

HANDBOOK ON CONFLICT PREVENTION IN NIGERIA

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Handbook on Conflict Prevention in Nigeria is a peer-reviewed compendium of Wukari International Studies Group (WISG) Department of History and Diplomatic Studies, Federal University Wukari-Taraba State. WISS follows the double-blind peer review process. All manuscripts are reviewed by an editor and members of the Editorial Board or qualified outside reviewers. Decisions will be made as quickly as possible, and the WISS strives to return reviewers' comments to author (s) within 4 weeks for final corrections where necessary. Interested persons are advised to contact the managing editor via szhema@yahoo.com or the editorial secretary via ochogaeochoga@gmail.com for WISS membership or submission of papers for subsequent editions.

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WISG Academic Publishers
Ibadan-Makurdi-Abuja
07037694253, 08032257518

ISBN:978-978-973-973-3

First Published in 2018

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DEDICATION

To innocent Nigerians who untimely lost their lives in violent
conflicts which ought to have been prevented.

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Chapter Three

FARMERS-HERDERS CONFLICT IN NIGERIA: A SEARCH FOR GLOBAL BEST PRACTICES

Edun Abdulkareem Jimoh

Introduction

Decades of attacks, massacres and wars have accomplished Nigeria's sojourn to democracy and development. Herdsmen-farmers conflict has proven to be more deadly and challengeable in the recent time. Apart from the crisis in the Niger Delta region engineered by the Niger Delta militants and in the North Eastern part of the country engineered by the Boko Haram which Nigeria has to grapple with, the farmers-herdsmen conflict in some part of the country has become a challenge for both the local and State Governments where the conflict has become endemically alarming. Disputes over farm and grazing land, invasion, and raping, kidnapping and incessant killings were among the reasons advanced for the conflict.

The first January, 2018 massacre of over seventy (70) people in Gunna and Logo Local government areas, Benue State claimed to be orchestrated by Fulani Herdsmen attracted both national and international attention to the lingering conflict. Successful governments in the country at both local and national levels have initiated series of socio-political and legislative policies to address the menace, though most of these policies were counterproductive and inimical to the resolution of the conflict. Apart from the recent anti-grazing laws passed by some

State Governments, the Federal Government in some of her recommendations, proposed colonies and ranches for grazing, which have attracted mixed reactions from Nigeria populace most especially from the North Central and Southern regions of the country.

However, this chapter aims at a critical review of the conflict with a view to bring global best practices on the prevention and management on Nigeria's situation. Such actions by the United Nations include peace-making initiatives on conflict in the World Affairs and also extricates best practices that have been adopted by selected countries in the World that have experienced similar pastoral farmers conflict. For instance, in 2005, the United Nations established the Peace Building Commission to identify the best practices for livelihood and natural resources conflicts which herdsmen/farmers conflicts was an embodiment.

Sequel to this in 2009, UN published a report on how national resources and the environment can contribute to this nature of conflict and how it can be managed. Build up to this, Ban Ki-Moon, former Secretary General of United Nations noted the pressing need to improve post conflict natural resources management in order to reduce the risk of conflict relapsing, and urged members states and the United Nations System to make questions of natural resources allocation, ownership, and access, an integral part of peace building strategies. Given the complexity of peace building on herdsmen-farmers conflicts, this chapter examines the root causes of the conflict, assess selected cases in Nigeria and juxtaposed articulated global practices that have been put in place. The chapter also explores the trends of the conflict, the dangers it

portends for the national unity, and the global best practices on its prevention and management.

