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COMMUNITY POLICING: THE NEED FOR CONTAINMENT OF HERDERS-FARMERS CONFLICTS IN NIGERIAN STATES

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ABSTRACT

With the proliferation of state security agencies charged with specialized roles in the maintenance of law and order, the partial passage of Anti-Open Gracing laws by some states in Nigeria, herders-farmers conflicts have remained intractable. This study examined the need for establishment of community policing as an alternative measure to containing herders-farmers conflicts in Nigeria. Based on the content analysis of data gathered through secondary sources, anchored on eco-violence and superior aggression theories as framework of analysis, this work argues that given the structural arrangement and the command of the Nigeria Police that skewed the control of the Police in charge of internal security, law and order to the directive of the center, the nonchalant attitude of the Federal Government shows the unwillingness to formalize the informal security apparatus to contain the incessant conflicts that may have persisted. The study concluded that, with the prevailing structure of Nigeria's federalism and the posture of its present leadership; herders-farmers conflicts would remain intractable and a recurring experience. Therefore, it recommends amongst other measures, the need for repositioning of the apparatus of community policing to systematically cut across villages, clans and hamlets, as an imperative needed change to contain the menace of herdsman banditry terror acts.

Keywords: Security structure, occupational conflict, micro police, sustainable ranching, environment challenge.

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INTRODUCTION

In a world where peace and conflict are inherent parts of human nature, both give foundation to the theory of contradiction that explains the social equilibrium of human conduct in life. Life itself is regulated by two opposing forces; "peace and conflict", Peace is known to have been erected on the foundation of conflict, and vice versa (Nwolize, 2009). The mix in the two con-

cepts explains the rationale for human existence. The degree of conflict in the world today, seems to be at a disequilibrium with peace, and by through human's value has threatened and the fear of human extinction, domination, and conquest questions some of their actions. It is within this world of disequilibrium that the country Nigeria has found herself since independence with diverse forms of challenges ranging from po-

litical violence to religious and ethnic conflicts that can be attributed to either the structure of her political system or style of her political leadership.

Ethno-religious and political conflicts in Nigeria are intensifying in recent times and, there has been a dramatic surge in intolerant expressions on ethnic conflicts and political hatred. This has become particularly so with the hardening of ethno-political positions and the proliferation of ethnic militias that have unleashed various degrees of violence and terrorism on the society, its citizens and the institutions (Egwu, 2001). It can be categorically stated that insignificant efforts are yet to made to address the problem of ethno-religious conflicts that have become widespread in Nigeria since the return to democracy in 1999, and in some other parts of Africa as a whole (Adisa, and Abdulraheem, 2012; Halliru, 2012). Most related ethnic conflict in recent times in Nigeria as well as West African countries is herdsmen's wanton killing of other tribes. Herders-farmers conflict is understood as another rising ethno-religious and political conflict, targeted as ethnic cleansing either for religious fundamentalism or political conquest.

The repeated raids and attacks by the herdsmen all over the Nigeria states in no doubt, gives fear for ethnic domination or conquest; a common phenomenon of Nigeria political setting. Ethnic conflict, which was made manifest in the resource contestation between Fulani herdsmen and farmers in sub-African countries has undoubtedly become the bane of Nigerian development (Biemen, 2013; Irobi, 2005). The need as well as the failure to quell ethnic conflicts by the government has equally given rise to the strong and widely expressed suspicion

about the conflict. As such, little or nothing have been done by the political elites to address this ugly trend. Situation has roused the attention of scholars to the trends of ethnic dimension of the conflicts and many have indicted government following its inaction and failure to act promptly because of the political undertone that has crept into the phase of conflicts the Nigeria states. In Nigeria like other sub- West African region countries, ethnicity has been a dividing factor that continues to drive violent conflicts and civil strife within and among communities; destabilizing effort on sustainable development peace and security. The unending violent conflicts in Africa since the end of cold war in late 90s has remained one of the main challenges. This is possibly attributed to the sudden shift from inter-state to intra-state conflicts that characterized most part of the late 1980s through to the 21st century (Jaye et al., 2011).

Currently, Nigeria is heading towards the brick of anarchy, chaos and eventual collapse. This is owing to the fact that Herdsmen-Farmers' conflict is increasing geometrically, and no state in the country can be seen as an exception. Internal displacement is unprecedentedly increasing daily and adding to this menace; is the unconvincing manner with through which the Nigerian government is handling the deterrent measures in foiling these attacks. Despite being a multi-ethnic and religious country, Nigeria is still struggling for compatibility, trust and stability to nip such menace in the bud. As such, escalation of conflicts between rampaging herders and farmers irrespective of the proliferation of security agencies charged with specialized roles in the maintenance of law and order, security and safety of citizenry has remained a big challenge to the existence of government and the presence of its secu-

rity agencies (Okoli, 2015).

