

## **Cattle Rustling Violence: Exploring the Drivers and Its Implications on Peace and Socio-Economic Development in Northern Nigeria**

<sup>1</sup>Hamman Jumba Ahmadu, PhD & <sup>2</sup>Idris Mu'azu

<sup>1</sup>Division of General Studies, University of Maiduguri,  
P.M.B. 1069 Maiduguri, Nigeria, Email: hammanjahmadu@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup>Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Faculty of Social Science, University of Maiduguri,  
P.M.B. 1069 Maiduguri, Nigeria, Email: idrismuazu72@gmail.com

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### **Abstract**

*The menace of cattle rustling violence in Northern Nigeria has been problematic since Nigeria returned to democratic rule in 1999. Cattle rustling has transited from its traditional origin and formation to an organised crime and criminality, orchestrated by both pastoral and non-pastoral syndicates, characterized by violent attacks and reprisal attacks leading to several lost of life and property. By juxtaposing both the traditional and contemporary understanding of cattle rustling phenomenon, the paper seeks to identify major drivers and predisposing factors responsible for cattle rustling as well as its implications on peace and socio-economic development in Northern Nigeria. The paper argued that, climate related issues; inflow of illegal arms; insurgency; ungoverned forest spaces; internationalisation and commercialisation of cattle rustling; rising cost of livestock; nomadic pattern of grazing; porous borders; lack of good governance among others are some of the major predisposing factors that influence cattle rustling in Northern Nigeria. However, the paper concludes that, cattle rustling as an organised crime has enormous implications on peace and socio-economic development. The situation is currently threatening not only the existing fragile peace but also Nigeria's aspirations for achieving food sufficient in no distant future. In undertaking this research, the paper explored content analysis of the existing literature and unstructured focus group discussion with pastoralists who are once victims of rustling violence in their lifetime.*

**Keywords:** Cattle, Rustling, Violence, Pastoralists

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### **Introduction**

Cattle rustling is quite ancient, which existed over seven thousand years ago, and is one of the oldest-known aspects of Proto-Indo-European culture, being seen in inscriptions on artifacts such as the Norse Golden Horns of Gallehus and in works such as the Old Irish *Tain* also known as 'Cattle Raid of Cooley'. Cattle stealing or rustling are practice in many pastoral societies and cultures across nation states ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cattle\\_raiding](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cattle_raiding)). However, its contemporary climax and degeneration into a security challenge in the last two decades has often been associated to crime and criminality. Currently the Nigerian state is experiencing an upsurge and vicious recurrence of cattle rustling and other forms of rural banditry which presupposes the feeble nature of state institutions for prevention and management of violent conflicts in Nigeria. Northern Nigeria in particular has often been described as the epicenter of cattle rustling violence because crop farming and cattle rearing are the agricultural mainstay and

predominant source of livelihoods and survival of people. Hence contemporary cattle rustling and its associated violence in Nigeria has evolved over the years as an organised crime and criminality accentuated by arms sophistication and power resulting into violent attacks, killings, arson, rape, kidnapping, maiming among others with unimaginable loss of human lives and property as well as millions of unaccounted cattle rustled. However, this development has not only constitute a threat to peace and security but has also triggered a lot of debate on the state of the nation, particularly the growing clamour and agitations for state police and general overhaul of the federal structure of government as a panacea to the security challenges in the country. States like Zamfara; Katsina; Kaduna and Sokoto in North-west, Plateau; Nassarawa and Benue in North-central, Taraba; Adamawa and Borno in North-east are considered as frontline states in Northern Nigeria engulf by pervasive cattle rustling violence. In Zamfara state for instance, persistent cattle rustling and banditry

