

**AGGRANDISEHMENT POSTURES OF FARMERS AND HERDERS: CHALLENGES AND EFFECTS OF CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA\***

**Abstract**

*Limited resources, climate change and land scarcity have fueled conflicts between Fulani and farmer in Nigeria. Clashes between the two parties have led to killing of thousands of people, destruction of properties worth millions of naira and rendered large number of people homeless. Federal Government, through legislations and policies has not been able to mediate the conflicts between the factions. Instead, some officials are taking sides in the conflicts for political reason. These two parties have been living together in peace and when misunderstanding emerges, they had traditional mechanisms of finding solution to it. In recent years, the population increased, resulting in land scarcity and climate change caused water resources to diminish. This paper examines challenges faced by pastoralists to sustain their lots, responds of cultivators to prevent their produce, causes and effects of the conflicts and government policies to contain the conflicts. The paper relies on published and unpublished primary and secondary sources like Nigeria Constitution, textbooks, journals, theses and internet facilities. The paper reveals that government has taken some measures to curb the increasing conflicts between the warring parties but due to aggrandisement postures of the parties and politicisation of the conflicts, the government attempt failed. The paper recommends the government to deploy a Joint Task Force comprising military, police, paramilitary and civil institutions to all the affected states as an immediate response to the conflict; the Federal government to revisit the 1965 Northern Region Grazing Reserve System and to have political will to punish the identified culprits*

**Keywords:** Pastoralists, Conflicts, Banditries, Cattle Rustling, Land Tenure system

**1.1 INTRODUCTION**

Nigeria returned to democratic governance in 1999 and since then, it has been struggling with one security challenge or the others. Major among them are Boko haram insurgency in the north east, Niger delta crisis, election violence, banditries, kidnapping and abduction, raping and in the recent time, Fulani and farmer conflicts. The north central states of Benue, Kogi, Plateau, Taraba and Nasarawa and other states have experienced conflicts that led to thousands of deaths and displacements as a result of clashes between herders and local cultivators in several communities.

Competitions on grazing land and scarce resources have been resulted in growing violent conflicts in terms of magnitude, intensity, frequency and territorial spread. Major causes of the escalation in frequency of conflicts in Nigeria is a confluence of environmental and demographic forces, especially desertification caused by climate change and population explosion. Expectedly, with the depletion of arable land for subsistence farming largely as a result of increasing urbanisation and the adverse effect of climate change, especially along the Lake Chad basin, there is increased struggle between herdsmen and farmers, leading to violent confrontations and conflicts, deaths, forced displacement, destruction of

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agriculture and livestock.<sup>1</sup> The Nigerian Government has adopted some policies to stem the conflicts between these two contending parties on their sources of livelihood, that is, cattle and farm produce. These rivalries have negative effects on both parties, innocent members of the public, economic, social, politics and national growth and development of the nation. This paper therefore examines the activities of pastoralists which often led to destruction of farmers' lots, challenges faced by herders to sustain their cattle, causes and effects of the conflicts and institutional policies to curb the incessant conflicts between farmers and herders.

## 1.2 CHALLENGES FACED BY PASTORALISTS IN NIGERIA

Transhumant pastoralism is currently facing a number of challenges. Some of these challenges are examined as follows:

**Pressure on Pastoralist Resources:** Pastoralist resources, notably water, pastures and grazing routes, are increasingly under pressure. Those pressures in West Africa, particularly at the Sahel zone include the increasing in climate variability. Although, the devastating droughts of 1970s and 1980s which led to the loss of 50 per cent of all animals did not repeat themselves, droughts have become more frequent. While overall rainfall does not seem to have decreased, rains are now starting later and have become more unpredictable. Pastoralists in the northern Sahel respond to these climate situation by migrating earlier in the year and further south, where they arrive at a time when farms produce are yet to be harvested.<sup>2</sup>

More so, there is rapid population growth which has led to the extension and overexploitation of agricultural space. The southern fringe of the Sahel shows the highest population density in West Africa and it is believed have reached saturation. Due to the lack of agricultural land in this zone, some farmers have moved further north and started to cultivate in marginal climatic zones that were formerly considered as suitable for pastoralism only.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, farmers cultivate fields around permanent water points which play prominent role in the pastoralist production system.

Also, in further South, farmers are intensifying their production systems by introducing new varieties, including off-season productions like irrigation, cashew nut and developing diversified agro-pastoralist systems. Both practices reduce the space for transhumant pastoralists passing through this zone on their way south. With the development of off-season products, there is no time of the year left when pastoralists can migrate through these zones without wrecking destruction on agricultural production. The new agro-pastoralists rely less on the formerly reciprocal exchanges with transhumant pastoralists that were based on exchanges of animals, milk and manure against access to water points and agricultural residues like gain shells and straw. At moment, farmers' animals and the pastoralists' animals now contest for the same resources. The pressure on agricultural land also leads to the occupation of officially demarcated grazing routes and pastoral areas. In addition to this, grazing areas and stock paths are progressively engaged for non-agricultural commitments, including roads, urban development and mining.

<sup>1</sup> E Ugwumba, 'Understanding the Herder-Farmer Conflict in Nigeria,' (2018) ACCORD [HTTPS://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/understanding-the-herder-farmer-conflict-in-nigeria](https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/understanding-the-herder-farmer-conflict-in-nigeria) accessed 25 March 2021.

<sup>2</sup> L Manuela, 'International Centre for Immigration Policy, Development (ICMPD) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS),' *Regional Policy and Response to Manage Pastoral Movements within ECOWAS Region*, 2017) 6. <https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf> accessed 24 March 2021.

<sup>3</sup> B Bonnet, 'Vulnerabilite Pastorale et Politiques de Puliques de Securitisation de la Mobilite Pastorale au Sahel,' (2013) 4 (164) *Modes e Development*, 71-91.

