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## CLIMATE CHANGE AND FARMERS-HERDSMEN CONFLICT: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE HUMAN SECURITY IMPLICATION IN THE SOUTH EAST OF NIGERIA

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**ABSTRACT:** *Nigeria just like other countries in the Southern hemisphere has contributed to the human causes of climate change and global warming but it is now among the worst hit by the adverse effects. Thus, the southward movement of pastoral herdsman into the humid and sub-humid zones in Nigeria is on the increase due to extreme weather events in the Sahel region orchestrated by climate change. The study therefore sets to investigate the deadly menace arising from the conflict between farmers and herdsman over stiff competition for pastureland and available fresh water in the South East of Nigeria with focus on the human security implication. The study utilized the documentary method and ex-post facto research design while the eco-violence theory formed the theoretical framework of analysis. The paper argued that the incessant violent conflict between farmers and herdsman in Nigeria and the South East in particular poses grave threat to human security and agricultural production. However, the Nigerian government has not done much to stem the ugly tide. The study therefore recommends that the State should establish grazing reserves and corridors, prosecute the perpetrators and invest more in research on combating climate change and adaptability.*

**Keywords:** Climate Change, Global Warming, Conflict, Human Security, Herdsmen.

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### INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian State is currently going through a very challenging phase in its history that is perhaps precedence only by the civil war. Economically, challenges like acute unemployment and exchange rate crisis and the attendant runaway inflation confront the country. In the midst of these, insecurity appears to pose the most formidable challenge which the current administration met upon its inception in May, 2015 (Nwosu, 2017). Thus, at the time of President Buhari's inauguration, less known to the international community outside the Boko Haram was another source of insecurity: the attacks by so-called Fulani Herdsmen. While the Buhari's administration had a considerable success in its fight against Boko Haram, it appears that the menace of the herdsman-farmers conflict has defied the government's capacity to maintain civil decorum. From the foregoing, Abugu and Onuba (2015) reiterated that there have been clashes between Fulani herdsman and the aborigines in several parts of Nigeria for over three decades. The clashes are occasioned by the destruction of agricultural farms of the aborigines by the cattle of the Fulanis. Naturally, Fulanis by their nature are migrants who leave their traditional abode in search of greener pasture for their flocks. Leed (2009) maintained that migration is a normal routine for pastoralists whose movement is determined by season. But with the advent of climate change, this pattern of migration changed due to rapid drought, deforestation and other environmental problems associated with climate change. Sequel to the above development, Abugu and

Onuba (2015) observed that the rate of desertification and deforestation in the Sahara desert is at alarming rate and Nigeria is part of the countries of the Sahel region that experiences drought, desertification and deforestation. These aforementioned triad challenges forced the Fulanis who occupy the area to migrate down South in search of greener pastures for their cattle to graze. In the course of entering the shores of the Southern and Middle-Belt regions of the country, their cattle cause great damage to farm lands, resulting to conflicts and confrontations with the indigenes. According to Global Terrorism Index (2015) the Fulani herdsmen militants constitute the fourth deadliest militant group in the world with a record killing of 1,229 people in 2014 alone. The Federal Government has been advised by many well-meaning Nigerians to pay serious attention to the activities of the Fulani herdsmen across the country. On the other hand, the federal Government has stated that investigations have established that most of these herdsmen are not Nigerian citizens and due to ECOWAS Transhumance Protocol which guarantees the right to free movement to citizens of member countries, it cannot stop non-citizens of Nigeria from grazing their cattle across the country (Eyekpimi, 2016). However, Egbedi (2014) noted with dismay that a situation where Fulani herdsmen carry riffles and other dangerous weapons unchecked is unacceptable. He also observed that the activities of these herdsmen have put the lives of innocent Nigeria at risks.

