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Title Page

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New drivers of conflict in Nigeria: An analysis of the clashes between farmers and pastoralists

Abstract

In the last few years, several African countries have witnessed an increase in conflict between pastoralists and sedentary farmers and among pastoralist groups. While issues such as climate change, desertification, regional conflicts, population expansion, trafficking and terrorism have been highlighted as the reasons for the surge in violence, none of these issues fully explain the increased use of small and light weapons by several pastoralist groups and sedentary farmers. This article explores the changes in the dynamics of cattle ownership termed Neo-pastoralism as a possible explanation for the increase in armed clashes between the groups. The article explains how traditional pastoralism is gradually giving way to neo-pastoralism, a form of pastoralism which involves larger herds and increased use of arms and ammunitions. The case study of Nigeria is used to explore these new patterns of conflict due to having the largest number of cattle in the Sub-Saharan Africa region and the scale of the conflict in the country. This article is based on field research and interviews carried out in Nigeria between 2013 and 2019.

Keywords: Pastoralism, Fulani, Neo-pastoralism, Sub-Saharan Africa, Cattle Rustling

Introduction

'African pastoralism conjures up images of the dusty herd moving across the landscape, and of the herder with his stick across his shoulder or standing on one leg leaning on his spear, gazing into the distance'. (Smith, 2005: 6)

The above description of African herders is vivid and could be described as an accurate description of pastoralists for decades (if not centuries). In recent times, however, the stick across the shoulder is increasingly being replaced with an automatic rifle as seen on the cover page of Mkutu's book on pastoralism in Africa. In one of the interviews carried out by Mkutu in 2003, the respondent stated 'the gun is looked at as a convertible currency. With a gun one can get cash; from cash, cows; from cows, guns; from guns, other general merchandise'.¹ The increase in the use of arms by pastoralists can be attributed to three main factors: First, an increase in conflicts between pastoral groups, second is an increase in conflict between pastoralists and sedentary farmers and third, an increase in cattle rustling and the resultant need for protection against rustlers. Although conflicts among pastoral groups² and between farmers and pastoralists are not new and have occurred for centuries³ with the former being more pronounced⁴, there has been an increase in the intensity and frequency resulting in a change in the dynamics of the conflicts.

Conflicts between pastoral groups sometimes arise as a result of cattle rustling or raiding and were previously used for specific purposes such as replenishing family herds after prolonged droughts or disease outbreaks, for marriage rites or to settle scores between pastoral communities.⁵ Furthermore, cattle rustling was often organised by community leaders who managed the whole process (often with strict laws of engagement), including compensation to communities where the raids have taken place.⁶ Conflicts between pastoralists and farmers

on the other hand were often as a result of competition for water, land and in some instance grazing routes.⁷ These conflicts are often grouped together and referred to as ‘farmer/herder conflict’ or ‘pastoralist conflict’.

Previously, pastoralist conflicts occurred predominantly in the horn of Africa due to the high number of pastoralists and the traditional occupational structure,⁸ however, the conflicts have now spread to countries in other regions such as Nigeria, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Mauritania, Ivory Coast and Senegal. According to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), the clashes in Nigeria and the resultant fatalities surpass those of the other countries. This is partly because Nigeria houses the largest number of cattle (about 20 million) and pastoralists in West Africa.⁹

Recently, one key issue identified as being responsible for the surge in violence between pastoralists and farmers is climate change which has impacted on grazing patterns and forced pastoralists to graze in new areas outside of traditional grazing routes.¹⁰ It is however difficult to argue that this is the main cause because the regions affected have experienced climate change since the 1970s. Konczacki while exploring the economics of pastoralism in the late 1970s stated that ‘rapid population growth’ and ‘vagaries of the climate’ have negatively impacted on pastoralism and agricultural productivity in Sub-Saharan Africa since early 1970s.¹¹ In addition to climate change, other factors such as armed conflicts, trafficking and terrorism have also led to increased arms proliferations, increased cattle rustling and decreased grazing areas respectively.¹²

In a comprehensive analysis of the conflict published in January 2018, the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) identified several causes of the conflict. These include institutional failure in the management of land and natural resources, lack of

infrastructural investment, changes in livestock and cropping system, increasing wealth differentials among pastoralist groups, poor policy structures and the non-involvement of pastoralists and farmers in decision making processes.¹³ Although convincing, the issues identified do not sufficiently explain the increase in conflict in the last decade, neither does it explain the increased use of small and light weapons (SALW) by pastoralist groups and farming communities.

This article argues that the changing nature of pastoralism throughout Africa resulting in new patterns of cattle ownership and management is a significant causal factor worth exploring in greater detail. Owing to an increase in the value of cattle, traditional pastoralism is gradually giving way to more sophisticated cattle ownership which has been labelled neo-pastoralism and is prevalent in semi-urban areas.¹⁴

The data for this research was drawn from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was generated from a qualitative research including informant and expert interviews carried out in three regions (North Central, North West and South West) of Nigeria.¹⁵ The three regions selected for the purpose of the research were based on their exposure to the conflict. For instance, data obtained from the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) indicates that the North Central region of Nigeria witnessed the highest number of clashes (140 clashes and 1,098 fatalities in 2018) while the South West region witnessed the highest number of clashes recorded in the Southern part of the country. A total of 70 interviews were carried out between 2013 and 2019 with the interviewees selected under four categories: Farmers, representatives of pastoral groups, government officials and experts on the topic. A combination of purposive and snowball sampling was used to identify and select the most suitable people to be interviewed. In addition, comprehensive data were obtained from the ACLED, Institute of Governance and Social Research (IGSR) and Centre for Democracy and

Development (CDD) West Africa. Other secondary sources include journals, books, reports, and relevant newspaper articles.

As there is no working definition for the term neo-pastoralism, the first section of this article would define the concept based on the current usage of the term. The section will explore the changes in pastoral patterns and structure. The section will also highlight the link between cattle ownership, money laundering and the use of weapons in pastoralism in Nigeria. The second section will explore the relationship between neo-pastoralism and cattle rustling with a focus on the increased clashes within the pastoralist community in Nigeria. The third section will identify the link between neo-pastoralism and the increase in conflicts between farmers and pastoralists. The last section highlights the politics involved in the management of the conflict with issues such as lack of understanding of the new conflict dynamics resulting in the inability of the Nigerian state to find a solution to the problem.

