

HERDSMEN – FARMERS CLASHES IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NATIONAL SECURITY

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the incessant clashes between the pastoral Fulani herdsmen and sedentary farmers in Nigeria, which poses serious security challenge to the nation. The paper examines the causes of incessant clashes between the herdsmen and farmers which include the competition for land for farming and grazing; the impact of climate change in the Sahel region and the Lake Chad basin in particular, thus resulting in massive drift of herdsmen and their cattle to the Middle Belt region and Southern Nigeria. There was also the proliferation of weapons in the Sahel region and, indeed, in Africa due to political upheavals, terrorism, insurgencies and arms smuggling etc. Also, the causes of violent clashes between herdsmen and farmers could be traced to the destruction of farm crops by herdsmen's cattle in the course of grazing, and the reprisal attacks by some host communities. Besides, the incidences of cattle rustling and killing of herdsmen's cattle sometimes provoked violent clashes between herdsmen and some host communities. The implication of these violent clashes includes the loss of many lives and properties, and the threat to peace and security across the nation. The clashes were said to have resulted in the destruction of valuable properties and investments worth \$14.7 billion, and 6,500 deaths of Nigerian citizens between 2010 and 2015. Besides, the violent clashes were said to have resulted in displacement of about 62,000 people from their homes. Moreover, it could instigate ethno-religious conflict in the country. Also, the clashes had resulted in the loss of large quantity of farm crops, thus exposing the farmers and the entire nation to hunger and starvation. Likewise, the act of cattle rustling deprived cattle owners their invaluable wealth, and the main source of the nation's protein and fiber content. These result in the drop in the nation's nutritional value, and as well the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Finally, the violent clashes tend to overstretch the capabilities of security agencies to maintain peace and security under the democratic system. Thus, the Federal Government should live up to its responsibilities and curb the incessant clashes between herdsmen and farmers. The establishment of modern commercial ranches with necessary infrastructure may help in this regard.