



THE STATE, GOVERNANCE DEFICIT AND INSECURITY IN NIGERIA: A DIACHRONIC ANALYSIS OF THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSIONS TO THE HERDERS – FARMERS CONFLICTS IN THE MIDDLE BELT GEOPOLITICAL ZONE 2015-2020

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Article history:	Abstract:
<p>Received: 11th June 2021 Accepted: 26th June 2021 Published: 29th July 2021</p>	<p>This paper examined the state, governance deficit and insecurity in Nigeria as tangents boosting international dimensions to the Herders-farmers conflicts in the Middle Belt Geopolitical Zone. The paper appropriated theory triangulation via Marx (1971) theory of the state, Frustration-aggression of Gur (1970) and Neo-Malthusian theory of natural scarcity of E. W. Wrigley (1969), Ran Abramitzky & Fabio Braggion (1977) to explain the relationship between the state, skewed governance, insecurity and development challenges. While classical Marxism reveals the state as an organized conspiracy to oppress, rob, and degrade the opposing class so it could appropriate the common wealth, Frustration-Aggression shows that the appropriation of the common wealth breeds frustration leading to aggression against persons and property. The two theories then collapse into the Neo-Malthusian theory of natural scarcity accentuated by population explosion, ecological degradation and indiscriminate consumption of natural resources to show the nexus in the herders-farmers conflicts in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria. The consideration of theory triangulation in the article is informed by the descriptive and articulate nature of the three theories in their attempt at highlighting the factors that are responsible for the Herders-farmers conflicts, while at the same time focusing on the linkages between local and international collaborators. Data for the paper was generated through secondary sources like text books, published and unpublished scholarly studies, verified internet links and journal articles. The paper adopted descriptive method to qualitatively analyze data. Qualitative analysis of data reveals that governance deficit and the support of the Buhari's regime to the Herders is not too different from the eruptive international jihadist collaborations that have boosted the Herders-farmers conflicts and recommended that government should collaborate with sociocultural groups like Pan Niger Delta Elders Forum, PANDEF, Afenifere, Middle-Belt Elders Forum and Ohana-Eze-Ndi Igbo to synergize with international non-governmental actors like the USAID, the British Council sponsored Nigeria Reconciliation and Stability Projects (NRSP), All Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN), MACBAND to discuss and initiate possible palliatives for the warring parties while modern method of animal husbandry, be kept in mind.</p>

Keywords: State, Governance, Security, Conflict, Herders-Farmers

INTRODUCTION

With the emergence of the Westphalia state system, the state has not only enjoyed the toga of total sovereignty and equality in the comity of nations, but has remained an indispensable minimum in interstate interactions. This position however, is currently beset by armed conflicts, insecurity and development challenges. At the heart of these challenges, especially in the sub-Saharan Africa, is governance morass characterized by political exclusion, marginalization, nepotism, religious fundamentalism and resource conflicts. The assertiveness of the recurring resource conflicts by subnational groups is occasioned by the need to hold the state to account for governance deficit. This assertiveness has inadvertently, challenged the state absolute claim to sovereignty and weakens its position as a protector of lives and property. One of such recurring conflicts is the Herders – farmers

conflicts in Nigeria. Contextually, conflict in whatever form or dimension is a major problem which has continuously engaged the world system by challenging international peace and security. Conflicts are recurrent occurrences that have grown inextricably linked to man's survival instincts. As such, whether at the individual, state, or international levels of analysis, conflicts are the rough edges in every relationship premised on the need to approximate self-preservation or maximize self-interest. Conversely, conflict arises as a consequence of intergroup connection in which interactions are characterized by a mishmash of values and interests that are sometimes interconnected, yet defined by a myriad of occasions valued and formed by some entwined power dynamics that is mutually exclusive.

These dynamics in view of the social classes in the Nigerian state, the mindless pursuit of class and sectional interest by the vantage political gladiators are not ahistorical but timeline sensitive. The timeline of 2015 - 2020 is of peculiar interest as it heralds the coming into power of president Muhammad Buhari a character drawn from Nigeria's military past and believed by many to be serendipitous with answers to the myriads of Nigerian problems. Again, the period becomes necessary for examination due to the contradictory outcomes of the expected serendipity via increased poverty, youth unemployment and hunger. With these expectations and challenges taking place dialectically in the state, the dialectics, especially in the contexts of African states, is revealed in the evolution of the state from a predatory political class interested only in power tussles and consolidation in the context of hegemonic control and domination with aggravation of conflicts and accompanying insecurity in mind. The ditto mirrors the Nigerian state as a typical example. In fact, the Nigerian state has, for long, transcended cyclic trajectories of armed and lethal conflicts, insecurity and development challenges relating to skewed governance and penchant for political exclusion, dominance and actualization of defined ends by the custodians of the state. The herders-farmers conflicts across the Middle-Belt, are yet another of such conflicts and security challenges in Nigeria linked to international dimensions. Consequently, livestock and farm produce in Nigeria are under threat from complex factors, including climate change and its repercussions on the available natural resources, arable land, flora, fodder and water. Incidentally, those constantly extrapolated by culture, tradition, occupation and natural scarcity appeared to be the herders who have remained an itinerant people with seasonal migrations in search of fodder for their cattle (Wegh, 1998). By the virtue of their linkages with Nigerian security forces, affiliation to Jihadist movements; ISWAP, Boko Haram in West Africa and access to international vigilante Islamist separatist like Tuareg groups in Northern Mali, (Tabita Pulaaku) and military-grade weapons, the Herders have become hegemonic and ostensibly placed in the vantage positions to forcefully graze their cattle in the Middle Belt farming communities leading to entrenched frosty relationship with the farmers. This is given oxygen by the porosity of the Nigeria's borders and fault lines of ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Residence, Establishment and Transhumance within and across the national borders of West African states (Obi, Herbert & Udalla, 2019). These, no doubt, form part of the international dimensions which have prolonged and elongated the conflicts.