The Dynamics of Herdsmen-Farmer Relationship in Nigeria

Nomadic pastoralism is a branch of agriculture which focuses on rearing of live stocks mostly cattle, from one region to another in search of greener pastures, sometimes leaving their families behind. Nomadic pastoralists constitute 10-15 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Nigeria and between 15-40 percent for most of the African countries. Sudan being the highest with 80% and Nigeria being the lowest with 10%. However, there are three major categories of nomadic herdsmen

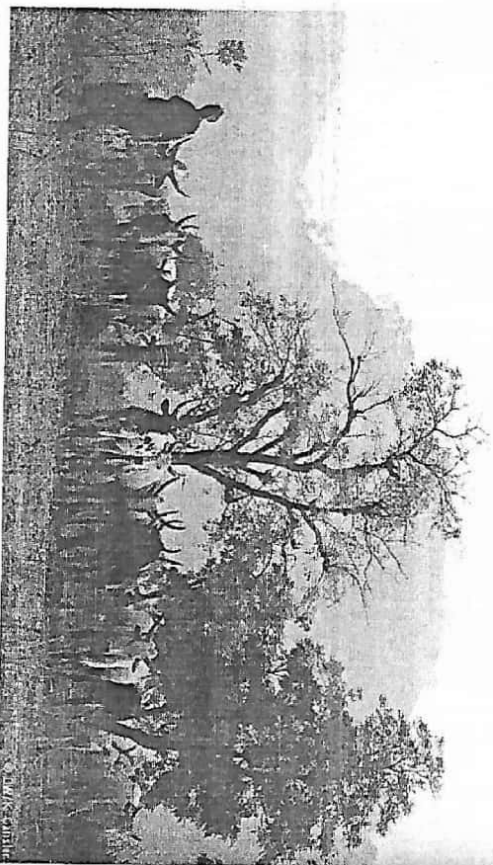


Figure 1: Shows Fulani Herdsmen peacefully grazing his cattle in one of the North Central States in Nigeria

in Nigeria and this include... Nomadic (Transient) pastoralist, urban pastoralist and Semi nomadic pastoralist. The Nomadic (Transient) pastoralist is a group of herdsmen who

engaged in extensive long range seasonal movement without permanent residence and no regular crop cultivation. This group moves South ward of Nigeria during the dry season and return back North during the raining season. Today, this group of herdsmen is expanding rapidly in middle belt due to climatic change.

The Urban pastoralists who were products and fronts of not only wealth northerners but the politically influential northerners who hold sway in the federal seat of power. This group of herdsmen were heavily armed, though they may be initially motivated to carry up arms due to increasing cows and cattle rustling. The other most important group is Nomadic transient pastoralists who engage in extensive long range seasonal movement. This group is not armed, cooperative but they can go to any extent to address injustice.

They are the majority in the groups of herdsmen and until lately have been enjoying relative harmony with their host communities. The last group of herdsmen is semi-nomadic trans-human pastoralists who unlike the nomadic transient pastoralist shuttle between their permanent home and grazing land. This has limited relationship with their co-habitats farmers though still enjoyed relative peace except in the recent time. It is pertinent to state here that there are some major herdsmen groups who enjoyed nomadic relationship with farmers and which their relationship is germane to the current trend of conflict.

However, on the other hand, farmers too have categories and we can identify also three basic groups of farmers and this includes large scale subsistence farmers, proteges farmers and small scale farmers. There are large sustenance farmers who

have taken farming has not only some full scale time activities but also has a family affair. These types of farmers always engage in large scale farming and they can be mostly found around riverine areas for large rice cultivation. The second category of farmers is the type of farmers who are protégés of wealth personalities in their communities. Those groups of personalities were mostly retired high ranking military officers and federal staff who have acquired both economic and political resources during their service years. The third categories of farmers are the group of small farmers who cultivates to sustain their family and they are mostly sedentary farmers.

Among these categories of herdsmen and farmers, the Nomadic transient pastoralist and large scale farmers have been enjoying harmonious relationship with little or minor conflict. The most conflictual relationship is between the urban pastoralists and protégés farmers. These two classes are elite class and enjoy tremendous political, economic and social resources. However, since the late 2012, the conflict between these two classes has degenerated into a complex social conflict and thus resulted into colossal economic loss. Due to this complexity, it is extremely difficult to locate which group of herdsmen-farmers are embroiled in the conflict.

