

PASTORALISM IN NIGERIA'S MIDDLE-BELT REGION: A RESOURCE OR A CURSE?

Nanji R. Umoh (PhD)

Institution: Department of Political Science, University of Jos, Nigeria.

ABSTRACT: *The Fulani, listed among the major pastoralist groups in Africa, are the group most noted for pastoralist activities in Nigeria. Today they have come to be recognized, not only as transitional groups, but as 'settler' groups that constitute parts of the wider society inhabiting sizeable portions of the rural hinterlands in various states of the federation. The highlights here are on their evolution and metamorphosis from mere pastoralists to a people whose activities have come to weigh heavily on the eco-social equilibrium of the nation with regard to political stability, social harmony, human security and environmental sustainability. The postulations of the pattern- and process-oriented approaches to pastoralist behaviour and the economic defendability theory provide a nexus between the ideal pastoral behavior and the realities with regard to the pastoralist-farmer relations in the region. They also provide a framework for the analysis and proffering of strategies in addition to those gleaned from a combination of best practices from around sub-Saharan African countries. The containment of contemporary pastoralist behavior in Nigeria is made more expedient in the light of the realities of heightening ethno-religious tensions, indigene-settler distrust and the threats which the activities of the Fulani pastoralists portend for human and food security in Nigeria's Middle-Belt region with focus on Plateau, Benue and Kaduna States.*

KEYWORDS: Ethno-Religious Tensions, Human Security, Nigeria's Middle-Belt Region, Pastoralist Behaviour, Socio-Political Stability.

Introduction

Most literature on pastoralism and pastoralist groups all over the world highlight the activities of the reindeer, buffalo, camel, llama, cattle, donkey, goat, horse and sheep herders. Their systems have been studied for decades or even centuries, to understand their lifestyles and the development of patterns of movement with their herds in order to provide insight in the study of pastoralism and pastoralist behaviour. There is no gainsaying however, that the evolution of society, expansion of industries, loss of arable land to drought, agriculture, housing and other commercial activities, climate change and so on that affect the availability of grasses, have cast a shadow on the traditional practices of pastoralists in some parts of the world such that mobility, one of the key strategies of pastoral groups is lost (Townsend, 2009). These have led to the development of ranching options in the United States, Australia, South Africa, etc. where modern variations like sheep and cattle stations exist.

There are about 120 million pastoralists in the world, 50 million of whom constitute 12% of the rural population of sub-Saharan Africa (Rass, 2006). Of the Khoikhoi of Southern Africa, the Turkana and the Maasai of Kenya, the Ariaal of Somalia, and the Fulani, which are some tribes noted for pastoralist activities in Africa, the Fulani are the largest nomadic ethnic group in the world, inhabiting several territories which combined, make up an area larger in size than the continental United States. They can be found in countries like Benin, Burkina Faso,

Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sudan, The Gambia and Togo (Marion, 2006). While in Guinea they are the largest single ethnic group constituting more than 49% of the entire population (www.cia.gov), in Nigeria, the Fulani are the primary pastoral group, with a population of approximately 15.3 million (Blench, 2004).

Problem Statement

Pastoralism is ideally the mobile aspect of agriculture that entails the movement of man (herders) and animals (herds) from place to place in search of ideal grazing areas in terms of fresh pasture and water (Moran, 2006). Blench (2001) defined pastoralism as one of the key production systems in the world's drylands that involves the use of extensive grazing in rangelands for livestock production. Sometimes, pastoralists adopt agropastoralist tendencies, veering into the combination of crop farming with the rearing of the livestock implying that they may take up residence for specific periods in areas which they deem conducive at any point. These are some of the harmless mechanisms known to characterize Fulani pastoralism which involved a naturalization process spanning the pre-colonial era to the post-colonial era through which they became an identifiable group in Nigeria until recently where the evolution of their tactics has led to the need for a reassessment of their activities. This perspective arises from the role of the herdsmen in fuelling the spate of ethno-religious and political conflicts and upheavals that have engulfed sections of the country in the recent years. Strangely it is the states with a sizeable Christian presence that have been subject to the most attacks by these rampaging Fulani herdsmen thereby raising questions as to the actual motives behind the onslaughts.

Pastoralism as a resource

Achim Steiner, the UN Under-Secretary and UNEP Executive Director described pastoralism as, 'a way of life that is more consistent with green economy goals than many modern methods of rearing livestock' (www.iucn.org, 2015). Though not addressed fully here, the benefits of pastoralism abound and are describable as direct and indirect. The direct include that it accounts for about 150 million dollars annually in West Africa with prospects for expansion. It also raises income from the sale of pastoral products like milk, meat, leather, horns and hides. In Northern Nigeria, it is a source of income tax (jangali) which the herdsmen pay to the government since the pre-colonial era (Adebayo, 1995). It provides jobs within pastoral communities, for indigenous farmers, and others within the livestock chain. It is also a source of raw materials for industries (de Jode, 2009). Indirectly, it aids the regulation of the ecosystem as it helps eliminate the dead biomass at the end of the dry season while preparing the ground for new grasses thereby reducing incidences of bush fires. The cattle trampling on the ground also helps facilitate water penetration in the ground especially in the rainy season and their movement from place to place encourages the transportation of seeds and the enhancement of biodiversity (Hesse and MacGregor, 2006). In Jos the Plateau state capital, the dung from the cattle is used by farmers as a cheaper option to augment the perennially insufficient fertilizer. At times, the native farmers offer the herdsmen soon-to-be cultivated land to graze and quarter the cattle for the period that they will be in the rural areas. This way, the farmers have an opportunity for the land to absorb some organic fertilizer from their waste in preparation for the planting season. Where there are excesses, they are sold to florists dealing in live aesthetic flowers and landscape artists for use on green areas at building and construction sites.

