

INITIATING SUSTAINABLE CATTLE INDUSTRY IN NIGERIA: THE SAUDI ARABIAN EXPERIENCE AND IMPLICATIONS FOR NIGERIA ECONOMY

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ABSTRACT

One of the vexed and perhaps the most discussed issues in Nigeria today apart from poverty, and economic recession is insecurity. For the past 17 years Nigeria has seen or know no peace owing to insecurity challenges plaguing the nation. It is either the Niger Delta militants are reeking havoc on oil pipelines, or Boko Haram from North-east, or the pro-Biafran agitators from South-east, or the crude method in which Fulani cattle herdsmen slaughter, maimed, sacked villages in some states in Nigeria. The rampaging Fulani herdsmen are causing a lot of havoc in Nigeria leading to insecurity of lives in some states of the federation. The paper discovers that the Fulani cattle herdsmen are armed with sophisticated weapons, with this, use their animals to destroy farmlands in some communities in Nigeria, and the reaction of the farmers pitied them into warfare. The cattle herdsmen on the other hand accused the locals of cattle rustling and killing of their men. In the process, there was tension and conflict, the result showed that the Fulani herdsmen had killed, maimed, raped, kidnapped, abducted many locals. The main killing fields are Taraba, Plateau, Nasarawa, Benue, Gombe, Ekiti, Delta, Edo, Abia, Imo among others. The paper recommends modern ranching in Nigeria, and the adopting of Saudi Arabian method of importing fodder for the animals. This work is theoretical, using mainly the secondary sources and complement with historical analysis as its methodology.

INTRODUCTION

For many years now, most communities in Nigeria especially in the Middle Belt down to the Mangrove in the South-South at one time or another had a bone to pick with the Fulani cattle herders over the destruction of their farmlands by the rampaging cattle in search of pasture. This frontal destruction of the farmlands has brought the locals and the herders in conflict coalition that has resulted in permanent skirmishes. In the process many lives have been lost, property mainly food crops and dwelling houses have been destroyed, and weighing the lost in monetary terms run into millions of Naira. This ugly phenomenon has been responsible for the displacement of thousands of people in some localities mainly in the Middle Belt states of Benue, Plateau and Nasarawa. The herdsmen have caused other forms of violent acts such as raping, kidnapping and abductions. The herdsmen have dislocated families – produced orphans, widows and widowers and by extension caused social problems. This is unhealthy for coexistence and the growing economy.

It is widely acknowledged that the cattle industry has contributed to the growth of the economy and by extension the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP). It has provided employment to thousands of Nigerians through the use and application of cattle related products. It has also provided food for the growing population through meat and milk among other things. In spite of these contributions, the negative activities of these herdsmen towards peoples farms has become a vexed issue in the Nigerian state and therefore needed to be

urgently addressed. This paper concerns itself with how to do away with the primitive method of cattle industry – that of the cattle farmer roaming with his animals. As modern ranching is practised in other climes such as Brazil, New Zealand, Australia and Saudi Arabia through modern method can also be introduced in Nigeria. Conflict is a bad egg, that if allowed to hatch may be a source of friction among families that share the same heredity. Nigeria needs peace to grow and develop.

History and development of primitive cattle industry in Nigeria

The primitive cattle industry is controlled and managed by the nomadic Fulanis. It has been their way of life from the beginning. They have been in this profession for hundreds of years. The Fulanis are said to have migrated to Nigeria about the 6th and 7th century AD (Stride and Ifeka, 1973). Iloeje (1972) 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. Some Fulani's are still nomadic and others live a sedentary life. However, the issue of migration from the North probably suggests that they came into the country either from Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger or even the Senegambia region. All these suggest that they are immigrants. It is postulated that the original home of the Fulani may have been the Senegal river valley and the Eastern Guinea area, and they expanded eastwards from about the 12th century (Kajubi, Lewis; Taiwo, 1974). Indeed, 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 have since learnt to live with the Hausa and even intermarry 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 practical 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 and 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 (Kajubi, Lewis, Taiwo, 1974).

