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Pastoralism as a New Phase of Terrorism in Nigeria

IdowuAdetayo Johnson [α] & Okunola, BiodunTaofik [σ]

Abstract- The need to feed livestock of herdsmen necessitates their migration from their communities due to inadequate pastures to other communities and this has led to the trespass of these pastoralists to the farmlands of local agriculturalists and destruction of their crops thereby leading to conflict. This study therefore analyses the causes, evolution, dynamics and solutions to the conflicts generated from the farmers-herdsmen clashes in Nigeria. The study also recommends the formulation of national livestock development policy, effective community policing model, demarcation of livestock grazing reserves, provision of constitutional roles and recognition for traditional rulers and convening of stakeholders' conference on nomadic pastoralism as strategies for ensuring peace.

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I. Introduction

The Nigerian nation has persistently been in a fierce vortex and seemingly boiling cauldron of state terrorism. The Nigerian state has witnessed series of mind-boggling and unthinkable bloodshed and the geographical space – the terra-firma on the school atlas christened 'Nigeria' has in its earth the bones of millions of innocent people who lost their lives to avoidable clashes, the sun has dried the tears of many helpless and hopeless people who have lost their loved ones and the ground has also gulped the innocent blood of many who perished in various wars and violent movements which have characterised the state.

These violence are such as the Biafran war, the ZakiBiam massacre, the Odimassacre, the Niger Delta violence, operation Wetie, the Modakeke-Ife war, Maitatsine religious uprising, the Fulani-Birom clashes in Jos, the Bauchi religious riots, the Boko Haram terrorist activities, the Shiite group massacre in Zaria and the recent Fulani herdsmen terrorist activities which pervades every region of the country. These acts of violence have largely disrupted the state of peace and development in the Nigerian state. It is therefore imperative for the government of Nigeria to act swiftly to curb the conflict between the two groups to forestall the metastasis of the conflict to full blown terrorism in an already ethnically-strained country Nigeria which is just recovering from the violent acts of the Boko Haram terrorism.

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II. Historical Origin of The Fulani's

Found across West Central Africa, the Fulani's are said to be perhaps the largest semi-nomadic group in the world (BBC, 2016). They are found in large number in Nigeria but while some have moved into the cities, many are still living as semi-nomadic herders. The nomadic group basically spend most of their lives in the bush and are the ones largely involved in clashes.

According to Anter (2011) the Fulani is an ethnic group who are spread over several West African countries and in some places in Central African and the Sudan. The Fulani people can be found in Gambia, Mali, Mauritania, The Gambia, Sierra Leone, Burkina Faso, Guinea Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire, Central African Republic, Togo, Nigeria, Niger, Senegal, Guinea,Benin, Ghana, Liberia, Sudan and Cameroon. In Guinea, the Fulani represents the largest population and they are basically pastoralist agriculturists whose main occupation is nomadic farming, pastoralism, trading, herding of cattle, goats and sheep which they do across the vast hinterland of where they consider their domain and in many cases, keeping away from local agricultural population (Anter, 2011). The religious, political and socio-cultural identity of the Fulani of West and Central Africa can be traced to the eighteenth and nineteenth century Jihad with conquered communities (Azarya, 1996). According to Blench (1994), the Fulani originated from the Senegambia before spreading out into about 20 states which cut across West Africa and the Sahel as well as western Sudan and Central African Republic (McGregor, 2014).

The Fulani are the major providers of milk and meat in Nigeria. Their contribution to the dairy and meat industry is phenomenal and about 90% of the cattle in Nigeria are owned by the Fulani and they contribute about 3.2% to Nigeria's gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Abass, 2012). The Fulani are also responsible for the provision and hides and skin in Nigeria. In the pastoral system, young people more especially the male tend the herd to ensure their feeding. The conflict between herdsmen and the local communities can be traced to the beginning of agriculture (Abbass 2012). Okelloet al. (2014) submits that it was the fall of the Sokoto Caliphate; colonialism and the introduction of the cattle tax were the major reasons for the initial dispersal of the Fulani to the southern part of the country. Basically, Nigeria has two major seasons – the rainy and the dry

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seasons. During the rainy season, the pastures begin to appear and this is the time when the clashes between the herdsmen and the people of local communities begin to occur due to their trespass into arable lands (Abass, 2012).

