

TRANSHUMANCE, INSECURITY AND NATION BUILDING, 1900 -2019: AN AQUATIC SAGA

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Abstract

Transhumance is ancient but pastoral activities have recently degenerated into spates of insecurity in the Nigerian polity. This, however, has been exacerbated by the persistence of climate change and the concomitant scarcity of fodder for livestock. To sustain their pastoral economy, presently (between 2008 and 2019), the herders acquired the services, so to say, of armed mercenary protectors or wielded the guns themselves along the routes of transhumance? That mayhem has been perpetrated is unarguable. The methodology used is comparative as it tends to compare, ab initio, the movement of populations which has over the years been underpinned by the availability of lands and water: Therefore, the aquatic saga. The paper concludes that herdsmen activities and the associated insecurity have been occasioned by the continuing climate change which has caused the alteration of pre-colonial routes of transhumance and occasioned indiscriminate grazing, and of obvious government inactions.

Keywords: Transhumance, aquatic saga, insecurity, alteration, mercenary, sedentarism and pastoralism.

Introduction

The writing of this paper will be undertaken in stages. First, there will be a hypothesis concerning the movement of human populations which has often been described as the aquatic saga in sub-Saharan Africa; second, a justification of the aquatic saga hypothesis vis-à-vis the age-long transhumance activities which always commenced from the northern to the southern zones of the communities of sub-Saharan Africa; and third, attempts will be made at discerning further consequences of the aquatic saga hypothesis which in present-day events have assumed ethnic and religious colourations. The aquatic saga is simply the movement of human populations in response to the availability of water points for agricultural and, specifically, pastoral activities. As a methodological preliminary, the paper starts with a survey of the human movements behind the spread, over large areas of sub-Saharan Africa, of languages and their speakers which belong to the Niger-Kordofanian proto-phylum. This study is even made possible since, evidently, the speakers of the Niger-Kordofanian languages, especially those of the southern fringes of the Sahara Desert as it continued to desiccate, have not changed from being essentially nomadic, but also, pastoral. The transhumance routes and its geography will be briefly surveyed. The elaborateness of this survey is intended to enable the making of useful suggestions and the drawing of reasonable conclusions vis-à-vis the political undertones and consequences of herdsmen activities on sedentary economic activities of the wet zones.

The Niger-Kordofanian Diaspora: An Aquatic Saga

This concerns the human movements behind the spread of languages over large areas of sub-Sahara Africa

from the Niger-Kordofanian proto-phylum area. Many techniques have been evolved and applied by linguists and ethno-historians in the study of human movements and language dispersals in the last four decades. Most of the techniques have been inspired by the “Family Tree” model which states that the prime cause of language differentiation is loss of spatial and social contacts between sections of originally continuous human populations.¹ There are other techniques, such as the “Word and Things Method” and the “Before and After Method” that have been used to determine which aspects of the culture and environment of a language family have been retained from the time prior to the beginning of dispersals and differentiations, and which aspects are more recent.² Having mentioned briefly the methodologies employable in the determination of language dispersals from a proto-phylum point (the elaboration of which would be outside the purview of this paper) certain deductions have been made to include that from the techniques usable in the reconstruction of language dispersals and differentiations:

- i. It becomes possible to reconstruct the various stages in the separation, dispersal and expansion of an originally continuous population;
- ii. They give broad hints regarding an absolute chronology of the stages;
- iii. Gives an outline of the geography of dispersals and expansion; and
- iv. Gives an outline of cultural continuity and cultural change during the course of diaspora.³

The Niger-Kordofanian Diaspora trailed along the southern fringes of the Sahara Desert as it desiccated, and continued to guide the movement of the populations until they arrived at the Senegambia Valley region, which accounts for about eighty percent of its speakers and the populations of West African sub-region. In spite of the hundreds of different languages involved in the saga, there are definite family, branch and sub-branch resemblances which suggest a remote origin for all of them. In human terms, this means the likelihood of a remote origin for the many, at least, of the populations that speak the Niger-Kordofanian language clusters.⁴

The brief is not presented somewhat to prove the origins of the speakers of the languages that have been associated with the Niger-Kordofanian proto-phylum as their original phylum only, but also intended to point out that the dispersal which took place along the southern fringes of the Sahara Desert were underpinned by the need for the human populations speaking those languages to sustain their agro-based economic activities, such as farming and pastoralism. Before discussing pastoralism as having been conditioned by the availability of conducive environment, especially of water, nexus environmental changes, it must be restated, while rehearsing Akosua Dosu, that the pastoralists have been highly dependent on land and water resources for their livestock, especially cattle. In an explanation, Dosu said that:

Climate change is limiting the herders' options for viable spaces to maintain their herder livelihood. Nomadic pastoralists who mostly resided in the semi-arid and arid zones of West [Africa] have been forced to abandon their traditional temporary transhumance routes between wet and dry seasons. Climate change reduced the reliability of the wet and dry season migration patterns and migration southward has been steadily increasing.⁵

Before reviewing the history of pastoralism in sub-Saharan Africa and West Africa, particularly, it must be mentioned that there is a difference between transhumance which was, and still is, induced by seasonal changes from the wet to the dry; and the climatic change-induced movements of herders in search of greener

pastures. Thus, while transhumance has been an activity occasioned by natural seasonal changes, the recent pervasive southward movements of herdsmen have been occasioned by the harsh realities of human activities which caused climatic changes per force.

Changing Environment and Pastoral Nomadism

Herdsmen activities nexus, transhumance, nomadism and the aquatic saga have been movements in response to climate-induced changes: Seasonal, natural or induced. The people of the north are excellent farmers, rearers and herders of livestock, enterprising traders and artisans. The seasons, which alternate between the wet and dry, encourage transhumance: an economic activity of the nomadic Hausa and Fulani cattle herders. This entails movements between the north and south, from pre-colonial times, with livestock for grazing. The onset of the dry season in the north every year necessitates the quest for greener pastures to the south. When the weather changes to the wet season, the nomads head back to the savannahs up north with their cattle which would have multiplied in number through breeding during the period of transhumance. Some would have equally been sold or exchanged for trade goods and foods needed in the northern parts. While transhumance often leads to the destruction of agricultural fields by the cattle while grazing along their routes, much to the consternation of farmers the cattle droppings, however, fertilize the farms as they graze. It is a blessing with misgivings that often lead to confrontations. This was responsible for the famed 'munchi saga' trouble between Tiv farmers of the Middle Belt and cattle herders from the north.

Stark realities must be faced in the analyses in this section of the paper. Described as the redistribution of pains and gains; and referred to by the less tolerant commentators as the Fulani barbarism, the truism is that it has been caused by Nigeria's (as elsewhere) environmental changes. This statement has been corroborated by both the tolerant and less tolerant camps. In an explanation, Okechi Dominic Azubuike and Evan Enwerem, representing the tolerant camp argued that:

Nigeria's peasant cattle production is based in its semi-arid north. The areas aridity becomes a major problem to cattle in the dry season. Herds are protected by bringing them down to the southern parts that are usually wetter at such times. Presence of tsetse fly in the south, particularly in the rainy season precludes sustained all year round grazing in the south. This sets the stage for migration back to the north at the onset of rains in the south. A number of social events have been observed that suggest possible change in the way this transhumance is conducted. The Fulani herders from northern Nigeria appear to be staying longer in the south. They are also turning sedentary and pressuring local resources and farmlands more intensely leading to violent and deadly conflicts with their local farming hosts in the south.⁶

Representing the less tolerant camp, Tola Adeniyi, in what has been described as the "Stone Age Activities of Fulani Cattlemen" said:

The Fulani cattlemen originate from the desert and arid zones of the country. Their cattle must be fed. These cattle live on grass and other leaves. These grasses and leaves are found in areas outside of the Fulani political control. The Fulani men are, therefore, literally compelled to look southwards for grazing. Because they know that farmers on whose plantations the cattle are likely to find food will not take kindly to their crops being destroyed, the cattlemen are armed to the teeth to challenge and confront the farm owners. This has been the recurring decimal in the relationship between cattle men and farmers whose farms are routinely [presently] vandalized.⁷

Having quoted excerpts from the camps of the tolerant and less tolerant, the analysis regarding the fallout from herdsmen activities, nomadism and the aquatic saga becomes streamlined and with less of the possibilities of becoming strictly consigned to any of the camps: moderate and immoderate. Towing a neutral path, both camps have stated similar events. However, the tone of their reports has been based on the psychic import of herdsmanism and/or nomadism.

Transhumance has been the preoccupation of pastoral complexes from antiquity whereby movements or migrations between the northern and southern parts of Nigeria were, and still are, determined only by the alternating dry and wet seasons; and by the inescapable interdependence of the peoples of the different vegetation zones where different foods, mendicants and crafts are produced. The problem arose when the nobility and sense of propriety that guided traditional transhumance became abandoned by the herdsmen as a result of climate change and by other inter-linking man-made and ecological variables. Moreover, transient transhumance and temporary seasonal sedentism have transmuted to permanency or their semblances of it as are prevalent in the Southeast geopolitical zone, among others.

