

CLIMATE CHANGE, INSECURITY AND HERDSMEN-FARMER CRISIS IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA

By
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Abstract

More than ever before, the dangers associated with climate change has become more evident and impactful in all societies across the globe in the contemporary era. The dilemma results from natural occurrences to human-induced manifestations; all pointers to the depth and impact on human lives. The present study examines the nexus between desertification of northern Nigeria that harbors 98% of herdsmen in the country and conflicts with farmers on account of the search for arable land for grazing. The continued pattern of migration of the Fulani herdsmen from the North to other parts of the South is a clear manifestation of the pervasive impact of climate change in the region. Thus, the clashes between herdsmen and farmers is presently threatening inter-group relations especially in the middle belt; aggravating ethnic, religious and political tensions across the country. The security conundrum into which this dilemma has put the country manifest as one sore thumb requiring surgical intervention before a possible conflagration that could unbundle the Lugardian architecture of 1914. This paper, contributing to the debate on climate change, green economy and security adopts a qualitative approach in methodology and with a historical narrative model for its analysis by utilizing both primary and secondary sources of data. It concludes that governments across the region especially sahelian West Africa must positively engage themselves to proffer a joint response to the malaise in the land. It specifically tasked the Nigerian state to be proactive in environmental policies that could curb rise in bloody conflicts in the land.

Keywords: Green Economy, Climate Change, Herdsmen, Farmer, Security

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Introduction

The Paris Climate Agreement (PCA) is a turning point in pragmatic policy pursuit on global efforts to tackling climate change by governments and policy makers. The accord, in line with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which is motivated by the need to protect the environment came to limelight again when the French President Emmanuel Macron called for “No Paris Agreement, No New Trade deals”¹ to serve as the official policy of governments in the European Commission. This request, for membership of the PCA to be a prerequisite for trade deals with members of the Commission, was reported to be backed by the EU.² The quest is to make the tackling of the issue of the global climate change more collaborative and concerted.

Climate change is one of the most important issues on the global political and economic agenda, yet it has taken at least 20 years to become an international priority.³

This is because political leaders have subjected the issue of climate change to multiple debate. In the line of questions, which Tom Jacobs succinctly intends to answer in his article is how certain are you that global warming explains many of the new weather patterns we are seeing today?⁴ Skeptics who describe climate change as “junk science” raised this and many arguments. Even the PCA faced a setback with the withdrawal of the US and its subsequent refusal to sign the accord (as the only country out of 196 others). In response, the French President, Emmanuel Macron began to “court” his American counterpart, Donald Trump to drop any anti-PCA stance especially since the US stands to lose EU’s 500,000,000 consumers if it fails to renegotiate trade deals with the EU. This renewed attention to the PCA puts to the spotlight again to the ongoing debate on and the global

¹Arthur Neslen “Macron: EU ‘mad’ to do trade deal with US after Paris climate withdrawal,” 22 March, 2018, <http://www.climatechangenews.com/2018/03/22/macron-eu-mad-trade-deals-us-paris-withdrawal/>

²Karl Mathiesen, “EU says no new trade deals with countries not in Paris Agreement,” Climate Home News, 2 February, 2018, <http://www.climatechangenews.com/2018/02/02/eu-difficult-imagine-trade-deals-countries-not-paris-agreement/>

³ Africa Talks Climate, “Nigeria Talks Climate: The Public Understanding of Climate Change,” BBC World Service Trust, 4.

⁴ Tom Jacobs, “How to Convince A Conservative that Climate Change is Real,” *Pacific Standard*, January 15, 2019, <https://psmag.com/environment/how-to-convince-a-conservative-that-climate-change-is-real>

effort to combating climate change “and [to help nations] adapt to its effects, with enhanced support to assist developing countries to do so.”⁵

Interrogating Climate Change

Climate change refers to a change that is attributed directly or indirectly to human activities that alter the composition of the global atmosphere and which are in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods.⁶ The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) offers the following conservative definition of climate change:

Climate change...refers to a change in the state of the climate that can be identified (e.g., using statistical tests) by changes in the mean and/or the variability of its properties, and that persists for an extended period, typically decades or longer. It refers to any change in climate over time, whether due to natural variability or as a result of human activity.⁷

Therefore, a combination of natural and human-induced forces contributes to climate change and

To get to zero emissions this century requires many policy changes. Fossil fuel companies must have their subsidies stripped. Investments in high-carbon emitting infrastructure must end, particularly World Bank loans and other regional multilateral bank support for countries. Zero emissions buildings will become the norm. Tropical forests will have to be protected to reduce and then eliminate deforestation.⁸

Contrary to the mainstream view of climate change are arguments and individuals that are unconvinced about, reject, dispute, or question the evidences of core climate issue. Rensburg explains that climate change

⁵ “The Paris Agreement,” United Nations Climate Change, retrieved on 4 April, 2018, <https://unfccc.int/process/the-paris-agreement/what-is-the-paris-agreement>

⁶ Thaddeus Chidi Nzeadibe, Chukwudumebi L. Egbule, Nnaemeka A. Chukwuone, Victoria Chinwe Agu, “Climate Change Awareness and Adaptation in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria,” *African Technology Policy Studies Network, Working Paper Series*, no. 57, 7.

