

INTERROGATING THE CHALLENGES OF MANAGING RESOURCE CONFLICT BETWEEN HERDERS AND FARMERS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The primary responsibility of the Nigerian State as contained in the 1999 Constitution (as amended) is that of securing human lives and property. Events in the last decades have shown that the Nigerian State has failed to live up to expectations in its responsibility, especially as it concerns the issue of managing resource conflicts. Human lives are wasted on a regular basis as a result of the fierce contestations for ecological resources such as land and water sources by herders and farmers. Government's responses through the deployment of security agencies and the use of agricultural policies have not successfully resolved this resource conflict or even mediate peace. While security agents are often belatedly deployed in conflict situations, agricultural policy initiatives are either poorly implemented or abandoned by the government. By way of a qualitative analysis of secondary data, the paper interrogates the challenges the Nigerian State faces in managing resource conflict between herders and farmers. The paper argues that the capacity of the Nigerian State to resolve the conflict has been weakened by the ruling elite who have certain interests to protect. This explains why the conflict has persisted across the country in recent years with devastating consequences. The paper recommends among others that the State should be relatively autonomous and ensure it does not allow the elite to influence it in such a way that its primary responsibility of securing human lives and property would be jeopardized.

Keywords: *Conflict management, farmers, herders, resource conflict, State.*

1.0 Introduction

The Nigeria State came into existence in 1914 following the amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorates by the then British colonial Governor-General, Lord Frederick Lugard. Before then, the country was a mere "geographical expression" It is predominantly an agrarian society that provides employment opportunities for about 30% of its population (Ibrahim & Chaminda, 2017). Before independence in 1960, agriculture was the mainstay of the Nigerian economy; it contributed over 70% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and over 60% of the country's export earnings (Audu, 2017). Agriculture was a dominant sector of the Nigerian economy, but was however neglected with the discovery of oil, since the 1970s during the oil boom era and today, Nigeria's global rating is measured primarily on oil and gas which accounts for government revenue and 90% of foreign exchange earnings (Audu, 2017). Though agriculture was neglected then, it has remained a major sector in the Nigerian economy.

The agricultural sector is made up of two major groups of people-those who engage in crop farming and those who engage in pastoral farming. These two groups have always complemented each other by providing the dietary needs of the Nigerian populace. Pastoral farming is the most predominant system of livestock farming in Nigeria and livestock owners

are basically nomads who travel from one place to another in search of grazing fields for their cattle and ready markets where they could sell their cattle whenever the need arises. The farmers on the other hands are into sedentary crop farming system as against the pastoralists who are always on the move in search of pasture for their cattle. The two occupational groups have always lived peacefully together with each other with little or no problem.

In recent years however, Nigeria has witnessed and is still witnessing increased resource conflicts between nomadic cattle herders and sedentary crop farmers in different parts of the country, especially in the north-central states of Benue, Kogi, Plateau and Nassarawa, which has a vast arable land suitable for both crop farming and cattle grazing. This explains why cattle herders move en mass from the far north, especially because of the impact of climate change to this region, which is rich in green pasture all year round and the availability of water for the nomads' cattle. The escalation of resource conflicts between herders and farmers has been blamed majorly on the fierce contestations for the shrinking ecological resources such as grazing fields, farming land and water sources.

The conflict has resulted to the loss of human and animal lives, destruction of properties, and the displacement of persons among others. For instance, on May 13, 2014 Ekwo-Okpanchenyi village of Agatu LGA of Benue state lost over 47 of its people and over 200 houses were burnt down as a result of resource conflict between Fulani herders and Benue farmers (Genyi, 2017). Similarly, in February 2016, over 300 persons including women and children lost their lives to resource conflict in some communities in Agatu LGA of Benue state (Ibrahim & Chaminda, 2017). Between 2015 and mid-2018, the casualty figure was put at about 2000 deaths. In 2017 alone, over 1, 000 persons were killed. While there were a total of 67 cases of resource conflicts arising from herders-farmers' clashes between 2007 and 2011; there were 716 cases of the conflict between 2012 and 2018 (Atelhe & Cornelius, 2018). Between January and July 2018 alone, no fewer than 500 lives were lost due to the incidence of resource conflicts between farmers and herders in the north-central geo-political zone of Nigeria (Clara, 2018). As at March 16, 2018 a cumulative fatality of 149 persons including women and children were recorded in violent confrontations and attacks arising from the resource conflicts between herders and farmers in Plateau, Benue, Edo, Ebonyi and Kogi states. Several people were allegedly injured with houses burnt down during the incidents (Zakari, 2018). On Wednesday 21st April, 2021, a traditional ruler and five other persons were allegedly killed in a resource conflict between herders and farmers in Tse-Zoola village in Agan ward of Makurdi LGA, Odugbeho in Agatu LGA and Mbayer-Yandev in Guma LGA of Benue state (Duru, 2021). Three days later, nine persons were killed while scores mostly women and children were injured in Ajimaka, a Tiv settlement in Doma LGA of Nasarawa state on April 24, 2021 in a resource conflict between herders and farmers (David, 2021).

