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Zamfara State Second Peace Initiative: Architecture for the Neighborhood States, Nigeria

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Abstract:

This paper examine the origin, nature, dynamics and prospects of the second peace initiative by the zamfara state government in managing the eight year old social conflict between Fulani herdsmen and local people in the state. While providing an insight in to the factors responsible for the collapse of the "first peace initiative" instituted by the immediate past administration of Governor Yari, the paper conducted critical examination of key peace indicators that may likely make the current initiative distinguished from the former one. It also provides a critical review of causes and consequences of the social conflict that characterized the state for eight years. The paper has equally provides in comparative terms reasons why other neighboring states like Katsina, Sokoto and Kebbi need to key in to the peace initiative of Zamfara state in order to ensure lasting peace in the region. The paper adopted mixed methodology of extensive field interview using purposive sampling method as well literature review.

Keywords: Zamfara State, Peace Initiative, Architecture, Neighbourhood States

1. Introduction

Since 2011, Zamfara state has been identified as one of the flash point states which are hits by the deadly social conflict in Northern Nigeria. Apart from Borno, Yobe, Adamawa and may be parts of Bauchi and Kano states, there is no other states in the North that has suffered deadly attacks which resulted to the killing of thousands of innocent lives than Zamfara state Hamza (2019). Beside cattle rustling which was at the beginning of the whole social conflict in the state in 2011, Zamfara people have suffered worst forms of armed banditry and militia which resulted to the death of over 3,500 people with average of over eight billion naira attendant economic losses emanating from kidnapping, abduction, and other social atrocities which characterized the state security situation since 2011.

In spite of the effort by the Nigerian government to tackle the social conflict through conventional means of using military and other security agencies, the effort has failed due to the combination of several factors among which include: complex nature of the terrain used by the bandits, non-reliable access to means of communication for timely contact with the security agencies during attacks and lack of accessible road to respond to emergency situation by the security agencies whenever attacks are launched, Lawal (2013).

With all these challenges, the state and federal government had been actively involved in conducting operation against these bandits especially along Dansadau forest which shares borders with the Niger, Kaduna and Kebbi states. For the past eight years however, no fewer than 1000 military personals have been redeployed in various parts of Zamfara for various operations, this is besides over 800 mobile and conventional police men, operatives of the Nigerian security and civil defense corps and personals of the state security Services which were redeployed to re-enforced the operation led by the Nigerian military and air force but yet the conflict continue to escalate beyond comprehension.

By the beginning of the 2017, the conflict took another dimension with the emergence of abduction and kidnapping for ransom. Estimate by Bello (2019) has shown that, over 1000 people have been abducted at Zamfara axis of the North West geo-political zone including those abducted along Zamfara state borders with Katsina, Sokoto, Birnin Gawayi in Kaduna and Wasagu in Kebbi State from 2017 to date. Also the MD Abubakar led security committee set up by the administration of Governor Muhammadu Bello reported that over 3 billion naira have been collected in the name of payment for ransom of the kidnapped relations Maradun (2019)

This negative development calls for initiation of peace pact between the armed bandits and local vigilante groups by the Abdulazeez Yari led government in early 2017 with the hope of returning peace among the two warring factions. However, not more than five months in to the 2017 peace accord, the bandits in particular allegedly returned to the forest due to what they termed as failure of the government to fulfill its parts of the agreement entered in to with them and continued arrest and killing of their members by the organized vigilante groups Usman (2019).

This action in particular, prompted the government to launched Operation "Dirar Mikiya" jointly carried out by the Nigerian Army and their Air force counterparts to get rid of the bandits as a result of their renewed violence. The operation lead to the killing of the suspected head of the bandits one notorious "Buharin Daji" and subsequent military

operation against the bandit's hideout in Dansadau, Zurmi, Birnin Magaji and Shinkafi resulted to the burning of several bandit camps and murder of over 500 armed bandits by the Nigerian security forces, Usman (2019).

