



Climate Change, Resource Exploitation and Governance Policies: The Phenomena for Herdsmen-Farmers Conflicts and Food Insecurity in Nigerian States

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Abstract

The manner in which armed herders are now occupying river flood-plains and forests; coupled with the way in which farmers have expanded their farm lands to the river bank due to the low rainfall in recent times has exacerbate conflicts and increase attacks between armed herders' and farmers in Nigerian states. This article examines the narratives of occurrence attacks and conflicts between farmers and armed herders in Southwestern states; The work is qualitative it employs exploratory survey design with conduct of in-depth interviews among purposively selected fifteen (15) key informants; five (5) each as representatives from the groups in the selected communities to investigate the experiences of climate change, and occurrence of armed herders attacks on farmers in the communities. The findings revealed that while climate change experience provides empirical basis for the movement of migrant armed herders; more complex factors as struggle to access natural resources as – contested space for cattle grazing, farm lands, socio-economic needs, ethno-political factors, and government policies exacerbate conflicts and provide a backdrop for armed herders, farmers attacks. The work contends that the occurrence of encroachment in farmers farm lands over the access to resources with inconsistent policy on resource management has given rise to fear of land occupation, threats of livelihoods and increase spate of human and food insecurity in the states. Good resource management policies with climate adaptation mitigation strategies is imperative to ensure peaceful co-existence among groups of people in Nigerian states.

Keywords: Climate change, Natural resources, Policy, Sustainable Development, Nigerian States.

Introduction

The occurrence of conflicts between armed herders and farmers over access to natural resources have become severer and increasingly widespread across Nigerian states. The repeated communal conflicts have given rise to both food and human insecurity as well as ethnic clashes over ownership of land, and scramble for access to available resources had been on increased most especially in the densely populated Africa countries (Fasona and Omojola 2005; Okunola and Ademola, 2016). Extant literature revealed that repeated conflicts between armed herders and farmers in Nigeria like many other Africa states were aggravated by climate-induced encounters which have compounded the experience of food and human security challenges in the states. (Ojo, 2020; Egbuta, 2018; Eke, 2020)

Diminishing access to land in most African states has caused a fierce competition, especially the two major groups of agricultural land users-transhumant pastoralists and sedentary peasant farmers. The incessant conflicts between these ago-user groups have grave implications for human security in Nigeria states. Thus, possible struggle over access to scarce land, water and grazing routes over the years have resulted in recurrent and growing violent conflicts in its rate as well as strength all over the geographical locations (Turaki 2024), Resource conflict in Nigeria is considered a major challenge due to poor resource management, governance and has become a daunting threat to human security in all 36 Nigerian states (Turaki, 2024; Adekule and Adisa, 2010). It has become unfavorable experience in the rural communities where the livelihoods, food production had become a



serious challenge to national security of the nation.

Resource utilization as a source of conflict in Nigerian states like many other sub-Saharan African states, occur as a result of unlimited nature of human needs and struggles for access to natural resources, while the share of its proceeds has remained a major cause of conflicts between and among communities, group and ethnic groups (Okunola and Ademola, 2016). Naturally, human movement has been at the heart of many contentions in African countries, and that conflicts between native communities, migrant herders over access to natural resources. Studies have shown that in the Nigeria middle belt area, fresh water and arable land for native farming populations, food production and pasture for cattle herders had been in increased given rise to food insecurity (Baca, 2015; Ademola, 2020). Food security has been linked to access to basic infrastructures in the states, and availability of need resources for development. Availability of adequate resources and access to infrastructural facilities enhances individuals' and households' physical, economic, socio-cultural development, food production as well as consumption (Obayelu et al, 2014). Evidences from extant literature have shown that adequate investment in rural infrastructures and secured environment is essential to improved food production, which can give a significant improvement on food chain system and security of a given state.

While migration of pastoralists in Nigeria have found not distinct from other African countries, its historical experience of incessant conflicts and attacks for access to scarce resources like water and land is very common (Baca, 2015). According to the national population commission authorized figures, Nigeria's population has grown in four-fold over the years: from 33 million in 1950; the country's population has increased from 56.6 million in 1963, into 88.9 million in 1991 and 140 million in 2006 respectively (NPC, 2018). As at 2018, National Population Commission had approximated the population to be around 198; growing towards 200 million (NPC, 2018). With the population increase, there have been

correspondent increase in the peoples' needs for resources within the different geographical locations and by which the inhabitants' as well as groups within these geographical areas have adapted diverse methods to curtail different conflicts given to contention over fringe available resources and climatic conditions (Agnew, 2021). Population growth, climate change and environmental scarcity have been considered a nexus to conflicts and of which in most cases always lead to violent conflict. Indeed, increase in demographic growth often led to decline in resources, competition and consequently resulted in socio-economic instability (Gleditsch and Urdal, 2002). Phenomena as increase in the population among other factors in Nigeria had therefore, put pressure on land and water resources mostly explored by herders who travel miles in search of grassland for their cattle (ACLED, 2014). On this note, Nigeria has been considered a country with high rate of resource-related conflict, as it is believed that, Nigeria has experienced a distinctly much number of these conflicts compare to other African countries.

