

HERDERS-FARMERS CONFLICT AND NATIONAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA

Felix C. Asogwa

Department of Political Science
Enugu State University of Science & Technology, Enugu
&

Nneka Ifeoma Okafor

School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics (Ethics Dept)
University of Kwazulu-Natal
Pietermaritzburg Campus, South Africa

Abstract

The Nigerian state no doubt is under monumental siege. This is basically as a result of the diverse social conflicts plaguing it. Top among these social conflicts is the herders /Farmers conflict that is currently ravaging the various regions of Nigeria. The conflict involving the Fulani herdsmen and Farmers from different socio cultural zones portends great danger to Nigeria's national security. This paper therefore examines the implications of this conflict on Nigeria's national security. The paper relies on materials from both primary and secondary sources in articulating the outcome of its investigation. It is hoped that at the end of the research both the academia and the larger society will draw insightful benefits from the research. This is especially for policy makers who will appreciate in broader perspective the national security implications of the conflict.

Keywords: Herders, Farmers, Fulani, Conflict, National Security

Introduction

It is a truism that conflict is a concomitant ingredient of social existence. Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527) remarked that conflict is not a peculiar phenomenon of any society but a tendency that has been with mankind since the beginning of time. According to Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), the tendency towards conflict is a basic element of human nature primarily on account of competition for scarce resources. Charles Darwin (1809-1882), in agreeing that conflict constitutes part of human existence opined that conflict and struggle promote human social existence by ensuring that the strongest of a species survives.

Darwin's assertion is an amplification of Thomas Robert Malthus' (1766-1834), remarks in his espousal of the Malthusian law of existence. Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), suggested that conflict is a natural process which contributes to social evolution, while William Graham Sumner (1840-1910), proposed that competition for survival may trigger positive social advancement if the outcome is properly managed. In espousing the Marxian concept of conflict, Karl Marx (1818-1883), observed that, given the contradictory nature of human existence, conflict is a basic structural

condition of society; and to that extent, conflict is an inherent part of human relations, essentially because human thought and action occurs through a dialectic process of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis.

In effect conflict is as old as the human race; and just as human strivings differ significantly, conflicts; when they occur, also assume diverse proportions and impact society in a variety of ways. Just as it has shaped human societies centuries ago, conflict is still shaping our societies today in more remarkable ways than one.

In our own time, these conflicts have assumed frightening dimensions calling attention to a global response. From the Middle East to Asia, Europe to the United States of America, South America to Africa, there is no end to the tale of woes visited upon mankind by the scourge of conflict. One strand of our modern day conflict, which Huntington (1996:321) alluded to in his hypothesization of “*the clash of civilization*”, is the global radicalization of Islam, which has manifested in grievous acts of terrorism all around the world triggering a global response code-named “war against terror”.

In this radicalization of faith among the Moslems, Nigeria has not been spared from terror-related attacks; attacks which have landed Nigeria in the terror-watch list of the world. For instance, Boko Haram insurgency remains a huge security challenge to Nigeria. But while the country’s entire security apparatus appears focused on a decisive response to the insurgency as well as the militancy in the Niger-Delta region of the country, large portions of our rural communities have erupted in fatal clashes between rural farmers and ethnic Fulani herdsmen. This new trend of violence, (though not peculiar to Nigeria because other countries in Africa are presently grappling with the same issue), has added a new twist to Nigeria’s fragile socio-political system and poses a huge challenge to the country’s national security.

The aim of this paper, therefore, is to critically examine the drivers and underlying currents in the herders-farmers conflicts in relation to the country’s national security. The herders are the Fulani itinerant cattle rearers that move from place to place in search of grazing fields for their flock. They are always on the move. The farmers, on the other hand, are sedentary people that till and cultivate the land for agriculture. They are normally found in savannah and rain forest regions. In search of greener pastures for their flock, the herdsmen drive their cattle into the farmlands of these sedentary people and destroy their crops. It is this competing interest to sustain an itinerant economy and a sedentary economic means of sustenance that has spawned the herders-farmers’ conflict in Nigeria.

Apart from the introductory part, this paper has been structured into four parts. The first part explored the theoretical perspectives to the concept of national security and the emerging trends that see the individual as the unit of security analysis rather than the state-centric impression of national security. Part two did an overview of herders-farmers conflict in Nigeria. In doing this, the paper historicized the Fulani ethnic group, their nomadic life style, the role of *Myetti Allah*, the organization of real owners of the herds of cattle, and Nigeria’s response to the conflict. Part three x-rayed the implications of this conflict on Nigeria’s national security while part four concluded the paper and made some policy recommendations.

Theoretical Perspectives to National Security

The notion of national security has been a subject of diverse interpretation by both scholars and statesmen. The centrality of the concept in national political discourse may account for this dichotomous interpretation. However, two keywords are imperative in understanding the concept of national security. These are “*national*” and “*security*”. The word “*national*”, which is an adjective of the word “*nation*”, has always been conceived in abstract terms to refer to the physical environment of a nation. Hence, national security has been conceived as the maintenance of the territorial integrity of a nation. At some other time, the idea of “*national*” has been used in national security discourse to imply the security of the government of a nation or the regime in power. This informs the view that national security has to do with the protection of the government or regime in power.

