



## **Addressing Pastoral Conflicts in Nigeria: A Thematic Overview**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Conflicts between farmers and nomadic cattle herders have become a common feature of economic livelihood in West Africa. In recent times, Nigeria has witnessed series of violent clashes arising from the activities of the farmers and nomadic herdsman, who move about on a daily basis with their cattle in search of water and green pastures. The paper discussed the strategies governments have adapted to addressing conflicts resulting from various violent clashes between nomadic herdsman and farmers in Nigeria and observed that their relationships in the previous years have been cordial and symbiotic. Relevant published texts across the country and the eclectic theory provided the leverage for the study. It revealed that the Nigeria's population is dynamic and growing at a very rapid rate compared to land that is relatively static which constitutes the most important cause of pressure and demand for food resources. Whenever violent clashes occur, the nomadic herdsman attack and kill scores of villagers in the course of a contest for grazing fields and water, there are usually reprisal attacks. This paper discovered that this scenario has, time without number, thrown up tribal, ethnic, regional, religious and political sentiments that threaten the corporate existence of Nigeria. It is, therefore, recommended among others that government should ensure that those involved in the allocation of land for farming should imbibe responsibility and not allocate along cattle route or over grazing lands to avoid encroachment by nomadic herdsman.

**Keywords:** Conflict, Nomadic Herdsman, Farmers, Violent clashes, Nigeria.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Herders have been driving their cattle across the Sahel region of Africa for centuries and the Fulani reportedly make up 90 percent of these herders. The Fulani are an ethnic group numbering in the order of 20 million and are found in several West and Central African countries, especially Nigeria. Many of them are nomadic or semi-nomadic herders. Traditionally, the relationship between nomadic herders and sedentary farmers throughout the region has been relatively violence free, if at times contentious. Herders migrate seasonally to graze their livestock, and in return for grazing rights, fertilise farmland. However more recently, tensions and violence have increasingly flared between herders and farmers with some estimates suggesting that in Nigeria alone up to 60,000 people have been killed in clashes since 2001(Crisis Group,2017).

ACLED summarised the violence engulfing central Nigeria during the first four 9months of 2016 as follows:

significant violence has been recorded in the southeastern states of Benue and Taraba between January and April (see Figure 4), with more recent fatalities reported in late April in Enugu (Vanguard 26 April 2016). The perpetrators of the attacks are identified as nomadic Fulani herder militias engaging in cattle raiding against the settled farming populations of those states. There have also been reports of retaliatory violence and clashes between the Fulani militias and other communal groups (France24, 1 March 2016). The most fatal of these incidents was a series of attacks targeting Agatu communities in Benue, believed to have been carried out by Fulani militias, which killed at least 200 in late February 2016 (Vanguard, 14 February 2016). Last week, attacks attributed to Fulani militias were reported in Enugu, resulting in dozens killed after at least seven villages were attacked (IBT, 26 April 2016). These incidents represent a dramatic increase in violence in this region; violence of this type has historically been associated with the northern and central regions of Nigeria (Quartz Africa, 30 April 2016).

In its analysis on events between January 2016 and January 2017 ACLED noted: “Other dynamics represented by February’s 2016] spike in violence is the ongoing conflict between largely Fulani herders and non-Fulani farmers in central Nigeria. The primary group driving this violence is Fulani ethnic militias, which were involved in twice as many events in 2016 as all other ethnic militia groups recorded by ACLED in Nigeria combined and were responsible for four times as many fatalities. Although events involving Fulani ethnic militias included several battles, the vast majority of these events were violence against civilians which resulted in 884 fatalities, representing an average of 11.8 fatalities per event, even higher than Boko Haram over the same time period. Many of these attacks, which were most prevalent during 2016 in the states of Benue, Kaduna, and Taraba have also resulted in large displacements of people and often involved the burning down of homes and villages which could amount to ethnic cleansing. The disputes behind the violence allegedly focus on the use of resources such as farmlands, grazing areas, and water, with both sides claiming grievances against the other”. Reporting on the ‘Farmer-Fulani Herder Violence in Benue, Kaduna and Plateau States’, the ACAPS thematic report provided the following ‘crisis overview’ covering 2016:

The longstanding violence between herders and farmers in Nigeria’s Benue, Kaduna, and Plateau states has increased in recent years. In 2016, at least 800 people were killed in southern Kaduna and 1,269 in Benue state, where at least 14 of the 23 LGAs were invaded. The February 2016 attack on 10 villages in Agatu LGA, for instance, displaced over 7,000 people (Reuters 13/2/2017; Premium Times 10/8/2016). With the state government unable to provide or maintain camps and relief, IDPs are unable to meet their basic needs. At least 62,000 people have been displaced in the three states since 2015 (Punch 08/10/2016; Vanguard 17/10/2015). Attacks are characterised by large-scale destruction of farmlands and property, rape, robbery, abduction, and displacement of farmers. Several farming communities report receiving letters from herders that warns of an impending attack. Reprisal attacks are also very common. Not all incidents are reported.

In Nigeria, this conflict is driven by the increases in population that have contributed to resource scarcity and desertification. Ambiguous land laws and a weak rule of law, especially in rural areas, have also played a part. Tensions between the Fulani, the majority of whom are Muslim, and farmers, of whom the majority in Nigeria for example are Christian, is largely driven by economic causes and low levels of Positive Peace. However, the conflict is also influenced by ethno-religious differences. The herders are mostly Muslim Fulani while the farmers are usually Christians, and are made up of a number of different ethnic groups. The conflict is exacerbated by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, which come from a combination of a porous Nigerian border, and the conflicts in Mali and Libya, plus a lack of accountability and absence of state security forces (BBC 05/05/2016). Farmers consistently accuse herders of molestation, damaging crops, failing to control their animals, and deliberately acting in a provocative manner (Vanguard 12/02/2017; Vanguard 02/03/2017; BBC 05/05/2016). The herders, through the Myetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) describe themselves as victims of cattle rustling by farmers and of stereotyping and criminal profiling (Vanguard 01/05/2016; Daily Trust 06/02/2017).

