

## The State and the Management of Herder-Farmer conflicts in the North-West Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria, 2010-2020

Felix Vincent Nnamani

Department of Political Science Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu, Nigeria.

Email: [felix.nnamani@esut.edu.ng](mailto:felix.nnamani@esut.edu.ng)

---

### ABSTRACT

This study examined the roles of the state in the management of farmers-herder conflicts in the North-West geopolitical zone, between 2010 and 2020. The specific focus of the study, however, was on the nexus between government's strategies of conflict resolution and the incidence of herders - farmers' conflicts in the North-West geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Anchored on the basic propositions adapted from the Marxist theory of the neo-colonial state and relevant qualitative data generated through documentary and survey methods and analysed using content and textual analysis, the study found that the unwillingness of the Federal Government to implement basic strategies of conflict resolution account for the inability to mitigate the rising incidence of herders-farmers conflicts in the North-West geopolitical zone of, with enormous humanitarian implications. The study thus underscored the need for effective implement of Comprehensive Livestock Development Plan to holistically mediate agrarian contestations, particularly between farmers and herders.

**Keywords:** Natural resources, Nigerian state, open ranching, conflict resolution, farmer-herder conflict

---

### INTRODUCTION

Livestock breeders and rural farmers are two major groups involved in food production in Nigeria. However, the traditional practices that hitherto focused on nurturing mutual relations have, in recent times, posed serious challenges in the dynamic relationships between the two primary food providers [1, 2, 3,4]. Thus, the two groups have consistently engaged each other in violent conflicts that constitute a formidable threat to their basic roles as primary food providers on the one hand, and Nigeria's corporate existence and survival on the other. Meanwhile, despite the political, religious and cultural narratives usually used to project certain objectives, the recurring conflicts between sedentary farmers and migrant pastoralists in Nigeria are basically driven by economic interests [5, 6, 7]. Migrant pastoralists in Nigeria are made up numerous ethnic groups, with the Fulbe or Fulani constituting over 90% [8, 9]. Recently, ecological, economic,

environmental and social factors have combined to radically alter the character of the conflicts between migrant pastoralists and sedentary farmers from rudimentary conflicts to outright militancy, with both sides becoming unusually combative, and each turn of the conflict becoming increasingly ferocious with attendant destruction of lives, crops, animals and property [10]. All these have heightened the level of national insecurity and the Nigerian government has variously intervened with a view to resolving the lingering resource conflicts [11, 12]. One of the ways the Nigerian government had utilized to resolve the persistent and festering conflicts between farmers and herders was the creation of grazing reserves. Prior to the onslaught of British colonialism, the land tenure system across the areas that later became Nigeria markedly differed. Therefore, in response to the crisis of pastoralism and crisis of land ownership, grazing reserves were

created by the government through the Northern Region Grazing Reserves Law of 1965 with a view to improving access to grazing and addressing the perennial conflicts between farming and grazing communities [13]. Unfortunately, these reserves have all collapsed amidst the challenges occasioned by urbanization, migration and insufficient pasture and water within the confines of the reserves. Aside grazing reserves, attempt was made by the Federal Government in 1978 to introduce the Nigerian Land Use Decree. The Decree essentially made the Federal Government the owner of all land, although the Governor has the authority to allocate up to 5000 ha, in their respective states. Ironically, the same Land Use Decree has primarily induced farmers-herder conflicts in Nigeria on account of its outdated and contrary statutory provisions. Sequel to the challenges attendant to the Nigerian Land Use Decree of 1978 and the need to effectively mediate agrarian relations, the National Agricultural Policy of 1988 enunciated which stated that a minimum of ten percent of the national territory, equivalent to 9.8 million hectares, would be set aside for the development of grazing reserves. Unfortunately, the policy has been bedeviled with implementation challenges since only 2.82 million hectares has been acquired in a total of 313 reserve as at 2012 [14].

Apart from the foregoing strategic interventions, deployment of security agencies has featured prominently in the Federal Government's strategic responses to the persistent conflicts between farmers and herders. For instance, Operation Safe Haven, a Special Task Force was once deployed in Plateau state to restore law and order. The Task Force, comprising officers and infantry of the armed forces and the police, was specifically asked to restore order and stability, following the incessant conflicts occasioned by persistent clashes between farmers and herders [15].

