Herders-Farmers Conflicts in Nigeria: Issues, Complications and Implications
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Abstract
This paper is underscored by the increasing intractable and vicious clashes between herders and the crop farmers in Nigeria. The violent activities have assumed dangerous dimension that if not properly and urgently tackled pose a great danger to the country. The paper identifies and categorise the causes of the herders-farmers conflicts into environmental, socio-cultural, religious, economic and political factors. It further points that the tepidity of government response which is further exacerbated by policy lacunae and absence of enforceable ordinances on grazing land ownership and violation contribute to the increase and lethality of the conflicts. To tackle the violence the paper suggests that Nigerian government should deal with the scourge by depoliticising and de-ethicising responses and solutions to the crisis. Also, governments at all levels should initiate legal and policy actions that will create environment for cattle industry/livestock farmers to build ranches and suitable land for crop farmers. The tragedy of the commons; economic, environmental and political ecology theories situate the focus of the paper.

Key Words: Conflict, Herdsmen, Farmer, Environmental Security, Resource

Introduction
'...the answer to war must be sought in humanity's capacity to learn from its self-inflicted catastrophes. Stoessinger, (2011).
A fundamental challenge currently faced by government of states and their people across the world is the increasing cases of conflicts, violence and acts of terror. Although, violence between herders (pastoralists) and crop farmers has had long history in Africa but has now assumed a new dimension in lethality and increased spatially in Nigeria. It is this ceaseless violence between pastoralist herders and crop farmers which has resulted in the killing of several people; the destruction of properties coupled with its damming consequences on the country, is the focus of this paper. This concern is further reinforced by the fact that Nigeria is presently faced with huge security challenges, especially arising from Boko Haram insurgency-an Islamist group that has been carrying out terror attacks resulting in the death
of over thirteen thousand people and destroyed state and private individual properties (Adeyeye, 2017; Onuoha, 2014). The issues raised in this paper are fundamental because of the negative consequences of violence on the country. Nigeria cannot at this time face large scale violence; a situation herders-farmer conflict is likely to lead to if not properly managed. It is therefore the view of this paper that Nigeria may be tottering towards anarchy with the on-going violence between nomadic Fulani herdsmen and indigenous farming communities if not tackled and issues concerning the crisis resolved. Also, if the political leadership of Nigeria continue to be tepid, indecisive and desultory in their response as it seems at present; the crisis will likely end in another catastrophe, particularly that the Boko Haram (BH) insurgents have found sanctuary and a new haven in the herders/farmers violence to carry out their activities to fight back at the Nigerian state as confirmed by the Nigeria's Army Chief-Lt. Gen Tukur Buratai in 2017. Arising from the above, the questions asked in this paper are: What are the proximate and immediate causes of herders-farmers conflicts in Nigeria? Are the Fulani naturally aggressive? Why have clashes between herders and farmers in Nigeria suddenly assumed catastrophic dimension? What are the conflict issues? What are the implications of herdsman-farmers violent conflicts? What are the available economic, socio-cultural and political solutions?

This paper identify the following as the unfolding traits of the new dimension of conflict: Climate change, incompatible goals, scarcity of resources such as water, food, space, natural resources and pasture for grazing. These issues are further exacerbated by policy lacunae coupled with absence of enforceable ordinances on grazing land ownership and violation. Also, ethnocentrism, religious and cultural issues are important factors in the instigation of the violence. As part of finding solution to the crisis and its impending greater consequence, the paper suggests that: government's depoliticising and de-ethicising its responses and solutions to the crisis, dealing with Boko Haram insurgents' manipulation of the conflict to perpetrate their activities, citizen's cooperation with the government and the military in ensuring synergy in the fight against violence, governments at all levels should initiate legal and policy actions that will create conducive environment for cattle industry/livestock farmers to build ranches and suitable land for crop farmers. The paper is situated within conflict, tragedy of commons, political economy, environmental and political ecology theories.

Situating Relevant Concepts and Theories
Various conceptions and clarifications have been advanced in the
discussion of the ongoing violent conflicts between herders (pastoralists) and crop farmers. For the purpose of this discussion, the theories of tragedy of the commons, environmental security and the political ecology perspective best situate this discourse. Conceptually, the term conflict essentially mean 'to clash or engage in a fight', a confrontation between one and more parties which aspire, compete or desire to have goals, means or ends that are incompatible or competitive. This confrontation or fight may be in form resource, political, economic and belief. Conflict may either be manifest, recognisable through actions or behaviours, or latent. It may remain dormant for some time as incompatibilities (Galtung, 1990 and 1969; Albert, 2011, 2012. It may be built into systems or such institutional arrangements as governments, corporations, civil societies and groups. Conflict is often constructed on incorrect perception, illusion, misunderstanding and misconceptions. Conflict is an inescapable and unavoidable part of human and an observable occurrence of and weighty aspect of the existence of man in everyday interaction. However, conflict assumes negative dimension when it is allowed to fester to become violent (Francis, 2009; Petterson and Wallesteen, 2015; Ennals, 1988; Coser, 1956; Joseph, 1999; Galtung, 1990 and 1969; Albert, 2011, 2012; Oladosu, 2013:114-128).

