

The Immediate and Remote Causes of Farmer Pastoralist Conflict in Southwest Nigeria

Review Article

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INTRODUCTION

Conflict is natural phenomenon common and perhaps inevitable in human environments. Moore (2005) has to agree that conflict per se, is not bad but a necessity in evolution and development of human organizations. In other words, when conflicts degenerate to be turned violent, destructive clashes, they become not only unhealthy, also counterproductive and disruptive. In the sub-Saharan

Abstract: This paper examines the immediate and remote causes of farmer pastoralist conflict in southwest Nigeria. The focus of the paper is to examine the factors responsible for the conflict between crop farmers and herders in the State, the implications farmer pastoralist conflict on economic development with a view to proffering solutions for economic development in Nigeria. The paper examined the existing literature and carry out a qualitative exploration in order to formulate a better understanding of the dynamics relations between farmers and herders in Nigerian. The research study employed a descriptive design of survey and data obtained secondary sources. Additionally, the study will examines the intellectual framework of the existing literature which addresses the issues impacting Fulani integration in all parts of Nigeria and Southern Nigeria particularly. The dynamics generating this conflict between famers and herders and examined the discontinuities this situation has created in the lives of cultural groups in Nigeria. Furthermore, these violent conflicts have compelled several Nigerians to attempt a redefinition of their identity as fallouts of emotive feeling and perceptions. The perceived findings in the study is that increases in the herd sizes, due to improved conditions of the cattle, climate change, related to clash of interest, resources destruction and abuse, cultural difference, discrimination, marginalization, neglect, poverty, unemployment, identity, and elite manipulation were the major causes of conflicts among the Fulani and the Farmers. The study concludes that demarcation of grazing reserves for Fulani herds men on their various grazing tracks. Participation of all stakeholders at all levels of conflict resolution and Resource management and Government should be firm and fair in its resolution and implementation of decisions.

Keywords: Conflict, Fulani, Farmer, and Economic Development.

Africa, resource related conflicts are responsible for over 12 percent declines in per capita food production due to conflicts between farmers and pastoralists (Nyong and Fiki, 2005). Pastoralism is defined to mean a state whereby people herd animals to sustain their livings (Bhasin, 2011). Despite various call and criticisms about pastoralism and its relevance in modern world, it remains a successful strategy to support a population where there is little access to social, cultural, physical, biological and environmental amenities (Ibid). Thus, pastoralists are people whose major source of livelihoods is livestock herding, and the importance of this industry particularly its contribution to food production in the developing world cannot be overemphasized. This has made pastoralism to become a way of guarantying food security in marginalized rural communities.

Pastoralists live or move in areas that are rural and remote in order to access pasture for their animals. This has resulted in marginalization as no one seems to remember them in any social and economic attention. It is worth mentioning that through pastoralism, production of milk, cheese, yoghurt, hide, and beef are enhanced which serve as raw materials for a number of industries in the urban areas. Pastoralists also use their animals as beast of burden

to work on their farms (e.g camels and cattle) and to a large extent, animal wastes are a good source of organic manure for crop production in the local communities. Despite these, pastoralists live in extreme poverty as it has been noted that people in rural areas are poorer than those in the urban (IFAD, 2001). This could be attributed to low income levels, low access to technology, lack of access to inputs, credit and market facilities in the rural areas (Leeuwis and Pyburn, 2002).

In the vein, Carter and Barrett (2007) stated that people who are below the marginalized threshold are ruined as they cannot access social facilities due to poverty; on the contrary, people above the threshold are productive and advanced. Would this definition of people below the margins fit the pastoralists and would the contrary opinion fit the elites of the urban areas?

In Nigeria, 90 per cent of cattle are owned by the Fulani ethnic group and they constitute the core of traditional pastoralists. This group of people is settled in the arid and semi-arid regions of the country. They however, migrate from one part of the country to another in search of graze land and water for the animals on daily basis (cited in Umar, 2006). This is apparent because pastoralists do not play any role in decision making in the society and as such lack nearly all forms of economic and social benefits of life. In some occasions they are seen as strangers and sometimes regarded as illegal settlers in some part of the south west, country (Ibid).

