ENVIRONMENT AND CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA: CAUSES AND TRENDS OF FARMERS – HERDERS CONFLICTS

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ABSTRACT
The nomadic pastoralists and sedentary farmers' conflict is one of the reoccurring security challenges Nigeria. The constant insecurity and overbearing uncertainty which had come to characterise Nigeria's existence compelled scholars to focus their attention on formulating an all- encompassing explanation of the phenomenon. This paper is a contribution in this direction. The paper appraises the roles of the environment in the frequent farmers- herders' conflict which has led to the loss of lives and property in Nigeria. In so doing, it analyses the nature of the Nigerian environmental factors and its changing dimensions which is claimed to have induced the migration of the nomadic pastoralists in search of pasture and water – a process that has led to recurring conflict with sedentary farming communities. The paper argued that dispute over environmental resources among pastoralists and farmers is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria. The conflict has a long and complex historical background. Notwithstanding the scarcity of environmental resources as the basic reason for the conflict, the paper also demonstrated that the proliferation of light arms by non-state actors and communication devices, inefficient state policies, climate change and lack of courage to take difficult but decisive decision by government precipitated these conflicts. The inter-disciplinary method was used through archival, internet, textbooks as well as oral sources were carefully reinterpreted in the writing of the paper.

Introduction

The environment is the part of the earth's surface and atmosphere in which living and non-living things live; it is the physical world which has such features as land, water bodies including oceans, rivers and lakes etc. Other features of the environment include air, sunshine, moonlight among others. Much of the properties of the environment directly or indirectly support life and livelihoods. Man lives in the environment, and being an economic animal explores it to achieve his economic needs that it can enhance his sustainability. Human societies across the globe rely upon the environment for its features which

are referred to as environment resources, in their bid for survival[68].

The industrial revolution of the 18th Century in Europe has since then driven rapid growth of human population as it causes technologies that enhances food production and supply and hygiene; improved health, education, poverty eradication strategies etc across societies of the globe. Human population growth in turn has affected environmental resources negatively, as it has caused extensive use of environmental resources to meet the economic and survival needs of the large populations. It has been rightly argued that the tremendously use of environmental resources is an economic problem[69]; such use can lead to environmental degradation, resources scarcity and affects the environment's functions including resources supplier, life support system, and waste assimilator[70].The negation of these functions of environmental resources further posses the challenge of conflict over resources control and use. Nigeria has over the years been grasped by this scenario as the population has continued to grow above available environment resources.

Nigeria and her population has been engaged in various economic activities including fishing, industrial production, civil service, merchants, farming among others, all of whom depend on the environment. The cumulative activities of the economic actors in Nigeria and across the globe generally have impacted negatively on the environment, which in turn has become a source of tension between the different economic actors and even nations. One of the dominant economic activities across the globe is food production whose primary source is agricultural production, which involves the production of food crops and animals. These activities are largely dependent on environment's resources including soil, its fertility, water and fodder. However, population growth and environmental change has driven these resources to scarcity above demand thereby causing competition on the available ones. Available literature concerning the earliest forms of relationship between the farmers-herders in Nigeria pointed to the fact that it was cordial and based on mutual cooperation[71].Other literature, however, contends although conflicts has been a feature of the relationship between the two groups, they were minimal both in terms of incidence and the degree of use of force hence the impact[72]. This later argument is more plausible since interest differentiation has been an inherent feature of human existence, and where there is clash of interests there would also be conflict. Accordingly, therefore, sedentary farmers-herders' conflicts are not a new thing in Nigeria, and elsewhere but have remained a phenomenon in the relationship between the two groups. They have however been transformed from mere conflicts to violent and coordinated conflicts with the characteristics of war. The purpose of this paper is not to do a comparative analysis of the pre transformational conflicts regime of sedentary farmer –herder conflicts in Nigeria with its transformational era. It has instead answered the

[68]See Olugboyega A. Oyeranti . 2001. Economics and management of environmental resources: *Theory and policy issues*. In *Natural resource use, the environment and sustainable development.*Pp.175-211.The Nigerian Economic Society. Selected papers presented at the 2001 annual conference.

