



FARMER-HERDER CONFLICTS: A CHALLENGE TO NATION-BUILDING AND DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Violent conflicts and armed insurgencies often target development infrastructures, hinder the construction process; and ultimately affect economic growth. This is the situation Nigeria is currently facing because of an increase in the clashes between herders and farmers, thereby resulting in violent conflicts, unrest, and high levels of insecurity. This has adversely affected the Nigerian state, nation building and development, increase in poverty, disruption of livelihood and insecurity amongst others. This is why this paper, seeks to examine the effects of these conflicts on nation-building and development in Nigeria. The study argues that conflict has affected not only nation-building and development, but has disrupted livelihoods, markets, and education amongst others. It has further destroyed social relations thereby making it difficult for integration of different groups in the country which is a panacea to nation-building. The paper adopts both the eco-survivalism theory of conflict and the national integration theory of nation-building as its analytical framework. We will rely on secondary sources to give an in-depth analysis of the effect of this conflict. We recommend that the government should establish proactive and reliable conflict management institutions and selfless and undying commitment on the side of leadership hold sway; only in that would the long-stolen peace and harmony be restored. This is because minus peace and harmony nation-building vis-a-vis development becomes an illusion.

Keywords: *Conflict, Herders, Farmers, Nation-building, Development*



Introduction

Violent conflict is a major global challenge. No continent is spared as both developed and developing nations are struggling with one form of internal conflict or the other. Spates of terrorism, insurgency and civil strife, leading to vicious destructions, displacements and deaths, are now persistent across the world. Africa, like other countries in the Middle East, has experienced many violent conflicts. Since the end of the Cold War between the Soviet Union (USSR) and the United States of America (USA), most armed conflicts on the continent of Africa have been internal in nature (Cilliers & Schunemann, 2013; Vogts, 1994).

For the umpteenth time, Nigeria and its people have been struggling with different approaches to building the country and setting it on the path of political, cultural, social and economic development. It has tried different political systems, implemented numerous economic measures, adopted various educational policies and evolved a variety of transformation efforts to facilitate the process of nation-building. Despite, these efforts, she has remained a nation seized by the drawbacks/or enemies of nation-building and development in the form of increasing poverty, conflict, corruption, poor governance, materialism, weak institutions, political misbehaviour, general indiscipline and infrastructural weaknesses, among others (Pate, 2013).

The violent conflict which was confined to the Middle-Belt states (Benue, Plateau, Nasarawa, southern Kaduna, and Kogi) has now proliferated to other geo-political zones (Zamfara State; Northwest, Abia and Enugu states; southeast, Delta and Edo states; south-south, Ekiti and Oyo states; southwest etc). The incessant herder-farmer clashes amongst other conundrums present to the Nigerian state a newer challenge and this has further compounded the



already quagmire the country is grappling with; hence, nation-building and development become an illusion that this work sets out to discuss.

Conceptual Clarification

Basic concepts such as conflict, Herder-Farmer, nation-building and development are clarified to give the reader(s) an in-depth understanding of the paper.

Conflict: Conflict is derivable from possession of, and pursuit of divergent ideas, goals, claims, interests and aspirations by people in their relations. The term, conflict according to Ofuoku and Isife (2010) suggests differences and disagreement. Conflict is the simultaneous occurrence of two or more mutually antagonistic impulses or motives. This was further described by Wilson and Hanna (1979) as a struggle involving opposing ideas and or limited resources. Conflicts occur between individuals, within states (civil wars), and between states. Conflict is a situation in which two or more human beings desire goals which they perceive as being obtainable by one or the other, but not both (Stagner, 1967).

Herders: These are people who rear livestock and are mostly of the Fulani extraction. The particular group in this study is the transhumant category and not the sedentary type. This is because, the sedentary ones have little record of clashes with their host communities compared to the transhumant category which grazes livestock and shifts from one location to another where they can get feed for their animals (Kolawale, Omoge & Eunice, 2018).

