

HERDSMEN AND FARMERS CLASH ON ECONOMIC AND HUMAN SECURITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

In recent years, the issue of herdsmen and farmers crisis has become one of the most dangerous threats to political, social, cultural, economic and human security of Nigeria most especially the affected states. Herdsmen attack is gradually becoming a household word as there is no day or week that the herdsmen will not attack villagers or farmers. The attack has negatively affected the economic and human security of Nigeria. The objective of the study is to look into herdsmen attack on economic and human security of Nigeria as well as government intervention programme in combating the menace. It was revealed that, herdsmen attack has affected in no small measure to the economic development of Nigeria and also has significant implications on human security of the country. The study therefore recommends that,

Keywords: Herdsmen, Farmers, Economic Crisis, Security Challenges, Nigeria.

Introduction

Over the years, the issue of civil unrest has been a recurring decimal in Nigeria's political, economic and socio-cultural climate prior to the independence of the nation and still lingers in post-independence era (Abodunrin, 2019). Nigeria is under a severe internal and security threat as the threat has political, economic and environmental dimensions. Each of these dimensions has critically affected the stability of the nation and can be traced to many factors in which the Fulani-herdsmen appears to be major factor. Most worrisome in the present development is the pillaging, raping, killing and kidnapping by the so called Fulani

herdsmen. Stories are found in the national dailies on daily basis of how these shepherds strategically attack several communities and houses, with sophisticated assault guns- AK-47.

According to Okereke (2012) and Bello (2013), the conflicts in most part of Nigeria especially the Fulani herdsmen and farmers clash are largely uncalled for. Farmers can no longer farm peacefully because of Fulani herdsmen. These Fulani herdsmen and farmers clash have pitched Christians and Muslims against each other. Recent studies conducted by Okereke (2012) and Kasarachi (2016) have shown that, serious conflict erupt between Fulani herdsmen and farmers leading to loss of lives, valuable properties and destruction of vast expanse of arable agricultural farmlands thereby posing serious threat to food security since farmers for fear of attack could no longer go to farm and harvest their farm produce. The latest attacks by Fulani herdsmen is on the upsurge, with the most latest attacks in February 2018 happening in Benue State, Taraba State, Nassarawa State and few cases of attack in other states.

In many of the affected rural communities, farmers are driven out of villages, ultimately becoming refugees in neighbouring states. Those that remain in the villages are afraid to travel to farms in remote locations due to fear of violence from herdsmen. The implication of this situation is ominous on food production. Already, there are reports that prices of foods have increased in some of the affected states while refugee problems have escalated. People have left their villages in the Benue state and migrated to the Nassarawa state, where the governor has voiced his inability to cope with the spillage. There are similar situations in other states as well.

In recent times, the killings recorded by Fulani herdsmen and farmers clash has rampaged most communities displacing them of their farmlands and loss of their major source of livelihood. This is becoming unbearable with the Fulani herdsmen always having their ways leaving the farmers at their mercy. Herdsmen attribute the roots of the crisis to religious differences resulting in the killing of their cows while the farmers see the herdsmen as a threat to their crops and agricultural produce since the herdsmen allow their cows to feed on the farmer crops.

This recent wave of violence in Nigeria as observed by Kasarachi (2016) has disrupted socioeconomic, religious and educational activities, political instability and threatened the national unity in Nigeria. These extra judiciary killings have forced thousands of people to abandon their homes and farmlands for safety. Okereke (2012) asserts that this unfolding violence have become so alarming that there is no gainsaying the fact that Nigeria is at a crossroad and gradually drifting to a conflict society. Equally begging for answers are the social issues of the rape of women, robbery and kidnapping with ultimate intent for ransom.

The first crisis between herdsmen and farmers was recorded in 1948. The second was in 1951 this led to the migration of Fulanin Bororo to Sudan. In 1955 there was a clash/genocide which led to the Sudanese Government issuing a quit notice to all Fulanin Bororo to relocate to their home countries. These people were mainly from Borno, Sokoto and Kano States in Nigeria (Ibrahim, 2018). In April 1956, the Nigerian Government sent a delegation comprising Alhaji Mohammad Ribadu-Minister of Lands, Alhaji Abubakar Akalai of Sokoto Native Administration, Malam Maaji Shani – Legal Adviser Borno Native Administration and Mr.

