

DESPERATE GUESTS, UNWILLING HOSTS: CLIMATE CHANGE-INDUCED MIGRATION AND FARMER-HERDER CONFLICTS IN SOUTHWESTERN NIGERIA

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Abstract. *Discourses on the relationship between climate change and violent conflict have created two opposing views of the enthusiasts and the skeptics, with the former arguing that there is a strong connection and the latter doubting it. This paper combines elements from the two lines of thought to assess the phenomenon of incessant farmer-herder conflicts in southwestern Nigeria. Presenting evidence collected from a town in southwestern Nigeria, the paper demonstrates not only the saliency of climate change but also its instigating influence in human migration and the associated violent conflicts in southwestern Nigeria. It argues that acute shortage in rainfalls, increasing dryness and scorching heat have resulted in depletion of water, flora, and fauna resources on the land. This has triggered forced migration of many cattle herders of the region to the lush wetter parts of the south in desperate search of grazing spaces. More often than not, however, the desperate guests (the grazers) have often been met by unwilling hosts (the farmers) in the wetter destinations, thereby setting in motion violent conflicts, which have increased and intensified since the late 1990s. However, the paper concludes that, on its own, climate change-induced migration seldom causes conflict unless enmeshed with the struggle for economic ascendancy, intolerance, ethnicity, insensitivity, an integration problem, and state incapacity.*

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Introduction

Violent clashes between farmers and herders have become almost a daily occurrence in Nigeria since the early 2000s, with grave consequences on peace, orderliness, and peaceful coexistence. Several studies have emerged linking the phenomenon to climate change. Roger Blench (2005) noted that although the phenomenon is as old as the beginning of agriculture, its intensity

since the late 1980s is a function of the increasing war over resources, mostly grass and water, which is occasioned by climate change. In a well-articulated report on the impact of climate change in Nigeria, Aaron Sayne (2012) pays particular attention to the creeping desertification of northern Nigeria and weak state capability as responsible for the phenomenon of herders' migration leading to violent conflicts. Olakunle Folami and Olubimpe Folami (2013:104-110) established a linkage between climate change and inter-ethnic conflict, concluding (with various examples) that there is an escalation of conflicts between ethnic groups (and within communities) over access to dwindling resources. Samuel Odo and Francis Chilaka (2012:110-124) linked the perennial violent clashes in northern Nigeria with climate change and, therefore, enjoined researchers to look beyond religion and politics in explaining causal bases of violence in the north. Idowu Oladele (2011:616-621) have not only examined, but also linked the debilitating consequences on food production in the savannah area of the Oyo State to the pastoralist-farmer conflicts over access to resources in the area. Also, in their study on farmer-herder conflicts in north central Nigeria, Oluwasegun and Solagberu's (2010:1-27) identified the primary causal factor as climate change-induced depletion of soil fertility. Freedom Onuoha and Gerard Ezirim (2010:248) are also clear in their study on human insecurity in Nigeria that climate change is one of its causal factors.

The reality of growing aridity of several parts of northern Nigeria has been universally acknowledged. It has been argued that about 35 percent of land areas that were cultivable before the 1960s are increasingly getting arid in 11 of Nigeria's northernmost states of Borno, Bauchi, Gombe, Adamawa, Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Yobe, Zamfara, Sokoto, and Kebbi. As a result, "the livelihoods of some 15 million pastoralists in northern Nigeria are threatened by decreasing access to water and pasture – shortages linked to climate change" (Federal Government of Nigeria, 1999:11). The fallout from the dire situation is the migration of grazers away from the areas towards the southern region that is much lush. But the obsession of scholars with the climate change issues in analyzing farmer-herder crises in Nigeria raises some pertinent questions. For instance: is there a consensus yet on the link between climate change and violent conflict? Are violent encounters between grazers and farmers in Nigeria explainable only from the prism of climate change? Apart from climate change, are there other intervening variables for such incessant farmer-herder clashes? Using fieldwork conducted in Saki, a border town in south-western Nigeria, as case study, this paper interrogates the phenomenon of farmer-herder clashes in Nigeria. It argues that climate change alone seldom results in conflict until combined with other variables. The study is also situated within the context of the arguments by Blench (2005:x) and Strauss (2012:16) calling for more case study research on the phenomenon of farmer-herder conflicts in Africa. Thus, following this introduction, we will explore the following issue-areas respectively: the debates on the climate-conflict question and setting of a theoretical framework for the study; the study methodology, result findings, discussion of major findings, and conclusion.

