

FULANI HERDSMEN AND NIGERIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY AND BEYOND

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Abstract

Between 1999 and now, the Fulani herdsmen have been frequently in the news for contributing to the insecurity challenges facing Nigeria. They are known to be using sophisticated weapons in their herding business and have terrorized villages-killed, maimed, raped, kidnapped, abducted – and plundered farmlands through rampaging cattle in search of fodder. In this connection, the local farmers have not spared them and their animals, and these have been generating incessant conflicts between them. The flash points of conflict (killing fields) are Benue, Nasarawa, Plateau, Gombe, Taraba, Adamawa, Ekiti, Enugu, Edo, Delta, Imo, Rivers and Abia among others. The paper discovered that cattle contributes positively to Nigeria economy and that their activities is affecting the legitimate economic activities of other people; that If the situation continues, it may plunge Nigeria into a difficult terrain of national insecurity. The work recommended that since migratory herding is obsolete it should be abolished in this 21st century as done in other climes, such as Brazil, India, Argentina, U.S.A and New Zealand. This should be replaced with modern ranching which is more productive and would curb friction between the locals and provide employment for the youths thus help build the economy. The paper, therefore, recommended modern ranching in Nigeria.

Introduction

Since the beginning of this century, this nation has witnessed the emergence of militant and terrorists groups holding Nigerians to ransom. In the North-east is found the Boko Haram terrorist group, in the Southern of Nigeria is found the Niger Delta militants, in the South east region is the pro-Biafran insurgents, kidnapping and armed robberies. In addition, there also emerged communal crises and ethno-religious

groups in Plateau, Kaduna, Nasarawa Ebonyi etc. All these are violent groups with telling effects on the economy. Of recent, the Fulani herdsmen have captured the serious attention and their actions have generated varied reactions among Nigerians. This is because their actions have the tendency of causing serious security challenges to the country. Given the pivotal role security plays in any nation then there is necessity to examine the impact of their activities to the general development of Nigeria. Though, the issue of national security in Nigeria could be traced back to the end of the Nigeria Civil War of 1970 and the long years of military rule, this paper, however, is only focusing on national security since the beginning of this century. This paper examines the activities of the Fulani herdsmen and their impact on national security.

Security: A Definition

The term security lacks a precise definition though it is a word commonly used by all manner of persons. It denotes freedom from threats, anxiety or danger. According to Nnoli (59) security is a cherished value associated with the physical safety of individuals, groups or nation states, together with a similar safety of their other most cherished values. Security can be considered objectively or subjectively. Security in an objective sense can be measured by the absence of threat, anxiety or danger. However, security in a subjective sense can be measured by the absence of fear that threat, anxiety or danger will occur. On the subjective sense, it depends on the perception that people about their environment, not necessarily. In other words, it is a value associated with confidence in physical safety and other most cherished values. No matter how safe people feel in the objective terms, unless there is confidence that such safety exists or will exist, there is no security. Even when no safety exists in objective terms but there is confidence that it exists, then there is likely to be security, at least in the short term. In this latter case one may speak of false security. The truth is that a person's security may be another person's insecurity. Security is, therefore, a state of mind not necessarily an objective state of being. It describes how people feel, not whether they are justified in feeling that way. On this note, Imobighe (15) perceives security as a feeling of being protected, and a feeling of freedom from danger, fear, anxiety, oppression and unwarranted violence. National security is feeling of the people within the nation of being protected from fear, anxiety, violence, oppression, unwarranted restriction.

National security means developing relatively stable patterns of economic development and political growth at home and abroad. National security by extension encompasses environmental security, human security, economic security, food security - that without national security other aspects of security cannot function to optimum.

National insecurity is caused by the failure of national government to address the special needs of its inhabitants. Such need includes hunger, poverty, unemployment, inequality and injustice among other things. Though the issue of hunger, poverty and unemployment are interwoven one aspect may be responsible for the manifestation of another. Let us now link these variables to insecurity.

