

Land Resource War in Africa: Examining Herdsmen-Farmers Contestations and Nigeria's Economic Retardation, 2001-2019

David M. Igba, Ph.D¹, Thaddeus T. Ityonzughul, Ph.D², Asor Gbamwuan²

¹*Department of History, Benue State University, Makurdi, Nigeria.*

²*Department of History & Diplomatic Studies, Kola Daisi Univeersity, Ibadan, Nigeria.*

Abstract

This study dwells on land resource contestations between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria, and its implications on economic retardation. Using extant literature and oral historical sources with the eco-violence and structural conflict theories, and adducing supporting evidence from statistics, it affirms the nexus between herdsmen-farmers conflicts and economic retardation in Nigeria. The causes of these conflicts ranged from trespass on farmlands, cattle rustling, confiscation of grazing reserves, and encroachment on traditional livestock migratory routes, among others. The paper identifies the economic effects of the phenomena paying attention to the destruction of lives and property, reduction in output, and income of farmers, *et cetera*. The study also explains the efforts made at resolving these conflicts. However, it concludes that these ended in futility because these conflicts are witness almost on daily basis. It recommends ranching, among others as the best option in addressing this societal malady.

Keywords: Land, Herdsmen, Farmers, Water, Crops, and Economic Retardation.

Introduction

This paper examines the threat posed by farmers/herdsmen conflicts in Nigeria's National Economy. Conflict by its nature is a natural occurrence on the fact that disputes, claims, contestation over resources, values, and wealth are part and parcel of human interaction. In the views of Best (2007:117) conflict occurs when one party perceives the action of another party as blocking the opportunity for the attainment of a goal. The conflict between farmers and herders can only be explained in the context of the struggle over land resources as both depend on land as a source of livelihood. Because of its importance, the land has become a source of conflict especially in Africa and Nigeria in particular.

According to Okpaga (2002), the nexus between man and land is inseparable. This is because the land is to man as what water is to fish. It has an emotional mystical value beyond economic and human consideration and in particular, it represents social security and community or ethnic

identity. It is therefore natural that conflicts must arise as people compete to acquire and use the available land to achieve their economic goals.

Rural farmers and herdsmen are an important component of the Nigerian economy as they serve as a source of food and raw materials for both domestic and industrial use. The two have in the past co-existed without much problem, and even where they existed, they were amicably resolved. However, Farmers and Herdsmen have for some time now engaged one another in fierce warfare. Some described it as a Guerrilla war that is gradually threatening Nigeria's National Economy. More worrisome is the fact that the conflict or attacks are gradually spreading to the 36 states of Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory. The main cause of these conflicts is the issue of resource use, damage to crops, cattle rustling, farming along the valleys, and more importantly the *Fadama* areas, and above all, the inability of the government to regulate activities of farmers and herdsmen. The recent Farmers/Herdsmen conflict is however complicated as it is now difficult to separate the real herdsmen from the invaders. The problem is further compounded by political, ethnic, and religious factors (Akpa and Fada, 2019).

The Nigerian state as at present has proven that it could not effectively handle the Farmers/Herdsmen conflict that is affecting the national economy. To some schools of thought, government officials who should have acted in this regard are cattle owners. It will therefore be to their disadvantage if stringent measures are taken to nip the problem in the bud. To others, the porous borders of the country have made it possible for immigrants (Fulani from Cameroon, Mali, and Niger, among others) to enter the country without being stopped by the authorities. Those who supported this view argued that it is these foreign Fulani's that are causing havoc with dangerous weapons. To them, an average Fulani man was known for carrying his stick and perhaps his sword as his major weapons as a means of controlling the cattle and protecting them against wild animals. Others view the current farmers/herder conflict as an attempt by the Jihadists to turn the whole of Nigeria into an Islamic state as they linked the activities of the Herdsmen to *Boko Haram* and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) (Akpa and Fada, 2019).

Whatever way one may perceive this conflict, the Nigerian State has to provide security for its people. The failure of the government to provide security for its citizens has therefore prompted Nigerians to resort to self-help, thereby making Nigeria become the survival of the fittest. The conflict between herdsmen and farmers if not properly managed is capable of returning Nigeria to the ancient state of nature where might was right. It is on this premise that this paper interrogates the aforementioned conflicts as a challenge to Nigeria's economy. To achieve this aim, the paper considers some critical questions: what is conflict? What are the causes, nature, and character of farmer-herder conflicts in Nigeria? What are the implications of these conflicts on the nation's economic development? To what extent has the Nigerian government been able to effectively manage these conflicts? What appropriate measures/strategies would help in stemming the tide for enhancing a better economy? These are the major concerns of this paper.