Main Causes of the South-Ward Migration of the Cow Fulani beyond Sudan and Sahel Savanna

The dryness in northern Nigeria and beyond to include nations such as Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, Mali is not a recent phenomenon. It has been a condition as far back as 1000BC. The impact of the desiccation of the Sahara Desert has much influence on the adjoining environment south of the desert. However, with the recent changes in climatic structure it tends to worsen the situation.

Sudan and Sahel Savannah are regions of low rainfall. These regions have 3 – 5 months of rainy period and are equally characterized by high temperatures and intense heat. Beyond this, other parts of Nigeria especially from the Mangrove in the South to the Guinea Savannah usually have rainfall almost throughout the year and grasses for animals are in abundance. In this connection, for the Sudan and Sahel regions, the rainy period does not usually sustain vegetation, hence lack of fodder for the feeding of cattle. Again, in some years rain usually come late making the region drier than usual thus, setting in drought. For instance drought was expedienced in 1983, 1992, 2004 etc among other years. This condition usually move the Fulani Bororoje to “drive” their cattle southwards in search of pastures. In

the process, these animals graze on peoples farmlands thus drawing conflict between the farmers and herdsman.

Indeed, the general degradation of the environment either as a result of desert encroachment, wind or water erosion, deforestation, poor farming methods, and other primitive methods of land use would automatically change the landform and it becomes inimical for vegetation growth and fodder production. This change in landform characteristics often compel the cow Fulani to look elsewhere for fodder so as to protect and maintain their animals and by extension run into conflict with the local farmers.

The Main Causes of Conflict between the Herders and Farmers (Locals)

The Fulani herdsman and local communities have coexisted for many years without much friction. If there had been friction it was minimal and they were able to settle their differences amicably. But recently between 2011 and 2016 the situation altered itself giving rise to feuds of various dimensions. However, the bone of contention is land. The Fulani herdsman, constrained by dwindling vegetative grazing land in the North, herd their cattle openly, moving them to other parts of the country for grazing. Grazing constitutes a problem to local farmers, because in the process of finding feed (fodder) the cattle would ravage the farm produce in a manner that is painful to the farmer when considering the labour and lost of produce thus pitch them into warfare. Many farmers have gone bankrupt due to the destruction of their investment by the cattle. This is very difficult to quantify in monetary terms. Apart from the destruction of farmlands, the herdsman sometimes engage in raping the locals, kidnapping, abductions and robbery. On the other hand, the Fulani herdsman claimed that they have been losing their cattle to rustlers, thus they for instance 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, p. 22). In July 2012, they killed a retired Nigerian Army Brigadier – General, Sylvester Irah on Lagos – Ibadan expressway as a result of anger of the Fulanis caused by cattle rustlers (Sunday Punch, October, 18, 2015, p. 16).

The Catholic Bishops of Makurdi, Otukpo, Gboko and Katsina – Ala Dioceses placed that the crisis might be political. Indeed history in other climes, reminds that farmers relationship and herdsman are always problematic when not properly handled as even observed in Chad, Cameroon, Central African Republic and the Sudan (Thursday Punch, March 13, 2014, p. 2). That from 2010 to date, Benue State in particular has witnessed endless conflicts between Fulani herdsman and Tiv, Idoma and Agatu farmers.

Politically too, the Middle Belt Forum viewed that attack by the herdsman as part of the plot to destabilize the North-Central. The coordinator of the Forum in Plateau State saw that attack on Governor Suswan on March, 2014 as a calculated attempt to destabilize the North-Central (Thursday Punch, March 13, 2014, p. 2). It may be political, but since none has come out to give information on that as it should be, all are part of the rumours in the polity.

