

Pastoral Economy and Social Conflicts: The Emergent Security Challenges in Contemporary Nigeria

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Abstract

Pastoral economy is not new in society. In fact, it is one of the earliest economic systems in human history. During its formative stages in ancient period, almost all human economic activities revolved around rearing and herding of animals. It entailed movement from one location to another in search of greener pasture for the consumption of livestock. As almost everybody was involved in this activity, there were minimal conflicts arising as a result of clash of interests. However, in contemporary industrial society operating side by side with pastoral economy, conflicts are not only endemic but also persistent in both economic systems. From a political economy analysis, this paper is of the view that these conflicts are outcome of the struggle by the various geo-political groups to control the socio-economic structure of the Nigerian State, and by extension dominate its political structure. This paper further opines that the emergent conflicts in pastoral activities, if not checked, are capable of destabilizing the Nigerian State. The paper therefore recommends that as a matter of urgency, the government should put in place measures to curtail these conflicts. Some of these measures include: the creation of grazing reserves in uninhabited areas; establishment of ranches; enactment of laws to check illegal movement of livestock; punishment of violators, amongst others. It is hoped that if these palliatives are put in place, social conflicts arising from pastoral activities will reduce and the security of the citizenry enhanced.

Keywords: Pastoral economy, Social conflict, Security Challenges, Political economy.

1. Introduction

Pastoral economy is the second oldest economic activities in the world history. It succeeded hunting and gathering economic organizations. The dominant characteristics of this economic organization, at its formative stages, were: almost all human economic activities revolved around rearing and herding of live stocks; similarly, it entailed movement of animals from one location to another in search of green pasture; another feature was that, almost everybody was involved in the activity; and finally, there were minimal conflicts arising as a result of clashes of interests over territory.

Progress made by man through technological development has shifted attention from pastoral to industrial society. However, in developing societies like Nigeria, modern economic organization is still operating side by side with other economic activities like agricultural and pastoral economies. This is the genesis of conflicts between pastoralists and other social groups in the Nigerian society.

Modern day pastoralists in Nigeria are mostly Fulani herdsmen who are nomadic herders. Their history is traceable to the Futa Jalon Mountains of West Africa. Their main occupation is raising livestock; they are mostly located in the Sahel and semi arid parts of West Africa. However, due to changes in climate patterns, many herdsmen have relocated further south into the savanna and tropical forest belt of West Africa ([https:// buzz Nigeria. com/ news/ Fulani-herdsmen](https://buzznigeria.com/news/Fulani-herdsmen), 2017). They are found in countries such as Nigeria, Senegal, Guinea, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Benin, Cote d' Ivoire and Cameroun.

Their history in Nigeria is traceable to the thirteen and fourteen centuries when they migrated into northern Nigeria from the Senegambia region. In the wake of the Uthman dan Fodio jihad of 1804, they integrated into the Hausa ethnic group. They usually move their cattle to the middle belt zone and other parts of southern Nigeria during the dry season to seek greener pasture when tse tse fly population has decimated in the region, but would return to the north at the beginning of the raining season. In the course of their movement, cattle grazing on farm lands leads to destruction of crops, thus, resulting to conflicts between herdsmen and farmers. To address this menace, the federal Government implemented the land use act in 1978 which gave states or the federal government the right to assign and lease land and also gave indigenes the right to apply and be given the right of occupancy to claim ownership of their ancestral lands.

This placed the pastoralists at a disadvantage situation; because most did not apply for certificate of occupancy to enable them have access to graze their herd. This meant that their grazing routes and recurring transhumance movement will lead to encroachment on the properties of others. To ameliorate this, the federal government carved out some grazing routes. This measure did not reduce clashes as there have been reports of clashes between herdsmen and farmers across the country. However, these clashes were not as devastating and destructive as clashes from the last decade of the 20th century to present date. Similarly, they were quickly resolved and normalcy restored.

The pertinent issues that seek attention are: what are the nature, extent, pattern and dimension of pastoralist conflicts in recent times? Who are the sponsors of these conflicts? What role has the Government played to end

this conflict? What is the security implication to the stability of Nigeria? What can be done to bring about lasting solution to this recurring decimal?

