

The menace of cattle rustling and banditry in north-west Nigeria: A Case Study of Katsina State

SHEHU, Suleiman Abdullahi¹, Mr. Victor .E², Binta M³

¹(B.Ed, M.Ed, PhD), ²(BA-Ed M.Ed), & ³(BSc, M.Ed)

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*Faculty of Humanities & Education. Department of Educational foundations Federal University, Gusau-
Zamfara State. PMB-1001*

Abstract: *Cattle rustling and banditry has been a veritable threat to public safety and security in north-west-Nigeria. It has led to loss of lives, human injury, population displacements, as well as loss of cattle in their numbers. This situation goes with repercussions that do not portend well for the collective wellbeing of the herding communities. It creates a sense of insecurity which has the capacity to hamper the productivity of the herding enterprise. The loss of cattle to rustlers means depletion of household income and communal resource of the herding community. It was based on this background, that this paper examined the menace of cattle rustling and banditry in north west Nigeria: A Case study of katsina state and the finding revealed that: Unwillingness to share grazing land, rampant drought and famine in the area: lack of sensitization of people to apply land use act of 1978; Claim for scarce resources ownership position of land; Grazing field account for conflict among herders and farmers; Decline in internal discipline and social cohesion among Fulani and farmers: Some recommendations to conflict resolution were: The federal and state commence the construction of grazing reserves and delineated stock routes for herders; Resolution and dialogue reached should be maintained*

Key words: *Cattle rustling; Banditry; Fulani herdsmen; Menace: Farmers*

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I. Introduction

In Nigeria, the prevalence of cattle rustling has been widespread, particularly in the northern part of the country where cattle rearing obtains as a dominant agricultural practice. Recent developments tend to have implicated cattle rustling in the rising wave of violence in northern Nigeria, as exemplified in the phenomenon of Boko Haram insurgency and herder/farmer conflicts (Okoli and Atelhe, 2014; Okoli and Iortyer, 2014). This scenario has accentuated the significance of cattle rustling as a fundamental national security problematic in Nigeria. (Daily Trust 2014 February; Okoli and Iortyer, 2014) The recent classification of some Fulani herdsmen as Boko Haram collaborators by the Nigerian military and politicians (McGregor 2014) reveals the complexities of violent clashes between cattle breeders and sedentary agriculturalists across different parts of the country. The alleged involvement of camel pastoralists from the Republic of Niger in some conflicts in the north-western and central regions of Nigeria also highlights the need to investigate the multidimensional causes and the politicization of a problem that spills over to neighbouring countries. For instance, analyses the relationship between herdsmen and farmers as an economic exchange of dairy products for grain, access to local markets, and the provision of manure on arable land while the cattle consume crop residues. However, he claims that religious and cultural factors, among others, are key to peaceful relationships that became less cordial as the Fulani migrated further south. This has led to several agitations in the past, notably by the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN), which advocates for the social, political, economic, and cultural integration of Fulani in communities where they settle (Awogbade 1987).

Climate changes, the migration further south, the growth of agro-pastoralism, the expansion of farming on pastures, the invasion of farmlands by cattle, assault on non-Fulani women by herders, blockage of stock routes and water points, freshwater scarcity, burning of rangelands, cattle theft, inadequate animal health care and disease control, overgrazing on fallow lands, defecation on streams and roads by cattle, extensive sedentarisation, ineffective coping strategies, ethnic stereotyping, and the breakdown of conflict intervention mechanisms—these are usually identified by scholars as the root causes of such violence in rural areas (Folami 2009; Ofuoku and Isife 2009; Adekunle and Adisa 2010; Blench 2010; Odoh and Chigozie 2012; Solagberu 2012; Audu 2013, 2014; Bello 2013; McGregor 2014). In line with this, Abass (2012) contends that the major source of tensions between pastoralists and farmers is basically economic, with land-related issues accounting for the majority of the conflicts. This can then be situated within the broader context of the political economy of land struggle, traceable to a burgeoning demography in which there is fierce competition for fixed space to meet the demands of the growing population (Olabode and Ajibade 2010; Solagberu 2012).