Pastoralism in Nigeria's Middle-Belt

There are similarities in the historical backgrounds of the Fulani in the vast arable lands of Middle-Belt region of Nigeria which today is comprised of Adamawa, Bauchi, Benue, Borno, Gombe, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau, Southern parts of Kaduna, Taraba and Yobe states as well as the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. This region is described as indeterminate because the presence of numerous minority groups gives it a heterogeneous multicultural, multiethnic and multi-linguistic colouration that affords an eminent distinction between it and the principally Islamic North (Harnischfeger, 2008).

Plateau State

Plateau state is noted for its serene environment occasioned by its topography, weather and the hospitality of its people which make it a major attraction to people of varying ethnic and national identities drawn from within and outside the state and even beyond the shores of Nigeria. The main indigenous ethnic groups within the Jos metropolis which also encompasses the state capital include the Berom, Anaguta and Afizere (BAA). There are also the Hausa-Fulani, a major ethnic group domiciled in the state for decades and who are the major contenders for key traditional and political positions and socio-economic space and resources with the BAA. Other groups like the Igbo, Yoruba, Urhobo among others which also came to be regarded as 'settlers' are however drawn to the state by the business opportunities and other socio-economic activities with little or no interest in matters pertaining to political power and ruler-ship. This characteristic led to the state being tagged a 'mini-Nigeria' (Howden, 2010) and 'the home of peace and tourism'.

Fulani pastoralism on the Jos Plateau is not a new phenomenon. Nomadic herders are believed to have drifted from Senegambia and the high plateaux of the Futa Jalon in modern-day Guinea more than a thousand years ago although pastoral nomadism and military conquest were the two processes that contributed immensely to their spread through West Africa (Blench, 1988). Most of the pastoral Fulde came from the north-east, settling on the Plateau in 1910 (Blench, 2004). The attraction for the Fulde pastoralists from all over the semi-arid regions into the sub-humid zones of the Plateau laid in the low human population, low levels of tsetse flies and mosquitoes, unlimited grassland (Blench, 2001) and the high altitude of the Plateau. These pluses deriving from its topography, led to the Jos Plateau becoming a rallying point in the national cattle industry supporting close to 300,000 pastoralists and a million cattle constituting about 7% of the national herd. In the last two decades however, the invasion of tsetse flies and animal trypanosomiasis posing threats to the animals and creating problems for their keepers have altered the status quo (Majekodunni, et al. 2013).

Fulde established themselves in all parts of the Plateau and originally lived alongside indigenous cultivators with minimal friction (Blench, 2001). Morrison (1976) noted that Fulde settlement on the Plateau which began in the late nineteenth century was given a great boost by the end of the warfare which enthroned colonialism over and above the emirate systems in the north. These emirates had been established by the jihads and military conquests of Usman Dan Fodio which had begun in 1807 (Blench, 1988). The Fulde camps further spread outwards from Bauchi, through Tafawa Balewa and into the Gindiri region (Bruce, 1982) leading to a sizeable Muslim population in the area. Subsequent developments of trade routes and communications in central Nigeria attracted Fulde from many regions and clans from Niger, Kano, Katsina and Sokoto States to settle in the lowlands, along with the older established groups from Bauchi and Borno (Blench, 2001).

Some historical accounts hold that as was the case with the Hausa in Jos, some of the Fulani pastoralists had settled on the Plateau as an escape from the rampaging jihadists in the far north whose intent was to spread Islam (Crisis Group Reports, 2012). They had been offered land by the natives to live, cultivate and for their herds to graze based on agreed terms. These reports, though not definitive enough, have been substantial in proving that the migration of the Beroms to the area had begun in the 18th century and was completed in the 19th century. Further documentations also show that in 1873, the BAA and other ethnic groups on the Plateau escaped slave raids and conquests by the Fulani jihadists by hiding in caves and mountains all over the region. Fulani from Bauchi, Zaria, etc., also escaping the same onslaught, migrated to the area around the 19th century. More migrations onto the Plateau by the Fulani are traceable to the 1980s and 1990s and were attributable to inter-communal conflicts, droughts and desertification in several northern states while migrations after the year 2000 resulted from conflicts in the Sharia compliant states (Logams, 2004; Crisis Group Reports, 2012).

Pastoralist trends on the Jos Plateau span nomadic pastoralism, agropastoralism and transhumance. Transhumance describes the survival antics which nomadic groups adopt in ensuring their self-preservation and that of their livestock on which they depend for livelihood. It implies the regular movement of herds between fixed points to exploit the seasonal availability of pastures. At times, it involves herd-splitting such that some of the herd are taken out in search of pasture, by the more nomadic pastoralists who can be reached from their villages within a day (Blench, 2001) while the sedentary community which focuses on investments in housing and other local infrastructure is left with a portion of the herd, usually comprised of work animals, lactating females, young calves or weak animals (FAO Document, 2005; Uhembe, 2015). The practice is similar to that of the Maasai of Kenya who spread their herds to encourage the growth of stronger social relationships and by extension, the building of social institutions that invariably determine and facilitate identity formation and information exchange and dissemination within the groups (Yurco, 2011).

From experience in the Jos Plateau, the more nomadic pastoralists are younger members of the immediate or extended family with better capacity for this horizontal transhumance which is more opportunistic, entailing movement developed over a few years between fixed sites but often disrupted by climatic, economic or political change. Vertical transhumance movement on the other hand, is such that the herders can afford to develop permanent relations with particular sites to the extent of building houses. Agropastoralism describes the activities of these pastoralists who settle as the resident community, cultivate areas by themselves or with the aid of hired hands to feed their families, hold land rights and keep herds that are smaller in size to those of the other pastoral systems. They are those who engage in herd-splitting not necessarily because they no longer attach value to the livestock but possibly because the size of the available grazing area is unable to cater to the needs of the enlarging herd (Blench, 2001). Blench (2001) also noted that the agropastoralists, when established within communities, become negotiators for themselves and on behalf of other pastoralists with whom they share ethno-linguistic identities, for socio-economic resources. These negotiations may include land for cattle tracks, grazing, rearing of work animals and camping of herds on farms, exchange of crop residue for manure, and so on.

