

Implications Of Climate Change And Farmers-Herdsmen Conflict On Human Security In South-Eastern Nigeria

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Abstract

Nigeria just like other countries in the southern hemisphere has contributed little to the human causes of climate change and global warming but it is now among the worst hit by the adverse effects. Thus, the southward movement of pastoral herdsmen into the humid and sub-humid zones in Nigeria is on the increase due to extreme weather events in the Sahel region orchestrated by climate change. The study therefore sets to investigate the deadly menace arising from the conflict between farmers and herdsmen over stiff competition for pastureland and available fresh water in the South East of Nigeria with focus on the human security implication. The study utilized the documentary method and descriptive research design while the eco-violence theory formed the theoretical framework of analysis. We argue that the incessant violent conflict between farmers and herdsmen in Nigeria and the South East in Particular poses grave threat to human security and agricultural production and that the Nigerian government has not done the needful to stem the ugly tide. The study therefore recommends that the state should establish grazing reserves and corridors, prosecute the perpetrators and invest more in research on combating climate change and adaptability.

Keywords: Climate Change; Global Warming; Conflict; Human Security; Herdsmen.

Introduction

The Nigerian State is currently going through a very challenging phase in its history that is perhaps preceded only by the civil war. Economically, challenges like acute unemployment and exchange rate crisis and the attendant runaway inflation confront the country. In the midst of these, insecurity appears to pose the most formidable challenge which the current administration met upon its inception in May, 2015 (Nwosu, 2017). Thus at the time of President Buhari's inauguration, less known to the international community outside the Boko Haram was another source of insecurity: the attacks by so-called Fulani herdsmen. While the Buhari administration has had measurable success in its fight against Boko Haram, it appears that the menace of the herdsmen-farmers conflict has defied the government.

From the foregoing, Abugu and Onuba (2015) reiterate that there have been clashes between Fulani herdsmen and the aborigines in several parts of Nigeria for over three decades. The clashes are occasioned by the destruction of agricultural farms of the aborigines by the cattle of the Fulanis. Naturally Fulanis by their nature are migrants who leave their traditional abode in search of greener pasture their flocks. Leed (2009) maintained that migration is a normal routine

for pastoralists whose movement is determined by season. But with the advent of climate change, this pattern of migration changed due to rapid drought, deforestation and other environmental problems associated with climate change. Sequel to the above development, Abugu and Onuba (2015) observed that the rate of desertification and deforestation in the Sahara desert is at an alarming rate and Nigeria is part of the countries of the Sahel region that experiences drought, desertification and deforestation. These aforementioned triad challenges forced the Fulanis who occupy the area to migrate down South in search of greener pastures for their cattle to graze. In the course of entering the shores of the Southern and Middle-Belt regions of the country, their cattle cause great damage to farm land, resulting to conflicts and confrontation with the indigenes.

According to Global Terrorism Index (2015) the Fulani herdsmen militants constitute the fourth deadliest militant group in the world with a record killing of 1,229 people in 2014 alone. The Federal Government has been advised by many well-meaning Nigerians to pay serious attention to the activities of the Fulani herdsmen across the country. On the other hand, the federal Government has stated that investigations have established that most of these herdsmen are not Nigerian citizens and due to ECOWASTranshumance Protocol which guarantees the right to free movement to citizens of member countries, it cannot stop non-citizens of Nigeria from grazing their cattle across the country (Eyekpimi, 2016). However, Egbedi (2014) noted with dismay that a situation where Fulani herdsmen carry rifles and other dangerous weapons unchecked is unacceptable. He noted that the activities of these herdsmen have put the lives of innocent Nigerians at risk.

According to Bamidele (2014) the insensitivity of these Fulani herdsmen to the plight of their hosts by reason of their activities is responsible for the ugly situation we find in most parts of the North Central region. Between 2000 and 2015, there has been reported cases of conflicts and confrontation between the Fulanis and indigenes of the areas they migrated to. Abugu and Onuba (2015) thus noted that cases of clashes between the Fulanis from the North and the inhabitants of the Plateau, Kogi and Benue in the Middle Belt region and some parts of the Eastern region abound. They specifically pointed out the clashes between the Fulanis and the Agatu people of Benue State in 2014 and that of the same Fulanis and people of Uzouwani Local Government of Enugu State in 2013.