In 2015, the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD), to mitigate the rising incidence of resource

conflicts, came up with an initiative, "a comprehensive livestock development plan." The aim was to effectively address violent conflicts between herders and farmers across the country. The initiative was also aimed at developing grazing reserves. However, as reported by [16], no state has been able to construct a ranch, reserve, or address the perennial issue of stock route notwithstanding the fact that the Central Bank of Nigeria has release the sum of N100 billion (nearly USD \$300 million) to the 36 states for this purpose [17].

Unfortunately, the foregoing efforts of the Nigerian government to mitigate the festering violent confrontations between farmers and herders failed to produce the desired outcomes as both sides are becoming unusually combative and each turn of the conflict becoming increasingly ferocious and destructive. The scenario has been further accentuated by the obvious limitations of state-based conflict management mechanisms and the prevailing ambience of security debacle in the country, which have reinforced the complexity of the conflicts. However, while famers-herders conflict is a phenomenon that has become visibly apparent in virtually all the geopolitical zones of the country, it has remained particularly pervasive and violent in the North-West geopolitical zone of Nigeria. In the last ten years, beginning from 2010, the zone has remained the hotbeds of pastoralist-farmer violence due to its changing socio-demographical and ecological configurations, as well as deliberate infusion of ethnic, religious, political and criminal motivations. The end results have been killing of human beings and animals, destruction of valuable properties, humanitarian disaster among others. Against the backdrop of the afore-stated limitations of state-based conflict management mechanisms in Nigeria and given the unique place of states as important actors in conflict management, this study interrogates the impact of the Nigerian state in the management of farmers-herders conflicts in the North-West geopolitical zone. The study shall

specifically interrogate the impact of the government's strategies of conflict resolution on the herders - farmers' conflicts in the North-West geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Herder-farmer conflict is

defined in this study to mean dispute between transhumance pastoralists and sedentary/migrant farmers over land-based resources [18].

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study is predicated on basic propositions derived from the Marxist theory of the state. The theory came into existence as a response to the postulations by liberal theorists that the state is an independent force that impartially takes care of the interests of all the members of the society, in addition to regulating their socio-economic processes on equal basis [19]

implement basic strategies of conflict resolution to effectively resolve land-based resource contestations. Parties to resource conflicts are rarely arrested and prosecuted for their criminalities, neither are they questioned for their illegal possession of firearms. This has emboldened them to engage in criminal activities with impunity, exploiting the ungoverned spaces that litter the forestlands and hinterlands in Nigeria [23]. The Nigerian government is therefore implicated for providing conditions that facilitate the emergence of ungoverned and exploitable spaces controlled by networks of criminalities. One of such spaces is the unregulated practice of nomadic migrancy and exploitation of natural resources, which has yielded violence in many parts of Nigeria [6]. In recent time, Nigeria has witnessed the implosion of resource-based conflict because of unregulated activities of migrant herders who move from one place to another in search of grazing land and fresh water. The activities of these nomads are scarcely regulated, and their movements are undocumented. This has provided the interstices exploited by criminal elements, masquerading as herders, to enter Nigeria and engage in criminal activities such as militancy that heightens humanitarian crisis in most parts of Nigeria, particularly in the North-West geo-political zone. Based on the basic propositions of the Marxist theory of the state, the study hypothesized that the unwillingness of the Nigerian government to implement basic strategies of conflict resolution has emboldened the herders to intensify their assaults on farmers in the North-West geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

The classical Marxist theory has been applied by [20] and others to the analysis and explanation of the peculiarities of the neo-colonial state. The basic contention of these scholars is that, as creatures of imperialism, the post-colonial states have adopted strategies of development as determined and directed primarily by the interests of the rapacious political class and their collaborators rather than the interests of the populace. According to [21], the post-colonial state is characterized by limited autonomy, implying that institutionally, the state is constituted in a way that denies it unlimited independence by the hegemonic social class, and as such, it is deeply engrossed in the unending class struggles. This has rendered the post-colonial states incapable of mediating and moderating political conflicts effectively [22].