Basically, there are two major environments that presented itself for negative relationship between the groups. There are natural (environmental) factor and man-made factor. The natural factor was as a result of climatic change which resulted into drought in some parts of the country, thus increased competition for limited available land between the herdsmen and farmers. This high competition forced the

herdsmen to migrate en mass, Southward in order to provide feedings for their cattle. Ademola (2016 :189) asserts that:

In Nigeria, several theories have been advanced as possible causes of the incessant killings between the pastoralists and farmers in several communities including Benue, Plateau and Nassarawa. A 'popular reason' for the increased in conflict between them is the increase in the number of herdsmen migrating Southwards as a result of climatic change and desertification in the core Northerners States of Nigeria. In other words, the battle to secure vital resources such as water and pasture for forage/farming is principally the bone of contention.

Desertification due to climatic change has substantially accounted for mass migration towards Southwards and thus become a reason while violent struggle ensued between two groups who have relatively been living in a peaceful co-existence. Violent confrontations between farmers and herders have become a defining feature of inter-group relations among communities in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria. Environmental degradation, social manipulation of ethno-religious biases, and technological advances have altered relationships that were historically interdependent and mutually beneficial (Chris *et al.*, 2018: 06). Access to land and water, grazing paths, drought, desertification and ethnicity all contribute to the violence. Attacks often happen when cattle

stray into farmland and destroy farm products. But the sudden increase in the number of attacks and casualties suggests that the conflict goes beyond access to natural resources and climate change.

Even though, there were no inter-tribal marriage between the herders of Fulani origin and people of Benue and Taraba, each group was able to learn their respective language, interacted freely and seek redress peacefully where there is aberration of justice, thus the sudden violent relationship required scientific investigation. In the same vein, Sayne, cited in Onyeku and Marchant (2013:54) asserts:

In the case of Nigeria, conflict arises between pastoralists and farmers as a result of early Southward movement of herders in secondary zones before the harvest is complete. And, this farmers-pastoralists conflict is mostly acute around the semi-arid zones due to the frequency of shortage of rains. In Nigeria, due to shifts in planting techniques driven by changing climate, many farmers now plant over designated grazing routes long agreed upon with herders, leading to violence

In a more empirical and elaborate manner, Adebayo *et al.* (2015:104) postulates that the causes of this conflict are natural resources scarcity and their inequitable access, the non-recognition of traditional rights, agricultural encroachment,

inappropriate cattle management system, grazing land encroachment, obstruction of pastoral routes, crops damage and in some cases corruption

Though environmental factor such as climate change may only be the underlying factor but not the real factor. Man-made factors such as lack of good governance that produces injustice and ill-conceived policies, insecurity, lack of tolerance from both sides, and over and one sided reporting from media were the major causes of this conflict.

In Benue, cases of killings of cows and human beings have been reporting since 2012 without justifiable justice and remedies by the government. For instance, at least 200 people were affected on April 5th, 2014 by suspected herders as a result of reprisal attack in Agatu Land. And also in January 2018, about 80 were killed aside those unaccounted for. Benue State is a state located within North Central of Nigeria with a vast land for agricultural produce. Indeed, the State is adjudged to be the food basket of the nation due to its fertility for agricultural produce.

However, since the beginning of the escalation of hostilities between the herders and farmers, this place of bounties has been turned to a theatre for herdsmen-farmers conflict. Since 2014, this State has not been at peace and daily reports from the State shows incessant mass burials. Attacks and counter attacks always trailed struggle for scarce resources for grazing and farming in the State. Over 600 people have lost their lives with over 300 million worth of livestock and properties been lost to the conflict.