[69]Hueting R. 1980. *New scarcity in economic growth: More welfare through less production?* North-Holland, Amsterdam

[70]Olugboyega A. Oyeranti . 2001. Economics and management of environmental resources: *Theory and policy issues*. In *Natural resource use, the environment and sustainable development.*P.176.The Nigerian Economic Society. Selected papers presented at the 2001 annual conference.

[71]Abbas I.M. 2012. No retreat, no surrender: Conflict for survival between Fulani pastoralists and farmers in northern Nigeria. In *Nigeria's conclusive federalism: Perspectives on flashpoints of conflicts in northern Nigeria.* Pp.65-69. Editor: Habu Mohammed. Ibadan. Cypress concepts and solutions. Also see Rogers, K.S. 1999. Sowing seeds of cooperation in environmentally induced conflicts.In *Ecology, politics and violent conflict.* Pp.260-263. Editor: Suliman M. London: A development and peace education book in cooperation with institute for African alternatives(IFAA)

[72]TernaPaiseAgba. 2022. An inquiry into the causality of Fulani herdsmen terrorism in Central Nigeria: A theoretical exposition. Yet to be published paper. Also see Suliman M. 1999. The rationality, irrationality of violence in sub-Saharan Africa.In *Ecology, politics and violent conflict.*Pp. 28-29. London: A development and peace education book in cooperation with institute for African alternatives(IFAA)

question of why has the conflicts transformed into violence characterised by the use of sophisticated arms in an organized manner; and the consequences been large scale human deaths, displacements, territorial displacements, maiming and socioeconomic disruptions. It has addressed the puzzle of what are the triggers and exacerbations of this violence.

A Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

In analysing the topic, the paper is guided by the general framework of Environmental system, social conflict and materialist theories. The three theories are integrated in order to throw more light on the topic in question as a form of conflict brought about by environmental factors and considerations for materialist gain. As stated in the introductory part, every feature of the environment such as land, trees, grass, water, various types of soil, air etc is referred to as natural or environmental resources. While some of these features can be easily noticed on the surface of the earth crust others are buried in the ground or submerged into waters or deposited on water beds (oceans, rivers etc floors). From a scientific point of view, the environment is the sole supporter for human existence such that without it human existence would be impossible. All of what humans use in keeping themselves alive are secured from the environment, for instance food, water, housing, medicines, and electricity which are just a minute of the mentions.

Among pastoralists include sedentary pastorals who rear the animals in enclosed premises, and the nomads who raise their cattle by roaming about with them. People have always used the term nomad to mean herder; however, these concepts are not the same thing even as they are close in meaning. While a nomad is the pastoralist who roams about over a long geographical space and time with his herd of animal to cater for them, the herder is the pastoralist that takes care of his animal in the country side in a relatively smaller geographical space and time. The seasonal changes in climate and other factors is a major driving force for pastoral nomads. In Nigeria, for instance, the nomads move from the more desiccated parts of the country-the north, towards the more wet parts in the south during the dry season. In the same vain they migrate back to the north in the rainy season when the north begins to have sufficient rain to support their animals. During the rainy season the south becomes too wet and could hurt the hoof of cattle hence cause them disease. This seasonal migration is a ritual with nomadic pastoralists. Thus, while a herder may not necessarily be a nomad, every nomad is a herder. Nomadism in its strict sense is an art, that involves other occupations too, for instance fishermen, labourers, traders' etc.[73].

Since human existence is propelled by environmental resources, the quest for their exploitation have become intense arising from the ever growing human populations and the insatiable quest to live sustainable and luxurious lives. Man's exploitation of the environment's resources over the years has impacted it negatively. This negative impact is described as environmental abuse/degradation. The abuses in turn cause global warming that manifests in environmental or climate change. Global warming is the condition of increased level of atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO_2) and other green house gases around the world[74], that in turn (warms) cause unprecedented rise and undesirable levels of temperature. While the warming causes high temperatures in some regions across the globe, it causes aerosols in others particularly in the Northern Hemisphere which tend to cool the atmosphere[75]. The sources of CO_2 include vehicle exhaust fumes, burning fossilfuel, falling of trees which absorb CO_2. Other sources of green house effect include for instance nitrogen oxide from vehicles and power plants and agricultural fertilizers and pesticides; chloroflocarbon is emitted from refrigerators and aerosols; methane gas is remitted from cows and household and industrial waste. When these green house gases

[73]See Abba GanaShetimma. 2018. Managing pastoral nomadism in Nigeria: A historical review. In *Proceedings of the first national conference on The dynamics of pastoral nomadism in contemporary Nigeria: Problems, policies and prospects.*Pp 95-113. Editors: A.M Gani and N.E Attah. Federal University of Kashere.16- 17 August 2018.

