



## CLIMATE CHANGE AND INTERNAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA: FULANI HERDSMEN-FARMERS CONFLICTS IN PERSPECTIVE

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### ABSTRACT

*The preponderance of internal security challenges such as Boko Haram insurgency, communal clashes, herders-farmers conflicts, agitations for resource control, and indigene-settler conflicts among others since the return to civil rule in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. The results of occurrences of these security challenges are massive loss of lives, destruction of properties and halting of important economic and social activities. The menace of pastoralist-farmers conflicts has recently taken a dangerous dimension with acquisition of sophisticated weapons. Incidents of killing, maiming, robbery, and intimidation by the herdsmen and their vengeful repercussions from the farmers have inflicted pains on the people thus creating serious security challenge. Therefore, this paper attempts to examine the menace of herdsmen and farmers conflicts with a view to identify its relationships with climate change that is sweeping across the country. Data were collected from secondary sources like journals, textbooks etc. and analyzed using qualitative methods. The paper adopted the frustration-aggression theory as a theoretical framework. The study reveals that the crises are related to environmental degradation caused by climate change and it militates against internal security, causes destruction of lives, loss of properties and unemployment. This paper recommended that the government should combat desertification engendered by climate change and encourage the cattle owners to set up colonies and that the farmers should keep off from annexing grazing lands allotted for grazing of cattle into farmlands.*

**Keywords:** Pastoralists-Farmers Conflict, Security Challenge, Climate Change, Frustration Aggression Theory

### INTRODUCTION

The danger constituted by Fulani herdsmen across different communities in Nigeria they migrate to in their quest for viable grazing postures and water for their cattle is at escalation point. The menace is becoming so alarming to the host communities of sedentary populations and therefore constituting a major internal security challenge for the country. The herdsmen attacks on the communities and farmlands have been on the increase recently. According to Akevi (2014) apart from Boko Haram, one recurrent security challenge that confronts many states in the country is the scourge of Fulani herdsmen. The attacks by the herdsmen on the sedentary communities have been increasing with each passing day. It is also reported that there have been escalations of attacks by Fulani herdsmen who usually kill natives of the invaded farming communities including women and children in various states across the country (Duroyaiye, 2014). Worst affected states include Benue, Nassarawa, Plateau, Taraba, Kaduna, Adamawa, Zamfara, Oyo, Imo, Cross-River and Enugu (Nte, 2016).

The mode of operation, combat readiness and weapon sophistication of the pastoralists gives them courage to attacks farmers who resist incursions of cattle into their farms. The conflict between Fulani herdsmen and host communities usually arise when grazing cattle are not properly controlled and consequently graze on cultivated plants like cassava, maize etc. in farms of host communities. Attempts by the owners of such farms to register their grievance of destruction of their livelihood (food crops and cash crops) by the cattle of Fulani herdsmen is always stoutly resisted thereby



degenerating into communal conflicts. When the communities attempt to moderate their activities or request their exit, the Fulani herdsmen become aggressive and attack the host community sometimes with the assistance of hired mercenaries (Nte, 2016). According to the latest Global Terrorism Index (GTI) (2015) Fulani Herdsmen are “believed to have killed at least 1,229 people in Nigeria in 2014.

The movement of the pastoralists from the northern to the southern regions of the country may not be unrelated with the climatic change that is fast sweeping across the country. Environmental degradation, shrinking of water bodies, deforestation and desertification are some of the harsh realities that push the pastoralists who depends on wandering for natural pastures and water to feed their cattle southwards in search of grazing pastures and water for their cattle. The communities they come into in search of these resources often perceived them as intruders and threat to their means of livelihood which is farming thereby creating strained relationship between the pastoralists and the farmers.

