Addressing the Emerging Security Challenges from Transhumance in West Africa: The ECOWAS Perspective

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Abstract
Transhumance Pastoralism is one of the dominant economies of the West African sub-region. About 50 million people rely on transhumance for their livelihood in the Sahel region and the Saharan fringes. Though pastoralists might be considered a minority, their discrete activities can be of serious security concern when there are engagements by some elements among these nomads in illegal activities, of which the most terrifying is belonging to extremist groups and participating in violent terrorist activities as have been observed among the Fulanis in Nigeria or the Tuaregs in Northern Mali. This paper sought, through a discursive style, to highlight the emerging security challenges – insurgencies and terrorism – in the West African sub-region with the view to make recommendations that can be implemented towards addressing these security challenges.

Key words: Transhumance, Transhumants, Pastoralists, Pastoralism, ECOWAS, Security challenges

Introduction

Humanity lives in some form of social groups. These groups are identified by certain peculiarities like mode of subsistence; type of government; beliefs; culture and the like. But the instinct of humanity that has endured in history is the quest for self-preservation, based on security.

The ancients were often patches of wandering tribes, who for economic purposes or the quest for conquest, explored regions beyond the ones known to them. This meant that such migrant tribes often clashed with other groups who have settled in certain areas deemed fit for their existence. This situation necessitated the emplacement of security measures to defend such groups against invaders.

High walls had been a standard security feature of the ancient world and, to some extent, is still relevant, as a security measure, in today's modern world. The Great Wall of China was built, circa 206 BC (Waldron, 1990), to ward off invading nomads. The migratory nature of herds reared by these nomadic communities meant frequent movements and also frequent clashes with agrarian communities, where these nomads ventured into at any point in time for grazing. This concept of seasonal movement for the purpose of livestock grazing is termed transhumance (Roger, 2001)

Humanity must be actively engaged economically, to sustain their existence. Nomads eke out hardy existence to maintain their herd which ensures their economic viability. On the other

hand, crop farmers depend on crops to ensure their economic sustainability. The struggle for resources often leads to conflicts among these groups. Tribes like the nomadic Mongols have always had wars with the Chinese over resources essential to the sustenance of their herd.

In contemporary West Africa, the Fulanis, found in Senegal, Guinea, The Gambia, Mali, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea Bissau, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, Togo, Ghana and Liberia, constitute the largest nomadic group (Anter, 2011). They are in the news, almost always, especially, in Nigeria, over frequent conflicts with communities in their line of migration. These Nomads are often armed with military assault weapons like AK-47 for their herding activities. This creates the feeling of insecurity among unarmed communities where these nomads operate; as now and again they endure unprovoked attacks that destabilize their communities and hamper economic activities like farming and trading. This security issue transcends national borders and demands a concerted effort among affected West African States to address.

The Vexed Issue of Security

The one word that dominates the lexicon of leaders of various nations of the world is: security. Security implies "the degree of resistance to, or protection from, harm. It applies to any vulnerable and valuable asset, such as a person, dwelling, community, item, nation, or organization" (ISECOM).

The security issues faced by our world, according to Ezrow (2016), include:

- Civil Conflict: Recently, the FARC insurgents in Colombia agreed to a peace deal with the Colombian government. That deal ended a civil conflict that had lasted for a little above 50 years. The costs in human and economic terms are enormous. Across the oceans to Syria, a raging civil conflict has resulted in one of the largest humanitarian crisis since WWII. In Yemen, Eastern Ukraine; South-Sudan, DR Congo, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Nigeria, civil conflicts constitute the primary sources of insecurity

- Organized Crime: Crime related to drugs claims lives almost every day around the globe. The threat posed by gang violence in countries like Brazil, Philippines, Colombia, Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, inter alia, are overwhelming. In Mexico, 20,000 people were killed in crime-related violence in 2015, alone; homicides in Honduras stood at 171 per 100,000 people; murder is committed every hour in tiny El Salvador.

- Small Arms: The proliferation of small arms in the world is an enormous security threat. In the United States alone, there were 33, 599 deaths in 2014 as a result of the use of small arms. Quite recently, the spontaneity of attacks involving small arms in the United States appears to have become routinized, so much so that it is a key issue in the United States presidency electioneering. The Small Arms Survey (an independent research project at the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva, Switzerland), show that:

  ➢ In Colombia: 1 in 10 deaths is caused by firearms; 93% of the victims are men. 80% of all homicides in the country are committed with firearms. The country has recorded 700,000 registered firearms and estimates that 2.4 million illegal guns are in circulation. Between 1979 and 2005 more than 475,000 people were killed by the use of firearms through crime – organized and petty – and the ongoing conflict. (Source: Conflict Analysis Resource Centre, Colombia, press release, 5 April 2006).

