

**MIGRATORY RIGHT, INVASION AND RELIGION AS A CHALLENGE TO
HERDSMEN (PASTORALISTS) – FARMERS CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN
NIGERIA**

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Abstract

At the top list of social (to certain extent religious) unrest in Nigeria today has been the recurrent incidents and cases of Herdsmen- Farmers conflict. One form and nature of confrontations have been witnessed across the regions, states and communities of the nation. In some regions and states, the confrontation seems to be more intense and dynamic compared to the other. Available materials before us reveal the various efforts made by the Government and Stakeholders at different levels to bring the conflict to a stop or minimal level. Unfortunately, instead of the rate of the conflict reducing, it has escalated to the point of constituting a great threat to the peace and stability of the entire nation. It is against this background that the present study sets out to explore the various factors obstructing any meaningful resolution plans and dialogue among the conflicting communities in Nigeria. The study is an on the spot research. It adopts historical design, with thematic and descriptive formats as the methods for data collection and analysis. The findings of the study reveals three latent claims and positions propagated by the conflicting parties that have hindered and still hindering any successful and mutual understanding and relationship among the two conflicting communities. It is the submission of the study that future conflict resolution plans should be in form of a dialogue between these two communities and should put into consideration the impact of the pluralistic nature of the nation; the divergent cultural, religious backgrounds and worldviews.

Key words: **Herdsmen (Pastoralists), Farmers, Conflict Resolution**

Introduction

History made us to understand that the misunderstanding and dispute between the pastoralists (herders) and farming communities is as old as humanity itself. Even though the crisis has escalated over the years, evidence still shows that there are unique differences between the past centuries' experience and the present century. For example, one remarkable difference between the past and the present experience is the regulated and controlled nature of the conflict by the local communities and systems. As a matter of fact, the highly bloody nature of the crisis today is associated mostly with lack of regulation and control; traced to the migration of foreign herdsmen/ pastoralist from other countries into Nigeria.

We are also meant to understand that since the inception of the crisis/ conflict, many conflict resolution plans and strategies have been put in place to bring the conflict to a minimal level and improve cordial relationship between these two Communities. In the past, we have measures like creation of grazing reserve/ route, establishment of National Grazing Law, approval of grazing in certain forest, advancement from nomadic lifestyle to sedentary

lifestyles etc. In the present time we have the Nomadic Education Programme (NEP), establishment for Cattle Colony across states and finally the most current method being the establishment of Ruga (Rural Grazing Areas) project in the states of the nation. Notwithstanding the above efforts made and advanced by the Nigerian Government towards resolving the conflicts, the crises instead, has manifested in other forms. In the recent time, the conflicting Communities and Nigerians have resisted some of these measures and proposals by the Government; claiming a suspicious motive beneath the projects and proposals, hence the continued increase cases of the confrontations among the parties across the country.

The aim of the present study is therefore to explore some underlying factors obstructing the mutual acceptance of these conflict resolution plans and dialogue among the two Communities in Nigerians. The study has four major objectives:

1. To explore the Nigerian Pastoral experiences.
2. To explore the nature and cause of conflict between the Herdsmen-Farmers communities in Nigeria.
3. To explore various efforts/ measures by the Government to address the conflict.
4. Finally to explore the factors hindering any true resolution plan/ dialogue among the two parties and recommend possible solutions.

The findings of the study will go a long way in helping any future resolution plan/ strategies between the two communities to sell through since the hidden obstructive elements have been unveiled.

Conceptualizing Pastoralism

Pastoralism is a branch of agriculture concerned with the care, tending and use of animals. It is a subsistence pattern in which people make their living by tending herds of large animals, which are all domesticated herbivore that normally live in herds and eats grass or other abundant plants. Pastoralism is generally believed to have strongly been associated with the presence of grass land or graze lands even though there are numerous grass lands or graze land without pastoral activities. It is, according to Gale (2008) an economic activity involving the care of herds of domesticated livestock. The origin of pastoralism and its practice, as we have it today, is as old as human civilization. It dates back to the era of 'Neolithic Revolution' (Agricultural Revolution), when man for the first time ever acquired the knowledge and skills with which to domesticate animals and crops/ plants. In its traditional forms, it is either practiced as main mode of subsistence or combined with agriculture. Two major factors was said to have enhanced the evolution of pastoralism; the medium human population densities and the presence of extensive rangelands usually in semi-arid regions. Pastoralists, in our context known as Herdsmen or herders are those hired men who tend the stock or herds.