Climate change and conflict: enthusiasts vs. skeptics

The idea of climate change instigating violent conflict is a subject of considerable debate in expert literature and a consensus is yet to be reached. Opinions are therefore divided into two opposing camps, whose members we would describe as enthusiasts and skeptics. One important reality of the climate change discourse is its changing political economy of meaning, perception, and interpretation. According to Oli Brown, Anne Hammill, and Robert McLeman (2007), climate change initially emerged as an environmental issue. However, it became an energy problem before becoming recast as a security threat; and then lifted to the level of the United Nations Security Council. In his work dated in 1994, Robert Kaplan envisaged such environmental issues as soil erosion, water shortage, air pollution, and an increase in sea level as capable of producing mass migration which could trigger violent conflicts in West Africa (Kaplan, 1994, cited in Brown & McLeman, 2009:289). Hendrix and Glaser (2007:695-715) examined the impact of both long term triggers and short term trends in rainfall predictability with respect to the propensity towards conflict in Africa. Their conclusion was that climatic variations in both long and short terms are capable of leading to violent conflict. Hussein, Sumberg, and Seddan (1999:397-418) saw increasing evidence of farmer-herder conflicts as a result of climate change driving pastoralists from their natural setting to wetter lands in search of pasture. Buhaug, Gleditsch, and Theisen (2008) identify three potential environmentally-induced events -- resource scarcity, a rise in sea level and natural disasters such as drought, floods, and desertification -- as capable of influencing security implications.

Barnett and Adger (2007:640) identified the growing possibility of climate change undermining human security by reducing access to important natural resources, and undermining the capacity of the state to act in ways that could promote human security. Linking climate change with acute violence, Dixon (1991) identified such events as population displacement and drop in agricultural outputs as capable of breeding insurgencies, guerilla warfare, and terrorist attacks. Blench, (2005), Ufuoku and Isife (2009:047-054) warned about the prospects of inclement climate-induced violent consequences due to itinerant herder migrations to lush green territories of sedentary farmers in Nigeria. Burke *et al.* (2009) produced a study that established a strong historical connection between civil war incidents and temperature changes in Africa. Using the Malian crisis as a case study, Cole (2013) identified the severe drought of the 1970s as the main responsible for the migration of ethnic Tuareg to Libya, where they were organized into a mercenary group by Qaddafi; he also described how their disbandment in the late 1980s prompted a massive return to Mali -- fuelling subsequent secession bids and the emergence of Ansare Dine terrorist group in the country.

However, the claims of climate-conflict enthusiasts have been subject to severe criticisms. For instance, Salehyan (2008:315-326) agreed that climate change posed a prob-

lem but doubted a direct linkage with conflict. To him, proponents of a climate-conflict nexus suffered from environmental deterministic tendencies and offered ready-made tools for NGOs prone to apocalyptic predictions. He insisted that conflicts seldom occurred without the conjunction of several social factors. For their part, Fjeddle and Uexkull (2012:444) argued that after several years of research, academics were yet to come up with concrete evidence to buttress the assertion of climate-conflict linkage. Rather, what was obtained was an avalanche of variegated N-studies that offered, at best, speculative support for direct linkage between environmental stress and armed conflict. Gleditsch and Nordas (2012:627-638) described most of the present ranges of work on security dimensions of climate change as unconvincing, mostly speculative, and of questionable orientations. In another work, Gleditsch (2012:3-9) faulted most works justifying climate change-driven conflict as based on case studies of conflict areas only.

In the same vein, Adano et al (2012:65-80), using a case study from Kenya as a reference point, discovered more killings during wetter periods than during dry ones, thereby disproving a strong linkage between drought and violent conflicts. Using an empirical evaluation which combined "high resolution meteorological data with geo-referenced data", Theisen, Holtermann, and Buhang (2011:79-106) found no strong link between drought and the occurrence of civil wars in Africa. While countering proponents of the climate-conflict thesis, Gartzke (2012:177-192) (pointing to the absence of convincing evidence of climate change-inducing conflict) initiated a debate on the possibility of climate change reducing the frequency of inter-state conflicts. For him, the phenomenon of climate change did not need to be associated with conflicts, no matter the appearance of a relationship. In the opinion of Schoch (2011), proponents of the climate-conflict thesis were yet to provide credible examples of violent conflict triggered by climate change; rather, what resulted were numerable questionable works, full of mere and unsubstantiated extrapolations. For his part, Bettini (2013:63-72) contended that most enthusiasts of climate change and conflict thesis were alarmists, projecting nothing but apocalyptic narratives.