To effectively address these teething problems, the paper comes in seven overlapping parts. The first part provides the parameters for discussion, while the second part deals with conceptual and theoretical issues. The next part examines the causes of herdsman and farmers' conflicts in Nigeria. The fourth part deals with the economic effects of the conflicts on the Nigerian state. The fifth part analyses the various efforts at resolving the conflicts under review. The sixth part advances some policy options for the resolution of farmer-herder conflicts in Nigeria. The last part provides the concluding thoughts.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

According to Francis, (2009) conflict is the pursuit of incompatible interests and goals by different groups. Armed conflict is the result of the use of force and armed violence in the pursuit of incompatible and particular interests and goals. The worst form of armed conflict includes mass murder and genocide against unarmed civilians (Francis, 2009). Commenting on the concept of conflict Button, cited in Bakut (2009) has this to say, “conflict as a term, and is usually for the range of arguments, tensions and violent conflicts that occur both within and between states”. It is, therefore, defined as the pursuit of incompatible goals or interests by different groups or individuals.

Conflict is also defined as a social problem in which two or more persons, families, districts, communities, states, or nations are at war with each other. Other words used for conflict are disagreement characterised by quarrel, fighting, severe anger, aggression, violence, and bloodshed. Conflicts lead to tensions, threats, fears, anxieties, and uncertainties (Dzurgba, 2010:1). In a fight against one another, military men or soldiers shoot, cut, hack or club one another to death. The death toll rises as casualties also increase. Combatants use arrows, knives, cutlasses, guns missiles, bombs, chemicals, and nuclear arms, depending on whether or not the war is a local war or an international war (Dzurgba, 2010:1). In the contemporary world, human anger and cruelty are extremely bad to the extent that military men use sophisticated and dangerous weapons to fight even in district wars. In this context, conflict destroys life and property without limit. Farmer-Herder conflicts on the other hand are conflicts occurring between peasant farmers or subsistence cultivators and nomadic or transhumant livestock keepers.

The study adopts two theories for elaborate analysis and discussion, they are eco-violence and structural conflict theories. Proponents of the eco-violence theory include: Homer-Dixon and Blitt cited in Gleditsch, and Urdal (2002). They contend that a large population in many developing countries is highly dependent on four key environmental resources, namely: freshwater, cropland, forests, and fish. Lack of these resources often triggers off conflicts. On this note, Homer-Dixon (1998) argues that:

The decrease in the quality and quantity of renewable resources, population growth, and unequal resource access act singly or in various combinations to increase the scarcity, for certain population groups, of cropland, water, forests, and fish. This can reduce economic productivity, both for the local groups experiencing the scarcity and for the larger regional and national

economies. The affected people may migrate or be expelled to new lands. Migrating groups often trigger ethnic conflicts when they move to new areas, while decreases in wealth can cause deprivation conflicts.

From the above, it can be seen that resource scarcity is the product of an insufficient supply, too much demand, or unequal distribution of a resource as a result of environmental hazards which forces some sectors of a society into a condition of deprivation and violence. These four sources of scarcity are in turn caused by variables such as population growth, economic development, pollution, and climate change. The eco-violence theory demonstrates that the desiccation of the Northern part of Nigeria has pushed herders to move into the Benue Valley Area. As earlier observed, this area is a fertile ground for water, agricultural production, and cattle rearing resulting in a competition between farmers and herders. Eco-violence theory is based on the assumption that competition over scarce ecological resources engenders violent conflicts.

The structural conflict theory on the other hand has two variants. The first is liberal structuralism represented by scholars like; Webber (1969: 26-27), Rose (1993:12), Scarborough cited in Davies & Gurr (1998), and Galtung (1990), *et cetera*. They see conflicts as an inescapable feature of society just like cooperation. To them, conflict is rather inherent in the social structures, sometimes even functional to the survival of society. Webber (1969: 28) opines that: ‘... Conflict cannot be excluded from social life ... peace is nothing more than a change in the form of conflict or the antagonists or the objects of conflict or finally in the chances of selection’. Collier (2003:2) submits that conflict is incompatible interest based on competition for resources which in most cases are assumed to be scarce.

The second variant of this theory anchors on radical structural functionalism and has been represented by the Marxist dialectical school with exponents like Marx (1957), Engels (1950), and Lenin (1939), among others. The Marxist Dialectical Materialism postulates that man’s consciousness of himself in society is determined by his material condition. The material condition here refers to what he can allude to as his in society. Therefore, this theory opines that material resources are limited and man’s aspiration to ‘possess’ them usually results in conflict with other men seeking the same thing (materialism), and this is where the Marxist rightly locate conflicts in any given human society. To Marxist philosophy, conflict is a driving force of history, being at the root of all major changes in law, institutions, morality, and religion. Society can only move forward through the peaceful resolution of such a struggle.