Pastoralism is of three major forms/ types; nomadic, semi-nomadic and transhumance. Nomadic form follows a seasonal migratory pattern that can vary from year to year. The timing and destinations of the migration are determined primarily by the needs of the herds

for water and fodder. The nomadic herders do not create permanent settlements but rather live in tents or relatively easily constructed dwellings the year round. They keep moving along with their animals in search of grazing areas and most often their households' moves along with this seasonal migration. This form of pastoralism is of subsistence type and is more common in areas of dry climate not suitable for crop farming. The semi-nomadic type (call by some agro-pastoralism) is often tagged unspecialized herding-farming form, even though some refused this tagging. This form involves the culture of practicing mixed farming and mixed form of subsistence. The last form- the transhumance is a pastoralist practice that follows a cyclical pattern of migrations that usually take them to cool highland valleys in the summer and warmer lowlands in the winter. It is a seasonal migration between the same two locations in which they have regular encampments or stable villages often with permanent houses. They depend somewhat less on their animals for food than do the nomadic type. They are seen as the highly developed form of pastoralism practiced by sedentary cultures whose major economic activity is agriculture.

All the three forms of pastoralism belong to the Fulbe (popularly called the Fulani) pastoral culture. Pastoralism as Blench (1990) observe, is strongly associated with the Fulbe who are generally presented as a unitary group with a unitary culture. They are the most numerous and widely spread pastoralists across the West Africa region and have been known to seasonally migrate by traversing large distances across the countries in chiefly search for their livestock and subsistence. Their cultural ideology observes Sarkile etal (2016) requires ownership and maintenance of large herds of cattle including the spirit of cultural oligarchy (government by the few) in the mind of their children as well the maintenance of pure matrimonial lineage through endogamous (marriage within a specific social group or tribe) marriage culture. There are also three major groups of Fulbe tribes based especially on their settlement; the nomadic pastoralists (known as the *Mbororo*), the Semi-nomadic (or semi-sedentary) and finally, the settled/ sedentary Fulbe.

The economic importance of pastoralism was over stressed by researchers. It is according to Berger (2003) one of the most important activities from which millions drives their livelihood and a way of life of some millions in Sahalian zone. For FAO (Food and Agricultural Organization) cited in Muhammed (n.d), it provides 10% of the world's meat production and supports some 200 million pastoral households. Thousands of Nigerians, observes Iro cited in Muhammed (n.d) wholly or partly make a living from animal business, butchering and transporting herds. It is viewed or projected as having numerous advantages over other forms of keeping life stocks.

Pastoralism and the Nigerian Experience

In Nigeria, the exact era when the Fulbe (Fulani) pastoralists first began to expand is still unknown. The Fulani's who were traditionally nomadic in nature as history made us to understand, migrated en-mass into Hausa land sometimes in the 1300's (14th century). They lived peacefully with their host country until the late 18th century when the Fulani war broke out. The war (Jihad) led by Usman Danfodio resulted in the acquisition of some parts of

Hausa land by the Caliphate. In the South West, Fulbe pastoralist was established early in the nineteenth century in the region of Borgou. The semi-arid Savannas of Borgou, the sparsely populated region between Ilorin and Muslim courts of Nikiki (in present day Benin) favoured the development of large herds of keteku or Borgou cattle. From there, the Fulbe (Fulani) moved to region around Oyo and virtually as far as Abeokuta in the Colonial era.

