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Farmers-Pastoralists Conflict and Its Implications on Internal Security in Nigeria

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Abstract:

This paper examines the implications of farmers-pastoralists conflicts on internal security in Nigeria. It identified policy framework, climate change, and grazing areas as causative factors in the conflict. Other factors are land ownership, socio-cultural differences, cattle rustling and proliferations of small and light weapons. The paper further discussed the nature of the implications of farmers-pastoralist conflicts on internal security in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Farmers-pastoralists conflict, internal security, Nigeria*

1. Introduction

Nations all over the world strive to provide peaceful environment for the wellbeing of their people. To achieve this desire, nations put in place measures that enable not only the individual; but also, the government to pursue economic activities peacefully. This is not the case with many nations, as they are often confronted with incessant conflicts in sharing and benefiting from the state resources. Myriad of these conflicts arise from a struggle for limited environmental resources among different groups in the society. A clear demonstration of such conflict is the struggle for the use of land resources for crop farming and animal husbandry. In a bid to increase production, farmers seek arable land to cultivate crops, while pastoralists also desire extensive grassland and water sources to graze their animals. As a result, the competition between farmers and pastoralists for land resources often lead to violent farmers-pastoralist conflict that undermine internal security of a state.

In Nigeria, conflicts between the farmers and pastoralists have been witnessed in many parts of the country, leading to destruction of lives and property, with grave implications for security in the nation. States such as Benue, Plateau, Nassarawa, Taraba, Kaduna, Kebbi and Zamfara, amongst others in the Northern Region have experienced intense conflicts between farmers and herdsman.ⁱ The situation is however, not confined to the Northern Region. States in the south such as Oyo, Enugu and Imo have also witnessed farmers-pastoralists conflict. According to Olayoku, over 120 cases of farmers-herdsman conflict were reported around the country between June 2008 and May 2014, leading to over 3700 deaths and over 61,000 people injured.ⁱⁱ During this period, crops and livestock worth billions of Naira were destroyed, while thousands of people were displaced.

The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to examine the causes of the farmers-pastoralists conflict and its implication on internal security in Nigeria. The paper will address such critical areas as conceptual clarification, an overview of Farmers-pastoralists conflict in Nigeria, causes of the conflict, Implication of the conflict on the Nigeria's internal security and above all a way forward toward ending the conflict.

2. Conceptual Clarifications

2.1. Farmer-Pastoralists Conflict

Oladele and Oladele defined farmers-pastoralists conflict as a competition between 2 agricultural land users, comprising farmers and herdsman, which often times turn into serious overt and covert hostilities and social friction.ⁱⁱⁱ This definition views farmers-pastoralists conflict as a struggle over scarce resources, such as land and water. It underlines the importance of resources in farmers-pastoralists conflict, but did not specify other influencing factors such as the socio-cultural perceptions.

Audu views farmers-pastoralists conflicts as a struggle between crop farming and pastoral groups for land or other resources that are critical for the sustainability and/or development of pastoral and agricultural production systems, such as watering areas, wet lands and fertile lands which can assume violent or non-violent dimensions.^{iv} This view outlines the importance of land and water resources to the development of pastoral and agricultural production, as well as emphasizing the influence of resource scarcity in farmers-pastoralists conflict. Other scholars who support this view include Odoh and Chilaka, who believe that resource scarcity is the primary cause of farmers-pastoralists conflict.^v This perspective is, however, restrictive as it does not accommodate other possible political, social and cultural factors that instigate farmers-pastoralists conflicts, such as social discrimination and cultural prejudices. This perspective is unsuitable for this study and therefore not adopted.

King defines farmers-pastoralists conflicts as conflicts involving farming communities and pastoralist occasioned by the struggle for land resources and socio-cultural dominance in a given environment.^{vi} He postulates that management and resolution of farmers-pastoralists conflict could be enhanced through an in-depth understanding of the socio-cultural behavioural patterns of pastoralists and farmers. This definition highlights the importance of socio-cultural perspective as vital to understanding farmers-pastoralists conflict. King's view is supported by scholars such as Moritz who posited that farmers-pastoralists conflicts are influenced by socio-cultural factors such as religion, livelihood and other cultural practices.^{vii}