In addition to the above, the unbridled influx of transhumance in Nigeria made possible by ECOWAS Protocol for grazing and other economic intentions is without concern to the recoiling hectares of arable land per Nigerian. Gundu, (2017) said that in 1961 Nigeria had 0.51 hectares of arable land per Nigerian, in 1990 the figure shrunk to 0.29 hectares per person; in 2010 it was 0.21 hectares per person. At the current population growth rate in Nigeria and by projections, it will shrink to 0.17 hectares in 2030, 0.10 hectares per person in 2040 and 0.08 hectares per person in 2050. Expectedly, with unchecked transhumance migrations and the fast shrinking hectares of arable land per Nigerian orchestrated by population growth in the country, the logic of the conflicts between Fulani herdsman and sedentary farming communities in the Middle Belt States is underscored.

It is not farfetched therefore, when Umoh (2019) noted that factors like draught, birth-rate of herds, seasonal changes, ecological pollution and the nomadic life style of the Herders on the one hand, and shifting cultivation methods of farming, claims to ancestral land and the consistent expansion of farming land by the farmers on the other hand, are parts of the pull-factors that have induced an upward negative social change that has led to a continued frosty relationship between the two groups. The source further noted that such frosty relationship may not necessarily lead to violence at the inception, but will draw manure from actor's interests, actors like Islamic militia and social groupings like the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBEN), the umbrella organisation of herders' associations and some government agricultural agencies to eventuate violence in order to protect group interest. Notable in the conflicts has been the misguided government approach and attendant operational deficit of the security agencies; with festering security threats all over Nigeria.

Of recent and between 2015 -2020, the frequency of violent clashes between the two groups have increased with a further widespread of misinformation and outcry from both parties that have exacerbated the gravity of the conflicts. The seeming inability of the government of Niger, Chad, and Nigeria and that of Cameroon, Sudan and Gabon who have Fulani ethnic people in positions of *decision-making-bodies* to find the right solution to the conflicts, constitute a part to the international dimensions to the conflict and have been increasingly interpreted as subsets of religious, political and ethnic solidarity, though the underlying factors may be competition for access to resources. After putting all these into consideration, there seems to be government support and sympathy towards the herdsman activities, this is connected to the fact that in most of the littoral states in west Africa and the states in northern Nigeria, the Fulanis are at the helm of affairs, thus, their support and sympathy for the Herders cannot be shielded from ethnic and primordial sentiments. This is evident in the security structure of Chad, Niger, Sudan and Nigeria. In Nigeria, there has been unconfirmed reports of Fulani led security forces taking sides to protect the herdsman rather than embracing a holistic peace approach like the proposals of Track one and half diplomacy as

proposed in Umoh (ibid). As a consequence, farmers have resorted to self-help by forming vigilante groups. Iheanacho (2016) is of the opinion that armed Herdsmen give the excuse to bear arms against indigenous cow rustlers even when the sophisticated weapons are illegally obtained. As earlier stated, the dominant causes of the Herders-farmers conflicts include environmental issues, land scarcity and damaging of crops among others. However, Ibrahim and Chaminda (2017) disputes the notion that the conflicts are related to resource scarcity alone. They drew scholars' attention to the possibility of the crises being induced by clandestine agents and actors with commercial or mechanized farming interest. Idowu (2017) gives reasons to why competing demands on a resource alone may not always lead to conflict. He says that poverty is sometimes treated as an obvious cause of conflict, yet, when and why poor people decide to support confrontation and violence is unclear or not yet convincingly established. Although he added that widespread changes in production systems and socio-political landscapes could create conditions that enables goal incompatibility that will heightens the potential severity of strife between herders and farmers, the current review point him to the direction of Gur (1970) *Why Men Rebel*. His assessment and many others explained above, implies that the Herders - farmers conflicts in Nigeria anchors on resource conflict and poverty alone whose mitigation requires systemic, institutional, and/or structural changes to address the root causes. The current analysis explores these root causes mentioned by them within the Nigerian experience and in the context of the international dimensions to the conflict on the purview of socio-political, socioeconomic and cultural factors and institutions that have remained the source of and fecundity to the conflicts between these two groups within the periods under review. Upon the above, this paper seeks to interrogate the interface of the state, governance deficit and dynamics of security crisis in Nigeria while keeping in mind, the role of the international collaborators in the Herders-farmers conflicts in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.