Therefore, the primary objective of this paper is to examine the menace of farmers-herders conflicts in Nigeria and determine its linkage to climate change and environmental degradation as internal security challenge. The paper also recommends appropriate measures to reduce the incidence of farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria. This paper collects data from secondary source of information and uses qualitative method of data analysis to analyses the data. Also, frustration-aggression theory was used as a theoretical framework. The paper is divided into five sections. Section one deals with introduction, section two focuses on conceptual clarification, section three addresses theoretical framework, section four dwells on the nexus between climate change and the farmers –herders conflict in Nigeria and section five deal with conclusion and recommendations.

## CONCEPTUAL LITERATURE

### Climate Change

The concept of climate change has not been precisely defined in the literature and it remained largely fluid. It is taken to refer to an average increase in the earth temperature, which in turn causes changes in climate. It is a change in statistical distribution of weather patterns or in time variations of weather when that change lasts for an extended period of time- from decades to millions years (Otegwu, Mahmoud and Ogoh, 2014). The major concern on the issue of climate change today is global warming and certain human activities have been identified as primary causes behind its unfolding. Based on overwhelming scientific consensus, the major human activities that were responsible for climate change (global warming) are human use of (burning) fossil fuels such as oil and coal, which releases carbon-dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and other greenhouse gases into the air. The gases trap heat within the atmosphere, which can have a range of effects on ecosystem including rising sea levels, severe weather events, droughts, that render landscapes more susceptible to wildfires and have impacts on plants, wildlife and humans. Other human activities, such as agriculture, deforestation, overgrazing, bush burning etc. also contribute to the proliferation of greenhouse gases and cause climate change.

The global average temperature near the earth surface has risen during the last 100 years. The earth average temperature has risen up to 1.4 F over the past century and is expected to rise as much as 11.5 F over the next (Otegwu et al, 2014). That might not seem like a lot, but even small increase in earth temperature caused by climate change can have severe effects on the ecosystem and human security. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (2014) asserts that the global warming since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century for the most parts can be blamed on the increase in anthropogenic greenhouse gas concentrations through the green house effects.



Climate change is an adverse environmental phenomenon that is causing enormous concern all over the world. It refers to some anomalies in the climate system that is a result of human activities. Climate change refers to some observable variations in the climate system that are attributable to human (anthropogenic) activities, especially those that alter the atmospheric composition of the earth and ultimately lead to global warming (Idowu, Ayoola, Opele and Ikenweiwe, 2011).

### **Conflict**

The concept of conflict refers to a confrontation between two or more parties aspiring towards incompatible or competitive means or ends. *Conflicts* occur primarily as a result of a clash of interests in the relationship between parties, groups or states, either because they are pursuing opposing or incompatible goals (Oyeniya, 2011). Conflicts are unavoidable aspects of human interaction. They arise from the pursuit of divergent interests, goals and aspirations by individuals or groups. They are an expression of tensions and incompatibilities between different, mutually independent parties with regard to their respective needs, interests and values. These conflicts are liable to lead to crises and destructive escalations affecting whole societies primarily during phases of profound socioeconomic change and political transition (Ropers, 2002).

Conflict is also defined as opposition among social entities directed against one another, it is distinguished from competition and defined as opposition among social entities independently striving for something of which the resources are inadequate to satisfy all (Wright, 1951). Two points which are directly related to conflict analysis and management can be deduced from this definition. One is that contrary to the old perspective which regards conflict as natural, it is not inevitable, only competition can be so regarded. Secondly, conflict and competition are two points of a continuum on which conflict represents aggravated competition. In other words conflict arises when disagreement emerging from competition cannot be resolved. It follows therefore that conflict management has to begin with and include management of supposedly simple competition. The other point that can be inferred from Wright's (1951) definition is that conflicts are themselves processes that tend to degenerate from non-violent to violent and from crisis to full-scale war.

Conflict take on a wide variety of forms and have been classified based on the intensity or scale of violence, structural and character of parties in conflict (such as class, ethnic, groups, religious group, racial group, and so on) and manifesting a distinct spatial character (such as national, regional, inter-state or international). However, non-violent conflict has the potential to become violent if the regulatory mechanism is ineffective. Wright (1951) also opines that war is a type of conflict, thus, by understanding conflict we may learn about the probable characteristics of war under different conditions and methods most suitable for regulating, preventing, and winning wars. Wright (1951) proceeds to give two senses in which war could be understood, that is, in the legal sense, war is considered a situation during which two or more political groups are equally entitled to settle conflict by armed force. Whereas in the sociological sense, which is of ordinary usage, war refers to conflicts among political groups carried on by armed forces of considerable magnitude.

