

HERDSMEN INVASION: A THREAT TO FOOD AND STATE SECURITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The connection between state security, herdsman invasion and food security is dynamic and has become a thorny issue in the preservation of the corporate existence of Nigerian state. The friction between herdsman, ethnic groups and socio-economic relationship has generated an obvious animosity, prejudices and violent conflict. Perceived conflict between farmers and herdsman has in many times worsened the state security scenario that directly hampered food security. This paper examines the incidence of herdsman invasion and its implication on food and state security in Nigeria putting into consideration the states that are vulnerable to the incessant attack. This investigation was largely anchored on the structural functional theory to further explain the phenomenon of herdsman and farmers conflict owing to the fact that the society is structured with interrelated parts designed to meet social needs of every individual, thus farmers provide food for the sustenance of state and herdsman equally served as a potential provider of food supplement (Meat). To compliment the effort of farmers, government with its policy act as a moderator to ensure that violence and friction, which can escalate to pose a threat to the security of the state, is curtailed. The paper suggests ways to



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ameliorate the incidence of the activities of herdsmen, which threatened food and state security.

Keywords: *herdsmen; security; invasion; food; state.*

JEL Classification: Q56, Q57

Introduction

One of the major causes of food insecurity in Nigeria is the farmers-herdsmen clash, which is mainly as a result of disputes over grazing areas for herdsmen cattle. From 2017, the farmer-herdsmen clashes intensified and over 70% of farmers have been displaced from effectively carrying out farming activities to aid food production. The rising competition conflict between the two agricultural land users has in recent times demonstrated a high potential to exacerbate the nation's food survival security. Food security is a condition related to the supply of food and the individual's access to it and the concerns over food security have existed throughout history. This paper examines the incidence of herdsmen in Nigeria and its implication on food security and state security in Nigeria. The paper further suggest ways to ameliorate the incidence of the activities of herdsmen. Nigeria is a multi-lingual state. Crises are unavoidable as long as we live in a multi-lingual, cultural and religious community such as Nigeria. Violent conflicts and crises in Nigeria like other parts of the world has created a rift in human relations, caused serious threat to food security, among many other effects. Conflicts in most part of Nigeria especially the herdsmen and farmers clash have hindered farmers from peacefully carrying out farming activities. The fact that these conflicts create reduction in the quality and quantity of food production simply indicates the high level of food insecurity in rural communities with its negative repercussion. Food insecurity negatively affects the growth rate of the nation's economy as investors have become more rigid in making investments in affected areas due to the crisis and this has increased food importation, which reduces the value of the nation's currency.

Conceptual Clarification

Food Security. Food security is a condition related to the supply of food, and individuals' access to it. Concerns over food security have existed throughout



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history. At the 1974 world food conference, the term “food security” was defined with an emphasis on supply. Food security, they said, is the “availability at all times of adequate world food supplies of basic foodstuffs to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuations in production and prices”. [United Nations, 2013] Later definitions added demand and access issues to the definition. The final report of the 1996 World Food Summit states that food security “exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”. [United Nations, 2015]

Household food security exists when all members, at all times, have access to enough food for an active, healthy life. [USDA, 2008] Individuals who are food secure do not live in hunger or fear of starvation. [FAO, 2006] Food insecurity, on the other hand, is a situation of “limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways”, according to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) (2008). Food security incorporates a measure of resilience to future disruption or unavailability of critical food supply due to various risk factors including droughts, shipping disruptions, fuel shortages, economic instability, and wars. [Boeing, 2016] In the years 2011-2017 [FAO, 2017], an estimated 842 million people were suffering from chronic hunger. [FAO, 2017] The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, or FAO, identified the four pillars of food security as availability, access, utilization, and stability. [FAO, 2009] The United Nation (UN) recognized the Right to Food in the Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 [United Nations, 2015] and has since noted that it is vital for the enjoyment of all other rights. [United Nations, 2015]

Concept of National Security

Buzan (2012) sees national security as the “survival and pursuit of freedom from threats and the ability to maintain a nation’s independence, identity and functional integrity against forces of change that are seen as hostile”. National security is best described as a capacity to control those domestic and foreign conditions that the public opinion of a given community believes necessary to enjoy its own self-determination or autonomy prosperity and well-being. It is the ability to preserve the nation’s physical integrity and territory to maintain its economic relations with the rest of the world on reasonable terms. All through there



