Full Length Research

A concentric approach to understanding herders-farmers clashes in Benue and Nasarawa States, Nigeria

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This paper provides a theoretical appraisal as regards the phenomenon of Herders and farmers clashes in north central of Nigeria, specifically “Benue” and “Nassarawa” States. By way of qualitative discourse, grounded on secondary sources, the paper gives insight and a deep understanding on the contending issues surrounding resource struggle by host farmers and migrating herders. The approach of Burgess and his concentric model opens up a wider midcourse and analysis; the model examines the historical roadmap to nomadic exploration, encroachment of old cattle routes and its implicating effect on land use in contemporary conflict.

Key words: Cattle routes, North central, Burgees theory, herders, farmers, conflict.

INTRODUCTION

In recent time, there has been an increase in the cases of conflict in Nigeria that are linked to the farmer-herder clashes (Olaniyan et al., 2015). The farmers and herders have a long tradition and commercial relationship, though there were cases of disparity existing between both groups that were usually resolved by both groups peacefully (Nzeh, 2015; Goke, 2018). The subsistence of the herders is shaped under interaction with sedentary farmers (Goke, 2018). Hence, it is an ostensible reality that the codependent connection flows as each group desires land, water points, forage and other nature’s resources for their economic undertakings (Tarhule and Lamb, 2003; Fiki and Lee, 2004). It is therefore worrisome that this form of relationship which has been in existence for centuries back has been truncated with several reported cases of widespread violence, death, and high figures of internally displaced persons resulting from farmers and herders clashes (Gelu and Kolawole, 2002; Dietz et al., 2001; Akinkuolie, 2018).

Factors such as climate change and desertification necessitate the movement of herders down south, and across middle-belt zones of Nigeria in search of pasture for their herds (Iro, 1994; Abass, 2012; Olaniyan et al., 2015). As the population of migrating cattle cannot be tamed from increasing, similarly, the population of humans is also on a progressive increase, with a 51.9% increase in the past 6 decade (Worldometers, 2019). This significantly increases the interest on the land usage per person. The fact that the land area does not seem to expand coupled with a low productivity index as the years passes, is something to be worried about. The farmers around this region who focus on shift rotation of land for fallowing reasons and good output of farm inputs see the invasion of fallowing grounds and other farmlands by the herder’s cattle as direct incursion on their livelihood (Abass, 2012; Akevi, 2014; Durojaiye, 2014). This

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interference in most cases degenerates into conflicts due to inapt and divergent interests of the herders and farmers. According to Aluko (2017), the conflict between herders and farmers in the north central of Nigeria has displaced more than 100,000 people in Benue and Nasarawa states. It has left them without any other feasible option than fending with relatives or relocating to temporary displaced person’s camps. The surges of violence have displaced 400,000 people in the last five years while many are still struggling to rebuild their lives (Crisis Group Report, 2018).

According to findings from the Institution for peace and conflict Resolution (IPCR), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Report (2012), the first noticeable conflict between the farmers and the Fulanis in Benue state originated when the Fulanis diverted from the old cattle route which came from Awe through Akaahena to Torkula, then west wards to ‘Ortese’ and out to ‘Doma’ district. This route clearly was away from the Makurdi north due to the absence of the flood plains in the North Bank area of Makurdi town in Benue State. The population of the cattle made the Fulani herders to seek other routes which could lead them to areas close to Makurdi, namely Rukobi, Anter, and Nyijir. These are all ‘rich’ and evergreen arable land suitable for pasture. More so, the absence of grazing reserves and routes precipitates and facilitates the conflict. Also, encroachment on grazing routes, which have gone extinct/blockage of cattle routes, was also noted to be responsible for the conflicts (IPCR-UNDP, 2012; Adeoye, 2017; CGR, 2018). All farming system such as the nomadic cattle herding has a boundary, which separates it from interfering with the larger system, which make up the environment. The boundary represents the limits in the larger society. Farmers have come in constant and increased competition with herdsmen for farmland, pastures, water, tress and the use of vast land in general (Ofuoku and Isife, 2010).

METHODOLOGY

This paper adopts a qualitative approach in the application of “Burgeses theory” in providing a clear cut explanation on encroachment by urban development, and how it has footed the escalated crises between herdsmen and farmers in two north central states. The paper is descriptive in design with a systematic review of relevant literatures. This paper made use of secondary data such as high impact reports and journal publications.

