

The Causes and Consequences of Fulani Pastoralist-Farmers Conflict in Nigeria

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Date of publication (dd/mm/yyyy): 03/07/2018

Abstract – Conflict between farmers and Fulani catterearers in Northern Nigeria has become an intractable and its re-occurrence posed greater challenges and concern among Nigerian and nation authorities. The conflict generally centered on access to and struggle for grazing land and water. It was observed that on daily basis the grazing land is continuously shrinking and diminishing due to factors such as climatic change which lead to it takeover of arable lands by desert, global warming also caused available space water to dry up, its encroachment by the farmers and other government/ nongovernmental activities, on the other hand the activities of those involved in arm banditry and cattle rustling also posed a threat to nations peace. These scenarios make conflict inevitable, and the crises create so many problems related to the nation's insecurity because not only crops and livestock but many lives and properties have been lost on daily basis.. The most disheartening thing in this conflict is how some well-placed individuals and politicians seems to label the conflict giving it a religious and ethnic coronation. This paper is going to focus on what cause the conflict and the way forward on how to reduce and resolve it, it also going to review the consequences of the crisis on the lasting peace and harmonious living in the country under study. It is also going to suggest the way forward to reduce and resolve the conflict in order to maintain peace in the country.

Keywords – Cattle Rustling, Conflict, Farmers, Food Scarcity, Fulani Pastoralists, Security, Sedantarization.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Farmers-herdsmen (Fulani) conflict have increase spreading throughout sub Saharan Africa and Nigeria appears to be the most affected nation more especially the North and some parts of Southern states. Its re-occurrences posed threat to nation coexistence, many people lost their lives and properties, communities were also been destroyed on daily basis as a result of the conflict [1]. Today, it takes different dimension as each occurrence would lead to the reprisal attacks on innocent people in some parts of Kaduna State of North-west and most North-central states by the ethnic and religious groups. The victims of the attacks are not only the Fulani themselves but also on Hausa community who are also terribly affected in a state like Zamfara [2]-[3]-[4]-[5]. The paper is going to address the following questions: 1. what are the proximate causes of the conflict? 2. What are the consequences on the affected communities and the nation in general? Does the current global climate change be linked to the cause's conflict? The paper will discuss the causes of the conflict such as destruction of crops and cattle rustling/arm banditry, the

consequences of the crises which include among others general loss of lives and properties and the shortage of food. It will also discuss on creation or reviving of grazing reserve as the feasible solution to end the conflict and drown conclusion.

II. CONCEPTUAL DEFINITIONS

A. Pastoralism

Pastoralism can be defined as the process or act of livestock production carried out by the sedentary and nomadic people [6]. It is the animal husbandry, the rearing of farm animals. "Pastoralism" generally has mobile aspect, moving the cattle in search of grazing land and water.

B. Sedentarization

"Sedentarization is the process of formerly nomadic populations settling into non-mobile communities, and applies to foraging populations, livestock keeping pastoralists, and other occupational or ethnic groups that were for-merly mobile such as Roma" [7]. Sendatary farming in Nigeria is among Fulani clients who mostly settle in towns and cities some of them cannot even the native langue they are mixed and inter married with Hausa [8].

C. Social Conflict

According to Caser (1959) cited in Agbegbedia, (2014) [9] social conflict is defined as "a struggle over values or claims to status, power and scarce resources, in which the aims of the conflicting parties are not only to gain the desired values, but also, to neutralize, injure or to eliminate their rivals". He further stated that such conflicts could occur between persons group or between persons and groups, which is bound to happen in every human society.

III. CAUSES OF THE CONFLICT

The Fulani Pastoralist - Farmers conflict is one of the most intricate social problems affecting Nigeria's survival as a nation, due to its intractable nature it is difficult to ascertain when it would come to an end. Moreover, it is assumed to be cause by so many factors among which include the following;



Fig. 1. Fulani pastoralist rearing cattle in Northern Nigeria.



Fig. 2. A local farmer in Northern Nigeria.

