

## **Nomads against Natives: A Political Ecology of Herder/Farmer Conflicts in Nasarawa State, Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper seeks to explore the herder/farmer conflicts in Nasarawa State, Nigeria, with a view to situating its nature, causes, dynamics, effects and implications. By way of qualitative analysis of primary and secondary sources, anchored on the political ecology perspective, the paper posits the conflicts have been informed by the desperate struggle for competitive survival and subsistence in an environment characterized by ecological scarcity and livelihood insecurity. The paper observes that the situation has been exacerbated by the phenomenon of climate change, whose dynamics tend to have been aggravating natural resource conflicts across the world. The paper submits that the conflict situation under review portends negatively for sustainable societal progress, nay national security in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Political ecology; eco-violence; eco-survivalism; eco-scarcity; resource conflict; climate change.

### **1. Introduction**

The subject matter which has engaged the attention of this paper falls within the purview of what is known in the cognate literature as ecological resource conflict. This has engaged the minds of scholars and analysts over the years (Suhrke, 1996; Baechler, 1998; and Gleditsch, 2001). This pattern of conflict has been pronounced in the continental ecological sphere of Africa wherein Nigeria is situated. According to Blench:

West African in general and Nigeria in particular has experienced a considerable increase in natural resource conflict since the beginnings of the 1990s. Of particular concern are the clashes between farmers and pastoralists... (2004:1).

As indicated in the preceding citation, an important dimension of the phenomenon of eco-resource conflict in Nigeria is the rising incidence of herder/farmer confrontation. This appears to be most prevalent and pervasive in the north-central region of Nigeria, which has witnessed the worst occurrences of pastoralist/farmer violence as a result of livelihood struggles. What is the nature and dynamics of this conflict? What accounts for its incidence and prevalence? How does the global trend of climate change correlate with the conflict? What are the effects and implications of the conflict? This paper seeks to address these questions with particular reference to the situation in Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

### **2. Analytical Compass cum Point of Departure**

A number of works has been done on the prevalence of conflicts in north-central Nigeria (Gyuse and Ajene, 2006; Alubo, 2008; Okolie and Ugwu, 2011; Abbas, 2012; Nchi, 2013). Also, there exists a number of works on the farmer/herder disputes in Nasarawa State (Blench, 2004; Adogi, 2013). These works are plausible in their own merits. Yet, none of them is able to systematically approach the conflict situation from a theoretical premise that exposes its politico-ecological dialectics. The present paper brings this perspective into focus in such a manner that conveys a newer understanding of the subject matter. The perspective in question is *political ecology*.

Political ecology is concerned with the study of the relationship between political, economic and social factors with environmental issues and dynamics. It seeks to interrogate ecological social sciences with political economy (Peet and Watts, 1997:6) in an attempt to evolve an inter-disciplinary synthesis (Okoli, 2013).

As an eclectic theoretical paradigm, political ecology was influenced by the scholarly contributions of development geography and cultural ecology in the 1970s and 1980s (Bryant, 1998:80). Since its emergence as a theoretical perspective, political ecology has sought primarily to understand the dynamics surrounding material and discursive struggles over the environment in the third world (Bryant, 1998:89).

The crux of political ecology constitutes largely issues revolving around “access to and control over resources” (Human et al, 2004:203). In this regard, Sutton (2004:311) sees political ecology as an attempt to come to terms with “...the day-to-day conflicts, alliances, and negotiations that ultimately result in some sort of definitive behaviours; how politics affects or structures resource use”.

In the main, political ecology seeks to contextualize political and ecological implications of human behavior (Okoli, 2013). This is in addition to provide critiques as well as alternatives in the interface of the environment and political, economic and social factors.

The theoretical perspective of political ecology is premised on a number of assumptions, viz:

- (i) Costs and benefits associated with environmental change are distributed unequally.
- (ii) Changes in the environment do not affect society in a homogenous way: political, social and economic differences account for uneven distribution of costs and benefits.
- (iii) The unequal distribution of costs and benefits inevitably reinforces or reduces existing social and economic inequalities.
- (iv) Any change in environmental conditions must affect the political and economic status-quo.
- (v) The unequal distribution of costs and benefits and the reinforcing or reducing of pre-existing inequalities holds political implications in terms of the power relationship that now result (Bryant and Bailey, 1997:28; Okoli, 2013).

The political ecology perspective is characterized by what could be termed ‘ecological determinism’. This is illustrated in the assertion that “any change in environmental conditions must affect the political and economic status quo” (Bryant and Bailey, 1997:28). With reference to the current study, the perspective would enable us unravel the ecological underpinnings of the socio-existential dynamics, which have characterized the herder/farmer conflict in the area of study. This analytical perspective would be made more plausible when considered against the shadow of the theory of eco-violence, which is considered shortly.