  ➢ Eighty percent of the guns used in crime in Mexico originate from outside the country. 50% of the guns used in crime in Canada were smuggled into the

country (Source: Canadian Professional Police Association). Legallyowned guns can end up in the hands of criminals: in Brazil for example, a government study in Rio de Janeiro found that 72% of the guns used in crimes had at one time been legally registered.

➢ Small arms and light weapons are responsible for the majority—between 60 and 90%, depending on the conflict—of direct conflict deaths, of which there were between 80,000 and 108,000 worldwide in 2003. (Source: Small Arms Survey 2005)

➢ Contemporary conflicts also cause a possibly larger but unquantifiable number of indirect deaths due to conflict-related social disruption, which leads to malnutrition and deaths from preventable diseases. Research shows that small arms also play an important role in these deaths, by restricting the access of humanitarian and relief organizations to vulnerable populations. (Source: Small Arms Survey 2005). For instance, according to the British medical journal The Lancet (January 2006) and the International Rescue Committee, 3.9 million people have died as a result of the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo since 1998.

➢ In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, more than 17,000 children have been removed from armed groups (as of May 2006). UNICEF and its partners supported the demobilization and care of 11,361 of those children, 14% of whom were girls. Of these, 8,646 were reunited with Fact sheet 1 United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects New York, 26 June – 7 July 2006 ● www.un.org/smallarms2006 their families and reintegrated into their communities. (Source: Protection Section/UNICEF Kinshasa, as of May 31, 2006)

➢ The Monitoring Group on Somalia reported (S/2005/153) that approximately 10,000 tons of charcoal were being illegally exported from Somalia every month in order to finance the mobilization of militias and to purchase arms. (Source: Report of the UN Secretary-General on small arms, 17 February 2006)

➢ At least 200,000 non-conflict-related firearms deaths occur each year, worldwide. These include homicide, suicide, and unintentional shooting deaths. Globally, firearms are used in 6% of suicides and in almost 40% of homicides. (Source: Small Arms Survey 2004)

➢ As of June 2005, legislative controls over illegal arms brokers existed in only 32 of the United Nations' 191 States. (Patrick Mc Carthy, "Scratching the surface of a global scourge: the first five years of the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms," Disarmament Forum, No. 1, 2006, United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research)

- Terrorism: This is the present concern among nations. The rise in religious fundamentalism, which is expressed through terrorism and insurgencies, has made humanity to have the sense that our contemporary world is unsafe. From Al Qaeda to ISIS; Boko Haram or Al Shaabab; acts of terrorism and atrocities by the various insurgencies around the globe, contribute to the insecurity that appears to hold sway in today's world

The Concept of Human Security
The 1994 UNDP Human Development Report, brought to the fore a new concept of human security which relates security directly to the human person rather than territories. The conceptualization of human security was expanded to reflect seven areas as follows:

- **Economic security** – Economic security requires an assured basic income for individuals, usually from productive and remunerative work or, as a last resort, from a publicly financed safety net. In this sense, only about a quarter of the world's people are presently economically secure. While the economic security problem may be more serious in developing countries, concern also arises in developed countries as well. Unemployment problems constitute an important factor underlying political tensions and ethnic violence.

- **Food security** – Food security requires that all people at all times have both physical and economic access to basic food. According to the United Nations, the overall availability of food is not a problem, rather the problem often is the poor distribution of food and a lack of purchasing power. In the past, food security problems have been dealt with at both national and global levels. However, their impacts are limited. According to UN, the key is to tackle the problems relating to access to assets, work and assured income (related to economic security).

- **Health security** – Health Security aims to guarantee a minimum protection from diseases and unhealthy lifestyles. In developing countries, the major causes of death traditionally were infectious and parasitic diseases, whereas in industrialized countries, the major killers were diseases of the circulatory system. Today, lifestyle-related chronic diseases are leading killers worldwide, with 80 percent of deaths from chronic diseases occurring in low- and middle-income countries.[8] According to the United Nations, in both developing and industrial countries, threats to health security are usually greater for poor people in rural areas, particularly children. This is due to malnutrition and insufficient access to health services, clean water and other basic necessities.

- **Environmental security** – Environmental security aims to protect people from the short- and long-term ravages of nature, man-made threats in nature, and deterioration of the natural environment. In developing countries, lack of access to clean water resources is one of the greatest environmental threats. In industrial countries, one of the major threats is air. Global warming, caused by the emission of greenhouse gases, is another environmental security issue.

