
**FARMERS-HERDERS CONFLICTS IN NORTH CENTRAL AND IMPACT ON EDUCATION,
NATIONAL SECURITY AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF NIGERIA**

BY

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Abstract

Since the restoration of civil rule in 1999, Nigeria has experienced a number of security issues, including Boko Haram insurgency, resource control agitation, and communal rioting. Numerous lives and properties have been lost as a result of these security issues. The Fulani herdsmen's attacks have become more dangerous in recent years due to their acquisition of sophisticated weaponry and communication technology. Most farmers have suffered because of Fulani herdsmen killings, robberies, rapes, and kidnappings, which has led to serious security challenges. Thus, the main goal of this paper is to analyze the threat posed by Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria and determine how it affects both socioeconomic development and national security. Conflicts between farmers and herders has posed substantial challenges to the educational system. Consequently, numerous villages and local governments have been compelled to shut down schools and colleges for extended periods. When clashes between farmers and herders transpire, essential infrastructure within schools, including classroom buildings, offices, books, and pertinent documents, often suffer extensive destruction or damage. In rural areas, schools are frequently subjected to arson, rendering it difficult for students to sustain their learning activities for prolonged periods as they relocate to safer areas with their families. The paper reveals that the Fulani herdsmen's attack destroys lives and property, undermines food security, and causes a significant increase in unemployment. The government should support affluent cattle owners in establishing cattle ranches across the nation, where the animals receive the proper care, as this paper suggests. For the security personnel and the host communities to be able to monitor the activities of Fulani herdsmen, registration is mandatory for those working in any local government.

Keywords: Conflict, Farmers, Herders, Education, Security, Development

Introduction

In recent decades, Nigeria has grappled with a persistent and complex challenge that has threatened its social cohesion, economic stability, and national security; the Farmers-Herders conflicts in the North Central region. These conflicts, characterized by clashes between sedentary farmers and nomadic herders over access to land and natural resources, have escalated to alarming proportions, permeating the very fabric of Nigerian society (Madu & Nwankwo, 2021). This paper aims to delve deeply into the multifaceted dimensions of the Farmers-Herders conflicts in North Central Nigeria and to elucidate its far-reaching impacts on education, national security, and socio-economic development. By examining the root causes, historical context, and contemporary manifestations of these conflicts, this paper seeks to offer insights into the complex dynamics at play and to propose viable solutions for mitigating the conflicts and their detrimental effects on Nigeria's trajectory of progress and development. To understand the origins and dynamics of the Farmers-Herders conflicts in North Central Nigeria, it is imperative to delve into the historical and socio-economic factors that have contributed to their emergence and perpetuation. The North Central region, often referred to as the Middle Belt, occupies a strategic position within Nigeria, serving as a transitional zone between the predominantly Muslim north and the largely Christian south. This geographical positioning has imbued the region with cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity, but it has also rendered it susceptible to tensions and conflicts stemming from competing interests and identities (Nnabuihe & Onwuzuruigbo, 2021).

Adebajo (2022) highlighted that the conflicts between farmers and herders in North Central Nigeria have deep historical roots, dating back centuries to the pre-colonial era when various ethnic groups coexisted and competed for land and resources. With the advent of colonial rule and the imposition of arbitrary boundaries and land tenure systems, the tensions between farmers and herders were further exacerbated, as colonial policies favored sedentary agriculture and marginalized nomadic pastoralism. The Farmers-Herders conflicts in North Central Nigeria are not isolated incidents of localized violence; rather, they represent a systemic challenge that has profound implications for the stability, prosperity, and unity of Nigeria as a nation-state. Ezeogu, Ezugwu, & Obi (2018) underscored the significance of addressing these conflicts cannot be overstated, as they pose serious threats to multiple facets of Nigerian society, including education, national security, and socio-economic development. At its core, the resolution of the Farmers-Herders conflicts is essential for fostering social cohesion and inter-communal harmony in Nigeria. The protracted nature of these conflicts has engendered deep-seated mistrust, animosity, and ethno-religious divisions among various communities, undermining the social fabric of the nation and impeding efforts towards nation-building and reconciliation.

Against this backdrop, the purpose of this paper is threefold: first, to provide a comprehensive overview of the Farmers-Herders conflicts in North Central Nigeria, elucidating their root causes, historical antecedents, and contemporary manifestations; second, to examine the far-reaching impacts of these conflicts on education, national security, and socio-economic development, highlighting the human costs, economic losses, and security challenges they engender; and third, to propose actionable recommendations and policy interventions for addressing the conflicts and fostering sustainable peace, stability, and development in Nigeria. Erundu & Nwakanma, (2018) affirms that the conflicts have resulted in population displacement, reduced agricultural output, and, as a result, an increase in unemployment. Agriculture, which employs a big number of productive teenagers and adults, has become strained and turbulent. Farmers-herdsmen conflicts have contributed to the widespread migration of people from rural areas (local governments). The agriculture sector's significance to Nigeria's economic growth and development cannot be overstated. Olaoye (2020) states that insufficient agricultural product supplies will cause concern, discontent, a lack of food security, and negative repercussions on the national economy and security. Agricultural product availability, on the other hand, will result in vigorous health, stable mental and physical growth of residents, and increased national output. In the subsequent sections of this paper, we will explore in depth the intricate dynamics of the Farmers-Herders conflicts, analyze their multifaceted impacts on education, national security, and socio-economic development, and delineate a roadmap for conflict resolution and peacebuilding in North Central Nigeria catalyze positive change towards a more inclusive, equitable, and resilient society for all Nigerians.

History of Herders-farmers Conflicts in Nigeria

The Farmers-Herders conflicts in North Central Nigeria epitomize the intricate interplay of historical grievances, socio-economic pressures, and environmental dynamics that have fueled protracted violence and instability in the region. Characterized by clashes between sedentary farmers, predominantly of agrarian backgrounds, and nomadic herders, primarily of pastoralist traditions, these conflicts have deep historical roots dating back centuries. At the heart of the Farmers-Herders conflicts lie competing claims over land, water, and grazing resources—a reflection of the changing dynamics of land use, population growth, and environmental degradation in North Central Nigeria. The historical patterns of land ownership, land tenure systems, and resource management practices have laid the groundwork for contention and conflict, as sedentary farming communities seek to protect their agricultural lands from encroachment by nomadic herders, who rely on transhumance and open grazing for their livelihoods. The

historical context of the Farmers-Herders conflicts is intricately linked to the pre-colonial periods before the 1900s (Olaoye, 2020).