A. Climate Change: Drought and Desertification

According to Ofunku and Sife (2009) and Olayoku, (2014) [10]-[11] the root cause of the herdsmen - farmers' conflict may be attributed to climate change which necessitates the Fulani and their cattle to migrate further south. The shortage of annual rainfall led to drought and desertification which contribute immensely to the occurrence of herdsmen- farmers' conflict in Nigeria. The countries Northwestern and Northeastern states lays within arid and semi-arid zones, which were characterized by prolong dry season [12]. A special report by the United Nations Institute of Peace [13] reveals that the reduction of animal feeds and water in the Sahel region caused by desert encroachment and drought pushed nomadic cattle rearers drifting southward "outside their normal grazing route" in the vane "a mix of weather related factors has pushed farmers to cultivate more land each year leaving wanderers fewer places to water and gaze their stock" (p.5) [14]. According to the National Metrological Agency report (2008) [15] for the past three decades the yearly wet season have diminished from an average of 150 to 120 days. For the past 60 years, over 350, 000 sq. km of these northern states either becomes desert or semi-desert. The report further stated that desert is rapidly encroaching southward at the speed rate of 0.6 km per annum. A report published by the FAO Country Programming Framework (CPF) (2013- 2017) [16] revealed that 50-75 per cent of the land areas of four northeastern and six northwestern states is becoming desert, unfortunately these seems to be the areas

where these Pastoralists group resided. These states are; Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, Yobe and Zamfara States. These environmental degradation affect agricultural production and the amount of water for the human and animal used forcing the pastoralist to move southward in search of productive land.

B. Loss of Grazing Reserve

The expansion of farming on pastures and grazing reserves is another causative factor of Fulani- Herdsmen conflict in Nigeria [17]. Subsequent to the Nations independence in 1960, the government of Northern region fumigated the law which demarcated grazing reserves and transhumance routes throughout the old northern region. According to Crisis Group report (2017) [18] these grazing reserves and routes meant for the passage of animals where severely annexed, the encroachment lead to outbreak of the deadly crises, some scholars attributed this to the inability of government to implement the grazing reserves Act of 1968. According to Adeoyo (2017) [19] there already exist 4125 grazing reserves in the country, unfortunately, only one-third is utilized, while the remaining 270 have either been built on or converted to farm land, and these has annoyed the herdsmen and may be one of the things fueling the crisis. This act encourages sedentarization and resolve conflict with a plan to create bumper harvest and infrastructural development to pastoralist family. This would however overcome the problem of unavailability of cattle market and animal fest and diseases control. Unfortunately, not all part of this law was implemented which may be one of the reason why this problem is still lingering [20]. The cattle pathways close to urban areas were taken over by business structures like filling stations and mansions [21]. The crisis mostly happened during dry season where the bush and grasses get dray and at the same time in preparation of the next farming season, farmer clear their farms and burn the grasses residue which the herdsmen used to feed their cattle. Grass burning and the scarcity of water push nomadic push them to cross the line and at the same time enter farmers land and this action ignites the crisis [22]. But Farouk (2002) [23] argues that the blames should be apportioned on both parties, the farmers do not want to release their farmland in good time after rainy seasons harvest for the herders to feed their caws with the farm residues at the onset of dry season. This delay mostly happened due to the planting of some crops whose ripeness takes long period, e.g. cotton, sorghum and sweet potato. The facts that the farmer leaves these crops unfenced make them vulnerable for the animals to destroy. If such happened sometimes the herders has to pay farmers compensation for the residue. He further emphasize that on the other side, majority of the Fulani nomads have apportioned the blame of the predicament of the crisis to the biased Nigeria's public policy that has been neglecting livestock production in favor of crop farming. In the related literature, Abbass (2012) [1] observed that the land grabbing or acquisition by the wealth to do individuals in the country instigates the reoccurrence of the clashes as the herdsmen have neither have a place for their cattle to pass nor place to stay. Traditional communal ownership has been changed to private ownership [24].