Problem Statement

Fulani herders are nomadic by default. They often migrate from the Northern Nigeria to the South in search of greener pasture for herds. Farmers-herders raids and counter-raids have been going on seasonally across northern Nigeria for decades but started escalating in 1999. Why the pastoral communities rely heavily on their herds because of survival which necessitates that they travel with their animals in search of pasture and water. However, human induced climate change such as dessert encroachment makes grazing difficult. As most animal grazing is carried out in dry lands, pastoralists and their families are usually affected by harsh weather conditions such as droughts which have severe ecological and economic effects on rangelands (Nori and Davies). This is because their animals find it difficult to graze the lands in such weather due to lack of feeds; and the lack of food and water could result in malnutrition, diseases and death of the animals (Carpenter et al., 2001).

Objectives

The general objective of the study is to investigate the immediate and remote causes of farmer pastoralist conflict in southwest, Nigeria is subjected to while the specific objectives are to: 1. to establish the relationship between farmer and herdsman. 2. To examine the factors responsible for the conflict between crop farmers and herders in the State. 3. The implications farmer pastoralist conflict on economic development.

Methods

The paper will base on the relevant published texts such as Articles, book and reports (secondary) consulted, provided the leverage for the study. The data collected was analysed with view of bringing to the fore the implications of incessant conflicts between herdsman and farmers on resource sustainability and its effects on the economic development of the communities studied.

The Study Area

The study was conducted in Southwest of Nigeria. Pastoralists are located in the southwest region of Nigeria. The field work was carried out in Ekiti and Ondo, Oyo State because of frequent recurrent of conflict between farmers and herdsmen in the two states.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Conflict is an existence of incompatible goals, interest and pursuits between two or more actors involved may employ the use of violence or not. It usually occurs when the interest of a group is articulated, aggregated and put forward in opposition to the goal or targets of another group. Manu et al. (2014) opine that conflict emanates from the insatiable nature of human wants; and competitions for scarce resources are the foremost causes of community or inter-group conflicts. Resource use conflicts/clashes according to Adisa and Adekunle (2010), are becoming fiercer and increasingly widespread in Nigeria.

On the other hand, Antonio and Silvia (2009) described pastoralists as people who live or found mostly in dry, remote areas. Their livelihoods depend on their intimate knowledge of the surrounding ecosystem and on the well-being of their livestock. According to the study, pastoral systems take many forms and are adapted to particular natural, political and economic environment, and the key feature qualifying pastoralism is Mobility (ibid). The term nomadic is used when mobility is high and in irregular patterns; transhumant when there are regular back-and-forth movements between relatively fixed locations; and sedentary for the rest.

Pastoralists are people who derive more than 50 per cent of their incomes from livestock and livestock products. Although the livelihoods of these communities are vulnerable to climate change, shifting global markets, population growth and increased competition for land and other natural resources, pastoralism remains a viable natural resource management system, and understating its rationale, importance and dynamics is a key element in efforts to reduce poverty (Antonio and Silvia, 2009).

According to Blench (2010) the Fulbe (another name for the Fulani) and the arable farmers among whom they move, have an interdependent relationship based on the exchange of dairy products for grain, and a market for the animals that must be periodically sold to provide cash for domestic purposes, such as cloth or marriage payments. Moreover, in many regions, Fulbe management strategies depend on access to cereal crop residues -something arable farmers permit because of the perceived advantages of manure as fertilizer.

However Blench (2010) stressed that, in no case the goods or services the pastoralist has to offer essential to the farming community, and therefore the pastoralist is obliged to remain on good terms with farmers if he wishes to continue to exploit the same locale in successive years. If Fulbe herders are unable to build up exchange relations with the farming communities, they can only survive by becoming sedentary, by flexible movement patterns that involve exploiting new arable communities every year, or by intimidation of the farmers. All of these strategies can be observed in operation in Nigeria, sometimes practiced simultaneously by different Fulbe subgroups.

The Fulani or Fulbe indisputably represent a significant component of the Nigerian economy. They constitute the major breeders of cattle, the main source of meat, the most available and cheap source of animal proteins consumed

by Nigerians (Eniola, 2007). The major source of animal protein is the cattle which are in the hands of Pastoral Fulani's (Ajala, 2000).