Two points are fundamental to the position of the climate-conflict skeptics and, by extension, to any research in the climate change-conflict discourse. The first is the need for concrete evidence to support climate-conflict claims. The second is the denial of conceptions of conflict on the basis of environmental determinism. Conflict, in this context, should be seen as a combination of sociopolitical, economic, and environmental factors. Therefore, while this paper operates from the premise of climate change contributions to violent conflicts in southern Nigeria, it strongly acknowledges other variables contributing to the emergence or intensification of such conflicts. These variables include, particularly in the case of migrating herders, such factors as the condition at the destination point, including the attitudinal disposition of the hosts, particularly any discriminatory practices against the migrants (Sirkeci, 2009:10; Okeke-Uzodike,

Idoniboye-Obu, and Whetho, 2012: 193-195), the conduct of the migrants on encountering their hosts, state capacity (Reuveny, 2007), and the level of local economic opportunities and competition (Blench, 2005). In essence, therefore, farmer-herder conflicts in Nigeria will be analyzed in the context of climate change and the interplay of these intervening variables.

Climate change and migration

Beyond the traditional conception of migration as a combination of economic, socio-political, and cultural factors, some studies also identified climate change as a major driver of migration (UNCHR, 2001; Reuveny, 2007:656-673; Black *et al.*, 2011:3-11; Kniverton, Smith and Wood, 2011:34-40; Warner 2010:402-403; Scheffram, Marmar & Sow, 2012:119-127). However, Mortreux & Barnet (2009:105-112), Williams and Pradhan (2009:3), and Warner (2011:403) added that decisions leading to migration are seldom mono-causal; they are often products of the interplay of factors such as fear about personal safety, individual circumstances, experiences, anticipated risk, cost-benefit assessment of migration and other variables like religion, culture and expected access to target spaces. This was demonstrated in the study of Mortreux and Barnet (2009:105-112) which revealed how religious values and culture worked together to prevent mass migration from Funafuti, Tuvalu in the face of apocalyptic climate change predictions. All this notwithstanding, studies by Brown (2007), Blench (2005), and UNEP (2011) showed evidence of growing migration of herders from arid regions to lush green areas in Africa as a result of severe climatic conditions.

In the case of Nigeria, herder migration is a historical practice with fairly recent rapid escalation in intensity. For a long time, a climatic demarcation existed between north and south. While in the northern region, there is a savannah forest area, conducive for cattle rearing, the thick forests of the south are suitable for crop farming but out of the reach of grazers because of serious tsetse fly infestation. This climatic dichotomy was intact until it was shattered by the veterinary revolution of the late 1950s (Blench, 2005) and the precipitation plunge of the 1960s (Balinger, 2000:41, Ekpo and Nsah, 2011:51). The development of *trypanocides* not only allowed mass breeding of cattle far beyond the grazing capacity of the area, but also constituted a major break in the tsetse fly imposed access barrier to the south, thereby giving opportunity for transhumance. The precipitation plunge of the 1960s resulted in the Sahel drought, which intensified in the 1970s, with great ecological tragedy in the region. These factors, more than any others, have played a major role in the migration of cattle herders to the southern part of the country, first on annual transhumance and later on a permanent basis (Blench, 2005). What happened then was a massive migration of grazers down from northern Nigeria to the southern part in search not only of grazing opportunities but also of more lucrative markets for their herds.

Rafael Reuveny's three-choice theoretical argument holds that people facing acute climate change problems have one of three options: (i) remain where they are and do nothing; (ii) remain where they are and try to mitigate the effects; and (iii), leave the affected area entirely. The final decision is often a combination of the nature of the state and its intervention capabilities. Thus, while developed countries often strive to mitigate such problems through technological and institutional competencies, less developed countries, with poor technological and institutional facilities, are often unable to stem effectively migration from areas prone to the harsh effects of climate change (Reuveny, 2007:657). Even though Kniverton, Smith, and Wood (2011) saw migration as one of the strategies used by humanity to cope with the challenges of climate change, Reuveny (2007: 657) pointed out the possibility of migration bringing benefits to the absorbing areas. Indeed, although there is a possibility that migration could result in conflict (Warner, 2010:403, Oliver-Smith, 2009), such propensity, argued Reuveny (2007:657), depends on the flow and size of such migration. Thus, a small and slow flow of migrants has a high possibility of easy and smooth absorption by the host communities.