The inability of the government to implement basic strategies of conflict resolution which has emboldened the herders to intensify their assaults on farmers is better explained and understood using the Marxist theory of the state. As a creature of colonialism, the Nigerian state is functionally and institutionally weak. In recent times, the functional weakness of the Nigerian state has found expression in the apparent unwillingness of the government to

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted longitudinal research design which entails observing and measuring changes in variables over

time and associating them with the causal factors. Applying the longitudinal research design to our study entailed

observation and measurement of the behaviour of the dependent variable over a period, before and after the intervention of the independent variable which is a presumed causal event. The study utilized the documentary method to generate the relevant secondary data from official documents, books, journal articles, among others, and Unstructured Key Informant Interview (KII) to generate primary data from a sample of 24 respondents from three states purposively selected from a population of 688 in the entire seven states in the region comprising the security personnel, especially the Police High Command, and the relevant stakeholders including: traditional rulers; the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) and Amalgamated Farmers Association (AFA); and civil society organizations (see table 1). Leaders of the stakeholders enumerated above were mainly selected because they are better equipped, positioned and

experienced to provide accurate and relevant information. While unstructured KII was adopted because it afforded the researchers a high level of flexibility which encouraged the respondents to express their views at length without being restricted.

Regarding the reliability and validity of measuring instruments, the study did not embark on any pilot study or apply the pre-test method but ensured that crosscheck questions were incorporated into the interview schedule to establish how consistent the respondents are in their answers to questions earlier asked. The study also adopted the content or face validity method together with the use of external criterion to ascertain the veracity of the findings of a particular instrument. The study relied on content/textual analysis, rooted in systematic logical deductions, to analyze primary and secondary data generated during this study.

**Table 1: Units of observation, population of selected states, and study sample**

| S/N | Selected States             | Units of Observation                                | Population | Sample |
|-----|-----------------------------|---|------------|--------|
| 1   | Kaduna, Katsina and Zamfara | Police High Command                                 | 71         | 6      |
| 2   |                             | First Class Traditional Rulers                      | 34         | 4      |
| 3   |                             | Leadership of MACBAN                                | 71         | 6      |
| 5   |                             | Leadership of Amalgamated Farmers Association (AFA) | 71         | 6      |
| 6   |                             | Leadership of Civil Society Organizations           | 17         | 2      |
|     |                             | Total   | 264        | 24     |

Field Survey (2021)

**Synopsis of the North-West Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria**

The North-West is a region of Nigeria. It is the native homeland of Hausa people with the second largest tribe being Fulani. It is composed of the following states: Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, and Zamfara. Geographically, the zone is almost entirely within the tropical West Sudanian savanna eco-region. Culturally, the majority of the zone falls within Hausaland-the indigenous cultural homeland of the Hausa people, a group that makes up the largest ethnic percentage of the northwestern population; however, there are sizable

minorities of Fulani people and other groups, mainly on the zone's peripheries. Economically, the North-West's urban areas-like the city of Kano-are large boosts to the Nigerian economy while most rural areas lag behind due to insecurity, low education rates, and government neglect. The region has a population of about 49 million people, around 23% of the total population of the country. It is mostly agrarian ([https://mapcarta.com/North\\_West\\_Nigeria](https://mapcarta.com/North_West_Nigeria)).

## **Unwillingness of the Federal Government to implement basic Strategies of Conflict resolution**

The Nigerian government has flagrantly displayed unwillingness to implement basic strategies of conflict resolution in respect of farmer-herder conflicts and this essentially manifest in two ways, namely

### **Reluctance of the Federal Government to Arrest and Prosecute Killer Herdsmen**

Violent conflicts between herders and farmers are rampant in Nigeria at present. The report of International Crisis Group (2018) indicates that confrontations between the two major food providers not only claimed no fewer than 1,300 Nigerians by the first half of 2018, but also accounted for death of civilians six times more than the Boko Haram insurgency. In fact, the conflicts now pose a grave danger to Nigeria's corporate existence. However, despite the fatality and premeditated nature of the conflicts, the attackers have neither been arrested nor prosecuted. In effect, the security agencies, especially the police, have been accused of complicity in the face of unwarranted assault on farmers by herdsmen. Indeed, the inability of the police to arrest and prosecute the herdsmen after each round of violence is quite disturbing. As a result, military personnel are often deployed by the Federal Government as a response to conflicts between farmers and herders. Even at that, the seeming reluctance of government to arrest and prosecute killer herdsmen is palpable. Oftentimes, the responses of the government are devoid of effective preventive action. The reluctance of security agencies to decisively and proactively deal with the rapidly increasing violent assault on farmers by herdsmen in Nigeria is obviously in marked contrast to the Federal Government's quick and prompt response to real or perceived security threats in other parts of the country such as secessionist agitators in the Southeast geopolitical zone and cattle rustlers in Zamfara state. This fuels the insinuations that the government of President Buhari is complicit in herders' violent attacks because he himself is a Fulani (International Crisis Group, 2018).

reluctance of the government to arrest and prosecute killer herdsmen, and failure by the government to arrest and prosecute herdsmen who move about with dangerous weapons.