The second important word is that of “*security*”. Security, especially when discussing the concept of national security, has often been used to refer to the absence of any physical threat or physical protection. But the word *security* must be understood in its broadest sense to include not only physical security but also social, political, economic and to a reasonable extent, cultural protection.

Two dominant perspectives have emerged in the effort to provide logical explanations to the concept of national security. The first and earliest perspective is the *state-centric* view on national security. The state-centric perspective to national security has its underpinning in the realist view of the state as the indivisible or monolithic entity maintaining absolute control over its territory. The state, therefore, becomes the foundation in the national security consideration.

As Deng (1995, pg.249) and Chappius (2011, pg. 99-122), noted, the centrality of the state as the provider of security has a practical rationale. In other words, there is no reliable analytical alternative that could substitute the authority of the state and its organizational role in providing security for the citizens. State-centric theorists like Weber (1919) argue that the pragmatic motivation of the State is the provision of security to its citizens.

The domineering role of the state-centric security discourse arises from the social contract theory, which argues that in return for protection, the citizens traded of certain of their rights to the state. The state, therefore, maintains monopoly over legitimate use of physical force in any society. Therefore, the key assumptions of the state-centric perspective to national security are:

- a) The centrality of the state in security discourse
- b) The relevance of territorial integrity, political independence in national security goals
- c) The primacy of applying military measures in national security considerations
- d) The state presumption that the protection of boundaries ultimately leads to the protection of individuals. In other words, that national security implies adequate protection from external threats.
- e) People presume that their security ultimately is guaranteed by the state

It is from this state-centric perspective that most scholars have conceptualized

national security. For instance, Lippmann's (1943, pg.49) definition represents the earliest state-centric conceptualizations of national security, which he conceives in terms of national power. National power here relates to military might of a country. According to him, a nation has security when it does not have to sacrifice its legitimate interest to avoid war, and is able, if challenged, to maintain those interests by war.

This classical state-centric notion of national security also informed Lasswell's (1950) definition of national security as the ability of a country to contend with external threats. In Lasswell's words, "the distinctive meaning of national security means freedom from foreign dictation". One major problem with this perspective to national security is its simplistic conception of national security merely in terms of a state's response to external environment, ignoring such domestic factors such as welfare of individuals, environmental, health, technological developments and other factors capable of undermining the security of a nation.

However, in recent years there has been a significant paradigm shift from the state-centric perception of national security (where the state is regarded as the only unit of analysis in national security discourses) to *human security*, which sees the individual citizen as the main unit of analysis in the security architecture of states. The human security paradigm is a critical departure from the state-centric notions on national security, which prioritizes individuals' security over the security of the state. The human security perspective to national security was greatly influenced by the behaviouralist movement with its emphasis on the individual rather than the state as a more reliable unit of societal analysis.

According to Mahmud *et al.*, (2008, pg.67), the meat of the human security perspective derives from the fact that "individuals should be the referent of security instead of the states since state's security has become less vulnerable while that of the individuals suffers even by their own state". The Report of the *UNDP Commission on Human Security* (2005, pg.23), has defined the objective of human security as being 'to protect the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and fulfillment.'

The foregoing core objective of human security is supported by the fact that instances of inter-state war have decreased drastically while factors like diseases, poverty, violence and state-sponsored abuse of human rights have posed new challenges to human liberties and freedoms in the state. This is why the Report of the *UNDP Commission on Human Security* (1994, pg.23), expressed concern on the continuing definition of national security in terms of 'carefully constructed safeguards against external threats', a mindset that has become vague in the post-cold war era. The *UNDP Report* thus, stresses two aspects of human security namely safety from such persistent threats as hunger, diseases and repression; and protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life (UNDP 1994. pg.23).

Consequently, the *UNDP* proposes human security in terms of the safeguards against "the threat of global organized crime, epidemics, environmental degradation, terrorism and poverty across international boundaries in the form of drugs, HIV/AIDS, climate change, illegal migration and terrorism" (UNDP 1994, pg.24). To

ensure human security, the UNDP insists that exclusive focus on territories must be replaced by greater attention on people through human development (Mahmud, et al., 2008, pg.67). The concept of human security, as UNDP proposes, is built on four fundamental features, which include universalism, interdependence of components, prevention rather than protection, and people-centred governance.

It is in this context that Chinkin (2005, pg.2), remarked that human security denotes individual freedom from basic insecurities, whatever the root of that insecurity. Chinkin (2005:4), equally noted that human security goes beyond and supplements state security. The Commission on Human Security (2005, pg.28) further explains that human security complements state security by being people-centered and by addressing insecurities that have not been considered as state security threats. Human insecurity can also arise through state violence within the state and even by the failure of the state to provide an inclusive legal and economic framework that will guarantee safety for the citizens from non-state actors.

The UNDP Report (1994, pg.25-33) has outlined seven major sources of threat to the individual and they include issues revolving around economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, communal security and political security. As noted by Mahmud et al., (2008, pg.68), threats to human security do not only originate by conditions of deprivation, inequality, and instability within the states, but also by the globalization of threats, such as, unchecked population growth, disparities in economic opportunities, excessive international migration, environmental degradation, drug production and trafficking and international terrorism (UNDP 1994, pg.34-38). The major conclusion of the Report is that the root causes of threats to human security lies in the structural context of societies that provoke conflict.