Kaduna State

The advent of the Fulani in Kaduna state is traceable to at least four centuries ago when they went through the region to engage in trade in kola nuts which were purchased from the area which now constitutes Nigeria's South-West region. They also came into the region through

the settlement of a few who practiced transhumance pastoralism determined by seasonal changes and the availability of forage. These pastoralists moved through designated corridors and fixed points which included international routes that incidentally also passed through the region (Sunrise Daily on Channels TV, 2017). Their history in Kaduna state is further traceable to the fallouts of the jihads of Usman Dan Fodio in the nineteenth century as was the case in the narrative on their presence in Plateau state and adjoining Middle-Belt states. They were then followed by the cattle-keeping Fulani who were more interested in settling in the area to avoid the strains and sufferings brought on by constant migration (Waters-Bayer and Taylor-Powell, 1984). Unlike in Plateau and Benue states however, Kaduna state is clearly divided into the Northern and Southern Kaduna with Muslim and Christian dominance respectively with the latter more in affinity with the Middle-Belt region. In the 1960s, northern and southern Kaduna were administered as the Northern and Southern Zaria Provinces respectively.

The Southern area of Kaduna state constitutes a major part of the Fulani Diaspora in the Middle-Belt (Agbebedia, 2014) while the northern area is sometimes exempted from being described as a part of the region. Today, this divide defines the core of the socio-political leanings of and interactions between the state indigenes. The Fulani pastoralist tendencies were determined by the available land, the presence of tsetse flies and the dry season when they engaged in herd-splitting like in the Plateau and Benue states scenarios. In the same vein, their settlement in particular communities and engagement in economic activities including sedentary lifestyles depended on whether the farmers allotted them land for the purpose (Agbebedia, 2014; Genyi, 2014).

Benue State

The recent history of the Fulani in the Benue Valley is traceable to the 1950s as a result of being constantly expelled from the area in the period prior to that era. They were also expelled from Otukpo in Idomaland in the 1970s. Benue state is inhabited by the Idoma, Iggede and the Tiv which is the most dominant ethnic group and is spread from the south to the north extending into the neighbouring states of Adamawa and Taraba. The Tiv are a sedentary people engaged in agricultural practices that have recently been limited by climate change, declining soil fertility, modernization, etc. (Tyubee, 2006 cited in Genyi, 2014). In the dry season, the Fulani from Plateau, Bauchi, Taraba, Adamawa, Kano, Nasarawa tended to trek into the Benue lowlands which unlike the Plateau, had risks of infestation with particular species of the tsetse fly (*glossina morsitans*). There tended to be spats between the Tiv farmers and the herdsmen from Bauchi over the effects of their cattle trampling the soil, making it compact and destroying crops, etc. (Agbebedia, 2014). The different pastoralist groups engaged in sedentary, semi-sedentary and transhumant pastoralism sometimes involving herd splitting since not more than 50 heads of cattle could be adequately managed by the sedentary enterprises at a time (Agbebedia, 2014).

Theoretical Underpinning:

Dwyer and Istomin (2008) evaluated several approaches to the study of pastoralist movements beginning with the two basic modeling approaches that were developed in the 1960s for explaining the concept of pastoralism beyond the lay notion of a system through which nomads move to new pastures to find fodder and water for their herds. They described pastoralism as based on the existence of a homeostatic relationship between the herder and his environment such that mobility (especially seasonal) is a mechanism for maintaining this homeostasis through leveling out fluctuations in resource supply in the environment. The second model

rejected this proposition holding that nomadic movements rather maximized the supply of resources for the herds depending on the season (Dwyer and Istomin, 2008).

The pattern-oriented approach deriving from the human behavioural ecology theories attributed pastoralist movement to the influence of biological and non-biological factors (Dwyer and Istomin, 2008). These spanned tsetse flies, good pasture, political, economic and social relations with the nomadic and non-nomadic groups and national governments, etc. though of these, the biological factors were still preeminent (McCabe, 1994). The post-1960s saw scholarly attempts to broaden the model and provide more in-depth explanations for the effects and trends of influence of the biological (ecological) and the non-biological (non-ecological) factors on pastoralist movements (Dwyer and Istomin, 2008). Though they were not major deviations from the initial conceptions, focus shifted to the strength of socio-cultural considerations in defining the contexts of the factors and determining the pastoral movements (Gulliver, 1975; Dyson-Hudson, 1972). The ecological factors which have contemporarily been expanded to reflect conditions brought about by the effects of climate change on the environment, forage, soil, etc. (Omale, 2013), were deemed as determining the general features of the migration from one zone to the next based on the seasons while the non-ecological factors determined the concrete details of movements and schedules (Dwyer and Istomin, 2008).

In the 1980s the Turkana researchers developed a new approach which Orlove (1980) described as the process approach that focused on the factors and processes that influenced the decisions and actions of actors (the herders and the herds) in the entire pastoralist process. The process approach was concerned with decision-making models such as the optimal foraging and dynamic optimality actor-based models derived from theories in the fields of human environmental ecology and animal ecology. These attempted to explain how the cognitive processes of the herders or the reluctance of the herds to graze on particular forage or areas within particular periods could constitute reasons to move.

The cognitive-actor-based actions posited by the optimality model of the process-oriented approach explain the characteristics of pastoralist behavior that have been reported by some of the attacked communities. Dwyer and Istomin (2008) noted that the optimality model emphasizes the actions of both the herders and the herds that results from their perceptions of the environment around them. Where the herd refused to graze on forage to which they had been guided, the herders allowed themselves to be led by the herds to seek out more preferable grazing lands thereby upholding the fact that nomadic pastoralist traits were also subject to determination by the perceptions of the actors in the equation. This analysis agrees with some reasons proffered for the attacks which include complaints of encroachment either by the herders into farmlands for want of greater access to grazing lands (Genyi, 2014) or as a result of the preference of the herds for the food and cash crops. However, as with many theoretical constructs, none of the approaches suffices in its entirety in providing coherent explanations for nomadic pastoralists' decisions in relation to movement (Dwyer and Istomin, 2008).

