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## Rustling and Human Security in Nigeria: An Analysis of ECOWAS Response

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### ABSTRACT

This study analyses ECOWAS response to rustling and human security in Nigeria. The central theme of the argument in the study is that rustling poses a significant threat to human security in Nigeria. This implies that diaries and beef consumption are altered by the activities of rustlers, insurgents, terrorists, kidnappers, and bandits. This, in turn, also poses a significant risk to animal life, human security, and food security in Nigeria. Thus, in line with mainstream submissions in the extant literature, the study's findings indicate that rustling threatens human and food security in Nigeria. To address these security issues, the study recommends that the government should come out with a new dimension to national security, secure the national borders by documenting and using forensic technology to record the details of people and commercial trade activities at the wall, and also seek sub-regional cooperation with ECOWAS member states.

### INTRODUCTION

Violent conflicts involving pastoralists have escalated in West Africa in recent years, claiming thousands of lives and properties across the region. These conflicts were primarily driven by competition for land, water, and forage, but political and socio-economic factors were also involved. This crisis negatively affects farmers and agricultural production. Also, banditry and cattle rustling are severe problems associated with these conflicts, especially in areas where the state was weak or where state officials were linked to armed groups. The scale and frequency of farmer-herder battles varied greatly among and within West African states, and the increased use of sophisticated weapons intensified these conflicts.

To address most of the pastoral-related issues, such as banditry, terrorism, cross-border crimes, and cattle rustling, in the West African sub-region, the ECOWAS policies were adopted and implemented. By adopting the ECOWAS Protocol on Transhumance (1998) and supporting Regulation (2003), ECOWAS Member States recognized cross-border pastoralist transhumance as a valuable economic activity. It defined a regional regulatory framework for cross-border transhumance based on the ECOWAS principle of free movement of persons, services and goods. Also, the ECOWAS Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP) of 2009 - to be implemented by the Ministers of Livestock, Trade and Security - was adopted as a guiding principle for developing the livestock industry in the ECOWAS region. Unfortunately, with these policies and implementation efforts, some countries in the region still experience myriad security challenges at an increasing level. (ECOWAS-UNOWAS, 2017).

Nigeria had more fatalities in farmer-herder conflicts than the rest of the ECOWAS member states combined and had faced significant challenges implementing its

legislation on pastoralism. The frequency and spread of cattle rustling nationwide have been a concern. This activity did not only result in the stealing of herds of cattle but also in the high death toll of herders and sometimes local farmers and residents. Several reports of bandits with sophisticated automated weapons attacking farms and herders' settlements to cart away cattle and stage cattle proliferation also filled the airwaves of the nation's media. The evolving nature of this criminal activity manifested in nearly every part of Nigeria with daily occurrences (Egwu, 2015).

For instance, Plateau State – a state in the middle belt of Nigeria, recorded cattle-rustling activities in Mangu, Bokokos, Barkin Ladi, Shendam, Jos South, Riyom, Langtang North, and Langtang South (Leadership newspaper, 2014). Several villages in the regions between the four northern states of Kaduna, Katsina, Zamfara, Niger and Benue were also found in the middle belt under siege from cattle rustlers who unleashed terror on helpless herders and cow farmers. Also, the 2016 Nigeria Watch Project: Sixth Report on Violence recorded that the main drivers for deaths in the country were crime and conflicts among herders, a shift believed to have probably arisen from the containment of the Boko Haram insurgency (Adams *et al.*, 2016). This is no surprise as cattle rustling evolved into organized crime with immense criminality, leading to a high death toll, as evidenced in Nigeria. As the violence continues, ECOWAS responses have been insufficient in tackling the marauding attacks, especially in the country's northeastern part.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Conceptual Analysis of Rustling in Nigeria

Rustling is an age-old and profoundly entrenched feature of pastoralist livelihood. It fostered competition

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between groups that found themselves in harsh, delicate environments, which also served as a means of primitive accumulation of a herd of cattle in the context of subsistence and commercial pastoralism (Blench, 2004). The practice dates back to ancient history; the first recorded cattle raids were conducted over seven thousand years ago, though the problem persisted, even in developed countries. For instance, the San Francisco Chronicle (IOM, 2019) reported that rustling was rising in California, involving an estimated 16,000 herds of cattle, with the calves reportedly missing and stolen from California farms and ranches valued at more than \$9 million.