J.R. Knowles- A Senior Veterinary Officer. This led to the Fulani's eventual relocation to Nigeria two years later (Ibrahim, 2018).

According to Nwosu (2017), an accurate account of the death toll resulting from herdsman – farmer violence in Nigeria is difficult to come by due to the lack of a dedicated database. Therefore, most of the evidence comes from newspaper reports of various incidents involving the herdsman and farmers in settled communities. Some sources claim that since 2001, over 60,000 persons had died as a result of the conflicts, making it deadlier than the notorious Boko Haram uprising. A BBC reported that over 50,000 deaths were caused by the crisis between 2001 and 2004 alone. Of these deaths, women and children accounted for almost 35,000. Some accounts have it that the violent confrontations started since 1990s or earlier than that. A report showed that the economic cost of the herdsman-farmer conflicts in only the four states of Benue, Kaduna, Nassarawa and Plateau at about \$14 billion annually. Current figures are likely to be higher, especially with the spread of the conflict to other states.

The conflict between herdsman and farmers was becoming a regional security threat. As a result, the local authority is weakened in the enforcement of the agreement between the groups. According to Nigerian reports, thieves stole approximately 60,000 cattle in recent years. Many herdsman have to arm themselves with weapons to protect their cattle and homes to ensure security. The government prioritizes the conflict as a threat to national security. President Buhari took swift action and tried to control the conflict (Blogger, 2018). The conflict became a threat to Nigeria's national security because violent actions have caused deteriorating living conditions, and it will ultimately lead to more conflicts and breakdown of order in the region the states affected.

The issue of Herdsman and farmers conflict appears to have direct implications for social and economic development in the states attacked and Nigeria in general. In the states where the Fulani herdsman and farmers crisis is pervasive, the property destroyed and cases of rapes slog their economic and social opulence back by several steps. Besides the destroyed properties, socio-economic life in those states is usually grounded to a halt as people could not freely go about their farming and socio-economic activities for fear of being killed. The overall implication for sustainable development is that the farming, economic and social activities seem to be fast deteriorating. Also, a substantial part of the country's budget has been spent on the compensation of families who lost their relations to the Fulani herdsman and farmers crisis. Also, huge amount of money is being spent on weapons and ammunition acquisition so as to equip the military to handle the situation on ground. All these seem to have affected Nigeria's economy (Ajibefun, 2018).

Michael, Inyang and Ukpong (2017) observed that, the attack has created social dislocation and continuous suspicion among Fulani and other ethnic groups within the areas of attack. Herdsman are now looked upon as social stigma as people are no longer comfortable with herdsman who are generally undertaking their legitimate nomadic business. The social integration and cohesion which often exist among herdsman and residents has been battered as most communities no longer socialize with herdsman. They further observed that previously, Fulani herdsman were allowed to join community associations and relate with members of the community. Currently, they are strongly denied the privilege of joining such associations where they exist. This inevitably has created social dislocation. In some

communities, it has been resolved that no member shall provide land for herdsmen to graze their herds. This has greatly affected social relations (Michael, Inyang & Ukpong, 2017).

Implications of Herdsmen Attack On:

Human Security

Human security is the first and foremost requisite for development. Human security does not simply refer to the questions of survival alone but it also refers to the basic needs of life such as access to clean water. Moreover it is concerned with the issues related to the quality of life. The goals of "freedom from fear" and "freedom from want" may well be attained only through the protection of empowerment framework of human security. That will promote the highest freedom of how to live in dignity. It promotes a people oriented, integrated and comprehensive framework. Human security in Nigeria is often threatened by unjust political, social and economic structures. The fragmentation process of social groups, economic systems and political structures threatens human security at every step. Conflicts and civil unrest has made Nigeria insecure throughout the last five decades after independence in 1960. The security of people is endangered by poverty, hunger, unemployment, health hazards, discrimination and ecological degradation. The issue of kidnapping, killing for rituals, banditry, Boko Haram insurgency and herdsmen attack continue to be a major threat confronting the human security in Nigeria.