⁷ Christian Webersik, *Climate Change and Security: A Gathering Storm of Global Challenges* (Santa Barbara, California: Praeger, 2010): 1-2.

⁸ Simon Lewis, “Five Things You Need To Know About The Paris Climate Deal” IFL Science, retrieved April 13, 2018, <http://www.iflscience.com/environment/five-things-you-need-know-about-paris-climate-deal/>

"skeptics [are] from different walks of life and with different levels of expertise...and display a wide range of intensities of belief (or nonbelief). Some act as vocal public champions of the skeptic cause while others reservedly express unease about the reliability of the science."⁹ These skeptics present contentious argument that seeks to distort and undermine the science of climate change and deny the seriousness of the potential consequences of global warming. The Royal Society—the UK national academy of science—attempts to articulate and address by scientifically answers to key arguments guiding the climate change controversy.¹⁰ Given the gravity of the problem on both ecosystems and human populations if left un-arrested, the objective of this discourse is that this "non-acceptance of a thesis about which no doubt should exist"¹¹ would be reversed and calls for quick, practical, and collective actions by all levels will be taken more seriously. Therefore, this study examines, in more vivid example, the security challenge posed by desertification of the "Sudano-Sahelian" region resulting to the violent conflict between the herdsmen and local farmers emanating from both the northern and southern Nigeria, and the Maghreb which now threatens global peace.¹² With the ongoing danger of climate change, it is only unwise to accept that it is a "scientific controversy [that] was fabricated to confuse the public and decision makers, and delay decisive action against climate change,"¹³ and reject that it is only tilting the ecosystem and human population to more danger.

Political Prophecy, Climate Change and Nigeria

In a prophetic style, on November 29, 1979, the Alhaji Mohammed Goni, the Governor of Borno state, in the Northeastern corner of Nigeria warned that unless the authorities—Federal and state—fought the encroaching desert, the entire nation would be in trouble. He explained that despite the state being declared a disaster zone following the invasion of farmlands by elephants, quail birds, locusts and rats, it had not fully recovered from the drought effects of the early 1970s, yet faces another

⁹ Willem Van Rensburg, "Climate Change Skepticism: A Conceptual Re-Evaluation," *SAGE Open* (April-June 2015): 1.

¹⁰ Royal Society, "Climate Change Controversies: A Simple Guide," (June 2007).

¹¹ Rensburg, "Climate Change," 1.

¹² Chukwuma Onyi, "Climate Change and Conflict in Nigeria: The Boko Haram Challenge," *American International Journal of Social Science* 4, No. 2 (April 2015): 181.

¹³ Rensburg, "Climate Change," 1.

problem of desert encroachment.¹⁴ This solemn cry for prompt and pragmatic response is central to understanding the discourse remotely.

Climatic shifts could also factor into some shortages. More heat plus less rain is already creating drought conditions in parts of northern Nigeria...In parts of southern Nigeria, flooding caused by sea level rise is also contaminating freshwater aquifers, rivers, and stock-watering points, leaving them with high salinity and more polluted with sediment and sewage.¹⁵

Therefore, in Nigeria, climate change and its consequences are far from abstract; it is already determining the course of people's lives. Nigeria in the twenty-first century has been strongly felt the impacts of climate change. In an interview at the 2018 World Economic Forum in Davos, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, the Co-chair of Global Commission for the Economy and Climate headlined discussions with serious concern on the adverse effect of climate change, even in Africa. Explaining that Africa is suffering the largest impact of climate change, she lamented.¹⁶ The continent has witness visible manifestation of what climate change scientists have recognized as the manifestations of global climate change. Examples abound including flooding, gully erosion, drying up of the Lake Chad, greenhouse gas emissions that are causing global warming, and desertification as recorded evidence of the grave dangers that is already the experience of the developing countries in Africa and Nigeria is not immune to these hazards. Adding to the poor response (adaptive also), it is raising the risks of violent conflict in the country. Even recent violent conflicts, the Fulani herdsman-farmers dichotomy, across Nigeria can be associated with climate change.

The IPCC reports, "by the 2080s, many millions more people than today are projected to experience floods every year due to sea-level rise... [largely] in the densely populated and low-lying mega-deltas of Asia and Africa...small islands are especially vulnerable."¹⁷ This rising sea levels is

¹⁴*The Nigeria Year Book 1982: A Record of Events and Development*, (Apapa: Daily Times Publication, December 29, 1979):185.

¹⁵Sayne, "Climate Change," 4.