### ***3. The Aim, Focus and Rationale of the Paper***

The principal aim of the paper is to explore the nature, causes, dynamics, effects and implications of the perennial, internecine conflicts between the Fulani pastoralists and settled native farmers in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. This is against the backdrop of the growing incidence, prevalence and the intractability of such conflicts, which tend to have been on the rise over the recent years (See Table 1 for recent trends and indicators).

**Table 1: Recent Fulani/Farmer Clashes in Nigeria (2013)**

Date	Place Of Incident	Number Of Death
January 1	Jukun Fulani clash in Taraba State	5
January 15	Farmers/Fulani clash in Nasarawa State	10
January 20	Farmers/Fulani clash in Nasarawa State	25
January 24	Fulani/Farmers clash in Plateau State	9
February 7	Fulani/Eggon clash in Nasarawa State	30
March 20	Clashes between Fulani an Tarok, Jos, Plateau State	18
March 28	Clashes between Fulani and Farmers in Riyon, B/Ladi, Jos, Plateau State	28
March 29/30	Clashes between Fulani and Natives in Bokkos areas of Bokkos LGA Jos, Plateau State	18
March 30	Police killings in clashes between farmers and Fulani	6
April 3	Farmers/Fulani clashes in Guma LGA, Benue State	3
April 10	Clash between Fulani and Tiv farmers	28
April 23	Fulani/Egbe Farmers clash in Kogi State	5
May 4	Fulani/Farmers clash in Plateau State	13
May 4	Jukun/Fulani clash in Wukari, Taraba State	39
May 13	Fulani/Agatu clash in Benue State	50
May 20	Tiv/Fulani clash at Benue-Nasarawa boarder	23
	<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>

**Source:** *Sunday Trust* May 26, 2013, p.1

This paper thus sets out to introduce a new understanding into the prevailing discourse on the conflict situation by interrogating it from the stand-point of political ecology. This marks a paradigmatic departure from the dominant extant scholarly and policy thinking thereof. This way, the paper opens up a new vista of analysis towards a pragmatic apprehension of the subject matter. It is expected that this modest contribution would go a long way in complementing the endeavours of scholars towards evolving a plausible body of knowledge capable of explicating the phenomenon of herder/farmer conflicts in Nigeria, nay elsewhere in Africa.

#### **4. Methodology**

The method of the paper is qualitative and exploratory. Data were generated from primary and secondary sources. The primary data were sourced through what we prefer to call 'study chat' with select informants, most of whom are students of Federal University Lafia-Nigeria, wherein one of the researchers teaches. Secondary data were elicited from library and official (government) sources. In this regard, books, journals, dailies and periodicals, internet materials, as well as relevant official records were explored with a view to eliciting useful information.

This method of analysis for the paper follows the pattern of descriptive analysis. This is predicated on the theory of eco-violence as an analytical anchorage. The mode of analytical presentation is thematic in nature. In this respect, relevant issues are schematically considered under select themes and sub-themes designed to address the declared objectives of the paper.

#### **5. The Locus of the Study: Situating Nasarawa State for Inquiry**

Nasarawa State is situated in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria. Otherwise referred to as north-central Nigeria, the Middle Belt consists of Plateau, Nasarawa, Benue, Niger, Kogi, Taraba, Adamawa, Kwara, Abuja (Federal Capital Territory- FCT), and to some extent Southern Kaduna (Ayih, 2003:11). This geographical sphere coincides virtually, but not identically, with what is known as the North-Central zone in the contemporary Nigerian Federation.

Nasarawa State was created on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1996. It was severed from the old Plateau State. Nasarawa State is composed of thirteen (13) Local Government Areas. Its capital is Lafia, a fast-urbanizing town along the Northern Benue valley. Spread across these Local Government Areas are a number of chiefdoms and emirates. Table 1 shows the distribution of some of these chiefdoms/emirates across the thirteen (13) Local Government Areas.

**Table 2: Nasarawa L.G.As and constituent Chiefdoms/Emirates**

S/N	LGA	CHIEFDOM/EMIRATE
1.	Lafia	Lafia Emirate
2.	Doma	Doma Chiefdom
3.	Awe	Awe Chiefdom
4.	Keana	Keana Chiefdom
5.	Obi	Migili and Obi Chiefdoms
6.	Akwanga	Mada Chiefdom
7.	Nassarawa Eggon	Nassarawa Eggon Chiefdom
8.	Keffi	Keffi Emirate
9.	Wamba	Wamba and Mama Chiefdoms
10.	Karu	Karu, Karshi and Yankpa Chiefdoms
11.	Konkona	Toni Chiefdom
12.	Nasarawa	Nasarawa Emirate and Udege Chiefdom
13.	Toto	Umaisha, Toto and Gwagwada Turunku Chiefdoms

**Source:** Authors, as adapted from Ayih (2003)

Nasarawa State is a home to an amalgam of ethnic nationalities. Prominent among these are the Eggon, Hausa-Fulani, Tiv, Jukun, Gbagyi, Egbura, Doma, Alago, Milgili, Kambari/Kanuri, and so on. There is also a pronounced presence of settlers (non-natives) from the different parts of the country in the state.