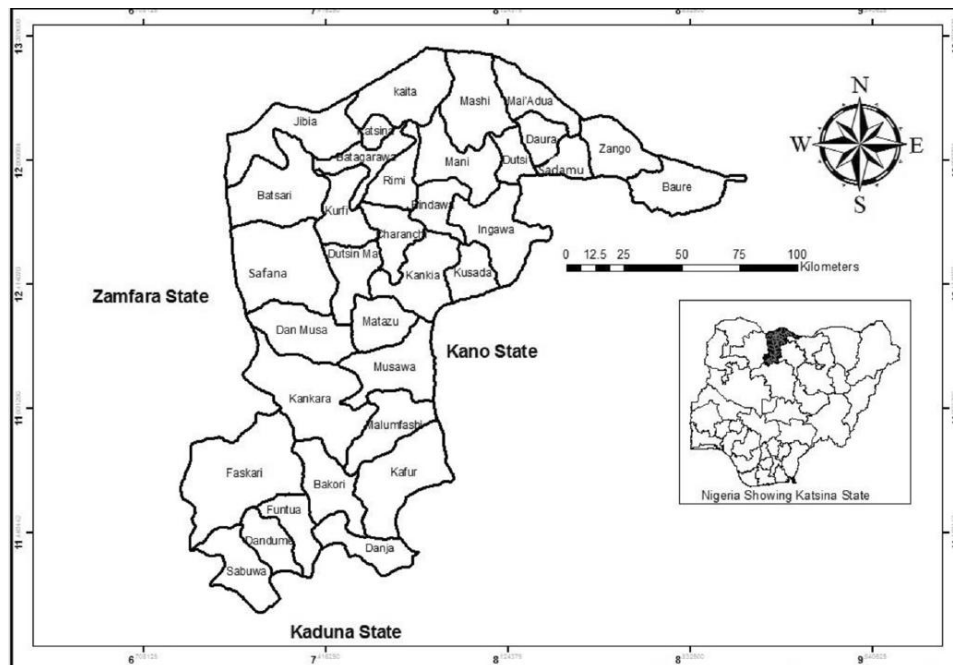
However, Blench (2010) has observed that ecological and economic determinism may not capture the complexities embedded in the conflict contexts of these groups. Sellen (1996) also advocated for contextual analyses of 'local socio-ecological conditions' and diversity of pastoral populations in accounting for their nutritional habits. Therefore, there is need to overcome the socio-cultural stereotyping of the nomadic life and relate experiences to their contexts, while taking cognisance of the holistic functioning systems of local economies (Gefu and Gilles 1990). In more recent times, transhumant herdsman coexist with agro-pastoralists and farmers who have also taken to cattle breeding (Awogbade 1987), and this has redefined their perceptions of and relationships with each other. Of these herdsman, the Fulani are highly visible. Yet there are about 14 other groups who practise pastoralist activities in Nigeria, including the Arabs, Kanuri, Kanembu, Shuwa, and Touareg (Blench 2010; Krause 2011; Abass 2012; Audu 2013; McGregor 2014)

Hence, rustling and banditry activities have been a veritable threat to public safety and security in Nigeria. It has led to loss of lives, human injury, population displacements, as well as loss of cattle in their numbers. This situation goes with repercussions that do not portend well for the collective wellbeing of the herding communities. It creates a sense of insecurity which has the capacity to hamper the productivity of the herding enterprise. The loss of cattle to rustlers means depletion of household income and communal resource of the herding community. The implications of this for sustainable productivity of the herding venture are easy to decipher. This could ultimately lead to drop in the aggregate supply of organic protein and dairy in Nigeria. What is more critical and dicey is the correlation between cattle rustling and spiral violence in some parts of northern Nigeria. The incessant attacks by cattle rustlers on herding communities tend to set them at loggerheads with their ecological neighbours - the settled native farmers. In some instances, the farmers are arbitrarily accused by the herders as the culprit and masterminds of their cattle raids. The strategic implication of this development is that it has the capacity of raising the instrumental value and utility of cattle rustling to a level where its solution would be as problematic as terrorism itself. The logic is that if cattle rustling earnestly becomes an instrumentality for terrorist design, it will surely thrive so long as terrorism prevails. (Blench 2010; Krause 2011; Abass 2012; Audu 2013)