III. The Fulani Pastoralists and Terrorist Activities

There have been repeated and bloody clashes between the Fulani herdsmen and host communities for several years. These clashes according to BBC (2016) have claimed thousands of lives within a period of twenty years. It is further stated that in 2014, over 1,200 lives were lost which made these set of people the world's fourth deadliest militant group. In February 2016, there was an attack on farmers in Benue State which according to reports killed some 300 people (BBC, 2016). In April, 2016, there was another attack in Southern Enugu State which claimed about 40 lives and destroyed properties worth millions of naira leaving thousands fleeing their homes and rendering children orphaned.

On the part of the farmers seeking defence, some angry youths, local hunters and farmers in many communities in the country have however acquired weapons against unprovoked attacks by Fulani herdsmen. These people have also vowed to stop what they have described as mindless killings and destruction of their farmlands by rampaging Fulani herdsmen (Punch, 2016). In recent times, the Fulani herdsmen have reportedly killed hundreds in different states of the federation including Plateau, Adamawa, Benue, Enugu and lot of other states (Punch, 2016) the more disturbing aspect is that no prosecution has been made despite promises by security agencies in country. It is instructive to note that these herders are involved in criminal activities as they were reported to have invaded some places in Lagelu Local Government of Oyo State and made away with goods and cash worth N500,000 (Punch, 2015). The group is said to have grown very audacious such that they obstructed the convoy of the governor of Imo State, Rochas Okorocha at the state capital while the governor was inspecting state projects (Thisday, 2016).

Cattle grazing-related violence has been on the increase in Nigeria. According to Olayoku (2014) about 615 violent deaths have been recorded by the database of Nigerian Watch and there have been about 61,314 fatalities that can be described as violent. According to the scholar, in 2008, there were 31 reported cases of cattle conflict while in 2009 the fatalities soared to 83 all occurring most primarily in the northern states of the country. In 2010, iut was also observed that the occurrence of cattle grazing violence dropped to 39 fatalities with most of the cases occurring in the north but sad enough, in the following year, the occurrence rose to 116 fatalities with the highest occurrence being in Plateau state and the most sustained, lasting five days occurring in Benue State (Olayoku, 2014).

The major cause of this violence has been recognised as the invasion of farmlands by the herders and destruction of agricultural farmlands of people of the communities. In 2012, Nigeria recorded the highest number of fatalities when the record was put at 128fatalities. Also, according to Joseph (2012) about 500 cows were reportedly lost by the Fulani herdsmen. It was reported that in Delta State, the herdsmen were armed and dressed in uniforms and when they were attacked by the local communities, it led to the display of headless bodies and raping of women and when the military tried to restore peace, another two persons were killed while militants were also involved in the fight using the opportunity to engage in robbery activities (O'Neil, 2012).

There were also violent cases in 2013 and about 115 casualties were said to have been reported and this spate of terrorism has remained a continuum. Several communities have therefore become hostile to the pastoralists farmers and particularly the Fulani herdsmen who have been dubbed a semblance of the Boko Haram insurgents due to their terrorising habit of host communities. In a sleepy town of OkeAko in Ikole Local government area of Ekiti State some suspected herdsmen attacked the town and killed one of the residents (Olakitan, 2016). Also, in Uzaar in Tombo, Anyii in Logo and Vase in Ukum local government areas of Benue State, the herdsmen attacked killing 8 and 12 persons respectively (Duru, 2016) this incident led to the displacement of about 1,000 people from this localities rendering them homeless.