The argument by the human security theorists is that society must go beyond the state-centric understanding of physical aggression against the state as the only source of insecurity. Factors such as society's structural arrangement, resource scarcity, poor economic growth, iniquitous production-distribution-consumption patterns, etc must be factored into national security discourses (Kong and MacFarlane, 2006, pg.152). While the human security proponents maintain that the individual members of society should actually constitute the unit of analysis in matters of national security, they are quick to emphasize that human security does not replace but rather seeks to compliment and build upon the state nation of security, human rights and human development (Ogata and Cels, 2003, pg.275).

According to Kong and MacFarlane (2006, pg.228-231), the paradigm shift to human security is predicated on the fact that security is for the individual, that the term "human security" is directly related to the physical survival of non-combatants in conflict situations; that states should do well to incorporate human security in their foreign policy pursuits; and "that the securitized domains such as economy, environment, health, gender, etc are also important aspects to be given priority in the state budget along with military expenditures" (Kong and MacFarlane, 2003, pg.228-231). Such a conceptual revision, observed Mahmud et al., (2008, pg.68), adequately serves two purposes-first, it helps in the policy battle for resources, and secondly, it

focuses on a blind spot of the mainstream security studies by assuming the individual as the referent and enforcing the state to accept certain universal norms concerning the protection of individuals within their boundaries.

The beauty and allure of the human security perspective notwithstanding, some scholars have picked weaknesses in its assumptions. The first problem with this perspective is its penchant for over-stretching the human component of national security. This, according to the critics subtracts from its effectiveness in lumping too many variables, competing for priority attention, under the umbrella of human security. Konh and MacFarlane (2006, pg.237-243) have picked holes in this approach. They argue, for instance, that the claim for replacing state-centric perspective by the people-centric approach, although sounds more liberal, has some weaknesses. On the one hand, the claim that less inter-states war and more casualties in intra-state wars does not necessarily prove that national security has become useless; on the other hand, public policy requires prioritizing certain aspects over others, it cannot just give the same attention to everything simultaneously.

Secondly, putting too many items under the umbrella of human security confuses rather than clarifies the causes, and with ambiguous causal propositions, any policy formulation is likely to fail, and sometimes may even backfire. Thirdly, they contend, including everything into human security runs the risk of securitizing a range of issues that may unwittingly lead to military solutions to political or socio-economic problems. These criticisms, in the main, do not vitiate the propriety of the human security paradigm basically because even the proponents have stated emphatically that it has not come to replace but rather to compliment and build state security, enhance the respect for fundamental human rights and encourage human development (Ogata and Cels, 2003, pg.228-231). In the final analysis, the concept of national security of a country has to do with the protection of the socio-economic and political rights of the people as well as their physical protection from external aggression together with that of their government. This, fundamentally, is the human security perspective to national security.

The trend in recent events in Nigeria, especially the boiling issue of herders-farmers conflict, underscores the need to re-evaluate our understanding of national security in a comprehensive manner. Such comprehensive re-evaluation will help us to understand more the issue of national security and peace from the human security perspective. For instance, in Nigeria, scholars such as Fagbade (1981), Etikerentse (1985), Ihonvbere and Shaw (1988), Eteng, (1997), and Ibeanu (1997) are agreed that resource as well as ethnic agitations derive from the notion by people that they are being marginalized or that their environment is threatened or that they are being ravaged by one disease of the other. All these variables must be factored in when defining national security.

In this paper, we have adopted the human-centric approach as our explanatory framework. The reason for adopting this approach is anchored on the fact that human-centric approach sees the individual as the unit of security architecture in any society. The major assumption of this approach is that ensuring "freedom from want" and "freedom from fear" for all persons is the best approach to tackling the

problem of insecurity in any society.

Overview of Herders-Farmers Conflict in Nigeria

The Fulani or Fulbe, according to Anter (2011), is an ethnic group with significant presence in many West African countries such as Mauritania, Senegal, Guinea, The Gambia, Mali, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea Bissau, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast), Niger, Togo, the Central African Republic, Ghana, Liberia, and as far as Sudan in the east. Demographic studies (Nwankwo, 2016) suggest that wherever the Fulanis are found, they rarely constitute the majority on account of their nomadic life style. They are essentially itinerant cattle rearers and are constantly on the move with their herds of cattle to find grazing fields.

In terms of religion, over 99% of Fulani are Muslims. It will be recalled that in 1804 Usman Dan Fodio, prosecuted a jihad against the Hausa kings whom he felt were not following the teachings of the Prophet Mohammed. A great upheaval followed in the wake of this jihad in which the Fulani took control of most of the Hausa states of northern Nigeria. A new kingdom, based in the city of Sokoto, was born. The Fulani expansion was not just driven by religious zeal but by political ambitions, as the attack on the well-established Muslim kingdom of Bornu showed. The result of this upheaval was the creation of a powerful Sokoto Caliphate under a caliph, whose authority was established over cities such as Kano and Zaria and whose rulers became emirs of provinces within the Sokoto caliphate (Morell, 1968, pg. 141-142).