¹⁶ CNBC Africa, "Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala Talks Climate Change at the WEF," last updated January 25, 2018, <https://www.cnbc.com/africa/videos/2018/01/25/ngozi-okonjo-iweala-talks-climate-change-at-wef/>

¹⁷Africa Talks Climate, 7.

having stark impacts with severe cases of flooding in Nigeria. Between July and October 2012, flooding in Nigeria pushed rivers over their banks and submerged hundreds of thousands of acres of farmland. By mid-October, floods had forced 1.3 million people from their homes and claimed 431 lives, according to Nigeria's National Emergency Management Agency.¹⁸ Flooding affected Adamawa, Taraba, Plateau, Bayelsa and Benue states ravaging crops and agriculture. From the 2012 to 2017, Nigeria has year after year suffered one degree of flood related loss to another.¹⁹ From North to the South, East to the West, the adverse effects are very glaring. In 2013, heavy rain caused flooding in Kano and flash flood in Yobe states. And in 2014, flash floods hit Plateau and Kebbi states destroying as many as 300 houses and leaving 3 dead and over 200 homeless respectively, also damaging livestock and crops; in southern Nigeria, Akwa Ibom and Cross River states suffered from heavy rain-induced flooding. While in 2014, Delta, Anambra and Oyo states were the worst hit. In 2015, local media reported that Zamfara, Adamawa, Kebbi, Kano states suffered from flooding again, not excluding Sokoto state. Again, on Sunday 12 June, 2016, heavy rainfall ransacked several homes causing severe damage in Abakiliki flooding the area and by September, five communities in Anambra state was submerged in water.²⁰ Kano again was affected by another session of flooding. By the second half of 2017, Niger and Benue states suffered from deadly floods. The Benue disaster left over 100,000 people homeless, washing away villages, farmlands and food storage facilities.²¹

The devastating effect on food security in Nigeria because of loss of farm produce is unquantifiable. Whether these flooding are caused by human activities and even triggered by natural phenomenon there is obvious unpreparedness of the government and weak response to these environmental challenges. Erosion too is also an environmental degradation that constitutes climate change. Reports indicate that more severe rainfall is

¹⁸ NASA Earth Observatory,
<https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/NaturalHazards/view.php?id=79404>

¹⁹ See FloodList, <http://floodlist.com/tag/nigeria?r=1>

²⁰ Charles Onyekamuo, "Five Communities in Anambra Submerged by Flood," *ThisDay Newspaper*, last modified September 8, 2016,
<https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2016/09/08/five-communities-in-anambra-submerged-by-flood/>

²¹ "Benue Devastating Flooding," *ThisDay Newspaper*, last modified on September 10, 2017,
<https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2017/09/10/benues-devastating-flood/>

causing massive sheet erosion in the sandy soils of the southeast, again resulting in lower yields.²² With torrential rains during the wet season becoming heavier and more destructive, floods will become more frequent in the south, thus intensifying the risk of landslides and erosion.²³ Agulu, Nanka and Oko communities are the worst hit in Anambra state which is the most affected of all the states in Nigeria. In towns like Nanka, Nkpologwu, Agulu-Ezechukwu, Ekwulobia and Agulu, the gully extends for kilometers with width and depth in tens and hundreds of meter.²⁴

Furthermore, the dual strike of climate change and overuse had led to the disappearing of inland water bodies even the Lake Chad is shrinking.²⁵ According to Aaron Sayne "less rainfall and higher temperatures have helped shrink Lake Chad, once the world's sixth largest lake and the north's biggest irrigation resource, to one-tenth its size a half century ago."²⁶ Also, the recent UN Meeting, coverage and Press Release blames increasing insecurity in the region to the continued disadvantages posed by the shrinking of the Lake Chad and climate change. Its drying up has left fishermen jobless, herdsmen traversing long distances in search of greener pastures, and young people joining terrorist groups.²⁷ The dropping of water levels in the Lake Chad, which serves as a source of water for irrigation, further threatens food security.

Nigeria is one of the main producers of greenhouse gas emissions and this is causing global warming. According to Nzeadibe et al, Human activities have tended to exacerbate climate change and its impacts on agriculture and livelihoods in some communities in Nigeria. For example, the Niger Delta region of Nigeria is reported to have over 123 gas flaring sites making

²² Aaron Sayne, "Climate Change Adaptation and Conflict in Nigeria," *Special Report 247* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace, June 2011): 5.

²³ Africa Talks Climate, 8.

²⁴ I.I. Obiadi, C.M. Nwosu, N.E. Ajaegwu, E.K. Anakwuba, N.E. Onuigbo, E.O. Akpunonu, and O.E. Ezim, "Gully Erosion in Anambra State, South East Nigeria: Issues and Solution," *International Journal of Environmental Sciences* 2, no. 2 (2011): 801.

²⁵ D. A. Yunana, A. A. Shittu, S. Ayuba, E. J. Bassah and W. K. Joshua, "Climate Change and Lake Water Resources in Sub-Saharan Africa: Case Study of Lake Chad and Lake Victoria," *Nigerian Journal of Technology* 36, No. 2, (April 2017): 648.

²⁶ Sayne, "Climate Change," 5.

²⁷ UN Meetings, Coverages and Press Releases "Better Governance of Underfunded, Poorly Managed Lake Chad Basin Key to Resolving Conflict, Suffering Across Region, Speaker Tells Security Council," <https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/sc13259.doc.htm>

Nigeria one of the highest emitters of greenhouse gases in Africa (Akinro et al. 2008). A recent study by the World Bank (2008) revealed that Nigeria accounts for roughly one-sixth of worldwide gas flaring. Nigeria flares about 75% of her gas and all take place in the Niger delta region. The flares have apparently contributed more greenhouse gases hence climate change in the region than anything else.²⁸

The urgency required for nations to take urgent steps to combat climate change is the urgency required to reduce the more severe consequences of climate change.