Between 2008 and 2015, for example, rural banditry escalated in the rural areas of North-Western Nigeria, including the States of Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna, the Niger and FCT Abuja. This phenomenon was often misunderstood and equated with the violent farmer-herder conflicts in Nigeria's Middle Belt. Pastoralists in the North were particularly affected by rustling. This involved the stealing of cattle and other animals from herders or the raiding of cattle from ranches. Rustling was originally a culturally embedded practice that mainly served to reconstitute herds after a significant crisis or to secure bride price payments. The course was perceived to be driven by different needs, including cash, some groups' need for meat, or as a means of revenge for damaged crops. For years, however, cattle rustling was transformed into a vicious criminal activity, far beyond a quasi-cultural practice and the low-intensity conflict that previously defined the relationship between farmers and grazers.

It became a form of economic crime orchestrated by well-organized networks, often with the backing of some high-ranking officials. In Northern Nigeria, wealthy individuals staged and financed large-scale rustling operations by well-armed groups of unemployed young pastoralists, usually involving several thousand animals and complex logistic processes. Other forms of rural banditry include street robbery, rape, kidnapping, organized attacks in villages and communities, and looting. They all seriously affect farmers' and herders' asset bases and livelihoods. As herders and farmers armed themselves to fend off bandits, there was the risk of further violent escalation of conflict since many farmers believed that local pastoralists carried out rustling. These, however, were also victims of such practices. Pastoralists reacted to rustling by retreating into remote areas, including Natural Reserves, and limiting their herds' mobility. Both methods negatively impacted their ability to access services and maintain their flocks in a productive state. When security forces got involved in rustling cases, they often failed to distinguish between pastoralists who were victims of crime and criminals who committed crimes (Kuna *et al.*, 2015).

Rustling became a significant security issue in Northern Nigeria. Pastoralists practiced raiding for many years as a cultural pattern of showing male prowess and restocking depleted herds. Over the past years, however, it evolved into organized crime. The most affected states include Benue, Gombe, Kaduna, Katsina, Nasarawa, the Niger,

Plateau, Taraba and Zamfara, with neighboring states also involved. Within these states, rustlers operated out of inaccessible forest areas such as the Dajin Rugu forest stretching from Kaduna through Katsina to Zamfara, where they had their bases and accumulated the stolen animals before trucking them to the urban markets. Rustlers attacked farmers and pastoralists, who preferred transhumant pastoralists from neighboring countries, who drove larger herds and were less able to connect to the local security forces. For this reason, pastoralist movement from Niger into Nigeria has declined by 80 per cent since 2012 (IOM, 2019). Rustlers attacked villages and pastoralist settlements, maimed or killed their inhabitants, raped women, kidnapped girls and drove away the cattle. Available figures on cattle rustling were anecdotal but highlighted the size of the phenomenon. In 2013, cattle rustlers killed 322 herders and stole over 30,000 cattle in five northern states (Okoli & Okpaleke, 2014). Overall, it is estimated that several hundred people were killed and several tens of thousands of cattle stolen yearly by rustlers.