Violent conflicts have continued to define the relationships between crop farmers and cattle herders in most parts of the country, especially the north-central in the 2000s. The conflict poses a challenge to the national security and integration of the country. To curtail the incidents of this conflict and its concomitant consequences therefore, the Nigerian government has attempted different policy measures at different times with little or no success. Instead of reducing the incidents and the attendant consequences, the conflicts have escalated in recent years despite the various strategies employed by the government (Izevbizua & Izevbizua, 2021).

It is against this backdrop that this paper interrogates the challenges the Nigerian State faces in managing resource conflict between sedentary crop farmers and nomadic cattle herders in six parts. The first part serves as the introduction. The second part centers on conceptual issues. The third part focuses on the theoretical framework. The fourth part assesses the Nigerian State's response to resource conflict between herders and farmers. The fifth part considers the Nigerian State's challenges of managing resource conflict between herders and

farmers. The last part concludes the paper and makes some useful recommendations as a panacea to the problem of resource conflict between herders and farmers.

2.0 Conceptual Issues

There are three basic concepts that are germane to this paper. These are conflict management, resource conflict and the state

2.1 Conflict Management

Conflict management is the process by which conflicts are resolved, where negative results are minimized and positive results are prioritized. In other words, it is the process of limiting the negative aspects of conflicts while increasing the positive aspects of conflicts. It also means the techniques and ideas designed to reduce the negative effects of conflict and enhance the positive outcomes for all parties involved. Ken (2014) sees conflict management as the operationalization and responses to the enforcement of the strategic provisions, goals and ideals of conflict resolution agenda. Boutros-Ghali (1993) sees conflict management to span the broad spectrum of peace processes such as early warning systems, conflict prevention, peacemaking, peacekeeping, peace enforcement, and post conflict peace building for intervention. Conflict management is geared towards capacity building remedies to support peace processes.

Conflict management may also be defined as the process of reducing the negative and destructive capacity of conflict through a number of measures and by working with and through the parties involved in that conflict. It covers the entire area of handling conflicts positively at different stages, including those efforts made to prevent conflict by being proactive. It also encompasses conflict limitation, containment and litigation (Best, 2014). This term is sometimes synonymously used with “conflict regulation” and “conflict prevention” To Burton (1990), conflict prevention connotes the containment of conflict through steps introduced to promote conditions in which collaborative and valued relationships control the behaviour of conflict parties. The term “conflict management” confirms the fact that conflict is inevitable in all human society, but not that all conflicts can always be resolved; therefore what practitioners can do is to manage and regulate them (Best, 2014).

2.2 Resource Conflict

Conflict is the manifestation of hostile attitude in the face of conflicting interests between individuals, groups or states. These conflicting interests can be over resources, identity, power, status or values (Onu, 2014). It can also be seen as a situation in which two or more parties strive to acquire the same scarce resources at the same time (Wallenstein, 2002). According to Blench (1996), resource conflicts can be classified into two, namely point resources including mines, farms and reserves, and eco-zonal conflicts including water, grazing and hunting rights. The resource conflict that concerns this paper is the latter category, which has to do with conflict between crop farmers and cattle herders over ecological resources such as grazing fields, arable lands, and water sources. In this regard, Okoli and Atelhe (2014) define it as the systematic aggression exhibited by the nomadic pastoralists in the context of socio-ecological struggles with sedentary crop farmers. Okoro (2018a) avers that resource conflicts are conflicts occurring between peasant farmers or subsistence cultivators and nomadic or transhumant live-stock keepers. Hussein, Sumberg, and Seddon, (1999) view this conflict as comprising different types of conflicts, including ethnic conflicts, interest conflicts, political action, evictions, killings, cattle raiding and cattle rustling.

2.3 The State

The State may be defined as a politically organized body of people inhabiting a defined geographical entity with an organized legitimate government (Dibie, 2018). It may also be referred to a population occupying a definite territory and subject to a government which is recognized by other states and has monopoly over the use of legitimate force (Olisa, Okoli & Nwabufo, 1999). The State is said to exist where a territory, a government, population, and sovereignty exist. The State must also be recognized by other similar states in the international political system.