### **Internal Security**

Internal security is the act of keeping peace within borders of a sovereign state or other self-governing territories generally by upholding the national law and defending against internal security threats. Responsibility for internal security may range from police to paramilitary forces and in exceptional circumstances the military itself. Internal security is defined as the process of keeping peace and maintaining safety within a state or nation.

In its broader sense, internal security is the continuing guarantee provided by the state to all its citizens to live and work in a safe, secure and stable environment-duly protected against dangers from within the country or across its borders. In the past two decades the maintenance of internal



security has been a cause for serious concern which sometimes, have been graver than that which traditionally relate to safeguarding the country' sovereignty and territorial integrity against external aggression.

For Arase (2018) Internal security, is concerned with internal threats and is all state actions directed at enmeshing, upholding and deploying national laws, strategies, policies and state law enforcement agencies towards the maintenance of peace, law and order; safeguarding citizens from fear or threats to their values, livelihood, liberty, lives and property within a country's territory. While there are usually several secondary law enforcement agencies that are statutorily empowered to advance the internal security interests of a nation, the Police is commonly acknowledged as the lead agency within the internal security framework of any nation. Internal security has to do with the process connected with alleviation of any kind of threat to man and his cherished values. It is such an important concept that every state desires. This is why Bodunde (2014) asserts that "internal security can be seen as the freedom from or absence of those tendencies which could undermine internal cohesion and the cooperate existence of a country and its ability to maintain its vital institution for the promotion of its core values and socio-political and economic objection as well as meet the legitimate operation of the people" (Bodunde, Ola and Afolabi, 2014).

### **Fulani Herdsmen**

Fulani herdsmen or Fulani pastoralists are nomadic or semi-nomadic herders whose primary occupation is raising livestock (Iro, 1994). Fulani herdsmen engage in both random and planned transhumance movements. Random movements are usually taken by the pure nomadic Fulani herdsmen while planned movements are taken by the semi-nomadic pastoralists. A primary reason for migratory nature of the herdsmen is to reach areas with abundant grass and water for the cattle (Iro, 1994).

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This paper adopted Frustration-aggression theory to explain the herdsmen-farmers conflicts in Nigeria. The theory is propounded by John Dollard; Leonard Willey. Doob; Masser Miller; Mowrer Orval Hobert; Sears Robert in 1939 but further developed and expanded by Miller in 1948, Yates in 1962 and Berkowitz 1963. The theory is the most common explanation for violent behaviour stemming from inability to fulfill needs. Theorists who rely on this explanation use the psychological theories of motivation and behaviour, as well as frustration and aggression (Anifowose 1982).

The thrust of the theory is that aggression is always the consequences of frustration from inability to fulfill needs (Dougherty and Pfaltzgrate Jr, 1990). The frustration theory states that aggression increases if a person feels that he or she is being blocked from achieving a goal (Dollard, Doob, Miller; Mowrer, Sears, 1939). The theory therefore postulates that conflict is the outcome of frustration, where the legitimate desires of an individual are denied either intentionally or unintentionally by the way society is being structured, the feeling of disappointment leads to such a person to express his anger through violence. This frustration can then turn into anger and then aggression when something triggers it. When expectation fails to meet attainment, the tendency is for people to confront others they can hold responsible for frustrating their ambition or someone on whom they can take out their frustrations. This is the central argument of Gurr (1970) that "the greater the discrepancy, however marginal, between what is sought and what seem attainable, the greater will be the chances that anger and violence will result."

The application of this theory is that the increase in the clashes between herdsmen and farmers is associated with frustration the two parties experience as a result of non-fulfillment of their needs.



