

Herdsmen Debacle in Nigeria: The Implication on Stability and Food Security.

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Abstract

The associated crises with herdsmen and farmers activities in Nigeria have become worrisome in the recent time. Such crises have affected negatively, the supply of food in one hand, and stability on the other hand. Most farmers have lost their life and property, while, some have been forced to vacate their farmland and relocate to safe environment for fear of attack by the herdsmen. Despite the various attempts by individuals, organizations and government at addressing this menace, the needless crisis has continued unabated. Based on this, the paper examined the various factors responsible for herdsmen clashes with farmers and the effect of such on stability and food security. The paper employed the use of secondary data for its analysis. It was observed that the crisis was as a result of natural climate change, pressure on land resource, destruction of crops and cattle rustling. The paper recommended semi-intensive system of farming, ranching, restricted open grazing and the use of traditional and native approach for conflict resolution.

Key Words: Conflict, Farmers, Food, Herdsmen Stability.

Introduction

Nigeria is currently faced with socio-economic, political and food crisis, which has greatly affected lives of individuals in particular and development of nation in general. It has further threatened the nation's stability and harmonious coexistence of various groups across the country. This ugly phenomenon is not unconnected with the uncontrolled spate of herdsmen – farmers clashes, particularly in the north – central zone of the country like Benue, Taraba, Plateau, Nassarawa etc.

Conflict between pastoralists and farmers have existed since the beginning of agriculture and increased or decreased in intensity and frequency depending on economic, environmental and other factors. For example, increases in the herd sizes, due to improved conditions of the cattle, compelled the pastoralists to seek for more pastures beyond their limited, unavoidable drought in the northern area and more pressures on the land resources (Bello, 2013).

This avoidable crisis between herdsmen and farmers has become worrisome as there have been several clashes between the duo resulting to loss of lives and properties, displacement and joblessness. Unfortunately, the victim and most vulnerable zone (north-central) is noted for its noble engagement and role in farming activities and agricultural production. As a matter of emphasis, one of the states in the region (Benue state) has an appellation "food basket of nation" which implies or describes the tangible and essentials role being played by the state in the area of food production for local, national and international consumption. This has a great consequence on food availability and perhaps, food security.

In May 2016, Oyo state government established grazing lands, feedlots and ranches for herdsmen and their cattle in the state and concurrently outlawed night grazing and straying of cows outside the proposed enclosed designated grazing areas. In the same year, Ekiti state government banned cattle rearing and grazing in the state. In similar vein, Benue state government enacted law against open grazing in the state in November 2017 (Toromade, 2018). Despite these various attempts at combating herdsmen and farmers crisis at various state levels, the unwarranted and needless violence has continued unabated with its attendant effects on stability and food security. And this has further raised question about the legal duty of government

to protect life and property of citizens. This unpalatable and worrisome incidence makes this paper unavoidable and significant.

Objectives of the study

The paper is set to achieve the following objectives;

to examine the various dimensions of Herders – farmers conflict in Nigeria;

to investigate the various factors responsible for herdsmen clashes with farmers in Nigeria;

to examine the effect of herdsmen – farmers debacle on stability and food security;

to suggest possible and appropriate options capable of ensuring peaceful coexistence between the two groups in Nigeria.

Conceptual Explanation

Concept of Food Security

Food security can be generally viewed as a situation that describes adequate supply of food and unhindered access to it by individuals. Globally, food security has been variously conceptualized and explained at different international fora. One of such was World Food Conference (1974) which perceived food security as the availability at all times of adequate world food supplies of basic food stuffs to sustain a steady expression of food consumption and to offset fluctuations in production and prices (FAO,1996). In a similar vein, the World Food Summit (1996) describes food security as what exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (United Nation, 1996). Inferred from the foregoing definitions is the essential role of food in human and sustainable development. Therefore, it must be adequately supplied and expressly accessed by individuals for the sake of good and qualitative life.

