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The Way Out to Herders-Farmers Crisis in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The solution or the way out to herders-farmers violent clashes or crisis in Nigeria has remained illusory due to lack of accord, mostly between the Federal Government of Nigeria and affected North-Central and Southern states Governments, regarding the right method for curbing the menace. This continuous lack of accord is attributable to the sentimentalization of this sensitive national issue given the wide ethnic and religious differences between two warring groups – the 'herders' who are mainly Muslims and Fulani, and the crop farmers who are predominantly Christians from the middle-belt and southeastern states. The mission of this study, therefore, is to identify any key stakeholder group that uses scientific methods devoid of sentiments to study any phenomenon before concluding fact-based findings. It is against this backdrop that this study tries to examine academics' recommendations on the sustainable panacea to Herders-Farmers conflict in Nigeria. Because of the empirical nature of the study, it employed library-and-desk research methods for data collection. The population of the study constitutes journal articles on Herders-Farmers clashes in Nigeria. Twenty-eight papers were sourced and analyzed using content analysis. The study observed that the majority of the academics recommended conflict resolution mechanisms, mass orientation, and ranches as the sustainable solution to the constant herders-farmers crisis in Nigeria. The study, therefore, recommends that the ranches proposed by the Federal Government of Nigeria should be directed in some affected states to be able to assess its real potentials instead of totally rejecting it without subjecting it to any form of experimentation.

Keywords: Fear, Peace, Ranching, Sustainable Development.

Introduction

Moore (2005), Adenkunle and Adisa (2010) aver that "Competition for common, limited and declining natural resources often trigger violent conflict across the world which is counter-productive". So, the collision between herders and farmers can be traced to time of yore. However, the erratic and intensity of resource-based conflict are usually heightened when the clashing groups or users of the resources belong to different ethnic nationalities with different faiths

and socio-cultural values as in the case with cattle herders and crop farmers in Nigeria, and vice versa. Arguably, this explains why the reported herders-farmers' clashes in the centre of Northern Nigeria are fewer compared to other parts of Nigeria, like North-Central and Southern Nigeria. In essence, the capacity, tolerance, readiness and willingness of community, tribal, and political leaders to manage the frequent herders-farmers' clashes in collaborative ways can reduce the increase of crisis whenever they occur.

Some of the causes of incessant herders-farmers conflict in Nigeria according to (Blench and Dendo, 2003; Fasona and Omojola, 2005; Adenkunle and Adisa, 2010; *International Crisis Group*, 2017; Umoh, 2017; and Chukwuemeka, Aloysius and Enah, 2018) among others include: scarcity of water, desertification, unchecked population expansion, increasing unemployment rate, porous national borders, encroachment into grazing routes and reserves, nomadism, ignorance about the grazing routes and laws, soil compartment and loss of soil fertility, crop damage by cattle, indiscriminate bush burning, fake news and media propaganda, politicization, rural banditry and cattle rustling, insecurity, proliferation of small harms, reprisals, deficient government responses, and phobia and hate speeches.

Many Scholars as Okeke (2014) believe that so far the root causes of herders-farmers conflict are not overcome or eliminated by the government(s) and key stakeholders, the desired peace necessitating sustainable socio-economic development of rural and national economies will remain incomprhensible and an illusion.

For the interest of peace, the Federal, State and Local Governments as well as key stakeholders like academics, religious bodies, ethnic groups, statesmen, political parties, civil society groups, media, and the international community have proffered several solutions to ending the crisis. Two recommendations were made. They are: ranching and anti-open grazing bill. While the Federal government led by President Muhammadu Buhari has demonstrated a preference for ranching, some state governments in the Middle-Belt and South have prioritized no-open grazing act. The Federal government's justifications for ranching are that it would constrain cattle movement, encourage sedentary settlements for herders, enhance cultural integration, create a cattle-feed market for farmers, create a cattle-manure market for herders, and attract livestock support services (veterinary hospitals, research centres, abattoirs, leather and dairy factories). In contrast, the state's anti-open grazing bill is premised on the need to protect the lives, crops and properties of indigenous farmers and to forestall the perceived *Islamization* of the Middle-Belt and South-Eastern states of Nigeria by the Fulani tribes through herding. Both sides i.e. the Federal Government of Nigeria and affected states, have since commenced implementation of ranching, if consented-to by any state government and no-open grazing law. This apparent lack of consensus solution tends to have escalated the confusion, mistrust, tension, and fear in the land.