**Farming and Herding:** for the purpose of clarity, the analysis of farming and herding is commenced by comprehending the commonalities and differences between the two. First, it is submitted here that both are economic and farming activities. As such there is no any controversy when talking about crop and livestock farming. This is because farming is concerned with the activity of growing crops or raising livestock for food or raw materials. It is the practice or business of growing crops or keeping animals on a farm. Farming can also be synonymous with other words such as agriculture, cultivation and land management. Arising from this description, farming has a few sectors or divisions such as livestock, crop production, grain production, land management, among others, and whoever engages in any of these endeavours is a farmer. To this extent, herding is a category of farming and a herder is a category of farmer. What then are the differences between the two? Herding is an agricultural method device to manage animals domesticated for supply of food or raw materials. While crop farming is space-confined, herding can, but does not have to be confined. In addition, while livestock farming is farming for subsistence and for sale by the owner of the farm, herding is often done by third parties working for livestock farmers or by individual families as small holders (Gbadegesin 2016:48). Herding has also been described as a way of life. In his words, Sale
Bayari, (2012), claims that nomadic Fulani cannot live without domesticated life. According to the former National Secretary of Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria, "cattle mean more to Fulani man; it is an ancestral and generational wealth... to dispose him of that wealth is to extinct his generational wealth". In Nigeria, the Fulani ethnic group is the recognised pastoralists. They engage essentially in herding and shepherding their cattle from one place to another in search of food and water to feed them. This does not mean that other tribes do not engage in livestock farming, in fact many retired military officers who had been in government and politicians many of whom are not Fulani engage in farming which include livestock. However, they essentially hire the services of Fulani to cater and shepherd their cattle. In this paper farmer is used to depict crop farmers; herding and pastoralist to mean livestock farmers.

In the course of human history there has been common dilemma over open resources. The dilemma has often resulted into wide range of conflicts and violence. Specifically, problems over the shortage of freshwater, the atmosphere, land and pollution have been ever present and have been severally pointed as the cause of resource conflicts such as in the case of herders-farmers violent conflicts in Nigeria. Undoubtedly, one fundamental challenge faced in the contemporary world is the destruction of the common atmosphere and the environment through pollution which has resulted in global warming and subsequently leading to conflicts.

**Theory of the Tragedy of the Commons**: arising from the above, the proponents of the theory of the Tragedy of the Commons prominent among which are William Floyd (1833), Garrett Hardin (1968) and recently Susan Cox (1985) argue that situations where resource is collectively owned by a group of people often leads to the manipulation, exploitation and overuse of such resource as such ultimately leads to its destruction. In situating the above argument, Hardin (1968) used the case of pasture usually open to all to use. It is the openness of pasture which is used by herdsmen that allow their cattle to graze and as individual pastoralist add cattle to his pasture for the purpose of economic of expanding his proceeds coming from their herd (economic factor), the pressure and competition on the open resource-land, green grass and water, continue to increase thereby leading to conflict and when the conflict is not well managed and allowed to fester either overtly or covertly conflict becomes violence and acts of terror which are currently felt in many parts of Nigeria. Also, because the resources especially water is scarce particularly during the dry season the search for water and green grass increases the degree of competition and security dilemma between the crop farmers and the herdsmen. To that extent it is this common dilemma that has
been responsible for the fundamental variety of the ongoing resource problems in the country.

Closely related to the above is the concern over the destruction of the environment. No doubt, one of the fundamental concerns of the world after the Cold War era was the issue of environmental degradation which was witnessed in every parts of the world. It is in recognition of the problems associated with environmental degradation that environmental security theory specifically emphasise the purpose of recognising and explaining the growing environmental degradation which has impacted in the political, socio-economic and security realities of domestic and the global system. The opinion of the proponents of the environmental theory such as Floyd, (2008); Graeger, (1996); Barnett, (2001); Homer-Dixon, (1991 and 1999); Gleditsch, (2000) interrogates the degeneration and deterioration of resources of the world which came about due to the pervasive environmental degradation without special consideration for borders of states and political divisions but on the desire for the creation of a global sustainable future. The theory argues that human actions and inactions have largely led to the decline of global environment. Pollution, deforestation and erosion are few of the consequence of human action mentioned as responsible for the enormous loss of stability in human environment. These have not only rendered the environment highly unpredictable but create difficulty in controlling the environment and to a large extent threaten human existence. This condition has been fingered as responsible for the increasing transhumance movements of pastoralists from the dry lands of the Northern parts of Nigeria to green land in the Western region required for the survival of cattle. The destruction of the environment, drought and desertification that has continue to degrade pastures; dry water sources in the Sahel region of the country's north has largely created fertile ground for seeds of discord and conflicts to germinate especially between herdsmen and crop farmers who are the land owners. This is what the environmental security theory argues that volatility in the availability and accessibility of resources and land continues to create competition and conflict arising from inadequacy and shortage (Graeger, (1996) and Barnett, (2001)).