Concept of Stability

Stability literarily can be viewed as steady or firm condition. It is a word that generally depict order and cohesion. But for the purpose of this study, the definition offered by Chandan (2004) was employed. According to Chandan, stability is seen as the condition of freedom from social disorder generally manifested in the form of intergroup conflict or violence. It is also the condition of sustainable development and well being. The author, views stability as basic quality desired by every state and society. It cuts across social, political and economic circle. This implies that stability describes social and political order as well as economic order.

Theoretical Framework

Based on the nature of this study and the need to creditably achieve adequate and deeper understanding of the salient issues of discussion, conflict theory was employed as theoretical framework. Essentially, the study basically focused on the incessant and unabated crisis between the Herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria and the implication of such on stability and food security. Apparently, conflict theory seems to be suitable and most appropriate for the study. It is believed in the social sciences parlance that although, individual and groups may make efforts at achieving consensus, social life is characterized by conflict as much as consensus. This is because norms and values are not equally distributed or accepted by members of the society (Tonah, 2006).

Conflict embodies notions of difference and disagreement, strife and struggle (Tonah, 2006). Hocker and Wilmot (1985) describe conflict as the interaction of interdependent people who perceive incompatible goals and interference from each other in achieving those goals. Generally, conflict theories tend to assume that competition over scarce resources is at the heart of all social relationships. However, defined, all conflicts share common traits; First, there is some form of contact between the parties involved. Second, the conflicting

parties must have perceived divergent differences, and third, at least one of the parties should want to redress the existing contradiction (Ekanola, 2004).

Herders compete with farmers for farmland, water, pasture etc. This is a typical struggle over resources, which could be described as resource conflicts capable of resulting to violent conflicts if left unchecked. The current crisis between the herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria emanated from regular competition and struggle between the duo over land resources.

Methodology

The study basically relied on secondary data collected through different publications and archives such as the international agencies reports, news item, texts, journals, magazines, Newspapers, Bulletin, Government gazettes and the internet.

Herdsmen Crisis in Nigeria: An Overview

The high spate of conflicts and series of attacks of farmers by herdsmen has generated a lot concern amongst stakeholders, policy makers, policy analysts human right activities, scholars and international communities. The ugly trend has not only raised question about peaceful coexistence of different ethnic groups in Nigeria, but has also forced individual states to introduce legal measures to curtail the activities of herdsmen across their states (Ngwodo, 2018).

The Fulani's are majorly nomadic in nature, moving from one to the other with their animals in search of food. They are spread over many countries, particularly West Africa region. In Nigeria, the Fulani and the Hausa people dominate the northern states, with a reasonable population, they are present in almost every state across the country (Adetula, 2016).

Adetula observed that the herdsmen have been known long before now for violence and attack of certain communities in the country, but noted that the rate of attack has increased exponentially in the recent time, which apparently calls for concern. According to him, the statistics provided by the Institute for Economics and Peace estimated 1,229 people to have been killed through Herdsmen – Farmers violence in 2014 and 63 in 2013. In May 2015, over 100 farmers and their family were killed in villages and refugee camps located in the Ukuraper, Gafa and Tse – Gusa local government areas of Benue State (Adetula, 2016). In the recent times, there have been reported cases of herdsmen attack particularly in the North-Central zone. These cases are captured in the table below.

Table 1: Selected Cases of Attack by Herdsmen, January – April, 2018

S/N	Nature of Attack	Date of Attack	Source of Information
1.	50 Benue indigenes killed 30 injured in Logo Benue	January 1, 2018	http://punchng.com/herdsmen-killed-50-injured-30-inBenue.htm
2.	2 Nasarawa farmers killed in Awe, Nasarawa	January 1, 2018	http://punchng.com/flrring-herdsmen-allegedly-kill-Nasarawafarmer
3.	25 Nasarawa farmers killed in Keana, Nasarawa	January 1, 2018	http://punchng.com/death-tollhits-25-in-Nasarawa-herdsmen-farmers-crisis
4.	Village head and 15 others attacked and killed in Logo, Benue	January 6, 2018	http://www.vanguardng.com/2018/01/village-head-15-others-killed-fresh-herdsmen-attack