Our summation from the contending issues is that conflict has the utilitarian value of moving society forward through conflict resolution mechanisms that are put in place. When this is not properly done, its occurrence is inevitable, while members of society constantly suffer from its excruciating effects.

Causes of Herdsmen-Farmers conflicts in Nigeria Conflicts

The causes of conflicts are also known as sources of conflicts. These sources are multifarious or myriad. Igbaheh (2016:84-88) isolates some of the courses to include: Trespass on farmlands,

deliberate destruction of farm products, deliberate contamination of drinking water, sexual assault and other criminal acts by cattle nomads, reaction and reprisal by native farmers, and the pursuit of a hidden agenda, among others. Similarly, an informant who is also an indigene of Taraba State, Sunday Nyam (2010) explains that the cattle nomads are fond of deliberately taking their cattle to graze on farmland without minding whether crops are planted or not. Their actions are usually associated with two basic negative effects on the side of farmers. Firstly, the cattle usually consumed cultivated crops. Secondly, the cattle hooves compact or harden the soil making tiling difficult since the farmers operate under strenuous conditions with crude implements like hoes and cutlasses.

Another victim of herdersmen-farmers conflicts, who is also an oral informant, Samuel Ako (2014) argues that the nomads love their cattle as themselves to the extent that they deliberately allow their animals to feed on-farm products kept in the farm. They open yam and grain barns and feed their cattle with; whenever farmers complain in most cases, it results in violent conflicts. Confiscation of grazing reserves is another source of farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria. In analysing this teething problem the *National Mirror Newspaper*, August 06, (2015) pontificates:

Until the mid-1990s there were close to 500 grazing reserves in the country, but the big men both civilian, military, and police have taken over the lands for their commercial agriculture. Even though it is government property they have shared it among themselves. Today a poor Fulani herder who needs to survive and also needs to feed his cattle has nothing to do other than fighting his brother who is a farmer and also needs a means of survival.

To corroborate the above, the former Surveyor-General of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, professor Peter Nwile discloses that the grazing reserves in the country vanished because of undue encroachment and lack of maintenance (*National Mirror Newspaper*, August, 06:2015). Nwile stressed that there were over 400 grazing corridors in the country in the past, but that they had all been filtered away for development purpose (SIC). Out of 400 grazing reserves, only 40 were gazetted. He Nwile notes that it was wise to create grazing routes, but when cities grow, they share the grazing routes thinking they were not important (*National Mirror Newspaper*, August 06, 2015).

Besides, a nomadic cattle herder, Sani Zagga noted in a conversation that traditional rulers and are also the drivers of farmers and herdsman conflicts. Most traditional rulers are in the habit of collecting huge sums of money and granting permission to herders to graze at will. Once herders pay these sums of money, they automatically assume ownership of the land without minding other users (Oral interview with Zagga, 2020).

Also, the increasing incidence of cattle theft in Nigeria is another source of conflict. Owing to the high level of narcotics, alcoholic, and other illicit drugs, the farmers and herders youths often carry out nefarious activities ranging from cattle rustling, rape, and killings. All these often

trigger the conflict between farmers and herdsmen (Oral interview with Mohammed, 2020). The table below gave an example of cattle rustled in Nigeria.

Table 1. Estimated No. of Rustled Cattle and Associated Deaths in 2013

State	Herdsmen Killed	No. of Cattle Rustled
Plateau	87	7,200
Nasarawa	125	12,000
Benue	17	2,000
Zamfara	37	2,462
Niger	15	500
Gombe	NA	99
Yobe	NA	92
Bauchi	NA	204
Kwara	NA	204