Also there has always been tendency amongst economists to provide economic explanation for the existence and endurance of conflict. Specifically, economic theories often highlight resources in such discussion. This is largely so because people in conflict are assumed to be fighting over, not about, something that is material. The question that readily comes to fore here is: is the conflict a result of greed to covet or of grievance arising from feelings of injustice (Adeyeye, 2017; Faleti 2009:49). According to Collier
(2003:4) some people often referred to as 'conflict entrepreneurs' really benefit from chaos: while the larger majority of the population are affected by the negative consequences of violence. Also, leaders of armed groups that perpetrate violence profit from the chaos; (and) that while the prospect of pecuniary gains is rarely the main reward or motivator for conflict it can become a preferred state of affair for those who carry out violence. Over the years, social conflicts are caused by numerous factors, many of which are deep-seated. To proponents of economic/resource theory, across ages, conflicts have come to be seen as having a "functional utility" and are deeprooted in economic disparity. Even though the perception has not gone unchallenged especially on the importance of economic factors to the understanding of conflicts, the need to investigate the linkage is not contested. Economic theorist argue that even though issues in conflict may and are often packaged with ideological, religious, ethnic or racial differences; these represent at the most basic level, a contest for control over economic assets (Bredal and Malone 2000:1; Collier et al 2003; Burton, 1990a and b). Flowing from the above submission, one can argue that herderfarmers conflict in Nigeria is tinted with religious and ethnic sentiment and that the herders' conflict is nothing than ethnic and religious cleansing. In contrast to the environmental security theory, the interest of the political ecology is aimed at revealing the basis of conflicts between two actors, such as the crop farmers and herdsmen in Nigeria.

The Theory of Political Ecology as propounded by Wolf Eric (1972), Michael Watts (1983) and (2000), and Paul Robbins (2012) differs with the environmental theory on the ground that conflicts between pastoralists and crop farmers does not only arise from environmental issues (changes in or limited access to natural resources), but significantly from policies and-the actions and inactions of states, especially policies relating to legal and policy frameworks which determines the usage and control of lands. For instance, the theory argues that the issue factor that decides the policies could be import and export economies immigrants' and locals' rights of access, among others. These sources can be examined by the exercise of the standard focuses of political ecology which includes: (1) several level of juxtapositions (multilevel analysis), of the relationship between human beings and his environment (2) historical method which focuses on the transfiguration and transmogrification of the management of indigenous resource strategy in the face of globalisation (3) the degree of power and control possessed and can be exercised by local governments on rural economies and on the use of land (4) determining the decisions individuals make and can make in response to his changing social and natural
environments, and (5) knowledge of the differences between the same issues of different regions. Within this theoretical explanation, it is derivable that herders-farmers conflicts can be expounded by the fact that one of the parties in conflict will always process greater political power (Bassett 1988:453-472). This explains why some people are of the view that the herdies are well connected and have higher political power advantage in Nigeria. For example, those who argue this way especially the representative of farmers in Okun Ogun community Adekojo and Adio (2016) are of the view that many of the retired military men who had served in government engage in livestock farming of which majority and many serving highly placed politician in the executive and legislative including the president of the country, Muhammadu Buhari own cattle, thereby granting them political favour at the expense of the crop farmers. It can equally be concluded that the ceaseless cases of conflicts between farmers and the herdiesmen are essentially output of the imbalance in the rights of access to resources, instead of the lack of resources due to natural causes such as population, or climate change (Vanguard, 2016).

An Overview of Herdsmen-Farmers Conflicts in Africa and Nigeria

Herdiers-farmers conflict has a very long history dating back to the 16th century (Chatwin 1989), and many of these conflicts are results of th environmental (in) security, economic and political factors. The 16 century coincides with the time when white warriors- herdiesmen from the North of Sahel region in Africa attacked black agricultural villages in the south of the region (Moritz 2006a:1-140', 2006b:101-126, Hogan 2009). The vicious circle of attacks and violence according to some people were predominantly result of contest for the insufficient natural resources especially water and fertile lands which are the marks of the Sahel region. And as the Sahel became enlarged and spread, the cattle/livestock tenders-herdiesmen, were compelled to move southward especially during the period of dry season in search of food for their livestock. This mobility allowed for access to the agricultural production and resources of the farmers in the south region of Sahel region; a situation which further aggravated and transformed conflict into violence.