Though many factors have been arguably made by scholars as factors responsible for the occurrence of these conflicts such as: environmental problem as relating to climate change in the north region part given reason for the encroachment upon grazing routes in the Middle region belt. Militia attacks; poor government response to distress calls and failure to punish past and even present perpetrators as well as new legislations across some of the affected states to ban open grazing (ICG, 2018; ACAPS) without alternatives for the herdsmen. Consequently, this has led to increase in displacements and insecurity of lives, loss of property and even looming war and food crisis in Nigeria. It has further exacted heavy burden on law enforcement agents, posing bigger challenge as their capacity and their suspicion of being culpable to the escalation of many conflicts, while at the same time, distracting them from other important internal security missions like Boko Haram insurgency (ICG, 2018)

This study examined the causal factors with farmers and Fulani herders' conflicts. It explores the role of Nigerian security agencies with special attention on Nigeria Police as well as the call and the need for creation of voluntary policing outfits as informal police to effectively contain internal insecurity and conflicts. It examined the capacity of the Nigeria Police in preventing and controlling these conflicts judging from its enabling Act and chain of command; the complacency, as perceived complicity and conspiracy of the political elites, Government, and its central control of the security agencies, and leadership of states where the conflicts are prevalent were also interrogated. Attention was given to the need to repositioning voluntary policing outfits in states to be proactive and responsive in containing the ravag-

ing conflicts. The methodology is qualitative while data for the study were collected through secondary sources including in-depth interview of the selected key informants in the affected states with reviews from literature, internet materials, newspapers which were subjected to critical analysis.

Theoretical framework

The triangulation of Eco-violence and Late Arrival Superior Aggressive (LASAT) theories were adopted as framework of analysis in explaining the causes of herders-farmers conflicts, and why the conflicts have remained intractable to justify the need to revisit voluntary policing apparatus as an alternative measure to containing the conflicts.

Eco-violence

Eco-violence theory was propounded by Homer-Dixon's (1999). It explains the causes of conflicts by analysing relationships between environmental factors and violent conflicts. According to the theory, many developing countries face increasingly complex, fast-moving, and interacting environmental degradation and resource scarcity. This environmental scarcity sometimes helps to drive society into a self-reinforcing spiral of violence, institutional dysfunction, and social fragmentation. de Soysa, (2002) observed that the issue of environmental pressure as a source of conflict revolves largely around resource degradation and resource scarcity. Resource scarcity can contribute to civil violence, including insurgencies and ethnic clashes. The incidences of such violence will probably increase as scarcity of crops, land, freshwater, and forests worsen in many parts of the developing world.

The affected people with resource scarce environment may migrate or be expelled to new lands. This migration often triggers eth-

nic conflicts when they move to new areas, while decreases in their wealth can cause deprivation conflicts. For instance, cattle transhumance – which refers to the seasonal movement of herds occurring between two points and following precise routes repeated each year—is a dominant mode of mobile pastoralism in Nigeria. It is characterized by a seasonal forth-back movement whereby herdsmen move their flocks' southwards during the dry season in search of greener pasture (Okoli, 2015). This movement is returned during the rainy season when the herdsmen move back their flock northwards in prospect of a more favourable grazing. The herd mobility follows a seasonal pattern along specific paths called corridors (transhumance migratory routes), that serve as an efficient mechanism for moderating contacts between the pastoralists and settled farmers to mitigate conflicts. This explains the scenario in Nigeria where the rampaging herders move their cattle southwards during the dry and northwards in the wet season. What has appeared certain in the course of these movements however, are destruction of farmlands and crops by herders, who accused the farmers of rustling their cattle, resulting in conflicts with unquantifiable consequences.

Dixon's discussion on environmental scarcity as a major cause of violence, has been subjected to many criticisms. Seter and Theise (2013) for example, noted that the role of environmental scarcity in violence is often obscure and indirect. They argued that it intermingles with political, economic, and other generating factors that beyond the eyes. de Soysa, (2002) identified several other factors which mediate the effects of environmental pressure. These intervening variables range from cultural conceptions

of the environment, nature and degree of social cleavages, the availability of social capital, nature of institutions, skills and ideological propensities of leadership and groups, among others. With the configuration of the conflicts, and the nature and degree of attacks and killings ascribed to the herders that rarely suffer any casualties in most conflicts, it is wrong to describe such violence as mere clashes. He noted that most of the attacks reported were unprovoked especially when the attackers chose to strike at night. There is no evidence that those attacked ever faced the attackers or that they had a chance to fight back as in the cases of herdsmen attacks in Plateau State and Agatu in Benue State. Thus, while the eco-violence theory attempted to establish nexus amongst resources, conflicts and security, it does not explain in full the contemporary experience, the causes, sustenance and escalation of herders-farmers conflicts in West African Countries and especially, in Nigeria when considering the rate of influx of herders into southwest and southeastern parts of Nigeria states during the raining season. This lay credence to the idea projected by the conspiracy theory (Barkum, 2003).

