

## Effects of Farmers-Herders Skirmish on Nigeria National Security: An Appraisal

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### Abstract

Farmers-herders scrimmage is of late pervasive across the shores of sub-Saharan Africa. In Nigeria, the development has rapidly transcended the boundaries of the nation's geopolitical zones and swiftly transforming dynamically and tactically involving its inhabitants as hardly would any group be off hook the act of pastoralism. This paper set out to evaluate farmer's herder's conflict in Nigeria and its challenges to national security. Details for the analysis were gathered from primary and secondary sources through the use of documentary research technique and focus group discussion with knowledgeable on the subject matter, the literature were judiciously scrutinized using the descriptive methodology. The study revealed that while cases of farmer's herders clash cannot be completely contained, the development is now taking a new dimension with the infusion of politicization, ethnicity and religious posture.

**Keywords:** skirmish/Conflict, Farmers-Herders, Nomadic Pastoralism, National Security

### Introduction

The fundamental task of any government is to protect its citizens, safe guard foreign persons within its territory and defend goods and property in the state against obliteration. As enshrined in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria specifically indicating that the security and welfare of the populace shall be the primary concern of the government. Skirmishes are inherent in mankind and it is a natural characteristic in humanity. Ackerman and Murray 2004 averred, from 1988-1996 regardless of what part of the globe manhood is bedeviled with variety of oppression, discrimination, persecution and abuses due to conflicts. Farmers and herders have cohabited for decades in peace and coherence, creating symbolic conglomerate based on mutual assistance unfortunately, as population increased rapidly and astronomically, skirmish between farmers and herders turnout to be irritating and impacting on national security (Bello 2023).

The widespread of clash between the farmers and herders is not unique to Nigeria but rather intensified as a result of plants destruction, assault on livestock, rusting, mobilization of armed groups for protection, high population growth, environmental dynamic, urbanization i.e. residential, industrial and urban built-up which have exacerbated the struggle for land resources provoke and deepen the skirmishes. This is further compounded by the increase in the trade of small arms across the Sahel region, organized gangs operating from difficult forest have multiply engross in cattle rustling, abduction for ransom, armed pilfering, irrepressible gold mining and plundering of communities. These threats have spread to other parts of the nation haven originated from Zamfara. The violence ensures cold humanitarian and economic effects on the geopolitical zone and generates a complex pattern on security challenges. The conflict is exacerbating other security problems, consequently forcing pastoralists to move southward into

the middle belt hence increasing the skirmish between the farmers and herders. Considerable number of researchers and political analyst pejoratively presuppose farmer's herder's conflicts in Nigeria are common in North Central and North Western geopolitical zones. For example, in Nigeria North West geopolitical zone, skirmishes involving numerous armed organizations with herder's allied groups rooted in competition over resource between predominantly Fulani herders and mostly Hausa farmers had killed over 8000 people since 2011 and displaced over 200,000 despite several security operations and dialogue efforts as posits by International Crisis Group 2018 (Bello 2023).

### **Theoretical and Conceptual Framework**

The function of theory is to consider facts in all their varied ramifications and at list suggest conclusion remedies. Theory could therefore be of different forms ranging from purely abstract and hypothetical on one side to perfectly causal and empirical on the other. It could be viewed from the perspective of Coker (1934) who averred "when political government and its forms and activities are studied not simply as fact to be described and compared or judged in reference to their immediate and temporary effects, but as fact to be understood and appraised in relation to the constant needs, desires and opinions of men, then we assume political theory.

Furthermore, theory could also combine the empirical truths about human political reactions with the moral truths of what is politically desirable by designing institutions and constitutions which will generate the desirable by harnessing human nature. Simply put, theory refers to sets of systematically related generalizations and involves viewing and thinking. More specifically, it is coherent body of generalization and principles associated with the practice of a field of inquiry. There is the rigorous and specialized meaning of the concept as used in the natural sciences where theory is a collection of derived theorems tested in the process of predicting events from observed conditions.