For Umoh (2021), a close examination of conflicts over natural resources in Nigeria, will no doubt, indicate a somewhat peculiar post-colonial theme, both in the nature of their manifestation and the politics of their resolution. As such. the Herders- famers conflicts in Nigeria have these recurring themes in their activities. The conflicts have a historical context in Nigeria and have been magnified by continued governance deficit occasioned by poor leadership and the inability of the herdsmen to adopt modern methods of animal husbandry. In recent years, skewed governance and stewardship in Nigeria have intensified the Herders – farmers conflicts. Extant literature on the subject has witnessed a plethora of reasons to the escalation of the crises. From weak land tenure system, dwindling natural resources, environmental degradation, climate change to the migratory disposition of the herdsmen. To this end, the escalation of the conflict has been blamed by scholars on a myriads of factors. For Shettima, and Tar (2008), Tonah (2006), and Berger (2003), these factors include poor system of animal husbandry, weak land tenure system, insecurity, poor policy implementation of government, influence of none governmental actors and international subnational groups. The above scholars equally consider pastures, woody vegetation, water resources and land as common property resource consistent with transducers of the conflict. They aver that the increasing number of reports of violence between these groups are articulated with religious, ethnic, and political conditions. For Moritz (2010), the crises are resource competition-driven which often turned into serious nocturnal and duodenal hostilities and social friction in many parts of Nigeria.

Cases of herders butchering farmers and their families in local communities of Adamawa, Yobe, Benue, Ebonyi, Zamfara, Kogi and Ogun shows that in addition to loss of lives and property, many farmers and herders have experienced dwindling productivity. In most of these encounters, citizens are regularly killed and the destruction or loss of property leaves an already endangered populace even poorer. The possibility of the frequency and scale of these communal conflicts become more alarming has prompted Umoh (2019, p.1) to suggest that the conflicts however blamed on natural resource scarcity is often a direct consequence of the destruction of farmers' crops by herders' herds. He added that the competition for land between indigenous land owners and the herders seeking to graze their cattle often create conflict and that further trespassing of cattle during and immediately after farming season exacerbates the pressure on land and economic resources engendered by additional population brought along by the herders. The argument is that government support and sympathy towards the herdsmen in Nigeria in recent times cannot be separated from the fact that in most of the countries in the West African sub region, Fulani political influencers seems to have been embolden by the political rhetoric of the Buhari's regime regarding the herdsmen. This rhetoric in the regime's pronouncement of a counter-rural development policy, like the Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) and the directives to donate land to settlers have been interpreted by the farmers as eruptive supports of the regime to the herders because the President himself owns herds. The president is reported to have declared his assets before the 2015 presidential elections, these assets according to BBC News (2015) include 30m naira, 5 homes and 270 herds of cattle. For a fact that the president owns herds, his sympathy seems to reflect intragroup solidarity which lies with the herders. These sympathies and supports, the farmers reasoned, cannot be shielded from ethnic sentiments and primordial ties.

The rejection of the RUGA policy by several states in Nigeria is anchored not only on the premise of repugnancy, but equally on the concern that the migrating herders are not Nigerians. This brings to the fore the international dimensions to the conflict. In these dimensions, the Fulani nation is estimated to have ties to nearly every northern region of the countries within the ECOWAS sub region, whereas, indigenous farmers in the same region represent different ethnic nations. In Nigeria, continued unconfirmed reports of Fulani led security forces

taking sides to give the herdsmen protection to commit ethnic cleansing has been excused by the government on the premise that killer herders are the armed bandits and fighters that were trained and abandoned in Libya after the fall of the Gadhafi's regime. As a consequence, farmers, who often complained of being abandoned by the Nigerian security forces during attacks by the herdsmen have resorted to self-help by forming local vigilante groups (Umoh, 2019). Since all these take place in the state, the state therefore, is central to conflict resolution. Owing to this, the understanding of the meaning of the state such as Nigeria and perhaps its nature in the postcolonial context is key to facilitating the understanding of the major contentions of this paper. Again, due to its strategic importance, issues pertaining to the state including governance and security, as they affect its variations in meaning and purpose dominate this review.

While existing literature in the field of agriculture, geography, conflict and environmental studies have explored the causes and consequences of these conflicts in Nigeria, little has been done to assess the international dimensions within the period under review. For example, Blench (2004), examined natural resource conflicts in North-Central Nigeria. Bello (2013) interrogated Herdsmen and farmers conflicts in North-Eastern Nigeria to pinpoint causes, repercussions and resolutions. Umoh (2019) using track 1 & ½ diplomacy tries to fathom farmers- herders conflict in West Africa and the implication for Nigeria's security. These studies adopted several approaches and perspectives to conceptualize myriads of framework ranging from the Greed and Grievance, Eco-conflict, Stake Holders, Tract 1&1/2, Frustration – Aggression, Relative Deprivation down to the Political Economy perspectives. These approaches and perspectives adopted are consistent with the thrust of their arguments with degrees of parsimony to the problem and with varying policy recommendations. Despite the avalanche of research concerning Herders-Farmers conflicts in Nigeria, the roles of international collaborators in the exacerbation of the problem has not been studied neither were the causes of Herders - Farmers conflicts, vigorously documented. It is against this backdrop, that this paper specifically examined the international dimensions to the Herders-farmers conflicts in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria between 2015-2019.

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES ON THE STATE, GOVERNANCE AND SECURITY.