2.4 Historical Analysis of Resource Conflict between Herders and Farmers

Resource conflict between herders and farmers is not a 21st Century phenomenon. This conflict has been in existence since the beginning of agriculture and has either increased or decreased in intensity or frequency depending on economic, environmental and other factors (Blench, 2010; Aliyu, 2015; Okoro, 2018b). Crop farmers are settled agriculturalists who deal in crop production either for subsistence or commercial purposes. The cattle herders who are mostly Fulani depend on nomadic or transhumance cattle herding in which case they move their cattle seasonally from the north to south in the dry season and back to the north in the rainy season. The pattern of relationship between these two agricultural land user groups was symbiotic-while the farmers benefit from the cattle manure to fertilize their crops, the herders benefit from the crop refuse to nutritionally feed their herds. This symbiotic practice tied the wellbeing of the farmers to the wellbeing of the herders and allowed for most resource conflicts between the two groups to be resolved non-violently through traditional mediation mechanism (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2017).

Since 2000 however, the symbiotic relationship between farmers and herders increasingly deteriorated due to climate change induced migration of herders (Ogoh, 2019; Akuva & Yusufu, 2020), increase in both human and animal population (Okoli & Atelhe, 2014), proliferation of small and light weapons (Genyi, 2019), failure of traditional conflict resolution mechanism (Bukar, 2016), politicization or government's lack of political will to tame the conflict (Atelhe & Cornelius, 2018), shrinking natural resources (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2017) and forceful occupation of host community lands without authorization among others. Cattle herders are predominantly Muslims from the Fulani ethnic group whereas the crop farmers are predominantly Christians. Thus, the conflict begins as resource conflict but sometimes transforms into ethno-religious conflict with devastating consequences.

Climate change has led to desertification and brought about inadequate arable land water resources needed for crop farming and cattle herding (Abass, 2012: Ogoh, 2019). As these climatic conditions began to have devastating effects on the herders and their capacity to breed cattle for optimum profits in their locations, it became imperative to move southwards to locations where green pastures could be relatively found all through the year. This migration to the Middle-Belt and the southern region has therefore made the competition for scarce available land to become very stiff. This culminates in violent confrontations by the two groups. Disagreeing with the nexus between climate change and resource conflict Conroy (2014) is of the opinion that no concrete relationship between climates change and violent conflicts. According to him, even a search into the Nigeria Watch database reveals that there is zero result for relation between climate change and conflict.

Also, increase in human population and urbanization has combined to put pressure on the available land. While human population is increasing at a geometrical proportion, available ecological resources are becoming more threatened and scarcer. The ensuing struggle for access to and utilization of these ecological resources by both groups turns violent in most cases resulting to loss of human lives, forceful displacement of people, destruction of valuable properties including farmlands and harvested foodstuff. According to Nyang (2010), population explosion made the farmers to cultivate more lands thereby leaving little lands for

the herders to graze on. Thus, this made the herders to move to other places where they can have access to pasture (Clara, 2017). In addition, urbanization and industrial development have tended to encroach on lands which were hitherto available for cattle grazing and crop farming. This again puts more pressures on available ecological resources and this brings about violent conflicts between the two groups. Another factor that has been blamed for the persistence of resource conflict between herders and farmers is the proliferation of small and light weapons (Genyi, 2019). Some analysts believe that the conflicts in Libya and Mali have resulted to the inflow of all manner of arms and ammunition into Nigeria through her porous borders (Bagudu, 2017).

Furthermore, the influx of foreign herders has been blamed for the persistence of resource conflict between farmers and herders in Nigeria. The former National Chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Alhaji Abubakar Kawu Baraje said that Fulani herders accused of wrecking havoc across Nigeria are not Nigerians. In his words:

The Fulani involved in criminal activities are not Nigerians. The Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria do not carry guns. They only have machetes used to clear the bush as they progress with their cows and a stick to direct the animals. Those who carry arms were criminals who exploited the porosity of the Nigerian borders and came in without cattle. To disguise their intention, they first began with cattle rustling in the north-west to acquire cows and assume the status of herdsmen. This went on for some time in the north. It is now that they spread their nefarious activities to the south that the awareness and condemnation became very prominent and loud (Akinyemi, 2021)

Resource conflicts between farmers and herders pose a lot of challenges to national security in Nigeria, and thus threaten the very existence of the Nigeria state as well. The general effects of these conflicts includes loss of humans lives, loss of animal lives, destruction of farm crops, poisoning of water sources, destruction of sources of livelihood, and internal displacement of persons among others (Aliyu, Ikedinma & Akinwande, 2018).