The inability of herdsmen to secure and have access to land and water for rearing of cattle has led to frustration on the side of the herdsmen while the farmers see the herdsmen as intruders in their communities who are there to destroy their farm products, thus, frustrating all their effort for survival. This made the herdsmen to engage in violent activities whenever they experience any resistance by farmers because they regard farmers as potential enemies that militate against their survival. Therefore, the frustrated herders and farmers resort to use of violence to actualize and fulfill their needs, which leads to destruction of lives and properties, displacement of farmers and reduction in agricultural production.

## **CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE CONFLICT BETWEEN HERDSMEN AND FARMERS IN NIGERIA**

Climate change in Nigeria has led to increasing fluctuation in temperature, rainfall, storms, and sea levels. These climatic challenges, left unaddressed, had thrown already stressed resources such as land and water into even shorter supply. Moreover, poor responses to resource shortages could have serious negative secondary effects, including more sickness and hunger, fewer jobs, and poor economic growth, which in turn could open the door to more violence. Indeed, in a few conflict-prone states in the arid north, this sequence is probably playing out already (Odoh & Chilaka, 2012).

More heat and less rain, as well as drought as presently experienced in the north have implications for climate conflict, but they will first lead to factors that will trigger climate conflict such as, first, land scarcity. According to Aaron (2011), the combination of more heat plus less rain raises the specter of widespread desertification, especially in northern Nigeria. According to some estimates, fully two-thirds of Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kano, Kaduna, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, Yobe, and Zamfara states could turn desert or semi-desert in the twenty-first century. Already the Sahel creeps south by approximately 1,400 square miles a year, swallowing whole villages and government geological data show a 400 percent increase in sand dunes over twenty years (Odoh & Chilaka, 2012).

In Nigeria, many communal clashes are actually struggle over either the control of land or mineral resources or both. In the northern and middle parts of the country, the cereal-productive Sudan savannah ecology is transiting to pure Sahel and the influence of the Sahara is increasing southwards. In the same vein, the root and tuber productive ecology of the Guinea Savannah is giving way to Sudan Savannah grassland. The predominant Fulani herdsman of the lower Sahel and Sudan savannah ecologies is now moving south to states such as Nasarawa, Kogi, Abuja, Kwara, Plateau, Benue who are close to the Guinea Savannah and Forest belt of the South to find greener pasture for his herds. This is not acceptable to the root and tuber farmers of these northern states who are close to the Guinea Savannah that is already farming close to the climatic margin of cultivation. They have the fears that Fulani herds will destroy their farmlands. The natural result is clash over right to the lands, a pattern seen across the Sahel that experiences drought, feed and water shortages caused partly by desertification and drought which have sent nomadic pastoralists, most of them ethnic Fulanis, wandering south to some northern states close to the Guinea Savannah, outside their normal grazing routes. At the same time, a mix of weather-related factors has pushed farmers to cultivate more land each year, leaving wanderers fewer places to water and graze their stock (Odoh & Chilaka, 2012).

A climatic and environmental consultant known as Kabiru Yammama is of the view that the effects of climate change are partly to blame for the disputes between Fulani herdsmen and the farmers. Northern nomadic communities are increasingly moving southwards as climate change turns their grazing land into desert. He further noted that about 35 percent of land that was cultivable 50 years ago is now desert in 11 of Nigeria's northernmost states: Borno, Bauchi, Gombe, Adamawa,



Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Yobe, Zamfara, Sokoto and Kebbi, and the livelihoods of some 15 million pastoralists in northern Nigeria are threatened by decreasing access to water and pasture-shortages linked to climate change. This is not surprising because according to a 2008 National Meteorological Agency study, the rainy season in northern Nigeria has dropped to an average of 120 days down from 150 days 30 years ago, cutting crop yields by 20 percent (“Nigeria: Nomad-farmer clashes increase as pasture shrinks” 2011).