Due to its strategic importance and purpose in conflict resolution, Igwe (2007) sees the state as creature of the basis, and most decisive element of the superstructure of society, with class and politics its major attributes, and government its primary agency. The state is thus seen as the most comprehensive political organization of society, a culmination of man's struggle in a settled life, embodying and expressing the common interests of the dominant class within the system, and of its derivative ruling class within the government, both of whom are able to attain and sustain such pre-eminence by various designs, including the ultimate application of authoritative force. Other scholars that see the state as the expression of the interest of the dominant class include Alavi (1973), Ekekwe (1985), Ake (1985), Miliband (1969) and Ibeanu (1998). Beyond its western liberal connotations as a human creature necessitated by the imperativeness of orderly conducts and social existence in society, the state is seen in this paper as an outcome of class antagonisms and a clear representation of the common and primitive interest of the triumphant, dominant and decisive class. The state is thus, a territorial contraption expressing the interest and rule of the *have-more* (dominant class) as legitimized by constitution, code of laws and the existence of cohesive apparatus of government.

Governance consists of the traditions and institutions by which authority is exercised. It includes the capacity of the government to formulate and implement sound policies, manage scarce resources, and deliver, or ensure the delivery of services to the citizenry. The components of governance: citizenry, the institutions and public/private providers are enhanced through three fundamental elements, accountability, responsiveness and capability. Governance also entails efficiency and effectiveness in the management of the available human and material resources, initiation and implementation of potent policies and programmes, accountability, transparency, unrestricted access to information, all aimed at optimum realization of stated goals and objectives. In contrast, **governance deficit** refers to a lacuna occasioned by the inefficiency in the formulation and implementation of policies that are required to meet the developmental needs of society. It is associated with some basic elements of which one of these elements is weakness in public-sector management. Governance deficits reflect poor governance and entails lack of openness and transparency in the conduct of public business and discharge of service.

Insecurity on the other hand presupposes the absence of the tenets of security. Security has a multifaceted and multidimensional meaning. Security in its objective and primary sense in (Nnoli, 2006) entails a cherished value associated with the physical safety of individuals, groups or nation-states, together with a similar safety of their other most cherished values. It denotes freedom from anxiety, threats or danger. Security is the antithesis of insecurity. Insecurity with different connotations regarding lack of confidence on physical safety and existence of danger and anxiety. It is a state of fear or anxiety due to absence or lack of protection (Beland, 2005). Obviously, the logic of insecurity is derived substantially from the idea that the state has declined from being the guarantor of protection, and human security.

THEORETICAL ANCHORAGE.

This paper is anchored on theory triangulation via the core assumptions of the classical Marxist (1971) theory of the postcolonial state which helps demystify even as it explains the dynamics of the theoretical postulations by the Western scholars that the state is not only class neutral and free from conflicts between classes, but exist to foster

the overall interest of the members of society through equitable distribution of the commonwealth. Incidentally, the inequitable distribution of and little access to the common wealth by groups breeds frustration as explain by the Frustration-Aggression theory of Gur (1971). The basic assumptions of Frustration-aggression theory explain violence like the Herders-farmers conflicts to be accentuated by the state placement of impediment to a group achievement of a goal other than its dominant elitists class. In view of the above, every shortchanged group expresses its frustration as aggression against another group and sometimes against the state for pitching tent with a particular group against another. The state however tries to excuse its inequitable distribution of the common wealth on the excuse of natural resource scarcity and thus attempt to blame conflicts as that of the herders and farmers on natural scarcity and its implication to resource conflict. However, both (classical Marxist theory of the state and Frustration-Aggression collapses into Neo –Malthusian theory of Abramistzky and Braggion (1977) which explicates the nexus between population explosion, consumption and scarcity in a social setting. It explains the relationship between herders and farmers from economic contradiction generated mainly from consumption via increase in population. Its usage here is to dissect the herders - farmers conflict from a cortical natural scarcity perspective to show that natural scarcity of the means of production is enough catalyst to stimulate the Herders-farmers conflicts in the Middle Belt region.

The consideration of theory triangulation in the article is informed by the descriptive and articulate nature of the three theories in their attempt at highlighting the factors that are responsible for the Herders-farmers conflicts, while at the same time focusing on the linkages between herders and farmers in Nigeria and herders and farmers in other African countries in the context of local and international collaborators. It shows those changes that occur in intergroup relationship when the state seems to protect one group against another in view of continued natural scarcity thereby exacerbating frustration expressed as aggression. Triangulation of the three theories also offers critical assessment of groups focus which hitherto was obfuscated by governance deficit or general insecurity in Nigeria. It shows that not every citizen of the state is in the state and that if a state like Nigeria was equitable to all, individual citizen would participate in the state according their expressive natural ability. In Nigeria, this is called socioeconomic restructuring.

CAUSES OF HERDERS-FARMERS CONFLICTS IN THE MIDDLE BELT REGION.

Trespasses.

The causes of Herders-farmers conflicts are often not far-fetched. However, there appears to be no consensus among both groups as to the root causes of their mutual conflicts. Deduced from the struggle to water herds or the destruction to fresh crops in the Herders-farmers conflicts is the issue of trespass. These trespasses as noted by many analysts have caused clashes between cattle herders and crop farmers and have equally led to increased violence and general insecurity in Nigeria. In most of these encounters, people outside the two groups end up as collateral damage even as the destruction or loss of property leaves an already endangered populace poorer. Blench (2004) says that the frequency and scale of these communal conflicts have become alarming to the extent that the frosty relationship between the groups becomes generational. This is not helped by the frequency of illegal invasion of farms and destruction of crops by cattle, particularly during planting season and immediately after the harvesting period.