**Land Tenure Systems Supporting Commercialisation and Privatisation of Land:** Conventionally, pastoralists' access to natural resources such as water and pastures was based on the multi-functionality of natural resources and the numerous uses of these resources by different users over the course of time. A piece of land, for example, could become a field during rainy season and a pasture during dry season. These different forms of resource use were further guided by the principles of complementarity and reciprocity. During the rainy season, agro-pastoralists led their herds northwards to benefit from the rich and varied pastures in the Sahel. During the dry season, Shelian pastoralists brought their herds towards the south to secure their survival. Farmers and herders exchanged milk and grain to protect their respective nutritional desires. The pastoralists' animals fertilised the harvested fields, while feeding on the residues. The economic complementarity between farming and pastoralist systems was underpinned by carefully established social relations between farming and herding groups of which the 'joking relationships' (cousinage) between pastoralists and some farming communities are the most prominent examples.<sup>4</sup> With population growth, the expansion and intensification of agriculture, the development of agro-pastoralist systems, the formerly reciprocal relationship between farmers and pastoralists has become competitive, if not hostile. This is accompanied by a shift from formerly shared usufruct rights to the privatisation of natural resources, particularly, land and to the commercialisation of farmer-pastoralist relations.

In almost all West African states, land tenure is shifting from communally to privately owned land. While traditional authorities such as the '*chef de terre*' or 'clan' formerly attributed land use rights to village or lineage members as well as 'strangers' based on their needs, agricultural land is now privatised, bought and sold. Land commercialisation and privatisation involves exclusive use rights over the natural resources found on the land to the detriment of forming systems of multiple use rights by different actors. Coupled with this, those land tenure systems recognising pastoralists' rights to natural resources as operates in Mali and the Niger, differently value agricultural and pastoralist land use. Therefore, pastoralists only enjoy usufruct rights of pastoral resources under the condition that they respect private (agricultural) land.<sup>5</sup> Pastoralists' access to natural resources thus remains tenuous and subject to agricultural requirements. In several coastal states, in addition, ideas of indigeneity have become infectious, posing indigenes against settlers or *autochtones* against *allogènes*. The indigenes are generally the local farming communities while migrant farmers and all herders are considered as settlers or strangers. It has become a widespread practice to negate strangers any secure access to natural resources such as land and in some cases even to jobs, education and infrastructure.<sup>6</sup> These beliefs aggravate the social and economic marginalisation of pastoralists and further confine their access to resources. One of the consequences of privatisation of natural resources is the commercialisation of farmer-herder exchanges, particularly, in the densely populated transit zones between the Sahel and the coast. Herders are now obliged to pay considerable sums for accessing all kinds of resources. They have to pay at the borders and for individual farmers for grazing on their fields or pay traditional rulers for using village lands for pasture. They have to pay for watering their herds at public water points or for plying certain routes. While herders formerly gave a bull as a gift to the farmer, who hosted them over

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<sup>4</sup> Manuela, (n. 2), 7.

<sup>5</sup> O Toure , 'At the Crossroads: Analysing the impact of Pastoral Policies upon Pastoralists Based in Niger, (Teddington, Teafund, 2015)

<sup>6</sup> A Floquet, et al., 'Land Security as an Issue for Livestock Keepers in the Sudano-Guinean Savannas of West Africa,' (Paper prepared for presentation to the World Bank Conference on Land and Poverty, Washington D.C , 23-27 March 2015).

the dry season, this has now become an expected form of payment.<sup>7</sup> Local residents now also privatise the vegetation of public rangelands by cutting grass and selling it to pastoralists. It is uncertain how far the pastoralist economy is able to absorb these additional costs.

Land privatization is also driven by the emergence of new actors in the livestock sector. These include politicians, retired government officials and wealthy traders, who invest in livestock as a business opportunity. Due to their political networks, they are often able to acquire large parcels of land which they fence for the purpose of establishing cattle ranches. Some of them even privatise and fence water resources that were formerly common property. Others are able to over-exploit marginal pastures by watering cattle from lorries. These activities reduce the access of ordinary pastoralists to urgently needed resources.

**Crisis of Grazing Reserves:** In 1965, the Nigerian government passed a law on the establishment of Grazing Reserves for Fulani herders. These are areas set aside for livestock production which were equipped with pastoral infrastructure such as water points, veterinary centres and nomadic schools. The law allowed for a minimum 10 per cent of the country's land area to be legally acquired and constituted into grazing reserves for lease allocation to pastoralists. However, the Nigerian central government has never been willing to allocate substantial resources required to develop the grazing reserves nor to protect them from encroachment. In the late 1990s, the now defunct Petroleum Trust Fund undertook some activities to rehabilitate existing grazing reserves and stock routes.

In addition, some Northern States such as Kaduna established their own grazing reserves. Despite these efforts, out of 299 proposed grazing reserves in the former Northern States and Abuja totaling to 2.3 million hectares, only 23 have been gazette, covering a total of just over 500,000 hectares.<sup>8</sup> Many of the existing grazing reserves are in bad shape. They suffer from encroachment by agriculture, private ranches and mining, and lack the social and pastoral amenities to support a large pastoral population. Some of them are used by cattle rustlers as retreat, who benefit from their protected status and inaccessibility. These cattle rustlers also threaten the pastoralist population living in the reserves. These are also affected by overcrowding, poor grazing conditions and lack of outlets for milk. Since the land provided within the grazing reserves is too limited in area and quality to meet the nutritional needs of the cattle population, most inhabitants of the grazing reserves take some or all of their herd on transhumance in the dry season and, in case of important stresses.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, grazing reserves function as a safe haven for pastoralists fleeing from communal violence elsewhere.<sup>10</sup>

**Decentralisation Policies and the Political Marginalisation of Pastoralists:** Since independence, pastoralists have been politically marginalised in most West African States as a result of their low levels of Western education and mobility which hinder their participation in elections and the political process. Already in the colonial time, the territorial organisation of West Africa favoured sedentary farmers, who were organised in cantons and districts headed by a chef de canton or district chief, while pastoralists were organised into non-territorial family groups or fractions subjected to a separate

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<sup>7</sup>See K Kouame, 'Ethnographie des Pratique de Securitisation de l'accès aux Ressources Agropastorales dans un Contexte de Conflits Centre Agriculteurs et Migrants Uevoura Dianra Cote d'Ivoire (2016) 12 (18) European Scientific Journal.

