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Herdsmen/Farmers' Crisis and National Security in Nigeria: Understanding the Propellants

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Abstract

The paper examined the dimensions with which the violent clashes between the Fulani herdsmen and farmers pose threat to national security of Nigeria. The paper adopted a descriptive analytical method which relied on observation and secondary data. The secondary data were derived from published articles, newspapers, books, and official documents. The paper revealed that the usual causes of clashes between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria prior to the recent clashes were: climate change, south-ward migration, blockage of livestock routes and water points, cattle theft, over-grazing on fallow lands and assault on non-Fulani women. In addition to the aforementioned causes, the paper revealed that there are new dimensions to the causes which propel the recent wanton and incessant killing of farmers across most farming communities in the country by herdsmen as follows; the audacity of the herdsmen in grazing on available vegetations, no acceptance of compensation by farmers from herdsmen etc. The paper also revealed the perceived challenges to the smooth practice of anti-grazing law in Nigeria. The paper then recommends creation of more grazing reserves in addition to the existing ones, where is possible due to availability of land for such and modern ranching in areas where practicing of grazing reserve is impossible due to lack of land for such purpose, and embark on resource sustainability by reclaiming deforested land through afforestation process.

Keywords: herdsmen, farmers, crisis, national security and propellants

Introduction

As a democratic nation, Nigerians hope for socio-economic and security well-being but reverse is the case due to insecurity in the land. Nigeria has been experiencing an accelerated shift from one form of insecurity to the other, sometimes combination of insecurity challenges such as militancy, kidnapping, insurgency, among others as she changes government, has been observed. The security challenges in Nigeria are characterized by crises which have resulted in lack of peace and security of lives and properties (Esosuakpo, 2015). A federated nation as Nigeria with ethnic and cultural diversity can only achieve its development drive if there exists stability and security, the country needs stability and security for development to thrive. Nigeria is a country with over two hundred and fifty ethnic groups; different climatic condition as well as religion was amalgamated in 1914 which needs intensive and continuous sensitization on the essence of imbibing national integration by the leaders to ensue peace, stability and security. National integration is about maintaining unity of new political system and the creation of a united society from the diverse groups linked by that system (Eregha, 2008). Okonkwo and Efeurhobo (2015) note that "the prospects of development in Nigeria has been entangled by one challenge or the other since its independence in 1960, but in the recent time, it has been seriously affected by internal insecurity". Iwuamadi and Ajeka (2012) posited that the lawless activities such as abduction and kidnapping, armed robbery, militancy, terrorism, religious crises, political thurgery and ethnic rivalry caused insecurity that have led to destruction of lives and properties in Nigeria.

The most disturbing security challenge in the recent time is the violent clashes between Herdsmen and farmers across Nigeria. The insecurity caused by the violent clashes between Herdsmen and farmers across the country posed threat to the national security of the country because of the high casualty rate and massive displacement of communities (Gadzama, 2018).

Nigeria is one of the developing countries struggling to become a developed country. While comparing Nigeria with some other countries of the World, Esosuakpo (2015) opined that Nigeria is abundantly endowed with natural resources and also relatively free from natural disasters such as earthquakes, flooding among others that are prevalent in other countries of the World. However, internal security challenge poses serious threat to Nigeria survival as a corporate entity, particularly the recent Herdsmen and farmers' crisis.

Although prior to 1999, Nigeria faced some security challenges due to armed robbery and assassin but since enthronement of democracy in 1999 there is intensification of insecurity as a result of religious crises, ethnic crises, militancy, kidnapping and terrorism – Boko Haram (Izunna, 2015; Akinterinwa, 2015; Abdularazak, 2015; Emiola, 2013; Sampson, 2010; Ikelegbe, 2016). The aforementioned security challenges posed threat to the effective governance by the various governments at a time because they posed threat to among others lives and free movement of the people living in these areas of operations, exception of the militants as noted by Sampson (2010) and Abiodun and Oriavwota (2015) that vandalized oil pipelines and kidnapped multinational oil workers expropriates for ransoms in the Niger Delta region, which according to Ukit (2015) were meant to agitate for better living conditions and environmental sustainability of the region.

