

Recurrent Conflicts among Migrant Fulani Herdsmen and Indigenous Communities of Southern Nigeria: A Review of Literature

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Abstract

Grazing conflicts between Fulani herdsmen and indigenous farming communities across Nigeria has existed for many decades without appreciable resolutions. In recent times the conflict has even assumed dangerous dimensions tending towards criminality with attendant monumental loss of lives and property. Yet, the causes, repercussions and effective resolution mechanism of the conflict have not been critically analyzed and properly understood. This is the gap in knowledge which this study is set to fill. This is a review paper which investigated the causes, repercussions and resolutions of pastoral herdsmen grazing conflicts with indigenous farming communities in Nigeria using secondary documentary sources. The Relative Deprivation Theory provided the theoretical anchorage for the study. The findings show that the inability of the Nigerian state to equitably distribute and allocate land resources for cattle routes and grazing is at core of the conflict. The government thus has an unflinching obligation to resolve the conflict by establishing ranches and grazing reserves across the country. This is with the view to ensuring that nomadic Fulani herdsmen do not infringe on the rights of indigenous farming communities as well as other farmers who thrive on settled agricultural production in Nigeria.

Keywords: Fulani, Pastoral Herdsmen, Grazing Conflict, Grazing Reserves, Indigenous Communities, Ranches,

Introduction

Conflict has ever been a recurring decimal in history of mankind. More often than not, this is as a result of competition for scarce resources in human society. Conflicts between Fulani herdsmen and indigenous farmers have existed for a very long time but it may be exactly difficult to pinpoint when the crises actually started. However, from a historical point of view, certain scholars refer to the fact that conflicts resulting from cattle grazing have existed for as long as the practice of agriculture (Abbass, 2012; Blench, 2010; cited in Olayoku, 2014). Fulani Herdsmen have borne a large proportion of the blame for most conflicts and environmental degradation in policy statements in the Guinea Savannah region of West African States (Thebaud and Batterbury, 2001). It is probably unarguable that resource ownership and utilization have directly and indirectly defined the dimensions of most

conflicts involving man since time immemorial. Of all resources, however, land has remained an overwhelming source of conflicts among various user groups as well as individuals at varying thresholds.

Objectives of the Paper

This is a review paper that examined among others very crucial issues bordering on herders/farmers conflict in recent time in Nigeria. Principally, the paper investigated the factors responsible for such conflicts in the contemporary Nigerian society. The consequences of the intractable conflict between the herdsmen and members of the indigenous communities were further interrogated in literature. The paper then concluded by proffering lasting and reliable solutions which could, to a major extent, curb the incessant conflicts involving the herders and the farmers in the various communities in Nigeria.

Overview/Brief Account of Recent Fulani Herdsmen-Indigenous Community Conflicts in Southern Nigeria and other Communities in the North Central States of the Country

In particular, conflicts between farmers and herdsmen in the use of agricultural land are becoming fiercer and increasingly widespread in Nigeria, largely due to ‘intensification and extensification’ of production activities that are necessitated by increasing human population (Fasona & Omojola, 2005; Gefu & Kolawole, 2005, cited in Adisa & Adekunle, 2010). Conflicts involving lands have not only heightened the level of insecurity, but have also demonstrated high potential to exacerbate food crisis in Nigeria and other affected countries due to loss of lives, animals, crops and valuable properties (*Cotula, Toulmin, & Hesse, 2004*).

Grazing lands in Nigeria have barely been demarcated, and this large sector of agriculture always suffer compared to crop farming or fruit plantation (FAO, 1985). Pastoralists usually graze over areas outside farm lands, and these have been accepted to be the norm from time immemorial. Their movements are opportunistic and they look for pasture and water resources in a pattern that varies seasonally or year-to-year according to availability of resources (FAO, 2011). The patterns of movement may be controlled by seasonal climate variations. However, increase in population, drying of waterholes, shifting in rainfall pattern leading to drought as a result of the changing climate affects both sectors of agriculture. At the same time, smaller and local agricultural production systems are becoming more and more integrated into the global economy, pushing up land values (Muhammed, Ismaila &

Bibi, 2015). Fulani herders make excellent use of sign language, cane and verbal command to drive the animals, with faster animals occupying the front rows. During migration, a typical herd consisting of several family units move in a column of up to five meters wide and two kilometres long. By the time it passes any given point, ‘everything that stands at that point is destroyed’ (Fricke, 1979; and Vengroff, 1980, cited in Iro, 1994). This could partly result in conflict with the farmers due largely to the fact that some farm produce and equipments may be destroyed in the process.