<sup>8</sup> U S Abdullahi, et al, 'Grazing Reserve and Pastoralism in Nigeria,' (2015) 10, Journal of Veterinary Science, 137-142.

<sup>9</sup> Manuela, (n. 2), 37.

<sup>10</sup>M Ducrottoy, et al, 'Fulani Cattle Productivity and Management in the Kachia Grazing Reserve, Nigeria,' (2016) 6 (25) Pastoralism, Research, Policy and practice.

taxation system.<sup>11</sup> Since the 1990s, many West African states implemented decentralisation processes that run in parallel to the implementation of structural adjustment programmes. Structural adjustment led to the drastic reduction in services provided by the central state, including many essential services for pastoralists such as veterinary care, extension work and mobile health clinics and schools, from which pastoralists are still suffering today. Decentralisation reinforces the influence of the sedentary populations at local level. Due to their mobility, pastoralists are systematically excluded from local elections, local councils and committees. This reinforces the opportunistic behaviour of local sedentary groups that exploit their local influence and the weakness of the central state. These dynamics cumulate in the further social and economic marginalisation of transhumant pastoralists.

A further effect of decentralisation is the advent of a superfluity of ad hoc commissions and institutions and the general dilution of responsibility. Traditional rulers lost authority, particularly in their traditional domain of natural resource management, while the new decentralised authorities lack skills and authority to fill this role. Party politics entered the local domain and affect local decision-making. The deconcentrated state ministries set up local commissions and management committees with overlapping mandates and sometimes contradictory objectives and often without the required capacities to carry out their tasks. The resulting legal and institutional disorder does not favour the representation of pastoralists' interests.

**Political Marginalisation of Pastoralists and Lack of Institutional Support:** Pastoralist livelihoods are deeply misunderstood in many parts of Nigeria and suffer from lack of political and institutional support. There is lack of effective protection and regulation of this important economic activity, coupled with the absence of investments in grazing land, infrastructure, extension services and market access for pastoralists. Social and political pressure is high for transhumance to cease and livestock breeding to be confined to ranches. Pastoralists enjoy political representation only in a few northern states. Even in those northern states, only urban Fulani elites who speak on their behalf. Pastoralists are also excluded from local government, since they are considered as 'non-natives' in most parts of the country and are thus denied basic rights such as the right to political participation and the right to land. In the social media, they are the object of hate speech and misinformation on their way of life. Due to this marginalisation, pastoralists' legitimate interests are often neglected. This has led some observers to fear for the very future of pastoralism in Nigeria.

**Insecurity Challenge:** Insecurity has become a major obstacle to transhumant pastoralism. Pastoralists can be both victims and actors of insecurity. Large parts of the Sahel, including northern Mali, northern and the eastern Niger, eastern Chad and northern Nigeria, are currently being controlled by various armed groups belonging to rebellions, jihadists, cattle rustlers and organised criminals. These groups often pry on pastoralists' herds to secure their own subsistence. They also involve pastoralists into their struggles by using them as informants, human shields or transporters of arms and other illegal goods. Faced with the presence of armed groups, pastoralists move in larger groups, change their migration routes, reduce transhumance to a minimum, or arm themselves with sophisticated and dangerous weapons like AK47. All these strategies have negative effects on the well-being of their herds and their relations with the sedentary population. Penurious young pastoralists have also become perpetrators of violence. In the central Sahel, they act as rural bandits, street robbers and cattle rustlers. Apart from these phenomena, conflicts between farmers and pastoralists often lead to violence. In countries such as Nigeria, they have even escalated into communal violence between ethno-religious groups, leading

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<sup>11</sup> Manuela, (n. 2).

to high losses of human lives as well as to the destruction of fields and decimation of herds. Faced with such violence, pastoralists tend to withdraw into protected pastoral areas or grazing reserves where the resources to sustain their herds are limited. The involvement of some pastoralists in armed conflicts such as in northern Mali has led to an emerging narrative of pastoralism as a security issue<sup>12</sup> or even the unhelpful perception that pastoralists are terrorists.<sup>13</sup> Such discourse feeds into the existing stigmatisation of pastoralists as the dangerous.