Nte (2016) opined that the most fundamental reason for the migration of herdsmen to other areas is desert encroachment (desertification) of the Sahel region caused by climate change. He also stated that Climate change destroys and depletes natural resources. This is because a lot of communities are heavily dependent on natural resources which are very crucial for individual wellbeing. Climate change significantly undermines individual livelihoods and community growth thereby undermining the capacity of state to provide social services and economic opportunities requisite for state development and stability. The lack of opportunities to sustain livelihood makes indigenes of such communities very susceptible to conflicts.

Climate change is therefore, a major contributor to communal conflict in Nigeria and other third world countries. The Fulani herdsmen are completely dependent on resources of the natural environment and this makes them go all out to get these resources thereby making them susceptible to resistance in which case they fight back and communal conflicts ensue. This is subscribed to by Barnett and Neil (2008) who argues that “there are different levels of vulnerability to climate change. Those impacted most are likely to be those who depend on natural resources and ecosystem services for their livelihoods”. Therefore, Fulani herdsmen have most likely become the victim of climate change.

According to Omoche (2018) the feud between the Fulani herders and the other tribes in Nigeria is a result of climate change. He maintains that the Fulani herdsmen are nomadic and habitually migratory, moving annually from north to south in search of grazing fields for their herds. However, the movement which used to be seasonal has been altered due to expansive desertification, drought and unchecked deforestation in Northern Nigeria. The herdsmen now seek greener pasture southwards. As their migration intensifies, so also do violent clashes over grazing lands between local farmers in the south and postural herdsmen, who are guilty of devouring crops and forcefully appropriating lands. He also explains that the worsening climatic condition engender occurrences of natural disaster like never before, hunger owing to drought; migration, land and territorial disputes. This is because of limited natural resources available, and groups go to war over water, vegetation and sustenance.

In an article entitled “climate change and Fulani herdsmen-farmers’ clashes” Odogwu (2018) explains that Fulani herdsmen is an ethnic group in Nigeria whose lifestyles, culture and heritage are endangered as a result of climate change. They are nomadic group that habitually and seasonally migrate with their cattle from north to south in search of pasture but due to high level and rapid desert encroachment in the north their movement pattern has been markedly altered. They now move to south and remain there virtually all the year round as a result of such migration conflict ensued between the local farmers and the herdsmen.

In another study by Udeh (2018) it is maintained that the seasonal movement pattern of the Fulani herdsmen has been markedly altered due to desertification and drought in northern Nigeria. As a result of migration violent clashes occur over grazing lands between farmers in the south and the pastoralists from the north. He also posited that the emerging conflict is compounded further by the shrinking of Lake Chad from 45,000 square kilometers to 3000 square kilometers in less than three decades. The consequences of which, according to United Nations, is the displacement of about



10.5 million people. It is the combination of these factors that has push herders from northeastern Nigeria, the region closest to the Lake Chad, to the southern parts of the country and causing farmers-herders clashes. Farming communities in Benue, Kogi, Taraba and Nasarawa in North-Central and Enugu, Abia and Anambra in the South-east have incurred the highest casualties (Udeh, 2018).

The government response has ignored climate change as the source of conflict exacerbating the herdsman grazing crisis. Historically since the existence of Nigeria, the Fulani herdsman have graze their herds in the north and intermittently in other areas. But incremental drought with resultant desert encroachment forced them to regularly look southward for greener grazing areas (Udeh, 2018).

For Oguamanam (2018) the herder-farmer crisis demonstrates the reality of climate change and resource control interface and its embedded security challenges. The scarcity of water and shrinking of grazing fields in the desert north appear to be pushing herders southwards to grasslands of the Savannah and forest. The skirmishes over natural resources, namely water and grazing fields, could become more dire as the impact of climate change takes hold. This struggle has significant security implication for Nigeria and other African countries. It resolution requires thoughtful intervention which should include a combination of policy options rooted in technology and innovation, as well as political and sustainability policy responses.