From pastoralism to neo-pastoralism

The term neo-pastoralism was first used by Matthew Luizza of the American Association for the advancement of science to describe the subversion of the traditional form of pastoralism by rich urban elites who venture into pastoralism to conceal stolen or illegally acquired assets.¹⁶ I define neo-pastoralism as a new form of cattle ownership characterised by large cattle holdings owned by non-pastoralists, kept by salaried herdsmen, often involving the use of sophisticated arms and ammunitions, arising from the need to hide stolen wealth, proceeds of trafficking or income derived from terrorism with the underlining aim of deriving profit for investors. It is important to note that my definition of neo-pastoralism does not include investment in cattle funded by legitimate means, which exist but are few, as it is not within the remit of this article.

Pastoralism has traditionally been small scale, family holdings of cattle usually associated with certain ethnic groups. The risks associated with pastoralism coupled with the efforts required to move cattle over hundreds of miles for grazing make the profession limited to few ethnic groups including the Fulanis who have seen it as their primary occupation for decades. The Fulanis represent one of the largest ethnic groups in the Sahel and Sub-Saharan Africa with a population of about 37 million in the region and about 17 million in Nigeria alone.¹⁷ Furthermore, the cattle are often seen as a source of security and a count of wealth, hence, traditional pastoralists engaged in limited sales of cattle.¹⁸ Neo-pastoralism differs from this in terms of cattle ownership, average herd sizes and the use of weapons. While traditional average herd size ranges from 16-69,¹⁹ herds linked to neo-patrimonialism typically range between 50 and 1000²⁰ and often involves the use of weapons by the hired herdsmen. Although previously commonplace in the Sahel where such herds are sometimes accompanied by armed soldiers,²¹ cattle ownership is increasingly seen as a means of concealing illicit wealth by corrupt politicians. In addition, while traditional pastoralists strive to maintain good relationships with farmers to maintain their symbiotic relationship, hired herders do not have any incentive to invest in social relations with farmers since they possess weapons which could be used to intimidate the farmers²².

In Nigeria, there are three distinct explanations for neo-pastoralism. First, cattle ownership is increasingly deemed a lucrative investment because of the upward trend in the price of cattle. An adult cow in Nigeria could cost as much as N350,000 (\$1000) and this makes it lucrative for potential investors.²³

Table 1

Year	South/West	North/Central	North/West
1997	110,000	70,000	65,000
2000	130,000	80,000	70,000
2003	145,000	75,000	75,000
2006	170,000	85,000	80,000
2009	180,000	100,000	90,000
2012	190,000	110,000	100,000
2015	220,000	110,000	110,000
2018	240,000	150,000	130,000
2019	250,000	170,000	130,000

Table 1: Average cattle prices in Nigeria from 1997-2019 (Prices in Naira- 1Naira=\$350: Prices not adjusted for inflation). Data generated from interview excerpts in the case study regions.²⁴

The price of cattle coupled with the difficulty in identifying cattle ownership makes it an attractive venture for non-traditional pastoralists. In an interview with a customs officer in northern Nigeria in 2017, he stated that: 'I have been on this job for a long time and pastoralism has changed a lot. About 10-20 years ago, pastoralists roamed the borders of this country with only sticks to direct or control their animals. Especially in semi-urban areas, what we see now are pastoralists that are fully armed with AK47s and sometimes machine guns that even we customs officers do not have access to. Most of the ones we have arrested confess that the cattle belong to either serving or retired government officials, military officers or even senior customs officers and they are only employed and armed to take care of the cattle and prevent rustlers who go around raiding and stealing cattle. Although we discovered that some of them also engage in cattle rustling, pastoralism has changed from what it used to be and it is now a tool for money laundering because of the value of the

cows'.²⁵ Other interviewees agree that the steady increase in the value of cattle has opened up the industry to non-traditional pastoralists with many using it for money laundering.

Second, neo-pastoralism has direct links with corrupt practices in Nigeria. Several studies²⁶ have identified corruption especially in the polity as a key reason for insurgency in the country. In 2014, one of the measures introduced by the government to curb corruption especially money laundering was the introduction of a Bank Verification Number (BVN). The aim of the BVN was to monitor banking transactions and reduce or eliminate money laundering.²⁷ BVN uses biometric technology to register every customer in all Nigerian banks. Each customer is then issued a unique identification code that links all their accounts in order to easily monitor transactions across several banks.²⁸ The goal is to ensure that suspicious transactions are easily identified as the system captures the pictures and fingerprints of all banking customers making it difficult for illicit funds to be lodged in different accounts by the same person. Interview data revealed that the BVN has made it difficult for political office holders to hide illicit wealth²⁹ and several accounts linked to politicians and their cronies with allegedly stolen funds have been frozen since its introduction.³⁰ The Central Bank of Nigeria stated that 'some billions of Naira and millions of other foreign currencies are trapped in some banks' accounts which owners suddenly stopped operating'³¹. Over 30 million dormant accounts have been identified since the introduction of BVN in Nigeria.³²

Expert interviews revealed that many people who had hidden huge sums of money in Nigerian banks prior to the introduction of BVN hurriedly withdrew these monies to avoid being detected. A senior banking officer interviewed in one of Nigeria's biggest banks stated: 'Some weeks before the expiration of the deadline for people to get their BVN, we observed a

surge in the amount of cash withdrawn from many of our branches across the country. Rather than apply for a BVN, some people preferred to withdraw their money but I cannot ascertain if these were stolen or illegally acquired money'.³³ In another interview with a security analyst in Northern Nigeria, he explained that many politicians in Nigeria have resorted to the use of cash in order to avoid being monitored since the introduction of the BVN. He explained further that illegally acquired funds have been channelled into agriculture with a 'substantive amount' used to purchase cattle. According to the security expert 'the truth is that there is always a way out for people who are bent on cheating the system. Since the introduction of BVN, we have seen an increase in the number of people using stolen wealth to purchase cattle. When you consider the fact that an adult cow sells for between 200,000-400,000 naira (\$600-\$1100: 2019 prices), and there is no mechanism for identifying cattle ownership, it is easy for people to buy hundreds of cows which translates into millions of naira. This has even led to an artificial increase in cattle prices as several herds are now owned by non-pastoralists with some even coming from other regions of the country. This creates another huge security risk to this part of the country as the herders are often armed.'³⁴