Umoh (2019) is of the opinion that other than natural factors like draught and desertification, the two groups practically hate each other based on religious and cultural differentials. He remarked that since Fulani herdsmen are mostly Muslims and the farmers, mostly Christians, the principles and practices of the two religions are of parallel narratives. In addition, De Haan (2002) noted that destruction of crops by cattle and other properties (irrigation equipment and infrastructure) by the Herders themselves are the main direct causes for conflicts cited by the farmers, whereas burning of rangelands, fadama, blockage of stock routes and water points by crop encroachment are important direct reasons cited by the cattle herders. This is in addition to increasing rate of cattle theft which is often accompanied by violence.

Poor System of Animal Husbandry occasioned by Economic Interest of the Ruling Class

Globally, cattle business is of great economic importance, especially in countries where cattle rearing is characterized by ranching. In Nigeria, cattle are the most important livestock species in terms of animal protein supply, value and biomass, skin, bone, and horn products. The Fulani herdsmen are the most prosperous in the business of cattle rearing; owning over 90% of the Nigeria's livestock population that accounts for one-third of the agricultural Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 3.2% of the nation's GDP (Bellow, 2013). Whereas pastoralism as a system of cattle rearing has long given way to ranching in a highly ranked cattle rearing countries of Europe, America, Asia and in many countries, regrettably, cattle business in Nigeria has remained a contradiction, as well as saddled in conflicts owing to the warped and primitive open grazing system orchestrated as a means of class and ethnic domination in the country. Table 1 depicts 2018 world cattle inventory/ranking of countries

Table 1: 2018 world cattle inventory/ranking of countries

S/N	Country	Year (2018)	% of World (1,001841,00)	S/N	Country	Year (2018)	% of World (1,001841,00)
1	India	305,000,000	30.44	5	European Union	88,445,000	8.83
2	Brazil	232,350,000	23.19	6	Argentina	53,765,000	5.37
3	China	96,850,000	9.67	7	Australia	25,500,000	2.55
4	United States	94,399,000	9.42	8	Russia	18,380,000	1.83
9	Mexico	16,584,000	1.66	13	New Zealand	10,082,000	1.01
10	Turkey	14,500,000	1.45	14	Egypt	7,205,000	0.73
11	Uruguay	11,754,000	1.17	15	Belarus	4,362,000	0.44
12	Canada	11,625,000	1.16	16	Japan	3,895,000	0.39
17	Ukraine	3,739,000	0.37	18	South Korea	3,406,000	0.34

Source: United States Department of Agriculture (2018) World cattle inventory: ranking of countries.: <https://beej2live.com/story-world-cattle-inventory-ranking-count-ries-0-J-06905>

Incidentally, Nigeria is not ranked among the countries in the global cattle business as depicted by the above table. None of the top cattle nations ranked are practicing cattle colony or primitive cattle grazing or give room for wanton killing of their farming communities. These countries apply modern technology and ranching to maximize optimum profit from the cattle business. With less than 20 million cattle in Nigeria, and in a bid to actualize religious and economic interest, the Fulani pastoralists by the virtue of their affiliation to Jihadist movements across West Africa, and support from government of Nigeria, Niger and Chad as well as access to international jihadist groupings rejected the enactment and implementation of anti-open grazing law on November 2017 in some state, like Benue, in the Middle Belt Geopolitical Zone. this brought about the escalation of the conflicts; raising humanitarian and economic concerns.

In 2018 alone, over 180,000 people of the affected local governments in the zone were registered in eight officially designated Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camp, while over 500,000 displaced people have been living with relatives (Ortom, 2019). Unfortunately, Federal Government under President Buhari that would have stepped in and resolve the conflicts has acquiesced in several instances, but rather chose to pacify the Meyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) with whooping sum of N100bn (\$276m) to enable the group call off their murderous activities; given the expansionist and vested economic interest of the segments of the ruling class in the cattle business. These altogether seem to have emboldened the herdsmen in their nefarious activities, as well as justify the intractability of the conflicts in Middle Belt Region

Government support to the Herders. The Fulani led government in Nigeria seems to be fixated with herders' welfare more than the farmers' safety. This maybe premised on the prestige and symbol of wealth ascribe to the ownership of cattle in the Fulani tribe. The cultural and economic undertone of government supports often breeds displeasure and frustration on the part of the farmers who interpret such supports as eruptive, hegemonic and tribalistic. The Nigerian government lack of public condemnation of atrocities committed by Fulani Herders groupings like Miyetti Allah, Kautal Hoe and others who have consistently admitted to wanton killings and destruction of communities across the county fuels farmers' frustrations in the Middle belt. In addition to the above, the key underlying causes of farmers-herdsmen conflict in Nigeria are: *Changing resource access rights. Inadequacy of grazing resources, Decline in internal discipline and social cohesion (within both groups).*

A DIACHRONIC ANALYSIS OF THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSIONS TO THE HERDERS – FARMERS CONFLICT IN THE MIDDLE BELT GEOPOLITICAL ZONE 2015-2020

Transnational Fulani Terrorism. Of all Islamic ethnic nations in the sub-Saharan Africa, the Fulani nation appears to embrace terrorism quicker than the rest. The reason could be gleaned from the degree of illiteracy of the Fulani in every country from the Sahel to littoral states. Being nomadic in nature and somehow socialist in character, the life of a typical Fulani herder is inseparable from the lives of his herds.

