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Original Research

EMERGING ISSUES AROUND TRANSHUMANCE MIGRATION FROM THE SAHEL REGION AND NIGERIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria has recorded in the annals of its historical development monumental internal security challenges occasioned by the activities of non- state actors such as Boko Haram, and in recent past, bandits associated with transhumance and irregular migration into the country. The main discourse is on transhumance migration which revolves around the debates in the public domain that link almost entirely the Nigeria's security situation to the activities of herdsmen that migrate through the corridors of the Sahel region. The paper relied on qualitative data collected from secondary sources. Findings in the paper revealed that despite the high-level of violence being perpetrated by non-state actors in Nigeria, pastoralists-perpetrated violence accounts for only 16 %. Pastoralist violence is only one part of the different overlapping conflicts in the country. The paper recommended for review the domestication and full operationalization of the ECOWAS protocol on the regulation of transhumance 1998 by member states.

Keywords: Farmers and herders, Migration, National security, Pastoralists, Sahel, Transhumance

Citation of article: Abubakar, LA (2022). Emerging issues around transhumance migration from the Sahel region and Nigeria's national security, *African Journal of Social Issues*, 5(1): 1-14

Date Submitted: 17/09/2022 **Date Accepted:** 28/09/2022 **Date Published:** December, 2022

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is faced with security challenges associated with transhumance and irregular migration into the country due to vast and porous land borders. Weak regional regulatory framework on transhumance also constitutes additional challenge resulting into conflict between farmers and herders. In this regard one can agree with Sani (2019) when he says that:

Seasonal human migration is a common phenomenon on agricultural practices across the world, as aspect of which involves moving sheep/cattle in response to climate change, especially to escape summer heat or find more forage. This migratory trend often brings transhumance pastoralists/nomads into interaction with different cultures some of which are not receptive to transhumance practice. Thus, they are bound to come into conflict with the individuals or groups they encounter in their migratory movements. In cases where established conflict resolution mechanism fails to bring about peaceful resolution of these conflicts, it escalates into violent clashes with attendant loss of lives and property (Sani, 2019: 70) .

Furthermore, transhumance and international migration have posed serious internal security challenges due to pastoralists' migration in response to adverse effects of climate change, natural disasters or other environmental factors. Yazeem (2017) and Sani (2019) in their various studies observed that, "Effect of climate change such as rapid desertification of grazing land and lower rainfall is making cattle rearing very difficult for pastoralists in their Northern Nigeria base". In consequence, pastoralists migrate to the southern part of Nigeria in search of pasture resulting in occurrences of violent conflicts with the farmers. Accordingly, Fulton and Nickel (2017) and Sani (2019) in their various studies noted that since 2001 over 60,000 people have died in pastoralists- related violence in Nigeria alone. Sani, (2019) noted that the Miyetti-Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) provides a revealing statistics on killings of people and rustling of cattle. In Plateau state alone, between 2013 and 2015, about twenty eight thousand (28,000) cattle were rustled and six hundred and twenty four (624) persons killed. The security situation has reached a climax with bandits occupying forests in Zamfara, Kaduna, Katsina, Niger and Sokoto states as their hideout and operational base. The infiltration of irregular migrants across the international borders had increased the level of violence. Corroborating this assertion, Sani (2019) described the dimension more clearly when he states that:

The dimension of the violence has been worsened by incursion into the Nigerian territorial borders by foreign elements from neighboring Niger, Chad, Sudan and far flung countries such as the Central Africa Republic (CAR), Libya and Mali among others. Facilitated by porous borders, these illegal migrants, armed with sophisticated weapons have penetrated agrarian communities, wreaking havoc on a daily basis (Sani, 2019: 71).

However, some schools of thought argue that part of the conflicts especially around farm encroachment is the actual cause of herders – farmers' conflicts that lasted for decades in Nigeria. The aim of this paper is to achieve the following objectives:

- To examine the emerging issues around transhumance migration from the Sahel region.

- To ascertain the level of involvement of foreign pastoralists for the general insecurity in Nigeria.