2.2. Internal Security

On the other hand, internal security refers to the act of preserving peaceful atmosphere and safety of the people within the borders of a sovereign state or other self-governing territories.^{viii} This is demonstrated on the ground of state capability to uphold the national law and repel any security threat in the state. The security of the state involves the safety of the state and portends absence of or protection of the state from physical danger.^{ix}

The internal security of the state is to secure the state and free her from danger, harm or anxiety. The state ought to have the ability to respond and contend adequately to security breaches and threats within her bounds.^x Section 14(2) (b) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) dealing with the fundamental objectives and directive principle of state policy states inter alia: 'the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of the government'.^{xi} This signifies that it is incumbent on the state to provide not only for the welfare of her citizens, but to ensure law and order and take effective measures to ensure their security, continued survival and existence. Implied from this definition also, is that ensuring the continued survival and existence of the people, the security of the state could have internal and external dimension. That is to say, the state in ensuring her security could use coercive power to stop her enemy whether they are coming from within or without.

In line with this submission, Imobighe indicated that internal security involves freedom from or the absence of those situations which could destroy internal cohesion and the corporate existence of a state and its ability to maintain its cherished institutions.^{xii} In addition, Nwolise opines that internal security refers to the maintenance of peace, law, and order, as well as the security of lives and property within a given territory.¹⁶ These definitions place emphasis on peace and freedom from danger for people within a given political entity irrespective of the source of such threats. Similarly, Ahmadu holds that internal security is the protection of the citizenry from internally generated threats or crisis.¹⁷ This paper argues that internal security refers to safety and a feeling of safety by the citizenry from any threat whatsoever.

2.3. Overview of Farmers-Pastoralists Conflict in Nigeria

The introduction of Cattle Tax (Jangali) by some native authorities in Northern Nigeria in 1923 caused a widespread migration of Pastoralists (Fulani Herdsmen) towards the middle belts regions where such taxes were not in force.¹⁸ In the process, pastoralists clashed with farmers in communities along their migration routes, as their livestock strayed into farms causing destruction to crops. These conflicts between farmers and herdsmen were witnessed in several communities including Mambila, Benue/Plateau, Kaduna and Jalingo among others, up to the early post independence era.¹⁹ This necessitated measures to forestall the conflicts in order to enhance internal security in Nigeria.

Accordingly, the government of the Northern Region enacted the Northern Nigeria Grazing Law in 1965.²⁰ The law provided for the establishment of grazing lands in order to encourage the nomadic Fulani herdsmen to adopt sedentary practices. In 1975, the Federal Government initiated the National Livestock Development Plan (NLDP) with the aim of enhancing livestock productivity, through effective and efficient management of livestock and grazing resources.²¹ These policies, however, did not comprehensively address the peculiar needs of the pastoralists whose major concern was the elimination of multiple tax regimes. Thus, these policies did not attract the necessary cooperation for effective implementation.

Efforts to implement the Northern Nigeria Grazing Law led to the acquisition of 6.4 million hectares of forest reserve for the grazing reserve scheme.²² Land was earmarked for the establishment of grazing reserves at Sokoto, Bauchi, Zaria, Ilorin, Katsina, Wase, Zamfara and Udubo. The NLDP further necessitated the establishment and demarcation of about 4,125 grazing reserves across Nigeria, covering about 4.3 million hectares, as well as grazing routes.²³ The well demarcated grazing reserves and grazing routes were designed to prevent contact between farmers and herdsmen during the seasonal migration of herdsmen, thus curbing farmers-herdsmen conflict for the enhancement of internal security. However, most of the reserves have been encroached upon, while insufficient information on the stock routes has contributed to herdsmen straying away

from demarcated routes into farming areas. This has further instigated farmers-herdsmen conflicts, thereby undermining internal security.

Incidents of conflicts between farmers and herdsmen emerged again in 1991, when farmers and herdsmen clashed in Kaduna.²⁴ Thereafter, intense conflicts were witnessed in Plateau, Benue, Taraba and Niger States.²⁵ Between 1991 and 2005, farmers-herdsmen conflicts accounted for over 35 per cent of all reported conflicts in Nigeria.²⁶ This period also witnessed the use of firearms and automatic rifles in farmers-herdsmen conflicts. The intensity of the conflicts necessitated the adoption of robust law enforcement measures to prevent further escalation of farmers-pastoralists conflict. The Police were deployed to quell these conflicts and restore law and order. However, the Police have shown considerable lack of capacity to quell these conflicts in many cases. As a result, the Nigerian Armed Forces have also been mobilized in some cases to provide assistance to the Police to restore law and order during farmers-pastoralists conflicts. These law enforcement measures have however been unable to stem the increasing trend of farmers-herdsmen conflicts which has posed serious threats to internal security.