However, as a result of population pressures, climate change, and other causes, these conflicts have gotten significantly more serious in recent decades. Herders and farmers would agree on a system called *burti* during the British colonial era, in which special migration routes were established up for herders with mutual agreement from farmers, herders, and local officials. Thus, the *burti* system came to an end around the 1970s when farmers increasingly claimed ownership of areas along cattle movement routes, resulting in increasing confrontations (Peace, 2017). Herders used to routinely trade milk for cereal grains with farming groups. However, as packaged beverages became more popular in towns, milk was no longer extensively bartered. Modern treatments have also enabled herders to transfer their livestock further south into the "tsetse fly zone" in the south, where previously herders were unable to keep their cattle on a big scale due to tropical diseases in humid temperature zones. Tsetse management initiatives, beginning with those established by the British colonial authority, have lowered the threat of diseases such as trypanosomiasis (Mustapha, 2022). Herders now have easy access to medications for trypanosomiasis and dermatophilosis in order to keep their livestock alive. Furthermore, during the past several decades, herders have crossed trypanosome-intolerant zebu cattle with trypanosome-tolerant humpless breeds, boosting the cattle's tolerance of tropical diseases. All of these circumstances have facilitated the widespread movement of Fulani herders into Nigeria's southernmost territories, where they can readily sell their cattle for higher prices due to great demand for beef and other meat products in Nigeria's large southern towns and cities. However, in the south regions, they would confront settled societies that traditionally lack a background in peacefully negotiating and coexisting with nomadic herders. The rising accessibility to weapons and the religious division among followers of both Christianity and Islam have heightened the likelihood of violence. Blench (2017) states that the imposition of arbitrary boundaries and land tenure systems by colonial authorities further exacerbated tensions between farmers and herders, as competition over scarce resources intensified and conflicts over land ownership and access escalated.

Baca (2015) emphasized that since the establishment of the Fourth Nigerian Republic in 1999, farmer-herder conflict has killed over 19,000 people and displaced hundreds of thousands more. It coincided with an increase in farmer-herder conflicts across much of the western Sahel, owing to an increase in agriculturist population and cultivated land at the expense of pasturelands; deteriorating environmental conditions, desertification, and soil degradation; population growth; a breakdown in traditional conflict resolution mechanisms for land and water disputes; and the proliferation of small arms and crime in rural areas. Insecurity and violence have prompted numerous people to form self-defense units as well as ethnic and tribal militias, which have engaged in additional violence. The majority of farmer-herder confrontations have involved Muslim Fulani herdsmen and farmers, aggravating tensions. According to Oluwaleye (2020) in contemporary times, the Farmers-Herders conflicts have been exacerbated by a confluence of factors, including demographic pressures, climate change, and socio-economic inequalities. Rapid population growth and urbanization have led to increased competition for land and resources, exacerbating tensions between sedentary farmers and nomadic herders. Moreover, the adverse impacts of climate change, including desertification, deforestation, and depletion of water sources, have further intensified resource scarcity and heightened competition over dwindling natural resources. Mohammed & Baba (2018) affirm that the escalation of violence and bloodshed in the Farmers-Herders conflicts has been facilitated by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, which have exacerbated inter-communal tensions and fueled cycles of revenge and retaliation. The breakdown of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms and the erosion of social cohesion have also contributed to the intractability of the conflicts, as communities resort to violence and vigilantism to assert their interests and defend their livelihoods.

The geographical scope of the Farmers-Herders conflicts extends beyond the borders of North Central Nigeria, encompassing other regions such as the North West and North East, where similar dynamics of resource competition and ethno-religious tensions prevail. The transnational dimension of the conflicts, manifested in cross-border migration and transhumance, further complicates efforts to address the root causes and mitigate the impacts of the conflicts. Since the establishment of the Fourth Nigerian Republic in 1999, farmer-herder conflict has killed over 19,000 people and displaced hundreds of thousands more (Usman, 2019). It coincided with an increase in farmer-herder conflicts across much of the western Sahel, owing to an increase in agriculturist population and cultivated land at the expense of pasturelands; deteriorating environmental conditions, desertification, and soil degradation; population growth; a breakdown in traditional conflict resolution mechanisms for land and water disputes; and the proliferation of small arms and crime in rural areas (Baca, 2015). Insecurity and violence have prompted numerous people to form self-defense units as well as ethnic and tribal militias, which have engaged in additional violence. The majority of farmer-herder confrontations have involved Muslim Fulani herdsmen and farmers, aggravating tensions.

Farmers-Herders' Conflicts in North Central Nigeria

The North Central is one of Nigeria's six geopolitical zones, encompassing the majority of the country's Middle Belt. It consists of six states: Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, and Plateau, as well as Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory. The North Central region runs over the whole width of the country, from the border with Cameroon to the border with Benin. In terms of environment, the zone is characterized by the Guinean forest-savanna mosaic, with the western section being under the West Sudanian savanna ecoregion. The region has a population of over 20 million people, accounting for approximately 11% of the entire population of the country. The Federal Capital Territory Abuja, as well as Ilorin and Jos, are the most populated cities in the North Central, as well as the sixth, seventh, and eighth most populous cities in Nigeria (Wikipedia, 2022). Nigerian and international newspapers are frequently unable to report precise statistics of casualties. Despite the high number of attacks, Nigerian and foreign journalists rarely get access to first-hand accounts and frequently cite erroneous statistics (Obaje, 2017). As reported by Punch Newspaper on August 19, 2023, two lecturers at the University of Abuja expressed deep concern over the loss of lives and property in conflicts between farmers and herdsmen in Benue and Plateau states. The academics highlighted a lack of governmental determination to prosecute the perpetrators, which they emphasized as a contributing factor to the sustained violence. Recently, at least two communities in Plateau State were subjected to retaliatory assaults by herdsmen, resulting in the tragic death of 21 individuals. The lecturers conveyed these concerns during a book review event entitled "The root cause of farmers-herders crisis in North-central Nigeria," hosted by the department in collaboration with the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation. Dr. Olowu Olagunju, one of the lecturers, stated that the conflict in Nigeria's North-Central region has tragically claimed the lives of over 60,000 individuals since 2001. He highlighted that the farmer-herder clashes have been documented in 22 out of Nigeria's 36 states, with the North-Central zone being the epicenter of these conflicts nationwide. These disputes have escalated into deadly violence, resulting in a death toll that exceeds 60,000 since 2001, a figure surpassing the casualties from the Boko Haram insurgency.