Where there were no more cattle to steal, rustlers turned to kidnapping, demanding high sums from impoverished pastoralists. Rustling became a sophisticated business operation usually run by influential and sometimes well-known urban businessmen who hired and armed disadvantaged pastoralist youth to carry out the raids. They also operated cattle bases in remote areas and organized the transport and marketing of the stolen cattle towards Nigeria's large urban markets. The rustling networks were known for their violence and feared by the police. Meanwhile, rustling further exacerbated farmer-herder tensions since farmers often blamed local pastoralists for the violence. Farmers and pastoralists established local vigilante groups in many areas who engaged in retaliatory violence after rustling incidents. Many Nigerians also blamed "foreign herders" for the scourge of cattle rustling in the northern regions and demanded the total closure of Nigeria's borders for pastoralists from other countries. Some observers maintained that some of the rustling in Northern Nigeria was carried out on behalf of Boko Haram, which was alleged to pay its arms and fighters from its proceeds (Olaniyan & Yahaya, 2016). Before

**Table 1:** Showing Distribution of the Number of Cattle from 2009 to 2015

Year	Number of cattle
2009	16,434,978
2010	16,577,962
2011	19,041,270
2012	19,206,929
2013	19,374,029
2014	19,753,249
2015	20,184,763
<b>Total</b>	<b>130,573,180</b>

Source: Federal Department of Livestock (FMA&RD), 2021



coming under military pressure from the government, Boko Haram fighters also undertook raids similar to rustling in the north-eastern States of Borno, Gombe and Adamawa to ensure the sustenance of their group.

### Causes of Rustling in Nigeria

Without a doubt, rustling has developed from an ordinary survival crime into an organized crime with connections to politics, power and organized violence. Several scholars have tried to account for the causes of rustling and have come up with ideas that support their claims. In Nigeria, the activities of rustling witnessed in the northern part of the country in recent years have sometimes been traced to the activities of the Boko Haram Islamic sect. Rebel and terrorist groups resort to rustling to raise funds to support their group agenda (Okoli & Ioryer, 2014). However, it becomes pertinent to note that these activities are not in total ignorance of the transnational syndicate of Fulani nomads who have an in-depth knowledge of the locations of the forest. This is because the success of rustling involves good information on herd-ship and a vast understanding of transit routes and movement. Hence, Okoli suggests that most of the culprits of rustling are nomads who must have lost their cattle due to the constant 'resource conflict' with the settled farmers or disgruntled Fulani who have lost herds of cattle (Okoli & Atelhe, 2014).

Regarding rustling and organized crimes in Nigeria, Akah & Akah's (2023) paper interrogates the challenges and prospects of managing protracted social conflicts in Nigeria by examining the socio-economic and political dynamics of the Nigerian State within the framework of the current security challenges in Nigeria. Their findings indicate that the root causes of conflicts in Nigeria are ethno-religious intolerance, struggle for power and scarce resources, bad governance, insincerity and a haphazard approach towards resolving these conflicts. The authors conclude that there is no alternative to good governance in Nigeria's fight against violent clashes. Good governance is congenial to the promotion, reign and sustenance of peace. Similarly, Omony's (2023) work on 'Evaluation of trans-border crimes in Nigeria' blames the causes of crimes on terrorism, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs), human trafficking, internet fraud, oil theft, smuggling of goods among others. Hence, Akah & Akah (2023) maintain that several administrations in Nigeria have failed to change the pattern of leadership to reflect the people's popular demand; instead, they intensified them and re-packaged it in a modern way with different brand names. Abumbe *et al.* (2018) aver that Islamic fundamentalism has been observed to be a significant cause of this crisis. According to them, Islamic fundamentalism is the belief in the existence and supremacy of the Islamic religion above every other religion. BK sect is agitating for an Islamic State in Nigeria. Members of this dreaded group believe that an infidel is anyone who practices a religion other than Islam and deserves to die. Also, the group is

firmly against Western education.

On the other hand, another factor aiding the prevalence of cattle rustling in contemporary Nigeria is the harsh living conditions of the herders, which stem from the outcome of climate change and the attendant resource conflicts that precipitate criminalities and ammunition that facilitate the proliferation of illegal operations among unscrupulous elements in the country (Rufai, 2017). The criminal impunity of the people, arising from the level of poverty in the nation due to government and private organizations' inability to provide employment and create avenues for wealth creation, is also a factor in the rise of rustling in Nigeria. The unemployed factions can only engage in rustling and other criminal activities. The level of economic wealth lost at this point not only degrades the potential of the cattle business but also hurts the true nature of how much cattle business generates for the nation.