History of Ranching other Nations

Transhumance is not a new phenomenon. It has been a phenomenon experienced in other climes. Just as it breeds conflict in Nigeria, it had been experienced in places such as the USA, Saudi Arabia, the Philippines and for that reason they urgently sought for a lasting solution. In this connection, therefore, as far back as 1874, the United States cattle owners, after admitting the damaging clashes between them and farmers, introduced ranching, which

is the practice of raising herds of animals on large tracts of land. Currently the USA is one of the leading countries in the world in livestock production with 89.8 million heads of cattle. Other countries with excellent ranch system or culture are Australia, Argentina, Uruguay, New Zealand etc. The Australian Bureau of statistics stated that cattle – rearing is “a strong part of the Australian economy”, and placed the figure of cattle in the country at 29.3 million heads. The country has the world’s largest ranch – the Anna Creek, which covers 24,000 square kilometers. The European Union has 23.4 million heads of cattle. In Argentina, ranches also serve as tourist attractions. It is postulated that, the ranching and livestock industry grow faster than any other agricultural sector in the world (Sunday Punch, October 18, 2015, p. 16).

Importance of Ranching in an Economy

Ranching industry is very important in an economy. Apart from the provision of milk, cheese, beef and indeed part of the food, it also creates employment to millions of people in an economy where it is practised. Cattle industry also adds value in the GDP of nations. It also attract tourists in climes such as the USA, Argentina, Australia, Paraguay etc.

In Nigeria, the cattle industry is not as productive as would be expected, because the cattle trek for long distances in the arid zone, thus, provided approximately one litre of milk per day, compared to 10 litres per day in the Philippines, 40 litres per day for Israel’s “super cows” where application of modern technology has made her the global leader in dairy production (Punch, Friday, February 12, 2016, p. 20). Cattle contribution to Nigeria’s GDP is very low when compared to countries such as Israel, the United States of America, the Philippines among others; thus Nigeria’s cattle industry contributed for instance 5 per cent to GDP in 1993 and less than 2 per cent in 2014. In terms of consumption as food, it is postulated that an average Nigerian, for instance consumed 5 grams of animal protein in 2006, while Food and Agricultural Organization recommends 35 grams per day. Well, the consumption pattern may differ owing to many factors such as income, poverty and availability of the dairy products.

Besides, it is expected that if reforms are made in the grazing industry through ranching and application of modern technology, “the new farming culture” as some experts put would create another two million direct and indirect jobs: this apparently would add much to the economy. This is to because the population of Nigerians engaging in cattle industry beginning from the herders to distributive meat sellers down to leather are in millions (Punch, Friday, February 12, 2016, p. 20).

Main Conflict Zones

As earlier chronicled, the Fulani Bororoje usually move southwards largely due to land degradation, bringing them into constant conflicts with farmers whose farms and crops are ravaged by grazing cattle. The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) says Nigeria loses 2,168 kilometres of cattle rangeland each year; 400,000 hectares of arable land are lost to deforestation annually (Punch, Friday, February 2016, p. 20).

The clashes between the Fulani herdsman and the local communities have taken a new colouration, it would appear or invariably it has become ethnic and sectarian feuds but with no particular ethnic group except the Fulani and others. The killing fields are mainly Benue, Plateau, Taraba, Gombe, Nasarawa, Kaduna States in the North, and have extended to

southern states such as Edo, Osun, Oyo, Ogun, Enugu, Cross River, Delta, Akwa Ibom and Rivers (Punch, Friday, February 12, 201, p. 20).