Criticizing the failure of the Federal Government to initiate proactive measures against the herdsmen for their atrocities, especially killings of rural dwellers in Nigeria, [22] aptly likens the Federal Government's reluctance to isolate and punish the killer herdsmen to the initial disbelief of President Goodluck Jonathan, when the so-called Chibok Girls were kidnapped by Boko Haram militia. According to Soyinka (2018, np):

...President Muhammed Buhari and his government - including his inspector-general of police - in near identical denial, appear to believe that killer herdsmen who strike again and again at will from one corner of the nation to the other, are merely hot-tempered citizens whose scraps occasionally degenerate into 'communal clashes'....the marauders are naughty children who can be admonished, paternalistically, into good neighbourly conduct. Sometimes, of course, the killers were also said be non-Nigerians after all. The contradictions are mind-boggling

A respondent from traditional institution posits that the killer herdsmen commit serious crimes and get away with them due to the disposition of the government to treat their atrocities with levity. According to the respondent:

The killer herdsmen have been committing unspeakable atrocities in Nigeria and getting away with them since President Buhari came to power. Aside killing, maiming and raping their victims to death, the killer herdsmen, in alliance with their



cohorts from Niger Republic, have been violating Nigeria's territorial sovereignty - destroying, encumbering and confiscating farmlands [23].

*The point being made is that the raising profile of Fulani herdsmen criminal atrocities across the length and breadth of Nigeria since the outset of the Buhari government is compounded by the apparent unwillingness of the Federal Government to take any serious measure to contain the menace. The inability of the Federal government to effectively and proactively address their criminal atrocities is seen as a "way of glamorizing their activities which seemingly have provided the fulcrum for their increased impunity and wanton destruction of lives and property" [5].*

Unfortunately, the failure of federal-controlled security and judicial system to arrest and prosecute killer herdsmen across the length and breadth of Nigeria stands in utter contradiction to the speed and alacrity with which the same security

#### **Failure by the Government to Arrest and Prosecute Herdsmen who Move about with Dangerous Weapons**

It is the responsibility of security agencies to provide security. Oftentimes, the responses of the security agencies, especially the police, in cases of severe security threats are issues for serious concern. Regarding the rising incidence of farmer-herder conflicts in Nigeria, the failure of security agencies under the control by the Federal Government to arrest and prosecute killer herdsmen, notwithstanding the severity and ubiquity of their crimes across the length and breadth of Nigeria is worrisome. According

and the High Court of Adamawa state secured conviction and death penalty of five persons- Alex Amos, Alheri Phaniel, Holy Boniface, Jerry Gideon and Jari Sabagi, on charges of culpable homicide punishable with death for the killing of a pastoralist, Adamu Buba, in Demsa Local Government Area of Adamawa [20,21,23]. Appraising the disposition of Federal Government in dealing with the rapidly increasing incidence of assault on farmers in Nigeria, two civil society organizations (CSOs)- Nigeria Mourns and the Joint Nigeria Crisis Action Committee (JN-CAC), aver that since government has a duty to accord equal value to every Nigerian life, it should adopt a holistic approach to tackle killings by herdsmen. Otherwise, it would encourage the perception that it (Federal Government) is unwilling to protect every Nigerian and unable to hold accountable anyone who violates a Nigerian life (cited in Shibayan, 2021)

*to the report of International Crisis Group (2018, in 2014, 2017 and 2018, over 90% of the attacks on private citizens by herdsmen were responsible for no fewer than 81% of deaths. The attacks were violently perpetrated mainly through armed assaults. The largest and fiercest of these perhaps was in 2014, when the group killed over 200 people - community leaders and residents that were meeting in a remote village in Zamfara state, Nigeria (Dickson et al, 2016). Figure 1 shows a herder bearing a sophisticated weapon.*



**Figure 1: Herdsman bearing sophisticated weapon**

**Source:** Mikailu, N. (2016) Making sense of Nigeria's Fulani-farmer conflict. BBC News, 5 May

The menace of the rampaging herdsmen is such that their activities in various parts of the country have been likened to genocide on the natives (Odufowokan 2014). Highlighting the menace of gun-wielding herdsmen, a respondent from Amalgamated Farmers Association reveals Look at the kinds of weapons they use. They are heavily armed with different sophisticated weapon such as machine guns, RPGs, AK47s, knives, machetes, bows and arrows - one can wonder where they got all these firearms from. It's like they are hired from other countries (Face-to-face Interview, 2021).