Farmers: Here, means only those who cultivate the land for plant produce. Most of these people are indigenous members of the community where they reside. In Nigeria, they are found in



almost all rural settings and are cultivated at a subsistent level (Kolawale, Omoge & Eunice, 2018).

Development: The exact meaning of development in the terrain of development studies has been plagued with intense controversy as to what is development, for whom and by whom. Development according to Todaro & Smith (2003) entails the meeting of basic needs equivalently, reduction in absolute poverty, the creation of modern employment opportunities, and the achievement of a less unequal distribution of income have all become important criteria in determining the level of development. They also argued that development must therefore be conceived of as a multidimensional process involving major changes in social structures, popular attitudes, and national institutions, as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and the eradication of poverty. This presupposes that development is not purely an economic phenomenon but rather a multi-dimensional process involving reorganization and reorientation of the entire economic and social system and it is a process of improving the quality of all human lives with three equally important aspects- which are basic components or core values serve as a conceptual basis and practical guideline for comprehending the inner meaning of development. Development for this study has to do with qualitative and quantitative improvement in all aspects of human endeavours comprising the economic, political, cultural, environmental, social, etc.

Nation-building: The case for nation-building vis-à-vis development as a policy to promote State building in societies with diverse ethnic and religious cleavages is critical in an African continent, Nigeria inclusive; characterized by issues of underdevelopment, conflict, political instability, insurgencies and human development challenges (Miguel, 2004 & Collier, 2009).



Thus, an internally driven, dynamic and developing process of democratic governance would underpin successful nation-building, state construction and development in Nigeria and other African countries. The dearth of democratic governance, conflict and underdevelopment therefore has continuously weakened nation-building, weakened State construction and undermined socio-economic development which persistently undermines the people's well-being and degrades the human condition in most States in the African continent (Andebrhan, 2010).

Nation-building is all about promoting the collective well-being of the people through meeting their needs, interests and aspirations (Agbese et al., 2007, p. 4). Its hallmarks would be the pursuit of liberty, social justice, progress and prosperity for the people by the government and its institutions. Nation-building is therefore a product of conscious statecraft built by men and women with vision and doggedness and not mere wishful thinking. Nation-building is always a work in progress; a dynamic process in constant need of nurturing and reinvention. Nation-building is about building a common sense of purpose, a sense of shared destiny, and a collective imagination of belonging (Gambari, 2008).

Brief History of Farmer-Herder Conflicts in Nigeria

There is a long historical record of fluctuating conflict, competition and cooperation between farmers and pastoral or transhumant herders. In the period before the beginning of the 20th century, the problem was mainly restricted to the savanna belts of West Africa. Conflicts between farmers and nomadic cattle herders have been a common feature of economic livelihood in West Africa (Tonah, 2006). Cattle rearing was mainly prevalent in the Guinea, Sudan and Sahel savanna belts where crop production was carried out only during the short rainy season on a small scale. This gave the cattle herders access to a vast area of grassland. In West Africa,



farmers formerly associated pastoral peoples with large-scale military conquest. But with the coming of the colonial regimes and the collapse of indigenous states, conflict between farmers and herders took on a different colouring, becoming more associated with competition for natural resources (Blench 1984 & 2001).

The large number of wild animals and the fear of losing animals to diseases, especially trypanosomiasis, prevented herders from settling permanently in the humid zone (Blench, 1994). Tonah (2006) stated that there is a consensus among observers that herders-farmers clashes have only since the 20th century become widespread in the coastal countries of West Africa. Herder-farmer conflict in Nigeria has long been distinct from other African countries but it was still historically rooted in competition for access to land. The conflict was transformed by key changes attendant on the demographic and veterinary revolution of the colonial era and again by the flow of oil revenues from the 1970s onwards which increased the market for pastoral products. However, in recent years, Nigeria has been constantly racked by civil strife, particularly across the religious divide, and this has reconfigured herder/farmer conflict in new and striking ways.