Late Arrival Superior Aggression Theory (LASAT)

To analyse the current conflicts between the farmers and Fulani herdsmen across the southwest states of Nigeria; and the aggressive herdsmen with the political and economic factors, this theory becomes relevant. LASAT is a building theory of diaspora relations developed by the University of Ibadan, School of Diaspora Studies. The proponent who heads the Diaspora unit, Senayon (2019) observes within historical perspective, the persistent clash between 'late arrivals and early arrivals' and how the late arrivals have always thrived through the deployment of

superior agency and aggression. The danger of a late arrival superior aggression can be seen in the repeated clashes between farmers and herdsmen, the reports about kidnapping and banditry.

Through aggressive plots and confrontation of legitimacy, the late arrivals (herdsmen), pursuit of the survival of their cattle leads to recurrent clash of interest with early arrival (farmers). Consequently, the 'desire to survive' hidden under the pretext of cattle's economy survival is leading to desire to dominate the indigenous owners of the lands in the concerned southern western states (the host communities). Their aggression is expressed in their desire and envy unleashed through the articulation of being Nigerian and referencing ranching as entrenched by the colonial master's legacy to give it legitimacy. LASAT poses that where the late arrival realizes that morality of ownership by early arrival is backed by law, such as the case of land tenure, which gives states power over lands in their domain, they resort to violence, criminality, killings, abduction and rape. All these are done to forcefully share of the resources of early arrival and if possible, dispossess (farmers) and dominate them.

Sanayon's LASAT latent attention is to the complacency of the early arrival, otherwise known as host who only mark time rather than responding to deal with the 'desire and envy' of the late arrivals. Early arrivals have a tendency to lay claim to a space as their ancestral home, counting time as the basic legitimating principle. To defend the right to land, early arrivals in Southern Nigeria use dane guns and machetes and in recent times come up with "Amotekun", the security outfit saddled with the responsibility to combat the aggressive posture of late arri-

vals (herdsmen) who in their audacious character strive to dispossess early arrival with the use of superior technology of aggression (AK47) and confrontation. It has been observed that the late arrival is armed with sophisticated weapons while at the same time accompanied by a sinister group otherwise known as armed 'strangers' who are mercenaries that wield such weapons with which they wreak havoc on the host communities.

Literature Review

The Fulani constitutes one of the most diverse population groups that inhabit the West Africa region, from the "Atlantic coast" to the Red Sea. They live in more or less dry-land zones, characterized by a specific climatic condition and vegetation in the Sahel region (Dinar et al., 2012). Essential distinction that characterizes Fulani is that they are indigenous people domicile and inhabit to many states within the Sahelian region. They moved into the forest zone of the coastal states, which include Nigeria, Benin, Ghana and Cote D'Ivoire (De Bruijn and Van Dijk, 2003). Osei-Bonsu et al. (2002:4) noted in her identification that pastoralists are predominantly seen in the Northern part of Nigeria. They are in Futa Jallon, Futa Toro of the Senegal and Guinea and the Eastern part of Niger and Cameroon, as well as the Macina region in Mali. The Fulani are considered to be herdsmen because a significant proportion of them are involved in cattle handling and grazing from natural pastures. Fricke (1979) observed that the withering or fading away of pastures in the dry season is the principal compelling variable that necessitates the Fulani nomads to move southward during the dry season.

From a historical point of view, some scholars with believe that conflicts between herdsmen and farmers resulting from cattle grazing

have existed for as long as the practice of agriculture (Berger, 2003; Schama, 1996). These conflicts occur mostly in areas of stiff competition for grazing land and farming but the degree of intensity differs from state to state depending on the ecological location and communities involved (Ali, 2013). The inability to successfully contain these conflicts led to multiplicity of social, political, economic, humanitarian and security challenges with dire consequences especially in rural areas where these conflicts occur, due to the fact that a large number of the population are engaged in agriculture. In the Nigerian context, colonization, together with the fall of the Sokoto Caliphate and the introduction of cattle tax, marginalized the Fulani and dispersed them further towards the South (Haro and Doyo, 2005; Gbehe, 2007). According to (Bienen, 2013) the advancement of farming through irrigation and the increased decimation of pasture across the savannah also extended the scope of conflicts, through transhumance, to the coastal zones that were more ecologically viable (Berger, 2003).