Of particular concern is the increasing terror threat from radicalised Fulani in Nigeria, where there is already an ongoing violent conflict between herders and farmers. The ongoing conflict over land use in Nigeria has been exacerbated by worsening droughts, erratic rainfall and land degradation. This has contributed to thousands of deaths in recent years, resulting in a strong government response. Events in the GTD attributed to 'Fulani Extremists' reflect the use of terrorism as a tactic in the conflict between pastoralists and farmers, rather than the existence of an organized terrorist group (GTI, 2019). The essence of this paper to identify and discuss the strategies government in Nigeria have put in addressing this menaces.

### **Contextualizing Conflict**

The study of conflict in Africa has not always been mindful of the need to consider the interaction of local and international factors in the evolution of conflicts between African Nations. Conflict in African is not susceptible to prediction, although it can be explained. Overt manifestations of conflict are seldom unremitting, even in relations between rival cultures (Robert, 2001). Conflict is a particular relationship between states or rival factions within a state which implies subjective hostilities or tension manifested in subversive economic or military hostilities (Quincy, 2001).

The term conflict refers to a situation of hostility between individuals, groups, or states resulting from competition over resources, power, or opposing interests in other areas (James, 2000). Individuals need each other for survival; along the way conflict is unavoidable. What is important for all parties is that differences be reconciled without resort to violence. Goodhand and Hulme (2009), note that 'conflict is only a problem when society cannot represent, manage or resolve its different interests in a productive manner, thus initiating a degenerative or destructive cycle of physical violence. Conflicts are as old as human societies themselves. Historically, individuals, social groups and societies have disputed and competed against one another over scarce commodities and resources land, money, political power, and ideology. They have even fought one another and bitterly sought the elimination and/or subjugation of rivals, in order to control these resources and commodities (Reichel, 2008). Similarly conflict is defined as a situation in which two or more parties strive to acquire the same scarce resources at the same time. It occurs between people in all kinds of human relationships and in all social settings. Because of the wide range of potential differences among people, the absence of conflict usually signals the absence of meaningful interaction. Conflict by itself is neither good nor bad. However, the manner in which conflict is handled determines whether it is constructive or destructive (Deutsch & Coleman, 2010).

In addition, Conflict refers, when two or more values, perspectives and opinions are contradictory in nature and have not been values and perspectives are threatened; or discomfort from fear of the unknown or from lack of fulfillment. Conflict is inevitable and often good, for example, good teams always go through a "form, storm, norm and perform" period. Getting the most out of diversity means often contradictory values, perspectives and opinions (McNamara, 2007). Nathan (2007) on the other hand asserts that conflict is also a nature consequence of major reform and of popular pressure for fundamental political or economic change. Furthermore, (Spangler, 2003) states that conflict tends to arise over non-negotiable issues such as fundamental human needs, intolerable moral difference or high stakes distributional issues regarding essential resources such as water or land. Accordingly, conflict is inherent to all societies. Differences in interests and opinions between groups are natural, but the method by which such differences are expressed and managed determine if conflicts manifest themselves in either non violent or violent ways.

Conflict takes various forms and dimensions in African societies; it is significant to note that conflict is difficult to define from the perspective of the Africans. It seems to be part of excitement for networking relationship, whether negative or positive. Consequently, conflicts are in the magnitude of rage, rift, misunderstanding, family and market brawls, skirmishes and wars, public insurrections and assaults. It also includes chieftaincy and boundary disputes. These storms of conflicts are wide spread in Africa (Olaoba, 2005). Conflict as an element of social interaction has been defined in various dimensions. Some writers argued that, a conflict situation emerges when two or more parties could not agree on an issue. The parties to such conflict may not necessary be the government or nation states. In an incompatible stage among nation- states, every part involved seeks to achieve certain objectives, such as additional or more secure territory, security, access to markets, prestige, alliances and the overthrow of an unfriendly government (Omotosho, 2004). Conflict can be described as a

condition in which are identifiable group of human beings whether tribal, ethnic, linguistic, religious, socio-political, economic, cultural or otherwise is in conscious opposition to one or more other identifiable human group because these groups are pursuing what to be incompatible goals. More importantly, conflict arises from the interaction of individuals who have partly, incompatible ends, in which the ability of one actor to gain his ends, depends to an important degrees on the choice or decisions that other parties will take.

Conflict could be violent on uncontrollable dominant or recessive, resolvable or insolvable under various sets or circumstances (Omotosho, 2004). Mohammed argues that conflicts are inevitable wherever severe resources are unequally distributed among competitors and inequity is reflected in cultural and political relationship between groups. With regards to various issues in dealing with conflict, it is important to bear in mind not just overt, physical violence, but also the sometimes subtly disguised forms of structural and cultural violence (Adam, 2000).

## **Theoretical Framework of Analysis**

### **Eclectic Model**

Eclectic model was developed by Dahrendorf (1959). The central tenet of the eclectic model is that civil conflicts are the products of confluence of factors- cultural, economic, historical, political, and social among others which necessitate combining multiple theoretical approaches in order to arrive at acceptable explanations. This simply means they are used mechanically without any real effort at integrating them or assessing the logical implications of adhering to one view while simultaneously endorsing another (Sanderson, 1987). Eclecticism holds that any particular problem must be explained from different angles so as to bring to bear diversity of approaches. This is essential because each approach only provides partial insight into the nature of the problem, whereas the combination of approaches gives a complete picture of the problem (Sanderson, 1987). That is, given the complexity of civil conflicts, a single variable or factor is insufficient to explain the causes of these phenomena (Kieh, 2002). Miner (1990 cited in Kieh (2002) argues that “at the heart of the (Sudanese) conflict has been an amalgam of religious and racial, political and economic tensions defying easy description.” He contends further that it is the synergy of these factors that occasioned the outbreak of the Sudanese civil war in 1956. Copson (1991) attributes conflicts in the North Central geo political zones to a combination of factors. Accordingly to him, poverty based on individual and regional disparities, for example, manifest in the degradation of unemployment and underemployment, works as an inducement in persuading people to engage in violence. Politically, Copson cites repression, the abuse of human rights, and the concentration of power at the political center as conflict precipitants.