In order to address the conflict in the State, the Government of the State passed it into law, an Anti-Open Grazing Bill which prevents open grazing by the herders. The consequences of this action was overwhelming, conflict goes whirlwind and become more difficult for both the State and Federal apparatus to handle. In the wave of this first January, 2018 massacres, 76 people lost their lives and further destruction of communities and livestock took place. Federal Government on the other hand, could not provide effective mechanisms to address the conflict thus its recommendations of colonies/ranches was greeted with uproar and mixed reaction. Benue State witnessed the highest number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) resulted from herders - farmers conflict in Nigeria with over 170,000 persons scattered all over the camps, most of them in a serious humanitarian crisis. (Daily Trust, March 17 2018)



Figure IV: Shows the site of mass burial organized for the victims of herders farmers' conflict in Benue State

Plateau State is also within North-Central zone of the country and it presents a more complex security situation. Unlike Benue State, conflict in Plateau is ethno-religious in nature even though it was colorized as Farmers-herdsmen conflict because of the occasional conflicts that ensued between pastoralists who were settlers and the aborigines who were land owners, hence the concept 'indigene settlers'. The conflict was purely between Berom and Fulani over ownership of land and later metamorphosed to be some complex ethno-religious emergencies between Farmers and herdsmen. Ibrahim & Chaminda (2000:69) asserts that ethno-religious and communal conflicts in Nigeria are linked to citizenship within the context of identity, which is rooted in the politics of inclusion or exclusion. Abdul (2013:353) opines that the conflict culminating in 1994 into open clashes mainly between the Berom indigenes and Hausa-Fulani settlers over farmland and chieftaincy issues.

Plateau conflict that started as chieftaincy crisis in 1994 over chairmanship position in Jos North Local Government snowballed into farmers-herdsmen conflicts which have a devastating impact on the whole Jos community. On 25th of June, 2018, the conflict consumed more than 200 lives and properties worth millions of naira.

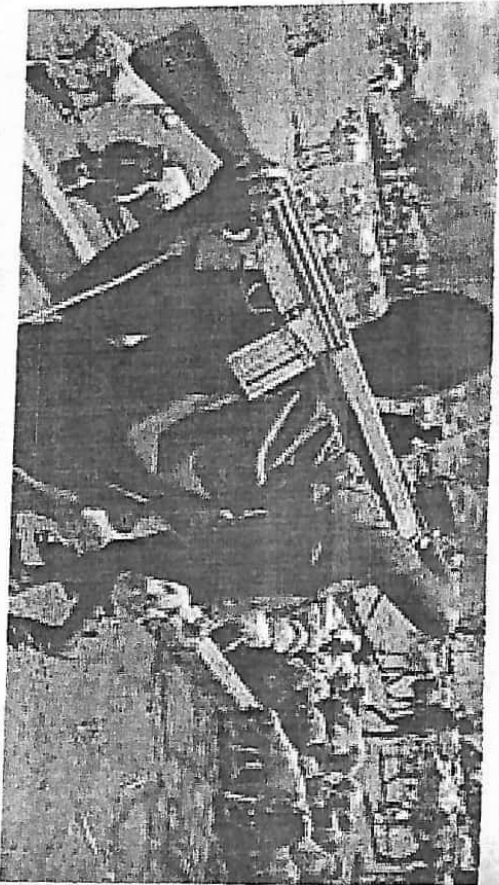


Figure III: Shows Herdsmen with AK 47 Guns

A Search for Global Best Practise

Farmers-Herdsmen conflict is a global phenomenon and not peculiar to the Sahel Africa. Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Mali, Canada, Australia, Niger, Ivory Coast, India, Pakistan,

Ghana, Columbia, Brazil, Bolivia, Ecuador and elsewhere have been experiencing herdsmen-farmer's conflicts. Indeed, after terrorism, farmers-herders conflict is next by ranking. The Global Terrorism Index (2017) reported that over 2,500 deaths were recorded between 2012 and 2016 in sub-Saharan Africa as a result of herdsmen-farmers conflict with majority of the deaths recorded in Nigeria. And while there were 67 clashes between 2007 and 2011, there were 716 clashes between 2012 and 2018. This figure continues to rise at an alarming rate (The Chidi, 2018).