According to Collins (153-154) and Nnoli (59) national insecurity is not all about absence of threat, violence, killings or in short human security. It encompasses other aspects of life such as food security, environmental security, economic security, social, cultural security and space security. These other securities are for the utilization of man. Man lives and depends on environment for his other activities to thrive. Without the environment human security would have no meaning. Without viable economic security, the essence of man would be totally unparallel to life. Social security has to do with interactions of people through exchanges in wealth, recreation, etc, while space security has to do with the wind, water, and other constituents of cosmology that has direct link with man. So poverty, poor health, unemployment, injustice and lack of adequate education can destroy the bases of these securities. National occurrences such as flood, desertification, earthquake and man's creation such as modern slavery (human trafficking) are all some aspects of national insecurity.

National insecurity is a condition in nation's development where life is threatened as a result of lapses in governance which have adverse effect on food security, youth employment, health conditions of the people and in the long run breed violence - kidnapping, and armed robbery, assassination, ethno-religious, crisis, or even civil war.

Many factors have contributed to national insecurity like injustice generally, political injustice, and economic injustice. Injustice, for instance, is one of the major causes of insecurity in Nigeria though taken with levity by some. Apart from injustice meted by man on man on daily bases, others are political, economic and social injustices. The

emergence of Niger Delta militant groups and Boko Haram terrorist are all linked to social, political and economic injustices of past and present governments in Nigeria.

Political injustice is usually link to electoral process especially the conduct of elections and election of candidates into political offices. Political injustice was responsible for the Nigerian Civil War of 1967-1970 and the wounds are not totally healed today, Political injustice was responsible for the annulment of June 12, 1993 presidential elections and the aftermath of that June 12 episode is still lingering with us. That annulment had a corrosive impact on Nigerian politics in spite of antics by the political gladiators to bury it permanently. The upbeat of it is that some ethnic nationalities are seeing the south-west as dominating the political firmament. Besides, after the April, 2011 general elections, most political parties were disenchanted over the result especially the Congress of Progressive Change (CPC) presidential candidate, General Muhammadu Buhari. General Buhari claimed he won the election but was robbed of it by the ruling Peoples Democracy Party (PDP). It was that alleged claim that was responsible for the 2011 Bauchi political crisis where Nigerian Youth Corps members and other Nigerians lost their lives, and property worth billions of Naira were destroyed (Mordi, 2012). That Bauchi crisis spilled over to Gombe, Kano, Kaduna and other northern towns. Since then the northern cities of Bauchi, Kaduna have not been the same again security wise (Agbo,24).

Gombe, Niger, Yobe, Plateau, Adamawa have been in flames which to a large extent have affected national security. Of recent, elections in Nigeria are not usually conducted in the manner they should. Rather, politicians would do everything to win. This must-win syndrome, usually lead to importation of arms, training of political thugs that later constitute a reign of terror to the nation. Nigerians have experienced this even before 1999 and so engender national security and by extension constitutes a bane to our development (Mordi, 2012). Today, serving Governors in some states of the federation have made life difficult for their opponents. Since every one wants to survive, they evolve a process of survival either through arms and thugs or any other form. This also aid and bring about insecurity.

The case of Niger Delta is specific and touching. The wealth of this nation is derived from there, and yet the people who own the area are

worst off in terms of basic living conditions such as food and potable water, good shelter, basic education for the children, lack of basic infrastructure such as good road network and electricity. The wealth of this area is taken to develop other areas while the owners of the wealth are underdeveloped. It was against this background that some young men in the Niger Delta constituted themselves into militant groups to draw attention of the Federal government to their plights. This resulted in kidnapping, assassinations, and other violent related activities. The resulted importation arms has led to insecurity in the region to both indigenes and non-indigenes.

