CONFLICT BETWEEN PASTORALISTS AND FARMERS IN NIGERIA AND ITS POTENTIALS FOR REGIONAL INSECURITY IN AFRICA

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Abstract

Pastoralists and farmers clashes in different parts of Nigeria have been on the increase since the return to democratic governance in 1999. While it is recognised that both parties have been living peaceably for decades, several factors have affected this relationship and have made the onset of conflicts inevitable. For instance, climate change, drought, desertification and flooding have necessitated the movement of herders from their base in the northern part of the country to the south for greener pastures, a move that has pitched them against southern farmers whose crops are often destroyed during such migrations. Furthermore, population explosion, blocking of traditional grazing routes, cattle rustling and banditry as well as manipulation of the crisis by the political elite, have all aided the exacerbation of the conflict. Sourcing data from theoretical and empirical evidence, this study examines the phenomenon of pastoralists and farmers conflict in Nigeria and their potential for instability in the African sub-region. Findings from the study show that tensions or any major confrontation between the Fulani and other ethnic groups in Nigeria could have a spillover effect on neighbouring African countries with repercussions on Africa's security and stability. This is because the Fulani ethnic group is found across several African countries and transnational livestock migrations could draw in fighters from neighbouring countries. Besides, the conflict could articulate other types of conflicts on the continent. To manage the conflict, the author recommends that African governments should muster the political will to address the security challenges posed to the African continent by the conflict by reviewing the ECOWAS Transhumance Protocol among others.

Key words: pastoralists, farmers, conflict, pastoralists and farmers conflict, insecurity

Introduction

Nigeria is regarded as the giant of Africa because of her human and natural resources. The country has a population estimated at 214.7 million in 2022 and projected to be 480 million by 2050 (countrymeters, 2022; Premium Times, 2018). In terms of natural resources, Nigeria is blessed with mineral resources, of which crude oil is the most dominant. Nigeria is Africa's largest producer of crude oil (OPEC, 2023), the 15th largest producer of petroleum worldwide and 7th largest exporter of oil in 2021 (Premium Times Nigeria, 2023). Although Nigeria chiefly is known for its oil and gas production, agriculture contributes 40 per cent to its GDP and employs about 70 per cent of its labour force (International Crisis Group, 2017). Small-holders in the country's centre and south harvest most of the country's tuber and vegetable crops while pastoralists in the north raise most of its grains and livestock (Imo, 2017). Crop farmers comprise mainly indigenous ethnic groups found within the country while pastoralists comprise Fulani, an ethnic group found mainly in the northern part of the country and a culturally diverse group in Central Africa and West Africa. They are mostly nomadic in nature, herding cattle, goats and sheep across the vast dry grass lands of their environment, making them the world's largest pastoral nomadic group. The group is spread across several countries but found mainly in West Africa and northern parts of Central Africa as well as in Sudan and Egypt. The groups of people that are actively engaged in farming activities in Nigeria are the Kanembu, Kwoya, Manga, Fulbe and Shuwa Arabs with the Fulbe being the largest owners of livestock accounting for about 90% of the nation's stock, contributing one third of the agricultural Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 3.2% of the national GDP (Muhammed, Ismail and Bibi, 2015).

Although conflict between herders and farmers have been on for decades, the prevalence and frequency of these conflicts became noticeable in the aftermath of the return to democratic rule in 1999. This could be explained from the perspective that prior to 1999, security was considerably firmer and internal crises were containable easily invariably because of the military apparatus but since the onset of civilian rule there has been a poor and an inadequate response to the security of lives and property as seen from the poor

management of the farmers and herders' conflicts. Clashes between farmers and herders have occurred in different parts of the country particularly in states such as Benue, Kogi, Kaduna, Nasarawa, Plateau, Taraba in the Middle Belt, Adamawa in the northeast and Zamfara in the northwest. According to the Century Wilberforce Initiative (CWI cited in Okoli and Ogayi, 2018), "……. the threat posed by Fulani militants in the Middle Belt is escalating intoone of the most significant security concerns in West Africa." Nigeria's national security has been tragically embattled over the years as evident in the alarming incidence of the Boko Haram insurgency, which has resulted in dire humanitarian consequences (Okoli & Ogayi, 2018).