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is often a legitimate military dimension to national security. Further studies have proven that national security cannot be measured by military parameters alone. It is also a function of economic strength, political cohesiveness, social equity, cultural outreach and environmental soundness. The security dilemma is not peculiar or unique to Third World Countries and Nigeria in particular, but a universal concern particularly in these contemporary times of growing interdependence, globalization, shared danger posed by weapons of mass destruction and varying natures of terrorist acts. Since the end of the Cold War in 1989, there has been a serious debate over the redefinition of national security to respond to new global challenges. The debate is essentially premised on the need to focus more on political threats posed by regional, ethnic and religious conflicts as a result of explosion in global interdependence, communication and information technology and crisis on public world order. Apart from the issue at stake, the menace of the Boko Haram sect, order security problems currently confronting the nation have been identified to include political and election conflicts, socio-economic agitations, ethno-religious crisis, ethnic militias, boundary disputes, cultism, criminality and organized crimes. These problems individually and collectively constitute threat to the peace, security and development of the country. These have implications for the continuity and survival of the nation's nascent democracy. Indeed, the question has been whose interest does national security serve in Nigeria? According to Olukoshi (2014) and Imobighe (2013), states and dominant class interests obviously overshadowed national security in Nigeria. The security thrust is often directed toward the interests of the governing class and their propertied allies while most Nigerians are left high and dry and alienated from the security processes. The bad state of national security in Nigeria has become more alarming than the issue of power and energy in the country. It finds explanation at the rate in which armed robbery, kidnapping, religious fanaticism, political assassination and other criminal act have become the rampant. A situation where these brigands demonstrate superior firepower to the police is critical and worrisome and that can only serve to dampen the moral of the law enforcement agencies. There is no gainsaying the fact that Nigerian government has been very careless over security matters, for instance, the porous nature of Nigeria's borders is one of the challenges of the national security system. For too long, the borders have been thrown open as of 1980s to all manner of aliens from Niger, Chad and Sudan is very prominent in most of the cities and towns of northern Nigeria. Most migrated to Nigeria without Nigerian immigration ministry



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actually challenging their identities. Perhaps, Nigerian government open its flanks to these nations in the spirit of one in brotherhood-Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), but fails to realize that these countries are strong members of Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) and are capable of coming in to the country to indoctrinate the Muslim youths in the northern region. The United States is markedly known as the melting point in relation to cultural assimilation or multiculturalism, yet, it does not easily open its door to just any nation for security proposes.

Theoretical Framework

In explaining this study structural functionalism and the system theory would be used basically to explain the phenomenon of herdsmen and farmers conflict which is largely attributed to the fact that the society is structured into interrelated parts designed to meet social needs of every individual, thus farmers provide food for the sustenance of state and herdsmen equally served as a potential provider of food supplement (Meat) to compliment the effort of farmers. Government with its policy act as a moderator to ensure that violence and friction, which can escalate to pose a threat to the security of the state, are curtailed. David Easton defined political system theory as “that system of interaction in any society through which binding or authoritative allocation are made and implemented.” According to Easton, it is the making of binding or authoritative allocations, which distinguishes the political system from other system both within and outside the overall society that form the environment of a political system.

This theory is of great value to this study because it explains the importance of governance (politics) as both the process and importance of the economy. This is because, when government input are receive it is the authority (politics) that ensure inputs are translated into output for the benefit of the citizenry. Thus, Nigerian government would be able to come up with adequate public policies on food security and state security as regards proffering solution the activities of herdsmen and the institution of workable mechanism to aid food security. For instance, members of the society’s aspiration to feed themselves, the high demand and high cost of food items and the agitation for a reduced price of food items in the market when the prices are high could be received as the input, the government who will now employ its regulatory mechanism to rationalize, assess and convert these demands having been received from the society into output.



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Outputs are the results of the processing of demands. They are decision and actions of the decision-making authority. Having received various demands from the society, the political system converts them into outputs. Subsidization of agrochemical and other agro-allied products, the government will empower banks to issue loan to farmers at reduced interest rates, construction of roads to ease food transportation problem. Outputs can take the form of laws, policies regulation, decisions and actions of government.