The thrust of this paper however, is a departure from the context discussed in the models highlighted in the sense that its focus is not necessarily on understanding pastoralist movements. Rather, it focuses on the non-ecological, socio-cultural factors as the propelling force behind the activities of the Fulani pastoralists in Nigeria today. In doing this, it draws from the postulation of Brown (1964) in his economic defendability theory which states that the defense of a resource has costs, such as energy expenditure, risk of injury, as well as benefits of priority access to the resource.

Collier and Hoeffler (2002) in their 'greed and grievance' debate assessed unrests and wars as fuelled by a 'resource curse'. This perspective holds that there are natural resources to illegally extract and forcefully acquire and this is driven by greed that results from circumstances of low per capita income and low wage earnings which make conflict attractive as a remedy. The grievance aspect is reflected in the perception of hurt that brings about reprisals though in their analyses, greed is a more cogent driving force of conflicts than grievance which on its own has not proved to be sufficient for initiating the onset of wars or conflicts.

The Collier-Hoeffler model resonates in what Brown (1964) describes as territorial behavior - a response which arises when benefits are believed to be greater than the costs. The need to resort to territorial behavior among humans is caused largely, by the breakdown of social development policies arising from or attributable to inadequate policing and ineffective project monitoring and evaluation. Other drivers of conflict include social and high income inequality, mutual distrust, social injustice, religious and ethnic affiliations, political cleavages, scramble for insufficient political gains, weak state structures, feelings of deprivation and thirst for power that lead to violent confrontations between and by aggrieved groups (Justino, 2007; Onwuzuigbo, 2009). Incidentally, these drivers characterize Nigeria's socio-political ecology today.

CONCEPTUAL LINK/DISCUSSION

Though initially designed to explain pastoralist movements especially among the Izhma Komi and Taz Nenet herders in the arctic region, for the instant analyses, both the pattern- and process-oriented approaches are adopted as a combination of factors that are applicable in explaining the patterns of pastoralist behavior in Nigeria today. The ecological (forage) and non-ecological (political, economic and social) factors reflected in the postulations of the pattern-oriented approach are indices that are ever-present, with the latter (non-ecological) factors appearing to emit stronger undercurrents within some states in Nigeria's Middle-Belt region.

Blench (1988) explained that the spread of the Fulani in West Africa was driven by two main processes – nomadic pastoralism and military conquests. The first process which falls within the purview of the pattern-oriented approach discussed as Dwyer and Istomin's (2008) ecological factors implies the actions of the Fulani pastoralists whereby they move from place to place with their herds looking for the 'best' pasture. Till date, the Fulani are nomads moving from one place to the other either as international or intra-national migrants (Umoh, 2010). Under this explanation, the Fulani herdsmen and their host communities in Jos coexisted in a symbiotic and cordial socio-economic relationship such that each party had a clear understanding of the limits of their rights to the available resources. The farmers were the custodians of the land which they either gave or leased out to the herdsmen who in turn sold the dung from the cattle to the farmers who on the other hand sold their farm produce to the herdsmen. Though the herdsmen rarely kept vast amounts of cattle around the areas they had decided to settle either temporarily or permanently, those who tended to settle permanently were either elderly, had large polygamous families comprising many young children or had an interest in obtaining a level of education or engagement in trade which stability of some sort could afford them.

The non-ecological factors in the pattern-oriented approach (Dwyer and Istomin, 2008) include the socio-economic reasons which constitute one of the main thrusts of migration in the world. They developed as secondary reasons in line with global dynamics and the societal

transformation to which the pastoralists were exposed in the course of their movements. Over the years, reasons for migration started to take a political twist as a result of the conflicts which attended their movement from place to place. This was made famous by the jihads of Usman dan Fodio, carried out for political and religious reasons (Blench, 1988). Today, their presence in any community awakens a consciousness of the indigene-settler syndrome (Hembe, 2005) which, though primordial in the context of modernity, has become the major determinant of political integration and social cohesion (Umoh, 2010) in Nigeria's Middle-Belt region. The result was that the existing Hausa communities in the areas they conquered were overrun, leading to the spread of Islam and the establishment of the Sokoto caliphate and other emirate councils in northern Nigeria. Subsequently and as the probable consequence of acculturation and the influence of Islam, the people came to be known as the Hausa-Fulani. This might also be attributable to the prominence of the Hausa language as the more dominant medium of communication in those areas that were subdued during the jihads while Islam which was the essence of the conquests, became the dominant religion (Blench, 2001).

In Jos, most conflicts had stemmed from the struggles for the land resources and the attendant political and socio-economic powers and dominance between the Hausa-Fulani and the BAA over Jos North local government area, a central territory in the heart of the metropolis. Though regarded as 'settlers', they are the dominant group in the Jos North area and had been demanding for an emirate to further cement their 'ownership status'. The general perception among the indigenes was that the division of Jos was a self-serving decision orchestrated to further advance the cause of the Hausa-Fulani ethnic group. These claims to the ownership of Jos have been the underlying causes of the deadly ethno-religious conflicts that have plagued Plateau state from 1994 to the most recent years of her history (Higazi, 2011).