Although scholars have written much on farmers-herdsmen conflicts in Nigeria, none has satisfactorily linked these conflicts with climate change and its attendant food insecurity in Nigeria and South East geopolitical zone in particular. Despite the fact that these scholars appreciate the need for the study of climate change, they did not satisfactorily account for the effects of the climate change induced farmers-herdsmen conflicts on National food security.

Against this backdrop, the study therefore sets to examine the recurrent farmers-herdsman conflict in Nigeria and implications for National food security in a fast changing climate with

particular attention to the events in the South East Zone. The argument before us now is to fully examine and unravel why these clashes escalate to mass killings and butchery and to fully understand the purpose as well as the cost of these damages and hence proffer the way forward.

Theoretical Framework

In order to properly explain the subject matter under study and appropriately guide us in understanding the linkage between farmers – herdsman conflict, climate change and food security threat in Nigeria, we shall usefully adopt the theory of eco-violence as articulated by Homer Dixon. Essentially, Homer-Dixon and Blitt (1998) argue that large populations in many developing countries are highly dependent on four key environmental resources that are very fundamental to crop production: fresh water, cropland, forests, and fish. Scarcity or shrinking of these resources as a result of misuse, over-use or degradation under certain circumstances will trigger conflicts.

According to Homer-Dixon (1998) decreases in the quality and quantity of renewable resources, population growth and unequal resource access act singly or in various combinations to increase scarcity, for certain population groups, of cropland water, forests and fish. This can reduce economic productivity, both for the local groups experiencing the scarcity and for the larger regional or national economies. The affected people may migrate or be expelled to new lands. Migrating groups often trigger ethnic conflicts when they move to new area, while decreases in wealth can cause deprivation conflicts (Homer- Dixon and Blitt, 1998; Gledish and Urdal, 2002). Essentially, the fundamental assumption of the theory is that resource scarcity is the product of an insufficient supply, too much demand or an unequal distribution of a resource as a result of environmental hazards that forces some sector of the society into a condition of deprivation and violence. These four sources of scarcity are in turn caused by variables such as population growth, economic development, pollution and obviously climate change. Thus, environmental resource scarcity will constrain agricultural and economic productivity, further inducing the disruption of economic livelihoods, poverty and migration.

Having stated the above, it becomes imperative that the eco-violence theory is germane for a deeper understanding of the root causes and implications of the ongoing farmers- herdsman conflict in Nigeria. One basic feature of the Fulani herdsman is migration and at the heart of the migration is climate change. As a result of climate change, seas have dried up leading to shortage of fish and fresh water. Drought and desertification have also eaten up crop lands and forest thereby making these environmental resources that trigger violence in short supply. To avert these conditions individuals especially herdsman stray to where they will get moderate weather, market opportunity, green vegetation, forage and food, thereby threatening the means production and reproduction of some other people who would not brook such encroachment. This in itself engenders conflict.

Methodology

The study adopted qualitative research method and sourced its data from secondary sources. We used the descriptive research design and trend analytical technique was employed for data analysis. The choice of this method is basically because the study has enough already existing qualitative data that were accessible and available for use. Investigation was carried out to assess the activities of the Fulani herdsmen across the country that have resulted to destruction of lives and property over clash with farmers. In determining the underlying conditions that triggered these conflicts, this study interrogated lack of natural grazing policy, climate change, food insecurity and forced migration as the fundamental causes associated with the conflict phenomenon under study. *Farmers-Herdsmen Conflict and Implications on Human Security in the South East of Nigeria*

Conceptual Explications

Conflict

Extant literature abounds as to the definition and meaning of conflict. Hence, there is no universally accepted definition of the term conflict. To this end, Okolie (2009) posits that any definitional enterprise on conflict must take into cognizance the fact that conflict is part of several movements in history. In view of this, Ezeani (2014) averred that one issue of contention is whether the conflict is a situation or a type of behaviour. According to Rakim (2010) conflict refers to an interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement or dissonance within or between social entities. In his own perception, Gilick (2009) pointed out that natural resource conflict is as old as man itself. He goes further to define conflict as a struggle over values and claims to scarce resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals. Deutsch (1973) sees conflict as an action which prevents, obstructs, interferes with injuries or renders ineffective of another action with which it is incompatible. Mc Enny (1985) refers to conflict as the overt coercive interaction of contending collectivities while Onu (2009) conceives conflict as a manifestation of hostile attitude in face of conflicting interest between individual groups or states. These conflicting interests can be over resources, identity, power, status or values. German sociologist, Georg Simmel asserts that social conflict and consensus (peace and unity) are naturally complementary. According to him, genuine peace or consensus without conflict is hardly possible (Cosser and Rosenbery, 1979). Without doubt, one striking view on the inevitability of social conflict was posited by Karl Marx. Marx applied the idea of dialecticism to a materialistic analysis of history or societal development and submitted that “the history of all hitherto known or existing societies is the history of class struggle”. For Marx, social conflict revolves around the emergence of two opposing classes (the bourgeoisie and the proletariat) in the capitalist regime (Marx, 1971)