The fact that the Savannah zones of Nigeria have abundance of grasses and forages and also the absence of the deadly cattle disease called Trypanosomiasis make the zone conducive for rearing cattle (Ibrahim et al., 2014).

NATURE OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HERDSMEN AND FARMERS

The relationship between herdsmen and farmers is dynamic, transforming and always evolving from one form to another. Historically, it is not uncommon for scholars to conceive the relationship between these two groups of resource users to be initially symbiotic, Host-Client or Host-Stranger in nature (Tonah, 2006, Moritz, 2010).

This symbiotic relationship usually promotes interdependence and reciprocity as demonstrated by Mboror Herders and Gbaya farmers in the Adamawa province of Cameroon (Moritz, 2008) in which gifts and items were exchanged among members of these groups for many years of coexistence. Blench (2010) also analysed this relationship as an economic exchange of dairy product for grains, access to local markets and the provision of manure on arable land while the cattle consume crop residues. However, this relationship turned sour as a result of the scarcity of environmental resources which often brings farmers and herdsmen into competition for the available resources and resultant conflicts which often lead to violence.

The conflict theory

The contemporary society is characterized by different schools of thought, each analyzing social phenomenon from its own orientation. For the purpose of this paper, the conflict theory is adopted to explain herders-farmers conflicts in southwest Nigeria.

In its general usage the word or term "conflict" envelops view of difference and disagreement, strife and struggle. The conflict perspective or conflict theory was derived from the ideas of Karl Marx (1818-1883) the great German theorist and political activist believed that society is a dynamic entity constantly undergoing change driven by conflict. According to Marx, men, in the social production of their existence, inevitably enter into definite relations which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production the totality of which constitutes the economic structure of society.

The fact that the dominant or ruling class (the bourgeoisie) controls the social relations of production, the dominant ideology in capitalist society is that of the ruling class.

Ideology and social institutions, in turn, serve to reproduce and perpetuate the economic class structure, According to Marx, the real foundation upon which the superstructure of social, political and intellectual consciousness was built, has been the exploitative economic arrangements of capitalism. Marx believes that any social setting based on exploitative economic arrangement generated within it the seed of its own destruction (Marx, 1971).

In general, conflict perspective view Society as made up of individuals competing for limited resources. Competition over scarce resources is at the heart of all social relationships. Competition, rather than consensus, is characteristic of human relationships. Broader social structures and organizations reflect the competition for

resources and the inherent inequality competition entails, some people and organizations have more resources (i.e., power and influence), and use those resources to maintain their positions of power in the society (Marx, 1971).

According to the conflict perspective, society is constantly in conflict over resources, and that conflict drives social change. For example, conflict theorists might explain the civil rights movements of the 1960s by studying how activists challenged the racially unequal distribution of political power and economic resources. As in this example, conflict theorists generally see social change as abrupt, even revolutionary, rather than incremental. In the conflict perspective, change comes about through conflict between competing interests, not consensus or adaptation. Conflict theory, therefore, gives sociologists a framework for explaining social change. All conflicts share common qualities. The first is that there is a kind of contact between the parties that are involved, secondly, the parties in conflict perceive conflicting views and finally, one of the parties always wants to redress existing contradictions (Ofuoku and Isife, 2009).

CASES OF CONFLICTS BETWEEN HERDERS AND CROP FARMERS IN SOUTHWEST NIGERIA

Herders-farmers' conflict is wide spread and a formidable challenge to livestock production in Nigeria. However, an accurate account of the death toll resulting from herdsmen-farmer violence in southwest Nigeria is difficult to come by due to the lack of a dedicated database at the time of this paper. Therefore, most of the evidence comes from newspaper reports of various incidents involving the herdsmen and farmers in settled communities.

The latest issue in Ekiti where grazing is illegal is the case where some graduate commercial farmers at Oke Ako – Ipao axis of Ekiti State, have protested the alleged destruction of their crops worth N35 million by suspected herdsmen grazing their cattle in the area. The angry farmers, who stormed the State House of Assembly with placards of different inscriptions, also visited the offices of the then Governor Ayodele Fayose and the Commissioner for Agriculture, Hon. Kehinde Odebunmi to lodge similar complaint.

