Africa Development, Volume XLIV, No. 2, 2019, pp. 53-76

(ISSN: 0850 3907)

Cows, Cash and Terror: How Cattle Rustling Proceeds Fuel Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study explores the nexus between cattle rustling and the Boko Haram insurgency by way of ascertaining how proceeds from the former is used to fund the latter. By means of secondary research, predicated on the theory of terrorism financing the article argues that material and financial proceeds from cattle rustling have been deployed to fund and sustain Boko Haram operations. The study underscores the strategic implications of cattle rustling as a veritable source of terrorism financing, and contends that dismantling cattle rustling infrastructure (the sources, syndicates, networks, markets, routes, transits, etc.) is key to counter-insurgency efforts in Nigeria.

Résumé

Cette étude explore le lien qui existe entre le vol de bétail et l'insurrection de Boko Haram afin de déterminer comment les produits de la première activité sont utilisés pour financer la seconde. Au moyen de recherches secondaires, fondées sur la théorie du financement du terrorisme, l'étude postule que les revenus matériels et financiers du vol de bétail ont été utilisés pour financer les opérations de Boko Haram. L'étude souligne les implications stratégiques du vol de bétail en tant que véritable source de financement du terrorisme et soutient que le démantèlement des infrastructures de vol de bétail (sources, réseaux, itinéraires, lieux de transits, etc.) est essentiel pour contrer l'insurrection au Nigeria.

Introduction

Cattle rustling has been a critical dimension of the prevailing security crises in Africa. Over the years, the problem has intrigued analysts, who have

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sought to interrogate its phenomenology from a variety of perspectives. A dominant narrative in the existing literature has associated the phenomenon with the contemporary complications of rural banditry (Okoli 2014; Egwu 2016). Another important perspective has linked the occurrence to the contradictions of nomadic pastoralism in the context of climate change, rapid urbanisation and population explosion (Adogi 2013; Okoli and Atelhe 2014; Okoli 2016; Olaniyan and Yahaya 2016). Despite the gamut of extant literature, very little has been said concerning the nexus between cattle rustling and the incidence of insurgency in Africa.

Scholarship on insurgency in African has been rich, ebullient, bourgeoning and perennial. With reference to Nigeria's experience with Boko Haram insurgency, scholarly inquiry has turned a full cycle, as there is virtually no aspect of the crisis that has not been overtly interrogated. Nonetheless, in spite of the avalanche of literature on the subject matter, some salient aspects are yet to be properly and sufficiently engaged. For instance, while much has been written on the nature, causes, complications and impacts of the Boko Haram insurgency (Onuoha 2011; Ibrahim 2012; Okoli and Iortyer 2014), there exists scant information on its funding and material sustenance.

Although aspects of funding Boko Haram activities have been recognised in the emerging literature on terrorism financing (Omeje2007; Onuoha 2012; FATF-GIABA-GABAC 2016), the bulk of what is known in that regard is largely a matter of anecdotal speculation and analytical permutations. There is, therefore, a need to undertake a rigorous study on the subject matter in order to buttress and/or validate relevant hypothetical claims. It is this need that has informed this study.

This article, therefore, seeks to establish a nexus between cattle rustling proceeds and Boko Haram insurgency within the analytical framework of terrorism financing. This is against the backdrop of the rising incidence of cattle rustling in northern Nigeria since the escalation of the Boko Haram insurgency from the 2000s (Egwu 2015). The study posits that financial and material proceeds from cattle rustling have been used to fund and sustain the operations of Boko Haram insurgents.

The remainder of the article is schematically organised under the following broad themes: conceptual analysis; analytical framework/terrorism financing; overview of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria; incidence and dynamics of cattle rustling in northern Nigeria; insurgency and political economy of cattle rustling; cattle rustling proceeds and the Boko Haram insurgency; strategic implications and the way forward; and conclusion.

Conceptual analysis

Two key terms form the conceptual thrust of this study, namely "insurgency" and "cattle rustling". This section clarifies and contextualises these concepts, with a view to situating their operational meaning in the context of the present discourse.

Insurgency

This is a form of collective violence whereby a clandestine sub-state organisation seeks to gain control of a state or an aspect of its territory 'from within through a combination of subversion, guerrilla warfare, and terrorism' (cf. Mokaitis 2011: 6). The United States Department of Defense (DoD) defines insurgency as 'an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through use of subversion and armed conflict' (DoD-US 2017). More elaborately, Liolio (2013: 35) avers that insurgency connotes:

> an internal uprising often outside the confines of state's laws and ... often characterised by social–economic (sic) and political goals as well as military or guerrilla tactics... a protracted struggle carefully and methodically carried out to achieve the goals with the eventual aim of replacing the existing power structure.

Insurgency is so related to terrorism to the extent that a typical instance of insurgency may necessarily entail the use of one form of terrorist tactic or another. Yet, the two phenomena are not essentially the same, both in terms of means and ends. In effect, while insurgent groups often use violence more selectively and discreetly, terrorists are more often inclined to using violence rather recklessly and wantonly. Again, while insurgency is generally dedicated to bringing about political change in favour of the insurgent group, terrorism tends to be more oriented towards systematic chaos and anarchy. But both insurgency and terrorism employ asymmetric approach to violence, unlike what obtains in conventional warfare (Okoli and Iortyer 2014). Concerning the relationship between insurgency and terrorism vis-à-vis civil war, Liolio (2013: 34) poignantly observes that:

> While for instance terrorism rarely brings about systematic political change on its own, insurgency attempts to bring about change through force of arms. Similarly, terrorists often apply a wide range of damages when compared to insurgents. On the other hand, while conventional war involves adversaries that are more or less symmetric in equipment and training, insurgency involves adversaries that are asymmetric, weak, and almost always a sub-state group.