In examination for unbiased and objective solutions to the herders-farmers conflict,

this study focused on the submission of the academic scholars which are generally regarded as the fountain of truth devoid of sentiments and emotion with a view to determine their recommendations on this national issue.

2. Review of Related Literature

Conflict has been conceptualized differently by Group of scholars as a phenomenon- something that exists, behavioural outcome, and activity or process. As a phenomenon, according to De Dreu and Gelfand (2008), conflict is seen as a social phenomenon that occurs across species, time periods, and cultures. That is a fight or quarrel that occurs between or among individuals and ethnic-racial groups from time to time. This suggests that conflict is inevitable but manageable. In their own view, Brauch and Scheffran (2012) recognize conflict as a contest between two or more actors like individuals, societal groups, states, or groups of states over scarce and sought-after material and immaterial goods, where the parties pursue contradictory aims or means. In like manner, Adetoye and Omilusi (2015) described conflict as a form of struggle and rivalry for material and non-material objects to which individuals and groups attach importance.

As a behavioural outcome, Jeong (2010:3) opines, "conflict is manifested through adversarial social action, involving two or more actors with the expression of differences often accompanied by intense hostilities". In the above, conflict connotes the action of one party, rightly or wrongly that arouse the reaction of another party, rightly or wrongly as a way of portraying dissatisfaction, disagreement or unacceptance which often degenerate into crisis. Rahim (2010) defines conflict as an interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement or dissonance within or between social activities. In actual sence, conflict arises during human interactions in the workplaces, homes, occasions, and places of worship.

From a process point of view, De Dreu, Harinck, and Van Vianen (1999) stated that conflict is a process that commences when an individual or group perceives differences and opposition between itself and another individual or group about interests and resources, beliefs, values, or practices that matter to them. Nicholson (1992) looks at conflict as an activity which takes place when conscious beings, individuals and groups wish to carryout mutually inconsistent acts concerning their wants, needs or obligations. Gillin and Gillin (1949) clarified that conflict is a social process in which individuals or groups seek their ends by directly challenging the antagonist by violence or threat of violence.

In this paper, conflict is regarded as the outcome of mismanaged disagreement between two or more parties- individuals, groups, communities or nations over differences in personal, social, cultural, political and economic goals, aspirations or pursuits. Besides that, conflict also can be caused by personal factors such as envy and mistrust, economic factors such as struggle for limited resources and high unemployment rate, social factor such as income inequality and poverty, cultural factors such as differences in value and religious faith, and political factors such as flawed election and greedy attitude to continue in power until death.

Lumumba-Kasongo, (2017) points out that several theories have explained the causes of conflict. First, the state-centric state or classical theory of conflict states

that the right of a state to preserve and protect its sovereignty and autonomous entity often lead to conflicts especially with external aggressors or internal secessionists. In addition, the concentration of political power and positions in the hands of one or a few ethnic groups in a multi-ethnic society can trigger conflict. Nevertheless, Waltz (1979) observed that the balance of power among different ethnic groups can serve as an impediment to conflict. In the Nigerian context, the encroachment of foreign nomadic Fulani herders into farmlands owned by other ethnic nationalities in North-Central and Southern Nigeria and the glaring government failure to forestall the encroachments as well as the insecurity of lives and properties that ensued has made self-protection by ethnic nationalities is inevitable. Such encroachment (offence or attack) and defence stance of both parties caused the recurrent conflict between Fulani herders and sedentary farmers in most parts of Nigeria and beyond**.**

Secondly, classical liberalism theory of conflict maintains that countries that have institutionalized liberal democracy and capitalism experience sustainable peace as against conflict if the reverse were to be the case. Therefore, attempts to block participation in the political or economic process can degenerate into a conflict between the oppressor and the oppressed.