On *Monday*, the 25th of April, 2016, no fewer than 500 heavily armed Fulani herdsmen *allegedly* invaded Nimbo in Uzo-Uwani local government area of Enugu state in the Southeast of Nigeria where more than 40 persons were reportedly killed by the herders. The incident took place barely 24 hours after stories filtered out that no fewer than 500 heavily-armed Fulani herdsmen sneaked into the community preparatory to launch an attack. About seven villages (Nimbo (Nimbo Ngwoko, Ugwuujoro, Ekwuru, Ebor, Enugu Nimbo, Umuome and Ugwuachara) were attacked. Ten residential houses and a *Catholic* church, Christ Holy Church International, aka Odozi Obodo, were also burnt by the herdsmen just as vehicles and motorcycles were destroyed and domestic animals killed (<http://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/04/bloodbath-enugu-fulani-herdsmen-kill-40/>).

One of the victims of the attack in Nimbo community in Enugu state was a Councillor, named Ezugwu. Speaking from his hospital bed said:

I was coming out of my house when I heard the community bell ringing. As I was going with a friend to know what the bell was all about, 40 Fulani herdsmen armed with sophisticated guns and machetes came after us. They pursued us, killed my friend and shot at me several times but missed. They caught up with me and used machetes on me until I lost consciousness (<http://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/04/bloodbath-enugu-fulani-herdsmen-kill-40/>).

Consequent upon this invasion, the inhabitants of the affected villages were said to have moved in droves to safer havens. It is instructive to note that this movement is not without its attendant consequences. It leads to massive civilian displacement and losing of productive capabilities of the internally displaced persons. Latently, it serves as a boost to the herders to continually invade peaceful and unsuspecting people who hitherto were enjoying the ambiance of their God given lands and homes.

The invasion of Agatu in Benue state in north central zone of Nigeria is another recent killing by the nomadic herdsmen. They rendered some villages in Benue State a gaping wound, spewing forth a river of human blood. No immediate reasons were offered for the attacks. Neither has anybody been able to give the precise number of people killed; but reports say more than a hundred people were killed by the herdsmen. The account of Paul Ede, who coordinated the coalition of civil society groups that visited the National Assembly in Abuja Nigeria to protest the latest killings in Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State, claimed that 400 persons lost their lives in that orgy of violence.

Very heart-rending, however, was the account of the police chief, who recounted how the villages were razed to the ground and emptied of their original inhabitants only to be taken over by heavily armed Fulani herdsmen and about 5,000 cattle. In a situation where the heinous crime of sacking whole communities was committed – about 7,000 people were said to have fled their homes – how come it did not occur to the commissioner of police that the heavily armed men he saw at the crime scene were the first suspects, who should be taken in for questioning?

As is usual when such attacks occur, there were no security men in Agatu or in Nimbo to protect the victims, most of them women and children. The invaders in Agatu reportedly crossed over from Loco and Doma in nearby Nasarawa State and sacked seven villages, namely Okokolo, Aila, Adagbo Akwu, Omikuidi, Ocholonya and Odugbeho. Yet, for the length of time the onslaught lasted, security men did not come to the rescue of the victims. Similarly, in Nimbo in Uzo-Uwani community of Enugu state, it was alleged that no sooner than the law enforcement agents left than the herdsmen struck and ravaged the villages without any challenge whatsoever from the law enforcement agencies. This is an indictment on the nature of policing in place in the country today. Something urgent and decisive has to be done to curb the excesses of these rampaging Fulani herdsmen.