A study of major conflict between Fulani herders and farmers shows that land related issues, especially over grazing fields account for the highest percentage of the conflicts, in other words, struggle over the control of economically viable land cause more tension and violent conflicts among the nomads and farmers (Ali, 2013). It has been observed that, the rampaging menace of herdsman at initial stage was concentrated in Benue and Plateau states in the north central part of the country where their activities have been linked to genocide attack on native tribes of Tiv, Idoma, Berron, Angas, Kwalla and Taroh people (Odufowokan, 2018). The recent activities

of Fulani herdsman in southern Nigeria however, is found to be suggestive of insurgency, it is Boko Haram in different forms of shape and the target is to infiltrate southern part of the country which conventional Boko Haram could not penetrate (Obi, 2016). From the plains of Plateau, Nasarawa and southern part of Kaduna state, these armed herders have increased in numbers, pouring southwest into Oyo, Ekiti, Ondo, Osun, Ogun, Enugu, Abia, Anambra, Delta, Edo and part of River State.

They are either armed with sophisticated weapons or accompanied by a sinister group otherwise known as armed 'strangers' who are mercenaries that wield such weapons with which they wreak havoc on communities. They brazenly herd their livestock into people's farmland and threaten them with their deadly weapons at a slightest sign of protest. They have today engaged in criminal ventures such as kidnapping, armed robbery, murder and rape. They often block highways and inflict life threatening pains on their victims (*Vanguard*, 2016). They wage hateful wars against peaceful communities and villages located thousands of kilometers away from the states where the herdsman originated (Obijiofor, 2016). The sources of these arms they carry have been ascribed to powerful owners of the cattle who are retired army generals and politicians that have powerful unions across West Africa (Ibekwe, 2015; Morgen, 2016).

Before this time, herdsman do not carry these types of weapons, besides that, they are not hostile to the communities through which they pass. They do not also allow their cattle to feed nor destroy farmlands. This has become a past experience now herdsman have transformed themselves into brutal killers, they are violent wondrous, bloodthirsty,

aggressive and provocative (Omilusi, 2016). They have become ethno-religious militia in the recent years, mobilized, incited, used and sponsored by their political elites, traditional, religious, military and educational leaders in particular (McBeath, 1978; Wiegenstein, 2014; Egbejule, 2017). Thus, the new phenomenon of Fulani herdsmen now behaves as a conquering group or invaders, ready to inflict terrors on their victims and not ready to ask for permission for land use from which the big problem lies since the farmers also are not ready to do away with their inheritance.

It is believed that Fulani herdsmen value their cattle much more than their own lives as well as those of others and would do just anything to anyone who tries to be a stumbling block to their grazing and welfare (Besong and Robert, 2019). It is reported that for the average Fulani-herdsman, pastoral practice is both a cultural and economic systems of livelihood, marked with common heritage (Abbas, 2000). In effect, any threat to their herds amount to a threat to their survival, heritage, animals and sources of livelihood (Abbas, 2000; Okoli and Atelhe, 2014). The words of a Fulani nomad are quoted by Abbas (2000):

Our herd is our life, because to every nomad, life is worthless without his cattle. What do you expect from us when our source of existence is threatened? The encroachment of grazing field and routes by farmers is a call to war. This explains the magnitude of aggression and vindictive violence that the Fulani pastoralists often manifest in their disputes with settled farming communities (Young and Sing'oei, 2011).

Going by several reports of herdsmen encroachment, infiltration and grazing of their cattle on the farmlands, the pattern of their attacks on farmers settlement and communities, the Fulani appear overwhelming as aggressors. This has given rise to the suspicion that Fulani community is resolutely committed to fighting their cause that they engage mercenaries, who are sometimes dressed in Nigeria army fatigues and use sophisticated weaponry on helpless local community members. Though, there has not been any evidence of official sponsorship, the inability of Nigerian security agencies to arrest any of the offenders has equally given reasons for suspicion and complacency on the part of the Nigerian government. The complicity, complacency and conspiracy of the government in the conflicts were aptly captured by (Tenuche and Olarewaju, 2009; Okoli, 2015) as they both argued that, the Nigerian State found culpable in most crises due to:

- the inability of the government to resolve the indigene/settler dichotomy;
- the failure of the government to establish or develop grazing reserves;
- the Nigerian land use and land tenure system which alienates the peasants;
- the inability of the government to come up with efficient enabling legislation to regulate grazing/transhumance practice;
- the inefficiency or excesses of state security operatives (military, police, civil defence) in ensuring objective application of relevant public policies;
- the failure of the state to effectively control arms proliferations and criminality.