Moreover, most herders aspire to have control over more cattle because of the cultural respect that comes with it. Invariably, the herders use rustling to increase their cattle and gain power, consideration and affluence. This is juxtaposed with Okoli's statement that says that herders carry out the majority of rustling incidents.

Small arms and light weapons increase insecurity in communities and could account for the prevalence of rustling. The Proliferation of arms and ammunition has become a common threat in northern/ middle belt regions of Nigeria. The increasing use of weapons usually instigates the acts of violence witnessed in rustling activities. Most of the rustlers arm themselves with these weapons that aid them to intimidate and threaten the herders from whom they steal the livestock. Moreover, the study was informed that these weapons have led to increased killings in the area and guns are therefore seen as an economic investment. Traditionally, the pastoralists practiced cattle rustling using spears and bows; now, the weapon of choice is the AK-47 (Eavis, 2002). Pastoral communities seem to be arming themselves for defensive and offensive reasons with the need to protect themselves and their cattle from being plundered by hostile groups and using arms to steal stock from other pastoral communities forcefully (Abdullahi, 2016). Finally, due to the accessibility and volume of foreign supplies, major internal markets have emerged where rebels, criminals, and terrorists can access weapons, ammunition, and explosives. This has led to a catastrophic rise in violent deaths in local communal conflicts over land and water or the traditional practice of rustling (Mkutu, 2007).

Another trigger of the rustling is the presence of large swathes of forest reserves that are generally out of the reach of the Nigerian security operatives. Most rustling activities occur in Northern Nigeria's state-owned resources, such as the Kamuku, Kiyanbana, and Fagore forests (Olaniyan & Yahaya, 2016). Most of the arms and ammunition the criminals used to carry out their dastardly acts were being ferried into the country by using animals crossing the forest (Nan, 2015). This aids

as a perfect location for criminals from security forces as it is tough to control all border areas between countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. The reluctance of the Nigerian security operatives to enter these forest areas seems to be mainly due to inefficiency and corruption (Olaniyan & Yahaya, 2016). First, one significant consequence of the Nigerian security forces' lack of equipment and poor motivation is gross inefficiency as they are ill-equipped and ill-motivated in contrast to the criminals, who are well-armed and motivated. Second, security forces and rustlers are often in cahoots, which seems obvious given the open manner of rustling and the reluctance of the security operatives to act, even when provided with intelligence by residents. The third issue of corruption is highly explained by Y. Z. Ya'u, executive director of the Centre for Information Technology and Development (CITAD), a non-governmental body funded by the MacArthur Foundation that is developing workable technological innovations against rustling in Nigeria, stated:

People steal hundreds of cattle and move them around for days, and they do not get apprehended, which means there is a problem with our security system. Secondly, suppose they can take them to our markets here in Nigeria and sell them off. In that case, it means there is not only a problem with our intelligence-gathering system but also a form of collaboration with the dealers because the primary cattle dealers in the markets ought to know if the cows are stolen. It illustrates that there is a wave of partnerships at various levels of cattle rustling, and there is an apparent inability of the police and other security outfits to deal with the problem because, firstly, they are insufficiently equipped to handle the challenge. Second, there is a form of collaboration between criminal elements and security agents; third, there is outright corruption (National Express, 2017).

