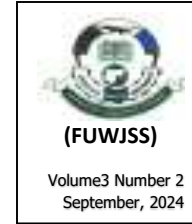# DEGRADED STATE CAPACITY AND MANAGEMENT OF FARMERS-HERDERS CONFLICTS IN MIDDLE-BELT NIGERIA

Wonotanzokan Tagowa Nzeda
Department of Political Science,
Federal University Wukari

Isa Mohammed
Department of Political Science & International Relations
Taraba State University, Jalingo

Abstract

This paper examines state complicity in the management of farmers-herders conflicts in Nigeria with a focus on the Middle Belt. The long-established symbiotic relationship between farmers and herders spanning centuries of amity deteriorates and culminated in bloody clashes as a result of the competition to access land, water, and pastures. The development-induced challenges were exacerbated by urbanization, industrialization, and desertification. The paper relies on secondary sources of data from journal articles, books, newspapers, document analysis and open resource materials that were used based on content and qualitative analysis. The study adopts a weak state-centered approach as a theoretical explanation of the lingering farmers-herders conflicts. Findings of the study reveal that the Middle Belt region is most affected by the conflicts due to its fertile land, water resources, and greener pasture. The paper concludes that the farmers-herders conflicts are triggered by porous borders, state collapse in Africa, environmental and climate change, and the introduction of Anti-Open Grazing Laws by some state governments. The study recommends among others the implementation of grazing reserves, dialogue, and the use of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.

Keywords: Farmers-herders conflicts, state complicity, weak state, Middle Belt, Nigeria

Introduction

Nigeria is passing through complex security challenges and dynamics exacerbated by a weak state's capacity to respond. Globally, security

and survival are the two major quests of every state. However, security challenges are always changing in patterns and magnitude based on the prevailing political and socio-economic developments. This is why recently; the Nigerian security architecture has been overwhelmed by the activities of criminals, kidnappers, bandits, terrorists, separatist groups, cattle rustlers, Boko Haram, and farmers-herders conflicts. The heightened activity of gunmen and armed non-state groups owes itself to degraded state capacity and weakened law enforcement by the state (Ebenezer, 2022).

One of the major security challenges facing the Nigeria-state is the farmers-herders conflicts. The deterioration of the complimentary relationship between the farmers and herders known for ages has been a subject of concern to scholars. The situation implies that the farmers' and herders' clashes in the six geo-political zones of Nigeria are not different in the context of clashes, violence, and killings. However, the symbiotic relationship has vanished or been disrupted in recent years due to increased human population and livestock, urbanization and industrialization, agricultural expansion, and the use of technology in both farming and pastoralism. The introduction of fertilizer and powdered milk made farmers less dependent on pastoralists. However, the pastoralists are dependent on farmers for access to other natural resources for their cattle (Blench, 2003; 2004).

According to the International Crisis Group (2018), the conflict is fundamentally a land-use contest between farmers and herders across the country's Middle Belt. It has taken on dangerous religious and ethnic dimensions, however, because most of the herders are from the traditionally nomadic and Muslim Fulani who make up about 90 percent of Nigeria's pastoralists, while most of the farmers are Christians of various ethnicities. Three factors have aggravated this decades-long conflict arising from environmental degradation in the far north and encroachment upon grazing grounds in the Middle Belt: militia attacks; the poor government response to distress calls and failure to punish past perpetrators; and new laws banning open grazing in Benue and Taraba states (ICG, 2018).

In Nigeria, religion intersects and dynamically interacts with ethnic identity, region, class, and profession. Farmer-herder conflicts across the country's northern and Middle Belt states also epitomize this complexity. The rise in violence is ultimately a function of degraded state capacity, mistrust of law enforcement, and erosion of the rule of law (Ebenezer, 2022).

Hence, the politicized security agencies become incapacitated and repressive, and citizens turn to non-state security providers for protection, from private firms to criminals and insurgents, increasing social violence and obscuring the state origins of what we term privilege violence (Kleinfeld & Barham, 2018). The Federal Government is perceived from some quarters, especially by opposition parties, as being sympathetic to the activities of the herdsmen. This perception is likely because the President is Fulani, the same ethnic group that dominates the cattle business. Citizens, especially from the most affected states expected the federal government to deal with the herdsmen-farmer conflicts in all parts of the state with the same vigor and determination it showed in similar internal security issues in other parts of the country (Egbuta, 2018).

As a result of the increasing insecurity level, Nigeria has been ranked 148th among 163 countries on the Global Peace Index. Since then, Nigeria has retained the 148th position. However, what is worrisome with the report since 2017 is the case of the heightened level of violence and deaths from farmer-herder conflicts that are higher than the ones committed by the Boko Haram insurgents (GPI, 2018; GPI, 2019). Many attempts by the Federal and State governments to address the increasing clashes between farmers and herders polarize the already tense inter-group relations that hinge on mutual suspicion of tribal and religious differences. The Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) policy of the Federal Government of 2019 was rejected (FG, 2018; 2019).

Therefore, one of the major markers of underdevelopment in the management of human activities is the sluggish and lethargic response to emergencies and grave occurrences. When settlements are under attacks, and the security forces are caught pants down; or when communities have had suspicions of imminent attacks, and have notified law enforcers who then hold press conferences to assure all to go about their legitimate businesses, for there is no cause for alarm" only for the killers to come into those communities, unchallenged, and hold the hapless people hostage and hopeless for hours, in a destructive frenzy. It is only when perpetrators walked away triumphant, leaving chaos, corpses, and catastrophe behind. This is when we officially see and coronate our vicious enemies (Akintunde-Johnson, ThisDay 2021 July, 10).