[74]Brown, S.P.A.1998. Global warming policy: Some economic implications. *Economic Review.*Fourth quarter, pp.26-35

[75] For some of the manifestations of climate change see Watson. R. T. 2000. Report of the intergovernmental panel on climate (IPCC).Presented by the chair of the ipcc at the six conferences of parties to the United Nations Framework convention on climate change.13 November.pp.1-20.

come in contact with sun light they undergo chemical change that react with water vapour to create acid rain which represent environmental change. Aside long rising temperatures and acid rain other forms of environment/climate change arising from global warming include long term changes in wind, atmospheric pressure, precipitation-rain and snow, and humidity. Others include desertification, desiccation, flooding, erosion, drought, ice, ice melting, forest fires, landslides, loss of land fertility, rising sea levels and a host of others.

Conflict is a social phenomenon that exists in human relations: relationship to authority, political space, land and economic materials[76].It emerges when two or more parties perceive that their interests are incompatible as such expresses that incompatibility through hostile attitudes or actions that damage the other parties' interest which could be political, money, territory, land, values, religious etc[77]. Conflict is an inherent feature in human interaction arising from the diverse interests in human needs in his quest for sustainable existence. Conflict is not necessarily dysfunctional to human development when it is positively adopted as a means of creating a balance in diverse interest situations. Conflict becomes dysfunctional when violence is used as a means of achieving the interest between parties. Accordingly, while conflicts may be expressed through other hostile but non-violent means, violent conflicts tend to adopt violent strategies including the use of arms in the execution of conflict. Violence entails actions executed by force which are intended to cause destruction, death, pain, maim, etc. Violent conflicts are, therefore, one of major drivers of displaced populations, human deaths, ill-health and poverty in Nigeria[78].

Many theorists have explained the sedentary farmers-nomad herders' violence in Nigeria from the lens of environmental changes induced migration[79].The Fulani nomadic herders are indigenous groups in the Nigeria's arid/semi arid region whose expanse is the fringes of Northern Nigeria covering such states as Sokoto, Borno, Zamfara, Katsina, Yobe, Kano down to areas such as Adamawa, and Bauchi states of the Nigerian federation. The theorists argue that owing to the desiccated nature of these areas which manifest into shortage of grass and water to support cattle life, the herders wander about to locate spots that have such advantage. Meanwhile such spots are not empty spaces, but are occupied by sedentary populations whose major economic activity is cultivation of crops. In the quest to use the cultivators' spaces for grazing conflicts then emerges. They argued that the constant friction over farming and grazing spaces between the two economic groups is as result of the impacts of the manifestations of global warming-environmental or climate change. Such theorists contend that environmental changes such as desiccation, erosion, decreased rain pours, high temperatures, shortage of grass and fodder for sustainable support of animal life and the lives of the nomads themselves have caused the nomads to seek for territories that would support them and cattle rearing. This leads to their encroachment of sedentary farmers' lands hence a clash of interest emerges which if not properly managed escalate to violence between the two[80].

[76]Rummel, R.J. 1975. *Understanding conflict and war.the dynamic psychological field*. Vol 3.Berverly Hills, Carlifornia: Sage publications.

[77]Creative Associates.2014.Conflict prevention, a guide to understanding conflict and peace.In http://www.creativeassociatesinternational.com/.../ghail/understanding.htm Accessedon June 13, 2014. Also read World Research. 2015. Migration and violence in divided societies: Non Boko-Haram violence against Christians in the Middle-Belt region of Nigeria. *Working Paper.* No.1. Abuja, Nigeria: Nigerian conflict security analysis network(NCSAN), for more extrapolations on the sources of conflicts.