Source: *Sunday Trust*, June 1, 2014

The facts and figures of incidents of cattle rustling for 2013 alone are quite instructive, as reflected in Table 1. More recent figures of rustled cattle and the number of herdsmen killed across the country show the humanitarian crisis associated with cattle rustling as an expression of rural banditry, including incidents in the North Central states of Benue, Nasarawa, Plateau, Kwara, and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja. According to Dr. Garus Gololo, secretary of the Benue State branch of the *Myetti Allah* Cattle Rearers Association of Nigeria (MACBN), these include 28,000 cows rustled in Plateau; 25,000 in Nasarawa; 8,680 in Benue; 1,650 in Kwara; and 1,500 in the FCT. The human casualties include 2,500 herdsmen in Benue; 264 in Plateau; 150 in Kwara; 70 in Nasarawa; and 7 in the FCT (*Weekly Trust*, May 16, 2015). Reports further indicate that criminal cattle rustlers have drifted southward to the North-Central states, having been dislodged from the northern states of Zamfara, Sokoto, and Kaduna (*Weekly Trust*, May 16, 2015). Although the identities of cattle rustlers' victims were not revealed in the investigations, it is believed that most of the victims were not revealed in the investigations, it is believed that most of the victims are nomadic herdsmen. However, there is a need to recognize that to some extent cattle rustling intersects with other forms of rural banditry, which appear to have acquired a dynamic of their own when situated within the wider context of the challenges of human security, climate change, and the declining capacity of the state to perform its routine governance tasks.

Apart from the above causes of the pastoralists and farmers' conflict Idyorough (2017) identifies the following factors as being responsible for the conflict in question:

- i. There is desert encroachment in Central Nigeria that makes open grazing difficult during the dry season from November to May.
- ii. There are environmental pollution and degradation in Central Nigeria caused by overgrazing.

- iii. There is global warming and it affects rainfall and resulting in high temperatures in Central Nigeria.
- iv. There is poor maintenance culture in the provision of social services (such as water, health clinics, and schools) on the grazing reserves that were established in the past under the Grazing Reserves Act of 1965.
- v. There are cattle rustling by thieves and armed bandits on open grazing sites.
- vi. Herdsmen's culture belief that when their cattle are introduced into crops and they consume them, they become more fertile.
- vii. Ethnocentric behavior of the nomads to retain nomadic culture even though it is an obsolete or archaic way of raising animals.
- viii. Herdsmen's constant introduction of their herds into crop farms to destroy crops thereby instigating crisis.

Economic Effects of Farmer-Herder's Conflicts on the Nigerian State

The effects of the herdersmen-farmers conflicts in Nigeria are legion. These conflicts affected both farmers and nomads in diverse ways. First and foremost is the loss of lives; a lot of killings by the nomads and reprisal killing of nomads by the host communities who are usually farmers takes place during these conflicts. Herds of cattle belonging to the nomads are also killed while crops are equally destroyed thereby retarding the development of the economy. This has reduced some women farmers to the status of widows, men into widowers thereby creating terror to the farmers to continue with their farming activities.

Secondly, there is a radical reduction in output and income of farmers as a result of the destruction of crops by cattle and indiscriminate bush burning. Many farmers lost a substantial part of their yields. This drastically reduced yielding which in turn led to low income on part of farmers who take farming as their core occupation thereby retarding the development of the economy. This negatively affects their savings, credit repayment ability, as well the food security and economic welfare of urban dwellers that depend on these farmers for food supply. This seriously discourages farmers and rural agricultural development (Ofuoku and Isafe, 2009). Similarly, Akpa & Fada (2019:135) disclose that:

Both farmers and herders are central to the Nigerian economy and their continued clashes are detrimental to food security which is a major component of national security. These clashes as noted have instilled fear in both farmers and herders thereby making it difficult for them to attend to their farms.

Furthermore, a vivid analysis of the effects of the farmers-herders conflict cannot be attained without stating that the crisis has deprived people of their basic rights such as the right to food, clothing, shelter, medical service, and security. Psychologically, the conflicts have created fear among the native farmers to the extent that they are afraid to go to the farm in the affected areas (Igbahenah, 2016:90-91). On the side of nomadic cattle herders, they have gained additional lands for grazing but they also live in fear and carry large arms to scare the people in case of any

eventuality (Igbahenah, 2016:90-91). Besides, there is erosion (land degradation) in Nigeria as a result of zero grazings. The exposures of the soil make it susceptible to erosion which is worsened by the rain. This is accelerated by the topographic nature of some areas, which are hilly. Erosion causes loss of soil materials and difficulty of cultivation (Ofuoku and Isafe, 2009).

Besides, the conflicts under review have affected farmers, herders, citizens, and the government respectively. Take for instance; most farmers in the affected communities could not go to the farmer because they were displaced while others for fear of being attacked. Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin (2018) observed that over 620,000 people were displaced in Nigeria’s Middle Belt states where the conflicts were more heated. This had a negative impact on food security and revenue generation as rightly noted by Mercy Corps (2015) cited in International Crisis Group (2017), thus: ‘the Federal Government of Nigeria was losing about \$13.7 billion revenue annually due to herdsman and farmers conflicts in Benue, Kaduna, Nasarawa and Plateau States with the four states losing nearly 47% of their annual internally generated revenues’. When food is in short supply, it provides fodder for inflationary pressures, which in turn heightens tension in the country, and in most cases can lead to political instability and, in extreme cases, an abrupt change of government. The conflicts also heighten cattle rustling as a retaliatory mechanism which in the final analysis resulted in reprisal attacks and senseless killings by the Fulani herdsman.