According to Bamidele (2014) the insensitivity of these Fulani herdsmen to the plight of their host by reason of their activities is responsible for the ugly situation we find in most parts of the North Central region. Between 2000 and 2015, there have been reported cases of conflicts and confrontation between the Fulanis and indigenes of the areas they migrated to. Abugu and Onuba (2015) noted succinctly that, cases of clashes between the Fulanis from the North and the inhabitants of the Plateau, Kogi and Benue in the Middle Belt region and some parts of the Eastern region abound. They specifically pointed out the clashes between the Fulanis and the Agatu people of Benue State in 2014 and that of the Fulanis and the people of Uzouwani Local Government Area of Enugu State in 2013.

Although scholars have written much on farmers-herdsmen conflicts in Nigeria, none has satisfactorily linked these conflicts with climate change and its attendant food insecurity in Nigeria and South East geopolitical zone in particular. Despite the fact that these scholars appreciated the need for the study of climate change, they did not satisfactorily account for the effects of the climate change induced farmers- herdsmen conflicts on National food security.

It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to examine the recurrent farmers- herdsmen conflict in Nigeria and its implications on National food security in a fast changing climate with particular attention to the events in the South East Zone. The argument before us now is to fully examine and unravel why these clashes escalate to mass killings and butchery and to fully understand the purpose as well as the cost of these damages and hence proffer the way forward. The paper is divided into four sections: The first section is the introduction, followed by the conceptual explications, the second section focuses on the literature review, the third section is the methods of study, and the fourth section is the theoretical framework. Finally, the paper ends with conclusion and recommendations. These sections were carefully conceived to address climate change, herders-farmers' conflict and its human security implication in the South East of Nigeria

### **Conceptual Explications**

At this juncture, it is imperative to meticulously conceptualize the fundamental concepts associated with the study as follows;

### **The Concept of Conflict**

Extant literatures abound as to the definition and meaning of conflict. Hence, there is no universally accepted definition of the term conflict. To this end, Okolie (2009) posits that any definitional enterprise on conflict must take into cognizance the fact that conflict is part of several movements in history. In view of this, Ezeani (2014) averred that one issue of contention is whether the conflict is a

situation or a type of behaviour. According to Rakim (2010) conflict refers to an interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement or dissonance within or between social entities. In his own perception, Gilick (2009) pointed out that natural resource conflict is as old as man itself.

He goes further to define conflict as a struggle over values and claims to scarce resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals. Deutsch (1973) sees conflict as an action which prevents, obstructs, interferes with injuries or renders ineffective of another action with which it is incompatible. McEnny (1985) refers to conflict as the overt coercive interaction of contending collectivities. While Onu (2009) conceives conflict as a manifestation of hostile attitude in face of conflicting interest between individual groups or states. These conflicting interests can be over resources, identity, power, status or values. German sociologist, Georg Simmel asserts that social conflict and consensus (peace and unity) are naturally complementary. According to him, genuine peace or consensus without conflict is hardly possible (cited in Coser & Rosenbery, 1979). Without doubt, one striking view on the inevitability of social conflict was posited by Karl Marx. Marx applied the idea of dialectics to a materialistic analysis of history or societal development and submitted that “the history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggle”. For Marx, social conflict revolves around the emergence of two opposing classes (the bourgeoisie and the proletariat) in the capitalist regime (Marx, 1971).

### **Climate Change**

Climate change has been defined as any long term significant change in the expected patterns of average weather of a specific region of the earth as a whole over an appropriately significant period of time (IPCC, 2007). Corroborating the definition, Uguru, M.I., Baiyari, K.P, and Aba, S.C. (2011) noted that climate change is a phenomenon that occurs when the climate of a specific area or planet is altered between two different times. This could occur when there is change in total amount of sun’s energy absorbed by the earth’s atmosphere and surface. Climate change, the prime cause of global warming has manifested in global climate history as periods of warmth, melting of the ice caps and increased rainfalls, floods, rise in sea levels, etc. Human activities are by far the major cause of climate change through continuous release of greenhouse gases and aerosols into the atmosphere, by charging land surfaces and by depleting the stratospheric ozone layer (Uguru et al; cited in Ani, 2012).