The worries of many citizens is that what are the recent causes of the attacks on farmers by herdsmen that is posing threat to the corporate existence of Nigeria. The worry is as a result of the emanated security problems such as; the geographical spread of the wanton and incessant killings, the social dislocation and massive displacement of communities with attendant effects of other insecurity dimensions that are threatening the nation's security. There is a popular saying that known problem is half solved. The inability of the security agencies and concerned authorities to address the problem of the continual clashes between the herdsmen and the farmers is due to lack of understanding of the recent propellants which have resulted in the death of 149 people as at March 16th, 2018 in Plateau, Benue, Edo, Ebonyi and Kogi States (WANEP, 2018), has increased both national and international concerns. Therefore, this paper by the adoption of descriptive and analytical method which relied on observation and secondary data examines the extent in which the propellants of the violent clashes between Fulani herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria.

National Security

Security is pivotal and fundamental condition necessary for human existence, which can be applicable to nation existence because no human beings, no nation. The concept of national security as defined by Walter Lippmann in *Chine* and Tsafa (2016) is "when nation does not have to sacrifice its legitimate interests to avoid war, and is able, if challenged to maintain them by war." Akhakpe (2011) sees security in different form and among others He identified human security and national security. He asserted that national security is the appropriation and deployment of state apparatus of coercive force to deal with situation of crisis, nationally or internationally, while human security involves protection of citizenry from hunger, disease, poverty, unemployment, natural disasters and among others. Akhakpe position on human security buds from the report of United Nations Development Programmes (UNDP) of 1994 on human development titled "New Dimension of human security which sees security as people-centred rather than arms raising. The concept concerns the importance of affording people "freedom from fear and freedom from want" (UNDP 2019). Akhakpe (2011) on the platform of experience, opines that human security is the most effective tool for attainment of national security rather than building of arms and weapons of warfare. Akhakpe's position is that national safety and stability which is national security can be achieved through creation and sustainability of human security.

Considering national security as securing of interest, citizens and nation's properties, Okoroafor (2012) opines that national security involves the sum total of efforts, energy, intelligence, commitment and of institutions to enforce and to ensure adequate protection of interest, people and properties of a nation. Therefore, absence of the elements aforementioned by Okoroafor portrays no national security in a nation. Mainer (1990) in Olugbuyi and Tyokase (2013) associated national security with national power by portraying national security as a capacity to control those domestic and foreign conditions that the public opinions of a given community believes necessary to enjoy its own self-determination or autonomy, prosperity and well-being.

Nnoli (2006) submits in his observation that, "it is surprising that national security in contemporary is counter-productive to human security, environmental security, economic and social security and the security of the ethnic groups".

Nnoli (2006) further noted that;

National security is a cherished value associated with the physical safety of individuals, groups or nation-states, together with a similar safety of their most cherished values. It denotes freedom from threats, anxiety or danger. However, and more importantly, security has subjective sense, which can be measured by the absence of fear that threats, anxiety or danger will materialize. In order words, it is a value

associated with confidence in physical safety and other most cherished values.

The recent insecurity caused by the crises between Herdsmen and farmers pose threat to national security because the continual crisis is eroding the elements encompassed in the Nnoli's position on National security. While emphasizing the need to re-define national security in developing nation like Nigeria because of the parochial notion often held about the concept that mainly refers to the defense and survival of a country, Oni and Alabi (2015) opined that for a developing country to be secured, it must have buoyant and strong, loyal and happy people, and good governance piloted by a patriotic leadership.

