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The role of group solidarity in conflict between farmers and Fulani pastoralists: A case study of Northern Nigeria

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In recent years, conflict between farmers and pastoralists has been one among the frontline threats to sustainable peace and development in Nigeria. More worrisome is the incessant upsurge of these violent conflicts with group solidarity. The existence of these conflicts is not in dispute, but continues climax of group solidarity, has added an impetus to the complexities and veracity of these conflict involving larger farming and pastoral communities. This paper argues that, though, group-solidarity is a reminiscent of longstanding socio-cultural ties as well as a source of collective action and unity of purpose that binds people in most societies, it eventually turned into a formidable means for launching offensive or defensive against possible threats or violent attacks as the case with Fulani pastoralists and farmers in Northern Nigeria. The paper concludes that the use of group-solidarity by both pastoralists and farmers contributed in deepening the conflict into a wider dimension beyond individual pastoralist-farmer conflict to a communal conflict. The study explored content analysis of the existing literatures and unstructured focus group discussion with some farmers and pastoralists in the study area.

Key words: Conflict, pastoralists, farmers, group-solidarity

INTRODUCTION

Several researchers have come to the conclusion that farmer–pastoralist conflict is widely spread in terms of recurrence and intensity in Nigeria (Chinwokwu, 2017; Adeoye and Alagbe, 2016; Olaniyan and Yahaya, 2016; Fasona et al 2016; Olaniyi, 2014; Shettima and Tar 2008). Conflict between them has existed since the beginning of agriculture in Africa, and their interaction dates back to ancient times, with common denomination

such as trade and economic complementarities in agriculture and livestock products (Fratkin, 1997).

To further buttress this claim, Monod (1975) reported that, ‘no nomad can exist for long without contact with sedentary farmers—even the Tuareg nomads of the Sahara maintain contact with oasis dwellers.’ This symbiotic relationship as described by Shettima and Tar (2008) is that ‘pastoralists require the calories produced

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by crop farmers, much as the crop farmers also often require dairy products produced by the pastoralists. But constant mobility among pastoralists for opportunistic resource utilization routinely brings them into close contact with sedentary farmers with consequences of conflict over natural resources such as land, water, pasture, among others. Notable among these pastoralists are the Fulani who have expanded eastward from the Gambia River over the last one thousand years and probably entered Nigeria in the fourteenth century (Blench and Dendo, 2003). The Nigerian Fulani pastoralists are described in a number of monographs most notably St. Croix (1944), Hopen (1958) and Stening (1959). Other pastoral groups such as Shuwa and Koyam-Kanuris in Borno and Yobe States have confined themselves in the semi-arid zone around the Lake-Chad Basin area.

Since Nigeria's return to democratic rule in May 1999, conflicts between farmers and pastoralists have persisted. More worrisome is the escalation of the farmer-pastoralists into violent attacks and counter attacks with group solidarity against each other by the larger farming and Fulani pastoral communities may obscure what Robert Kaplan has earlier described as the "coming anarchy" (Kaplan, 1994). The current widespread violence between these two dominant communities have become one of the most knotty issues in Nigeria's recent history. Hence, nation building continued to suffer from strong divisive forces of natural resources conflict particularly farmer-pastoralist issue, which presupposes the weakening of peace and security in Nigeria (Maiangwa and Ahmadu, 2007).

More often, farmer-pastoralist conflicts in Nigeria are not just simply the outcome of competition between two economic sectors as in many cases; however it is also a reminiscent competition between different socio-cultural groups as obtainable elsewhere in Africa where both farmers and pastoralists have distinct culture and traditions that are peculiar to each other. Therefore, group-solidarity for purposes of collective action becomes a source of formidable strength for attacks and counter attacks devoid of all legal encumbrances as the case with farmer-pastoralists conflict in Nigeria. When conflict ensued between a farmer and a Fulani pastoralist easily turn into a communal war between two groups. During this conflicts, innocent community members are attacked, killed, maimed or kidnapped.