Stedman (2007) asserts that “conflicts in Nigeria arise from problems basic to all populations: the tugs and pulls of different identities, the distribution of resources and access to power, and competing definitions of what is right, fair and just.” In other words, he posits that there is a broad universe of ethnic, economic, political, and moral factors that occasion conflicts in the North Central geo political zones. Garuba (2008) identifies an array of factors that contribute to civil conflicts in the North Central geo political zones. The paucity of resources brings even the most equitable sharing arrangements under acute stress. Also, the level of ignorance among the masses makes them highly susceptible to both internal exploitation and external manipulation. Moreover, the North Central peoples are more economically vulnerable. Treading a similar path, Imobighe (2009) describes a host of factors that precipitate civil conflicts in Africa. He cites inequalities in access to power and resources. In conclusion, the precipitants of civil conflicts can be divided into two major categories which are: the contingent and proximate (Kieh, 2002). The former consists of those long-term deeply rooted conditions that date back to the very formation of the society; however, they are not sufficient to precipitate a civil conflict. The latter serves as “trigger mechanism” for the outbreak of civil conflict. As “lighting rods,” they are dependent on the contingent factors.

The above arguments authenticate the necessity of eclectic approach to conflict studies. Researchers in the field of sociology and anthropology appear to have produced scholarly works that advocate eclecticism. Some critics are of the opinion that eclectic approach suffers from several crucial defects. Sander (1987) avers that acceptance of diverse theoretical perspectives which the theory connotes, eclecticism obviously leads to hopelessly self- contradictory argument that generate far more confusion than insight. It is antithetical to the widely accepted scientific aim of simplicity as its arguments increase rather than decrease the number of explanatory concepts and principles that must

be relied on in analysis. The theory frustrates efforts at seeing the world as fundamentally unified and coherent but rather as complex and disjointed (Maxwell, 2004). Eclecticism often leads to adoption of theories which are not linked together or inter-penetrate each other as they are often mutually exclusive (Harris, 2009). Finally, eclectic theory runs counter to the basic mechanism of rationality and progress in science. This is because the idea of testing and evaluating theories before coming up with the best one to adopt is made impossible and as such undermines that which makes science uniquely successful (Sander, 2007).

Despite the criticisms against eclecticism, the approach provides a framework for the analysis of conflict in this study. The superiority of this model to other theories examined above is seen in its comprehensiveness and inclusiveness, providing the basis for the analysis of multifactor etiology of conflict. Suffice to say that eclecticism is the only framework that can produce thorough explanations of the confluence of factors precipitating conflict. An individual theory can only give a partial understanding of reality, hence the need for joining together several theories to have a true complete understanding of the phenomenon under study.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The paper adopted a descriptive analytical method and relied essentially on researches conducted across the country with emphasis on the reported cases of violent clashes between farmers and nomadic herdsmen. Relevant published texts such as articles, books and reports provided the leverage for the study. The materials were assessed with a view to bringing to the fore the demographic implications of incessant violent clashes between nomadic herdsmen and farmers on resources sustainability and its effects on the economic development in Nigeria.

### **The Government's Strategic Response to the Herdsmen-Farmer Conflict**

In examining this hypothesis, we are going to discuss these strategic responses in themes: Creation of Grazing Reserves in 1965:

Peace and Security Forum Policy Brief (2017) on "Resolving the Herders/Farmers Conflict in Nigeria", Posited that in 1965 the northern regional government initiated one of the first attempts to respond to the herdsmen-farmer conflict in the country. The grazing reserves allocated large portions of land to be exclusively used by herders to rear their livestock. However, the grazing reserve system was not supported adequately. The government was still in the process of initiating legislations to legitimise the grazing reserves before natural factors such as population growth and other related consequences like urbanisation, and migration encroached on these designated areas reducing the herders' chances of accessing the reserves. It is clear that Nigeria have to plan towards the transformation of pastoralism into settled forms of animal husbandry. The establishment of grazing reserves provides the opportunity for practicing a more limited form of pastoralism and is therefore a pathway towards a more settled form of animal husbandry. Nigeria has a total of 417 grazing reserves out of which only about 141 (Yusuf, 2014) have been gazette. Whether we support or oppose pastoralism, it is clear that at least in the short and medium term, many herds must continue to practice seasonal migration between dry and wet season grazing areas. Ultimately, there is the need for permanent settlement of pastoralists.

Currently, Nigeria has a total of 417 grazing reserves all over the country, out of which only about 141 have been gazetted. There are many problems facing the implementation of the provisions of the 1965 Grazing Reserve Law and the management of the established grazing reserves. First, most of the grazing reserves were established by the then Northern Regional Government. Since the 1970's subsequent military and civilian governments have in effect abandoned the policy of establishing and developing grazing reserves. Secondly, State governments have not been diligent in sustaining previous policies and have not surveyed and gazetted most of the designated grazing reserves. Indeed, only 113 (about 27%) of the 417 proposed grazing reserves have been gazetted.

### ***Establishment of the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) in 1989:***

The federal government in 1989 established the NCNE and it is supported by the Nigerian legal system. The main goal 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.