The porous nature of inter-state border-lines in Africa makes trans-border rustling conducive and thriving. Border security has come to assume heightened importance in the world today. It has become easy for transnational crimes to be conducted, such as moving money, people and goods across the globe, because of advancements in telecommunications, transportation and technology. These borders promote illicit trade, goods and services of which rustled herds of cattle have become significant commodities being passed and crossed along the Nigeria border lines. These borders are identified with dried trees, oil drums, and rims of tyres to demarcate the national boundaries; this makes the wall disorganized, poorly managed and insecure (Akinyemi, 2013). This promotes the unrepressed entry of illegal migrants and cross-border activities. However, some indefinable corridors or regions served as a route to these illegal migrants, posing a severe threat to the country and the national borders. For instance, it has been discovered that Nigeria has 1497 irregular and 84 regular routes where movements were done illegally.

## Rustling and Human Security in Nigeria: A Theoretical Nexus

The growing phenomenon of rustling is one of the transformations from the hitherto Fulani cultural practice of testing a person's bravery and prowess in bloody warfare involving various groups and actors. This transformation has seen the emergence of well-coordinated and well-funded banditry in virtually every state in the northern area, with the Fulani ethnic group often considered at the epicenter of the scenario because of its deep involvement in pastoralism. However, herding livestock is not an exclusive preserve of Fulani; in Nigeria alone, 14 other ethnic groups, including the Shuwa, Kanuri, Kanembu, Arabs, and Tuareg, are in some way involved in it (Blench, 2013).

In Nigeria, the prevalence and dimensions of rustling have been widespread, particularly in the country's middle belt and northern zones, where cattle rearing and land cultivation is a dominant agricultural practice and defines their livelihood. However, this problem has been complicated by the rising incidence of farmer/herder conflicts that stem from farmland encroachment, struggle over grazing space, rustling and other forms of violence, including the Boko Haram insurgency.

In recent developments, the wave of violence in the phenomenon of herders and farmers conflicts through rustling has escalated to a new dimension of violence that poses a serious challenge to human security. This recent phenomenon of criminal activities with sophisticated weaponry threatens the lives of herders, communities, states and, by extension, the nation. This has worsened the conditions of the herders, coupled with climate change and the frequent resource conflict, which tends to coerce criminal tendencies among the herders. The consequences of such a threat are loss of livelihood, population displacement, loss of lives and property, and decline in rural productivity and agricultural output.

In the last decade, the death toll recorded by cattle rustlers has increased in Nigeria. In Plateau State alone, between 2013 and 2015, 28,000 cattle have been rustled, and rustlers have killed 264 herders. While it is challenging to say the number of cattle stolen by these unidentified rustlers, sources revealed that thousands of cattle have been brazenly stolen by persons who often attack villages at night to carry out the nefarious act.

## METHODOLOGY

The study deploys content analysis within the qualitative research as its research design. It systematically reviews literature on cattle rustling, internal insecurity, and armed banditry in Nigeria. Hence, it depends on document analysis via the utilization of secondary sources of data such as textbooks, journals, periodicals, online materials, government publications, and publications by reputable international and national organizations such as Amnesty International (AI), National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), Nigerian Intelligence Agency (NIA), Global Conflict

Tracker, Global Peace Index (GPI), Global Terrorism Index (GTI), World Bank, etc. Results from the analysis of these documents are presented in a thematic format to vitiate the subjects of our inquiry. Hence, the paper

is descriptive in style since it builds on the strength of already existing works.

## RESULTS

**Table 2:** Showing Number of Rustled Cattle and Causalities between 2013 and 2015

Year in view	Number of Causalities	Number of the Cattle Rustled
2013	322	60,000
2014	281	58,801
2015	2991	64,820
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,594</b>	<b>183,621</b>

Source: Author's compilation (2022)

**Table 3:** Showing Dimensions of Cattle Rustling in Nigeria

	Orientation	Motivation	Origination	Destination	Culprits Petty/Local
Petty/Localized rustling	Not Syndicated; not armed.	Criminal quest for household protein or dairy (meat and milk)	Neighborhood paddocks or grazing fields.	Local Household.	Local Farmers and Nomads.
Inland rustling	Loosely Syndicated and moderately armed.	Quest for capital accumulation.	Grazing fields of herding communities.	Local cattle markets and abattoirs.	Local Farmers and Nomads.
Trans-border rustling.	Robustly syndicated, organized and armed.	Quest for capital accumulation; funding of political cause, e.g. armed rebellion and terrorism.	Grazing fields, commercial farms, cattle markets, herding communes.	Across national boundaries of Niger, Chad, Cameroon.	Nomads and a cartel of agents, merchants, and foreign accomplices.