However, the extant literature on farmer-pastoralists issue has been that of vicious circle of serial violent attacks and reprisal attacks with impunity (Ducrottoy et al., 2018; Chinwoku, 2017; Akinyemi, 2016; Okolie and Atelhe, 2014; Bello, 2013). Hence discussions and analysis from the emerging literature basically centered on trying to understand factors responsible for igniting the conflict and its negative consequences both in general terms and specific case studies (Shettima and Tar, 2008; Abbass, 2012; Bello, 2013; Baidoo, 2014; Muhammad, et al., 2015; Fasona et al, 2016; Akinyemi, 2016). What is less or probably none subjected to academic

interrogation is the role of group solidarity during conflict by both farmers and the Fulani pastoralists as well as the incessant circle of attacks involving larger communities. Against this background the paper intends to explore and understand the role and interplay of group-solidarity in farmer-pastoralist conflict in Northern Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Solidarity as a concept in social sciences has been a subject of several explanations and definitions by social science theorists because of its venerability (Homans, 1950); Fararo and Doreian, 1998; Heckathorn and Rosenstien, 2002) based their analysis on four primary characteristics that explains or defined a solidarity group. These characteristics are:

- (1) Bonds that unite members of a group
- (2) Norms that defines obligation of a group
- (3) Collective patterns and characteristics of the group in terms of pro-social behavior.
- (4) Ties within and across the group.

Most of the theoretical approaches that flourished in trying to explain other elements of group solidarity were basically within the context of the above four fundamental characteristics. For instance, Widegren (1997) defines solidarity as emerging from altruistic sentiments directed towards those who reciprocate sentiments purposely to understand pro-social activity and strong group norms as well as dense intra-group ties. While Lawler and Yoon, (1998) argued that positive sentiments not as fundamental but as deriving from incessant interactions that are mutually satisfactory among status equals.

Hechter (1987) in his analysis view group solidarity as the proportion of member resources meant to fulfill corporate obligations. Solidarity therefore depends on two factors, the rate of compliance with corporate obligations and extensiveness of these obligations. Ibn Khaldun in his 'Asabiyah' days explained that, group solidarity arises naturally in groups of common ancestry, but is extendable to groups with social ties beyond common decent, including clients and allies in large political units (Gierer, 2001).

However, it is discernible to say that group solidarity as a social science concept that begins from family to larger society dependent on the sanctity of cultural norms and purpose of solidarity groups. Solidarity groups can be social, political, economic or cultural, but the purpose of unity, cooperation, and collective action can be positive for development or negative which is detrimental as the case with farmer-pastoralists conflict.

THE THEORY OF GROUP SOLIDARITY: AN OVERVIEW

The theory of group solidarity like most social science

theories has been subjected to academic analysis and explanations by analysts targeted at achieving a comprehensive and elaborate theoretical understanding of the concept of group solidarity. However, Heckathorn and Rosenstein (2002) observed that, 'some analysts discuss solidarity without offering a definition, and others use definitions that cannot be operational. In an attempt to bridge these theoretical gap, Hechter (1987) provided a more elaborate analysis on group solidarity. His analysis is basically an extension of the theory of dependence. He argued that group solidarity is tied to the proportion of member resources meant to fulfill corporate obligations which are mainly dependent on two issues of, rate of compliance to corporate obligations by solidarity groups, and the extensiveness of obligations. The main analysis of Hechter (1987) theory dwelt on solidarity group compliance and extensiveness of obligations. This was targeted at making group solidarity a measurable concept. Comparatively, the analysis in this paper has no intention to neither measure solidarity within and across farmers and pastoralists nor determine their intra-group over out-group ties. But compliance to group obligations and extensiveness of such obligations has always been the strong chain of cohesion and unity of purpose among farming and pastoral communities in the study area. More inclusive to most pastoral and farming groups is the point of collective action in solidarity. The common syndrome are 'threat to one threat against all', and 'intimidation to one, intimidation against all'. Group solidarity as a means of collective action, is not only an ordinary social tie, but is embedded in the socio-cultural norms and values of particularly the Fulani pastoralists, due to cohesive nature of their socio-cultural background and homogeneity in their economic livelihood. Therefore, group solidarity among them is not only paramount but culturally sacrosanct whether positively or negatively.