3.0 Theoretical Framework

Theorizing conflict remains very difficult, because the actors, causes and dynamics are complex and varied (Le Meur & Hochet 2010). A combination of theories is therefore needed to lucidly explain this conflict. The paper therefore finds a synergy of Resource Access Theory and State Fragility Theory as apt in this discourse, because the former explains the factors responsible for the persistence of resource conflict between herders and farmers; while the latter explains the challenges the Nigerian State faces in managing the conflict,

3.1 Resource Access Theory

The paper adopts this theory to explain the factors responsible for the persistence of resource conflict between farmers and herders. Resource Access Theory was developed in the 1970s by Jeffrey Pfeffer and Gerald Sanannak (Fajonyomi, Fatile, Bello, Opusunju & Adejuwon, 2018). According to this theory, conflict is basically a part and parcel of human society, and that the competition for scarce resources is responsible for resource conflict in all human societies. The ownership and utilization of resources has continued to directly and indirectly define the dimensions of most resource conflicts since the beginning of mankind. Of all the resources in contention world over, ecological resources such as grazing/farming land and water sources have remained the most potent source of resource conflicts between cattle herders and crop farmers.

The theory aids our understanding of the persistence of resource conflict between herders and farmers in different parts of the country, especially in the Middle Belt States of Benue, Plateau and Nassarawa where the struggle for access to and utilization of land and water sources has taken more dangerous dimension with the introduction of sophisticated weapons of warfare such as AK-47s and other assault rifles. To this theory, the struggle for access to resources is behind the violent resource conflict between herders and farmers across the country (Ikezue & Ezeah, 2017)

The impact of climate change has been felt in the dwindling quality and quantity of ecological resources, which are very important to both farmers and herders. Climate change and desertification have resulted in scarcity of land and water resources, and this has intensified the contestations for these resources by the farmers and herders. The cattle herders in Nigeria, majority of who are Fulani wish to always have unhindered access to land and water sources in any part of the country they find themselves not minding whether or not they are indigenes of those areas. The farmers on their own part also do not wish to share these resources with cattle herders, especially now that these resources have become very scarce consequent upon change in climatic conditions. The herders feel frustrated, relatively deprived and tend to be aggressive as they relate with the farmers.

Applied to the purpose of this paper, resource conflict between herders and farmers across the country has become more deadly in recent years as a result of the intensification of production of food crops necessitated by the ever increasing demand for food stuff by the increasing human population (Adisa & Adekunle, 2010). The relevance of this theory in the understanding of resource conflict notwithstanding, it has been criticized for focusing on groups contending for resources to the neglect of individual members of these groups. Also, the theory was not able to explain why certain feelings of deprivation of access to resources are transformed into collective action, whereas in some other similar cases, no collective effort is made to reshape the society. These criticisms notwithstanding, Resource Access Theory still remains a useful analytical tool in explaining resource conflicts between herders and farmers in Nigeria.

3.2 State Fragility Theory

This paper adopts this theory to explain how the Nigerian state has fared in managing resource conflict between farmers and herders. The persistence of this conflict and its concomitant consequences of loss of human lives and displacement of Nigerian citizens in their own country is an indication that the Nigerian State is weak. A fragile or weak State is a country characterized by weak state capacity or weak state legitimacy leaving citizens vulnerable to a range of shocks (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fragile_state). The primary responsibility of government is to protect the lives and property of its citizens, but it has failed woefully in this regard. The failure of the state to tackle resource conflict between farmers and herders in north-central Nigeria, especially Benue, Plateau and Nasarawa States, has led to loss of hundreds of lives (Genyi, 2019) with survivors being forced to seek refuge at Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camp (Akuva & Yusufu, 2020).

The failure of the government to promptly respond to the conflicts when called upon by victims shows that the government has failed in its responsibility and goes to prove that the state is feeble and fragile. For instance, the people of Agatu LGA of Benue state were attacked by armed herdsmen in February 2016 for four consecutive days without responses from the state security agencies. A total of about 500 persons including women and children were said to have been killed in the attack (Genyi, 2019). The Inspector General of Police came to the scene of the massacre two weeks after the attacks were carried out, only to dispute the casualty figures of either 300 or 500 projected by the community leaders and the press. That was the best the IGP could do. Also, the Minister of Internal Affairs, whose office is responsible for

internal security, visited the affected communities a week after the IGP's visit (Undertow, 2016).

The increasing numbers of killings consequent upon resource conflict between farmers and herders in recent years is an indication that government is weak and the Nigerian state is fragile. The Nigerian state has not yet failed; but according to Yusufu and Ilevbare (2021) it is gradually transforming into a failed state. A failed state is a state that is unable to meet the needs and aspirations of its masses (Ayanwu, 2005). A failed state as opposed to a capable state is a state which has failed to provide for its citizens such basic needs like adequate security, food, water, electricity, health care and good road networks among others.