- **Personal security** – Personal security aims to protect people from physical violence, whether from the state or external states, from violent individuals and sub-state actors, from domestic abuse, or from predatory adults. For many people, the greatest source of anxiety is crime, particularly violent crime.

- **Community security** – Community security aims to protect people from the loss of traditional relationships and values and from sectarian and ethnic violence. Traditional communities, particularly minority ethnic groups are often threatened. About half of the world's states have experienced some inter-ethnic strife. The United Nations declared 1993 the Year of Indigenous People to highlight the continuing vulnerability of the 300 million aboriginal people in 70 countries as they face a widening spiral of violence.

- **Political security** – Political security is concerned with whether people live in a society that honors their basic human rights. According to a survey conducted by Amnesty International, political repression, systematic torture, ill treatment or disappearance was still practised in 110 countries. Human rights violations are most frequent during periods of political unrest. Along with repressing individuals and groups, governments may try to exercise control over ideas and information.

The challenges of security as a result of transhumance in West African have a lot to do with human security; they are more of personal security issues, involving humans directly, than mere territories that involve national governments and geographical entities.

The West African Sub-Region and the ECOWAS Charter
The sub-region of West Africa is located west of north-south axis lying close to 10° east longitude. The Atlantic Ocean forms the western as well as the southern borders of the West African region. The northern border is the Sahara Desert, with the Ranishanu Bend generally considered the northernmost part of the region. The eastern border lies between the Benue Trough, and a line running from Mount Cameroon to Lake Chad. Colonial boundaries are still reflected in the modern boundaries between contemporary West African states, cutting across ethnic and cultural lines, often dividing single ethnic groups between two or more states (http://www.ecowas.int/member-states/).

Figure 1: Map of West Africa

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was established on 28th May 1975, as a regional organization of 15 West African member nations. These are: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. The main goal of ECOWAS is the promotion of the economic integration among its members. These countries have both cultural and geopolitical ties and shared common economic interest.

Transhumance and ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol
Large populations in West Africa depend on transhumance pastoral production as a main source of livelihood, meaning that this activity contributes greatly to the economies of peoples of this region. It is a way of life that has ecological, political, economic, cultural and social dimensions (CIRAD, 2012).
On the global scale, 10 % of meat production comes via transhumance pastoral production. Also, this activity supports about 200 million households (Hérault, 2010). On the African continent, some 50 million herders live in arid and semi-arid zones in Africa. They own a third of livestock; they supply 60% of the beef and 70% of the milk produced in African countries (ECOWAS, CSAO, 2008).

Transhumants make their movements depending on the rainfall and vegetation distribution at any point in time. They move seasonally between the arid/semiarid regions in the rainy season and secure grazing resources in the dry season.

Transhumance pastoral production system is a main source of livelihood for large populations in West Africa and contributes greatly to the economies of the countries in this region. This practice appears to be under threat from complex factors that includes: climatic changes, ecological factors, economic, political, cultural and demographic changes with consequent security and development implications.

The ECOWAS protocol on free movement of persons, residence and establishment was adopted on May 29, 1979; the Articles on the free movement protocol are as follows:

Article 2
- The Community citizens have the right to enter, reside and establish in the territory of Member States.
- The right of entry, residence and establishment referred to in paragraph 1 above shall be progressively established in the course of a maximum transitional period of fifteen (15) years from the definitive entry into force of this Protocol by abolishing all other obstacles to free movement of persons and the right of residence and establishment.
- The right of entry, residence and establishment which shall be established in the course of a transitional period shall be accomplished in three phases, namely:

Article 3
- Any citizen of the Community who wishes to enter the territory of any other Member State shall be required to possess a valid travel document and an international health certificate.
- A citizen of the Community visiting any Member State for a period not exceeding ninety (90) days shall enter the territory of that Member State through the official entry point free of visa requirements. Such citizen shall, however, be required to obtain permission for an extension of stay from the appropriate authority if after such entry that citizen has cause to stay for more than ninety (90) days.

Article 5
In order to facilitate the movement of persons transported in private or commercial vehicles the following shall apply:

Private Vehicles: A private vehicle registered in the territory of a Member State may enter the territory of another Member State and remain there for a period not exceeding ninety (90) days upon presentation of the documents listed hereunder to the competent authority of that Member State:
- Valid driving licence
- Matriculation Certificate (Ownership Card) or Log Book.
- Insurance Policy recognised by Member States
- International customs documents recognised within the Community.

