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All correspondences to:
The Managing Editor
Dr Titus Wuyah Yunana
PMR
Department of Management Science
Nigeria Police Academy, Wudil-Kano
Email: polacmanagementreview@gmail.com, inzehty01@gmail.com
Phone: +23408036949298

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**POLAC MANAGEMENT REVIEW (PMR)
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NIGERIA POLICE ACADEMY, WUDIL-KANO**



FARMERS – HERDERS CONFLICT IN PLATEAU STATE: A POLITICAL ECONOMY PERSPECTIVE IN WASE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

Shuaibu Abubakar Abubakar

Department of Political Science, Bauchi State University, Gadau

Yusuf Musa Yahaya, PhD

Department of Political Science, Bauchi State University, Gadau

Ameer Sunusi

Department of General Studies, Federal Polytechnic Bauchi

Abstract

Nigeria has witnessed and is still experiencing so many conflicts among several ethnic communities across the state these conflicts significantly differ in dimension. The study sought to find out causes of farmers-herders conflict in Wase local government area of plateau state. For several years, tensions have existed between farmers and Fulani herdsmen in Wase LGA which resulted to disruptions of both political and socio economic activities in the area. The paper extensively discussed the causes and effects of this conflict between these two groups in Wase local government area of Plateau state. The Process and the groups involve is observed that, while some conflict arise between same resource user groups others occur between farmer-herdsmen conflict has remained the most highly resources conflict in wase. The study adopts qualitative which heavily on rely on the use of primary source face to face interview and secondary source of data on information which includes Books, Journals, Magazines, Articles, et al. The study use content analysis during the data collection The paper recommends the demarcation of grazing and farming lands by government, The local authorities should embark on peace education to sensitize the people and also .Government should create an agency that will be saddle with the responsibility of monitoring of early warning signs that can result to conflict to be tackled headlong.

Keywords: Farmers, Herders, Recourses Conflict, Wase Local Government.

Introduction

The clashes have led to significant socio-economic disruptions, including loss of lives, displacement and threats to food security and national unity. The farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria, particularly plateau has evolved from resource based into complex socio political and economic crisis. Tensions have existed for several years between farmers and Fulani herdsmen, causing much trauma, the loss of lives, and the destruction of both property and property. Conflict, according to Eke (2013), is a type of social interaction in which the participants try to win a small benefit by weakening their rivals. Duromi et al. (2015) define conflict as the interaction of interdependent people who see opposing goals and obstacles from one another in achieving those goals. Gyong (2014) defines conflict as the battle

between two parties to control or dominate one another in a way that subjugates or even eliminates the adversary. Grave ethnic and religious conflicts have occurred and are still occurring in Nigeria. These conflicts primarily differ in terms of their dimensions, processes, and participating groups. Omale (2016) noted that while some conflicts do emerge between members of the same ethnic group, such as between Fulani farmers and other farmers, other conflicts do arise between distinct user groups, such as between herders and crop farmers or between foresters and farmers. According to Adisa (2015), the conflict between farmers and herders has persisted as Nigeria's most prevalent resource-use conflict. Conflicts do emerge between members of the same ethnic group, such as between Fulani farmers and other farmers, other conflicts do arise between

distinct user groups, such as between herders and crop farmers or between foresters and farmers.

According to Adisa (2015), the conflict between farmers and herders has persisted as Nigeria's most prevalent resource-use conflict. According to Abbas (2018), research on the main causes of disputes between farmers and Fulani demonstrates that land-related concerns, particularly on land, account for the majority of the disputes. In other words, disputes over economically valuable areas exacerbate tensions and hostilities between groups.

Fulani pastoralists and farmers are still at odds with one another due to social and economic causes. The nature and makeup of the user group where pastoralists graze heavily influence the conflict's severity and fluctuations. The farmers' and pastoralists' means of subsistence and livelihood, which both groups are adamantly defending, have been seriously threatened by these confrontations. The disputes (however inflammatory) over livestock routes and access rights to farms (Labi) have gotten out of hand and don't seem to have any end in sight (Abbas, 2018). However, Ahmad (2017) has emphasized that conflicts over claims to a limited resource are inevitable and are seen as the bane of disputes over the inestimable value of property and its resource. However, the complicated land use system that has undergone significant change over time is what has led to the current host community conflicts and animosity between Fulani herdsmen. In 2018, 100 people were reported dead as a result of farmer-herder clashes in Plateau State, which has been the scene of numerous conflicts that have resulted in significant property damage and loss. A new issue in the state is the violent fights between ranchers and crop producers in the plateau state.

This phenomenon has been going on for ten years (Okeke, 2014). Herders destroying crops primarily at night is one of the main factors contributing to the farmer-herder conflict in Wase. Herdsmen frequently travel through fields in search of forage during the dry season. While there have been numerous conflicts between the farming community and herders in Wase for more than 20 years, the violence increased in 2014 when the herdsmen killed 1,229 individuals as opposed to 63

in 2013 (Abbas, 2018). Commonly blamed for the disputes is the expansion of Fulani herders from traditional grazing areas into agricultural land, which invariably leads to conflict over access to water.

