

Herdsmen/Farmers Crisis: A Threat to Democratic Governance in Nigeria

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Abstract

Herdsmen and farmers crisis have remained the most predominately resource-use crisis in Nigeria. The necessity to provide good governance has been hampering by the activities of herdsmen. The herdsmen/farmer crises have demonstrated high potential to exacerbate the insecurity in rural communities where most of the crises are localized, with reverberating repercussions nationwide. This study describes the relationship between Fulani herdsmen and farmers in the incessant land crises witnessed in Nigeria and how it affects livelihood security of those involved and land sustainability for the local communities. The paper adopt structural functionalism as it theoretical framework in analyzing. The study concluded that there is the need to identify the causes, repercussions and proffered resolution of the critical issues that are at the roots of the herdsmen/farmers crisis. The paper recommended among other things ranching as the best way of cattle rearing.

Keywords: crisis, farmers, herdsmen, Good Governance and Democratic

Introduction

Over the last decade, reporting of farmer-herder violence has increased exponentially. Violence between Fulani herdsmen and farmers is one of Nigeria's most persistent security problems and has left thousands of people dead in recent decades. The largest spike in reporting, occurring between 2013 and 2014, may be as a result of an increased number of incidents, increased awareness on the issue, or both. It may likewise be attributed to the 2014 presidential elections and the increased Boko Haram activity during this period. In any case, the increasing number of articles covering this issue signifies the growing urgency of this crisis (Blench, 2010). The prevalence of crises in the country has become a major concern for the well meaning Nigerians considering the impact on the peace, security as well as the economy of the nation. Destruction of lives and properties has almost become an everyday affair. These happenings have created a fearful atmosphere that discourages investors both domestic and foreign. By and large the economy of the nation is threatened. In explaining the political situation in the country; three terms need to be clarified. They include: crises, crises and violence. A crisis is the aftermath of crises and violence.

Farmer-herder crises in Nigeria occur as a result of resource scarcity; there exists a growing scarcity of arable land and water sources that are equally essential to sustain crop cultivation and cattle herds. Farmers encroach on grazing routes, and have expropriated land designated to grazing reserves, while herders often destroy crops, pollute water sources and trespass on farms to feed their cattle. This is further exacerbated by the growing population of farmers, herders and their herds, increasing scarcity of arable land due to droughts, impending desertification of the sahel-savannah, land degradation, and cultural differences among ethnic groups that predominantly farm or graze cattle (Fiki & Lee, 2005).

Many Nigerians however attribute the violence to ethnic incompatibility. Nigerians have become accustomed to headlines that read, "Fulani herdsmen attack Guma and Logo and 120 persons were killed. As Nigerians, we are also familiar with reports of incessant "clashes between the majority Muslim north and Christian south." Although these narratives are not completely false, as evidenced by the fact that a majority of clashes occur in the most diverse middle belt states, Plateau, Taraba, Ekiti, Kogi and Benue, etc they are oversimplified narratives of deeper issues, such as increased insecurity following the emergence of Boko Haram, increased access to arms and automatic weapons, and also the exploitation of farmer-herder violence by Boko Haram terrorists (Blench & Dendo, 2003 and Rashid, 2012).

Ifidon, 2005 & Ifla, 2001 see resolution as a collaborative problem-solving, a cooperative taking together process that leads to choosing a plan of action that both of you can feel good about. There are undoubtedly serious security issues challenging the peace and national security of the nation. Security is crucial to a nation's sustainable development. Production and industrial activities can only thrive in an enabling environment. Challenging issues currently facing the country include: Political Violence, Extremism (Boko Haram) or insurgency, Communal violence, kidnapping, the Niger Delta, Maritime insecurity among others. If these issues are considered critically, irreconcilable differences and struggle between individuals and groups over access to power, opportunities and privileges that go with it are not farfetched.

Background

For a few years, there has been a raging battle between Fulani herdsmen and farmers of Nigeria's middle states of Benue, Jos and Taraba. This conflict if left to mutate can discourage tourists from visiting the different

amazing destinations situated in this region. Benue State is regarded as the food basket of the nation. It is an agrarian state because of the fertile soil and this makes agriculture very important for their livelihood and survival, and has inevitably attracted Fulani herdsmen to Benue and other Middle belt states. So, the farmers rue the wanton ravaging of their lands as it destroys of their source of livelihood. At the end, it becomes a battle for survive (Akinkuolie, 2018, Blench, 1984).