Table 2. Fulani Herdsmen/Farmers Clashes in Nigeria (2014-2019).

S/ N	Date	State	Nature and place of incident	Number of death	Other effects
1.	05-03-2014	Plateau	People of Riyom LGA were attacked by herdsman	10 people	More than 100 houses burnt
2.	09-03-2014	Kaduna	57 gunmen, suspected to be Fulani herdsman attacked the community of Angwan Sakwai in Kaura LGA	57 people killed	Houses were burnt and properties destroyed
3.	19-04-2014	Delta	Residents of 25 LGA in Delta State grounded activities on the Benin-Asaba Expressway, protesting over attack and killings of nomadic herdsman	23 killed from the attack	N/A
4.	November 2014	Nassarawa	Herders attack villages	33	N/A
5.	2014	Benue	N/A	1229	N/A
6.	07-04-2015	Benue	Fulani herdsman attack community in Benue State, injured many, sacked three (3) COMMUNITIES	28	N/A

7.	27-04-2015	Benue	Suspected Fulani herdsmen attacked Benue Community, Adeke, Mbadiwan; in Gurua District of the Local government and injured many.	21	N/A
8.	19-06-2015	Rivers	Herdsmen attacked and killed farmers which resulted in the pandemonium in Port Harcourt	10 farmers killed	N/A
9.	October 2015	Kogi	Herders attacked Agojeju-Idkain Dekina LGA	23	Properties destroyed and houses burnt
10.	12 to 13-12-2015	Kaduna	Zaria Massacre	700-100 were killed	N/A
11.	13-12-2015	Plateau	Fulani herdsmen attacked Kwata Community in Southern Jos	22	N/A
12.	24-01-2016	Benue	Fulani herdsmen ambushed police officers including Division Police Officer as revenge over the feud between the local farmers and herdsmen.	31	N/A
13.	08-02-2016	Benue	Fulani herdsmen attacked Benue Villages at Tom-Anyiin and Tom Ataan Communities of Mbaya, Tombu in Buruku LGA	10	Over 300 people have been displayed
14.	18-02-2016	Benue	Herdsmen attack Okokolo village in Agatu LGA of Benue State	5	Properties destroyed
15.	14-03-2016	Benue	Many fired and killed as Fulani herdsmen invaded Agatu. The attacks lasted for days according to the Vanguard Newspaper.	300	Burnt houses, many slaughtered and many displaced
16.	31-03-2016	Benue	Herdsmen attacked Agasha Community in Guma LGA	7	N/A
17.	10-04-2016	Benue	Fulani herdsmen attacked Dori and Maisuma villages	1	N/A
18.	21-04-2016	Benue	Ten communities were razed while many killed by herdsmen in Agatu,	About 500	N/A

			Benue State		
19.	24-04-2016	Benue	Fulani herdsmen killed many in Benue State	35	Many displaced
20.	24-04-2016	Plateau	Kwata, Zawanara of Jos South fewer kilometres from NIPPS at about 8:30 pm Sunday in Plateau was attacked killed mainly women and children.	14	Burnt houses
21.	25-04-2016	Enugu	Ukpabi Nimbo attack of imported mercenary by Fulani herdsmen	40 above	Survivors fled to nearby communities
22.	07-05-2016	Kogi	Gunmen attacked Fulani camp at Enjema Community in Ankpa LGA of Kogi State.	41 cows killed	300 cows missing
23.	03-08-2016	Kaduna	Armed Fulani herdsmen attacked in Jama's LGA of Kaduna State	5	N/A
24.	04-09-2016	Adamawa	Attack by Fulani herdsmen raiding Demsare, Wunamokoh, Dikajam, and Taboungo villages	30 killed and a DPO	Several houses and other properties burnt
25.	13-10-2016	Kaduna	Attack by suspected Fulani herdsmen along Kagoro Gidan Waya road in Kaura LGA	2 police officers were ambushed and killed	2 police officers injured
26.	15 to 16-10-2016	Kaduna	Gunmen, suspected to be Fulani herdsmen attacked Godogodo area of southern Kaduna in Jama'ah LGA	20 killed	Several injured
27.	14-11-2016	Abia	Suspected Fulani herdsmen attacked farmers harvesting rice on their farm in Abam community of Arochukwu LGA	Several killed	Others injured
28.	17-11-2016	Niger	Fulani herdsmen attacked the Kukaki community of Shiroro LGA	6	50 injured, 700 cows, goats, and sheep carted away.