***The Use of the Armed Forces to Curb Internal Security:***

One of the 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. The political, economic and social systems of a country create the conditions for security and insecurity. Security is a first-order or necessary precondition for the development of human beings and society. Therefore, security is the most basic need of human beings and societies. Recognizing the significance of security as the precondition for the survival of the Nigerian people and nation, the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provided in section 14 (1) (b) that "the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government" (FGN, 1999). For example, in Plateau state, in 2001, the government deployed a Special Task Force called Operation Safe Haven (STF-OSH) to check insecurity resulting from the herdsmen-farmers clashes. Following the 1 January attacks in Benue state, he also dispatched 663 additional personnel to support existing units in the affected areas. He subsequently assigned five additional mobile police units to Nasarawa state. The new deployments are from the anti-riot Police Mobile Force, Police Special Forces, counterterrorism units, conventional policemen, officers from the Police Explosive Ordnance Department, Special Police Joint Intelligence and Investigation Teams, and Police Aerial Surveillance Teams (Police Helicopters). On 5 February, the police commissioner in Benue state, Fatai Owoseni, reported that police headquarters had deployed fifteen additional units, including Special Forces as well as technical and intelligence teams, to support officers on ground. On 9 January, President Buhari ordered Idris to relocate to Benue state and remain there until the killings stopped – the police chief spent two days in the state and left.

In February 2018, the Nigerian Army commenced Exercise Ayem Akpatuma covering Benue, Taraba, Kogi, Nasarawa, Kaduna and Niger states, in order to tackle kidnappings, herdsmen/farmer' clashes, among others. The Nigerian Air Force (NAF) inducted its first indigenous operational Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV), Tsaigumi. The newly-inducted UAV has day and night capability, an operational endurance in excess of 10 hours, a service ceiling of 15,000 feet and a mission radius of 100km, and is capable of being used for policing operations, disaster management, convoy protection, maritime patrol, pipeline, power line monitoring as well as mapping and border patrol duties.

The Nigerian Air Force (NAF) established 10 new Units as NAF had concluded plans to set up Quick Response Wings (QRWs) across Nasarawa State, in a bid to tackle the herders/farmers clashes plaguing some states within the axis. The Nigerian Army extended Exercise Ayem Akpatuma in Taraba State by two months. The air force has also established new stations and deployed more assets, including 1,300 personnel and two Mi-35 helicopter gunships, to the region. On 19 June, the Whirl Stroke 1 force commander, Major General Adeyemi Yekini, reported that troops supported by the air force's helicopter gunships had carried out two major operations (code-named Deadly Strike and Dark Down) against armed militias in Benue and Nasarawa states, including a raid on about 40 "herdsmen", some armed with AK-47 rifles, camped at Kwantan Gyemi on the boundary between the two states.

The NAF launched newly-constructed accommodation for the 205 Combat Search and Rescue Group (CSARG) established in 2017 to provide aid and operational assistance to wounded and distressed troops serving in combat units in Kerang, Plateau State. Recently, the OSH mandate was expanded to replace Operation Harbin Kunama II in Southern Kaduna state whose mandate was similar to that of OSH in Plateau. Presently, many are calling 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. 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.

These deployments signal, at least in principle, a more robust response to the Conflict which many felt is long overdue. But they have produced mixed results at best. They have curbed violence and repelled invading militias in certain areas, enabling some of the displaced in Benue state to return to their villages. Yet killings continue; many sacked communities remain deserted, and thousands of displaced are barred from returning home, as security forces say they cannot yet guarantee the villages' security. Several factors account for the limited effectiveness of the enhanced deployments.

The personnel are still inadequate to secure many areas, and units are ill equipped to respond speedily to distress calls from remote villages. Some police units deployed in rural areas are operating cautiously, mindful that officers have been ambushed and killed. In many areas, the forces deployed are inadequate to deter heavily armed militias who attack villages at night and retreat to their forest camps before dawn.

The police have made some effort to collect or confiscate illegal arms. On 21 February Idris ordered the public to surrender all illicit firearms during the 21 days from 22 February to 15 March. The deadline was later moved to April 30, 2018. The police reported about 4,000 firearms surrendered or recovered countrywide. But this total included only 453 firearms from the six states hardest-hit by farmer-herder violence. Moreover, the exercise did not disarm the groups responsible for the killings. The government has arrested and started prosecuting some attackers. In early February, the police reported the arrest of 145 people suspected of involvement in killings, 120 of which would be put on trial. Many more have been arrested in connection with various attacks since then, notably including the head of the Benue Livestock Guards, Aliyu Teshaku, held by the army on 27 April (Crisis Group, 2018) . These are welcome developments.

#### ***Establishment of the National Grazing Reserve Bill 2016:***

One of the greatest difficulties in addressing and resolving issues surrounding pastoralism is the politicisation of legal regimes and the blockages to the enactment of or implementation of laws that can redress the key challenges posed. This is because there are discordant laws and regulations that legislates livestock production and pastoralism at the regional, national and state levels. Some of the newly emerging laws such as the “anti-grazing” state laws appear to contradict the free movement principle enshrined in the Constitution. The Bill’s concluding Explanatory Memorandum says that the Bill seeks to provide for, among other things, the establishment of the National Grazing Reserve Commission of Nigeria, for the preservation and control of national grazing reserves and stock routes in the country. Its sponsor was Senator Zainab Kure, wife of a two-time Governor of Niger State. Hajiya Zainab Kure, who chaired the Senate Committee Chairman on Marine Transport. Its key provisions and high points include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. To establish a National Grazing Reserve Commission (NGRC), a body corporate.
2. The NGRC may acquire, hold, lease or dispose of any property, moveable or immovable for the purpose of carrying out its function.
3. The NGRC shall have a governing Council headed by a Chairman appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate with members representing the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Water Resources, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Environment, Housing and Urban Development, the National Commission for Nomadic Education and shall also have a Director General.
4. To raise monies by way of grants, loans, borrowing, subsidies and donations.
5. The following lands may be subject to the provisions of the Act to be constituted as National Grazing Reserves and Stock Routes:
  - a. Lands at the disposal of the Federal Government of Nigeria.
  - b. Any lands in respect of which it appears to the Commission that grazing in such land should be practiced.
  - c. Any land acquired by the Commission through purchase, assignment, gift or otherwise howsoever.
6. State Governments shall be given notice first before land acquisition and gazetting.
7. The Commission shall pay compensation to persons affected by any land acquisition.
8. There shall be no improvements, encroachment, bush burning, hunting, use of chemicals and felling of trees by anyone inside lands acquired and demarcated as National Grazing Reserves or Stock Routes.
9. Contravention of any of the provisions in (8) above shall be punishable by a fine of N50,000 or 5 years of imprisonment or both.
10. No Court of law shall carry out execution of its judgment or attachment of court process issued against the Commission in any action or suit without obtaining the prior consent of the Attorney General of the Federation.
11. For the time being, the Commission shall report to the Honorable Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources.