Third, neo-pastoralism explains the new pattern of neo-patrimonial relationship in the pastoralist community due to increased levels of poverty. Despite the increase in cattle prices in the last few decades especially with an expansion in the export market, Catley and Aklilu found that pastoralist poverty has not decreased. They argued that in the last 30-40 years, the number of poor pastoralists has increased sharply.³⁵ For those at the bottom of the pastoral ladder, working for large herd owners is becoming the only option. While the increase in 'absentee herd owners' is not a new development due to the economic importance of cattle in Africa,³⁶ what is new is the dynamics of ownership and the resulting neo-patrimonial relationship. Under neo-pastoralism, the increasing poverty in the pastoralist community

which has seen traditional pastoralists priced out of the business makes them available to the absentee owners as cheap sources of labour. In instances where political office holders own the cattle, members of their communities or ethnic groups are often employed to tend the cattle in return for wages in a manner which is painted as local empowerment. This perhaps is to legitimise illicit wealth obtained in a prebendal manner. Interviews reveal that the patron-client relationship prevalent in Nigeria especially in Northern Nigeria results in this type of business structure whereby hired traditional pastoralists are made to think that they are being empowered.³⁷

Changing dynamics of pastoralism and the new wave of violence in Nigeria

One of the key consequences of neo-pastoralism in Nigeria is the increased incidents and changes in the dynamics of cattle rustling especially in rural areas. Although the literature on cattle rustling has increased in the last few decades mainly due to the increased number of incidences, it is not a new phenomenon and has taken place for a long time.³⁸ Azeez and Aliyu argued that for decades, cattle rustling was 'localised, seasonal, and pursued with mostly traditional weapons' with low level of violence.³⁹ During this period, cattle rustling and pastoral welfare went hand in hand and cattle rustling was seen as a tool for resource redistribution and land expansion by the pastoralist communities. In order to prevent anarchy, there were laws put in place by community leaders and crimes such as violence against women and children, and murder were prohibited during rustling.⁴⁰ At this time, pastoralism was limited to specific ethnic groups that lived in close-knit communities and had a shared culture, value and religion, making it easy to understand the dynamics of pastoralism and resolve issues without degenerating into violent conflict.

Apart from the explanation offered by Triche in relation to the origin of cattle rustling in Africa, other literatures explore the reasons for cattle rustling in different parts of Africa.⁴¹ Issues such as sudden loss of cattle through natural disasters like drought, flooding, diseases or annual bush fires often resulted in the desire to replenish stocks and where pastoralists are unable to do so, the motivation for cattle rustling increases.⁴² Markakis explains that scarcity of grazing land and water, coupled with increased competition for available resources among different pastoralist groups resulted in conflicts, with one of the consequences of such conflicts being cattle rustling.⁴³ One major difference between cattle rustling decades ago and currently is the rationale behind the act. Previously, the motive behind cattle rustling was either to replenish lost family stock, pay for bride prices for young men or to settle differences, so, it was not market oriented or primarily done for economic purposes.⁴⁴ On the contrary, most of the cattle rustling activities witnessed in the last decade have been motivated by economic profiteering and are market oriented. This could be partly attributed to issues such as the price of cattle, increased demand for meat due to population increase and the ease of acquiring weapons.

This study observed a direct link between neo-pastoralism and increased cattle rustling in Nigeria. Events in several African countries have increased arms proliferation in the region providing weapons to neo-pastoralists for ‘herd protection’ which are also used for rustling.⁴⁵ For instance, since 2011, tens of thousands of small arms have found their way from Libya into many countries in the Sahel Sahara as well as Sub-Saharan Africa. A panel of experts formed by the United Nations Security Council on the Libyan conflict stated that the uprising in Libya has led to unprecedented arms proliferation not only in neighbouring countries but throughout the continent.⁴⁶ The panel gathered information from 14 countries in Africa and

concluded that Nigeria is one of the countries affected by arms proliferations from Libya. Arms are trafficked to Nigeria and other countries via the Central African Republic (CAR) corridor through a 'highly diversified range of trafficking dynamics'.⁴⁷ A key conclusion of the panel is that trafficking from Libya was fuelling conflict, insecurity and terrorism in several countries in Africa.⁴⁸

Although the Libyan conflict is a major source of arms proliferation in Africa, there are 'live' conflicts in other countries which have also provided arms to various groups including neo-pastoralists. These include South Sudan, Somalia, Mali, Central African Republic, Burundi and the Democratic republic of Congo.⁴⁹ As at March 2017, an estimated 100 million SALW were present in crisis zones around the world with Africa hosting a large percentage of these weapons.⁵⁰ The illicit arms trade industry has blossomed in Africa, where porous borders are common around most countries, with weapons moving freely across the borders. While most of the trafficked weapons fall into the hands of insurgent and terrorist groups, pastoralists have also increasingly used SALW. For instance, pastoralists in Sudan and South Sudan have openly displayed SALW for over 10 years.⁵¹ While many traditional pastoralists could still be seen in Nigeria herding cattle with sticks, several pastoralists have been seen with SALW and some of them have been accused of being involved in cattle rustling.⁵² There has been a significant increase in the numbers of cattle rustled in the last decade resulting in the death of not only traditional pastoralists but also farmers, security agents and other citizens.

Table 2

Year	Cattle Rustled	Pastoralists fatalities
2010	32,316	412
2011	45, 922	329
2012	47,312	194
2013	53,801	281
2014	60,000	357
2015	64,830	741
2016	59, 322	1041
2017	67,400	1139
2018	68,322	1459

Table 2: Estimated cattle rustling and fatalities in Nigeria: 2010-2018.¹ Data obtained from IGSR and CDD West Africa.

