



VIOLENT ARMED CONFLICT BETWEEN NOMADIC HERDSMEN AND SEDENTARY FARMERS IN NIGERIA: A CONSOCIAL NEED FOR INTEGRATED COMMUNITY BASED SECURITY SURVEILLANCE

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ABSTRACT

This paper highlights the importance of establishing integrated community-based security surveillance system (ICSS), as a major step towards improving the detection and assessment of violent conflicts between Nomadic Herdsmen and Sedentary Farmers in Nigeria. The system is an adaptable low-cost security initiative, designed to improve internal security and strengthen rapid response to security risks. It is to be managed by communities for their protection against external forces through monitoring unusual events and reporting same to appropriate authorities. The ICSS volunteers are to bolster community surveillance in collaboration with law enforcement agents and in line with these 3 cardinal operational contexts: -to monitor security trends and trigger response operations; enhance operational security in the affected communities; and to operate in complex environments where there is manifestation of weak, bad, and declining institutional security framework, and/or where there is limited surveillance coverage. This fundamental proposal is therefore a bid to cover security gaps that have widened the ethnic and religious crises in Nigeria, while also contributing to existing local knowledge and identifying militating factors surrounding such armed conflicts in Nigeria.

Keywords: Communities, Nigeria, Nomadic Herdsmen, Sedentary Farmers, Integrated Security Surveillance.

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INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is embroiled in various security crisis of unprecedented scale, and a catalogue of problems is aggravating it; with present conflict patterns being fundamentally different from those witnessed in the past (Hensel, 2001). In that context, one can state that community conflicts in Nigeria are becoming more frequent and bloodier than the patterns witnessed decades ago.

Indeed, Nigerian communities are in the throes of chronic security crisis with increasing cases of kidnapping, hostage taking, neighbourhood robbery, armed conflicts and terrorist attacks (Gubak and Bulus, 2018). This phenomenal increase in violent crimes co-exists with rising incidences of lawlessness and the proliferation of small guns and sophisticated weapons, amidst the existence of various armed groups that are purveyors of violence, atrocities, societal devastation and generalized insecurity (Jennifer and Jonas, 2007).

For instance, the ‘Boko Haram’ insurgency in the North East of Nigeria, though down played by erstwhile administrative regimes, peaked in 2014, with devastating consequences experienced till date. The continuing clashes between Boko Haram insurgents and the Nigerian police and military forces, are largely felt in households and communities; as households have lost family members due to the violence. It has also resulted to unprecedented level of displacements and large disruptions in rural economies (Azad and Kaila, 2018).

In addition, the longstanding disputes between sedentary farmers and nomadic herdsmen have claimed several lives within communities in the North central part of Nigeria, coupled with internal displacements and food insecurity. Such conflicts have also spread to communities in South Eastern part of Nigeria, and one obvious precursor of the conflicts is the reduction in pasture land and water. These violent clashes have resulted in farm land destruction, killings of humans and cattle, and the destruction of houses. Of greater concern, is the consequential negative





impact on the socio-economic conditions in the affected communities (Plangshak, 2017).

On the other hand, the existence of militia groups operating in the oil rich communities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, have remained a security burden. These militia groups attack pipeline workers and are responsible for the cases of kidnapping and hostage taking for ransom (Gubak and Bulus, 2018). The armed groups oftentimes, clash with the Joint Task Force (JTF), leaving the affected communities fragile and vulnerable to further attacks, while also causing disruptions in their rural economy (Mercy Corp, 2015).

Of interest also, is the fact that in some instances, ethnic and cultural tensions, including religious cleaves and tribal egoistic competition, have triggered conflicts within several Nigerian communities. Reports has it that traditional power struggle for leadership or ownership of ethno-cultural groups, can trigger conflicts that is masterminded by a populist who seeks favourable structural change through conflicts (Muzaffel, 2016).