In Kaduna state, the conflicts were first instigated by frustrations arising from access to land, land use conflicts and the reducing influence of the 'ArDOS' who are ranked high as leaders in the socio-political organization of the Fulani (Waters-Bayer and Taylor-Powell, 1984). Other reasons for Southern Kaduna killings touted by the incumbent governor of the state include that they were reprisal attacks by non-indigenous Fulani herdsmen from other nations who had lost family and community members that had been caught up in the post-election violence of 2011 in the course of engaging in legitimate pastoralist activities along the officially designated routes. The farmers were also accused of expanding their farmlands into the transhumant corridors traditionally used by the Fulani and covered by laws like the ECOWAS Transhumance Protocol of 1998 (Sunrise Daily on Channels TV, 2017; Tukur, 2013). In Benue state, the attacks were blamed on access to land (Tenuche and Ifatimehin, 2009) and watering holes which were already in short supply as a result of modernity, the expansion of the families of the indigenous Tiv farmers and other natural factors.

The advent of the Fulani herdsmen attacks on communities in the region is traceable to the turn of the twenty-first century (2000s). Ironically there had not necessarily been intense conflicts emanating from relations between the Fulani herdsmen and the indigenous farmers. The scale witnessed in the hinterland of the Middle-Belt states of Plateau, Taraba, Benue, Nasarawa, and Kaduna were therefore alien phenomena that came across as premeditated and unprovoked since there had not been any skirmishes or altercations that warranted attacks of those magnitudes. However, there was a change in the mannerisms of the Fulani pastoralists as their herds were only led by adult males bearing sophisticated weapons and unaccompanied by their families (Genyi, 2014). As is characteristic of every post-conflict situation and similar to what transpired in the Plateau state scenario, there have been blame-games going on in Benue and

Kaduna states with several accusations and counter-accusations between the stakeholders and actors in the crises.

FINDINGS

From the foregoing it is evident that besides the non-ecological social, political and economic factors of the pattern-oriented school discussed by Dwyer and Istomin (2008) and the military conquests highlighted by Blench (1988), the possibility of a religious factor as responsible for the Fulani presence in Nigeria's Middle-Belt region is increasingly taking centre stage as a non-ecological perspective of interest. To begin with, it is common knowledge that the region continues to hold an attraction for these herdsmen as a result of the promise of vast, arable grazing lands (Blench, 1988; 2001, 2003, 2004, 2010; Tukur, 2013; Laccino, 2016). It is also common knowledge that there have been attacks credited to Boko Haram in Jos, the Plateau state capital with colossal losses in terms of lives and property. Though the Fulani are averse to being referred to as Hausa-Fulani, these recent occurrences have made it almost impossible to separate both terror groups especially as they seem to be pursuing the same goals of overrunning areas and imposing 'alien' cultures.

Campbell (2016) stated that the conflicts between the pastoralists and the farmers in Nigeria's Middle-Belt region has been endemic over the years fuelled by land and water use, religion, boundary disputes and the manipulations of politicians with the new entrant on the stage being the magnitude of killings carried out by the herdsmen. David Otto, CEO of TGS Intelligence Consultants had noted that the danger of the conflicts between the well armed Hausa-Fulani herdsmen and the farmers presents a leeway for infiltration by the Boko Haram terrorists or other organized crime groups that assess the conflicts as opportunities in chaos (Laccino, 2016). Uhembe (2015) described the pastoralists in the region as made up of two categories, the resident pastoralists and the mobile armed pastoralists (the new arrival). While the former group is fully integrated into their host communities to the extent of speaking their languages and intermarrying with them, the latter group is comprised of the Bokolo or Bururu who are militant, armed and able to coerce their hosts to inflict mayhem on these host communities. Uhembe (2015) further described them as terrorists disguising as pastoralists with the primitive motive of the forceful acquisition of the land of the host communities through the re-launch of jihads or by acting out the script of the Boko Haram group.

This view is the popular notion held about the herdsmen attacks since the usual reason of struggles over land resources is no longer as water-tight as it used to be. Today, the Fulani violence in Nigeria is evaluated as the continuation of Dan Fodio's jihad aimed first at completely Islamizing the Middle-Belt and then the oil-rich south (Obateru, 2012 cited in McGregor, 2017). Interviews conducted with some indigenous civil servants in Plateau state to determine their assessments of the crises revealed that the impression held by majority of the citizenry is that the Boko Haram group and the Hausa-Fulani herdsmen are two sides of the same coin. The explanation is that both groups are unidirectional with 'shared responsibilities' that are designed to ensure simultaneous attacks on the metropolitan areas (towns) and the hinterlands respectively. This perception stems from the assumption that the Boko Haram groups are not conversant with the hinterland and so concentrate their attacks mainly on the metropolis while the Fulani herdsmen with their characteristic nomadic lifestyle and familiarity with the hinterland, are actually mutated Islamic militant groups groomed to handle the largely unfamiliar territories (Umoh, 2016).

This entry point when related to pastoralist behaviour in Nigeria's Middle-Belt region can be subsumed under the socio-economic and political indices which constitute the non-ecological factors in the pattern-oriented approach discussed by Dwyer and Istomin (2008). Expansionist tendencies are expressed in circumstances where the pastoralists either move to claim ownership of the lands which were allocated to them by the indigenous groups on trust and based on predetermined agreements (Genyi, 2014; Uhembe, 2015) or under the guise of being driven by the concerns for the well-being of their herds, trespass into the farmlands and farm produce of their hosts and adjoining communities. In the Southern part of Kaduna state, the experience is that some of the communities that were overrun by these Fulani pastoralist/militant groups had come to be inhabited by them since the natives had been too scared to return to their homes, further fuelling the greed and expansionist perspective on the crises (Jacobs, 2017).

As it is, the threat posed by the Fulani especially in Nigeria's Middle-Belt region is palpable. The proneness of the region and the spontaneity of the herdsmen attacks are such that cast a pall on the society, giving it a Hobbesian feel whereby life is short, nasty, brutish and anarchical. The glaring realities of government failures and the inability to either 'bring the culprits of the recurrent attacks to book' or stem the tide of attacks on innocent, hapless citizens, invite defensive actions also bordering on territorial behavior and counter-attacks by the farmers in the face of threats of genocides. These may be advisable as a potent mechanism for adoption by the regions constantly at risk if the safety and security of lives and property is to be ensured. As Campbell (2016) pointed out, the situation is made grimmer by the fact that the Nigerian state is already grappling with her sovereignty being threatened by Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast. The deployment of substantial military and material resources to the region has taken a toll on the capacity of the military forces thereby leaving a window for violence to thrive.