Remote and immediate triggers of conflict between farmers and Fulani pastoralists in Northern Nigeria

Some researchers have tried to trace the root causes and triggers responsible for igniting farmer - pastoralists' conflict across Nigeria (Shettima and Tar, 2008; Abbass, 2012; Bello, 2013; Baidoo, 2014; McGregor, 2014; Muhammad et al., 2015; Fasona et al., 2016; Chinwokwu, 2017; Ducrotoy, et al., 2018). Some of the major triggers of the conflict are remote and long-term while others are immediate.

Remote causes; the general deteriorating fortunes of pasture in some parts of Sub-Saharan Africa since early 1990s, arising from the effects of desertification, land degradation, unstable rainfall and other climatic factors, 'pushed' the Fulani pastoralist to abandon their respective traditional ecological range in the neighboring countries of Chad, Niger and Cameroon republics, and moved inwards into Northern part of Nigeria. This led to increase demand for land, water and pasture. Beside,

major agricultural expansion programs (Fadama Program and River Basins irrigation projects) also contributed in shrinking lands for both pastoralism and sedentarism which led to competition over limited land and pastures.

According to Blench and Dendo, (2003), expansion of riverside and valley-bottom 'fadama' (irrigation) farming since the 1990s and the influx of pastoralists into the river banks meant that pastoralists and farmers are now competing very directly for access to pasture with a consequent increase in conflict. The cumulative impacts of these developments bring them into close contact with arable farmers. Central to this conflict is land and its resources in terms of right to access and use in the mist of enhanced sedentarization and increase pastoralism leading to incessant conflict with agrarian societies (Blench, 2010). This has been the source of irregular pastoral migration, poverty and conflict. Fulani are the largest pastoral group in the world and they constitute about 95 per cent of the nomadic pastoralists in Nigeria with estimated population of 15.3 million (Majekodunmi et al., 2014).

Across ages, Fulanis are well known for deriving their livelihood and survival through mobile livestock rearing as a key strategy for survival. Their enormous contributions to Nigeria's agricultural food security and local food value chain cannot be underscored. The Fulanis produce 90 percent of Nigeria's livestock population which accounts for one-third of agricultural GDP and 32 percent of the nation's GDP (Fabusoro and Oyegbami, 2009). It is indisputably clear that pastoralists in Nigeria contribute to the economy as a source of meat, milk and animal protein for human consumption. Yet despite these huge contributions of livestock to the economy neo-patrimonial states pay less attention to pastoralism particularly in Nigeria.

Pastoralism has been in its traditional form with no effort to move the sector to the next level as a business rather than a traditional source of livelihood. Some scholars blamed Nigerian government response to several security challenges bedeviled the country has been rather slow and generally reactive (Olaniyan and Yahaya, 2016). Feeble institutional frameworks for resource governance, absence of pro-active mechanisms for responding to issues of farmer-pastoralist conflict by states, potent greater security implications (McGregor, 2014; Fasona et al., 2016; Chinwokwu, 2017).

Immediate triggers of the conflict - the deliberate attitude and behavior of both farmers and pastoralists alike cannot be under scored in analyzing the immediate causes of the conflict. For instance, pastoralists contaminate water by dragging their cattle into water ponds while farmers poison the water ponds with harmful insecticides intentionally meant for killing herds to prevent pastoralists from contaminating their only source of water. Farmers' destroy forest while pastoralists need grasses and fodder for their herds. Farmers block cattle routes and grazing reserves meant for grazing, while

pastoralists invade farms and damage crops.

According to 2009 official report from Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Nigeria has officially demarcated 4125 grazing reserves and cattle routes. Only one third out of this number is put into use, 270 grazing reserves have been cultivated by farmers (Abbas, 2012). Both farmers and pastoralists largely depend on the availability of usable land and pasture for their livelihoods (Fasona et al., 2016). Blockage of routes and grazing areas may probably be the reason behind pastoralists traversing farms and communities regardless of the right of their host. In line with this narrative Fasona et al. (2016) reported that Fulani herdsmen “hardly request any permission to move or stay around any community, and are thus regarded as invaders by the host communities”. This has been some of the major triggers of violence with consequences of threat to lives and livelihood of thousands from both farmers and pastoral communities.