Research Methodology

Herder-farmer conflicts are hardly observed firsthand by researchers, and so analyses of them rely mainly on data from post-hoc interviews and archives (Moritz 2006). The whole of Nigeria becomes the purview of the paper; with selected incidents (in some states) of herder-farmer attacks. Data were generated from secondary sources. The data were elicited from library and official (government) sources. Thus, books, dailies, journals and periodicals, internet materials, as well as relevant official records were explored with a view to eliciting useful



information. The method of analysis for the paper follows the pattern of content and descriptive analysis that is grounded on the national integration theory of nation-building as an analytical anchorage.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Eco-Survivalism theory of conflict and national integration theory of nation-building are adopted as theoretical anchorage for analyzing this study.

Eco-Survivalism Theory of Conflict

The crux of this theory is that the desperate quest of groups to protect and advance their livelihood in a competitive and resource-scarce ecological sphere is likely to precipitate violent conflict (Okoli & Atelhe, 2014). The theory draws the relationship between resource scarcity and survival. Further, the theory holds that the militant posture of the herdsmen and the farmers must be understood in relation to survival (Okoli & Atelhe, 2014). To the farmer in Nigeria, his/her survival depends on the cultivation and harvesting of crops. Therefore, any damage caused to the crops threatens the livelihood of the farmer. In the same way as the Fulani herdsmen; for the average herdsman, pastoralism is a way of living. In this regard, any threat to his herd amounts to a threat to his survival and destiny. As captured by Abbas (2012), "Our herd is our life, because to every nomad, life is worthless without his cattle. What do you expect from us when our source of existence is threatened? The encroachment of grazing fields and routes by farmers is a call to war."

By applying this theory to Nigeria, the aggression among the farmers and the Fulani herdsmen is motivated by a do-or-die struggle for a living in a territory that is competitive, and



hostile to each other's collective means of sustenance; and to a large extent impacts nation-building and the development of Nigeria. With incessant attacks on farmers and their farm crops, herders and their cattle, food insecurity aggravates, social cohesion hampers and economic activities appear completely gloomy. In effect, the move by the locals to expel or eject the Fulani herdsmen from Nigeria farmlands has been adjudged as a threat to the livelihood of the latter, resulting in attacks and reprisal attacks. The eco-survivalism theory has been criticised over its reliance on resource scarcity as a cause of farmer-herder conflict in Africa (Peluso & Watts, 2001). Despite the criticisms levelled against the theory, its relevance in providing great insight into explaining farmer-herder conflicts in Nigeria cannot be over-emphasized.

National Integration Theory of Nation-Building

Another theory adopted for this study is the national integration theory of nation-building. The tenets of this theory are that the pursuit of nation-building becomes a lot much simpler in the face of workable and functional national integration. National integration can be described as a state of fusion or harmonious interaction and interrelation of people and groups (within a nation) to make them an identifiable single entity with common goals which include nation-building accomplishments (Okobiia, 1984). From the foregoing, it is apt to note that any conception of national integration that is aimed towards nation-building accomplishments must be looked at as the fusion of culturally, socially, politically, and ethnically, disparate groups or people in a given geo-political setting into a closely knit cohesive group involved in repetitive cordiality, dominated human interaction geared towards building a territorial nationality (Mezieobi, 1995, p. 2). To discuss national integration for nation-building, the following must be taken into cognizance: the existence of ethnically heterogeneous society with each ethnic group



firmly attached to her ethnic roots; a determination to dismantle ethnic primordial ties, wielding all ethnic groups into one functional geo-polity and therefore, shifting loyalties towards a homogeneous nation; minimized tension, conflict, acrimony, suspicion, prejudice, segregation and engineering harmonious co-existence, interactive adjustment, high level of tolerance, high geared cordial social interaction; perceiving a geo-polity a genuinely ours not theirs and having a true sense of belonging to a larger political community such as Nigeria; commitment to the aspirations and ideals of a single entity to which everybody is happily identified and participate in actuality; a mechanism holding a society together (Mezieobi, 1995). Nation-building efforts cannot thrive where there are elements of disintegration. These disintegrative elements include disunity, perpetual rivalry, clash of interests, ethnic chauvinism, ethnic suspicion and prejudice, fear of domination of one group by the other, mutual distrust, ethnic discrimination and where the ideology of the swallow hypothesis holds sway. The relevance of this theory to the study is to explain the fact that thriving towards nation-building becomes an illusion with an atmosphere of rancour with incessant violent conflict (ongoing Herder-Farmer conflict) which embraces the disintegrative elements of nation-building and development at the detriment of the integrative one as mentioned above.