Complicity of Government

- Nigeria is a developing country with the responsibility for national growth and socio-economic development policies resting solely within the purview of the government. The Nigerian Terrorism (Prevention) Act designed to checkmate incidences of terrorist activities in Nigeria, was passed in 2011. Unfortunately from that time to date, spanning a period of about six (6) years, the terrorist acts have continued unabated and unbridled as evidenced by the continued attacks by the Boko Haram insurgent group mainly in Nigeria's North-East and by the Fulani pastoral groups, which are today rated fourth most deadly terrorist group in the world (The Global Terrorism Index, 2015), in the North-Central region and in other parts of the country.

The government is apparently unable to handle the onslaught by these herdsmen which is threatening to snowball into a free-for-all as a result of an overheated polity. The question now is, 'should the citizens (propelled by grievance) not be allowed to go to any lengths to self-defend and protect themselves based on the postulations of Brown's (1964) territorial behavior theory?' In this case, Collier and Hoeffler's (2002) position that grievance on its own is insufficient to instigate war may be countered in consonance with the position of Fearon and Laitin (2003) that the weakness of state capacity provides opportunities for the onset of civil wars.

- Poor policy formulation and implementation processes come to the fore once again. Currently, the government plans for a diversification of the nation's economy with a

heightened focus on agriculture and increased green areas are on the front burner yet the Fulani herdsmen and farmers' conflicts and grazing land matters have not been adequately resolved to ensure an appreciable level of compromise and stability. As it is, there just might be a disaster waiting to happen because the poor formulation of the policies can eventually culminate in costs that continually resonate in terms of lives and property in the light of the recurrent conflicts over land resources.

- Lack of commitment to security makes the proliferation of arms exacerbated by the Arab Spring and the Libyan uprising (Genyi, 2014) thrive so the propensity of the Fulani herdsmen to carry arms continues to go unchecked. The aggrieved communities may also take advantage of this lacuna to arm themselves in self-defense thereby leading to situations that portend very grave consequences.
- Lack of ranching options and the effective checkmating of deforestation make it imperative for the herdsmen to roam freely. In these Middle-Belt states, even within the residential areas of the metropolis, it is not out of place to encounter herdsmen and young boys leading herds comprising more of cattle, a few sheep and very rarely, dogs, across the major roads, and through undeveloped plots of vast land, etc. sometimes constituting a nuisance to road users and other citizens. There are no restrictions whatsoever on the routes designated for these herdsmen thereby heightening the 'no-holds-barred' approach to pastoralism in the nation.

Risk Factors and Consequences of Government's Inaction

This trend of herdsmen attacks has several consequences with domino-themed effects for the Nigerian society.

1. Very fundamentally, these conflicts expose, further weaken and threaten the already shaky foundation and structure of Nigeria's federalism. Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari is quoted as saying that the marauding Fulani herdsmen are Libyans who were trained by the deposed government of Muammar Ghaddafi in Libya. He further stated that some of them have found themselves in the Boko Haram group (Odunsi, 2016). This lends verve to the general belief that the herdsmen are the foot soldiers of the Boko Haram group that have the sole focus of pursuing the jihadist agenda of the spread of Islam (Umoh, 2016).

The fact that the president is also of Fulani extraction and that the ethnic group is known to have a unique affinity for its members as has been explained as some of the reasons for their attacks on some communities in the Middle-Belt region, have also been touted as possible reasons for the government's lackluster attitude to addressing the attacks. This further raises questions such as, 'does he owe them or is he giving them a level playing field to achieve their plans?', 'How do they get their supplies of arms?', 'Who bankrolls their activities?', 'Are they playing out the Boko Haram script and attempting to make the nation ungovernable too?'. Another point of note is that most of the communities attacked or overrun by these herdsmen are predominantly Christian (Umoh, 2016; worldwatchmonitor.org, 2016; Ohikere, 2017; ReligionofPeace.com, 2017).

These are some of the issues that occupy the minds of Nigerians and political analysts particularly when the country's socio-political ecology is evaluated from the ethno-

religious cleavages and the deepening divide of the country along ethnic lines, the quests for inclusion and relevance that tug at the nation's fabric, further heightening the distrust in the polity and threatening her already fragile unity.

2. Loss of internally generated revenue (IGR) is one of the fallouts of the failure of the Nigerian government to tackle the menace in the region particularly as the states assessed (Plateau, Benue, Kaduna and Nasarawa) are states which were not highly rated as economically viable and so are largely dependent on this IGR for sustenance. In their overall assessments of the revenue-loss impact analyses of the farmer-pastoralist conflicts including losses based on number of fatalities, Plateau state topped the charts as having incurred notable losses in IGR followed by Kaduna, Benue and Nasarawa states. The losses ranged between NGN 109 and 347 million in 2010 alone accounting for 22 - 47% of the potential IGR collection in the states (McDougal et al, 2015).
3. The impact on socio-economic and socio-psychological development, food and human security cannot be overemphasized. Besides the loss of lives and property to the incessant attacks, the ripple effects are felt in the fact that food production is dropping leading to a rise in the cost of food that results in a corresponding rise in the cost of living. Benue state is described as the food basket of the nation but these attacks have cast a pall on the farming and food production activities. This leads to an invariable heightening of the poverty levels, a rise in crime as a result of the unemployment of the vulnerable youth population. There is also a rise in prostitution as affected mature females must find alternative means of eking out livelihoods in the face of their inability to return to the farms or even be assured of safety in their villages. This rise is accompanied by a corresponding increase in the number of cases of avoidable sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) among the youthful population on which the posterity of the nation is expected to depend.
4. Human and economic capital flights result from the wariness of potential investors making commitments in the region as a result of instability and proneness to violence. On the other hand, capable indigenes of the region are moving out to seek greener pastures in safer and calmer business environments to ply their trade. This has led to an influx into the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, which is a near neighbor also in the Middle-Belt region. The outcome is a growth and increase in the population density of the fringe areas in the outskirts of the city since most people are unable to afford the cost of living in the FCT and an attendant rise in crime, prostitution and other social maladies.
5. As it is, nothing tangible has been done to effectively put these Fulani herdsmen in check and the possibility of them spiraling out of control is high if a cue is to be taken from Nigeria's experience with the Boko Haram group which festered as an amorphous group until it became the hydra-headed monster attacking state formations and other government institutions today. The Fulani herdsmen and their activities already fit into the descriptions of terrorism offered by Nigeria's Terrorism Prevention Act (2011) and though they may as yet not have attacked state institutions, their activities qualify them for identification as fifth columnists.