More worrisome is the climax of militancy and group solidarity in perpetrating violence particularly with the mass influx of the aggressive Udawa and Bokoloji Fulani pastoralists from other sub-Saharan African countries with guns and other sophisticated weapons as well as the use of new communication devices, accompanied with banditry, kidnapping and other criminalities. According to Chinwokwu (2017), “Fulani herdsmen carry sophisticated firearms (in disregard to laws prohibiting this kind of act) and attack their target communities at ungodly hours when the members of the community are most susceptible to defend themselves”.

The role of group-solidarity in the conflict

The 21st century witnessed the changing context and dynamics of group solidarity conflicts between sedentary farmers and Fulani pastoralists in most parts of Northern Nigeria. The juxtaposition of the conflict with group determination has not only complicated the conflict but also obscured a new dimension with threats to national peace and security. In a plural society such as Nigeria, group solidarity is more routinely use in communal wars particularly between farmers and pastoralists. The role of group solidarity in the conflict cannot be over emphasized. Despite the fact that there are other ethnic groups involved in herding, Fulani ethnic group often considered at the epicenter of the scenario because of its deep involvement in cattle rearing (Olaniyan and Yahaya, 2016).

Historically, many Fulani pastoralists participated in the Jihad of Usman Danfodio in 1804 which led to the establishment of Caliphates across Northern Nigeria. Most of these caliphates have subjected and enslaved non-Muslims populations believed to be sedentarized farmers from non-Fulani pastoral communities. They consider all non-Fulani as “Habe” (pagan) and are subject to raid, attack and harassment irrespective of their religion, position, or social status.

Today, the resentment between war and slavery

among these groups remains strong, divisive and routinely use to orchestrate communities when conflict over crop damage ensued. For instance, the current militarized form of cattle raid and rustling by the Fulani herdsmen is a reminiscent of long traditional and cultural pattern of displaying prowess and of restocking depleted stock of herds, motivated by wealth accumulation (Olaniyan and Yahaya, 2016; Alemika 2013).

Solidarity is dependent on the forms and purpose of collective action. Collective action is determined by compliance and extensiveness of solidarity group's obligations. Compliance primarily depends on sanctioning and monitoring capacity of solidarity group. Compliance is high when the sanctioning capacity is effective in case of violations of corporate obligations. The Fulani are the largest pastoral group in the world (Majekodunmi et al., 2014).

Unlike the sedentarized farmers, the Fulani pastoralists are reckoned for preserving and displaying their culture and traditions at all times, and wherever they find themselves. Culturally, these are some of the strategies they use in consolidating not only their cultural norms and values, but also developing the most common solidarity attributes popularly referred to as “Pullaku” meaning “ethics” in Fulani dialect, which set the boundaries between Fulani identity and other groups. The word “Pullaku” is a domesticated social character of all Fulanis, which encompasses shy, exclusiveness, bravery, firmness, superiority, unity and by extension never forgive or forgets. Therefore, any threat against one of them is considered rebellion against all and reprisal must be from group as solidarity.

Over time, Fulani pastoralists developed sanctioning and monitoring mechanisms in order to achieve maximum unity, solidarity and compliance among group members. For example, distribution of “cola nuts” to their people especially during market days where majority meets symbolizes communication network such as anticipated threat or solicitation of support over an issue including launching solidarity attack or reprisal attack. Therefore, non-compliance to such group obligation attracts sanctions including fine in cash or kind. Sanctioning erring members for abdicating group obligation is among some of the major issues disclosed by discussant during the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with pastoralists. For instance, Ardo Alim the eldest man among the discussants revealed that “sanctioning mechanism for those who defy group obligation have been internalised among Fulani pastoral communities based on sanctity of culture and traditions bequeathed by our ancestors from time immemorial, in order to achieve unity of purpose at all times”

The migratory influx of volatile ‘Udawa’ and ‘Bokoloji’ Fulani pastoralists also contributed in consolidation of aggressive behavior because of their exposure to modern weapons and communication network gradually enhance group solidarity networks of collective action. Pastoralists live in remote rural areas, where state hegemony is

absent, insecurity of lives and properties become the major concern of pastoralists. Eventually, pastoralists develop group solidarity behavior in defense of their herds as a critical security measures against raids, cattle rustling and theft from armed robbers, bandits and their host farmers as well as from other pastoral communities.