This paper seeks to address the preceding issues in the succeeding themes: conceptual clarification, theoretical frame work, nature, extent and dimension of the conflict, security implications of the conflict, the way forward and finally a conclusion is drawn.

2. Conceptual Clarifications

In this section, some concepts are crucial and germane to the discussions in this paper. These concepts are examined within the context of this paper. They are: Pastoral economy, Social conflicts and security challenges.

2.1 Pastoral economy.

Pastoral economy is one of the oldest economic organisation in world history. This economic activity was preceded by hunting and gathering economy and succeeded by agricultural society. The pre-occupation of the pastoralists is herding of animals like cattle, sheep and goats. Their social organization takes into account the need to feed their livestock and give them water. They look for fertile land with available water sources to site their camp and avoid places with tsetse fly. They stay relatively less long in their camps than agriculturalists. For this reason, they have less enduring habitat and also move more frequently than agriculturalists, especially given the vagaries in climatic conditions at the turn of the century. They establish a symbiotic relationship with the host community by exchanging milk/meat for food crops with the latter. Examples of the pastoralists are the Masai of East Africa, Fulani (especially Bororo) of West Africa, the Kazak of Central Asia, Northern Tungus of Siberia and the Ruwala Badawin of Northern Arabia. The Bororo are mostly involved in pastoral activities in Nigeria in recent times.

2.2. Social Conflicts.

Social conflicts exist in every society in as much as such a society is inhabited by human beings. However, social conflicts vary in degree and manner of expression. Sometimes these conflicts manifest themselves at the level of ideas (ideology), and at other times, they are expressed physically through the use of violence. Again, the conflicts may be politically, economically or ethno religious in nature, depending on the most plausible and favourable acceptable variable which could be used as an explanatory note at the material time (Yecho, 2006).

What then constitutes social conflict? When two or more persons converge, they must interact. In the course of interaction, there may be agreements and disagreements on particular issues or objects of value which each opposing side would like to lay claim at the expense of the other. Thus when the disagreements outweigh the agreements, conflict ensues. It is in this vein that Coser (1965) views conflict as a struggle over values and claims to some status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponent are to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals. Similarly, Okpaga (2002) sees conflicts as manifesting themselves in the struggle to acquire wealth and positions of power, influence and prestige.

The above views suggest that conflict is a condition of disharmony within an interactive process which comes about as a result of clash of interests between parties involved in some form of relationship. It is therefore an inevitable outcome of human dynamics and diversity. Its major source in any given society, according to Otitte (1999), is derivable from the pursuit of divergent interests, goals and aspirations by individuals or group in a defined socio-economic and geo-political environment. Within the context of this paper, social conflict is seen as the struggle, which manifests itself in physical violence, between the pastoralists and farmers over land and its resources.

2.3. Security challenges.

We can only comprehend a security challenge if we understand and contextualize the meaning of security. The term security has been subjected to different meanings at different periods and in different environments. The origin of the term is traceable to the Greek word *Se-cura*, which refers to 'a state of no fear', implying that humankind is in a state which is free from any threat both within and from outside his territory. This state is achieved by putting in place structures and actions designed to shield members of the society from all kinds of harm, be they physical, psychological, economic, or otherwise (Yecho, 2006)

Traditionally, it is viewed as the protection of life and property of an individual, group, the community or the state through the use of force or deterrence. In contemporary usage, it goes beyond the protection of life and property by the armed and security forces to the provision of social welfare services, employment, economic opportunities, freedom and fundamental rights of the citizenry by the state acting through the government (Kasali, 2008). The relative actualization of these aspirations for the masses by the government of the day would translate to the attainment of security for the state in question.

From a military and paramilitary point of view, security refers to a state of existence where espionage is eliminated, subversion does not exist, and sabotage is prevented. This definition is very narrow and limits itself to the operational exigencies of its practioners. The problem of this traditional approach to security is that the

concept is reduced to militarism. It is in view of this inadequacy that McNamara (1969) maintains that:

Security is not military hardware, though it may include it. Security is not military force, though it involves it. Security is not traditional military activity, though it may encompass it. Security is development. Without development, there can be no security. A developing nation that does not in fact develop simply cannot remain secured.