12. Native communities referred to in the Bill shall be any group of persons occupying any lands in accordance with, and subject to native law and custom.
13. Stock Routes shall mean tertiary or secondary or inter-state stock routes linking two or more States together or leading from grazing reserve to grazing reserve.
14. When passed into law, the Act shall be cited as The National Grazing Reserve Commission (Establishment and Development) Bill 2008.

Some States have enacted laws or are processing bills to prevent open grazing on their territory. There are four initiatives so far in Benue, Ekiti, Taraba and Edo States. Josite(2016) have noted the following as deliberate or careless omissions from the proposed legislation:

1. What informed the need for such a Bill is not mentioned anywhere in the Bill. Is the incessant Fulani/farmers clashes? What is the cause of all such clashes? Is it not because the Fulani cattle rearers grazed their cattle on the farmers' yet-to-be-harvested crops? Who is, therefore, the antagonist? Should the cattle-rich aggressor, the Fulanis, now be protected or the defenseless poor peasant farmers?
2. For whose use are the grazing reserves and stock routes to be acquired? The Bill does not say. It will simply create grazing reserves and stock routes for nomadic cattle rearers who we know are of one ethnic group – Fulani. The clause **cattle rearers** in the Bill can be replaced with the word **Fulani**, and it will be seen that it is purely meant to serve the interest of one ethnic group out of over 250 ethnic groups on Nigeria.
3. The Bill does not define who a **cattle rearer** is. Will all Nigerians of all ethnic groups who own cattle, sheep, goats, camels, donkeys, etc; be allowed to use the grazing reserves and stock routes.
4. Why does the Bill not require Cattle rearers to contribute towards the acquisition of the grazing reserves and stock routes when owning cattle is tantamount to being wealthy? Cattle rearers are richer in terms of assets than the poor farmers who will be dispossessed of their inherited ancestral lands. Shouldn't the rich cattle rearers be made to sell some cattle and pay for the rights the Bill wishes to give them?
5. The fundamental rights, ancestral rights, customary rights, rights to pursue a preferred means of livelihood of farmers whose lands will be forcefully acquired are not mentioned anywhere in the Bill. Don't other Nigerians, especially agriculturalists, have equal rights and entitlements from the Federal Government as cattle rearers?
6. Arrangements for the resettlement of the farmers and other land owners who will become internally displaced is not mentioned anywhere in the Bill. Does the Bill assume that the compensation they will receive will be adequate to buy comparative land elsewhere? Why should the Bill not provide that the Grazing Reserves Commission will also negotiate and pay for alternative land for persons who will be dispossessed of their farm holdings?
7. The Bill has been designed to create a refugee crisis of internally displaced persons by legislation. This is the most absurd and vexatious to put it mildly. How could right-thinking intelligent Nigerian legislators do this? Unless they are not what we all assume them to be.
8. Without saying it in clear terms, the Bill, when and if passed into law, shall apply in retrospect from 2008. Otherwise, why should it be cited as a 2008 legislation in our statute books? I can't see the rationale in this.
9. The NGRC shall report "for the time being" to the Minister of Agriculture and Water Resources. Who will it eventually be reporting to? The head of the Fulani tribe? Why this ambiguity? Something is being hidden here by the sponsors of the Bill.
10. There is no provision whatsoever in the Bill for the policing of grazing reserves and stock routes by any of our security agencies. They will be outside the purview of our law enforcement agencies and therefore constitute lawless enclaves where the nomads will be above the laws of Nigeria

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. Thus, the Land Use Act is an Act of the National Assembly, and by implication, a binding legislation, unless it is amended. State governments and their representatives at



the parliament have always opposed any attempt to establish grazing reserves in their domain. They consider it to be usurping the constitutional powers vested in them (Alli, Yusuf 2018).

**Proposed Cattle Ranching System 2018:**

In reaction to increasing conflicts and mass killings resulting from seasonal pastoral movements, the government in 2018, as a matter of policy approved a 10-year National Livestock Plan at a cost of about 179 billion naira. As a long-term solution, the government, in January 2018, announced a new plan to establish “cattle colonies” across the country. According to Agriculture Minister Audu Innocent Ogbeh, each colony was to cover 5,000 hectares (about 25km by 20km) and would be a cluster of ranches, with resources and facilities including grass, water, veterinary services, mills for converting agro-waste to livestock feed, schools, hospitals and markets, all secured by agro-rangers. “Ogbeh defines cattle colonies, ranches, as panacea to farmers-herders crisis”, Daily Trust, 14 January 2018; “Cattle colonies: How FG plans to end farmers-herders clash”, Daily Trust, 28 January 2018. In this new long time solution, States were expected to provide land and the federal government would bear development and maintenance costs – possibly with support from the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and others. Ranchers and herders were to pay “a small fee”.