What can be deduced from the foregoing is that killer herdsmen move about with dangerous weapon with the intension to deliberately destroy farms and to assault any farmer who attempts to stop them. Utterly worrisome is the failure of the Federal Government to arrest and prosecute the killer herdsmen who move about with dangerous weapons. Although President Buhari has directed that "anybody who carries arms unlawfully should be arrested and prosecuted" (*Daily Post*, February 9, 2021), no AK-47-wielding Fulani herder has been arrested and prosecuted despite the severity and ubiquity of their activities.

A respondent from the Police High Command however contends that a lot of arrest and prosecution have been by the police. According to him,

...the narrative that perpetrators of conflicts are neither arrested nor prosecuted is incorrect. Police arrested and equally prosecuted those who went and kidnapped Chief Olu Falae in his farm in Ondo. Whenever, there are cases reported against the Fulani herdsmen, police usually move into action and get them arrested and prosecuted (Face-to-face Interview, 2021).

Unfortunately, most of these claims of arrest and prosecution by the police are not known to the public who are mainly victims of the crime. According to Ekwowusi (2021), the passionate pleas that Buhari government should declare AK-47-wielding killer herdsmen terrorists have not been heeded, despite the fatalities and ubiquity of their activities in recent times. Instead, the government appears to have simply acquiesced in their assault and massacre of Nigerian citizens.

### **Assaults on Farmers by Herders in the North-West Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria**

Instances of violent resource conflicts involving crop farmers and Fulani pastoralists are common in Nigeria. These conflicts largely occur due to stiff competition for land-based resources for grazing and farming. The conflicts usually occur when Fulani herders move with their cattle into the homesteads or farms of non-Fulani, resulting in the destruction of their crops. By so doing, the herders provoke their victims to resist entry into their farms, resulting in deadly attacks on farming communities by the herders. As a result, Fulani herdsmen have been classified as the deadliest militant group in Nigeria with a record killing of 1,229 people in 2014, as well as accounting for 97% of all deaths in 2014 as against 67% recorded by Boko-Haram (Mercy Corps, 2015). The incidence of violent confrontations between farmers and herdsmen are quite evident in the Northwest Geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

In Kaduna State, for instance, pastoralists instigate resource conflicts. In 2016 alone, about 800 people were killed in southern Kaduna during attacks also characterised by rape, robbery, abduction, large-scale destruction of farmlands and property and displacement of farmers. A number of farming communities confirmed receiving letters from herders that warn of an impending attack (ACAPS, 2017). Hence, as revealed by Shiklam (2014), rampaging killer herdsmen in March, 2014 killed about 123 people in seven villages in Sanga Local Government Area of Kaduna state in a deadly onslaught which lasted for several hours. Again, on

24 and 25 September and 15 October 2016, Fulani gunmen attacked Godogodo Village in Kaduna State, killing at least 30 people and injuring 16 others. In addition, more than 300 houses were burnt. One of the injured was a 16-year-old, who was shot in his right leg during the first day of the attack on, 24 September. According to the report of Amnesty International (2018), the victim had gone out with other young men to defend the village but they were overpowered and as they ran back to the village, he was hit by a bullet. The leg was later amputated at the knee.

Furthermore, several villages in Birnin-Gwari LGA of Kaduna State have continued to witness violent assaults perpetrated by killer herdsmen. This ugly situation is even more volatile, due to the proximity of the LGA to Zamfara State. The forests that cut across the two states (Kaduna and Zamfara states) have made the residents vulnerable to repeated attacks. For instance, between January 2018 and 11 May 2018, no fewer than 152 people were killed in various attacks by herdsmen in Birnin-Gwari Local Government Area. Specifically, some communities and villages in Birnin-Gwari such as Bagoman Daji, Kagi, Goron-Dutse, Layin-Maigwari, Tsohuwar Birnin-Gwari, Kirazo, Kwalakwangi, Dokan-ruwa, and Gwaska were violently attacked by herdsmen (Amnesty International, 2018). Figure 2 shows a badly burnt 6-year-old girl with her mother. The girl was burnt when Fulani gunmen set her father's house ablaze in an attack on Zilian Village in Kaduna State on 20 February 2017.