United Nation Development Programme (UNDP, 1994) on Human Development is also worried on the narrow conceptualization of security. It maintains that security has for too long being interpreted to mean physical security aimed at protecting the state while neglecting the legitimate concerns of ordinary people who seek security in their daily lives. This illuminating report paved the way for a more comprehensive conceptualization of security by the South African white paper on Defense (1996) which defines security as:

An all-encompassing condition in which individual citizens live in freedom, peace, and safety; participate fully in the process of governance; enjoy the protection of fundamental rights; have access to resources and the basic necessities of life; and inhabit an environment which is not detrimental to their health and wellbeing.

The above definition is totally inclusive. It does not narrow its conceptualization of security to the military, but also extend it to the political arena, the socio-economic, health and environmental issues. Arising from this broad definition therefore, security challenges would be seen as obstacles or problems militating against the effective functioning and the overall wellbeing of the individual, group or the state in general which if not overcome would impaired the smooth functioning of the individual, group or the state concerned.

3. Theoretical Perspective

This paper adopts the political economy approach in its analysis of pastoralists-farmers conflicts in Nigeria. Politics is concerned with the authoritative allocation of values in a politically organized society, while economics deals with the production, distribution, exchange and consumption of goods and services in society. Political economy therefore refers to the mediation between politics and economics in the authoritative allocation of scarce resources to individuals and groups in the society. The major thrust of political economy is that production of material value is the basis of social life (Kulikov, 1886 and Nikitin, 1983), because economic need is man's most fundamental need. Unless man is able to meet this need, he cannot exist in the first place. All other social activities, social conflicts, therefore revolve around material condition of life (Ake, 1981). This fact is evident in people's consciousness that is why they identify themselves in terms of their economic role in society.

According to this perspective, the starting point for the analysis of society is that social life is determined, in the main, by economic production. That is, what is produced, how and who produces it and how the product is shared is of primary concern to the survival of humanity. This is the main source of social conflict which may come in form of ethnic, political, or religious conflicts (Yecho, 2006). It should therefore be noted that competition for scarce resources by different groups will usually result in violent conflicts if not properly managed.

The political economy approach sees herdsmen-farmers conflicts as resulting from the inherent contradictions in human activities in the course of material production. To appreciate the emergence of conflict in society, Magubane (1969:51) directs our attention to the role of social structure and urges us to give particular consideration to:

The material basis of society, the nature of the social system, the political organization, the structure of social consciousness, the ideological and socio-psychological orientation of the members of the society, views of the ruling classes and various social groups, and the rivalry between the various groupings within the ruling circles.

Political economy approach maintains that social conflicts should be examined and analysed from the perspective of historical materialism. This is in view of the fact that a specific mode of production is unique to a particular socio economic formation. It would therefore be misleading to assume that conflicts operate independently and devoid of socio historical circumstances. Rather, they operate alongside such social variables as economic, ideological/political, religious, and ethnic and a host of other factors. It is against this background that we can examine the inherent contradiction in herdsmen-farmers clash in the course of material production in contemporary Nigeria. Two factors account for this: the increase in population and climatic changes has not only led to the dwindling of the fertility of land and its resources, but also its scarcity. However, the feuding parties depend solely on this resource for its material existence; hence the struggle to take possession of it becomes fierce.

Unfortunately, these conflicts are not properly managed because of the divergent interests of the ruling class in the imbroglio. While one section of the ruling class has taken side with the pastoralists, the other class is sympathetic to the cause of the farmers who are in the majority and who produce the bulk of the resources for the

sustenance of the nation's economy.

The major assumptions of this approach endeared themselves to this paper; hence the approach is adopted as a basis for the paper analysis of the phenomenon.

4. Nature, Extent and Dimension of Pastoral Conflicts in Nigeria

Since the beginning of 21st century, no month passes without report of clashes between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria. All these clashes assumed a violent nature resulting in loss of lives and property. Statistics from the institute of economic and peace (cited in Adetula, 2016) revealed that one thousand two hundred and twenty nine (1229) people were killed in 2014 alone as a result of these clashes.