C. Crime: Rural Banditry and Cattle Rustling

Cattle rustling and rural banditry is a serious problem which cause Farmers Fulani conflict in Nigeria. Check any newspaper you will come across the news of attacks which appears to be associated with livestock thefts especially in most states of north central, north-east and north-western Nigeria. According Hame Saidu, a Pastoralist, Wuse, 2009-IRIN, 2009 cited in Abbass (2012) [1] “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?” going by this statement by the re-known Fulani it is clear indication that cattle thefts is call to war by every nomads. The continue re-occurrence of the crime have also lead to the threat on the nation’s security as so many lives and properties were lost [11]. Sometimes the crime of rural banditry and cattle rustling do occur within Fulani pastoralist themselves especially the happenings in the North-west and North-central zones. It is rather unfortunate that the rustlers have formed arm groups moving and attacking rural communities in reaction to the steal their cattle. The bands formed their based in a remote bush where there is less presence of state security agents within three month (February to May) this year 2018 alone, over 500 people were reported to be killed in the crises in Talatan Mafara, Shinkafi and Dansadau Local government areas of Zamfara, Birnin Gwari LGA of Kaduna, Numan LGA of Adamawa, Gwer West in Benue respectively and some were hold for ransom [25]. According to Spotlight an international review for peace initiative (2016) [26], the areas that are mostly affected according to the report are Taraba north-west, south-east Plateau, Zamfara and some rural areas of Borno State. Another criminal gang that engages in cattle rustling is Boko Haram terrorist who based in remote areas of Borno State. It has been reported that from 2011 - 2016 the sect has killed over 1,900 Shuwa Arab pastoralists and took away over 227,000 livestock¹.

D. Changing in Pastoralism and Farming Practice

Historically, the herders completely engaged in pure nomadism where they live together along with their cattle wherever they go. Today some pastoralists are gradually changing to “sedentary lifestyle leaving to the younger men or boys aged 9 to 25 years”². These younger generations cannot be able to control the caws and in the event they enter into the farms, they lack technicalities to amicably resolve the conflict in a polite manner. Haro and Dayo [27] claims that these negligence by the Fulani nomads to put more attention on their animals when grazing in the field during wet season, make their animal mostly eat and destroy the farmers’ crops. This action would raise the tension of the farmers and may result in to crisis if not properly control. According to De Hann [28] both parties have their opinion on what triggered the conflict, the farmers made mentioned that destruction of their crops by cows is what causes the conflict while on the other hand the pastoralists apportioned the blames on the burning of lands

and government fadama project is what trigger the conflict.

IV. CONSEQUENCES OF THE CONFLICT

Fulani-farmers’ clashes have direct impact on the survival of those involved. The conflict destabilizes the production of food and raw material for the manufacturing sector in Nigeria [29]-[30]. It also contributes to the high rate of poverty and starvation and also leads to social disorganization amongst the families. Additionally, it destroys the peaceful symbiotic relationships that exist between farmers and nomads which exist since time immemorial.

“Some farmers practicing mixed farming attests that their animals have in one way or the other been affected, other farmers likewise sedentary pastoralists were in one way or the other affected by farmers” [30]. With these relationships, it appears that there is inter dependent between Fulani and farmers, and hardly one can do without the other [31], the mutual relationship has been affected due to the continues attacks and reprisal attacks each of them.

Another consequence of the conflict is the general loss of lives and properties. According to Ezeah, and Ikezue, [32] a lot of farmers and fulanis died as a result of the conflict and at every occurrence of the conflict government would form a committee to investigate the root cause but the inability of the government to implement the committees report which means punishing the perpetrators of the crises seems to be the major problem.

The conflict also led to mistrust among people who lived together for so many years because some north Christian minority and southern politicians have stated leveling the conflict as a deliberate attempt by the Northern Muslim Leaders to impose Islamic religion to the mostly Christian dominated states of north central and southern states. According to Higazi, and Yousuf³ “in reality urbanized, sedentary Fulani and ‘Hausa-Fulani’ populations tend to have limited or no influence over nomadic Fulani pastoralists”. In his statement during an interview with VOA Africa Hausa service in April, 2018 [33] Nigerian President claims that contrary to what some politicians are propagating in media houses pertaining Fulani- Farmers crises that his government has hand in it because of it escalation during his administration and apportioned the blame on him and other northern for inability to end the attacks and leveled it as a political agenda, the president revealed that the conflict has long history, it stated since times immemorial and urge the politician to stop playing politics with nation security.