CONCLUSION

An anonymous saying that ‘mild skirmishes need not be resolved with heavy artillery’ loses its substance when applied to pastoralist behavior in Nigeria. Misunderstandings between farmers and pastoralists used to be muted and settled amicably by the village heads or traditional rulers (Genyi, 2014) but now, the Fulani herdsmen (supposed pastoralist ‘settlers’) are sacking whole communities on a scale that appears rivaled only by armed rebel groups that threaten sovereign nations. The context of the conflicts between the pastoralists and farmers in the Middle-Belt region has undergone a metamorphosis. It has lost the tinge of conflicts arising from grazing misdemeanors and no longer has the indigene-settler colouration. Rather, it has taken on an expansionist land-grabbing undertone with a politico-religious agenda that borders on the struggle for land resource control and the indigene-settler question which together reflect the nexus of the crises in the region over the years. Sadly, in the scenario that is playing out in Nigeria’s Middle-Belt Region, the reprisal and counterattacks that should be expected to characterize territorial behavior that stems from grievances and the defense of the vast lands by the indigenous farmers are virtually non-existent with the reverse appearing to be the case. The farmers are faced with a prepared, formidable aggressor with modern sophisticated weapons that are incomparable with their options of traditional weapons of warfare.

Indeed, the indices inherent in twenty-first century pastoralism in Nigeria portend grave consequences for national stability and sustainability if nothing is done to curb the menace. It is noteworthy that state failure is characterized by the inability of the government to deliver socio-economic and political goods to the citizenry especially in a developing country like Nigeria on whose shoulders the onus for national growth and development rests. The responsibility for the security of the lives and property of her citizenry falls within this purview. This reality brings with it, a need for the Nigerian government to return to the drawing-board, evaluate our existing laws, processes and procedures, scrap the unworkable old laws and develop more functional ones that take cognizance of contemporary issues, in the light of true patriotism and a desire for national posterity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The core of any nation rests in its constitution and capacity to ensure the security of its citizens and maintain its sovereignty and territorial integrity. The constitution guides its existence and its provisions must be upheld at all costs if the posterity of the nation is to be preserved. The perfunctoriness of the Nigerian government towards these rampaging Fulani herdsmen and her apparent inability to curtail the intensity, spread, scope and frequency of conflicts between the farmers and herdsmen (Omale, 2013), casts aspersions on the extent of her commitment to the responsibility for protection of territorial integrity. It is evident that the conflicts have mutated into events that are driven more by non-ecological factors such as the fragility or outright lack of unity of ethnic nationalities in the country than they are by the ecological factors. Other strategies must therefore be devised, that are more spot-on and conscious of the realities on ground.

1. There must be definite and definitive actions to prove that the government is conscious of her responsibilities and appreciates the fact that the lives of her citizens matter. The group has been listed as the fourth most dangerous terror group in the world (Global Terrorism Index, 2015) and must be treated as such for all intents and purposes.

Negotiations at the risk of a colossal loss of lives, property and heritages and heightening human insecurity begs, amongst a host of others, an unavoidable question, 'where does the integrity of Nigeria lie both to her citizens and as a nation state in the international community when she is willing to sacrifice her territorial sovereignty at the altar of brigandage?' Concerted proactive efforts must be made to either disarm the herdsmen or laws allowing Nigerians to own small arms for immediate protection and self-defense be enacted. This will serve to checkmate situations where people get uncannily set upon by these groups of irresponsible and provocative individuals who are guided by doctrines like 'injury to one, injury to all' and wreak havoc from this perspective. The Fulani herdsmen should be seen as the Islamic militant group which they are and their activities addressed in the same notion as the acts of terrorism. No more white-wash or playing the ostrich.

In Southern Ghana, despite the arming of the local communities to enable counterattacks on the Fulani, other strategies like the continuous exclusion and the expulsion of the Fulani in response to the aggression, violence and death which they represent to the indigenous peoples have also led to the Fulani relocating to neighbouring countries of Burkina Faso, Nigeria, etc. (Bukari and Schareika, 2015). There is however an increase in the farmer-herder clashes as retaliation against the expulsion and exclusion strategies (Tonah, 2002 cited in Bukari and Schareika, 2015). Of note here is the fact that the indigenous communities are well armed and able to self-defend against the rampaging Fulani. This has automatically reduced the spate of deaths from their attacks (12 to 21 between 2009 and 2013 - a space of 4 years) unlike the figures and situation in the Nigerian scenario where as many as 300 lives are lost in a single attack like the Dogo Na Hauwa and Agatu cases in Plateau and Benue states respectively. This is largely because of the inability of the communities to effectively match the firepower of the herdsmen.