Adetula (2016) reports that the north central zone and Benue state in particular seem to be the hardest hit in the country by the activities of the Fulani pastoralist. This was re-echoed by Governor Ayodele Fayoshe of Ekiti State who implored the federal government to intervene and stop the genocide in Benue state (Adetola, 2016). Since 2016, over five hundred (500) Agatu villagers lost their lives and ten (10) communities in that same local government area (Agatu) in Benue state suffered unprecedented hardship in the hands of Fulani pastoralist.

Parts of Guma local government area have been completely over run and farm lands and villages taken over by Fulani pastoralists, rendering members of the communities as refugees in urban centers. On the eve on new (1st January) 2018, over seven-three people were killed in the night by herdsmen in Guma Local Government Area of Benue State (*The Nation Newspaper*. 2nd January, 2018). On 14 March, 2017 over twenty five (25) people were killed in Tombo villages in Buruku local government area of Benue state. Virtually all local government areas in the state have been subjected to attacks at one time or the other, but the hardest hit are: Logo, Guma Gwer west, Agatu and Makurdi (<https://buzznigeria.com//news/fulani-herdsmen/>).

In plateau State, the conflicts date back to 2002 and 2004 clashes in the Yelwa – Shendam area of the state in which thousands lost their lives. The clashes were seen as an overlap of ethnic, religious, political and economic tensions allegedly organized by powerful politicians/government functionaries to enable the Hausa/Fulani take over the land of the host communities (Mikailu, 2016). In Adamawa State, thirty (30) people were killed by herdsmen in villages in Demsa in August 2016. Prior to that, another fifty (50) were killed in the same State (Akinwotu, 2017).

Data also suggest that between 1996 and 2016, one hundred and twenty one people (121) lost their lives in Bauchi and Gombe States as a result of conflict between pastoral Fulani herdsmen and farmers (Buzz, Nigeria, 2017). The same source reports that twenty one (21) people were killed in Niger State on 14 March 2017 by armed Fulani herdsmen. Cross River State is not left out as Odukpani local government area was attacked on 1st April 2017 leaving ten (10) people dead (Kola, 2017) and farm lands destroyed. Similarly, Ojo (2017) reports that Ondo State University was invaded on 10th September 2017, while Kikewoha (2017) maintains that two persons were killed by herdsmen in Rivers state.

In south Kaduna, it is estimated by the catholic diocese of Kafanchan (cited in Christian solidarity worldwide, 2017) that more than eight hundred men (800), women and children have already been killed in this year and over ten thousand (10000) have fled their homes. Similarly, there were deadly clashes between Fulani pastoralists and rural farmers in communities of Uzuakoli, in Bende local government area, Ebem and Akanu in Ohafia and Umuchueze in Umunneochi local government areas of Abia State.

The situation is not different in Enugu State as several people were killed by herdsmen in 2014, including Tamgbo Ogueji, a member of the traditional cabinet at Eke community in Udi local government area. These attacks were repeated in the State in April 2016 where people, women and children were killed in Ukpabi Nimbo community in Uzu- Uwani local government area of Enugu state.

As episodic and sensational as these reports may seem to be, they highlight the endemic conflicts that exist between Fulani pastoralists and farmers across the country. The data suggest that these conflicts are violent in nature, involving the use of lethal weapons as can be attested to by the level of casualties in both personnel and property. Similarly, the conflict is widespread and cuts across various states of the federation. In fact, no state is immune from the conflict as shown by the data.

While these conflicts are economic oriented, they are given ethnic and religious colorations by various social groups because of the people involved and the assumed role of the state in resolving the crises. These is more so given the fact that in some instances, the conflicts take the form of hit and run (guerrilla tactics) retaliatory attacks, as in the case of Abia and Enugu States. In other instances, they attack and occupy the territory, as in the case of Guma local government area of Benue State. They even lay claim to the Benue troupe as their original place of abode. The pattern of attacks is the same in all situations: they attack mostly in the early hours of the day when their victims are still in bed and set fire on buildings and then attack fleeing victims with assault rifles.

As the volume and character of these conflicts increase by the day, the government looks the other way or is adamant in taming the hydra-headed phenomenon with all seriousness it deserves. This may portend great danger to the citizenry and the Nigerian state in general.