In the same manner, contemporary conflicts between herdiesmen and farmers often occur in the Sahel region and West Africa (Moritz 2012, Baca 2015). It is also common to experience herdiers-farmers violence in regions conducive to pastoralism and agriculture such as the semi-humid and semiarid regions. Equally and most recent, violent conflicts between those who engage in the two farming activities-farming and herding occurs in virtually all regions in Sub Saharan Africa. It has taken place albeit varyingly in Cote
d'Ivoire, Cameroon (Northwest region), Ghana, Senegal, Burkina Faso and Nigeria. In Nigeria, the herdsmen are largely Fulani ethnic group. They are spread across the entire regions in the country but have large population and as stated by Sale Bayari (National Secretary, Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria), Fulani sees the following states in Nigeria as their home because they have the largest concentration of Fulani in the country: Plateau, Nasarawa, Benue, Kogi, Niger, Kwara, Sokoto, Bauchi, Jigawa, Borno and Adamawa (Obase, 2016).

Since the late 1980s, recurring conflicts between farmers and herdsmen have been recorded in more than half of the states. The herders-farmers conflicts have occurred in Jigawa, Kogi, Taraba, Benue, Kwara, Yobe, Adamawa, Gombe, Oyo, Ogun, Ekiti, Kaduna and Plateau. More recently, Fulani herdsmen have carried out attacks in the eastern part of the country not very common in the past (Vanguard, 2016). The 2016 Enugu state killings by the pastoralists revealed their entrant into the eastern part of the country and was the peak of the crisis. Although there are no readily available official statistics, reports shows that the clashes have resulted in massive loss of lives and properties (Vanguard, 2016). The pastoralists killed 1,309 people between 2010 and 2014. The terror activities take place in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria with the most hit states being Benue, Plateau and Taraba where 847 people were killed. The Fulani pastoralist equally engaged the Jukun, Tiv and Eggon communities where 712 people were killed (Vanguard, 2016).

Proximate and Immediate Causes of Farmers-Herders Recurring Violent Conflicts

Significantly, the land tenure system in Nigeria has precipitated conflicts between farmers and herdsmen. This is because the programme has often created severe shortage of arable land thereby making disputes inevitable over the little available land. It is germane to mention that the activities of the upper class-elites, who often take advantage of the provision of the 1976 land use Decree (promulgated by the military regime) to appropriate enormous sizes of land to themselves (Alkali 1997). This greed and corrupt act of the political elites create peasants' revolts in some parts of the country and has been a major impetus in the conflicts. (Alkali 1997; Ker, 2007:112-113)

1. Individual decision making: This is usually in form of personal interests and motivations not recognising possible effects on others, society and the country as a whole, such as deliberate destruction of farmer's crop by herdsmen which is by no means costly and infuriating to the farmer

2. Domestic actions and inactions of government and policies: In some instances such as Nigeria, administrative authorities and institutions of
government often make decisions that are motivated by personal benefits or likely to bring about personal gains. This is often the case when government officials exploit competing interests between farmers and herdsmen. There has been accusation of receipt of bribe by agencies and the police in the handling of conflicts between the two parties in conflicts.

3. Economic, cultural survival and negative perception factors: According to Sale Bayari (2012) hostile environment in which Fulani herdsmen live; survival instinct in the face of extinction; the need for balance of terror; negative perception of pastoralists as naturally aggressive by other ethnic groups; coupled with desire to protect ancestral and generational wealth are factor in the conflicts

4. Exogenous factor: According to the President of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari while speaking with the Archbishop of Canterbury, th Justin Welby on 11 April, 2018 in London ascribed herdsmen violence to the impact of gunmen trained in the Sahel region particularly those that were trained by the late Libyan leader, Muammar Gaddafi. In his words, He-Buhari, said: “…the problem is even older than us. It has always been there, but made worse by the influx of the armed gunmen from the Sahel region into parts of the West African sun-region. These gunmen were trained and armed, by Muammar Gaddafi of Libya" (Punch Newspaper, April 11 2018).

5. The manipulation of religious and cultural affinity by Boko Haram: evidence has shown that the insurgent group now use the conflict as strategy to carry out its operation. The nature of the operational tactics, lethality and strategy adopted in the conflicts resembles Boko Haram methods. Those arrested confessed to being members of the insurgents and the country's Army Chief-Lt. Gen Tukur Buratai in 2017 confirms the link between BH and the 'herders'(Vanguard, 2016). Other factors are: the continuation of age-long social, ethnic and religious struggles, feeling of neglect by Fulani herdsmen and government insensitivity, self-help and retaliatory strategy on the part of crop farmers, manipulation of herdsmen-farmers conflict by dissents/insurgent groups such as Boko Haram, greed factor (cattle rustling)(Obase 2016:20; Bassett, Thomas and Koli, 2000: 67-95; Morgan 2009; Suleiman 2012:47-53).