According to Anter (2011, pg.12), "The Fulani are traditionally a nomadic, pastoralist, trading people, herding cattle, goats and sheep across the vast dry hinterlands of their domain, keeping somewhat separate from the local agricultural populations". Their origin is a matter of contestation, with some scholars claiming Judaeo-Syrian ancestry and others suggesting a North African descent. However, most scholars agree that the group may have migrated from the Middle East through North Africa and settled in the Central and West Africa from the Tekruur Empire in today's Senegal region.

They are believed to be the largest semi-nomadic group in the world. In Nigeria, most of them still function as semi-nomadic herders, while others have embraced modernity and moved to the cities. Unlike the more integrated city dwellers, the nomadic groups spend most of their lives in the bush and are the ones largely involved in these herders-farmers conflicts. These herders usually herd their animals across vast areas, frequently clashing with farming communities. These Fulani herdsmen are often linked with the Hausas, both having lived together for a very long time. Some refer to them as the Hausa-Fulani, but the truth is that they are different and distinct ethnic groups.

Even those who have embraced city life are known to be wealthy cattle owners alongside other cattle owners of Hausa and Kanuri extraction. Immediately after Nigeria's political independence, these cattle owners who engaged the *alimajiris* as cattle rearers had serious clashes with farmers. These rich cattle owners

consequently convinced the Northern Regional Government then under Alhaji Ahmadu Bello in 1963 to initiate the policy of grazing reserves. These cattle breeders and owners in 1979 got together under the umbrella of *Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria* (MACBAN) to lobby for grazing reserves. It was not until 1987 that the Ibrahim Babangida military regime gazetted the first grazing reserve in Kachia. In truth, the real owners of the herds of cattle are not the peasant Fulani men and women and their children who wander about with their herds. The actual owners are the members of MACBAN. According to the Secretary of MACBAN, there are over 30million cows in Nigeria, and over 150million sheep and goats. The Secretary also justified the use of AK-47 riffles by the herdsmen as preemptive measure to ward off cattle rustlers that have been menacing the herders (KII, 2016).

Herders-Farmers Conflict in Nigeria:

Since the return by Nigeria to civil rule in 1999, violence related to herders-farmers conflicts has assumed alarming and disturbing proportions with thousands of people either killed or displaced and property worth millions of naira destroyed. Herders-farmers conflict in Nigeria has not only taken enormous toll on the country but has spawned the proliferation of ethnic and religious-based militia groups, which in turn has aggravated inter-ethnic tensions and impacted adversely on the country's agricultural sector.

Many scholars (Bassett 1986; de Haan, van Driel, and Kruithof 1990; Diallo 2000; and Tonah 2006) have pointed out that this conflict between the farmers and herders has always been latent though native authorities were always prompt in redressing any identified conflict trigger. To that extent, one can submit that far from being antagonists, the farmers and herders were rather symbiotic in their relations. As Moritz (2010, pg.139) remarked, "many communities of farmers and herders had built interdependent relationships with one another through emergent processes of exchange". Diallo (2000, pg.65-91) and Tonah (2006, pg.152-178), described this interdependence as a symbiotic relationship in which the two communities form host-stranger relationships with one another. Such host-stranger relationships exist in so many parts of Nigeria especially between the Fulani herdsmen and host communities in the central regions of Nigeria.

Breusers et al (2000, pg.125-128), argue that such host-stranger relations have been very useful in accommodating the herders into predominantly farming communities; and preventing or resolving conflicts when and where they arise in the community. This host-stranger relationship between the farmers and herders appear the norm rather than exception in most farming communities in Nigeria. Dafinger and Pelican (2006, pg.127-157) consider the host-client relations a structural factor that explains variation in herder-farmer conflicts between communities. Moritz (2010, pg.139-148) explains that such mutual relationship between the herders and farmers had in the past facilitated dispute resolution between herders and farmers.

Much as this symbiotic analysis goes, the truth is that in many cases it has broken down and minor skirmishes have escalated into deadly conflicts between the hosts and strangers. The escalation of such conflicts is usually driven by very

entrenched considerations other than just the destruction of crops by herds of cattle. Herders-farmers conflicts are almost endemic to the central states of the Middle Belt of Nigeria. This region in Nigeria has the “largest concentration of minority ethnic groups in Nigeria” (Genyi, 2014, pg.2). Like other parts of Nigeria, this geo-political zone is characterized by deep-seated religious diversity, the major ones being Christianity, Islam and traditional religious worship. The numerical proportions of adherents to these religions in the zone, according to Genyi (2014, pg.2) but Christianity appears the dominant religion. Next in line is Islam practiced by the predominantly migrant Hausa- Fulani settlers.

This region of Nigeria is a transition zone between the semi-arid far north (the main homeland of the pastoral Hausa/Fulani) and the rain forest of the south. The Middle Belt is the Savanna belt of Nigeria and contains geographical features of both the north and the south. It is regarded as the food basket of the country. The indigenes are predominantly farmers versed in root crops, cereals and tuber crops. The cultivation of these crops requires expansive farmlands for sustained cultivation and high yields. The climatic condition in the middle belt is very suitable for the cultivation of many varieties of crops and the extensive landscape is watered by many rivers. Given the nature of their traditional occupation, minority ethnic groups in the Middle Belt and southern Nigeria are sedentary farmers.