They lamented that herdsmen operating in the area, had destroyed their maize plantation covering over 30 hectares of land and cassava planted on an expansive land of over 20 hectares. The farmers said the programme was being undertaken under Ipao Youth in Commercial Agriculture Cooperative in partnership with Matna Foods in Akure, Ondo State.

The victims stormed the State Assembly, told the Speaker, Hon Kola Oluwawole that they started the programme with a sum of N3 million in partnerships with Matna for the plantation of the crops, saying their hopes had been shattered. Spokesman of the victims, Rotimi Fapohunda, said: “Shortly after they started planting, they noticed that some herdsmen used to come for grazing around that area at night.

Like retaliation with African power, no fewer than 23 cows were killed by thunder in Ekiti state. According to News Agency of Nigeria, the deafening thunder was accompanied by a downpour recorded in parts of the state. Mr. Kadiri who happens to be the owner of the cows stated that after careful observation, he found that there was no trace of bodily injuries on the dead cows which he believes that it is an act of God since he did not offend or quarrel with anyone. In the same vein, no fewer than 36 cows have been killed by a thunderstorm at Ijare, under Ifedore Local Government Area of Ondo State. According to Sahara Reporters, the incident happened in sacred area in the

community at Oke Owa Mountain The traditional head of Ijare, Wemimo Olaniran, that the place is not meant for ordinary people and even the king that goes there, does so with great caution.

In Ondo State, the Ondo State Agricultural Commodities Association stated the activities of the ‘Fulani herdsmen’ to ceaselessly wreak havoc on the produce of farmers in the State are becoming worrisome to its members. The Association, which is comprised of local farmers, is demanded the sum of N2 billion from the Federal Government as compensation for the farmers whose produce was destroyed. The group also condemned the violence caused by the Fulani herdsmen (cited in Sahara Reporters, 2016). This issue is not just ravaging our farms, but gradually and steadily snowballing into rape, robbery, inferno of our tree crops (cocoa, palm oil, and kola nut),” the report read in part (Ibid).

According to Aliyu (2004), conflicts in Oyo state are of diverse types and have been on rapid in recent time. These conflicts are mainly attributable to resource control and divergent value systems in the country. The movement of pastoralist from one area of the state to another is usually caused by the increasing demand for fresh grazing grounds especially during draught period, when the pastoralists move southwards because of the availability of pasture. In most cases, the pastoralists do encounter problems with the local people because farmers’ crops were being destroyed by their cattle (Olaleye et al, 2010).

Currently, there are little systematically gathered and compiled information on the occurrences and magnitude of such conflict. Hence an understanding of the causes and effects of conflict between nomads and farmers in host communities is an important pre-requisite for the realization of the goals of agricultural development policies to which research experts and extension agents are professionally committed.

SOME CAUSES OF CATTLE HERDER-CROP FARMER CONFLICTS

The genesis of conflicts over access, use and management of land resources between nomadic cattle herders and sedentary farmers is as diverse as the nature of the conflicts themselves (Abubakar, 2012). In general terms, however, the expansion of population throughout northern Nigeria has led to the expansion of farming activities into areas utilized by cattle herders for the purpose of livestock production. This phenomenon is particularly noticeable in Hausa land where the traditional pastoralist grazing area (hurumai), stock routes, and water points have been turned into farming areas over the years (Baba, 1987).

The conflicts between cattle herders and farmers have existed since the beginning of agriculture and increased or decreased in intensity and frequency depending on economic, environmental and other factors. For example, increases in the herd sizes, due to improved conditions of the cattle, compelled the cattle herders to seek for more pastures beyond their limited range. Climate change has constituted a great threat by putting great pressures on the land and thus provoking conflicts between them.

However, improvements in human health and population have enhanced a much greater pressure on land. Since the 1980s therefore, there has been a marked expansion of cultivation of the fadama (riverine and valley-bottom) areas. This means that both the farmers and cattle herders have engaged in fierce struggles for access to such valuable lands which, more often than not, result in increased conflicts and violence (Abbas, 2009).

These conflicts have constituted serious threats to the means of survival and livelihoods of both the farmers and cattle herders and what both groups are tenaciously protecting and projecting. The conflicts, through provocative claims over access rights to farmland and cattle routes have become ubiquitous and seem to have defied solutions (Abbas, 2009).