The former Minister of Defense, retired General T.Y Danjuma, accused the military of colluding with bandits. He stated this during the Maiden Convocation Ceremony of Taraba State University in Jalingo. *"They collude with the armed bandits that kill people, kill Nigerians. They facilitate their movements. They cover them. If you are depending*

on the armed forces to stop the killings, you will die one by one," (Daily Trust, 2018 March 25). Many pundits believe his accusation was aimed at showing state complicity in the spread of violence in Nigeria, especially in riverine areas in the Middle Belt sub-region caused by kidnappers, cattle rustlers, and farmer-herder conflicts.

It is against the backdrop of weak state response to complex security dynamics that this paper will investigate State-complicity in the management of farmers-herders conflict in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria.

Study Area: Middle Belt in Perspectives

The Middle Belt has a long history that predates modern Nigeria. However, the Middle Belt evolves as a geographical, political, socio-economic, and identity movement in Nigeria. The Middle Belt is taken as an area roughly inscribed by the Hausa-speaking area to the north, and the Yoruba, Edo, and Ibo-speaking areas to the south. Geographically it is an area that has a certain climatic coherence, falling between the Sahel to the north and the forest to the south (Pullan, 1962; Buchanan, 1953).

Source: Figure 1 an adapted Political map of the Middle Belt from Jonah, 2015.

The population of the Middle Belt as of 1991, was about 17.3 million but is now predicted to be over 45 million people living in the middle belt region, with a predominantly Christian population of 65%, Muslim

population of 25%, and Animist population of 10% of the total population. The Middle Belt today has a landmass of 300,000 square km. There are about 230 languages spoken in Middle Belt. In Nigeria, the states and areas refer to as Middle Belt are; Plateau, Benue, Adamawa, Niger, Nasarawa, Kwara, Kogi, Taraba, Southern Kaduna, and Southern Kebbi, Southern Bauchi, Southern Gombe, Southern Borno, Southern Yobe and Federal Capital Territory Abuja. The Middle Belt (also spelled Middle-Belt or Central Nigeria) is a term used in human geography to designate a belt region stretching across central Nigeria longitudinally and forming a transition zone between Northern and Southern Nigeria. It is composed of the southern half of the defunct Northern Region of Nigeria, now comprising mostly the North Central geopolitical zone, and is characterized by its lack of a clear majority ethnic group (Patrick, 1978; Blench, 2019).

The Middle-Belt true to its name is located in central Nigeria, and interacting with the North and the South with a large population of both Northern and Southern peoples, the Middle-Belt is always in the best position to interpret the North to the South, and the South to the North. What the Middle-Belt seeks, therefore, is to advance its former stand has been addressed as North Central Zone to self-identification as a Middle-Belt region, and widen the scope of the informal sector which to this day cements the platform of our national unity, so that our elite in the Middle-Belt behave in the spirit of national unity, as adequately and persistently demonstrated by the grass root people over the years (Seri, 2000).

Since the amalgamation of 1914, the people of the Middle Belt have been held under dehumanizing conditions, they are treated as a third rated citizens; little or no regard is accorded their culture and tradition, while their so-called masters wallowed in affluence enjoying the best of everything to the detriment of the Middle-Belter. Accordingly, these people from the Middle Belt have the right to discontinue their association with those who enslave them and hold their destiny in their hands (Bayo, 2000).

According to Mailafia (2020), the Middle Belt is both a geographical expression as well as a political identity. It is also a state of mind. Like the English constitution, the Middle Belt exists in the hearts and minds of the Middle Belt peoples. Everyone that feels and knows he or she is Middle Belter, such a one belongs to the Middle Belt. A Middle Belter is anyone who was historically never defeated by the Fulani Jihad. We are who we are because we were never defeated by the Fulani Jihad. A Middle Belter is also anyone who does not subscribe to Caliphate

ideology and the hegemony of the Fulani-dominated emirate system. Thirdly, a Middle Belter is anyone in the former North who does not wish to live under Sharia.

The peoples of the Middle Belt are also defined by history. We had one of the greatest civilizations that ever flourished in ancient Africa, namely: the Nok civilization which was older than Benin and older than Ile-Ife. From what we know of its artifacts, the people had spiritual and cultural linkages to the Egypt of the Pharaohs. The successor to the ancient Nok culture was the great Kwararafa Kingdom that is today symbolized by the Aku Uka of Jukun land. The Kwararafa ruled Kano and many parts of Hausa land for more than 200 years. The small size of their population did not allow them to impose their hegemony over their conquered subjects. But their historical role is one of the pillars in the construction of modern Middle Belt identity politics (Mailafia, 2020).

The Willink Minority Commission 1957 advocated the creation of an autonomous region for the Middle Belt, but the matter was unfortunately overtaken by geopolitics. The British considered it to be in their long-term strategic interest to ensure that the North would remain the dominant region and would continue to rule in perpetuity.

The people of the Middle-Belt are not in the North and cannot, therefore, be northerners...Since it pleases God to distinguish the people he created along geographic, racial, national, ethnic, and language divide, it is equally good to identify and call them such and this is the wisdom behind the struggle for a separate identity for the people of the Middle-Belt (Onesimus, 2000).