Nasarawa State lies within the Savanna grassland region of central Nigeria. The predominant vegetation of the state is undulating grassland with sparse forests along the Tire river valleys (Ayih, 2003:13). The topography of the state is largely low lying but for the high lands around Mada hills and Nasarawa Eggon mountains, which hosts Nasarawa Eggon, Akwanga and Wamba Local Government Areas (Ayih, 2003:13).

Agriculture is traditionally the main occupation of the people of Nasarawa State. Important food crops grown in the state include yam, maize, guinea corn, rice, sugarcane, beans, soya beans, groundnuts, and assorted fruits and vegetables. The state is also a harbour of important solid minerals, namely granite, limestone, salt and sundry precious stones. Fishing and herding are also flourishing agricultural activities in the state.

Demographically, Nasarawa State is characterized by a mean but 'prodigiously' increasing population (Adogi, 2013). According to the 2006 census, the state has a total population of 1,863,275 people, making it the smallest in the North-central geopolitical zone (Adogi, 2013: para 6). It is, however, estimated that the population of the state has since geometrically increased to the figure of 2.6million people at present (Adogi, 2013: para 6).

Nasarawa State lies in a geographical or ecological belt characterized by sparse habitation. In effect, the state's population density is low and dispersed. This characteristic makes the state favourable to grazing and other agricultural activities (Ayih, 2003). The vast arable land and relatively thin population which used to be a dominant attribute of the state, made struggle for farmland virtually unknown in the past (Ayih, 2003:14). This advantage, however, has been overtaken in the recent years by the trend of massive agrarian migration into the state, which has resulted in stiff competition for the increasingly scarce land resources, leading to confrontations and violent conflicts (Adogi, 2013).

### **6. Theoretical Framework: The Eco-violence Theory**

The paper adopts the theory of *eco-violence* as its analytical framework. The theory of eco-violence is an emerging theoretical construct seeking to explicate the relationship between environmental factors and violent conflicts (Onuoha, nd). Developed by Homer-Dixon (1999), the theory holds thus:

Decreased in the quality and quantity of renewable resources, population growth, and resource access act singly or in various combinations to increase the scarcity, for certain population groups, of cropland, water, forests, and fish. This can reduce economic productivity, both for the local groups experiencing the scarcity and for the larger regional and national economies. The affected people may migrate or be expelled to new lands. Migrating groups often trigger ethnic conflicts when they move to new areas, while decreases in wealth can cause deprivation conflicts (Homer-Dixon, 1999:30).

Implicit in the eco-violence theory is the assumption that competition over scarce ecological resources engenders violent conflict. This trend has been aggravated in contemporary times owing to the impacts of climate change, which has exacerbated ecological scarcity across the world (Blench, 2004; Onuoha, 2007).

In effect, ecological scarcity raises the competitive stakes and premium that the various societal groups may place on available ecological resources. This condition tends to precipitate violent conflicts.

Applied to the purpose of the present discourse, the theory of eco-violence offers insights into the nature and dynamics of the herdsmen/farmers conflicts in Nigeria. In this regard, it is to be observed that the conflicts have been driven by the desperation of the affected groups to protect and advance their livelihood interests in the context of an ever shrinking ecological space, characterized by resource-scarcity, livelihood crisis, population explosion, and resource competition. In the case of Nasarawa State, which is by design the focus of this paper, the situation has been accentuated by the climate change-induced migration of pastoralists from the far North to the North-Central region of Nigeria in search of grazing fields (Blench 2004). This trend has been succinctly captured thus:

As the population is increasing, definitely there will be as well increase in demand for land, water, forest products and grazing land within the territories inhabited by Fulanis and farmers; these groups are forced to find new ways to cope with different types of conflict at once because of competition over marginal resources (Adogi, 2013: para 7).

The outcome of this scenario in Nasarawa State has been the prevailing internecine herder/farmer conflict, which has so far tends to have defied all remedies. An extrapolation of the foregoing theoretical position has been nicely articulated in the analytical notion of 'eco-survivalism (Okoli, 2013). The crux of the theory of eco-violence is that the desperate quest for survival by groups in a competitive and resource-scarce ecological sphere (eco-survivalism) is likely to precipitate violent conflict.

The eco-violence theory derives its epistemological foundation from the political ecology perspective. In effect, the bulk of its assumptions are organically related thereto. In any case, the theory takes as a point of departure the mainstream political ecology premise in an attempt to evolve a robust analytical tradition amenable to analyzing micro issues pertaining to resource-conflict problematique.