With the coming of the new administration of Bello Matawalle in May 2019 he championed the initiation of "Zamfara second peace deal" with the aim of integrating some structural reforms in to the initiative to make it different from the first one. Though many doubt how the new deal will be different from the past one, the Governor during a Radio Phone-in programme insisted that, the second peace deal will be the last step toward returning Zamfara state to its former of being "the most peaceful state in Nigeria", Zamfara Radio (2019).

The objective of this position paper is to conduct an over-view of the structure of the new peace deal initiated by Zamfara state government and assesses some of the indicators that may make it work differently from the first one and also review how the structure and content of the new deal can serve as architecture for the neighborhood states. The research adopted mixed research methodology of literature review and purposive oral interview with a view to assessing factual information that are considered critical to the content development of this paper.

2. Historical Over-view of Zamfara Social Conflict

Though it is still unclear as to the actual cause of the social conflict in Zamfara State, but despite several narrations there has been a popular view among people especially after the incident at Chile Market. According to Anka (2019), the origin of Zamfara conflict could be traced to the brutal murder of a suspected Fulani herder at Chile market by some members of the organized vigilante group as reprisal attack in 2011. Though it was one action against an accused, the implication of what happened at Chile sent a wrong signal to other organized vigilante groups along Dansadau forest and several other places who resorted to applying similar strategy of killing any suspected Fulani herder who is on their track list. Jabir (2018) argued, when the Fulani men were openly murdered in an open market at Chile and other local markets the government and indeed the security agencies failed to take appropriate steps of stopping the action by the vigilante until when it becomes clearer that, Fulani had to put themselves on the defense. The last scenario that puts the whole security atmosphere on the trial was after the avoidable murder of about twenty-five Fulani herders at Dangulbi, Dankurmi, Nasarawar Godal and Kasuwar Daji markets from 2011 to 2015. Anka (2019).

The conflict which lasted for close to nine years has resulted to the brutal murder and killing of hundreds of innocent lives including women, children, households and adults. These killings and murder involves both the locals and Fulani herders hence both side of the divide prepare arms in defense of themselves. Lawal (2018) argued, since when the conflict started in 2011, over one hundred communities and settlements have been either invaded or attacked by the suspected bandits and hundreds of lives and properties have been lost to this tragedy. Anka (2019) provided this graph below:

S/No		Incident	Casualties
1	February 14 th 2018	Attack on Villagers travelling on Truck to Birane Village	41 people Killed
2	January 18 th 2018	Gun men attack Gora Village in Maradun	6 People Killed, Four wounded and 2 sons of a Federal Legislator abducted
3	September 22 nd 2017	Gun men attack Tsafe Town	An official of FRSC Killed
4	January 26 th 2017	Suspected herdsmen killed one person in Magazu in an attempt to find one Rabo who allegedly stole their Cattle	One Person killed
5	November 19 th 2016	Gun men attacked Dole, TudunBugaje and Kwangami Villages in Zurmi	25 People Killed
6	November 18 th 2016	Gunmen Rustle Cattle and abducted people in Maru Local Government	40 People Abducted
7	November 7 th 2016	Gun men Killed Gold Miners at a mining Camp near GidanArdo Village in Maru	40 Gold Miners Killed
8	November 6 th 2016	Gun men killed Ten traders from Kanoma Village in Maru Local Government Council	10 people killed
9	May 5 th 2016	Gun men invaded Madada Village RuwanTofa	Number of Casualties not confirmed.
10	February 6 th 2016	Gun men attacked KwanarDutse Village in Maru Local government Council	50 people killed, Cattle stole and houses burnt
11	July 2015	Gun men attacked Kokeya and Chigama	Over 30 people killed and hundreds of cattle rustle
12	September 2014	Gun Men Killed people at Akuzo, Zarfarawa, Girke, Kofa, Kundubau, Wonaka, FuraGirke, FeginMahe, KukarGwandu, KanawaLafiya and Gora Villages	33 People were killed
13	April 6 th 2014	Suspected Gun Men attacked Yargaladima Village of Maru Local government Council	200 People were killed

