

Contradictions of State-Building in Nigeria: The Link Between Arable and Pastoral Farmer's Conflict and Economic Development in Benue State, Nigeria by

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Abstract: The recent phenomenal attacks by herders on the sedentary farmers had taken a new paradigm shift thereby altering the existing social relations between arable farmers and pastoral herders. Thus, Benue State has been the most target population that had received its portion of damage on farms and death toll of her population, especially, the labour force. The most worrisome is the inadequate attention paid by Nigerian government and Benue State in curtailing the viral attacks. However, the focus of this study sets to examine the nature and contradictions of conflicts between Fulani-herders and arable-indigenous farmers, implication of unhealthy relations between sedentary and pastoral farmers on economic growth and development in Benue State. Methodologically, the study appropriated mixed method approach and data were generated through the primary sources of data collection. The study also utilized participatory research and focus group discussion and in-depth interview. The sample size of 340 farmers was purposively chosen from the population of farmers from three selected local governments in Benue State which were affected by the attacks. The theoretical framework of analysis for the study was anchored on the theory of protracted social conflict as propounded by Edward Azar. The findings of the study revealed that the struggle for limited natural resources (pasture ranges) had heightened the intense of conflicts, reduction of incomes accruable to farmers and problem of food security for human sustenance. Therefore, the study recommends among others; reforestation and utilization of Sambisa forests and strengthening of the local securities and institutions for adequate policing.

Key words: Cattle route, conflict, development, diplomacy, labour force, adequate policing

INTRODUCTION

It is unarguable that resource ownership and utilization has directly defined the dimension of most conflicts involving man, since, time immemorial. Nonetheless, of all resources, land has remained an overwhelming source of conflict among various users as well as individuals at varying thresholds. In particular, conflict between arable farmers and pastoralists on the use of land has becoming increasingly disastrous in Nigeria. Thus, Benue State is not an exception to serial attacks unleashed on the people and farm lands that had implicated on the volume of agricultural production and less economic development of the state. It is important to note that the vital role of agriculture in the development of the economies of third world nations including Nigeria is undeniable (Eastwood *et al.*, 2006).

Nigeria with a population of 201 million people occupying a land area of 923,773 km² has continued to benefit immensely from agricultural activities. With about 82 million hectares of arable land, out of which only 42% is so far cultivated, agriculture (crop and animal production) has contributed between 31.2 and 39.2% of total GDP between 1986 and 1995 and over 40% in 1999

and 2006 (Anonymous, 2006). In Benue State Nigeria, the mainstay of her economic development has agriculture and it demands an enabling environment and securitization of lives and property to harness its maximum potential. This is to suggest that sustainable development of agriculture demands a peaceful co-habitation of communities and their environs. It is through constant cooperation that local communities could implement sustainability of common resources and conservation for future uses.

However, the challenges facing economic development of Benue State is the problem associated with arable farmers and pastoralists conflicts over land tenureship. The consternation between the two parties has led to increasing frustration and impoverishment of arable farmers occasioned by perennial and extensive destruction of farm land. The effects of the farmer's conflicts on the economy of the Benue State had gulped government spending in the provision of infrastructure to the citizens. It is of interest to note that the conflicts in Guma, Logo, Naka, Agatu local government areas of the state and hinter lands have implications on the lives of the people and antithetical to economic development of the state. It is against this background that this study seeks to

appreciate extant literature on arable farmers and pastoralist's conflicts and economic development in Benue State.

Conceptual clarification

Conflict: The construct of conflict and conflict management have in the recent time transcended the limited fields of social sciences. As dynamic as the term seems, it has attracted plethora meanings from myriad of scholars and stakeholders from different background. Conflict refers to pursuit of incompatible interests and goals by different groups in the society. It can also be conceived as a phenomenon or something devastating, abnormal, dysfunctional and detestable, yet it could be a precursor of positive change, if constructively handled (Aspinall, 2002; Hammed and Ayantunji, 2002). The conflict situation between the indigene and herders implicates the struggle for scarce resource, land. The varying interests reflect the need to feed the cattle with pasture and water while this contradicts the interests of the indigenous with whom their farm lands were utterly destroyed and bodies of water gravely contaminated.