**Cattle Rustling and Rural Banditry:** In the past decades, rural banditry has escalated in the rural areas of North-Western Nigeria, including the States of Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna, Kebbi, Niger and FCT Abuja. This phenomenon is often misunderstood and equated with the violent farmer-herder conflicts in Nigeria's Middle Belt. Pastoralists in the North are particularly affected by cattle rustling. This involves the stealing of cattle and other animals from herders, or the raiding of cattle from ranches. Cattle rustling was originally a culturally embedded practice that mainly served the reconstitution of herds after a major crisis or to secure bride price payments. It has now become a form of economic offence coordinated by well-organised networks, often with the backing of some high-ranking officials. In Northern Nigeria, wealthy individuals stage and finance large-scale cattle rustling operations by well-armed groups of unemployed young pastoralists, often involving several thousand of animals and complex logistic operations. Other forms of rural banditries include street robbery, rape, kidnapping, organised attacks on villages and communities, and looting. Particularly along busy roads in the north. Examples are Okele-Lokaja road in Kogi State, Brinigbari- Kaduna road in Kaduna state, Ore-Ondo road, in Ondo state and many others. All of these are seriously affecting the asset base and livelihood opportunities of affected farmers and pastoralists. Both farmers and pastoralists arm themselves to fend off bandits, there is the risk of further violent escalation of conflict because most farmers believe that cattle rustling was perpetrated by local pastoralists. Pastoralists react to cattle rustling by retreating into remote areas, including natural reserves and by limiting the mobility of their herds. Both practices have negative implication on their ability to access services and maintain their herds in a productive state. Where security forces get involved in cases of cattle rustling, they often fail to distinguish between pastoralists who are victims of offence from criminals who commit crime.<sup>14</sup>

### 1.3 CAUSES OF CONFLICT BETWEEN FULANI HERDSMEN AND FARMERS

The last two decades have witnessed a growing recognition of resource scarcity in national and international security. In the West African sub region, many conflicts, civil wars and transnational border conflicts started as competition and conflict by two groups.<sup>15</sup> The 1993 war between Nigeria and Chad occurred due to the conflict between fishermen of the two countries.<sup>16</sup> Civil wars in Chad and Niger started as a result of competition between Tubu, Arab and Fulbe herders over a well, while the tension between the Tuaregs and the state of Mali, Chad and Niger has been linked to resource conflict. In the Senegal valley, resource conflict between farmers, herders and fishermen escalated into border conflict between Senegal and Mauritania, while the struggle for land between groups played a key role in the Rwandan genocide.<sup>17</sup>

One of the factors is unlawful infringement into farmlands which has led to serious conflicts between the farmers and herdsmen in recent times because of the damage cause to crops and fallow lands left to

<sup>12</sup> World Bank, 2014

<sup>13</sup> Global Terrorism Index, 2015.

<sup>14</sup> Manuela, (n. 2), 38.

<sup>15</sup>Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act, 1985..

<sup>16</sup> A J Omede, 'Nigeria Relations with her Neighbours,' (2006) 4 (10) Stud. Tribes Tribals, 12-13.

<sup>17</sup> T F Homer-Dixon, *Environment, Security and Violence*, (Princeton, University Press, 1999) 17-18.

replenish the nutrients after long years of use.<sup>18</sup> The herdsmen's cows often stray into the farmlands of the farmers without permission and destroy crop nurseries or full-grown crops, which they hope to harvest and sell in the near future. This attitude no doubt, provokes the farmers to go after their animals.<sup>19</sup> It has been revealed that the shrinking of ecological space and resorts creates an atmosphere of eco-scarcity, which raises the stakes and puts a premium on the available resources. What usually results from this, is violent rivalry and a desperate struggle for subsistence. In this context, conflict not becomes inevitable and a matter of survival.<sup>20</sup>

More so, the Fulani herdsmen use to buy land in proxies in their own names while they lie to the natives that they are the people buying the land for one business or the other. The owners, (the sellers) of the land later discovered that they have been tricked by the herdsmen when they realised that the land being used by herdsmen for cattle business contrary to their will. This leads to conflicts.<sup>21</sup>

Climate change is another tribulation causing conflicts between farmers and herdsmen. This is so because when there is unfavourable weather in their former place of grazing, the herdsmen will be compelled to leave their original habitation to another area for greener pastures. In support of this proposition, Gleick<sup>22</sup> states that climate change has been tipped as the greatest factor that induces migration and population displacement. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change believes that this will affect people displaced by shoreline erosion, coastal flooding and agricultural disruption. Ibenwa, Nwokocha and Okoli<sup>23</sup> described migration as the movement of people from one geographical region to another for the purpose of taking up permanent or semi-permanent residence.

It has equally discovered that lack of political will by the government to arrest and punish the offenders adequately is another challenge escalating the activities of the herdsmen in Africa. A good example was what happened in Nimbo in Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area and in Enugu town in 2016 when the Fulani herdsmen attacked farmers at Nimbo because of a misunderstanding over grazing fields and killed over 50 persons and destroyed their properties worth millions of naira.<sup>24</sup> Since then, no serious arrest was effected and the Fulani come back at intervals to attack farmers and villagers on their farms. A few months after the attack at Nimbo and Enugu, Fulani herdsmen entered a farm to feed their flocks and while they were doing that, the owners of the farm land came and chased them and their cattle away. Sequel to this, at midnight, the Fulani herdsmen came back to attack the people and killed a pregnant woman.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> A G Shettima and U A Tar, 'Farmer-Pastoralists Conflicts I West Africa: Exploring the Causes and Consequences,' (2018) 1 (2) Information, Society and Justice, 163-184.

<sup>19</sup>E O .Okeke, 'Conflicts between Fulani Herdsmen and farmers in Central and southern Nigeria: Discourse on Proposed Establishment of Grazing Routes and Reserves' (2014) 3 (1) AFRREW IJAH: An International Journal of Arts and Humanities

<sup>20</sup>N Christopher, 'A Critical Analysis of Conflicts between Herdsmen and Farmers in Nigeria: Causes and Socioreligious and Political Effects on National Development,' (2018) 74 (1) HTS Theologies Studies/Theological Studies, 4. <<https://www.ajol.info>> accessed 12 March 2021.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

<sup>22</sup>P H Gleick, 'Water, Drought, Climate Change and Conflict in Syria (2010) American Meteorological Society, Washington, 231-232.