The agro-pastoral crisis in Nigeria has increasingly become a regional contagion in West Africa andrequires collective, interlocking, and transnational approach becausesecurity is both a national, regional, and global phenomenon, and it will be very difficult to comprehend the security dynamics of one country without inserting it into a broader context (Chukwuemeka & Nwangwu, 2019). The significance of this study lies in the fact that while most studies on pastoralist and farmers conflict adopt a micro approach to the conflict by limiting its consequences and solutions to the immediate environment of the conflict, the study adopts a macro approach and focuses on a link between the national and regional levels.

Background to Conflict between Pastoralists and Farmers

Conflict between pastoralists and farmers has a long history dating back to precolonial times, sometimes said to be "as old as civilization" (Meier 2011 cited in Cabot, 2017). A symbiotic relationship exists between farmers and herdsmen; nomadic herders'cattle would fertilise the farmers' land in exchange for grazing rights from the communities (Olomojobi, 2017). This relationship is however oftencharacterised by competition which has in recent times led to violent conflict over fresh water and land referred to as Common-Pool Resources (CPRs) (Cabot, 2017).

Out-break of conflicts, including conflict between and within ethnic groups, are common in Nigeria but a persistent conflict which has received much attention in recent times in the country is that between farmers and Fulani pastoralists. While conflict between pastoralists and crop farmers has existed since the beginnings of agriculture, it has increased and assumed a violent nature in recent times.For instance,

bloodshed from herder-farmer conflict between September 2001 and May 2004 accounted for more than two thousand deaths and the flight of 20,000 Fulani nomads while from 2011 to 2016 more than 2,000 people were killed annually in Nigeria during clashes between herders and farmers, most notably in Benue and Taraba states in Nigeria's Middle Belt (Oberholzer, 2018; Cabot, 2017). Conflict between herders and farmers in Nigeria is said to be already six times deadlier in 2018 than Boko Haram's insurgency according to the International Crisis Group (2018).

Drivers of Conflict between Pastoralists and Farmers in Nigeria

At the root of the crisis between farmers and pastoralists are several factors which have been grouped into man-made and natural factors. Some of the natural factors include climate change, flooding and desertification while man-made factors include, population explosion, urbanisation, blockage of traditional grazing routes, criminality and cattle rustling and banditry, abuse of traditional host/stranger relationships, expansion of cultivation of the Fadama, illegal invasion of farms and politicization of the issue. Some of these factors could be man-made and natural at the same time. For instance, flooding could be natural and man-made. Also, blockage of traditional grazing routes could be as a result of natural factors such as population explosion and a change in government policy.

Natural Drivers

Climate Change

Climate change is a change in the statistical distribution of weather patterns when that change lasts for an extended period of time (i.e., decades to millions of years). It may also refer to a change in average weather conditions, or in the time variation of weather within the context of longer-term average conditions (NASA, 2018). The most general definition of climate change is a change in the statistical properties (principally its mean and spread) of the climate system when considered over long periods of time, regardless of cause (Solomon, Qin, Manning, Chen, Marquis, Averyt, Tignor, Miller, 2007; IPCC, 2001). Climate change may be due to natural internal processes or external forces, or to persistent anthropogenic changes in the composition of the atmosphere or in land use (IPCC, 2003). Climate change in Nigeria has led to

growing shifts in temperature, rainfall, storms, and sea levels. These climatic challenges, left unaddressed, had thrown already stressed resources such as land and water into even shorter supply (Aaron, 2011). The effect of climate change as a driver of conflict is buttressed by a United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP, 1999) report which identified a growing trend in international and intra-national conflict which appears to be linked to the deteriorating environmental conditions. The effects of climate change that concerns this study are flooding, drought and desertification.

- **Flooding**

Flooding is a major problem in Nigeria where many states across the country have been adversely affected by its effect. Flooding is both a natural cause of climate change such as heavy rains and overflowing rivers and a man-made factor owing to the activities of humans such as blockage of drainages and poorly designed infrastructure among others. Flooding occurs in the different parts of the country particularly in the north where it compounds the challenges posed by desertification. As a result of flooding many states have lost billions of naira worth of their farm produce. Rice farmers in Sokoto State lost about 27.5 billion to flooding in 2018 while farmers in other states such as Anambra and Benue lost millions of naira(AIT News, 2018). When such loss is further aggravated by destruction by cattle, it generates conflict. Another problem of flooding is erosion which washes away the river bank and the attempt by farmer to take up the available space for farming often pitch them in conflict with the herders.