Source: Okoli and Okpaleke (2014), *Cattle Rustling and Dialectics of Security in Northern Nigeria*, *International Journal of Liberal Arts and Social Science*, Vol. 2 No. 3.

## DISCUSSION

The significant findings reveal that rustling has been a veritable threat to Nigeria's national and human security and has manifested its effects in diverse dimensions. It has led to loss of lives, human injury, population displacement, as well as loss of cattle in their numbers. This situation has diverse repercussions that would affect the collective security of the herding communities and the nation. The repercussion goes beyond insecurity; it also affects the capacity of productivity and an eventual depletion of household and national income. This could ultimately lead to a drop in the cumulative supply of organic protein/ dairy in Nigeria and, by extension, to other products that survive on it.

However, similar findings reveal that the persistent attacks by rustlers on herding communities have put such communities in a precarious state. This aggravates the already conflictive herder/farmer inter-group relation, ultimately leading to a ferocious circle of violence. An extension to this dimension is the perceptible collapse into various terror brands that commit mass raids where massive killings, destructions and raping are perpetuated, of which women and children are victimized and often face the worse hit of these raids. Thus, with its extreme dynamics, rustling can be categorized as having traits of

terrorism in terms of its destructive import of instilling fear of destruction of human life and property.

Closely related to this is the concern that rustling is being resorted to by the insurgents as a fund-raising strategy for terror financing (Okoli & Okpaleke, 2014). Some funding sources for terrorist groups in Northern Nigeria have been linked to rustling. Some stakeholders have alleged that a direct link between rustling and the Boko Haram insurgency has been established through intelligence reports. The former Governor of Borno state, for instance, stated that:

Our security agencies have reasonably established that most of the cattle being traded at the markets [in Borno State] were the direct proceeds of cattle-rustling perpetrated by insurgents [and] were sold at prohibitive costs to unsuspecting customers through some unscrupulous middlemen who use underhand ploy[s] to disguise the transactions as legitimate deliberately. The money realized from such transaction[s] would then be channeled to fund their deadly activities (Daily Post, 2016).

The implication of this is that insurgency can raise the instrumental value and utility of rustling to a level where its solution would be as problematic as terrorism itself. This means, therefore, that if rustling earnestly becomes an instrumentality for terrorist design, it will indeed thrive

so long as terrorism prevails.

In addition, it has also been used as a mechanism for Small Arms and Light Weapons proliferation (SALW). Arms 'Trafficking along Nigerians' porous borders, particularly in the heat of insurgency, has also become a trend. Weapons are loaded on these cattle and are used as transportation services across the borders. The vast ungoverned space stretching between Southern Niger, Southern Chad, North East Nigeria and North West Cameroon further enhances cattle rustling since these cattle' are not passed through structured road routes but through bush paths and other grazing trans-border routes. This porous nature of African inter-state border lines generally makes trans-border rustling conducive and thriving. That being said, what then is the response of ECOWAS in dealing with this violent trend?

### ECOWAS Response to Rustling in Nigeria

One of the most significant attempts of ECOWAS to deal with the problem of rustling was the introduction of the ECOWAS Protocol on Transhumance in 1998. This protocol is also binding in Nigeria. However, Nigeria did little to domesticate and implement the Transhumance Protocol. Given the general scarcity of legislation on pastoralist transhumance, there was no national law domesticating the ECOWAS Transhumance Protocol within the period under review, and there was also no institutional framework for implementing the law. Hence, the issue of cattle rustling in Nigeria loomed high.