2.0 CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

2.1 Migration

Chandna (1998) defines migration as a movement that involves a permanent or semi-permanent change in residence from one settlement to another. The definition deals mainly with residential change and physical distance. Eisenstadt (1953) defined migration as the physical transition of an individual or a group from one society to another. Emphasis in this definition is basically on leaving a whole set of social life of a person's previous place of residence and establishing a new set of social life in a new place where he migrated or decided to live. Migration, according to Mishra (1981), is an inflow or out flow of population from a defined region to another region for a permanent or semi- permanent settlement. From these definitions, it is clear that migration is a defining global issue predicated on a frequent inflow and outflow of people from one region to the other as the case with the pastoralists.

2.2 Transhumance

Alidou (2016) describes transhumance as an animal production practice characterized by regular seasonal movements between complementary ecological areas whereby a few individuals accompany the herds while the largest part of pastoral group remains sedentary. The herdsmen generally live in disequilibrium environment where pasture has become scarce and move with their herds toward areas that appear to have abundant pasture.

2.3 Sahel

Hiernaux et al (2006) cited in Garba, et al (2012) noted that the Sahel is located in the climatic transition area between the Sahara zone in the north and the Sudanian zone or Sudanian Savanna in the south. It extends from the Atlantic Ocean to the red sea. The average annual rainfall in this biogeographical region ranges from 150 to 600 mm. Hiernaux et al., went further to say; "Over the last four decades, the Sahel has undergone several deficit rainfall periods resulting in major droughts (1968-1974, 1983-1984, 2002-2003, 2005, 2009) which have had a serious impact on human and animal populations". From the geographical description of the Sahel region above, coupled with its vast nature, it is clear the pastoralists cannot survive with their herds without moving around in search of pasture.

2.4 National Security

National Security, like most social science concepts, also suffers from lack of consensus in its definition. However, a proponent of non-military school of thought, McNamara (1968) cited in Lawal (2015) focuses primarily on the imperative of socio-economic development over military strategic consideration. Nwolise (2008) cited in Lawal (2015) described National Security as:

A country may have the best armed forces in terms of training and equipment, the most efficient police force, the most efficient customs men, the most active secret service agents, and best quality prisons but yet be the most insecure

nation in the world as a result of defense and security problems, with bad government, alienated and suffering masses, ignorance, hunger and unemployment (Lawal, 2015: 15-16).

Nwolise's definition is only short of being comprehensive, by not including the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS). Its inclusion in such definition is important because of its border security functions. (Border security is generally identified as the weakling of national security). However, the definition is apt in view of the security situation in some states in the Northwest, the North central (Banditry, kidnapping for ransom, Pastoralists and farmers' conflicts etc.) and the Northeast (Boko Haram Insurgency) as well as issues related to the socio-economic indices in some of the states in both regions such as high illiteracy rate, unemployment rate, high poverty rate etc. as provided in National Population Commission (NPC) demographic surveys (2008).

2.5 Emerging Issues around Transhumance Migration in Nigeria

There are abundant literature dealing with human and transhumance migration probably because of its complexities and challenges on the society. These challenges are mostly due to the evolution of transnational organized crimes in West Africa and indeed the Sahel region. Such crimes include inter-alia: Smuggling of Migrants (SOMs), Trafficking in Persons (TIPs), Money laundering, Trafficking in Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), Cross-border banditry and terrorism, Farmers/herders' conflicts, Drug trafficking among others. Most of the migration through the Sahel (human and transhumance) is inter regional and legal essentially because of the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement, Goods and Services (1979) and ECOWAS Protocol on Regulation of Transhumance (1998) that applies to most countries in West Africa. According to Alidou (2016):

Transhumance livestock production can be a source of conflicts between crop farmers in the host countries and the pastoralists from the Sahel countries because of pressure on the shared natural resources. The cause of dispute between the farmers and the pastoralists has been the straying of animals into the farmlands. The level of damage is usually not limited to crops but sometimes the conflicts lead to serious or mortal injuries to livestock as well as loss of human lives (Alidou, 2016: 1)