related violence claimed hundreds of lives and property which precipitated Abdulazeez Yari the Executive Governor of the state to publically relinquish and recuse his constitutional responsibility as the chief security officer of the state on Friday 15, 2018. Few months later, Nigerian Police Forces confirmed a strong nexus between cattle rustling and banditry violence with the mining activities in the same state which prompted the ban on all mining activities in the state (Punch Newspapers, April 7, 2019). In neighboring Katsina state, Governor Aminu Masari also seemingly revealed that, security reports has established a strong nexus between cattle rustling violence in Katsina and the activities of Islamic State of West Africa (ISWA). After the deadly attacks on Musa, Faskari and Batsari Local Government Areas which left 26 people death, Governor Masari proposed a mandatory death penalty for convicted rustlers and rural bandits which he signed into law on May 24, 2019 (<https://www.channelstv.com>). In Borno and parts of Yobe states, already there is apprehension over the apparent 'Boko Haram' involvement in cattle rustling as a means of raising funds to support their insurgency operations (See Okoli, 2014; Okoli and Iortyer, 2014; Ahmadu, 2019). This prompted Borno state government in collaboration with security organisations to close all cattle markets across the state (Ahmadu, 2019). According to reports by Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria [MACBAN] revealed that approximately 7,000 cattle were rustled across Northern Nigeria between October, 2013 and March, 2014 (Bashir, 2014). While in 2016 about 30,000 rustled cattle were recovered by the Joint Security Task Force fighting the menace in Nigeria (Tauna, 2016). Today, the phenomenon of cattle rustling and banditry has become common and widespread across Northern States and probably among the list of top knotty security challenges that is bedeviling Nigeria in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Virtually all of the states in Northern region of Nigeria are affected by cattle rustling (Olaniyan and Yahaya, 2016). From the extant literatures that flourished over the last two decades on cattle rustling phenomenon, two dominant understanding suffices. First, is the traditional and historical understanding of the primary influence, purpose and motive for rustling which remain traditional, primitive, guided and regulated by

the sanctity of culture and tradition especially among the larger (Fulani) pastoral community. Therefore, the desire for cattle rustling is motivated by primitive accumulation of cow-herds in the context of subsistence as well as capital and untaxed wealth (Blench, 2004; Alemika, 2013). It is a nomadic affair because the nomads are conversant and familiar with cattle rearing as their source of livelihood, therefore is easier for them to rear stolen cattle. And not only that, they are also familiar with the geography and topography of forest routes which they can effectively maneuver and escape with stolen cattle (Okoli and Okpaleke, 2014). The second understanding, is the sudden transformation of contemporary cattle rustling phenomenon into an organised crime and criminality with immense sophistication and efficiency in their modus operandi using modern weaponry as well as trans-national network of syndicates and gangs (Alamika, 2013; Ahmadu, 2019). Some scholars described it as 'underworld franchise' in contemporary society (Okoli and Agada 2014; Okoli and Okpaleke, 2014). Within the context of both the traditional and contemporary understandings, this paper seeks to explore the specific drivers and dynamics of cattle rustling as well as its implications on peace and socio-economic development in Northern Nigeria.

### **Theoretical Background**

In order to have a theoretical alignment for this paper, Queer Ladder Theory (QLT) has been used in analysing the contemporary cattle rustling as an organised crime and criminality accentuated by killings and arms-driven violence. The choice of Queer Ladder Theory was precipitated by its popularity and its analytical strength in recent literatures which often forms the theoretical basis for most studies on organised crime and criminality. Queer Ladder Theory was espoused by one of the prominent American Sociologist, Daniel Bell (1919 – 2011). He came-up with the theory in order to have a better understanding of the workings and interplay of organised crime. The theory posits that organised crime is a functional utility being exploited for socio-economic gains and social climbing. Okoli and Okpaleke, (2014) summarised three basic assumptions of Queer Ladder Theory. First, is that organised crime is an instrumental behavior; Secondly, is an instrument for socio-economic progression

and advancement; and thirdly, is a means for wealth creation and power build-up. Generally organised crime may ultimately prosper because it forms the basis for socio-economic struggle. Where laws are ineffective, response to crime is low, corruption is endemic, good governance is absent among others may consequently subvert and weaken institutional capacities and mechanism for deterrence. The issue of cattle rustling in Nigeria today is in tandem with the analysis of Queer Ladder theory because the phenomenon of cattle rustling has been associated with organised crime driven by the primitive and criminal desire for wealth accumulation and other socio-economic benefits. Therefore, prevention and management of cattle rustling menace requires multi-dimensional approach because of its criminal nature.