### ***7. Betwixt Eco-survivalism and Eco-violence: Understanding the Rising Herders' Militancy***

Militancy is the belief in, and resort to, the use of aggression in the pursuit of group cause (Okoli, 2013). The manifest militant posture of the Fulani pastoralists must be understood with reference to their individual and collective worldviews vis-à-vis group subsistence and survival; that has a lot to do with pastoralism. For the average Fulani-herdsman, pastoralism is a way of living, which is reckoned with as a mark of common heritage. In effect, any threat to his herd amounts to a threat, not only to his survival but also to his common destiny. This way of thinking is encapsulated in the following citation as credited to a Fulani-nomad:

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 field and routes by farmers is a call to war (cited in Abbas, 2012: 331).

The implication of the preceding citation is that a typical Fulani-pastoralist would care less to live if the survival and sustenance of his herd come under serious threats. This explains the magnitude of aggression and vindictive violence that the Fulani pastoralists often manifest in their disputes with settled farming communities (Young and Sing'Oei, 2011).

The fact being emphasized in the foregoing exegesis is that the rising wave of militancy among the Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria is a phenomenon that is principally driven by a do-or-die struggle for survival in an environment that is competitive, and perceptibly hostile to their collective sustainable livelihood. As has been observed in the case of Nasarawa State and its environs, the attempt by the settled native farmers to displace, disinherit, victimize, or marginalize the herdsmen in their common ecological domain has been adjudged by the latter as an invitation to war. The inevitable outcome of this pattern of inter-group relations in the state has been a vicious circle of eco-violence and vendetta.

### ***8. Nature of the Conflict: The Climate Change Connection***

The nexus between climate change and ecological conflict has been established by scholars (Blench, 2003, 2004; Onuoha, 2007; Abbas, 2012). The prevailing thinking in this regard is climate change gives rise to certain ecological changes and outcomes, which often precipitate conflict (Blench, 2003; Onuoha, n.d). Some of the conditions are:

- i. environmental degradation
- ii. desertification/desert encroachment;
- iii. loss of wetlands;
- iv. inadequacy of rainfall/ droughts; and
- v. extreme climate variability and volatility (Blench, 2004; Onuoha, 2007; Olorunfemi; 2009; Nchi, 2013).

The aforementioned conditions interface to produce the dynamics of ecological misfortunes with far-reaching implications for the agrarian communities. For instance:

The land hunger in the semi-arid zones has caused a major migration of farmers southwards, both seasonally and permanently. Many uncultivated areas in river flood-plains are now farmed by migrants, leading to disputes with their traditional 'owners' (Blench, 2004: 6).

The shrinking of ecological space and resorts creates an atmosphere of eco-scarcity which raises the stakes and premium on the available resources. What usually results from this is fierce competition and desperate struggle for subsistence. In this context, therefore, conflict does not only become inevitable; it simply becomes a matter of survival.

With reference to the herder/farmer conflicts, Blench (2004) observes that the ecological dynamics engendered by climate change tend to drag various land users into conflictive relations in the context of resource scarcity and want. This situation has been made worse by the claims and contestations over land ownership and/or tenure rights. Hence:

As farmers take up more of the river-bank for farms, they come into conflict with the other users, especially the herders and fish-folk. The herders have been coming to the river for many years for the grass and tend to consider they have ownership rights. When they arrive and find their grazing now covered by tomatoes, they may become angry. The farmers, often desperate to feed their families in a situation where the old rain-fed systems no longer work regard the herders as dangerous and intrusive (Blench, 2004:6).

To say the least, therefore, the relationship between climate change and farmer/herder conflicts is such that the former brings about conditions that make the latter not only possible but also more or less compelling. To be sure, "As Fulani pastoralists undertake their... movement to the southern part of the country...(as dictated by the imperative of climate change), they regularly clash with farmers as the inevitable rogue (sic) herdsmen allow their cattle to enter tilled farms and eat up the crops. Altercations that follow usually end up in violence, with loss of lives and properties by both sides" (Nchi, 2013: 221; the brackets are my emphasis).

When the people's sources of livelihood are threatened as a consequence of the ecological vicissitudes and vagaries associated with climate change, desperate tactics are employed to ensure survival. This arguably explains the perennial pastoralist/farmer debacle in Nasarawa State.

### ***9. Herder/Farmer Conflicts in Nasarawa State: Nature, Causes and Dynamics***

The herder/farmer conflict situation in Nasarawa State has been interrogated by scholars and analysts from a variety of analytical prisms. An exegesis of some of these contributions is germane in order to situate the subject matter on a sound analytical frame.