Economic development: Like every other concepts in fields of political economy and development studies, economic development has refuted precise definition from scholars. According to Anyanwuocha (2004), economic development is the process of increasing real per capita income and engineering substantial positive transformations in the various sectors of the economy. It implies a real change in the economic and social superstructure of the nation. Economic development refers to an improvement in the consumption choice open to the average citizen in the education and health of the average citizen. It involves both quantitative and non-quantitative aspects of the living, reduction in income inequality, unemployment and general poverty (Lawal and Oluwatoyin, 2011).

Literature review

Nature and characterization of arable-pastoral conflicts: The nature and character of clashes between indigenous farmers and herdsman has in the recent time become a theater of war of scholarship among scholars. Several people have contributed to this ongoing debate by expressing their diverse perspectives on the influence of farmer's conflicts on the economic development. Scholars like Musa *et al.* (2016) in their study of the conflicts between herdsman and farmers in Guma local government area of Benue State, maintained that the destruction of crops and farmland, contamination of water and harassment of herdsman by host communities were major causes of conflict between farmers and herdsman. Likewise, according to Chia he took a paradigm shift by appreciating the impacts of farmers and herdsman clashes

from the security perspective and the risk it poses to the integrity of state. He maintains that conflict between crop farmers and Fulani herders has claimed a lot of lives and property totaling about 853 deaths, since, 2014. Thus while Fulani herdsman claimed to have lost 214 people in addition to 3200 cows, the Tiv people reportedly killed were estimated at 633 persons excluding children and women who died in ram shackled camps (Adamu and Ben, 2017).

Furthermore as the conflict increases in intensity, the worst hits of local government areas are Guma, Gwer-West, Logo and Makurdi. For instance in Makurdi local government area there are ten different camps for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), so does their humanitarian and economic implication on the state. The increasing accessibility of illicit firearms and arm racing, both locally-produced and those smuggled from outside had worsened the conflict, thereby sabotaging the security efforts of government and economic development of the state. Over the past 5 years, thousands have been killed but survey of open reports suggest that fatalities may have reached an annual average of 2,000 from 2013-2018, for some years exceeding the toll from the Boko Haram insurgency. It is learnt that tens of thousands had been forcibly displaced with property, crops and livestock worth billions of naira destroyed at a great cost to local and state economies.

Sedentary-pastoral conflicts and economic downturn in Benue State:

The conflict between pastoralist and indigenous farmers had existed side by side, since, the evolution of man and discovering of art of agriculture. This scenario has come to represents conflict of interest, resource disputes, evictions, killings and livestock theft (Hussein, 1998). According to Moritz (2003), the arable-herder's farmers conflict is configured along low-level and small-scale conflicts over access to grazing land and campsites. Such tensions are often linked to longstanding insecurity, drought and scarcity of natural resources as portrayed in the movement instinctive scrambles for pasture and ranges. It is believed that tension erupts under a state of constant competition for scarce vegetation and land for breeding of cattle by herders. The arable farmer-herders conflicts had increased during the last decades, especially in the Benue valley due to changing patterns of resource use and increasing competition for resources, breakdown of traditional mechanisms governing resource management and conflict resolution.

However, the perception that indigenous-herder farmer's relation was before hand symbiotic have grown more conflictual. During the 20th century when Fulani herders began to migrate down the Benue valley and settle with the people in the areas, the zone was previously inaccessible to pastoralists, thus, bringing them in contact

with unknown people's cultures and production systems. The consequence becomes push for untested interactions between the parties and considerable space for continual conflict. Thus, Fulani herders are unable to build up exchange relations with their host communities only to survive either by settling or movement pattern that involve encountering new arable communities every year or by intimidation of the farmers. According to Boh (2007) and Gbehe (2007), land in most communities in Nigeria, especially, among the Tiv people of Benue valley is freighted with symbolic meaning. They maintained that land is sacred and considered as an ancestral and historical sphere of influence. On the account of this, conflict over land is usually fierce with massive destruction of lives and properties. In a similar vein, Egwu (2006), noted that the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is deficient in the provision of dealing with indigeneship/settler phenomenon in the country.

From the above, it is evident that scholars have not properly interrogated the impacts of arable farmers and herdsman conflict on food production and security in Benue State. Most efforts to understand the conflict between farmers and pastoralists in contemporary Nigeria were simplistic in nature and have not provided a framework for better understanding of its weird forms, causes, patterns and dimensions. This study fills this gap in literature by examining from a holistic perspective; how this conflict has undermined food security: productivity, availability and price in Benue State.