The Middle Belt has been the melting pot where small and large ethnoreligious groups in Nigeria have long coexisted, but where they have also increasingly collided over land, resources, identity, and political power. The result is a mixture of recurring conflicts and occasional political unity and solidarity amongst these highly differentiated peoples. An example of the latter was the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) by Sir Joseph Tarka which emerged following Nigeria's independence from Britain in 1960 (Higazi, 2011). Other leaders of the Middle Belt include late Gomwalk, late Dr. Bala Takaya, late Daboh, late Dr. Obadiah Mailafia, and Dr. Bitrus Pogu, General (Rtd) T.Y Danjuma, General (Rtd)Zamani Lekwot, Dan Suleiman, and Amb. Yahaya Kwande. The context of the Middle Belt in this study refers to the Riverine areas and communities in Adamawa, Taraba, Benue, Nasarawa, and Plateau states respectively.

Effects of Farmers-Herders Conflicts in the Middle Belt

The Middle Belt has enormous natural resources; water, grasses, mineral resources, and fertile agriculture. Both the River Niger and River Benue are found in the Middle Belt apart from other thick forest and game reserves. However, the political dynamics of minority question informs the national question agitations by the ethnic nationalities of the area. International political discourse is often reluctant to admit that the extreme violence in the Middle Belt and other states has the same sectarian dimension as in the north and east of the country, claiming that land and environmental issues are the primary drivers. As Médecins Sans Frontières reported in 2020:

> "Nigeria's 'Middle Belt' states, Adamawa, Benue, Kaduna, Plateau, Nasarawa, and Taraba, host the largest numbers of internally displaced people (IDPs) in the country, outside of the Northeast region. Most people have been uprooted by the so-called 'farmer-herdsmen' conflicts.

In 2018, the International Crisis Group identified three reasons for the escalation of violence: the growth of ethnic militias who were bearing illegally acquired weapons; the failure of the federal government to prosecute perpetrators or heed warnings of attacks; and the introduction of anti-grazing laws in some states, resulting in clashes between farmers and herders in neighboring states. In March 2020, an independent Crisis Information website (Acaps.org), noted that "violence between herders and farmers has continued for decades in Nigeria's Middle Belt states of Taraba, Benue, Kaduna, Plateau, Nasarawa, and Adamawa." Violence has commonly arisen over land issues, water resources, grazing space, and the demands on agricultural land by population growth, but the report admits that violence has also "been rooted in religious and ethnic motivations (ICG, 2018; ACAPS, 2020).

In addition to ethnoreligious tensions, attacks by herdsmen on farming settlements seem driven by desertification, compounded by intensified drought due to climate change. Between 2017 and 2020, herdsmen reportedly killed 2,539 people in as many as 654 attacks. As much as 60 percent of the land in Nigeria is under the pressure of desertification (Ebenezer, 2022).

The Federal Government is perceived from some quarters, especially by opposition parties, as being sympathetic to the activities of the herdsmen. This perception is likely because the former President was Fulani, the same ethnic group that dominates the cattle business. Citizens, especially from the most affected states expected the federal government

to deal with the herdsmen-farmers conflicts in all parts of the state with the same vigor and determination it showed in similar internal security issues in other parts of the country (Egbuta, 2018).

Theoretical Framework: A Weak State-Centered Approach Explanation

It still raises questions about the nature of the state in Africa. The questions concern "authority" and social control, the extent to which decisions are "binding", and binding concerning "all segments of society".

Fragile states are also known as weak states. Fragile states fail to fully meet the key needs of their citizens. The shortcomings are termed gaps, with three core gaps: security gap, capacity gap, and legitimacy gap. The security gap means the state does not provide adequate protection to its citizens; the capacity gap means the state does not fully provide adequate services; and the legitimacy gap means that the authority of the state is not fully accepted (Andrew & Ashley, 2017; Juhi, 2012).

While it is universally recognized that states are responsible for human rights conditions in their jurisdictions, it is less often noticed that this responsibility has two dimensions, one normative and one empirical. Normatively, most people agree that states ought to prevent human rights abuses. Empirically, however, states may not always be able to do so. In weak and failing states, agency loss and the inability to police effectively can lead to abuses by private individuals and rogue agents of the state. Thus, on balance, weak states typically have worse human rights abuse records than strong ones (Englehart, 2009).

A state's capabilities are defined as: *"the capacity to penetrate society, regulate social relationships, extract resources, and appropriate or use resources in determining ways"* (Migdal 1988:4). The crisis for the post-independent state in sub-Saharan Africa is that it has failed to fulfillthese capabilities (Azarya & Chazan 1987).

Part of the process of coming to grips with the crises of the African state is to understand our expectations of state performance and how states vary from an ideal type. At the close of the colonial era in the 1960s and 1970s, social scientists advocated a centralized approach to political order based on modernization theory (Apter 1965, Huntington 1968). Now many authors argued the centralized approach was wrong-headed and based on ethnocentric assumptions. Migdal (1985) points out that these state-centric models were based on dichotomous concepts depicting the center as modern and strong, and the periphery as traditional, weak,

and disorganized. Migdal (1985:45) claims these dichotomies are ethnocentric, derived from a notion of evolution of state where modernizing leads to scientific which leads to Western, and that makes it desirable and right. In addition, Migdal argues that the center-periphery model treats people in the periphery as passive recipients where all activities occur in reaction to the state. This approach objectifies citizens of the private sector and overlooks if not denigrates their contribution to state building.

Migdal criticizes Shils (1975), a main proponent of the model: "It never occurred to him that change generated in the periphery might affect the very nature and capabilities of the center" (Migdal, 1985:44). To conclude, part of the dilemma of the failure of the state in Africa belongs to Western social science, development policy, and initiatives. To modernize, or covertly "Western" African states and societies has not been a useful way to proceed. In addition, a dichotomous, mono-causal approach to economic and political development that disregards the role of society in that development is simply unrealistic.