In his account, Ayih (2003:10-15) associated the conflicts to what he calls "population explosion", which he attributed to high birth rate and immigration. According to him:

People tend to move from Northern and Southern Nigeria into the Middle Belt region where population is relatively low and where there is availability of vast arable land. The consequent rapid growth in population has caused the farmers to struggle for farmland which is becoming scarce by the day. With this development, grazing areas that were hitherto abundant are being taken over by scattered small farms, making grazing in these areas difficult.

Ayih's contribution is plausible in many respects. For instance, it captures properly the fundamental existential conditions that create the situation of land scarcity and hunger, which in turn, precipitates the herder/farmer conflict. This position agrees nicely with the prevailing thinking on resource conflict literature (Onuoha, 2007; Adogi, 2013).

On a general note, Ayih (2003) identified four other crucial factors which tend to be driving the conflict situation under review.

These factors, in addition to the variable of population explosion, include

- i. desertification of the (northern) region;
- ii. indigenization of the nomadic grazing communities;
- iii. legalization of farming or grazing rights (through land use laws/legislation); and
- iv. the rise in indiscipline and crime wave (Ayih, 2003:15).

The aforementioned factors are inter-related to some degrees. For instance, the factor of desertification of the northern ecological belt interfaces with that of population explosion (as a result of influx of migrant farmers/pastoralists) to create a situation of land scarcity and hunger. Again, indigenization of herding communities correlates with legalization of farming/grazing rights to engender land tenure (ownership) disputes. The whole variables interact to produce the wave of rising conflicts and contestations between the farming and herding communities.

In his contribution, Adogi (2013) points out that the conflicts between the farmers and herders in Nasarawa State have been on the rise since the 1990s. According to him:

Nigeria in general and Nasarawa in particular has experienced resource-related communal clashes (often misrepresented or mis-interpreted as ethnic, political and religious clashes) since the beginning of the 1990s. Of particular concern are the clashes between farmers and pastoralists (Fulani), especially in rural areas where the dwellers are predominantly small scale farmers (Adogi, 2013: para 2).

In an attempt to explain the occurrence of the conflict, Adogi maintains a perspective wherein he implicated ecological and demographic factors and dialectics. Putting his perspective into focus, he asserts:

The predominant Fulani herdsmen of the lower Sahel and Sudan Savannah ecologies from the north-west and north-east (of) Nigeria are now migrating and gradually becoming natives in the Middle Belt region – to find greener pasture for their herds. This is not acceptable to the root and tuber farmer of the Middle Belt that is already farming close to the climatic margin of cultivation. The farmer fears that Fulani herds will destroy his farmlands. The natural result is clash over right to the lands (Adogi, 2013: para 3&4).

The observation implicit in the foregoing citation is that the herder/farmer conflict in Nasarawa State has been, in the main, occasioned by the rising migration and settlement of the Fulani pastoralists in the state in search of arable grazing fields. The movement brings the herders into conflictive relations with the native farming communities, who are often bent on asserting their exclusive right to land tenure and inheritance in that context. This movement of the pastoralists must be understood as a consequence of the global trend of climate change, leading to increasing desertification of the wider northern Nigeria (Blench, 2003; 2004).

In his seminal work on natural resource conflict in north-central Nigeria, Blench (2004), among other things, sought to establish the nexus between pastoral migration and increased herder/farmer conflicts in the ecological zone that also encompasses Nasarawa State. The outcome of this study implicated climate change, desertification and drought, land tenure and scarcity, as well as pastoral migration as factors that account for the spiral farmer/herder conflict in the region. This corroborates the dominant scholarly standpoint on the subject matter, as we have seen in the foregoing.

In a very recent work, Nchi (2013) opines that the herder/farmer conflicts in Nasarawa State have copious economic undertones. According to him:

...these are clearly economic conflicts and are not sectarian in any way. You have migrant pastoralists on the one hand and sedentary farmers on the other hand fighting for pastures and farmlands which are decreasing as the population of humans and cattle increase (2013:222).

To conceive of the conflict simply in terms of 'clash of economic interests' is, at best, reductionist. Granted that economic conditions are crucial to explicating the conflict situation, it ought to be noted that what really gives the conflicts decisive impetus is their socio-ecological underpinnings. In this sense, the issue of economic interests should be treated as secondary (symptom rather than cause) in trying to come to terms with the real essence and substance of the conflict.

It must be noted, however, that recent developments have revealed the culpability of politico-primordial variables in predisposing the conflict under review. In this regard, Adogi (2013) observes that politicization of the already conflictive farmer/herder relations in that context has contributed in complicating the situation. This politicization is achieved through subtle mobilization of clannish, ethnic, religious, and other parochial sentiments in prosecuting group struggles.

The politicization of the conflict situation has added a dangerous twist to its dynamics: mobilization of primordial identity. The logic of this tendency has been succinctly illustrated thus:

...the parties in a conflict may be carrying or expressing different religious identities. A simple argument between a Fulani-herdsman and a farmer from a community that is predominantly Christian over land, for example, may take a tenor of a sectarian crisis since the Fulani herdsman almost always is a Muslim (Nchi, 2013:228).