Nigerian government has been implicated in the transhumance crisis by way of questionable deployment of public security operatives in an attempt to resolve the crisis (Besong and Robert, 2019), This is because there have not been any deliberate and imaginative

efforts to tackle the crisis and as a result, it has festered quietly but dangerously (Akinlotan,2016). In response to the mounting insecurity, many people and states have resulted into self-defence with states coming up with anti-open grazing law and demand for ranches as a modern and global trend in livestock business. Even while these have presented another security challenge to Nigerians; it has equally been considered as a big landmark for these states.

For instance, local narratives reveal that the public security operatives (the military, police, civil defence), among others often exhibit some level of operational bias or high handedness in dealing with conflict situations. These security operatives according to many reports have behaved in a manner that gives them out as agents of vested interests. There have been occasions where these security men simply looked on while a section of the community is being attacked by Fulani assailants. In Benue state killings where it was reported that about 500 people, including women and children were slaughtered, some police officers who were present at the scene claimed without proof that the herdsmen were non-Nigerian (Akinlotan, 2016). This had later gone contrary to the report from Fulani leaders who addressed press men on Agatu given the reason for the killing as a reprisal for the murder of a few respected Fulani in the Agatu village. This invariably supplied the graphic details of the provocation. Yet, the police have neither invited the avengers for questioning nor embarked on investigating into the vendetta.

The claims and observations ostensibly show that the role of the State in the crisis through its security operatives have become suspicious. The disposition of security agencies in responding to herders-farmers conflicts is either to proactively prevent or

reactively contain them but where the leadership tacitly or openly lends support to one of the parties who are members of their ethnic group, it becomes necessary revisit the apparatus of voluntary policing as an alternative measure to contain the menace.

Voluntary policing and conceptual discourse

Informal policing, voluntary policing and community policing are three terms used interchangeably in describing the involvement of non-formal security personnel or operatives in the maintenance of law and order, and the protection of lives and property. In Nigeria's context, the term, voluntary policing is used synonymously with vigilantism which has been described as an organized attempt by a group of ordinary citizens to enforce norms and maintain law and order in their communities by resorting to violence, in the perceived absence of effective official state actions through the police and courts (Ogbozor, 2016). The traditional concept of vigilante in Nigeria exclusively refers to an un-armed voluntary citizens or groups created in local communities to help the security agents by arresting suspected criminals or delinquents and handing them over to the police (Okeke, 2013).

Ugwu (2014) conceived community policing as a 'policing philosophy that promotes and supports organizational strategies to address the causes and reduce the fear of crime and social disorder through problem solving tactics and police community partnership. It entails creating a safe and secured environment for all through which people take active part in their own affairs. Community policing involves confidence building measures and capacity building where partnerships are forged in conjunction with oth-

er government agencies, community members and groups, human and social service providers, private businesses, and the media. The central thesis of community policing theory revolves around three core elements of citizen involvement, problem solving, and decentralization. It is also based on a belief that members of a community can live a peaceful and orderly life only if they directly participate in their community policing activities.

The communitarian variant of community policing theory attributed to Etzioni (1994) advocates that citizens should now go beyond just giving their opinions to participating directly by taking up responsibilities in the community giving their time, energy and money. According to Arase (2014) due to the increasing complexities in the thinking of criminals and the frequency of reported crimes, some revolutionary innovations to policing in some part of the world like intelligence-led policing, community policing, pro-active policing, crime survey, crime statistics and crime reports or intelligence analysis, among others should be introduced. Community policing is not new in Nigeria since vigilantism dates back to the pre-colonial era (Ogbozor, 2016). Voluntary policing has been in practice in the country under different names and status, amidst criticisms that are associated with their activities. Given to the incessant conflicts and the rampaging attacks with complacency and perceived complicity of the Federal Government, the Police that have preference to the sustained and escalated herders-farmers conflicts; revisiting the voluntary policing outfits remain the immediate viable alternative to contain the menace.

Command structure of the Nigerian Po-

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lice and containment of herders-farmers conflicts:

Constitutionally, the responsibility for internal security ranges from police to paramilitary forces, and in exceptional circumstances, the military itself. Azinge, 2013 and Brown, 2014 explained that internal security operations are those acts carried out by the domestic security agents such as: Police, Customs and Immigration Services, and others for the purpose of containing domestic threats to the security of the state. These threats often relate to dire cases of riots, demonstrations, strikes, communal clashes, terrorism, and the likes, that normally occurred outside the constitutional duties of the military. From the foregoing, there is a consensus that internal security should centre on acts of threat to peace within a sovereign state, and it is the duty of domestic security agents to deal with such threats. The military however can only be drafted in when the threat is beyond the capacity of the internal security operators to contain the challenges, as it is with the case of *Boko Haram*.