- **Drought, Desertification and Declining Availability of Renewable Natural Resources**

According to Bakuh (2005 cited in Olomojobi, 2017) 45 per cent of the land mass in Africa is said to be desertified. Desertification in different parts of the world is gradually transforming habitable land into desert as a result of climate change and sometimes destructive use of the land. The northern part of Nigeria which is the traditional home of herders is arid and semi-arid, with a long dry season from October to May and low rainfall from June to September (Report 252, 2017). In 2008, the National Meteorological Agency reported thatin the preceding 30 years the annual rainy season dropped from an average of 150 to 120 days and in the last six decades, over

350,000sq. km of the already arid region turned to desert or desert-like conditions, a phenomenon which has led to depletion of fresh water and land in the northern region. This in turn led to southernmovement, also known as transhumance, by herders, aimed at providing livestock with the necessary pasture and water by moving to areas with better grazing possibilities (Cobat, 2017; Report 252, 2017). In the early times, such migrations were seasonal, with herders staying in the central belt of Nigeria from December to May before returning north but over the last two decades, as available pastures shrank in the far north, they resorted to staying in the central zone longer, from December to June or July and more recently, some have chosen to graze their herds there permanently. At the same time, farmers' cultivation areas have expanded so as to increase production, and in the process encroach on land that was traditionally dedicated to the grazing of cattle and this has triggered increasing disputes over land and water between both parties (Report 252, 2017; Cobat, 2017). This is in line with Homer-Dixon's argument that decrease in the quality and quantity of renewable resources act singly or combined to increase the scarcity of natural resources such as fresh water and arable land so that those affected are forced in many instances to migrate to new areas and in the process find themselves in conflict with the 'indigenes' (Homer-Dixon, 1999)**.**Ajaero et. al (2015) agreed that declining availability of renewable natural resources results into competition over scarce resources thereby engendering violent conflict between farmers and herders.

Man-made Drivers

Population Explosion and Urbanisation

Population explosion and urbanisation constitute the main part of the factors responsible for herdsmen and farmers' conflict. Nigeria's population has grown from 33 million in 1950 to about 214.7 million in 2022 (countrymeters, 2022). A recent projection by the United Nations Nigeria (2022), puts the population of the country at about 206 million in 2020 and 401 million in 2050. Increase in the population of the country means a geometric increase in the demand for food products as a basic human need. Additionally, industrialisation and urbanisation have continued to claim all available land, leaving little or nothing for farmers' survival. Specifically, the demographic increase has led to an expansion in cultivated farmland and a reduction in available grazing land for

pastoralists who are forced to migrate for greener pastures and in the process compete with farmers over dwindling resources. According to 2009 official report of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources, of Nigeria's 4125 grazing reserves or routes 270 of these have been put into cultivation (Aliyu, 2015).

Blockage of Traditional Grazing Routes and Migrations

This is both a human and natural cause. During the colonial period, pastoralists and farming communities agreed on grazing routes for cattle. However, with increased agricultural activities, those routes have been encroached on by the farming communities, thereby resulting to the blockage of transhumance routes and loss of grazing land to agricultural expansion. The above condition has resulted in the increased southward movement of pastoralists which in turn has led to increased conflict with local communities whose farmlands and produce are destroyed in the process. This is particularly the case in the Middle Belt, notably in Plateau, Kaduna, Niger, Nasarawa, Benue, Taraba, and Adamawa States **(**Premium Times, 2018**).** Apart from destruction of farmlands, conflict may also arise when farming communities are bent on asserting their exclusive right to land tenure and inheritance as is the case in Plateau and Nasarawa State (Okoli and Atelhe, 2014).

Expansion of Cultivation of the Fadama

The collapse of the *burti* (migratory routes) system in the 1970s and the growth of fadama cultivation since the 1980s are twin factors that have been at the root of conflict between farmers and pastoralists (Olomojobi, 2017). Since the 1980s there has been a marked expansion of cultivation of the *fadama* (valley-bottom and flood plain) areas which has made both the farmers and cattle herders to engage in fierce struggles for access to such valuable lands which, more often than not, result in increased conflicts and violence (Abbas, 2009). With the introduction of irrigation farming in savannah belt of Nigeria to enhance food security to support the growing population in the country, more land was put to farming activities and this limited access to the vast area which was initially used by Fulani herdsmen for rearing their herds especially along the river banks of savannah belts in the northern part of the country, and this made the need for migration by the Fulani inevitable (Shabu, 2014). The negative impact of this is that pastoralists are forced to encroach on farmlands and destroy

crops in their sojourns. Farmers often resist this and in attempt to protect their crops results into conflict between the two.