Fulani herdsmen are popular for being cattle rearers which makes it essential for them to navigate their prized cows, from one location to another in search for food and water. As a result of this regular search, it may lead to the invasion of other peoples farms by the herdsmen. The Fulani Herdsmen crisis remains a major issue in Nigeria. So far, thousands have been killed and many more have been expelled from their homes, and the Nigerian government does not appear willing to initiate any forceful action against them. Rather, they are requesting for pieces of land from states in order to provide the rampaging herdsmen with permanent feeding ground. They are largely nomads who go through towns with their cattle. In Nigeria, the Fulani and the Hausa people dominate the northern states, with a population of well over 30 million. Notably, people of the Fulani tribe rarely ever use artificial birth control methods and, as a result of this, the tribe is very fertile, hence their vast population and their presence in almost every state across the country. Due to the peculiarity of the activities of the herdsmen, they move from one place to another in search of pasture. In this process, the herdsmen have reportedly encountered cattle rustlers and made complaints to the relevant authorities who fail to investigate the issue, hence their purported reason for carrying arms about. During their journey, they frequently trespass farmlands owned by locals in their host communities, destroying crops and valuables. Attempts by farmers to prevent them from causing havoc are met with stiff and violent resistance. Most times, the farmers are overpowered, injured and killed, while others are evicted from their homes. Sometimes, the herdsmen are accused of taking these opportunities to steal, rape, raze houses and kill innocent members of the communities they pass through (Akinkuolie, 2018, Blench, 1984, World Bank, 1989).

Before now, the herdsmen have been known to wreak havoc in certain communities in Nigeria, but now, the rate at which they commit these crimes has increased exponentially. According to statistics provided by the Institute for Economics and Peace, 1,229 people were killed in 2014, up from 63 in 2013 and Benue State seems to be the hardest hit in recent times. Barely five days to the end of Governor Gabriel Suswam's administration in May 2015, over 100 farmers and their family members were reportedly massacred in villages and refugee camps located in the Ukura, Per, Gafa and Tse-Gusa local government areas of the state. According to reports, in July 2015, suspected herdsmen attacked Adeke, a community on the outskirts of the state capital, Makurdi. Last December, six persons were killed at Idele village in the Oju local government area. A reprisal attack by youths in the community saw three Fulani herdsmen killed and beheaded.

In February this year 2018, as a result of a clash between herdsmen and farmers in Benue State, 40 more people were killed, about 2,000 displaced and not less than 100 were seriously injured. Most recently, more than 92 Nigerians were massacred by suspected Fulani Herdsmen in Benue and Niger states. Also, before this time, there have been reported attacks by the Fulani Herdsmen in southern states of the country, including Enugu, Ekiti and Ondo states (Daniels, 2006).

Concerns have been raised as to the true identity of those behind the attacks. Many with dissenting views believe they may be members of the Boko Haram sect, masquerading as Fulani Herdsmen. A few others, including the Nigerian military, have said they are herdsmen from other parts in West Africa and not Fulani. While the latter may be admissible due to porous Nigerian borders and poor immigration surveillance, especially in northern parts of the country, it is very difficult to correlate the activities of Boko Haram terrorists to those of the Fulani Herdsmen. Boko Haram has utilised explosives carried by suicide bombers or hidden in a target, but accounts by victims of the herdsmen crisis have shown that the Fulani Herdsmen are mainly concerned with gaining greater access to grazing lands for livestock. In fact, following the February attacks in Benue, the leadership of the Fulani group openly admitted that the attacks were carried out by its members (Ajayi, and Allagenyi, 2001, Daniels, 2006).

Good Governance

Generally, governance, according to the World Bank Report (1989) is the exercise of political power in the management of a nation's affairs. This definition thus implies that governance encompasses the state's institutional and structural arrangements, decision-making processes and implementation capacity, and the relationship between the governing apparatus and the governed- that is the people in terms of their standard of living.