Understanding the annual herding cycle by nomads within conflict regions

The nomadic system of cattle grazing is a foremost occupation of the people in the Sahel and parts of the Savannah regions of Nigeria (Ogboru et al., 2018). Pastoralists are people whose main source of livings is livestock herding which are very important in the agricultural industry, particularly its support to food production in the developmental context. Its importance cannot be overemphasized. In most African countries, nomadic pastoralists ordinarily are a combination of both the indigenous nomads and those who migrated from other neighboring African countries in search of water and pasture; Nigeria is a typical example. The end movement is known as transhumance; however, the movement of the nomadic herds within a country is also considered as transhumance (Agyemang, 2017). Transhumance was part of a policy of Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS). In continuance of this policy, ECOWAS went further to develop a Transhumance Protocol in 1998. This protocol was adopted and signed by member countries, including Nigeria. The protocol guarantees the free movement of herdsmen across the sub-region.

Describing the annual herding cycle of the Fulani, Iro (1994) affirmed that the herding period commences with southward movement of their herds with mapped out routes along rivers, streams and valleys, round October down to December which eventually marks the end of the rainy period and the commencement of dry season. The month of January and February happens to be the harmattan season, which is often characterized by longer hours of grazing, splitting of herds, and regular visitation to stable water sources (Tarhule and Lamb, 2003). This consequently intensifies the southward movement of herds. More so, March and April are mostly the toughest for the herdsmen because it is the hottest period in the grazing calendar (Iro, 1994). While May and June indicate the end of dry season and foliage begins to appear. The appearance of vegetation during this period marks the beginning of movement of cattle herds northwards. From this period down to September, which is the main presence of rain during the wet season, open and free cattle breeding with shorter grazing hours and more milk production mostly characterize this season (Aluko, 2017). It is therefore imperative to note that cattle herding coincides significantly with arable farming. Farmer-herders conflict therefore becomes prevalent during this period, with less attention to solving grazing route problems.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Burgeses theory and the concentric ring model

The Concentric ring model is one of the preliminary theoretical models to explain urban social structures. Sociologist Ernest Burgess created it in 1925. It was the first to give a contemporary simplification and explanation of distribution of social groups enclosed in urban areas (Burgess et al., 1925). This concentric ring model portrays urban land use in concentric rings: the Central Business District (CBD) holds the middle of the model, and the city expanded in rings with different land uses. The distinguished zones include the following (Figure 1):

(i) The center holds the CBD
(ii) The transition zone of mixed residential and commercial uses
(iii) Low-class residential homes (inner suburbs), in later decades called inner city
(iv) Better quality middle-class homes (Outer Suburbs)
(v) Commuter’s zone

Burgess many times observed that there was a relationship between the established distance from the CBD and the riches and affluence of the inhabited area; wealthier families prefer to live much farther away from the Central Business District. As the city continued to
enlarge in activities and development, Burgess also observed that the CBD would cause it to expand outwards; sequentially forced the other rings to expand outwards as well.

**Concentric ring Model: Population explosion and encroachment on old cattle routes within north central Nigeria**

Before Abuja was designated to be the Federal Capital, it was a vast area of land filled with forests and ancient part way that housed the corridors for nomads and grazing routes. The nomads moved through these routes down south towards the middle-belt through Nasarawa down to Benue, Taraba, and back to the north through Abuja. Following the introduction of the first National livestock Development Project (NLDP), and the enactment of a grazing law by the Northern Nigeria Legislative Assembly in 1965, the then authorities made an attempt to provide grazing lands with routes to accommodate migrating herders in order to make the nomadic Fulani sedentary activities hitch free, and provide a commercial corridor for them (Awogbade, 1987). Grazing routes were mapped out through Nasarawa, Benue, Plateau, Kastina, Bauchi, Abuja, Sokoto and Adamawa. However, only 270 of these official grazing lands are functional, which may be one of the reasons why this problem is still lingering (Abass, 2012; Tenuche and Hatimehim, 2009) (Figure 2).