These theorems must be translated into assertions about the real world and some of them need to be verifiable such a use of theory can be made by the natural sciences because problems of recognition, definition and classification have largely been solved. For the social sciences however, these problems are often critical hence, the aim of social sciences must be lower than that of the natural sciences. Fundamentally however, theory could aim to cover subjective understanding and that implies an intuitive organization of perception. However, theory may not be considered by the degree of its scientific orientation and extent of its elaboration, scope and objective but also by its usefulness. According to (Bello 2023) a good theory will provide a means for organizing and classifying data, without a theoretical model all facts are likely to seem equally relevant. A theory may therefore be judged on how well it provides criterion of selection and classification and implicitly by its worthwhile in guarding researcher as well as by its accuracy and power in description, explanation and predictions.

Consequently therefore, this paper major trepidation is centered on farmer's herders skirmish (conflict). Some theories held a central standpoint for its understanding. One of such theories is the development of game theory as a special kind of analysis of bargaining that has heralded as one significant breakthrough in contemporary political science, (Bello 2023). Its essential elements could be found in diverse situation as in chess, poker or confrontation with a crying baby. Fundamentally however, game theory is specifically applicable to diplomacy, deterrence, politics and warfare. Marti Shubik (1964) posits "the importance of game theory is that it allows

analyzing social situation while taking into consideration the existence of conflict as an inevitable accompaniment rather than as an evil that must be eradicated or eliminated. Conversely however, the frustration aggression theory propounded by Dollard 1939 appreciate violent behavior as the inability to fulfill desired needs and what people tend to get in the act of their struggles, simply put expected needs of satisfaction and when expectation fails to meet attainment, the tendency is for mankind to aggressively confront those responsible for their frustration due to their inability to meet their aspirations. Hence the theory is based on the assumption that aggression is not just undertaken as a natural reaction, instinct or biological factor but rather an outcome of frustration. Consequently, in the circumstances whereby the aspirations of an individual is not articulated nor aggregated but rather denied directly or otherwise the feeling of disappointment is always express in anger through violence directed upon those in position of authority. Conversely however, unjust distribution of socioeconomic resources could be consequential to frustration and aggressive tendencies of mankind that is better expressed in anti-social behavior, criminality that is inimical and threat to national security.

In the light of the above exploration, the theoretical framework adopted to guide this research is the push theory. Petrevski 2012 averred “the push theory is a combination of different things that make it firm and provoke emotional reactions between farmers and herders skirmish. In addition, the dynamic of globalization, the globe economic crunch, political insecurity, violence, terrorism, trepidation, climate change, ethnic influence plus ideological rivalry coagulate to amplify the agriculturalist –pastoralist skirmish. Centrally complementing the ecological, economic and social factors is globalization that has dynamically transformed the patterned of intermingling and connection beyond nations boundaries. Accordingly, the might of globalization has strengthened knowledge about economic and social prosperity; by what way could their state of affairs change, relocation to other propitious natural ecosystem surrounding and take control of prospect in connection to assessable natural resources in the new founded environment. The complementary advantages attached to relocation by men coupled with the changes in group interests and creed has largely been the root for skirmish.

### **Conceptual Illumination**

Skirmish/Conflict, debatably as a case in point is one of the most focal concepts in the study of human behaviorism and its definition remain the object of extreme intellectual competition right from the ages. Small and Singer 1972 hypothesize conflict as clash enmeshing individuals in the course of disagreement or vehemently engaged in an infuriating dispute. At a stage however, mankind generally viewed skirmish as detrimental destructive element in humanity to be get rid of. But yet skirmish could be a painful or uncomfortable stage of a system undergoing a process of change and present the possibility or likely hood to alter and cause optimistic development if handled appropriately.

According to Isite and Ofuoku 1978, skirmish is the concurrent happening of two or more mutually incompatible instinct. Conflict could equally be appreciated as the struggle for limited meager resources by set of people which may be positive, prestige and values. Karl Marx in his conflict hypothesis asserts that due to humanity endless struggle for resources, mankind will always be in a state of skirmish. This infer that those who own resources and affluence would defend and store them, while those in need will do all that is necessary to acquire them hence, the relentless struggle between the prosperous and the poor, the privileged and underprivileged.

Consequently therefore, conflict is a state of human interaction where there is disharmony or a perceived divergence of interest needs or goals. There is a perception that interests needs or goals cannot be achieved due to interference from the other person or people. Skirmish or conflict is between two people and is characterized by disharmony and at times exist in a conceal or covert state for long period of time but when it surface, it manifest as competition over identity, limited resources and involves some level of confrontation which may escalate to violence unmanageable which can eventually intensify into wide spread destruction and devastation.