[78]Agba, T. P. (2021). Displacement and confinement: voices from Abagana and Daudu IDPs camps. In Afaha Philip., Attah, N. &Otoabasi, A. Editors.*Fortress of tents: dynamics of population displacement in Nigeria.* (Pp.417-443).Abuja: Brandmore communication.

[79]World Research. 2015. Migration and violence in divided societies: Non Boko-Haram violence against Christians in the Middle-Belt region of Nigeria. *Working Paper.* No.1. Abuja, Nigeria: Nigerian conflict security analysis network(NCSAN)

[80]The arguments for global change as driver of cultivators-nomad herders' conflicts in Nigeria read Hassan. H. Bdliya.2018. Climate change, receding lake Chad and the challenges of farmers/herders in Nigeria. In *Proceedings of the first national conference on The dynamics of pastoral nomadism in contemporary Nigeria: Problems , policies and prospects.*Pp 81-94. Editors: A.M Gani and N.E Attah. Federal University of Kashere.16- 17 August 2018, also I.

The Trends of the Conflicts

Pastoral nomadism is age long practice in Africa including Nigeria. In the Nigerian region, pastoral nomadism is nearly an exclusive occupation of the Fulani ethnic group[81] "who ostensibly still hold onto the Neolithic culture of cattle rearing"[82].The history of Fulani herdsmen grazing and conflicts with sedentary farmers in the Nigeria area predates the colonial era, as most often in the course of grazing, the animals strayed into farms of the people and destroyed crops either by eating them up or by running over it. This phenomenon caused conflicts between the Fulani and the farmers. Criminal elements between the two provoked instances of conflict for example some dubious herdsmen may let their cattle to eat up or destroy crops of a farmer and if the farm was far away in the bush (where no homestead was close), such a farmer was beaten or at times even killed or raped (if it were a woman) by the herdsman trespasser, upon demand for compensation by the farmer. Similarly, sedentary farmers on their part at times provokingly robbed the cattle herders when they trespassed on their farms or simply rustled the cattle without provocation from the herder. This was done especially when the herder was alone or when they were not enough to repel the sedentary turned rustlers. Still, some unscrupulous elements at times could rustle a cow of the Fulani especially when such cattle strayed[83].

The conflicts however, never escalated into full blown violence as they were settled through traditional dispute resolution mechanisms or constituted authority. Accordingly, both the pastoralist nomads and sedentary farmers complemented each other in their spheres of economic, political and social endeavours[84].This relationship extended to the colonial era up to the two decades covering the post-colonial era. However, beginning from the early 1980s the relationship started showing serious strain. From the late 1990s the relationship greatly deteriorated and at the turn of the 21st Century it collapsed.

The violent conflicts regime between the herders and sedentary groups in Nigeria's post - independence history is wrongly traced to the conflict events in the central Nigeria's region over time; being the transition belt between the extremely wet Southern region and the extremely dry Northern region. This region it was claimed, has been described as a 'grossly marginalized region with an endangered species on the brink of extinction and cultural annihilation'[85] and have witnessed the intermittent flare of violence conflict for over twenty years, pitting Muslims against Christians, indigenes against settlers, one ethnic group against the other[86]. Such violence emanated from conflicts over the central Nigeria's

L.Bashir. 2018. Managing a clash of civilization: Issues and policies pastoral nomadism in contemporary Nigeria. In *Proceedings of the first national conference…*pp. 9-32, and Isah Mohammed Abbas. 2018. Contest for survival between Fulani pastoralists and farmers: Charades of conflicts and dilemma in Nigeria. In *Proceedings of the first national conference…*pp.65-80

[81]I. L.Bashir. 2018. Managing a clash of civilization: Issues and policies pastoral nomadism in …p.11, Drake, N., Mustapha S., Simon A., Jan F., Osama H.,Kevin W., and Ahmed E., 2011. DMPXV:Paleohydrology and paleoenvironment: Initial results and report of 2010 and 2011 fieldwork. *Lybian studies.*42. Pp. 139-149, also eatalIsah Mohammed Abbas .2018. Contest for survival between Fulani pastoralists and farmers…p.65.