In the context of this study, insurgency is used to denote a politically organised and conscious sub-state organisation that seeks to control a state or any aspect of its territory through systematic violence and subversion. Insurgency differs from terrorism both in essence and in purpose. While the former is characterised by immense lethality and wanton destruction, the latter is more systematic and discreet in the application of terror.

Insurgency has manifested in various forms and dimensions in most parts of the world. In some instances, it has been associated with ideological or religious extremism. Elsewhere, it has been characterised by manifest criminal opportunism and impunity. Table 1 gives insights into common patterns of insurgency widely recognised in the contemporary security discourse.

Table 1: Typology of insurgency

Type	**Remarks**
Revolutionary insurgency	Seeks a revolutionary change; repudiation of the status quo.
Reformist insurgency	Seeks modification or alternation of specific policies.
Separatist insurgency	Seeks self-determination or cessation.
Resistance insurgency	Seeks political liberation; resists foreign power/ territorial domination.
Commercialist insurgency	Seeks economic advantage (access to resources) through attempt to seize power.
Opportunistic insurgency	Capitalises on state failure or ungoverned space to carve a sphere of influence.
Degenerate insurgency	Switches from organised insurgency to extremist (terrorist) or criminal organisation.

Source: Adapted from Mockaitis (2011); Liolio (2013)

Cattle rustling

Cattle rustling is a dominant form of rural banditry in contemporary Africa (Okoli 2016). In the context of this study, it refers to the theft of cattle through armed violence, or threat to that effect (cf. Okoli and Okpaleke 2014). From a legal point of view, a protocol of Eastern African Police Chiefs Cooperation (EAPCCO) defines cattle rustling as 'the stealing or planning, organising, 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: 3).

Originally, cattle rustling (also sometimes designated as cattle raiding) was observed as a symbolic cultural practice in parts of the Horn and East Africa. In this context, 'it was sanctioned by elders and played as a game aimed at replenishing lost herds and for cultural practices including dowry payment, and as a proof of one's manhood and brevity' (RCSA n.d.: v).From its traditional mode as a means of 'localized herd redistribution' (Olaniyan and Yahaya 2016), as well as a system of cultural expression, cattle rustling has, over the years, degenerated into a pattern of organised criminality and militancy (Copenhagen Centre for Development Research 2014; N*ew African* 2016). In effect, 'the current system of cattle rustling was perceived as a criminal activity, because it is often perpetrated by non-pastoralists for commercial purposes rather than cultural motives' (Copenhagen Centre for Development Research 2014: 2).

The transformation of cattle rustling from its ancient and simple form to its contemporary manifestation as organised crime is significant. It entails the instrumentalisation and militarisation of a naive cultural practice by opportunistic criminals in the age of arms proliferation and criminal impunity, albeit in a context of failure of state governance (Okoli and Okpaleke 2014). Hence, contemporary cattle rustlers are characteristically violent and destructive. They are armed with sophisticated weapons and often operate with immense criminal efficiency and brutality (Kwaja 2014).

The modern transformation of cattle rustling is also evidenced by its growing translocational and transnational tendencies (Olaniyan and Yahaya 2016). Unlike the primitive mode of cattle rustling that was essentially localised and isolated, present-age cattle rustling bears all the trappings of translocalism and syndication. Consequently, the act is often perpetrated by networks of actors and facilitators that may be isolated from each other in real time and space. Yet, the act is also systematically plotted, coordinated and prosecuted, often with optimal efficiency.

The incidence and prevalence of cattle rustling in Nigeria today is associated with a number of factors, the crux of which is the inability or weakness of the state to govern effectively, especially in terms of hinterlands and forestlands policing (Okoli and Ochim 2016; Olaniyan 2017). This has been complicated by arms proliferation and insurgency to accord cattle rustling the character of intractability (Egwu 2016; Olaniyan 2017).

As much as being an organised crime (Alemika 2013), cattle rustling has become a booming criminal franchise in East and West Africa (Copenhagen Centre for Development Research2014; Tar and Shettima 2014). In these contexts, it has served the purpose of 'queer capitalist acquisition' and 'criminal profiteering' (Okoli and Okpaleke 2014b). The repercussions

of cattle rustling have been implicated as veritable precipitators of rural violence and insecurity in Africa (Tar and Shettima 2008).

It is germane to note that cattle rustling is different from other forms of cattle theft, such as waylaying and killing a stray cow for meat, or pilfering cows from the ranch. These instances of cattle theft, often petty and furtive, do not require much planning and organisation, let alone syndication. Again, they do not entail the use of violence or threat of violence, and are basically driven by concerns of subsistence rather than those of primitive or capitalist economic accumulation.