Towards a Review

The literature on the farmer-herder conflicts is broad and they have examined contested concepts that relate to how we might understand the farmer-herder conflict from a multidimensional perspective. Many studies have been carried out by scholars on the farmer/herdsmen conflict in Nigeria. Going through the literature most studies have looked at the causes of the conflict ranging from issues of resource scarcity to the quantity and quality of resources available to



these two groups. Others have looked at the history of the conflict, the nature, dynamics, consequences, implications and solution to the conflict (Adebayo, 1997; Abbas 2000; Getu and Kolawole, 2002; Abbas 2000; Blench & Dendo, 2003; Fosona and Omojola, 2005; Abba & Usman, 2008; Odoh & Chilaka, 2012; Ime, 2013; Chukwuma & Atelhe, 2014; Ibrahim et al, 2015). The focus of some studies has been on the northern region and some states in north-central Nigeria (Olabode & Ajibade, 2010; Chukwuma & Atelhe 2014; Garba et al, 2015). Some scholars have looked at the socioeconomic effect of the conflict in southern Nigeria with a focus on Ebonyi and Delta states respectively (Umeh & Chukwu, 2015 and Ofuoku & Isife, 2009). Some quarter's experiences have a direct bearing on human health and reputation; as women are sexually harassed, streams are perpetually contaminated, and cattle defecate on the roads (Ofuoku and Isife 2009). Jonathan 2019 has looked at the effects of farmers/herders conflict on socioeconomic lives and national development (Jonathan, 2019). The focus of these studies did not discuss nation-building and national development thereby making it one of the gaps this study intends to fill. Therefore, our concern in this paper is to appraise how the ongoing farmers-herders violent conflicts affect nation-building and development in Nigeria as a departure from the works of other scholars who seem to dwell heavily on the economic dimension of the menace.

Causes of Herders-Farmers Conflict in Nigeria

The conflicts between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria are caused by so many factors. According to Musa (2014), most of these factors include the destruction of crops and farmlands, the roles of traditional rulers, and cattle theft by the host communities. 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 conflict in the country. Ingawa et al (1999) stressed that the key underlying causes of farmers and herdsmen conflicts in Nigeria are:

1. Inadequate Grazing Land and Resources: 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 the National Fadama Development Programme (NFDP) like tomatoes and onions produce almost no crop residues for livestock feeding.

2. Changing resources access rights: Altering 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 favourite 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.

3. Decline in internal discipline and social cohesion: The failure in internal discipline and social cohesion as the adherence to the traditional rules regarding grazing periods and the authority of the traditional rulers is broken down. Tonah (2006) opined that the causes of farmers-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 and 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 land tenure system ownership of land was regarded as a cause of the conflicts. In most areas in Nigeria, farmers are regarded as those who 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.

4. Poor Government Policies and Dearth of Political Will: Government policies according to Hoffman et al (2008) can also be seen as a cause of herdsmen-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. Thus, the government's lackadaisical attitude towards punishing and/or prosecuting defaulters contributes to the ongoing crisis.

Other causes of farmer-herder conflicts according to Bello (2013) are;

1. Destruction of crops by cattle and other property (reservoirs, irrigational facilities and infrastructure) by the herdsmen themselves is the main direct cause of conflicts cited by the farmers.
2. Burning of range lands, fadama and blockage of stock routes and water points by crop encroachment are important direct reasons cited by the herdsmen.
3. Increasing rate of cattle theft which is often accompanied by violence.



4. Antagonistic perceptions and beliefs among farmers and herdsmen could compound conflict situations, especially due to failing institutions and fierce competition for resources.