On the other hand, the Fulani, who are predominantly Muslim, are a nomadic, pastoralist group who are by occupation traditional cattle herders. Their search for conditions conducive to raising their herds keeps them on the move from one place to another, and specifically to areas with pasture and water availability and no tsetse fly infestation (Iro, 1991). This movement takes the pastoralists to as much as 20 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, making the Fulani the most diffuse ethno-cultural group (on the continent), and seen as only slightly impacted by modernity in regards to pastoralists’ economic activity. As Moritz (2010, pg. 136-148) noted, “the pastoralist Fulani in Nigeria move southwards into the Benue valley with their cattle seeking pasture and water from the onset of the dry season (November to April). The Benue valley has two major attractive factors—water from the Benue rivers and their tributaries, such as River Katsina-Ala, and a tsetse-free environment. The return movement begins with the onset of rains in April and continues through June. Genyi (2014) adds that “once the valley is saturated with heavy rain and movement is hampered by muddy areas threatening the very survival of the herds and shrinking passage due to farming activities, leaving the valley become inevitable” (Genyi, 2014, pg.3-8).

The contest for access and utilization of land based resources, especially pasture and water, farmers and Fulani herdsman can be explained in the context of the peasant and nomadic economic production systems adopted by both groups. The farmers in the Middle Belt and Southern Nigeria are not nomads. They are sedentary people basically because they cultivate their land all year round. Incidentally, population increase has put enormous pressure on access to available land even among farmers. Declining soil fertility, erosion, climate change and modernity have also impacted traditional agricultural practices in a way that challenges the very

livelihood of farmers (Tyubee, 2006, pg.5).

The Fulani herdsmen are a nomadic stock whose system of production revolves around cattle rearing. They use mobility as a strategy of production as well as consumption (Iro, 1991). A number of factors have conspired to challenge the Fulani's economic livelihood, including the clash of modernism with traditionalism. The Fulani have resisted modernity and hence their system of production and consumption has remained largely unaltered in the face of population growth and modernization. Environmental factors constitute a major set of issues affecting the Fulani economy, including the pattern of rainfall, its distribution and seasonality, and the extent to which this affects land utilization. Closely related to this is the pattern of vegetation, compartmentalized into semi-arid and forest areas. This vegetation pattern determines pasture availability, inaccessibility, and insects' predation (Iro, 1991). Vegetation pattern therefore explains pastoral migration. The disappearance of grazing routes and reserves due to farming activities thus set the tone for contemporary conflicts between nomadic pastoralist Fulanis and their host farming communities.

It was not until 2001, that full scale conflicts between farmers and Fulani herdsmen erupted in many parts of the Middle Belt including Taraba, Kwara, Benue, and Nasarawa States (Olabode and Ajibade, 2014). These conflicts occurred from June to October of 2001, which is actually the rainy season when crops are planted and nurtured to be harvested beginning from late October. Thus, one does not need to be a rocket scientist to know that cattle grazing on the cultivated farmlands would incur the wrath of farmers whose livelihood is threatened by this act of destruction by herds. Any response from farmers to protect their crops, however, resulted in conflicts leading to widespread destruction of lives and properties.

Pressure for access to grazing lands have forced the nomadic herdsmen further down south into the Igbo heartland, where the effort by the native people to protect their cultivated farmlands have pitted them against the Fulani herdsmen. Recently, Nimbo community in Enugu, South-east Nigeria was brutally attacked by herdsmen on allegations of cattle rustling and harbouring someone who allegedly murdered a Fulani herdsman. What is actually worrisome is the caliber of guns at the disposal of the herdsmen. Many of them are seen moving with their herds with AK-47 and Ak-49 assault rifles. The current secretary of Miyetti Allah explained recently in an interview (Ayorinde, Olokun, *TheNews Magazine*, October 4th 2016), that the Fulani herdsmen carry guns to protect themselves and their cattle.

There is no doubt that growing ecological and demographic changes are putting huge pressures on the rural communities in Nigeria but the truth is that political authorities in the country have not been very effective at managing these conflicts. For instance, the response by the government in the renewed wake of these herders-farmers conflicts has been less than satisfactory. The introduction of the Grazing Routes Bill seemed to have peeled public confidence and created the impression of Fulani political domination of other sections of Nigeria. This is why any herders-farmers conflict in Nigeria is viewed, especially by non-Moslems as an attempt to Islamize the country. Stripped to its bare-bones, this bill seeks to use the

apparatus of government to dispossess other people of their ancestral land inheritance and hand same over to the Fulani herdsmen. When this is done, the original owners of the land would become refugees in their own space and subject to the whims and caprices of Fulani cattle rearers (Nwankwo, 2016, pg.2).