The Governor of Ekiti State, AyodeleFayose was reported to have armed local hunters and urged them to be defensive in any case where there was an attack from the herdsmen (Saharareporters, 2016). A closely related case occurred in Delta State when Hon. EvanceIvwurie, a Nigerian lawmaker from Ethiope Constituency of Delta State led security agents into the forest in the outskirt of Abraka Kingdom which had become a hideout for the herdsmen in which the herdsmen had also dug a tunnel in order to gain access to attack the community. It is therefore imperative that the Nigerian government must do something to curb the persistent violence and terrorism of local communities by the Fulani herdsmen to forestall peace and tranquillity in these communities and also aid the friendliness of the Fulanis with local residents as well as ease their pastoral business.

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IV. Strategies to Curb the Persistent Fulani-Local Community Fatalities in Nigeria

As a nation just rising from the ashes of the Boko Haram insurgency, the herdsmen-communities clashes is something Nigeria cannot afford at the moment. The country has already lost thousands of lives and property to the Boko Haram insurgency and while more than a million people have been displaced, it is therefore important for the Nigerian nation to look critically into the pastoralist budding conflict before it degenerates into a full blown terrorism.

To achieve this therefore, Nigeria must ensure that there is the promulgation of the National Livestock Development Policy which will provide guidelines for livestock resources management. The government should also ensure that there is the development of institutional and technological changes which is necessary for the exploitation of the potentials which lies in the livestock sub-sector. This approach will enhance research and development of livestock breed, disease control and ways of addressing the ecological problems in Nigerian among others. The implementation of this policy is a viable route of solving the herdsmen-communities clashes in Nigeria. The government should ensure that it consults with the major stakeholders in the livestock sector such as the Maiyatti Allah and other relevant groups. The federal ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources should ensure it initiates a consultative interaction with these groups.

The government can also implement community policing model can also help to forestall peace in the rural areas since the shortage in officers and men of the Nigeria Police could be seen as one of the reasons the herdsmen gain access into the communities to attack residents. This policy was launched by the Nigeria police force in 2004 as a pragmatic approach to police reforms and also a way of substituting traditional reactive and incident-based policing to a proactive problem-solving policing system. It seeks the effective community engagement in the provision of solution to policing issues and also developing partnership in the maintenance of safety and security in the society. This approach will also ensure that effective personnel were deployed to the rural communities and a good structure was maintained in the rural communities.

Another important approach is to ensure that there is a demarcation of the grazing reserves to forestall desertification. There is a need for environmental regeneration programme to mitigate the challenges of environmental desertification as most grazing reserves have been lost to this. The implementation of the demarcation of the razing reserves will ensure that there is enough grazing land for the herdsmen and will also encourage them to return to the abandoned grazing lands in the northern part of the country. There is a need for collaboration between the ministry of agriculture and environment to formulate this policy and develop modalities for ensuring that this goal is achieved.

There is also a need for convening of national stakeholders' conference on nomadic pastoralism where adequate attention to the peculiarities of pastoralism could be discussed and measures to eliminate clashes will be discussed. This will also be a platform where various parties could discuss their grievances and this will engender mutual understanding among conflicting parties.

The traditional institutions in the country should also be given constitutional roles and recognition and this will afford them the opportunity to exercise their authority as grassroots leaders and custodians of cultural heritage. This recognition will also help to reduce the need for traditional rulers to continue seeking relevance through active political patronage and enable them to focus on solving issues that deals with their communities while also thinking of bringing development to their local communities. Once this is achieved, community leaders will know how to engage the pastoral farmers in conflict resolution approach instead of attacks.

V. Conclusion

This study examines the Fulani pastoral farmers and local communities' clashes in Nigeria as a form of budding terrorism and threat to national security. Thestudy established that the persistent conflict has a negative relationship on national peace and security and it has been on the increase in recent times more especially in 2016 where several people were killed in Enugu and Benue States with several attacks in the South West and prominently, in Ekiti State. The study therefore established that policies and programmes were not effectively implemented with generated issues that influenced the persistence of conflicts between farmers and herdsmen within the country. It was therefore recommended that the Nigerian government should endeavour to implement grazing reserves, laws enforcement and socio-cultural dynamics as possible routes to curb the violence.

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