Apart from the hired herders who use the weapons available to them to engage in rustling, there are also ‘professional bandits’ who primarily engage in cattle rustling in several parts of Nigeria.⁵³ Neo-pastoralists often argue that their herdsmen need protection from these bandits when explaining armed pastoralism. Some of the pastoralists interviewed stated that they bear arms to protect themselves from rustlers who attack them with the intention of stealing their cattle. The national secretary of Miyetti Allah cattle breeders association of Nigeria (One of the largest pastoralist groups in the country) stated 'If you see a Fulani man handling AK-47, that is because cattle rustling has become so much that one wonders if there is security in the country'.⁵⁴ The complication is that arms acquired in these cases to prevent cattle rustling are also freely used when there is conflict between the pastoralists and farmers. These conflicting interests in the pastoralist industry is leading to an arms race and creating a warlike environment as increasing numbers of traditional pastoralists have also resorted to bearing weapons to protect

themselves and their cattle.⁵⁵ The changing dynamics are resulting in new waves of violence and are often collectively termed ‘pastoralist conflict’.

Farmer/ Pastoralist conflicts: New dynamics

Another consequence of neo-pastoralism in Nigeria is the increase in violent clashes between farmers and pastoralists. Surpassing fatalities resulting from terrorism, they accounted for the largest number of conflict related deaths in 2017 in the country.⁵⁶ Although clashes between farmers and pastoralists have been recurrent for centuries and date back to the colonial era,⁵⁷ the dynamics of the conflict have changed dramatically. Before the era of colonisation, pastoralists and farmers often co-existed in a symbiotic relationship due to the mode of agriculture and the size of the herds. The cattle grazed on the foliage provided by the farmers after their harvest usually in the dry season when the pastoralists move their cattle further southwards to graze. In return for the grazing and right of way provided by the farmers, the cattle's droppings were used by the farmers as manure to fertilize their farmlands. This was a period of small holding farms and family owned sizes of cattle and both farmers and herdsmen benefitted from the arrangements. Occasionally, when grazing activities destroyed farm produce and conflicts arose, there was a conflict resolution mechanism in place between the farmers and the pastoralists and differences were usually resolved without recourse to violent conflicts.⁵⁸ Farmers and pastoralists also often engaged in grain for milk schemes which strengthened their relationship.

This pattern of agriculture, however, has undergone several changes. Issues such as changes in farming production pattern, population explosion, capitalism, climate change, shrinkage of lake Chad, competition for land and water, right to grazing paths, drought and desertification, increased ethnic delineation and political manipulation have been fingered as the reasons

behind the changes in the dynamics of the farmer/pastoralist relationship. Davidheiser and Luna identified the combination of colonialization and the introduction of capitalism to Africa as one of the principal causes of the conflict between pastoralists and farmers on the continent.⁵⁹ They argued that changes in land tenure laws during the colonial era coupled with changes in farming techniques following the adoption of modern farming methods such as irrigation agriculture and 'sedentarisation schemes for transhumant pastoralists' disrupted the symbiotic relationship between the farmers and the pastoralists increasing the likelihood of conflict between the groups.⁶⁰ The analysis offered is that the integration of capitalism and modern modes of production resulted in a shift from 'exchange-based relations' between the farmers and the pastoralists to 'marketisation and commodification' which increased the pressure and demand for natural resources between the pair and destabilised the previous symbiotic relationship.⁶¹

Climate change has also been cited as one of the root causes of conflicts between farmers and pastoralists in West Africa. In a quantitative research carried out in Kano state, Nigeria in 2010, Halliru identifies desert encroachment as a major source of resource struggle leading to conflicts between pastoralists and farmers in Northern Nigeria.⁶² Changes in precipitation has altered the pattern of pastoralists' migration resulting in pastoralists moving further southward to areas where they would normally not graze in previous decades. An instance of this is the effect of prolonged droughts across the Sudan-Sahel desert region which has become intense since the 1970s.⁶³ This new pattern of migration increases the pressure on land and land resources resulting in conflicts between farmers and herdsman.⁶⁴ In other instances, increases in the population of farmers and pastoralists communities have also contributed to the pressure on the environment.

Although these issues have contributed to the conflict, there has been a marked difference in the last few years in terms of the intensity, types of weapons involved, mode of attacks and the number of fatalities recorded in the conflict. The numbers of attacks have also increased tremendously in the last decade, most significantly in Nigeria. Data obtained from ACLED reveals that the conflict has become more severe since 2011 reinforcing a probable link to the Libyan uprising and the resultant arms proliferation. While the number of attacks and the number of fatalities have increased in most of the countries affected by this conflict, the figures for Nigeria confirms the surge and magnitude of the problem highlighting the need for a thorough understanding of the key elements of the conflict.