Fulani Herdsmen and Nigerian National Security

The *Fula* people, also known as *Fulani* in *Hausa* language, are a mass population widely dispersed and culturally diverse in all of Africa, but most predominant in West Africa. The Fulani's generally speak the Fula language. A significant number of them are nomadic in nature, herding cattle, goats and sheep across the vast dry grasslands of their environment, keeping themselves isolated from the local farming communities, making them the world's largest pastoral nomadic group. [Eyekpimi, 2016] They are massively spread over many countries, and are found mainly in West Africa and northern parts of Central Africa, but also in Sudan and Egypt. The main Fulani sub-groups in Nigeria are Fulbe Adamawa, Fulbe Mbororo, Fulbe Sokoto, Fulbe Gombe, and the Fulbe Borgu. [Eyekpimi, 2016] Nigeria as a nation state is under a severe internal socio-economic and security threat. At a more general level, the threat has special economic, political and environmental dimensions. Each of these dimensions has greatly affected the nation's stability and can be traced to the Fulani-herdsmen and farmers clash, ethnic militant armies, ethnic and religious conflicts, poverty, insurgency, armed robbery, corruption, economic sabotage and environmental degradation. [Damba, 2007]

Nigeria, blessed with a large amount of arable agricultural farmlands in all the States of the federation, is strongly affected by this threat as aside the loss of lives, the vast expanse of arable lands are left uncultivated due to the insecurity of the farmers. States like Benue (the Food Basket of the Nation), Taraba, Nasarawa, Kaduna, Delta, Edo, Jos, Ondo, Enugu, Oyo, Abuja traditionally known for farming and with abundance in food supply are faced with struggle to feed its own population and Nigeria. In the developing country of Nigeria, the Agricultural sector plays strategic role in economic development, making significant contributions to economic prosperity and providing basic raw materials for industries and household consumption. The sector employs approximately two-third of the total labour



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force and contributes over 40% to the GDP. About 7.1 million people faced with acute food insecurity require urgent lifesaving response and livelihood protection to reduce the possibility of famine in the affected areas across Nigeria. When Nigerian farmers cannot plant and harvest crops peacefully, the price of commodities in the markets will greatly increase and encourage importation to supply the shortages; further discouraging the participation of youths in agriculture.

Causes of Farmer and Herdsmen Conflict in Nigeria

Problem does not exist in a vacuum and every problem was caused by something. A good number of factors gave rise to farmers and herdsmen conflict in Nigeria. This section is geared towards discussing them.

Land Use

Land use featured prominently among the major causes of conflict between herdsmen and farmers. Intensive crop farming has expanded into grazing lands in many areas over these years. These areas of encroachment agree with most of the conflict points recorded. [Muhammed, Ismailia, Bibi, 2015] They argued that the incessant clashes between farmers and herdsmen were partly caused by increase in population, which led to utilization of grazing pathways for agricultural activities and residential purposes. This made land very scarce for herdsmen and most often they graze on farmers' crop which leads to clashes. Past conflicts were solely due to overlap of farmlands with cattle routes, where farmers grow crops on the routes. [Muhammed, Ismailia, Bibi, 2015] Other studies show farmers encroachment on cattle routes is the real cause. [Nformi *et al.*, 2014] Farmer-pastoralist conflicts have been associated with the conflict of land resource use exacerbated by dwindling resources. [Blench, 2004] Some researchers have linked this crisis to the theory of eco-violence [Okoli & Atelhe, 2014], where environmental factors and exploitation of scarce resources leads to conflict and violence. This may explain the dwindling grazing resources (land, pasture etc.) and poor management of existing grazing reserves [Adisa, 2012] as one the major cause. Furthermore, the population is dynamic and ever increasing compared to land that is relatively static. The population growth rate of Nigeria per year is 3.2%. [National Population Commission, 2012] Therefore, more and more people will continue to compete over land.



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Ethnic and Religious Differences