As established in the theoretical section, there are other salient intervening variables such as the attitudinal disposition of the host community to the migrating herders, the conduct of the migrating herders, the capacity of the state, the level of economic competition, and the available opportunities. Using this theoretical statement as a fulcrum, we argue that many members of the cattle rearing ethnic groups of northern Nigeria facing dwindling rainfall, growing desertification, high and increasing temperatures (with serious consequences on grazing opportunities), and poor and ineffectual state intervention often chose to migrate southward to secure their means of livelihood. In some instances, such migration tended to trigger violent conflicts in the course of encounters with the crop farmers in the southern part of the country. In fact, although the root cause of farmer-herder conflicts in Nigeria appears to be climate change-driven migration, it is the combination and aggregation of several intervening variables (serving as buoys) that are responsible for recourse to conflict.

Methodology

Data for this paper was collected in Saki, Oyo state in southwestern Nigeria. Saki lies approximately on $3^{\circ}24'$ east of the Greenwich Meridian and latitude $8^{\circ}4'$ north of the Equator. It is about 184 and 320 kilometers north of Ibadan and Lagos respectively (Ajadi, 2004). Saki shares borders with Benin Republic to the west, Ago Are to the south, Ogboro to the East and Ilesha Ibaruba to the north (Lekan, 2008:19). Also, Saki sits at the intersection of the northern savannah forest and the southern forest zone, thereby combining the elements of grassland with rainforest, making the town ever-green round the year. The climatic condition of Saki sets it up as the preferred destination for pastoralists who are fleeing the uncertainty of rainfall in the Sahel/Savannah and wary of the far south that has not been totally rid of tsetse fly. The town is noted for its grazing

environment and serves as a livestock station for the Oyo state government. Apart from the border location that makes the town a thriving place for trans-border business, it is also important for its historical role as local administrative headquarters dating back to the colonial times. Largely, the town houses many of Nigeria's different ethnic groups.

Saki was purposefully selected for two crucial reasons. First, the town hosts a large number of Fulani herders. Secondly, it has experienced the highest number of cases of farmer-herder conflicts in southern Nigeria. Therefore, the location fits ideally with the basic idea behind the research. The data collected was supported by observations made during the interviews. Specifically, short duration semi-structured personal interview sessions were conducted with 48 respondents, which were split among Fulani herdsmen (the migrants from the north) and Yoruba respondents (local hosts), legal personnel and security officers. Those who consented to be interviewed included 17 Fulani herders and 21 farmers. There were two legal officers, one representative of the traditional ruler, three women from the market women's association, and the Divisional Crime Officer of the town. Of the Fulani respondents, eleven referred to themselves as Bororo and six claimed to be *Ibile*. The *Ibile* are the group Olasoji (2011) referred to as the agro-pastoralists who engaged in crop farming alongside cattle rearing. The group has also been described by Blench as the *sedentarized* Fulani herders who had migrated long ago, settled, intermarried and integrated with the locals (Blench, 2005). The *Ibile* speak the Yoruba language fluently, unlike the Bororo (newcomer Fulani herders).

Only the male herders agreed to be interviewed. Due to religious and cultural values, the wives and female children of the herders refused to speak with the researchers. By contrast, there were five women participants among the thirty-one Yoruba respondents. Of the twenty-six male respondents among the Yoruba speaking respondents, there were sixteen farmers, two saw-millers, two commercial road transport workers, two local teachers, two traditional chiefs, and two police officers. The session was conducted in Yoruba and Hausa languages, with the former being the language of the host communities and the latter, that of the herdsmen. A large number of the herdsmen also speak the language of the hosts fluently. The Fulani respondents were asked to address a set number of questions on: why they chose to relocate to Saki; their relationship with the local host communities; and the causes of conflict between themselves and their Saki hosts. The Yoruba respondents were asked questions related to: their impression on the migrant herders and the nature of their interactions with them; and the perceived consequences of the Fulani grazers' arrival in Saki. Generally, the questions were structured to discern the level of the respondents' knowledge on the issues of climate change, migration, peace, and conflict in their areas of location. Expectedly, there were differences in the general disposition of the respondents to the questions posed. The researchers observed much greater levels of enthusiasm amongst the local indigenes compared to the Fulani communities. The locals alluded to the interview being the first time researchers visited their community to see what they were passing through.