Figure 1

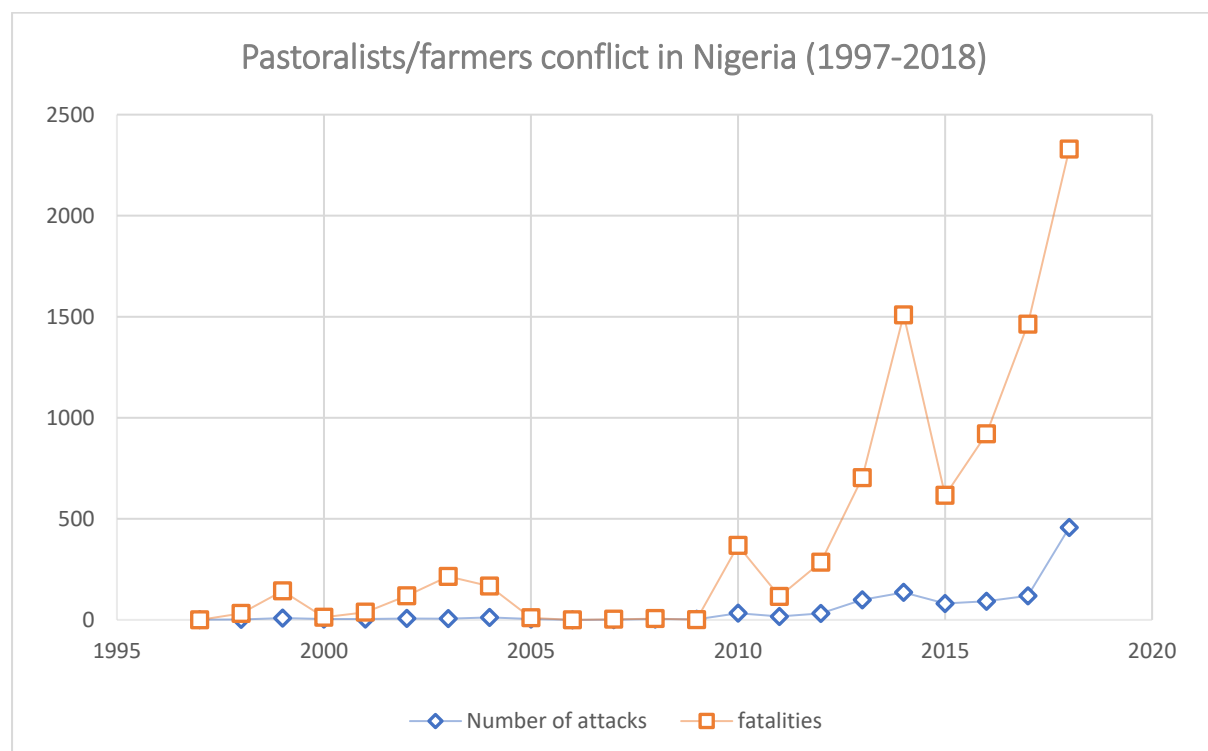


Figure 1: Pastoralists and farmers conflicts and fatalities in Nigeria. Data compiled from ACLED database 2019.

Two major links emerge between the mode and intensity of the attacks and neo-pastoralism. First, the type of arms and ammunitions used by the pastoralists and second, the people involved in the attacks. A key finding of this research is that the weapons purchased by the neo-pastoralists to protect their cattle are also used to attack farmers whenever there are disagreements over grazing routes or destruction of farmlands by travelling pastoralists.⁶⁵ In many cases, the types of weapons used by attackers suggest that they have external backing as seen in Taraba state (North-Eastern Nigeria). After protracted attacks by pastoralists in the state, the federal government deployed soldiers to the affected communities to prevent further attacks. Despite the deployment of troops in the affected communities, several attacks were still carried out with sophisticated weapons including machine guns. The chairman of Takum Local Government Area, Taraba state, Mr. Shiban Tikari in an interview with Daily Post Nigeria, stated “The herdsmen that are coming into our community now with machine guns are not the traditional herdsmen we know and lived with over the years; I suspect they may be released Boko Haram members”.⁶⁶ There is strong evidence that sections of the pastoralist communities are fully armed and now operate like militias, for instance, a leader of the pastoralist community in an interview boasted that his group has successfully carried out attacks in several farming communities in Northern Nigeria. He claimed his group are no longer afraid of the military and stated, “We have over 800 rifles, machine guns; Fulanis now have bombs and military uniforms”.⁶⁷ This claim was affirmed by several interviewees during the period of this research.

The types of arms and ammunitions involved in these attacks are beyond the reach of traditional pastoralists and point towards neo-pastoralists.⁶⁸ In an interview with a military officer, he argued that poor pastoralists with little herds cannot afford automatic rifles and the type of arms used by the assailants. He stated ‘come to think of it, how can a poor herder

afford machine gun or hand grenades used by these attackers? Every venture has a cost benefit analysis and the local herders could not have invested in such weapons to protect their little herds. For anyone to spend huge amounts of money to purchase these weapons, they must either have invested heavily on these herds or intend to steal as much cattle as possible to recoup their investment. This further points to the fact that organised crime syndicates or cartels are now involved in pastoralism'⁶⁹. Another respondent stated that traditional pastoralists cannot afford the price of an AK47 which is sold for N400,000 - N500,000 (\$1,200- \$1,500) in the black market in Nigeria. Additionally, in 2017, a lawmaker representing Ethiope East in Delta State (South-south region), House of Assembly, Evance Ivwurie, stated that an unidentified helicopter regularly delivers supplies to some pastoralists in Ovre-Abraka desert of the state where they reside with their cattle. The forest according to the lawmaker is residence to over 5,000 cattle and about 2,000 herdsmen.⁷⁰ These assertions further indicate that the ownership of these cattle is questionable.

The second link between the mode and intensity of attack and neo-pastoralism is the identity of the people involved in the attacks. There have been several arguments regarding the identity of the pastoralists involved in the attacks against farmers and its being pointed that many of the assailants are hired pastoralists. In many areas where farmers and pastoralists have co-existed for decades, the farmers know the pastoralists that graze around their farms, the periods they bring their cattle as well as the average sizes of the herds. More recently, there have been complaints that the sizes of the herds are larger, the pastoralists are unknown to the farmers and armed with dangerous weapons. These changes make traditional conflict management between farmers and pastoralists more difficult and sometimes impossible. The Chairman of Ussa Local Government Council of Taraba state, Mr. Rimamsikwe Karma, stated that the pastoralists involved in the attacks on farmers are not the regular pastoralists

they had known, stating that they are ‘strange’. The council leader stated that “The herdsmen that followed the army to our council are not friendly with our people, they are strange faces to us and they are killing people”.⁷¹ This claim was corroborated by the Nigerian military stating that the pastoralists involved in violent attacks on farmers are ‘sponsored’ and are not traditional pastoralists.⁷² The commissioner for police in Kano state explained in an interview that many of the armed pastoralists arrested were from countries such as Senegal, Mali and Chad.⁷³ This is further testament that more hired pastoralists are replacing the traditional pastoralists.

It is important to state that not all conflicts between pastoralists and farmers in these regions are due to neo-pastoralism. Recent developments show that many traditional pastoralists now bear weapons too. Furthermore, some of the attacks on farmers are reprisals for the killings of cattle by farmers. Although many mainstream media in Nigeria assert that pastoralists are the aggressors in most of the conflicts, research interviews reveal that some of the attacks are revenge for the killings of pastoralists' cattle. For instance, the Berom ethnic group in Plateau state (One of the largest ethnic groups in the region) have never hidden their disdain for the pastoralists and have sometimes resorted to killing pastoralists' cattle to prevent them from grazing on their lands. This has led to reprisals by the pastoralists resulting in the killing of hundreds of people in Berom communities.⁷⁴ In response to increasing attacks on farmers, several farming communities have either formed vigilantes to prevent attacks on their communities or launched counter-attacks on pastoralist communities’ further increasing animosity between the groups.⁷⁵

The Politics of Pastoral conflicts

Although the ruling elite mostly understand the dynamics of this conflict, politics often play a significant role in the reporting/ lack of reporting of the conflict, potential solutions as well as the response of the Nigerian state. While potential solutions such as expansion of grazing lands,⁷⁶ disarming of armed pastoralists,⁷⁷ compensation for farmers,⁷⁸ securitization of farming communities,⁷⁹ addressing issues related to climate change⁸⁰ and combating cattle rustling⁸¹ have all been discussed, the conflict has been fraught with political calculations which makes it difficult to resolve.