Thirdly, the social-conflict theory advanced by Karl Marx posits that the excesses and limitations of capitalism create a class struggle between the capitalists and proletarians. It is typical of the capitalist to exploit workers through unfair remuneration and poor work environment thereby creating two social classes: the rich and richer capitalist and the poor and poorer workers. On the other hand, it is typical of workers to unite and protest and demand salary increase and better work condition. This parallel stance can be a source of conflict.

Fourthly, the feminist theory of conflict opines that gender inequality has empowered men over women in most societies of the world. It posits that women are supposed to enjoy equal rights and privileges as men in all societies. However, the reality is that women rights and privileges are often relegated, leading to conflicts in homes, marriages, workplace, and politics.

Post-colonialism theory is the fifth theory of conflict. Colonialism is the art of domination, oppression and slavery of the weaker group usually by a stronger group. In contrast, post-colonialism is usually preceded by decolonization in the disobedience, resistance, treaties, protests and armed struggle against colonial authorities. Lumumba-Kasongo (2017) asserts that the relationship between oppression and freedom is permanently conflicting.

3. Methods

For the fact that this study is empirical in nature, the library-and-desk research methods were employed for data collection. The population of the study constitutes journal articles on herders-farmers clashes in Nigeria. Twenty-eight papers were sourced and analyzed using content analysis. According to Holsti (1968:601), content analysis is, “any technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics of messages”. Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias

(2009:239) affirmed that "most content analysis research is quantitative in one form or the other".

3.1 Findings

Some recommendations from past studies on herders-farmers conflict were organized and analyzed with the purpose of determining the proffered solutions to the crisis. The findings are presented under the following sub-headings:

3.2 Confab for Conflict Resolution

At community levels, 'dialogue and conflict resolution' approches are the most recommended remedy for the resolution of the herders-farmers conflict. Certainly, conflict cannot be avoided in every human setting. Nevertheless, its early detection and proper management could forestall conflict escalation from individual to group levels, and from group to communal levels, and beyond as witnessed in the case of herder-farmer clashes in Nigeria. Violent conflicts between herders and farmers in the past had not only led to the depletion of the most important business and economic asset – the human capital – but has equally led to the destruction of valuable tangible farming assets such as crops, cattle, and produce stores as well as intangible farming business assets such as the eroding of mutual trusts and business relationships. This development negates the hallmark of business - the accumulation and preservation of business assets for productive and commercial activities with many attendant benefits, namely labour employment, profit maximization, revenue generation, apprentice training opportunities, and poverty reduction. In fact, the alternative to the well established traditional approach to conflict resolution between herders and farmers is reprisal, chaos, war and anarchy in the land which are antithetical to a conducive business environment. According to Okeke (2014) "conflicts between farmers and herders in Nigeria can only be resolved when the consequences of not doing so can no longer be ignored; that is, when national peace, stability, and unity" are threatened by the conflict.

3.3 Orientation and Education of the Herders and Farmers

There is need for orientation and education of the herders as well as farmers. This is the second leading recommendation with a frequency of 14, amounting to 50%. This suggests that most of the herders and rural farmers are uneducated about government laws, policies and programmes which hinder peaceful coexistence. This is one of the points that the critics of the ranching system and *fulaniphobia propagandists* needs to factor in their analysis, predictions, and judgment. An average herder is illiterate with neither Islamic nor western education. According to Aliyu (2015), 75 per cent of cattle herders had no formal education. Now, the question is how the illiterate pastoralists propagate Islam in the North-central and southern Nigeria when they lack the capacity to do so? Besides, the demands and hurdle of cattle grazing occupation make it difficult for the Fulani herders to spare time for the propagation of Islamic faith. One wonders whether the rapid spread of Islam in Europe and the USA is also orchestrated by Fulani pastoralists. The business implication of this phobia propaganda is that it scares away husbandry and pastoral investors thereby stifling the growth and development of rural economies where more than 70 per cent of Nigerian population lives. Lots of

value chain support for both crop and cattle farming are unharnessed due to this stance.