The assaults carried out by Fulani herdsmen in the North-central Nigerian state of Benue have resulted in the deaths of at least 1,269 individuals. Among the 23 local government areas in the state, these marauding herdsmen have infiltrated and taken control of 14 areas and are poised to encroach upon the remaining nine if prompt measures are not implemented to address this dire situation. In the North-east Senatorial District of Benue, the herdsmen have invaded Katsina-Ala, Kwande, Logo, and Ukum, with Vandeikya, Konshisha, and Ushongo remaining untouched. In the Benue North-east Senatorial District, the assailant herdsmen have targeted all the local government councils, except for Gboko. The areas that have been invaded and controlled by these violent herdsmen encompass Guma, Gwer-West, Gwer-East, Buruku, Tarka, and Makurdi local government councils (Premium Times News). Herdsmen

attacked Nasarawa, razing over 50 houses and killing dozens of people. Approximately 40 farmers, among them women and children, have tragically lost their lives in Takalafiya village within the Gitata district of Panda Development Area in Karu Local Council due to suspected herdsmen. An eyewitness named Moses claimed that the assailants, believed to be of Fulani descent, launched an attack on the village. They reportedly fired guns indiscriminately and hurled explosives at houses while the residents were sleeping. Among the victims was Reverend Daniel Danbeki, a pastor from the Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA), along with several members of his congregation, including women and children (The Guardian Newspaper).

On the 15th of May 2017, as reported by Punch Newspaper, a harrowing incident unfolded where herdsmen launched a vicious assault on a village in Niger State, resulting in the tragic loss of 21 lives. The attack took place on a Saturday night in Etoji community, Gbara ward of Mokwa Local Government Area. The conflict originated from an earlier confrontation between some Fulani youths and members of the community, resulting in the death of a Fulani herdsman. The herders, who had settled near the community, were granted land for farming under the condition that they would share a portion of the yield with the village head. However, tensions arose when the herders failed to fulfill this agreement, asserting their ownership of the land. Distraught by the loss of one of their own, the herders sought support from their kin and subsequently launched an attack on the community's mosque while worshippers were in prayer, resulting in the tragic deaths of everyone present, including the imam.

Reportedly by Sahara Report, Fear spreads as Fulani herdsmen abduct farmers in Kwara. The herders raided the farm, taking an unspecified number of workers with them while abandoning a pickup truck at the site. Kwara State has experienced repeated attacks by suspected herdsmen in recent times. In June, individuals believed to be Fulani herdsmen similarly encroached upon a farm situated behind Offa University in Aro, Offa, Kwara State. Nevertheless, as reported by Leadership News, a significant number of individuals are feared to have lost their lives in a clash between farmers and herders in Isanlu, the central town of Yagba East local government area in Kogi State. The violence erupted following the ambush and killing of a farmer on his way to his farm, with his decomposing body found on Sunday after local hunters and vigilantes scoured the nearby bushes. The severity of the crisis was amplified as it occurred on a market day, gathering both herders and farmers. Approximately 15 motorcycles and a Toyota Corolla car owned by the herders were set on fire, while others fled for safety. The incident brought economic activities to a halt in Isanlu, with most shops and marketplaces shut down.

Causes of Farmers-Herders Conflict in Nigeria

Many reasons have been cited in the literature as causes of farmer/herder confrontations; among them, though not exhaustively, are:

- (a) **Climatic fluctuations' Effects:** Climatic variations, including irregular rainfall patterns, prolonged droughts, and desertification, have significantly altered traditional grazing routes and patterns in Nigeria. As arable land diminishes due to desert encroachment and changing weather patterns, herders are compelled to seek alternative grazing areas, often encroaching upon farmlands previously reserved for crop cultivation. The scarcity of water sources and diminishing pasturelands intensifies competition between farmers and herders for access to vital resources. As arable land shrinks and water sources become increasingly scarce, conflicts erupt over control and utilization of these limited resources. Herders, facing dwindling grazing lands, are forced to drive their cattle further afield, encroaching upon farmlands and triggering confrontations with farmers defending their livelihoods. Climatic fluctuations exacerbate existing socio-economic disparities, leaving both farmers and herders vulnerable to the adverse effects of environmental degradation. Farmers, reliant on consistent rainfall and stable growing seasons, face crop failures and reduced yields due to erratic weather patterns. Similarly, herders confront dwindling pasturelands and escalating fodder costs,

exacerbating their economic hardship and heightening tensions with farmers competing for resources (Nwakanma & Boroh, 2019).

- (b) **Population Growth:** The conflict between farmers and herders in Nigeria has persisted for decades, causing loss of lives, property, and economic setbacks. While various factors contribute to this conflict, one significant underlying cause is population growth. Nigeria is one of the most populous countries in Africa, with a population growth rate estimated at over 2% annually. The exponential increase in population puts immense pressure on land resources, exacerbating competition between farmers and herders for limited arable land and grazing areas. As the population grows, so does the demand for land for settlement, agriculture, and other economic activities. Consequently, available land for farming and grazing diminishes, leading to heightened competition between farmers and herders. This competition often escalates into violent conflicts, as both groups struggle to secure their livelihoods and sustain their families. Historically, Nigeria had designated grazing reserves to accommodate the needs of herders and their cattle. However, rapid urbanization, agricultural expansion, and population growth have encroached upon these reserves, reducing their size and functionality. As a result, herders face dwindling access to traditional grazing lands, forcing them to seek alternative grazing areas, often leading to clashes with farmers (Akinrinde, Osuwa & Olawoyin, 2021). Population growth exacerbates the effects of climate change, which further strains available resources. Erratic rainfall patterns, desertification, and diminishing water sources exacerbate competition between farmers and herders for fertile land and water resources. This intensifies tensions and escalates conflicts, as both groups struggle to adapt to changing environmental conditions. Population growth also intersects with political and socioeconomic factors, including inadequate land tenure systems, weak governance, and ethnic tensions, which exacerbate the farmers-herders conflict. In many cases, political manipulation and ethnic rivalries worsen the situation, leading to protracted violence and displacement of communities (Ofuoku & Isife, 2009).
- (c) **Failure of Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanism:** The conflict between farmers and herders in Nigeria predates colonialism, rooted in centuries-old competition for land and resources. Historically, traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, deeply ingrained within the cultural fabric of Nigerian societies, served as effective tools for mediating disputes and maintaining peace between agrarian and pastoralist communities. These mechanisms relied on customary laws, community elders, and religious leaders to arbitrate conflicts, emphasizing reconciliation and communal harmony. However, the effectiveness of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms has been severely undermined in contemporary Nigeria. One primary reason for this failure is the erosion of traditional authority structures and communal cohesion due to rapid urbanization, demographic shifts, and modernization (Ofuoku & Isife, 2009). As rural communities undergo socio-economic transformations, the authority of traditional leaders and institutions diminishes, weakening their ability to resolve disputes and enforce customary laws. Moreover, the escalating scale and intensity of the farmers-herders conflict have surpassed the capacity of traditional mechanisms to cope. The influx of modern weapons and the commercialization of livestock rearing have transformed the nature of disputes, rendering traditional mediators ill-equipped to address complex issues of land ownership, resource competition, and criminality (Olagbaju & Awosusi, 2019). Another significant impediment to traditional conflict resolution mechanisms is political interference and ethnic polarization. Politicians often exploit ethnic and religious fault lines to advance their agendas, exacerbating tensions and deepening mistrust between communities. The politicization of the farmers-herders conflict has further polarized society, hindering efforts to foster dialogue and reconciliation at the grassroots level. Moreover, the failure of successive governments to formulate and implement inclusive and sustainable policies exacerbates grievances and perpetuates cycles of violence. The absence of adequate legal frameworks and institutional support undermines the legitimacy of traditional mechanisms, leaving communities vulnerable to exploitation and manipulation by vested interests (Peace, 2017).
- (d) **Technology and Economic Changes:** The complex and longstanding conflicts between farmers and herders in Nigeria have garnered significant attention both nationally and internationally. While the roots of these conflicts are multifaceted, the impact of technology and economic changes cannot be understated.