In terms of political calculations, there are several issues involved. First, linking this conflict to ethnicity and religion often diverts attention from the core issues and creates division between previously integrated communities. While almost all the pastoralists are of Fulani descent, most of the attacks are directed against other ethnic groups. Rather than address the issues identified as responsible for the conflict, politicians often accentuate the ethnic motivations for the conflict in order to increase their own popularity and to create patronage as with other conflicts in Nigeria.⁸² Furthermore, influential religious, ethnic and political leaders often engage in political and ethnic manipulations while purportedly addressing the issue which often stokes rather than douse tensions.⁸³

Second, the debate on grazing and the provision of ranches are often politicised and painted in a manner akin to either the marginalisation of the Fulanis or the preferential treatment of the Fulanis, depending on who is involved in the debate. In June 2018, after several states affected by the conflict decided to individually establish anti-grazing laws on their lands, the federal government of Nigeria in an attempt to end the conflict and offer a coherent solution announced plans to spend N179 billion (about \$600 million) to build ranches in 10 states.⁸⁴ While several groups outside the pastoralist communities argued that pastoralism is a private

business and should not incur public spending,⁸⁵ the pastoralist community also rejected the idea on the basis that it is designed to persecute the Fulani community impacting on their freedom of movement.⁸⁶ Several members of the pastoralist community argued that the proposed ranching laws were ‘being used as campaigns by some people to win votes in the 2019 elections’⁸⁷ The politicisation of the issue coupled with the lackadaisical approach of the government makes every move towards resolving the conflict unattractive to the parties involved.

Third, the unwillingness of the Nigerian government to proscribe groups that have claimed responsibility for (or justified) attacks on farming communities in retaliation for the killing of cattle has been linked to the fear of loss of patronage. Despite Miyetti Allah justifying the killing of scores of people in Plateau state in 2018 as a retaliation for the killing of 300 cows by the farming communities,⁸⁸ the government refused to take any action on the group claiming that it is a socio-cultural group representing the interests of Fulanis.⁸⁹ This has led many Nigerians to think that the group has been deliberately shielded by the government as the sitting president (President Buhari) is from the Fulani ethnic group.

In addition, the inability of the ruling elite in Nigeria to address the impact of the neo-pastoralist dimension of the conflict is problematic. Rather than address the reasons why pastoralism is becoming increasingly militarised, the government has focused on the ethnic and religious dimensions of the conflict. Furthermore, many owners of large cattle herds are influential elites with considerable influence which makes prosecution of crimes difficult. If the neo-pastoralist dimension of the conflict is not identified and addressed coherently, the situation is likely to persist in the country.

Conclusion

This article unpacks the new waves of violence experienced in Nigeria broadly categorised as ‘farmer/herder’ or ‘pastoralist conflict’. The article argues that the dynamics of the conflict are more complicated than has been reported and crucial aspects of the conflict have not been identified prolonging the search for a lasting solution. Although this study focused on the case study of Nigeria, other African countries such as Ghana, Mali, Niger, Mauritania, Ivory Coast, Senegal, and Kenya have all experienced violent clashes involving the pastoral community.

Not discounting the factors previously identified as being responsible for the conflict such as climate change, armed conflicts in parts of Africa resulting in increased arms proliferation, trafficking and terrorism, this article identifies the changing nature of pastoralism in the country resulting from new patterns of cattle ownership and management as a significant factor responsible for the increase in pastoralist conflict.

Empirical research carried out in Nigeria reveals that the need to conceal illicit wealth by some individuals coupled with an upward trend in cattle prices has redefined the century-long established system of pastoralism. Traditional pastoralism is gradually giving way to more sophisticated (arms fuelled) cattle ownership which has been labelled neo-pastoralism and is prevalent in semi-urban areas of Northern Nigeria. This changing dynamics in cattle ownership has several significant consequences such as changes in the modes of cattle rustling especially in rural areas, increased conflicts between pastoralists and sedentary farmers and infighting between pastoralist groups, all resulting in an arms race in pastoral and farming communities.

The article also argues that the failure of the Nigerian state to deal with the issue stems from a combination of inability to address the neo-pastoral aspect of the conflict as well as the unwillingness to alter the neo-patrimonial balance of the state. In order to find a lasting

solution to pastoralist conflict, it is important to take a holistic look at all the strands of the violence identified by this research. More empirical studies are needed to understand the impact of the changes to pastoralism and the reasons for the increased use of SALW in the pastoral and farming communities.

Notes

¹ Mkutu, "Guns and Governance in the Rift Vally" 44

² Lamphear, "The traditional history of the Jie of Uganda"

³ Mkutu, "Guns and Governance in the Rift Vally"

⁴ Leff, "Pastoralists at War,"

⁵ See Lamphear, 1976 and Markakis, 1993

⁶ Mkutu, "Guns and Governance in the Rift Vally"

⁷ Ibid

⁸ There are more pastoralists in the horn of Africa than any other region in Africa, see Greiner, "Guns, land, and votes"; See also Verweijen and Brabant. "Cows and Guns."

⁹ IIED, "Farmer- Herder Conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa"; FAOSTAT, Livestock and Livelihood Spotlight: Nigeria-Cattle and Poultry Sectors

¹⁰ Although several issues have been identified by many scholars as being responsible for a surge in the violence, issues relating to climate change and desertification top the list. See Medugu et al, "Assessing the vulnerability of farmers, fishermen and herdsman to climate change"; Reuveny, "Climate change-induced migration and violent conflict"; Podesta and Ogden, "The Security Implications of Climate Change"; *Mohammed*, "No retreat no surrender"; Adekola, "Nigeria's conflict is a result of environmental devastation across West Africa"

¹¹ Konczacki, "The Economics of Pastoralism"

¹² Tall, "Herders vs Farmers."