**Figure 2: A badly burnt 6-year-old girl with her mother**



**Source:** Amnesty International [AI] (2018). *Harvest of deaths: Three years of bloody clashes between herders and farmers in Nigeria*. Abuja: Amnesty International. P. 20

The persistent assault on farmers by herders in Kaduna is primarily due to the expansion of pastoralist militia groups and proliferation of small arms in North-West geopolitical zone. Oftentimes, members of pastoralist militias in an attempt to secure grazing pastures for their herds usually provoke reprisal attacks by community vigilante groups seeking to protect their farms. Both sides in Kaduna's farmer-herder clashes increasingly use small arms smuggled into North-West Nigeria. The relative ease by which weapons are accessed has encouraged both farmers and herders to arm themselves, deepening the cycle of violence in Kaduna (Ayandele, 2021). In Kastina and Zamfara states, the unwholesome activities of transhumance largely account for the incessant conflicts between farmers-herders. In Zamfara state, no fewer than 50 individuals were, on the fourteenth of July, 2014, accounted for dead in Pilagani region of Marakun Local Government Area, Zamfara State in a related clash (*Premium Times*, 2016). What Starting in late 2015, attacks by herder-allied armed groups, vigilantes and criminally motivated groups spread with varying intensity and fatality from Zamfara to other states in the zone, especially Kaduna, Katsina and Sokoto. Violent conflicts in these states have largely concentrated in their border areas with Zamfara, or close to the forests where

is more, in 2016, more than 200 villagers were killed by Pastoralists in an orgy of violent attacks that lasted for three days. Some of the worst hit communities are Dansadau and Yargaladima village in Dansadau Emirate of Maru Local government area (Amnesty International, 2018). The North-West has witnessed a rapid increase in cases of violence between pastoralists and allied armed groups, otherwise called "bandits", on one hand, and farmers supported by community and state-sponsored vigilantes, on the other since 2011. With Zamfara state as its epicenter, the violent conflicts, which predominantly occur in rural areas, has spread to other states in the region, especially Kano, Kaduna, Katsina, Kebbi and Sokoto. According to International Crisis Group (2020), the persistent violent conflicts between herders and farmers have claimed about 8,000 people killed from 2011 to the present, predominantly in Zamfara state and mostly over the last five years.

all sorts of armed groups have made camps. In Katsina state, 10 of the 34 local government areas have all witnessed violent conflicts between herders and farmers. These local governments include: Batsari, Danmusa, Faskari, Kankara and Safana among others. In Sokoto state, violent conflicts between herders and farmers have occurred in 9 of the 23 local

[www.idosr.org](http://www.idosr.org)

government areas, particularly in Gada, Sabon Birni, Goronyo and Isa to the north, and Rabah and Tureta to the east.

In Sokoto state, there have been sparks of violent conflict between farmers and pastoralists in recent times. Motivated by competition for limited resources, disequilibrium of resources distribution, and quest for survival of livelihood, these conflicts are characterized by humanitarian crisis, notably livelihood disruptions and population displacement among others. The recorded cases of clashes between the farmers and herders in Sokoto mostly occurred in communities that share a border with the neighboring Niger Republic. For instance, Tangaza which shares a border with Niger is one of the most 7 commonly used passage by migrants. The violent conflicts within the communities are mostly ascribed to foreigners migrating from Niger Republic into local communities (Samson, 2020).

The conflicts between farmers and pastoralists have triggered a huge humanitarian crisis. As a result, hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced from their places of abode. For instance, the report of a joint assessment mission by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons indicates that in September 2019, no fewer than 210,354 people were displaced from 171 towns and villages in the North-West. Displacements by states show that 29,417 people were

Nnamani

affected in Katsina, 35,941 people in Sokoto and 144,996 people in Zamfara state. The report further indicates that about 60,000 of the victims have moved over to Niger Republic (International Crisis Group, 2020). Furthermore, the report of the National Emergency Management Agency shows that in March, 2020, 105,463 people were displaced in Sokoto state alone (*Daily Trust*, 16 March, 2020). It is pertinent to note that displacement carries with it deteriorations in the living conditions of people. Hence, the living conditions of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the Northwest geopolitical zone of Nigeria within the study period were appalling, characterised by irregular and inadequate food distribution, crude shelters, and poor health and sanitation services. As there is no officially recognised IDP camp in Zamfara and Katsina states, many internally displaced people live in makeshift camps or scattered in towns and villages away from home, which obscures the scale of displacement. The IDPs' plight is compounded by the near absence of humanitarian actors from affected areas, largely due to significant underestimation of the violence's scale and impact, but also because insecurity limits access for needs assessment in certain places (International Crisis Group, 2020). Table 2 succinctly captures instances of farmer-herder conflicts and the attendant destructions in the North-West geopolitical zone