#### **Rustling or Raid: A Conceptual Clarification**

The concept “Rustle or Rustling” means to steal livestock especially cattle or horses (Microsoft Encarta Premium, 2009). Markakis, (1993) describe it as an arm attacks by individual or group of individuals on another with the intention of stealing livestock and not necessary territorial expansion. While some defined cattle rustling as the act of stealing grazing cattle (Okoli and Okpaleke, 2014). In Australia such stealing is often referred to as ‘duffing’, and the perpetrator as a ‘duffer’. In North America, especially in the Wild West cowboy culture, cattle theft is dubbed rustling, while an individual or group who engages in the act is referred to as a rustler or rustlers ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cattle\\_raiding](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cattle_raiding)). However, East Africa has the highest prevalence of cattle rustling in Africa which led to the signing of protocol of Eastern African Police Chiefs Cooperation (EAPCCO). In that protocol they defined cattle rustling as “the stealing or planning, organizing attempting, aiding or abetting the stealing of livestock by any person from one country or community to another, where the theft is accompanied by dangerous weapons and violence” (EAPCCO, 2008). Deducing from the scholarly definitions that flourished over the years, the concept of ‘rustling’ appears to be universal and applicable in qualifying the act of stealing cattle. In most cases the term “rustling” and “raid” has interchangeably suffered misapplication. In conceptual terms some scholarly literature used the concept of ‘cattle raid’ as ‘cattle rustling’

unmindful of the intention and motivational drivers (Ahmadu, 2011; Greiner, 2013). Rustling as a concept is applicable and peculiar to cattle theft or stealing. While ‘raid’ as a concept is a general term used to denote sudden attack which may not be associated to cattle theft. For instance several communities are raided by armed robbers who are neither rustlers nor pastoralist. The term ‘rustling’ in operational terms has different trends and tendencies from one society to the other based on its contribution to violence (Osamba, 2000). Actor rustlers and bandits are interwoven in most pastoral communities in Africa (Murtala, 2018). This has not underscored the fact that there is prevalence of cattle theft or rustling across nation states in Africa (Okoli, 2016).

#### **Cattle Rustling Violence as a Global Malady**

Cattle rustling phenomenon is not peculiar to Nigeria it has become a global malady which has gradually manifested both in dimension and veracity across nation states. For instance, in Scotland, 300 cattle were reported to have been rustled by the end of 2013, which led to the declaration of national emergency on cattle rustling by the Scottish government (*Daily Trust Editorial*, cited in Okoli and Okpaleke, 2014). In North-western Kenya massive death of cattle due to outbreak of diseases led to raids and rustling as one of the options for replenishing the depleted stocks (Osamba, 2000). East African corridor has a long history of rustling because of their age-long pastoral activities. But from 1990s, cattle rustling incidents in East Africa; has been characterized by violence largely due to proliferation of illegal small arms in the hands of non-state actors including actor-rustlers (Ahmadu, 2019). In January 2016, the Madagascan army announced that 161 people had been killed in clashes between the army and cattle rustlers, which the army attributes to large swathes of territory as ‘zones rouges,’ where government presence are less or completely absent created congenial grounds for cattle rustlers to thrive and operate with a sense of impunity (Ahmadu, 2019). Cattle rustling became a major issue in Argentina at the end of the 19th century, cattle stolen during malones were taken to Chile, where they were exchanged for alcoholic beverages and firearms ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cattle\\_raiding](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cattle_raiding)). The theft of sheep, goats and cows is one of the most difficult problems confronted by farmers

in Israel. About 400 cases are reported annually in the northern part of the country. Most of the stolen livestock is taken to the West Bank, the butchers quickly slaughter them and the meat is then smuggled back into Israel where it is disposed off

([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cattle\\_raiding](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cattle_raiding)).

In South Sudan state of Jonglei, witnessed cattle raids in August 2011 which left 600 people dead and in January 2012, ethnic clashes related to cattle theft killed between 2,000 and 3,000 people and over 30,000 displaced ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cattle\\_raiding](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cattle_raiding)). The current global dynamics and sophistication of cattle rustling as well as its apparent degeneration, has been associated with spiral violence in different parts of the world today (See Okoli and Okpaleke, 2014).