Cattle rustling is a global phenomenon. It is still a common form of rural crime in Asia, the United States, Australia and the Philippines (see for instance Crime Prevention on Farms n.d.; Malnekoff 2013). In Africa, cattle rustling has been most prevalent in East Africa, with Kenya having the lion's share in terms of its incidence (Khisa 2017; Cheserek, Omondi and Odenyo 2012). The West African sub-region has also had a significant manifestation of cattle rusting over the years (Tar and Shetima 2008). Since the escalation of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria from the late 2000s, cattle rustling has become rampant in many parts of northern Nigeria, with dire transnational complications in the Lake Chad axis. In this context, it has served the dual purpose of terrorism financing and opportunistic criminality.

Overview of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria

Boko Haram is a fundamentalist Islamic sect formerly known as *Jama'a Ahl as-Sunna Lida'wa-al Jihad.* It arose in the early 2000s as a small *Sunni* Islamic sect championing strict implementation and interpretation of Islamic law in Nigeria (Congressional Research Service 2016). The group was originally led by Mohammed Yusuf, a non-conformist Islamic cleric, who was murdered in custody of the Nigerian security forces in 2009 (Okoli 2017). The phenomenology and activities of the sect have been well documented in the literature (see for instance Onuoha 2011; 2012; Okoli and Iortyer 2014). Suffice it to note that the impact of the Boko Haram insurgency in relation to Nigeria's human security has been horrendous. As a record alarms:

> More than 15,000 people are estimated to have been killed by Boko Haram, including more than 6,000 in 2015 alone. By UN estimates, roughly 2.8 million people have been displaced by Boko Haram related violence in the Lake Chad Basin region, where approximately 5.6 million are in need of emergency food aid (Congressional Research Service 2016: i).

Box 1: Timeline of Boko Haram Violence

Selective chronology: 2003–17

2003 – Boko Haram was established in northern Nigeria under the leadership of Islamic cleric Mohammed Yusuf. Yusuf preached that the country's ruling was marred by corruption and advocated for the creation of an Islamic state.

July 2009 – Boko Haram members clashed with security forces in several northern states, resulting in at least 800 deaths. Mohammed Yusuf was arrested and killed in police custody.

2010 – Boko Haram regrouped and started its campaign of violent attacks against security forces, schools, churches and civilians.

September 2010 – Boko Haram attacked a prison in Bauchi State, freeing 150 of its members and several hundred other prisoners.

12 June 2011 – The Nigerian Government established a Joint Task Force (JTF) in Borno State, to 'restore law and order' to North-East Nigeria. It is comprised of personnel from the Nigerian Armed Forces, the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), the Department of State Security (DSS), the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) and the Defence Intelligence Agencies (DIA).

16 June 2011 – Boko Haram bombed Nigeria's National Police Force Headquarters in Abuja.

26 August 2011 – Boko Haram bombed the UN offices in Abuja, killing 23.

26 April 2012 – Boko Haram bombed the offices of the Nigerian newspaper *This Day* in Abuja and a building housing three newspapers, including *This Day*, in Kaduna. At least seven people died.

November 2012 – The Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court noted that serious human rights violations may have been committed by the JTF and that Boko Haram's attacks may constitute crimes against humanity.

May 2013 – President Jonathan declared a state of emergency in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States, which was rapidly approved by the National Assembly.

May 2013 – A vigilante group, known as 'Civilian Joint Task Force' was formed with government support in Maiduguri. They were given powers to arrest suspected Boko Haram members and hand them over to security forces.

November 2013 – The National Assembly approved a six-month extension to the state of emergency in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States.

2014 – Attacks by Boko Haram against civilians intensified, becoming an almost daily occurrence. The JTF responded by increasing its campaign to flush Boko Haram out of its camps in the east of Borno State.

16 January 2014 – President Jonathan replaces the Chief of Defence Staff and some other senior military figures.

14 March 2014 – Boko Haram attacked the Giwa Military Barracks in Maiduguri, allegedly freeing over a thousand inmates. The military recaptured the barracks, then rounded up and shot hundreds of escaped detainees.

April 2014 – Boko Haram abducted nearly 300 girls from a school dormitory in Chibok.

July 2014 – Boko Haram shifted from asymmetric attacks to a conventional offensive, dedicated to seizing and holding territory.

August 2014 –Boko Haram declared an Islamic State in the North-East.

7 March 2015 – Boko Haram pledged allegiance to ISIS.

April 2015 – Boko Haram began to lose most of its territories, sliding into the Sambisa forest.

December 2016 – Nigerian military began intensive combat operations in Sambisa forest in an attempt to recapture the territory and dislodge the insurgents.

May 2017 – Some girl-captors (Chibok girls) were released by the insurgents in exchange for some of their commanders.

Source: Okoli 2017: 42–3

Terrorism financing: theoretical framework

Terrorism financing refers to the system of funding terrorist activities. It 'encompasses complex financing structures used by terrorist organizations to conduct large scale attacks or simplistic models used to support small cells and fund smaller attacks', (FATF-GIABA-GABAC 2016: 1).This includes networks, actors, assets, and money as illustrated in Figure 1.

There are many and varied sources of terrorism financing, ranging from local to international sources as well as 'legal' to 'illegal' sources (Onuoha 2011; 2017). Local sources refer to domestic avenues by which terrorist organisations raise funds for self-maintenance and sustainable operations. These range from legitimate activities such as farming and trading to illicit activities such as bank raids, smuggling, kidnapping and the like (see Table 2). International sources of terrorism financing have to do with external sponsorship of terrorist activities via state and non-state donations. Some of these donations are often disguised as religious, corporate or humanitarian charities while some are direct proceeds of money laundering and other transnational crime (cf. Freeman 2011).