Occasionally, the military may be required to assist the civil authorities to deal with internal violence by suppressing internal tension. They may also be required to assist the police in restoring law and order in any part of the country. Section 217(c) of the 1999 Constitution for example, provided the basis for the involvement of the military in internal security operations in Nigeria. In relation to the functions of the military in Nigeria, the Constitution stipulates thus:

restore order when called upon to do so by the President but subject to such conditions as may be prescribed by an Act of National Assembly (1999 Constitution).

Section 8 (1) of the Armed Forces Act provides that the President shall determine the

operational use of the Armed Forces. This is further defined as reflected below:

In this section, "operational use of the armed forces" includes the operational use of the Armed Forces in Nigeria for the purpose of maintaining and securing public safety and public order (Sec. 8, 1999 Constitution).

Though, the security sector in Nigeria comprises all institutions and other aspects of the state involved in securing the state and its citizens. The institutions consist of Armed Forces, Police and para-military forces as intelligence and security services while the State oversee the management bodies including the Executive branch, National Advisory bodies, Parliament, Ministries of Defense, Internal Affairs, Foreign Affairs, the Justice and rule of law institutions (Para-Mallam, O. J & Hoomlong, K. 2012). Narrowing the security agencies that oversee internal security, they are governmental organizations that conduct intelligence activities for the internal security of a nation. In Nigeria, they include the Nigerian Police Force (NPF), the State Security Service (SSS) now the Department of State Services (DSS), Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), Nigeria Prison Service (NPS), Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC), National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC), and the Federal Fire Service (FFS).

However, the Police is charged with the preservation of law and order, the protection of lives and property and the due enforcement of all laws and regulations within the society. Therefore, containment of herders and farmers conflicts is the respon-

sibility of the Police, but how this has fared is the concern of this study and the reason for community policing. Evidence abounds on the complacency manifesting on the part of the Nigerian police in crisis management in Nigeria. For instance, the herders--farmers' attacks across the states. The experience and encounter between herdsmen and Sunday Igboho in the communities at Igan-gan and Igbora in Januari 2020 (*Vanguard*, 2021); the encounter at Ukpabi-Nimbo, in Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area, Enugu State in April 2016 (Morgen, 2016) presents evidences. When the inhabitants of these communities observed the influx of heavily armed herdsmen, the Chairman of the Transition Committee, the Community leader, the State government and the State Police Command were notified respectively. Unfortunately, in spite of this invaluable information, it was reported that no Police, Mobile Police or any security agencies in charge of maintaining internal security was dispatched to avert the bloody incident (Morgen, 2016),

Section 4 of the (Police Act) stipulates the general duties of the police. Preservation of law and order and protection of lives and property of the citizenry are very explicit in the provision. The way and manner men and officers of the Police go about these duties with relevant sections of the Act, especially, with regards to containing herders-farmers conflicts need interrogation. The accounts of repeated cases of crises where the State's Commissioner of Police have been duly informed of the looming danger on time through the State Governor and as such would have been prevented such crisis in his domain (SB Morgen, 2016; Eke, 2017). The Commissioner could not however, swing into action immediately because going by the command structure, clearance and approval is needed from the President before such an

operation can be carried out. For instance, Section 9 (4) of the Police Act states that: The President shall be charged with operational control of the Force. With regards to public safety and public order, Section 10 (1) states as follows:

The President may give to the Inspector-General such directions with respect to the maintaining and securing of public safety and public order as he may consider necessary, and the Inspector-General shall comply with those directions or cause them to be complied with.

Sub-section (2) added thus:

Subject to the provisions of sub-section (1) of this section, the Commissioner of a State shall comply with the directions of the Governor of the State with respect to the maintaining and securing of public safety and public order within the State, or cause them to be complied with: Provided that before carrying out any such direction the Commissioner may request that the matter should be referred to the President for his directions (Nigeria Constitution).

The above brief could explain why it is difficult for police to intervene on time to prevent the massacres that happened in most of the states that have often resulted in unquantifiable dire consequences. The most pertinent questions are: Where is the Commissioner's discretion as the highest-ranking officer in charge of the state who is closest to the scene of crisis? Does the Commissioner need the approval and clearance first from the President to burst planned armed robbery, kidnapping, insurgency or terror-

ism? Or would he delay action because of the ethnic group of the people involved in the conflict?