According to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2007) it is shown that the origin of the relationship between climate change and resource depletion dates as far back as 1869 when the first climate observation was carried out. They observed that the emissions of greenhouse gases mostly carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) and nitrogen oxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) into the atmosphere has increased from a pre-industrial value of 278 parts per million (ppm) to 379 parts per million in 2005. This observation has also shown that the average global temperature rose by 0.74<sup>0</sup>C. Global warming as a result of emission of harmful greenhouse into the atmosphere chiefly carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, methane, nitrous oxide, chloro- fluoro carbons through the burning of fossil fuels and agricultural activities lead to the progressive depletion of the ozone layer in the stratosphere (Goldberg,1994). The Ozone layer is the shield that absorbs about 90% of the harmful electro-magnetic waves emitted from the sun on the earth. The greenhouse gases allow shortwave energy to get to lower atmosphere but hold back long wave radiation from escaping thus regulating the earth’s heat budget. The imbalance between the short wave and the long wave and this is responsible for extreme weather events such as drought and flood (Ezeani, 2014; Leed, 2007; Meehl, 2007).

### **Human Security**

Human security is a new and broadened approach to security studies which seeks to explicate the global vulnerabilities and examine how poverty, environment, and social interaction generate conflict and increasingly poses threat to human existentialism. Central to this approach is the

understanding that human security deprivations can undermine peace and stability within and between states, whereas overemphasis on state security can be detrimental to human welfare.

In an expanded definition, the UNDP (1994) sees human security as safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression, and protection from sudden and harmful disruptions in the patterns of daily life. It further argues that the scope of global security should be broadened to include threats in seven areas namely; economic security, political security, community security, food security, environmental security, personal security, and health security (UNDP, 1994:24-25). Human security believes that without security of humans, national and regional security would be difficult to achieve. Human security is not an attack on national security but a complimentary view to national security. Essentially, human security refers to the degree to which the welfare of individuals is protected and advanced. It holds that a people-centred view of security is necessary for national, regional and global security. Human security is indebted to the human rights tradition, hence, this explains why Akire (2003: 2) summarily puts it that human security is deliberately protective. It recognizes that people and communities are fatally threatened by events well beyond their control such as violent conflict.

### **The Fulani Herdsmen**

The Fulani is an ethnic group of the West African Savannah. Some of them live in towns and cities and engage in farming and trading. A larger proportion of them are cattle herders. Through the series of event called the Fulani Jihads, the Fulanis conquered a greater part of the area that later became Northern Nigeria between 1804 and 1810 (Horton, 1972; Adeleye 1971; Last, 1967). The Fulanis indisputably represent a significant component of the Nigerian economy. They constitute the major breeders of cattle, the main source of meat, the most available and cheap source of animal protein consumed by Nigerians (Eniola, 2007). Similarly, Aliyu (2015) maintains that the name Fulani has become synonymous with grazing and cattle ownership. He further noted that less than a tenth of the Fulanis have jobs other than herding and farming.

Describing the annual herding cycle of the Fulanis, Iro (1994) stated that the herding season begins with southward movement of the herds along rivers and stream valleys from October to December marking the end of rainy season and beginning of dry season. January to February is the harmattan season that is characterized by longer grazing hours, herd splitting and more frequent visits to stable water sources. The months of March and April are usually the toughest for the herdsmen and their cattles, as it is the hottest period in the grazing calendar. Indeed, they now herd their cattle only in the evenings and nights (Iro, 1994). May and June signify the end of dry season and vegetation begins to appear. This also marks the beginning of northward movement of cattle herds. From this period up till September, which is the peak of rainy season, though characterized by cattle breeding, more milk production and shorter grazing hours, cattle herding coincides significantly with arable crop production and farmers – herdsmen conflict is therefore triggered.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This section concentrated on existing literature in relation to the subject matter of our research questions with a view to understanding what other scholars have already written or what have not been satisfactorily addressed in the literature concerning the subject matter under study.