29.	2016	Kaduna	Herdsmen attacked 53 villages	808	57 injured and 1422 houses, 16 churches, 19 shops, and 1 primary school destroyed. 6000 cows lost.
30.	26-03-2017	Rivers	Herdsmen attack in Abraka	A lecturer and 16 villagers killed	N/A
31.	12-04-2017	Taraba	Two villages in Gashaka LGAs of Taraba State	15	N/A
32.	19-04-2017	Edo	25 local governments blocked Benin-Asaba Highway in protest of the killing of 23 persons by Fulani herdsmen	23	N/A
33.	21-04-2017	Oyo	Herdsmen attacked Lagun village in Iyana Offa, Atagba, Lapata, and surroundings in Lagelu LGA of Oyo State.	A night guard killed	Villages ransacked at night and valuables carted away.
34.	2017	Benue	Herdsmen attack in Zaki Biam	N/A	2000 displayed and 100 injured
35.	2017	Kaduna	Herdsmen attack	204	N/A
36.	28-04-2018	Taraba	Attack by herdsmen on some villages in Wukari	N/A	N/A
37.	16-06-2018	Delta	Fulani herdsmen attacked Ossisa community in Ndokwa East LGA of Delta State	A 45-year-old farmer shot dead	N/A
38.	20-06-2018	Benue	Fulani herdsmen attacked Ugondo, Turan, and Gabo-Nenzev in Logo LGA of Benue State	59 persons killed	N/A

39.	2018	Kogi	Attack in Dekina & Omala LGAs	35	Properties destroyed & houses burnt.
40.	04-02-2019	Zamfara	Herder's attack 7 villages for revenge of 7 cows	26	N/A
41.	11-02-2019	Kaduna	Attack on Adara settlement-ungwar Bardi	152	65 missing
42.	20-02-2019	Benue	Fulani herdsmen	17	N/A
43.	26-02-2019	Kaduna	Fulani herdsmen attack	40	N/A
44.	10-03-2019	Kaduna	Attack by suspected Fulani herdsmen	About 35 killed	N/A
45.	11-03-2019	Kaduna	Fulani herdsmen attack for revenge for cow	About 52 killed	N/A
46.	16-03-2019	Kaduna	Fulani herdsmen revenge attack	10 killed	N/A
			TOTAL	About 3,126,001	

Source: Author compilation from *Daily Trust*, April 15, 19,24, May 31, January 24, *Punch*, April 21, *Sunday Trust*, December 13, *vanguard*, February 8, Today online media April 24, *Sahara Reporters* January 24, the *Guardian*, May 3, *Daily Trust* May 7, *Vanguard*, May 8.

Table 2 graphically presented the random statistics of casualties in the affected areas. The table shows the locations and nature of attacks and the aftermath. It can be seen that many civilians (women and children) were killed during farmer-herder conflicts, Nigeria Police Force personnel killed, and numbers of cattle killed in the act of conflicts in the affected areas. Aside from the death tolls, properties worth millions of naira were destroyed. This is as a result of houses, shops, markets burnt in the act of violence by the herdsmen while many civilians in the farming communities have been displaced. This situation suggests that the affected areas are under siege and if care is not taken, it could result in food scarcity due to the economic and social backwardness of the attacked areas.

Efforts at Resolving the Conflicts

The attempts at curbing the farmers-nomadic cattle herders conflicts in Nigeria have been made at different periods by different categories of people. Here, the chapter considers the role of the Federal Government (FGN), government agencies, and local militias in surmounting the conflicts under study. The first step taken by the Federal Government to do away with this problem was the creation of ranches. The rationale for the creation of ranches in the country was to stop the wider and free movement of herders with cattle. But unfortunately, because of personal interest and corruption, almost all the cattle ranches have been taken by selfish individuals leaving the

whole country in a total mess (Oral Interview with Tsonov, 2016). It is praiseworthy to note that the FGN demonstrated a penchant attitude towards her policy of completing ranches. With the above matter, Nwilo disclosed that out of the 400 ranches created in the country only 40 of them were grazing (*National Mirror Newspaper*, August (2005).