[82]. I. L.Bashir. 2018. Managing a clash of civilization: Issues and policies pastoral nomadism in …p.11

[83]Sale Osek . 2014. Oral interview.,KwaghgandeAbelakpan .2014. oral interview, also Suleiman S. 2012. The dynamics of intergroup relations and conflict management in Northern Nigeria: A historical overview 29, andSuliman M. 1999. The rationality, irrationality of violence in sub-Saharan Africa.In *Ecology, politics and violent conflict…*Pp. 28-29.

[84]I. L.Bashir. 2018. Managing a clash of civilization: Issues and policies pastoral nomadism in …p.11

[85]Odafe, George.2003. The Middle belt in Nigeria's retrogression. *The gadfly magazine.*Vol.4. No.6. p.106

[86]See Agba. T.P. 2012.National integration in Nigeriasince 1999: Issues and implications for democratization and nation building. *African Journal of Cultural, religious, educational and environmental sustainability(AJCREES).* Vol. 1. No. 2. p99. Also see the various articles in Olayemi, A., O. O. Okpeh., and Je' adeyibe D. Gwamman. Eds. 2006. *Intergroup relations in Nigeriaduring the 19th and 20th Centuries.*Makurdi: Aboki publishers.

minority groups' attempts to wrench themselves free from their perceived political domination by the combined Hausa and Fulani group[87]. However, the conflict between herders and farmers is not restricted to central Nigerian area along, it is also common in the far-Northern region. Once it happened in the 'far-north' it is easily resolved due to the common faith and belief of the contending parties.

Thus, the phenomenon of nomadic herders-sedentary farmers' violence grasped the entire country, it is, however, more pronounced in northern Nigeria with high level flash points in the north central region including parts of central and southern Kaduna state, Plateau, Southern part of Bauchi state, Adamawa, Taraba, Nasarawa and Benue states. Others include Kogi, Kwara and Niger states and the federal capital territory since 2010[88].For example, in Plateau State, which has rich tourism and agricultural potentials, several communities including Dogo- Nahawa, Zot, and Rassat and Kutgot were attacked on 7th March, 2010, by the Fulani herdsmen terrorists[89]. On September 5th, 2011 Zakaleo Village, in Babale, Jos North Local Government was attacked by the Fulani nomadic herdsmen. "The attackers came by midnight when the villagers were soundly asleep, surrounded the village and opened fire on the unsuspecting villagers by burning their houses and shooting at sight any villager who attempted to escape. The attack left scores of the villagers dead including a 74-year old man, his wife and two grandchildren. Four of the deaths were burnt beyond recognition when the invaders set their houses on fire and locked the doors from outside"[90].Such barbarous and dastardly attacks have remained a current decimal in the socioeconomic life on the Plateau up to date. Similarly, in Kaduna state particularly in its central and southern parts where there exist very fertile lands and adequate water to support both plant and animal lives; the Fulani herdsmen has perpetually carried out attacks on the sedentary communities. This narrative is the same in Benue, Nasarawa and Taraba states[91]. It should be emphasized that most of these attacks carried out by the herders were reprisal attacks which were done against them by the farming communities: killing their cattle, women and children. For instance in a village of Dong near Numan, Adamawa State, mere altercation between a Fulani herder and a Bachama farmer on 4th December 2017, led to the killing of about 40 Fulani herders, most of whom were old men, women and Children. [92] When the corpses were brought to Numan for burial, it almost lead to war in the State.

The methods of operation of both the nomadic herders and the farmers are cruel, barbaric and inhuman. The herders most often storm and surround a village and homesteads in the midnight when the unsuspecting sedentary farmers and villagers have slept off. They then set the houses ablaze and lay siege some distance away from the inferno to shoot at anybody who attempted to escape from the fire. Or to save their bullets they simply get hold of the attempted escape and slaughter him or her with the machete[93]. On the other hand, the farmers normally kill the whole cattle of the herders, kill old men, children and raped their women, even pregnant women were not spare.

The violence has also been alleged to involve the use of military personnel of the Nigerian Army from both sides. The perpetrators most often colluded with some undisciplined and corrupt officers and men of the Nigerian armed forces to attack the sedentary farmers and villagers or herdsmen[94].Brian TilexOrtese emphasized this

[87]Ogoh Alubo.2006. *Ethnic Conflicts and Citizenship crisis in the Central Region* .Ibadan: Programme of Ethnic and Federal Studies, University of Ibadan,; also OkwudibaNnoli, , 2003."Ethnic Violence in Nigeria: A Historical Perspective", *Communal Conflict and Population Displacement in Nigeria* in, ed., OkwudibaNnoli.Enugu: PACREP.