Climate change exacerbate conflict through various cascading impacts. In Nigeria, the impacts include droughts, desertification, and changing weather patterns that have led to water and food scarcity, causing tensions and conflicts over access to these resources. Rising sea levels, frequent natural disasters, and decreased livelihoods can force people to migrate, possibly lead to land, resource, and cultural identity conflicts. One very important cascading impact of climate change is the altered migration patterns of herders and their animals for pasture and water (Albert, 2025). Understanding these impacts is crucial for developing effective strategies to adapt to climate change like, reducing the risk of conflict, and promoting peace and stability. Previously, herders arrived with their grazing animals after the harvest on farmers' land, but with longer dry and shorter rain periods, this harmonious rhythm is shaken up, and herders now often arrive before the harvest, leading to clashes with sedentary farmers who are losing their crops and incomes to the grazing animals (Albert, 2025). This led to violent conflicts across the land



as the migrating herders were associated with extreme violence, forcing many farmers to flee their farms.

The occurrence of many other conflicts like religious, ethnicity and ethno-cultural conflicts are however easily exacerbated by climate change and resource scarcity (Blench, 2003). Scholars in environmental security have established causal links between climate change driven environmental scarcity and violence (Bauhaug, et al, 2008). They have agreed that though, climate change in itself cannot lead to conflict in the sense of direct violence, however, it has been viewed as a threat multiplier which exacerbates existing tensions and instability (Chikodri et al, 2020). It increases the risk and reshapes the productive landscape, while exacerbating food insecurity, water and energy scarcities and contributing to destabilization of unregulated movements, conflict intensity and tension (Chikodri et al, 2020). The risks are not just of humanitarian nature; but include political and security risks that directly affect, exacerbate existing conflicts and creating “threats” for international and human security (Dabelko, 2009). Illustrating climate change as a “threat exacerbator” Javier argued that climate change often added pressure to the existing conflict and thereby generating “threats” for both international and human security. He illustrates six ways in which climate change cause “threats” as: conflict over resources, loss of territory, border disputes, environmentally-induced migration, situations of fragility and radicalization, tension over energy supply and pressure on international governance (Javier, 2008). All these occur in different regions of the world.

The unhealthy struggle for scarce resources, lack of resource management, different cultural beliefs, as well as poor governance complicate and exacerbate natural resource conflicts in African states (Hellstrom, 2001). Resource utilization has become a threat to human security in many African countries such like oil resource in Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia and Sierra Leon (Alao, 2016). On this note, African states have been regarded the

troubled continent, the world's nightmare and continent with climate-dependent economic sectors consumed with violent ethnic conflict. Experience of climate change had been agued by Scholars not to change the current security situation because of the existing socio-political structures of African states (James, 2007). The conflicts in African states are attributable to historical and political dichotomy, demand for the fair distribution of endowed natural resources over disputes concern utilization of scarce resources.

Resource conflicts in Nigeria spin mostly around crude oil, land and water as well as the allocation of proceeds from oil (Okuola and Ademola, 2016). In the recent, gold had been added to the list of resources that fuel conflict as gold mining has found responsible for the banditry experience in Zamfara State since (Augustine and Blessing 2019), Resource conflicts in Nigeria have lasted for more than two decades when the Niger Delta crisis began in the early 1990s (Ike and Oronto, 2003). It is centered conflicts on struggle to get access to land for instance, in the semi-arid zones which has led to migration of herders' southwards, both seasonally and in the recent permanently (Blench, 2004). The root causes of most conflicts however, had been simplifying under six headings as: disagreements over historical claims, changes in climatic conditions, consequences of changes in the nature of power balance; elite fragmentation, youth reactions to vulnerability and exclusion as well as changes in boundary structures (Alao, 2016).