There has been in place conflict resolution mechanism through which mediation and amicable settlement is reached. In Northern Nigeria for example, the traditional institution has over the years played an important role in resolving such conflicts. However, most of the disputes are settled in the court of law. Pflaum (2021) made a revealing analysis of events and fatalities across North and West Africa. He observed that despite the "high level of violence being perpetrated by non- state actors in Nigeria only 16% of violent events were perpetrated by pastoralists". The security situation in Nigeria occasioned by partly the incessant attacks of villages in Plateau, Kaduna, Benue, Taraba, Adamawa, Zamfara and Katsina states and currently killings and kidnapping for ransom that is linked to herdsmen/pastoralists has over time dominated discussions in both official and political spaces in Nigeria. The perpetrators of such attacks in recent past were linked to the herdsmen/pastoralists from the West African Sub-Region and beyond. Pflaum (2021) noted thus:

...Violent events and fatalities in which pastoralists are involved are geographically clustered in two hot spots: Nigeria and its peripheries, already experiencing numerous

overlapping conflicts, and central Sahel, a vast region destabilized by the Malian conflict and the proliferation of extreme groups...Both regions have experienced rapid acceleration of pastoralist violence since the 2012- 13 period due to increasing militia and extremist group formation and ramifications of conflicts in Mali, Nigeria and Libya (Pflaum, 2021: 8)

Pflaum (2021) further acknowledged the persistent violence in the middle belt of Nigeria. In his words, "...the centre of gravity of pastoralist violence in Nigeria has been persistently located in the Middle Belt where communal violence is wide spread but violent events have also spread to the north and south of the country".

The activities of pastoralists particularly in Nigeria have attracted intensive discourse and sometimes controversies. While some argue that the activities of the herdsmen/pastoralists present a daunting national and regional security challenges in West Africa and beyond due to incessant conflicts between farmers and herders, another school of thought expands the scope of the argument by providing four perspectives to the understanding of farmers/herders' conflicts in Nigeria thus: The perspective of Criminality, Ethnicism/Increased Pressure on Land and Economic Resources, Farm Encroachment Conflicts perspective, and Political/ Public policy Dimension perspective of the Conflict. The argument postulated by these schools of thought could expand the scope of understanding the farmers-herders' conflicts and also separate the chaff from the grains by way of looking at the typology and trajectory of the crisis that are linked to herdsmen in some Nigerian states. Isolating this crisis would provide a clear understanding of the extent of the crisis that are perpetrated by herdsmen on one hand, as well as the crimes perpetrated by other criminal elements in the Nigerian society on the other hand. United Nations Office of West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS, 2018) noted that; "Conflicts between herders and farmers in Nigeria are often mixed up with local politics frequently along ethno-religious lines". This explains why local conflict is exaggerated and sometimes misplaced. Buttressing this point further, Higazi (2022) in his work on "Cross border conflict, evidence, policy and trends" funded by United Kingdom (UK) sought to explore whether there was any validity to the widely held view that, "foreign" pastoralists were responsible for much of crimes and violence in Nigeria. Based on his findings he noted that, "cross-border pastoralism was generally not associated with conflict or criminality in the areas we worked in". (i.e. Kano, Jigawa, Bauchi and Gombe states of Northern Nigeria). However, Higazi (2022) admitted that from the evidence available to him, it is not inevitable that pastoralists' movement causes conflicts.

From the preceding literature review, there is a clear nexus between pastoralists' movement and conflict. There are enough evidences that transhumance movement causes conflict between farmers and herders in Nigeria for decades because of pressure on the shared natural resources. What this paper seeks to do is to determine the level of involvement of the foreign pastoralists in the conflicts that besieged the entire country. In this sense therefore, it is important to stress that while discussing such conflicts significant attention needs to be placed in the understanding of political/public policy dimension, historical/farm encroachment perspective, perspective of criminality, ethnic and religious drivers and the dynamics of the conflicts between herders and farmers in Nigeria as discussed below.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

The emerging issues around transhumance migration are characterized by frequent conflicts. Since resources in the society are not evenly distributed by nature therefore, competition becomes inevitable between people. The German philosopher, Karl Marx is considered the father of the social

conflict theory. He first proposed the theory in the 19th century. The theory hinges its tenets on four assumptions namely: Competition, war, revolution and structural inequality. According to the proponent of this theory, any of these factors can cause conflict. The theory sees society as a congregation of people of diverse needs and conflicting interests and struggling for resources that are obviously scarce. The competition over land/space, water and forage that are increasingly becoming scarce, trigger conflicts between transhumance migrants and farmers along the corridors of the Sahel region. The theory is therefore relevant and applicable to this study because the driving force of the conflicts between farmers and herders is the competition for available resources, especially grazing land.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The paper relied on secondary sources and collected data from related secondary documents such as journals, unpublished papers, on line resource on migration as well as regional instruments such as ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Goods and Services (1979) and ECOWAS Protocol on the Regulation of Transhumance (1998). The author found this method of data collection suitable for a non-survey study. The data collected were analyzed descriptively to realize the objectives of the paper.