The persistence of farmers-herdsmen conflict necessitated efforts by government to establish various mediatory panels and judicial commissions to address these conflicts. These official conflict management mechanisms are supported institutionally, provided by traditional institutions; which in the traditional Nigerian community provide the basic conflict resolution mechanisms. However, these institutional conflict management mechanisms have been unable to curb the conflicts, due to the inability of traditional institutions to exert sufficient influence on the conflicting parties. Thus farmers-herdsmen conflicts persisted particularly in states such as Benue, Bauchi, Plateau, Nassarawa, Sokoto, Kaduna and Taraba.^{xiii} The persistence of these conflict has led to colossal loss of lives and property, thereby jeopardizing internal security in Nigeria.

Significantly also, many southern states have witnessed the eruption of farmers-herdsmen clashes. The increasing southwards movement of herdsmen towards the southern states of Nigeria, has instigated farmers-herdsmen conflict in states such as Oyo, Enugu, Anambra, Delta, Kwara and Rivers. In many cases, differences in socio-cultural background have created misunderstandings that fueled these conflicts. Cultural differences have influenced animosities and exacerbated farmers-pastoralists conflict, thereby undermining internal security. This has brought to fore the influence of socio-cultural dynamics on farmers-herdsmen conflict. Thus, the overview of farmers-pastoralists conflict raises some pertinent issues that have implications on internal security in Nigeria.

3. Causes of Farmer-Pastoralist Conflict in Nigeria

There are numerous causes to the farmer-pastoralist conflict in Nigeria which continues to interrupt the peace-loving communities of the Nigerian state and has resulted in the untimely deaths on both sides of the principal actors as well as innocent citizens who have been caught in the crossfire of the conflict.

3.1. Policy Framework

The Land Use Act of 1978 vested the control of land with the States and LGAs which made it difficult for Federal Government to acquire land for grazing reserves (GRs). The NLDP proposed that 10 per cent of the nation's landmass should be allocated for GRs to be replicated by the states.²⁷ However, this framework has not been implemented, hence there is the need to revisit those laws and probably review them.

3.2. Climate Change

Climate change has forced herdsmen to move further down South in the regional and Nigerian context in search of grazing areas. Climate change and desertification have opened up two main corridors, the North-West corridor which runs from Benin Republic through to Niger and cuts into Sokoto, Zamfara, and Kwara States. And the North-East Corridor from Niger Republic, Cameroun through into Borno, Yobe, Adamawa, Kano, Plateau, Nassarawa and terminates in the Niger-Benue basin, and both corridors cut across the Niger-Benue basin, which has become a focal point and very important because the movements are largely ungoverned. Therefore, shortage of rainfall results in desertification which prompt herdsmen to encroach farmlands which result to farmer-pastoralists conflict.

3.3. Grazing Area

The FGN identified over 300 areas with 28 million hectares for GRs in 1992. About 45 of these areas, covering 600,000 hectares have been gazetted. Eight of these reserves totaling 225,000 hectares are fully established.²⁸ The limited number of GRs has often led to farmer-pastoralist conflict, added to the failure of the FGN, state governments and the pastoralists to replenish, maintain, develop the grazing reserves and encourage their future usage led to the abandonment of established grazing reserves by pastoralists. For instance, 2014 witnessed the abandonment of the 2,000 projected grazing reserves for pastoralists families.²⁹ It has also been observed that pastoralists migrate from North Africa, due to conflicts in the Sahel region and Northeast of Nigeria, meaning that areas for grazing have narrowed. They now move down South to the Niger-Benue basin which is under pressure as a grazing area and due to fears of being attacked, pastoralists carry arms.