The loss of human lives cannot be equated with any other form of loss. The herdsmen and farmers' clashes, amongst many other conflict situations in the country, have led to the decimation of many lives since independence till date. Onwumere (2016) quoted the number of deaths as at 2014 resulting from the herders and farmers' crisis as officially recorded by Institute for Economics and Peace as 1,229. This figure pales into insignificance when compared with the most recent killings witnessed in Benue state. This most recent Benue State experience, for instance, recorded over seventy lives lost in one single attack of a community. No doubt many individuals have been affected in several ways such as loss of bread winners and food producers, children being orphaned, women widowed and the emotional and physical injuries sustained are traumatic and longer lasting.

Nwosu (2017) observed that, an accurate account of the death toll resulting from herdsmen and farmers crisis in Nigeria is difficult to come by due to the lack of a dedicated database. Therefore, most of the evidence comes from newspaper reports of various incidents involving the herdsmen and farmers in conflicted communities. Some sources claim that since 2001, over 60,000 persons had died as a result of the conflicts, making it deadlier than the notorious Boko Haram uprising. A BBC reported that over 50,000 deaths were caused by the crisis between 2001 and 2004 alone. Of these deaths, women and children accounted for almost 35,000. Some accounts have it that the violent confrontations started since 1990s or earlier than that. A report showed that the economic cost of the herdsmen-farmer conflicts in only the four states of Benue, Kaduna, Nassarawa and Plateau at about \$14 billion annually. Current figures are likely to be higher, especially with the spread of the conflict to other states. recommended solutions that ranged from the creation of new grazing reserves and deployment of modern technology like an electronic chip to track animals (tracking of animals could help address the problem of cattle rustling and crises that have become so rampant) which is today practiced in Katsina State (Premium times, 2018). Again, according to George Onmonya Daniel, we live

in a country where we don't plan at all despite signs of the changing times and when change abruptly faces us we are confused.

Indeed, from Agatu in Benue State, Akure in Ondo State, Bukuru area in Plateau State, Oke Ogun area in Oyo State, Gassaka and Bali local government areas in Taraba State to Nimbo in Enugu State, rampaging herdsmen seem to be on a mission to draw blood. And blood they are getting everywhere they go, sorrow, tears and blood trail them (Obi, Chinwere & Onyejebo, 2018). Curiously, they operate in such audacious fashion that makes mockery of our national security arrangement (Ogunbiyi, 2018).

The outcomes of violent confrontations are hardly advantageous when the well-being and safety of the generality of the people are considered, as well as its implications on the growth and development of the nation (Erondu & Nwakanma, 2018). For instance, the loss of social capital in form of breakdown of social relationships that have been built over the years between these livelihood groups in neighbouring communities is one of the fallouts of the cattle herders and farmers' crisis. This situation robs both groups the ability to trust each other in future dealings, thus creating and re-creating tension situations that may give rise to new forms of conflict and crisis. Whole communities have been sacked and displaced thereby increasing the burden of government, groups and individuals in providing care and other necessities of life for them. Also, the crisis has put the Nigerian government under serious spotlight nationally and internationally (Erondu & Nwakanma, 2018).

Economic

Sustainable Development implies the consistency in the positive qualitative increment in the standard of living, economic, political and cultural variables in a society. Conflict and violence impede on such increases and renders a nation's development goals static and unachievable. According to Adetula (2009), the effect of conflicts in Nigeria is seen in the diversion of resources from productive uses to the payment of compensation, reconstruction of destroyed public property among others as a result of conflicts. The World Bank reported that \$800 million have been diverted away from development to solve problems of conflict in West Africa, with Nigeria as a key player. Also, International donors and development agencies have made it known that development assistance projects have greatly been frustrated in many countries in Africa due to incessant conflicts in the region (Dalhatu, 2012). Transparency International and Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC) have noted that Nigerian Government officials spend roughly N241.8 billion (that is \$670 million) yearly in the name of 'Security Votes' (Mutum, 2018).

Apparently, these increasingly deadly clashes have started taking place more frequently in the southern states. There have been attacks in states including Rivers and Enugu, in the southeast, and Ondo, in the southwest, where a former presidential candidate, Olu Falae was abducted from his farm by herdsmen for days. So far, it is estimated Nigeria loses about \$14 billion annually to these clashes. In February, about 300 people were killed and a further 7,000 persons displaced in four communities in just one local government area Agatu, in the middle belt state of Benue (Amaza, 2016). Also, following the rising spate of attacks, a number of states including Ekiti, Benue and Taraba, passed anti-grazing laws as a measure to curb these pastoral clashes, but their suggested punitive measures have been largely ineffective, except in Ekiti, where the measures have at least seen attacks go to nearly zero. Nigerians have

however condemned the Federal Governments parochial reaction to control the looming disaster (Obi, Chinwere & Onyejebo, 2018).