In the whole, there are four major groups of pastoralists in Nigeria; the Fulbe (Fulani), the Shuwa-Arab, and the Baduma, the Kwanyaro. The last three groups were further divided into numerous subgroups. There are some fourteen other pastoral groups in Nigeria aside the Fulbe (Fulani). Just with most West African countries, the Fulbe (Fulani) pastoralists are the best known and the most numerous pastoralist group in Nigeria. They are, according to Ibrahim, Abdurrahman & Umar (2015) the largest owners of livestock accounting for about 90% of the nation's stock, contributing one third of the Agricultural Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 3.2% of the national GDP. Many of the herds grazing across the country, opines Zacharys (2012) belong to the Fulbe Siire (*Toronkawa*) who are rich patrons in the cities. The Fulbe Ladde (Fulani *Bororo*) who tends these herds is merely hired hands. Finally, there are two main pastoral corridors in Nigeria; the North West and the North-East. The first runs from Nigeria and Benin Republic through Sokoto, Zamfara, Kebbi, Katsina, Niger and Kwara states, and terminating in Oyo state. The second corridor, emanating from the Republic of Niger, Chad and Cameroon running through Borno, Yobe, Adamawa, Jigawa, Kano and Plateau states terminating in the Benue Niger basins. The major pastoralist groups identified above belong to these pastoral corridors, even though the Fulbe (Fulani) pastoralist of the north eastern region is considered the largest group of nomads in Nigeria.

An Overview of Herdsman (Pastoralist) – Farmers Conflict in Nigeria (Nature and Causes)

Conflict is an active disagreement between people with opposing opinions or principles. It is, according to Cambridge English Dictionary (2019) a fighting between two or more groups of people or countries. For some, it is not just a serious disagreement but an argument typically a protracted one (lasting for a long time). According to Njoku (2014), conflict arises from the pursuit of physical interests, goals and aspiration by individuals and or groups in defined social and physical environment. It can take any of these forms; task conflict, relationship conflict and value conflict. It can be positive when needed to sustain the life of the social reality or negative when it retards social reality or fabric. A critical appraisal of the conflict between the Herdsmen- Farmers communities in Nigeria obviously indicates a negative conflict considering the destructive/ dangerous effects it has on the lives and properties of the people.

The actual origin of the unhealthy and unpeaceful relationship among the pastoralists/ herdsmen- Farmers communities in Nigeria was traced back to the negative change recorded among the Fulani tribe, who were dominant pastoralist groups in Nigeria after the 1804 Holy War. The Fulbe (Fulani) tribes were earlier living peaceful with their Hausa neighbours until after the Jihad, which saw the unusual quest for control and dominance of the regions by the Fulani tribe. Before this period, even though there have been records of misunderstanding

and disputes among the Fulani's and the host communities, the disputes weren't as bloody and as frequent as they are today. The highly or most threatened states of the nation today are; Nasarawa, Zamfara and Plateau, Jigawa, Katsina and Kwara, Benue states all found within the North East and North Central.

The conflict among the two parties has assumed many forms and a wider dimension. The most popular nature has been the frequency of violent attack and invasion by the conflicting parties, resulting in massive killings, murder, kidnapping, raiding, destruction of houses and properties, displacement leading to accelerated number of internally displaced persons (IDP), increased rate of rural- urban migration. Notwithstanding slight difference recorded in some region, the experience and nature are relatively the same. Narrating the Benue state experience, Samuel Ortom (2019), the Governor of Benue state has this experience to share:

The history of nomadic herdsman attack on crop farmers in the state dates back to 2009, but 2011 was when the conflict assumed the dramatic serious status of widespread killings, injury and displacement of farmers from their ancestral lands. The attack reached the highest level after the threat of Miyetti Allah Kautal Hore on January 1, 2018 where more than 73 people were killed in one day (p.6).

The effect, according to the Governor was numerous:

Thousands of lives were lost. Benue state has been thrown into humanitarian and economic crisis of enormous proportions. Homes, schools, churches, health centres, security posts, roads, bridges, farms and other sources of livelihood have been destroyed. Over 180,000 numbers of officially designated Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps in most part of 2018, while over 500,000 displaced people have been living with relatives in uncompleted buildings and public spaces across several local government areas of Benue state (p.9).

Similar experience was recorded in north-central zone. According to the report, many people who caught herds of cattle feasting on their crops and had the boldness to protest were killed by herders or beheaded. In October, 2002, a series of attacks by well-armed groups was reported on villages in Jos with Berom people as the principal victims. Another such incident was recorded in Yakuru, in Kwara state in March, 2017. A farmer was murdered by cattle herders in a nearby community, farmers retaliated by killing 4 herders and the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) was reported to have threaten retaliation ([www. Google](http://www.Google)). In Taraba state, following the attack on Murbai, Kisbai, Sember and Yawai-Abbare villages of the Ardo Kola and Jalingo Local Government Area, residents of the sacked villages and adjoining communities have started fleeing to Jalingo, the state capital for fear of further attack (TODAY NEWS, May 12th 2019).