### Research Methodology

The paper utilized Focus Group Discussion (FGD) in eliciting data from the target respondents in addition to the content analysis of the existing literature on the subject matter. The target respondents are mostly cattle herders who are victims of rustling and traditional leaders who report rustling cases to security agencies. The number of discussants for the group interview is between 5 – 10 people depending on the turn-out. In each of the three geo-political zones in Northern Nigeria, one Focus Group Discussion was conducted in vulnerable area. These areas include Ryom in plateau state North-central Nigeria, Jere in Borno State, North-east Nigeria and Kankara in Katsina State North-western Nigeria. Unstructured interview was used during the discussion to trigger conversation, as data continue to flourish from the discussion more specific questions are posed for further discussion until the data is saturated.

### Linking Pastoral Livelihood and Cattle Rustling

Pastoralists in Northern Nigeria raise different types of livestock in accordance with the variations and uncertainties in climatic conditions which makes them sensitive to drought and shortage of pasture in different parts of the region. Therefore, the number and composition of the herds is determined by two major factors first, is the climatic and environmental conditions faced by pastoralists and secondly, is the characteristics and adaptability of the livestock to the prevailing

climatic situation. Pastoralists always strive to accumulate and maintain livestock as much as possible because it is their only source of wealth. By and large pastoralists have been able to eke out a living from the harsh and unpredictable environment for centuries. In their long history livestock provided not only a valuable source of food but also acted as a wealth reserve, a redeemer from damage, a sacrificial gift and a means of marriage and other ceremonial payments Salih, (1992) cited in Osamba, (2000). Across ages, Fulani socio-cultural group are well known for deriving their livelihood and survival through mobile livestock rearing as a key strategy for survival. They produce 90 percent of Nigeria's livestock population which accounts for one-third of agricultural Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 32 percent of the nation's GDP (Fabusoro and Oyegbami, 2009). Therefore, both human and natural circumstances that deplete herds may ordinarily trigger rustling to replenish the lost herds.

There are about 120 million pastoralists worldwide, 50 million in Sub-Saharan Africa and they constitute 12 percent of rural populace (Rass, 2006). They are found in more than twenty countries (Fabusoro and Oyegbami, 2009). Nigeria has been at the center stage of livestock production in West Africa especially cattle estimated at 20.5 million based on the study by United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS, 2018). According to Nzeh (2015) Nigeria's livestock production sub-sector account for about 25% of Central and Western Africa's entire livestock holding. This figure makes Nigeria the leading producer of livestock in the sub-region with an estimated over 16 million herds of cattle ahead of Niger Republic's 8.7 million, Mali's 8.2 million, and Chad's 7 million herds. The sector in Nigeria also provides employment for a significant number of herders in the country. Unfortunately, despite their huge contributions to the economy of Nigeria, modern civilization has done little to their livelihood. Fulani are the largest pastoral group in the world and they constitute about 95 per cent of the nomadic pastoralists in Nigeria with estimated population of 15.3 million (Majekodunmi et al., 2014). Other group of pastoralists such as the *Shuwa-Arab*, *Koyam*, *Bodoi*, *Manga* and other *Kanuri* related groups confined their pastoral activities within the Lake Chad basin area.

Regrettably, there is paucity or absence of current and reliable data on the number of cattle in Nigeria. Pastoral economy is dependent on livestock production. Hence cattle rustling become pervasive and more common in areas where nomadic pastoralism is the primary source of livelihood of people. Paradoxically, areas with sedentarised livestock production activity such as ranches have less cattle rustling phenomenon.