The Historical trend of cattle rustling activities in Katsina state

Katsina State is located on the high plains of Hausa-land approximately 733m above sea level. The coordinates of the State are latitudes 11° 30'N - 13° 15'N and longitudes 6° 52' E - 09° 20' east. The State is composed of 34 local government areas (LGAs), divided into 3 senatorial zones, namely, Katsina Central, Katsina South and Katsina North. Farming is the predominant economic activity, particularly in rural areas. Cattle theft mainly occurs in six LGAs that cut across Katsina Central and South axes. The affected LGAs are Sabuwa, Danmusa, Dandume, Safana, Batsari, Faskari and Kankara. Coincidentally, these LGAs share borders with some States within the north-west geopolitical zone that are simultaneously hit by incessant cattle theft. For instance, Faskari, Danmusa, Batsari, Safana, Kankara and Sabuwa border Zamfara State and Kaduna State. Moreover, other parts of the State are bounded to the north by the Niger Republic and to the east by Kano and Jigawa States (see Figure 1). The State covers an area of 23,938 km², which accounts for approximately 2.7 % of the total land area of Nigeria

Figure 1 Administrative map of Katsina State showing the LGAs



Cattle rustling and banditry have for many years remained the most teething problems bedeviling the people of southern part of Katsina state especially communities surrounding the dreaded Rugu forest. Rugu forest spanning over 220KM has been a hub for the bandits and no go area for any persons. The forest is also backbone for the illicit trade of animals. Kano Chronicle gathered that hundreds of lives were lost, many women raped, several persons maimed just as thousands of animals worth billions of naira were lost to the activities of such bandits who have made the forest their hideouts. A renewed effort in the last eight months as promised by state government were about N300m was so far expended is fast restoring hope to the already impoverish communities in Faskari, Safana, Danmusa, Jibia, Dutsinma and Bakori. The communities have for long been bearing the brunt of cattle rustling and banditry. Kano Chronicle recalled that sometimes last year over 100 lives were killed by the bandits in just one daring attack in Faskari and Sabuwa local government areas of the state. However, the perceived normalcy as been witnessed now with increase patrols and involvement of community policing as adopted in the fight against rustlers is showing some improvement. A breakdown of the statistics obtained from the secretariat of the state standing committee on cattle rustling shows that from July-December 2015 about 11,989 animals were recovered out of which 9,221 were returned to their rightful owners. Eight thousand, six hundred and seventy six (8,676) of the recovered animals are cows, 2,623 sheep, 571 goats, 55 camels and 74 donkeys. Also from January to date, 3,509 animals were recovered and 4,028 have been reunited with owners. Some residents, who spoke to Kano Chronicle on the menace of cattle rustling in the state have expressed appreciation to the renewed efforts so far but still expect more to be done to nip the issues in the bud. A resident of Tawanka village of Tsaskiya town in Safana local government, Malam Muhammad Salisu said the renewed efforts had drastically reduced cattle rustling and banditry in Safana and environ. He said even though there were still issues of thefts here and there but compared to what was happening before, people were living in relative peace. "What happened in the past if allowed to continue by now nobody would have been alive in Tsaskiya town, just recently somebody from Wuma village was also attesting to the peace we are enjoying presently," he added. Mahmud Hassan of Kankara town said the ills were reducing seriously compared to when bandits in hundreds riding on motorbikes with guns would attack a village shooting sporadically at unsuspecting persons before carting away animals and raping women. He said, what remains were few petty thieves who engaged in stealing a cow or two unlike when herds of cattle were driven away to the forest with no any effort to get them back. Speaking during an enlarged stakeholders meeting on cattle rustling, the state governor Aminu Bello Masari said a data bank that would monitor movement of cattle within and outside the state was in the process of development.

Responsible factors for cattle rustling and banditry in katsina state

Cattle rustling in Katsina State major occurrence are caused by many factors such as unwillingness to share grazing land, rampant drought and famine in the area, etc. Cattle raiding have major effects on the communities living in the seven LGA. The raids have mainly resulted in deaths and immigration. The high livestock raids have also resulted to high illiteracy levels in the communities, high levels of hunger and poverty among others

In a study conducted by (Bashir, 2017) there exist different attributing factors to cattle rustling and banditry in the state, it depends on one’s perception to the menace acts. However, he identified the following as major factors:

- ✓ Poverty which represented (16.6%), followed by political interference (14.4%), climate change occasioned by droughts and reduced access to water sources (13.3%).
- ✓ Competition over access and control of scarce natural resources that represented (12.8%) and limited natural resources (11.7%),
- ✓ Pastoralist culture (Fulani herders) and traditions passed over the years that have promoted animosity in the area (11.7%),
- ✓ Commercialization of cattle rustling which represented (10.6%) and Poor policies on pastoralists community that have destabilized the livelihoods of the community (7.1%)
- ✓ Invading of private farmlands and ranching in search of grazing land (1.9%) which have contributed detrimentally to cattle rustling