Even though Herdsmen- Farmers' conflict seems to be relatively new or uncommon in the South East, minimal cases have been reported in some parts of the region. On 5th may, 2019, in Imo state it was reported of an invasion by suspected herdsman in Umuorii/ Uratta

community in Owerri North L.G.A. One person was allegedly killed and another critically injured by the attackers. Many residents of the community fled the area for safety, while many youths combed the area in search of the suspected herdsmen. Tension mounted in the villages (www. Google). The case of Ezi-Nze in Udi local government area, of Enugu state was one such south east experience. According to Edo (2018), Fulani herdsmen kidnapped several young men demanding 2 million compensation for the purported killing of undisclosed number of cows out of which 600,000 has been paid. As a response to the south east experience/ attack, the different support groups/ association have issued a mandate at different level to the herdsmen. For example, the VEast (Voice of the East) in 2018 issued a notice mandating herdsmen to vacate south East states and Anioma in Delta and Ikwere in Rivers states up till August 31, 2018. The Ohanaze Youths Council (OYC) as observe by Anuolu (2018) was demanding all the Falani herdsmen operating in Igboland to vacate the region “Vacate Igbo Land or have yourself to blame”.

Research indicates that a lot of factors have been responsible for the increasing rate of attack and confrontation experienced among the two groups recently. Among these factors are the following dominant factors:

1. **Population Growth:** Population, is dynamic and ever increasing, never static. According to Gefu & Gills (cited in Ibrahim, abdurrahman & Umar, 2015), research shows that within a period of 35years (1951-1986) lands primarily meant for livestock grazing diminished by increase in population, while the number of livestock almost doubled. For the National Population Commission (2011), the population growth rate of Nigeria is 3.2%. With these, more and more people will continue to compete overland.
2. **Heavy Pressure on Land:** Pressure on land use has been observed as another factor that led to the increase rate of dispute/ attacks witnessed recently among the Herdsmen- Farmers communities in the country. Land use, especially in agricultural expansion, urbanization and other government construction works/projects has seriously affected the dominance of grazing land and pastoralism, and has acted as the major cause of the conflict. Farmers- Pastoralist conflict as observes by Blench (1990) has been associated with the conflict of land resource use exacerbated by dwindling resources. The use of tractors, herbicides and fertilizers as some observes, have revolutionalized agriculture in the country, leading to more and more grazing lands being farmed extensively. According to Iro (cited in Mohammed, n.d), pastoralists are also competing with large scale agricultural schemes that narrows the grazing lands. Emphasis was made to 1980 Nigerian Fadama agricultural project. The project, as some analysts observe has meant that herders and farmers are now competing directly to access the river banks with consequently increase in conflict. Fadama project they further observe, occupies over three hectares of land with core states mostly in the Sahalian zone. In most of these states, Fadama water, ponds and rivulets formerly used as walking points for livestock are now converted to sources of irrigation water to the discomfort of the pastoralists. Added to this, they maintains, is the delay of the core Fadama states to comply with the recommendation of the 1996

World Bank mission which required agricultural development project to set aside 20 percent of the Fadama for pastoral purposes. Farmland, they opine, increase to the detriment of grazing lands. Animals can easily veer into farmlands to destroy crops.

3. **Climatic change challenge:** This has been identified as another factor that triggers the unhealthy confrontation recorded in the present time among the two conflicting communities in Nigeria. Change in climate, especially drought affects pastoral activities; forcing pastoralist to move South wards in search of pasture for their livestock. Climatic change induced rainfall shifting patterns, this result in heavy wave of migration because of the shortage of grazing pastures, especially, in the dry season. Dispute, observes Mohammed (n.d) flares up as migratory livestock in search of water and pasture would sometimes graze on farmers land and use their water point. The 1973 drought of Sahalian Zone of Africa, south of Sahara was one of such climatic threats. The farmers complain about animals wandering on the cropland as critical growth periods and that trampling compacts the soil; making tillage in the next planting season difficult.
4. **Unregulated migration and desertification:** Another factor towards the increasingly rate of attack/ misunderstanding among the two communities in recent time has been greatly associated with the lack of regulation by the Nigerian government on foreign pastoralist movement into the country, leading to desert encroachment by these foreign headers. This is believed to increase the numbers of pastoralists operating in the country, often resulting in desertification and competition/ rivalry over grazing lands. The first experience of such external movement/ migration was traced to the 1973 drought of Sahalian Zone of Africa, South of the Sahara. The drought brought with it for the first time the appearance of Hanagamba Fulani en-mass with large numbers of livestock, whose original home country is Niger Republic into Northern Nigeria. Their appearance have heightened competition over grazing grass or pasture, water points and also led to congestion that is occasioned by animal's disease.