3.4 Ranching

It is equally observed that out of many recommendations made by the scholars of the 28 selected papers, ranching has the third-highest frequency counts of 13, which represent 46.4 per cent. This is accord with the Federal Government position that creation and management of ranches would provide a lasting solution to the herders-farmers conflict. This is possible if the state governments agreed with the idea by leasing out lands for such purposes. If ranching policy receives the needed support of all key stakeholders for its successful implementation by the federal government and investors, the rural economies of the states that make up Nigeria will witness rapid growth along the value-chain of livestock farming business. The potentials of ranching among others include:

1. Investors can build ranches, rent them out to herders and generate incomes on a sustainable basis.
2. Crop-farmers would begin to enjoy smooth farming activities with abundant harvest due to stoppage of man-caused damages to the crops; this would increase annual income from sales of farm produce.
3. Remnants of crops would no longer be regarded as a free gift of nature awaiting free grazing by herders' cattle. The immobile nature of ranch farming encourages demand for crop remnants (animal feeds) which further generates huge subsidiary income to the farmers.
4. Ranching enables the accumulation and gathering of cattle waste which is a good source of organic manure that helps improve the quality of soil and crop yield. In fact, farmers can swap fodder with cattle wastes just to exploit the barter alternative.
5. Ranching or cattle colonies could attract basic physical and socio-economic infrastructure, ranging from tarred roads, water supply systems, veterinary hospitals, health centres, slaughterhouses, schools, research institutes, dairy and skin markets among others which can benefit members of the sedentary cattle migrants and indigenous farmers' settlements.
6. The ranches across the nation may be dominated by the Fulani tribes which would foster cultural integration and national unity with the indigenous communities as enshrined and promoted by Section 15(3c) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999 as amended) which reads "for the purpose of promoting national integration, it shall be the duty of the state to encourage inter-marriage among persons from different places of origin, or of different religious, ethnic or linguistic association or ties".
7. Another big potential of ranches is that they could grow to become the centre of a tourist attraction with its accumulated benefits, namely labour employment, the vibrancy of hotel, eatery and transportation services among others.
8. It could also checkmate the sprayed and transmission of diseases between cattle and humans especially through cross-country migration, nomadism and open-grazing.
9. Ranching could reduce time committed to herding, thereby freeing labour hours for the acquisition of literacy and vocation skills in which a majority of the herders are chronically lacking. In the discovery of Afuoku and Isife (2010) 70 per cent of Fulani herders in Niger Delta had no western education. Such extra labour hour could be channelled into crop production from which the farming

herders will experience and appreciate the cost, suffering, sacrifice and risks involved in the manual or labour intensive crop farming.

10. Security against cattle swishing can be enhanced through ranching and business loss resulted from the reduction of crimes prevented by the use of ranches.

3.5 Grazing Reserves

The study also revealed that 10 sampled papers equivalent to 35.7 per cent recommended the creation and use of grazing reserves and cattle routes as a remedy to herders and farmers conflict in Nigeria. Though similar to ranching which is the confinement of livestock to a fenced area while feeds are sourced externally, grazing reserves is an official bulletin and demarcated green field preserved for livestock rearing and production. According to Babalobi, (2016). It was first created in Nigeria in 1965 following enactment of "Grazing Reserve Law of Northern Nigeria" and subsequently incorporated in the second, third and fourth National Development Plans that lasted from 1970 to 1985. Premium Times (2016) posited that the increased population of cattle to approximately 19.5 million in 2016 calls for the introduction of new grazing reserves if the movement of cattle must be curtailed to reduce or eliminate constant violent clashes and loss of lives. The business implications of additional grazing reserves are similar to the ones already discussed under ranching.