As many scholars grappled with the clash between paradigms of the state and empirical reality, other scholars used the latter to observe and explain that discontinuity. Ekeh (1975) blamed the crisis of the state on the fact that the new state was imposed from the outside, and in this regard, his thesis derives from dependency theory. Ekeh presented a theory of two publics in Africa that explained the amoral and destructive behavior of African civil servants as a devastating legacy of the colonial era (Ekeh, 1975). Ekeh argues that in Africa the civic public (civil service and political posts) is amoral and the primordial public (ethnic, religious, and village associations) is moral. The dialectics between these two publics are at the core of the "uniqueness of modern African politics" (Ekeh 1975:108). Simply put, it is *legitimate to rob the civic public to strengthen the primordial public"* (Ekeh 1975:108). This explains the *"destructive results of African politics in the post-colonial era"* (Ekeh 1975:111).

Migdal (1988:32) summarizes the problem of groups competing against the state for social control of the population:

> Leaders of many other social organizations in an environment of conflict have not shared the belief that the state should be predominant in the entire society, and they, too, have desperately sought social control. They have used the same currency of compliance, participation, and legitimation to protect and strengthen their enclaves, in which they have also tried to determine how social life should be ordered and what the rules of the game should be.

These actors, as individuals or as groups, constitute a very real threat to the state in their perpetual quest for social control of the population. We see evidence of these threats to the state in military coups, the activities of opposition political parties, ethnic competition and conflict, and the behavior of "amoral" functionaries who work for the state.

Apart from the confusion generated by the interaction of state and society, and state and state personnel, another problematic area of the state in sub-Saharan Africa concerns rulers. The problems with rulers are reflected in their regimes and include rigid authoritarianism, political monopolism under single party or military rule, and endlessly corrupt patrimonialization of power (Young, 1989).

The track record of the African state to perform to capacity was so dismal that some scholars questioned whether the state was a state (Young, 1984). As Lemarchand (1988) put it, "Has the state suddenly become conspicuous by its absence?" Other authors argue, that if there is indeed consensus that the "state" in Africa does exist, then it surely wields more authority in the international arena than within its borders (1988, p.149).

Cohen (1978:1) portrays the power of the state as being awesome, *"It moves mountains and redirects rivers."* After reviewing the above scholarly analyses of the state in Africa, it seems obvious that such a portrayal of the state as almighty does not fit the African context.

Migdal (1988:32) presents three indicators of social control for which states and other groups compete:

1. Compliance: At the most elementary level, the strength of the state rests on gaining conformance to its demands by the population. Compliance often first comes with the use of the most basic of sanctions, force.

2. Participation: Leaders of the state organization seek more than compliance; they want to gain strength by organizing the population for specialized tasks in the institutional components of the state organization. Participation denotes repeated voluntary use of and action in state-run or state-authorized institutions.

3. Legitimation: The most potent factor accounting for the strength of the state, legitimation is more inclusive than either compliance or participation. It is an acceptance, even approbation, of the state's rules of the game, its social control, as true and right. The application of the weak state model is informed by the fact that there is ungovernable space and a lack of effective security provision which has eluded the

Nigerian federal government without state police. The Federal might is challenged by armed groups and internal strife.

Research Methodology

The paper relies on secondary sources of data from books, journal articles, newspapers, document analysis and open resource materials that were used based on content and qualitative analysis. The data for the study were collected from June to December, 2023.

Nigeria Federal Government Response to the Farmers-Herders Conflicts

While the Federal Government's response to the farmers-herders conflict went back to the pre-colonial and colonial eras to the present the problem still lingers on. The Federal Government's response to the farmers-herders conflicts is in four phases. The first National Livestock Development Project (NLDP) and the enactment of a grazing law by the Northern Legislative Assembly were passed in *1965*. During that period, the authorities tried to provide grazing lands in order to make the nomadic Fulani sedentary. This was established in collaboration with organizations such as the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI). The objective of this legal instrument was to enhance productivity and to demarcate 4, 125 grazing lands across Nigeria, covering about 4.3 million Ha, with some of the lands being equipped with boreholes, fences, fire breaks, and veterinary services, access roads, and dams. Unfortunately, only 270 of these official grazing lands are functional across Nigeria (Awogbode, 1987; Abass, 2012).

The Buhari administration plan is conceived and announced through the National Economic Council. The main plan by the government to permanently address the farmers-herders clash, including the socio-economic drivers of the crisis, is the "National Livestock Transformation Plan" (NLTP), announced by the National Economic Council on 19 June 2018.104 The NLTP is a broad and long term plan that seeks to solve the herders-farmers crisis as well as develop the livestock sector over 10 years. The plan, a summary of which was seen by Amnesty International, rests on six pillars: economic investment, conflict resolution, law and order, humanitarian relief, information, education, and strategic communication and crosscutting issues. The 10-year plan is expected to cost at least N179 billion ($496 million), with both the federal and state governments funding the first three years of its budget at N70 billion ($194 million).

The second is humanitarian assistance which is being handled by the National Emergency Management Agency. This largely has not addressed the challenges of IDPs and refugees from the farmers-herders conflicts. Therefore, the IDPs' predicament of shelter, food, camps, and other necessities has remained a mirage. This resulted in IDPs using schools, Mosques, Churches, and relations to survive the increasing populations without shelter. Hence, this created another problem with schools remaining closed which affects teaching and learning in most affected communities. Hence, resettlement, rehabilitation, and reconstruction of destroyed communities.