The Fulani *Ibile* did not mind being interviewed, but the Bororo were reluctant in their responses and it took extended explanations and persuasion to get them to participate.

Results

Migration triggered by the climatic factor

All the respondents agreed that the Fulani herders migrated to Saki at different times and periods. Of the 48 personal interviews conducted, responses on reasons for migration amounted to 39 as reflected in Table 1. Reasons related to climate change – worsening weather condition, erratic rainfall, dwindling grazing resources – were the most cited at 62%; as for relegating economic motives (17%) and crop farming (8%), they were considered background factors. Herders frequently pointed to environmental challenges as the primary reasons for migrating. The head of the Fulani Bororo commented pointedly: “I left home (Sokoto) in 1983 with few animals because there were no green fields for my cattle and many of them died, particularly during the dry season due to shortage of water”. Another respondent noted:

Table 1 (Respondents on Migration)
The main reasons for migration to Saki

Reasons for migration	No. of responses
Worsening weather condition	8
Erratic rainfall	7
Dwindling grazing opportunity in places of origin	9
To engage in crop farming	3
Need for market	7
Natural inclination to migrate	6
Migration deliberate to cause trouble	2
Total	39

My migration from the northern part was never borne out of love of the people of Saki, but nature has placed us under the terrible weather condition in the northern part of this country where we came from and we have no option than to look for a better place where our animals can be well fed

One respondent who came from Niger Republic added that he had to move when he “almost lost everything in terms of human and material resources to the drought in the Niger Republic”. In the view of another interviewee,

Water is the major factor that led to my migration from Maiduguri to Saki about 15 years ago because unlike here, where rain falls regularly, the reverse is now the case in Maiduguri. Even people in the local communities don’t have access to water; let alone animals.

When the question of “why did you come from far away to settle in Saki” was posed to a respondent, his answer captured the environmental concerns:

As Fulani, what we know as occupation is to look for greener pasture for our cattle and breed them more. Besides, there was a poor grazing opportunity where I

came from (Kebbi State) due to erratic rainfall. Before I left, the dry season could stretch for six months.

Some of the locals also share the same feeling that the herders came to their territory because of the environmental condition they were facing in the northern Nigeria. One of them underscored the point sympathetically:

I know that the rainfall problem in the north brought these people here. I once lived in the north and I know the place is very hot. There are months without rain to wet the grass for them. So, I won't blame them for finding their ways out. If I were in their shoes I would do the same. They have to survive. It is only those who have not gone to the north that will question why they left their territories for another land.

These quotes are indicative of the general attitude of those interviewed. There was an overwhelming reference to climate-related issues as the main drivers for the herders' migration to Saki. In this context, therefore, we can say that the migration to Saki by the herders has been largely triggered by environmental factors. This conforms to the theoretical analysis citing climate change as a major cause of migration in the contemporary world. This has been particularly crucial in understanding Fulani-herder encounter in Africa.

The economic considerations – which were sometimes linked to environmental concerns – were second to environmental issues in the herder responses (17%). That complexity is captured in the response of one herder who underscored the point: “we came here because our cattle are not doing well in my former place – Kano. There was shortage of green field and water to feed our cattle. Also, we must sell our cattle”. Another respondent further reinforced the same point:

I left home some years ago to Birni Gwari in Kaduna area. From there, I came to Saki land because there was no water for my cattle. Even getting green land was becoming difficult. There is also the need to sell my cattle in southwest. That is why I find this place (Saki) very appealing to stay.

The economic dimension to the migration process, though less emphasized in the respondents' views, represents a major trigger of conflict in the area. Clearly, the herders rear cattle as a livelihood. As such, they need both grazing spaces for their cattle and accessible and lucrative markets to dispose of them. As shall be explained in the next section, it is around the livelihood issues that inter-communal conflicts are often triggered.

Beyond those who linked the migrants' presence to environmental and economic factors, some locals saw the herders' migration from an ethnic perspective. According to one of them,

What is climate change? Who told you climate is changing? Forget about all those book things. Climate is not changing. The north is always like that. Besides, whether

climate changes or not, these Fulani Bororo will always want to move with cattle. In their movement, they bring trouble to other people.