There have been accusations and counter accusations between the herdsmen and farmers in many of the states and series of occasions as related to the questions above, where it was alleged that the Police arrested the victims or the attacked instead of the attackers. In Oyo state, the police have been accused of bias where the leadership of police tried to broker peace between farmers and herdsmen as farmers accused herdsmen of grazing on their crops without restrictions, rape their women, threaten them and sometimes use dangerous weapons to rob innocent commuters along several highways within the state (Eke, 2017). The herders in turn, accused the farmers of killing their animals by poisoning the water that their cattle drank. In Nasarawa state the public security operatives (the military, police, civil defense,) were reported to have exhibited some level of operational bias or highhandedness in dealing with conflict situation (Okoli, 2015). It was observed that these security operatives have behaved in a manner that gives them out as agent of vested interests. Many criticisms have been raised against the manner and pattern by which security agencies have addressed the herders' posture. For example, Adeniyi, (2016) opined that:

Given the long tradition of nomadic cattle herding in the country, we ought by now to have acquired enough human assets among the herdsmen as to rely on flawless human intelligence to preempt and prevent this attack. Indeed, that our security agencies are failing on this crisis is evident from the fact that they have not even interrogated the challenge to

understand what exactly we are dealing with (Adeniyi, 2016).

This impunity on the part of the herdsmen is inexplicable, and it is as if there are different set of laws for the herdsmen (Ochonu, 2016). It is agreeable that, the more these attacks happen without agencies able to stop the attackers, the risks of the people self-arming to protect themselves by carrying out reprisal attacks on people who have similar ethnic and religious affiliations with the herdsmen becomes increasing likely. In fact, such attacks will likely set off another reprisal attacks and it will be an endless cycle of violence. Thus, when authoritarian populism is allowed to target a group of people for repression, it is the entire society that suffers as a consequence.

Perpetration and containment of the herders-farmers' conflicts especially in the southwest states like Oyo, Ogun, Osun and Ekiti, and parts of the north like Kaduna, Nasarawa and Benue states have given insight along ethnic, tribal, cultural and religious lines of parties involved in the conflicts. The herdsmen for instance, are found to be predominantly pastoral Muslims and the farmers are native non-Muslims; the government at the center and some states that share similar identities with the former are accused of tacit support of their marauding activities for diverse reasons. For instance, in Nasarawa State, Okoli (2015) noted that the political elites appear to be investing in the crises to advance their political agenda. In this regard, it was widely held that the Fulani and Ombatse militias who are the harbingers of the crises have been armed by some prominent politicians in the state to serve their partisan interests.

Thus, herders-farmers' conflicts have endured and escalated because governments at the center and the security agents where the crisis occurred have not demonstrated firm resolve and commitment to tackle the menace. The body language of the government and its response suggests complicity in the conflicts that accounts largely for the sustenance and escalation of farmers-herders' conflicts as recently witnessed across the states. The real shock though, is not the killings, maiming and displacements taking place with impunity but that the Federal Government seems to be comfortable in the face of this critical national challenge (Agbese 2017). This is however, worsened, by the government inability to caution them or take any effective measure to contain the situation which seemingly have provided the fulcrum for their increased impunity and wanton destruction of lives and property (Eke, 2017), Government seems to be unwilling to respond to the situation which affirmed that there are faceless sponsors and godfathers behind the scene whose aims and objectives the attackers are carrying out.

Re-thinking the restructuring of Voluntary Policing for the containment of incessant Farmers-Herdsmen's Conflicts

It is in no doubt that voluntary policing outfits are already in existence under different names and status in various states where they perform diverse functions. Ogbosor (2016), Okenyodo and Ugwu (2014) noted that these outfits are founded based on community associations like Neighbourhood Watch Schemes, Residents or Tenants' Associations, Street Guards, Ethnic Associations as (O'odua Peoples' Congress (OPC), Bakkassi Boys, Egbesu Boys, Hisbah and State-sponsorship (vigilante groups). They equally observed that none of these groups perform rigid or exclusive functions along its for-

mation line, rather, they execute all available duties. Community policing is a recent innovation to deal with security challenges; the Community Policing Unit is under the Police Inspectorate Department of the Ministry of Police Affairs (Police Act). Arase, (2014) acknowledged that by 2003, the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) sent some policemen to Britain to be trained in community policing under the auspices of the British Department for International Development (DFID). Most states have equally leveraged on community policing and established state-sponsored voluntary policing outfits. According to Okeke (2013), some state governments-sponsored and endorsed community policing outfits include the Anambra State Vigilante Service (AVS), Abia State Vigilante Service and Imo State Vigilante Service (IVS). There are also vigilante groups operating in Ebonyi State and Enugu State. Ogbozor (2016) observed also that in some states, laws exist to guide the activities of the informal groups. Such legalization makes them agents of the state security apparatus, with financial implications on the part of the local authority.