Random selection of incidents of Farmer-Herder clashes/attacks in Nigeria (2011-2023)

Date	Place of incidents	Number of Death/Casualty
April 17, 2011	Border communities between Doma Local Govt. of Nasarawa state and Guma LGA in Benue State	30
January 13, 2012	Doka, Kwara and Ungwan Yaran made in Keana and Doma LGA, Nasarawa state	10
July 24, 2012	Kotsona village in Tunga, Awe LGA, Nasarawa state	35
January 1, 2013	Jukun Fulani clash in Taraba State	5
January 15, 2013	Farmers/Fulani clash in Nasarawa State	10
January 24, 2013	Fulani/Farmers clash in Plateau State	9
February 8, 2013	Randa village, near Kwanderer in Lafia North Local Govt. Area	30
March 28, 2013	Clashes between Fulani and Farmers in Riyom, B/Ladi, Jos, Plateau State	28
March 30, 2013	Police killings in clashes between farmers and Fulani	6
April 3, 2013	Farmers/Fulani clashes in Guma LGA, Benue State	3
April 23, 2013	Fulani/Egbe Farmers clash in Kogi State	5
May 4, 2013	Fulani/Farmers clash in Plateau State	13



Date	Place of incidents	Number of Death/Casualty
May 4, 2013	Jukun/Fulani clash in Wukari, Taraba State	39
May 13, 2013	Fulani/Agatu clash in Benue State	50
May 20, 2013	Tiv/Fulani clash at Benue-Nasarawa boarder	23
July 12, 2013	The border area of Guma in Benue and Awe in Nasarawa State	40
August 4, 2013	Kuduku, Ajo Villages in Keane LGA, state	20
April 5, 2014	Fulanis attacked Galadima village	200
March 5, 2016	Communities were rampaged in Agatu Local government area of Benue state.	500
April 12, 2016:	Fulani herdsmen attacked two villages in Gashaka Local Government Area of Taraba state	15
April 25, 2016	Seven villages were attacked in Nimbo in Uzo- Uwani Local Government Area of Enugu State	40
June 16, 2016	A 45-year-old renowned farmer was shot by gunmen suspected to be Fulani herdsmen in Ossissa community in Ndokwa east local government area of Delta state.	1
January 9, 2017	Suspected Fulani herdsmen have reportedly hacked five farmers to death in two separate attacks in Abraka and Obiaruku, both in Ethiope East and Ukwuani Local Government Area of Delta State.	5
April 21, 2017	Lagun village in Iyana Offa, Atagba, Lapata and surroundings in Lagelu Local Govt. Area of Oyo state	1



Date	Place of incidents	Number of Death/Casualty
October 16, 2017	Fulani herdsmen attacked Nkiedonwhro village of Irigwe chieftdom in Bassa Local Government Area of Plateau State, killing 29 people; mostly women and children.	29
October 27, 2017	Herdsmen attacks; 75 killed, 13, 726 displaced in Plateau.	75
March 15, 2018	Fulani-herdsmen attack; Twenty-two persons massacred in Oganeinugu community, Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State	22
April 25, 2018	Seven villages in Nimbo in Uzo-Uwani Local Govt. Area of Enugu state	40
June 25, 2018	At least 86 people died in a clash between berom farmers and Fulani herders in Barkin Ladi, Plateau state	86
July 12, 2018	At least, 42 people mostly women and children are said to have been killed across 12 villages in the Lau Local Government Area of Taraba State	42
May 02, 2019	About four persons have been reportedly killed as suspected herdsmen and farmers clashed in the Iwoye area of Imeko-Afon Local Government Area of Ogun State, southwest Nigeria.	4
July 01, 2020	The destructive activities of rogue herdsmen on farms in communities in Igbo land are becoming worrisome and frightening.	Dislodged from their ancestral land



Date	Place of incidents	Number of Death/Casualty
October 21, 2022	23 people killed as herders, farmers clash in north-central Nigeria	
May 15, 2023	At least 15 persons were killed by suspected Fulani herders in Tarkalafia and Kwaja villages in Karu district, Nasarawa state	15
December 26, 2023	More than 140 persons were killed in Bokkos, Plateau state and it is suspected of a herders-farmers crisis.	Over 140