Abuse of Traditional Host/Stranger Relationships

It is customary for farming communities in the early days in Nigeria to host herders and give them temporary settlement rights but this act has been grossly abused by herders who overstay their welcome and, in some instances, demand equal rights (political and economic) with the indigenes. Where the government has encouraged nomadic herders to become sedentary, this has led to protests by the host agricultural populations and to heightened potential for conflict (Seddon and Sumberg, 1997). A case in point is Jos north Local Government Area of Plateau State where there has been conflict between herdsmen and local 'host' agriculturalist population because of the former's abuse of the privilege given to them and demanding for tenure rights.

Illegal Invasion of Farms

Illegal invasion of farms and destruction of crops by cattle, particularly during the planting season and immediately after the harvesting period is another major factor which drives herdsmen and farmers conflict (Aliyu, 2015). Cattle rustling and acts of banditry are said to be carried out by the aggressive *Udawa* and *Bokoloji* pastoralists who usually come into the country through Niger/Nigeria border. These nonchalant pastoralists allow their herds to stray unchecked into farmlands and destroy farm crops in the process and this often leads the farmers to engage them in conflict. Bowing to pressure to criminalise herdsmen as terrorists, Nigeria's President, Muhammadu Buhari in 2018 declared that herdsmen in the country who carry out violent acts were foreigners who were in the country illegally. The presence of these foreign herdsmen has led to the emergence and introduction of guns and other sophisticated weapons in the conflicts.

Criminality and Rural Banditry

Cattle rustling and banditry are twin factors that have increased the crisis. While farmers complain of the destruction of farmlands and produce, herders have to face the challenge of their cattle being stolen and often times, farmers are held responsible for this and the resultant end is conflict. The truth however is that cattle rustling is carried out by youth on both

sides of the aisle who conspire to carry out the act for pecuniary reasons.

Arms Proliferation

The availability of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) has no doubt exacerbated the conflict between farmers and herders and increased the number of casualties (UNEP, 2011 cited in Cobat, 2017). Out of an estimated 640 million SALWs in circulation world-wide, 100 million are estimated to be in Africa, about 30 million in sub-Saharan Africa, 8 million in West Africa alonewith 70% of these found in Nigeria (Ajodo-Adebanjoko, 2017). Unlike in the past when herders were known for carrying sticks, today in Nigeria they are often found with sophisticated weapons particularly AK 47 while local crop farmers and militia groups are also armed. The increase in SALWs has been attributed to several factors, such as the end of the Cold War, the Libyan Crisis and the resulting free flow of firearms in the wake of Gadhafi's death, gun running, and local politics, among others which have been made possible by Nigeria's porous borders. With increasing availability of modern weapons supplied by powerful interests in order to advance their own causes through sponsored violence, it is not surprising that the conflict has increased in intensity and casualties (Seddon and Sumberg, 1997).

Negative Media Reportage and Profiling

The manner in which a crisis is reported may fuel or reduce it. Negative and unbalanced reportage by the media before, during and after a conflict could lead to its rise, sustenance or recurrence. For instance, when the figure of casualties is exaggerated, the tendency is for the group who seemed to be the major casualties to seek a pound of flesh in return.

As conflict between herdsmen and farmers has grown and developed, the narratives emerging in the media and in popular discourse are becoming part of the drivers for expanding conflicts in the country. Nomadic Fulani cattle herders, who are mostly Muslims are often viewed as the protagonists of the conflict while farmers who in most cases are non-Muslims are viewed as victims. The implication is that the conflict is often viewed as that between Muslims and Christians. An example is the allegation of a conspiracy to annex or colonise Nigeria through a jihad which is currently unfolding through herdsmen attacks. This argument is further buttressed by the fact that the Nigerian government seems to

favour cattle colonies in all parts of the country, a move which many describe as a subtle attempt to finish the task first embarked on by Othman Dan Fodio. This kind of narrative often breeds and sustains suspicion and distrust between the two groups. The result is negative stereotyping between "the one" and "the other" that leads further to ethnic and religious bigotry which fuels the hate process, culminating in further chains of attacks and counter or revenge attacks being exchanged between these different groups (Nigerian Working Group/PremiumTimes,2018).