Nigeria and Global Insecurity Index

There have been lots of violence and insecurity in Nigeria since the country returned to democracy in 1999. According to Mordi (2012) Nigeria is ranked among the countries of the world where the state of peace is very low. He noted that Global Peace Index released by the Institute of Economics and Peace Researches that measures the level of global peace, ranked Nigeria in 146th position. Other nations ranked alongside Nigeria are Sudan, 156th, Afghanistan, 157th; and Somalia 158th. In 2011, the same institute placed Nigeria as 142th; in 2007 Nigeria was placed 117th. This is an indication that insecurity is gaining momentum in Nigeria and placing the country in a precarious position (Mordi, 50). Besides the activities of the militants and Boko Haram, the Fulani herdsmen's activities of recent have become insecurity issue in Nigeria, which informs the topic of this paper.

Origin and Migration of the Fulani People of Nigeria

The precise origin of the Fulani is not known. There are different authorities trying to explain or bring to focus the origin of these people who are being viewed by some people as quiet and peaceful, and by others as troublesome and warlike. However, (Stride and Ifeka, 12-13) see them as immigrants from somewhere in West Africa that entered Nigeria at about 6th and 7th century AD. Iloje (33-34) is of the view that the Fulani people are nomadic herdsmen who are believed to have come to Nigeria from the north as invaders at different periods from the 13th century to the 19th. He added that, there are two groups of Fulanis – nomadic and sedentary. But that the issue of migration from the north probably suggests that they came into Nigeria either from Mali, Niger,

Burkina Faso or even the Senegambia region. All these indicate that they are immigrants.

Boahen (57) opined that the Fulani originated in the lower basins of the Senegal and the Gambia as a result of a mixture between Berber emigrants from the Sahara and the Negroes of the Wolof and Serer stock. It appears that part of them – probably the predominantly Berber portion – stuck to the nomadic mode of life style of their ancestors and became known as the Bororoje or cattle Fulani, while part of them remained in the towns, became fanatically Muslim and generally well educated, and are known as the Fulanin Gidda or Town Fulani. The two groups began infiltrating eastwards and southwards, into the regions of Ghana, Mali and Songhai between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries; into Hausa land in the fifteenth century and by the sixteenth century went as far as the Cameroons. In all these areas, they maintained their traditional way of life; the Bororoje sticking to the rural areas and the Fulanin Gidda to the towns. So Boahen supported Iloeje that they came in from the north probably from the Senegambia through Mali, Niger or Burkina Faso.

Another school postulated that the original home of the Fulani may have been the Senegal River valley and the Eastern Guinea area, and later expanded eastwards from about the 12th century (Kajubi, Lewsi, Taiwo, 1974:216). They went further to add that there are two classes of Fulani known after their settlement in Nigeria. These are the 'cow' Fulani who still retain their tall, slim features and light complexion. Others are the 'town' Fulani that have since learnt to live with the Hausa and even inter-marry with their neighbours. The cow Fulani live in temporary tents made of cow hides or grass-easy to set up and equally easy to dismantle. This is practiced in view of the fact that they are nomadic pastoralists who are always on the move. This is also a confirmation that the cattle industry in Nigeria began between the 12th and the 19th centuries and has been heavily controlled, managed by the nomadic Fulani. In the northern parts of Nigeria they exchange their cattle, milk and cheese for instance, for agricultural products from their hosts. The Fulani in this way supply 90 per cent of Nigeria's beef and cattle hide.