Impact of Fulani Herdsmen on the Locals in Nigeria

For a long period now, Nigeria as a nation has not seen or know peace. It is either the Niger Delta militancy in the Niger Delta, or the Boko Haram in the North-east Nigeria, or movement for Independent Republic of Biafra, or indeed armed robberies and the kidnapping palaver in the south-east, rape and other related violence. However, the clash between the cattle Fulani and the locals have caused a lot of problems in the Nigerian state. It has been responsible for the displacement of the local people in various parts of Nigeria especially in the Middle Belt and South-east Nigeria. For instance in February 2014 in Taraba State, over 20 farming communities in Takum, Ussa and Wukari Local Government Areas were burnt down and nearly 100,000 farmers displaced. In Benue State, the herdsmen attacked some villages in Logo, Jato Aka in Kwande Local Government Area. Indeed, for now, Agatu, Gwer, parts of Makurdi, Guma, Logo, and Kwande Local Government are alleged to be under consistent attacks by Fulani herdsmen. The attack it is believed is a daily affair with 200 communities destroyed and over 200,000 farmers displaced. Those areas mentioned represent flashpoints of the Fulani invasion (Torlumun, 2014). With the growing insecurity in most farming communities, it signals that there will be food insecurity not only in the Middle Belt and other states attacked by the herdsmen but other Nigerian peoples who depend on these states for food supply. Aside from the displacement of people, hundreds of people are said to have lost their lives. For instance, in February 2014, in Benue State, Tor Tiv's ancestral home was burnt down and 8 people lost their lives. In all over 2000 people were killed in 2015 in clashes between Fulani herdsmen and local communities in Benue, Nasarawa, and Plateau States (Punch, Friday, February 12, 2016. P. 20).

Apart from the destruction of farmlands, schools activities in those areas were disrupted. Old and young people were looking for safety from the hands of these cruel herdsmen. The impact of these attacks are enormous in school enrolment as many children are out of school. In this connection many children especially in the primary and secondary schools have been dislocated perhaps permanently thus, drawing them backwards. This is odd for the growing children. The Taraba Tiv people Association, Abuja chapter on March 11, 2014, stated that the attacks have so far displaced 24,000 people and destroyed produce worth millions of naira. In other words the Fulani clashes with the locals have sent some people to early graves, created orphans, widows and widowers; many have become poor and by extension leads to food insecurity.

Causes of Attack on those States and the Fulani Herdsmen Defence

It has been discussed in many circles that the growing sophistication of the crisis in Plateau, Benue, Nasarawa and Taraba are the handiwork of Boko Haram. Attacking those places was a strategy to distract the military's attention in the North-east to allow the insurgents reinforce for more devastating attacks in the Middle Belt (Torlumun, 2014). This was the period when the Nigerian security operations in the North-east confronted the Boko Haram terrorists frontally. Does that argument still holds now that the Boko Haram elements have been cleared in Adamawa, Taraba and a greater part of Bornu? Perhaps, it may or may not. But certainly and to a large extent the Fulani wants to push the locals southward and have a permanent area to graze their cattle.

Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders' Association of Nigeria. MACBAN, in February 2014, put that the herdsmen were fighting in self-defence. They called the Federal government to institute a committee to investigate the remote and immediate causes of the crisis so as to unravel the truth. "We have graphic records, facts and pictures of most of the mayhems and catastrophes that herdsmen have suffered in the hands of farmers" (Torlumun, 2014).

According to the national vice president of the cattle Breeders Association, Alhaji Hussaini Bosso, that their problem began when the former governor of Benue State, Gabriel Suswam announced that he did not want them herdsmen in the state. Bosso added that, in Benue alone, the Association lost 82 herdsmen, and 6,700 cattle, 43 Fulani and 533 cattle. Between January and March 2014, they lost in all 134 cattle Fulani and 11,915 heads of cattle to the clashes in Benue, Plateau and Taraba states. This evil were caused by the Tiv people (Punch, March 13, 2014, p.2).

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Nigeria: A Comparison

The kingdom of Saudi Arabia has a population of about 10 million people. It has almost the same climatic feature like the Sahel region of Nigeria. It has an average annual rainfall of about 250mm a year because rainfall is scarce. Most of the land is bare sand, gravel or rock. There are no permanent rivers. An average July temperatures are 25⁰c – 30⁰c (Kajubi, Lewis, Taiwo, 1974). In the past, the Bedouin people followed herds of camel, goats and sheep. Today that experience in Saudi Arabia is past. The Sahel region of Nigeria has a three month rainy period of about 400mm. Most of the land is bare sand. There are two permanent rivers. An average monthly temperature of about 21⁰c – 24⁰c.