The problem with this trend is the complication of conflicts in such a manner that produces dicey outcomes. In the case of the situation in Nasarawa State, this has introduced a level of ethno-religious primordialism into the herder/farmer debacle. In this regard, the farmers who are predominantly Christian are wont to consider the Fulani herders (who are, incidentally, largely Muslim) as religious cum political foes; and vice versa.

From the point of view of the vast extant literature and official documents, the farmer/herder conflicts in Nasarawa State have been engendered by interplay of factors, prominent among which are:

- i. disputes arising from claims and contestations regarding land ownership and use;
- ii. struggles for grazing/farm fields in the light of the diminution of arable land in the state;
- iii. destruction of farmlands/farm-crops by Fulani herd;
- iv. provocation of parties – farmers and herders alike – through trespass on cherished valuables;
- v. increasing deprivation and livelihood crisis in the context of growing ecological resource scarcity and lack;
- vi. politicization of native/nomad differences through mobilization of clannish, ethnic, religious, or other primordial sentiments;
- vii. increasing pressure on land and resources thereof as a result of rising population;
- viii. indigenization and sedentarisation of grazing communities in the state;
- ix. culture of criminal brigandage and opportunism among the youths of both sides of the conflict divide;
- x. inefficient land use laws and administration;
- xi. politicisation of the indigene-ship question; etc (cf. Gyuse and Ajene, 2006; Adogi, 2013).

Indeed, the herder/farmer conflicts in Nasarawa State have been quite endemic, perennial and intractable. This is so because the prevailing social cum existential conditions in that context tend to be conducive to such an occurrence. According to Nchi (2013: 229), “the social, economic and political environment sustains the violence”. Nchi further asserts:

Increasing rate of youth unemployment, political, economic and cultural exclusion, poverty, corruption, collapse of family and its values resulting in bad upbringing of children who have no sense of restraint, weak state institutions that have deliberately failed to punish perpetrators of previous violence thus promoting impunity, all combine to nurture and sustain perennial round (of) violence (2013:229).

In its unfolding dynamics of degeneration, the conflicts tend to have reached a critical threshold whereby the prospect of its resolution largely appears precarious. The current stage of the situation is characterized by pathological hate and vindictive vendetta, which threaten the mutual wellbeing and co-existence of the parties. What is more, the conflicts often result in rounds of multiplier incidents within a locality. In this respect, Nchi (2013: 221) rightly observes “The initial conflict may give birth to subsequent and recurring revenge violence in the immediate community, which usually spreads to other adjoining communities”.

**Table 3: Selected Incidents of Fulani/Farmer Clashes in Nasarawa State, 2011-2013**

S/no	Month/year	Place	Immediate cause(s)	No of people killed	Other effects
1	20/11/2011	Akpanaja, Ondori Rukubi in Doma Local Govt. Area	Trespass into Agatu, Tiv and other farms by the Fulani herdsman	4	Houses were burnt, farm produce destroyed and people deserted their homes
2	10/2/2011	Udeni-Gida Nasarawa Local Govt. Area	Killing of Fulani cows by AFO farmers	1	Houses and farm produce were damaged by both parties; girls were raped
3	17/4/2011	Border communities between Doma Local Govt. of Nasarawa State and Guma LGA in Benue State	Killing of a Fulani herdsman by the Tiv community	30	Damage of property, injuries of varied degrees; Population displacement
4	13/1/2012	Doka, Kwara and Ungwan Yaran mada in Keana and Doma LGA	Fulani herdsman alleged stealing and killing of their cows by the Tiv/Mada/Migili communities	10	Destruction of prosperity, population displacement
5	24/3/2012	Yelow (Igbabo) in Ekye Dev. Area of Doma LGA	Encroachment on Eggon farmland by the Fulani herdsman	10	Destruction of property; people displaced
6	24/7/2012	Kotsona village in Tunga, Awe LGA	Fulani herdsman grazing on Tiv farms in the area	About 35	Property were destroyed
7	5/1/2013	Agbashi town in Doma LGA	Chopping of a young Agatu man's hand in his farm and rapping of women and girls in the farms by Fulani herdsman	5 (Fulani)	Houses were destroyed in Fulani camp; people was displaced
8	6/1/2013	Agbashi town in Doma LGA	Reprisal attack Fulani herdsman over the killing of their people	16 (Agatu) ed	Houses and property were destroyed
9	17/3/2013	Ambane-Egga, Ladi Ende in N/Eggon LGA	Fulani Herdsman attacked claiming reprisal for killing two of their own	5	Houses and property were destroyed
10	4/8/2013	Kuduku, Ajo Villages in Keane LGA	Reprisal for killing five Fulani herdsman for trespass	20	Houses and property were destroyed

**Source:** National Orientation Agency (NOA) Nasarawa State *Pulse Report* 2011-2013, n.p

Among other things, Table 2, 3 and appendix 1 suggest that there has been appreciable incidence and prevalence of Fulani/Farmer conflict in Nasarawa State. More importantly, they point to the fact that the situation has been quite perennial and threatening. The destructive import of the conflict would be better appreciated against the backdrop of their manifest and observed effects. It is to this concern that we now turn.