S/No		Incident	Casualties
14	September 30 th 2013	Gun men attacked Buzuzu Village in Bukkuyum Local government Council	3 People were Killed
15	July-September 2013	Summary of people killed and abducted as stated by the State Governor	160 people killed and 10 married women abducted
16	June 18 th 2013	Gun Men attacked Kizara Village In Tsafe	48 People were killed
17	December 14 th 2012	Gun men attacked Rukudawa Village in Zurmi Local government Council	10 members of vigilante o Vigilante were shot dead
18	October 30 th 2012	Gunmen attacked Kaboro Village in Dansadau Maru Local government Council	20 people including the Village Head were killed
19	June 11 th 2012	Gunmen attacked Guru, Dangulbi Sabuwar Kasuwa and Biya Village all in Maru Local government Council	26 people killed
20	May 12 th 2012	Robbers attacked Jangeme Village	Killed four Police men and 2 Children
21	October 3 rd 2011	Gun men attacked Lingyado Village in Maru Local government Council	23 people killed

Table 1: Some Graphic Pictures of Areas Affected by the Zamfara Conflict Since 2011

Sources: Reuters, NTA, BBC, Premium Times, Daily Trust, Leadership, Vanguard, The Street Journal, The Scoop, Nigerian Tribune, Fox News, Africa Review, Information Nigeria, Channels Tv, PM News (2018) As Provided For By Anka (2019)

The consequences of this conflict have not only resulted to loss of lives and properties, but it affected virtually all aspect of the socio-economic and political development of the state. It has influenced forceful migration of hundreds of Fulani herders with their cattle and other livestock out of Zamfara due to the fear of the unknown. It was evidently clear that, Zamfara has loss over one hundred Fulani settlements to this social conflict even as over one hundred and forty-two thousand herds of cattle have been moved out of the state. The implication of this forceful migration of the Fulani and their cattle out of Zamfara lead to the scarcity of cattle and increase in the price of meat in the local markets. Muhammad (2018) argued the price at which we normally buy cattle and slaughter for sales in the market has almost doubled. For instance, instead of going to Talatar-Mafara, Shinkafi or Gummi markets to secure cattle at a cheaper and affordable prices, one has to travel as per as Adamawa and Niger states to procure them. Imagine what it will take someone to procure and transport cattle from this per distance areas of the North-East and North-Central parts of Nigeria to Zamfara state.

The crises also lead to the increasing hunger and shortage of food as majority of those affected are rural people whose pre-occupation is mainly farming. Since 2014, the victim communities have been voicing out their fear that, the bandits have been threatening their effort to embark on their annual farming activities as many were shot dead by the bandits on their farm lands. Wadatau (2018) argued, eighty percent of farmers at Dansadau, Dagulbi, Dankurmi and their neighboring villages cannot farm their lands for the past five consecutive years because they have been sent warning notice and some of those who defy the warning were killed by these armed bandits group. The development resulted to not only shortage of food but increasing hunger among people as hardly people find food of nutritional value to eat. Our people are dying of hunger as both the government and wealthy individuals in the cities have abandoned us at our own faith, Umar (2018).