**Establishment of the CBD**

Since the establishment of Abuja as the Federal Capital of Nigeria, it turned out to become a CBD as proposed by Burgess. Heavy commercial and developmental activities commenced ever since, attracting all kinds of people with various walks of life. It became the suburb within the north-central region, with high incursion of people from surrounding environment, neighboring states and other countries for Administrative, diplomatic, business and other known and unknown purposes. From Burgess analogy, as the city continues to grow and develop economically, this would in turn cause the CBD which is the “Central Business District” to expand outward. The expansion of the CBD comes with a stringing effect, thereby allowing other rings to expand outwards as well. Abuja being the CBD within the region, began to expand due to the leaden activities carried out within the CBD. There is high value for land within this district, and has made the rent, and land use fees very high and expensive. The expansion of the transition zone of mixed residential and commercial users is as a function of the high value of land use within the CBD. As a result of these expansions, there has been a massive encroachment on old ancient cattle routes and farming areas. Large portion of these ancient routes was sold off for developmental purposes with constructions of housing units, offices, factories, camps etc. The encroachment by urban development continued to expand the concentric...
ring outward, down to the creation of the Low-class residential homes (inner suburbs), in later decades called inner city. This area still surrounds the Federal Capital known as the Central business District.

People who live within this "inner suburbs" do so due to the proximity to work place or their businesses; housing is usually not comfortable but a little cheaper than the other rings. The "outer suburbs" and "Commuter zones" are the last two rings within the Burgess concentric zone. These zones also expand outward as well. There is comfortable and affordable rent by the middle-class. Most of the neighboring states fall within this zone. Looking at the structure of Abuja, which is the CBD, majority of people who work in the CBD live outside the region; Karu, Maraba and Nyaya which are suburb settlements and also boundary areas between Abuja and Nasarawa states, with a high population of people residing there. Those areas have cheaper housing and lesser land value as compared to the CBD; more so, there is close proximity to the CBD.

Burgess theory gives a break down on social groups enclosed in urban areas and the multiplying effect on land use and value around these areas. This also helps in giving a deeper understanding to the problem of herdsmen and farmers crises around the north-central states. Nasarawa state and Benue state are neighboring states to Abuja. Lots of people have migrated from these states down to Abuja to seek better life and job opportunities. The ponderous activity within the CBD has caused an explosion of population around these states. It is worthy of note that Nasarawa state and Benue states also serve as corridors for migrating herdsmen with major grazing routes in these states. Due to the explosion of population and economic activities around these regions, there has been a wide encroachment on those ancient cattle and grazing routes connecting through Abuja to Nasarawa and Benue state. Urban development has over the years encroached into these grazing routes, with little or no option for migrating herdsmen. The expansion of all the rings around the CBD has made clashes and land conflict inevitable, as migrating herdsmen are left with no other option than scavenging on farmlands and

![Map of Nigeria indicating Nasarawa and Benue state](image)

**Figure 2.** Map of Nigeria showing north central states under discussion.
Source: UNDP, IPCR, (2012)
communities along such routes (Figure 3).

Burgess concentric model is more detailed than the traditional down-mid-uptown divide by which downtown is the CBD, uptown the rich residential outer ring, and midtown in between. Burgess's work is anchored on the bid rent curve. This theory states that the concentric circles spring from the amount that people will pay for the land. This value of such land is based on the profits that are obtainable from maintaining a business on that land. The center of the town takes the highest number of customers making it more profitable for retail activities. Manufacturers will pay slightly less for the land, as they are only interested in the accessibility for workers, "goods in" and 'goods out'. Residential land use will take the surrounding land. In summary, the Burgess theory gives an explanation on how ancient cattle routes have been encroached as a result of urban development around the CBD (Abuja).

Conclusion

Change is constant and as such, every society must adapt to new innovations and technology. There is an exigent need to intensify efforts by both federal and state actors, in congruent dexterity with the locals in curbing the already amplified conflict between herders and farmers in Nigeria. Modules and lessons from other successful countries in preventing and resolving similar conflict can guide the decision of the Nigeria Government. More so, the government should give a close investigation into how other countries with low herder-farmers conflict were able to modernize, regulate and transform their livestock industry and animal movement with an inclusive advantage for both herding and farming communities. A very good example of such country is Brazil. According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA, 2019), Brazil whom exported 625 million tons of livestock products in 2000, now has over 226 million herds of cattle, this therefore made them the second highest in the world, after India). This is a visible and tenable result of ranching. On the other hand, Nigeria, which is shuffled by the archaic tradition style of open herding, had an estimated 20.8 million cattle (Knoema, 2017).

In order to resolve tension and control herders-farmers...
conflict, government should employ a strategy that would motivate herders and cattle owners in adopting ranching style, since it is difficult in controlling the level of encroachment through urban development policies. In place of grazing routes, herders should be offered loans with low interest to establish ranches, and also be provided with infrastructure to secure them and their livestock. It is also imperative, that a security approach be employed in ensuring immediate halt on violence and restoring the rule of law, amidst other ongoing intervention towards decorum.

**CONFLICT OF INTERESTS**

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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