The above figure is suggestive of Fulani terrorism linked to international collaborators deeply involved in fueling incessant herders-farmers conflict in Nigeria. This is subsumed in arms trafficking via transhumant routes, and Islamic expansionist focus which allows collaborators like the Taureg rebels, the Pirates of Somalia, the militia if Mali. ISWAP of Chad and Niger and Boko Haram of Nigeria to collaborate in other to establish caliphates at desired places. Conversely, one major international dimensions to the conflicts is the links with jihadism which have boosted the conflicts.

Transnational governmental support: In recent times, the relationship between transnational Fulani groupings is consequent on expressed or implied supports from some African governments linked with the Fulani religious and primordial ties. Since the Buhari's regime in Nigeria, there has been a rebirth of Usman Danfodio's proposal that the Middle Belt and indeed the Nigeria state belongs to Islam. The kid-glove with which the Buhari's administration handles herders' terroristic activities gives the notion that farmers are not to exist in the Benue Basin. Even the increase in herds are linked to government policies on migration of Fulani herders from other African countries, the proposed Rural/Urban Grazing Area (RUGA) for livestock and the regime's complicity in the crises. It is a given that

nearly every Islamic sect view each other as fighting a complementary just cause, thereby mirroring the crises as an Islamic agenda. The Herders -farmers conflicts have been subsumed in ethnic cum religious wars between Muslim dominated herders and Christian dominated famers in all the African countries and since Nigeria, a leading African state has painted the crises so, others have had the singular reason to point at the implied or expressed support of Nigerian government to the herders.

Transnational borders’ porosity and ECOWAS transhumant routes: The Fulani nation being one of the largest ethnic nations in Africa spread easily by migration from the Sahel to the littoral states. This nomadic life is encouraged and sustained by their source of livelihood. Pre Islamic Africa witnessed a plethora of calm exchange relations between the herders and peasant farmers even outside the ethnic demographic. Pressure from population explosion engendered by colonial and post-colonial unequal production relations have seen myriads of negative linkages and collaboration between hitherto peaceful herders and contemporary violent Islamic jihadists all in a bid to advance group’s interest.

In the opinion of Clement (2010), life in the Sahel has been punctured by a rapid rise in violent attacks from militant Islamist groups leading to thousands of people being killed and properties worth millions of dollars destroyed since a separatist-turned-militant Islamist conflict erupted in 2012. The disproportionate presence of Fulani among the militant Islamist groups that are responsible for the Herders-farmers violence in northern Burkina Faso, western Niger, northern and central Mali has not only shattered intercommoned trust and the social harmony of the region it has equally affected the herders-farmers conflicts in Nigeria via transhumance of the herders.

Transnational arms trafficking: From stick to arms, militant herders emerged in early 2014 and became hegemonic in 2015 when the Buhari regime’ security structures became *Fulanized*. Many captured terrorist herders where given amnesty in 2018 by the regime. This action has been interpreted as ethnically inclined. The farmers who were affected by the herders’ activities of that year argued that such ethnic solidarity cannot be excused on the principles of amnesty since herders are private businessmen. Foreign collaborators like ISWAP, has help boost negatively the crises through arms and training supports. The spread of insecurity in the Middle Belt has led some observers to simplify tag the escalation of the violence as “Fulani agenda” or “Islamic expansionist focus”. In essence, there seem to be Fulani terrorism across Africa with ties to Arab Islamic fundamentalist groups in the Middle East. In view of this, one can easily point to insurgent groups as parts of the international collaborators. Groups such as Front de Libération du Macina (FLM) led by Fulani preacher, Amadou Koufa in central Mali, Ansaroul Islam founded by Fulani Ibrahim Malam Dicko, the Fulani Tolebe fighters from Niger who fought with the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) and who are now mixed within the ranks of the Islamic State of the Greater Sahara, and even Ansar Dine and other affiliates of Jama’at Nusrat al Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) that contain groups of Fulani fighters (Africa Centre for Strategic Studies [ACSS] 2020).

Transnational Reprisal Attacks:

The fear of Fulani terrorism, has precipitated the targeting of Fulani communities by neighbouring community militias such as the Dozo in central Mali, the Koglweogo in Burkina Faso and the Benue Vigilante groups in Nigeria propelling a deadly revenge-reprisal cycle. Fulani herders’ terrorism in recent times and jihadistic expansionists focus are transnationally intervened. Every vestige of herders-farmers ancient cordial ties have been eroded by the overtaking prerogative of jihadists to spread Islam. Simple disputes are allowed to metastasized to a pogrom for the benefit of land grabbing and annihilation of the defenceless Christian farmers. For Terge (2013), international reprisal attacks are dimensions boosted by tangents from the population explosion occasioned by migrating Fulani herders and families from Mali, Chad and Niger to Northern Nigeria. Their breeding speed shows a reinforcing commitment to increase indoctrinated Islamic population. The table below is explicative of the issues in question.