Enahoro (2004) viewed national security as absence of threat to life, property, socio-economic well-being of a nation and its citizens, and presence of a condition in which citizens of a country enjoy a free, peaceful and safe environment, and have access to resources which will enable them to enjoy the basic necessities of life. Therefore the recent insecurity cause by the crisis between herdsmen and farmers pose threat to Nigeria national security because human security enthrone national security (absence of fear of threat to life and property). "Human security is the protection of the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedom and fulfillment" (Liotta and Owen in Thom-Oluya, 2015). Human security is an approach to secure people from fear and want, and people's livelihood such as food, environment or health among others (Thom-Oluya, 2015). He asserted that human security seeks to remodify the conception of security that focused primarily on the safety of states from military aggression to one that centre on the security of individuals, their protection and empowerment. This is why Akhakpe (2011) submitted that human security is the most effective tool for attainment of national security rather than building of arms and weapons of warfare.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted the theory of eco-survival as its analytical framework. The theory suits this study because it helps to understand the rising militancy of nomadic herdsmen and how it causes threat to national security. Militancy implies the use of aggression to pursue a group course. (Okoli and Attelhe, 2014). Hence, militant is when one achieved his/her aim through the use of coercive force (Hornby, 2001). National security in this study is seen as absence of fear of threat to life, socio-economic wellbeing of a nation and its citizens. That is why Thom-Oluya (2015) asserted that national security means peace and stability in a community/country. Therefore, the display of the militant posture of the Fulani herdsmen must be understood in relation to their individual and collective global view as well as group subsistence and survival, which has a lot to do with pastoralism. Adeoye (2017) the average Fulani herdsmen perceive pastoralism as a culture and it is regarded as a mark of common heritage, so any threat to their flocks amount to a threat, not only to their survival but also their common destiny. The herdsmen cultural thinking can be described with the citation that accredited to a Fulani-nomad as follows, "our herd is our life because, to every nomad, life is worthless without his cattle, what do you expect from us when our source of existence is threatened? The encroachment of grazing fields and routes by farmers is a call to war" (Abass, 2012).

The application of Eco-survivalism theory in this study is glaring in Abass (2012) quotation of the herdsmen that their lives are their herd/cow and life is worthless without their cattle, and they could kill if farmers encroached grazing field and routes. To the herdsmen any greener pasture is a grazing held and wherever they could pass into the targeted greener pasture is their route, therefore any farmer challenging them over their life (cow) is a call to war by such farmer(s) in Nigeria situation at present. The increasing wave of militancy among the Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria is posing threat to farmers' lives and socio-economic wellbeing of Nigeria state (national security). This because national security implies absence of threat to core values and the prevention of public disorders (Thom-Oluya, 2015). Therefore, national security is not only centred on prevention from external invasion of a country, it also implies protection of lives and property; to any threat to value, environment, economy and political stability of a people (Thom-Oluya and Okpo 2016). The wanton and incessant killings, social dislocation and massive displacement of communities pose threat to the nation's security.

The Propellants of the Clashes Between Herdsmen and the Farmers in Nigeria

It has been established that clashes between herdsmen and farmers started when agriculture began (Blench, 2010; Abassi 2012), which were usually caused by climate change, the south-ward migration, the growth of agro-pastoralism, the expansion of farming on pasture, the invasion of farmlands by cattle, assault on non-fulani women by herdsmen, blockage of livestock routes and water points, fresh water scarcity, burning of rangelands, cattle theft, inadequate animal health care and disease control, over-

grazing on fallow lands, defecation on streams and roads by cattle, extensive sensitization, ineffective coping strategies, ethnic stereotyping and the breakdown of conflict intervention mechanism as the causes of clashes between them (Folami, 2009; Ofuoku and Isife, 2009; Adekunle and Adisa, 2010; Blench, 2010; Odoh and Chigozie, 2012; Solagberu, 2012; Audu, 2013; Bello, 2013; MrGregor, 2014). However, the clashes between the herdsman and farmers did not result to deadly dimensions as recently recorded in which communities are being wiped out; hundreds of lives and millions of naira worth of properties were destroyed, has been observed.