The recent killings by the herdsmen however, could be traced to the successes they achieved in the past when they killed almost everybody in the areas they invaded. It could be recalled that no fewer than 500 persons were brutally murdered and many wounded in three villages in Jos South and Barakin Ladi local government areas of Plateau State in north central geo political zone of Nigeria by persons suspected to be Fulani herdsmen on 7th March, 2010. According to an eye-witness account, the men who arrived at Dogo Nahawa and Shen in Jos South local government area at about

3am massacred the villagers including women and children in their sleep in what was believed was a reprisal attack on villagers who were part of the Jos crisis of January 17 that year (<http://www.nigerianbestforum.com/blog/massacre-fulani-herdsmen-kill-500-in-plateau/>).

From a group of stick-wielding pastoralists, living essentially a nomadic life, the Fulani, whose stock cuts across many countries in the West African sub-region, have transformed into an arms-bearing fighting force, leaving a trail of destruction wherever they go. At a time when the country is seriously concerned about her huge food import bill, the Fulani empty their cattle into cultivated farmland and are ready to kill and maim whoever dares to challenge them. It is even suggested that most of those who carry out the killings are not Nigerians, but imported fighters, who quickly find their way out of the country once they accomplish their deadly mission. No thanks to the activities of the Fulani herders, Nigeria now boasts of a worse terrorism record than Somalia, a failed state.

The 2015 Global Terrorism Index identifies the Fulani militants as a terrorist group, only Iraq and Afghanistan suffered worse terror attacks than Nigeria in 2014. Of the 20 deadliest terror attacks globally in 2014, nine occurred in Nigeria, with Boko Haram, which overtook the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria as the deadliest terror group. The ninth, an attack in Galadima, which claimed over 200 lives, was attributed to Fulani herdsmen. While Boko Haram attacks claimed 6,644 lives, Fulani militants, named as the fourth deadliest in the world, were responsible for 1,229 lives (<http://www.punchng.com/fulani-herdsmens-mindless-agatu-killings/>).

The recent attacks bring to the fore the futility of continuing with the current policing system. It offers a compelling reason to seek the state police option. Besides, the security agents will be making a mistake to think that only Boko Haram, which also calls itself the Islamic State of West African Province, deserves the attention of the Nigerian military. Such disposition has given room for other groups to embark on a killing binge. The security agents should be alert to terror attacks wherever they occur in the country (<http://www.punchng.com/fulani-herdsmens-mindless-agatu-killings/>). It is therefore very necessary that every necessary effort should be put in place. This is for the purposes and intents of stemming the barbaric and inhuman conducts of these herders before their actions precipitate a chain of attendant reactions which possible end may not be desirable at all.

Theoretical Framework

This paper is anchored the Relative Deprivation Theory. Some of the major proponents of the theory are-Aristotle, Karl Marx, Bertrand de' Toqueville, Samuel Stouffer, Simone Flynn, Quinn McMemar, Rensis Likert, Linda Brown, Townsend Patrick. While modern relative deprivation theory developed in the 1940s, the concept of relative deprivation itself has a longer history in the social sciences. Relative Deprivation Theory predicts collective action by groups especially those members of the society who feel more frustrated and disgruntled by social and economic conditions. It is a conscious feeling of negative discrepancy between legitimate expectation and present actualities (Wilson, 1973). The theory states that the Potentials for collective violence vary strongly with the intensity and scope of relative deprivation among members of a collectivity. The theory maintains that men who feel that they have many ways to attain their goals are less likely to become angry when one way is blocked than those who have few alternatives. Relative deprivation theory argues that collective actions have their foundations among people who feel relatively deprived of some goods or resources. It maintains that individuals and groups who lack some goods, services and comfort are more likely to organize themselves collectively to improve and defend their conditions (Morrison, 1978).