The Implications of Farmers- Herdsmen Conflict on Human Security in the South East of Nigeria

In Eastern Nigeria, there is hardly any community where Fulani herdsmen are not found. In Abia state, clashes between the Fulani herdsmen and local farmers have become a huge threat to human security, hence in Abia communities of Uzuakoli in Bende Local Government, Ebem and Akanu in Ohafia and Umuechieze in Umunneochi, there have been cases of deadly clashes between rural farmers and these cattle breeders (Nwaopara & Okoli, 2015). Essentially, conflicts between cattle herders and farmers have existed since the beginning of agriculture and increased or decreased in intensity and frequency depending on economic, environmental and other factors. Clashes between cattle herders

and crop farmers have been a major cause of increasing violence and general insecurity in Nigeria. In most of the seen counters, citizens are regularly killed; the destruction or loss of property leaves an already endangered populace even poorer. The frequency and scale of these communal conflicts have become alarming (leadership Newspaper, 2011).

In Nigeria, the most frequent causes of conflict between the nomadic cattle herders and sedentary farmers are illegal invasion of farms and destruction of crops by cattle, particularly during the planting season and immediately after the harvesting period (Blench, 2004).

Similarly, Anyamelum and Awka North local government areas lost four persons on account of violent activities of the Fulani herdsmen (Ezeonwuka & Igwe, 2016:209). With emphasis on the implication of these conflicts on food security in Nigeria. Adisa (2012) noted that 75% of today's food comes from twelve arable crops chiefly dominated by rice, maize and wheat and five animal species. He further observed that Nigerian agricultural production is dominated by rural based small scale arable crop producers who account for about 80% of total food requirement of the nation. In the same vein, Eguru (2012) observed that the declining fertility of soil will affect agriculture, which is the major employer of labour in the Sahel region of Africa. He noted that the negative effect of climate change is not static. For instance, cereal crop production is expected to decline in some areas by 50% while others are between 25 – 50%. Contributing to the debate on climate change, resource control and other issues. Leed (2006) noted that the negative impact of climate change has increased environmental degradation and demographic pressures. The continuous crisis between Fulani herdsmen and farmers in the Middle-Belt and South – Eastern region can be attributed to the factors mentioned above.

Furthermore, it is quite obvious that the re-occurrence of these conflicts have impacted negatively on the economy of the two parties (herdsmen and farmers) on one hand and the government. Agriculture which is the mainstay of the economy of the local people is been disrupted by these conflicts, making livelihood difficult at both the immediate locality and the larger societies alike that are dependent on the produce from the warring communities. Therefore, food supply is affected in both quantity and quality. According to the Mercy Corps reports of 2016, these incessant attacks have a drastic effect on food security and have caused a loss of \$14 billion in three years. This global humanitarian organization funded by the British Department for International Development (DFID) carried out a research between 2015 and 2016 on the causes and effects of perennial clashes between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria. The study further posited that ongoing conflict is thwarting the country's economic development to an enormous extent and if these conflicts were resolved, the average household affected today could see income increase by at least 64% and potentially 210% or higher. In all, Marietu and Olerewaju (cited in Ezeani, 2014) posit that this unresolved crisis has grievous dimensions in its effects on the policy of government in providing development opportunities and attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

#### **Cases of Deadly Attacks by Fulani Herdsmen in the South –East of Nigeria**

The recurrent conflict between herdsmen and farmers has posed grave implications on human safety and security especially as it affects farmers in the South-East of Nigeria. Okeke (2014) aptly noted that in nearly every state in the region, Fulani herdsmen graze where they like destroy crops, block traffic, rape women, beat up hunters, and not too infrequently wage deadly armed attacks on villages where there is the slightest resistance to their depredations. In the same vein, Abugu and Onuba (2015) reported that in Enugu state in 2009, suspected Fulani herdsmen attacked Ezeagu communities in the state and killed at least two women in their farm. They further revealed that in Anambra state especially