4.0 RIVERS AND DYNAMICS OF CONFLICTS BETWEEN FARMERS AND HERDERS AND SOCIAL CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA

(i) Perspective of Criminality

The infiltration of hardened criminals into Nigeria due to large ungoverned spaces arising from vast and permeable land borders has created huge security challenges to Nigeria. According to UNOWAS (2018), “the modern history of banditry in Northern Nigeria allegedly goes back to the early 1990s when armed bandits from Chad entered the country across the North eastern borders”. These bandits were referred to as Kwanta-Kwanta. The word Kwanta- Kwanta derived its roots from Hausa, a member of the Afro-Asiatic language family, describing a command to victims of armed robbery to lie down. However, sequel to the establishment of a Multi-National Joint Taskforce (MNJTF) in 1998 with the mandates to among others checkmate banditry activities in the Lake Chad region, security was tightened at the borders. This brought to a halt the challenge of banditry in that axis in the late 1990s. Corroborating the MNJTF establishment and mandate, Lt Col Sagir Musa, Nigerian Army spokesman noted in Premium Times of May 9, 2013 that; “...the initial mandate of the taskforce was to conduct military operations in the Lake Chad region, checkmate banditry activities and to facilitate free movement of the Member States of the Lake Chad Basin Commission across their common border.” Some locals especially in the Northwest and North central stepped into some spaces and took up banditry, cattle rustling and armed robbery. Buttressing this point further in Plateau state for example, Chris and Abdul (1996) noted that:

The rustling of cattle, human trafficking, car and motor cycle theft, livestock and crop theft, ritualist and other petty crimes in the rural areas of Plateau state have become major security challenges that continue to fuel violent conflict and insecurity. The Commissioner of Police in Plateau state, in a press conference, corroborates this thus: Two persons were arrested upon suspicion that they were involved in human trafficking. In September 2014, the Plateau State Command, arrested 25 suspected criminals, including a man who attempted to sell his wife to ritualist...in the local

government areas however, cattle rustling takes centre stage. (Chris and Abdul, 1996: 329-30)

Further in the criminality perspective, the paper observed that some other criminal elements of foreign nationality enter into the country with small and light weapons (SALW) and sale to non-state actors. The non-state actors are involved in the recruitment of people and forming gangs. According to Sani (2019), the gangs were initially domiciled in the forests around Birnin Gwari in Kaduna State and part of Rugu forest in Zamfara State and have now extended their tentacles to Katsina and Niger states among others. Example of such gangs, their leaders and estimated followers in Zamfara state were enumerated by Dr Murtala A. Rufai in the Vanguard (Lagos) Newspaper of 18th January 2022, as in Table 1 below:

Table 1: List of Bandits and their Leaders and Estimated Followers in Zamfara State

a. Maradun Local Government Area

S/NO	LEADER OF BANDITS	ESTIMATED NO OF FOLLOWERS
1.	Samaila of Bayan Dutsi	150 boys
2.	Jimmo Fadama of Bayan Ruwa	80 boys
3.	Simoli of Bayan Ruwa	65 boys
4.	Sahabi of Bayan Ruwa	250 boys
5.	Na 'akka of Bayan ruwa	180 boys
6.	Aminu Jajani of Bayan ruwa	120 boys
7.	Sani ba Ruwanka of Dagwarwa	135 boys
8.	Uban Kafirai of Dagwarwa	250 boys
9.	Mai Bokolo of Dajin Yar Tunniya	300 boys
10.	Haruna Zango of Dammaka	280 boys
11.	Muntari of Duddubi	31 boys
12.	Boyi of Duddubi	210 boys
13.	Turji of Fakai	500 boys
14.	Nakyalla of Filinga	213 boys
15.	Najana of Gidan Bisa	96 boys
16.	Sitanda of Gwari	156 boys
17.	Dullu of Sububu	138 boys
18.	Halilu Sububu of Sububu	Over 1,200 boys
19.	Maiduna of tankyalla	216 boys
20.	Gwaska of Tungar kolo	76 boys
21.	Kabiru Yankusa of safrar kade	185 boys
22.	Karamin Gaye of Tungar Miya	242 boys
23.	Dan Saadiyya of Dagwarwa da Badako	48 boys
24.	Dan Shehu of kudo	140 boys
25.	Mati of Kudo	165 boys
26.	Dan Bello of Kudo	98 Boys