The theory also helps us to have a better understanding of why there are frequent problems associated with ethnic groups, regions or provinces that are fighting to address their relatively deprived situation especially in federations where resources and revenue are not well distributed. The inability of the Fulani herdsmen to have unhindered access to grazing areas/reserves is to a major extent responsible for why they often go into conflict with host communities and farmers in Nigeria. Sometimes, the conflicts between the herdsmen and the indigenous farming communities could even take ethnic dimensions. The relative deprivation theory was adopted as a theoretical platform because it can be used to explain the subject matter of this paper. The theory sees relative deprivation as the main cause of conflict, insecurity and violence. Due to the absence of mapped out grazing routes and grazing reserves, herdsmen especially of the Fulani origin resorted to taking the laws into their hands by forcing their animals into people's farmlands thereby destroying farm produce in the process. The herdsmen believed that they should have unhindered access to grazing routes which they see as their God's given right and any attempt to deny them this right will

definitely be challenged. On the other hand, farmers may not be willing to allow the herdsmen access to their farmlands and may always resort to violence to challenge the excesses of the herdsmen. The end products of such intense and violent exchanges often precipitate conflict between the two parties. Indigenous communities may feel aggrieved with the destruction of their farmlands and produce and subsequently engage the herders in physical combat. The herdsmen however may be displeased with the manner in which the host community dealt with them and eventually embark on reprisal attack on the people. This could account for herdsmen invasion of Dogo Nahawa in Plateau state, Agatu in Benue state and Uzo Uwani in Enugu State in Nigeria. It is therefore necessary to recognize the need of instituting a conflict resolution mechanism which will take care of the grievances of the aggrieved parties. Land is seen to be at the centre of the conflicts between the herders and farmers in most communities in Nigeria. It then becomes necessary that grazing routes and grazing reserves which were provided by the government in the past should be re introduced and clearly mapped out so as to minimize the conflicts between the herders and farmers in Nigeria.

However, in spite of the contributions of the relative deprivation theory, numerous aspects of the theory have been questioned. For instance, critics have questioned the link between feelings of deprivation and the rise of social movements and argue that studies of relative deprivation must recognize egoistic deprivation, fraternal deprivation and self referenced relative deprivation. The central idea of relative deprivation theory suggests that individuals or groups feel deprived when their current circumstances are negatively compared to the situation of others. But critics who questioned the link between relative deprivation and social movements observed that much of the evidence linking social movements to feelings of discontent and ultimately efforts to effect social change, feelings of relative deprivation may or may not definitely lead to the creation of social movements and collective identity (Morrison, 1971).

Relative deprivation theory has been criticized for a lack of focus on the individual. Critics assert that sociologists using relative deprivation theory tends to examine individual and collective relative deprivation but ignore self referenced relative deprivation. Self referenced relative deprivation results from comparisons with one's own previous or anticipated future

situation rather than with the situation of others. Sociologists who dismiss self-referenced relative deprivation believe that it may have more impact on the efforts that individuals make to change their individual situations rather than on group-level political or social action. Sociologists who support further research into self-referenced relative deprivation believe that it may serve as a catalyst to examine one's beliefs about fairness and justice in society.

Critics have also noted that people do not need to feel deprived before they move to action and that even when deprivation is intense on individuals or a large group; it is not a sufficient condition for violence. Finally, the theory also fails to explain why certain feelings of deprivation are transformed into collective action, whereas in some similar situations, no collective effort is made to reshape society. In spite of the shortcomings of the relative deprivation theory, the theory is still useful in explaining herdsman/farmers conflict in Nigeria.

Review of Related Literature

Scholars have written extensively on the conflicts involving Fulani herdsmen. In this paper however, emphasis will be based on examining in a very pragmatic manner, the series of events which happen before, during and after the herdsmen's activities especially as it relates to the Nigerian contemporary milieu. In this respect, the factors which influence the conflicts, the consequences of the conflicts and the possible remediation actions will be examined in detail.