The Table below shows a synoptic timeline of Fulani herdsmen and farmers attacks in Benue state and Enugu from 2013 – 2016:

S/N	Place of Fulani Herdsmen-Farmers Conflict	Date of Conflict	No. of Lives Lost	Properties Lost/Destroyed
1	Mbasenge community, Guma LGA	April 23, 2013	10	15 Houses burnt and 5 cows killed
2	Okpanchenyi and Ekwo communities of Agatu LGA	May 12, 2013	83	N.A
3	Ekwo-Okpanchenyi, Agatu LGA	May 14, 2013	40	N.A
4	Ichama Village, Okpokwu LGA	June 11, 2013	1	40 cattle belonging to the Catholic Church Otukpo were rustled
5	Okpanchenyi village, Otukpo, Benue	July 1, 2013	40	Crops, houses torched
6	Nzorov, Guma, LGA., Benue State	July 5, 2013	60	Houses, Churches torched
7	Agatu LGA	July 28, 2013	8	N.A
8	Oguche Village, Benue State	Sept., 29, 2013	15	Churches, houses torched
9	Ikpele & Okpopolo communities, Agatu LGA.	Nov., 7, 2013	7	Over 6,000 persons displaced when Fulani herdsmen invade the two villages
10	Adeke Village, Benue State	Jan., 20, 2014	3	Many people were displaced
11	Gwer West LGA.	Feb., 20-21, 2014	35	80,000 persons displaced, and 6 villages sacked
12	Ogbadibo LGA.	Sept., 10 2014	No. of death not certain	Scores dead when herdsmen attacked 5 villages in Ogbadibo LGA.
13	Abugbe, Okoklo, Ogwule & Ocholoyan in Agatu LGA	Jan., 27, 2015	17	Thousands of people displaced and farmlands destroyed including houses and churches
14	Tor-Anyiin and Tor-Ataan in Buruku LGA.	Feb., 8, 2016	10	Over 300 persons displaced in clash between herdsmen and farmers
15	Onoli, Awgu LG, Enugu StatE	Feb., 16, 2016	2	Crops and farmlands destroyed
16	Ukpabi-Nimbo, Enugu State	April 26, 2016	40	Houses and churches torched

Adapted from Aluko Opeyemi Idowu (2017., pg. 187-206); "Urban Violence Dimension in Nigeria: Farmers and Herders Onslaught", Agathos, Vol. 8, Issue 1, No.14

Implications of Herders-Farmers Conflict on Nigeria's National Security

Herders-farmers conflicts in Nigeria present a very disturbing complex scenario to Nigeria's national security; a scenario that is much more complex than the Boko Haram insurgency or the militancy in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria essentially because herders-farmers conflicts ramifies into the political, economic, cultural and social spheres. While some schools of thought see herders-farmers conflicts as the continuation of ethno-religious conflicts that predate the Nigerian state, others tend to locate its implications outside the matrix of ethnicity and religion. But no matter how we tend to explain this disturbing phenomenon, the truth is that herders-farmers conflicts have far-reaching implications for Nigeria's unity.

Forging national unity from the welter of ethnicities has been a perennial challenge to Nigeria's evolution as a country. Since independence from Britain in 1960, Nigeria has continued to weather severe storms that bear directly at her foundation. Some of these storms include the Nigeria-Biafra civil war, decades of corrupt military dictatorships; perennial inter-ethnic distrust; persistent religious crisis and political instability; ethnic determinism and self-determination; minority and resource control agitations; and a very corrupt political class. These issues make national cohesion very difficult in Nigeria. Presently, the country's geo-political landscape has been overwhelmed by a new dimension of tension and conflict as evidenced by the escalating deadly and fatal conflicts between nomadic Fulani cattle herders and farmers.

Beyond its implications for the unity of the country, it portends serious danger in terms of food production and sufficiency. Admittedly, there have several narratives to this conflict some bothering on accusations of an Islamization agenda; fundamentally the current herders-farmers conflict is a reflection of climate change-induced resource scarcity that threatens food and national security. With an estimated 250 ethnic groups, Nigeria is by far Africa's most ethnically diverse country with visible fault lines in its religious divide. The ongoing resource and environmental tension represented by the clash between herders and crop farmers has embedded religious significance. Most itinerant herders are northerners and adherents of the Islamic faith. Their clashes with farmers happen mainly in the central and southern regions, where most people are Christians and animists.

From 2013 to 2016, conflicts between the herders and farmers have become very deadly. Many traditional and farming communities in central and southern Nigeria have been overrun by herders who are accused of grazing their cattle on crop fields. The Nigerian and international media have been awash with reports of maiming, killings, rape and other forms of banditry associated with the highly armed Fulani herdsman. Unofficial figures put the casualty figure from one such incident in Nimbo, Enugu State, in the southeastern region, at about 140.

In the absence of state protection, these events have fuelled affected communities' support for ethnic or regional militias as a civic defence strategy. The clashes between herdsman and farmers strike at the core of Nigeria's vulnerable ethno-political fault lines. They also have ramifications for climate change and food security. Crop farmers produce more than 80 percent of Nigeria's food. Leaving this

critical lifeblood of the country's economic and cultural life at the mercy of herders and their cattle is not an option. Farmers, the majority of whom are women, constitute the bedrock of the country's informal economy. And the unofficial farming sector is the country's highest employer of labour. Now this key economic sector is under siege.