Literature Review

In their study, Tenuche and Ifatimehin (2009) found that resource sustainability in Nigeria is insufficient. Because of this, it is difficult for the bulk of its residents to access land for farming and grazing. And this is a key factor in the Benue Valley region's conflicts. As a result, they contend that the state should reconsider the current legislation governing community members' access to land. Equity will be achieved in this manner, preventing ongoing strife. When the constitution is being reviewed, concerns like indignity, settlers' rights in communities, and land use laws that have been widely misused by the upper class should be given priority consideration. As a result of shrinking grazing pastures, other research has suggested that the pastoral Rufa'a Al Hoi ethnic group in Sudan's Blue Nile State may experience cattle losses and emigration (Ahmed 2009). Similar patterns have been observed among the Fulani pastoral communities of Burkina Faso (Tenuche & Ifatimehin 2009; Madu 2012). The privatization of pastoral lands and the sedentarization of pastoral communities in eastern Africa are two examples of how land use and land cover dynamics are changing (Lesorogol 2005).

According to Haro and Dayo (2005), one of the major causes of the conflict is that Fulani herdsmen frequently wander into the fields during the growing season while their herds eat or tramp on the crops as a result of the herdsmen's inattention or the cattle's stray movement, which causes tension to rise. While in the study area, as narrated by an eyewitness and according to police reports in the area, youth actually decided to kill and eat one of the Fulani herdsmen's cattle as a mark of revenge against the destruction of their crops and farmlands. In the majority of cases reported to the police, youth in the affected areas and the Fulani herdsmen or their cattle frequently engage in skirmishes. Additionally, Scha (1996) found that water, cattle, crops, and other vegetal resources have significant importance in the socioeconomic strength of a society. Therefore, the need

to safeguard and defend group membership is what drives these confrontations. The Yakurr people enjoy their farmlands while the Fulani herdsmen plan for the defense and reservation of their livestock. However, the Yakurr people's interest in ownership, which they define as "owning what you have," has frequently led to this type of conflict, also known as a conflict of livelihood.

Herders destroying properties by grazing primarily at night is one of the undeniable causes of the farmer-herder conflict in Wase. Herders frequently travel across fields in search of forage during the dry season. The locations of crops along their route are occasionally overlooked or ignored by these herders since they believe that any damage done cannot be traced back to them. As a result, they do not hesitate to cut down or trample on planted crops or let loose their cattle to feed on the planted crops before moving on to the next town.

Unfortunately, due to a lack of proof, the police frequently struggle to apprehend those responsible for such claimed crimes. As a result, impacted farmers now arbitrarily attack Fulani ranchers and their animals, who may or may not be the actual perpetrators of retaliation assaults. Additionally, these farmers haven't shied away from firing at the cattle on occasion, setting off a series of violent events that resulted in the loss of human life and the destruction of property belonging to the two disputing parties (Amnesty international report, 2018).

The media's unfavorable stereotyping and portrayal of Fulani herdsmen as rapists and armed robbers is another factor fueling the conflict. For instance, numerous media outlets refer to Fulani armed robbers and kidnappers by their ethnic groups while referring to other armed robbers and kidnappers simply as "armed robbers." Media accounts of violent crimes by herders are frequently common, which contributes to the false impression that Fulani herdsmen are not law-abiding citizens. With this change of events, it is not surprising that some residents use the opportunity to commit crimes while impersonating Fulani herders, escalating already high levels of hostility in the villages. Effectively, this reinforces the unfair stereotype that Fulani herdsmen in these areas are criminals who have no regard for human life (Crisis Group Reprt,2017). Another reason for

farmer-herder conflict is that there are insufficient supplies of drinking water for the livestock. Sometimes, the herders take their animals to the villages' watering holes. It is crucial that actions like the construction of dams are implemented by the government and the herders' association to ensure that there are adequate sources of water for both the community and the cattle in order to prevent future occurrences of the tensions caused by the cattle that often lead to threats of shooting the animals (Okeke, 2014).

Other contributing factors include under-grazing of the land, disrespect for regional traditional leaders, sexual harassment of women, youth harassment of nomads living in host communities, indiscriminate bush burning, cattle feces on roadways, cattle theft, and cattle wandering.

This study aims to close this gap by examining the factors that contribute to the conflict between farmers and herders in Nigeria's Wase Local Government Area and the plateau state. It also examines alternative strategies for resolving the conflict.

Wase Local Government Area

Wase is a town and local government area (LGA) in Plateau State, Nigeria. Jos, the Plateau State capital, is located 216 kilometers to the southeast of Wase. The adjacent Wase River and it both share the same name. The LGA had 159,861 residents as of 2006, and its urban area was 1750 km².

The Jukun people, centered on the historic walled town of the same name, were the first people to live in the Wase region. Bashar was originally where it is now. Following the second crisis between Tarok and Fulani, she contained a chiefdom governed by the Jukun in Mavo, followed by Tarok in Kadarko. The Hausa Fulani, Burmawa, and Jukun tribes made up the majority of the population in the local government area. Tarok and Basherawa are the two smaller tribes. Subsequently became part of the British Royal Niger Company protectorate following the arrival of British troops in 1898. Wase was a part of the Plateau Province when it was established in 1926 and became the Plateau State upon Nigeria's independence in 1960.