Climate Change

Climate change has been defined as any long term significant change in the expected patterns of average weather of a specific region of the earth as a whole over an appropriately significant period of time (IPCC, 2007). Corroborating the definition, Uguru et al (2011) noted that climate change is a phenomenon that occurs when the climate of a specific area or planet is altered between two different times. This could occur when there is change in total amount of sun's energy absorbed by the earth's atmosphere and surface. Climate change, the prime cause of global warming has manifested in global climate history as periods of warmth, melting of the ice caps and increased rainfalls, floods, rise in sea levels etcetera. Human activities are by far the major cause of climate change through continuous release of greenhouse gases and aerosols into the atmosphere, by changing land surfaces and by depleting the stratospheric ozone layer (Uguru et al; cited in Ani, 2012).

According to the Fourth Assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2007) it is shown that the origin of the relationship between climate change and resource depletion dates as far back as 1869 when the first climate observation was carried out. They observed that the emissions of greenhouse gases mostly carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄) and nitrogen oxide (NO₂) into the atmosphere has increased from a pre-industrial value of 278 parts per million (ppm) to 379 parts per million in 2005. This observation has also shown that the average global temperature rose by 0.74⁰C. Global warming as a result of emission of harmful greenhouse into the atmosphere chiefly carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, methane, nitrous oxide, chloro- fluoro carbons through the burning of fossil fuels and agricultural activities lead to the progressive depletion of the ozone layer in the stratosphere (Goldberg, 1994). The Ozone layer is the shield that absorbs about 90% of the harmful electro-magnetic waves emitted from the sun on the earth. The greenhouse gases allow shortwave energy to get to lower atmosphere but hold back long wave radiation from escaping thus regulating the earth's heat budget. The imbalance between the short wave and the long wave and this is responsible for extreme weather events such as drought and flood (Ezeani, 2014; Leed, 2007; Meehl, 2007).

Human Security

Human security is a new and broadened approach to security studies which seeks to explicate the global vulnerabilities and examine how poverty, environment, and social interaction generate conflict and increasingly, poses threat to human existentialism. Central to this approach is the understanding that human security deprivations can undermine peace and stability within and between states, whereas overemphasis on state security can be detrimental to human welfare.

In an expanded definition, the UNDP (1994) sees human security as safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression, and protection from sudden and harmful disruptions in the patterns of daily life. It further argues that the scope of global security should be broadened to include threats in seven areas namely; economic security, political security, community

security, food security, environmental security, personal security, and health security (UNDP, 1994:24-25). Human security believes that without security of humans, national security and regional will be difficult to achieve. Human security is not an attack on national security but a complimentary view to national security. Essentially, human security refers to the degree to which the welfare of individuals is protected and advanced. It holds that a people-centered view of security is necessary for national, regional and global security. Human security is indebted to the Human Rights tradition; hence, this explains why Akire (2003: 2) aptly summarily puts it that Human security is deliberately protective. It recognizes that people and communities are fatally threatened by events well beyond their control such as violent conflict.

The Fulani Herdsmen

The Fulani in as ethnic group of the West African Savannah, some of them lives in town and cities and engage in farming and trading. A larger proportion of them are cattle herders. Through the series of event called the Fulani Jihads, the Fulani conquered a greater part of the area that later became Northern Nigeria between 1804 and 1810 (Horton, 1972; Adeleye 1971; Last, 1967). The Fulani or Fulbe indisputably represent a significant component of the Nigerian economy. They constitute the major breeders of cattle, the main source of meat, the most available and cheap source of animal protein consumed by Nigerians (Eniola, 2007). Similarly, Aliyu (2015) maintains that the name Fulani has become synonymous with grazing and cattle ownership. He further noted that less than a tenth of the Fulani have jobs other than herding and farming.