Also, there were very few border posts along the country's northern border, and none was restricted as an official border crossing point for pastoralists as required by the Protocol. The International Transhumance Certificate (ITC) was, at best, only known to some government officials in Abuja, while its issuance was the responsibility of the federal states. Most states ignored the certificate and did not have institutions to issue it. The provisions of the ECOWAS Transhumance Protocol were unknown to the relevant department within the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, where it was misunderstood as an agreement allowing the unlimited immigration of foreign pastoralists into Nigeria.

This perception was widespread among those officials who heard about the Transhumance Protocol but did not have a chance to read it. Given the pervasive narrative that foreign and heavily armed pastoralists were responsible for the rustling crisis in northern Nigeria and possibly for much farmer-herder violence in other parts of the country, many official interlocutors reject the Transhumance Protocol. This also includes representatives of local pastoralist associations, who fear that ECOWAS promoted the unfettered influx of foreign pastoralists, competing with the Nigerians for scarce pastoral resources. Many Nigerian pastoralists seemed suspicious of foreign pastoralists arriving in Nigeria on a transhumance basis.

Nigeria's border guards, including the National Immigration Service, considered cross-border transhumance a security

issue as terrorist or criminal groups could attempt to cross the borders in the guise of pastoralists. They also report armed foreign pastoralists who try to evade the official Nigerian border points and enter the country through illegal roads. While Nigeria counts plant and animal quarantine officers at approved border points at its air and sea borders, these are missing at its land borders. Hence, herds are allowed to pass uncontrolled.

Generally, there was a feeling among the border guards that the ECOWAS Protocol on Transhumance did not reflect West Africa's realities. Pastoralists would abuse ECOWAS provisions on free movement for their purposes. While this was a valid point of view, other interview partners reported that police and border officers were sometimes actively involved in large-scale violent operations such as rustling and cross-border transporting of stolen cattle. There were also reports of abuses of border and police officers against Nigerian and foreign pastoralists, exploiting the latter's vulnerable position to extract bribes and ransom. Overall, Nigerian border institutions appeared to lack the capacity to implement the ECOWAS Protocol on Transhumance fully.

It was reported that the number of pastoralists moving from neighboring countries into Nigeria to benefit from dry season pastures and marketing opportunities decreased by 80 per cent with the period under review. This is mainly due to widespread cattle rustling, farmer-herder violence, insurgency, and harassment.

### CONCLUSION

Rustling is a serious security challenge, given its dire impacts and implications in contemporary Nigeria. Although it is an essentially local problem, it also has growing trans-border crime implications, particularly when international criminal organizations become involved. It does not only pose a severe threat to humans but, by extension, threatens food and national security. Its latest manifestations in blood-shedding, rape and raids in some parts of the middle belt and northern zones of Nigeria that brings about the destruction of property have become a serious source of concern that should be given immediate attention, particularly with its purported association with the Boko Haram insurgency. Therefore, it rests on the government to immediately find a way to arrest the prevailing violence occasioned by rustling. As this study has revealed, rustling activities are the bedrock of human and food insecurity. The marauders have repeatedly distorted the peace and stability of herders and crop farmers as they have been identified as bandits, gangs of kidnappers or terrorists.

### RECOMMENDATION

Arising from this challenge and the findings discussed above, the study recommends that Nigeria introduce a ranching system that creates reserves where livestock will be nurtured and used for dairy, beef and other commercial purposes. Secondly, it is essential to revisit the ECOWAS Transhumance Protocol, and Nigeria



should be willing to implement some of the protocol's provisions. Also, ECOWAS and all the member states should be more committed to its regional security. Partnership, particularly military-wise, should be made to present a joint military force that will ensure peace and stability in the region and combat all the rustlers who take advantage of the vast array of forests in the northern part of Nigeria to perpetrate violence and criminality.

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