Clashes between cattle herders and crop farmers have been a major cause of increasing violence and general insecurity in Nigeria. In most of these encounters, citizens are regularly killed; the destruction or loss of property leaves an already endangered populace even poorer. The frequency and scale of these communal conflicts have become alarming (Leadership Newspaper, May 17, 2011). In Nigeria, the most frequent causes of conflicts between the nomadic cattle herders and sedentary farmers are illegal invasion of farms and destruction of crops by cattle, particularly during the planting season and immediately after the harvesting period (Blench, 2004).

Therefore, the causes of farmers-herdsmen conflicts are often not far-fetched. However, there appears to be no consensus among both groups as to the causes of their mutual conflict. This has caused a lot of problems between the host farming communities and the nomadic herdsmen who did not always think of the value of the damaged crops, but their cattle. It is glaring that the various causes are related to clash of interest, resources destruction and abuse.

THE IMPLICATIONS FARMER PASTORALIST CONFLICT ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The unsustainable grazing of vegetal resources and wanton destruction of other resources such as water and fish, with the re-occurrence of these conflicts is surely having considerable effects on the economy of the two parties (herdsmen and farmers) involved and the government. Agriculture, which is the mainstay of the economy of the local people is been disrupted by these conflicts, making livelihood difficult at both the immediate locality as well as the larger societies that are dependent on the produce from the warring communities.

Therefore, food supply is affected in both quantity and price. The pollution of available safe drinking water has serious implications for healthy living. Attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) becomes problematic in affected the rural community with obvious implication for the prevalence of water borne diseases.

However, the socio-economic effects of the conflicts on economic development are discussed subsequently

i). Reduction in output and income of crop farmers as a result of the destruction of crops by cattle and indiscriminate bush burning. Many farmers lost part or the whole of their crops. This meant reduced yield 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.

ii). Displacement of farmers: There were reports of displaced farmers and herdsmen alike. In the host communities, Nomadic herdsmen relocate as a result of conflict. Host farmers, especially women, who remain behind stop going to the distant farms for fear of attack by the nomads in the bush. 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.

iii). Erosion (land degradation) as a result of zero grazing. The exposure of the soil makes it Susceptible to erosion which is worsened by the rain. This is accelerated by the topographic nature of some of the areas, which are hilly. Erosion causes a lot of loss of soil nutrients and difficulty of cultivation.

iv). Loss of lives. A lot of killing by the nomads and reprisal killing of nomads by the host communities takes place during the conflicts. Herds of cattle belonging to the nomads are also killed. Also some of the victims (young and old) are badly injured or maimed. This has reduced some women farmers to the status of widows. All these have drastically reduced agricultural labour force in the area. In the process there are reported cases of proliferation of small arms and ammunitions since the host farming communities and the headsmen saw each other as archenemies. This is inimical to the spirit of integration of Nigerian tribes or ethnic groups and peaceful co-existence.

THE WAY FORWARD

This unresolved crisis has grievous dimensions in its effect on the policy of government in providing development opportunities to its citizens. If these conflicts are not resolved in good time, sustainability of both the economy and environment would become problems to tackle. However, we suggest that the following should be adopted:

1. Identification of flashpoints of possible conflict;
2. Demarcation of grazing reserves for Fulani herds men on their various grazing tracks;
3. Provision of water through either boreholes or wells along the tracks;
4. Participation of all stakeholders at all levels of conflict resolution and Resource management and;
5. Government should be firm and fair in its resolution and implementation of decisions.

CONCLUSION

This paper explores the immediate and remote causes of farmer pastoralist conflict in southwest Nigeria. It discovers that the major causes of the conflict are climate change which is the prime cause of environmental scarcity, population explosion, expansive use of land for non- agricultural reasons, unregulated transhumance, ethno-religious intolerance, land ownership system among others. The paper concludes that it is in the interest of the southwest geo-political zone to end the rhetoric on the demarcation of grazing land and take concrete steps to address the genuine needs of herdsmen for availability of grazing land, resolve the re-occurring conflicts in the agricultural sector which currently provides employment for national development.

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