Collaborative violence is most commonly use by Fulani pastoralists to defend and fight-off raids from cattle rustlers and arm robbers. Hence, even child teenagers among pastoral communities are oblige to embrace not only skills and braveness required for pastoralism but also develop the courage and enthusiasm to aggressively, defend their herds from raids and attacks. Over time, the use of group solidarity by way of confrontation and violence in responding to issues becomes probably a common norm among the Fulani pastoralists.

Umaru Dada, a Fulani Man and a member of the FGD stated thus “by nature of our rural livelihood, where there is no presence of security agents, educationally disadvantaged and politically less in government circle, we have no alternative than group solidarity for collective action to defend ourselves from the menace of cattle raids, cattle rustling, and banditry among others”

Sedentary farmers on the other hand, has stigmatized pastoralists of Fulani origin as an opportunist, exploitative, hostile and threat to agricultural crop production. When there is crop-damage by one pastoralist, ethnic farmers gang raided all ‘Fulani’ pastoralists including innocent ones. Sedentary farmers realized that some migratory pastoralists are armed with modern weapons which precipitated their group solidarity in case of possible attack by pastoralists. Arable farmers were unanimous on the issue of crop damage as the major concern. Abubakar Sarkin Noma, a lead discussant, summarized it this way: “Farmers invest time, energy and resources on the farms, suddenly realized that all product destroyed in couple of hours by pastoralist. Hence, farmers may be aggressive and confrontational due to frustration because his only source of livelihood has been threatened”

Herders’ political powerlessness compared to their farming counterparts is another source of political marginalization of pastoralism in favor of agricultural development. The general perception of pastoralists is that the state and farmers are in close alliance in colonizing pastoralists. Compared to farmers, pastoralists are few in population and their disdain for western education since colonial days, made them less or not represented in government. Eventually, pastoralist gradually becomes politically powerless and defenseless in governance circle.

Some incidences of violent conflict between farmers and Fulani pastoralists with group solidarity

Northern region of Nigeria has nineteen states with a large expanse of desert and mountains. The region has a long span of international border with Niger and

Cameroun Republics and a short maritime border with the Republic of Chad. Economic and agricultural potentials such as availability of palatable grasses, adequate rainfall, and less threat of animal diseases, particularly along the central states and the two major pastoral corridors of Mambila Plateau and the Lake Chad Basin area eventually becomes center of convergence and conflict between farmers and pastoralist. Figure 1 shows specific Local Government Areas where farmers and Fulani pastoralists conflict are rampant and reoccurring.

In Adamawa and Taraba States pastoral corridors there has been relentless conflict between farmers and Fulani pastoralists due to long-standing claims and counter claims over land and access to resources. For instance, the reprisal attack launch by pastoralist on Kisa, Wurke, and other surrounding communities in Lamurde, Adamawa State left many persons dead and injured while approximately over 2000 persons displaced from their houses (New Nigeria, February 1, 2010; Abbas, 2012). These solidarity attacks and reprisal attacks between pastoralist and farmers in the hinterland of Mambila Plateau continued to manifest unabatedly. More recently, Fulani pastoral villages of Toffi, Mayo Daga, Mayo Sina, Tamiya, Tugan Lugere, Timjire, Nguroje among others were attacked and invaded by ethnic militia gang who are mostly farmers suspected to be on reprisal attack mission. The attack left many innocent victims dead and unspecified number of people displaced from the affected communities (This Day June 28, 2017).