5.	60 indigenes attacked and killed in Lau, Taraba	January 5, 2018	www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headline/254650-tarabacommunities-attacked-fulani-bachama-groups-accused.html
6.	Herdsmen attacked and killed 1 in Ibi, Taraba	January 14, 2018	File://localhost/tp:http://punchng.com/armed-fulanimen-attack-taraba-community-kill-traditional-ruler.
7.	Hunter killed in Barkin ladi, Plateau	January 20, 2018	http://punchng.com/suspected-herdsmen-kill-hunter-in-plateau/
8.	Reprisal attack leaves 6 dead in Juman, Adamawa	January 21, 2018	http://saharareporters.com/2018/01/23/herdsmen-attack-reprisal-claims-six-lives-adamawa
9.	Herdsmen kill 7 in bokkos Plateau state,	January 24, 2018	http://sunnewsonline.com/suspected-herdsmen-kill-7-injure-manyinplateau/
10.	Attack in Bassa, Plateau state. 8 locals killed	January 25, 2018	http://Sunnewsonline.com/suspected-herdsmen-kill-8-injure-10-personsinplateau/
11.	2 killed in Bassa, Plateau state.	January 28, 2018	http://sunnewsonline.com/2-killedinplateau-as-herdsmenambushresdents/
12.	NNPC workers attacked and 1 killed in Guma, Benue	January 29, 2018	http://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/01/breaking-herdsmen-attacknnpcofficials-workin-petroleum-benuestate/
13.	Herdsmen killed 9 in Birnm Gwari, Kaduna	January 31, 2018	http://saharareporters.com/2018/02/01/suspected-fulani-herdsmen-kill-9-kaduna/
14.	2 killed in Song, Adamawa	February 2, 2018	http://sunnewsonline.com/2-killed-village-razed-in-herdsmen-farmers-clash-in-adamawa/
15.	Herdsmen attack Gov. Ortorm farm house and kill 2	February 5, 2018	www.vanguardngr.com/2018/02/herdsmen-attack-sack-gov-ortoms-farmhouse
16.	Herdsmen ambush and kill 2 police officers	February 10, 2018	http://saharareporters.com/2018/02/11/four-officers-missing-herdsmenambush-police-team-benue
17.	4 killed in Jema'a, Kaduna	February 11, 2018	http://punching.com/suspected-fulani-herdsmen-kill-four-in-kaduna-village
18.	2 civil defence officers killed in Guma, Benue	February 12, 2018	http://saharareporters.com/2018/02/12/suspected-fulani-herdsmen-kill-two-nscdc-officers-benue
19.	20 killed in Demsa, Adamawa	February 27, 2018	http://sunnewsonline.com/herdsmen-20-killed-23injured-inadamawa
20.	24 killed in Okpokwu Benue	March 5, 2018	http://punching.com/updated-benue-herdsmen-attack-death-toll-now-24
21.	11 killed in Bassa, Plateau	March 8, 2018	http://punching.com/herdsmen-kill-11-torch-50-housesinplateau
22.	2 brothers killed in Guma Benue	March 13, 2018	Saharareporters.com/2018/03/14/herdsmen-kills-two-brothers-Benue
23.	32 killed in Daima/ Omala, kogi	March 14, 2018	http://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/north-central/261907-32-killed-in-kogi-by-suspected-herdsmen-senator.htm/