Recently, this conflict has escalated, taking another dimension of ethnic and Religious differences with little effort from government or community leaders aimed at addressing them. [Muhammed, Ismailia, Bibi, 2015] Ethnic jingoists and politicians have been benefitting in these strives and without doubt have succeeded in creating a divide between the farmers and pastoralist, especially in communities that are less educated. Leaders at the federal, state, local governments and even at community levels become perplexed and wondered on how these issues can be resolved. [Muhammed, Ismailia, Bibi, 2015] In a survey research conducted by Yobe State, Nigeria Bello (2013) examined “Herdsman and farmers conflict in North-Eastern Nigeria; Causes, Repercussion and Resolutions.” The sample size consisted of 500 farmers and 250 cattle herdsman, making a total of 750. The study used quantitative methods with structured questionnaire as the major instrument for data collection. The result of the study revealed the following causes of farmers and herdsman conflict in Yobe State, Nigeria: (a) Destruction of crops, cattle and other property (reservoirs, irrigational facilities and infrastructure) by the herdsman themselves are the main direct causes for conflicts cited by the farmers; (b) Burning of rangelands, fadama and blockage of stock routes and water points by crop encroachment are important direct reasons cited by the herdsman; (c) Increasing rate of cattle theft which is often accompanied by violence; (d) Antagonistic perceptions and beliefs among farmers and herdsman could compound conflict situation, especially due to failing institutions and fierce competition for resources. In support of above claims, Ingawa, Ega, and Erhabor (1999) reported that the key underlying causes of farmer-herdsman conflict in Nigeria are: 1. Decline in internal discipline and social cohesion, as the adherence to the traditional rules regarding grazing periods, and the authority of the traditional rulers is breaking down. This is exacerbated by increased rent seeking of the formal and traditional authorities in managing resource access. 2. Particularly severe on the traditional trek routes, which become favourite cropping sites because of their better soil fertility resulting from the concentration of animal manure from the trekking herds in these areas. Within the fadama areas, this is exacerbated by the fragmented nature of the crop plots, which makes prevention of animals straying in the crop plots difficult 3. Inadequacy of grazing resources, as increasing crop cultivation (and increasing commercialization of the crop-residues) and poor management of the existing grazing reserves have resulted in a significant reduction in available livestock feed



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resources, in particular in the Northern States. 4. Moreover, the high value crops introduced by NFDP (tomatoes and onions) produce almost no crop-residues for livestock feeding. 5. Finally, the regulation that twenty percent of the Fadama would need to be set aside for grazing [National Agricultural Policy, 1988] has not been adhered to.

Negative Impact of State Security on Food Security

Violent conflict and crisis in Nigeria, like in other parts of the world, have created a rift in human relations, caused serious threat to food security, among many other effects. [Basil, 2015] Crisis is inevitable as long as we live together, especially in a multi-ethnic, cultural and religious community like Nigeria. However, violence leaves us with various forms of retardation and underdevelopment resulting from the destruction of lives, farmland and property. The menaces of violent crisis conflict have been on the increase in some most Nigerian cities in the last two decades. [Ilufoye, 2009] Most of these conflicts are generally regarded as ethno-religious bigotry and antagonism.

According to Kassam (2014) and Basil (2015), the conflicts in most part of Nigeria especially the Fulani herdsmen and farmers clash are largely uncalled for. Farmers can no longer farm peacefully because of Fulani herdsmen. These Fulani herdsmen and farmers clashes have pitched Christians and Muslims against each other. The conflict has had devastating effects on inter-group relationships especially in Nasarawa Egoon in Nasarawa State and Agatu L.G.A. of Benue State. Apart from the loss of lives, farmlands, food produce and property, it has profound influence on residential relationships, leading to new trends in the polarization of communities. This is evident in a physical manifestation of mono-religious areas in Nasarawa and Benue States, with Christians and Muslims living in dominant religious clusters. [Eyekpemi, 2016] Recent studies conducted by Basil (2015) and Ekpeyemi (2016) have shown that serious conflict erupted between Fulani herdsmen and farmers leading to loss of lives, valuable properties and destruction of vast expanse of arable agricultural farmlands thereby posing serious threat to food security since farmers for fear of attack could no longer go to farm and harvest their farm produce. The recent attacks by Fulani herdsmen are on the increase, with the attacks in June 2016 occurring in Ossissa community in Ndokwa East and Abraka community in Ethiope East Local Government Areas of Delta State and three more communities (Ugondo, Turan, Gabo Nenzev) in Logo Local Government Area,



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Benue State, total killings involving no fewer than 60 persons. [Ekpeyemi, 2016] The Federal Government recently ordered an inquiry, military crackdown on the group and affirmed its plans to establish cattle ranches as a solution to the frequent clashes between Fulani herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria. [Basil, 2015] In recent times, the killings recorded by Fulani herdsmen and farmers clashes have rampaged most communities displacing them of their farmlands and loss of their major source of livelihood. This is becoming unbearable with the Fulani herdsmen always having their ways, leaving the farmers at their mercy. Farmers now go to farm armed with weapons for defence in case of attack. [Ekpeyemi, 2016]