[88]See World Research. 2015. Migration and violence in divided societies: Non Boko-Haram violence against Christians in the Middle-Belt region of Nigeria. *Working Paper.* No.1. Abuja, Nigeria: Nigerian conflict security analysis network(NCSAN)

[89]*The Nation,* Thursday March 11th2010, pp.1-2

[90]*Tell*, Sept. 19th2011,p.2

[91]See World Research. 2015. Migration and violence in divided societies: Non Boko-Haram violence against Christians in the Middle-Belt region of Nigeria. *Working Paper.* No.1. Abuja, Nigeria: Nigerian conflict security analysis network(NCSAN)

[92] Interview with Innawuro Buba 2018

[93]Oral interview with Adamji Samuel 2014.

[94] Oral interview .Stephen Angel, 2014

fact in his open letter to President Goodluck Jonathan when he reported that "at some point the two Commanding Officers of NASME Barracks, Makurdi, and 72 Special Forces Battalion, Makurdi, were Fulani and there was serious concerns of bias in the intervention of the military"[95]. In a suit No.FHC/MKD/CS/55/2013 between Grace Igbavenda and 4 others Vs Nigerian Army, at the Federal High Court, Makurdi, five widows sued the Nigerian Army, the Chief of Army Staff, the Commanding Officer of 72 Special Forces Battalion, one Staff Sergeant Auta Mohammed and the Attorney General of the Federation for complicity in the murder of their husbands by Fulani herdsmen. The plaintiffs accordingly, complained that Staff Sergeant Auta Mohammed led a team of 6 soldiers to accompany 34 youths from Imande Dem, Guma Local Government Area of Benue State to search for bodies of two Tiv youths earlier killed by Fulani herdsmen. At some point there in the bush, the soldiers asked the 33 of the youths to squat in the grasses and wait while they (soldiers) advanced with one of the youths when suddenly some Fulani herdsmen emerged and opened fire on the un-armed squatting youths, killing 5 while the armed soldiers did not respond, but rather ordered them to remain squatted in the grass while the attack lasted. The soldiers were even said to have driven away the youths that ran towards them for refugee but asked them to go and fight their battle[96]. The same allegation was lebelled against the Bachama farmers whom Hamman Manu accused of using military personnel and retired military officers to kill them at Dong.[97]

In other circumstances, the nomadic herders resort to ambushing mourners either in wake keep in honour dead sedentary farmers or during burial ceremonies of dead members whom they have earlier killed and shot sporadically at the gathering thereby killing as many people that their bullets can hit in the crowd. The perpetrators of the violence also engaged in guerrilla warfare tactics by laying ambush for their opponents. For instance while the nomadic herders lay ambush at farms sites of a sedentary farmer(s), the sedentary farmer lays ambush on suspected routes of the nomadic herder, and as the unsuspecting cultivator or herder to engaged in his activity, he or she was shot at from the bush[98]. The nomadic herdsmen especially rape women of the sedentary farmers under the watch of their husbands or fathers who after witnessing the devilish act perpetrated on their wives/daughters/sister etc are at times then murdered; they tear open the bellies of pregnant women and leave the foetus to fate[99].These examples and many more others which for want of time and space forms the trajectories and trends of violence between nomadic herders and sedentary farmers in Nigeria.

The incidence of violence in the nomadic herders-sedentary farmers' conflict have being very high even as they are ceaseless such that as at 2018, Benue state alone had 726 attacks from nomadic herders, followed by Adamawa with 540, Plateau 492, Zamfara 489, Taraba 453, Kaduna 414, Nasarawa 196 and Niger 94. Others included Kogi 66, Enugu 46, Delta 22, CrossRiver 16, Oyo 13, Edo 9, Ebonyi 4, Abuja 2, Ondo 2, Rivers 2, Ekiti 1, Anambra 1, and Abia 1[100]. These figures might have grown in leaps now that is has been five years after they were generated as the phenomenon of the violence has never ceased since then.