Suspected Fulani herdsmen launched an attack and killed 10 people while some unspecified number of victims got various degrees of injury in a village called Nwokyo in Wukari Local Government Area of Taraba State (Nigerian Eye, 2014). Two years later violence ensued between Fulani herdsmen and farmers in Wukari led to gruesome murder of dozens of people and wanton destruction of property compelled the Tiv from Taraba State to abandon their homes and search for alternative safety places (Nte, 2016). The recent farmer-herdsmen violent conflict that rocked Numan and Demsa Local Government areas in Adamawa state left many Nigerians in dilemma over the capabilities of institutions of Government in bringing the menace to an end. The skirmishes started when herdsmen killed a Bachama farmer in his farm, in response to the killing, some Bachama militia farmers mobilized themselves and launch a reprisal attack on Fulani herdsmen in Safare and Kedomti villages of Numan Local Governments.

According to police report, the attack left 27 persons killed mostly women and children including a 3 months old baby (Punch, November 21, 2017). After two weeks, Fulani militia herdsmen also gang-up and embarked on reprisal attack in Lawaru, Dong and Kiken villages in Demsa and Numan Local Governments. Police in the area reported 55 persons killed, many injured and several houses burnt. In an attempt to tame and end the vicious circle of the attacks and counter attacks, 6 out of the