Perennial ethnic and religious suspicion in Nigeria often fuels apprehensions of an ulterior jihadist agenda. This has a significant security dimension that can easily be exploited. There is a perception of state impunity for the herders, given the evident lack of resolve to rein them in. As this paper pointed out earlier, government's response has not been salutary. At best the government's response smacks of abject appeasement and encouragement of violence on the victims of herdsman attack. Thus, the government must respond urgently before the current crisis festers like the Boko Haram insurgency. The herders-farmers crisis demonstrates the reality of the synergy between climate change and resource control and its engrained security challenges. The scarcity of water and shrinking of grazing fields in the desert north appear to be pushing herders southwards to the grasslands of the savannas and forests. The conflict over natural resources, like water and grazing fields, could become more pressing as the impact of climate change sets in. That struggle has significant security implications for Nigeria.

This volatile situation has further been exacerbated by the influx of additional Fulani herdsman from neighbouring countries of Niger, Chad, Mali and the Maghreb region, escaping the deteriorating environmental conditions in the Sahel- a semi-arid belt stretching thousands of kilometers. These migrating herdsman add more pressure on available grazing areas and the determination by the sedentary farmers in the central and southern parts of Nigeria to protect their farmlands from Fulani herdsman cannot be taken for granted.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Evidently, herders-farmers conflict in Nigeria has a long history. Incidentally, these herders cannot be easily tracked because of their constant movement, which has made them oblivious of territorial boundaries. Experts have predicted that the impact of climate change on the environment will become acute in the coming months and years. The implication of this is that the herders-farmers conflict can only escalate as the herders violate territorial boundaries in search of pastures and grazing fields for their animals. Finding a lasting cure for this conflict, in the light of increasing pressure due to climate change, suggests that the Nigerian government must wake up from slumber. Farmers are not willing to trade off their means of livelihood for the Fulani herdsman to graze their animals nor are the Fulanis willing to pass-by grazing fields and suffer their cattle to starve to death. This is indeed a very delicate matter requiring urgent and thoughtful intervention. This intervention should include a combination of policy options rooted in technology and innovation, as well as political and sustainability policy responses. In view of the foregoing, this paper makes the following recommendations:

- a) Government should explore the option of mapping potential grazing areas especially in farming communities. Most farming communities in Nigeria practice crop rotation indicating that at some point in the farming cycle some areas are lying fallow. A comprehensive mapping exercise will identify the regularity of such fallow grounds and understanding reached with concerned communities. This will forestall indiscriminate grazing of cattle on cultivated lands by the herders and reduce tension between the herders and farmers
- b) Members of Miyetti Allah, the real owners of the cattle, should be compelled to take up insurance policies as precautionary measures to indemnify any destruction that may be caused by their herds. The herders or rather foot soldiers of the Miyetti Allah must be identified and report to the community head of their host communities.
- c) Government should, as a matter of urgency, compel members of Miyetti Allah to explore the option of creating ranches in strategic places. This will reduce the incidence of crop destruction. The herders can go into the fields and collect fodders for the cattle. Creating such ranches would have a trickledown effect on the economy of scale of cattle rearing because many people would immediately go into the business of providing enough fodder for the cattle. Among the Igbos and Efik of southeast Nigeria cattle rearing is not alien. These people rear a species of bulls which are always reined in within enclosures. The owners provide grass for them or they pay for such services.
- d) Government must protect our borders to check the influx of foreign herdsmen into the country. Nigerian borders are notoriously porous and this allows rogue and undesirable elements from other countries to come into the country unhindered. From these porous borders, arms and ammunitions are smuggled into the country. Recently, it was generously reported in the Nigerian press of how foreign herdsmen were smuggling weapons into the country and how they have recruited and armed unemployed youths as cattle rearers. Porous border is Nigeria's biggest external problem to national security and government must tackle it as matter of urgency.
- e) Government should also strengthen traditional institutions to act as mediators in conflict situations, identify and nip conflict triggers in the bud. This will help in peace and confidence-building among the herders and their host communities.

References

- Anter, T. (2011). "Who are the People and Their Origins". Accessible at <https://www.modernghana.com/news/349849/who-are-the-fulani-people-their>
- Bassett, T.J. (1986). "Fulani Herd Movements". *Geographical Review* Vol. 26, No. 3, pg.234-248.
- Brown, H. (1983). "Thinking about National Security: Defense and Foreign Policy in an Dangerous World", *Journal of Contemporary World Issues* 5(2)
- Breusers, M., Suzanne N., and van Rheenen, T. (2000). "Reply to Peter Oksen's 'Disentanglements'". *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 38, No.1.