¹³ IIED, "Farmer-Herder Conflict in sub-Saharan Africa"

¹⁴ Matthew Luizza, "African herders have been pushed into destitution and crime"

¹⁵ Respondents for this research were drawn mainly from 10 states in Nigeria: North Central- Nassarawa, Benue and Kwara states; North West- Kebbi and Kaduna states and South West- Lagos and Oyo states. There were also respondents from Abuja, Yobe and Bornu states although not part of the regions under study.

¹⁶ Luizza, "African herders have been pushed into destitution and crime"

¹⁷ Foundation Pour La Recherche Strategique, "Fulani people and Jihadism in Sahel and West African countries"

¹⁸ De Bruijn M. & van Dijk H. "Changing population mobility in West Africa."

¹⁹ Kubkomawa, "Indigenous Breeds of Cattle"

²⁰ FAO. "Livestock and Environment Spotlight Cattle and Poultry Sectors in Nigeria".

²¹ Luizza, "African herders have been pushed into destitution and crime"

²² Interview with pastoral expert at International Institute for Environment and Development

²³ Ajala, "Why clashes are on the rise between farmers and herdsman in the Sahel."; Nigerian price, "Prices of cows in Nigeria"

²⁴ The main reason for the higher prices in the south is because of the transportation cost as well as the profit derived by middlemen. Cattle are often purchased directly from pastoralists in Northern Nigeria.

Table 2

Year	Cattle Rustled	Pastoralists fatalities
2010	32,316	412
2011	45, 922	329
2012	47,312	194
2013	53,801	281
2014	60,000	357
2015	64,830	741
2016	59, 322	1041
2017	67,400	1139
2018	68,322	1459

Table 2: Estimated cattle rustling and fatalities in Nigeria: 2010-2018.²⁴ Data obtained from IGSR and CDD West Africa.

Figure 1

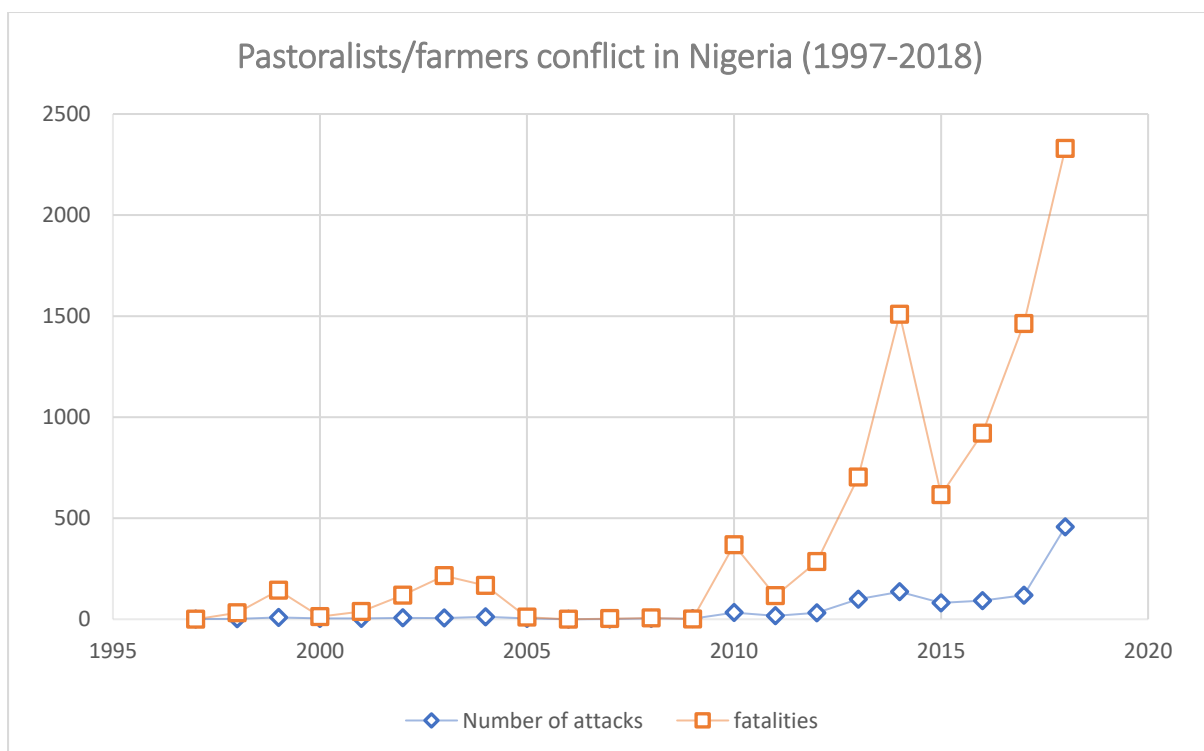


Figure 1: Pastoralists and farmers conflicts and fatalities in Nigeria. Data compiled from ACLED database 2019.

²⁵ Interview with customs officer in Northern Nigeria, December 2017

²⁶ There is a high level of corruption in Nigeria despite the huge resources generated from natural resources and the resultant poverty is often linked to the formation of insurgent groups. See Ajala, 2018; Adenrele, "Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria"; Suleiman and Karim, "Cycle of Bad Governance and Corruption"; LeVan, "Reciprocal retaliation and local linkage"

²⁷ The Vanguard, "Importance of Bank Verification Number".