Recent causes (propellants) of clashes between herdsman and farmers have taken different dimensions. Some of the identified causes of the clashes between the herdsman and farmers are still part of the causes of the on going clashes. However, there are new dimensions to the causes which fuel the recent wanton and incessant killing of farmers across most farming communities in the country by herdsman as follows;

- *The audacity of the herdsman in grazing on available vegetations.* Apart from herdsman as early identified as strangers among the host communities due to language and cultural barriers but the annoying thing is the audacity with which the herdsman shepherd their cattle to graze available vegetation on their route has repeatedly attracted protest from the host communities and this has caused violent clashes amongst famers and herdsman that have wiped out a number communities residents and those fortunate to escape have become refugees in other places (Imo, 2017).
- *Economic interest of both the herdsman and farmers.* The herdsman and farmers have economic interest to protect because their livelihood dependence flocks and crops, respectively, which increase in Nigeria population is promoting. National Population Commission (NPC) (2006) revealed that Nigeria is experiencing a historic demographic expansion and a spectacular change in food habits, and with a population growth nearly 2.8% per-Year, the country's own domestic production is far from being able to meet demands. Similarly, Population References Bureau (PRB) (2016) revealed that Nigeria is expected to have a population of over 398 million which is more than the population of Pakistan and Brazil in 2050. By Implication, Nigeria is forced to import more than 25% of the beef consumed, which is a major outlet for Sahel livestock either through direct sales or moving of the cattle for commercial purposes (Imo, 2017). Interestly, Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) in Imo (2017) revealed that livestock operations by the herdsman contribute about 5% of GDP, whereas agriculture as a whole contribute 35% of GDP of Federal Government of Nigeria. The above scenario the increase economic interest of not only the herdsman and farmers but also Federal government. This scenario account for why it is difficult for both the herdsman and host communities to co-exist without problem because as revealed by Imo (2017) nomadic herdsman are busy endeavor to secure their cattle and make livelihood from their sales, the lost communities residents need to protect their farmlands from grazing by herdsman cattle.
- *Thief of herdsman cattle have been attributed to the wanton and incessant killing of farming communities residents.* Myetti Allah cattle Breeders Association Benue State Chapter GarusGololo told BBC News Piginthat stealing of their cattle have resulted their attack on farmers and he gave a case when 1000 cattle were stolen from them as they were relocating to Taraba State through Nassarawa state at the border of town of Nengere (Demola and Ahon, 2018), which have made of the herdsman to protect themselves and their cattle against cattle rustlers (Ahmed-Gamgum, 2018). The increase rate of attacks and wanton killings, 2015 Global Terrorism index declared Fulani Militants as the forth deadliest militant group in the world have killed 1229 people in 2014 (Eyekpimi, 2016)
- *The development of the violence into criminality and rural banditry (Premium Times, 2018).* The violence between the herdsman and farmers has become criminality and rural banditry creating meaning and (mis)understanding. The narratives on rural banditry in the media and in popular discourse are becoming part of the drivers for expanding clashes in the country. The Antagonists in this saga are seen as Fulani Cattle leaders who are mostly Muslims and the (Protagonists) farming communities made up of other ethnic extractions who are often, but not always non-Muslims, both groups are usually seen as perpetrators and victims, respectively. The perspectives of social, religious and ethnic characteristics of these rural/farming communities are framed into expansive essentialist discourses that actively breed and sustain suspicion and distrust. Therefore, the suspicion and distort resulted in negative stereotypes which further lead to ethnic and religious bigotry fuelling the hate process, culminating in further chain attacks, counter or revenge attacks, being exclaimed between these different groups.
- *No resource sustainability by Nigerian government.* Tenuche and Ifatimehin (2009) in their study revealed that there is no resource sustainability in Nigeria and is a major cause of conflicts between

farmers and herdsmen. To them, because of absence of resource sustainability, it becomes difficult for a majority of Nigerians who require land for farming and grazing to have access to land, and this has been a major cause of conflicts in the Benue valley region.