Tropically, Nigeria climate has two rainfall patterns like low rainfall pattern of the Northern states with short grass, and marginal savanna, the high precipitation of the Southwestern and Southeastern states of rainforest and mangrove. The experience of climate change, as increase in temperature; variable rainfall; rise in sea level and flooding; drought and desertification; land degradation; more frequent extreme weather events evidently revealed the unprecedented challenge on the inhabitants and the environment (Elisha, 2017). The challenges which are associated with the climate change though vary



across Nigeria geo political region such like drought and desertification experienced, in the north and, erosion and large-scale flooding in the south (Akande et al, 2017). This has exacerbated communal and inter-ethnic clashes between herders and farmers in the north central states Nigeria including Jos Plateau, Nasarawa and Benue Valley including Taraba and Adamawa, as well as Southwestern states some of which have turned deadly (Nkechi et al, 2016; Amadi and Udo, 2015). Violence associated with resource contestation across the states had been accounted for the thousands of deaths, displacement with other humanitarian experiences such as incessant ethnic conflicts, risen vigilante militias and inter-communal tensions (Baca, 2015). Many other, issues as democratic governance, violent conflict, unsuitable policy frameworks as well as political instability have all added impetus to the mismanagement of natural resources and conflict. (Adano, 2012).

Given to this backdrop, this work explores gap between climate change, migration, resource conflicts, policy formulation as the critical aspect of ecological effects of farmers herders' conflicts, and struggle for resources usage among groups in southwestern states, Nigeria.

Methodology

The work is pure qualitative; it employs conduct of exploratory survey and in-depth interviews among purposively selected fifteen (15) key informants; five (5) each from groups of respondents to investigate the narratives and encounters of farmers and armed herders' conflicts in the selected communities in the states. Extant literature, dailies internet reports on conflicts and periodic reports on climate change as well as relevant official records of states were explored with a view to eliciting useful information on climate change, herders migration and environmental problems; and how other factors as access to land, socio-cultural differences, government policies have remotely contributed and aggravated conflicts in the selected Southwestern states: Oyo, Ogun. Ondo and Ekiti states with options for sustainable peace, peaceful co-existence and inclusive political and economic policy.

Conceptual discourse on resource conflict and theoretical framework

Analysis on the conceptual clarification on environmental problem, migration and resource conflict has been a subject of intense discourse over the years, and this has given reasons to different approaches to the terms with a lack of a uniform framework. The experience has been to the differences in professional orientations that had contributed to the study of environmental-variations (Dun and Genene, 2008). Geophysical, impacts as temperature increase, the changes in environmental systems as excessive heat and the melting of glaciers have been reported to have contributed to desertification, coastal flooding, land degradation, crops yield reduction, low water availability and food insecurity, among others. These have impacted communities as well as groups over access to natural resources most that have tagged in various forms as herders farmers conflict, eco violence and pastoralist-farmer conflict (Ajala,2020; Olumba, et al, 2022). The increase global temperature as extreme weather events and ecological changes with a decrease in rainfall in some parts and an increase in rainfall in other has caused a lot of conflicts and eventful devastating effect on human lives (Gabriel, 2009). Increased water scarcity, food insecurity, forest's encroachment, gradually depleting vegetation and grazing resources have encouraged massive inflow and movement for resettlement of people to areas believed to be less threatened or recertificated (Madu, 2012). The climate-induced drought in the northern part for instance, necessitated a form of migratory pastoralism, particularly in the Nigeria Middlebelt to the Southern parts. The occurrences of drought, poor water quality, and crop losses are being experienced, while human migration driven by climate change in the regions (Agnew, 2012; Ojo 2020). As a result of this, more than 75% of farmland in the core northern part of Nigeria is decertified. While the link between climate change and human migration or displacement is widely acknowledged in the literature, scholars are uncertain about the actual weight of climate events in peoples' decision to move.



Nevertheless, climate change has influence forced migration resulting in the destruction of livelihoods and infrastructure (Bernett and Webber, 2009; World Bank, 2019; Flamik, 2018). Its nexus between violent extremism in Nigeria has been at the front burner by the scholars and at public discourses because of the repeated crises that border on security, terrorism, population displacement, insurgent recruitment drive, peasant farmer transhumant conflicts; all which are somewhat related to the disruption's extension, generated and exacerbated by climate change (IPCC, 2014). As a matter of fact, movement to destinations pastoral transhumance in Nigeria' though, may not be the cause of greater security matter, it is the consequence of greater insecurity in the states (Bauhaug et al, 3008). The increasing vulnerability of dry land areas; to environmental degradation, the question as to how the migrant populations on marginal lands can be stabilized is quite relevant. While migration could be both a cause and effect of worsening environmental situations it seems to have provided a loop from vulnerability to socio-ecological contentions and conflicts between the groups. Conflicts occur when the activity of a party in the given resource environment compromises the type of quality or quantity of the need resource to the extent that the other party cannot achieve their livelihood or goals or aspiration and which eventually lead to an action or reaction. Also, conflict occur, in an environment where the parties in the given environment where a needed resource by a party or group is being destroyed or compromised by another party or group all in the attempt to achieve own livelihood – this is tantamount to human insecurity and captured by frustration-aggression theory as framework of this work.