4.0 Assessment of the Nigerian State's Response to Resource Conflict between Herders and Farmers

The Federal Government and some State Governments have made attempts to address the problem of resource conflict between herders and farmers in the past. This became imperative because of the protracted nature of the conflict, which does not only pose a threat to national security but also, threatens the prospects for food security in the country. Some of the government's responses to this conflict include the following:

Creation of Grazing Reserves: The passage of the Grazing Reserve Law in 1965 was the first tangible effort by the government towards addressing the problem of resource conflict between herders and farmers (Genyi, 2017). The law was intended to protect herders against intimidation and deprivation of access to grazing field by farmers, cattle ranchers and intruders (Uzundu, 2013). The government's inability to enforce this law led to the encroachment on cattle routes by farmers. In 1976, the government again surveyed land in the country, and by 1980 about 2.3 million hectares of land were officially established as grazing areas, which represents just about 2% of the total areas earmarked for the purpose. Then the government intended to create additional 28 million hectares as grazing reserves out of the 300 areas which were initially surveyed. Of these, only about 600,000 hectares were gazette and this covers only 45 areas. In all, only about 225,000 hectares which covers 8 reserves were fully established by the government as reserve areas for grazing (Uzundu, 2013). The inability of the government to develop a systematic grazing reserve system in the country, in a way, could be blamed for the lingering resource conflict between herders and farmers across various farming communities in Nigeria.

Establishment of the National Commission for Nomadic Education: The National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) was established by the federal government of Nigeria in 1989 via Decree No. 41. Presently, the law establishing the commission is known as Nomadic Education Act, Cap No. 20 Laws of the Federation. The aim of the programme was to economically and socially integrate nomadic herders into the national life, through the provision of relevant, functional, and mobile basic education and livelihoods skills provision. Also, the program is designed to help the nomadic cattle herders embrace modern techniques of breeding cattle so as to optimize their economic potentials, as well as dairy processing and marketing, animal vaccinations, and modern herding techniques. The programme on nomadic education has not really being able to achieve the objectives for which it was established in the first place because, according to Alabi (2015), the programme is challenged by inadequate funding from the federal government resulting to inadequate infrastructural facilities and inadequate qualified personnel to manage the programme.

Deployment of Security Agents: The deployment of security operatives has become a major strategy that the Nigerian state adopts in managing resource conflict between herders and farmers. Any time a resource conflict ensues between herders and farmers, the first conflict management strategy the federal government adopts is the deployment of security officers to the conflict engulfed zones. The Nigerian government often responds to violent resource

conflict with the deployment of security operatives under various code names. For instance, the Nigerian Army flagged off Battalion Forward Operation Base (FOB) in Birnin- Gwari, with an operation tagged “Idon Raini”. Also, The Nigerian Air Force has deployed its Special Forces to the newly-established 23 Quick Response Wing (QRW) in Nguroje, Taraba (Vanguard, 2018). Again, the NAF has a 1000-man Special Intervention Force (SIF) deployed to Makurdi to debase armed bandits and criminal elements terrorizing the people of Benue and Nasarawa states. NAF has also unveiled a new base in Kerang, Plateau state, with the aim of reducing its response time to emergencies. NAF has also deployed drones to flash points. The Federal Government deployed 3,000 personnel of Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC) Special Forces, known as *Agro-rangers*, to protect farms and agricultural investment in the country. In the same vein, the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) has deployed additional five units of Police Mobile Force, Police Special Forces, Police Aerial Surveillance Helicopters and Special Police Joint Intelligence and Investigation Team to Benue State. Also, the NPF has deployed a surveillance helicopter to Taraba (Vanguard, 2018).

Incidentally, there are concerns that these security measures have not been proactive. Again, there are reports that security agencies who are part of these operations and were sent to protect at-risk farmers and herders communities have committed crimes and human rights violations, such as physical torture, extortion, and other forms of gender-based violence against the communities they were deployed to protect in the first place. In fact, the deployment of security agencies has often had the unintended consequence of breeding local umbrage and further increasing divides as many communities perceive them to be biased with one side. This “one side” according to Genyi (2019) is the cattle herders, most of whom are Fulani. In a study conducted by Genyi (2019), it was found that the Nigerian state is not neutral in its intervention in resource conflict as it reveals an implied bent towards the herders. This perceived or actual bias risks alienating the communities and people they are meant to protect (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2018).