(a) Factors influencing farmers-herdsmen conflicts

It is almost incontrovertible that the causes of farmer-herdsmen conflicts are often not far-fetched. However, there appears to be no consensus among both groups as to the causes of their mutual conflict. Ingawa, Ega, and Erhabor (1999, p. 13) reported that the key underlying causes of farmer-herdsmen conflict in Nigeria are:

- i) Changing resource access rights, whereby traditional access rights to communal grazing and water resources are being obstructed by the individual tenureship of arable farmers. This is particularly severe on the traditional trek routes, which become favourite cropping sites because of their better soil fertility resulting from the concentration of animal manure from the trekking herds in these areas. Within the fadama areas, this is exacerbated by the fragmented nature of the crop plots, which makes prevention of animals straying in the crop plots difficult;*
- ii) Inadequacy of grazing resources, as increasing crop cultivation (and increasing commercialization of the crop-residues) and poor management of the existing grazing reserves have*

resulted in a significant reduction in available livestock feed resources, in particular in the Northern States. Moreover the high value crops introduced by NFDLP (tomatoes and onions) produce almost no crop-residues for livestock feeding. iii) Decline in internal discipline and social cohesion, as the adherence to the traditional rules regarding grazing periods, and the authority of the traditional rulers is broken down. Finally, the regulation that twenty percent of the fadama would need to be set aside for grazing (National Agricultural Policy, 1988) has not been adhered to.

Another contributing factor is the fact that grazing resources including pasture and water are found in different places at different times of the year, hence the need for constant mobility among cattle herders for opportunistic resource use. This brings them into contact with the “landed” settled farmers, and causes competition and conflicts (Abubakar, 2012). Tonah (2006) opined that the causes of farmers/herders conflicts include the southward movement of pastoral herds into the humid and sub-humid zones, promoted by the successful control of the menace posed by disease, the widespread and availability of veterinary medicine and the expansion of farming activities into areas that hitherto served as pastureland. As a result, the herdsmen destroy crops of the farmers on their farmland.

Hoffmann et al. (2008 cited in Aliyu, 2015) opined that the relationship between farmers and nomadic Fulanis started degenerating when the Hausa farmers began to raise animals, including cattle. The farmers started taking crop residues to their animals, and as a consequence, forage became scarce for herders in the dry season. Probably, out of frustration, the settled herders invited the nomadic ones to carry-out group herding on farmers field even while crop were yet to be harvested. When the farmers attempted to challenge them, violence erupted. This is an indication that nomads-farmers conflicts could be seen to have ethnic influence. Government policies could also be seen as a cause of nomads/farmers conflicts. For example, Aliyu (2015) further explained that the conflicts do occur as the size of the existing reserve keep on shrinking due to encroachment and government approved expansion of farmlands. This leads to the conversion of water points and stock routes into farmlands. In a related development, Ofuoku and Isife (2009) stated that a cow once strayed and destroyed farm products in Delta state and as a result, the offended party slaughtered it. This resulted in conflicts between the host farming communities and the nomads. They further observed that the contamination of streams that the host communities rely on and the rape of community girls by the nomads also cause and aggravate the conflict.

Furthermore, Blench (2010) summarized some number of issues regarding the causes of farmers/ pastoralist conflicts. According to the author, conflict between farmers and cattle herders in Nigeria has been documented from the pre-colonial era onwards and dispute resolution mechanisms functioned until the 1970s, though there is evidence that they were weighted towards herders' interests. Blench (2010) continued that since the 1980s, the frequency of violent clashes has increased, with a further acceleration since the introduction of democracy at the end of the 1990s. The widespread availability of modern automatic weapons and improved communications are increasing the intensity of conflicts. Conflicts are being increasingly interpreted as religious and/or political even though the underlying drivers may be conflicts over access to resources.

In addition to the above, Bello (2013) enumerated the major causes of herdsmen-farmers conflict in Nigeria. He argued that destruction of crops by cattle and other property (reservoirs, irrigational facilities and infrastructure) by the herdsmen themselves are the main direct causes for conflicts cited by the farmers. Burning of rangelands, fadama and blockage of stock routes and water points by crop encroachment are important direct reasons cited by the herdsmen while increasing rate of cattle theft which is often accompanied by violence, antagonistic perceptions and beliefs among farmers and herdsmen could compound conflict situation, especially due to failing institutions and fierce competition for resources (Bello, 2013).