Also, the FGN under the leadership of President Muhammadu Buhari (a Fulani man) has responded to the public outcry and ordered security forces to crack down on the cattle raiders (Mikailu, *BBC News*, 15th May 2016). Associated with the above, another source explains that President Muhammadu Buhari on Wednesday, April 27, 2015, ordered the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), Major General Abayomi Olonishakan, and the Inspector General of Police (IGP), Solomon Arase to go after the herdsmen who are killing in several parts of the country. The president also assured of his administration's readiness to deploy all required resources to remove this new threat to the collective security of the Nation (*Daily Trust Newspaper*, April 28, 2016:3).

Since there are speculations that the herdsmen ravaging the Nigerian communities are foreign invaders, the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) is working assiduously to ascertain whether such claim is true and if possible proffer a solution to it. However, the spokesman of the NIS, Ekedeme King, was captured (in the *National Newspaper*, May, 29 2016:2) postulating that:

There is no evidence that the herdsmen are foreigners, and the NIS doesn't profile immigrants based on their ethnicity, so the NIS cannot say whether the herdsmen are Nigerians or not because nobody has produced them for us to profile them. We are at the borders and we have not seen any herdsman coming into the country. We have our men at the borders and they are doing their job. What we have so far is speculation; it is not possible that they could be foreigners.

The idea here is not just a debate on whether the violent nomads are outsiders or insiders but to assess the contribution of the NIS towards curbing the farmers-herders conflicts in Nigeria. It is also revealed that in the week preceding May 29, 2016, the police arrested five herdsmen alleged to have masterminded the attack on Ukpabi Nimbe community in Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area of Enugu State. According to the police, the suspects had a video of the attack (*The National Newspaper*, May 29, 2016:2). Similarly, in many states, the mobile police are usually deployed for peacekeeping in the affected communities.

In the face of the incessant security challenges in the country, natives of different communities resulted in forming militia and vigilante groups. It is glaring that during the conflict between farmers and herders these groups do come out to fight for the interest of the people. In many cases, they defeat the herders since they are more conversant with the terrain of their communities than the nomadic cattle herders (Oral Interview with Piev, 2016). Despite the above-chronicled efforts, it should be recognized and acknowledge that efforts at stopping farmers-herders conflicts area are yet to yield the desired results and as such this call for policy suggestions.

Some Policy Options for the Resolution of Farmer-Herder Conflicts for a Better Nigerian Economy

To do away with the farmers-nomadic cattle herders' conflicts in Nigeria, certain measures must be put in place. Firstly, there is a need for the FGN and the affected state governments to institute some necessary actions towards tackling the incessant problem of acute water shortage and drought, which are the key issues that drive the herdsman out from their immediate environment to seek fresh pasture and clear water elsewhere.

Secondly, the FGN should implement the United Nations and African Union-backed Great Green Wall Programme, which brings together 11 countries to plant trees across Africa, to lessen the effects of desertification and improve the ecosystem integrity in the dry northern parts of the country stretching from Zamfara and Kebbi State in North-West, along the northern border of Nigeria to the extreme eastern border of Borno States and involving 8 states in all. If this is done, it will go a very long way in reducing the insecurity involving pastoral herdsman in the region (Okpaleke, 2016).

Thirdly, the FGN should enact relevant legislation to enable the grant of pastoral lease in some designated areas, taking into consideration, native or indigenous land rights, as the case may be. A pastoral lease is an arrangement whereby a lease is granted to livestock owners overstate or government-owned land for grazing or other pastoral use (Opkaleke, 2016). Widely used in some countries like Australia and New Zealand, this lease concept should perhaps be studied, with a view to, if possible, adapting same in Nigeria, that is if found to be relevant and suitable. This will at least drastically reduce farmers-herders' conflicts.

Importantly and much more fundamentally, the FGN should encourage herders to establish ranches and make sure that they are effective. If this is done it will prevent cattle and herders from moving out freely and generating violent conflicts in the process. Nigerians should take a cue from other countries whose have huge cattle such as Spain, Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Uganda, and Israel, among others but who have strictly adopted the practice of building and situating their cattle in well-irrigated ranches, thereby stopping or reducing to the barest minimum the problem of pastoral conflicts. The Minister of Agriculture, Dr. Audu Ogbe also subscribes to the idea of ranching. According to him:

The Fulani cow yield 1 little of milk a day, the ones in Uganda and Israel that are ranched produce 15 and 40 litres a day, respectively. Countries in Europe, America, and Asia have long discarded the system of open grazing of cattle and they are reaping the socio-economic benefits. It is against the law in many of these countries to herd livestock in the open as is the practice in Nigeria (*The Union Newspaper*, September 1, 2015:21).