Frustration-Aggression theory

Theoretically, environmental-conflict nexus had been mostly illustrated with the frustration-aggression theory most especially, when one considers most works as related to Dollard and his associates (Aubrey, 1962; Yates and Berkowitz, 1962; Miller et al, 1939). In discussing the interplay of ecological problem and environmental decline with poor institutional response over the contestation between herders

and farmers in Nigeria; this theory is found more applicable. The central premise of the frustration-aggression theory, put simply is that, aggression is always the result of frustration given the requisite condition of individual, whose basic needs or desires are thwarted. He or she will likely response to his condition by directing aggressive behaviour at what or whom is perceived as being responsible for thwarting those desires, goals or at a substitute. The grater the perceived importance of the desires or needs, and the more comprehensive the checking the more vigorous the aggressive response (Yates and Borowitz, 1962).

Nigerian states historically have been of ethno-linguistical difference with a geographically diverse ethnic groups within their ethno-geographical locations. The differences of their religion practices and ethnos linguistic differences were about reported history of occurrence conflicts which made Blench to describe Nigeria as one of the most deeply divided states in Africa; the third most ethnically and linguistically diverse country in the world after New Guinea and Indonesia (Blench, 2003). Nigeria with so many ethnic groups and diverse linguistic parts numbering about 24,827 has experienced significant conflicts over the access to natural resources and which have gotten a direct effect on her socio-political, economy and national integration. Her heterogeneity nature is evidently expressed in its different climate patterns across the geographic locations of which impacts in the livelihood of inhabitants and consequently resulted in incessant conflicts. The occurrence of conflicts that always presupposes the existence of frustration and, inversely, the existence of frustration have led to some form of aggression among the groups (Borowitz, 1962). The display of aggressive behavior among groups in Nigeria has always occurred by frustration which bring about aggressive action on the party of the groups. Aggression occurs when there are an interference or hindrances in people's desire goals, a response by which such individual generates an aggressive energy that is targeted against object. Thus, inability to achieve desire goal often led to the mobilization of extra energy that follow the display of destructive and aggressive behavior as experienced between

herders and farmers over the competition for scarce resources.

Nigeria ecological differences as illustrate by its topographic landscapes differ widely across the geographical locations, and directly influenced relationship between the ethnic groups; their environment and occupational practices. Geographically Nigerian state, is exceptionally structured by its ecological differences.' Its tropical ecological zones cut across through a longitude of $20^{\circ} 40' 1''$ to $140^{\circ} 45' 1''$ into the Eastern part of apogee, and in North to latitude $40^{\circ} 15' 1''$ to $130^{\circ} 55' 1''$. The tropical environmental zones of Nigerian states beginning at the Atlantic edge of the southern part, and makes a latitudinal space of about 1500° km (Fasona and Omolaja, 2005). These zones consist of: Mangrove swamp of the Southern states extended in the latitude 4 and $60^{\circ} 30' 1''$ N', the tropical rainforest zone with a latitude $60^{\circ} 30' 1''$ to $70^{\circ} 45' 1''$, which extend from the Southwest states to the Southeast states. Also, are both Sudan Savannah belt on $100' 1''$ to $120' 1''$ N', and Guinea Savannah belt with latitude $70^{\circ} 45' 1''$ to $100' 1''$ N', as well as the Sahel Savannah which situated in areas above latitude $120' 1''$ to 28° (Fasona and Omolaja, 2005).

These varieties, especially landscape differences of state soil composition; the diversity which equally dictated the agricultural productions across the country; also influences kinds of food products grown in each region and their availability (Aregheore, 2009). The difference in geographical location and climatic topographies across Nigerian states amplify that climate change, and its occurrence impacted on the ecologies of the regions and the states differently (Amobi et al, 2015). These ecological differences and its damage impacted negatively on relationship between farmers-herders. This was further worsened by desertification experience in the Northern part as well as rising sea levels of the Southern part of Nigeria (Olufemi and Samson, 2012).