The above contention was depicted in the table below. From his result findings as thus:

Table 1: Parameter and percentage of respondents

Parameter	Count	Percentage of Responses from each Herders Chairman from the 7 LGA
Poverty	61	16.6
Political interference	53	14.4
Climate change occasioned by droughts and reduced access to water	49	13.3
Competition over access and control of scarce natural	47	12.8
Competition over access and control of scarce natural	47	12.8
Pastoralists culture and traditions passed over the years that have promoted animosity in the area	43	11.7
Limited natural resources	43	11.7
Commercialization of livestock rustling	39	10.6
Poor policies on pastoralists community that have destabilized the livelihoods of the community	26	7.1
Invading of private farmlands and ranching in search of grazing land	7	1.9

In addition to the identified, cattle rustling conflicts in Katsina State are complex and take different forms including some of the following: conflict over land and water; conflict over cattle/commercialized raids; conflict over the district boundary; road thuggery and banditry. Cattle rustling is an old practice among the cattle rearing communities in Katsina. However, in post-modern Katsina, cattle rustling has transformed from being a customary means of cattle restocking where traditional weapon such as bows, arrows and spears were used to a commercial practice where sophisticated weaponry is used. Modernity has brought with it a more deadly form of cattle-rustling, and has raised concern because of its sophistication. Raids are well planned and executed with military precision characterized by the use of modern and destructive weapons. Cattle raiders are known to use small arms and light weapons such as Mark4, German Riffle 3, Alexander Klashikov47, grenades and mortars. In the view of Cheserek, et. al, (2012). Cattle rustling is an ancient practice that is associated with societies suffering from social and economic upheavals and where the structures and functioning of leadership and governance have collapsed or are significantly weakened. It is more in rural and marginal communities. They identified two forms of cattle rustling as:

- i. Rustling of livestock by opposing ethnic groups or clans. This form of rustling often involves large number of people from defined ethnic or family background. The purpose of this form of rustling is to build-up the stock of livestock wealth for the ethnic group or clans. The rustled cows are shared among the family or group members for breeding. In some situations, part of the cows may be given back to families or groups whose animals were previously rustled by the opposing parties. Examples of these forms of rustling are common in the Greater Horn of Africa, particularly in countries including Somalia, Kenya and Uganda.
- ii. Rustling of cattle by criminal gangs or thieves who sell-off the stolen cows. The purpose of this form of rustling is purely criminal; it is to steal the cows and sell them off for monetary gains. For this form of rustling to exist, there must be ready markets which are built around powerful cartels with wide networks and support from state institutions, particularly security agencies.

The Impacts of the attacks on the Socio-Economic Development of katsina

Figure 2: Recovered Animals



According to Bashir, (2017) the activities of cattle rustling and banditry has had major impact on Pastoral livelihoods in Katsina State. It has resulted to conflict related deaths according to 26.7% of the responses. It has also led to immigration (22.6%), internally displaced persons (17.2%), intolerance between communities (12.8%), high number of police patrol and military personnel (9.1%). Incidence of human rights abuse, sexual assault and rape (6.1%) have also increased, arrest and detention of the common people without probable cause or warrant (5.4%) as shown in the table below.

The participants in the focus group in the seven LGA where data was collected also cited the main impacts resulting from cattle rustling as poverty due to the source of livelihood being taken away. Early marriage and polygamy has also increased as youths who raid livestock tend to marry early and many wives. Heroism leads to hatred among the community and also further cattle rustling especially when youths are drawn in. High number of widows and children also get killed as raiders come into the community. The community has also continuously experienced trauma due to the deaths and anxiety created by unexpected turnouts of cattle rustling in the area

Table 2: Impacts of cattle rustling and Banditry

Parameter	Count	Percentage of Responses from each Herders Chairman from the 7 LGA
Deaths	79	26.7
Immigration	67	22.6
Internally Displaced Persons	51	17.2
Intolerance Between Pastoral Communities	38	12.8
High Number of Police Patrol and Military Personnel	27	9.1
Incidence of Human Right Abuse, Sexual Assault and Rape	18	6.1
Arrest and Detention Without Probable cause or warrant	16	5.4

From the fore-going on the impact of cattle rustling and banditry in katsina state more specifically, the populace have suffered devastating effects of the activities especially in the targeted communities and the state at large and these include the following:

- ✓ killing of hundreds of innocent people over the years under review, no one can estimate the high rate of economic lost encountered by the people of the state especially food and other livestock either destroyed or stolen from the affected areas..
- ✓ As one of the bad aspect of these deadly attacks, is that in every single attack, there must be lost of live and properties while severally houses and places of worships are been the target of these hoodlums which led to the crippled investment opportunity of the state because foreign investors due to lack of safety of their life and property.
- ✓ Movement of goods and other agricultural product is no longer possible considering the fact people and even the security agencies are been attacked on the daily basis while farmlands are equally destroyed even before harvest and the hope for agricultural is almost dashed out.