- *No acceptance of compensation by farmers from herdsmen.* The migration of the cattle across farmlands, sometimes destruct crops and results in conflict between the farmers who claim customary right over the land and herdsmen who are regarded as stranger (Ahmed- Gamgum, 2018). He further noted that to engender co-existence between the farmers and herdsmen, the traditional rulers from time to time had to come into adjudicate to ensure that whoever was found guilty paid compensation. But it has come to be noticed that this solution did not solve the problem because there was no compensation as required by law to customary land owners, hence the herdsmen deliberately stay out of grazing path into cultivated lands with their sophisticated guns not to attack animals but farming communities residents in the face of alternative peaceful dispute (s) resolution methods. Ugwu (2017) noted that farmers equally refuse the idea of collecting compensation because they do not want to be living on compensation as such compensation lacks life sustainable components.
- *Anti-open grazing law and Blockage of grazed routes.* The herdsmen have been embarking on the wanton killing of farmers particularly in Benue state due to law passed against open grazing their (herdsmen's) cattle enjoy. The contemporary submission reported by Hankuyi (2017) and Godwin (2017), the Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria on the 19th November 2017 via their socio-cultural association, Miyeti Allah, KautalHore vowed not to accept cattle ranching and have expatiated their point of view among others that the anti-open grazing laws do not take into cognizance their sociology, economic interest, production patterns, climate variations and factors that pushed herdsmen (pastoralists) into these migrate. They further claim that they migration because there is no longer traditional cattle routes due to blockage of farmers cultivations, so they have their right to survey and choose suitable area where they can graze their cattle, and use the tarred roads because they also pay taxes used in tarring the roads. The usage of the tarred road by cattle has given Nigeria bad image in the international community as Ghanaian president, Nana Akufo-Addo mocked Nigeria that Ghana is not like Nigeria where cattle roam the street (Ogundele, 2018).

In this regard, the Fulani herdsmen association raise a constitutional matter that Benue state has no powers to make law to stop herders from having access to those natural resources especially at the peak of the dry eason between January and May months of the year when pastoralists need river water for their cattle. It is safe to say that this constitutional contention that spurred president Buhari to sent the water bill in 2018 to the National assembly, a bill that aimed at concentration of the control of water resource in the ambit of the Federal government which divided the senators along regional lines (Adepegba, Uabor, Aluko and Nnodim, 2018).

Anti-Open Grazing Law and the Perceive Obstacle to the Smooth Practice of the Law in Nigeria.

The seasonal migration of the cattle and their herdsmen across the states of the country with their new dimension of bearing sophisticated weapons of war to terrorize farmers and other associated destruction (Ahmed-Gamgum, 2018), have made some states in Nigeria think of solution(s) to the menace. Some state have enacted anti-open grazing laws or are in the process of making such bill(s) in their states, and four states that have enacted the law (premium times, 2018) are as follow;

- *Ekiti state:* Prohibition of cattle and other ruminants grazing in Ekiti, 2016
- *Taraba state:* Anti-open grazing prohibition and Ranches Establishment Bill 2017. "A bill for a law to prohibit open rearing and grazing of livestock and provide for the establishment of ranches and the Taraba state livestock and ranches administration, and control committee and for others connected thereto 2017"
- *Edo state bill:* A bill for a law to establish the Edo state control of nomadic cattle rearing/grazing and for other purposes
- *Benue state law:* A law to prohibit open rearing and grazing of live-stocks and provide for the Establishment of ranches and livestock administration, regulation and control and for other matters connected there with, 2017.