Socio-Economic and Humanitarian Costs of the Conflict

Pastoralists and farmers conflict in different parts of the country has negative consequences on the polity. The cost of these conflicts has socio-economic, security and humanitarian implications.

Social insecurity is a common manifestation in conflict situation especially when it is a violent one like that between pastoralists and farmers and this occur as people develop fear of being attacked unnecessarily which also negatively affect their ability to carry out their economic activities such as production and marketing (Blench, 2004).

On the economic front, properties, crops and livestock worth billions of naira have been destroyed at great cost to local, state and federal economies; in 2015, the federal government was said to have lost $13.7 billion in revenue annually to the crisis from Benue, Kaduna, Nasarawa and Plateau states with an average of these states losing 47 percent of their internally generated revenues (International Crisis Group, 2017). The conflict has reduced economic activities in the areas affected, impeded economic development, destroyed productive assets, prevented trade, deterred local and foreign direct investment and eroded trust between market actors (Mercy Corps, n.d). According to Okello et al. (2014 cited in Muhammed, Ismail and Bibi, 2015), the Nigerian cattle market generates only $6.8 billion of a potential $20 billion annually due to clashes among others. On the other hand, agricultural produce particularly yam which is cultivated in Benue state one of the states affected by pastoralists and farmers conflict, are currently being exported by the Nigerian government. Nigeria's effort to diversify from an oil-dependent economy to an agrarian economy as it was before the oil boom in the early

1970s is seriously threatened by the series of clashes. Nigeria's current export includes yams which are produced in Benue state which is currently embroiled in the conflict. The state in recent times has been ravaged by floods which have destroyed farm produce, the current spate of crisis between pastoralists and farmers, worsens this situation. The loss of farm produce and livestock further increases poverty and food insecurity. Food waste in Nigeria could affect the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which aims at ending hunger, achieving food security and improving nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture by 2030 (Imo, 2017). According to a report by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC, 2018) food waste costs developing countries $310 billion. At least 7.1 million people face acute food insecurity and require urgent life-saving response and livelihood protection and with about 44,000 people exposed to famine, Nigeria suffers "serious level of hunger" according to UN statistics. According to the latest Global Hunger Index, 32.9 per cent of Nigerian children under the age of five suffered stunted growth due to hunger and malnutrition. Between 2008 and 2016, the country's GHI level remained at "serious" level.

Humanitarian impact of the crisis is huge. Since 1999, tens of thousands have been forcibly displaced, thousands killed and entire villages expelled. From January 2015 to February 2017, at least 62,000 people were displaced in Kaduna, Benue and Plateau states while in 2018, there was an estimated over 175,000 IDPs in Benue State alone (International Crisis Group, 2017; Channels TV, 2018). In the words of the CWI (cited in Okoli and Ogayi, 2018):

> What is unfolding in Northern and Central Nigeria is one of the gravest current humanitarian crises in the world, with millions affected, thousands killed, insecurity rampant, children ravaged by malnutrition, one of the world's highest populations of IDPs [internally displaced persons], schools closed, houses of worship destroyed and entire communities burned to the ground in scorched earth attacks.

The number of deaths resulting from these clashes is alarming. Some sources claim that the conflicts have resulted in the loss of over 60,000 lives since 2001, making it deadlier than the notorious Boko Haram uprising. A BBC

report claims that over 50,000 deaths were caused by the crisis between 2001 and 2004 alone, of these deaths, women and children accounted for almost 35,000 (BBC, 2018). It is estimated that 2, 500 people were killed in different parts of the country in 2016 and between 2014 and 2016, more than 1, 878 people were said to be killed in Benue State, in 2017, 549 deaths were recorded across 14 states in the country and between January and June 2018 alone, over 1,750 people have been killed in Adamawa, Benue, Kaduna, Plateau, Taraba and Zamfara states (International Crisis Group, 2017; Godwin, 2018). From January to March 2018, the figure was 528 (WANEP, 2018). In Benue State alone, more than 73 persons were given mass burial in 2018

Rape is another consequence of the crisis. Rape is most common in times of war as a 'tool' against the adversary as seen the Sierra Leone Civil War and ongoing Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria where women and girls are often sexually abused by their captors. This is the case with women in the ongoing pastoralists and farmers face-off. Fulani herdsmen do not stop at killing during conflicts, but rape women and girls (Kwaghga, Tion, and Terwase, 2018).