However, there is growing concern globally and regionally on the rise and inability of the affected countries in the Sahel region to prevent and address this ugly situation. Over 14 billion Dollars have been lost to this conflict in the region. The unrest in Libya and Mali intractable conflicts have greatly contributed to the inability of the governments of the affected States to manage the conflicts. These regional conflicts have resulted in proliferation of Weapons in which unidentified herdsmen often armed with sophisticated weapons, including some sourced from Libya, as well as new trends in cattle rustling and animal trafficking in the entire region. In Nigeria, the conflict is becoming intractable and this needs urgent panacea. In the words of Adebajo and Olayinka (2016:54), the intractability of the conflict is becoming more alarming as the days go by and it does not appear that there is any possible solution in sight.

Successful Nigeria Governments have launched series of prevention and management mechanisms. In 1965, Northern Nigeria Government created Grazing Reserves through Northern Region Grazing Reserves Law of 1965 which reserves 415 grazing Lands for migration and pasturing of cattle. In 1989,

through Decree 4, National Commission for Nomadic Education was established to cater for the enlightenment and education of Nomadic.

At the State level, Benue State Government established Anti-Open Grazing Law in May 22, 2017 and this has proved to be more counterproductive than any other mechanisms because the attendant conflicts and deaths that accompanied the introduction of the bill speak more volume. Though Taraba State followed suit on January 24, 2018, by passing into law open grazing prohibition and Ranches Establishment Bill of 2017. In Recognition of the threat posed by the herdsman-farmers conflict in the region, African Union (AU) introduced the Great Green Wall Initiative in 2007 that was directed towards combating desertification of the Sahara Desert and thus addressed the environmental aspect of the conflict. The African Union introduced the Great Green Wall Initiative (GGWI) in 2007.

The GGWI set out to create an 8,000km (nearly 5,000 miles) of trees along the southern Sahel, accompanied by rural development and ecosystem management initiatives, to combat the encroaching desertification of the Sahara Desert. In 2013, the Nigerian government answered the call by establishing the Great Green Wall Agency (GGWA) to fight desertification, which has been responsible for the migration of herders from the northern part of the country to the Middle Belt region in search of water and pasture (Chris & Bukola, 2013 :09)

One of the aspects of physical security, Operation Safe-Haven was deployed in 2001 and operation Cat Race was put in place in 2018. Recently, the Federal Government established grazing land of large hectares to provide for herdsman, all these

mechanisms were counter-productive and failed to address the conflict. However, assessing global best practice on the prevention and management of herdsman-farmers conflict in Kenya context, resource based conflict is common most especially in the Northern Eastern Kenya. Factors as economic and political marginalization, active resistance by pastoralist communities to assimilation, resource depletion and demographic changes, and the growing availability of small arms and light weapons are among the major factors causing conflict in the region (Gakuria, 2013). Kenya Government has instituted a community based initiative that encouraged collaboration among groups to build trust and regulate the mobility of livestock across the region and also provides a framework for managing disputes and conflict.

In Sudan, pastoralism and agriculture are the main sources of livelihood. As a result, it is inescapable that the people will compete over resources (land, pastures and water). Traditionally, there was conflict over the use of resources among the pastoralists and farmers and even among the farmers. The Sudanese Government has designated routes as grazing routes though this doesn't prevent conflict arising between farmers and herdsman.

In Burkina Faso, in the Sahel Zone of the country, such as Zoundweogo and Nahouri in South Central Region, Gouna and Komplenga in East Region, Sissli and Ziro in Central-West Region, and Poni and Nounbiel in South West Region, conflicts between herders and farmers were high and it is always accompanied by wanton destruction. Traditionally, Government demarcated grazing routes and this has also failed to address the situation. China has provided relative working framework to

address the conflict between Tibet nomads and the farmers. Resettlement and development of nomad's environment has been the hallmarks of Chinese effort in managing herders - farmer's conflict.