3.4. Land Ownership

Ownership of rights of way and use of land is another cause of farmer-pastoralists conflict. The 1978 LUA Act granted equal rights and opportunities to Nigerians to live in any part of the country undeterred. It also vested the control of land with

the States and LGAs.³⁰ However, the ownership of lands in Nigeria as contained in the LUA focuses more on staying permanent on the land and showing uninterrupted use of the land. The provision of staying permanently on land as provided by the LUA makes farmers have greater advantage of securing land than the pastoralists who by their nature are nomadic and cannot settle on land for a long period of time. The land administration system also favours the land acquisition by the peasant and the lower class who are mostly farmers. This is because land is allocated in a discretionary manner by families and communal land owners in the LGAs, and customary land tenure agreements continue to be the standard by which land rights are allocated.³¹

3.5. Socio-Cultural

Socio-cultural divergence between the two actors is also a causative factor, the pastoralist's way of life is quite different from that of the farmer, so it will be difficult for both of them to co-habit. The Nomadic lifestyle of the pastoralist is changing; some have become semi-sedentary which is triggering the conflict with local farmers. There are instances of herdsmen settling in some communities and choosing not to move or sometimes they leave family members behind and return when the migration season starts, which means they are becoming owners or joint owners of the community. The tendency of the pastoralists to occupy areas of 'unused land' which traditionally belong to communities has created a feeling of perceived threat of land grabbing and this is spiking the conflict.

In addition, the culture of the pastoralists also contradicts most of those in the communities they come across while migrating from one place to the other. The pastoralist mode of encampment consists essentially of clearing any available area of unoccupied or un-utilized land. The pastoralists culture recognises land and water as natural resources endowed for the use of everybody no matter where it is found.³²

3.6. Cattle Rustling

Cattle rustling often results in farmer-pastoralist conflict in recent years, it is estimated that, about 70,000 cattle were rustled in Benue state, while over 58,430 were stolen in Kaduna and 45,302 in Nassarawa States. There are reports of poisoning of cattle; limited access to water points for cattle and killing of herdsmen in transit. This act of criminality leads to farmer- pastoralist conflict in Nigeria which impedes internal security.³³

3.7. Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons

The issue of proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) has to be addressed; currently Nigeria is saturated with SALW, which is helping to ignite the conflict because actors are no longer interested in dialogue. Herdsmen during migration carry arms and will most likely kill farmers when confronted for encroachment. In 2016, 8,000 illegal SALWs were discovered to have been used during FPC in Agatu in Benue State.³⁴ Furthermore security agencies have been accused of unwillingness or lack of political will to prosecute offenders. There is empirical evidence which suggest that police failed to prosecute or diligently prosecute those arrested during the pastoralists and sedentary farmers' crisis in Benue State between 2010 and 2012.

4. Implications of Farmer-Pastoralist Conflict on Internal Security in Nigeria

4.1. Lives and Property

The FPC has brought about increase in loss of lives and property in Nigeria. Conflicts between pastoralists and farmers causes destruction of farm produce and stealing of livestock. This has led to significant reduction of agricultural produce in many parts of Nigeria. Also, the invasion of farmlands by pastoralists and their cattle has caused destruction to farmlands with attendant reduction on food security in Nigeria. For instance, Benue, Plateau and Nasarawa states have recorded low harvests of major agricultural products due to persistent farmer-pastoralist conflict. FPC has reduced major agricultural produce by 35 per cent from 2007 to 2015.³⁵ According media reports in 2016, over 2,000 people have been killed in conflicts between pastoralists, host communities and farmers.³⁶ Thus, farmer-pastoralist conflict threatens the safety of lives and property of the 2 main actors with adverse effect on internal security in Nigeria.

4.2. Food Security

Conflicts between pastoralists and farmers continues to cause destruction of farm produce and stealing of livestock. This has led to significant reduction of agricultural produce in many parts of Nigeria. In addition, States affected by FPC conflicts lost an average of 47% of taxes (Internally Generated Revenue) during these attacks. In Benue State the people are predominantly farmers, 70% of the fruits and food produce consumed in Nigeria are cultivated in the state. Beyond the physical mass violence in the community, clashes between farmers and pastoralists impedes trade practices, reduces crop yield, displace farmers. Furthermore, consumers of farm produce boycott the communities as a result of the violence which eventually leads to increase in food price across the country in general. In 2015 the Global Hunger Index reported that Taraba, Benue and Plateau States recorded the destruction of about 23,471 farmlands which resulted in 20 per cent decline of food security in the country.³⁷ These losses as a result of the conflict impact negatively on internal security in Nigeria.