Recently, several deaths and casualties have been recorded in series of clash between Fulani herdsmen and farmers. Most people attribute the clash between Fulani Herdsmen and Farmers to religious differences between the Muslims or Islam's and the Christians [Basil, 2015] Several farmlands have been destroyed due to conflict erupting between farmers and herdsmen. Herdsmen attribute the roots of the crisis to religious differences resulting in the killing of their cows while the farmers see the herdsmen as a threat to their crops and agricultural produce since the herdsmen allow their cows to feed on the farmer crops. Evidences have shown that herdsmen and farmers clash in several parts of Nigeria especially in the Nassarawa, Delta, Edo, and Benue states could be due to differences in religious background between the herdsmen and farmers. Several lives and farmlands being destroyed in this crisis. [Ekpeyemi, 2016] Recently, in Benue state, Fulani herdsmen attacked farmers at the farm and claimed one life, which prompted the indigenes of the state to riot.

Effects of Herdsmen Invasion

Lose of live and properties is one of the major effect of herdsmen invasion. In 2016, there was an estimated death toll of about 2,500 arising from herdsmen attacks. [International Crises Group, 2017] Farmers and herdsmen conflicts in Nigeria have grown spread and intensified over the past decade and today pose a threat to national survival and integration. Thousands of people have been killed, communities have been destroyed and so many farmers and herdsmen have lost their lives and property in an extended orgy of killings and destruction that is not only continuously destroying livelihoods but also affecting national cohesion. [Gambari *et al.*, 2018; Adisa, & Adekunle, 2010]



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Another effects of farmers and Fulani herdsmen conflict in Nigeria are destruction of properties, theft of cattle and goats; destruction of crops; physical fight with machetes and sticks; pollution of drinkable water; destruction of reservoirs and source of drinkable water; burning of rangelands, fadama land houses and damages to irrigational facilities. All this have an immediate bearing to food and state security in Nigeria. The destruction has direct impact on the peoples' livelihood as their economic activities are tied to these environmental resources such as water, land (soil), and vegetation (herbs and food crops). [Bello, 2013]

Economic Depletion is yet another known effect of the persistence and consistency of farmers and herdsmen conflicts. [Adisa & Adekunle, 2010] Farm products, which also serve as Nigerian foreign exchange products, are destroyed during attacks. These farm products as cash crops add to Nigerians' National Domestic Products, but when these crops are destroyed it leads to depletion of economic growth. Economically, Nigeria does not do well with the incessant attacks on farmers and farm produce by the Fulani herdsmen, at the advent of conflict. On the other hand, cattle rearing have in no small measure contributed to the Nigerian economy. Nigeria is a country that exports cow meat and products and this adds to our GDP, however it can be observed that when farmers' farm products are destroyed by cows, there is always a reprisal attacks on the cow leading to the killing and injuring of hundreds of cows and this affects immensely Nigerian cow meat production, which in turn leads to the depletion of the Nigerian economy.

The economic effects have also been huge. According to a 2015 study, the federal government was losing \$13.7 billion in revenue annually because of farmers and herdsmen conflicts in Benue, Kaduna, Nasarawa and Plateau states. The study found that on average these four states lost 47 per cent of their internally-generated revenues. In March 2017, Benue state Governor, Samuel Ortom, asserted that attacks by herders coming from more northerly states, and possibly also from Cameroon and Niger, had cost his state N95 billion (about \$634 million at that time) between 2012 and 2014. [International Crises Group, 2017]

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is evident from this study that conflict between farmers and herdsmen hinged on land resource control, which has been heightened by pressure on land from the two conflict actors. This phenomenon of farmer-herdsmen conflicts represents what can be called a "land resource control conflict," which poses a threat to food



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security in Nigeria. The incessant farmers-herders conflicts in Nigeria have become a very serious source of concern to Nigerians. This is against the background that such conflicts in recent times are taking a very dangerous dimension, which, if not nipped in the bud, will eventually metamorphose into more widespread destruction, capable of setting the whole nation ablaze.

The study therefore made the following recommendations as panacea to achieving peace in Nigeria:

1. A strong political will from governments at all levels is fundamental to resolving the herdsman/farmers conflict's across the country.

2. Nigerian Government should make policies on grazing. There should be the establishment and operation of contemporary grazing reserves in the affected.

3. Government should set up conflict mediation, resolution, reconciliation and peace building mechanisms in rural communities, local government areas and states affected by the conflict.

4. Law enforcement agencies should be alive to their constitutional roles and government must strengthen the security around the farmers and herders across the country by providing necessary training and state-of-the-art equipment required anytime there is conflict.

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