History and Causes of Conflict between the Fulani and the Locals

The home of the cattle Fulani in Nigeria are mainly in the northern states bordering the Sudan and the Sahel Savannah in states, such as, Sokoto, Kebbi, Zamfara, Katsina, Kano, Jigawa, part of Yobe,

Bauchi, Gombe and part of Kaduna. This is not to say that they are not found in the Guinea Savannah, but comparatively they are more in Sudan and Sahel than other areas. The Fulani (town and cattle) and local communities have co-existed for many years without much friction. It is contended that if there were conflicts in the past, it was not as alarming as experienced in the past six years (between 2011 and 2016). What appears to be the main bone of contention that is generating conflict is land. The Fulani herdsmen, constrained by dwindling vegetative grazing land in the North to herd their cattle were constrained to move them to other parts of the country for grazing. Grazing has become a challenge to the local farmers because in the process of grazing cows would ravage the farm produce in a manner that draws dagger between the farmer and the herdsmen when considering the labour and cost in the process. Many farmers have gone bankrupt after their investments have been destroyed by the cattle. Besides the destruction of farmlands, the herdsmen sometimes engage in kidnapping, raping, abductions, armed robbery, looting and killings across the country. For instance, in September 2015, they kidnapped Chief Olu Falae, a former Minister for Finance, at his farm in Akure, Ondo State, and released him days later, only to invade his farm again (Punch, October 18, 2015. P. 16).

The local farmers also lamented that, not only do cattle ravage their farm lands, cattle also wreak havoc on sources of water. On the devastation of cattle rearing, the Yewa of Ogun, Attakar of Kaduna, and Tiv of Benue, laments that cattle, not only devour their plants and harvested yams, they also defecate in their streams which serve often as their only source of drinking water". Farmers everywhere are particularly distressed at the ravages of migratory cattle and the frequent recourse to rape, murder, arson, looting, kidnapping by Fulani herdsmen (Punch, Friday December 20, 2013, p. 22).

In the Middle Belt, the Catholic Bishops of Makurdi, Oturkpo, Gboko and Katsina-Ala consider the problem of the herdsmen as political. They observed that from 2010 to date, Benue State in particular has witnessed endless conflicts between Fulani herdsmen and Tiv, Idoma and Agatu farmers. The Middle Belt Forum viewed the attack by the herdsmen as part of the plot to destabilize the North-central. The coordinator of the Forum in Plateau State saw an attack on Governor Suswan on March 14, 2014 as a calculated attempt to destabilize the

North central (Punch, Thursday, March 2014, 2). The Fulani herdsmen were known to be carrying bows and arrows which have been replaced with AK 47 assault rifles. This has heightened the fear of the locals and the consideration of the herdsmen as terrorists in recent times.

On the other hand, the Fulani herdsmen claim that they have been losing their cattle to rustlers. They also alleged that they lost 3.5 million heads of cattle between 2001 and 2010 in different bloody encounters with the locals (Punch, Thursday May 13, 2013, 22). But this could be explained as a consequence of their dastardly activities which have resulted in conflicts between the local farmer and the herdsmen. Sometimes, they herdsmen have to pay the farmers for the havoc they caused them in the destruction of farmlands.

Fulani Terrorist Zones

The Fulani Bororoje usually moves southwards in search of pasture and this has been generating conflict with the local farmers in the process. The clashes between the Fulani herdsmen and local people have taken a new colouration. The herdsmen have settled permanently now in the Middle Belt. What used to be skirmishes or little conflicts has become ethnic and sectarian feuds but with no particular ethnic group except the Fulani and others. The Fulani have killed in thousands, maimed, abducted, robbed, looted, etc.

Indeed, the killing is mostly in Benue, Nasarawa, Kogi, Plateau, Taraba, Kaduna. Other flashpoints are Delta, Oyo, Ogun, Enugu, Ondo, Kwara, Ekiti. Benue State is the epicenter of this pogrom. For instance in August 2015, 621 persons were killed in the Middle Belt. Benue State was the worst hit – in January 2015, 27 people lost the lives; in February, 96 people, while March recorded 236 deaths (Punch, Sunday, October 18, 2015, p. 16). On November, 2013, herdsmen were found wielding AK 47 assault rifles and machets, petrol and matches, launched simultaneous attacks at five villages in Barkin Ladi and Mangu Local Government Areas of Plateau State, killing 37 persons, injuring many more and setting houses, barns and vehicles ablaze. In that same month suspected Fulani herdsmen killed 5 people in Kukah in Shendam Local Government Area and several houses were set ablaze (Punch, Sunday, October 18, 2015, 16).