Composition of Fulani within Total Population by Country			
Country	Fulani Population (000's)	Total Population (000's)	Fulani Share of Total Population (%)
Nigeria	16,800	190,000	8.8
Guinea	4,900	13,000	37.7
Senegal	3,500	16,000	21.9
Mali	3,000	18,500	16.2
Cameroon	2,900	24,000	12.1
Niger	1,600	21,000	7.6
Mauritania	1,260	4,200	30.0
Burkina Faso	1,200	19,000	6.3
Chad	580	15,000	3.9
The Gambia	320	2,000	16.0
Guinea-Bissau	320	1,900	16.8
Sierra Leone	310	6,200	5.0
Central African Republic	250	5,400	4.6
Ghana	5	28,000	0.02

Source: Boukary Sangare

Transnational Islamic Links:

Since the emergence of terrorism in Kenya Angola, Somalia Mali and Libya, Herders-farmers conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa have received Islamic supports in form of weapons and mercenaries from the terror groups. In Nigeria in 2016, President Buhari in a broadcast intimated that killer herdsman are killer herders who are actually rebels

trained in Libya. This goes to question the Nigeria's security intelligence of and response to the conflict. As a result, the linkages between herders and farmers that were cordial and peaceful has turned out to be the Achille's heel in the security of the farmers. Transnational supports from Fulani networks in other African countries have made the herders in Nigeria more assertive and hegemonic. These accusations have been given some banal excuses by Lawrence- Aide, (2020) when he stated that. "Although in some other African countries, Fulani pastoralists have joined militant Islamist groups in the Sahel for reasons that are as varied as they are numerous". To the source, armed herders are fighting against abuses of some government authorities extracting arbitrary taxes. Such excuses were examined and found to be apologetic by Kaley and Benjamin (2017) when they averred that Islamist Fulani and separatist Tuareg groups advanced their 2012 expansionist objective in Northern Mali, and made many enemies besides the Malian armed forces because their fighters looted businesses of Arab smugglers, destroys farmlands and raided cattle from peaceful shepherds leading to the formation of militia by the Arabs and indigenous farmer. the Fulani Tuareg groups joined (MUJAO) in 2013 with the excuse to self-protect against the Tuareg Azawad National Liberation Movement (MNL) an Islamist allies to al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Ansar Dine. This scenario prompted Pauline Le Roux (2019) to say that similar reactions by peaceful Fulani communities have continued in the face of persistent attempt by other Fulani jihadists to intimidate them or rustle their cattle. This of course, mirrors the activities of pastoralists in other African states. She added that in March of 2013, a Tuareg battalion sympathetic to pastoralists, killed 21 Fulani livestock merchants and threw their corpses in the wells of the village of Doungoura located in the Mopti Region of central Mali. Subsequent efforts by pastoralist leaders to engage local officials and national authorities to address the security concerns were ineffective. Most of the wanted herders migrated to Nigeria

Abdisaid (2016) affirmed that, seeking to exploit this perception, in 2013, Hamma Founè Diallo, a leader of the Mouvement pour la défense de la patrie (MDP), called on Fulani pastoralists to join in rebellion against the Malian state, but not to side with the jihadists. His calls were mostly unheeded, because many Fulani pastoralists had already been influenced by the ideas of Amadou Koufa, leader of FLM, who was preaching jihad throughout the region. Koufa's ideas found fertile ground among Fulani herders who, tired of perceived official indifference and abuses, were primed for grazing rights revolution cloaked in religious inspiration.

Transnational Caliphate project Herders from the Fulani nation and their religious desire for hegemonic control of agro-social relations, their inability to adopt new methods of animal husbandry and the penchant to spread Islam through the throes of caliphates have led to the dominant presence of Fulani and support amongst militant Islamist groups from the Sahel to the littoral states in west Africa. This, inadvertently, has been a pull factor in the increasing interconnectedness of international collaborators to the herders – farmers conflicts in Nigeria . In countries like Mali and Sudan where government are certain that jihadism has taken a center stage in herders – farmers conflicts, collaboration of the armed forces with vigilante have met in the crosshairs of the jihadists. Intelligence gathering and decision by the government forces is sometimes fazed with sabotage occasioned by ethnic ties. About the conundrum, Africa Center for Strategic Studies [ACSS] (2019) says that ethnic identity has become highly polarized and this has been sparking bouts of intercommoned violence.

Conflicts between Fulani Herders and indigenous farmer populations has a long and brutal history in West Africa that considerably predates the sub region's terrorist challenges. In Nigeria, from 2015, the conflicts have intensified due to herders' interconnectedness with jihadism. Most of the jihadist herders pursued out of Sudan and Mali were recruited by Nigeria's northern political actors like Mallam El-Ruffai to boost the chances of Mohammed Buhari coming into power in 2015. Since Buhari's emergence, the structures behind the conflicts are ethno-religious inclined and politically entrenched. Nigeria's government of Obasanjo and Goodluck uphold land rights of the indigenes of the region following the emergence of Bokoharam. This strategy was to emasculate the spread of the terrorists group. Unfortunately, the group's leaders, Yusuf and Shaku turned the strategy against the government by decrying marginalization as frustrating the objectives of the sect and the herders. Without hidden sentiments, the political elites of the Buhari's regimes have manipulated such laws and strategy rallying support for the protection of the killers herders all of over the country while stoking resentments for nationalism . In Mali, a 2001 Pastoral Charter empowered local authorities to resolve land disputes, but because of the possibility of herders from other countries masquerading as native of Mali, local jurists become constrained on true identity of litigant or despondent herders and sometimes become partial to the farmers composed of the stationary constituents of well-defined territorial jurisdictions, a logic that agrees with ancestral history of the farmers' grip on both the land and the political system over time.