Dan Sadau Emirate

S/NO	LEADER OF BANDITS	ESTIMATED NO OF FOLLOWERS
1.	Dan Makaranta of North Makada	460 boys
2.	Dogo Gyade of Dajin babbar doka	2000 boys
3.	Damana in Dajin	1,500 boys
4.	Ali Kachalla of Madada	1,600 boys
5.	Malam at Western cebi	900 boys
6.	Bulaki of east 'yargaladima	1,200 boys
7.	Ciyaman at east 'yargaladima	900 boys
8.	Dahe in east 'yar galadima	250 boys
9.	Kawu of Eastern Dansadau	700 boys
10.	Ado Lalo of East Dansadau	350 boys
11.	Bulak of East Cebi	520 boys
12.	Janburos of East Madada... 800 boys	800 boys
13.	Sani Bica at East Madaka	180 boys
14.	Dan Bagobiri of Western Cebi	230 boys
15.	Nagala at west of Mairairai	750 boys
16.	Ali kanen Nagala at East Mairairai	220 boys
17.	Zahiru at between Gandaya and Mairairai	175 boys
18.	Mai Gariyo at Southern Burwaye	56 boys
19.	Yalo of near Burwaye	85 Boys

a. Zurmi Local Government Area

S/NO	LEADER OF BANDITS	ESTIMATED NO OF FOLLOWERS
1.	Kachalla at North of Mayasa	1200 boys
2.	Maidaji at North of Labunde	1500 boys
3.	Dankarami at Tsanu	750 Boys

b. Birnin Magaji Local Government Area

S/NO	LEADER OF BANDITS	ESTIMATED NO OF FOLLOWERS
1.	Alhaji Zaki of Rugu	85 boys
2.	Yalo of Rugu	60 boys
3.	Hassan of Rugu	28 boys
4.	Maidaji of Rugu	40 boys
5.	Kachalla of Rugu	58 boys

c. Shinkafi Local Government Area

S/NO	LEADER OF BANDITS	ESTIMATED NO OF FOLLOWERS
1.	Atarwatse of Dajin Mashema	200 boys
2.	Dan makwado of Kamarawa and Bafarawa	550 boys
3.	Nagona at between Bafarawa and Surduku	200 boys

Source: Compiled by Author from Vanguard (Lagos) Report at allafrica.com

Similar gangs exist in Rugu forest on Katsina state axis, Zaria / Kaduna highway, Abuja/ Kaduna highway, Kaduna metropolitan and its environs, forests in Niger state especially Kontagora axis among others. From time to time, these criminals move out of the forests to cause mayhem against Nigerian people. They are involved in cattle rustling, kidnapping, armed robbery and attacks on villages and quite recently have attacked moving Kaduna bound passenger train (killing, maiming and kidnapping many passengers), train stations, military institutions and formations. The methodology of attack and sophistry of the bandits resemble that of Boko Haram in many ways with horrendous consequences. It is clear from this perspective that the indigenous Fulani and other tribes are largely the perpetrators of banditry in the Northwest and North central Nigeria and not mainly the pastoralists migrating along the corridors of the Sahel region. Accordingly, UNOWAS Study report (2018) revealed that:

Many of the bandits were identified as being Fulani while victims were Fulani and Hausa. Some of the political elites in Zamfara sponsored vigilante groups to confront the bandits but they mobilised these groups against the local Fulani population, creating generalised violence between Fulani pastoralists and Hausa farmers that have claimed many lives (UNOWAS, 2018: 74)

Similarly, while linking the general insecurity in Nigeria to the activities of indigenous people, Chris and Abdul (1996), in their study on “rural banditry and social conflicts in Plateau state”, documented the argument of one of the respondents linking the general insecurity in Nigeria to the activities of indigenous people thus:

The absence of jobs creates poverty, which in turn breeds banditry and social conflicts in our state. Like the saying (goes), an idle mind is the devil’s workshop; a lot of our unemployed youths are involved in banditry because of the money they get from it. The stealing of cattle has become a big employer of labour for these youths (Chris and Abdul, 1996: 334).