Ethnicity becomes more evident in the dichotomy between members of the two Fulani herder communities in Saki- *Ibile* and Bororo. The responding Fulani *ibiles* were quick to distinguish themselves from the Bororo. According to a 76 year-old chief of the Fulani settlers in Saki:

We are the Fulani *ibile* – the settlers. My great-grand father was here for a long time...my grandparents and parents stayed here for so long that I was born here. So, I have been here since my childhood. Look at my age now!

A similar opinion was expressed by another Fulani *Ibile* respondent:

I was born here as Fulani *Ibile*. My parents died some years ago and were buried here. I was told we came from Yobe, but I have never been to that place (Yobe) at all. All I know is that we originated from the Yobe state because my father said so before he died. But we are now part of Saki. There is no other home that I know other than this place.

This supports Blench’s (2005) argument that a branch of Borgu Fulani had migrated to the Saki area during the colonial period. However, unofficial evidence shows that the Bororo Fulani in Saki are more in population than the Fulani *Ibile*.¹ The settlers, however, have integrated into the Saki society to the extent that they regard the comparatively recent Bororo migrants as threats (as reflected in their interview responses). Not surprisingly, the locals and the settlers lived peacefully together in Saki until January 23 1999 when violence broke out between them and the new settlers – the Fulani Bororo – which resulted in the deaths of about ten people and the loss of farm crops, livestock and other valuable properties².

The violent conflict

Since 1999, there have been several other cases of violent clashes in Saki between the two contesting groups. For example, on February 20, 2013, during the period of the Saki interviews, a violent clash erupted in the town, which left five people dead³. Also on March 13, 2013, shortly after the interviews, four people, (father, mother and two children)⁴, were confirmed

Table 2 (Respondents on Conflict)
The main reasons for conflict

Reasons for conflict	No. of responses
The migration of Bororo herders with large herds and people	21
Destruction of farmlands by cattle	20
Indiscriminate grazing activities	15
Locals killing cattle	11
Unwillingness to pay compensation by herders	12
Economic competition	20
Lack of trust in the security outfit	11
Total	110

killed in a clash between the two groups. All respondents agreed that there have been conflicts in the town, particularly since 1999. They also agreed that although the conflict started between some farmers and herders, subsequent ones had assumed a communal dimension. However, as reflected in Table 2, there are differences of opinion regarding not only the roles played by the opposing parties in the crisis but also on the magnitude of the conflicts. There were multiple responses to questions, but the overwhelming responses by the farmers, Fulani *Ibile*, the law enforcement officers and members of the community identified the Bororo as the main perpetrator of the crisis. One of the respondents, the representative of the traditional ruler of the town, argued that:

At present, we have two types of Fulani here, the *ibile* and Bororo. We have been living peacefully with the *Ibile* long ago before the arrival of Bororo group of herders. The Bororo have been a cog in the wheel of progress in this land and that is responsible for the incessant clashes between the two parties (farmers and herders).

The president of the Saki Farmers Association was equally direct:

What I have in mind concerning Fulani is too sad because they have destroyed the social fabrics of this land. Since 1999, the Bororo have been terrorizing this land with a series of nefarious activities. They do kill us, beat, and rape our women at will. It is pathetic. They lead their cattle to our farms to destroy them. When we react, they start killing with dangerous weapons.

The head of Fulani *Ibile* was also unsparing:

You know their Seriki (head of the Bororo) will not tell you the truth about the whole thing because you (the interviewer) are not part of them. They are the problem in this land. Cases of conflicts with farmers have been rising on a daily basis. They (Bororo) came across us here living peacefully. But since they came, they have caused several conflicts with the farmers to the extent that the king of this town does not want them any more.

One respondent, a law enforcement officer, explained the nature and basis of the conflicts

The crux of the matter is that the cattle would enter and destroy crops in the farms. The farmers retaliate by attacking or killing the animals. This would lead to clashes and in most cases, resulting in loss of human lives and properties. It is a frequent problem. It happens regularly.

The Bororo herders do not take lightly the claims that they are responsible for the conflict in Saki. An overwhelming number of Bororo respondents laid the blame for the conflicts on the killing of cattle by the locals. One Bororo respondent was emphatic

about those responsible:

Our host communities started it all. They are wicked and inhuman. They believe they are the owners of everything. Any time they see us on the grazing field they abuse and curse us for no reason. They also have traditional ways of killing our animals, and when we react, they will say we are fighting them. What about the fact that they are killing our animals?