In his analysis, Odock (2006:3) and Beetseh & Akpoo (2014), sees good governance as "a system of government based on good leadership, respect for the rule of law and due process, the accountability of the political leadership to the electorate as well as transparency in the operations of government." Transparency, Odock (2006) opined that it has to do with the leadership carrying out government business in an open, easy to understand and explicit manner, such that the rules made by government, the policies implemented by the

government and the results of government activities are easy to verify by the ordinary citizens. Accountability as a component of good governance refers to the fact that those who occupy positions of leadership in the government must give account or subject themselves to the will and desire of the society and people they lead. Unfortunately, this is lacking in the public domain in Nigeria.

Governance typically emphasizes leadership which suggests the way political leaders meaning the apparatus of the state, use or misuse power, to promote social and economic development or to engage in those agendas that largely undermine the realization of the good things of life for the people. Good governance is in tandem with democratic governance which is largely characterized by high valued principles such as rule of law, accountability, participation, transparency, human and civil rights. These governance qualities have the capacity to provide the development process of a country.

Theoretical framework

Structural functional theory

The structural functional approach provides a useful framework for categorizing and comparing data. It was not very useful for analyzing or predicting change; the issue of why, how, when, and in what direction, political development occurs. This issue of development, or change, is, of course, crucial for the Third World. Structural functionalism is a tradition of social analysis that sees society as a mosaic of functions and structures that perform them. For example, in order to survive, a society needs to educate its children, produce goods, govern its affairs and provide security for its members. These are functions and they necessitate a number of structures such as schools, industries, parliaments, courts, armed forces, etc to perform their roles. Understandably, when these structures perform their roles or functions properly, there is order in society and in fact, society inherently moves in the direction of order and stability. Consequently, from a structural-functionalist perspective, peace is achieved where existing social structures perform their functions adequately, supported by the requisite culture, norms and values.

In broadening the definition of peace, Galtung (1990) had earlier outlined two dimensions of peace. The first is negative peace, that is the absence of direct violence, war and fear of the individual, nation, region and indeed at the international levels; the second dimension is positive peace that is the absence of unjust structures, unequal relationships, justice and inner peace of the individual. In sum, we can conceive peace to be the absence of fear, conflict, anxiety, exclusion, deprivation or suffering and violence. It is primarily concerned with creating and maintaining a just order in society.

Galtung (1991) and Fayeye (2011) Peace and indeed peace theory is intimately connected not only with conflict theory, but equally with development theory. Therefore a peace research must be one that looks into the conditions past, present and future for the realization of peace which is intricately connected with conflict research and indeed development research. Violent conflicts, whether social, political or environmental have seriously contributed to the crisis situation in terms of loss of human and material capital. This theory has however found it suit on this paper as the structure of government has fail in it responsible of maintaining peace. (Army, Police and other security).

Nigerian herdsmen crisis

The clashes are driven by a range of factors from the environmental to political but at their core is the problem of land scarcity. Climate change and the desertification of Nigeria's north have forced the nomadic cattle herdsmen farther south to feed and sell their cattle, encroaching on the territory of sedentary farmers. Rapid population growth Nigeria has 180 million people today and is set to become the third largest in the world by 2050 has worsened the competition for land. Why has there been a surge in attacks? For decades, herders and farmers mainly lived in peace (Fiki, & Lee, 2005, Fayinka, 2004, Fabusoro, 2007).

However as Nigeria grew, it became clear that for herdsmen and farmers to co-exist peacefully, something had to be done. In the 1960s, the government attempted to introduce legislation to guarantee migratory routes for the herdsmen and ensure farmland was respected. But the laws never were enforced, leaving communities to deal with disputes themselves. In recent years, the violence has increased, with some herdsmen carrying heavy arms and the farmers assembling militias. Both sides are now engaged in a devastating cycle of reprisal attacks, particularly in the central region. What has the government done? – Each time there is an outbreak of violence the Nigerian government has promised to crack down on the perpetrators. But the reality has seen herdsmen and farmers take matters into their own hands to settle scores. “There’s no accountability, that’s the issue,” said Isa Sanusi, spokesman for Amnesty International Nigeria. “Previous perpetrators have never been punished,” he said. “Impunity is the most dangerous thing.” Individual states are trying to introduce new laws with mixed results. In Benue state, where 80 people have been killed since the start of the year, a ban on open grazing angered herders who said it threatens their way of life. What do Nigerians think? Nigeria is a country split almost evenly between a mainly Muslim north and a largely Christian south, and religious tensions bubble constantly below the surface. Many Nigerians and especially lawmakers playing identity politics have seized on the fact that the