Conflict Issues, Complications and Implications
The issues in the conflict are economic, environmental, political, cultural and legal and social. Since May 29, 1999 when the current democratic regime was instituted Nigeria has been faced with security challenges. The problem became alarming with the Boko Haram insurgent operations largely in the north eastern region and pockets in Abuja (the country's capital city), and its adjoining communities. While the country’s security apparatus seems
fixated on Boko Haram crisis, considerable parts of Nigeria rural and urban cities continue to feel the impacts of armed operation carried out by pastoralist and crop farmers. A situation that has not only assume devastating dimension but pose increasing challenge for the already strained state forces. The question that readily comes to mind and which is one of the concerns of this paper is: What are the issues in the herdsmen-farmers conflicts? First, it is important to note that herding and farming are both farming activities and as expressed earlier farming is an economic activity. Also it is natural for the crop farmers to protect their economic interest; resent the destruction and impunity that appears to characterise the actions of the pastoralist-herders.

On the legal perspective is the feeling of discrimination by the crop farmers as regard law on possession of arms. In an interview conducted by Vanguard 2016, the representatives of farmers in Oyo state, Adekojo Alade and Adio Aleem (2016), expressed the feeling of displeasure and anger of the farmers. They were of the view that the herders behaviour depict that they are subject to no laws or different codes protecting them from justice. The farmer said they often see many of the herdsmen carrying AK-47. The farmers ask: Do the herdsmen have the legally approved license to carry such lethal weapons in pursuit of their economic interests at the expense of the farmer's interests or other economic interests? This has led to confrontation from some crop farmers even though some resists confrontation with the Fulani herdsmen. Those who fight back resort to self-help; decided to take their destinies into their hands, fighting against what they view as necessary for their economic and cultural survival on the hand, and battle against oppression and tyranny of the powerful and mighty on the other. For example, a local vigilante group called yansakai prominent in Zamfara state have taken up arms against the Fulani (Daily Post, 2019). This is obviously so in the face of tepid and indecisive response from the government. On the part of the herder, they are of the opinion that neglect, creation of myth, wrong impression and media perception without considering the various problems such as access to pasture, water, veterinary drugs and the issue of land tenure has been challenges they face.

Another issue worth evaluating is premised on the belief that herding is a way of life of Fulani ethnic group. The assertion claims that herdsmen are culturally nomadic and they cannot live domesticated life, as such be left alone since nothing can be done to prevent the culture. While this may be accepted as valid to some extent, it is not supported by the contemporary realities. For example, one can ask: where is the middle easterners of Abrahamic religions who were living nomad lives? Where is the nomadic way
of life in the present reality in Israel or with contemporary Bedouin Arabs? No
doubt, many of the have settled for urban life enjoying modern facilities
including schools and health care. Equally, if it is agreed as stated that
herding is another method of raising domesticated animals, it is livestock
farming as stated, then, as a method prevailed under two related realities
that no longer exist. One, there was large expanse of land most of which was
unclaimed by any specific individuals or groups. Two, the land was unsuitable
for crop farming and the shrub and plants on the land was not good for
animals. In the modern day Africa and specifically in Nigeria these realities are
non-existence.
It is a fact in Nigeria that the lands herdsmen shepherd their cattle in
search of food belong to certain individuals, groups and families. Although as
a result of military fiat much of the lands now belong to the state
governments. (This military law has continued to generate criticism from
Nigerian with many calling for its abrogation). By this submission, there are
no free lands anywhere in the country, to that extent, no free lands for use as
grazing by herdsmen. It is within this conclusion that farmers argue that the
idea of grazing reserves and routes is not only provocative but selfish and
clouded by religious and political biases. To them government cannot ask
people in an agrarian areas to cut out portions and designate them as grazing
precincts (AdekojoAlade and AdioAleem, representative of farmers in Okun
Ogun community (Gbadegesin 2016:48).
The above issues make the conflict complicated especially when one
considers the intertwining of factors which include: elite connivance,
political manipulation of the conflict by conflict entrepreneurs divided along
ethno-religious and cultural groupings. It is also believed that the pastoralists
enjoy the support and patronage of elites in government and in the northern
region for example, the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigerian
organization of Cattle Breeders in Nigeria, which was registered as an NGO
in 1986 has as its board of trustees five powerful northern emirs-the Sultan of
Sokoto, the Emir of Kano, Emir of Katsina, the Emir of Zazzau, and the Lamido
of Adamawa. It is even believed that the Nigerian president-Muhammadu
Buhari has not really shown interest in the conflict because he is a Hausa
Fulani and owns cattle in his Kastina state. Some are even of the belief that
Buhari is one of the patrons of Miyetti Allah. It has also been speculated that
many powerful members of the society including serving and ex-military
rulers are not showing the required interest in the conflict because they own
farms and cattle and that the pastoralist help them in catering for their cattle
and that they are the ones equipping the pastoralists, although this position
can be queried on the ground that a number of farms belonging ex-military
Officers has equally been attacked by the pastoralists such as the farm
belonging to ex-naval officer Air Vice Marshal Afolayan in Kwara state, North-
Central, Nigeria (Kwara News, February 2018).