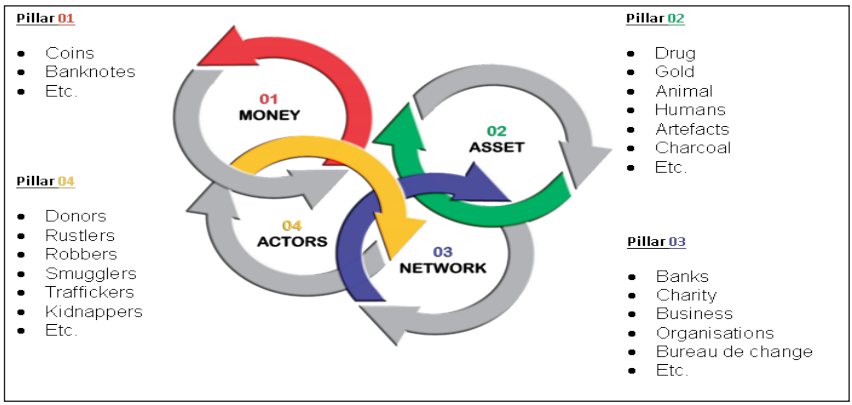

Figure 1: Aspects (pillars) of terrorism financing infrastructure
Source: Onuoha (2017:5)

Table 2: Sources of terrorism financing

Main Sources	Other Sources
Extortions in the form of taxes and protection/security fees	Arms trafficking
Personal and group donations	Human trafficking
Legitimate activities (such as agriculture and trading)	Drug trafficking
Kidnapping for ransom	Substance cultivation and sale
House looting	Piracy
Cattle rustling	Oil bunkering/theft
Armed robbery	Illicit mining
Market raids	Illicit refining of crude oil
Farm raids	Diaspora funding
Infrastructure vandalism	State sponsorship
Material dispossessions from government soldiers	Illicit exploitation of wildlife
Membership dues	Smuggling

Source: Adapted from FATF-GIABA-GABAC (2016)

The theory of terrorism financing is still inchoate and evolving. The groundwork of the theory was laid out by Freeman (2011) in a work

where he set out to theorise terrorism financing from the standpoint of the following analytical positions:

1. What are the possible sources of terrorism financing?
2. What do terrorist organisations look for when they consider various sources of financing?
3. What makes one source more attractive than the other? (*ibid.* 461–3).

The theory of terrorism financing is predicated on the assumption that terrorism is an expensive venture and that money (finance) is indispensable to it. According to Freeman (2011: 461), 'Terrorism costs money'. He adds that 'without money, (terrorist) groups could not conduct their operations or exist as organizations' (*ibid.*). The theory also postulates that since money is the 'life-blood' of every terrorist organisation (Freeman 2011), stifling sources and prospects of terrorism financing then becomes a desideratum in any meaningful counter-terrorism endeavours (Bloemkolkoo 2014).

In an attempt to evaluate the different sources of terrorist funding, particularly in terms of their comparative advantages and disadvantages to the terrorist group, Freeman (2011: 461) advances six explanatory criteria, as reproduced in Table 3.

Table 3: Freeman's six conditional indices/criteria for terrorism financing

Criterion	**Explanation**
Quantity	Sources of terrorism financing that provide larger quantities of money are preferred to those that do not.
Legitimacy	Sources of financing seen by terrorists as legitimate and ideologically permissive are highly preferable.
Security	Sources that guarantee higher prospects of self-security and operational secrecy of the terrorist organisation are more desirable.
Reliability	Sources that are fairly predictable and consistent are better for terrorist groups than those that fluctuate rather inconsistently.
Control	Sources that guarantee high prospects of internal control of the sourcing and management of finances are much preferred.
Simplicity	Simpler, more cost-effective methods of fund-raising are more desirable.

Source: Freeman (2011: 463–4)

The aforementioned sources/methods of terrorists financing are essentially competitive. In the light of the six criteria identified in Table 3, these sources

present a premise for strategic bargain and trade-offs. According to Freeman (2011: 464):

> One source, for example state sponsorship, might be advantageous for bringing in large sums of funding, but may be disadvantageous because the terrorist group may be beholden to the state sponsor's agenda to lose some control over how their organization functions.

In such a strategic dilemma, the concern of the terrorist organisation involved would be to prioritise among the different criteria with a view to settling for one or a combination of funding options that most pragmatically suits its purpose. In other words, the adoption of any funding strategy must be predicated on its comparative strategic efficacy cum utility against the backdrop of other relevant criteria (see Table 3).

How does the theory of terrorism financing apply to the present study on Boko Haran insurgency? First and foremost, Boko Haram has been designated as an international terrorist organisation (Okoli and Iortyer 2014). As a metamorphosed terrorist group, Boko Haram has tended to derive the bulk of its funds locally (FATF-GIABA-GABAC 2016). Most of the funds have been generated from looting, localised extortion and disguised donation (local sponsorship), membership contributions, and banditry which stands out as a very important method of Boko Haram's funding (Kuna and Ibrahim 2016). This has obtained in the form of market raids, high-way robbery, bank robbery and cattle rustling (Okoli and Okpaleke 2014a; 2014b). Cattle rustling has been a principal source of Boko Haram's funding (FATF-GABA-GABAC 2016). A number of socio-ecological factors make cattle rustling a variable method of fundraising by the insurgents:

1. availability of enormous nomadic livestock in northern Nigeria;
2. existence of a wide expanse of forested areas, often separated from proper territorial control of the state;
3. porosity of international borderlines along the Cameroon–Niger–Chad axis;
4. poor hinterlands and forestlands policing in most parts of rural northern Nigeria (Okoli and Okpaleke 2014a; Okoli and Ochim 2016).