A study by Halliru (2015) focused on the implication of climate change between cattle rearers and farmers in the desert prone line in northern Nigeria which leads to unavoidable crisis and insecurity in Nigeria and Africa in general. The study found that the consequences of climate change has untold security implication on the life of Nigerian; conflicts in the country have been traced to the doorsteps of two strange groups that are forced to live together as a result of unfavourable climatic condition in the northern parts of the country. The conflict between Fulani herdsman and farming communities is linked to disputes over grazing land and it has become frequent in parts of central and northern Nigeria in recent years. The study also revealed that population increase takes over grazing land as a result of development and the path of animals (known as Burtali) in the past are now taken over by farmers; desert encroachment has taken over vast farmland and the quest for greener pasture usually brings Fulani herdsman into crisis with the local communities.

## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

It is revealed in this study that climate change in Nigeria has led to increasing fluctuation in temperature, rainfall, storms and sea levels, this has thrown already stressed resources such as land and water into shorter supply and this has open the door for more violence between the farmers and the Fulani herdsman who solely depend on those resources for their livelihood. The research also revealed that a combination of more heat and less rain as well as drought caused by climate change in the north triggers climate conflicts which borders on land scarcity and widespread desertification. As a result of climate change many communal clashes between the farmers and the pastoralists are actually struggle over either the control of land or mineral resources such as grazing field or farmlands and water.

It is also found out that the fundamental reason for migration of herdsman to other areas is desert encroachment of the sahel region caused by climate change because it destroys and depletes natural resources. Climate change is major contributor to communal conflict in Nigeria. The worsening climatic condition engender occurrences of natural disaster such as hunger owing to drought, migration, land and territorial disputes. The lifestyles, culture and heritage of the Fulani herdsman as an ethnic group are endangered as a result of climate change. Their seasonal movement pattern has been markedly altered due to desertification and drought in northern Nigeria. As a result of



migration violent clashes occur over grazing lands between farmers in the south and the pastoralists from the north.

## CONCLUSION

Drought, desertification and land scarcity in Northern Nigeria engendered by climate change have sent the Fulani herdsmen wandering southwards in search of greener pastures and water for their cattle. This often times causes misunderstanding and conflicts between the herdsmen and the local farmers who depend on the land resources as their means of livelihood through farming. Furthermore, the effects of climate change have pushed farmers to cultivate more land each year, leaving nomadic pastoralists fewer places to water and graze their livestock. This contestation between the farmers and pastoralists over the land and water for consumption over the years has degenerated into chaos and fierce conflict between the two. In addition to this, high level of drought, desertification and rainfall shortages has rendered the hitherto good grazing lands and farmlands barren and unproductive for both the farmers and the herders. This also escalates the resource scarcity and heightens the tensions occurring between the farmers and herders.

We have, therefore, examined the menace of Fulani herdsmen and farmers conflicts in Nigeria, traces its nexus to climate change and possible implication to internal security. Violent activities as a result of the conflicts have led to destruction of lives and properties, displacement of farmers from their homes, decline in agricultural production and output, massive unemployment and result in strained relationship between the herdsmen and host communities. Another implication of the conflict is the degeneration of the situation into other vices such as kidnapping, hostage taking among others. All these problems pose serious threat to internal security.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations would help to reduce the incidence of herdsmen and farmers conflicts engendered by climate change in Nigeria.

1. The government should invest more in encouraging the fight against desertification in the north and putting machinery on ground for mitigating the effects of climate change.
2. Environmental governance in Nigeria must be robust enough to institutionalize regulatory frameworks that recognize the dangers of temperature fluctuation, drought, floods among others to the environment and the implications they have to internal security. There is an overwhelming need to mitigate these problems and to restore balance to the degraded ecosystems to ensure agricultural productivity and sustainable development.
3. The government should do its utmost to ensure security of lives and property by making sure that competitions over scarce resources do not provoke crises and instability.
4. Government should consider building of cattle colonies in each state around the country in order to tame the pastoralists from unnecessary wandering which often time is the main cause of the farmers-herders conflict in the country. This will also put the herders at rest and will make them even more productive. The farmers will also be free from destruction of their crops by the cattle of the pastoralists.

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