4.3. Humanitarian Crisis

Victims of farmer-pastoralist conflict are usually forced to take refuge in nearest Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps outside their homes and communities for safety. For instance, in April 2014, clashes between pastoralists and farmers in Benue State led to the displacement of over 25,000 people who were encamped in various IDPs camps in Makurdi.³⁸ These IDPs suffer emotional problems associated with memory of fearful events, loss of livelihood, frustration, assaults and human right abuse. There is also the considerable financial cost for both state and federal government in providing food and material resources for victims of the FPC. Hence, farmer-pastoralist conflicts, therefore, causes great humanitarian crises that requires huge government funds to manage, which negatively affect internal security in Nigeria.

5. Way Forward

The farmer-pastoralist conflict may be suppressed as has been the case in previous crisis, but unless the causes are addressed which has not been the case, the problem will still persist. It is therefore imperative that a strategy to ensure lasting peace and stability between both actors is developed. The strategy will ensure that violence and destruction are brought to a level manageable by community leaders, traditional rulers and security agencies. Hence, the FGN can:

- Take concrete steps towards the realization of the plan to create ranches or grazing areas which are either government sponsored or private public partnership that pastoralists can pay to graze their cattle. These can be an integrated economic system where animal husbandry, abattoir can be linked to the ranches or grazing areas. This is considered a critical strategy to curb the movement of cattle across the country and to yield great outputs in terms of dairy products with the help of improved breeds and modern technological knowhow.
- Establish route guards at entry points in all LGs, who will identify and notify the communities and security agencies about the movements of the nomadic pastoralists.
- Generate satellite geo-spatial intelligence of all the grazing areas and farm lands, and also compare old maps and current ones to see the level of encroachment through the National Space Research and Development Agency(NASDRA)
- Govern the Niger-Benue basin region, in such a way that grazing reserves can be developed around the area which will be useful to both farmers and pastoralists.
- Create an authority that can manage the area and actors should include indigenes of the areas, herdsmen, security forces, traditional and community leaders, local institution, local, state and federal government.
- Draw lessons from communities where peace exists between farmers and pastoralists, because they have come to an agreement on resource sharing that is not generating conflict. For instance, some Benue State communities are trying to use local approaches in solving the crisis, however limitations exist to some of the approaches because different communities use different approaches.
- Examine the conflict from the strategic and local levels because it cannot be a one level approach and before organizing all-stakeholders meeting, a stakeholders' identification must take place, which will help in identifying the objectives for the national and local conference.
- Proper enlightenment is needed at the grass root in the communities to help come up with some community-based solutions. Pastoralism and cultivation of land are both methods of farming. But the way the media reports the incidence makes it look as if pastoralists are not farmers, which is wrong.
- Both legal and policy frameworks should be considered and submitted by the Ministry of Agriculture. The policy framework involves the integration of animal agriculture and grazing path in the formulation of future policies.
- Adopt the ECOWAS protocol relating to free movement of persons, residents and establishments and also the trans-human certificate. And convene an all stakeholders conference for farmers and herdsmen to promote dialogue for short, medium, and long-term measures to resolve the disputes between both parties and implement a lasting resolution. In addition, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) policy has to be involved in order to reach a compromise before implementation.

6. Conclusion

The conflict between farmers and pastoralists has reached a frightening level which calls for concerted efforts from all stake holders. However, the federal government has taken significant efforts in aiding the discourse on policy framework, to reach a broad consensus to contain the growing crisis between the 2 groups. Lawmakers in Abuja have been working on a bill that would establish grazing areas across the country to reduce hostilities. The Ministry of Agriculture is in the process of creating grazing reserves or cattle ranches which should contain the frequent clashes between farmers and pastoralists. Currently, some state governments approximately 10 northern states and one central state had provided 55,000 hectares to establish ranches to curb the FPC in order to enhance internal security in Nigeria. Also, there are ongoing FGN initiatives of curbing the conflict these include the Sectoral Security Partnership, Great Green wall (GGW) Project and Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) Peace Pact with State Governments.

Overall, in order to harvest a "grass root" opinion and response from those involved there is the need for a town hall dialogue, centralized from the local government to state and national levels. This would enable every voice to be heard and harness the main objective of the dialogue which is to be addressed appropriately and for success.

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