Humanitarian and Economic Toll of the Conflict

It is obvious that the violent skirmishes between the nomadic herders and sedentary populations in Nigeria birthed tremendous humanitarian and economic toll. The study by World Research succinctly provided the data of the violence in terms of its incidences, dates of incidents, location, number of casualties, number of people injured, and displaced and the number

[95]Ortese, B. T. 2014. An Open Letter to President Goodluck Jonathan Appealing to the Federal Government Intervention in the on-going attack on Tiv people in Nassarawa and Benue States and annexation of our land by Armed Fulani herdsmen and Hired mercenaries from Nasarawa and other northern states and neighbouring African countries. retrieved on 6th August 2014, from *https//www. Facebook.com/briantilex/posts/836965789653735*

[96]Ibid.

[97]Oral interview , Hamman Manu 2018

[98]Oral interview.Obonogo John. 2014.

[99]Oral interview.IliasuMaigoro. 2014

[100]Amnesty International Report 2018 cited in Godwin Ajeinu Abu. 2019. Dealing with herdsmen/farmers conflict in Benue state, Nigeria. Being a paper presented at the symposium themed: *Displaced, traumatized and neglected: An emerging humanitarian crisis in Benue state.* YAVNIELLE ENT LTD and Benue state emergency management agency. JS Tarkaa Foundation, Makurdi.14-15th January 2019, p.13

of property destroyed[101].Similarly the International crisis Group argue that the violence have caused huge populations displacements and impacted negatively in many spheres of socioeconomic and political spheres. Agricultural and food production has become crippled. While thousands of herders are displaced and cannot find enough fodder, thousands of farmers who fear attacks are unable to attend to their farms. This therefore has contributed largely to the food deficits, food prices inflation and hunger been experienced in Nigeria at the moment. As at 2018, it was argued that food production in Benue, Nasarawa, and Taraba states was estimated to drop by 33 percent to 65 percent in that year[102]. The displaced populations lacked access to health, just as they lacked access to education.

Accordingly, it has been stated that from September 2017 through June 2018, farmer-herder violence left at least 1,500 people dead, many more wounded and about 300, 000 displaced[103]. These figures may be conservative after all as a result of improper data sourcing and politicization of issues in Nigeria. Some of those injured became incapacitated in engaging in their productive ventures which has then thrown them into poverty. The displaced have became vulnerable to poverty of different forms including hunger, lack of income, health poverty, non access to educations etc. While some of them are staying with kin in safer places, a vast majority of them are still in internally displaced person's camps (IDPs) which are characterized by very appalling conditions including severe inadequate shelter, food and are at risk of communicable diseases[104]. As rightly reported, the camps are overcrowded and lack safe water; poor sanitation which most often leads to the death of communicable diseases like measles, diarrhoea etc[105]. The escalating humanitarian challenges caused by the violence has "overwhelmed the capacities of the states... governments 'resources are badly overstretched , undercutting their ability to provide medical care, food, clothing and infrastructure in the camps"[106].

The Exacerbating Forces of the Violence

The consensus argument is that global warming, which has evolved as a result of human activities on the environment has led to the depletion of environmental resources including land and water hence their scarcity. Thus, imbalance in availability and demand of these resources has formed the basis for violence between the nomadic herders and sedentary farmers. However, insight into the trends of the violent conflicts between these two has clearly indicated that other factors including population growth/demographic changes, proliferation of arms, weak governance, and lack of nationalistic feeling and patriotism, have contributed immensely to the success of the violence.

Added to these are the government policies of promoting agricultural cultivation such as Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) and Green Revolution among others. These programmes were aimed at improving the production of crops in Nigeria. The implication of this is that, more lands were put into cultivation without regard to the plight of the nomadic herders. Even what in Fulani sources was referred to as *burtali*[107] were cultivated

The Nigerian civil war 1967-1970, the prolonged military rule in Nigeria which militarized the Nigerian society, and the deployment of Nigerian troops to other west African states for peace keeping missions are perceived as a cause of the leakage of arms into the hands of unscrupulous elements in Nigeria including cultivators and herders. Related to the above factor is the fact that Nigerian borders are so porous and with the active connivance of unpatriotic and corrupt officials mercenaries and unauthorized weapons from Chad, and Niger are smuggled into the country[108]. The weak nature

[101]World Research. 2015. Migration and violence in divided societies…pp. 30-35

[102]*The Punch.* 2018. *Herdsmen: Anxiety in states over food shortage.*4February 2018, also *Sunday Sun*.2018. Food shortage looms, 3. June 2018, and *Daily Sun.*2018. Herdsmen's killings: Hunger, starvation imminent in Taraba. 20 July 2018.