Describing the annual herding cycle of the Fulani, Iro (1994) stated that the herding season begins with southward movement of the herds along rivers and stream valleys from October to December marking the end of rainy season and beginning of dry season. January to February is the harmattan season that is characterized by longer grazing hours, herd splitting and more frequent visits to stable water sources. The months of March and April are usually the toughest for the herdsman and his cattle, as it is the hottest period is the grazing calendar. Indeed, he now herds his cattle only in the evenings and nights (Iro, 1994). May and June signify the end of dry season and vegetation begins to appear. This also marks the beginning of northward movement of cattle herds. From this period up till September, which is the peak of rainy season, though characterized by cattle breeding, more milk production and shorter grazing hours, cattle herding coincides significantly with arable crop production and farmers – herdsmen conflict is therefore triggered.

In eastern Nigeria, there is hardly any community where Fulani herdsmen are not found. In Abia state, clashes between the Fulani herdsmen and local farmers have become a huge threat to human security, hence in Abia communities of Uzuakoli in Bende Local Government, Ebem and Akanu in Ohafia and Umuechieze in Umunneochi, there have been cases of deadly clashes between rural farmers and these cattle breeders (Nwaopara & Okoli, 2015). Essentially, conflicts

between cattle herders and farmers have existed since the beginning of agriculture and increased or decreased in intensity and frequency depending on economic, environmental and other factors. Clashes between cattle herders and crop farmers have been a major cause of increasing violence and general insecurity in Nigeria. In most of these encounters, citizens are regularly killed; the destruction or loss of property leaves an already endangered populace even poorer. The frequency and scale of these communal conflicts have become alarming (leadership Newspaper, May 17, 2011).

In Nigeria, the most frequent causes of conflict between the nomadic cattle herders and sedentary farmers are illegal invasion of farms and destruction of crops by cattle, particularly during the planting season and immediately after the harvesting period (Blench, 2004). Similarly, Anyamelum and Awka North local government areas lost 4 people on account of violent activities of the Fulani herdsmen (Ezeonwuka & Igwe, 2016:209). With emphasis on the implication of these conflicts on food security in Nigeria, Adisa (2012) noted that 75 percent of today's food comes from 12 arable crops chiefly dominated by rice, maize and wheat and five animal species. He further observed that Nigerian agricultural production is dominated by rural based small scale arable crop producers who account for about 80% of total food requirement of the nation. Similarly, Eguru (2012) observed that the declining fertility of soil will affect agriculture, which is the major employer of labour in the Sahel region of Africa. He noted that the negative effect of climate change is not static. For instance, cereal crop production is expected to decline in some areas by up to 50% while others is between 25 – 50%. Contributing to the debate on climate change, resource control and other issues, Leed (2006) noted that the negative impact of climate change has increased environmental degradation and demographic pressures. The continuous crisis and between Fulani herdsmen and farmers in the Middle-Belt and South – Eastern region can be attributed to the factors mentioned above.

Furthermore, it is quite obvious that the re-occurrence of these conflicts have impacted negatively on the economy of the two parties (herdsmen and farmers) on one hand and the government. Agriculture which is the mainstay of the economy of the local people is been disrupted by these conflicts, making livelihood difficult at both the immediate locality and the larger societies alike that are dependent on the produce from the warring communities. Therefore, food supply is affected in both quantity and quality. According to the Mercy Corps reports of 2016, these incessant attacks have a drastic effect on food security and have caused a loss of \$14 billion in three years. This global humanitarian organization funded by the British Department for International Development (DFID) carried out a research between 2015 and 2016 on the causes and effects of the perennial clashes between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria. The study further posited that ongoing conflict is thwarting the country's economic development to an enormous extent and if these conflicts were resolved, the average household affected today could see income increase by at least 64 percent and potentially 210 percent or higher. In all, Marietu and Olerewaju (2001) cited in Ezeani (2014) posit that this unresolved crisis has

grievous dimensions in its effects on the policy of government in providing development opportunities and attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Further Cases of Deadly Attacks by Fulani Herdsmen in the South –East of Nigeria