**Table 2: Instances of herdsmen-farmers conflicts and attendant destructions in the North-West geopolitical zone of Nigeria**

| S/N | Date   | Location  | Attack & Degree of Destruction   | Sources                               |
|-----|--|---|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1   | March, 2014                                    | Sanga Local Government Area of Kaduna state   | Rampaging killer herdsmen killed about 123 people in a deadly onslaught which lasted for several hours.                | Shiklam (2014)                        |
| 2   | July, 2014                                     | Pilagani region of Marakun Local Government Area of Zamfara state                   | no fewer than 50 individuals were killed by herdsmen in a related clash  | <i>Premium Times</i> , (2016)         |
| 3   | 2016   | Dansadau and Yargaladima villages in Dansadau Emirate of Maru Local Government Area | more than 200 villagers were killed by Pastoralists in an orgy of violent attacks that lasted for three days           | Amnesty International (2018)          |
| 4   | September 24 and 25 as well as October 15 2016 | Godogodo Village in Kaduna State  | Fulani gunmen attacked and killed no fewer than 30 people and injuring 16 others. More than 300 houses were also burnt | Amnesty International (2018)          |
| 5   | Between January and May 2018                   | Birnin-Gwari Local Government Area in Kaduna State                                  | about 152 people were killed in various attacks by herdsmen in   | Amnesty International (2018)          |
| 6   | September, 2019                                | Kastina, Sokoto and Zamfara states  | 29,417 people were affected in Katsina, 35,941 people in Sokoto and 144,996 people in Zamfara state                    | International Crisis Group, 2020      |
| 7   | March, 2020,                                   | Sokoto state  | 105,463 people were displaced  | <i>Daily Trust</i> , 16 March, (2020) |

The violence has also exacted a severe toll on children. In Zamfara state, the government reports that over 16,000 children have been orphaned because of violence in the last decade. Other estimates by some stakeholders in the state point higher, with one putting the number as high as 44,000 (Senator Marafa, as cited in International Crisis Group, 2020, p. 16). As the violence has disrupted schooling in many areas, it has also swelled the already high number of out-of-school children in the region and thus the number of child street beggars in many towns and cities. It is our submission, therefore, that the apparent unwillingness of the Federal Government to implement basic strategies of conflict resolution has

emboldened the herders to intensify their assaults on farmers. The failure of the Federal Government to arrest and prosecute killer herdsmen who move about with dangerous weapons and leaders of Miyetti Allah, for their unguarded utterances and threats is implicated in the rising assaults and militancy on sedentary farmers by herdsmen in Nigeria, with enormous humanitarian implications. Thus, the complicit role of the Nigerian state in the management of the persistent conflicts between herders and farmers in Nigeria account for the unwillingness of the Federal Government to implement basic strategies of conflict resolution, with attendant rise in cases of violent attacks on sedentary farmers by herdsmen.

## CONCLUSION

The study examined the roles of the state in the management of farmers-herder conflicts in the North-West geopolitical zone and noted that the unwillingness of the government to implement basic strategies of conflict resolution manifesting has emboldened the herders to intensify their assaults on farmers in the North-West geopolitical zone of Nigeria within the study period, with enormous humanitarian implications. Thus, the inability to effectively implement basic strategies of conflict resolution has rendered the Federal Government not only sterile but also complicit in the rapid increase of violent confrontation between herdsmen and crop farmers. Based on the

findings of the study, the following recommendations are put forward:

1. The Nigerian government should effectively implement initiatives and legislations, especially the Comprehensive Livestock Development Plan, aimed at mediating agrarian contestations, particularly between farmers and herders.
2. Government should institute hinterlands and forestlands community policing based on tactical synergy between public security operatives and relevant local vigilantes to assist the government in addressing the rising incidence of farmers and herders.