Herdsmen Activities, Nation Building and Government Actions and Inactions

This section of the paper is, rather, a cautionary one. It reviews primordial factors that have worked against nation-building in Nigeria. Concomitantly, additional factors have also been identified but have been traced to be fallouts from previous ones. Commentators on the Dissensus Theory are forewarned that Nigeria, in spite, of the factors that create dissensus, are not anywhere near the brink of collapse. This statement has been made against the background that no Nigerian has given any reason, except in the aborted case of the Igbo in the Biafra-Nigeria imbroglio, for dissension. It has been “in disunity we stand”. Despite the agglomerating and disparate ethnic group's daily clamour for recognition and benefits in a common Nigeria, her government must apply a greater caution vis-à-vis the methods it adopts in solving the herdsmen-farmer's clashes. The government must look closer at the events and must be ethnically non-committal as portrayed in a poem by Mohammed Akran, thus:

Far upon the mountain, I saw a beast. When I came nearer, I saw it was a man. When I came nearer still, I saw it was my brother.

Cyprian Ekwensi further captured Nigeria's present situation in the fiction, the “Burning Grass”, when the herder and *dramatis personae*, Mai Sunsaye said:

We are men of cattle, our cattle come first and since it is our wish to take them to better pastures, all else must succumb to that wish.

The activities of government towards stemming the incessancy of violence and deaths arising from recent activities of herdsmen must be dispassionate. It is beyond reasonable doubt that the activities and impunity of the herdsmen leave much room for suspicion. Allowing the suspicions to linger, with fingers pointing at various directions, amid political and ethnic colourations the situation has assumed, government must have the political will to address and stem the chaos for the interest of Nigerians. Although some commentators have thrown up so many wild kites some of which have been adjudged reasonable, yet, it is imperative to undertake some chaffing and sifting from among the activities of government; the activities of politicians

who fan embers of discord; the non-utilitarian activities of ethnic vanguard groups; the politics of herdsmanism and Fulanization, the Boko Haram insurgency and its proliferation into sects; of, for instance, the Miyetti Allah dimensions; and the Fulani spearhead, Hausa askance and of the purported Northern agenda.

Natural and Induced Transhumance, and Livestock Herding

Many communities and nations have lived over the years feeling powerless and hopeless. This has brought to the fore Trevor Roper's 'Hamitic hypothesis theory' assertion that Africans have been engaged in barbaric gyrations in grotesque and irrelevant corners of the globe. According to Roper they have lived on the dictates of the law of Natural Abundance and consequently, have lacked the ability to control and manage their environment vis-à-vis changing situations and the innovations of modernity. Without doubt, Africans have made attempts that have introduced superficial modern changes in their lives, but somehow nothing seems to have really changed in their traditional milieu. Regarding herdsman and farmer's clashes, attempts are being made by government to transform herding activities in order to improve the welfare of herdsman, enhance productivity and quality of meat and milk, and, intrinsically, curb violence.

Meanwhile, the nomads see the new approach as encroaching on their traditional subsistence while the sedentary farmers to the south have alleged an agenda to dispossess them of their lands, on the one hand, and at the federal level: of intensified Fulanization. Therefore, there is resort, or enforced relapse, to *status quo ante*. Any change to the fundamental underlying structure of society is rejected with vehemence, often with violence. Like a river towing the line of least resistance, flowing to wherever it is not obstructed by mountains or natural barriers, societies have often refused and rejected any alterations to the basic primordial orientation of their lives.⁸ Another dimension exacerbating the towing of the path of least resistance to change is traditionality. All over Africa, communities observe maturity rites and one of them is herding in between acceptable distances to prove that one has come of age. A discontinuation of transhumance for cattle colonies or ranching would end this age-long tradition or maturity rite of herdsman, and naturally, man being conservative vis-à-vis additions to his cherished world or past has always resisted it. In essence, people experience strong emotional reactions when their cultural values are violated or when their cultures' expected behaviours are ignored.⁹

But the so much desired peace and co-existence between herdsman and farmers cannot be achieved without a social engineering of sorts. The thrust of government and the desire of every citizen is the peaceful co-existence of Nigeria's agglomerating ethnic groups. Explaining the need for a socio-economic and political reorientation, Fritz said that:

Once a new basic structure is in place, the overall thrust of [Nigerians' lives] - like the power of the river's current - surges to form the results [Nigerians] truly want. And the direct path to those results becomes the path of least resistance. In fact, with an appropriate change in the underlying structure of your life, the path of least resistance cannot lead anywhere but in the direction you really want to go.¹⁰

In the processes of government interventions in stemming violence between herdsman and farmers, certain inactions have come to the fore. For instance, in a Report by the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) vis-à-vis the United Kingdom's new focus on farmer-herdsman clashes, it has been observed that there

are many causes to the conflicts which range from competition over land to climate change. Yet, to this end, government is yet to implement its various programmes, such as grazing reserves, cattle colonies, ranching and lately the RUGA plan. Although the federal government had evolved the National Livestock Transformation Plan (NLTP) with the core component of enclosed ranching, guaranteeing higher yields, enhancing livelihood for farmers, producing more meat and milk and stemming nomadism for herders; all in the bid to prevent or curb open grazing of cattle and the consequent destruction of crops, it failed woefully in the area of implementation. Before climatic changes, the population of cattle was lesser than it is now¹¹. What has accounted for the increased population of cattle in a depleted savanna environment? Answer to this poser would be the influx of cattle into Nigeria through her porous northern borders from such neighbours as the Niger Republic and Chad. Unarguably then, the contestation is no longer only between the southern farmers and the Nigerian-Fulani herdsmen but between them and herdsmen of the whole West African sub-region.

Government Actions and Mistakes

The Federal government has since 2015 embarked on several half-hearted and abortive approaches that could have curbed nomadic herders-farmers clashes. These have been the touted establishment of cattle colonies, cattle ranches and, finally, the RUGA which THE government thought would be the final and winning formula against insecurity. As mentioned above: of the activities of politicians, especially those likely to be in the opposition, RUGA has been opposed from the beginning and, indeed, has died a natural death. Some have regarded the interpretation of RUGA as an acronym for “Rural Grazing Area” as a camouflage for what it really means. For the opposite commentators, RUGA is a Fulani word for domination or colonization. The field is a float with trumped up meanings. Recalling Chris Okigbo's “Whatever happened to the Elephant, hurrah for thunder” pronouncement, President Muhammadu Buhari has suspended RUGA not because it is a bad concept but because it is a concept badly presented in a country where, according to Dan Agbese:

We sit on fault lines, cousins to the tinder box. Our national discourse is conducted on the basis of (a) 'yes' by one section and a loud 'no' by the other section and (b) the expression of extreme views with little room for other less extreme views because local champions spring from the rich ponds of hate, suspicion and misunderstanding.¹²

In towing the neutral path, certain questions have been raised: Is RUGA a sound national policy that is designed to curb herders-farmer's clashes? Or is it a cynical response that is shrouded in mystery to a problem seeking urgent solution? The thinking of government smacked of impunity, a carry-over from years of military dictatorship, and an imposition of sorts by not placing the RUGA plan in public domain so that relevant questions could have been asked by the civil society and all Nigerians; and consequently allay the attendant fears, mistrust and suspicion. Since relevant and pre-emptive actions were not taken by the government, it becomes pardonable for those who tagged RUGA as a Fulfude - Fulani - word used to hide the intention of giving the Fulani leverage over other ethnic groups. In a palpable display of arrogance, the Buhari-led federal government failed to embark on a massive sensitization and education of the people before the implementation of RUGA. With opponents and supporters amassed on both sides of the RUGA plan, the divisiveness in the country has obviously increased as a result of a good but poorly, or not at all, marketed concept.

Among the tenets of the plan which ought to have been made known to the public and, in fact, profusely debated, before the attempted implementation are that:

- i. The plan is intended to address and possibly end the herdsmen-farmers clashes that have taken a toll on Nigeria's human and agricultural resources and added dangerous dimensions to security challenges;
- ii. The RUGA settlement would end migrations of pastoralists in search of green pastures for their animals
- iii. It was conceived as a modern pastoral settlement for nomadic herdsmen and other animal breeders. It would have a market, an abattoir, schools and medical facilities for the pastoralists; and
- iv. It will take-off as a pilot scheme in eleven States that have so far shown interest in it and are willing to donate land for RUGA.