herders are mostly Muslim while the farmers are mainly Christian. President Muhammadu Buhari has warned against what he says is “simplistic reductionism” but he has been accused of not acting decisively because he is an ethnic Fulani. “This latest round of attacks has cemented the perception that the federal government, particularly the Buhari administration, is biased in favour of the herdsmen,” said political analyst Chris Ngwodo. Many feel Buhari is not addressing the herdsmen conflict as decisively as he did with Boko Haram jihadists and Niger delta militants. “Whether this is arising from incapacity or complacency or complicity is open to question,” Ngwodo said, warning the attacks could harm Buhari’s support at elections in 2019. – Can the violence be stopped? – The violence could be contained if the government focused on boosting security and enforcing legislation, said Azeez Olaniyan, a political scientist at Ekiti State University (Abbas, Isah, 2009). A first step would be to arrest perpetrators, he added. “If the people had been apprehended earlier on and dealt with, we would have been talking about another thing entirely”. At the same time, legislation guaranteeing herders and farmers access to land has to be enforced. Unchecked, the conflict risks mutating into a greater security threat where ethnic groups are pitted against each other, Ngwodo said. “If it’s not dealt with as a criminal justice issue, it escalates and you have a cycle of blood feuds,” he said. “Then it becomes more catastrophic” (Fiki, & Lee, 2005, Fayinka, 2004, Fabusoro, 2007).

Responses from various stakeholders

Many Nigerians believe the president has deliberately shied away from commenting on the crisis, as it is widely known that he comes from the Fulani ethnic group. Following attacks by herdsmen in Ekiti State, the governor of the state, Ayodele Fayose, encouraged his people to take up arms in self defence. He also gave the go-ahead to vigilante groups in the affected area of the state, charging them to kill any Fulani Herdsmen attempting to rape their wives or kill their children. Revealing why the Fulani Herdsmen attacked the Agatus (an ethnic group in Benue) in February, the Interim National Secretary of the Gan Allah Fulani Association, rose in defence of his kinsmen, saying it was a reprisal attack by his people, meant to revenge the killing of a prominent Fulani man. The Gan Allah Fulani Association is an umbrella body of Fulani associations in Nigeria. In the heat of the herdsmen crisis, the Sultan of Sokoto, Muhammad Sa’ad Abubakar III, advised Nigerians to stop attributing ethnicity and religion to the Fulani Herdsmen crisis, citing that such actions are not peculiar to the Fulanis (Ajayi, and Allagenyi, 2001, Daniels, 2006).

The grazing routes’ plan by the Nigerian government

A Nigerian lawmaker, Zainab Kure, has sponsored a bill in the country’s Senate. The bill popularly regarded as the ‘Land Grazing Bill,’ is aimed at securing areas for Fulani Herdsmen across the federation and for the mapping out of grazing routes. Beyond that, the bill seeks to establish a National Grazing Reserves Establishment and Development Commission. The successful signing of this bill into law means there will be a limited areas reserved for the Fulani Herdsmen and their cattle. On the land required for the grazing routes, Nigeria’s Minister of Agriculture, Audu Ogbah, has said that many northern states have donated several pieces of land for the project. However, states in the southern part of the country have kicked against the idea, noting that they cannot be forced to give out their land for this purpose. Despite the controversy that comes with the proposal, the bill has scaled the first reading in the Senate (Mshelia, 1981, Iro, 1994).

What to expect from government

The Fulani Herdsmen have unabatedly continued to wreck havoc, mostly in the middle belt area of the country. The inability of the Nigerian Police to contain them may spell greater doom for lives in susceptible areas. Some days ago, Ventures Africa reflected on what the silence of President Muhammadu Buhari on the herdsmen crisis could mean. Nigeria needs to take the bull by its horn, else, the Fulani Herdsmen – who are deemed only less deadly than Boko Haram, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS or ISIL), and al-Shabaab in the entire world – may be Nigeria’s worst nightmare. Other economic impacts include: impeding trade practices, reduction in crop yield, displacement of farmers, loss of lives and properties, loss of products in storage and destruction of public and private buildings...Here are some of the attacks by Fulani Herdsmen compiled from various news headlines, (World Bank, 1989, Abbas, Isah, 2009). For instance in:

Herdsmen/Farmer Crises: A Threat to Democratic Governance in Nigeria

The herdsmen/farmers crises pose a threat to democratic governance as the level of intolerance among the herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria has deteriorated to unimaginable level of arms struggle resulting in countless deaths among villagers with the attendant reduction in the population of the peasant farmers (Ingawa, and Erhabor, 1999, Akinkuolie, 2018, Ajayi, and Allagenyi, 2001). Hence, it is important to note that these violent clashes have direct impact on the lives and livelihoods of those involved and lead to the displacement of economic productive population of the community. In most cases, these incessant violent clashes lead to reduction in output and income of crop farmers as a result of the destruction of crops by cattle. Most farmers

have been forced to flee their farms for fear of being killed by well-armed herdsmen and loss of part or the whole of their crops which translated into low income on the part of the farmers who take farming as a major occupation. This tends to negatively affect their savings, credit repayment ability, as well the food security and economic welfare of urban dwellers that depend on these farmers for food supply. Hence, discourages the farmers and stifles rural/agricultural development (Adekule & Adisa, 2010). Mercy Corps 2013 and 2016, a global humanitarian organisation funded by the British Department for International Development (BDID), on the causes and effects of perennial clashes between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria, revealed that the incessant attacks have drastic effects on food security and caused a loss of \$14 billion in three years. Apart from thwarting the country's economic development to an enormous extent, other economic impacts of these crises include impeding trade practices, reducing in crop yield, displacement of farmers, loss of lives and properties, loss of products in storage and destruction of public and private buildings. It become glaring that if nothing is done to arrest this ugly situation, the achievement of food security and sustainable development becomes a mirage (Akinkuolie, 2018, Ajayi, and Allagenyi, 2001).

The herdsmen and farmers crises disrupt and threaten the sustainability of pastoral farming and crop production in West Africa (Ifidon & Ahiauzu, 2005). These crises reinforce circles of extreme poverty and hunger, and destroy social status, food security and affect mostly the most marginalised groups that include women and children of a teeming population like Nigeria. In the host communities, nomadic herdsmen relocate as a result of conflict and host farmers, especially women and children, who remain behind, stop going to the distant farms for fear of attack by the nomads in the bush (Blench & Dendo, 2003, Blench, 1994, Blench, 1984, Blench, 2010, Ajayi, and Allagenyi, 2001, Daniels, 2006).

Such displaced farmers have become a source of liability to other farmers whom they have to beg for food for themselves and their families. This has created a vicious cycle of poverty in such communities and affected the education of children leading to obstacles in their development and mass displacement. This has reduced some women farmers to the status of widows. All these have drastically reduced agricultural labour force in such areas which pose huge challenges for the constant growing Nigerian population. During these crises, there are reported cases of proliferation of small arms and ammunitions since the host farming communities and the herdsmen saw each other as archenemies. This is inimical to the spirit of integration of Nigerian tribes or ethnic groups and peaceful co-existence (Adisa, 2012).

There is no doubt that the displacement of some of these economic productive people from their various host farming communities by the nomadic herdsmen would impede the efforts of the international best practices which obviously correspond with the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 2, and 6, which emphasize the need to adequately achieve food security and sustainable management of resources for the teeming Nigeria population. Finally the money that would have been use on development is use on managing crises.

Challenges/solution of herdsmen/farmers Crises in Nigeria

The high level of crises in Nigeria today has made it so imperative to interrogate the socio-economic and political condition in the country with a view to ascertaining the factors that cause insecurity in Nigeria with a bid to fashioning out a way out of the condition of insecurity in order to enthrone an atmosphere of sustainable peace in the country. The level of insecurity is so high to the extent that the American government cautioned its citizens not to travel to visit 20 states in Nigeria, citing armed robbery, kidnapping and terrorism among others, as reasons for the advice. The recent killings in Benue, Taraba, River and even the herd's men threat to Ekiti state are clearly sings of insensitivity to governance by the present government. The president is expected to fight the falani herd's men the way he did to IPOB and Boko Haram in the north. The slow action of the president to 73 persons kill in Benue State shows secret ethnic cleaning. The present government has shown it inability to management crises as couldn't fight the threat from Miytti Allah. When there is governance, the people are sure of security (Abass, 2012). The clashes between herdsmen and farmers in some states in Nigeria, especially in Benue, Taraba and Kaduna states should not be allowed to generate further by incitement and intemperate statements. The committee set up by the government to solve this problem must come out with a holistic solution which will deal with the problems of encroachment into farmlands, incitement and credible plans to integrate the herdsmen fully into the Nigerian society (Ingawa, and Erhabor, 1999, Akinkuolie, 2018, Ajayi, and Allagenyi, 2001).