Commercial Vehicles: A commercial vehicle registered in the territory of a Member State and carrying passengers may enter the territory of another Member State and remain there for a period not exceeding fifteen (15) days upon presentation of the documents listed hereunder to the competent authority of that Member State:
- Valid driving licence
- Matriculation Certificate (Ownership Card) or Log Book.

- Insurance Policy recognised by Member States
- International customs documents recognised within the Community.

During the period of fifteen (15) days the commercial motor vehicle shall however not engage in any commercial activities within the territory of the Member State entered.

Emerging Security Challenges from Transhumance in West Africa
Nigeria is a classical example of the security challenges that transhumance pose. Long before now, transhumant Fulanis have been about their activities without incidents of communal clashes being widely reported. Incidents usually associated with transhumance are cattle rustling and banditry.

But the new climate of religious fundamentalism has opened up a new vista of security issues associated with transhumance. Focus is now on insurgency and terrorism.

The ECOWAS protocol on free movement was put in place long before the EU Shengen protocol which was especially designed to facilitate free movement among European citizens. But the realities of refugee migration from Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan and some countries in Africa have raised a lot of security concerns that the original proponents of the protocol never envisaged. This is about the same thing with the ECOWAS protocol on free movement.

Criminals who perpetrate nefarious activities in Nigeria, for instance can exploit this protocol to vanish to member states in order to avoid the prevailing laws in the countries where crimes are committed.

Al Qaeda in the Maghreb headquartered in the Sahara desert and Boko Haram which is entrenched in Northeast Nigeria present a new form of security challenge. These groups are armed and ideological. They could take advantage of the protocol; and, in the guise of transhumants perpetrate mayhem in order to further their cause.

In Nigeria, as well as some member states of ECOWAS, now and again, gunmen suspected to be Fulani herdsmen go on the rampage, killing people without any reason. It has become a menace in the agricultural southern Nigeria. Some opinion leaders in Nigeria have labeled them, foreign herdsmen. A close observation would show that there is ethic and religious colouration to the intent for attacks on communities where these gunmen operate.

The gunmen among the herdsmen could be in the minority, but the scale of their atrocities makes it so easy for the innocents among the herds men to be absolved from the crime of a few. The consequence is that the peaceful co-existence between the Nomads and the crop farmers is always called into question, necessitating the need to urgently take pro-active measures to address these security challenges and prevent the exploitation of conflicts that occasionally flare up among these groups from being aggravated by terrorist groups to destabilize the peace, economic stability and security of the countries in the entire West African sub-region.

Transhumance and Transnational Security in West Africa: Recommendations
Transhumance is a necessary aspect of the economic development of groups in the West African sub-region; as such, efforts ought to be made at the level of ECOWAS policy making to accommodate these groups, on the one hand and to enhance security on the other hand. In the light of this, the following are recommended:

- A deliberate policy of identification should be adopted which would help track the genuine pastroralists from those who go out of their way to engage in banditry or terrorism

- Technology should be employed to map the clusters where pastoralists graze their herd so that host communities could be notified of their presence at any point in time to avoid the sense of 'incursion' among farm owners that might lead to clashes.
- Transnational policing, specifically designed to protect both the nomads and crop farmers should be designed to ensure that the activities of pastoralists are not substituted for terrorism.
- Social schemes should be put in place that would serve as a meeting point for groups engaged in transhumance and their hosts so that there can be communication and cultural engagements which would lead to a better understanding and serve to reduce tension that often brews when one group sees the other as 'stranger'
- Grazing reserves along the trails of transhumance should be set up, just like ranches in the United States, so that pastoralists can be concentrated and confined to a given area where they can have the sense of security for themselves and their herd while the groups that offered the reserves should be adequately compensated and educated on the need for the reserves in the regard of their security and prosperity.
- Regulations that have already been put in place to manage transhumance by ECOWAS should be implemented to the extent they are useful in combating the present concern of trans-border insurgencies and terrorism.

Conclusion

The contemporary security challenges facing our world necessitate concerted and concrete actions to address them. Terrorism via religious fundamentalism is what we now face as a big security issue in the world. The West African Sub-region is not immune to this threat. Fundamentalist groups like ISIS have shown how far modern terrorism can go, by the rapid way they seized territories and declared a Caliphate that they want other groups to swear allegiance to. Some little cracks on the wall gave this hitherto unknown group the advantage that saw it rise to monstrous heights that it's taking a whole coalition of States to try to take them out.

Failure to address the security challenges that attend transhumance may see the West African sub-region turn into a free zone for religious fundamentalist groups who would explore loopholes in the system, like the case of Iraq, Libya and Somalia to establish armed insurgencies that threaten the existence of people.

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