Consequences of Pastoralists and Farmers Clashes for Africa's Security and Stability

Conflicts between herders and farmers closely intertwine with multiple other security, economic, environmental and political factors; They destroy the economic and social fabric of rural communities - and compromise traditional governance and dispute resolution mechanisms and thus have devastating impact on human, national and regional security (UNOWAS, 2018).

Nigeria shares boundaries with several African countries such as Benin in the west, Chad in the north east, Cameroon in the east and Niger in the North. One of the many challenges of the country is its porous borders which allow many foreign nationals to come into the country unlawfully and vice versa. Many Boko Haram members are said to be foreigners from Chad and Niger while some bandits including herdsmen that have invaded some Nigerian communities are said to be foreigners. Given this narrative, the clashes between pastoralists and farmers in the country will no doubt affect neighbouring countries and could worsen the fragile security landscape in Africa. Specifically, the conflict could be hijacked by terrorist groups within the continent as well as encourage

the growth of new terrorist groups. The Islamic State (IS) for instance has readily found new grounds in sub-Saharan Africa provided by pre-existing extremist groups, insecurity and socioeconomic challenges among others. The prevalence of agro-pastoralist conflicts within Africa makes the continent particularly vulnerable to new threats driven by the rise of the Islamic State and poses a new challenge in the effort to counter terrorism on the continent (Allison,.2014; Muhammad, 2017).

Pastoralist and farmers conflict in Nigeria could fuel other conflicts in Africa. Local resource conflicts have been linked to some other wider conflicts in West Africa with cases such as tension between the Tuareg and the state in Mali and Niger and the Civil War in Chad, the 1983 war between Nigeria and Chad which began over fishing rights, conflicts between Tubu, Arab and Fulbe herders over wells articulated with civil wars in Niger and Chad while in the Senegal valley conflicts between farmers, herders and fishermen articulated with other conflicts and escalated into border conflicts between Senegal and Mauritania (Shettima & Tar, 2008).

Pastoralists are Fulani ethnic group who are found in different parts of Africa. As such the group could mobilise fighters from several African countries and in solidarity with their brothers in Nigeria may invade the country and this will worsen the security situation in an already fragile region (International Crisis Group, 2017). The clashes in the country could also spill over to neighbouring countries or different parts of Africa. This is because violent conflicts do not stop at the boundary of the communities in which the conflict occurs but often spill over to neighbouring communities (Sulaiman and Ja`afar-Furo, 2010). A case in point is the Boko Haram insurgency and the agitation for the State of Biafra in Nigeria which spilled over to Cameroon. Recently in October 2018 over 79 school girls were abducted from a school in the English-speaking area of Cameroon and after much effort these abductees were returned. In November of the same year, about 22 girls were abducted from the same region in Cameroon. This may not be far from the fact that such actors were influenced by what goes on in Nigeria where the Boko Haram sect in its face-off with the Federal government has on several occasions abducted school children.

One of the challenges of the conflict is border migrations which could increase humanitarian crisis in Africa particularly in neighbouring countries, with the influx of refugees into these countries. Africa is currently going through

a refugee crisis with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees' (UNHCR) Global Trends Report showing that 85%, about 13.9 million of refugees are hosted in and by developing countries including Africa (Maunganidze, 2018; Kasozi, n.d). Sub-Saharan Africa alone hosts more than 26 percent of the world's 68.5 million refugee population (UNHCR, 2018a; UNHCR, 2018b). UNHCR estimated that about 10,000 Nigerianscrossed intoneighbouringCameroon, Chad and Niger in the heydays of the Boko Haram insurgency while there are currently over 100 hundred Nigerian refugees in Cameroon, fleeing from violence in the country (Aljazeera News, 2018; Ajodo-Adebanjoko, Ojua and Okorie, 2017). Rising case of refugees from Nigeria will negatively impact and compound Africa's refugee crisis and pose a challenge to the continent's security and stability.