The quotation depicts that migratory herding has been archaic and unproductive and should be discouraged. In addition to the above policy options, raids, shootings, killings and abductions or violence of any kind should be outlawed and strict penalties and sanctions should be imposed by

status for any infringement. Regulation of the business would modernise the business, enhance its growth as an export business, which can on its own generate revenue for both the owners and the government through the cattle and cattle products which include beef, hides, and hooves, to mention just a few productions.

Policy suggestions for the resolution of the farmers-herders conflict in the country cannot be smoothly examined without stating that there should also be a programme for the production of cattle feed by farmers and industrialists. This will help build a symbiotic relationship between cattle ranches and farming communities. Apart from modernising and boosting livestock production for local consumption and export, the problem would help to put an end to the needless massacre and destruction of properties, particular farmlands, which have been the fallout of the migratory, herding system practiced in the country (*The Union Newspaper*, September 1, 2015).

Furthermore, the Fulani Cattle Breeders Association (Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association (MACBAN) should stop misleading their follow cattle breeders by using the 1999 Constitution to justify their alleged right to graze on farms in order states of Nigeria. According to them, because freedom of movement is their Constitutional right, no one can stop us from grazing in the south (*The Nation Newspaper*, May, 18, 2016:18). Explaining their take on this issue, Nuru Abdullahi, the chairman of MACBAN, Plateau State insists that:

Nobody can deprive Fulani herdsmen of their constitutional right of free movement because... the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria guarantees freedom of movement for every citizen of the country: this includes the right to live, work and carry out any legitimate activity in any part of the country (*The Nation Newspaper*, May, 18, 2016:18).

Conservative notions such as these are likely to create acrimonious relationships rather than peaceful co-existence. In this wise, we recommend that the interpretation of the constitution should be done by the law experts for peace and harmony.

Traditional rulers and other community leaders should stop breaching their contractual agreement on sales of land with the herders. Those who don not want to sell their land to the herders should not pretend. If this is done, it will resolve to a great extent the farmers-herders conflict in the study area. To resolve the farmers-nomadic cattle herders' conflicts, modern and indigenous conflict management techniques should be adopted. Here, all the identified stakeholders should be brought together under a common forum and included in the decision making and allowed to participate actively in the planning process that involves all stakeholders (herdsmen, crop growers, and government) in the dispute resolution mechanism, this will help to promote consensus instead of conflict (Bleneh, 2010).

Also, another approach necessary for the resolution of the lingering conflicts between farmers-herders in Nigeria is that nomadic education should be intensified to properly position nomadic cattle herders to see the need for peaceful co-existence with their host communities. The host

communities should stop emphasizing that herders are visitors to their communities but they should rather have a priority of finding ways to accommodate them without conflict.

Lastly, all the states government should enact a law to prohibit open rearing and grazing of livestock and provide for the establishment of ranches and livestock administration, regulation and control, and other matters connected with it. This has been already started by states like Benue, Kwara, and Taraba State. The purpose of this law is to ensure peace between farmers and pastoralists since both crops and cattle cannot coexist on the same piece of farmland. If the above recommendation to policy makers and other relevant stakeholders are considered and implemented, may help mitigate and manage this challenging phenomenon for the peace and economic development of Nigerian.

Conclusion

The preceding analysis has demonstrated that the contestations between herdsmen and farmers over scarce landed resources are basically to enable them to survive. These conflicts are triggered as a result of encroachment of grazing routes, contaminations of water, cattle rustling, and breaching of contract /agreement between traditional rulers of the host communities with the herders, among others. The paper argued that herdsmen-farmers conflicts have caused a barrage of problems to both groups. It has led to the destruction of lives and property, displacement of farmers leading to low productivity and output thereby retarding the development of the Nigeria's economy. The study alluded that the Nigerian government has intervened to settle the matter but at the time of this study her effort did not yield the desired result since these conflicts remain protracted. The paper explained that despite the intermittent conflicts between the settled farmers and the herders, they still have a lot of things in common. This is because they need each other for their survival since none of them can wholly supply their needs. The paper also examined the effects of these conflicts on the Nigerian economy and society. The study contended that so far, all efforts made at resolving these conflicts have ended in futility because the farmers-herders' attacks are witness almost on the daily basis in the country. In the final analysis, the study made some recommendations aimed at resolving the long ravaging conflicts between these groups. Fundamentally, the paper specifically advocates the need for herders to engage in ranching as the best option in addressing this problem. This is because it is out of place in the 21st century for herders to move about with cattle. Apart from the environmental hazards accompanied by grazing, it is believed that ranched cattle produce more milk and beef and are not prone to diseases.

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