<sup>23</sup>C N Ibenwa, et al, 'GSP Climate Change and Eschatological Events,' in Nwosu A A (ed) *A Pre-conference Proceeding for the 2017 School of General Studies*. International Conference, Held at University of Nigeria, Nsuka, 7<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> May, 2017, Grand Heritage Global Communications, Nsuka, 290.

<sup>24</sup> E Mamah , et al, 'Bloodbath in Enugu as Fulani Herdsmen Kill 40, April 26' (2016).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

The inability of government in most cases to respond quickly to distress calls and early warning signs is an issue that promotes conflicts. This negative attitude has made it difficult to contain the conflicts that would have been prevented if government had responded promptly to distress calls and warnings.<sup>26</sup>

#### **1.4 EFFECTS OF FULANI AND FARMERS CONFLICTS**

The consequences of the conflict can be linked to humanitarian, social, economic and security tribulations. Okoli and Atelhe<sup>27</sup> believed that natives-nomads conflict results in loss of life, population displacements, human injury and livelihood crisis. In this regard, the conflict does not only lead to the killing of people, people become homeless, displaced and destitute.

The economic effects of pastoralists and farmers conflict leads to dire productivity and agricultural consequences. The economic implications relate to losses associated with the destruction of homes, farmlands, community assets and household properties. For fear of being attacked, many people refuse to go to farm, resulting in low agricultural productivity during harvest season. Further, many farmlands and large volumes of farm crops and produce are destroyed while hundreds of cattle are killed.<sup>28</sup> It has been noted that the conflict leads to a reduction in farming output and income of farmers and nomads. The farmers lose part or whole of their farms and crops through the grazing and the destruction by the cattle and indiscriminate bush burning. On the other hand, the conflict leads to loss of cows belonging to the nomads through indiscriminate killing. In this regard, the yield of the farmers and the nomads are reduced, which is translated into lower income. Consequently, this negatively affects their savings, credit repayment ability as well as food security and economic welfare of urban dwellers.<sup>29</sup> Tonah posited that, the conflict has negative effect on agricultural productivity as farmers find it difficult to acquire the services of cattle required for ploughing, weeding of fields and transporting of harvested crop. This discourages the farmers and rural agricultural development.

It is an undisputable fact that the activities of the Fulani herdsmen against the farmers have resulted to huge economic loss in Nigeria. Part of economic effect is the creation of artificial scarcity. There is no doubt that whenever there is attack on farmers by the Fulani herdsmen, the farmers run away from their farmlands and find it difficult to return for fear of being attacked again. This sometimes lasts for a long time, thereby hindering sowing and reaping farm produce. There is no doubt that Fulani frequent attacks on the farmers led to the creation of artificial scarcity of goods and services, consequently leads to inflation and devaluation of currency at international markets.

Inflation is the decline of purchasing power of a given currency over time. A quantitative estimate of the rate at which the decline in the purchasing power occurs can be reflected in the increase of an average price level of a basket of selected goods and services in an economy over period of time.<sup>30</sup> It is the persistent escalation in the prices of goods and services over a period of time. The artificial scarcity created by the frequent attacks of the herdsmen on citizens as stated earlier leads to inflation,

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<sup>26</sup> Christopher, (n. 19), 4.

<sup>27</sup> A C Okoli and A G Atelhe, 'Nomads against Natives: A Political Ecology of Herder/Farmer Conflicts in Nasarawa State, Nigeria,' (2014) 4 (2) *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, 84.

<sup>28</sup> Okoli and Atelhe (n. 26), 85.

<sup>29</sup> A U Ofuoku and B L Isife, 'Causes, effects and Resolution of farmers-Nomads Cattle Herders Conflict in Delta State, Nigeria, (2009) 1 (2) *International Journal of sociology and Anthropology*, 53)

<sup>30</sup> Part of Economy Guide, Inflation, <<https://www.investopedia.com>> accessed 16 March 2021.

which in turn leads to devaluation of currency<sup>31</sup> It is believed that during inflation, the value of currency is reduced because much money is chasing few goods and services. There is a decrease in output per capita because of restrictions on people's movements as a result of curfews. Moreover, the daily output in goods and services is seriously affected. People can no longer move to their farms, shops and business centres as a result of the incessant attacks by Fulani herdsmen on innocent farmers.

It has been asserted that apart from the killings by nomads and reprisal attacks by the indigenes, some people become widows, widowers and orphans during the conflicts, while other victims of the conflict are maimed or injured. It is also argued that, people become internally displaced as a result of the conflict, especially women, who decide to stop going to the distant farm for fear of attacks by nomads.<sup>32</sup> The social effects of farmers-pastoralists conflict threaten peace and tranquility among various groups. Such conflicts create tense and volatile inter-group relations amongst the various people. This manifests in mutual mistrust and animosity which are often misplaced. In view of this, the herdsmen see the natives as enemies of their collective survival and destiny, and vice versa. They continue by arguing that, the conflict creates an atmosphere of mutual suspicion and perpetual tension that threatens peaceful coexistence, security and stability of society.<sup>33</sup> In addition, Tonah contends that nomads-natives conflict leads to threats and intimidation forcing both to leave conflict-prone settlements. In this regard, the tense relationship affects the level of cooperation and economic exchanges between the two groups.<sup>34</sup> In some situations, the tense and volatile relations is not only between the natives and the nomads, also between the natives and the traditional authority as the youth accuse them of releasing lands to the Fulani herdsmen. They also accuse them of unholy alliance with the nomads.<sup>35</sup>

Ibenwa<sup>36</sup> believes that incessant attacks on farmers by the Fulani herdsmen scare away foreigners who have come to a particular African country to do business. In the course of the attacks, lives and property, public companies, film-producing houses and industries are destroyed. When foreigners see these things happening, they get discouraged and withdraw their businesses and go to other countries where their lives, properties and businesses are secured.