When the question of “what accounts for incessant conflict between herders and farmers” was posed to the leader of the Bororo group, his answer reflected his belief that there were deep feelings of intolerance on the part of the locals:

We have seen cases where conflicts erupt between us, which result in loss of cattle and human lives. When animals destroy farmlands, though not deliberately, farmers have always reacted violently. When there is an attack by farmers, my people will also attack them in their farms. Farmers don't believe Fulani are human beings. As I am speaking, we have cases in court against the farmers⁵.

In essence then, two major issues emerge from the foregoing comments. The first is evidence of climate change driving migration. The second is evidence of conflict between the migrants and their hosts. The linkage between the two is that the unfavorable climatic changes in the northern part of Nigeria trigger mass migration of herders towards the wetter south where their need for grazing land put them in conflict with the sedentary farmers, whose livelihoods are sometimes threatened by grazing cattle. The net outcome sometimes is violent clashes between the two groups. Clearly, without significant migration of herders to Saki, there would not have been any reason for violent clashes between herders and their Saki hosts. However, the clashes have been escalated by intervening variables.

Assessment of Findings

A deeper assessment of the findings from the fieldwork reveals the variety of issues that underpin the crisis in Saki. First is the sudden increase in the flow and size of Bororo migrants. Migration patterns to Saki can be categorized into two phases: old and new migrants. While those that arrived in the 1960s (and before that period) fall under the first category, the set of herders who arrived thereafter, especially starting with the 1990s onward, belong to the new migrant category. While the old migrants came in trickles, the new set arrived basically en-masse. Because of their relatively small size, the old Fulani migrants were easily and smoothly absorbed. Largely integrated with the locals, they speak the Yoruba language fluently, and (like their hosts) they engage in crop farming alongside their cattle rearing, and they intermarry with the locals and are *sedentarized*. However, the new migrants remain generally itinerant, separated from the host communities and largely *un-integrated*. Thus, while the old migrants consider

the place their home, the new migrants do not share the same feelings. Not surprisingly, the arrival of large numbers of herders who refuse to integrate or mix with the locals is a cause of tension amongst the people of the Saki town.

Second is the perception of locals that the herders are highly insensitive to their customs and values. The tension created by the cattle invasion was heightened by the conduct of the migrating herders. Responses from farmer interviewees alluded to cases of unrestrained grazing, encroachment in crop farms, and lack of respect for land ownership. Indeed, in response to a question on how they acquire grassland for grazing purposes, the head of the Bororo argued that "land is a free gift by God. We don't buy it and nobody gives it to us. We only feel it is good for our animals as grazing zone". Another herder responded to the same question by saying that "land is not given by man but by God. Why should we buy a free gift of God? Who owns it?" In contrast, the settler herders (*Ibile*) did not display disdain for the land ownership values of their host community. In contrast to the Bororo, they keep their cattle to the pens and also acquire grazing areas for what can be described as guided grazing⁶.

A number of factors are responsible for the practice of the settler herders. First of all, unlike the Bororo, they possess a fewer number of cattle,⁷ which enables them to restrict the movements and grazing activities of their herds. Secondly, they are engaged in crop farming alongside their herding practice – making it imperative for them to control their herds from straying into farmlands. Thirdly, they are deeply embedded in the socio-cultural life of the Saki community; they possess their own lands and are emotionally attached to the place. The Bororo, on the other hand, owned large cattle herds that must be fed, possess neither land nor farms on which to keep and feed them, and entertained little or no sentiments towards their hosts and their customs⁸. In contrast, the settler herders (*Ibile*) share with the locals a profound desire to prevent cattle from destroying farmlands. And, as with the locals, the *Ibile* share an attitude that regards and treats the Bororo as the "other" in the socio-political and cultural spheres of the town⁹.

Third is the perceived economic supremacy of the herders and the attendant envy by some members of their host community. The struggle for economic ascendancy between the two groups acts as a major instigator of violence given the pattern of inter-group economic relations existing in the town, which puts the Fulani ahead of the locals (given the high value fetched by each cow). The farmers attribute their low economic status to perennial loss of huge income when Bororo herders invade their farmlands and destroy their crops at the peak of readiness for harvest, thereby depriving them of bountiful crops and profit. They cited the example of the leader of the Bororo group driving a "big jeep" while the locals could hardly afford a motorcycle. The mental picture of 'strangers' living a full life in their land makes violent reaction against the herders a constant event in the town. Therefore, we can locate the recourse to cattle killing by the locals within the context of the economic factor.