Dougherty and Pfaltzgraf (1981) averred conflict is a condition in which one identified group of human beings engaged in conscious opposition to one or more other recognized groups because those groups are chasing what emerge to be mismatched aspiration or purpose. Nonetheless, conflict is natural to human but does not essentially have to be pugnacious. When skirmish becomes confrontational, it has converted into hostility which Clausewitz (1968) illustrate as “a dual on an extensive scale an act of violence pushed to its utmost bounds directed upon the destruction of the enemy’s powers”. When this situation occurs between sovereign states, war then becomes a continuation of state policy by other means or a continuation of political commerce”. Stedman 1991 posits conflict occur from problems central to all populations, the tugs and pulls of different characters, the disparity of resources and access to power and competing description of what is right, fair and just.

National Security simply involves the measures put in place by state actors to safeguard the nation from real or potential threats. It is that aspect of government policy which create enabling atmosphere necessary for the protection and promotion of vital national interests and values against known or potential advisory. Consequently however, enhanced national security is concentrated with both domestic and foreign interests (Bello 2003). Conversely therefore security denotes freedom from danger, fear, anxiety or uncertainty. A secured state could be averred to imply one that is realistically emancipated from internal and external attacks and internal disorder furthermore, security embrace rational freedom from natural al disasters starvation, food shortage, drought, poverty, exploitation, debt and multiplicity of sociocultural, economic, political, psychological and institutional hazard. Security is customary a primary concern of every nation because it affects not only the contentment of the needs of the citizens but also the essentials subjects of the nation’s continual existence as a sustainable entity. Its only under a secured atmosphere that a state can develop and direct its human and material resources toward productive ends.

There are two aspects of state security specifically internal and external. The security of a state is affected internally by the nature of its sociopolitical and economic situation, the way its affairs are run by its political elites as well as the level of commitment by its inhabitants. At the external level, a state security is influenced by the nature of the geo-economic and political circumstances surrounding it as well as the nature of its foreign policy and the way it conduct its relation with other states. Two assumptions could be generated here, the first being the behavior of a nation at both the external and internal levels have a bearing upon its security. Secondly, conditions which are not of the state making at times play a vital role in determining the amount of security that nations adore (Imobighe 1978).

National, regional and global security issues are interrelated concepts. National security is a condition whereby a state is free from internal, external fear or threat to its peace, stability and progress. There are other classifications of security, political security, the freedom from

domination, economic and religious domination and environmental security, the freedom environmental destruction, resource scarcity, National, regional and global insecurity affects both national economy and development. For example, poverty a condition of human existence where resources for meeting basic needs are extremely limited or inaccessible is being neglected by nations around the globe. Some of the characteristics of poverty include:

- a. Food insecurity of absolute and relative form
- b. Lack of access to health services
- c. Poor or inadequate education
- d. Lack of basic needs
- e. Physical and psychological experience of violence and insecurity

In addition, he postulates that without development, there can be no security. In his words: in a modernizing society, security means development, security is not military hardware, though it may include it, security is not military force, though it may involve it, security is not traditional military activity, though it may encompass it, security is all about development and without development, there can be no security. A developing state that does not develop cannot remain secure for the reason that its own citizens share it human nature”.

This process of human nature involves the notion that human beings have needs and aspirations such as food, clothing, shelter, health progress and good life. Nomadic Pastoralism as express in chambers 21<sup>st</sup> century dictionary 1999 is a way of life characterized by keeping herds of animals such as cattle's, sheep, camels, reindeer, goats and llamas which is common in dry mountainous or severely cold climates not suitable for agriculture. Conversely the dictionaries describe the term pastoralism as a way of life that depends on raising livestock and living on its milk and meat.

Herdsmen are traditionally looked at as inhabitants who own and breeds cattle and livestock. In Nigeria for instance, the Fulani descent that specialized in breeding livestock are categorized as pastoralists while in other parts of the globe like in South America, Bolivia and Peru, herders are usually mobile searching for foliage and lush plants, water sources, plantation and consumables for their livestock Salzmann (2002). On the other hand, nomadic pastoralist move from place to place in search for food and water or pasture for their livestock. The expression nomadic pastoralist is not unique to those who breed livestock for commercial intention alone but rather it consists of subsistence cattle and livestock breeders.