## REFERENCES

1. ACAPS (2017). Nigeria: Farmer-Fulani herder violence in Benue, Kaduna and Plateau States - Thematic report
2. Ake, C (1985). The state in contemporary Africa. In C. Ake (Ed.) *Political economy of Nigeria*. London & Lagos: Longman.
3. Alavi, H. (1973). The state in post-colonial societies: Pakistan and Bangladesh. In H. Goul' Bourne (Ed.) *Politics and state in the Third World*. London: Longman.
4. Amnesty International [AI] (2018). *Harvest of deaths: Three years of bloody clashes between herders and farmers in Nigeria*. Abuja: Amnesty International.
5. Ayandele, O. (2021). Confronting Nigeria's Kaduna crisis. African Center for Strategic Studies. [africacenter.org/spotlight/confronting-nigerias-kaduna-crisis/](http://africacenter.org/spotlight/confronting-nigerias-kaduna-crisis/). Accessed on 15/08/2021.
6. Cotula, L., Toulmin, C., & Hesse, C., (2004). *Land tenure and administration in Africa: Lessons of experience and emerging issues*. London: IIED.
7. Dickson, C. et al. (2016). Fulani herdsmen: The emergence of a deadlier terrorist group. <http://wdn.com.ng/wdnews-exclusive-fulani-herdsmen-the-emergence-of-a-deadlier-terrorist-group>. Accessed 10/08/2021
8. Eke, C.C. (2017). Glamorization of Fulani herdsmen's criminality and its implications on national security in Nigeria. *Online Journal of Arts, Management and Social Sciences*. 2 (2). <http://www.gojamss.net/journal/index.php/OJAMSS/article/view/234>. Accessed 14/08/2021.
9. Eniola, K. (2007). Key issues in livelihoods security of migrant Fulani pastoralists: Empirical evidence from Southwest Nigeria. AEGIS European Conference on African studies - African Alternatives: Initiative and Creativity beyond Current Constraints - 11-14 July .
10. Ekwowusi, S. (2021), Time to arrest the killer herdsmen. <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2021/07/07/time-to-arrest-the-killer-herdsmen/>. Accessed 13/08/2021.
11. Fayemi, J.K & Olonisakin, F. (2008 ). Nigeria. In A. Bryden, B. N'Diaye & 'F.Olonisakin (Eds.) *Challenges of security sector governance in West Africa*. Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces.

12. International Crisis Group (2020). Violence in Nigeria's North West: Rolling back the mayhem. Africa Report N°288.
13. International Crisis Group (2018). Stopping Nigeria's spiraling farmer-herder. *Africa Report* N°262.
14. Kwaja, C.M.A. & Ademola-Adelehin, B.I (2018). Responses to conflicts between farmers and herders in the Middle Belt of Nigeria: Mapping past efforts and opportunities for violence prevention. Policy Paper-Search for Common Ground <https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Responses-to-Conflicts-between-Farmers-and-Herders-in-the-Middle-Belt-FINAL.pdf>.
15. Muhammed, I., Ismaila, A. B & Bibi, U.M. (2015). An assessment of farmer-pastoralist conflict in Nigeria using GIS. *International Journal of Engineering Science Invention*, 4 (7), 23-33.
16. Odufowokan, D., 2014. Herdsmen or killer squads? *The Nation*, 30 March 2016.
17. Okoli, A.C. & Atelhe, G. (2014). Nomads against natives: A Political ecology of state, Nigeria. *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, 4(2), 76-88.
18. Okolie, A.M. (2006). Prebendal politics and democratic practice in Nigeria, 1999-2004. *ANSU Journal of Politics and Administration*, 1(1).
19. Samson, O. (2020). Trends in cross-border mobility of pastoralists and its implications on the farmer-herder conflicts.
20. Shibayan, D. (2021). CSOs: Those who killed a herdsman were arrested but killer herdsmen still on the prowl. <https://www.thecable.ng/csos-appears-govt-lacks-political-will-tackle-killings>. Accessed 12/08/2021
21. Shiklam, J. (2014). How Boko Haram activities destroy economy of the North. [www.thisdaylive.com](http://www.thisdaylive.com). Accessed on 14/08/2021
22. Soyinka. W (2018) Impunity rides again. <https://punchng.com/impunity-rides-again/>. Accessed 12/05/2021.
23. Tukur, B. (2013). Perspectives on the conflict between farmers and transhumance pastoralists in Nigeria. Paper presented at a conference on pastoral security and development held at N'Djamena on 27 - 29 May, 2013.