Health care management has almost become paralyzed hence the medical health facilities have either been destroyed or abandoned by the professional health personals because of the fear of their safety. Lawal (2018) argued, as I speak to you, if you exclude General Hospital Dansadau and Dangulbi, our people have to travel to Gusau or nearby local governments to access medical facility as no health worker is willing to risk his life and stay with us in the villages. Our pregnant women died of absence of basic primary health care support caused by the unending tragedy that befalls us. Not only health care system, education had also suffered hence majority of the schools that are either constructed or renovated by the government have been abandoned by the teachers. Even where the teachers opted to stay, some of the pupils are not able to pay the school fees because their breadwinners were either killed or incapacitated by the deadliest attacks over the years, Mammam (2015) argued, when attack in Yargaladima was perfected, we had to shut down our only primary school in the village hence those that are providing the financial support for the payment of the teacher's salary were all killed in the attack. We used to contribute three hundred naira per child monthly to raise forty five thousand naira as salary to the three NCE teachers we employed to teach our children and among us there are those with three-five children and majority of them are killed and even before the attack, government constructed two blocks of six class rooms and for the past three years we had been agitating for deployment of teachers but that demand has not been fulfill by the government. And now that over one hundred households are killed to the most tragic attack in our community we have to shut down the school completely.

Very painful of this negative development there was an increase in the emergence of human kidnapping and abduction which befalls almost every parts of the state. Since the beginning of the year 2018, the attention of every citizen of Zamfara has been shifted to the menace of human abduction and kidnapping. Munnir (2018) argued, if there is any calamity that this tragedy of banditry has cost Zamfara people is the proliferation of kidnapping groups as over two hundred people are either abducted or kidnapped for ransom. Here in Kaura Namoda it has become a daily thing hardly a day comes since February 2018 without one or two person being kidnapped and millions of naira is being paid as ransom.

3. Dynamics of Zamfara Second Peace Deal

Many may wonder what differentiate Zamfara first and second peace deal by structure and content. But in the opinion of Shehu (2019) the second peace deal is both comprehensive and more focus especially that, new administration has taken notes of the major weaknesses of why the first deal has failed.

First among the most critical strategy in the second peace deal is the issue of disarmament and weapons surrender. Though this was parts of the agreement reached in the first deal, it has not yielded much needed result because the government has not provided a reliable structure through which the weapons shall be surrendered Munir (2018). But the in the new peace deal, all aggrieved parties especially the bandits and members of the organized vigilante groups were asked to surrender their weapons willingly to the police authority. Zamfara state Police Commissioner Usman Nagogo stated, "since the initiation of the second peace deal, gunmen have brought 49 AK47 rifles while the vigilance group surrendered 100 dane guns, Maiharaji (2019). In another development, Zamfara state spoke person for the police SP Shehu Muhammad said "the caliber of arms and ammunition surrendered by the repentant bandits included: AK 47 rifle, LMG military rifle, LAR rifle, ten rounds of live ammunition and military camouflage uniforms PM News (2019).

Second strategy of the new peace deal is the exchange of the captives between members of the organized vigilante groups and leaders of the bandits. The idea of the exchange as contained in the new peace deal is to free the mind of all the aggrieved parties that the government is sincere in the peace dialogue. Evidently however, because at the first peace deal this issue of exchange of captives was not made prominent some Fulani bandits after few months returned to the forest because government was reluctant in making sure that their captured relations were freed and allow to be reunited with the members of their families. But to show some level of differences the State Commissioner of Police Nagogo included in the new initiative exchange of captives between the two warring parties. For instance on the 4th of July 2019 while at the ongoing talk in the palace of the Emir of Dansadau, "some 25 Fulani women, men and children held by the Yansakai since last April 2019 were released to the State Commissioner of Police Mr. Usman Nagoggo". Since the beginning of the second peace deal over 300 captives were exchanged through the state police command, Yusuf (2019).

Another unique strategy in the second peace deal initiated by Zamfara state government is the rehabilitation of the victim communities affected by this social conflict. Many observers of the development in Zamfara were of the generic views that, the first peace deal initiated by the government failed because the government was only concern about arm surrender. In the majority views, while the government is pursuing both parties to embrace peace it is equally important that some victim communities are put to rehabilitation so that, people displaced can reunite back and continue with their normal activities. As argued by Sanusi (2019), you cannot achieved peace when you emphasize on arm surrender alone ignoring the victim communities that are at the receiving end. During one of the peace dialogue meeting, the Governor stated, "part of our new strategies of ensuring peace in Zamfara is we are going to develop mechanisms that would see to the rehabilitation of the communities affected by the menace of the social conflict as well as empower those that suffered economic losses as a result of serial attacks over the years Zamfara Radio (2019).