The recurrent conflict between herdsmen and farmers has posed grave implications on human safety and security especially as it affects farmers in the South-East of Nigeria, Okeke (2014) aptly noted that in nearly every state in the region, Fulani herdsmen graze where they like, destroy crops, block traffic, rape women, beat up hunters, and not too infrequently wage deadly armed attacks on villages where there is the slightest resistance to their depredations. In the same vein, Abugu and Onuba (2015) reported that in Enugu state in 2009, suspected Fulani herdsmen attacked Ezeagu communities in the state and killed at least two women in their farm. They further revealed that in Anambra state especially in the Aguleri/ Umuleri axis, Fulani herdsmen have been banned from entering the areas since 2012. Similarly, the damage caused by Fulani herdsmen also led to their expulsion from places like Umuahia and Isuochi precisely as they have all witnessed orgy of violence and crisis of greater magnitude caused by Fulani herdsmen. Nwosu (2017) aptly captures that on 25 April, 2016, suspected Fulani invaders attacked Ukpabi-Nimbo, a town in Enugu state, killing about 40 indigenes.

The following headlines each of which refers to a separate event that occurred between 2012-2013 are further evidences of the depredations of the Fulani herdsmen in the South Eastern part of Nigeria: “Crisis looms between Abia community and Hausa/Fulani herdsmen” (The Daily Post, June 10, 2013). “Fulani herdsmen invade Ohaji”; “Fulani herdsmen storm Enugu, robbed and raped women” (Oodera, 2013). The press media also reported in 2013, that the Fulani herdsmen killed 2 people in Uzouwani Local government in Enugu State. Essentially in all these development, government has not done enough to find a lasting solution to the herdsmen and their deadly activities

Findings

The study found out that:

- The phenomenon of farmers-herdsmen frequent conflicts pose grave threat to the corporate existence of the Nigerian state, especially in lieu of the fact that the Fulani herdsmen ranks as the fourth deadliest terrorist group in the world.
- Extreme climatic conditions such drought, high heat waves, desertification, deforestation, spatial rainfall and drying of rivers and seas resulting from global warming account for the biggest cause of farmers-herdsmen conflicts in Nigeria and South East in particular.
- Government inability to investigate, arrest and prosecute the perpetrators of the farmers-herdsmen conflict over the years, have contributed to embolden the culprits.
- Nigeria faces the danger of food insecurity resulting from disruption of agricultural production and displacement of arable crop farmers due to the endemic conflict between rural farmers and cattle herders.

- The apparent lack of investment into scientific research to combat climate change through adaptability and mitigation mechanisms has further compounded the existing environmental induced conflict.
- The inability of Nigerian State to effectively tackle the Fulani herdsmen menace has resulted to incessant loss of lives and property of defenceless people in the South East and other regions of Nigeria. This in turn poses a grave threat human security.

Conclusion

The study examined the ongoing conflicts between herders and farmers in Nigeria in general and south East geopolitical zone in particular. Essentially, the paper argued that these conflicts are closely knit with the adverse effects of climate change which triggers migration and competition over environmental resources and space. The study contends that though climate change cannot be wished away, government sincere intervention through effective regulatory policy, establishment of ranch or grazing corridors and funding of research will stem the tide.

Recommendations

There is urgent need to institutionalize a broad-based and coordinated national policy on grazing to address the recurrent farmers-herdsmen violent clashes and anarchy.

Government should always promptly address some perceived violence or injustice among the herdsmen and farmers to forestall violent confrontations. A good example in point is the setting up of a cattle menace committee in Anambra State led by the state's commissioner of police, traditional rulers and community representatives to ensure peaceful coexistence between communities and herdsmen. It is troubling that private citizens can have apparently easy access to unlicensed sophisticated military grade weapons. Thus, it is expedient that authorities get to the root of arms proliferation and confiscate illegal firearms.

Against the backdrop that some of the attacks were allegedly perpetrated by foreign invaders, it is incumbent upon the government to ensure proper border security. Free movement of people and goods as guaranteed by ECOWAS Protocols should not be an excuse for irresponsible border security. State and local governments need to be proactive by letting people know that they are concerned about their security and welfare through prompt intervention and regular contacts with stakeholders, traditional rulers and migrant pastoralists. Improved practices to adapt and mitigate the impacts of climate change should be adopted as a national policy objective and part of long term goals.

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