5. Security Challenges and Implications underlying these Conflicts.

Nigeria is already confronted with a myriad of security challenges ranging from kidnapping, armed robbery, the Boko Haram insurgency, the Niger Delta crises, to the agitation by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and other groups for self determination. The current herdsmen/farmers conflict is the most intractable security challenges which if not properly handled will sound a death knell to the corporate existence of the Nigerian state. This is because the conflict affects every state of the federation and touches on the material existence of the parties involved. A major security challenge is the fact that most of these clashes are carried out in the remote areas of the rural communities where security presence is lacking. By the time security agents are mobilized and called in, monumental destruction must have taken place before their arrival. This scenario is captured more vividly by Reginald (cited in Akinwotu, 2017:2), a worker from Nigeria-based NGO Crudan who maintains that the attacks have met little resistance from police or the military:

This crisis has been able to go on partly because there is very little security present in village communities, and attacks in rural fields are hard to police. So most times when the herdsmen attack, or when these issues take place, by the time people hear about it, it's too late to stop.

This is compounded by poor communication and the nature of the terrain. Corollary to the above, it is alleged that most often, when such incidences are reported to security agencies, it takes time for the latter to respond because of one logistic problem or the other. And when they finally respond, their neutrality is almost always put in doubt by some of the parties involved in the dispute, as insinuated by commentaries from the Nigerian press (Akinwotu, 2017; CSW, 2017).

Another major challenge is that Nigeria's borders with her neighbours are not only numerous but also porous. It is common knowledge that most of the security personnel manning our borders are corrupt. They are prepared to compromise anything for fee, including allowing unscreened persons, illegal goods and services into the country. Evidence suggests that a majority of the herdsmen who are involved in these conflicts are non Nigerians. They come from Mali, Senegal and other West African countries. This explained why the Northern Governors Forum (NGF) through its spokesperson, Governor Kashim Shettima of Borno is of the view that immigrant Fulani herdsmen should be allowed into the country and registered by the relevant authorities (<https://buzznigeria.com/fulani-herdsmen-attack-affenifere-conemns/>).

The influx of this group into Nigeria in recent times is occasioned by two major factors: First, climatic changes have made it imperative for them to explore other sources of livelihood for their livestock. They consider Nigerian vegetation attractive, fertile and favorable for rearing their herds. Second, the crises in Libya and Mali have not only displaced most inhabitants of these countries, but also led to the proliferation of weapons in individuals' possessions. Armed with these weapons, the herdsmen are emboldened to force their way to any territory they consider fertile for their grazing activities with little resistance from the host communities. Given the level of their sophistication, they usually subdue the ill equipped and reluctant security personnel who are called upon to quell the conflicts.

The implications of these challenges to the nation are many folds: Firstly, these attacks lead to loss of lives or incapacitation of many Nigerians thereby deflating the workforce that could have contributed immensely to the development of the society. Secondly, properties worth billions of Naira are destroyed and people displaced from their houses. This creates an additional problem of creating camps to take care of internally displaced people. The implication of this is that the resources which could have been used in taking care of the development of the country are channeled to the rehabilitation of displaced people who are usually children and women.

Thirdly, these crises compromise food security as many farmlands and crops are destroyed and cattle killed or rustled, thereby deflating the availability of food stuff in society. This has been worsened by the fact that people no longer go to cultivate crops in their farms for fear of being attacked. The cumulative effect of planted crops being destroyed and farmers refusing to go to farm because of fear of attack is the emergence of famine in the society.

Fourthly, these conflicts create social disharmony among the various groups in the society through mutual suspicious and hatred. People no longer interact freely with one another. Interaction is mostly restricted to in-group. The out-groups are regarded as enemies and antagonists who must be destroyed at all cost. This creates a situation whereby citizens do not cooperate meaningfully and positively with one another to usher peace, harmony and development in the society.

The conflicts have a multiplier effects on the volume and character of crime in the society. This is in view of the fact that those dispossessed of their farmlands/crops and livestock have no other means of livelihood. Consequently, they are likely to resort to other means to make a living. This is aptly captured by the up-surge of kidnapping and armed robbery attacks on major highways across the country. Most of the kidnappers along Abuja - Lokoja – Okene – Ayamgba road who are identified as Fulani usually announced to their victims that they were out to seek revenge on the society that deprived them of their means of livelihood. Some were bold enough to tell their victims that had the victims come from some particular ethnic groups, they (victims) would

have been killed.