One of the immediate effects of this is the unusual desert encroachment by these foreign herders. The threat to national security and stability has been another great effect. As a matter of fact, most of the violent and bloody attacks by the herdsmen are often associated or traced to this foreign herders/ herdsmen in the country. This was once reemphasized by the president of Nigeria, Buhari while addressing the Nigeria communities at a town hall meeting in Dubia on April 9, 2019. The president observes Ortom (2019) absolved Nigerian herdsmen of involvement in killings, laying the blame on those "cattle rearers from Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, Cameroon and other cattle herders. Kperogi (2018) also attributed the unhealthy relationship among the two communities in the recent time to foreign herders. According to him, even before the incursion of blood thirsty Bororo pastoralists into Nigeria, farmers occasionally had clash with settled herders, but the clash weren't usually as bloody and as frequent as they are now. Stressing the security threats further, Zacharys (2012) observes that the manner in which nomad's criss-cross the national boundaries, penetrating deeply into countries like Nigeria is capable of undermining national security at many levels.

- 5. Social, political, tribal and religious sentiments:** Added to the above factors has been the unhealthy sentiments/ bias witnessed among Nigerians across social, political, tribal and religious dimensions. Many unhealthy myths and sentiments have been paraded by Nigerians and this instead of helping to address the problem has gone as far as worsening the problem. As a matter of fact, gradual decline in social cohesion, ethno centric and religious intolerance couple with political sentiments, as researchers observes, instigated conflicts among the Herdsmen- Farmers communities in Nigeria. The exhibition of selfishness and lack of mutual interest/ position by the present government and stakeholders is considered by many as another factor hindering any meaningful dialogue among the two conflicting communities.

Conflict Resolution Measures/ Strategies in Nigeria

Conflict Resolution is defined by Wikipedia, the free Encyclopedia dictionary as the methods and processes involved in facilitating the peaceful ending of conflict and retribution. It can be simply seen as a way for two or more parties to find a peaceful solution to a disagreement among them. Since the emergence of pastoralism in Nigeria, the country had made and still making some efforts toward its maintenance and sustainability; cutting across the three eras- pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial. The very first move as history made us to understand was traced immediately after the Uthman Danfodio Jihad in 1804. According to Zacharys (2012), here a grazing reserve was created even though this was tagged by some as Fulani agenda instead of a national agenda aimed at creating grazing reserve for their bororo kith and kin across the areas they had influence on. These reserves were later formalized by then British Government. This was followed by effort to change the scope of namadism in 1901 from nomadic lifestyle to a sedentary lifestyle. This was attributed to the devastating effects of drought which occurred in some part of Northern Nigeria. The first actual idea came in 1942 and the first trial settlement was at Riyom near Jos Plateau state. To encourage Pastoralist to settle, each herding household unit was allocated a piece of land, encouraged to practice mixed farming and develop pasture. The plan did not last long because it was over-run by tin mining operations. This was followed by the 1954 World Bank proposal which resulted after the review of the nature of pastoralism in Nigeria. According to their review, range grazing practices was a serious impediment to livestock development and modernization. They recommended the settlement or what is referred to as “stabilization” as the most important factor in the expansion and modernization of production. Three major proposals according to Ibrahim, Abdrrahman & Umar (2015) was advanced for immediate development:

1. Establishment of grazing reserves to be protected by law
2. Provision of land rights to the pastoralist and;

3. The development of communal villages in grazing reserves as a means of bringing livestock into peasant agriculture

In late 1950's forestry authorities was approved, which was tied to the recognition of the growing problem of diminishing grazing land in the late 1950's. An agreement as observe by Abdullahi, Daneyel & Aliyara (n.d) was reached that grazing in certain forest reserves could be allowed in order to provide the wet season "*Mashekar*" (alternative) for the pastoralist and indeed as a measure to avoid ever-increasing pastoralists- farmers clashes of the wet season. Control grazing in these forest reserves was started in the early 1960's after embarking on technical training by the staff and receiving of financial support from International Agencies, such as USAID. Consequently, the forest reserves at Wase, Kukar- Jangarai, Zamfara-Anke, Udubo and Falgoro were selected. It was after five years of independence in 1965 that the Northern Regional Government enacted the Grazing Reserve law. The law according to Zacharys (2012) allowed for a minimum of 10% of the country's land area to be legally acquired and constituted into grazing reserves for lease allocation to grazing. At the present, observes Abdullahi (2017), 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 500,000 hectares. This was followed by the Federal Government assisted by USAID in 1976 establishment of hundreds of reserves for use by nomadic families. This again could not succeed. The failure as observe by Zacharys (2012) was attributed to the skewed nature of the concept, explaining the incessant clashes between the intended beneficiaries of the concept and farmers across the country from Southern Kaduna to Oyo.

There were other remarkable efforts recorded in late 20th century. In 1990 was the introduction of the Nomadic Education Programme (NEP). The idea as recorded came up as a result of the annual, seasonal migration of the Fulbe (Fulani) and their livestock as well as the effects of their mass movement across the country which significantly affects the socio-economic and environmental activities across the nation. Consequently, the Federal Government, Academic Institutions and various organizations in Nigeria and abroad have commissioned numerous studies to gain comprehensive understanding of ways of nomadic Fulbe tribe with the view to improve their living standards as well as national development. To this effect, Nomadic Education Programme (NEP) was set up by the Federal Government in 1990 to take care of educational needs of the nomads. Although the traditional culture of pure nomadic people prefers their traditional education system, as such, the programme will be more effective among the transhumance or Agro-pastoralist groups who have a settled or sedentarization lifestyle.

Another Federal Government measure in the 21st century, especially with regards to having an acceptable law on grazing was the National Grazing Route and Reserve Commission Bill of 2011. The Bill failed to scale through a third reading as the Senators were divided over whether the Federal Government was constitutionally empowered to create grazing reserves and stock routes in any state of the federation. This was followed by the three recent Bills presented before the Federal Government Lawmakers:

1. National Grazing Reserve Establishment Bill, 2015 (HB 448)

2. National Grazing Route and Reserve Commission Establishment Bill 2016 (HB 539) and;
3. National Grazing Reserve Agency Establishment Bill, 2016

Proponent of the Bills argue that once passed, it will reduce the incessant clashes between nomadic pastoralists and farmers in different parts of the country and in the course, have reminded Nigerians that the idea of grazing reserves and corridors is not new in the country. However, in 2016 Senators voted for the withdrawal of the bill with the argument that is not constitutional because legislation over land belonged to the states and not the federal government. In addition to this, was the claim to legal inconsistency put up by some Nigerians in support of the withdrawal of the Bill, with the charge that the designation of land across the country for grazing by predominantly Muslim pastoralist is a ploy to Islamize Nigeria and for some, it is an intention to arbitrarily obtain land.

The recent development / proposal by the federal government towards resolving the conflict between the Pastoralists- Farmers communities in the country is the establishment of ‘Cattle Colony’ project across the states of the federation. The concept was proposed by the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Audu Ogbah. He believes that cattle colony is the way to go in order to drastically reduce incessant violent confrontations between cattle herders and farmers, especially, in places like Benue, Kaduna and Plateau states. According to him, Cattle Colony is not using herdsmen to colonize any state. It is going to be done in partnership with state government that will like to volunteer land for it. The Federal government will fund the project and those wishing to benefit from it will pay some fees (PLAC, 2019). Justifying the project further, the Minister observes that it would result in increasing the agricultural yields of meat and milk production. The argument for having a cattle colony observes PLAC, are generally centered on creating employment opportunities, large scale production of foods for domestic consumption, generating internally generated revenue in states and helping to give Fulani nomads a sense of belonging while bringing their culture in conformity with 21st century realities. Just with previous attempts and measures advanced, the proposal for cattle colonies across the states of the federation has confronted with a lot of criticism from Nigerian citizens. Some sees it as unconstitutional, discriminating and offensive concept. For this group, how can a private business become the burden of the country? According to the critics, it is simply a ploy to give free land to rich cattle owners who are running private businesses. Others questioned why the Federal Government could not extend its benevolence in giving lands to farmers too. The other group argued that “cattle colony” is a euphemism for Islamization of Nigeria. Although 16 states were reported to have offered land for the project, even though many still query if the donated land is government owned or private land. Some states, especially in north central and south east reject firmly to the idea, claiming that the idea is impractical and having limited land for agricultural activities in the state (PLAC, 2019).