Scholars have also claimed that the intrusion of banditry, killings and armed conflicts in some affected Nigerian communities, is a reflection of the state's weakness and in some cases, the state's collapse (Ordu, 2015). They are manifestations of the weak, bad and declining institutional framework of governance. According to Mevayerore (2020), crisis of a 'state' is the result of challenges of the past and the existing exclusion, marginalization, inequalities and injustices perpetuated by and through state apparatuses. The phenomenon may also be indicative of bottom or base pressures and grievances that were suppressed and hitherto not ventilated, but now volatile or explosive. The crisis are often catalogued as crisis of political succession, personalization of leadership, irresponsible use of power, class opportunist among the political class, and the neglect of popular welfare as an aspect of governance (Nyamutu, 2014).

While the poor state of criminal justice is seen as a remote cause of armed conflicts between Nomadic Herdsmen and Sedentary Farmers, the neglect of traditional socio-political realm and the whittling down of native authority overtime, are significantly responsible for the security issues in several communities in Nigeria (Oluka and Igwe, 2020). Therefore, disregarding indigenous approach to achieving conflict free societies in Nigeria, and neglecting the role

of chiefs and indigenous traditional institutions in conflict resolution, communal solidarity and collective responsibility, have created missing gaps in community security surveillance and proactive mechanisms (Nwachukwu, 2012).

It is rather unfortunately, that the principles of inclusion, consensus and kinship, among the elders and societies, particularly in dispute arbitration, have been ignored (Ayittey, 1991), and judging by the precarious nature of insecurity in Nigeria, the absence of indigenous traditional institutions in the security architecture is intimately connected to the incessant community conflicts. Hence, communal aspiration in security surveillance is emerging as an important mechanism in the struggle to create conflict free communities in Nigeria.

This paper therefore, examines the relevance of indigenous structures in an integrated community security surveillance system within typical Nigerian communities, while exploring the nexus of violent armed conflicts between Nomadic Herdsmen and Sedentary farmers in Nigeria, and also advocating a new conversation on the veracity of adopting such an integrated community security surveillance model towards achieving conflict free societies in Nigeria.

Theoretical Perspective

The theoretical underpinning of this paper on violent armed conflicts between Nomadic Herdsmen and sedentary farmers are the state fragility perspective, frustration aggression approach, and the Broken Window Theory (BWI), popularized by Wilson and Kelling (1982), Sara (2008) and Dallard (1939). The decision to adopt these theories is predicated upon the desire to demonstrate that the inability of the state to cater for her citizens has sustained ethnic militias and insurgency in the country.

The 'fragile state' as articulated by Sara (2008), refers to the state of countries facing severe developmental challenges such as weak institutional capacity, poor governance and political instability. Thus, a fragile state is the one that is trapped in a vicious circle of violent conflicts. Slater (2012), a leading proponent of this theory, had observed that a fragile state is significantly susceptible to crisis in one or more of its subsystems. According to him, the 'fragile state' is that state that is particularly vulnerable to internal shocks and domestic conflicts.





The frustration aggression theory formulated by Bollard *et al.* (1939) has the central premise that aggression is always the result of frustration. According to them, frustration produces instigations towards different types of responses, one of which is instigation to aggression. Anifowase (2003) submits that “given the requisite conditions, individuals or groups who feel frustrated in the attainment of their desires and demands often react to aggressive behaviour”.

However, the Broken Window Theory (BWI) suggests that public-order offences like vandalism, and rowdy behaviour, can create downward spiral neighbourhood determination that leads to more serious crimes if not checked by the community. Such menial crimes tend to portray the impression that nobody cares and that residents, as well as the police, have lost control over the community. The theory argues that most neighbourhood crimes are often than not, perpetuated by offenders who reside near the victims (Ogunfadebo, 2018). Thus, increasing security presence and enforcing informal rule of conduct and law, can make communities less chaotic and less prone to insecurity. Therefore, there should be increased security presence and the involvement of residents in community security.