Conceptualizing the Nexus between Climate Change and Conflicts

The ecological challenge in Nigeria points towards the dry period getting drier, more rainfall occurring during the wet period, and an overall shift in seasons.²⁹ In Northern Nigeria, the Sahara shift or desert encroachment is a result of climate change as it characterizes that part of the country. Deforestation too is having an impact on desertification and soil degradation. Sayne explains that the

combination of more heat plus less rain raises the specter of widespread desertification, especially in northern Nigeria. According to some estimates, fully two-thirds of Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kano, Kaduna, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, Yobe, and Zamfara states could turn desert or semi-desert in the twenty-first century. Already the Sahel creeps south by approximately 1,400 square miles a year, swallowing whole villages; government geological data show a 400 percent increase in sand dunes over twenty years.³⁰

Thus, in addition to flooding in the region like other states in the south that have experienced more gully erosion and greater production of greenhouse gases, the Northern region is facing a major environmental challenge of drought and desert encroachment. The BBC Citizens' Focus Group

²⁸Nzeadibe, "Climate Change," 7.

²⁹Africa Talks Climate, 8.

³⁰Sayne, "Climate Change," 3.

Discussion and interviews on the effect of Climate Change in Nigeria reflects this adverse condition:

In northern Nigeria, many people have noticed a reduction in agricultural output due to drought and desert encroachment: "Years back, we use to have...trees and we use to grow groundnuts and local beans," a man from Jigawa remembers, "but there was this strong approach of drought that took over, and since then we don't grow them anymore. The lack of trees gave way for the desert to come in."

Farmers in particular feel the effects: "In those days you could farm and harvest food that would last for a whole year, but these days your harvest can't last up to six months," says one in Jigawa. "If you had 10 cows you wouldn't be worried because they could go around and they fed well because there was grass, but now even if you have two cows you will be worried because there is no grass for them to eat." Clearly, farmers are worried by the change in their circumstances.³¹

In May 2017, the National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) launched a voluntary initiative as an attempt to rescue the environment and people from the grave dangers posed by these changes. This response was named Tree Planters Association (TPA) and was kick started in Sokoto state by the Batch A, Stream 1 Corp-members. The first effort was to plant tree seedlings at the newly established NYSC Orientation camp at Wamakko. Wamakko, like other parts of Sokoto and Northern Nigeria, is a veritable example of the havoc of climate change—desert encroachment. Encamped for the mandatory 3 week of national service year, Corp-members were always covered by a less severe version of the Sahelian sandstorms, because the few trees (which had been deliberately planted by the NYSC management earlier) could not withstand the wind nor were there enough grasses to prevent it. Therefore, the TPA was a campaign for afforestation and reforestation in the state. Participating Corp-member serving in the state were urged to plant and tend a tree for the duration of time in the state. This was a strategy to reach the One-Million-Tree target set by the TPA.³²

³¹Africa Talks Climate, 10.

³²The author is a pioneer member of this TPA; "NYSC to Plant One Million Trees in Sokoto," *The Nation*, last modified 14 February, 2017, <http://thenationonlineng.net/nysc-to-plant-one-million-trees-in-sokoto/>

Therefore, that Northern Nigeria in the Sahel and Sudan ecological zones is today threatened by climate change is evident and this is exacerbating activity of traversing herdsmen in other parts of Nigeria. In an area described as more or less a continuous zone corresponding mainly to the climatic and vegetation zone of the Sahel is predominant the home of the Fulani nomads in Africa. Largely, this influx of herdsmen from other affected West African neighbors—especially neighbors up North, Niger and Chad—to the richer food resource zones for their herds is not peculiar in and to Nigeria as other parts of Sub-Saharan Africa have been affected, including Ghana³³. This rapid migration pattern can also be described as resource-induced migration. The BBC reports that rural-to-urban migration is expected to intensify, linked to economic development and industrialization and aggravated by agricultural failures and a loss of arable land due to desertification. Some 3,500 sq/km of land turn into desert each year, uprooting farmers and herdsmen and causing internal migration towards coastal areas.³⁴ The southern movement of herdsmen is causing a major damage and triggering and/or intensifying migration processes that are difficult to control. Also, as the WGBU report explains that most environmental migration is initially likely to occur within national borders is visibly rampant all over Nigeria and draws attention by the incessant crushing experience of resource conflict reported all over national media.³⁵ The next phase of this environmental migration is trans-boundary migration which might already be the norm considering the commonality of the challenge with countries across the Sudanese ecological zone, the migratory nature of the herdsmen and the porosity of Nigeria's borders. The possibility of foreign infiltration, whether nomads or "Gaddafi's gunmen"³⁶ as Nigeria's president argues, is frightening. Yakubu in his thesis on cattle trade in Maigatari, Jigawa state explains that Nigerians and foreigners, especially Nigeriens dominate the business; adding that cattle were sourced from

³³ Emmanuel Agyemang, "Farmer-Herder Conflict in Africa: An Assessment of the Causes and Effects of the Sedentary Farmers-Fulani Herdsmen Conflict. A Case Study of the Agogo Traditional Area, Ashanti Region of Ghana," (MA Thesis submitted to the Department of History and International Studies, University of AgderNsukka).