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Interviews with First bank officials in Lagos, December 2017

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- ³⁰ Pulse Nigeria, "This is why Governor stormed banks with thugs": See also; The Nation Nigeria, "Revealed: How \$22.3m hit Jonathan's wife's accounts."
- ³¹ Nigeria Communications Week, "Fear of BVN"
- ³² Ibid ; See also Premium times Nigeria, 'Amidst anti-corruption war, BVN, bank customers reduce across Nigeria'
- ³³ Interview with senior banking officer, Lagos state
- ³⁴ Interview with security expert in Maiduguri, December 2017; Thousands of cattle in Nigeria are owned by non-pastoralists who arm the herders. See Niyi Akinnaso, 'Who are the cattle owners in Nigeria?' ; See also PM News, 'Most Nigerian cattle not owned by Fulani Herdsmen- Shawulu'
- ³⁵ Catley and Aklilu, "Moving up or moving out?"
- ³⁶ Little, " Absentee herd owners and part-time pastoralists"
- ³⁷ Field interviews carried out in 2017 in Nigeria
- ³⁸ Triche, "Pastoral Conflict in Kenya"
- ³⁹ Azeez and Aliyu "Cows, Bandits, and Violent Conflicts: Understanding Cattle Rustling in Northern Nigeria"
- ⁴⁰ Triche, "Pastoral Conflict in Kenya"
- ⁴¹ Ibid
- ⁴² Toulmin, " Tracking through Drought: Options for Destocking and Restocking"
- ⁴³ Markakis, "Conflict and the Decline of pastoralism in the horn of Africa".
- ⁴⁴ Fleisher, "War is Good for Thieving!"
- ⁴⁵ This trend is common in the North Central region of Nigeria based on the accounts of several interviewees.
- ⁴⁶ UNSC, "Report of the Panel of Experts reports, 2017"
- ⁴⁷ Ibid; See also: Strazzari "Libyan arms and regional instability"
- ⁴⁸ Ibid
- ⁴⁹ Global Conflict Tracker- 1 August 2018
- ⁵⁰ Oxfam Research Reports, "The Human cost of uncontrolled arms in Africao"
- ⁵¹ Ibid
- ⁵² Kuna and Ibrahim, "Rural Banditory and Conflicts in Northern Nigeria"
- ⁵³ Kuna and Ibrahim, "Rural Banditory and Conflicts in Northern Nigeria"
- ⁵⁴ Ngelzarma, "Fulani National leader"
- ⁵⁵ Interview data from Benue, Nassarawa and Kwara (North Central Nigeria)
- ⁵⁶ Kazeem, "Nigeria now has a bigger internal security threat than Boko Haram"; It is important to note that some of the clashes between pastoral groups as well as fatalities as a result of cattle rustling are often included in these data as seen in the ACLED database.
- ⁵⁷ Ajala, "Why clashes are on the rise between farmers and herdsmen in the Sahel."
- ⁵⁸ See King, " Conflict Management among the Farmers and Pastoralists in Tanzania"; Makinta, Hamisu, and Bello, "Influence of Traditional Institutions in Farmer-herder Conflicts Management in Borno State, Nigeria"; These claims were corroborated when I interviewed farmers and pastoralists in the case study areas with one of the farmers stating that some herdsmen even offer payment for grazing on his harvested stocks.
- ⁵⁹ Davidheiser and Luna, "From Complementarity to Conflict"
- ⁶⁰ Ibid
- ⁶¹ Ibid, 79
- ⁶² Halliru, " Security Implication of Climate Change Between Farmers and Cattle Rearers in Northern Nigeria"
- ⁶³ Fasona and Omojola, "Climate Change, Human Security and Communal Clashes in Nigeria"
- ⁶⁴ Akinyemi and Olaniyan, "Nigeria: Climate War and farmer-herder conflicts"
- ⁶⁵ This was affirmed by several interviewees including farmers, herdsmen and government officials.
- ⁶⁶ Ugwuanyi "Herdsmen now attack us with machine guns- Taraba residence"
- ⁶⁷ Salkida "Exclusive on Fulani herdsmen"

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- ⁶⁸ Most interviewees agreed with this argument.
- ⁶⁹ Interview with a military officer in Nigeria, September 2016
- ⁷⁰ Adeseun, "How Unidentified Helicopter Delivers Supplies To Fulani Herdsmen In Delta Desert' – House Of Assembly Member"
- ⁷¹ Ugwuanyi "Herdsmen now attack us with machine guns- Taraba residence"
- ⁷² Fabiyi, Aluko and Charles, "Benue: Killer herdsmen are sponsored, says military"
- ⁷³ Channels TV "Big Story: Focus on Cattle Rustling in Nigeria Part 1"
- ⁷⁴ See Aluko, "Urban Violence Dimension in Nigeria"; See also, Akov, "The resource-conflict debate revisited"
- ⁷⁵ International Crises Group, "Herders against Farmers"; See also, Onwughalu and Obiorah, "Voluntary policing and the containment of Herders-Farmers conflicts in Nigeria"
- ⁷⁶ Shuichi Oyam, "Farmer-herder conflict. "
- ⁷⁷ Premium times, "Fulani chief urges Nigerian govt to disarm herdsmen in Jigawa"; See also, The Guardian Nigeria, 'Disarm Fulani herdsmen now to prevent war"
- ⁷⁸ Nike Popoola, "Herdsmen"
- ⁷⁹ Apart from the Nigerian government sending military to affected areas, see BBC, 'Nigeria's Benue clashes: Mass burial after farmer-Fulani clashes', several farming communities in Nigeria have also set up vigilante groups to either protect themselves from pastoralists or launch counter-attacks on pastoralist groups see International Crises Group, 'Herders against farmers'
- ⁸⁰ C, Cabot, "Climate change and Farmer-Herder conflicts in West Africa"
- ⁸¹ Chris Kwaja and Bukola Ademola-Adelehin, "Responses to Conflicts between Farmers and Herders in the Middle Belt of Nigeria"
- ⁸² Berman "Ethnicity, Patronage and the African State"; See also, Arriola, "Patronage and Political Stability in Africa"
- ⁸³ Princewill, "The politics of the poor man's pain"
- ⁸⁴ Obogo, Chinelo, "Uproar over proposed cattle ranches in 10 states"
- ⁸⁵ Ibid
- ⁸⁶ Akpeji, Wantu and Ande Emmanuel, "Fulani leaders ask herdsmen to boycott anti-grazing bill hearing"
- ⁸⁷ Erunke, "Why Nigerian Fulani won't accept ranching- Miyetti Allah"
- ⁸⁸ Vanguard Newspaper, "Plateau Massacre, retaliation for lost 300 cows- Miyetti Allah"
- ⁸⁹ Punch Newspaper, "Miyetti Allah is like Afenifere, Ohanaeze, Presidency says"

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