Furthermore, Blench (2010) stressed that ethnicity remains a major factor in recruitment to the conflicting parties and is crucial in raising funds. He maintained that government is unwilling to acknowledge the scale of conflict for reasons that relate to its external political presentation. The local press has played an important role in making public various situations but they are seen as partisan. World media have taken almost no interest in these matters. Action by the authorities to quell violent conflict has been minimal or ineffective, leading to a perception by communities that they should take responsibility for their own security. Judicial commissions held subsequent to conflicts do not result in effective action and strategies of conflict resolution, however framed, have little impact unless the political will to both follow up and enforce agreements is present. This would require a major change in political culture in Nigeria (Blench, 2010).

(b) Consequences of Farmers/Headers conflicts

Conflicts involving Fulani herders and farmers have far reaching implications. The first visible effects of such outburst are loss of lives and properties. Almost in all situations, the conflicts portray the non readiness and less functional posture of the law enforcement agencies in the Nigerian nation in tackling violent killings involving the herders. Cases abound all over the country of killings and almost annihilation of entire villages by the herdsman. The deadly escapades of arms-bearing marauders suspected to be Fulani herdsman are becoming increasingly unsettling. They have left their sanguinary footmark in practically every part of the country that has had the misfortune of receiving them in their seemingly unstoppable march, ostensibly, in search of pastures to graze their cattle. In their latest outing, they have been very unsparing of the host communities (<http://www.punchng.com/fulani-herdsmens-mindless-agatu-killings/>).

One of the obvious consequences of the conflicts is the magnitude of destruction involved in the conflicts. So many people have lost their lives to these intractable crises which have been occurring between the herders and their hosts (farmers). Nweze (2005) stated that many farmers and herders have lost their lives and herds, while others have experienced dwindling productivity in their herds. This was supported by Ajuwon (2004, cited in Nweze, 2005) in his observation that in Imo State for instance between 1996 and 2005, 19 people died and 42 people were injured in the farmers-herders conflicts and the violence that often accompanied such conflict. The conflicts are a threat to peace and national stability. It also has implication for tribal co-existence, Nigeria being a multi-ethnic and a multi-tribal nation. One cannot forget so easily the wanton destruction of lives and properties in the very recent invasion of Uzo Uwani people of Enugu state in Southeast Nigeria by these herdsman. More destructive incidents had earlier taken place in Agatu community in Benue state and Dogo Nahawa in Plateau state in the North central geo political zone of Nigeria where hundreds of people including women, children and the elderly ones were allegedly butchered by these blood thirsty herdsman. In these communities, the houses were burnt down, churches destroyed and properties were either out rightly looted or destroyed.

It is important to note that these conflicts have direct impact on the lives and livelihoods of those involved. They also disrupt and threaten the sustainability of pastoral production and agriculture (Moritz, 2010). These conflicts reinforce circles of extreme poverty and hunger,

and destroy social status, food security and affect mostly the most marginalised groups that include women and children. This affects education of children leading to obstacles in their development and mass displacement. Consequentially, this debilitates the once mutually existing farmer-pastoralist relationships. This awful situation becomes worst, especially when either the farmer or the pastoralist is categorised into a group relating to religion, tribe or region. Abbass (2012) warned that the disharmony in pastoralism and sedentarism reflect enhanced sedentarisation and increased pastoralism leading to constant conflict with the agrarian societies.