Thirdly, the use of military force to normalizes the security situation in the country. The irony of this is that it ended in creating more problems and security dilemmas for victims. In most cases, the perpetrators would escape the victims are either arrested or killed mistakenly by security forces at the scene of the conflicts. This is one case too many in Adamawa, Taraba, Plateau, and Benue states. The reported incidences in these states happened either security forces have withdrawn or were deployed to attack the culprits. Amnesty International found evidence showing that security forces received information about impending attacks and in some cases, came in contact with attackers but did nothing to stop or prevent the attacks. Amnesty International documented at least seven cases where security forces were aware of attacks but did nothing. Many attacks lasted for hours, in some cases days, even in communities where security forces were not far away. The response of security forces in some of the instances in Adamawa, Kaduna, Taraba, Benue, Plateau, and Zamfara states was so slow and poor that villagers accused them of complicity in the attacks. In some cases, especially in Adamawa and Taraba states, security forces knew attacks were about to happen and saw the attackers but refused to act (Amnesty International, 2018).

Furthermore, Amnesty International is deeply concerned that the government of Nigeria has failed to comply with its obligation to exercise due diligence, failing both to address the underlying causes of the violence between herders and villagers described in this report and to stop violence when it did occur, resulting in the death of hundreds of people, the destruction of thousands of homes and extensive harm to people's livelihoods. The Nigerian Constitution is clear on where the responsibility lies when it comes to the protection of lives and livelihoods, of the government. Chapter 14 (2) (b) states that the security and welfare of Nigerians shall be the primary purpose of government, and this means all organs of government, be it executive, legislative, or

judiciary. Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes that "Everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security of person".

For instance, on 4 December 2017, between 6 am and 12 pm, at least seven villages, including Dong, in Numan and Demsa local government areas of Adamawa State, were attacked by suspected Fulani gunmen. Responding to these attacks, the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) deployed an Alpha jet and an EC 135 attack helicopter to the area.144 At least 86 villagers died and about 3,000 houses were destroyed in the attack and air raid (Amnesty International, 2018).

Fourthly, the rejected RUGA policy of the Federal Government in 2019 by most of the states and some civil society organizations was not surprising. The RUGA policy and cattle colony were rejected for alleged suspicion of the colonization agenda of the Fulani, linking the policy to the Dan Fodio Jihad of 1804 and expansionism of Islam in Nigeria. Even though the argument is weak in a democratic setting and governance, unfortunately, the view is very popular and widely accepted by the Nigerian population, arguing that the President is a Fulani apologist.

Triggers of Farmer-Herders in Middle Belt Nigeria

The conflicts between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria are caused by so many factors or triggers. According to Musa (2014), most of these triggers include; suspicious inter-group relations, intolerance, the collapse of the traditional justice system, corruption, destruction of crops farmlands, the roles of traditional rulers, and cattle theft by the host communities.

Problems with Land Tenure System

The introduction of the Land Right Act of 1978 gave farmers more advantages to obtain a certificate of occupancy of their land assets than the herders. According to Abbas (2009), a study of major sources of conflicts between herdsmen and farmers shows that land-related issues, especially on grazing fields, account for the highest percentage of the conflicts. Also, Okello (2014) emphasized that the conflicts between herdsmen and farmers have intensified in recent years with dwindling natural resources and land availability greatly contributing to the ongoing, escalating conflicts in the country.

Ingawa et al (1999) stressed that the key underlying causes of herdsmen and farmers' conflicts in Nigeria are: (a) changing resources access rights, whereby traditional access rights to communal grazing and

water resources are being obstructed by the individual tenure ship of arable farmers. This is particularly severe on the traditional trek routes, which become favorite cropping sites because of their better soil fertility resulting from the concentration of animal manure from the trekking herds in these areas. Within the Fadama areas, this is exacerbated by the fragmented nature of the crop plots, which makes the prevention of animals straying in the crop plots difficult.

(b) Inadequate grazing resources as increasing crop cultivation (and increasing commercialization of the crop residues) and poor management of grazing reserves have resulted in a significant reduction in available livestock feed resources, particularly in the Northern States. Moreover, the high-value crops introduced by National Fadama Development Programme (NFDP) like tomatoes and onions produce almost no crop residues for livestock feeding.

(c) Decline in internal discipline and social cohesion as the adherence to the traditional rules regarding grazing periods and the authority of the traditional rulers are broken down.

Tonah (2006) pointed out that the causes of farmers' and herders' conflicts include the southward movement of pastoral herds into the humid and sub-humid zones, promoted by the successful control of the menace posed by disease, the widespread availability of veterinary medicine, and the expansion of farming activities into areas that hitherto served as pasture land.

As a result, the herdsmen destroy the crops of the farmers on their farmland. Also, Adisa (2012) stressed that the land tenure system ownership of land was regarded as a cause of the conflicts. In most areas in Nigeria, farmers are regarded as those that own the land, and therefore determine how it is used, while the herdsmen are regarded as the landless group who do not own land to use and settle on. Government policies according to Hoffman et al (2008) can also be seen as a cause of herdsmen and farmers' conflicts. For instance, conflicts do occur as the size of the existing reserve shrinks due to encroachment and government-approved expansion of farmlands. This leads to the conversion of water points and stock routes into farmlands.