Technological advancements, particularly in agriculture and communication, have transformed traditional farming and herding practices in Nigeria. The adoption of modern farming techniques, such as mechanized farming and irrigation systems, has led to increased productivity and the expansion of farmlands. However, these advancements have also encroached upon traditional grazing areas, diminishing the available land for herders and their livestock (Akinrinde, Osuwa & Olawoyin, 2021). Furthermore, advancements in communication technology have facilitated the rapid spread of information and the coordination of actions among various groups. This has enabled herders to mobilize more efficiently in response to perceived threats or conflicts over grazing lands. Similarly, farmers can organize and advocate for their rights more effectively, leading to heightened tensions between the two groups. Economic changes, including population growth, urbanization, and shifts in agricultural practices, have further exacerbated the conflicts between farmers and herders (Akanwa et al, 2023). Nigeria's population has been steadily increasing, leading to greater competition for land and resources. Urbanization has driven the conversion of agricultural land into residential and commercial areas, further reducing the available space for grazing. Moreover, changes in agricultural practices, such as the expansion of cash crops and commercial farming, have altered land use patterns and intensified competition for arable land. This has forced herders to seek alternative grazing routes and encroach upon farmlands, resulting in frequent clashes with farmers. The economic disparity between farmers and herders has also widened, exacerbating existing tensions. While farmers have benefited from government subsidies, access to credit, and support programs, herders have been marginalized and overlooked in development policies. This disparity has fueled resentment and animosity between the two groups, leading to violent confrontations and reprisals (Obasanmi & Enoma, 2022).

- (e) **Long-Standing Disagreements:** The longstanding and escalating conflict between Fulani herders and farming communities in Nigeria has garnered widespread attention due to its devastating impacts on lives, livelihoods, and national stability. Recent attacks by Fulani herders often stem from long-standing grievances and retaliatory motives. For instance, the massacre of the Agatu people was reportedly retaliation for the death of a prominent Fulani figure due to alleged cow theft. Such incidents highlight the cycle of violence fueled by revenge and unresolved disputes over land and resources (Bello & Abdullahi, 2021). The core of the farmers-herders conflict revolves around competition for land. Rapid urbanization, population growth, and desertification have exacerbated land scarcity, pushing herders and farmers into closer proximity and intensifying resource conflicts. The encroachment of farmlands onto traditional grazing routes further exacerbates tensions, leading to clashes over land use and ownership (Yamtal, Ajik & Yamtal, 2023). Many herders face poverty, lack of access to education, healthcare, and basic infrastructure, exacerbating their vulnerability and sense of injustice. As traditional grazing lands shrink and economic opportunities dwindle, herders become increasingly desperate, resorting to violence as a means of survival and asserting their rights (Achem & Aderinto, 2023).
- (f) **Damage or intentional grazing on crops:** One of the significant causes of conflict between farmers and herders is the damage or intentional grazing on crops. Herders, in search of grazing land for their cattle, often allow their animals to feed on farmlands, leading to destruction of crops. This can occur either unintentionally due to the lack of designated grazing areas or intentionally as a means of asserting herders' rights to land (Yamtal, Ajik & Yamtal, 2023). The consequences of damage or intentional grazing on crops are severe and multifaceted. Farmers suffer substantial financial losses due to destroyed crops, which undermines their livelihoods and food security. Moreover, these conflicts often result in loss of lives and further exacerbate ethnic and religious tensions in already volatile regions. The persistent conflicts between farmers and herders have detrimental effects on Nigeria's socio-economic development. Investments in agriculture are hindered as farmers fear cultivating their lands due to the risk of destruction by cattle. Additionally, the uncertainty and insecurity resulting from these conflicts deter investors and impede economic growth in affected areas (Yikwabs et al, 2020).
- (g) **Water scarcity:** Water scarcity stands as a critical factor exacerbating the longstanding tensions between farmers and herders in Nigeria. Water is not merely a resource; it is a lifeline for agricultural productivity

and sustenance. In Nigeria, where agriculture serves as a primary source of livelihood for a significant portion of the population, access to water is indispensable for both farmers and herders. The competition for water resources, particularly in arid and semi-arid regions, sets the stage for conflict dynamics between these two groups. Nigeria grapples with the challenges of water scarcity, compounded by factors such as climate change, population growth, and unsustainable water management practices. As water sources dwindle and become increasingly unreliable, the pressure mounts on farmers and herders alike to secure access to this precious resource for irrigation, livestock rearing, and domestic use. The scarcity of water directly impacts agricultural productivity, with farmers struggling to maintain their crops amidst erratic rainfall patterns and dwindling water supplies. In regions where irrigation is essential for farming, disputes over access to water sources escalate, leading to confrontations between farmers and herders vying for control over these vital resources. For herders, water scarcity poses a severe challenge to livestock management. As traditional grazing lands dry up and water sources diminish, herders are compelled to seek alternative routes and access points for their animals. This often brings them into direct conflict with settled farming communities, whose livelihoods depend on protecting their crops from grazing animals. Water scarcity exacerbates the underlying competition for land and resources between farmers and herders. Scarce water points become contested territories, sparking tensions and fueling violence as both groups vie for control over these critical lifelines. In the absence of effective water management strategies and conflict resolution mechanisms, the situation escalates into protracted disputes with devastating socio-economic consequences. The unchecked competition for water exacerbates environmental degradation, leading to the depletion of water sources, soil erosion, and loss of biodiversity. The overexploitation of water resources further exacerbates the vulnerability of communities already grappling with the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and instability.