³⁴ Africa Talks Climate, 8.

³⁵ German Advisory Council on Global Change, "Summary for policy-maker, World in Transition: Climate Change as a Security Risk," (Berlin WBGU, 2007): 3.

³⁶ Samuel Ogundipe, "Buhari Blames Gaddafi for Killing across Nigeria," *Premium Times*, last updated on April 12, 2018, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/264764-buhari-blames-gaddafi-for-killings-across-nigeria.html>

outside of Nigeria too. These livestock were brought by either truck or hoof or through cross-border smuggling of cattle.³⁷ Likewise, foreign transhumant Fulani from the Sahel, who suffer the same fate as their counterpart in Nigeria, pastoralists also herd their cattle down southern Nigeria in search of grazing lands and water for their cattle. This gives credibility to the fact that transnational Fulani nomads are responsible some of the crises in Nigeria too.

The effect of climate change is all over the Sahelian region and the possibility of high spillover risk in conflict region. The social impacts of climate change can transcend borders, thereby swiftly expanding the geographical extent of crisis and conflict regions.³⁸ In the Sub-Saharan Africa, cases of farmers-herders conflict are widespread across the sub region. Consequently, Nigeria has been characterized by this climate-induced conflict. This "conflict constellations" are defined as typical causal linkages at the interface of environment and society, whose dynamic can lead to social destabilization and, in the end, to violence.³⁹

The links between environmental degradation, political tension and conflict have been highlighted for many years. Environmental degradation reduces the supply of food and fresh water, and resources such as land. Climate change is predicted to exacerbate conflict in Africa, and in some cases is already doing so.⁴⁰

Climate change is worsening resource scarcity and thus heighten the risk of conflict—resource conflict. Sayne draws a nexus between the recurrent conflicts over resource control and climate change in Nigeria thus:

Conflicts over resources have long been a depressingly familiar part of Nigeria's social order. According to one estimate, communal violence, most of it involving contested resources, killed at least 10,000 Nigerians in less than a decade. Again, links to climate change can be more or less

³⁷AdamuYakubu, "Cattle Trade and the Development of Maigatari Economy in Jigawa state, Nigeria, 1960-2010," (MA Thesis submitted to the Department of History and International Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka): 72, 63.

³⁸ German Advisory, 2.

³⁹ German Advisory, 2.

⁴⁰Africa Talks Climate, 7.

strong. A case in point is Nigeria's frequent farmer-herder conflicts. In a pattern seen across the Sahel since the thirty-year drought, feed and water shortages caused partly by desertification and drought have sent nomadic pastoralists, most of them ethnic Fulanis, wandering south, outside their normal grazing routes. At the same time, a mix of weather-related factors has pushed farmers to cultivate more land each year, leaving wanderers fewer places to water and graze their stock. The resulting contests may have been responsible for the deaths of several hundred Nigerians since the return of democracy in 1999.⁴¹

Further strengthening this assertion on the link between the conflict associated with the herdsmen migration southwards and the effects of climate change in Nigeria, Osaghae et al elucidates that:

Although virtually all inter-group clashes in Nigeria have involved the mobilization of identities in the competition for some socio-economic and/or political resources, it is still possible to isolate a class of conflicts that are almost exclusively defined by the competition for scarce economic goods. The classic example is the conflict over grazing opportunities that has taken place across the length and breadth of the country between Fulani herdsmen and sedentary farming populations.⁴²

Therefore, that climate change accounts for the worsening incidence of conflict between Fulani herdsmen and farmers across Nigeria is unequivocal.

The Fulani herdsmen are nomadic and habitually migratory, moving annually from North to South in search of grazing fields for their herds. However, the movement which used to be seasonal has been altered due to expansive desertification, drought and unchecked deforestation in Northern Nigeria. The herdsmen now seek greener pasture southward. As migration intensifies, so also do violent clashes over grazing

⁴¹Sayne, "Climate Change," 5.

⁴²Eghosa E. Osaghae and Rotimi T. Suberu, "A History of Identities, Violence, and Stability in Nigeria," *CRISE WORKING PAPER* No. 6, (January 2005): 20.

lands between local farmers in the South and pastoral herdsmen, who are guilty of devouring crops and forcefully appropriating lands.⁴³

This conflicts between crop farmers or host communities and herders are common in nearly every part of Nigeria.⁴⁴ The major source of tensions is economic, with land related issues accounting for the majority of the conflicts. This can then be situated within the broader context of the political economy of land struggle.⁴⁵ Since grazing is a major means of animal rearing in Nigeria, in the far northern Nigeria, overgrazing is described as a significant contributor to desertification⁴⁶ of the area and in the south it is leading to increasing competition for land between farmers and nomadic herdsmen. Moreover, alongside the distortion in the grazing patterns of nomadic herdsmen, farmers have also altered their traditional cultivatable lands because of the depletion in soil yield to take advantage of more fertile arable lands. Adisa citing Ingawa, Ega, and Erhabor (1999) reports thus:

Changing resource access rights, whereby traditional access rights to communal grazing and water resources are being obstructed by the individual tenureship of arable farmers. This is particularly severe on the traditional trek routes, which become favorite cropping sites because of their better soil fertility resulting from the concentration of animal manure from the trekking herds in these areas. Within the Fadama areas, this is exacerbated by the fragmented nature of the

⁴³ David Emoche, "Herdsmen-Farmers Crisis: A Fallout of Climate Change ," *Sahara Reporters*, last modified February 24, 2018, <http://saharareporters.com/2018/02/24/herdsmen-farmers-crisis-fallout-climate-changedavid-emoche>

⁴⁴Dimelu Mabel Ukamaka, Salifu Edward Danjuma, Chah Jane Mbolle, Enwelu Innocent Achonam and Igbokwe Edwin Mbadiwe. "Livelihood issues in herdsmen-farmers' conflict among farming communities in Kogi State, Nigeria." *African Journal of Agricultural Research* 12, no. 24 (2017): 2105.