Tukur (2013) opined that the cause of herdsmen and farmers conflicts in Nigeria include destruction of crops, contamination of streams by cattle, zero grazing of land, disregard for local traditional authorities, female harassment, harassment of nomads by host communities' youths, indiscriminate bush burning, defecation of cattle on roads, cattle theft and straying of cattle.

Environment and Climate Change

Desertification and climate change have affected the normal calendar of movement of cattle from the Northeast to the other parts of the country. The shrinking of the Lake Chad Basin in the last three decades has affected herding and farming in Northeast and Northwest Nigeria. This development forced the herders to move southward earlier to feed their cattle (Orounye, Ahmed & Fatima, 2020; ICG, 2018; Lenshie, Kondu).

Porous Border: The porous nature of West Africa's countries' borders, which owes its origin to the hasty way the colonialists carved up the African continent as well as the nature of their management by post-colonial states, has become a serious issue in human trafficking, money laundering, and other related crimes (Akinyemi, 2019). The issue of the porosity of Nigeria's borders, spanning a total land mass of 923, 768 square kilometers, has remained a source of concern over the years.

The former Comptroller-General of the Nigerian Immigration Service, Mr. David Parradang, disclosed while addressing the National Conference Committee on Immigration. He said that:

> "Though the country has only 84 approved land border control posts, there are more than 1,400 illegal borders in the country. Across the over 4,000 square kilometers of coverage, we have illegal routes which are not manned" (The Cable, 2014, April 24).

Nigeria's porous border is another aggravating factor in the problem of general insecurity. The National Security Adviser (NSA), Major-Gen. Babagana Mungono (Rtd), stated this in Abuja during the Eighth Session of the Cameroon-Nigeria Trans-border Security Committee. He maintains that both ISWAP and Boko Haram bandits have continued to exploit the porous border areas to disrupt the livelihoods of innocent citizens in their communities.

According to Babatola (2015), Nigeria is situated (1,497 km) between Niger, Chad (87 km), and Cameroon (1,690 km), and has a coastline of at least 853 km. Nigeria's claim to territorial sea (offshore space) rose from 3 miles of the continental shelf and about 200 miles of exclusive fishing zones from 1958 to 1978 as a country signatory to Conventions on the Continental Shelf despite its inability to determine the extent of its claim.

Similarly, Marenin (2010) identified several types of borders. He mentioned that not all borders are alike, and they are managed in different ways. The areas, the space, the nature, threats that have to be controlled,

the types of equipment needed and the skills to use them, and the personnel required to make the borders differ from one country to another.

ECOWAS Protocol of 1998 on Free Movement of Goods and Services

Brown (1998) avers that the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Protocol of 1998 on the free movement of people and goods could be one of the reasons for the clashes when foreign nationals illegally came into Nigeria in the guise of grazing animals by the nomads. This conflict will continue to linger as long as the ECOWAS Convention remains unchanged by the member-states.

Violent conflicts involving farmers and herders have become a major source of instability in the Western Sahel and Lake Chad Basin (LCB) regions. The livelihoods of both farmers and herders are dependent on reliable access to land and water. While farmers tend to be sedentary, traditional nomadic and semi-nomadic pastoralists graze their cattle in line with the seasonal migrations and search for water and pasture that will sustain their herds, often crossing national boundaries in fulfillment of these needs. As pastoralists migrate in search of water and pasture, they can encroach on farms, insecurity, and other population centers that block traditional grazing routes, statutory grazing reserves, and water points (Kwaja & Smith, 2020).

Introduction of Controversial Anti-Open Grazing Laws by some States

As a result of deadly and incessant conflicts between farmers-herders, some states in Middle Belt and Southwest Nigeria have attempted the introduction of laws prohibiting open grazing systems. The development instead of controlling the situation has created sharp division and heightened conflicts and suspicions between governments and herders on one and between herders and farmers on the other. Benue and Taraba States have enacted laws banning and proscribing OGS in their states in 2017 and 2018 respectively. Presently none of the Anti-Open Grazing Laws is working in the affected states.

The Problem of States' Collapse in Africa

The political instability in some African countries like Libya, Somalia, Mali, Chad, Niger, and Cameroon brought about a mass exodus of migrants into West Africa and Nigeria. The situation has adverse

effects on border security and governance that triggers internal strife. This is caused by the availability of Small and Light Weapons (SLW) in the hands of people and criminals. These armed non-state actors (ANSA) perpetrate violence, killings, and abductions and complicate the farmers-herders crisis in Nigeria. In April, President Muhammadu Buhari, while speaking with the Archbishop of Canterbury in London, attributed the "farmers-herders" clashes to an influx of arms and gunmen from Libya, following its former leader's demise:

> "The problem is even older than us. It has always been there but is now made worse by the influx of gunmen from the Sahel region into different parts of the West African sub-region. These gunmen were trained and armed by Muammar Gadaffi of Libya. When he was killed, the gunmen escaped with their arms. We encountered some of them fighting with Boko Haram. Herdsmen that we used to know carried only sticks and maybe a cutlass to clear the way, but these now carry sophisticated weapons. The problem is not religious, but sociological and economic. But we are working on solutions" (Buhari, Premium Times 2018 11, April).

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper attempted to investigate state complicity in the management and provision of security governance in Nigeria with a special focus on farmers-herders conflicts in the Middle Belt region. The Federal Government response was largely slow, ineffective, kinetic, deadly, and inadequate. This resulted in human rights violations, complicated state-society relations, and a breakdown of law and order. The fallout of the alleged state complicity in Nigeria emboldened many affected states to introduce Anti-Open Grazing Laws which were not operational for political reasons and intervention of the Federal Government through the National Economic Council. Additionally, there was an upsurge and suspicion which necessitated the introduction of State-sponsored civilian security groups like Amotekun, Eastern Security Network, and ethnic militias respectively.