Comprehensive Livestock Development Plan: The federal government through Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development formulated the “comprehensive livestock development plan.” in 2015. The plan was aimed at curtailing the persistent resource conflict between farmers and herders across farming communities in the country. The plan was also to develop grazing reserves and cattle routes after a review of the existing programmes. To ensure that the aim of the programme was realized, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) decided to release the sum of N100 billion to the 36 states of the federation (Atelhe & Cornelius, 2018). The release of this humongous amount by the CBN notwithstanding, none of these state governments have been able to construct a ranch not to talk of reserve or even stock route owing to lack of commitment to the programme (Atelhe & Cornelius, 2018)

The Great Green Wall Initiatives: Climate change had impacted negatively on the environment with concomitant effects of desertification, deforestation and land aridity mostly in Northern Nigeria. Against this backdrop, the African Union (AU) introduced the Great Green Wall Initiative (GGWI) in 2007. The Great Green Wall Initiative set out to create an 8,000km of trees along the southern Sahel, accompanied by rural development and ecosystem management initiatives, to combat the encroaching desertification of the Sahara Desert. However, it was in 2013, that the Nigerian government decided to establish the Great Green Wall Agency (GGWA) saddled with the responsibility of combating desertification, which has been responsible for the mass exodus of cattle herders from the northern part of the country to the Middle Belt region in search of green/fresh pasture and water (Kwaja, 2013). The GGWA aims at creating green shelter-belt (wind-breaking trees) in the frontline states of Borno, Katsina, Kebbi, and Zamfara, to protect the northern part of the country against desert encroachment. The GGWA has established orchards and nurseries in northern Nigeria, as well

as solar and wind-powered boreholes, but their activities have slowed down due to funding challenges from the federal government (Fulani, 2017)

The National Livestock Transformation Plan: The National Livestock Transformation Plan is built on six key pillars: economic investment, conflict resolution, law and order, humanitarian relief, information education and strategic communication; and cross-cutting issues. According to the plan, the economic investment pillar would support and strengthen the development of market-driven ranches in seven pilot states [Adamawa, Benue, Kaduna, Plateau, Nasarawa, Taraba and Zamfara] for improved livestock productivity through breed (genetic) improvement and pasture production, in addition to efficient land and water productivity. The government also said it would rebuild social capital at the community level to promote mutual trust, confidence building and consolidate the peace process, with regards to the conflict resolution pillar. The humanitarian relief pillar focuses on rebuilding and reconstructing of common facilities such as worship centers, markets and individual homes that have been destroyed. The fifth pillar was meant to aid information, education and strategic communication on the development of grazing reserves in the frontline states, and guard against the repercussions of resource conflicts between herders and farmers such as loss of human lives and destruction of properties among others. The cross-cutting issues pillar identifies various cross-cutting issues that are necessary for the realization of the objectives of the programme which includes among others monitoring, evaluation, research and development.

The RUGA (Rural Grazing Area) policy: The RUGA project was conceived by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and was approved by President Muhammadu Buhari on May 11, 2019. According to Bankole (2019), the word ‘RUGA’ is not just an acronym for Rural Grazing Area, but a Hausa term which means cow settlement. In RUGA settlement, cattle herders were supposed to graze within defined area and maintain some level of separation since they were to be provided with amenities such as pasture, water, health facilities, schools, road networks, veterinary clinics, markets as well as processing firms that would make refined products from meat, milk and other byproducts (Toromade, 2019). The preliminary project was supposed to cover ninety four locations in Adamawa, Benue, Edo, Ebonyi, Kaduna, Nasarawa, Oyo, Plateau, Taraba, Ekiti, Niger, and Zamfara states (Iyare, 2019). The policy was aimed at addressing the problem of the incessant resource conflict between cattle herders and crop farmers in Nigeria. While some states in the Middle-Belt and southern regions such as Benue state among others dissociated themselves from the RUGA settlement policy, Some others states such as Sokoto, Adamawa, Nasarawa, Kaduna, Kogi, Taraba, Katsina, Plateau, Kebbi, Zamfara and Niger supported the policy and even went ahead to apply to the Federal government promising to making lands available for the take-off of the Ruga scheme.

The Ruga policy is presently suspended because of the criticisms that trail its introduction. The federal government suspended the policy on July 3, 2019 (Ekpo & Bright, 2019). For instance, the policy was criticized as being a grand plan by the administration of President Mohammadu Buhari (a Fulani man) to claim land across the country for his Fulani kinsmen, majority of whom are cattle herders. While kicking against the policy, the Benue state Governor, Samuel Ortom through his Chief Press Secretary, Terver Akase, maintained that:

We find the approach of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture not only as a gross violation of the ranching law but also as an insult to the sensibilities of the entire Benue state. The government of Benue state is willing to support cattle owners to establish ranches as stipulated by the law prohibiting open grazing. We however, wish to reiterate that Benue state has no land for grazing reserves, grazing

routes, cattle colonies, and RUGA settlement (Ameh, Nnodim, Charles, Tyopuusu, Casmir & Ekeoma, 2019)