The latest measure or proposal, though has been temporarily suspended is the *RUGA* settlement (Rural Grazing Areas) project. According to the proponent of the project, the advantages of the *RUGA* project are numerous; to ensure all those herdsmen are gathered in an enclosure, they wouldn’t have the guts to vandalize someone’s property. It will have a

head that controls herdsmen. Added to this they maintain is the challenges of pastoralism, especially, the nomadic type in this 21st century. Moving cattle from one location to the other while crop farming keeps expanding will only create clashes. RUGA project, they insist is the best solution in this century. Still yet the newest project has faced with tensed criticism from Nigerians. According to the critics, no matter how it is dressed, RUGA connotes no other thing than a measure in ethnic domination and conquest as it seeks to create territories for Fulani people all over the country. There is, according to them, therefore no way the RUGA settlements project is going to sell as it smacks only a desire for land-grabbing, dominion and conquest. There can, they continue, be no convincing reason why the Federal Government would make cattle business a national affair the way it's being done presently if there was no hidden agenda (<https://www.vanguardngr.com>, 2010/07).

In addition to the Federal Government development strategies/ measures are numerous other efforts across states and communities. Ekiti state in 2016 passed into law the prohibition of cattle and other ruminant grazing in the state. Edo state presented a Bill for a law to establish the Edo State Control of Nomadic Cattle Rearing/ Grazing Law and for the other purposes. In 2017, Taraba state came up with Anti- open Grazing prohibition and Ranches establishment Bill; a Bill for a law to prohibit open rearing and grazing of livestock and provide the establishment of ranches. Same was recorded in Benue state. In 2017, the Benue state House of Assembly passed into law the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Bill. The Bill according to the state Governor, Orthom (2019) is aimed at embracing what is considered the global best practice of animal husbandry.

Challenges to Conflict Resolution among Herdsmen- Farmers Communities in Nigeria

The reason why up till this day there is yet any sustainable and effective measures that could be acceptable by the conflicting parties, and of course, to Nigerians as a whole remain a source of worry to many concern Nigerians. As can be seen above, the Nigerian Government, at the Federal and states levels had made numerous efforts and still making some efforts towards ensuring that the menace caused by the misunderstanding and disputes between the Pastoralist/ Herdsmen and Farmers communities is eradicated, or at least, reduced to a minimal level. Yet, report before us daily indicates an increase in the rate of attack and confrontations among the two parties in the country today. The findings of the present study reveals that there many underlying factors, especially, in the form of latent claims/ positions responsible for the inability of the Government and other stakeholders to come up with a generally acceptable measures on the conflict. Prominent among these claims and positions among the conflicting parties are the following:

1. **Migratory / Constitutional Rights:** Dominant position shared among the Pastoralist/ Herdsmen community in Nigeria is the claim to constitutional right to migration and free movement in the country. According to the Pastoralist community, their movement and migration is protected by the constitution and as such, any policy or law against it is geared towards the deprivation of this right. The migratory movement as they maintains, is fundamental to pastoralism and has been recognized by both the constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) and Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS)

Stock-Rearing Action Plan 2011, which recognizes pastoralist's right to move stock from one region to another, protects access to water in settled agricultural regions and facilities cross-border trade. Migration they observed is fundamental to pastoralism and has been the traditional system of keeping livestock existing from time immemorial. They also, according to Sarkile & etel, (2016) hold strong belief that their seasonal rhythm through migration in search of a better environment for the cattle, pasture land as well as land that is free from cattle disease is an endless life style. This is why past measures are placed on creation of grazing reserve or route to enhance this movement/ Migration.