24.	Herdsmen kill 2 soldiers in Rafiki, Bassa, Plateau	March 14, 2018	http://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/03/herdsmen-youths-clash-plateau-2operation-safe-haven-personnel-killed-2-othersinjured
25.	Herdsmen kill 4 soldiers in Miango, Bassa, Plateau	March 14, 2018	http://saharareporters.com/2018/03/17/fulani-herdsmen-kill-4-soldiers-garrison-commanders-convoy-injure-scores-plateau
26.	Attack on Takum, Taraba leaves 5 dead	March 15, 2018	http://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/03/five-people-killed-houses-razed-herdsmen-attack-Taraba-community
27.	5 killed in Makudi, Benue	March 24, 2018	http://punchng.com/5-die-infresh-fulani-crisis-in-benue
28.	Herdsmen kill 10 in Gwer west, Benue	April 4, 2018	http://sunnewsonline.com/10-killed-injured-fulani-herdsmenbenue
29.	5 kill in Dobga, Taraba	April 5, 2018	http://sunnewsonline.com/herdsmen-killed-5-thursday-attack-tarabavillage
30.	Father and son killed in Agatu, Benue	April 7, 2018	http://punchng.com/herdsmen-attack-benue-community-kill-father-son/
31.	4 killed in Keana, Nasarawa	April 8, 2018	http://sunnewsonline.com/herdsmen-farmers-crisis-gunmen-kill-4-persons-in-reprisal-attack-in-Nasarawa
32.	Soldier kill in Guma, Benue	April 9, 2018	https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/04/soldier-kill-herdsmen-invade-another-benue-community
33.	Herdsmen kill 31 in Guma, Benue	April 20, 2018	http://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/04/another-31-kill-benue/
34.	Herdsmen raid and kill 2 priest and 17 others, Gwer East, Benue	April 25, 2018	http://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/04/fresh-bloodbath-benue-2-catholic-priest-17-others-killed-herdsmen
35.	Herdsmen attack and kill 7 in Awe, Nasarawa	April 25, 2018	http://www.punchng.com/suspected-herdsmen-kill-7-in-Nasarawa-communal-clash-death

Compiled by the Authors

Observable from the table is the systematic, consistent and sporadic nature of killings as well as the veracity of same on weekly, monthly and quarterly basis. This is quite sad and unfortunate. It is mind-boggling. Nigeria is a country with plethora of security institutions and agencies, with layers of leadership at different governmental levels yet, wanton destruction of life and property has continued unabated. This is one of the gaps this study intends to fill.

Factors Responsible for Herdsmen-Farmers Conflict

Many factors have been identified and adduced as being responsible for the incessant conflict and violence between the herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria. Udeh (2018) in his professional analysis pointed out that due to expansive desertification, drought and unchecked deforestation in northern Nigeria were responsible for the movement of herdsmen to the south to seek greener pasture. He corroborated this with the shrinking of lake Chad from 45,000km² to 3000km² in less than three decades, which apparently led to the displacement of about 10.5 million people.

To be sure, this will naturally aid movement of herdsmen toward central and southern Nigeria and put pressure on land resources. It has also been established in the work of Tonah (2006) that successful control of diseases as a result of availability of veterinary medicine with growth in livestock population has resulted in growing pressure on land resources. With this development, the herders will have to look for more pasture to feed their cattle.

Another cause of conflict between herdsmen and farmers is the destruction of crops by cattle. Sometimes, the cattle are left uncontrolled, thus moving into cultivated lands to destroy crops and valuables. This trespass on farmland does not only destroy crops but also destroy source of drinkable water leading to avoidable pollution of portable water in the farm. This can inherently serve as a potential source of conflict between herdsmen and farmers.

Also, frequent loss of cattle to rustlers has also generated a lot of hiccups between cattle owners and farmers. The incessant and unchecked theft of cattle and cows indirectly informed the illegal carrying of arms by some herdsmen to protect their animals from being stolen by unknown farmers.

Another motivating factor responsible for herder farmers' conflict is the open criticism and condemnation of anti- open grazing law initiated by some states. Some groups have viewed anti – open grazing law as impediment to the constitutional principle on the free movement of persons and goods and as such questioned the existence and legality of such laws. This has further serves as source of encouragement and strength for the conflicts to continue. Actually, freedom of movement of persons and goods as enshrined in the constitution guarantees free movement from one place to the other but does not suggest destruction of farmland and other resources. It is illogical to destroy source of livelihood of one in an attempt to ensure and sustain other's source of livelihood. There must be a balance. Most communities in the middle belt and southern part are basically agrarian societies that rely on farming for sustenance. It is therefore not out of place for them to want to guide and protect their farm as it serves as only dependable means of livelihood.