It is clear from the response above that the indigenous people are perpetrating the social conflicts and banditry just like the pastoralists that migrate through the corridors of the Sahel region contribute to the general insecurity in Nigeria.

Ethnicity

With increased pressure on land and economic resources ethnic differences are playing a major role in exacerbating the conflict between farmers and herders-based population. This is what other school of

thought presents as the basis of conflict in Nigerian states of Plateau, Benue, Taraba and Adamawa and later Southwest Nigeria. Buttressing this point UNOWAS Study report (2018) indicated that:

Tensions are further reinforced by differences in ethnicity and religion. The Fulani herdsmen are Muslims while the population in the south and the middle belt are mainly Christians. The violence is being generalised between communities taking it beyond clashes between cattle herders and crop farmers in the fields to wider ethnic or ethno-religious conflagrations (UNOWAS, 2018: 68)

It is clear from the forgone discussions that the conflicts particularly in some states in the North central are taken beyond the usual farmers- herders' conflict that is known in Nigeria for decades to a wider ethno- religious conflagration.

(ii) Farm-Encroachment conflicts perspective

Pressure on grass land/arable land is increasing with desertification and population explosion. This is the actual cause of herders/farmers' conflicts that lasted for decades. According to UNOWAS Study report (2018):

Growing demographic and ecological pressures are regional phenomena. The area of land under cultivation in West Africa and the Sahel has dramatically increased over time, while available grazing land has decreased. This is partly because pastoralists rarely own land on an individual or collective basis, but instead rely on access to pasture and water as common resources, in agreement with local communities (UNOWAS, 2018: 13)

The conflict is exacerbated in the way grazing reserves and routes were altered/encroached on by the emergence of structures e.g. roads, buildings and sometimes farmlands. In Central and Northwest Nigeria for example, pastoralists have lost access to much land they hitherto used for grazing and the grazing routes are frequently blocked by the expansion of farmland by the sedentary farmers, thereby causing conflicts. However, such are conflicts that were resolved using traditional mechanism of conflict resolution between herders and farmers. On the other hand, the pastoralists are also accused of encroaching on the farmers' protected land.

Grabbing of communal land, farmland and what had been grazing land by elites and agribusinesses also cause problems for small farmers and some pastoralists in some States. In addition, industrialisation and urbanization have continued to claim all available land leaving little or nothing for farmers' survival (Egbuta, 2018: 5). Facilities for grazing were provided by government in Northern Nigeria in order to regulate the relationship between the farmers and herders; such infrastructures were never in existence in Southern Nigeria. According to UNOWAS (2017), "most of grazing reserves in Northern states now exist only on paper. An example, which has regional implications for Southwest Nigeria, is the loss of the most of Bobi grazing reserve in Niger state, which was a major grazing area." The federal government of Nigeria at one time adequately equipped the grazing reserve with facilities to cater for the needs of the pastoralists. However, part of it has been encroached and turned into farmland. The loss of grazing reserves and other pastoral lands in Northern Nigeria partly explains why more pastoralists have moved to southern parts of the country where grazing reserves never existed. Arising from such movements, pressure is exerted on farmers especially when animals stray into farmlands, destroying crops and these result into conflicts between pastoralists and farmers.

(iii) Political/Public policy dimension of the conflict

The politicization of access to land and free movement is one of the most contentious issues in Nigeria. Human rights advocates are not left out of this debate as they increasingly emphasized on the right of indigenous people to land and its resources. Proponents of this standpoint argue that the alienation of indigenous land for open and unregulated grazing may constitute a violation of indigenous rights to property and culture especially in areas where pastoralism is not a major traditional occupation (UNOWAS, 2018: 67)