⁴⁵Chukwuechefulam Kingsley Imo, "The Demographic Implications of Nomadic Herdsmen and Farmers Clashes in Nigeria," *International Journal of Development and Management Review* 12, no. 1 (June, 2017): 46.

⁴⁶Ifeyori I. Ihimodu, "Land use Practices, Livestock, Grazing and fuelwood extraction as Agents of Deforestation and Biodiversity Loss in Nigeria," in *Environmental Problems of Nigeria (With Special Emphasis in Northern Nigeria)*, ed. Akinjide Osuntokun (Ibadan: Davidson Press, 1999): 108.

crop plots, which makes prevention of animals straying in the crop plots difficult.⁴⁷

Inequitable access to land, diminishing land resources linked with poor response to the impacts of climate change have enabled fierce competition for resources. In addition, the growing human population will inevitably make environmental change more disruptive in the future even in the face of increased technological prowess.⁴⁸ The attempt to meet the food resource demand of the expanding Nigerian population in more arable lands have left farmers scrambling for traditionally uncultivated lands is also a causative factor; alongside

Resource becomes a melting point for both farmers and transhumant herders. The former pressured converts traditionally fallow lands that are more arable to farmland, some of which are the traditional routes and grazing sight of herdsmen, to increase crop yields. Eventually, these encroachment into traditional trek routes and traditional farmlands results to conflict between local farmers who have been threatened in their land by migrating Fulani nomad and their cattle as the later attack farms destroying crops in their search for grazing field.

Historicizing Herdsmen-Farmers Crisis

The herdsmen-Farmer dichotomy in Nigeria has become a perennial challenge since return to democratic rule in 1999. The conflict motivated by the country's ecological exigency setting has left deep wounds in the heart of many with hundreds of lives lost and viable communities in the middle-belt region of Nigeria desolated and even deserted. Conflicts resulting from cattle grazing actually accounted for 35% of all reported crises between 1991 and 2005 in Nigeria.⁴⁹ According to the 2017 Global Terrorism Index Database, the decline of attacks by Boko Haram did not equate decline in

⁴⁷Rashid Solagberu Adisa, "Land Use Conflict between Farmers and Herdsmen – Implications for Agricultural and Rural Development in Nigeria," in *Rural Development—Contemporary Issues and Practices*, ed. Rashid Solagberu Adisa (InTech, 2012), ISBN: 978-953-51-0461-2, <http://www.intechopen.com/books/rural-development-contemporary-issues-and-practices/land-use-conflictbetween-famers-and-herdsmen-implications-for-agricultural-and-rural-development-in>, 101-102.

⁴⁸ Mary-Elana Carr, Kate Brash and Robert F. Anderson, "Climate Change: Addressing the Major Skeptic Argument," *DB Climate Change Advisors* (September 2010): 5.

⁴⁹Imo, "The Demographic," 50.

the number of death as a result of militancy in Nigeria. The Fulani extremists who undertook more attacks and were responsible for more deaths than the Boko Haram in 2016, accounts for the killing of over 2,500 people in Nigeria between 2012 and 2016.⁵⁰ The prevalence of these attacks which took place in the context of ongoing tension between nomadic herders and sedentary farmers throughout the region and which are exacerbated by resource scarcity and desertification has obviously been on the high side especially in recent times. There has also been increasing inflammatory speeches by prominent Fulani leaders like the National Chairman of the Fulbe (Fulani) Development Association of Nigeria (FULDAN), Mallam Ahmed Usman Bello,⁵¹ the leaders of Miyatteh Allah Cattle Breeders Association—and umbrella group of Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria⁵² and call by the Ohanaeze Youth Council banning herdsmen in Igboland⁵³ because of their activities.

Series of clashes between herdsmen and farmers resulting to loss of lives and properties were reported in the Nigeria national dailies. On May 31, 2017, on the floor of upper chamber of the National Assembly, the Senators in strongest of words condemned the insecurity in the country because of the farmer-herdsmen crisis. They described the phenomenon as terrorist acts, another form of Boko Haram, and highlighted the need to deal decisively with the herdsmen attacks across the country.⁵⁴ The Global Terrorism Index even ranked the herdsmen as the fourth largest terrorist group only after Boko Haram, ISIS and Al-Shabab in 2014.⁵⁵ The spate of killings in the crisis from January 2016 to May 18, 2017 claimed the lives of not less than 8626 people according to Clifford Ndujihe timeline on the crisis.