3.6 Security Measures

It was revealed in the data analysis that proactive and reactive security measures by the government represent the four-most recommended solution to the herder-farmers feud (8 or 28.6%). The proactive measures entail corporate intelligence gathering, adequate training of policemen, adequate tooling and motivation of the security personnel. The reactive measures include the prompt response by the police and supportive security agencies to distress calls from either the cultivators or pastoralists, making arrests, and ensuring appropriate prosecution of the suspected attackers.

3.7 Aids for the Victim Farmers and Herders

It is (17.9%) out of all the recommendations are in favour of providing relief to people displaced by herders-farmers conflict. This can reduce the tendency for reprisal attacks, check the outbreak of diseases and encourage resettlement for a new productive life.

3.8 Creation of Cattle Routes

Four papers equivalent to 14.3 per cent was revealed to have supported the creation of new cattle routes. Grazing routes are proclaimed and demarcated cattle road networks aimed at stopping trespass by land-users and reducing friction between farmers and herders. Cattle grazing routes may be de-emphasized in the long run if the ranches are eventually accepted by all and sundry. Meanwhile, preservation of the exiting grazing routes and creation of new ones will not only allow free flow of traffic on the highways but reduce the rate of accidents caused by cattle intruders.

3.9 Other Remedies

In the sampled studies, other unpopular but important recommendations are the amendment of right to land use acts (10.7%) and encouragement of sedentary settlement for herders (10.7%). Moreover, each of the following nine different recommendations viz: anti-open grazing law, regulated grazing and

farming, cattle census and tracking, securing national borders, mitigating drought and desertification, creating grazing guards, provision of water reservoir, total place of abode to herders' land use, and integrating herders-farmers in policy making have equal frequency count of two, which is equivalent to 7.4 per cent. The business implication of government proactive approach to security threats, securing national borders, registering cattle with trackers, and creating grazing guards is that the farming business environment, as well as investors' confidence, will be greatly enhanced which can translate to greater livestock and crop production. The recommendations with one per cent in this group are unbiased media report, fodder bank, stock reserves, cattle rearing tax, and insurance cover for farmers and herders.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Evidently for religious, ethnic and political differences, efforts of the Federal and State Governments towards finding a lasting solution to the herders-farmers conflict have not been generally accepted. Therefore, this study examined the recommendations of studies conducted by the scholars for the purpose of identifying the objective-based solution to the seemingly unending crisis. Arising from the findings above, the study concludes that application of conflict resolution mechanism, mass orientation and education, and confinement of cattle rearing to ranches and grazing-reserves remain the viable solutions to the lingering problems associated with herders-farmers violent crisis.

Recommendations

This study recommends that:

i. One of the rcommendations is that both formal method (police/courts) and informal method (traditional leaders) should be explored to restore normalcy in every crisis situation relating to herding and farming.
ii. Mass orientation and education for herders and farmers on the existing no-open grazing laws in some state, grazing routes, and grazing reserves across the country should be strengthened. This is to encourage obedience to the law and discourage the habit of trespassing by either party, which is often the cause of the conflict.
iii. The study equally recommends that ranches should be created and leased to herders as a mark of non-ownership of land in order to address the fear of land usurpation in the long-run. Furthermore, the ranches proposed by the Federal Government of Nigeria should be piloted in some affected states to be able to appraise its real potentials rather than totally rejecting it without subjecting it to any form of experimentation. The paper also recommends that the opponents of ranches should fear nothing but fear itself, because "there is no compulsion in (Islam) religion" (Quran 2:256) – meaning that no Muslim is allowed to force anybody to accept the Islamic faith. Nwobi (2018) asserts that ranching option

and grazing reserves are not accepted in the south-east zone because of "the fear of being colonized by the northerners".

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