### **Some Reported Incidences of Cattle Rustling Violence**

Incidences of cattle rustling is widely spread across Northern states but the veracity of the violence is grossly under reported by the media probably because of the remote and rural nature of locations where this crimes exist. An appendage to that is the apparent paucity of reliable and discrete statistical data on the number of cattle rustled and human casualties involved particularly in the frontline states where these incidences are pervasive. However, the paper seeks to provide an overview of some few incidences reported by security agencies and the media. For instance in North-west Nigeria particularly Kaduna, Katsina, Sokoto and Zamfara states cattle rustling violence has reached an alarming proportion as a result of persistent attacks and reprisal attacks by cattle rustlers and rural bandits. Several villages across the states have been under siege and attacks from cattle rustlers who freely unleash terror on helpless herdsmen and farmers alike (Akowe and Kayode, 2014). A breakdown of the statistics obtained from the secretariat of the Katsina state Government standing committee on cattle rustling shows that from July to December 2015 about 11,989 animals were recovered out of which 9, 221 were returned to their rightful owners (Ahmadu, 2019). In central Nigeria, particularly Plateau, Nasarawa and Benue states are ravaged by incessant farmer-pastoralists clashes as well as cattle rustling menace. For instance, some Local Government Areas of Plateau state such as *Mangu*, *Bokkos*, *Langtang*, *Barikin-Ladi*, and *Shendam* among others have been tormented by crises linked to cattle rustling and farmers-herdsmen clashes (Olaniyan & Yahaya, 2016). In the same region, reports by Security Special Task Force (STF) set-up by the Federal Government in response to the security challenges in Plateau state confirmed that within couple of months 160 attacks were

launched by gun men suspected to be rustlers resulted in 2,501 cows rustled and 260 people lost their lives (Olaniyan & Yahaya, 2015). Ahmadu, (2019) reported that, spokesman of Operation Lafiya Dole Theater Command in Maiduguri, Colonel Timothy Antigha revealed that, they ambushed and arrested Boko Haram cattle rustling syndicates with rustled cattle from Lingir village in Monguno Local Government area on their way crossing into Maiduguri to dispose the rustled cattle. According to reports by the Commandant of the Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC) Borno State Ibrahim Abdullahi, revealed that, “Boko Haram often transport rustled cattle to markets in major towns through their agents who serve as middle men in the cattle business. The agents buy off these cattle and settle the insurgent-rustlers cash to enable them raise money to buy food, drugs and even arms” (www.nigerianews.net). Insurgent-rustlers are so ingenious that they inscribe permanent marks or signs on the bodies of the cattle for people to believe that the cattle belong to them (www.nigerianews.net).

### **Major Drivers of Cattle Rustling Violence**

Cattle rustling as a phenomenon have transited from its traditional essence and quintessence to interplay of violence and deadly attacks. However the historical evolution of cattle rustling remains traditional but the emergence of violence associated with rustling presupposes no single factor as responsible for cattle rustling violence. Basically is a combination and interplay of both traditional and contemporary predisposing factors.

**TRADITIONAL DRIVERS** - Cattle rustling were hitherto internalised within pastoral communities especially among the Fulani who are the largest pastoralists in the world. Cattle rustling among the Fulani traditional pastoral society is almost a traditional ritual guided and regulated by the sanctity of culture and tradition purposely for testing prowess and bravery. Teenage Fulani pastoralists are oblige to rustle not only for purposes of replenishing lost herds but also an opportunity for preparatory training against external attacks from other actor rustlers. Agility and bravery are some of the preconditions for marriages and other traditional rights and privileges. The insatiable traditional desire for cow-herds-wealth has also contributed. When herds are depleted or completely lost due to natural disasters such as

outbreak of animal diseases or due to human factors like theft, raids or rustling, ordinarily pastoralists find a means of replenishing the lost herds because economically their livelihoods and survival is inextricably tied to the cattle. Because of the economic value attached to the cow-herds-wealth in rural communities, the larger the number of herds a herder may possess the greater economic and political power and influence he enjoys from his fellow herders. Therefore, pastoralist traditional desire for cow-herds-wealth is primarily determined by the economic influences leading to rustling as the fastest means of replenishing lost herds. The traditional influence that is responsible for cattle rustling was further corroborated during our unstructured focus group discussion with several groups of pastoralists in the frontline states. During the discussion an 80 years old pastoralist named Ardo Madi, who has been a victim of both traditional and contemporary rustling aptly summarized some of these traditional influences. In his words:

*“The number of cattle or herds one’s possesses defines wealth and the level of economic and political influence that person may exercise. Being rich or poor is ordinarily distinguishable by the number of herds a herder possesses. Therefore loss of herds is loss of livelihood. Some of our herders engaged in rustling as a quick and easiest way of replenishing the lost herds. Traditionally, cattle rustling are internalised particularly within the Fulani pastoral society. However, this also serves as a platform not only for purposes of replenishing herds but also for exhibiting bravery and prowess as preconditions for fulfilling certain traditional rituals”*