It has been observed that the Federal Capital Territory and seventeen states, including Plateau, Kaduna, and Kano, have enacted laws guiding the activities of the Vigilante Group of Nigeria. The failure of state government to recognize and accord voluntary policing apparatus its pride of place especially, in the wake of the sustenance and escalation of herders-farmers' conflicts, is the missing link. Though, most states in the recent times have enacted legislations regulating the activities of voluntary policing outfits, further steps will be needed to re-organize and re-structure the outfits by streamlining its activities to enable it function under one umbrella and to prevent its proliferations in the state. More importantly, its structure and operations should cut

across state, and local government headquarters, towns, villages and clans. This kind of arrangement or structure if allowed will cover the length and breadth of the state, making its presence and impacts to be felt in all the nooks and crannies of the communities. This idea becomes important because citizenry appear to be more at home with the voluntary policing outfits in spite of their shortcomings and they are willingly paying their monthly levies to sustain their operations in some communities. Voluntary policing emerged and is thriving because poor people resorted to dealing with their safety and security, due to the inability of the formal police set up to provide for them. This has created an atmosphere of lack of trust between the formal security institutions and citizens they are supposed to serve. Most time, those who make use of informal policing groups found it to be less bureaucratic, affordable as per time and money, and responsive to their needs. The level of trust which the communities have in these groups makes it easy for the groups to coordinate the community members, gathering information during different interactive forums that bring them together with the communities. When such a security arrangement is in place, aside its psychological effects, it will offer the potentials of putting off herders-farmers' conflicts and any other crime; as the perpetrator(s) is conscious of the chances of being challenged and contained.

When Anti Gracing Bill 2016 was set up in Ekiti with the Enforcement of Marshal which implements the Law amongst other measure, personality of the then governor of Ekiti State, Ayo Fayose and his antecedents sent the right signals to the appropriate quarters. According to Ogo-Oluwa (2017), it is evident that the policy has succeeded in resolving conflicts between herdsmen and farmers in Ekiti State. Herders however,

have challenged the passage of Anti-Open Gracing law in Benue and Taraba states (Ebuzor, 2017; Charles, 2017); there was an attempt by Fulani herders to challenge the same law in Oyo state (*Punch*, 2019; Taiwo-Hansan, 2021). What is imperative is that various States Government need to put machinery in place to curb the challenges of procedures especially, for recruitment and training, the ignorance of the provisions of the law, lack of basic operational equipment such as flashlights, warm clothing, raincoats, booths, whistles, uniforms, identity cards, curbing their harassments and extortions of members of communities, multiplicity of informal policing organizations, excesses by the voluntary policing outfits whose members have been accused of collusion such as cover-ups for criminals, harassments of citizens, unlawful killings of suspects, confiscation of property with weak accountability structures.

CONCLUSION

The sustenance of peace and security, and the prevention of incessant herders-farmers' conflicts amidst perceived governments complacency and complicity, exhibited by the political elites and the role of security agencies in containing the menace of herdsmen necessitated the need to revisit the community policing apparatus in the country. The prebendal nature of the Nigerian state and the asymmetrical nature of its federal system foreclose the need for the establishment of state police. Therefore, States Governments that are interested in protecting the lives and property of her citizens should resort to community policing apparatus as an immediate and viable option to policing its communities. The guidelines for voluntary policing by the State Governments should ensure that all the activities of voluntary policing outfits, starting

from the recruitment procedures should conform to the standard. Nevertheless, in spite of public perception of the Police, the voluntary policing outfit cannot function in isolation; therefore, it should work hand in hand with the Police to prevent and control herders-farmers' conflicts and curb other security challenges rampaging sub-African region.

Above all, with the increasing population and the effects of climate change on gracing, there is a need for the federal government to establish cattle ranches just as it has been done in the western world. The government could take advantage of adopting a Sustainable Ranching Model (SRM) where all misconceptions about ranching and RUGA settlements will be purged out of ethnic sentiments. This will tackle the problem of open gracing which is the traditional method of gracing. Creation of a sustainable ranching model as well as RUGA settlement will equally attract investors that are willing to invest in the model, and it will bring solutions to the root causes of the conflicts caused by change in climate and increased in population. Since it has been affirmed that the major reason for herdsmen's migration and destruction of farmlands is due to climate change, that is; low rainfall, shrinking rivers, lakes and pro-long dry season. Both the SRM and RUGA settlement purposed by the government will solve the problems faced by herders and farmers, where all the necessary feeds and water needed to cater for cattle and at the same time, improve the livelihood of the people will be provided. Therefore, every environmental need that drives herdsmen into southward communities will be addressed. The Sustainable Ranching Model (SRM) or RUGA settlement has been practiced in Brazil but not yet in any Africa country (Nwokomoa, 2016). This

will showcase Nigeria economic policy on resource diversification, and at the same time, attract tourists and investors like milk companies, leather companies and others for sustainable peace and economic growth. Nevertheless, the formation of community policing policy and its implementation must be a collective effort of all a sundry.

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