⁵⁰ Institute for Economics and Peace, "Global Terrorism Index 2017: Measuring and understanding the impact of terrorism," 24.

⁵¹Iferekelyang, "No One Can Defeat Us in Nigeria—Fulani National Leader, Bello Boasts." *Daily Post Nigeria*, January 2018, <http://dailypost.ng/2018/01/29/no-one-can-defeat-us-nigeria-fulani-national-leader-bello-boasts/amp>

⁵² Samuel Adesanya, "Benue Killings: 'We Warned Buhari about Looming Crisis'—Fulani Leaders." *The Nation Nigeria*, January 2018, <http://www.google.com/amp/thenationonlineng.net/benue-killings-we-warned-buhari-looming-crisi-fulani-leaders/amp>

⁵³ChuksOnuoha, "Ohanaeze Youth Council bans herdsmen in Igboland." *The Sun*, 18th January 2018, <http://sunnewsonline.com/ohanaeze-youth-council-bans-herdsmen-in-igboland/>

⁵⁴ Henry Umoru, "Herdsmen attacks, another Boko Haram—Senate," *Vanguard Nigeria*, accessed May 7, 2018, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/06/herdsmen-attacks-another-boko-haram-senate/>

⁵⁵ Institute for Economics and Peace, "Global Terrorism Index 2015: Measuring and understanding the impact of terrorism," 4.

The timeline presents an elaborate summary of the attacks by the herdsmen on local communities within this period across Nigeria.

On the first week of January, between 12 and 38 people were killed in Udeni Ruwa, in Nasarawa State and 45 were killed in Agatu, Benue State and on January 17, 2016 three people were killed in Gareji village in Taraba State. In nearby Adamawa state, between 30-60 people were killed including a police DPO in Demsare, Wunamokoh, Dikajam and Taboungo. From the 2 February 20-28, 2016, series of herdsmen attack occurred in Agatu, the thriving but sleepy town in Benue state recording over 600 casualties. In Abii Enugu state, the entire community suffered severe attack leading to the declaration of several individuals missing and on the 2 March, 2016, residents of Ossissa, in Ndokwa, Delta State fled their homes following attacks by herdsmen.

March 7, 2016: Eight people were killed and the next day, 12 were killed in Mbaya-Tombo, both in Benue. There were more deaths on March 13, 2016; then 15 more on March 17.

March 26, 2016: 76 residents of Ugwunesi in Awgu LGA in Enugu State were arrested and detained by soldiers for holding a meeting to discuss the problem of herdsmen attacks in their area. **April 3-7, 2016:** Between April 3 and 4 about 7 and 16 people were killed in Ohali-Elu, in Rivers State.

April 9, 2016: In Ilado, Ondo State, OluFalae, former SGF, was attacked and a security guard was killed.

April 10, 2016: Between 15 and 44 were killed in Angai, Dashole, Dori and Mesuwa villages, all in Taraba State.

April 18, 2016: There was news that another 18 people had been killed in Moor.

April 20, 2016: Soldiers were attacked in Agatu, Benue, and a policeman was declared missing

April 25, 2016: Herdsmen attacked Nimbo Community of Uzo-Uwani LGA in Enugu and killed no fewer than 46 persons.

November 25, 2016: Dungun Mu'azu community in Sabuwa Local Government Area of Katsina State was thrown into crisis as armed herdsmen cut down seven men and one woman in a nocturnal reprisal attack.

January 4, 2017: Five indigenes of Abraka and Obiarukwu both in Ethiope East and Ukwani local government areas of Delta State, were reportedly killed during a clash between farmers and suspected herdsmen along the boundary of the neighboring communities.

January 8, 2017: Five Mobile Policemen and two civilians died in an attack by suspected herdsmen in Demsa Local Government Area of Adamawa State. The Mobile policemen were deployed to Kwayina, Gideon Dadi and Kurlai communities after clashes by residents with armed herdsmen that left more than 40 persons dead. Apart from the policemen, two other bodies were recovered after the attacks.

January 9, 2017: No fewer than five persons were hacked to death by suspected herdsmen in two separate attacks in Abraka and Obiaruku, both in Ethiope East and Ukwuani Local Government Area of Delta State

January 15, 2017: Nine people including a Police Inspector and a Superintendent of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corp (NSCDC) were killed by herdsmen in RafinGona and BCC Gbagyi villages in Bosso local government area of Niger State.

January 17, 2017: Three persons were killed and five injured when herdsmen opened fire in SamaruKataf market in Zango-Kataf Local Council of Kaduna State.

January 24, 2017: 15 persons were killed by rampaging Fulani herdsmen, who attacked farmers in Ipiga village in Ohimini Local Government Area of Benue State. Some armed herdsmen stormed the neighbouring Ajegbe village, where they grazed their cattle and destroyed farmlands. From there they moved into Ipiga village, shooting sporadically, though they met a stiff resistance from the locals. A bloody fight erupted and two of the herdsmen were reportedly killed, while about 13 of the villagers were also killed.

January 24, 2017: Five students of the College of Education, Gidan Waya, Jema'a Local Government Area, Kaduna State, were reportedly shot dead close to GidanWaya, when a commercial car taking them to school from Kafanchan was waylaid by herdsmen.