### **10. Effects of the Conflicts**

The conflict situation under review has resulted in dire humanitarian, social, economic, and socio-economic consequences. These effects of the conflicts are hereunder discussed based on empirical insights drawn from field study as well as systematic exploration of relevant secondary sources.

**10.1 Humanitarian Effects:** Herder/Farmer conflicts in Nasarawa State have led to loss of life, population displacements, human injury and livelihood crisis. According to a source credited to the National Orientation Agency (*NOA Nasarawa State Pulse Report*, 2013), the conflicts have led to the killing of not fewer than one hundred and thirty (130) persons between 2011 and 2013 (see Table 3). This is in addition to scores of people who have been rendered morbid, homeless, displaced and destitute by the conflicts.

Table 2 and 3 above give insights into some dimensions of the humanitarian impacts of the conflicts. Psychologically, the conflicts are created an atmosphere of mental siege and terror among the populace in such a manner that threatens public peace and tranquility.

**10.2 Social Effects:** The conflicts have also led to tense and volatile inter-group relations amongst the various peoples of Nasarawa State. This manifests in mutual mistrust and animosity which are often misplaced. The pastoralists see the settled farmers as enemies of their collective survival and destiny, and vice versa. This creates an ambience of mutual suspicion and perpetual tension that threatens peaceful coexistence, security and stability of society.

**10.3 Economic Effects:** The economic impact of the conflict situation under review could be seen in terms of losses associated with destruction of homes, farmlands, community assets, and household properties. These damages have been well documented in relevant official sources (see Tables 3 and appendix 1 for instance), even though they have not been properly quantified. Adding to this is the diminishing fortunes of agricultural productivity in the State. When the conflicts occur during the farming season, the tendency is that most farmers would not go to farm for fear of being attacked. The implication of this is the possibility of how agricultural productivity in the following harvest season. Besides, the conflicts have resulted in actual damage of farmlands and volumes of farm crops and produce. On the other hand, it has also led to killing of cows from the Fulani herd. All these damages translate into real and quantifiable material losses.

**10.4 Socio-Economic Effects:** The socio-economic impacts of the conflicts are evident in the glaring level of rural impoverishment and destitution in the hinterlands of Nasarawa State. The internecine violence associated with the conflicts has tended to exacerbate hunger and human insecurity. This does not augur well for sustainable socio-economic and livelihood wellbeing of the people.

**10.5 The Cumulative Effect:** On the whole, the conflicts have been engendered untoward outcomes that impede sustainable societal peace and development. As pointed out by Nchi “These rounds of strife disrupt community life and solidarity and destroy local and national economies with negative consequences on general social and economic development” (2013:222).

## ***11. General Implications of the Conflicts: Trajectory to National Security***

The herder/farmer conflict in Nasarawa State holds critical implications for the progress of the state in particular and Nigeria in general. Firstly, it implies negatively for inclusive citizenship in Nigeria. The primordial claims by the natives to exclusive land tenure rights is out of keeping with the constitutional guarantees of inclusive citizenship, which require that every Nigeria has the right to settle and make a living in any part of the country he so pleases. Therefore, any attempt to deny any person or group his/her rights to legitimate settlement and livelihood in any party of the country under the guise of indigene/settler calculus, amounts to the violation of Nigeria’s citizenship code.

Secondly, the conflict situation also portends negatively for sustainable peace and development in Nigeria. Given the extent of crisis and violence that has characterized the conflict, it would be obvious to state that such a situation is an enemy of sustainable development both in the affected communities and Nigeria as a whole. Note that development (which invariably translates into national security) (MacNamara, 1978; Okoli and Orinya, 2013) cannot be attained and sustained under the atmosphere of crisis.

Lastly, the implication of the conflict for Nigeria’s national security cannot be over emphasized. The humanitarian, economic, and social consequences of the conflict have been manifold and telling. The attendant security and livelihood crises threaten the collective subsistence and survival of the affected populations. There are also other externalities, such as diminution of agricultural productivity and decline in household capital, all of which do not augur well for societal and national sustainability. It suffices, therefore, to say that the farmer/herder conflict in Nasarawa State is inimical to human security, and by extension, national security in Nigeria.