Pastoralists and farmers clashes in Nigeria disrupt and threaten the sustainability of pastoral farming and crop farming in West Africa, reinforcing a circle of extreme poverty and hunger according to Moritz (2010 cited in Imo, 2017). Several hundred million people practice pastoralism – the use of extensive grazing on rangelands for livestock production, in over 100 countries worldwide (Nnoko-Mewanu, 2020). The African Union estimated that Africa has about268 million pastoralists over a quarter of the total population -- living on about 43 percent of the continent's total land mass (Nnoko-Mewanu, 2020). Pastoralism is the main livestock production system in much of Africa; historically, pastoralists have been able to meet the meat demand in West Africa with a relatively high level of efficiency without government subsidy for generations. According to the Association of Cattle Rearers in Nigeria, Miyetti Alllah, over 2 million cattle have been lost to the crisis (TVC News, 2018). Continued crisis between herders and farmers in Nigeria will no doubt affect livestock production and increase the potentials for food insecurity.

Livestock production plays a central economic role in Africa contributing about 49 per cent to agricultural GDP in the ECOWAS region and in the Sahel countries, the contribution of the livestock sector to agricultural GDP is estimated at between 40 per cent and 50 per cent while livestock production is regarded as the only way of utilising the 38 per cent of the West Africa region that are composed of arid zones and are unfavourable to the development of crop production, employs millions of people and is an important source of food and income for the poor, particularly those living in fragile

ecological zones and vulnerable to food insecurity (Leonhardt,2019). Conflict in the region will negatively impact on these potentials.

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) remains one of the major challenges of pastoralist and farmers clashes in Nigeria. Women and girls are often victims of violence during crises and in the conflict between the two groups, this vulnerable group continues to be violated. Women and girls are viewed as elements of the spoils of warandare often raped by herdsmen as a way of bruising the pride of the community being attacked (Oluyemi-kusa & Salihu, 2015). As a result of the stigma that goes with rape, there are currently no data available to indicate the number of women and girls that have been raped in the course of conflict in the agro-pastoral sector. SGBV is a public health problem and erodes social cohesion and development (World Bank, 2019). The prevalence of rape in Africa will not only worsen the continent's human rights record but have devastating impact on human security.

Resolving Conflict between Herders and Farmers in Nigeria

Addressing the conflict between herders and farmers is one of the topmost agenda of most governments in Nigeria in recent times. Contrary to Seddon's and Sumberg's (1997) position that the recourse to violence by local communities is indicative of a lack of policies, or that existing policies are not working to the benefit of these communities as a whole, it is not the lack of policies or the ineffectiveness of such policies that encourage the recourse to violence but the lack of political will by the Nigerian government to implement such policies. Owing to political and ethnic sentiments, the conflict remains unresolved. For instance, the passing of the anti-open grazing law by Benue state among others is seen by many from the northern part of the country as well as the government as an attempt to expel the Fulani ethnic group from other parts of the country. To address the conflict therefore requires sincerity on the part of the government and all stakeholders. In view of this, the study makes the following recommendations:

There is the need for the establishment and strengthening of conflict resolution, mediation and peacebuilding mechanisms. Measures directly aimed at conflict prevention such as developing mediation and conflict prevention capacities of the communities involved, early warning system, training and indigenous peace building processes should be put in place at the local level and within rural communities particularly in

areas that have been most affected by conflict (International Crisis Group, 2017). Farmer and herder groups also need to be trained in conflict management and resolution techniques to avoid recourse to violence whenever there is conflict between them.

The need for dialogue between the warring parties is necessary. Such efforts should be brokered by traditional rulers, religious leaders, Civil Society Groups (CSOs), government, Non-Governmental Organisations as well as other local and internationally recognised mediators.

Reconciliation and restitution on the part of the parties to the conflict is necessary. This will involve both parties taking responsibility for their actions and inactions that have contributed to the conflict and making amends where necessary. Government on its part needs to rehabilitate communities that have been destroyed and compensate both parties for the loss incurred during the crisis. An independent Commission of enquiry also needs to be set up by the Federal Government of Nigeria to probe the killings and bring perpetrators of the various attacks and killings to justice.

The Federal Government of Nigeria needs to address environmental factors that encourage migration such as such as flooding, land degradation and desertification and support communities adaptation to climate change by encouraging climate smart agriculture in addition to stepping up the implementation of programs under the Great Green Wall Initiative for the Sahara and the Sahel as well as natural resource governance to prevent or mitigate conflicts that result from poor management of natural resources.