As for the implications, it is important to start by stating that Fulani
militancy has contributed to the consistent high rating of Nigeria in the
countries with high incidence of terrorism. To be sure, since 2014, Nigeria has
consistently been rated as having high incidence of terrorism. For instance,
Nigeria is currently ranked third in the 2020 Global Terrorism Index (Institute
for Economic and Peace, November 25, 2020). The Fulani pastoralist have
received various interpretations, many of which borders on very emotive,
sentimental and likely to further balkanised the already divided nation. The
problem with the situation is that Nigeria's continued existence as a state has
always been threatened and possibility of disintegration looms on the
fractured state. This is because the various conflicts and violence such as the
Boko Haram insurgency, MASSOB and the Biafran crisis in the east, Niger
Delta Avengers in the country's south-south region and the lately increasing
cases of bloody clashes between herders and farmers, which to date has
claimed several thousands of lives and destroyed enormous state and private
properties provide genuine threat to the continued existence of the country
as one entity. The country's government have not been able to adequately
take care of the persistent insecurity challenges which is further aggravated
by the increasing proliferation of arms have made people and groups resort
to self-help by creating defence forces and ethno-religious militias (Adeyeye,
2017). The danger with the numerous conflicts and the self-help activities is
that it further divides the country along religious and ethnic lines.
The direction of the new democratic government to diversify the
country's economy and placing more emphasis on agriculture conditioned by
the global recession in oil price is daily troubled by the farmers-herders
bloody battles. For instance, the North-Central Middle Belt area of Nigeria is
home to great swaths of arable land that is needed for the revolution in
agriculture in a country eagerly searching for safety from poverty and
hunger. However, the area is the theatre of herdsmen-farmers bloody
battles on who should use the land and how to use it. While crop farmers
often complain about herder's cattle destroying their crops, Fulani herdsmen
say they have the right to graze their cattle and have nowhere to do so. In
affirming the negative consequence of the conflicts, Zakariya Daniel
(Chairman of cassava farmers in the northern state of Kaduna), states that:
“One problem leads to another. By then, there's a little conflict, the Fulani
will run away, the farmers will not farm. The farmer is afraid to go and farm,
and the Fulani man has run away. "So when the Fulani man is not grazing, the
cattle are not well fed, the farmer is afraid to go to the farm, of course there is going to be reduction in production.” (Zakariya, 2015) And, as the economic theorists argue poverty is a fundamental issue in conflict and motivation of violence which by extension pose greater danger for any society. A possibility of catastrophe that may arise from the conflict if not properly managed is religious and ethnic war. This is because herdsmen-farmers conflicts has assumed religious and ethnic dimension further instigating the ever present tension, coupled with the meddling by politicians across regional divides. Considering that the country has always been faced with problems of religion and ethnic divides; its manipulation by insurgents backed by politicians and the perception of the conflict as north-south dichotomy portend a future damage for the country. The sectionalisation south-north, of herdsmen-farmers conflicts has led to further proliferation of ethnic and vigilante armed groups and growing secessionist activities such as IPOB, Biafra reminiscent of the 1967-1970 civil war. This in turn is further aggravated by communal conflicts with its consequence not only on the country's agrarian sector but in the oil region which till now represent the only feasible income generating resource for Nigeria. No doubt, going by the prevailing economic, cultural, social and political realities there is no way the country can sustain grazing of vegetal resources. And the continued herdsmen-farmers conflicts and destruction of resources like water and fish portend danger for the economy of the two significant contributors to the country's overall economy and the urgent need to diversify into agriculture. While the government often claim to be putting in place solutions to the crisis, the reality is far more complicated especially with the confirmation by the country's army chief that Boko Haram members have infiltrated the herdsmen. It is reported that those arrested in Wukari confessed to be members of the insurgent group. The reality is that Boko Haram group facing renewed attack from armed forces and realising the north-east is no longer safe and their recruitment affected now shift their strategy to recruiting herdsmen and in other cases acts like herdsmen to further carry out their operations. Some have even asked if those attacking and killing innocent people are actually herdsmen since there has not been real proof that the perpetrators of terror are herdsmen. The conclusion here is that Nigeria is still fighting against insurgents in another garb. This is further enhanced by the porosity of Nigeria's borders and its control which has always make it possible for herdsmen and insurgent recruits from allied countries such as Niger and Cameroun. The West African sub-region and the continent as a whole face possible share of the catastrophic consequence that may arise from the ongoing
conflicts in Nigeria. The humanitarian crisis that has been witnessed arising from Boko Haram insurgent operations will surely geometrically increased by herders-farmers conflicts. Neighbouring countries such as Chad, Niger and Cameroun are currently feeling the pain of influx of internally displaced persons (IDPs). These countries and Africa does not have the capacity to handle humanitarian crisis in Nigeria with its huge population.