From the above, since much of the cattle, goats and sheep are reared in the Sahel region of Nigeria, and comparatively Saudi Arabia and Nigeria has a lot in common. The central issue is that Saudi Arabia imports grass from Sudan and the United States, and that has enabled her to create one of the world's largest cattle ranches with 153,000 cows, selling milk to other Persian Gulf States (Friday Punch, February 12, 2016, p. 20).

According to the minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Audu, Ogbah, in Punch

A special grass cultivation programme is planned under which nutrient – rich forage will be available for cattle and other livestock. It calls for the supply of grass from across the country, including southern states, to feed the large population of cattle, goats and sheep found in northern states. Significantly, this is just one plank of Ogbah's solution to the age-long problem of cattle herding that has resulted in permanent warfare between the herders and farmers/local communities and frozen animal farming in its primitive state (Friday Punch February 12, 2016, p. 20).

The Ministers idea lies on the fact that forage for ranching in the North should be imported from the Southern part of Nigeria against Saudis import from Sudan and the United States. Perhaps the infrastructural conditions prevailing in Saudi Arabia are not obtained in Nigeria. It means the Minister's policy direction is good and a welcome one, but in climes that have institutional drive or infrastructures to drive the economy.

Infrastructural Comparison of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Nigeria

The kingdom of Saudi Arabia is an oil producing economy. It is the largest producer of crude oil. Oil was first produced in commercial quantity in May 1937 during the time of King Ibn

Saudi. Her chief income before oil was from pilgrims to Mecca. However, over the years the kingdom of Saudi Arabia received massive revenues from petroleum exports, especially during the oil shocks of 1973-74 and the Gulf War “palaver” of 1990s and 2003. It has used the fall-out to finance lofty infrastructural development and modernization programmes (Akpan, 2003).

Indeed, since 1970, Saudi Arabia came with series of economic development plans. For instance, the plans have been initially on a five-year duration spanning from 1970: the first plan (1970 – 75), the second plan (1975 – 80) which gulped \$142bn, the third plan (1980 – 85) which gulped \$235bn, the fourth plan (1985 – 90), and the fifth plan that lasted (1990 – 95) (Akpan, 2003). Through these plans, Saudi Arabia has been able to build infrastructures that compare favourably with the ones in advanced industrialized economies.

In the area of transport and communication, Saudi Arabia has lengthy and well-paved roads and its national bus operator, the Saudi Public Transport Company (SAPTCO) is heavily subsidized by the government. Recently, there is an expanding population which put pressure on existing infrastructure. In this connection, \$43.8 billion has been allocated for transport, telecommunication, with transport development in particular seen as essential to enhancing construction/industrial growth.

Saudi Arabia has several railway projects in the pipeline, for instance, which aims to support intra-regional trade and increase the country’s export capacity. The country has also completed the first metro rail network in the capital Riyadh, which is the world’s largest public transport system. The country has also embarked and completed six economic cities, including the 168 kilometer, \$75 billion King Abdullah Economic City in Rabigh (Akpan, 2003).

Additionally, the kingdom has one of the best airports in the world and the new Riyadh Airport is the largest in the world. The availability of modern airports has stimulated communications in the kingdom. Besides, all the seaports based on the Red Sea and the Gulf have undergone rapid expansion and modernization (Akpan, 2003). All these indices in the area of transport facilities showcase that the importation of grass and other fodder condiments for the animals (cattle) are done with ease. It means when fodder arrives from USA and other countries of import, it is urgently distributed to the ranches without headache and the supply is inelastic. By implication, the earlier tension, quarrel and destruction of farmlands had been curtailed and harmony restored.

Nigeria

The search for oil began in 1903 when the Mineral Survey Company pioneered mineralogical study of the country. But it was not until 1956, that Shell D’ Archy made history when oil exploitation began in Oloibiri. Oil production and exportation started in 1958. By that time, Nigeria entered the rank of oil producing nations (Gbadamosi, Kupoloku, Oluleye, 2007).