Anytime there is any serious attack on the citizens, houses are burnt down and people are rendered homeless. Consequently, some of affected wretched victims find it difficult to get alternative place of abode. This eventually led them living in public buildings like IDPs. It has been noted that war creates refugees and large numbers of people are displaced, which are popularly known as IDPs. People are displaced from their houses as a result of arson by the Fulani herdsmen and they camp in public buildings.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> A R I Anyanwuocha, 'Fundamental of Economic of Senior Secondary Schools,' (Africana-Feb Publisher Ltd, Onitsha, 1999), 25.

<sup>32</sup> O O Ofem and B Inyang, 'Livelihood and Conflict Dimension among Crop Farmers and Fulani Herdsmen in Yakurr Region of Cross River State,' (2014) 5 (8) Mediterranean Journal of Social Science, 517.

<sup>33</sup> Okoli and Atelhe, (n. 26), 85.

<sup>34</sup> S Tonah, 'State Policies, Local Prejudices and Cattle Rustling along the Ghana: Burkina Faso Border (2000) 70 (4), Africa: Journal of the International African Institute, 169.

<sup>35</sup> A Emmanuel, 'Farmer-Herder Conflict in Africa: An Assessment of the Causes and Effects of the Sedentary Farmers-Fulani Herder Conflict. A Case Study of Agogo Traditional Area, Ashanti Region of Ghana' (Master thesis in Education, University of Agder, 2017), 19.

<sup>36</sup> C N Ibenwa, 'Fanaticism and Religious Riots in Northern Nigeria: Its Implications for Societal Development,' (2012). A Ph.D Thesis Submitted to Department of Religion and Cultural Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsuka

<sup>37</sup> Christopher (n.b19), 4.

The herdsmen/farmers crises pose threat to democratic governance as the level of intolerance among the herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria has deteriorated to unimaginable level of arms struggle, resulting in countless death among villagers with the attendant reduction in population of the peasant farmers.<sup>38</sup> This violent clashes have direct impact on the live and livelihood of those involved and lead to displacement of economic productive population of the community. In most cases, these incessant violent clashes lead to reduction in output and income of crop farmers as a result of the destruction of crops by cattle. Most farmers have been forced to flee their farmers for fear of being killed by well-armed herdsmen and loss of part or the whole of their crops which translated into low income on the part of the farmers who take farming as a major occupation. This tends to negatively affect their savings, credit repayment ability as well as food security and economic welfare of urban dwellers that depend on these farmers for food supply.<sup>39</sup> It therefore discourages the farmers and stifles rural/agricultural development. A global humanitarian organisation founded by the British Department for International Development (BDID), on the causes and effects of perennial clashes between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria, revealed that the incessant attacks have drastic effects and food security and caused a loss of \$14 billion in three years.

Politically, it makes for distraction in government programmes and a waste of time. Whenever there is a violent attack by the herdsmen, government attention is required. As a result of this, government will be forced to abandon other projects to address the herdsmen and farmers crisis and spends time addressing it. To lend credence to this viewpoint, government is truly distracted once there is crisis. Whenever there is occurrence of attack, government is required to provide relief materials like foodstuffs, clothes and medicines, even accommodations for victims of the attacks.

It is obvious that during the crises, companies, firms and industries are destroyed and it takes owners of these businesses time to rebuild their destroyed business centres. Their employees spend this long period without work to do. They add to the number of unemployed youths that are roaming our streets. There is no doubt that these unemployed youths, as a result of shot down of their working companies may resort into vices like robbery, theft and others because they need to survive at all cost. Also, during the pastoral attacks, people are killed or maimed. Those who are maimed may no longer be able to do what they hitherto did themselves because of impairment. They may resort to begging as a means of livelihood, thereby increasing the number of beggars on the streets of our towns and cities. There is no doubt that conflict between Farmers and Fulani herdsmen increases the number of physically challenged people in the society because of the use of offensive weapons during riots that give people deep cuts and all forms of deformities.

Another repercussion is that when there is an attack, people's movements are restricted. In some cases, the government may decide to declare hours of curfew or a dawn to dusk curfew. This is an infringement on the statutory freedom of movement of the citizen. In a personal communication conducted by another writer on 05 April 2017, Damian Odo and Dr Elias Ngwu stressed the fact that whenever there is any serious attack on citizens by any grieved group, whether it is a religious sect, Fulani herdsmen, an ethnic group or political group, the government usually declares a state of emergency or curfew. When this happens, people's movements are restricted.

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<sup>38</sup> S A Ingawa, et al, *Farmer-Pastoralist Conflict in Core-States of the National* (FADAMA Project, FACU, Abuja, 1999)

<sup>39</sup> K Beetseh, 'Herdsmen/Farmers Crisis: A Threat to Democratic Governance in Nigeria,' (2018) 8 (11) *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 104.

The herdsman and farmer conflict, like other conflicts in Nigeria, such as the Maitatsine religious conflict, OIC conflict, Sharia conflict, ethnicity conflict, border conflict and Boko-Haram terroristic activity, have adversely affected religious activities such as night vigils, midweek services, Sunday services, Friday Juma'at prayers, Eid Fitr and Eid Kabir prayers and open-field crusade, particularly night vigils, which is believed was one of the most powerful means of attacking Satan, evil spirits, witches and wizards and occult men and women.