In April 2013, the Fulani alleged that two of their cows were

poisoned in Zankan, Kaduna State; they become provoked and so descended on communities in Kaduna and Plateau States. In the process 50 people were killed and over 10,000 were displaced from their homes. The fact is that there are no 36 states of the federation that have not affected by the activities of Fulani herdsmen. The impacts have been devastating. According to community groups in Southern Kaduna, Plateau, Benue, Nasarawa and Taraba states, Fulani herdsmen and their allies from Niger and Chad have killed more people in Northern Nigeria in the years between 2010 and 2013 than the Boko Haram terrorists. The Christians Association of Nigeria (CAN) claimed that about 205 Christians had been killed in Fulani herdsmen attacks in Benue State alone in the first six months of 2013. It was also reported that, in the series of attacks on communities in October 2013, Southern Kaduna ethnic nationalities lost about 100 of their people and hundred houses burnt by the rampaging Fulani herdsmen (Punch, Friday, December 20, 2013, 22).

However, it was not the North alone that suffered from the “blood thirsty” herdsmen; Southern Nigerians had their own share of injury from them. In December, 2013 the herdsmen killed 6 persons in Bayelsa. Again in December 2012, residents in some Bayelsa communities sent a protest letter to state government to protect them from herdsmen attacks since 2000. Apart from Lagos, other southern states such as Delta, Edo, Akwa Ibom, Ebonyi States among others have been touched by the “wicked” hands of Fulani herdsmen (Punch, Friday, December 20, 2013, 22).

This has resulted in Fulani herdsmen being labeled terrorist. In general, according to Global Terrorism Index, the Fulani herdsmen killed 80 people in 2013, 1,229 in 2014, 2,000 in 2015 in clashes between the Fulani herdsmen and local communities in Benue, Nasarawa, and Plateau States alone (Punch, Thursday, September 8, 2016, p. 20).

Impact of the Fulani Herdsmen on Nigeria

Cattle rearing are legitimate business and part of the Nigerian economy. From North-east-to-Lagos, revenue from cattle market is put at N324 billion annually and contributes not less than 2 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Though, little in GDP contribution, the cattle market provides meat, milk, hides and skin for export, employment to thousands of Nigerians and in so doing assist to grow and stimulate the economy.

In spite of this, the negative impact of cattle rearing has also taken a toll on the nation already ravaged by ethnic and religious violence. For instance, since 2000 the people of Ogun State protested and sent SOS to their Governor for protection against the invading Fulani herdsmen. This is an indication that for a long period the people of Nigeria especially some communities in the Middle Belt and Southern parts have known no peace owing to the atrocities of the Fulani herders. Terrorism, insurgency and other forms of violence have engulfed Nigerian state.

The Middle Belt of Nigeria is an agrarian zone. Benue is known to be the “food basket” of Nigeria. It is a known fact that states such as Nasarawa, Plateau, Taraba, Adamawa, Benue have been in constant attack of the herdsmen. By extrapolation, farming communities have lost over 3,000 people and over 700,000 thousand have displacing in the past three years. This makes farming difficult because of fear thus bring about shortage of food. Besides, the displaced people constitute social problems of varying degrees because of want and poverty. The burden of displacement of people from their homes are enormous – to the host communities and to the government. In a nutshell, with the growing insecurity in most farming communities, it signals that there will be food insecurity not only to the Middle Belt but to other states attacked by the herdsmen and those depending on them for food supply.

Apart from farming, property worth millions of Naira is destroyed. School infrastructures are affected thus retarding the educational development of the youths. This is a set back in an emerging economy such as Nigeria. Food insecurity, social problems emanated from unemployment hunger and poverty constitute part of national insecurity.