There is agreement on the fact that there is a vast area in all parts of the country that are termed ungovernable spaces. Herder-farmer conflicts in North Central Nigeria have caused the death of almost 4000 people as of 2018. The records of the destruction of farms and other material resources are unquantifiable. While the farmers have attributed the conflict to the tendency of cattle to damage their crops and pollution of

water sources, the herders argued that rustling, cattle theft, and the barricade of traditional grazing are the major drivers of the conflicts.

In a functional state, it presupposes that no space within the frontiers of a sovereign state is to beout of the reach of the government that legitimately possesses the monopolyof the use of force as well as other resources necessary for preventingungoverned spaces from coming under the control of violent non-state actors (Lenshie, Confidence & Christian, 2020).

Therefore, the conclusion is that the State security apparatus in Nigeria are sympathetic and protective to herders and non-state actors support farmers. This allegation formed the basis of the state complicity argument in the handling of the farmers-herders conflicts.

Drawing from the findings of this study it is recommended that the Federal Government should exercise the political will to revisit and implement the existing grazing reserves and national livestock development plan in consultation with the states. State Governments must dialogue and create awareness with farmers and herders on the benefits of provision of ranching for pastoralists and economic development. The government both federal and states must punish perpetrators of violence. This can be done by releasing white papers and paying compensation, rehabilitation, resettlement, and reconstruction of destroyed communities. Border and security governance must be improved to curtail the activities of invaders and illegal immigrants into Nigeria. The application of alternative dispute resolution is preferable in cases of farmers-herders conflicts. This has been the old practice and should be encouraged in settling issues amicably by the community and ethnic political leadership.

References

Abbas, I. M. (2009). No Retreat No Surrender for Survival between Fulani Cattle Herders and Farmers in Nigeria. *European Scientific Journal.* Vol.8, No.1. pp 331-349.

Abubakar, A. (1977). *The Lamibe of Fombina*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Agyeman, O. (1988). Setbacks to Political Institutionalisation by Praetorianism in Africa. *The Journal of Modern African Studies. 26(3) pp. 403-435.*

Akintude-Johnson, F. (2021 July, 10). Weaponizing banditry indulgence and complicity.

https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2021/07/10/weaponising-banditry-indulgence-and-complicity/

Apter, D.A. (1965). *The Politics of Modernization.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Amnesty International (2018). Harvest of death: Three years of bloody clashes between farmers and herders in Nigeria, Report 17 December, 2018.

https://www.amnesty.be/IMG/pdf/nigeria_harvest_of_death_report_17_december_2108.pdf

Andrew; A. & Ashley, M. (2017). Untangling the Complexity of Fragile States. Truman Center.

Awogbade, M. O. (1986). "The Fulani of the Jos Plateau." In Adamu, M. and A.H.M. Kirk-

Greene (eds.) Pastoralists of the West African Savannah. Great Britain: Manchester University Press, pp. 214-224.

Awogbade, M. (1987). Grazing Reserves in Nigeria. Nomadic Peoples, No. 23. pp. 19-30.

Azarya, V. (1988). Reordering State-Society Relations: Incorporation and Disengagement." In D. Rothchild and N. Chazan (eds.), The Precarious Balance: State and Society in Africa. Boulder: Westview Press, pp.3-21. Azarya, V. and N. Chazan 1987 "Disengagement from the State in Africa: The Experience of Ghana and Guinea." Comparative Studies in Society and History, 29(1), pp. 107-131.

Bayo J. (2000). "Thoughts of A Veteran". New Vision. 1 (2): 7–9.

Bello, A. (2013). Herdsmen and farmers conflicts in North Eastern Nigeria: causes, repercussions, and resolutions, MCSER-CEMAS Sapienza, Univ. of Rome, in *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies, 2(5): 129-139.*

Blench, R. (2019). Old data and new technologies: the seamless integration of linguistics, literacy, and translation for Nigerian minority languages. Jos Linguistic Circle, Jos.

Buchanan, K. (1953). The Northern Region of Nigeria: the Geographical Background of its Political Duality', Geographical Review, xliii. 451–73.

Buhari, M. (2018). Buhari speaks on 2019 bid, farmers-herders clashes, https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/264695-buhari-speaks-on-2019-bid-farmers-herders-clashes.html

Chazan, N. (1988a). Patterns of State-Society Incorporation and Disengagement in Africa." In D.

Rothchild and N. Chazan (eds.), The Precarious Balance: State and Society in Africa. Boulder: Westview Press, pp. 121-148.

Chazan, N. (1988b). State and Society in Africa: Images and Challenges." In D. Rothchild and N. Chazan (eds.), The Precarious Balance: State and Society in Africa. Boulder: Westview Press, pp. 325-341.

Cohen, R. (1978). State Foundations: A Controlled Comparison." In R. Cohen and E. Service (eds.), Origins of the State. Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues.

Ebenezer, O. (2022). Escalating violence is putting Nigeria's future on the line. Council on Foreign Relations. https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/ escalating-violence-putting-nigerias-future-line

Egbuta. E. (2018). Understanding the herder-farmer conflict in Nigeria. Nigerian, Pastoralism. https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/ understanding-the-herder-farmer-conflict-in-nigeria/

Ekeh, P. (1975). Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement." In Comparative Studies in Society and History 17(1):91-112.

Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (F.M.A. & R.D). (2019). Report on the National Livestock Transformation Programme (NLTP) Federal Government Budget, 7 (4). 2019.

Higazi, A. (2011). "The Jos Crisis: A Recurrent Nigerian Tragedy". *Working Paper*. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (2): 3–6.

Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust (2021). Long Read: Violence in Nigeria's 'Middle Belt' States: Ethnic and Religious Dimensions. https://www.hart-uk.org/blog/long-read-violence-in-nigerias-middle-belt-states-ethnic-and-religious-dimensions/

Hirschman, A.O. (1970). *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Huntington, S. (1968). Political Order in Changing Societies. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Huntington, S. (1973). Political Order in Changing Societies. Yale University Press. ISBN 978-0-300-01171-5..

Ingawa, S. A, Ega, A & Erhabor, P (1999). Farmer -Pastoralist conflict in core states of the National Fadama Project. Abuja: FACU.

Information Crisis Websites (2020). Nigeria's Complex crisis. https://www.acaps.org/country/nigeria/crisis/complex-crisis

International Crisis Group (2018). Stopping Nigeria's farmer-herder violence.https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/africa-report-n-262-stopping-nigeria-s-spiralling-farmer-herder-violence

Ismail, I. (1994). From nomadism to sedentarism: An Analysis of development constraints and public policy issues in the socio-economic transformation of the pastoral Fulani of Nigeria. New York: Howard University.

Johnson, P. (1978). *Operation World: A day-to-day guide to praying for the world* (4th ed.). OM Publishing and WEC Publications. pp. 327–328.

Jonah, C.E. (2015). The Myth and Reality of Middle Belt Geo-Politics in Nigeria: A Discourse. Journal of Culture, Society and Development, Vol. 10, No. 13 pp.1-8.

Juhi, T. (2012). "Weak States". *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia ofGlobalization*. doi:10.1002/9780470670590.wbeog809.

Kleinfeld, R., & Barham, E. (2018). Complicit states and governing strategy of privilege violence when weakness is not problem. https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/05/23/complicit-states-and-governing-strategy-of-privilege-violence-when-weakness-is-not-problem-pub-76434

Kwaja, C. M. A. & Smith. K. (2020). Brief Transnational Dimension of Farmer-Herder Conflicts. https://www. sfcg. org/wpcontent/ uploads/2020/04/SFCG_Policy_Brief_Transnational_Dirnension_to_F H_Conflicts.pdf

Njoku., C. G. (2021). Farmer-herder relations in Nigeria historical antecedents and the way forward for social cohesion. https://bbforpeace.org/blog/2021/05/02/farmer-herder-relations-in-nigeria-historical-antecedents-and-the-way-forward-for-social-cohesion/

Lemarchand, R. (1988). The State, the Parallel Economy, and the Changing Structure of Patronage Systems." In D. Rothchild and N. Chazan (eds.), The Precarious Balance: State and Society in Africa. Boulder: Westview Press, pp.149-170.

Lenshie, N. E. & Kondu, P. (2020), Nomadic Migration and Rural Violence in Nigeria: Interrogating the Conflicts between Fulani Herdsmen and Farmers in Taraba State. Ethnic Studies Review. No.43 (1),pp.*64-95*.

Lenshie, N. E., Kelechi O, Confidence. N. O. & Christian E. (2020): Desertification, migration, and herder-farmer conflicts in Nigeria: rethinking the ungoverned spaces thesis, Small Wars & Insurgencies.

Migdal, J.S. (1985). A Model of State-Society Relations." In H.J. Wiarda (ed.), New Directions in Comparative Politics. Boulder: Westview Press, pp 41-55.

Migdal, J., S. (1988). *Strong societies and weak states: state-society relations and state capabilities in the third world. Princeton University press. p. 261. ISBN 9780691010731. OCLC 876100982.*

Musa, T. (2014). Resources use conflict between farmers and Fulani herdsmen in Guma Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria. Dept. of Geography and Planning. Anyigba: Kogi State University.

Nordlinger Eric. (1981). *On the Autonomy of the Democratic State*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Onesimus E. (2000). *"OPC Versus Hausa/Fulani". New Vision. 1 (2): 13–18.*

Pullan, R. A. (1962). The Concept of the Middle Belt in Nigeria: an Attempt at a Climatic Definition ', Nigerian Geographic Journal, v. 39–52.

Seri, F.   (2000). *"Middle-Belt: An Agenda for the 21st Century". New Vision. 1 (2): 10–11.*

Shils, E. (1975). *Center and Periphery*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Soyinka, W. (2019). RUGA might park off explosion, the cable Thursday, July 4,

The Cable (2014, April 24). Nigeria has over 1,400 illegal border routes, Immigration   CG   reveals.https://www.thecable.ng/nigeria-has-over-1400-illegal-border-routes-immigration-cg-reveals

Tukur, A. (2013). Conflicts between transhumant pastoralist and farmers in Nigeria: the way out. world press.com. Retrieved https://pastoralist2.

Vanguard (2020 June, 18). Scenarios with Obadiah Mailafia: Who is afraid of the Middle Belt? https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/06/who-is-afraid-of-the-middle-belt/

Young, C. (1984). Zaire: Is There a State?" *Canadian Journal of African Studies 18(l):80-82.*

Young, C. (1989). Beyond Patrimonial Autocracy: The African Challenge." In Beyond Autocracy. Report on a Workshop on Governance at the Carter Presidential Center of Emory University, February, 1989.