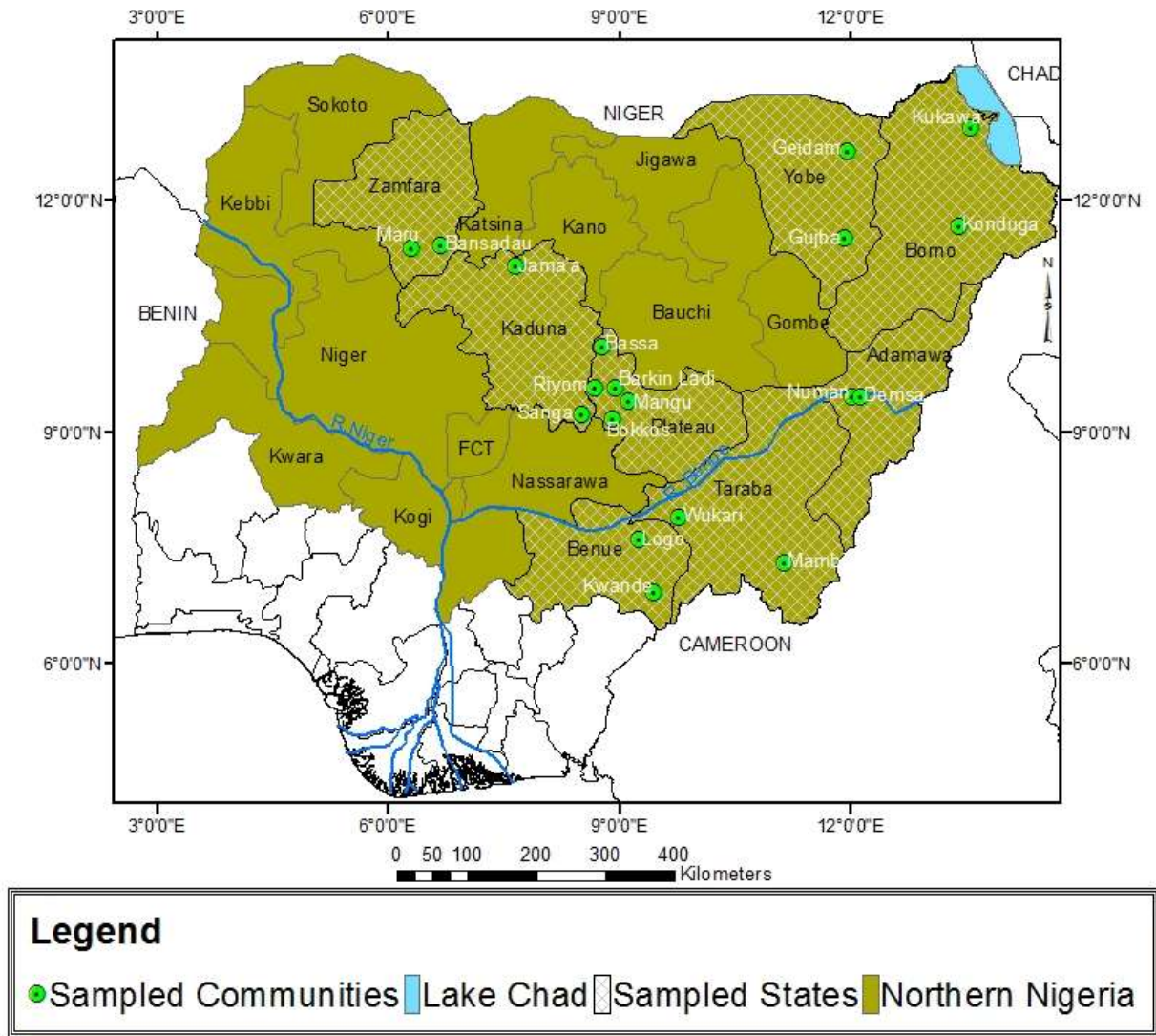


Figure 1. Political map of Nigeria.
Source: Digitized in GIS Laboratory, Department of Geography, University of Maiduguri, Nigeria.

Mobile Police men that were drafted to contain the situation were killed by the militia herdsmen (DailyTrust, December 5, 2017).

In recent years, Kaduna State has also been bedeviled with notorious issues of farmer-herdsmen crises due to influx of strange Fulani herdsmen. For instance, Fulani herdsmen had killed 38 people in Kabamu and Ankpong villages. After few days later, a spokesman of the Kaduna State Police Command Zubairu Abubabakar reported that 123 people were also killed by militia herdsmen in some villages of Sanga Local Government Area of Kaduna state (Shiklam, 2014). In the same Kaduna state Godogodo village was attacked by militia herdsmen in September, 2016 leaving 8 people death and many injured. After a month precisely October 15, 2016 another attack was also launch on the same village which left 40

persons death and un-quantified properties burnt (Morning Star News, 2016). For some years now Zamfara state is also witnessing an orgy of violent attack by Fulani herdsmen. More than 200 hundred villagers were killed by Fulani herdsmen. Some of the worst hit areas are Dansadau and Yargaladima villages in Dansadau Emirate of Maru local government area (Nte, 2016).

More than 70 cases of conflicts over conversion of cattle routes to farmland by farmers and over-running of farms by herdsmen have been recorded since the beginning of 2015 farming season (Ezeonwuka and Igwe, 2016). Even the nation’s capital territory is not spared from the herdsmen militia attacks. Some residents of Kuje Area council were attacked by militia herdsmen on November 13, 2016 leaving 3 people killed while some

were abducted by the attackers (Akinrujomi, 2016 cited in Chinwokwu, 2017).

In central states of Benue and Plateau the conflict has been a long standing issue in the last two decades. Leadership newspapers of March 12, 2014 reported the killing of more than 30 people in Kastina Ala, Kwande and Logo local government areas of Benue State by suspected Fulani herdsmen disguised in military uniform. Houses and farmlands were also burnt. On February 12, 2016, more than 300 people were killed in Agatu village in Benue state by Fulani herdsmen (Abonu, 2016). Again in February 18, 2016, 5 people were killed in Okokolo village of the same Local Government.

In Borno and Yobe states where the Nigerian side of the Lake Chad basin is located farmer-pastoralists conflict is a recurring decimal. For instance, conflict between an individual farmer and a Fulani pastoralist over crop damage, at Bulabulin Ngaburawa area of Borno State, resulted into ethnic conflicts between local farmers and Fulani pastoral groups. Both groups combated themselves in solidarity using dangerous weapons killing one another and set their houses ablaze. The hostilities resulted in the killing of over forty persons as officially announced by the police and several persons were injured mostly innocent people from both sides (DailyTrust, December 27, 2008). The incidence of serious cases of conflicts for survival between pastoralists and farmers also led continuous desire for vengeance by the parties involved (Abbas, 2012). The illegal possession of guns and other weapons has worsened the conflicts alongside the intrusion of camel pastoralists from Niger Republic (Pyramid Trust, July 17, 2009).