¹Preliminary investigations conducted by Al-Hayah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria on the loss of lives, livestock and properties of its members due to Boko Haram activities in Borno State, Nigeria – December 2015. Sourced from the Research work conducted by

Conciliation Resources, Published by Spotlight an International Review for Peace Initiatives.

²Abbass, *op cit.* 4.

³Higazi, and Yousuf, *op. cit.* 3

V. REVIVAL OF GRAZING RESERVE: A POSSIBLE SOLUTION TO END THE CONFLICT

In order to come out with the lasting solution to the conflict, the federal government setup a committee of public policy experts to suggest the ways to solve the lingering crisis and suggest that, government is to create a permanent settlement for the herdsmen i.e. to establish or revive grazing reserves so that pastoralist would stop wandering with their caws it would reduce the clashes between the two adversaries [34]. In a related development Musa, Terwase and Igbawu⁴ argues that creation of grazing reserves seems to be the viable solution, means shifting from old system of animal husbandry to a modern method. As claimed by Claiment and Peter [35] the already demarcated 4125 grazing reserves in the country should be traced and allocated to the herders. This would however overcome the problem of unavailability of cattle market and animal pest and diseases control offices. Revisiting grazing resources may be another way forward to end the conflict. Prior to the nations independence, government formed grazing reserve Act in 1964 for the purposes of assessing grazing lands to the nomads, it encourages sedentarization and resolve conflict with the hope to create bumper harvest and infrastructural development to pastoralists family, unfortunately, not all part of this law was implemented which may be one of the reason why this problem is still lingering⁵. Similarly, the land use Act, (1990) [36] also fumigated by the government granted equal rights and opportunities to all Nigerian to live where ever they in the country, and consider every citizen as Nigerian. Rasak. (2011) [37] argued that these laws also need to be totally implemented.

VI. CONCLUSION

The paper has explained that the conflict between Fulani herdsmen and farmers occurred since time immemorial. One of the proximate causes is scarcity of water resources and animal feeds, which push Fulani pastoralists, migrate southward in search of where to feed their animals. The failure of government to fully implement the long awaited land use act and grazing reserve act which among other things allowed for the demarcation of the land for growing of pastures for grazing and passed routes of animals made the conflict more intractable. The activities of cattle rustlers and arm bandit are continuously increasing which result in the general loss of lives and properties not only among the warring parties but also on the innocent people throughout the country called Nigeria.

Consequences were outlined which include the unrest among the two warring parties and the likelihood of what they may cause which is shortage of food and livestock. The recent politicization of the conflict by the politicians and

religious organizations is a clear indication that the crisis has now taken a different dimension which has negative consequences to the survival of the country. Most of the Christian politicians asserted that because of the religious inclination of the cattle rearers been Muslims and must of the communities attacked especially those of central Nigeria are non-Muslims; they leveled it as a continuation of northern Muslims hegemony on the minority tribes of the north. However, in real sense the number of people killed in the Muslim dominated states of Zamfara and Kaduna superseded by per those killed in other states summing the together, (President Buhari Interview with VOA on 4th may 2018). He further stated that, the conflict has nothing to do with religion.

Further academic research need to be conducted on the causes and consequences of the conflict and a sound conflict resolution mechanism is needed from the government which my included intensive research on the way forward to resolve the conflict by the government policy makers and the leaders of the parties involved in the conflict in order to come out with a policy that will end the conflict for the lasting peace of the country.

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⁴Terwase and Igbawu, *op. cit*

⁵FOA. "The Nigerian Government's Grazing Reserve Act of 1964 was a response to the problem of alienation of grazing lands increasingly being faced by the pastoral population at the time. In a broader framework, the law was also taken as one of the policy measures to address some of the constraints confronting livestock development in Nigeria. Thus, grazing

reserves were established not only to protect grazing lands from crop farming and provide easier access to them by pastoralists but also to encourage the sedentarization of nomadic/transhumant pastoralists through legally secure titles to grazing water and, in general, as one means of promoting livestock development".

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