**Official Responses to the Intractable Conundrum in Nigeria**

Although it is possible to argue that the government of Nigeria has in the past responded to the farmers-herders conflicts with a view to nip the scourge in the bud through various efforts, such as setting of presidential committee, budgetary allocations to cater for the establishment of grazing reserves and stock route, among others, however, there not been meaningful result to show that the government is serious about finding lasting solution to the crisis. Apart from measures taken by state governments, the federal government have reacted to the crisis but some of the responses are not free of gaps some of which are pointed below.

In attempting to correct the problem, the federal government evolved a policy of establishing nationwide grazing reserves and routes. Apart from the existing grazing areas, the Federal Capital Territory planned three (3) reserves to serve about 15million pastoralists in the Northern states, including the demarcation of 175,000 hectares of grazing land, building of veterinary service centres, and construction of settlements for nomads to use en route. A total of $247 million was earmarked for the project. The government also demarcated about 1,400km livestock route from Sokoto State in the Northeast to Oyo State in the Southwest; and another 2,000km route from Adamawa State in the Northeast to Calabar in the Delta region.

According to the former Minister of Agriculture Dr AdesinaAkinwunmi (2014), the country's grazing reserves as at 2015 is 415 out of which only 141 have been gazetted with less than 20 equipped with resources for pastoralists(Gbadegesin, 2016; Akinwunmi, 2014).

In another effort at solving the problem, the administration of Goodluck Jonathan set up a Presidential Committee with specific terms of reference aimed at improving the existing grazing reserves and designing new financial regime for them, the committee did not achieve the purpose for which it was established as it was inactive throughout the life of the regime. However, the same government earmarked N10 billion for the operation of the Great Green Wall Programme (GGWP) to boost the fight against desert encroachment, one major factor that has been driving pastoralists from far North to the North central and the southern regions in search of grazing fields, there has not been any proof that the money was
spent on the programme or any physical action to tackle desert encroachment in the region (Durojaiye, 2016). An analysis of capital budget from 2011 to 2014 sourced from Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development showed inconsistent allocation to the development of grazing routes and reserves. In 2011, the ministry allocated N31, 404, 899, 584 for capital projects. The ministry in the same year channelled N310, 489, 185 for its National Grazing Reserves and Pasture Development Programme. In 2012, out of its N45, 009, 990, 00 capital budgets, a total N930, 000, 000 was allocated to the development of grazing reserves, stock routes (1140km) and resting points across Nigeria (Source: Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2015). Also, in an attempt to finding solution to the crisis, the Buhari administration inaugurated the National Livestock Transformation Plan (NLTP) at the Gongoshi Grazing Reserve in Adamawa State. The ten year plan-2019 to 2028 is a collaborative initiative that includes federal and state government, farmers, pastoralists and private investors (Premium Times Online, September 10, 2019). The NLTP replaced the Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) initiated by the ministry of agriculture which was rejected by many state governments.

**Recommendations**

No doubt, Nigeria is in a precarious situation within a world increasingly made fluid and toxic by violence tendencies that has continued to conspire and question states sovereignty and authority. Feelings of economic, sociocultural and political alienation, structural violence, discontentment and dissension daily fuel extremism, apathy and predictions of future catastrophe not only for the most populous and resource blessed Nigeria but the highly endowed African continent. It is the opinion of this paper that, agitations, conflicts, insurgency and acts of terror are common features in Nigeria due to the historically planted state lopsidedness that are watered by the parlous domestic environment evidence in structural violence, lack of functional legal and institutions, and corruption that currently pervades Nigeria. The herders-farmers conflicts in Nigeria and beyond is a reflection of the crisis of leadership and people to manage their internal problems and provide for the diverse elements within their domain. It is concluded that the Nigerian state as currently constituted is in a precarious situation and drifting towards large destruction that might make possible by the series of violence that pervades the country.