Transnational religious ties: Michael (2013) affirmed that herders - farmers grievances are common across Africa and that in many cases, these tensions are deepened by Muslim-Christian divisions. This is not helped by the Herders ties to jihadism in nearly every country in the ECOWAS sub region. The difficulty faced by other African countries in separating islamic terrorist groupings from the gun carrying herders has made countries like Mali and Cameroon to see every herder as a potential terrorist. In Nigeria, the story is the opposite. Government is in open consort with the herders. Cumulatively, countries who in a bid to strengthen national security against terrorism are making inroads with the Fulani, targeting the gun carrying Fulani while in Nigeria, Chad and some parts of Cameroon Fulani pastoralists are currently hobnobbing with terrorists and bandits. These collaborations are transnational allowing herders from areas such as the Sahel, the Lake Chad Basin, the Horn of Africa. and northern Kenya communities of Turkana and Pokot to migrate down to northern Nigeria. In countries like Mali whose grazing laws are very supportive

of herders' mindless destructions, herders are more mindful of their actions, but once in Nigeria, they become hegemonic and violent through association with terrorists who are gun traffickers.

Uganda and South Sudan for instance have seen continued terrorist pressure on Muslim pastoralists to enact violence against farmers in these countries and others including Nigeria. Michael (2013) says that in one 2008 poll, almost half of respondents living along the South Sudan–Kenya border region had witnessed at least one violent pressure on the moderate Muslim herders regarding recruitment into killer herdsman group. Generally, herders - farmers grievances and conflicts, according to scholars, has facilitated terrorism's push into new areas. Umoh (2019) is of the opinion that Islamic terrorists are mobilizing herders' communities on the daily in order to penetrate the Central African Republic, the Lake Chad Basin in general and specifically, the Middle Belt region of Nigeria in order to accelerate international religious dimensions of the conflict. He says that the terrorist groupings are exploiting the illiteracy and ethno-religious ties of the herders to fuel tensions that might help extend their influence in Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon into Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

This is diachronic as desertification and drought displace transhumance zones. As a result, new conflicts over water and land is providing terrorist groups further opportunities to make inroads. To support African counter insurgency drives, other African countries are making or have made laws and policies like a ban on open grazing while the Buhari regime in Nigeria is giving the herders -farmers tensions Islamic coloration. Supported by kidnapping for ransom like the case of Baraga community in Ondo state in the South West part of Nigeria, Herders relationship with farmers has undoubtedly worsen in the Middle Belt region due to herders associating with terrorists who actively aggravate hostilities and manipulate ethnic and religious differences of the two groups. However, before the interconnectedness with jihadism, the following were specific linkages in the Herders –Farmers relationship in Nigeria as well as other African countries; *adaptation of culture in the host-client relationship, interconnectedness of the means of production, the politics of colonial taxation by sedentary system, and capitalist commercial farming*. In recent times, these linkages have been exploited by Fulani terrorists in groups like ISWAP and Boko Haram as cover to establish ties with herders and escape detection and move into new areas with violence in mind that will help fuel an already intensified herders-farmers hatred and instability.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

In view of the fact that the Nigerian state combines the function of serving as a major instrument of primitive capital accumulation through the state agencies and machineries, including the security agencies, with that of being a direct instrument of class formation and domination, which to a large extent have justified the intractability of the herdsman-farmers conflicts in the Middle Belt and other related conflicts in all parts of the country, it is imperative that a holistic conflict resolution approach that is sustainable be adopted. Again, issues boarding on revenge or reprisal attacks, disputes over destruction of farmlands and crops, grazing rights dispute, decades long history of violence, competition for land resource, reactions to anti-grazing law in Benue State, cattle rustling, and violence habit of the herdsman seems to be identifiable causes apically expressive in the socio-economic effects in the contexts of loss of human lives, displacement of persons, destruction of houses, destruction of farmlands and crops, distrust, unemployment, threat to National security, and threat to food security in Nigeria, the government and security institutions should be responsive in solving the dangerous imbroglio by engaging mediation with non-government actors who are the real half of the track one and half diplomacy. Tract one & 1/2 Actors like Pan Niger Delta Elders Forum, PANDEF, Afenifere, Middle-Belt Elders Forum and Ohana-Eze-Indi Igbo to synergize with international non-governmental actors like the USAID, the British council sponsored Nigeria Reconciliation and Stability Projects (NRSP), Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN), MACBAND and others to discuss and initiate possible palliatives for the warring parties. Again, Government should enact laws that would compel cattle owners and herders in Nigeria to adopt modern animal husbandry. Furthermore, security agencies in Nigeria should be disciplined to act responsibly in protecting lives and property in a situation of large scale violence between the warring parties.

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