According to Bashir, (2017) he quantify that, the estimated No. of Rustled Cattle and Associated Deaths in Katsina State

Table 3: Statistic of cattle stolen and herders killed

Affected LGA	No. of Cattle Rustled	Herders Killed
Sabuwa	506	13
Dandume	155	6
Danmusa	70	9
Safana	390	11
Batsari	348	4
Faskari	247	12
Kankara	82	5
Total	1798	60

Suggested conflict resolution mechanism to curtail cattle rustling in katsina

In Katsina state various actions have been undertaken to deal with livestock raids such as: *Community Sensitization; Meetings and Community Dialogue and Amnesty; Different members of the community are involved in peace initiatives to deal with this conflict; The conflict resolution mechanism adopted by the community lead mainly to reduced number of raids in the area and some livestock were recovered.* Though time to time conflicts occur becomes it is seen as a vicious cycle. (Habibu, 2016 and Olaniyan, & Aliyu 2016),

Figure 3 Bill-Board Sensitizing populace on possession of Arms



Figure 4: Arms recovered from herders



Therefore, in order to curtail cattle rustling and banditry in Katsina State in totality efforts needs to be re-intensified, by governments, community Fulani herders and farmers so as to corroborate and consolidated the success achieved and these could include:

- ✓ All the recovered cows and sheep's in the possession of state government should be lustfully distributed back to the original owners
- ✓ Quick response tack- force of security personal should be on their toes and be deployed to strategic place;
- ✓ The success achieved through the re-conciliation committee between Fulani herders and farmers and the larger communities should be sacrosanct and un compromising

II. Conclusion and recommendations

Cattle rustling has emerged as a major security challenge in Nigeria. And seen as a criminal enterprise with consequences on the socio-economic, political, cultural, and psychological spheres of society. At the

economic level, it constitutes a major threat to the livelihood of herders and those who depend on cows for survival. At the socio-political level, rustlers' activities have resulted in death, loss, and the destruction of lives and property, thereby disturbing peace and security.

Therefore, Nigerian government and Katsina state in particular over time is expending major resources to eradicate rustling. For instance 1.4 billion was set aside by the state government to tackle and curtail the activities of cattle rustling activities in the state, this because they realized that a vast number of people have been disposed of their belongings, and families have been traumatized; there have been reported cases of rape and kidnapping, which has caused psychological trauma. It is important for the government to deploy security personnel to the forests that serve as hideouts for the marauders. The forests must be governed and the illegal users must be dislodged and permanently prevented from controlling the spaces. In addition, the security forces must strengthen the intelligence-gathering system, with support from the local population. Also, the Butchers and Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria must be involved in the fight. They are in a better position to identify rustled cows when they are brought to the market. The most important strategy is the use of technology, as initiated by the government of Kaduna State. The use of computer microchips will determine the location of the animals and the herders and enable tracking by the security forces. (Olaniyan and Aliyu, 2016))

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made in order to maintain and improve on the success achieved and putting a permanent stoppage to cattle rustling activities in the state:

- ✓ The dialogue & re-conciliation committee headed by the SSG (Mustapha Muhammad Inuwa) should ensure resolutions reached are followed and maintained for peaceful co-existence and the Fulani's, farmers and the teaming communities
- ✓ The joint task-force formed for surveillance should ensure prompt action to any up-rising or violence
- ✓ State government should ensure just distributions of the cows and sheep's collected from herders
- ✓ The promised grazing reserve and route stock for Fulani cow grazing should be a reality
- ✓ The quarterly Fulani stakeholders meeting you sensitise farmers, Fulani herders and entire populace on the land tenure act of 1978
- ✓ Opportunities should be provided for people especially the youth to come up with innovative peace building activities.
- ✓ The government together with other organizations should take a leading role in addressing the challenges affecting youths especially unemployment, idleness and illiteracy which would go along way in reducing their participation in livestock rustling in the study area.

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The menace of cattle rustling and banditry in north-west Nigeria: A Case Study of Katsina state..

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