To this paper, many of the conflicts are parts of the overall dissension in the country. The question that arises is: Are there solutions to the brewing Armageddon? How can the ugly trend be reversed? The answer can be located in the two groups of ideas that dominateliterature on herdersfarmers
conflicts in Nigeria. These are the logistical and military-centric strategies. While those who advance logistic method suggest that the ability of the parties in conflict to organise, gather local support and to be able to prolong conflict affect outcome; the military-centric proponents are of the view that intervention by expedition forces to repress dissents-military repression strategy, is the ideal solution to armed conflicts in Nigeria. To appropriate find solution to the brewing catastrophe that may arise from the ceaseless conflicts in Nigeria, this paper that suggest that the two strategies are required and adds improved legal and institutional capacity as important strategies. In the area of logistics and institutional framework it is important to mention that, Nigerian constitution is highly deficient in the area of provisions dealing with indigenes/settlers issue especially on land, privileges and rights. It is therefore important for the government of Nigeria to put in place constitutional review to cater for the prerogative, immunity, liberty and rights of settlers and indigenes. Also, putting an end to herdsmen-Farmers conflicts requires cause assessment and review of the genesis of the overall and individual cases with a view to finding solution to them, and, to apply solutions that are in tandem with internationally (subregional, regional and global), accepted conflict resolution best practices. As a form of recommendation, this paper views the following as very important:

Strengthening the legal and institutions of good governance: numerous opinions and literature has shown that clear correlation exist between the quality of governance in Nigeria and the level of violent conflicts in the country. As stated in the earlier part of this paper citizens do not have confidence in government thereby making them to resort to self-help strategy with a view to dealing with their conflict. It is therefore imperative for government to be proactive in creating civil constitution that is based on the promotion of the principle of freedom, single common legislation, and legal equality (Albert, 2012: 11; Kant, 1991: 100).

Governments at all levels should move from being reactive to putting in place proactive measures to first identify and understand parties in conflict; Dialogue- talk with them and understand their grievances with a view to changing their mind-set, views and opinions. It is equally imperative for governments (central, states and local), to remove the pervasive trust deficit of the larger population of citizens. Drastic actions should be made to dismantle the cattle rustling bands that have been wreaking havoc in the northern parts of Nigeria. If the country can muster the required political will and put in place institutional and policy structures required to battle and reduce herders-farmers conflicts, the resulting economic and security benefits would no doubt greatly enhance
not just agricultural sector required to shift from oil as means of national income; it would help expand the nation's economy and fight hunger and poverty; and enhance stability.

In virtually all conflicts in Nigeria, little attention has been paid to the role civil society organisations CSOs can play in resolution of conflicts and post conflict peace building, and in security and justice services. CSOs have ability to disseminate information that will help in not only understanding the root causes of conflict but finding solutions to them. They (CSOs) equally have ability to carry out analytical and policy research on conflicts, collaborate, lobby, advocate and influence decision on conflict. To this end, it is imperative for Nigerian government to include CSOs in settling disputes and conflicts in the country. Also, governments at all levels in Nigeria must always create a win-win condition during conflicts by facilitative mediation and constructive conflict management. This can be achieved when programmes of action geared towards the empowerment of civil societies, non-governmental organisations, community based groups and the youths. Nigeria government and its security apparatus should develop smarter subregional, regional and global partnership to finding solutions to conflicts, especially in conflict prevention, and peace building. Connecting subregional, regional and global dimensions will go a long way in understanding good practices elsewhere and combining same with peculiar domestic strategies towards ending the conflicts.

Government should put in place programmes to tackle the crisis in cast and stones not just making statements on pages of paper. Livestock farmers, who employ the services of herdsmen many of whom are highly placed in the society and have been pointed as providing arms for herdsmen, must not be allowed to put their economic interest above national interest. The country should have primary interest in harmonious relationship among its various groups.

**Conclusion**

It is important connecting with sub-regional, regional and global dimensions on combating conflicts and creating synergy with a view to forming common ground to not only end conflict but building peace (Solomon 201: 31-41). Also, legal and policy frameworks to cater for grievances is required urgently; there is the need for political will, negotiation and the design of implementation frameworks; processes for strategies and sanction; government should assist cattle farmers establish ranches in such a way crop farmers are assisted in providing agricultural loans, fertilizers, crops, tractors and other equipment so as to remove feeling of neglect by the Fulani herdsmen; engaging traditional, cultural, ethnic and religious leaders and groups;
disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration; reduction of poverty; and
taking drastic action on climate change; not just talking about it and
environmental impact assessment. Without putting an end to the depoliticisation
and decriminalisation of the state security apparatus Nigeria
will continue to face the inherence dangers of violence which has the
tendency to jeopardise the continued existence as an entity. It is therefore
important to cut politicians' support to armed groups. Also, there is the need
for formal and informal peace education, national peace policy and fund,
teaching history and Nigerian cultural heritage, risk assessment and early
warning sign monitoring, and security sector reform.

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