Appropriating Freeman's six criteria of terrorism financing, it is hereby posited that the afore-mentioned socio-ecological factors have conferred on cattle rustling the virtues of quantity, legitimacy, security, reliability, control and simplicity. Hence, cattle rustling has become a veritable mode of terrorism financing by Boko Haram insurgents. This explains the rising incidence of the phenomenon since the advent of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria in the early 2000s (Egwu 2016).

Apart from accounting for its basic funding, cattle rustling has also been a critical source of milk, meat, as well as trade in animal skin and dry meat for Boko Haram insurgents. It has largely sustained the activities of the organisations by ensuring that it lives up to its logistical and essential supplies needs (see Table 4). As demonstrated subsequently, this has largely accounted for the survival of the group.

Table 4: Uses of terrorist finances

Logistics	**Essential Supplies**	
• Transportation • Communication/ propaganda • Espionage • Training • Upkeep of commanders and fighters • Construction/maintenance of camps • Mobilisation of suicide missionaries	• Soft supplies • Food stuffs • Medicine (drugs) • Clothing • Water • Meat • Beverages • Household items	• Hard supplies • Operational vehicles • Weaponry (arms and ammunition) • Improvised Explosive Device(IED) materials • Combat kits/wears • ICT equipment • Energy (fuel, generating sets, solar technology) • Construction materials

Incidence and dynamics of cattle rustling in Nigeria

Cattle rustling is one of the most perilous manifestation of rural banditry in Nigeria (Shalangwa 2013; Kuna and Ibrahim 2016). Prior to the 1990s, the phenomenon of cattle rustling was scarcely prominent in Nigeria. Although there were occurrences of isolated and often small-scale cattle theft in that era, the incidents were largely less organised and less violent. In most cases, the perpetrators were local and petty criminals who pilfer cows furtively from herders' stock either for meat or for subsistence (Okoli and Okpaleke 2014a).

The 1990s saw the transformation of cattle rustling in Nigeria from its subsistence level to a commercialised and militarised trade. This development was partly occasioned by a number of isolated factors, namely:

1. the rising cost (price) of cattle in national and regional markets;
2. the influx and proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) in the country;
3. the dislodgement of some nomadic herdsmen from traditional pastoralism in the Sahel, as a result of loss of their herd in the context of prevalence of conflict, drought and disease;

4. the involvement of opportunistic criminals and militants in the cattle theft enterprise;
5. the emergence of local and trans-local networks and markets for the organisation and sale of stolen cattle;
6. the involvement of transnational syndicates in the criminal venture;
7. the prevalence of criminal franchise, opportunism and impunity in Nigeria, amidst growing failure of security governance (Kwaja 2014; Okoli and Okpaleke 2014a; Egwu 2016; Olaniyan and Yahaya 2016).

Cattle rustling criminality came to a head in the 2000s, following the escalation of Boko Haram insurgency in North-East Nigeria. This added a lethal combustion to the cattle rustling challenge. In this context, it has been observed that:

> 'conflict entrepreneurs' are taking advantage of the Boko Haram violence in the north-east and general insecurity in Nigeria to engage in widespread 'rural banditry'. These gangs of criminals instigate fear and violence to raid communities for livestock and plunder. They often attack during the middle of the night and create chaos, burning homes and shooting guns in the air to cause people to flee, and move to effectively manoeuvre cattle out of the community (Baguand Smith 2017: 11).

The contemporary trajectory of cattle rustling in Nigeria indicates that the phenomenon is becoming rather endemic and intractable. Although the incidence has been generally manifest in all states of northern Nigeria, it has been more prevalent and pervasive in North-West and North Central states, with the following states as the most critical flashpoints.

Table 5: Critical flash-points of cattle rustling in Nigeria

North-West	**North Central**
Zamfara	Plateau
Kebbi	Nasarawa
Kaduna	Niger
Katsina	Benue
Kano	Kogi

Within the north-eastern region, cattle rustling has been most catastrophic in scale and impact on the Kebbi–Zamfara–Katsina–Kaduna axis. Zamfara State, for instance, has witnessed the worst complications of cattle rustling, resulting in mass village and market raids as well as multiple human casualties (Rufai 2016). Table 6 is instructive of the scale and consequences of cattle rustling in Zamfara State.