Impact of the Conflict on Education

Education has become a crucial factor in driving the growth of the national economy in the contemporary economic landscape. This is primarily due to its recognized role as a key contributor to the development of human capital. The persistent destruction of schools has emerged as a significant social issue in affected regions. In the case of Benue state, the occurrence of conflicts between farmers and herders has posed substantial challenges to the educational system. Consequently, numerous villages and local governments have been compelled to shut down schools and colleges for extended periods. When clashes between farmers and herders transpire, essential infrastructure within schools, including classroom buildings, offices, books, and pertinent documents, often suffer extensive destruction or damage. In rural areas, schools are frequently subjected to arson, rendering it difficult for students to sustain their learning activities for prolonged periods as they relocate to safer areas with their families (Okwori & Angenyi, 2019).

The educational system in Agatu Local Government Area (LGA) of Benue State, Nigeria, was already vulnerable before the farmers-herdsmen crisis, characterized by a substantial portion of children never experiencing formal schooling and a considerable number discontinuing their education before completing secondary school. The crisis has exacerbated the educational challenges in Agatu LGA, resulting in low school enrollment and a significant increase in the number of out-of-school children (Bilyaminu et al, 2017). The closure of schools carries extensive consequences, leading to the termination of education for numerous students and the loss of opportunities for higher education (Odinkalu, 2014). The impact of insurgency on girls' education in northeastern Nigeria. The study uncovered that insurgency has adversely influenced education in the region, as students experienced trauma witnessing attacks on their schools, resulting in a pervasive fear that deterred them from attending school (Dauda, 2014). According to Prof. Wilfred Uji, the Executive Secretary of the Benue State Teaching Service Board, note that the ongoing attacks by herdsmen on Benue communities have resulted in a disruption of the school calendar, compelling 300,000 children to leave school. Within this number, 200,000 are secondary school students, while 100,000 are primary school pupils,

spanning across three local government areas. Uji expressed his concern about the detrimental impact of the crisis on the educational system, particularly within the primary and secondary school sectors. He mentioned that Government Secondary School, Gbajimba; Government Secondary School, Agasha; Government Science Secondary School, Logo; and Government Secondary School, Ukum, among others, have been either burnt or entirely shut down by herdsmen. Uji further stated that secondary school students and primary school pupils attending public schools in Apa, Agatu, Makurdi, Okpokwu, and Ogbadibo have also been compelled to abandon their educational institutions. The conditions in the IDP (Internally Displaced Persons) camps have become so challenging that even the mobile schools established within the camps struggle to manage the teaching and learning process due to overcrowding. Students who have been displaced and are now attempting to take the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) face difficulties, despite efforts to relocate them to safer centers.

However, Professor Uji further expressed the distress of witnessing students from IDP camps coming to take exams under such challenging circumstances. He remarked, while I was in my office, some of the teachers walked in and presented me with threat letters. When you receive such letters, it's crucial to take them seriously because the next day, the situation might escalate dramatically. The user's statement highlights a perceived connection between the attacks on educational facilities in Benue State by Fulani herdsmen and the violence in the North-East linked to Boko Haram. Uji expresses concern that there may be a deliberate effort to undermine the educational standards of Benue. He appeals to the federal and state governments to address the crisis, fearing that the region's educational standards might suffer in comparison to other parts of the country. He further emphasized, consider that an entire school year has been disrupted. When we contemplate recovering the lost time, it becomes evident that it will take more than five to 10 years to fully recover. The enduring consequences are substantial. Looking ahead, in 100 years, our region may lag behind educationally compared to other zones. The implications of the crisis are profound, affecting not only the future of the children but also the well-being of the Local Government, the state, and the country as a whole. The hardships brought about by the crisis have significantly impacted parents' ability to provide for their families, making it challenging to enroll children in school. The management of schools by teachers has also become problematic, as highlighted in a study by Okwori and Angenyi (2019) titled "Farmers-Pastoralists Conflicts and the Management of Primary Schools in Benue State." The research revealed that conflicts between farmers and pastoralists have had a highly detrimental effect on the utilization of infrastructural facilities and student enrollment in primary schools in Benue State. These conflicts not only hinder educational development but also impede economic growth by disrupting the productive segment of society. A particularly concerning aspect is that many pupils in Benue State have not been able to enroll in school after the calamity. Children have been compelled to relocate with their parents to safer places, where the crisis is not as prevalent. Additionally, those who remain in the affected communities often prioritize farming over attending school, further exacerbating the challenges facing education in the region.

Impact of the Conflict on National Security

The violent actions of Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria pose a major threat to national security, which has a negative impact on the nation's socioeconomic development. The threat posed by the Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria is increasingly concerning and could jeopardize national security. A persistent security issue facing numerous states across the nation, aside from Boko Haram, is the threat posed by Fulani herdsmen. Attacks by herdsmen on various communities in Nigeria have become more frequent (Nwangele, 2018). The number of reported attacks by Fulani herdsmen, who brutally murder locals in the invaded farming communities, including women and children, has increased in a number of states throughout the nation (Ikegbunam & Agudosy, 2019). Benue, Nassarawa, Plateau, Taraba, Kaduna, Adamawa, Zamfara, Oyo, Imo, Cross River, Abia, Ebonyi, and Rivers are among the states most severely impacted (Iheanacho, 2017). However, human security is weakened by the threat posed by Fulani herdsmen. Protecting people

from socio-existential threats and vulnerabilities is known as human security (Okafor & Chukwuemeka, 2023). Chinwokwu (2017) highlighted that the unbridled criminal activities of Fulani herdsmen carry numerous implications for national security. Presently, these herdsmen have garnered the alarming designation as the fourth most dangerous terrorist groups globally. This classification not only adversely affects Nigeria's international image but also compounds existing challenges, including insurgency in the North East and militant activities in the Niger Delta. The unity of Nigeria is precariously hanging in the balance due to the unchecked criminality of Fulani herdsmen, exacerbated by perceived governmental bias in addressing the menace. This prevailing situation has fostered a widespread perception of apathy, with a prevailing sentiment that governance in the Nigerian state is feeble and unsuccessful. Such a negative image could further reinforce the notion that Nigeria is a risky country for conducting business. This implies that the targets we have set for sustainable development and economic growth in our nation by 2030 are wholly unrealistic. When development continues to support national security, it flourishes.