Farmer-herdsmen conflict is not limited to Northern Nigeria. The Fulani militia herdsmen are in every part of Nigeria. For instance, on August 25, 2016 some villages in Nkanu West Local Government in Enugu state was attacked by armed Fulani militia herdsmen killing one of the Catholic Church Seminarian and injured 4 persons (Vanguard, August 26, 2016). About 5 villages of Legalu Local Government were attacked by Fulani militia herdsmen killing unspecified number of persons (Esho, 2016).

Implication of group solidarity in the conflict

The incessant tit-for-tat violent attacks and reprisal attacks between farmers and Fulani pastoralists with group solidarity influence has enormous implication on national unity and cohesion. The continued manifestation of these conflicts does not only threaten the peaceful co-existence of the Nigerian State but many innocent people pay the price by their blood or their source of livelihood for just being either a pastoralists or a farmer. Most unfortunate is the growing polarization of Nigerians along ethnic and religious dimension over farmer-pastoralists

conflict. The recent case in the central states of Kaduna, Plateau, Benue, Nasarawa and Taraba is clear signal to cleavages of ethnicity and religion in farmer-pastoralist conflict. When conflict ensued over crop damage, farmers attack all Fulani pastoralist they come across. Pastoralists on the other hand, attack all native farmers they come across when there is disagreement. The consequences of this development led to killings, maiming, kidnapping, displacement and destruction to lives and sources of livelihood of many Nigerians particularly the rural populace. Nigeria is a heterogeneous society with different ethnic nationalities, religion and socio-cultural norms and values. The continued culmination of ethnicity and religion to whatever extent in conflict between farmers and pastoralists will further deepen the crisis that has been lingering up till today. Widespread cases of farmer-pastoralist conflict with group solidarity have raised a lot of questions over the efficacy of the Nigerian state which generated recent clamor and agitations for the restructuring of the federal system by some sections of the Nigeria. Currently, farmer pastoralist conflict is one of the major threats to national peace and security. Its continued manifestation and spread across the country is a clear reflection of the failure of patrimonial states in Africa. Successive Government in Nigeria allows its citizens (farmers and pastoralists) use group solidarity negatively in perpetrating violent attacks and reprisal attacks against each other regardless of all legal encumbrances.

Conclusion

Both farming and pastoralism are important economic potentials that contribute to the Nigeria's GDP as well as a source of livelihood to people especially the rural populace. Hence government at all levels in Nigeria has not accorded the required transformation that will make pastoralism a profitable and attractive business not only for Fulani pastoralist but for interested investors.

The conflict in its current violent form is a reminiscence of the inability of government to develop the livestock sector from its traditional form to a more technology driven. Beside high level of illiteracy and lack of awareness among pastoral communities has contributed in using group solidarity in a negative way against the farmers. For instance, the anti-open grazing law enacted by the Benue State Government in 2017 will be easily resisted by Fulani pastoralist because of lack of awareness and lack of adequate arrangement for the new ranching system.

Also, the herdsmen's colonies advocated by the federal government fuels fears and threats by host community as way of carting away the farmland as being biased. Therefore, Government at all levels must create the enabling environment for both farming and pastoral activities to thrive in Nigeria. Following the above position

the paper suggest that the institutions of governments at all levels whom are known to have weak or weaker agencies and institutions to cater for the socio economic, political, educational and security needs of the citizenry. Thus, there is urgent call to strengthen them. Fairness and equity should be the watchword of the agencies responsible. This is necessary because good governance is *sine qua non* to peace and sustainable development.

In addition, government at all levels should discourage the use of group solidarity in conflict situations. Through advocacy and enlightenment and awareness campaign on the implication of group solidarity in conflict there is need for collaboration among all stakeholders for better understanding in order to curb the negative consequences of group solidarity in farmers-pastoralist conflicts and its threats to sustainable peace and development.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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