Source: Compiled by the authors (Kums, Manga, Nimchak and Aaron, 2023) from the Nigerian Newspapers

Implications of Herder-Farmer Conflicts on Nation-Building and National Development

The consequences of the conflict can be linked to humanitarian, social, economic, and security effects. The humanitarian effects of farmer-herder conflicts are enormous. According to Okoli & Atelhe (2014, p.84), natives-nomads conflict results in loss of life, population displacements, human injury and livelihood crisis. In this regard, the conflict does not only lead to the killing of people, but also people become homeless, displaced and destitute. Elaborating further on the humanitarian effects, Ofem & Inyang (2014, p.517) asserted that apart from the killings by nomads and reprisal attacks by the indigenes, some people become widows, widowers and orphans during the conflicts, while other victims of the conflict are maimed or injured. They also argue that people become internally displaced as a result of the conflict, especially women, who decide to stop going to the distant farm for fear of attacks by nomads.

The social effects of herders-farmers conflict threaten peace and tranquillity among various groups. In their work on herder/farmer conflicts, Okoli & Atelhe (2014) asserted that



such conflicts create tense and volatile inter-group relations among various people. This manifests in mutual mistrust and animosity which are often misplaced. In view of this, the herdsmen see the natives as enemies of their collective survival and destiny, and vice versa. They continue by arguing that, the conflict creates an atmosphere of mutual suspicion and perpetual tension that threatens peaceful coexistence, security and stability of society (2014, p.85). In addition, Tonah (2006, p.169) contends that nomads-natives conflict leads to threats and intimidation forcing both to leave conflict-prone settlements. In this regard, the tense relationship affects the level of cooperation and economic exchanges between the two groups.

The economic effects of pastoralists and farmers conflict lead to dire productivity and agricultural consequences. Okoli & Atelhe (2014, p.85) contends that economic implications relate to losses associated with the destruction of homes, farmlands, community assets, and household properties. In their view, for fear of being attacked, many people refuse to go to the farm, resulting in low agricultural productivity during harvest season. Further, many farmlands and large volumes of farm crops and produce are destroyed while hundreds of cattle are killed.

Elaborating on the economic effects, Ofuoku & Isife (2009, p.53) note that the conflict leads to a reduction in farming output and income of farmers and nomads. They argue that farmers lose part or whole of their farms and crops through grazing the destruction by the cattle, and indiscriminate bush burning. On the other hand, the conflict leads to the loss of cows belonging to the nomads through indiscriminate killing. In this regard, the yield of the farmers and the nomads is reduced, which is translated into lower income. Consequently, this negatively affects their savings, credit repayment ability, as well as food security and the economic welfare of urban dwellers. Moreover, Tonah (2006, p.169) posited that the conflict has a negative effect



on agricultural productivity as farmers find it difficult to acquire the services of cattle required for ploughing, weeding of fields and transporting harvested crops. This discourages the farmers and rural agricultural development.

The last consequence related to the implications of the conflict is the effects on the security and/or safety of Nigerians. According to CSIS, & Gizewski (1997), the last two decades have witnessed a growing recognition of resource scarcity in national and international security. In the West African sub-region, many conflicts, civil wars and transnational border conflicts started as competition and conflict between two groups. The 1993 war between Nigeria and Chad occurred due to the conflict between the fishermen of the two countries (Omede, 2006, pp.12-13). Civil wars in Chad and Niger started as a result of competition between Tubu, Arab and Fulbe herders over a well, while the tension between the Tuaregs and the state of Mali, Chad and Niger has been linked to resource conflict (Shettima & Tar, 2008, p.178). In the Senegal valley, resource conflict between farmers, herders and fishermen escalated into a border conflict between Senegal and Mauritania, while the struggle for land between groups played a key role in the Rwandan genocide (Homer-Dixon, 1999, pp.17-18). Though scholars are divided on the security consequences of conflict over resources between two groups (Frerks, 2007, p.15), however, the effects of farmer-herder conflict on security cannot be compromised. Writing on the topic, Okoli & Atelhe (2014, p.85) asserted that denying any person or group their rights to legitimate settlement and livelihood threatens sustainable peace and development not only in the immediate environment but also in the entire country. This is so because development cannot be attained and sustained under the atmosphere of crisis as humanitarian, economic and social consequences affect productivity.