Conflicts between herders and farmers usually cause disruptions and pose a threat to the sustainability of crop production and pastoral farming. Conflicts like these exacerbate the cycle of extreme poverty and hunger, undermine social order and food security, and primarily impact the already marginalized groups—women and children in a nation as cohesive as Nigeria. Many communities have experienced a vicious cycle of poverty as a result of the conflicts, which has also had an impact on children's education and created barriers to their development and mass displacement (Cabot & Cabot, 2017). For example, in Zamfara state, insecurity has not only negatively impacted economic activity and people's means of subsistence, but farming—which is the primary source of income—has been abandoned, and communities have been abandoned out of fear. This has resulted in the rapid destruction of the social fabric of the communities and the destruction of fundamental human values, the consequences of which are too terrifying to consider (Imo, 2017). Nations globally are diligently striving to transition from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. This shift involves substantial efforts in industrial and technological advancements, as well as ensuring widespread access to food. However, in Nigeria, the actions of Fulani herdsmen, coupled with governmental inaction, have heightened food insecurity, economic challenges, and starvation, contributing to overall underdevelopment. The significant displacement of individuals from their farms and residences by herdsmen has resulted in a rise in the population of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Individuals who should have been actively engaged in cultivating their farms find themselves, through no fault of their own, transformed into beggars and refugees, relying on assistance for their families' survival within their own country (Udosen, 2021). Meanwhile, their homes and farmlands remain abandoned due to the actions of criminal herdsmen. It's crucial to acknowledge that, regardless of any government assertions, the economic and human toll resulting from these criminal activities poses a significant obstacle to sustainable development and security. Moreover, the reckless destruction of farmlands, aquatic resources, and water bodies has profound implications for food security, leading to a negative impact on both the quantity and price of food. One might argue that the government's profiting from corruption in fund allocation to internally displaced persons (IDPs) and receiving grants from foreign donors may be a contributing factor to their inaction in addressing the Fulani herdsmen menace and the growing population in IDP camps. (Chinwokwu, 2017).

However, serious accusations have been made, suggesting that the suspected Fulani herdsmen responsible for various violent crimes in Nigeria may not be Nigerian citizens. This raises concerns not only about the porosity of our borders but also about the apparent inability of our security forces to effectively monitor and safeguard domestic security. The ease with which foreigners, armed with dangerous AK-47 rifles, can traverse the country's hinterlands without detection at numerous roadblocks highlights the inefficiencies, lack of experience, professionalism, and perhaps even

patriotism within our security agencies. Such a situation poses a significant threat to our national security (Wambuma, 2021).

Impact of the Conflict on Socioeconomic Development of Nigeria

The threat posed by Fulani herdsmen is causing severe repercussions for socio-economic development in the targeted states and Nigeria as a whole. The areas affected by the conflict experience significant setbacks in economic and social prosperity due to the destruction of property and incidents of rape. In these states, the widespread crisis disrupts not only the physical infrastructure but also brings daily life to a standstill as people are afraid to engage in farming and other socio-economic activities, fearing for their lives. This escalating situation is rapidly undermining farming, economic endeavors, and social interactions, thereby jeopardizing sustainable development. Moreover, a substantial portion of the national budget is being allocated to compensate families who have lost loved ones in the Fulani herdsmen and farmers conflict. Additionally, considerable funds are being directed towards the acquisition of weapons and ammunition to equip the military in managing the crisis. These expenditures are taking a toll on Nigeria's economy, as highlighted by (Ajibefun, 2018). Similarly, Michael, Inyang, and Ukpong (2017) noted that the attacks by Fulani herdsmen have resulted in significant social dislocation and a persistent atmosphere of suspicion between the Fulani and other ethnic groups in the affected areas. The once legitimate nomadic activities of herdsmen have now become a social stigma, with people harboring discomfort around them. The social harmony and cohesion that used to exist between herdsmen and local residents have been severely strained, leading to a decline in social interactions. The researchers observed that in the past, Fulani herdsmen were welcomed to participate in community associations and engage with community members. However, this dynamic has shifted, and they are now often denied the privilege of joining such associations where they exist, contributing to a sense of social dislocation. In certain communities, resolutions have been made to prohibit the provision of land for herdsmen to graze their herds, significantly impacting social relationships.

According to the World Bank (2015), Nigeria boasting an estimated population of approximately 180 million, holds the status of being the largest country in Africa (Mohammed & Baba, 2018). A significant portion of its populace is involved in agricultural and livestock activities. The nation's diverse agroecological conditions facilitate the production of a wide range of agricultural goods. Moreover, agriculture stands as a crucial pillar in the economy, employing around 70% of the workforce and contributing roughly 60% to the national income (Ameh et al, 2017). Consequently, the extensive available land for agricultural purposes in Nigeria positions the sector as a key player in the country's economic development. Although 75% of the land is suitable for agriculture, only 40% is presently under cultivation (Ameh et al, 2017). Concerning the causes and consequences of the persistent conflicts between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria, Mercy Corps (2013; 2016), a global humanitarian organization supported by the British Department for International Development (DFID), has highlighted significant impacts. The recurrent attacks have imposed substantial costs, leading to a staggering \$14 billion loss over three years and severely affecting food security. Beyond impeding the country's economic development, these clashes have resulted in various economic repercussions, such as hindering trade practices, reducing crop yields, displacing farmers, causing loss of lives and properties, and damaging products in storage as well as public and private infrastructure. The situation is alarming, suggesting that without intervention, the attainment of food security and sustainable development remains elusive (Imo, 2017)

