above causes could be seen as general remote causes which bring the herdsman in constant close contact with the farmers. However, there are immediate factors which have always led to crisis between the herders and the local farmers. One of such is the destruction of farm crops by the cattle. In the cause of foraging for pasture for the cattle, most of herdsman have been accused of internationally releasing their cattle to graze on farmlands. Resistance to this destruction of their crops by local farmers is often resisted violently by the herdsman resulting in most cases to loss of lives.

Another important factor is the disregard for host traditional authority corroborating this as a cause of the farmers/herdsman crisis in Nigeria. Ingawa and Erhabor (1999) opines that decline in internal discipline and social cohesion due to non-adherence to traditional rules regarding grazing periods as well as breakdown in the authority of the traditional rules give rise to these conflicts. There is also the problem of contamination of streams and sources of fresh water for domestic use by herds of cattle; the problem of Zero grazing which leads to erosion of farm lands; allegations of sexual harassment of host community women, harassment of Nomads by host community youths and theft of cattle most times violently by cattle rustlers

Implication of herdsman/farmers conflict on national development

It is obvious that as people live together, especially in a multi-ethnic, cultural and religious community, conflicts are bound to occur. Violent conflicts; however has dire consequences on human relations and on the drive towards national development. As such, the herdsman/farmers conflict in Nigeria has seriously impacted negatively on the development of the country.

To buttress the view that the herdsman-farmers conflict in Nigeria has dire consequences on our strive towards development, a Vanguard News columnist, Dele Sobowale (2018) wrote that

the conflict is by nature economic and mostly inflicted to promote parochial interest devoid of communal interest which is undesirable, destructive and therefore constitute an impediment to growth and development. One major effect of this crisis is that it has caused food insecurity in the country. Food security as it were has to do with the supply of food and individuals' access to it. Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (United Nations, 2015).

It should be noted at this point that both herdsmen and farmers play active role in food production and supply in Nigeria. However, this conflict has led to serious losses in terms of crops destroyed, planting deferred, farms abandoned and harvest left to rot away (Sobowale, 2018). It has also led to a reduction in the quantity and quality of dairy products available to the citizens. Thus due to the conflict, Nigeria is now faced with the problem of food scarcity which is usually accompanied with poverty and diseases. In addition to the problem of shortfall in food supply due to the herder-farmer conflict is the downturn in the economic features of the individual, and households in the conflict areas. Bennan and Collier (2004) opines that as conflict occur, income tends to plummet. So, the herdsmen-farmers conflict in Nigeria has led to a reduction in the personal income of the citizens and this has affected the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and National income values of the country.

Equally important to note is the problem of social insecurity created by the crisis and its negative impact on economic activities. According to Blench (2004), the herdsmen/farmers crisis in the country has led to social insecurity as people develop fear of being attacked unnecessarily and this negatively affects their ability to carry out their economic activities. There is no gainsaying the fact that the above condition slows down economic activities in the country and retards economic growth. This was succinctly captured by Damba (2007) when he stated that the murderous campaigns and vicious onslaughts on individuals and institutions provide highly unfavourable business environment for internal and foreign investment, which is a major factor in the achievement of sustainable development.

The increase in the number of refugee and internally displaced persons is a main fallout of the herdsmen/farmers conflict which has impeded the development of the country. According to Pal (2003), one of the most important effect of wars or conflict situation is the emergence of refugees and establishment of refugee camps. This leaves a huge burden on the federal government

and as Egodi (2012) succinctly puts it, this causes diversion and removes government attention on some key areas of the economy, as huge amount of human and material resources are channeled to curbing the menace.

Theoretical framework

System theory

The system theory was developed by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy between the 1940s and the 1970s (Cristina, Jacqueline & Francesco (2010). According to Maturana and Varela, (1975) systems theory was developed on principles from physics, biology and engineering and later grew into numerous fields including philosophy, sociology, organizational theory, management, psychotherapy (within family systems therapy) and economics among others..

Cristina et al (2010) posited that a fundamental notion of general systems theory is its focus on interactions.

- The center in relationships lead to sustain that the behavior of a single autonomous element is different from its behavior when the element interacts with other elements.
- Another core tenet is the distinction between open, closed and isolated systems. In open systems there are exchanges of energy, matter, people, and information with the external environment. In closed systems there are no exchanges of information and matter, just exchanges of energy. In isolated system there is no exchange of elements.