The grazing of animals on cattle trails in the 21st century is to say the least antiquated. The focus should therefore be on modernization of cattle rearing which will maximize the benefits therein in terms of job creation, food security, and eventually end the vexatious farmers/ herdsmen conflicts. India, China, USA, Pakistan and countries with large populations depend on milk and dairy products to fight hunger, malnutrition, unemployment and promote social harmony. India is a good example with an annual production of 163 million metric tonnes of milk which is about 10% of worlds output. In India, cattle are reared within the confines of village communities, and farmers cooperatives, mainly for milk production and rarely for the meat. The attachment to the cattle in India is so strong that it is called mother, which in a sense is true because the cow provides food and

nourishment for the country's huge population. The European dairy farm model is also within confined paddocks which in most cases are not much bigger than a football pitch. The animal fodder is grown on location or in other farms which specialize in growing hays, grains and other animal feeds (World Bank, 1989, Rashid, 2012). The milk produced in these farms are collected, pasteurized and packed in local dairy plants for local and worldwide consumption as infant foods, cheese, yoghurt, butter and other dairy products. The average milk yield per cow in Europe is between 40-50 liters per day as compared to the paltry 1-2 liters yield of the Nigerian cow due to poor feeding, poor health and stress on the grazing trails. The milk producing years of a cow is about 5-7 years, after which it is culled for the meat. The profit in the industry is derived mainly from the dairy products which by some estimates could be in excess of 15,000 usd per milking cow per year. In Nigeria, cattle is reared mainly for the beef and minimally for the milk, which takes away the bulk of the profit in the business. The focus should therefore be on milk production which would contribute substantially to the national economy and at the same time stop the perennial conflicts between herdsmen and farmers in the country. The establishment of ranches and grazing lands may seem attractive and a simple way out of the herdsmen/ farmers clashes. The constraints of land and land ownership in tribal areas are also a big challenge. Ranches are established in countries with huge pastoral lands, like in the lush Pampas of Argentina, grass lands, which alone covers over 700,000 square kilometers of land mass or about 80% of Nigeria's entire territory. It is the same with the Prairies of USA/ Canada and the mighty Eurasia Steppes in Russia, which is about 17 times the size of Nigeria. The Indian and European models are therefore best suited for the Nigerian situation. Dairy farming however requires special skills and a certain level of education, which the itinerant herdsmen do not possess for now.

However, their native and rustic skills should be a useful asset which would accelerate their integration into modern animal husbandry methods. The education of the nomadic herdsmen should therefore be given priority as the first and most important step in the conversion and integration process. The existing nomadic educational system is not good enough. It must be modernized with added agricultural technical skills which would be useful in the field. The Federal Government should take the lead in establishing the proposed dairy plants in states which are ready to accept them. The private sector and foreign investors will thereafter follow the footsteps of the government and key into the programme. The tension in the country is now so high that grazing should be limited to states which are more receptive to the Fulani people or are of predominantly Fulani ethnic group, such as Adamawa, Kebbi, Sokoto, Zamfara, Bauchi and Jigawa states. The eventual success of the ventures would attract more states and investors to the project. For now, grazing trails should not be imposed on states which are still hurting from the clashes and those adverse to it.

Tackle Desertification

According to research findings a sandy desert occupies about 35 to 40 percent of the land mass of frontline Nigerian States of Borno, Yobe, Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Zamfara, Sokoto and Kebbi. Over the years, the desert has consumed different parts of the region due to deforestation and pastoralism. This has encouraged many Fulani herdsmen to move from their base in these states, southwards. The middle belt and other parts of Nigeria are bearing the brunt. To forestall this continued migration, the government needs to encourage reforestation and irrigational farming (Abbas, 2009, Herdsmen and Farmers Conflicts in North-Eastern Nigeria, 2018, Rashid Solagberu, 2012, Potter, 1995).

Bridge the Indigenes – Settler differences

When the Fulanis find themselves in the farmer's territory despite spending decades in the middle belt region, they are still regarded as settlers by the indigenes. This difference should be bridged through regular meetings, social gatherings, festivals and sporting events.