In addition, breakdown of traditional conflict resolution mechanism constitutes part of causes of herders – farmers' conflict. The various village Heads and community leaders have not been effective in the area of conflict resolution, particularly over issues like land trespass. Also, Institutional authorities have not effectively played their own roles as arbiter and hope of the people.

Effects of Herdsmen – Farmers Crisis on Stability and Food Security

Herdsmen - Farmers crisis affected different facets of the economy. There is social, political instability and food insecurity, particularly in the affected areas. Most farm land and food produce have been destroyed as a result of this crisis and this is posing threat to food security. According to Udeh (2018) "Our farmers are under attack and our children and women are left vulnerable to the violence of the Fulani herdsmen, who would rather kill humans than risk losing their cattle to hunger".

Aside the destruction of farm land and crops there is also physical destruction and burning of houses that has led to homelessness, displacement and joblessness. Farmers could no longer go to farm and harvest their farm produce for fear of attack, which invariably translate to loss of income, resources and major source of livelihood.

There is a social economic and political tension as a result of violent. Emotional exhaustion, trauma and socio – psychological effects are evidences of instability. Educational development is impeded in the affected areas causing educational instability. Destruction of crops manifests in loss of crop yields and consequently affect negatively the quantity of supply of food to the market.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper has critically examined herdsmen – farmers’ conflict in Nigeria. In it, various factors responsible for the conflict were thoroughly investigated and the effects of such conflicts were adequately captured and analyzed. It was observed that the conflict between herders and farmers is not a phenomenon of recency in Nigeria, as it has always been cases of encroachment into farmlands and cattle rustling. The paper further observed that both farmers and herders have essential role to play in the process of ensuring stability and food security especially in terms of their contribution to the economy.

Symbiotically, the cattle provide meat for the country’s population, while the farmers provide food for the nation. Both rely on each other for basic needs. Local milk and meat are derived from herding, which crop food like Yam, Corn or Maize, Rice, Cassava, Beans etc, are derived from farming. Herdsmen need foods to grow, while the farmers also need meat and milk as source of protein to grow and live qualitative life. Although, there is alternative to meat but no alternative to food but yet, the duo must learn to co-exist and embrace tolerance for the purpose of stability, peace, food and economic sustenance, national unity and overall sustainable development.

Significantly, climatic change is a natural occurrence that has been impacting and will continue to impact on pastoral activities. Obviously, this climatic change is fundamental and difficult to control by man and more often places much pressure on land resources due to the unavoidable movement of herders from the north down to the central and southern part of the country. It is therefore imperative in as much as this unavoidable movement and consequent pressure and contact between herders and farmers will continue to serve as source of conflict between the two parties to suggest possible and workable ways of ensuring harmonious and cohesive relationship between the herdsmen and farmers. To achieve this, the following recommendations are adduced; Encroachment and trespass into farmlands needs to be genuinely prevented and addressed by concern individuals and authorities. To achieve this, semi – intensive system of animal rearing can be adopted. These animals can be confined say within the confines of village communities. Also, ranching is another method that can prevent encroachment and trespass of land by pastoralists. Ranch is a very large farm where animals are bred. This practice is common in advanced nations and other developing countries. Our herdsmen can be trained through seminars, workshops, public lecture and other effective means. This is the best and workable way to practice ranching for efficient and effective milk and meat production. This practice will definitely prevent unnecessary and incessant conflicts and squabbles between herders and farmers.

Open grazing can be restricted to friendly environment, friendly environment as used here refers to environment (states, communities, settlement) that are more receptive to the Fulani people or area of predominantly dominated by Fulani ethnic group. Restricted open grazing, ranching and semi – intensive system of farming will undoubtedly prevent rustling, reduce pressure on land resource, avoid trespass and destruction of farm crops and inevitably curtail conflict and crisis.

Conflict resolution via traditional and native approach needs to be embraced particularly at community levels. The community Heads should organize a monthly or quarterly meetings or assembly where all stakeholders in the community will gather and discuss pertinent issues that could breed enmity or crisis among the residents with the sole purpose of resolving such issues. The case of Herdsmen – farmers conflict can be resolved amicably through this meeting.

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