If the federal government had sensitized the public, it would not have appeared as an imposition on the whole country but an agreement already reached with eleven Northern Nigeria States' governments. The way the announcement was made seemed as if RUGA would take off simultaneously in 36 States and the FCT, and beclouded also the fact that it was, additionally, intended to stem the murders and mayhem from herders-farmer's clashes. The government was also mistaken to think that the herdsmen, on their own, would jump at the scheme as it is intended to resettle them and end their wanderings in search of pastures. It failed to reappraise the cultures underpinning herdsmanism or nomad pastoralism. The government ought to have considered solutions to the primordial issues of ethnic pluralism, mistrust and suspicions vis-à-vis their causes, depth and dimensions before the aborted attempt of implementing RUGA. Why did the Fulani herdsmen who traditionally co-existed peacefully with their farming host-communities suddenly turned to AK-47 carriers and killers even when there are no evidences of clashes between them and the farmers? In the conception of Agbese and which is seemingly reasonable, "the federal government settled for a solution that it believes would make finding the cause, assumedly, unnecessary. Human societies do not progress, and have never progressed, on assumptions."¹³ Who are these gun-wielding herdsmen? Are the Fulani herdsmen already known by the people? Are they mercenaries hired by traditional herdsmen for protection along the routes of transhumance where hitherto they encountered no problems and have begun to do so? Are the herdsmen from across Nigerian borders? Are there other castes of politically disenchanting Nigerians who pose as herdsmen to cause mayhem? Has Boko Haram infiltrated nomadism? What roles are disgruntled and 'oppositionist' Nigerian politicians playing in this guise? Answers to these questions must be sought by the government and able assisted by Nigerians.

Taken as given, if the RUGA settlement plan had been conceived to end, primarily, the herdsmen-farmer's clashes, it then is a palliative and not a long-lasting solution that would have helped to make fundamental changes to Nigeria's traditional system of animal husbandry in the North and the land tenure system in the south. Animal husbandry caters for about twenty-seven million cattle which are more than the population, of at least, five northern States. Consequently, with such a huge number of cattle, there should be a sound national policy for animal husbandry as part of Nigeria's national agricultural development programme. Also neglected has been how to cater for the more than three thousand cattle that cross into Nigeria daily from neighbouring countries such as Niger Republic and Chad. The influx of foreign herds has, indeed, been additional burden on a fast diminishing Northern Nigeria grazing environment.

RUGA, ranching and reserves or not, a national plan must be conceptualized and executed as a programme that would mature over a given period of time. An impromptu approach as has been witnessed in the case of RUGA is not advisable and could be self-destructive. Certainly, the RUGA plan was not expected to be impromptu and its life abrupt if not for its wrong presentation. Further questions, which ought to have been asked and answered before the implementation of RUGA or any other such plans, have equally arisen, namely:

- i. Should the RUGA plan have been nation-wide or should it have been restricted to the animal breeding parts of the country? In as much as there are a significant number of cattle breeders in most parts of the country, it cannot imply that RUGA should be a national programme to which all States of the federation must subscribe to. It does not make sense, as indicated by opponents of RUGA that it will confer advantages on Fulani and other ethnic herdsmen vis-à-vis farmers. Unarguably, cattle breeders and farmers face different challenges that must be tackled, equally, differently;
- ii. Should RUGA have been a sole federal government project or a joint federal-state project?
- iii. Should RUGA have been a private/public enterprise? and
- iv. Should the land to have been acquired be on lease or an outright purchase by the federal government?

These and other probable questions should have been raised and addressed before the RUGA scheme was muted by the federal government of Nigeria. Dead on arrival, it is likely that the scheme would be replaced by a new scheme recently approved by the National Economic Council (NEC) known as the National Livestock Transformation Plan which, as is known, has been largely supported by State governors. It is left to be seen, on its implementation, if the governors accepted this other plan with the consent of their people which is doubtful. Leadership in Nigeria has always been skewed towards personal gratifications without regard to the citizenry under whose mandate the position of leadership was attained.

Regarding further government inactions, it will be recalled that the herders-farmers clashes occupied front burner during the 2014 National Conference. Yet, the leaders of the herdsmen under the umbrella of Gan Allah Fulani Development Association of Nigeria (GAFDAN) said they were not given a fair hearing having prepared to make their presentations during the Conference. In fact, as claimed, they were shortchanged since they were not allowed to adequately participate in the Conference. Eventually open grazing was outlawed without the prescription of modalities, in practical terms, of what the alternative would be for the herders. In addition to the neglect in such a forum, a vague clause which advised that cattle rearing or animal husbandry would be conducted in ranches was inserted.¹⁴