Table 6: Estimated number of livestock rustled in Zamfara State in 2016

	Area	**Number of livestock**
1	Badarawa	Over 200
2	Bagega	Over 4,500
3	Dorayi	Over 2,500
4	Filinga	Over 5,000
5	Gidan Kaso	1,455
6	Guru	270
7	Jangeme	Over 600
8	Kizara	Over 4,000
9	Lilo	90
10	Lingyado	Over 2,100
11	Madaba	106
12	Nasarawa Godal	Over 1,000
13	Nasarawa Mai Layi	Over 500
14	Rukudawa	250
15	Shigama and Kwokeya	1,020
16	Tsabre	Over 3,500
17	Tungar Baushe	1,110
18	Unguwar Galadima	850
19	Yar gada	230

Source: MACBAN (2016) as cited in Rufai (2016: 6)

In a recent study conducted by SB Morgen (2016:7), Zamfara State accounted for 446 of the 470 incidents of cattle rustling fatalities recorded in four affected states of northern Nigeria: Kano, Katsina, Niger and Zamfara. One striking feature of cattle rustling in Zamfara State is its rapid episodic pattern and lethality. It has often resulted in mass killings and population displacements (Rufai 2016).

Kaduna state has also been notorious for cattle rustling. The Birnin-Gwari area of the state has been particularly incident-prone. In 2013, over 1,000 cows were stolen by armed-to-the-teeth rustlers from a farm belonging to the former Vice President, Namadi Sambo, in the Birin Gwari area (Egwu 2016: 23). Cattle rustling has also been implicated in the recent serial episodes of inter-communal conflagrations between nomadic pastoralist and native crop farmers in the southern axis of the State (Bagu and Smith 2017). Cattle

rustling has equally been very pervasive in wider North Central Nigeria. In this context, it has been a critical driver of pastoral crisis in Benue, Nasarawa and Plateau States (SB Morgen 2016). Available data point to the fact that Nasarawa and Plateau States have been among the most critical flashpoints of cattle rustling North Central Nigeria (see Table 7).

Table 7: Estimated incidence of cattle rustling in Central Nigeria (2013 to early 2015)

State	No. of cattle rustled	No. of human casualties
Plateau	28,000	264
Nasarawa	25,000	70
Benue	8,680	2,500
Kwara	1,640	150
FCT	1,500	07
Total	64,820	2,991

Source: *Weekly Trust*, 16 May 2015 as cited in Okoli (2016: 418)

More recent records indicate that the incidence of cattle rustling in Nigeria is becoming rather alarming. With the incursion of organised criminal. syndicates and insurgents into the cattle rustling escapade, the situation has escalated and convoluted into a sort of an underworld economy that thrives on the principles of existential materialism as well as criminal expediency and impunity. But the consequences have been dire and lethal. According to the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders' Association of Nigerian (MACBAN), members of the organisation lost over 2 million cows to cattle rustlers in the two years since 2015 (*Premium Times* 2017). This is in addition to other collateral effects of the crisis, such as human fatalities and the associated human security debacle. The Boko Haram connection to the saga has proved to be one of its most ominous trajectories. It is to this crucial issue that the study now turns.

Insurgency and a political economy of cattle rustling

There is a bourgeoning cattle rustling economy in Nigeria. This is evident in the existence of a flourishing underworld cattle 'enterprise' that thrives on the logic of criminal franchise, opportunism and impunity (Kwaja 2014; Okoli and Okpaleke 2014a; Olaniyan and Yahaya 2016). An essential structure of the underworld business is a booming black market for stolen and rustled cattle located in Borno State as well as other states. Affirming the existence of such markets, the Governor of Borno State, Kashim Shettima, once opined:

> Our security agencies have reasonably established that most of the cattle traded at the markets (in Bono 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 deliberately disguise the transaction as legitimate. The money realized from such transaction(s) would be then channelled to fund their deadly activities (Ogbeche 2016, cited in Olaniyan and Yahaya 2016: 98).

In a bid to mitigate the situation, the Borno State government pronounced in March 2016 a temporary ban on 'all trading activities at the Gamboru Cattle markets, Dusuman, Shuwari and Ngom' in an effort to 'ensure that no public place (in the state) is turned to an avenue for funding activities of the terrorists' (Channels Television 2016). The government also suspended the importation of cattle to Maiduguri for two weeks, in addition to restricting the permission for the sale and slaughter of cattle only to the Cattle Traders' Association and the Butchers' Association respectively (Obaji 2017, para. 37). Equally suspended was the sale of dry meat, which was yet another important 'article' of the cattle rustling business. A civil-military task force was set up 'to enforce stringent conditions in slaughtering including a close monitoring of activities of the cattle traders and butchers to stop all illegal business' (*ibid.*, para. 39).

Another crucial structure of the cattle rustling enterprise is the abusive exchange relations that involve the insurgents, their commissioned middlemen and the unsuspecting or opportunistic cattle traders and/or consumers. The insurgents ensure regular supplies of stolen/rustled cattle from the hinterlands to the various cattle markets through the aid of unscrupulous paid agents. For instance, 'for each cow that passes into Maiduguri, unscrupulous members of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) operating in Sector II (one of the group's 10 command units in Borno State capital) get paid 5,000 naira (about US$16.5) by agents working for Boko Haram' (Obaji 2017, para. 25).

The middlemen commissioned by Boko Haram ensure the sale of the cattle via an arcane transaction shrouded in duplicity. Hence, 'the middlemen sell so cheap and declare even less to Boko Haram who can't say anything because they have no direct access to the market ... they could sell a cow usually worth 200,000 naira (about US$650) for as little as 40,000 naira (about US $65), and declare just 20,000 (about US $33) to the militants' (personal communication cited in Obaji (2017), para. 19).