In their view, attendant security and livelihood crises threaten the collective subsistence and survival of the affected populations. Therefore, farmer-herder conflicts threaten human security, as well as national security (p.85). Herder-farmer conflicts not only have a direct impact on the lives and livelihoods of those involved, but they also disrupt and threaten the drive towards nation-building and development in Nigeria. The re-emergence of democratic rule in 1999 heralded renewed conflicts and convulsions, ranging from ethnic crises, religious intolerance, political instability and proliferation of resource conflicts, the absence of good governance as well as the lack of development helped worsen the Nigerian situation. Nation-building continued to suffer from strong divisive forces of ethnicity, religion and natural resources conflict, which presupposes the weakening of national cohesion and integration (Maiangwa and Ahmadu, 2007).

From the above, one can clearly see all the dividing elements/factors of ethnicity, religion, clannish, regionalism, etc. present in the ongoing farmer-herder conflict and they are potent tools of disintegration amongst developing countries, Nigeria inclusive. The identical twin sisters' "religion and ethnicity" are two-one mustard seeds that can disintegrate Nigerians more than what one can imagine when planted. These present and/or sow seeds of discord, hatred, open vendetta, mistrust, suspicion, fear, etc between conflicting parties (farmers and Fulani herders). For instance, the clashes between the two parties in Benue, Southern Kaduna, Plateau, Nasarawa, Enugu, Delta, Zamfara, Osun states etc, breed animosity with perception along religion and ethnic lines, therefore, hampers nation-building and national development.



Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

This paper has examined the effects of herdsmen-farmers conflict on nation-building and national development in Nigeria. Generally, this paper has shown that the conflict has seriously affected social and intergroup relations and the economic lives of farmers and herders thereby affecting development and nation-building. Because there are high levels of mistrust, suspicion and tension which affects peaceful coexistence and therefore affects development. Also, their economic lives have been affected because farming has declined which could lead to food insecurity and a high prevalence of poverty in the country. National Development has been equally affected because the nation's agricultural productivity has dropped. This has compelled the state to purchase foodstuffs instead of using the resources for development. For this problem to be resolved there is a need for the collective resolve of the Nigerian people to look beyond the parochial interests of ethnicity and religion and seek the entrenchment of a truly democratic State where the rule of law, equal opportunity, accountability for power is fully enforced and implemented.

From the foregoing, it is evident that Nigeria's quest towards nation-building and development remains elusive due to the sacrilegious nature of herders-farmers conflict and general insecurity. Against this backdrop, the paper puts forward the following policy recommendations if looked into will help mitigate and/or stamp out herders-farmers conflict which invariably leads to unity and development:

1. One way to resolve this issue lies in the collective resolve of the Nigerian people to look beyond the parochial interests of ethnicity and religion and seek the entrenchment of a



truly democratic State where the rule of law, equal opportunity, accountability of power is fully enforced and implemented to the letter.

2. There is also the need to create genuine structures of social inclusion for all Nigerians irrespective of age, sex, religion or ethnicity; a developmental State and leadership that will engender a common spirit of civic citizenship backed by the guarantee of basic citizenship rights by the State.
3. Besides, tackling poverty in the country, the State should create avenues for ordinary citizens to earn a decent living which will go a long way to address the question of ethnic political mobilization.
4. Lastly, there is an urgent demand for the state to muster the right political will to make laws that stipulate stiff penalties for individuals, groups and organizations with underlying philosophy that preaches division and hatred amongst the various groups that constitute the Nigerian nation either on the platform of religion or ethnicity.



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