Addressing the failure of the government socio-economic policies in addressing critical issues of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy as well social disorder, marginalization and exclusion were also parts of the new strategies in the new peace deal. As argued by Aminu (2019), poverty indicators for Zamfara are terribly telling the government that, all is not well and Added to this, is the question of thousands of productive but unemployed youths that are deliberately sidelined by the policy response of the state. The government at the initial stage of the first peace deal did not adequately bother to redirect its policy implementation toward reducing poverty and unemployment among the people of the state. At one of the security meeting, Governor Matawalle said parts of the content of the second peace deal was to embarks on total overhauling of its socio-economic policies to improve government capacity in reducing poverty and unemployment among its citizens.

To address the question of marginalization and isolation especially among Fulani herdsmen, the governor initiated various reforms among which include "Sharo" one of the Fulani annual cultural displays. As captured Ifeanyi N (2019), "Matawalle invited the Fulani and repentant bandits for the festival in fulfillment of the peace agreement and reconciliation his government reached with the bandits. Over 30,000 persons attended the festival where Fulani cultural activities were displayed. Government functionaries, Fulani leaders and repentant bandits raced the event very happily. As part of the new strategies of achieving the peace deal, the government agreed to invest heavily in developing the new federal government Rural Grazing Area programme (RUGA). Parts of the idea was to recreate adequate grazing reserves for the herders which is seen as critical to ending the social conflict between Fulani herders and local farmers in the state. The Governor in one of the programme with the members of the Fulani cattle breeders states them that, "the RUGA project is aimed at showcasing to the world that, the peace process embarked upon by his administration is working". Beside the RUGA project, the government is planning to revive all grazing reserves and watering points so that Fulani herdsmen can move quietly and rear their livestock. The Governor once mentioned, "it is our responsibility under the new peace arrangement, to revive and secure all grazing reserves and provide functional dams for watering process. We are to also provide modern method of animal breeding and milk processing to enhance the economic viability of the Fulani people, Zamfara Radio (2019).

Under the new peace arrangement of Zamfara state government, the government is considering conducting a census of the all the Fulani settlements so that, basic social services especially nomadic school system and basic primary health care system can be provided for them. Not only is that, under the new RUGA Project, Fulfulde language is going to be taught as mandatory subject in all the nomadic schools. As reported by Sahara Reporters (2019), "the governor directed the State Ministry of Education to immediately start working on the inclusion of the Fulfulde language in school's curriculum". This is aimed at bridging the gap of marginalization through revival of Fulfulde language.

Harmonizing security strategies with the neighborhood states is also another strategy of the new peace deal. In the views of Aminu, unless other neighboring states of Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, Kaduna and precisely Niger states have keyed in to similar steps entered in to with the bandits by Zamfara state government especially in ensuring border surveillance and geo-regional security architecture the development may only last for temporary time. To enhance this, Zamfara state government had to enter in to memorandum of understanding with the states of Katsina, Sokoto and neighboring state of Maradi in Niger Republic in order to ensure harmonize security management strategies along their borders. Parts of the terms in the memorandum are “the participating states agreed to maintain good neighborliness and cooperation among themselves while addressing the issue of security collectively with one uniform strategy and approach.

4. Lessons for the Neighborhood States

One of the lessons to learn from Zamfara peace initiative by the neighborhood states is to also initiate similar peace pact with their set of armed bandits. The general implication of not initiating similar peace arrangement by the neighborhood states is that, there are high chances of these repentant bandits to spill their banditry activities to the neighboring states especially that, the states shares borders with Zamfara. Because their activities is such like an organize forms of crime they may decide to re-unites with other bandits in the forest and continue with their bandits activities in another state. As argued by Usman (2019), for the second peace deal to last for long, Zamfara border states of Katsina, Sokoto, Kebbi, Niger and Kaduna need to enter in to same peace deal and effectively ensure border surveillance and time to time review of security master plans.