Afolabi (2018) highlighted the multifaceted economic impact of the conflict. Firstly, the cattle industry is experiencing underperformance, contributing only 1.58 percent to Nigeria's GDP as of Q3 2017, in contrast to crop production, which contributed 22.19 percent. The potential for trade between farmers and herdsman could offer a solution, with farmers providing quality feeds to improve the cattle's meat and milk yields if they knew their produce could be exchanged for acceptable payment. However, due to the prevalence of violence over commerce, farmers are instead incentivized to harm crops that they know the cattle will consume, resulting in losses for both farmers and herders. Obi and Chukwumeka (2018) assert that according to the Nigerian Cattle Industry Report (2018), the current revenue generated by the Nigerian cattle market amounts to just US\$6.8 billion annually, falling short of its potential US\$20 billion. This discrepancy is primarily attributed to internal conflicts and the government's incomplete acknowledgment of the industry. Another aspect of the economic repercussions involves the detrimental impact of violence on communities that could have been potential markets for herders. Numerous communities in the affected regions have experienced depopulation, resulting in a refugee crisis that further burdens government resources. The Middle-Belt region has historically been one of Nigeria's most agriculturally productive areas, playing a crucial role in the nation's food production. The fertile soils of this region support the cultivation of important crops such as yam, cassava, rice, soybeans, and guinea corn. These crops are essential to Nigeria's aspirations for achieving self-sufficiency in food production. Hence, it is not an overstatement to assert that the ongoing pastoral conflict in key Middle-Belt states likely carries more significant economic implications for the country than the conflict in North Eastern Nigeria. The threat posed by Fulani herdsman has severe implications for both the national security and socio-economic development of Nigeria (Afolabi, 2018).

Government's Strategies in Resolving Farmers-Herders Conflict in Nigeria

Over the years, the Federal Government has employed various approaches to address the issue. In April 2014, then-President Goodluck Jonathan's administration established an inter-ministerial technical committee on grazing reserves. This committee was assigned the responsibility of devising strategies to mitigate conflicts. Simultaneously, a political Committee on Grazing Reserves, chaired by the then-Governor of Benue state, Gabriel Suswam, was established. The committee's report advocated for the restoration and enhancement of grazing routes encroached upon by farmers. It also recommended that the Central Bank of Nigeria allocate a total of N100 billion (\$317 million) to the 36 state governments for the construction of ranches (Peace, 2017). In 1965, the northern regional government of Nigeria took one of the earliest measures to address the pastoralism crisis associated with emerging conflicts between farmers and herders. The Northern Region Grazing Reserves Law of 1965 aimed to address the issue by establishing corridors for the movement of migrating livestock and designating 415 grazing reserves throughout the country. These reserves were intended to allocate large areas exclusively for herders to graze their livestock. Initially viewed as a legislative solution, challenges arose as population growth, urbanization, and migration encroached on these designated areas, limiting herders' access and use of the reserves. Furthermore, climate changes and inadequate maintenance often made it difficult for herders to find sufficient pasture and water within the reserves. Keeping livestock stationary increased their vulnerability to diseases and banditry, prompting herders to move their herds beyond the reserve boundaries. Both federal and state governments have neglected the maintenance of these reserves, failing to address the concerns of both farmers and herders. In the absence of a concrete response plan to enforce laws regarding cattle routes at all government levels, existing reserves are undergoing distortions (Salihu, 2019).

As a long-term solution, the government announced a new plan in January 2018 to establish 'cattle colonies' nationwide. According to Agriculture Minister Audu Innocent Ogbah, each colony was envisioned to cover 5,000 hectares (approximately 25km by 20km) and serve as a cluster of ranches. These colonies would provide resources and facilities such as grass, water, veterinary services, mills for converting agro-waste to livestock feed, schools,

hospitals, and markets. The entire setup was to be secured by agro-rangers. States were tasked with providing the land, and the federal government would bear the development and maintenance costs, possibly with support from international organizations like the UN Food and Agriculture Organization and the International Fund for Agricultural Development. Ranchers and herders were expected to pay a nominal fee. The government argued that the benefits would include protection from cattle rustlers, a reduction in farmer-herder disputes, healthier livestock, increased meat and dairy production, and additional revenue for state governments (International Crisis Group, 2018)

The federal government has taken several measures to address the escalating violence, including the deployment of additional police and army units. Two military operations, Exercise Cat Race (from 15 February to 31 March) and the ongoing Operation Whirl Stroke, have been initiated to curb violence across six states. In an intensified security response, the government has increased the deployment of both police and military units to the states facing unrest. In November 2017, the Inspector General of Police, Ibrahim Idris, dispatched five mobile police (anti-riot) units to Adamawa State to proactively prevent further clashes. Despite these deployments, the violence persists. President Buhari and other high-ranking officials have engaged in consultations with leaders of both herders and farmers, as well as relevant state governments, to explore ways of halting the attacks. As a potential long-term solution, the government has suggested the creation of "cattle colonies," designating specific land for herders nationwide. More recently, the government has introduced the National Livestock Transformation Plan (2018-2027). While these initiatives signal a heightened commitment on the part of the government, their actual implementation is pending, and the violence continues unabated. Kwaja and Ademola-Adelehen (2018) emphasized that the police have implemented certain measures to gather or confiscate illegal arms. On February 21, Inspector General Idris issued a directive for the public to surrender all unlawful firearms within a 21-day period from February 22 to March 15. During this timeframe, approximately 4,000 firearms were reported surrendered or recovered nationwide by the police. However, it's important to note that this total figure included only 453 firearms from the six states most severely affected by farmer-herder conflicts. Moreover, the initiative did not effectively disarm the groups responsible for the ongoing violence. The National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) was established by the federal government in 1989 through Decree 41, which is now recognized as the Nomadic Education Act, Cap No. 20 Laws of the Federation. The primary objective of this program was to facilitate the economic and social integration of nomadic pastoralists into national life by offering relevant, functional, and mobile basic education along with livelihood skills. Additionally, it aimed to assist pastoralists in modernizing their cattle-rearing techniques to maximize economic potential, encompassing aspects such as dairy processing, marketing, animal vaccinations, and modern herding methods. However, the current state of the nomadic education program is marked by deteriorating infrastructure and deficits in human resources, largely attributed to insufficient funding from the federal government.