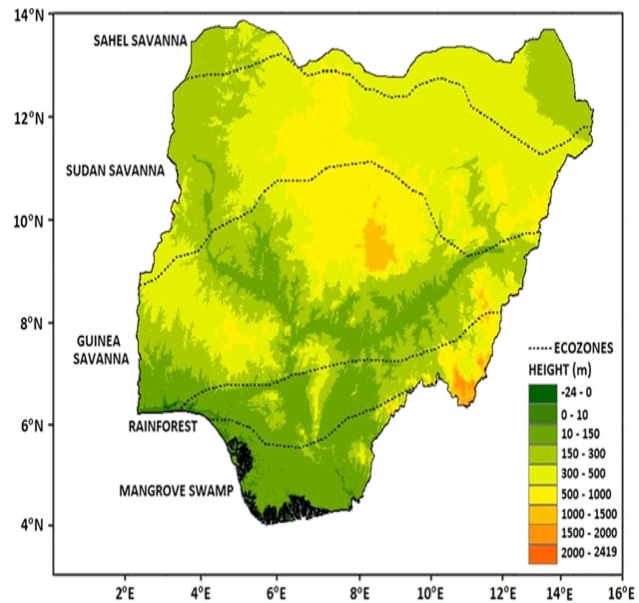


Figure 1: The Topography and Climatic Zones of Nigeria

Occurrence of farmer-herder conflicts in the Southwest Nigeria could therefore, not be farfetched from the ecological variable and seasonal incompatibility. This incompatibility has given reason for struggle and contest for limited land resource which birthed to grievances, hatred and later got intensified into open conflicts at the slightest provocation with the use of sophisticated guns.

Southwest Region, its Tropical and Exploration Experience

Southwestern states Nigeria is six in number: Ekiti, Ondo, Ogun, Oyo, Osun and Lagos. The reason for the Southwest states, as the study area was based by the report of incessant conflicts between armed herders and farmers in some rural communities in the selected four states and the activities of a Yoruba separatist leader in the conflict, Sunday Igboho prominence and' his encounters with Fulani ethnic group especially armed herders in the local communities as: Igangan and Igboora, Ibarapa central and north area in Oyo state; covers the larger part of the survey. Other communities are; Ikole, Owo, Aromoko; and Akure in Ekiti and Ondo states, and finally Eggua, Ojaodan and Igboro at Yewa axis of Ogun state, Nigeria.

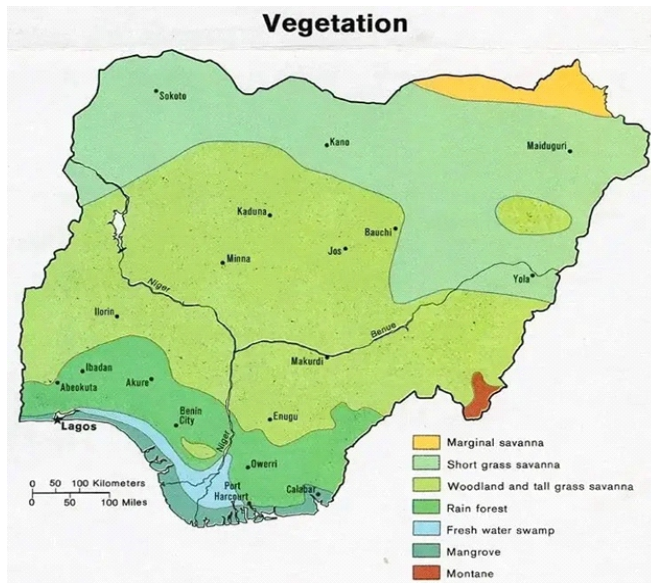


Fig 2: Map showing the vegetation of Nigeria

The southwest region has between longitudes 2031 ° and 6.00 °,001' East and latitude 6021 ° and 80371N' with a total area of 77818km². National population commission, estimates 27,511,892 for the population southwest region with 14,049,594 male and 13,462,298 respectively. Two distinct seasons as rainy and the dry season make composition of its weather. Due to population density and the dependency of larger part of local communities on seasonal rainfall agriculture system, the survival of these communities has been on arable farming productions. Seasonal rainfall is the determined their crop production at the same time the substance of life. Southwest equatorial savanna temperature is sub-humid and minimum precipitation; is less than 60mm in the dry season with an average annual rainfall of 1000mm. This is quite different from the decreased in precipitation of the north-east, the more erratic rain patterns in the middle-belt that have given reasons for economic and ecological insecurity that horizontally affects agriculture and livestock production.

The lands and climatic condition of the southwest states from the vegetation is reported favorable and fertile for both crops and livestock system. Crops like maize, yam, cassava, plantain, cocoa, fruit and leafy vegetables are majorly produced in the states with livestock animals' production in small scale. Rich pasture particularly vegetation

in the recent times has become a target for wide-ranging grazing by the moving herders. This is possible because transhumance among the Sahel and Sudan dwelling Hausa-Fulani tribe has been in increased with long and mass exodus movement into the south, which have led to more pressure on the land resource resulted into land use conflict as experience in the southern guinea savannah and rainforest belt (Fabusoro and Oyegbami, 2009). Just because the region is more tropical than the northern Sahelian traditional home of the migrant herders, a large number of them have found the region to be a home and abroad such that majority of them have settled in the different local communities for a long time. The demand for grazing land, the expansion of farm settlements and the preservation of land for members of the same clans or families constituted the roots of conflicts.