The criminal enterprise of dealing in rustled cattle is a flourishing concern. It is heavily patronised by both unsuspecting and opportunistic customers (cattle traders and butchers) who are driven by profiteering. As Obaji (*ibid.*) would suggest, the business is ludicrously profitable to the extent that the

average uncritical cattle trader would find it irresistible. So, while the agents, middlemen and traders enjoy brisk business and make fortunes out of the cattle rustling enterprise, insurgents ensures their material sustenance and functionality thereby. As rightly observed by Obaji (2017, para. 17):

> But the proceeds (from cattle rustling don't usually return to the militants in cash. Most part of the monies made by the agents is used to buy essential things such as food and fuel for the jihadists who've been suffering from a shortage of these commodities after supply routes were blocked by the Nigerian military.

The economy of cattle rustling in Nigeria has been promoted by the imperative of material survivalism (Okoli and Okpaleke 2014b). For the insurgents, it has been a veritable means of funding and material sustenance. For the criminal actors along its 'value-chain' (the agents, middlemen, opportunistic traders), it is a means of economic accumulation and material aggrandisement. The most abusive dimension of the criminal enterprise is the apparent involvement of state and para-state agents. This is exemplified in the alleged complicity of soldiers, policemen and some members of the civilian vigilante groups in the act (Obaji 2017).

The incidence of cattle rustling in northern Nigeria and its complications under the dispensation of the Boko Haram insurgency, to a large extent, reflect a fundamental logic, nay 'economics', of queer capitalist syndrome (Okoli and Okpaleke 2014b; Okoli 2014). This indicates a prevalence of an illicit business that incubates and hibernates on the reverse side of the law. While this business has had its desperate gainers, as indicated above, it has also produced vulnerable victims. The losers include the traditional and modern herders or ranchers who have been dispossessed of their cattle; the abductee-herdsmen who are often commandeered by the insurgents to drive rustled cattle in a dare-devil sojourn through the forested landscapes to the designated points of translocation and/or sale; as well as vulnerable rural community dwellers (farmers and herders alike) who are often killed or maimed in militarised village and market raids that often typify the cattle rustling onslaught.

Cattle rustling proceeds and the Boko Haram insurgency

How do cattle rustling proceeds fuel the Boko Haram insurgency? To properly attend to this analytically, it may be more apposite and rewarding to reformulate the question thus: what and how have cattle rustling proceeds contributed to the Boko Haram insurgency? To begin with, it is instructive to note that:

> Nigerian authorities have recorded an increase in cattle/livestock rustling activities mainly in the north and north-west regions of Nigeria that is directly

> connected to BH (Boko Haram). Most attacks occur in remote villages, close to forested regions in the north-west where there is little security presence. These activities are profitable for BH but also terrorise the local population and deprive them of their food and livelihoods (FATF-GIABA-GABAC 2016: 12).

Subscribing apparently to a perverse philosophy of 'existential materialism', Boko Haram insurgents have resorted to both 'retail' and' 'wholesale' cattle rustling and trading. The activity is carried out through a number of modalities, including:

1. creating its own markets to sell stolen cattle in Boko Haram-controlled territory;
2. scattering and selling the cattle in smaller numbers (maximum of five) at distant markets to avoid detection by the authorities;
3. selling the cattle in small local markets; and
4. hiding the cattle in neighbouring countries to be sold at a later stage (FATF-GIABA-GABAC 2016: 12).

The sources of the rustled cows were varied. Some were stolen from rangelands in the hinterlands of North-East and North-West Nigeria (Bagu and Smith 2016) while others were expropriated from cattle farms and ranches in northern Cameroon (Obaji 2016). In some instances, some of the rustled cattle were transported to Niger 'to be sold at a later stage' (FATF-GIABA-GABAC 2016: 12).

The material proceeds of Boko Haram's cattle rustling enterprise are threefold: money, milk, meat (the threesome M-M-M). The money is generated through direct and indirect sale of both mature and infant cattle through the outlets indicated above. The milk and meat are sourced from cattle that are harboured within the domains of Boko Haram's occupied territories. While the money is used to provide for the logistical and material needs of the insurgents, milk and meat constitute an essential component of the group's dietary requirements.

Boko Haram insurgents mostly made use of commissioned agents and middlemen to organise and effectuate the sale of rustled cattle (Mohammed 2016). There were cases whereby the insurgents had to resort to the direct exchange of cows for food stuffs or fuel in order to meet the exigencies of survival (personal communication 2017). It is difficult to quantify the volume of cash that the insurgents generate via the cattle rustling venture. It is even more difficult to track and scale the financial flows thereof in real material terms, in view of the obvious clandestine nature of the transactions. Nonetheless, available anecdotal and documented evidence suggest that the price of a rustled cow in the 'black market' ranges from 40,000 to 20,000

naira. To empirically illustrate the strategic utility of cattle rustling proceeds to the Boko Haram insurgency, a few examples suffice. Table 8 below is instructive in this regard.