Violent armed conflict between nomadic herdsman and sedentary farmers in Nigeria

Violent armed conflict or armed combat involves armed forces of at least one state or more armed factions seeking to gain control of all or part of the state. A variety of writers have posited that one example of violent armed conflict in the post military state is the conflict between ‘Nomadic herdsman’ and ‘sedentary farmers’. Such conflicts include those recorded in Oke-Ogun region of Oyo State and Auguta communities in Benue State, as well as those recorded in Enugu State, Ebonyi State, Taraba State, Plateau State, and Yobe State (Alawale, 2010).

In most cases, these violent armed conflicts are overtly ethicized to the extent of threatening Nigeria's national security. Consequently, individual households have been attacked and thousands of people have lost their lives, while some have been maimed for life or displaced from their communities (Albert, 2001). Above all, the conflicts have continued to constitute an impediment to democratic consolidation (Alawale, 2010).

Since 1999, the manifestation of violent conflicts between Nomadic herdsman and sedentary farmers have thwarted the developmental efforts of government, and have led to massive destruction of properties, coupled with killings and maiming of countless number of people, while turning others into refugees in their own country. According to Iro (1994), the herding circle of the Nomadic herdsman begins with Southward movement of the herd and along the river and sheering valleys from October to December -marking the end of rainy season and the beginning of dry season. January to February is the Hamattan season and it is characterized by lower grazing hours, herd splitting, and more frequent visits to stable water resources; thus, increasing the southward movement of the herdsman. The months of March and April are usually the highest period in the grazing calendar, and Reisman (1977) posits that May and June signifies the end of dry season and vegetation begins to appear. This according to Reisman marks the beginning of northward movement of cattle herds. From that period up to September –the rainy season, cattle herding wenders with aerobic crop production. Farmer herdsman conflicts therefore, became prevalent during this period and the major causes are the destruction of crops and other properties including reservoirs and irrigational facilities, as well as the burning of rangeland, blockage of stock routes and water points, crops encroachment, and the increasing rate of cattle theft.

Implications for integrated security based surveillance system among communities in Nigeria

Integrated security-based surveillance is a philosophical and organizational strategy that allows residents participate in the security watch of their communities. It is geared towards monitoring and observing the modus operandi of criminals, bandits, and militants who, on revenge missions, invade communities. It also involves the establishment of a joint task force of various community security networks in collaboration with the police force to solve the problems of crime, fear of crime, killings, invasions, looting and maiming of citizens within the communities. It reduces crime and ensures the communities are always at alert, while improving quality of life in the communities and also engendering a supportive environment for the police force. By implication, the integrated community-based security surveillance serves as a proactive problem solving programme operating within the following components:





1. Joint communities' security surveillance: - a collaborative partnership among communities. It is a security network that involves conflict analysis, and strategic and pragmatic recommendations. The base line is that security is not an isolated activity; hence, communities should ally with law enforcement agents.
2. In land transformation: - the involvement of law enforcement agencies, military and security services system to support volunteers in the respective communities in resolving security problems. The activities include raids, under-covering of crime, rapid response and routine patrol.
3. Conflict analysis: -the analysis of responses with strategic and pragmatic recommendations; following detailed assessment of the problems.

CONCLUSION

Periodical struggles for scarce eco-system resources have degenerated into violent conflicts in Nigeria between Fulani Herdsmen and Sedentary Farmers. These conflicts have become more intense with widespread destruction of communities. Since most of the Fulani Herdsmen do not own or possess the rights to land, they therefore depend absolutely on open land to feed their cattle, climaxing in intense pressure for land with incidences of conflicts that are now aggravated by climate change. Similarly, the encroachment of traditional cattle routes have drastically reduced the grazing space for livestock to access pastures and water, thereby increasing the frequency of the clashes, and resulting in serious security challenges; hence the need for security surveillance in order to protect the lives and properties of communities. Of course, several governmental policies in agriculture, especially the all-year round Fadama farming, can enable herdsmen access pastures and in that regard, should be consolidated.

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AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION

Nwachukwu Sunny conceived and wrote the manuscript. Nwachukwu Tobeckukwu and Kemi Ogunbadeniya corrected the manuscript. All authors contributed and approved the manuscript.