Theoretical framework of analysis: The nature of conflicts between the arable farmers and herders in relations to economic development can be explained within the theory of protracted social conflict theory. The theory was developed (Azar and Farah, 1981) and supported through the writings of. The central theme of protracted social conflict theory emphasizes that the sources of conflicts lay predominantly within and across rather than between states. It presents those conflicts that gravely stubbornly persist despite continued attempts at resolution. Protracted social conflict theory is characterized by protract, that is it persist over a long period of time. It also manifests itself in cyclic patterns with frequent bursts of violence juxtaposed with periods of relative quite as conflict brews beneath the surface (Putman and Wondoleck, 2003). According to Kreisberg, protracted social conflict continues despite repeated attempts by third party to resolve or transform it. However, the basic propositions of protracted social conflict theory are:

"Communal content", the fact that most useful unit of analysis in protracted social conflict is the identity group- racial, religious, ethnic, cultural and others. Deprivation of human needs as the underlying sources of protracted social conflict. Grievances resulting from need

deprivation are usually expressed collectively. Failure to redress these grievances by the authority cultivates a niche for protracted social conflict. Unlike interests, needs are ontological and negotiable. Governance and state role's as the critical factor in the satisfaction and or frustration of individual and identity group needs.

In most protracted social conflict- laden counties, political capacity is limited by rigid or fragile authority structure which prevents the state from responding to and meeting, the needs of various constituent's (Azar and Farah, 1981; Ramsbotham *et al.*, 2011 and Onu *et al.*, 2017).

Thus, the character of conflicts between, the sets of farmers, arable and pastoral have changed intensify as it has attracted attention beyond the shore of Nigeria State. This is due to heightened killings and looting of property in the North-Central, Nigeria, particularly Benue State. The conflict is protracting in nature as land has been identified as main cause. The conflict between the farmers is the people of Benue who predominantly share set of group identities and the pastoral-Fulani farmers who migrate from Northern hemisphere to Savanna Region to feed their cattle. The source of the conflict to the two parties have remained deprivation of needs; the need by pastoral farmers to feed their cattle which has been restricted by indigenes as they accused the later of destroying their crops, raping and maiming their citizens. On the other hand, the arable-indigenous farmers suffer deprivation as their farms are destroyed and as government is perceived to be weak in protecting her citizens from invasion by Fulani cattle rustler.

However, the fact that Nigeria State has sovereign power to maintain internal peace is a watershed as conflict remains protracted, parochial and fragile to satisfy human needs which is security of lives and property. This condition is evidenced as Nigeria security agencies have in different occasions failed to prevent and unravel perpetrators of sinister conflicts in Benue State.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed mixed method as it allows the researchers utilized qualitative and quantitative data from the population. The population of study was drawn using purposive sampling technique in selecting local governments in Benue State that have experienced grievous attacks. These local governments include; Logo, Guma and Agatu local government areas. The total population of these local governments is (476, 259). The breakdown of population according to these local governments is as follows: Logo-in Benue North-East, (169,063); Guma-in Benue North-West, (191, 599) and Agatu-in Benue South, (115,597). Therefore, we purposively drew out of the three local government areas, a sample size of (340) Benue farmers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data presentation and analysis: Table 1 shows that majority (59.7%), of the respondents were male. Out of the total sampled population, 56.8% of the respondents were married, 25% were single and the remaining 18.2% is shared between divorced and death related cases in the ratio of 141:41%, respectively. Majority (57.7%) of the respondents have a household size of about 5-7 people while school leavers (primary and secondary schools) who could not further their education beyond secondary school constituted 86.2% of the respondents.

Table 2 shows that poor access to land for grazing by the Fulani herdsmen is highly vulnerable to insecurity or conflict between Benue farmers and the Fulani herdsmen. These clashes, generally, centered on access to and competition for grazing land and water as revealed by the findings of this study. As pasture land shrinks, sequel to taking over of such lands by farmers, conflicts become inevitable. This is because it is difficult if not impossible, for the Fulani pastoralists or herdsmen to move and graze without veering into crop fields. More, so, majority (89.4%) of the respondents in the study recorded the destruction of crops by the Fulanis as the major cause of their conflict.