Table 8: Boko Haram cattle rustling incidents alongside estimation of financial worth

Incident(s)	Estimated Worth
On a day in September 2014, 7,000 cows from Chad heading to Maiduguri (Nigeria) were confiscated by Boko Haram around Dikwa in Nigeria. On 14 January 2016, Boko Haram stole 4,244 cows from 25 Choa Arab owners in Hile, Fotokol and Makary in the vicinity of Cameroon. On 12 April 2016, Boko Haram stole 13,511 cows in the Kolofota sub-division of Cameroon.	Based on estimates of the minimum value of cattle (EUR500), the minimum value of the 24,755 cattle stolen by Boko Haram in these three instances was approximately EUR 12,377,500 or CFA8,107,262,500.
In July 2016, BH members rustled 20,000 cattle from villages (unidentified) in Maidiguri, Borno State. The cows were transported to a market in Jigawa State through the Republic of Niger in order to hide their origin and make them look like they came from a legitimate source.	The estimated value of each cow was approximately 150,000 naira or US$500. The total estimated value of this particular rustling was 3 billion naira or US$10 million.
In July 2016, Boko Haram rustled between 500 and 1,000 animals from one individual in Borno State. It is likely the rustled animals were sold at the market in Jigawa State and the meat processed immediately.	Estimates not available.
In an operation, the CJTF found 1,300 cow skins. The cows were stolen from the Lake Chad Basin, slaughtered and processed into dry meat and transported to a market in Yobe for sale in the southern part of the country	A sack of dry meat costs approximately 150,000 naira, which brought the total estimated value of the dry meat to 195,000,000 naira or US$650, 000.
In July 2016, Boko Haram rustled cows from Maiduguri, Borno State to a cattle market in Jigawa through Niger to avoid security checks. They loaded a trailer full of 25 to 50 cows daily.	Each cow was sold at a flat rate of 40,000 naira (obviously below the market value).

Source: FATF-GIABA-GABAC (2016: 12–13)

The content of Table 8 has very important implications. Firstly, given the recency of the information, it is apparent that cattle rustling currently constitutes the major source of Boko Haram funding. Secondly, Table

8 indicates that cattle rustling and the Boko Haram insurgency are, to a reasonable extent, mutually reinforcing. This is apparently in keeping with the 'conflict–crime nexus' hypothesis (Jesperson2017). Thirdly, there is some indication that a flourishing cattle rustling enterprise exists, with identifiable transit and market structures. The serial references to the rustling routes and markets in Borno and Jigawa States attest to this fact (Baguand Smith 2016; FATF-GIABA-GABAC 2016).

Most importantly, the recent degrading of Boko Haram's operational capabilities by government forces (Okoli 2017) has badly affected their funding status and prospects. To be precise, the dislodgement of the insurgents from their hitherto occupied territories and fortified forested fortresses has invariably meant that sourcing funds via territorial looting and extortion (forced taxes, protection/security levies) is no longer effective and/or feasible. This has, therefore, placed an immense premium on cattle rustling as a strategic option for survival and subsistence by the insurgents. To counter this trend, both Nigerian and Cameroonian authorities have closed down a number of cattle markets, such as those in Gamboru, Dusuman, Shuwari and Ngom (in Borno State Nigeria) as well as a prominent cattle market in the far north region of Mayon-Sava in Cameroon (Obaji 2017).

Some Strategic implications and the way forward

It is a platitude to state that insurgency costs money. In fact, money is indispensable to any insurgent movement. Without money, no insurgent organisation can function effectively, let alone sustain its operations. If the existence and functionality of insurgent organisations are dependent on funding, it follows, therefore, that any meaningful strategy of counter-insurgency must recognise and prioritise the need to prevent insurgents from acquiring funds to finance their operations (cf. Bloemkolk 2014).

Following Freeman's (2011) theoretical exposition, effective counter-insurgency is contingent on the capacity of states to negate the 'six conditional indices/criteria' of terrorism financing: quantity, legitimacy, security, reliability, control and simplicity. So, if insurgents 'want to acquire money in large quantities, legitimately, securely, reliably, simply, and in a way that they can control, then states must reduce the quantity of funds and make their acquisition illegitimate, dangerous, unreliable, distracting, and complicated' (*ibid.*: 472).

This underscores the need for better and smarter ways of attacking sources of insurgents' funding in order to degrade their operational capabilities. What then goes precisely for cattle rustling as a veritable source

of Boko Haram's funding? The solution rests with the ability of the Nigerian state to devise a pragmatic means of negating the prospects of cattle rustling as an avenue for insurgent funding. This would entail the need to adroitly identify and dismantle the enabling 'infrastructure' of cattle rustling in the country and its borderlines: the sources, syndicates, networks, markets and routes, as well as the exchange and transit structures. This, however, requires a hinterland and borderland policing strategy that privileges a synergy between the public security operatives and local (even nomadic) vigilantes on a sub-regional scale.

Conclusion

Cattle rustling has been an important dimension of rural banditry in northern Nigeria. Its saliency as organised crime has been bolstered over the years by Boko Haram insurgents who resort to it as a means of sustaining their operations. Financial proceeds from cattle rustling have been a major source of funding to the Boko Haram insurgency. They have been deployed by the insurgents in meeting their essential logistics and supplies.

By providing funding and material sustenance to Boko Haram, cattle rustling has posed a strategic challenge to the fight against insurgency in northern Nigeria. The implication of this is that any meaningful counter-insurgency endeavour in that respect must recognise the need to undermine the existing structures and avenues of terror financing. And in the case of cattle rustling, respite lays with the dislodgement of the sources, markets, syndicates, networks and routes, as well as the exchange and transit structures that benefit the criminal franchise. This is a veritable challenge to the Nigerian state and its national security apparatus in the face of cattle rustling-insurgency problematique.

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