February 10, 2017: Eight people were confirmed dead in Zamfara State, following a clash between community members and suspected herdsmen in Rukumawa Tsafe Local Government Area.

February 21, 2017: Fulani herdsmen launched attacks on four communities in Southern Kaduna killing no less than 21 people.

March 1, 2017: Three persons were killed in clashes involving indigenes and suspected herdsmen in some communities of Delta and Rivers states.

March 2, 2017: No fewer than 10 persons were killed in a renewed hostilities between herdsmen and farmers in Mbahimin community, Gwer East Local Government Area of Benue State.

March 6, 2017: Two persons died in a clash between suspected herdsmen and residents of Omumu community in Ika South Local Council of Delta State.

March 11, 2017: Seven people were killed when herdsmen attacked a Tiv community, Mkgovur village in Buruku local government area of Benue State.

March 14, 2017: One person was killed and several others injured when herdsmen and the people of Umuobasikwu, Ozuitem community in Bende local government area of Abia State clashed.

March 28, 2017: Three persons were feared killed while six others sustained injuries as a group suspected to be herdsmen attacked Emuhu community in Ika South local council of Delta State.

May 8, 2017: Three persons were confirmed killed by herdsmen in Tse-Akaa village, Ugondo Mbamar District of Logo Local Government Area of Benue State.

May 10, 2017: The Delta Police command confirmed that an inspector was killed and three other policemen injured by suspected herdsmen in Abraka, Ethiope East LGA of the state.

May 12, 2017: Suspected herdsmen beheaded a commercial motorcycle rider identified as Udoka Ossai and six farmers who are indigenes of Ossissa community in Ndokwa East Local Government Area of Delta State.

May 13, 2017: Less than one week after many people were killed by herdsmen in three communities of Logo Local Government Area of Benue State, armed herders struck again on May 13 killing eight more people.

May 18, 2017: Two persons lost their lives after suspected herdsmen attack in AfamUku, in Oyigbo Local Government Area of Rivers State.⁵⁶ These losses may not be one-sided as the herdsmen also suffer considerable loss of cattle. The Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association, the umbrella organization of herdsmen, notes that it has lost no fewer than 6000 cows to the crisis in southern Kaduna only.⁵⁷ This shows that conflictual relations between and amongst the parties inflict some measure of pain on all.

⁵⁶ Clifford Ndujihe, "Timeline of major herdsmen attacks," *Vanguard Nigeria*, accessed May 7, 2018, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/06/herdsmen-attacks-another-boko-haram-senate/>

⁵⁷ Christopher I. Ndubuisi, "A critical analysis of conflicts between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria: Causes and socioreligious and political effects on national development," *HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 74(1), 3.

Conclusion

In the view of Lord Nicholas Stern, 'there is still time to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, if we act now and act internationally.'⁵⁸ As a panacea to this crisis, the Federal Governments proposed the Grazing Bill to establish Cattle Colonies, which would confine herdsmen and their cattle to designated locations in each state of the Federation. In the face of the recurring indigene and settler dichotomy of the Nigeria federalism,⁵⁹ various communities and even the Legislative Assembly outrightly rejected this proposal; however, this could not bring to an end this fierce competition for available scarce resources. Farming communities in Benue state were the worst hit, and the state Legislative Assembly, on November 1, 2017 quickly adopted the Anti-Grazing Bill as a responsive panacea to the crisis.⁶⁰ Other state governments like Ekiti and Taraba followed in this footsteps. The bill declared free ranging of cattle illegal and limited the itinerant business of cattle rearing in the state to ranching only. Scholars have advocated for this approach as a more realistic. The prototype is the European model of and transition to making cattle and sheep breeding a sedentary occupation. Okeke argues that:

rather than create grazing routes and reserves for Fulani herders outside their states of origin, the federal and, more importantly, the state governments of Fulani states should make livestock production a sedentary occupation. They should build ranches in Fulani states and on lands owned or leased (not seized) by the Fulani and confine cattle breeding within the enclosed areas.⁶¹

Though this measure (if adopted) could end the violence, however, this resource-induced migration is the consequence of climate change. This temporary solution cannot end desertification in the Sahel and other visibly manifest consequence of climate change across Nigeria. As long as government does not adopt more strategies that are realistic to combating

⁵⁸Webersik, *Climate Change*, 1.

⁵⁹ Leonard I. Ugwu, "Indigene and Settler Problem: Towards a Socio-psychological Analysis," in *Issues in Nigerian Peoples and Culture*, ed. Obiora Anichebe (Nsukka: Afro-Orbis Pub., 2009): 49-64.

⁶⁰AgerzuaTahav, "Ortom Declares Prohibition of Open Grazing in Benue state," *Benue News*, last updated on November 1, 2017, <https://benuestate.gov.ng/2017/11/01/>

⁶¹Okeke, "Conflicts," 78.

climate change, reminiscent of the former Governor's, Alhaji Mohammed Goni plea for pragmatic action nearly four decades now, trouble and insecurity still looms. However, since this crisis is transnational, solution should be international in approach. And given the spillover that is rife across Sub-Saharan African states and not particularly on those within the climatic and vegetation zone of the Sahel, home of the Fulani nomads, the approach to combating climate change and its consequences should be collective.