The distribution of annual incomes of the sampled respondents in the study area were compiled and

presented in Table 3. It is evident from the table that 40% of the respondents have farmer's output valued < or = ₦100,000 before the Fulani herdsmen attack but decreased to 15% during the attack. The percentage of those who had farmer's output valued between ₦200 000 and ₦300,000 decreased from 30-0% while the percentage of those with annual income from farm produce above ₦ 300,000 decreased from 30-0% during the times of the attack which indicated a decrease in the farmer's output of the respondents during the times of conflict.

Findings: The inverse relationship between conflict and economic development in Nigeria is witnessed as outputs of agricultural commodities and other services have continued to fall. This is as a result of serial damages unleashed on agricultural farms and maiming of needed labour force. However, the study discovers as findings:

- That the struggle for land between the two sets of farmers have not ceased as lasting solution is under way
- There is drastic reduction on the income that accrues to farmers as a result of the conflict
- Food production has been reduced as needed manpower has either been killed or migrated
- The pastoral farmers have destroyed farm lands and contaminated bodies of waters which serve as source of drinking water

Table 1: Demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the respondents

Observation	No. of respondents (frequency)	Percentage
Age		
Below 30	85	25.0
31-60	196	57.6
61 and above	59	17.4
Total	340	100.0
Sex		
Male	203	59.7
Female	137	40.3
Total	340	100.0
Marital status		
Single	85	25.0
Married	193	56.8
Divorced	48	14.1
Widow/widower	14	4.1
Total	340	100.0
Family size		
1-4	98	28.8
5-7	196	57.7
8 and above	46	13.5
Total	340	100.0
Educational qualification		
Informal education	20	5.9
Primary education	208	61.2
Secondary education	85	25.0
Higher education	27	7.9
Total	340	100.0
Number of dependents		
1-2	78	22.9
3-4	178	52.4
5 and Above	84	24.7
Total	340	100.0
Field survey		

Table 2: Responses of the respondents on causes of conflicts between crop farmers and pastoralists in selected local government in Benue State

Arable farmers and pastoralists conflicts	Respondents	Percentage
Destruction of crops	304	89.4
Contamination of streams and other waters by cattle	302	88.8
Overgrazing of fallow land and farmers	292	85.9
Financial pledge of traditional rulers with nomads	288	84.7
Disregard of traditional authority	268	78.8
Sexual harassment of women by nomads	244	71.8
Harassment of nomads by host youths	244	71.8
Indiscriminate defecation by cattle on roads	240	70.6
Theft of cattle	162	47.6
Stray cattle	144	42.4
Indiscriminate bush burning	125	36.8

Table 3: Effects of pastoral attacks on economic development in Benue State

Amount (N)	During Fulani attack		Before Fulani attack	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
<or = equal 100,000	24	15	294	40
100,000-200,000	46	13.53	55	15
200,000-300,000	0	0	86	15
300,000 and above	0	0	175	30
Total	340	100	340	100
Field survey				

CONCLUSION

The conflict between farmers and pastoralists has resulted in food insecurity. Storage houses in the affected communities were destroyed during conflict leading to the destruction of seedlings that would have been planted in the next farming season. Farmers in the affected areas were displaced and took refuge in the Internally Displaced Person's (IDPs) camps, leaving their farms to be over grown with weeds. However, this study examined the nature and character of clashes between indigenous farmers and herdsmen in the recent time, sedentary-pastoral conflicts and economic downturn in Benue State. The findings of the study had revealed that the struggle for limited natural resources (pasture) has aggravated conflicts, led to reduction in incomes accruable to farmers and food insecurity for human sustenance. Also, the study discovered that the number of pastoralist's attacks on crops and loss of lives of farmers recorded have negatively affected the economic development of Benue State.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Therefore, arising from the findings of the study, the study recommends the following: reforestation practice by government and utilization of the Sambisa forests. The campaign for reforestation in Nigeria particularly in the North-central, Nigeria needs to be boosted. When this is done, it will create a lasting solution to the problem of Southwards movement of the Fulani cattle herdsmen which usually spark off a number of violent conflict in that area, they would be encouraged to sit tight on a particular land, hence, the vegetation remains luxuriant to support their livestock.

The government and various stakeholders should not only intervene in conflicts whenever it arises but to put a permanent and sustainable structure to address it. In this case the strengthening of local indigenous existing institutions managing conflicts is identified.

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