[103]International Crisis Group. 2018. Stopping Nigeria's spiraling farmer-herder violence. *Africa Report.*No. 262. 26 July 2018. p.12

[104]Agba

[105]*The Guardian*. 6 April 2018. Measles outbreak in IDP camp kills seven children.

[106]Stopping Nigeria's spiraling farmer-herder violence…pp12-13

[107]Burtali is road designated for the herders and their cows to use for their seasonal movement.

[108]Federal Government of Nigeria. 2003. *Strategic conflict assessment: Consolidated and zonal*

of governance in Nigeria that is clutched in corruption, ethnicity and religious bigotry is also a good driver to the success of herders-farmers conflicts in the country. For instance, the security personnel whose major role is to ensure the security of lives and property of the citizens as well as ensure that justice prevails in the society are the very ones that most often compromise their official roles. Those who are supposed to ensure security and justice in many instances are both inefficient and corrupt that the transgressors are not apprehended either because they cannot or are paid to look the other way hence breed the culture of impunity.[109] Poor or weak governance have caused the state not to able to sustainably support the nomads pastoralists, elsewhere, the appropriate support has been to create ranches for pastoralists. Poor governance had also caused the failure of the grazing routes, just as it has caused or placed certain individuals and groups above the laws of the country. The implication is that such individuals can propagate and perpetrate impunity, lawlessness and crime without recourse to justice and laws of the land. Weak or poor governance has caused the handling of the violence both in the official and at the individual levels in partial manner along religious and ethnic lines.

Finally, ethnicity, religious and cultural divides are also prime factors in driving the success of the violence. Hardly will a Muslim, Hausa or Fulani man sees it as wrong and immoral if violence is orchestrated by Muslim, Hausa or Fulani herdsman, likewise the Christian or traditionalist sedentary person will see it as wrong and barbaric if his group leash violence.

Conclusion

Nomadic pastoralists' herders and cultivators' conflicts have undoubtedly reached violence level in Nigeria. These two socio economic groups have embraced violence in achieving conflict-pursuing their interests. The violence has had negative socioeconomic implications on Nigerians, politically, it serves as severe threat to the corporality of the Nigerian nation. The sum of all these is the underdeveloped condition Nigeria is currently thriving; poor access to food, education and health services, insecurity of life and property and of the environment etc. Existing literature have pointed to the implications of global warming as being the drivers of the nomadic herder pastoralist and cultivators' violence conflicts in Nigeria which has almost reached apogee level. Such argument in the existing literature is not disputable. The ever desiccating nature of the environment, continued loss of lands due to erosion, and loss of soil fertility among other environmental challenges caused by global warming have actually caused many pastoralists across the globe, to be on the move in search of water and fodder for their animals. The search is not on empty spaces since land is not empty but occupied by sedentary populations hence the contestation for the land resources between the two groups. However, this paper has found that the interplay of other forces including population explosion, poor governance which manifests in corruption; ethnic and religious divides, and Nigeria's porous borders which allows for proliferation of arms and influx of mercenaries into the country have heightened the violence between nomadic herders and sedentary populations.

For all intents and purposes, open grazing in Nigeria has outlived its usefulness and therefore need to be abolished. It is in this light that the anti – open grazing law enacted by the immediate past governor of Benue State, Mr Samuel Ortom as plausible. Be that as it may, the governor in his action and utterances demonstrated his hatred towards the herders, as such the law was misinterpreted. If the anti-open grazing law is being successfully in checkmating farmers – herders conflict, the herders need to be compensated by providing them with grazing area and facilities for effective pursue of the economic activities provided. Until this is done, we have not heard the end of farmers – herders conflict in Nigeria.

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