The government argued that benefits would include protection from cattle rustlers, fewer farmer-herder disputes, healthier stock, higher meat and dairy production, and more revenue for state governments( Daily Trust, 14 January 2018; “Cattle colonies: How FG plans to end farmers-herders clash”, Daily Trust, 28 January 2018). The plan would culminate in the establishment of 94 ranches in 10 pilot states of the federation. Reactions varied. According to Ogbeh, sixteen states, mostly from the North West and North East, endorsed the plan and promised to allocate land. These are states with large land masses, lower population densities and well-established pastoralist populations. In some North Central states, like Kogi, Kaduna and Kwara, the governors’ acceptance of the proposal met resistance from the indigenous ethnic groups, largely farmers. Elsewhere in the Middle Belt and much of the south, the “cattle colonies” proposal has prompted criticism from or outright rejection by state governments, ethnic pressure groups and other civil society organisations, on at least five counts (“Cattle colonies: Southern states shun FG’s request for land”, The Punch, 23 January 2018). New Telegraph, 5 February 2018, The Nation, 20 June 2018 and Crisis Group (2018) have articulated the major objections of Cattle Colonies to National Livestock Transformation Plan in the following narratives:

First, many considered the name provocative. Too many Nigerians’ ears, the term “colony” connotes an administrative space acquired not through negotiation and with indigenes’ consent but by force, conjuring memories of British imperial conquest. As narratives of “Fulani colonisation” already aggravate the farmer-herder problem and passions still run high over the Benue killings, the government’s adoption of the term was ill advised. A second objection concerned the government’s subsidies for livestock production. Critics contended that some cattle owners were millionaires who should be able to establish ranches without such subsidies. They asserted that the government had introduced no special schemes for crop farmers so should not do so for cattle owners and herders. This argument was inaccurate: over the years, successive governments have rolled out programs to help farmers. In principle, therefore, there was nothing new or wrong in a federal government plan for supporting livestock producers. A related objection centred on the nature of support to be offered. Opponents of the proposal argued that the government’s assistance to farmers had been largely in the form of movable capital and services, rather than land, which is a fixed asset. They urged that if the government was to assist cattle dealers and herders, it should offer interest-free loans, free veterinary services or herd improvement programs, but leave herders to acquire land only with locals’ permission.

A third concern centred on the availability of land. Some state governments, including those of Benue, Taraba, Ekiti and Abia, emphasised they have no land to spare. Indeed, given already high population densities and pressure on farmland due to the widespread practice of allowing land to lie fallow in order to improve its yield, it was doubtful that any southern state could afford to allocate 5,000 hectares for a cattle colony, either practically or politically. Establishing the colonies amid farms that lack sufficient land for their crops risked creating more problems.

Fourthly, many farmers in the Middle Belt and southern zones viewed the proposal as an indirect attempt by the federal government to take their ancestral land and hand it over to Fulani herders at

their expense. The government rejected that accusation and insisted that Nigerians of all ethnic groups were welcome to establish ranches. But many opponents of cattle colonies remained unconvinced. Some argued that colonies would eventually become “mini-states within states” with implications for demography and local culture. The last objection was that the cattle colonies would not solve the problem of open grazing, since it would be voluntary for herders to move into them and, more to the point, many herders are foreign transhumant migrants. Many are citizens of other West and Central African countries; they come to Nigeria in search of pasture during the dry season and leave when the rains begin. They may have little interest in settling in Nigeria, where they would be required to pay for cattle feed, water and use of amenities. Thus, while the colonies could reduce indiscriminate grazing, they would not eliminate it.

As the colonies’ critics waited for the government to address their concerns, Agriculture Minister Ogbeh on 19 June announced yet another policy initiative, a National Livestock Transformation Plan aimed at encouraging a more gradual switch from open grazing to ranching. According to him,

Open grazing is no longer viable; that’s why we’re switching to ranching. The plan, running from 2018 to 2027, is a multifaceted intervention intended to modernise livestock management, improve productivity and enhance security. Under the new plan, ten states – Adamawa, Benue, Ebonyi, Edo, Kaduna, Nasarawa, Oyo, Plateau, Taraba and Zamfara – have been selected as the pilot states, with 94 branches to be established in clusters of four at 24 locations spread over those states. To participate in the plan, cattle herders are expected to organise and register as cooperatives that will then be able to rent land from state governments and also benefit from loans, grants and subsidies. The federal and state governments are expected to provide a total of 70 billion naira (about \$195 million) for the pilot phase, spanning three years, while private interests are expected to invest in excess of 100 billion naira (about \$278 million) between the fourth and tenth years (Crisis Group, 2017,p.31).

The plan is a laudable effort at resolving the farmer-herder conflict, but like earlier initiatives, it has drawn mixed responses. The major herders’ and farmers’ associations, MACBAN and the All Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN), respectively, have cautiously welcomed it. But some of the states designated for the start-up phase, including Ebonyi and Edo in the south and Benue in the Middle Belt, again reject inclusion in the project. They argue that they lack sufficient land for ranches, but their opposition is more fundamentally driven by fears that allowing Fulani groups to settle in their midst risks further conflicts in the future. The federal government will have to address these fears in order to overcome resistance in the opposing states (“Farmers, herders hail FG over ranches in 10 states”, Daily Trust, 21 June 2018, “Nigerians won’t be able to afford beef if we stop open grazing now”, Saturday Punch, 7 July 2018, “Ebonyi kicks against FG’s ranching programme”, Daily Trust, 22 June 2018; “We’ve no land for FG’s ranches – Benue stakeholders”, Vanguard, 23 June 2018; “Benue tribal leaders reject FG’s N179 bn cattle ranches project” & Vanguard, 22 June 2018; “We’ll resist ceding land for cattle ranching – BNC”, Vanguard, 12 July 2018). 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.