The Fulani indisputably represent a significant component of the Nigerian economy. They constitute the major breeders of cattle, the main source of meat, the most available and cheap source of animal proteins consumed by Nigerians. The Fulani own over 90% of the nation's livestock population which accounts for one-third of agricultural GDP and 3.2% of the nation's GDP (Eniola, 2007). Furthermore, the contribution of the Fulani to the local food chain and national food security cannot be overstressed. The Fulani, with their dominance in the Sahel region, are the best known and most numerous of all the pastoral groups in Nigeria. The traditional and unique Fulani encampment (*ruga*) consisting of temporary structures made of stalks, closely knit family members and livestock is the natural habitat of the orthodox Fulbe settlement (Eniola, 2007) (Eniola, 2007).

Herdsmen and farmers clashes have affected the socio-economic well being. Ajibefun (2017) stated both the social and economic effects of the crisis. On the social effects, he observed the following:

- Sexual harassment of women
- Acquiring of weapons/arms
- Reduction in quality of social relationship
- Reduction of social support
- Loss of human life
- High cases of rape

On the economic effects, Ajibefun (2017) observed the following:

- Loss of produce in storage
- Displacement of farmers
- Reduction in output and income of farmers/nomads
- Scarcity of Agricultural products
- Loss of houses and properties
- Infrastructural damages

Government Responses to the Crisis

Governance in Nigeria has been assessed to have failed to provide the needed security for all her citizens most especially the herdsmen attack. Government's ineptitude towards handling the initial crisis has made its widespread possible. This has led concerned people to have the opinion that government has not only failed in her basic responsibility of securing the lives and property of her citizens, but has been insensitive to the plight of the affected persons in the various clashes. This situation has led to several accusations being levelled against government as being indirectly involved in encouraging the conflict. For instance, nothing much has been done by government and its agencies to curtail or checkmate the activities of the herders who in most cases are held responsible for provoking the conflicts. Such laissez-faire or non-interference disposition of government in the face of such heightened crisis can be interpreted to mean complicity on their part. Another reason that may be adduced for the increased frequency of occurrence of the crisis is the fact that sufficient stringent measures or punishments have not been meted out to arrested culprits to deter subsequent clashes. It is alleged that culprits are released without thorough and proper investigations. This situation

leaves victims feeling unsecured, unprotected and marginalized. Delayed delivery of justice may also be held accountable for retaliatory attacks which increase the frequency of the crisis. Government security agencies have not exhausted avenues to curb this social problem neither have they shown sufficient intolerance for such misbehaviour that has overarching consequences. Thus, every now and then we wake up to witness these clashes and their aftermaths that leave mouths gapping.

According to Egbuta (2018) the government strategic responses to the herdsmen and farmers conflict include:

1. **Creation of Grazing Reserves in 1965:** in 1965, the northern regional government initiated one of the first attempts to respond to the herdsmen-farmers conflict in the country. The grazing reserves allocated large portions of land to be exclusively used by herders to rear their livestock. However, the grazing reserves were not supported adequately. The government was still in the process of initiating legislations to legitimize the grazing reserves before natural factors such as population, growth and other related consequences like urbanization, and migration encroached on this designated areas reducing the herders chances of accessing the reserves. Establishment of the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) in 1989. The federal government in 1989 established the NCNE and it is supported by the Nigerian legal system. The main goal of the programme was to integrate nomadic pastoralists into national life through mobile basic education and skill acquisition. The programme intended to integrate them into society through education.
2. **The Use of the Armed Forces to Curb Internal Security:** One of the Federal government's immediate measures to address the herdsmen-farmer conflicts is the engagement of the Armed Forces of Nigeria as enshrined in the Constitution. For example, in Plateau state, in 2001, the government deployed a Special Task Force called Operation Safe Haven (STF-OSH) to check insecurity resulting from the herdsmen-farmers clashes. Recently, the OSH mandate was expanded to replace Operation Harbin Kunama II in Southern Kaduna state whose mandate was similar to that of OSH in Plateau. Presently, many are calling for a total declaration of a state of emergency in Benue and Plateau states as a result of the gruesome killing and displacement of thousands of people in those states. Nigerians also expect the government to activate all the necessary sections of the constitution regarding the use of the military in internal security. This call came as a fall-out of recent action taken by the government to suppress the Indigenous People of Biafra's (IPOB) agitations in the South-East and similar uprisings in other parts of the country. The military was deployed in September 2017 in an operation code-named Operation Python Dance to suppress the IPOB agitation and protests.
3. **Establishment of the National Grazing Reserve Bill 2016.** A National Grazing Reserve bill was sponsored in 2016 at the parliament to address the herdsmen-farmer conflicts. The Bill did not survive due to opposition from different stakeholders. Those that opposed the Bill hinged their rejection on the provisions of the Land Use Act of 1978 which vests all powers related to the regulation of ownership, acquisition, administration, and management of Nigerian land with the state governors. Thus, the Land Use Act is an Act of the National Assembly, and by implication, a binding