The overall implication is that Nigeria is a country divided along religious and ethnic lines: where patriotism and allegiance is no longer to the nation but to religious and ethnic enclaves; where some Nigerians prefer non Nigerian herdsmen to take over the land of Nigerians; and where other Nigerians prefer to go their separate ways than to remain second class citizens of a country that does not protect their interests. In the final analysis, the persistence of these conflicts suggests that the state is weak and unable to prevent the use of violence by non state actors and by unauthorized means to settle grievances (Animasawun, 2012). This is a pointer to the fact that the breakup of the country is imminent if this problem is not addressed.

6. Taming Herdsmen/Farmers Conflicts.

Since the beginning of these conflicts, no serious efforts have been taken by the federal government to address this hydra headed phenomenon. The near absence or haphazard approach by the government is attributed to the existence of vested interests of the ruling class which are diametrically in conflict with the various power blocks in the society.

The major official response to end the crisis was a bill sponsored at the senate by Senator Zainab Kure for the establishment of grazing reserve. The bill titled 'National Grazing Reserve (Establishment) Bill 2016', made provision for the establishment of National Grazing Reserve Commission which shall have powers to, among other things, establish at least one cattle reserve in each state of the federation. Because of the vested interests mentioned above, the bill did not see the light of the day, as it was seen to be against the land use act and overriding public interest.

With the death of the bill in the national assembly, most state governments resorted to solving the intractable problem in their own way, depending on the sway of their interests. For instance the Benue state government has enacted the anti grazing law in the state, prohibiting the open grazing of livestock. The Taraba state government has followed suit and most state of the federation are being pressurized by their people to enact the same law. But this law will create more instability and disorder than stability and order. For instance, state governments have no instruments at their disposal to enforce the law. All the formal security agencies are controlled by the federal government that is opposed to the law. The enforcement of this law therefore will be problematic if not impossible.

Any law that is intended to curtail this conflict should be total and all embracing and initiated by the federal government. The government should designate a virgin land for grazing and enact a law to prevent any other activities on such land. Pursuant to this, the Sambissa forest should be cleared of insurgents and made a grazing land. Similar forests that are not put to use should be designated as such.

Ranches should be created and herdsmen encouraged ranching their livestock. Security at our borders should be tightened to prevent immigrant herdsmen and other social miscreants from entering into the country. The idea of allowing immigrant herdsmen into the country and registering them should be completely discountenanced.

The government should enact laws against arms bearing herdsmen and farmers. Any individual or group found bearing arms should be arrested and prosecuted accordingly. The government should provide platform where various communities across the country could be encouraged to form conflict resolution committees. This will enable leaders of the community and herdsmen to meet from time to time to discuss issues that affect their common interests. This should be done with the view to forestalling the emergency or resurgence of conflicts. Traditional/community leaders should be discouraged from collecting money from herdsmen and allocating grazing lands to them without consultation with members of the community.

In the final analysis, the government should handle parties in conflict with fairness, equity and equality. Security agents should be given training and orientation to respond to conflict situations swiftly and with all sense of neutrality. This will give a sense of belonging to the citizenry and repose confidence in the government.

7. Conclusion

There is no gainsaying that Nigeria is bedeviled with a lot of social crises. However, the present pastoral-farmers conflicts are the most potent crises that cut across all states of the federation. This is evident from the nature and dimension of destruction of lives and property on a daily basis from various sections of the society. These conflicts touch on the material existence of over eighty percent (80%) of the citizenry; hence the parties involved are bent on doing everything to maintain their survival.

It is our candid opinion that if not checked, these conflicts are capable of destabilizing the Nigerian State. The paper therefore recommends that as a matter of urgency, the government should put in place measures to curtail the ugly phenomena. Some of these measures include: the creation of grazing reserves in uninhabited areas; establishment of ranches; enactment of laws to check movement of armed pastoralists and farmers; punishment of violators, amongst others. It is hoped that if these measures are put in place, social conflicts arising from pastoralists/farmers will reduce and the security of the citizenry/state enhanced.

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