in the Aguleri/ Umuleri axis, Fulani herdsmen have been banned from entering the areas since 2012. Similarly, the damage caused by Fulani herdsmen also led to their expulsion from places like Umuahia and Isuochi precisely as they have all witnessed orgy of violence and crisis of greater magnitude caused by Fulani herdsmen. Nwosu (2017) aptly captures that on 25 April, 2016, suspected Fulani invaders attacked Ukpabi Nimbo, a town in Enugu state, killing about 40 indigenes. However, this incidence shows the level of damage and attacks by suspected Fulani herders in South Eastern Nigeria. Also, crisis looms between Abia community and Hausa/Fulani herdsmen (The Daily Post, 2013). Other reported cases were the Fulani herdsmen invasion in Ohaji and that of Uzouwani Local government in Enugu State (Oodera, 2013). Essentially, in all these developments, government has to find a lasting solution to the herdsmen and their deadly activities.

### **METHODS OF STUDY**

The study adopted qualitative research method and sourced its data from secondary sources. The sources include textbooks, journal articles, reports, periodicals and internet materials. It adopts the ex-post facto research design and trend analytical technique was employed for data analysis. The choice of this method is basically because the study has enough already existing qualitative data that were accessible and available for use. In determining the underlying conditions that triggered these conflicts, this study interrogated lack of natural grazing policy, climate change, food insecurity and forced migration as the fundamental causes associated with the conflict phenomenon under study. The study carried out the three complementary steps of qualitative data analysis; data processing, data analysis and data interpretation.

### **Findings**

#### **The study found out that:**

1. The phenomenon of farmers-herdsmen frequent conflicts pose grave threat to the corporate existence of the Nigerian state, especially in lieu of the fact that the Fulani herdsmen ranks as the fourth deadliest terrorist group in the world.
2. Extreme climatic conditions such drought, high heat waves, desertification, deforestation, spatial rainfall and drying of rivers resulting from global warming account for the biggest cause of farmers-herdsmen conflicts in Nigeria and South East in particular.
3. Government inability to investigate, arrest and prosecute the perpetrators of the farmers- herdsmen conflicts have contributed to embolden the culprits.
4. Nigeria faces the danger of food insecurity resulting from disruption of agricultural production and displacement of arable crop farmers due to the endemic conflict between rural farmers and cattle herders.
5. The apparent lack of investment into scientific research to combat climate change through adaptability and mitigation mechanisms has further compounded the existing environmental induced conflict.
6. The inability of Nigerian State to effectively tackle the Fulani herdsmen menace has resulted to incessant loss of lives and property of defenseless people in the South East and other regions of Nigeria. This in turn poses a grave threat to human security.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The study examined the ongoing conflicts between herders and farmers in Nigeria in general and South East geopolitical zone in particular. Essentially, the paper argued that these conflicts are closely knit with the adverse effects of climate change which triggers migration and competition over environmental resources and space. The study contends that though climate change cannot be wished

away, government's sincere intervention through effective regulatory policy, establishment of ranch or grazing corridors and funding of research will stem the tide. Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations were proffered.

1. There is urgent need to institutionalize a broad-based and coordinated national policy on grazing to address the recurrent farmers-herdsmen violent clashes and anarchy.
2. Government should always promptly address some perceived violence or injustice among the herdsmen and farmers to forestall violent confrontations. A good example in point is the setting up of a cattle menace committee in Anambra state led by the state's Commissioner of Police, traditional rulers and community representatives to ensure peaceful coexistence between communities and herdsmen.
3. It is troubling that private citizens can have apparently easy access to unlicensed sophisticated military grade weapons. Thus, it is expedient that authorities get to the root of arms proliferation and confiscate illegal firearms.
4. Against the backdrop that some of the attacks were allegedly perpetrated by foreign invaders, it is incumbent upon the government to ensure proper border security. Free movement of people and food as guaranteed by ECOWAS Protocols should not be an excuse for irresponsible border insecurity.
5. State and local governments need to be proactive by letting people know that they are concerned about their security and welfare through prompt intervention and regular contacts with stake holders, traditional rulers and migrant pastoralists.
6. Improved practices to adapt and mitigate the impacts of climate change should be adopted as a national policy objective and part of long term goals.

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