The fourth factor is what we would describe as a poor response of authoritative structures of the state. As evident in the informant responses, the study shows the incapacity of the Nigerian state manifesting in two forms. The first is the migration of the herders from the problem area due to the inability of the state to effectively address the challenges posed by climatic change. The second is the inability of the state to handle the security situation in Saki town. Both parties accuse the law enforcement officers of inefficiency and partiality in dealing with the tensions. For instance, one of the local respondents from Saki suspected the involvement of the police:

On 23 January, 1999, I sent two children to the farm. They (Bororo) shot at them. but they did not die. I rose up angrily, rushed to the police station to report the matter but the police didn't do anything. It was as if they (police) connived with them

In a petition to the Inspector General of the Police, the Bororo group, under the auspices of the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association (MACBA), hinted at the inefficiency of the Commissioner of Police in Oyo State, hence the need to draw the attention of the national headquarters of the police. Similar accusations were made in the petitions of the Saki Farmers Association. Respondents also cited inefficiency of the police in handling the crises in the town.

In essence then, four key factors that have played out in Saki – the sudden increase in the flow and size of Bororo migrants, the insensitivity of the herders towards their hosts, ineffective policing by state authorities, and the comparatively better financial circumstances of the herders when compared to their hosts – combine to create an emotional and tension-ridden environment. The net effect of this aggregation and combination of issues is the steady gravitation towards violent conflicts between the recent migrants and their host community. As such, although deteriorating climatic conditions were the triggering factors for the southward migration of the Bororo herders to Saki, the conflict between them and their host community was not the direct result of climate change. Rather, the violent conflicts have been fuelled by unmediated cultural differences, attitudinal conduct, and their disparate modes of production and lifestyles.

Conclusion

This paper demonstrates a meaningful linkage between climate change and herder migration, using Saki in southwestern Nigeria as a case study. Virtually all respondents agreed that climate change was the driving factor for the migration of herders from various parts of northern Nigeria to Saki town. Clearly, the possibility of internal conflict occurring in Saki would have been quite remote without the climate-induced migration of the Bororo Fulani. Therefore, we can say that a link certainly exists (at least indirectly) between climate and conflict.

However, the study has also borrowed from the argument of the skeptics by providing a more complex and nuanced explanation of the crisis in Saki rather than the mono-

causal or deterministic prism that informs some climate-conflict assessments. It identified intervening variables fuelling the crisis in the forms of the sudden flow and large sizes of Bororo migrants, economic competition between the locals and the herders, poor state responses, and the disrespectful attitude of the migrants. The position here is that climate change could be a contributory factor to the propensity towards violent conflict (by pushing herders out of their natural territories and into Saki). After all, the Fulani have been living peacefully in Saki for a long time. Indeed, the first set of Fulani migrants who came on their own volition, rather than as a result of inclement weather, adjusted and integrated into the Saki community without difficulties, which demonstrates that not all Fulani herders are violent and that the Saki community is not unreceptive to strangers. Violence emerged because of the unwillingness of the new migrants not only to integrate with their local hosts but also to identify with some of their key cultural values. The study reveals that climate change alone does not result in conflict until enmeshed with factors such as intolerance, economic competition, insensitivity, ethnicity, and poor state response.

Notes

- 1 This was confirmed by the head of the Fulani settlers. He argues that the Bororo has been migrating in large numbers in recent years.
- 2 Figure given by Police officers and also the respondents during fieldwork.
- 3 This occurred in the course of the interview. We confirmed the actual number of the casualties with the Police station.
- 4 The researchers visited Saki once again to confirm with the Police after being alerted to this occurrence.
- 5 Both farmers and herders instituted cases in court against one another. Each accusing one another of aggression and also demanding compensation.
- 6 Interview with the settler herders indicate this practice. The researchers also saw a few ranches.
- 7 Where we conducted the interview, the population of cattle belonging to the Bororo far outnumbered the settlers. According to the head of the settler herders, in Saki West, where the interview was conducted, the population of settlers was less than 100 while the Bororo were over 200 people. In addition, a single Bororo could own between 100 to 200 heads of cattle at a time.
- 8 Constantly referring to their hosts as wicked and hostile reflect this perception. Also, while the Bororo instituted several cases against the locals, the settlers have none in court. In essence, the Bororo treat the settlers as part of the local hosts. The settlers also see themselves as part of the local community.
- 9 The locals constantly refer to the Bororo as strangers. They do not use the expression settler-herders.

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