2. With human dynamics and a constantly evolving society, the Fulani herdsmen must be brought under the control of the laws governing the country or countries. Their existence as nomads or 'human free-radicals' can no longer be unrestricted and so the boundaries within which they are allowed to ply their trade must be clearly spelt out. The government must also do more to enforce the rule of law without any bias. A situation where groups of pastoralist bandits are paid to prevent them from taking life or engaging in premeditated conflict in the 21st century, as was done in Kaduna state, Nigeria, is laughable. The governor, Nasir El-Rufai, also a Fulani, has been unapologetic for taking this course of action which he defends by stating that he was compensating the Fulani for their losses in the last post-election crises which had engulfed the state in 2011 (Sunrise Daily on Channels TV, 2017).
3. The provisions of the Nigerian Grazing Reserve Act of 1964 should be revisited and reviewed and grazing reserves urgently re-established only in clearly demarcated areas of the vast uninhabited rangelands in the far north for the herdsmen and their families. A 2009 official report of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources, Nigeria officially demarcated 4,125 grazing reserves or routes out of which just one-third are in use. The routes run through Nasarawa, Benue, Sokoto, Oyo, Plateau, Katsina, Adamawa, Bauchi, and Abuja and even extend to Calabar in the Niger Delta (UN-IRIN, 2009; Omale, 2013). As a check on the spate of attacks, the routes should be reserved for use by the foreign pastoralists alone. Although sedentarisation is

assessed as being 20% less productive than pastoral systems as a result of the intensive maintenance which the field bio-mass require to avoid depletion (RECANIGER, 2009; Muhammed et al, 2015), the policy focus should be on both the inevitability of the option in the circumstance and the fact that the pastoralists already maintain reclusive lifestyles. The reserves should be restructured in the similitude of the army barracks with markets, human and veterinary health facilities, schools and other infrastructure and institutions relevant to providing the minimum acceptable standards of quality life. These should be administered by designated government officials.

The government should embark on afforestation projects aimed at reclaiming desert-encroached areas in the far north so that the land mass is enough for the pastoralists to ply their trade without having to leave the vicinity. Alongside this, there should be a perennially abundant supply of the different types of forage (Mohamed-Saleem, 1984) that the pastoralists claim that the herds have a preference for. This will ensure that they have no cause to wander into the territories or areas outside the northern parts of the country where the religions, cultures and traditions are totally alien to what they are accustomed to. Also, since they are the major source of beef, etc. in the country, there should be particular days on which they are allowed to take their cattle to the open markets so that those who come from other parts of the country and from other countries to do business with them can gain access to them. The pastoralists should be made to understand that these new laws are for their benefit and not necessarily to agitate them or alienate them from the society.

This approach encompasses mechanisms of democratic promotion, socio-economic development, de-radicalization and counter-radicalization that are some of the components of the soft/indirect approach to counterterrorism. It adopts a population-centric position, centred on tackling the root causes of terrorism (Rineheart, 2010) and aimed at a holistic approach that enables an exit from terrorism by curbing terror, rehabilitating the individuals and re-integrating them into society (Umoh, 2016).

4. The registration of the indigenous (Nigerian) pastoral Fulani by family heads will enable the keeping of tabs on the number of indigenous pastoralists present in the country at given periods. Their births and deaths must also be properly documented as well as the number of herdsmen and cattle per household, vaccination records, etc. This will keep the relevant authorities constantly abreast with the information and events as they pertain to these pastoralist groups.
5. Measures must be instituted to ensure that foreign herdsmen passing through the internationally designated transhumant routes and corridors show evidence of documentation, identification and permits covering the expected duration of the visit or passage to prevent unwanted violent incidents and confrontations. The areas of the transhumant corridors around Nigeria's borders and territory should be well manned and restrictions put in place such that they can only be allowed thoroughfare on particular days to ensure that the processes are properly monitored. Pastoralists found without proper documentation as well as anyone found either outside the grazing reserves or within the nation's territorial space of the corridors on the days not allocated for movement should be regarded as terrorists and treated as such.

These strategic restrictions should not be seen as herculean, impracticable or segregational in the light of the antecedents of the pastoralist groups. Similar strategies

have already been adopted to keep the Fulani herdsmen in check in the Gambia where they are the second largest ethnic group accounting for eighteen percent of the population (www.accessgambia.com). The Gambian government procedures include that the Fulani must be granted entry permission and they must undertake to be law abiding. Also, they must be duly registered, unarmed, have their cattle properly vaccinated or must show proof of this and adequate information in respect to the number of cattle, number of herdsmen and the duration of their visit within the Gambian territory must be provided (Abdullahi, 2017 on Channels TV).

6. These new laws should be communicated at the national and international forums so that the other countries are carried along to prevent diplomatic spats of any kind. It behooves on every responsible nation to ensure that the safety and preservation of its territory and citizens take precedence and these should be communicated by the Nigerian government to her neighbours and cross-border business partners for the information of their citizens, as measures that have become imperative to checkmate the trend and violent strains of contemporary pastoralism in Nigeria and the attendant threats they portend for food, human and environmental sustainability.
7. Toning down or totally scrapping laws that fan the embers of ethno-religious cleavages and disunity like the federal character principle contained in the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the promotion of those which encourage statehood, patriotism and national unity has become an unavoidable necessity.
8. On the issue of the displaced groups and communities, there should be specialized committees and government bodies set up to oversee the rehabilitation and resettlement of the victims of the onslaughts by the herdsmen back in their villages. Efforts towards reinstating their means of livelihood and piecing together the vestiges of rural existence to which they are accustomed must be uppermost in the terms of reference of the relevant committees and agencies.

Future Research

These should encompass an evaluation of the efficacy of rehabilitation techniques that have been adopted in Nigeria's North-Eastern region that has been ravaged by the Boko Haram group. The researches should be able to determine the efficacy of the techniques in improving the quality of life of the affected citizens and whether they should be wholly applicable to the Middle-Belt areas ravaged by the marauding herdsmen or should be modified.

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