The enactment of Anti-open grazing law has negative implications among others on the fundamental rights of freedom of movement of the herdsmen as guaranteed by Nigeria 1999 constitution as amended. Section 41 of the said constitution guaranteed every citizen to move freely throughout the country and stay in any part of the country. Similarly section. 42 (2) prevents derivation of citizen of the country by reason of the circumstances of his birth. These sections of the constitution can be obstacle to

the effective implementation of the anti-open grazing laws passed by some of the states, if it is being contested in court of the law particularly on the basis of intra-state movement of Nigerians in Nigeria.

Another obstacle that can be an impediment to the anti-open grazing law is the legislation by the Ogun State Government and the Supreme Court Judgment on the case cited as "A.G/ Ogun State V. ALHAJA AYINKE ABERUAGBA (1985) 1 NWLR P.G 395" which barred states from interfering with inter-state commerce and the free movement of goods and services (Premium Time, 2018). At this time, Ogun State had endeavoured to administer the taxation of goods that are coming in from other states, which the Apex court ruled that it would be chaotic if states passed any laws that pleased them to restrict movement of goods and services in the federation (Premium Time, 2018). It further said that it was this judgment that led to the introduction of value added tax (VAT) as a state tax that is determined at the national level and collected by the Federation Government in which it takes administrative fees and redistributes the proceeds back to the states. This judgment can be an obstacle also to the affective implementation of the anti-open grazing laws in Nigeria because the cattle are commercial goods that involve inter-states migration, which CBN in Imo (2017) revealed that herdsman cattle alone contributes about 5% of 35% of the agriculture as a whole contribution to the Nation's GDP. Although there were negative reactions to Defence Minister, Mansur Dan-Ali that asked states such as Benue, Taraba, Kwara and Ekiti to stop forth with the anti-open grazing law, which National assembly asked the defence to withdraw such statement (Daniel, Ovuakpories, Duru and Ojomoyela, 2018). They also reported the questions for Dan-Ali by Nigeria that "Is the House of Assembly of a state constitutionally empowered to make laws for the promotion of peace, development and welfare of the people in the state? The support of the national Assembly and the reactions of some Nigerians for the anti-open grazing law by some states may strengthen the implementation of the said law.

Conclusion

The Fulani herdsman attacks on farmers as well as the wipe out of some of their communities in the country has constituted threat to the nation's survival because it has adverse effects on economic well being of the nation and its citizens. The Peaceful and safety environment which the citizens enjoy that enable them to go about their daily activities is mostly affected due to the eco-survival approach adopted by the herdsman as a defence mechanism to farmers reactions in respect to their farmland and produce destruction, which the herdsman regarded as noted by Adeoye (2017) not only a threat to their survival but also their common destiny. The clashes have caused crop farmers across the country to be apprehensive over the negative attitude of the herdsman who unleash their herds on crops as well as attacking and killing them due to the identified recent causes (propellants) such as the audacity of the herdsman grazing on available vegetations, economic interest of both herdsman and farmers as well as no acceptance of compensation by farmers from the herdsman owing to the farmers economic interest. The eco-survival approach adopted by the herdsman has spurred them into proliferation of small arms and ammunitions in the country since the host farming communities and the herdsman see themselves as enemies, due to the failure of government not providing them security or take decisive actions to stop the killings (Nwanze 2018).

Recommendations

The following are recommended to engender peace for co-existence between herdsman and farmers for enhancement of national security in Nigeria.

- i. Federal Government should create more grazing reserves in addition to the existing ones where is possible due to availability of land for such and modern ranching in areas where practicing of grazing reserve is impossible due to lack of land for such purpose and they should be well developed to meet world's best practices
- ii. Enough enlightenment programmes should be carried to educate the Fulani herdsman that anti-open grazing law is not aimed at discriminating but rather to create harmonious atmosphere of security for both parties, which will promote their lawful engaged activities.
- iii. Nigerian government should embark on resource sustainability by reclaiming deforested lands through afforestation process and maintenance culture.

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