Moreover, patterns of movement of the 'settled herders' in some part of the local communities in the state coupled with their unwanted "influx" in recent years by the purely nomadic armed herders who unfiltered the forests as permanent resident set the tone for resource conflicts. The trend of conflicts over the access to grazing land, routes has changed the narrative from the indigene-settler crisis and considered as invasion's, land-grabbing, forest dissatisfaction, occupation with other socio-political and religious sentiment that major on the struggle to access land, grazing right as the nexus of the crises increase across Nigerian states.

Policy actions and Policy failure

In the attempt to ameliorate the conflicts Nigeran government have come up with different policies to safeguard the live of her citizenry. Policy and actions are understood to have been taken to reduce or increase adverse incidents of climate change on vegetation of a country thereby making the citizen less vulnerable to outrageous effect of climate change and other. A well-coordinated policy strategy from government is needed to minimize climate change, its adaptation to human actions on the relevant components of a nation's population. In the same vein, human action and



inaction could engender negative effects of climate change which could as well enhance policy formation and its enforcement. The government's failure to address the spate of insecurity and prevent reoccurrence of conflicts and their escalation into more volatile situations. The government's inaction and refusal to investigate, arrest and prosecute perpetrators of attacks encouraged impunity—a situation that has resulted in attacks and reprisal attacks with at least 3,641 peoples killed between January 2016 and October 2018 (Amnesty International, 2018). However, while various legislative policies and interventions have been put in place to ensure mutual relations and a better interaction between farmers and herders in relation to climate adaptation and mitigation, it has remained a difficult task and a subject of controversy and contradictions between the Nigeria government and the populace.

Making a balance between environmental and livelihood sustainability with human migration, have caused major challenge to governments in a multi ethnically divided society like Nigeria. This has occurred because while a cardinal aim of the state is the protection of the lives and properties of the citizens, with which policy formulation stand as a potent instrument; the contestation on resource sharing among the groups often results in overlapping interests, contrary opinions, responses and contradictions due to plurality, ethnic divides, environment-induced conflicts migration and lastly regional dichotomy on natural resource-dependent livelihood.

The Federal Government for example, had announced it proposed Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) on 25 June 2019. The RUGA was purposed to be a settlement area provided with basic infrastructures like schools, veterinary clinics hospitals, road network market that would process and add more value to meats and animal productions (Ademola, 2020). The overall purpose of the settlement area was to cause a drastic reduction on the repeated conflicts between herders and farmers. Also, to increase the production of animal, while providing a complete value chain that will increase the quality and of

livestock productions, as beef, milk production, increased animals feeding quality, access to consumption as well as animal care both within the private sector and commercial pasture production for the proposed settlement. So, both RUGA and Nigerian National Livestock Transformation Plan (2018-2027) are purposed to be a gradual move from traditional pattern of open grazing to ranching as a mitigation process to a modern livestock production for improved quality and sustainable peace and security across the states (Ademola, 2020).

Both at local and federal levels, Nigerian governments have attempted different methods, policies and strategies to resolve the conflicts arising from the farmer-herder climatic influences. Several laws levels had been proposed to curtail the effects of conflict and insecurity. Priority has been given to fashioning legal measures with intention to avert the insecurity experience that has overwhelmed the states and weaken the confidence of populace on the government. These among others include expulsion, building of ranches, and local collaborations (Okeke, 2014; Bello, 2015). Military operations which include Operation Cat Race, Whirl Stroke, were part of government's response to the conflicts. Other policies like 1964 as Land Grazing Act, 1976 Land Use Act, the National Agricultural Policy for instance had been planned with the national territory as 9.8 million acres of 10% minimum size in the states to be allocated for grazing reserves, though less percentage as 2.82% of these lands were secured out of 313 reserves (Dwyer and Istomin, 2008). Similar to this was the Reserve Commission bill of 2011 on Grazing Route projected to provide 100 billion to Herders (Ibrahim, 2012). Moreover, proclamation of migration laws and regulations governing conditions of living; either as residence and employment of non-nationals: Immigration Act (1963), Immigration (Amendment) Act (1973) and 1972 Immigration Manuals and Regulation in Nigeria have been a source of high level of illegal transborder movements given reason for influx of migrant armed herders from other West African states. Thus, migration problem in the states has been



complicated by the authorization of the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol of 1979 which enabled thousands of aliens' movement mostly from ECOWAS states to flock to Nigeria (Bamgbose, 2013).