However, by 1970s Nigeria joined other nations in enjoying oil boom and Nigeria’s developmental aspiration was anchored on oil yet the proceeds from oil were squandered in the process. Indeed, few landmarks were made, it was from the oil money that the new capital of Nigeria Abuja was built. Between 1958 and 2016 Nigeria has made a capital receipts of ₦96 trillion oil revenue but comparatively nothing to show (Vanguard, Sunday, August 21, 2016 p. 10 – 11). With over 240,000 paved roads, most of them because of poor state cannot

be linked with some parts of the country especially in the south of Nigeria. Few seaports were constructed such as the Tin Can Island Port, Calabar Port, Burutu, Onne among others. Nigeria oil money also constructed few airports to international standard but the maintenance of these airports are appalling. Such airports include Murtala Mohammed International Airport, Lagos, Amino Kano International airport, Kano, Nnamdi Azikiwe International airport Abuja, Port Harcourt International airport among others.

In comparative terms, Nigeria is by far larger than Saudi Arabia in terms of landmass and population. But in terms of wealth, Saudi Arabia is richer than Nigeria. Thus by implication, importing fodder to feed animals in Saudi Arabia is cheaper and easier than doing same in Nigeria. This is so because infrastructural facilities such as good road network, airport, seaports facilities are good and better maintained in Saudi Arabia when compared with Nigeria. In Nigeria some roads cannot be linked especially during the rainy season, the airports are eyesore and seaports deplorable. It would be difficult to transport fodder from southern to Northern Nigeria though being the same country. But it is found that Saudi import fodder for the animals from other countries kilometers away, yet the animal are fed daily in their ranches without challenges. This is the situation and how do we cope with the circumstance?

In other climes such as the United States, Canada, Brazil, New Zealand, Argentina and even South Africa, have developed adequate railway system, road, air infrastructure in which fodder and other feeds are transported from one section of the country to another for animals. In other words forage crops are produced and supplied as demands come from one part of the state to another making use of the availability of good road – rail network. This has created job opportunities and added value to the economy. In Nigeria, there are poor infrastructural facilities. Nigeria's lack good roads, and in fact some roads are seasonal and connectivity is very poor. The rail system is poor and its functionality confined to few areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Transhumance is crude, yet it is a legitimate part of the economy. From Northern Nigeria to the south, cattle market is put at ₦324 billion annually. Nigeria with 19 million heads of cattle, Nigeria has the potential to produce enough beef for domestic consumption and for export (Punch Thursday, September 8, 2016, p. 20).

Indeed, before the ranching industry is achieved, it is necessary that Nigeria makes a law banning herding between 6pm and 7am daily. And for grazing ground, the herdsmen would purchase land from the owners. The law should also stipulate a stiff penalty for herdsmen carrying weapons while grazing. No Nigerian law has permitted any individual except law enforcement agents whose duty grants him the right to carry gun.

Ranching when established and managed will enhance security and curb cattle rustling. Migratory herding of cattle should be outlawed in every part of Nigeria as a way of cutting out the atrocities of livestock farmers and by extensions grow the economy and entrench national unity.

CONCLUSION

The challenges facing Nigeria as a developing economy are enormous. One of the most difficult challenges is the insecurity palavar. There is the Boko Haram and its destructive and

senseless killings especially in the north-east Nigeria. The militant insurgency in the Niger Delta struggling and agitating for resource control – in the process vandalize oil pipeline and gas facilities – further degrading the environment and driving the economy into doldrums. The agitation for resurrected Republic of Biafra in the south-east is tensed. In some states such as Benue, Gombe, Nasarawa, Plateau, Ekiti, Enugu, Taraba are becoming killing fields for the Fulani herdsmen. There are incessant attacks on farmers, destruction of farmlands and threat of all kinds by these “blood thirsty” cattle herdsmen. All these constitute part of the national insecurity. In farming producing states such as Benue, Nasarawa, Taraba, Plateau among others insecurity, insecurity has caused displacement of thousands of people from their ancestral homes; it has affected the enrolment and school attendance in both primary and secondary schools. It has pitted the Fulani and other ethnic nationalities as enemies. This does not augur well for a federated state like Nigeria. These challenges need to be taken headlong if Nigeria is to remain one entity.

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