#### **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. This, they hope, would reduce the risk 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. These laws have adding to an emerging conflict between the constitutional principle on free movement of persons and goods and laws emerging in some States restricting movement. In Section 41(1) of the Nigerian Constitution, it is stated that: “Every citizen of Nigeria is entitled to move freely throughout Nigeria and to reside in any part thereof, and no citizen of Nigeria shall be expelled from Nigeria or refused entry thereby or exit therefrom.” Some States have enacted laws or are processing bills to prevent open grazing on their territory. There are four initiatives so far:

1. Ekiti state: Prohibition of Cattle and Other Ruminants Grazing in Ekiti, 2016.
2. Taraba state: Anti-Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Bill 2017. ‘A bill for a law to prohibit open rearing and grazing of livestock and provide for the establishment of

ranches and the Taraba State livestock and ranches administration and control committee and for others connected thereto 2017’.

3. Edo State Bill: A Bill for A Law to Establish the Edo State Control of Nomadic Cattle Rearing/Grazing Law and for Other Purposes.
4. Benue State Law: A Law to Prohibit Open Rearing and Grazing of Livestock and Provide for the Establishment of Ranches and Livestock Administration, Regulation and Control and for Other Matters Connected Therewith, 2017.

On 22 May 2017 Benue state enacted the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law (2017) and its implementation began on 1 November 2017. The Benue case will serve as a standard bearer for other states analysis. In response to growing violence in Benue State and the wider Middle Belt region, the Benue State Government passed the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law, 2017. The Law prohibits open rearing and grazing of livestock and calls for the establishment of ranches and livestock administration, regulation, and control. As stated in the legislation, the overall purpose of the Law was to achieve six goals: (i) prevent the destruction of crop farms... by open grazing; (ii) prevent clashes between nomadic livestock herders and crop farmers; (iii) protect the environment from degradation and pollution caused by open rearing and over grazing of livestock; (iv) optimize the use of land resources in the face of overstretched land and increasing population; (v) prevent, control, and manage the spread of disease and... enhance the production of high quality and healthy livestock for local and international markets; and, (vi) create a conducive environment for large scale crop production(Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law, 2017 (Benue State).

In order to achieve this agenda, the Law restricts the free movement of cattle and requires that livestock be bred in ranches. The Law vests authority for its implementation in the Livestock Department of the Benue State Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources. The Livestock Department, acting under the Commissioner of the Ministry and on behalf of the Governor, has the authority to issue ranching permits, withdraw permits, and provides guidance and regulations for enforcement by the Livestock Special Task Force. The Benue state government constituted a special livestock task force, the Livestock and Community Volunteer Guards (LCVG), to enforce the implementation of the open grazing prohibition law. The LCVG is a voluntary group responsible with enforcing the instructions of the Law that reports to local police.

The Law provides that the lease and permission granted is a privilege and shall not create any right, title, interest or estate to the land as the land shall remain vested in the Governor in accordance with the Act (Section 11[1]). The Grazing Reserves Law Cap. 72, Laws of Benue State, 2004 is repealed by Section 35 of the Law, which also provides for modification of all instruments to ensure that they are in line with the provisions of the Law. The LCVG is also to coordinate actions of the Advisory Committee as contained in the law. The issue of indignity is particularly important in the case of the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law, as it imposes conditions upon potential ranchers based on their status as ‘indigene’ or ‘non-indigene’ is contained in Section 6[1-6] and Section 5a of the law. For instance, potential ranchers who do not qualify as indigenes of Benue State must submit applications, which require an environmental impact assessment and multiple layers of assessment and approval by the landowner, head of the family, kindred head (otherwise known as the designated heads of family clans), and the Chairman of Traditional Council in the relevant Local Government Area (LGA).

In the case that a potential application receives consent from all of the above, the application is then subjected to the approval of the Governor (Section 7-9). Once the lease is granted the applicant must then pay concessions to the landowner, family head, and kindred head, whose consent to establish a ranch is valid for one year and must be renewed annually. A secondary process of approval is also needed for the construction of fencing to secure the ranch. These conditions are only applicable for persons classified as non-indigenes of Benue State. Indigenes who wish to establish a ranch upon their own land are exempt from compliance with these conditions. As stated above, the majority of herders who are non-indigenes of Benue State would have to comply with the application process to procure a ranching lease. The tedious application process, the need to renew the lease annually, and the uncertainty of retaining a permit once granted may be an adequate disincentive for compliance (Section 7-9). This lack of compensation runs contrary to the provisions of the Land Use Act, which

recognizes a need to pay some compensation to all persons, regardless of whether they are indigenes or not, within the terms agreed by the Land Use and Allocation Committee.

Ekiti and Taraba states have also signed Bills prohibiting open grazing in their states. This makes open grazing under any guise, an illegal activity punishable by law. It is worthwhile posing the question whether laws can be effective in prohibiting pastoralism, which is practiced by millions of Nigerians. As some of the laws have already been passed, they would have to be tested in court. It is important to stress however that the Constitution guarantees free movement of persons and goods across Nigeria and no State government can withdraw constitutionally entrenched rights. Secondly, following a legislation by the Ogun State Government and the Supreme Court Judgment on the matter cited as “A.G. Ogun State V. Alhaja Ayinke Aberuagba (1985) 1 NWLR PG. 395” States were barred from interfering with inter-state commerce and the free movement of goods and services. At that time, Ogun State had tried to control and tax goods entering from other States and the Supreme Court ruled that it would be chaotic if States enacted any laws they please restricting movement of goods and services in the Federation. It was this judgment that led to the introduction of value added tax (VAT) as a State tax that is determined at the national level and collected by the Federal Government, which takes an administrative fee and redistributes the proceeds back to the States. The key issue however is that pastoralism has developed into a national crisis that is leading to increased violence so a legal approach alone cannot resolve the issue. It is therefore important to negotiate a national policy framework that would protect the interests of both farmers and herders. The Federal Government should take the initiative of negotiating a consensual policy framework that would address the issues.