Nigerian government has also involved in mapping out grazing reserves between Katsina and Bauchi states in Northern Nigeria, as well as Abuja in 2009; the project targeted about 247 million US dollars. The reserves arrangement, was deigned to serving at least 15 million pastoralists and to demarcate 175,000 hectares of grazing land, build veterinary units as settlements for nomads' cattle herders. These demarcated routes are consisting of 1,400 km livestock routes; starting from Sokoto State to Oyo State in the Southwest; 2,000 km route from Adamawa State in the Northeast to Calabar in the South South region. Nigerian government has also projected ten billion Naira for the Great Green Wall Programme (GGWP), purposed to mitigate desertification experience, which is understood a major reasons for the mass exodus of herders' movement to the South in search of green pastures (Bello, 2015). Government inability to implement most of these policies as well as laws which are already in place, the established ranches, delineate areas of operations or spheres of influence had further compounded the issue in conflict especially issues on Land use Act 1976. These among others has given way for distrust and mischiefs, as well as struggle for space which set in motion the intense conflicts of the last twenty years.

This have been the case because while many numbers of Nigerian including state governors have realized the importance of Grazing Bill for sustainable peace in their affected states, it was considered a desperate attempt by some. Some are of opinion that pastoralist movement towards central and Southern Nigeria is a way of cutting costs by reducing transport costs while making cattle available for consumption. Others as civil society groups, indigenous ethnic groups are of different opinion and vehemently rejected the Bill on the grounds that; such Bill would deny indigenous groups their inheritance and the land

which they would have been used for their agricultural production and livelihood. Others are of the view that such a rearrangement on land matters would shortchange local farmers of their inheritance since most lands were traditional properties passed over from one generation to another.

According to a respondent from Ibarapa community, Oyo State, he stated thus:

The grazing bill is a seductive way of taking peoples lands away from them to serve the interest of the headsmen, and it will promote more killing. In the last two months, five persons were attacked and killed in their farms over open grazing in this community. When they have not been given portion of land to graze their cattle in their host states, the manner and pattern of their infiltration into other states in Southwest revealed there is a secret agenda to occupy the land not to even talk about the havocs they have caused on the people's farms and numbers of death we have recorded. We have been appealing to governor of Oyo state to ensure that anti- open grazing bill is signed into law in the state. (In-depth interview with Mr Abioye the president of Agro-Park Association in Igaanga, Ibarapa area of Oyo state. (KII Interview, October 20 2024).

Most of the attacks on anti-gracing law in the states according to the survey, were perceived as deliberate and well-planned attempt aimed at secure territory, targeted at causing disorderliness in the affected communities, and some areas in the states to seize the opportunity to occupy the land and for the purpose of fulanization or Islamizing Nigerian state. This to some Nigerians, while government has played a key role in the conflicts over land; it has failed at the critical levels with poor policies formulation that had only ended in repeatedly loss of lives and property of the experienced conflicts over land resource. The land tenure policy in Nigeria for instance, has created controversy over access to land and reserved ownership of land. With no regards to regional differences in agricultural practiced the Land Use Act of 1978 ignorantly attempted to grant equal access to both traditions across the



states in the country (Bohannon, 1964). This wholesale rule had caused a major discrepancy between the Nigerian Land Tenure Act of 1962 as well as Land Use Act of 1978 (Bamgbose, 2015).

Land was a cherished possession of every community in pre-colonial Nigeria (Diayi, 2006). There are fanatical interests attached to land, the possession of it or the outright ownership of it has remained a strong reason for conflict in the African states. Land played most important role on natural resources and among African and ranks beyond economics purpose into a social importance, spiritual beliefs and political significance. Every household is customarily entitled to own a land in order to eke out a living (Daniel, 1984). Therefore, members of a household could have access to land through acquisition, distribution or shared among individuals or communities in several ways (Biebuyck, 1964). Individuals and families held specific rights to portions of land within a larger area controlled by their lineage or village on account of the fact that they or their forebears were the first to clear the land. Land was meant not to be sold because it was considered an ancestral belonging, and selling a land to a non-indigene, a stranger or migrant is suggest putting the security of the community into danger in some communities in the Southwest states as early as 20th century (Alao, 2016). Land was seen as the “birth Place”; the place where the ancestors are originated “rest”; where the “creator” has chosen to transcend down to incoming generations, and the final “resting place” for every child born on the land (Alao, 2016). Other avenues through which land was acquired were through conquest, pacific infiltration, conferred rights and transhumance. Therefore, land was a valued and communal possession for subsistent and large-scale farming. Furthermore, land is very essential conditions for the maintenance of sovereignty and their continuation as autonomous units or communities (Diayi, 2006).

Given to this belief, and in their attempt to curtail herdsmen attacks on the farming communities', Southwestern states governors have embarked on the pronouncement of anti-grazing law, restriction

of the cattle grazing tradition and recent called to the herdsmen to vacate the reserved forests in the states (Kabir, 2021). Ekiti state Governor had spearheaded the signed of anti-grazing law in 2016. His counterpart in Ondo State, in request order also request Fulani herdsmen to vacate the reserved forests in the state before they would be forcefully evicted. The law was signed for the Prohibition of Cattle and Other Ruminants Grazing in Ekiti, 2016 (Vanguard Newspaper, 2021).