Stability and Development are the key tropes used by the Chinese communist party in its efforts to transform the western area of the country. This is an economic development strategy, launched in 1999, that aims to transform the Tibetan plateau. Mark, (2013:06) observes "approximately 220,000kilometres of roads were built between 2000 and2005 alone, of which almost 7,000 kilometres are major highways. Over 5,000 kilometres of railways were built during the same period and ten airports were, or are in the process of being, constructed" Also in Sudan, where nomads accounted for more 13 percent of the country's population, (El Sammani, &Salih, 2006: 03) Government has provided twins framework to address incessant conflicts between the farmers and herders-Re-settlement and Precautionary conferences.

Where there settlement covers wide range of mechanisms such as provision of ranches or grassing lands, security services to provide for the maintenance of laws and modernization of nomads communities through access to quality education and social amenities like water supply, electricity supply and veterinary services were also provided. In Sudan, it is either sharing of land or part the nation and the farmers have to sacrifice certain hectares of lands for ranching or allow destruction of farm lands. Though, it is win - win framework because nomads are traditionally mobile people and an infringement on their fundamental human right of movement which negates convention No. 107 of UN (Under the

International Labour Organization: Convention Concerning the Protection and Integration of Indigenous and other Tribal and Semi-Tribal Populations in Independent Countries. Adopted 26 June 1957, came into force 2 June 1959.

Article three sub section three of the convention stipulates enjoyment of the general rights of citizenship, without discrimination, shall not be prejudiced in any way by such special measures of protection. However, elsewhere in India, Mexico, Australia and even in America between the native America and White America and Texas herders and framers, , the global practice has been the ranches and sedentarisation of pastoralists.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Herdsmen Farmers Conflict in Nigeria is not only endemic but also pandemic. This particular conflict has proven to be a hard nut to crack by the successful Nigerian Government. It has become daily occurrences mostly in the North Central Zone of the country where massacres and genocides have taken place. It is a complex phenomenon and this has generated both national and international reactions. Donald Trump, the America President has charged Nigerian Government to stop the killings of Christians in the country. Though, the conflict is not a religious conflict or Muslims versus Christians but struggle and competition for natural resources and livelihoods. In Plateau State, the conflict is more complex because of the ethnic coloration of the conflict.

However, series of legislative and executive's policies have been put in place to address the menace in the country- Ranches Routes Laws, Anti-Open Grazing Law, Operation Safe

Haven and Cat Race, and Green Wall Initiative among others. Despite all these efforts and mechanisms, the conflict rages on unabated.

However, this conflict was not peculiar to Nigeria and as countries such as Kenya, Sudan, India, Ethiopia, America, Australia and host of others has also experienced similar trends. Mechanisms such as improved environmental condition (desertification), ranches, colonies, stability, modern development and more importantly community relations build on mutual trust and justice were put in place to checkmate the occurrences of this conflict. In Kenya and Sudan in particular, governments focus majorly on mutual understanding of both herders and farmers- their communities and take prompt, just and fair action to address grievances when arise.

Also, Government and Non-Government bodies played prominent roles in preventing clapsing and relapsing of such conflict. Active public enlightening and management of such outburst of such conflicts by media is also very germane to the prevention of the conflict. Media needs not only to be patriotic in their reporting but also more professional. In China, the people of central state in the provinces of Sichuan, Qinghai (Amdo and Kham in Tibetan) and in the Tibetan Autonomous Region, Though this has not eradicated completely, the conflict between the herders and farmers but it has greatly reduced the frequency of such conflict. Herders - farmer's conflict is a global phenomenon but there is no acceptable general consensus on the best way to curtail the situation due to different political and social cultural environment of the countries involved in the conflict. In Sudan, it is either to share land for ranching or part

the nation. The framework for addressing the conflict is multifarious, therefore, the potency of the management of the conflict lies in the multi faceted approaches that have been the hallmark of Chinese effort in curtailment of the conflict.

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