#### ***The Great Green Wall Agency of the Federal Government:***

In 2013 the Federal government established the Great Green Wall Agency 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. The ongoing rise in herdsmen/farmers clashes in parts of the country has forced experts to conduct researches with a view to finding out government programmes that would have solved the crisis ahead of time, but was not implemented to the letter. One of the key schemes that got approval in 2014 to green the desert region of the country in line with African Union agreement is the Great Green Wall scheme. Business Highlights gathered that 2014, federal government earmarked about N10bn and handed same to the National Agency for the Great Green Wall Project (NAGGW) to drive conversation and fight desertification and the herdsmen challenge. The fundamental reason for this initiative is to arrest the continued desert encroachment along the Sahel region as a result of climate change which is a major factor responsible for seasonal migration of herdsmen from one region to the other in search of water and vegetation for cattle grazing. Followers of the Fulani herdsmen ‘insurgency’ have raised concerns over how the federal government was silent on the progress made by NAGGW, if any, rather than thinking of another form of colonization in the name of Cattle Colony which had been rejected by several states. Checks in parts of the north showed that not much was done by the agency upon all the yearly allocation via the Ministry of The Environment.

Nigeria commenced implementation in 2013 and in 2014 set up the Interim Office of the National Agency for the Great Green Wall with the appointment of an Acting Director General. Nigeria’s GGW programme involves 11 states. Benefitting states are Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, Yobe and Zamfara. It involves the establishment of a greenbelt covering 1500km from Dandi Arewa Local Government Area of Kebbi State to Marte in Borno State. The National Agency for the Great Green Wall says “*The mission of the NAGGW is to halt and reverse land degradation, prevent depletion of biological diversity, ensure that by 2025, ecosystems are resilient to climate change and continue to provide essential services that would contribute to human welfare and poverty eradication.*” However, agro experts have come up with another idea of converting recovered Sambisa Forest in Borno State to a national cattle ranch as it has capacity to contain well over 18m cattle at once. The inability of the Federal Government to raise funds from the Sovereign Green Bond may have stalled the execution of four proposed major projects in 2017 budget by National Agency for Great Green Wall (NAGGW).

The Agency budgeted N1.354billion for dry land restoration through massive afforestation programme monitoring and evaluation, promotion of alternative livelihoods, but only N200million was release last month. The Guardian learnt that agency has initiated ‘Action Against Desertification’,

aimed at planting of 485 hectares of Gum Arabic, Baobab trees for restoration of degraded land in Bauchi, Jigawa and Sokoto states. According to sources, NAGGW is embarking on planting of 1.6 million assorted seedlings to cover 129.3 kilometres of the shelterbelt in seven (7) states, and also wants to increase some projects in frontline states. Desertification has emerged as a major planetary threat with particularly daunting challenges for northern states, which necessitated the establishment of woodlots and mosaic shelterbelts in Adamawa, Bauchi, Gombe and Kano states. It affects about natural resources conservation and development, and agency's initiative is expected to lead to sustainable management of land, water and plant two million hectares of crop-land. Efforts to confirm the development from the NAGGW Director General, Goni Ahmed proved abortive. But sources further revealed that agency's activities have been hindered because lack of funds from Budget Office as out of N1.05billion approved in 2017 budget allocation, only N200million, representing 20 per cent given to the agency.

## **CONCLUSION**

This paper has situated and discussed the strategies resulting from various violent clashes between nomadic herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria and observed that their relationships in the previous years have been cordial and symbiotic. This possibly led to mutual respect and cross cultural relationships among the nomadic herdsmen and the crop farmers. Surprisingly, in recent years this somewhat mutual and complementary relationship between the nomadic herdsmen and their host communities is shrinking and being replaced by conflicts and open hostilities. Many farmers have been forced to flee their farms for fear of being killed by well-armed herdsmen and loss of part or the whole of their crops which translate into low income on the part of the farmers who take farming as a major occupation.

Also, the failure of the government in mediating such conflicts and setting up judicial commissions cannot be underestimated because it pushes communities to take the law into their own hands. There is no doubt that conflicts between the two parties if constructively resolved by the government could ensure peaceful coexistence and interdependence. This is with respect to a more direct impact on food security by conflicts between the farmers and nomadic herdsmen.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It becomes imperative from the findings of this study that in a bid to forestall frequent cases of conflicts between farmers and herdsmen, state governments should designate some areas as grazing fields for the nomadic herdsmen and warn that any crime involving a Fulani herdsman would attract severe penalties including the banishment of the culprit from the state. However, there is the need to establish grazing routes and reserves across the 36 states. Communities in conflict and those on the verge of conflict may be given this opportunity to come to a negotiation table where government representatives and NGOs may participate and mediate such meetings. More so, considering the growth rate of the country's population, a symbiotic relationship between farmers and nomadic herdsmen should be enhanced through processes of exchange.

Government should ensure that those involved in the allocation of land for farming should imbibe responsibility and not allocate along cattle route or over grazing lands to avoid encroachment by nomadic herdsmen. Support for agricultural development through incentives will facilitate availability of food for the teeming Nigeria population. More so, considering the frantic interest of the present government towards making agriculture an alternative source of revenue following the crash in oil price, it becomes imperative for people in different aspects of agriculture and other trades alike to simultaneously and mutually articulate their trades for enhanced productivity and achievement of Sustainable Development.

Non-governmental organizations (NGO), Federal alls State Governments and donor agencies should consult and include local religious and traditional leaders in all initiatives addressing grievances between farmers and pastoralists to capitalize on these leaders' knowledge of their communities and existing infrastructure. They should equally work with religious leaders, including women and youth, to increase their peace-building capacity, enabling these leaders to be involved in peace-building from early stages. Local community leaders, NGOs, Plateau State Government and donors should support greater cooperation between religious and traditional leaders (e.g., regular meetings, roundtable discussions or trainings on how to address these conflicts with their communities) on issues of conflict

over resources and other divisive matters. Local community leaders, NGOs, State Governments and donors should organize and support regular peace-building meetings, led by religious leaders including women and youth, bringing together members of the two conflicting communities to discuss the issues they face.

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