It is common knowledge that the recommendations of the 2014 National Conference have been ignored by the Muhammadu Buhari administration without any reasons given. No one knows the stand of the federal government on open grazing and some States, such as Edo, Ekiti, Benue and Taraba, have gone ahead to enact one law or another against open grazing, according to Sale Bayari, to suit their purposes. The herders-farmer's clashes have since escalated in these States. The confusion of government and state actors have culminated in the institution of programmes that have, at best, been trial by error solutions and/or flying wild kites among which have been the establishment of grazing reserves, ranches and cattle colonies. All failed woefully alongside the newest plan - RUGA. Nigeria has continued to toy with her future, therefore, fate; and with what to do with more than twenty-seven million cattle owned by about fifteen million people. The primordial divide in the Nigerian nation came again to the fore with the RUGA plan. All the States in the North except Benue and Taraba supported the initiative, whereas all the States in Southern Nigeria opposed the project since in their thinking it was a ploy by the federal government to establish Fulani autonomous colonies all over the country. To underscore this thinking, the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN), the Coalition of Northern Youth and Arewa Defenders Forum, threatened to carry out unwholesome acts, possibly felonious, if the President, Muhammadu Buhari does not un-suspend and implement RUGA. In the southern parts of the country, stakeholders, traditional rulers and governors, other than calling for the outright cancellation of RUGA also said they will not give out their lands for RUGA, not even for a fee.

It has been severally suggested that the northern part of the country ought to be made habitable for the herdsmen and their cows. This was re-echoed recently by the Governor of Kano State, Alhaji Ganduje, when he called on all herdsmen to return to the North, especially to Kano State that has ample land for RUGA.¹⁵ This resettlement, at a larger scale, would entail stemming the rapid encroachment of the desert into the northern fringes of the country through well-planned afforestation programmes, such as tree planting and the construction of irrigation systems in grass fields or plantations in arid and semi-arid environments. Another measure would be for government to look beyond the borders of Nigeria for advice and solution from nations that underwent experienced herders-farmers' clashes. For instance, how did Rwanda and Botswana overcome the problem of their herders' activities, in fact, when they controlled more cattle than their Nigerian counterparts? The officials of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development must be proactive and at all times give the federal government information and advice that would be devoid of any ethnic interest but be earnestly patriotic. It will be recalled that Professor Olajuwon Olayide had in a Report on the "Agricultural Development in Nigeria, 1973-1983" suggested that the Fulani must be encouraged to embrace settled life and agriculture through ranching and use of grazing reserves located (or to be located) in the North which has over 70 percent of the land area of the country. Unarguably, this document is still relevant and could be unearthed from the Ministry's archive.¹⁶

Concluding Remarks

The paper surveyed, from the outset, the movement of populations from the proto-phylum area originally inhabited by the speakers of Niger-Kordofanian language clusters. The mention of language dispersal has been made because it was associated with human populations. However, the dispersals, whether linguistic or human, were underpinned by the desiccation of the Sahara along its southernmost fringes about 5000 BC. Human movements and languages were determined by their, agricultural but basically pastoral economic activities that needed conducive lands environments. Although some commentators have argued that even in sedentary endeavours, the movements would still have taken place since farmers equally depended on fertile soils and enough water supplies for bountiful harvest. The pastoral activities of communities located in arid and semi-arid regions equally depended on the availability of lands and water; and climatic seasons of the year-wet or dry. on the wet and dry. Thus, they moved from the North through the Middle Belt to the Southern zones: a movement traditionally referred to as transhumance. However, climatic changes and concomitant droughts changed the form of transhumance from temporary to permanence. This roused the interest of southern sedentary farmers who though had their crops destroyed also watched askance at the incredulous activities of the herdsmen which is an indication of some sort of interest. The stunted reactions of farming host-communities in the southern parts of Nigeria are street knowledge and, unarguably, are expected especially when they are not backed by any military or police institutions. It is stating the obvious that the herdsmen have always followed the trails of available water and grass. What have the Federal and State governments done to enhance the availability of pastures and water in order to stem the violence resulting from the quests for them by herdsmen? Government inactions, presently, have fuelled further the pre-independence suspicions and mistrust among the various ethnic agglomerates. Some die-hard oppositionists, nexus the efforts so far made by government, have gone to the extent of reinventing the 19th century concept of the Sokoto Caliphate Jihadist plan then of not resting until the territories in the southern zones were added to Fulani conquests. Yet, other commentators have cautioned the antagonists and would, rather, want

government to find out why the herdsmen suddenly started wielding AK-47 rifles, pillaging callously through farmlands and killing defenseless farmers. Are they insurgents in disarray? Or disgruntled mercenaries?

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