The political elites leverage on the window created by the media insurgency to further exacerbate the crisis through media reports that are characterized by falsehood and more worrisome is the killings of innocent Nigerians. Social media space/platforms are not helping matters. There are statements that have been circulating in the social media and credited to highly placed personalities in Nigeria. The statements appear to be politically motivated. For example, a retired army General T. Y. Danjuma was reported to have called Nigerians to defend themselves. This was in a Vanguard online report on March 25th, 2018 by John Mkom, titled “Herdsmen Attacks: Defend yourselves or you’ll all die. In the same Vanguard online newspaper of March, 27th 2018, Anayo Okoli and Chimaobi Nwaiwu reported that:

The International Society for Civil Liberties and Rule of Law, Intersociety, yesterday described as belated but containing weighty, irrefutable facts and therefore must be paid attention to by Christians. The call by a former Army Chief and Defence Minister in Nigeria, retired Lt. Gen. Theophillus Danjuma to all Nigerians particularly members of Christian faith in the North east, North central and southern parts of the country to defend themselves against the on-going widespread massacres across the country. Lt Gen Danjuma by that statement has joined other informed and courageous Nigerians to accuse the Armed Forces and the country’s security establishment managers of protecting the attackers particularly, herdsmen.

Politicisation of the crisis is further manifested in manner high-ranking politicians in the ruling party and the leading opposition party attack each other aimed at scoring cheap popularity. Corroborating this assertion, a senior member of the ruling All Progressives Party (APC) Dakuku Peterside in the Premium Times of February 8th 2021 noted that, “some politicians have sought to capitalise on the crisis. It is indisputable that some local leaders who have been unable to provide good governance to their people resort to ethnic chauvinism by literally pouring fuel on the farmer-herder conflict to ramp up support amongst the local populace enhancing their popularity”. This statement clearly tilts towards regime protection mixing up the crisis with local politics against an obvious state of insecurity in Nigeria.

This is the extent of the politics of transhumance/farmers-herders’ conflicts in Nigeria. To this extent, United Nations Office of West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS, 2018) argue that, “conflicts between herders and farmers in Nigeria are often mixed up with local politics frequently along ethno-religious lines”. This explains why local conflict is exaggerated and sometimes misplaced. On public policy dimension of the conflict, in her consultancy work for International Organisation for Migration (IOM) on “Regional Policies and Response to Manage Pastoral Movements within the ECOWAS Region”, Manuela (2017) noted that:

Despite its importance, transhumant pastoralism is facing increasing challenges. These include population growth, climate change, the expansion of the agricultural areas, the privatization of formerly shared resources and public policies favouring agriculture at

the expense of mobile pastoralism. Particularly, Pastoralists transhumance is suffering from neglect and lack of governance in rural areas, exacerbating competition for scarce natural resources. The resulting conflicts and violence negatively impact on the perception of the pastoralists as a group and reinforce their marginalization. In some sectors, pastoralism is now viewed more as a security issue than as a development issue (Manuela, 2017: 1)

5.0 CONCLUSION

The paper observes that a regional regulatory framework aimed at ensuring free movement of pastoralists and peaceful transhumance activities covers transhumance migration from the Sahel. However, the weaknesses of the regulatory framework in terms of ECOWAS member states' failure to operationalize the legislation has been the cause of the conflict between farmers and pastoralists in Nigeria, especially when animals stray into farmlands and destroy crops. These conflicts have always been resolved using traditional conflict resolution mechanism or court of law. However, in recent past, the Nigeria's political space has been occupied with reports/discourse linking the country's security challenges entirely to the activities of pastoralists from the Sahel region. The paper made efforts to address such generalization while noting that the foreign pastoralists also contribute to some level of insecurity in Nigeria.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Against this background the paper recommends as follows:

- The ECOWAS Protocol on the Regulation of Transhumance (1998) should be harmonized with the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement, Goods and Services (1979) in order to create necessary synergy between relevant stakeholders in managing transhumance.
- Nigeria should champion/facilitate a move to create a sub-regional intervention that would lead to the creation of transhumance joint border patrol and control posts equipped with necessary infrastructure in terms of watering points and pastures and veterinary services in order to accommodate the herds during the required inspection period.
- ECOWAS member states that have not domesticated the Protocol should be committed to the domestication and full operationalization of the protocol relating to the regulation of transhumance movements.
- ECOWAS member states should develop operational guidelines such as laws that would clearly define practical steps and modalities for the implementation of the ECOWAS Protocol on the Regulation of Transhumance.

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