### Contemporary Drivers

1. Climate change induced factors – the vulnerability of climate change related complexities cannot be over emphasized because it is practical and real. Already the Lake Chad and Northern region as a whole has been susceptible to desertification, draught, land degradation and the looming recession of the Lake Chad water dislodged thousands of pastoralists, fast losing their source of livelihoods and their means of survival in jeopardy. This development has further created competition, contestation and tensions over

access to land and other renewable resources leading to conflict among the nomadic pastoralists. Pastoralists who are affected or threatened by the shrinking quality and quantity of renewable resources easily fall back to rustling as an alternative means of replenishing their lost herds.

2. Inflow and Circulation of Illegal Arms and Light Weapons - The rebellion in the Sahel region particularly the fall of Gaddafi and the crisis thereafter as well as the activities of separatists in Mali serve as gateway for inflow and circulation of illegal arms through the unsecured porous borders around the Lake Chad and other Northern Nigeria states. Nigeria becomes the final destination for illegal arms in the hands of criminal syndicates including cattle rustlers and bandits. As a result of the spread of these illegal arms in the hands of non-state actors particularly rustlers and bandits, cattle rustling saga becomes more sophisticated, organised and deadly crime and criminality. There is paucity of current, accurate and reliable data on the number of illicit arms in the hands of non-state actors in the Sahel states. However, what is evidently clear is the role of these illegal arms in fuelling violent crimes and criminality in the Sahel and West Africa. The veracity of these violent conflict and organised crimes associated to farmer-pastoralists clashes, cattle rustling and rural banditry, armed robbery and kidnapping, insurgency and terrorism among others in Nigeria today was largely attributed to the spread and inflow of illicit SALW in the hands of non-state actors. Since early 1990s, illegal arms especially AK-47 rifles have become common weapons of choice for cattle rustlers and other criminal syndicates, replacing traditional and less deadly weapons.

3. Boko Haram insurgency and Terrorism – the over one decade of the existence of Boko Haram insurgency and Terrorism in North-east Nigeria has exacerbated cattle rustling as a lucrative and vital franchise for financing terrorism activities. Since Boko Haram elements shifted their major enclaves to forest and remote rural areas, cattle rustling became the next most viable source of funding insurgency and terrorism in Northern Nigeria. The insurgents are already heavily armed taken charge of the forest, kill their victims and rustle their cattle at will.

4. Lack of security presence in remote rural communities – Northern Nigeria has large

expanse of forest reserves that are not secured because of absence of security operatives. Some of these forest reserves include *Sambisa, Yankari, Falgore, Kamuku, Kiyanbana* among others. All these reserves provide congenial colonies and dens for cattle rustlers, bandits and other criminals to perpetrate their crime without encumbrances. Olaniyan and Yahaya, (2016) have earlier revealed that 'Most rustling activities takes place in State own reserves. - The forest offer perfect location for the criminals to hide out from security forces'. However, in the case of the Lake Chad despite the large expanse of forest there are small creeks and islands around the basin that harbour such syndicates because of lack of security presence. Most of these reserves are gradually becoming ungoverned spaces.

Internationalisation and commercialisation of cattle rustling – The existence of international cattle markets along boarder communities of the Sahel and Lake Chad basin countries provides easy ride for cattle rustling syndicates to move their stolen cattle across boarder with readily available market at all times. These networks of rustlers are internationally interconnected like drug barons and traffickers with sophistication in communication and operation taking advantage of the porous land boarder in Northern Nigeria. And not only that, the proliferation of cattle markets across the boarder communities of Nigeria, Niger, Cameroun and Chad is also aiding the sales and marketing of rustle cattle by syndicates. Some of these cattle markets include *Jibiya, Illela, Kwonni, Kwangolon, Gurbin-Baure, Banki, Gamboru, Mubi, Mai"adua, Baban-Gida Dankama*, among other cattle markets in Northern Nigeria boarder communities. There are cattle merchants in most of these markets who purchase rustled cattle and dispose them-off to the end users.