Cattle Colony: The Federal government was to establish cattle colonies across states in the country with a view to curtailing the frequent resource conflicts between farmers and herders in some parts of the country. The announcement of this proposal was made in early 2018 by Chief Audu Ogbe, the then Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development. Sixteen states so far agreed to the establishment of cattle colonies proposed by the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Chief Audu Ogbe as a solution to the incessant resource conflict between farmers and herders in the Nigeria. The Minister explained that:

Cattle colonies are better for the breeding of cows because 30 or 40 ranches can share the same colony. A ranch is usually owned by an individual or a company with generally few cows. In a colony, you could find 30,000 cows owned by different owners. The reason why Government was designing the colonies is to be able to prepare on a large scale, on economy of scale, a place where many owners of cattle can co-exist, and where cows can be fed well, because Government can make their feeds. They can get good water to drink. Cows drink a lot of water. We can give them greater fodder (Afolabi, 2018, p.328).

The Federal government of Nigeria highlighted the expected benefits from the proposed cattle colonies as follows:

- i. It will ensure safety of lives and properties and a drastic reduction in resource conflicts between farmers and herders.
- ii. It is believed that cattle produce healthier beef when they are kept in colonies, and also produce more milk.
- iii. Farmers do not have to worry about the safety of their crops and thus more production is ensured for the masses, which means more economic activity in the agricultural sector.
- iv. Cattle colonies would put a stop to cattle rustling by thieves and terrorists.
- v. It would be easy to identify criminals who either masquerade as herdsmen or herdsmen who commit murderous crimes and destruction (Afolabi, 2018, p.328).

These benefits notwithstanding, Benue and Taraba states which have been experiencing perennial resource conflicts between farmers and herders as well as the southern states rejected the federal government's proposals of establishing cattle colonies. However 16 northern states volunteered land for the establishment of cattle colonies in their domains including Adamawa, Kano, Kaduna, Katsina, Zamfara, Kebbi, Nasarawa, Plateau, Bauchi, Gombe, Borno, Jigawa, Yobe, Niger, Kogi and Kwara states. The states agreed to volunteer 5,000 hectares of land each.

Open Grazing Prohibition Law: Open grazing prohibition laws were actually put in place by some state governments with the aim of curtailing the incessant resource conflicts between herders and farmers in those states. The Ekiti state government for instance, under the leadership of Governor Ayodele Fayose, enacted the Prohibition of Cattle and other Ruminants Grazing in 2016, which bans grazing after 6pm in the evening and before 7am in the morning, and it also says that any herdsman caught with firearms and any weapons whatsoever during grazing shall be charged with terrorism (Ogo-Oluwa, 2017). Also, the Benue state government under the leadership of Governor Samuel Ortom, enacted the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law 2017, with the following objectives: to prevent the destruction of farm crops; to bring an imminent end to clashes between farmers and herders; to protect the

environment while optimizing the use of land; to prevent, control, and manage the spread of diseases; and to create a conducive environment for large scale crop production among others (Aligba, Omanchi, & Gbakighir, 2020). The law prohibited the open grazing of livestock or the practice of allowing cattle to roam freely in search of pasture and water, and called instead for the establishment of ranches within the state. Similarly, in Taraba state, the Governor signed the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Bill 2017 into law, which took effect on 24th January, 2018 (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2018). The implementation of this law has economic, identity, socio-cultural, legal, and security implications (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2017), and does not really enjoy the support of the federal government of Nigeria.

5.0 The Nigerian State's Challenges of Managing Resource Conflict between Herders and Farmers

Elite Interest: The relative autonomy of the Nigerian state has presently been hijacked by the ruling elite for their selfish interest. Some scholars such as Tativ and Zasha (2020) have argued that the cattle herders who graze herds from one place to the other are not owners of the cattle they carry about; the real owners are rich men of Northern origin. Subscribing to this view, Akwara (2018) states that “the Fulani elite own large proportions of the cattle been reared by herders. The real cattle owners belong to the upper class citizens from the Northern extracts and have the financial muscles to arm these herdsmen against any perceived obstacle against their interest. This explains why some herdsmen are seen with AK47s and other sophisticated weapons (Ephraim 2014; Bagudu, 2017), which ordinarily they cannot afford to purchase. Open grazing is cheaper and more economical than modern day ranching. That is why the northern elite whose economic interest are been threatened would do anything within their powers to ensure that any policy against open grazing is challenged either legally or otherwise. For instance in Benue state, when the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Bill was passed into Law in 2017, the Fulani herdsmen under the canopy of Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) kicked against it and even went ahead and challenged it in court but lost the case. MACBAN opposed the law on the grounds that it was discriminatory against the herders, and does not provide or support the production of alternative livelihoods and effectively evicts herders from the state (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2017).