### **Brief Historical Track, Of Farmers Herdsmen Skirmish**

Historically, the relationship between the pastoralists and farmers in the dominated northern Hausa/Fulani enclave and other commune in the region have been adjudged to be impressive as they cohabit amicably, bounded by commerce, cultural affiliation, customs and religious affinity. At the epoch of self-rule years after the attainment of independent in 1965, the Northern Nigerian administrators conceptualized the need for the establishment of grazing reserves to contain anticipated unforeseen futuristic skirmish, create routes for roaming livestock with an estimated 415 grazing reserves across the nation for herds grazing.

This meritorious initiative was twist by natural and manmade impingement negatively impacting on herder's accessibility to the reserves for grazing thereby resulting to the contemporary

pervasive skirmishes between herders and farmers since 2000 and beyond (Bello 2023). In the recent past however, the establishment and completion of four KM square Ngarannam Livestock Improvement and Ranch Settlement in Mafa senatorial district to be replicated in other two senatorial district of Borno State, built to accommodate 461 nomadic families from eighteen communities in Mafa senatorial districts is a laudable initiative that would go a long way in mitigating the excessive scuffle between farmers and herders.

In addition, the colonies will provide maintainable environment for domestic animals, and support the value chain for livestock and dairy production as anticipated by the Federal Ministry of Livestock Development. This ingenuity should serve as an example to other states of the federation treading the same path. Specifically, residual states in the North West with the largest pastoralist's population in the country from where they stream down South for fodder during dry spells alleged to be causing mayhem and tension along their routes of advance.

### **Conundrum of Farmers Herders Conflict**

The population of Nigeria state has astronomically grown up from the initial 40 million in the 1950s to about 200million currently. The United Nations (UN) of late projected more increase in terms of population in the coming years to estimated 364million in 2030 and 480 million in 2050 respectively. This prodigious increase of population has place huge pressure on land and water resources use by both agriculturalists and pastoralists. Specifically the human population increase has led to expansion in cultivated farmland and reduction in available grazing land for pastoralists that is characterized by competition over dwindling resources, in the far north.

The impact of desertification as well as the increase of energy which has resulted in deforestation couple with climate uncertainty and lower rainfall has made it more difficult to sustain increasing population, pushing many farmers and pastoralists with livestock southward. This has happened gradually over the period of decades with an apparent increase over the past years and has added to pressure on land and water in central and southern Nigeria. One of the outcomes of this process has been the blockage of transhumance routes and loss of grazing land to agricultural expansion and increased southward movement of pastoralists has led to increased skirmish with local communities.

The Nigeria nation has a relatively weak rural presence and neglected the agrarian sector since the 1970s when the oil was discovered and its revenues began to dominate the economy. There have been few improvements in the agricultural productivity and livestock production as a result of the dependence on oil revenues, which have not been reinvested in productive economic activities. States reaction in the context of the persisting conflicts between farmers and herders has been both ad-hoc and reactive with no concrete and sustainable strategies for skirmish management and peace building beyond the deployment of security or establishment of commission of inquiries. One of the key pathways here is for the states to be more proactive in its response by putting in place mechanisms that are institutionalized sustainable both at local and states levels. As violence between pastoralists and agriculturalists has grown and developed into criminality and rural banditry, popular narratives creating meaning context and miss understanding have been emerging.

The narrative surfacing on rural banditry in the media and popular discourse are becoming part of the drives for expanding skirmish in the nation. The main characters in this saga are often

presented as being nomadic Fulani cattle herders who are Muslims and sedentary farmer's communities of several other ethnic extraction who are often but not always non-Muslims. These two distinct groups are usually depicted as perpetrators and victims respectively. Perspective of the social, religious and ethnic characteristics of these rural communities are framed into expansive essentialist discourses that actively breed and sustain suspicion and distrust, the result is negative stereotyping between one and the other that led further to ethnic and religious bigotry which fuels hate process culminating in further chain of attacks and counter or revenge attacks being exchanged between these different groups. The nation urgently needs to find pathways to get out of the crisis and one approach may be the development of grazing reserves for pastoralists.