5. High cost of livestock –The rising cost of livestock in the markets due to increasing demands for meat and dairy products on daily basis attracted other non-pastoral criminal syndicates to engage in rustling because it pays huge amount of money, fast in sales and transaction can be done at all times. This can be justified with Boko involvement in cattle rustling.

6. The nomadic pattern of grazing herds in Northern Nigeria – nomadic pastoralists in particular are predispose to rustling by the

nature of their movements which is determine by availability of pasture or otherwise, exposes them to vulnerable areas with high antecedents for cattle rustling.

7. Lack of scientific and technological means of cattle identification or registration - has been a major challenge in the fight against cattle rustling, because rustle cattle are disposed in market with no means identification and therefore difficult to be traced.

8. Government apathy towards fight against cattle rustling – apparently there are no sufficient legal framework and other mechanisms for combating cattle rustling as a major security concern in Nigeria.

### **Implications on Peace and Socio-Economic Development in Northern Nigeria**

Since Nigeria returned to democratic rule in 1999 the menace of cattle rustling violence has been increasingly becoming more worrisome and disturbing. The violent nature of contemporary rustling and its consequences on peace and socio-economic development cannot be over emphasized. The veracity of the conflict involving killings, arson, rape, kidnapping and destruction to lives and property, has continued to threaten peace and socio-economic development of the region. This has created an environment of insecurity, thousands of nomadic and sedentarised herders as well as peasant farmers were pauperized and forced to abandon their homes and villages seeking refuge in safer urban and semi-urban areas as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) or Refugees in their home country. The hostility by actor rustlers has halted agricultural and other economic activities in vulnerable areas, created fear, threat and anxiety among the rural populace. As a result of mass displacement of people, farmlands became inaccessible by farmers, cattle herders were left with no herds, fishermen cannot access their fishing destinations and several other agricultural and economic activities were hampered. Consequently, this has not only metamorphosed into livelihood crisis but has also raised a lot of uncertainties in Nigeria's aspirations for achieving food sufficiency and food security. For instance, the Lake Chad that supports the livelihood of more than twenty million people who directly depend on the lake is currently a shadow of itself. Several agrarian communities in Zamfara, Katsina, Sokoto, Nasarawa, and Benue among others are no longer producing

agricultural crops because they are now displaced and their livelihood is at the mercy of government relief materials and assistance from humanitarian organisations. Successive governments in Nigeria portrayed cattle rustling violence as local cultural issue of the pastoral lifestyle and therefore depastoralisation is often emphasised as a panacea without recourse to national security encumbrances. Pervasive insecurity has rolling implications which are multi-dimensional in nature. Therefore, cattle rustling violence is not an exception, perhaps today the primordial sentiments and narratives that portray cattle rustling as pastoral or nomadic affair can no longer suffice because it is among the major security challenge Nigeria is experiencing in the last two decades. In communities where cattle rustling, banditry, kidnapping and other forms of violence defines the order of the day, achieving sustainable peace is elusive, socio-economic development is near impossible. Hence, poverty, unemployment and joblessness will persist with multiplier negative consequences of crime and criminality.

### Conclusion

Cattle rustling violence is an under-estimated crime and criminality in Nigeria, but cattle rustling networks and syndication has gone beyond borders of Nigeria. The internationalisation and commercialisation of cattle rustling across the Sahel and West Africa has greatly underscored the era of pacifying pastoralists as traditionally prone to violence or localised desires for herds' accumulation. However, the climax of Boko Haram and other trans-boarder criminal elements in cattle rustlings is currently undermining national security. There exist cattle merchants across the boarder that operate in shadows, provide the necessary support for the rustlers to continue perpetrating the crime for their selfish gains. Therefore, government at all levels must be committed to providing effective pathways to ending the menace of rustling in rural communities. Political Leaders must have the political will for fighting not only rustling but all other forms of environmentally related conflicts in Nigeria. This may require changing the traditional scenario of cattle rearing from ordinary subsistence to modern method using science and technology so that it can contribute not only to Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product

(GDP) but can also create jobs for our teeming youths.

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