Politicization of Resource Conflict: Secondly is the issue of politicization of the resource conflict between herders and farmers by the Nigerian government. The likes of Genyi (2019) and Tativ and Zasha (2020) have argued that it is because the conflict has been politicized made it possible for the Fulani herdsmen to operate with impunity while the non-Hausa/Fulani farmers suffer the full wrath of the law, especially since 2015 when Muhammadu Buhari-a Fulani man became the president of this country. For instance, it took President Muhamadu Buhari more than six months to order an investigation into the resource conflict between Fulani herdsmen and crop farmers in Agatu LGA of Benue state in March, 2016 with a casualty figure over 500 deaths (Amaza, 2016). Also, whenever the farmers are attacked by the Fulani herdsmen and an alarm is raised by the victims for the security men to come to their rescue, the security officers would not come to the scene as at when due because an order has not been given from “above”. The delay in deploying security personnel often leads to more killings and destruction of valuable property belonging to the farmers. Even after the carnage might have ended, the Nigerian government would not make attempts to arrest and prosecute the perpetrators because they have strong people in government. And by failing to arrest, disarm, and prosecute these armed Fulani herdsmen for illegal possession of arms and perpetration of violence against defenseless Nigerians is an indication that they enjoy the full support of the Nigerian state (Genyi, 2019), a development that could result to farmers seeking self-help in a vicious circle of violence.

Lack of Political Will: Lack of political will has further exacerbated resource conflict between herders and farmers in Nigeria, which has greatly affected the socio-economic development of the country (Akuva & Audu, 2018). The governments at all levels have demonstrated absence of needed political will to address the problem of resource conflict between herders and farmers. Political leaders have failed to invoke appropriate legislation backed by action that would define rules and limits of parties/groups involved in the conflict (Izevbizua & Izevbizua, 2021). In the past, the federal government has made efforts to regulate and control pastoral activities, but it appears that the needed political will to enforce these laws is not there. Citizens in the affected areas, especially in the north-central parts of the country, expect the federal government to deal with resource conflict between herders and farmers with the same vigor and determination it demonstrated in similar internal security challenges in other parts of the country (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2018).

6.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper examined the challenges faced by the Nigerian State in managing resource conflict between farmers and herders in the country. However, the role played by the Nigerian State in managing this conflict prior to this timeframe was also examined. With the aid of documentary data derived from secondary sources anchored on a synergy of Resource Access Theory and State Fragility Theory, the paper found that the resource conflict between herders and farmers is as a result of the fierce contestations for shrinking ecological resources such as farming lands, grazing fields and water sources which are imperative for crop farming and pastoral farming. These fierce contestations have resulted to the loss of a lot of human lives and property as well as the forceful displacement of persons from their ancestral homes who are now residing at Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps. The capacity of the Nigerian State to intervene in these resource conflicts has been weakened by the elite, which has hijacked the relative autonomy of the State for its personal selfish interests. Also, the paper found that the conflict has been politicized by the federal government of Nigeria. This conflict does not only threaten the country's prospects for food security but also threatens its national security and national integration.

On the basis of the findings and conclusion drawn in this paper, the following recommendations have been made as a panacea to the problem of resource conflicts between herders and farmers in Nigeria:

- (a) The Nigerian state should be relatively autonomous and ensure it does not allow the elite to influence it in such a way that its primary responsibility of securing human lives and property would be jeopardized.
- (b) The Nigerian state should stop supporting the Fulani herdsmen perpetuating violence in the country but should be neutral in managing the conflict or mediating peace. Both crop farmers and Fulani herders are all Nigerians and should be given equal treatments and protection by the government.
- (c) The federal government should be more proactive rather than reactive in responding to resource conflict between herders and farmers, especially when intelligence reports have revealed that there is an imminent conflict. However, if the conflict erupts without the notice of the security personnel, the federal government should promptly deploy well-armed security response military team to the conflict engulfed locations.
- (d) Open grazing of cattle has become anachronistic and should therefore be jettisoned while embracing ranching which is a modern method of cattle breeding that is recognized worldwide. The federal government should give full support to the anti-open grazing laws as enacted by states like Benue, Taraba and Ekiti. Other states should be encouraged to prohibit open grazing and instead promote cattle ranching.

- (e) The Federal government should ensure that anyone found in illegal possession of arms should be arrested, disarmed, and prosecuted irrespective of their ethnic background, religious and political affiliations. This would serve as a deterrent to others.

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