In a related development, Okoli and Atelhe (2014) observed that the effects of conflict for Nigeria's national security cannot be over emphasized. The humanitarian, economic, and social consequences of conflicts have been manifold and telling. The attendant security and livelihood crises threaten the collective subsistence and survival of the affected populations. There are also other externalities, such as diminution of agricultural productivity and decline in household capital, all of which do not augur well for societal and national sustainability. The conflicts have not only heightened the level of insecurity, but have also demonstrated high potential to exacerbate the food crisis in Nigeria and other affected countries due to loss of lives, animals, crops and valuable properties (Cotula et al., 2004). Similarly, Ofuoku and Isife (2009, p. 53) identified socio economic effects of herders/farmers conflict to include;

i). Reduction in output and income of crop farmers as a result of the destruction of crops by cattle and indiscriminate bush burning. Many farmers lost part or the whole of their crops. This meant reduced yield which translated into low income on the part of the farmers who take farming as a major occupation. This tends to negatively affect their savings, credit repayment ability, as well the food security and economic welfare of urban dwellers that depend on these farmers for food supply. This discourages the farmers and rural/agricultural development.

ii). Displacement of farmers: There were reports of displaced farmers and herdsmen alike. In the host communities, Nomadic herdsmen relocate as a result of conflict. Host farmers, especially women, who remain behind stop going to the distant farms for fear of attack by the nomads in the bush. Such displaced farmers have become a source of liability to other farmers whom they have to beg for food for themselves and their families. This has created a vicious cycle of poverty in such communities.

Similarly, Bello (2013) stated the great negative repercussion of farmers/herders conflicts to include loss of income/resources/yield, home/farm destruction, bodily injury or death of family member; emotional exhaustion. According to him, the social, economic and political tensions created as a result of numerous escalations of violent conflicts have raised

fundamental national questions for the survival of the Nigerian State. The failure of the state to manage and resolve such conflicts has put a question mark on the suitability or relevance of the federal structure to the Nigerian reality.

Furthermore, Ofuoku and Isife (2009) maintained that Erosion (land degradation) and Loss of lives are other effects of herders/farmers conflict in Nigeria. They argued that the exposure of the soil makes it susceptible to erosion which is worsened by the rain. This is accelerated by the topographic nature of some of the areas, which are hilly. Erosion causes a lot of loss of soil nutrients and difficulty of cultivation. The authors also stressed that a lot of killing by the nomads and reprisal killing of nomads by the host communities takes place during the conflicts. Herds of cattle belonging to the nomads are also killed. Also some of the victims (young and old) are badly injured or maimed. This has reduced some women farmers to the status of widows. All these have drastically reduced agricultural labour force in the area. In the process there are reported cases of proliferation of small arms and ammunitions since the host farming communities and the headsmen saw each other as archenemies. This is inimical to the spirit of integration of Nigerian tribes or ethnic groups and peaceful co-existence.

(c) Mechanisms for Resolving Headers/Farmers Conflict

Different methods of conflict management strategies have been advanced by different scholars. However, management of headers/farmers conflicts has not been without its pitfalls. This explains why there has been resurgence of herders/farmers conflicts all over the country especially in the recent time. For Gyong (1998), the traditional method of conflict management before the advent of colonialism in Africa was better than the present strategies. According to him, the desire was to remove the cause of the dispute and reconcile the two parties in such a way as to restore the social structure of society to its state of equilibrium. That settlement of conflict was usually done in a “village square” under the leadership of a team of elders representing various clans, and they amicably settle and reconcile the parties involved. Conflicts are better managed when they are still brewing. This goes with the age old notion that prevention is better than cure. This is consistent with Nkom (1999) who advocated for nipping the conflict in the bud. This implies an ability to pick out conflict situation in their infancy; to understand their nature, causes and the possible danger signals

that may herald their eruption, and to act quickly and decisively to arrest such situations before they explode into open violence. He gave three important dimensions in conflict managements, conflict analysis, conflict containment and confrontation, and conflict resolution.