Ranching Zone

This is a key factor the government, herdsmen and farmers have to agree on. A large expanse of land set aside solely for grazing should be declared as ranching zone. This should be established across the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria. It will go a long way in reducing the tension between the farmers and the herdsmen. Fulani and their Cow Grazing on a farm land



Source: <https://guardian.ng/opinion/herdsmen-farmers-clashes-problems-and-solutions>

Conclusion

This paper focuses on herdsmen/farmers crisis a threat to democratic governance in Nigeria. Herdsmen/farmers crises disrupt government activities and cause panic to the public. Furthermore, the use of police and courts to resolve crises between Fulani herdsmen and farmers by government has been ineffective. This has contributed to the frequency of the crises especially since early 1980s sequel to the democratic dispensation. All these have exacerbated chronic insecurity that have encouraged the crises parties to take responsibility for their own security and to defend themselves, which is a threat to the sustainability of the federation.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are suggested for proper crises resolutions between the Fulani herdsmen and farmers. Experts should be assembled to map out the duration, strategy and timelines for the transition plan. As there is no miracle model for solving the problems, the plan should simultaneously pursue a number of models including:

- international Modern ranching can be pursued as one of the possible models in areas with lower population densities in the North East (Sambisa Game Reserve in Borno State) and North West (Gidan Jaja Grazing Reserve in Zamfara State);
- Semi-intensive systems of animal husbandry should be pursued accompanied with requisite investment in infrastructure, training, extension, marketing and animal health service delivery in conjuncture with the private sector;
- The traditional form of pastoralism should continue for a period to be agreed upon with some improvements (in the form of coordinated mobility between wet and dry season grazing areas and effective management of farmers and pastoralists relations);
- iv. Use of and development of grazing reserves to target pastoralists with large stocks where skills for pasture production, large milk production, etc can be promoted.
- Development of integrated crop-livestock systems with farmers and pastoralists being encouraged to keep some animals in their farms.
- vi. In order to meet the feeding needs of herds, alternative low water and drought resistant grasses should be produced, in response to the impact of desertification on fodder production.
- There is need for viable NGOs on farmer-herdsmen crises management, especially in the areas of awareness, education, prevention, and amelioration. Furthermore, nongovernmental organizations should support livestock-centered livelihoods including cattle herding, not only in crises mitigation but also in the support of grassroots innovations and in influencing favourable national policies.
- Government should be firm and fair in its resolution and implementation of decisions. Traditional and local leaders should be well involved in finding solutions to herdsmen-farmer crises. The committees proposed above must have representatives of the local leadership.
- . The atmosphere between farming and pastoral communities is extremely bitter and negative. Support should be provided for creative writers in Nollywood, Kannywood, radio and television to create new narratives showing how the interaction between the two groups could be peaceful and mutually beneficial. Above all, the National Orientation Agency (NOA), as an institution with presence across the 774 Local Government Areas (LGAs) of the country, should provide these critical services.
- In addition to the search for improving security in the zone through the use of security forces and mobilizing the civil population, some policy decisions are required. The military should be encouraged

to pursue the path of ranching as it has already decided to. The Sambisa Grazing Reserve (4800 ha) is an ideal and symbolic place to take-off by establishing a ranch run by the military. It would significantly improve the security situation in the zone and encourage cooperation between pastoralists and the military. In the North West, the military should also be encouraged to create ranches in the Gidan Jaja Grazing Reserve (565,000 ha) for the same purpose of improving security and cooperation with pastoralists.

- The programme for the country's transition to modern forms of animal husbandry must be accelerated and funded. The national stock would require rapid improvement and modernisation to meet market demands for meat, milk, hides and other products from the industry:
- i. Commercial ranches should be established in some of the sparsely populated zones in the North East and North West;
- The business community should be encouraged through policy measures to invest in the establishment of modern dairy farms;
- iii. Sensitisation programmes should be undertaken on the values of livestock improvement and breeding centres for the production of quality heifers to improve pastoral stock should be developed all over the country.

- Efforts should be made towards modeling best practices of pastoral-farmer relations as evident in countries such as Chad, Ethiopia and Niger, where the existence of institutionalized and functional mechanisms for pre-empting and resolving conflicts between farmers and pastoralists enable them to live in peace.

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