Socio-Economic Effect of the Conflict

One of the socioeconomic effects of the dispute between farmers and herders is a decrease in the level of productive activities in the plateau state's Wase local government region. Conflicts between farmers and herders have resulted in output losses for both groups. According to reports, the local administration in Wase has seen an increase in poverty and food insecurity as a result of the loss of cattle and crops, as well as the rising cost of transportation. Conflicts over land use have been cited by the Fulani cattle herders as the "most critical" issue they encounter in their line of work (Van'tHooft, Millar, & Django, 2005). Cattle herding correlates strongly with arable crop production during the height of the rainy season, which is marked by increased milk output, shorter grazing hours, and herdsman-farmers conflict.

The ensuing increase in social tension between the two user groups in Wase Local Government Area has frequently been caused by increased rivalry for agricultural land. Due to the loss of farmer lives, animals, crops, and valuable properties, the conflicts have not only increased the level of insecurity but also shown a significant potential to intensify the food crisis in the state and other impacted states (Cotula, Toulmin, & Hesse, 2004).

Since the beginning of agriculture, this conflict is said to have existed, and depending on economic, environmental, and other conditions, its severity or frequency has either increased or diminished (Aliyu, 2015). According to Idowu (2017), more than 1,000 individuals have been displaced by the conflict between ranchers and farmers in Wase and is either living with relatives or in impromptu IDP camps, many of whom are still attempting to reconstruct their lives.

- a. The devastation of crops by livestock and careless bush burning, which lowers crop growers' output and income. Many farmers lost all or part of their harvest. Reduced output as a result meant lower income for farmers that saw farming as their primary source of income. This typically has a negative impact on the savings,

capacity to pay back debt, food security, and economic well-being of urban residents who depend on these farmers for their food supply. For farmers and the development of rural and agricultural areas, this is highly depressing (Okeke, 2014).

- b. Farmer displacement: Both farmers and herdsmen were reported to be displaced. Conflict forces nomadic herdsmen to leave the host villages. Farmers who stay behind, especially women farmers, quit visiting the far-off fields out of fear of being attacked by ranchers in the bush. As a result of being forced to beg for food for themselves and their families, these displaced farmers have become a liability to other farmers. Due to the lack of grazing, this has led to erosion (land degradation) and a vicious circle of poverty (Ofuoku, 2018). The land becomes bare and vulnerable to erosion, which eventually intensifies as the rains fall. due to parts of the locations' hilly topography, which accelerates this process of difficulty.
- c. Loss of life: The disputes resulted in numerous killings by the herdsmen, which prompted retaliatory killings of nomads by the host communities or farmers. The herdsmen's cattle herds were also killed. Young and old victims alike suffered severe injuries, and some were maimed. Some farming women now have the status of widows as a result of this. All of these have significantly decreased the local agricultural labor force. There have reportedly been instances of the spread of small guns and ammunition throughout this procedure. This resulted from the host farming communities' and herdsmen's mutual hatred for one another. This is contrary to the spirit of Nigerian tribes' integration, or ethnic groups' peaceful coexistence (Yusuf, 2018).

Methodology

The study used a qualitative methodology that largely relied on interviews as primary sources as well as secondary sources of information such as books, journals, magazines, articles, newspapers, etc.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Fulani herdsmen have been neglected and alienated over the years since they are not citizens. In addition to failing to address their issues, government policies have fostered animosity, mistrust, tension, and violence between them and the locals in many villages and towns around the nation. Wase LGA in Plateau State is particularly concerned about the issue. This has had negative socioeconomic effects in addition to major ramifications for regional and national security. Therefore, it is crucial to come up with solutions to the problem.

It would be vital that all parties collaborate to develop long-term solutions to the issue in order to effectively end the herder-farmer dispute in Wase LGA and fully harness the advantages the community stands to gain from the herders. Some ideas are as follows:

To prevent cattle from wandering into people's crops, the government and traditional authorities should clearly demarcate grazing and farming territories. Anyone who disobeys shall face harsh penalties, according to strict measures.

- a. The construction of dams and boreholes specifically used for animal rearing is necessary.
- b. The government should start registering herders on a national scale so that they can be subject to taxes. Additionally, a fund might be established from taxes levied and used by local government entities to compensate farmers and/or herders for any property damage.
- c. The local government should start a peace education program to educate the populace about using peaceful methods to settle disputes.
- d. The security forces, particularly the police, must be fair and firm in their treatment of violent offenders.
- e. Communities and governments should work together to enhance security in the area around the villages in order to combat the threat of livestock rustling. More cooperatives and associations should be created by farmers and herders so they can represent their interests and speak with one voice. By requesting restitution from the appropriate authority whenever a conflict arises, this may lessen the incidence of "jungle justice."
- f. The government should establish a body tasked with keeping track of any early warning signals of conflict that should be addressed immediately.

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