With the atrocities committed by the herdsmen on the Nigerian state, they constitute security risk to the nation especially as they have allies with Chadian and Niger – their kits and kins. to confirm how dangerous they have been to national security, The Global Terrorism Index named Fulani Herdsmen as the fourth deadliest terror group in the World behind Boko Haram, the Islamic State (ISIS) and al-Shabaab (Punch, Thursday, September 8, 2016, 20).

Fulani Herdsmen Terrorist Group and Reaction from Government

The killing spree by the herdsmen is still going on in Enugu, Benue, and other states in Nigeria unabated. It appears as if the Federal

Government and the security agents are at want as to what to do or that enough is yet to be done in that regard. As a way out, there is an ongoing bill in the National Assembly on how best to control the migratory attitude of the herdsmen. The National Assembly is of the opinion that each state of the Federation should provide grazing grounds for the herders. But most states especially in Southern Nigeria are kicking against such a bill that is yet to be passed into law. The Punch in its Editorial of December 20, 2013 succinctly captures it. Thus:

A bill to establish grazing reserves and routes in all 36 states of the Federation that has passed second reading in the National Assembly may be well-intentioned, but is patently misguided. To set up grazing reserves by federal law in states where livestock is not their source of livelihood is ridiculous. Why set up a reserve in Bayelsa or Ogun or Akwa Ibom? The North has a vast land mass suitable for the purpose. The Northern States and the Federal Government should collaborate to do just that, and though afforestation, effectively gradually eliminate the backward practice of migratory herding. It should be voluntary for any southern state to establish a grazing reserve. We must operate the country in such a way that will enable us to utilize our comparative advantages sensibly (22).

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way that will enable us to utilize our comparative advantages sensibly (22).

Sadly, despite these attempts by the National Assembly at curbing the menace of the herdsmen, the Federal Government appears to be silent on the issue. This is what generated the suspicion of the affected states as expressed by the Punch Editorial of September 8, 2016 placed:

Oddly, the Federal Government has turned a blind eye to the wanton killings... herdsmen returned to Attakwu, Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State in August, when they killed a Catholic Seminarian. One of those injured in the attack died later in the hospital. Nobody-including the Fulani – has the right to take life, or trample on other people's property in the name of cattle rearing. And, what makes cows more important than yam or any other agricultural product? In its characteristics aloofness, the National Assembly has also shield away from this enigma (20).

Perhaps, it may be against this background of quietness and non-reaction from the Federal Government that, the Governor of Ekiti State, Ayo, Fayose and the Ekiti State House of Assembly came out with a law regulating herdsmen in Ekiti State. The new law, the first of its kind in Nigeria, stipulates the time for grazing. Violation of the law carries some penalty. This is a more sensible way or step towards curbing the murderous excesses of the cattle rearers.

It appears too that the laws for illegal possession of arms are no longer enforced or the Fulani herdsmen are exonerated. be carrying bow and arrow, but recently they are usually well armed – carrying AK – 47 assault rifles with live ammunitions and other instruments of war – for instance one Ibrahim Adamumale arrested by a Police Officer in Udi Local Government Area of Enugu State. It may not be a surprise if Ibrahim would be allowed to go scot free. Nigeria is a difficult nation and unpredictable too. The politicians have destroyed the country.

Conclusion

Nigeria is an emerging nation. Like other emerging nations, it is besetted with enormous challenges such as ethnicity, economic, social as well as political challenges. Recently, the national security has been a challenge. Besides the herdsmen's activities is that of the Niger Delta Avengers and pro-Biafra-Movement for the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and Biafra Independence Movement (BIM).

This paper is of the view that the activities of the herdsmen are causing very serious security breaches capable of jeopardizing the unity of the country and retarding development. Something positive need be done not only by paying lip service but by proactive strategic plans to nip the menace in the bud as it is done in other countries of the world that had similar problems.

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