Governor Masari of Katsina for instance in one of the Interview with Daily Trust once argued, “what is most important this time around is that whatever you decide to do collectively, the state governments will have a common approach. So, it will not be a situation where a bandit will run from Zamfara to Kaduna and Niger, or from Niger to Katsina and Sokoto. The approach will be the same, and the military and police are supportive. So, it is simply something like a carrot-and-stick approach that we are going to have, which will be uniform in the affected states Daily Trust (2019).

Another lesson is for the neighborhood states to key in to the RUGA programme or in alternative design a local programme aimed at reviving all the grazing reserves and watering places. If a common programme of providing a secured area for grazing of livestock has not been uniformly provided by the affected states, restriction of the movement of Fulani herdsmen with the cattle across Border States will be difficult. Usman (2019) observed, typical Fulani herdsman searching for greener grazing pasture does not necessarily understand conventional border line between one state and another and by implication law banning open grazing which may be of consequential effect on him in state which is not his own may ignite another crises and as such, there is the need for states to develop uniform policies and strategies on grazing so that such unforeseen circumstances can be avoided.

Governor Masari of Katsina once argued, “we have set up the time to rehabilitate water points because what is most important is to make sure that all the earth dams in the forest are rehabilitated. This is because sometimes the Fulani or herdsmen move their cattle in search of water. If there is sufficient water for rearing cattle, especially during the dry season, we believe that it will reduce the issue of moving from one place to another.

There is also the need for the neighborhood states, to learn from the lesson of policy reforms currently embarked upon by Zamfara state government to address the question of marginalization of the Fulani cultural sect especially reviving nomadic education as well as building hospitals and veterinary facilities in the forest. Aminu (2019) argued, the steps taken by Zamfara state government to revive nomadic schools system and improve on the health care management of the nomads is absolutely fundamental in ensuring a lasting peace but unless other neighboring states have agreed to implement same strategies they may find it difficult to manage their internal security crises. Governor Masari has already acknowledge this simple facts when he declared that, “we have made provision for four primary schools in the nine local government areas and constructed nine multi-purpose clinics for both animals and humans. We will do more to making sure that social policies as they are implemented in Katsina also impacted positively on the lives of the Fulani herdsmen.

Another lesson is for the neighborhood states to also effectively develop strategy plans aimed at addressing the foreign influence of other terrorists group who operates through Nigeria-Niger border lines. Though the three state governors had soon realize the effect of the border influence on this social conflict especially on the proliferation of small and light weapons and sign a memorandum with the government of Maradi to support border security, there is need for time to time review of the application of the terms of this memorandum to ensure maximum compliance. After the Maradi Accord Governor Masari once said, “Boko Haram has played a role in what is happening in banditry and cattle rustling in our respective states. Boko Haram has support from outside. Also, the fall of Gaddafi made flow of arms and ammunitions into our country easy. The crisis in Mali also helped, especially for those who wanted to use religion as a cover for their criminal activities. Religion was used, not because they believed in it, but because they needed an identity.

5. Conclusion

From the discussion so far, it is evidently clear that, the structure and content of the new peace pact executed by Zamfara state government may help in minimizing the eight years conflict in Zamfara to the barest minimum if the neighborhood states can carefully study and implement same or parts of the terms contained in the Zamfara model. Conflict world over is hardly manage if there is no cross border cooperation because the actors are not only organized locally but get connected with other interest groups especially within the neighboring states. Just like the way Nigerian government is fighting the Boko Haram insurgency through trans-border cooperation, this social conflict in Zamfara with its attendant consequences on the neighboring states of Katsina, Sokoto, Kebbi, Niger and Kaduna can be effectively managed through a geo-regional peace structure that will accommodate the interest of the actors involved in the conflict.

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