Acknowledging the challenges confronting nomadic pastoralism posed in the 21st century, Pastoralist (mostly in advanced) countries have started working for more compatible measures with the present century, such as establishment of Ranches, encouragement of sedentary lifestyle etc. It is in line with this obvious reality, observe the Minister of Agriculture, Audu Ogbeh, that the Federal Government saw the establishment of cattle colonies across the states as a suitable strategy in the present century. The recent proposal of RUGA is also advanced by the Federal government as a means to address the challenges of open grazing/ nomadic in the present era. Unfortunately these measures are still disputed among Nigerians and the conflicting parties.

2. Invasion: Invading the communities by Herdsmen is one of the latent claims by the Farmers. According to them, the indiscriminate open grazing on farm lands and the recent proposals of establishment cattle colonies and RUGA project by the Government are all ploys to invade their communities and take over their lands. Seeing the movement of the herdsmen as an intrusion, the farmers and the affected immediate communities sees it as a move that must be resisted at all cost. The claim of invasion in Benue state by armed herdsmen was once stressed by the Governor of Benue state, Samuel Orthom; "I personally briefed His Excellency, President Muhammadu Buhari on the security challenges in Benue State, particularly the invasion and killing of innocent people of the state by armed militia and the inevitable need to find a lasting solution and permanent peace "(Orthom, 2019; p.4). The same claim of invasion was justified in the statement of the National President of Miyetti Allah Kautal Hore, Alahaji Abdullahi Bello Badejo and Secretary General Engr. Salah Alhassan during a World Press Conference held in Abuja on Tuesday 30th May, 2017. As a move against the prohibition of Open Grazing and Ranches Establishment Law in Benue State, the Association was reported to have called on "Fulani herdsmen across West Africa to invade Benue, and to help them reclaim their land (Nation Newspaper, 31st May, 2019; p.4). Because of the claim towards invasion, most communities and groups especially south east has issued and official "quit notice" to the Fulani Herdsmen to vacate their land or face the consequences. This also explains the resistance and suspicion of recent measures by the government by the Farmers and Nigerians especially, in north central and south east regions of the country.

3. Religious Motives: Similarly some Nigerians, especially, among non-Muslim communities share the claim that open grazing of stocks by the Fulani herdsmen and the recent proposals by the government are geared not only towards invasion but has beneath it a

religious motives. According to this group, it was and remains a ploy to forcefully Islamize the entire country by Muslims through Fulani Herdsmen.

Religion, as research in Religion and Society reveals has strong influence on the relationship of people in especially, multi-religious background like Nigeria. The influence has cut- across the social, political and even economic lives of the country. As a matter of fact, conflict in Nigeria has now been subsumed into broader dichotomy of religion and disputes over access to resources. The religious claim is always intense when the two parties belong to different religious groups. According to Iro (cited in Ibrahim, Abdurrahman & Umar, 2015), there are recorded cases of blocking of waterholes by farmers and fishermen, crop damage by pastoralist livestock and reprisal attacks on pastoralist by sedentary farmers when ethnic or religious disputes occur somewhere else.

These claims and positions have posed a big stumbling block to any meaningful conflict resolution plan and dialogue ever proposed or advanced in the country.

Conclusion

The study has eventually succeeded in unveiling the latent threats towards conflict resolution among Herdsmen and Farmers communities in Nigeria. The most influencing factors were reflected in claims, myths, fears and even assumptions propagated by the two conflicting parties and their immediate communities. Obviously, open grazing (movement of flocks by nomads) has been confronted with a lot of challenges in the modern time, especially, when considered under the advancement recorded in agricultural production, population growth and security threat. As such, most advanced countries have resorted to a more compatible method; such as establishment of Ranches. In Nigeria, measures such as establishment of cattle colonies and RUGA are seen as compatible methods by the Government. Unfortunately, the claim of invading and Islamizing the communities through the proposed measures posed a great challenge to the acceptance of the projects/ measures and of course a threat to conflict resolution between the two conflicting communities in the country. The study therefore recommends that for the Government and interested Stakeholders to arrive at an effective conflict resolution measure among the pastoralist/ herdsmen and farmers, they should put into consideration the different tribal and religious backgrounds of the people. Attention should be placed on such measures that will be acceptable to Nigerians despite their diverse backgrounds (social, cultural, religious etc) and worldviews.

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Abbreviation: ECOWAS- Economic Commission of West African States; FAO- Food and Agricultural Organization; MACBAN- Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria; PLAC- Police and Legal Advocacy Centre; OYC- Ohanaze Youth Council; VEAST- Voice of the East.