Bello (2013) offered myriads of suggestions which will assist in ameliorating conflicts between headers and farmers. He advocated that government must make policies that are designed to enhance the Fulani herdsmen by ensuring that they secure rights to land use in order to reduce insecurity and mitigate the spate of conflicts. This will, among other things, bring about peaceful coexistence between the Fulani herdsmen and host communities. This also enhances the security of the cattle, to access grazing space or resources without pouncing on farmers' crops. Bello (2013) also suggested that law on the grazing reserve should be amended and improved upon. It is worthy of note that the Nigerian Grazing Reserve Act of 1964 was passed for the purpose of accessing grazing lands to the Pastoralists, thereby encouraging sedentarization and addressing conflict with a plan to improve productivity and social amenities (Ibrahim, 2012). This, in broader sense was expected to address constraints facing the cattle market and disease control. However, even though this law was passed, very little implementation was observed. Looking at the continual farmer-pastoralist conflict and a reduced cattle production, in which Nigeria imports about 23% of cattle from the neighbouring Sahel countries, the government again enacted the National Agricultural Policy of 1988. The law stipulates that a minimum of 10% of the national territory that is 9.8 million acres be allocated to grazing reserves. However, only 2.82 % was acquired out of 313 reserves (CIEL, 2006; Ibrahim, 2012). It is in view of this that the present government is proposing to establish grazing reserves with a view to reducing the persistent crises between the headers and farmers all over the country. He also suggested that for a sustainable peace to reign there must be a deliberate design to enlighten and mobilize the parties in conflict to understand the ecology and the resources available in the localities. This opens a window for interdependence and complementarities among groups in the optimal use of the resources for collective benefit and equitable access. Herdsmen should be made to keep to mapped out routes and farmers should be made to avoid farming across the routes by governments at the federal, state and local government area (Bello, 2013).

It is also necessary to emphasize that reports of several commissions of inquiry and panels set to investigate the immediate and remote causes of header/farmers conflicts must be adopted and the recommendations implemented where necessary to stem the possible reoccurrence of such invasion in the future. There is need for the law enforcement agencies to improve on their intelligence gathering techniques and to respond promptly when this is breakdown of law and order occasioned by headers/farmers conflict. Efforts should be put in place to stop the proliferation of arms which are often used in the killing of individuals when conflicts erupt.

Conclusion

The incessant conflicts associated with Fulani herdsmen grazing activities in Nigeria have become very serious source of concern to Nigerians. This is against the background that such conflicts in recent times are taking a very dangerous dimension which if not nipped in the bud, will eventually metamorphose into a more widespread destruction capable of setting the whole nation ablaze. At the root of most of the conflicts are the destruction of farm produce and farming equipments by the Fulani herdsmen. This therefore points to a major central issue, 'access to grazing land and sources of water for the nomads'. The most disturbing aspect of such conflict is the widespread and wanton destruction of entire village or community by people suspected to be the Fulani herdsmen. This has taken a disturbing criminal dimension and should be treated as such. It is imperative for the government both at the federal and at the state levels to as a matter of urgency tackle this problem decisively. The criminal elements of the conflicts should be made to feel the full force of the laws prohibiting such conduct while short term and long term efforts should be put in place to forestall further reoccurrence of the ugly malaise.

Recommendations

Going by the foregoing, the following recommendations were made to proffer long lasting solutions to the problem at hand;

Government should re-create grazing reserves and routes for the Fulani herdsmen to curtail their constant conflict with farmers and host communities. This should be subject to availability of land in the areas where the grazing reserves will be situated. Lands initially mapped out for grazing routes and reserves must be used for such purposes in the overriding public interests.



There should be a synergy between the law enforcement officials and the local populace in terms of intelligence gathering and dissemination. This is intended to assist in curbing violence especially the ones involving the herders and their host communities.

Proliferation of arms and other weapons must be checked. This is in view of the wanton destructions that took place in the past that led to almost total annihilation of entire community by the herders.

Security operatives should be up and doing to checkmate cases of cattle rustling and other vices which are equally incidental in the conflicts involving the indigenous communities and the Fulani herdsman. Lastly but not the least, sensitization programmes on the need to live peacefully and harmoniously with one another should be introduced and disseminated through the different available means of doing so. It could be by organizing town hall meetings, workshops and seminars with the view to inculcating in people the need for peaceful coexistence by the different ethnic groups in the country.

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