### **Consequences of Pastoralist and Agriculturalist Skirmish on Nigeria Socio-Economic Growth and National Security**

Nigeria has a huge pastoralist's population whose livelihood is often misconstrued. What is better agreed is the culture of farming which is established in a specific location and has activities that take place frequently. The belief that pastoralist is in itself an unfounded production scheme is far from the truth, Bello (2023). Pastoralist is the main livestock production scheme in much of the African states where the pastoralists live in very dry semiarid zone. It is historically developed strategy to cope with the uncertainties associated with climate change, buildup of organism and other related challenges.

It is above all an effective way to produce livestock at relatively low price through the use of noncommercial feeding stock. In the past, pastoralists have been able to meet the demand for meat in West Africa with relatively high level of efficiency without government subsidy for generation. Diverse method through the use of farm residue and open range grazing has allowed this trend to flourish. Nigeria is blessed with a land mass of 98.3 million hectares, 82 million hectares of arable land with 34 million hectares presently under utilize about a quarter of the total biomass.

The other three quarters is for crop residue and low-quality crop which is not directly useful to the people. It is this residue that cattle ruminant's convert into meat and milk. In addition to this, cattle also utilize grasses on fallow lands non-arable poor quality lands open ranges and Fadama in the same manner. Pastoralists move their animals to this location to access these opportunities. This system of production is breaking down currently as violent conflict between agriculturalists and pastoralists have arisen and created a major national catastrophe. Skirmish between agriculturalists and pastoralists in the recent past are often fundamentally express over the struggle and tussle for the domination of land and water.

Circumstantially however, the assertion is that tragedy leads to clash predominately in developing country where droughts and associated natural and manmade catastrophe compounded with pervasive free ranching as culturally and traditionally define has been a significant influence in exacerbating conflict. Other factors presumed worsening the unfriendly situation include social and societal influence of ethno-religious preconception, migration, population growth, environmental degradation, climate change and technological development that revised rapport which were previously codependent and share common valuables with one another.

Ingawa, Egg and Erhabo (1999) averred skirmish between agriculturalists and pastoralists can be appraised from the deterioration of core social interaction and discipline as obedience to traditional regulation concerning grazing timings and powers of the traditional rulers is wrecked. In addition, the guideline that twenty percent (20%) of Fadama should be set-aside for grazing as confine by National Agricultural Policy 1988 has not been stick to. Rather however, the introduction of high valued crops by NFDPA eg tomatoes and onions produce virtually no yield residues for livestock feeding. The situation is further put out when the commission's setup by government to investigate the circumstances leading to the tenacious skirmishes over the year's tender reports left in trance and unimplemented. These include Presidential Peace Initiative Committee 2002, The Federal Administrative Panel of Enquiry 2008, The Federal Advisory Committee 2010 and Post Advisory Committee on Security Challenges 2012. These developments assumed to undermine national security and perpetually overstretched the security forces area of operation.

## **Conclusion**

The study judiciously evaluate the consequence of pastoralists and agriculturalists skirmish and its impact on Nigeria national security with a view of generating awareness on some major challenges bedeviling the violence. Correspondingly however, the paper aimed at contributing to knowledge in the utilitarian scope of farmers and herders conflict. The outcome of this study is fundamentally to provide information and recommendations to ensure that scuffle between farmers and herders are restrained. A conclusion arrived at the end of the study indicate that the affliction of the woe of the skirmish gave rise to the need for government at whatever level to fashion out an approach that will regulate and minimize the occurrence of conflict between farmers and herders across the nook and cranny of the Nigerian state.

The paper therefore recommends: the proses of transition to cotemporary mode of animal husbandry should be prompt sufficiently funded to meet the demands of meat, milk and other productive needs of the industry, commercial ranches should be established across the six geopolitical zones, enlightenment program me should be embarked upon to educate the populace on the benefits of livestock improvement and breeding centers for production of quality calf to improve pastoral stock across the country, effort should be intensify to create a center for pastoral farmers relationship where the existence of a mechanism for resolving skirmish between them for peaceful coexistence like in Chad, Ethiopia and Niger are put in place.

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