In 2016, the National Assembly made an attempt to address conflicts between farmers and herders through the National Grazing Reserve (Establishment) Bill 2016. However, this controversial bill was not passed. The failure to pass the bill was largely attributed to the Land Use Act of 1978, which vests all powers related to the regulation of ownership, alienation, acquisition, administration, and management of Nigerian land with the state governors. The National Assembly's efforts, including the 2016 bill and other attempts to legislate on grazing reserves, were perceived as a violation of the Land Use Act of 1978 and were seen as an endeavor to encroach upon the powers of the governors (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehen, 2018). State-level responses differ. Some have set up local peace commissions or committees to facilitate dialogue between herders and farmers, aiming to address and resolve conflicts. Others, like Ekiti state in the southwest and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) of Abuja in the center, have enacted legislation to control grazing activities. In Benue and Taraba states, governments have implemented laws prohibiting any form of open grazing. In Edo state, authorities have expressed intentions to establish enclosed grazing areas equipped with watering facilities. This would mandate herdsmen to feed their cattle in these designated spaces and cover the

associated costs (Peace, 2017). Herders, viewing these regulations as limiting, frequently do not adhere to them. In the Federal Capital Territory, herders continue to let their cattle roam freely. In Taraba state, the cattle breeders' association has opposed the law prohibiting grazing, declaring an intention to legally challenge it (Peace, 2017).

Certain local responses have been more assertive. In Borno, Niger, and Plateau states, authorities have at times expelled herder groups from specific areas in response to local protests. In May 2016, Governor Okezie Ikpeazu of Abia state revived a local vigilante group, commonly known as the Bakassi Boys. He instructed community chiefs to nominate ten youths for a two-week intensive training with "reformed" Bakassi vigilantes before deploying them to rural communities. Two months later, the Cross River state government announced plans to establish a 3,000-member "Homeland Security Service." Local officials clarified that members would not carry firearms but would engage in activities such as providing intelligence on herders' movements and actions. While these measures might have decreased conflicts in certain areas, in other regions, they have exacerbated the situation. The expulsion of herder groups has heightened their resentment. If community-based vigilante groups target herders in the south, there is a risk that herders may retaliate against southerners residing in the north, thereby further intensifying the conflict (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehen, 2018).

The Way forward

The following steps could be taken to lessen the impact of the herders-farmers conflict on the nation's security and socioeconomic development:

- (a) **Fairness and Good governance:** To bring an end to recurring crises such as the farmers-herders clashes, it is crucial to embrace principles of equity and good governance. There needs to be a concerted effort to educate the political class about the significance of these principles. When there are perceptions of favoritism and nepotism within the government, it tends to provoke reactions from the citizens that can be detrimental to the overall peace of the country. As highlighted by Nnaji et al (2022) the persistent and deadly conflicts between farmers and Fulani herders are, in part, attributed to a lack of good governance. Addressing these governance issues is essential for fostering stability and harmony in the nation.
- (b) **Border Security:** The importance of border security personnel cannot be overstated in addressing the current security challenges in Nigeria. The country's borders, whether in the North-East, North-West, South-West, or South-South, are porous. Therefore, implementing joint-security patrols involving the Armed Forces, the Police, and Paramilitary agents at international borders is crucial (John, 2022). To enhance surveillance, it is imperative to install visual sensors and motion detectors at strategic unmanned border routes. By taking these measures, Nigeria can effectively address issues such as illegal immigration by foreign herders and religious extremists, as well as the illicit importation of weapons. This comprehensive approach to border security would significantly contribute to overcoming these challenges.
- (c) **Dialogue and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) methods:** Engaging in dialogue and utilizing Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) methods is essential. Providing a platform for traditional and religious leaders to unify and influence their respective communities is crucial. These leaders can play a significant role in promoting tolerance, peaceful co-existence, and discouraging violence in conflict situations. Historical records show that traditional institutions served as effective systems of administration, maintaining law and order during the colonial period. Therefore, the government should actively demonstrate a willingness to involve traditional rulers in the pursuit of peace, harmony, and effective leadership in the country. By leveraging the influence of traditional and religious leaders, a more comprehensive and culturally rooted approach to conflict resolution can be achieved (Close, 2020).

- (d) **Education and Orientation:** Massive education and orientation programs are essential for traditional herders, emphasizing the transition from open pastoralism to ranching. This not only minimizes clashes between farmers and herders but also enhances productivity. States like Taraba, Benue, and Ekiti should be commended for enacting anti-open grazing laws. However, these state governments, along with others, including the federal government, should provide financial and material support to herders willing to adopt ranching. Any group of herders openly grazing, leading to violence with farmers, should be apprehended and prosecuted. Applying appropriate laws upon conviction would effectively deter such activities, contributing significantly to reducing herder-farmer conflicts in Nigeria. Additionally, it would limit the hiding places for Fulani extremists and curtail their ability to carry out terror on farming communities (Kerven, Robinson & Behnke, 2021).
- (e) **The three tiers of Nigerian governments (Federal, States, and Local Governments):** The three tiers of Nigerian government must prioritize improving the living conditions of the Nigerian people, many of whom are currently grappling with poverty. It is imperative for governments, private entities, and international organizations to create employment opportunities for the large population of unemployed Nigerian youth, thereby enhancing their overall well-being. Essential amenities such as healthcare, educational facilities, electricity, water, and a well-developed road network should be provided to the Nigerian populace. However, the realization of these objectives hinges on the commitment of the political and economic leadership to combat corruption, injustice, nepotism, and bad governance; factors that insurgents often cite as justifications for their attacks. To achieve this, the government and its anti-corruption agencies should rise above sentimentalities and prosecute all corrupt officials, irrespective of their political, religious, regional, or ethnic affiliations. Upholding principles of good governance is crucial for uniting the country and preventing its disintegration.

Conclusion

A conducive environment, free from crisis and turmoil, is imperative for meaningful growth and development. This review delves into the immediate and underlying causes of the longstanding conflicts between Fulani herders and the farmers in Nigeria, assessing its consequences and proposing potential solutions. Originating in the 1960s, this crisis has resulted in significant loss of lives and property, displacement of families, and the disruption of livelihoods. The primary cause of the conflict lies in the quest for animal fodder, leading to encroachments into crop farms during grazing practices. This has polarized the entire citizenry, raising concerns about the country's continued existence. To ensure meaningful development and growth, all stakeholders must collaborate to address and mitigate the crisis. The review advocates for good governance, the establishment of justice, equity, and adherence to the rule of law as crucial measures to halt the protracted conflicts. Additionally, central government efforts should focus on rectifying the polarized economy, which contributes to ordinary citizens accessing sophisticated weapons for internal conflicts. Those responsible for perpetuating this situation should be held accountable without bias, ensuring that the rule of law prevails.

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