- Chappius, F. (2011). "Human Security and Security Sector Reform: Conceptual Convergences in Theory and Practice", In Benedek, W., Kettemann, M.C., Mostl, M. (eds.) *Mainstreaming Human Security in Peace Operations and Conflict Management*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Chinkin, C. (2005). "Human Security versus State Security". *Working Paper presented at the 6th Session of Global Security Environment and Future alternatives*: World Tribunal of Iraq.
- Dafinger, A, and Pelican, M. (2006). "Sharing or Dividing the Land? Land Rights and Herder Farmer Relations in Burkina Faso and Northwest Cameroon". *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 40(1).
- de Haan, L., Antje van D, and Annetee K., (1990). "From Symbiosis to Polarization: Peasants and Pastoralists in Northern Benin". *The Indian Geographical Journal*, Vol.65, No. 1, pg.51-65
- Deng, F.M. (1995). "Frontiers of Sovereignty: A Framework of Protection, Assistance and Development for the Internally Displaced". *Leiden Journal of International Law*, Vol. 8, No. 2.
- Diallo, Y. (200). Les Peuls et les Senufo de la savane ivoirienne. In L'ethnicité peule dans des contextes nouveaux. Youssouf Diallo and Günther Schlee, eds. Pp. 65-91. Paris: Karthala
- Eteng, I.A, (1997). "The Nigerian state and Oil community interest: Issues and Perspectives," in Adewumi, F. (ed.), *Oil Exploration and Exploitation, the state and crisis in Nigeria's Oil Bearing Enclave*. Lagos: Frederick Elbert Foundation.
- Etikerentse, S. (1985). *Nigerian Petroleum Law*. Hong Kong: Macmillan
- Fagbade, S.O. (1981). "An Assessment of the impact of oil on Fisheries of the Port-Harcourt Area of Niger Delta,". Port Harcourt: Niger Delta Development Authority
- Genyi, G.A. (2014). "Ethnic and Religious Identities Shaping Contestation for Land-based Resources: The Tiv Farmers and Pastoralist Conflicts in Central Nigeria". *Paper presented at the 1st Annual International Conference on ethnic and Religious Conflict resolution and Peace-Building*. New York City, October 1st
- High-level Panel on threats, Challenges and Change, HIPTCC (2004). "A More Secure world: Our Shared Responsibility". New York: United Nations
- Human Security Report Project, HSRP (2012). *Human Security Report 2012: Sexual Violence, Education and War: Beyond the Mainstream Narrative*. Vancouver: Human Security Press
- Huntington, S.P (1996). *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*.. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster
- Ibeanu, O. (1997). "Oil, Conflict and Security in Rural Nigeria: Issues in Ogoni Crisis," Occasional Paper, Vol.1, No. 2.
- Ihonvbere, J and Shaw, (1988). *Towards Economy of Nigeria: Petroleum and Politics at the (Semi-) Periphery*. Vermont: Gower Publishing Co. International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, ICISS, (2001). "The

- Responsibility to Protect". Ottawa: International Development Research Centre
- Iro, I. (1991). "The Fulani Herding System". *Washington African Development Foundation*. Accessible at www.gamji.com
- Kong, Y.F. and MacFarlane, N. (2006). *Human Security and the UN: A Critical History*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Lippmann, W. (1943). *US Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic*. Boston: Little Brown Books.
- Luckham, R., Goetz, A.M., and Kaldor, M. (2003). "Democratic Institutions and Democratic Politics", In Bastian, S. and Luckham, R. (eds.): *Can Democracy be Designed?* London: Zed Books.
- Mahmud, H., Quaisar, M.M., Sabur, A., and Tamanna, S., (2008). "Human Security or National Security: The Problems and Prospects of Norm of Human Security". *Journal of Politics and Law*, Vol. 4, No. 3
- Maier, C.S. (1990). "Peace and Security for the 1990s", Paper prepared for the MacArthur Fellowship Programme, Social Science Research Council
- Morel, E.D., (1968). *Nigeria: Its Peoples and its Problems*, (3rd Ed.). London: Frank Cass Publishers
- Moritz, M. (2010). "Understanding Herder-farmer Conflicts in west Africa: Outline of a Processual Approach". *Human Organizations*, Vol. 69, No. 2
- Nwankwo, A.A. (2016). "The National Grazing Reserve Bill and Islamization of Nigeria: Matters Arising". *The Sun Newspaper*, August 15
- Ogata, S and Cels, J. (2003). "Human Security: Protecting and Empowering the People". *Global Governance*, Vol. 9, No. 3.
- Olabode, A.D and Ajibade L.T. (2010). "Environmental-induced Conflict and Sustainable Development: A Case Study of Fulani-Farmers Conflict in Eke-Ero LGA, Kwara State-Nigeria". *Journal of Sustainable Development*, Vol. 12; No. 5
- Overseas Development Institute, ODI (2009). "State-Building for Peace: Navigating an Arena of Contradictions". *ODI Briefing Papers, Issue 52*. <http://www.odi.org.uk/publications/3673-fragile-state-building-peace-conflict>
- Tonah, S. (2006). "Migration and Herder-Farmer Conflicts in Ghana's Volta Basin". *Canadian Journal of African Studies*. Vol. 40, No. 1.
- Tyubee, B.T. (2006). "Influence of Extreme Climate on Common Disputes and Violence in Tiv Area of Benue State", In Timothy T. Gyuse and Oga Ajene (eds.), *Conflicts in the Benue Valley*, Makurdi:Benue State University Press
- UNDP Commission on Human Security (2005), *New Dimensions of Human Security*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Watson, C.N (2008). *US National Security: A Reference Handbook*. Washington D.C: ABC-CLIO Books.
- Weber, M. (1919). "Politics as a Vocation", Lecture given to the Free Students' Union of Munich University. <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/polisci/ethos/Weber-vocation.pdf>