According to Cristina et al (2010) a system can be defined as entity, which is a coherent whole such that a boundary is perceived around it in order to distinguish internal and external elements and to identify input and output relating to and emerging from the entity. A systems theory is hence a theoretical perspective that analyzes a phenomenon seen as a whole and not as simply the sum of elementary parts. The focus is on the interactions and on the relationships between parts in order to understand an entity's organization, functioning and outcomes. This perspective implies a dialogue between holism and reductionism. However, Senge, (1990) and Iheanacho (2017) asserted that David Easton in 1953 adopted the system theory to explain what happens in a political system but later elaborated his conception in 1965 in his two works: *A Framework for Political Analysis* and *A System Analysis of Political Life*. Proper understanding of system theory as developed by David Easton may demand the following steps:

- Changes in the social environment surrounding a political system produce “demands” and supports for action or status quo directed as “inputs” towards the political system through political behaviour.
- These demands and supporting groups stimulate competition in the political system, leading to decisions or “outputs” directed at some aspect of the surrounding social or physical environment.
- After a decision or specific policy is made, it interacts with its environment and if it produces change in the environment, there is “outcome”.
- When a new policy interacts with its environment, “outcomes” may generate new demands or supports and groups in support or against the policy (feedback) or a new policy on some related matter.
- Feedback leads back to step 1, forming a never-ending cycle.

Accordingly, if the system functions as described, then we have a “conducive social environment”.

If the system breaks down, then we have a “unconducive social environment”

In applying this theory, the social insecurity caused by the menace of Fulani herdsmen has created unconducive social environment. Consequently, the Fulani Herdsmen have unabatedly continued to wreak havoc, mostly in the middle belt area of the country. The inability of the government and relevant agencies to regulate land use and resource exploitation through appropriate policies has led to continuous struggle between the farmers and the herders.

Evaluation of Federal Government Efforts in curbing Herdsmen and Farmers Conflict

It is not surprising to note that the lives and property and security of the Nigerian citizens are not guaranteed. The primary duty of the government is to protect her citizens against internal and external aggression. The federal government understands the architecture of corruption and terrorism in Nigeria and has barely done the needful. It can be noted that fraudulent claim of integrity has eluded and disintegrated the Nigerian government. The killings carried out by the herdsmen in Nigerian seems to be normal hence, the muteness of the government. It is an abuse of power for the president not to visit the states where maiming was done and instead summoned the governor to the center. The ethnic cleansing going on in the country in disguise has made the

citizens to think of a way of self defence since it is not in the interest of the government to sit up to their responsibilities. No single herdsman has been apprehended and persecuted or in prison. Roads belong to human beings and cars but cows have taken possession of roads even classrooms in school as herdsman and their cows in the very recent past drove students out of their classrooms in Edo state. The Nigerian government seems to value cows to human lives. The federal government has not measured up to expectations in carrying out their duties in the country. Much is expected of them as almost nothing has been done to salvage the situation in the country.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Peace and harmony are not farfetched if a sincere commitment to conflict resolution is reached without hidden intentions and agenda. Herdsman and farmers clashes in Nigeria are predominantly taking place in Benue, Taraba and Kaduna states. These clashes should not be allowed to further inflict injuries and claiming lives of Nigerians. A holistic solution dealing with the encroachment into farmlands, incitement and credible plans to integrate the herdsman fully into the Nigerian society must be harnessed.

Animal grazing is not in the history of mankind. The federal government expertise should be channeled towards modernization of cattle rearing as done and practiced in other countries. A lot of benefits come with such practice in terms of job creation, food security which will curb in totality and end vexations in herdsman and farmers conflict. Cattle are reared in Nigeria for the beef and minimally for the milk. Thus, taking away the bulk of the profit in the business. The mind of the Nigerian government should be geared towards the milk productions which in a large extent will contribute substantially to the national economy hence, putting a halt to perennial conflict between herdsman and farmers in the country. Countries like USA, Pakistan, and India etc depend on milk and dairy products to fight malnutrition, hunger and unemployment and promote social harmony.

In India for instance, she has an annual production of 163 million metric tons of milk which is about 10% of the world's output. India rear cattle within the confines of village communities, and farmers' cooperatives, mainly for milk production and minimally for meat. In Europe, the average milk yield per cow is between 40-50 liters per day when compare to the paltry 1-2 liter yield of the Nigerian cow owing to poor feeding, stress on the grazing trails and poor health.

Nigeria, when planned properly, cattle rearing will also contribute to the economy growth of the nation.

The establishment of ranches is a good idea but should be done in such a way that it will promote unity, harmony and stability within the host communities and the herdsmen. The ranches should not be imposed on states. Because of the tension in the country, the killing and maiming by the Fulani herdsmen and for mutual co-existence and co-operation in the country, the federal government of Nigeria should take the grazing law to states that are more ethnic knitted to Fulani tribe. When this is embraced, establishment of dairy plants will be considered which will attract both local and foreign investors.

Government should ensure that those involved in the allocation of land for farming should imbibe responsibility and not allocate along cattle route or over grazing lands to avoid encroachment by nomadic herdsmen. Support for agricultural development through incentives will facilitate availability of food for the teeming Nigeria population. More so, considering the frantic interest of the present government towards making agriculture an alternative source of revenue following the crash in oil price, it becomes imperative for people in different aspects of agriculture and other trades alike to simultaneously and mutually articulate their trades for enhanced productivity and achievement of Sustainable Development.

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