legislation, unless it is amended. State governments and their representatives at the parliament have always opposed any attempt to establish grazing reserves in their domain. They consider it to be usurping the constitutional powers vested in them.

4. **Proposed Cattle Ranching System 2018.** In reaction to increasing conflicts and mass killings resulting from seasonal pastoral movements, the government in 2018, as a matter of policy approved a 10-year National Livestock Plan at a cost of about 179 billion naira. The plan would culminate in the establishment of 94 ranches in 10 pilot states of the federation.¹⁴ Again, state governments, especially in the South and North Central areas rejected the proposal on the grounds of not having enough space for such projects
5. **Legislation Prohibiting Open Grazing:** As part of measures to end the persistent conflict between herdsmen and farmers in various states, government at state levels began enacting legislations prohibiting open grazing in their state. This, they hope, would reduce the risk of herdsmen destruction of farm lands and the associated conflicts. Benue, Ekiti and Taraba states are leading this opposition by enacting state laws prohibiting open grazing. On 22 May 2017 Benue state enacted the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law (2017) and its implementation began on 1 November 2017. Ekiti and Taraba states have also signed Bills prohibiting open grazing in their states. This makes open grazing under any guise, an illegal activity punishable by law.
6. **The Great Green Wall Agency of the Federal Government:** In 2013 the Federal government established the Great Green Wall Agency to tackle desertification. This was in response to the 2007 African Union Great Green Wall Initiative that aimed at encouraging member states to plant 8 000km of trees along the Southern Sahel to counter the effects of desertification along that area. Continued desert encroachment along the Sahel region as a result of climate change is a major factor responsible for seasonal migration of herdsmen from one region to the other in search of water and vegetation for cattle grazing.

The Nigeria Government has been unwilling to address the causes of the crises. In 2019, President Mohammedu Buhari tried to create Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) settlement. His decisions were met with fierce criticism, because it was widely believed by Nigerians that, it was not the best way to bring an end to the menace.

Conclusion

The issue of herdsmen and farmers conflict in Nigeria is not a new phenomenon. It could be dated back to 1940s and 50s but the worrisome aspect of it in the recent years is persistent increase in the crises which could be said to have been fuelled and reinforced by personal and selfish interest on the part of the herdsmen which has developed into series of killings, loss of properties and civil unrest. This herdsmen/farmers conflict has cut across nooks and crannies of the country because of its impact on all sectors of life because people feels unsecured to travelled to this troubled area or engaged themselves in farming activities due to the fair of being attacked by the herdsmen.

Recommendations

The study therefore recommends that:

- The Federal government should vigorously pursue a holistic campaign that will seek the support of all actors, including herdsmen, farmers, state and local governments, to bring an end to the conflict
- Government at all levels should put in place policies and programmes that will promote peace and harmony between the two groups that is herdsmen and the farmers. This will help putting an end to this recurring issue of conflict between them. Robust committees must be set up that will include both the herdsmen and the farmers. This will afford them the opportunity of presenting their request as well as registering the grievances to the government for proper and prompt attention before it develops to war against each other.
- Government and communities should ensure they regulate grazing activities of herdsmen within their area in the best security interest of the community members.

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