Grazing reserves in different parts of the north should be converted into ranches to limit the movement of pastoralists southward. The practice of modern pastoralism as seen in different parts of the world no longer encourages movement of cattle and humans because of the hazards involved among others.

Effective policing of the Nigerian state will require decentralisation of the police through the creation of state police, while effective border patrol and security involving Nigeria and the countries she share borders with is necessary to stem the tide of criminal elements entering and moving in and out of the country through the porous borders. This will require that more security forces be deployed to the sore spots in addition to constant aerial surveillance to track attackers.

African governments need to recognize the complexities that exist in these conflicts and to remove barriers to accessing land for pastoralists without compromising the rights of farming communities. Designing viable conditions under which land is occupied and used by nomadic and farming communities such as creating grazing corridors through inclusive decision-making would reduce conflict. This would also secure pastoralist livelihoods without weakening customary ownership of farming communities (Seddon and Sumberg, 1997).

The ECOWAS Transhumance Protocol of 1998 and the ECOWAS Protocol of Free Movement of Goods and Persons in West Africa which allow herders access to designated stock routes and grazing lands/reserves through the West African countries need to be reviewed to ensure efficiency and to identify new routes and away from the routes that have already been turned farmlands.

There is the need for regional cooperation among the various countries in Africa to ensure regional security. Nigeria should work with Cameroon, Chad and Niger (the Lake Chad basin countries) to regulate movements across borders, particularly of cattle rustlers, armed herders, non-Nigerian armed herders and others that have been identified as aggravating internal tension and insecurity in Nigeria (International Crisis Group, 2017).

Farmers and pastoralists alike suffer from the lack of enforcement of existing laws and without clear directives regulating the management of land, water, and transhumance, disputes and violence between herders and farmers intensify, as a result, the Federal government needs to focus attention on issues relating to land rights and natural resource management (UNOWAS, 2018) and ensure that each group has equitable access to land and water. African governments also need to recognize the complexities that exist in these conflicts and remove barriers to accessing land for pastoralists without compromising the rights of farming communities. One way to do this is to design viable conditions under which land is occupied and used by nomadic and farming communities by creating grazing corridors through inclusive decision-making would reduce conflict. This would also secure pastoralist livelihoods without weakening customary ownership of farming communities (Nnoko-Mewanu, 2020).

International and regional bodies such as the UN, ECOWAS and the African Union should hold an extraordinary

session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government to deliberate on the agro-pastoralist conflicts in the region and find lasting solution to the problem (Amnesty International,2018). This is necessary to prevent the continent from being engulfed by the conflict. In the same vein, Member-States should work together to ensure that the conflict is resolved and this could be done by the Nigerian government engaging the governments of Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, as well as the ECOWAS Commission, to strengthen existing relations and to agree on how to collectively monitor and regulate international transhumance pastoralism, in accordance with relevant conventions, including ECOWAS protocols (Chukwuemeka &Nwangwu, 2019).

An inclusive approach to resolving the conflict which includes the involvement of women and youths as peacebuilders in finding sustainable solutions to the conflict is necessary. Despite women's critical role as agents of change and development in pastoral and farming societies, yet they are not adequately represented in the existing institutions or mechanisms through which communities address conflicts (Search for Common Grounds, 2020). The exclusion of the major victims (Women and youths) from conflict resolution robs the process of the needed sense of belonging and credibility.

Considering the impact of SALWs on the conflict, the Nigerian government should muster the political will to domesticate the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons into the national laws and ensure the full and effective implementation of the Convention (Amnesty International, 2018) as well as ensure that available SALWs obtained illegally by their possessors are mopped from the society.

Conclusion

Pastoralism generates wealth and economic interdependence between farmers and cattle herders in some African countries, but it also causes tension and conflicts as a result of competition for vital resources such as water or pasturelands (Amnesty International, 2018).Recurring violent conflict between farmers and herders in different parts of the Nigeria poses a grave threat to national and regional security. This conflict has increased in frequency, intensity and geographical scope with dire humanitarian, social, political and economic consequences. Nigeria shares borders with several countries in

the West African sub-region and is one of the countries in Africa which practices pastoralism. Continued conflict in the country could spill over to neighbouring countries as a result of international livestock migration. Further, the conflict could articulate with other conflicts with dire consequences for human security on the continent African governments need to see the increasing conflict between herdsmen and farmers in the country as a serious security challenge to the African continent and muster the political will to address it urgently.

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