Cattle rustling has become a major security issue in Northern Nigeria. Pastoralists have practiced cattle raiding for many years as a cultural pattern of showing male prowess and of restocking depleted herds. Over the past years, however, it has evolved into a form of organised crime. The most affected states include Benue, Gombe, Kaduna, Katsina, Nasarawa, the Niger, Plateau, Taraba and Zamfara. It should be added that these activities no longer limited to a particular geopolitical zone (s) in Nigeria. In almost all states in Nigeria, cattle rustlers tend to operate out of inaccessible forest areas such as the Dajin Rugu forest stretching from Kaduna through Katsina to Zamfara, where they have their bases and accumulate the stolen animals before trucking them to the urban markets. Cattle rustlers attack both farmers and pastoralists, with a preference for transhumant pastoralists from neighbouring countries, who drive larger herds and are less able to connect to the local security forces. For this reason, pastoralist movement from the Niger into Nigeria has declined by 80 per cent since 2012. Cattle rustlers attack villages and pastoralist settlements, maim or kill their inhabitants, rape women, kidnap girls and drive away the cattle.<sup>40</sup>

It is estimated that several hundred people are killed and several tens of thousands of cattle stolen each year by cattle rustlers. Where there are no more cattle to steal, cattle rustlers turn to kidnapping, demanding high sums from impoverished pastoralists. Cattle rustling has become a sophisticated business operation that is usually run by powerful and sometimes well-known urban businessmen, who hire and arm impoverished pastoralist youth to carry out the actual raids. They also operate cattle bases in remote areas and organize the transport and marketing of the stolen cattle towards Nigeria's large urban markets. The cattle rustling networks are known for their violence and feared by the police. The Nigerian central government launched a specific task force on cattle rustling in 2016, whose impact still remains to be seen.

Meanwhile, cattle rustling further exacerbates farmer-herder tensions on the ground since farmers often blame local pastoralists for the violence. In many areas, both farmers and pastoralists have established local vigilante groups who engage in retaliatory violence after incidents of cattle rustling. Many Nigerians also blame foreign herders for the scourge of cattle rustling in the northern regions and demand the total closure of Nigeria's borders for pastoralists from other countries.<sup>41</sup>

Due to the demographic and climatic changes of the past decades, pastoralists have been expanding their grazing areas southwards, particularly into the sub-humid 'Middle Belt' and the high-altitude grasslands of Bauchi and the Jos Plateau. Nigerian farmers, on the other hand, have been moving into the densely populated semi-arid zone around the major Hausa towns of Sokoto, Kano and Kaduna in the North. Land pressure has led to increasing tensions between farmers and pastoralists. To address these tensions, the late colonial authorities established a system of transhumance corridors under which

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<sup>40</sup> A Okoloi and F N Okpaleke, 'Cattle Rustling and Dialectics of Security in Northern Nigeria,' (2014) 2 (3) International Journal of Liberal Arts and Social Science.

<sup>41</sup> Manuela, '(n. 2), 38.

Fulani leaders and local community authorities under the auspices of local government agreed on pre-defined stock routes linking established grazing areas with each other. Local committees were established to resolve any disputes arising from crop damage or wandering cattle. In the 1970s, the system of stock routes began to collapse, as farmers increasingly claimed ownership of the land crossed by the stock routes and began to cultivate the well-manured plots. Cattle following the stock routes so inevitably wandered into newly created farms, leading to conflict and violence. The expansion of agricultural activities reduced the availability of grazing areas in all parts of the country, leading to decreases in the total number of livestock, affecting their productivity and negatively impacting on the income and food security of pastoralists.

A particular challenge to pastoralists is the growth in off-season crop farming and horticulture along flooded river beds, which formerly provided critical pastures during dry season. Transhumance towards the south during dry season depended on the unhindered access to the grassy riverbanks which are now cultivated without any process of negotiating access with transhumant pastoralists which leads to conflicts.<sup>42</sup>

### **1. 5 INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES TO CONTAIN HE CONFLICTS**

Having realised the persistent conflicts between farmers and Fulani herdsman, the Nigerian government put in place some measures in form of policies and laws. Though, the conflicts are still much on ground, however, the government strategies need to be appreciated and highlighted in this paper.

**Creation of Grazing Reserves in 1965:** The northern regional government initiated one of the first attempts to respond to the herdsman-farmer conflict in the country in 1965.<sup>43</sup> Large portion of land were allocated for grazing reserves to be exclusively used by herders to rear their livestock. However, the grazing reserve system was not supported with political will and adequate resources. The government is still in the process of initiating legislation to legitimise the grazing reserves before natural factors such as population growth and other related issues like urbanisation and migration encroached on these designated areas reducing the herders' chances of accessing the reserves.

**Establishment of the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) in 1989:** The Federal Military Government established the NCNE and it is supported by the Nigerian legal system in 1989. The objective of the programme was to integrate nomadic pastoralists into national life through mobile basic education and skill acquisition. The programme intended to integrate them into society through education.<sup>44</sup>

**The Great Green Wall Agency of the Federal Government:** Federal government established the Great Green Wall Agency in 2013 to tackle desertification. This was in response to the 2007 African Union Great Green Wall Initiative that aimed at encouraging member states to plant 8 000km of trees along the Southern Sahel to counter the effects of desertification along that area. Continued desert encroachment along the Sahel region as a result of climate change is a major factor responsible for seasonal migration of herdsman from one region to the other in search of water and vegetation for cattle grazing.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> R Blench, 'Conflicts between Pastoralists and Cultivators in Nigeria,' (2010) Reviewed paper Prepared for DFID, Nigeria, Cambridge.

<sup>43</sup> Peace and Security Forum, 'Resolving the Herders/Farmers Conflict in Nigeria,' (2017) Policy Brief.