## ***12. Conclusion and Recommendations***

The phenomenon of herder/farmer conflict in Nasarawa State typifies what is known as resource conflict in contemporary development literature. This thrives in an atmosphere of ecological scarcity and competition, as well as livelihood crisis. The problem has been accentuated by the global trend of climate change which has led to the shrinking of ecological space and resources, leading to intense pressure on, and competition for, the available resources.

The spiraling migration of pastoralists from the far North towards the central part of Nigeria has resulted in a sort of dialectical relations between the Fulani herdsmen and the settled native farmers. As this paper has observed in the case of Nasarawa State, this situation has been complicated by the rising incidence of livelihood insecurity among the farming and herding communities as a result of the dwindling ecological fortunes of the region. This scenario has led to desperate, violent struggles for access to and control of scarce ecological space and resources, a situation that has engendered dire humanitarian, social, socio-economic and economic consequences. The fierce and often virulent nature of this struggles have found expression in a vicious circle of violence and mutual vendetta.

The herder/farmer debacle in Nasarawa state has been essentially woeful in terms of its destructive impacts. So far, it has defied all measures at remedying it. In its apparent dynamics of deterioration and viciousness, the situation has given rise to a sort of pervasive Fulani militancy in the hinterlands of the State. This has been the bane of sustainable peace and progress in most parts of Nasarawa State. As a panacea to this problem, the paper recommends as follows:

- i. effective regulation of grazing and farming activities in Nasarawa State through efficient land-use laws/ legislations and administration;
- ii. creation of grazing reserves and dedicated grazing routes in order to solve the issue of herd's encroachment on farmlands and vice versa;
- iii. mitigation of desertification and drought in the far North by the government, communities and individuals in order to forestall mass movement of pastoralists towards the north-central belt;
- iv. sensitization of stakeholders – farmers and herdsmen alike – on the need for mutual co-existence and peace; this would help to forestall needless provocations and opportunistic violence;
- v. sedentarisation of grazing through ranching in order to regulate practice and foreclose clashes between herding and farming communities.

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**Appendix 1: Random Cases of Herder/Farmer Conflicts in Nasarawa State between 2012 and 2013**

Communities	Month/year of occurrence	Immediate cause(s)	No. of persons killed	Nature and Degree of destruction
Border area of Guma in Benue and Awe in Nasarawa State	July 12, 2013	Dispute over farm and grazing land	40	Scores were reportedly killed, many property including houses burnt, and hundreds displaced in to less than 15 settlements between the two States
Hausawa, Sangaya and Gbagbo, two neighbouring villages under Yelwan Ediya district of Dama Local Govt.	June 15, 2012	A mild quarrel between a Mada peasant working on his farm, and a Fulani herdsman, resulted in fight that forced their respective kinsmen to take up arms	11	Many property including houses burnt and hundreds displaced.
Rukubi community of Doma local government area	June 7, 2013	Over destroying of farm crops intentionally	40	No fewer than 20 houses and six vehicles, all belonging to Agatu people of the area were burnt in the invasion
Border area of Benue and Nasarawa	May 20, 2013	It was a reprisal attack by the Fulani herdsman after armed farmer killed a Fulani traditional ruler- Ardo of Kardorko- Alhaji Habibu Domo, and four others	2 Soldiers, 18 others were killed. One of the soldiers was identified as Lieutenant Chinedu Anyanwu.	Thousands displaced and more than 1000 homesteads destroyed
Agwada-Amba axis of Kokona Local Government	May 21, 2013	Dispute over the alleged killing of kinsmen by Ombatse militiamen	14	39 Eggon houses burnt, and hundreds of person displaced
Pankshin Doma, Doma LGA	April 9, 2012	Allegation of destruction of farm crops by herders	25	Many property including 25 houses burnt, and hundreds of person displaced
Ruttu community of Doma Local Govt. Area	April 27, 2013	Dispute over farm and grazing lands	30	59 houses burnt, and hundreds of person displaced
Randa village, near Kwanderer in Lafia north Local Govt. Area	February 8, 2013	The immediate cause was not known but there was a claim that Kwandere, where the Fulani are taking refuge has become the base from where Fulani operate and carry out reprisal attack on nearby villages	30	Houses were burnt, including those of palace of emir of Kwandere an Elder brother to the present Governor of Nasarawa State
Bassa District	January 22, 2013	Destruction of farm crops by herdsman	7	2000 persons displaced, property worth millions of naira destroyed
Agbashi in Ekwe development area; the clash involved Agatu/Eggon and Fulani herders	January 15, 2013	They allegation that a cattle rearer destroyed a farmland belonging to the Agatu	2	5 houses burnt and many property destroyed; hundreds displaced

**Sources:** Authors' compilation from *Sunday Trust* May 26, 2013, p.10; *Daily Trust* June 7, 2013, p.9; July 12 2013, p.9; *Leadership* May 21, 2013, p.11, etc