<sup>44</sup> Ugwumba (n. 1) 38.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

**The Use of the Armed Forces to Curb Internal Security:** One of functions of the government is to maintain the security and welfare of the people. Federal government's immediate measures to address the herdsmen-farmer conflicts is the engagement of the Armed Forces of Nigeria as enshrined in the Constitution.<sup>46</sup> For example, in Plateau state, in 2001, the government deployed a Special Task Force called Operation Safe Haven to check insecurity resulting from the herdsmen-farmers clashes. Recently, the operation's mandate was expanded to replace Operation Harbin Kunama II in Southern Kaduna state whose mandate was similar to that of OSH in Plateau.<sup>47</sup> There was a call for a total declaration of a state of emergency in Benue and Plateau states as a result of the gruesome killing and displacement of thousands of people in those states. In fact, it is not all over in Benue state because there was an attempt to assassinate Governor Samuel Ortom of Benue state on Saturday, 20<sup>th</sup> March, 2021.<sup>48</sup> Nigerians also expect the government to activate all the necessary sections of the Constitution regarding the use of the military in internal security. This call came as a fall-out of recent action taken by the government to suppress the Indigenous People of Biafra's (IPOB) agitations in the South-East and similar uprisings in other parts of the country. The military was deployed in September 2017 in an operation code-named Operation Python Dance to suppress the IPOB agitation and protests.<sup>49</sup>

**Establishment of the National Grazing Reserve Bill 2016:** A National Grazing Reserve Bill was sponsored in 2016 at the parliament to address the herdsmen-farmer conflicts. The Bill did not survive due to opposition from different stakeholders. Those that opposed the Bill hinged their rejection on the provisions of the Land Use Act of 1978 which vests all powers related to the regulation of ownership, acquisition, administration, and management of Nigerian land with the state governors.<sup>50</sup> Thus, the Land Use Act is an Act of the National Assembly. Because of this, it is a binding enactment, unless it is amended. State governments and their representatives at the parliament have always opposed any attempt to establish grazing reserves in their domains. They consider it to be usurping the constitutional powers vested in them.<sup>51</sup>

**Proposed Cattle Ranching System 2018:** To respond to the decimal of conflicts and mass killings resulting from seasonal pastoral movements, in 2018, the government approved a 10-year National Livestock Plan at a cost of about 179 billion naira. The plan would culminate in the establishment of 94 ranches in 10 pilot states of the federation.<sup>52</sup> Again, state governments, especially in the South and North Central areas rejected the proposal on the grounds of not having enough space for such projects.

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<sup>46</sup> Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), s. 14 (2) (b).

<sup>47</sup> Agande B, (2017) 'Army Launches Operation Harbin Kunama II in Southern Kaduna'. (2017) Vanguard News. <<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/04/army-launches-operation-harbin-kunama-ii-southern-kaduna/>> accessed 21 March 2021.

<sup>48</sup> Agency Report, 'Assassination Attempt: Governor Ortom Meets Buhari at Aso Rock,' (Premium Times, 23 March, 2021).

<sup>49</sup> Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) is a pressure group that believes in the actualisation of the state of Biafra in eastern Nigeria. The Federal government, through the armed forces, <sup>49</sup>blacklisted the group as a terrorist group due to its activities. In September 2017 Operation Python Dance was deployed to suppress the activities of the group.

<sup>50</sup> Land Use Decree, 1978, No. 6, Cap 202. Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004.

<sup>51</sup> C MA Kwaja and B I Ademola-Adelehin, 'Response to Conflicts between Farmers and Herders in the Middle Belt of Nigeria: Mapping Past Efforts and Opportunities for Violence Prevention,' (2018) *Search for Common Ground*. 8.

<sup>52</sup> Y Alli, 'Federal Government to Build 94 Ranches in 10 States' *The Nations News*, 20 June 2018 <<http://thenationonlineng.net/fed-govt-to-build-94-ranches-in-10-states/>> accessed on 21 March 2021.

**Legislation Prohibiting Open Grazing:** As part of measures to end the persistent conflict between herdsmen and farmers in various states, government at state levels began enacting legislations prohibiting open grazing in their state. It is believed that this would alleviate the danger of herdsmen destruction of farm lands and the associated conflicts. Benue, Ekiti and Taraba states are leading this opposition by enacting state laws prohibiting open grazing. Benue state enacted the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law, 2017<sup>53</sup> and its implementation began on 1 November 2017.<sup>54</sup> Ekiti and Taraba states have also signed Bills prohibiting open grazing in their states. This makes open grazing under any guise, an illegal.

## 1. 6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Federal government of Nigeria should deploy a Joint Task Force comprising military, police, paramilitary and civil institutions to all the affected states as an immediate response to the conflict. This will help restore law and order and build confidence of the general populace in the ability of the government to respond to threats. The military could be deployed to the conflict zones to create safe and secure environments peaceful enough to inject long-term strategies for ending the conflict and engaging in peacebuilding.

There is a need to encourage community policing leveraging on the already existing vigilante system in most states. Community policing will help in intelligence gathering about the conflict while civil police would respond to such threats. This will help address the challenges of waiting for the federal government to deploy security to states when there is conflict.

The Federal government should revisit the 1965 Northern Region Government's Grazing Reserve System and remodel it to deal with contemporary threats. The grazing reserves and live-stock routes have also been encroached by farmers and the activities of urban developers. The abandoned grazing reserve system operated in the 1960s has to be revisited.

Conclusively, there is need for government to robustly pursue a all-inclusive crusade that will seek the support of all actors, including National and States Houses of Assembly, Fulani herdsmen and farmers, state and local governments, to accept the idea of modern ranching as an alternative to traditional migration of herdsmen which causes friction and other associated threats to farmers and other innocent souls.

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<sup>53</sup> Channels TV Report, 'Benue Governor Signs Bill Prohibiting Open Grazing Into Law' Channels TV, 22 May 2017. <<https://www.channelstv.com/2017/05/22/benue-governor-signs-bill-prohibiting-open-grazing-law/>> accessed 20 March 2021.

<sup>54</sup> Kwajan and Ademola-Adelehin (n. 51).