A respondent from Ikole communities in Ekiti state, during an interview confirmed that: State Governor passed into Law Anti Grazing Bill due to the repeated herdsmen attacks on the farming community which has led to loss of lives in the State, and since governor could not endure these attacks, the bill was signed into law (KII Interview, 15. 10. 2024),

Speaking during the 2025 inter-faith annual service, Governor Makinde of Oyo state, decried the influx of bandits in the state when he narrated how he got intelligence report that bandits are not far from Fasola farm (Makinde, 2025)..Fasola Agribusiness Industrial Farm Center, was the first of the integrated agribusiness revitalized by Governor Makinde for the new Oyo State Agribusiness Development Agency (OYSADA) to build across the state, is located on 1,100 hectares of land in Oyo West Local government, along Oyo State. The agribusiness project was first stablished in 1946 by the British colonial master as a result of the vast potential of the area has for agricultural production, especially livestock and poultry (Daramola, 2024). It was later revived as dairy farming; under the administration of Chief Obafemi Awolowo; the premier of old western region. During Awolowo premiership, Fasola farm was known all over Nigeria and beyond as a center of excellence for livestock research, breeding, and production. The farm in the recent time has turned from being deserted to becoming forest and un-governed zone that harbored armed herders, enrout them to southwestern states for open grazing and livestock rearing.



Many of Fulani herders who are streaming into Southwest states are said to be victims of cattle rustling seeking for job and when they cannot find job, they join the bandit groups. These armed herdsmen reported to have invaded the farms like Chief Olu Falae farm, where five hectares of his maize and palm oil farm were reported to have been burnt down at his hometown, Ilado in Akure North Local Government area of Ondo State. The attack preceded the attacks that was later carried out in the same farm when a security guard was killed and Chief Falae was himself kidnapped stayed under their captive for three days (<http://saharareporters.com/2021>).

Another group of armed herders equally attacked and stabbed a farmer to death in Akure, on January 22 2021 the Ondo State capital while he was working on his farm. On Saturday night February 13, 2021 there was attacked when some farmers at Ijugbere in the Owo Local Government area of Ondo State, were reported to have been killed by the suspected herders. More pathetic was Owo massacred on the faithful Sunday in June 6, 2021. At Isaba Ekiti, in Ikole Local Government Area of Ekiti State on Friday April 15, 2019 two farmers were killed following the invasion of farmlands by some Fulani herdsmen. Likewise on 29 January 2024; two traditional rulers from Ikole, Ekiti state were murdered by the armed herders <http://saharareporters.com/2021/01/22>.

There was attacked by the armed herders in some communities in Ketu local government area in Ogun State when they invaded farms areas along Ikotun, Ologiri, Akeru, Ilukan, Ijege and Ajibode; cut down palm trees, vegetable plants, cassava and opened fires on the farmers that challenged them. In Oyo State in Lagun, Iyana Offa, Offa Atagba, in Lagelu Local Government Area of Ibadan there was attacks by the Fulani herdsmen. These was followed with rampage in the Okeogun area of Oyo state when a group of armed herders' men between 30-40 in number invaded the communities. There was invasion in Igangan, a rural community in Ibarapa north local government area, Oyo State, on June 6, 2021 which led to the massacred of scores of residents

by this same roving herder. Prior to invasion, Dr Aborode, an indigene of Igangan, an American base Agro-agriculturalist was brutally murdered on December 11, 2020. He fell into the hands of armed herdsmen in his farm at Igangan. According to his father:

My son was generous man particularly generous to herdsmen in Igangan, and allowed them to graze in his firm for free especially when the yield is poor. He also, employed the wives of Fulani herdsmen in his firms still yet the same herdsmen gruesomely murdered him in his farm. I have been alive and around for a while now in this community, and Ibarapa land had been peaceful all the while, but that peace has been truncated since Fulani herders has started attacking members of community. How do you see and hear this and not get saddened? That is why our people are insisting that these herders must leave our communities (KII Interview, 15. 05. 2024).

Despite their long settlement history in southwest, the advent of unrest in recent has cause a lot for concern. The repeated clashes had been linked to access to the grazing routes and dwindling fertile land, it seems as more than that. A respondent explained thus:

On our farms, we would come across very young children herding cattle. We would not know that the parents of these child herders were hidden on a tree. Should the farmer confront the child herder from destroying his farm, the hidden chaperon on the tree would suddenly appear and accost the farmer. (KII Interview, 18.10.2024).

It was observed that difficult and hard for a farmer in the southwest states to consider the stay of herders in their communities considering the much damages they have caused.

The creation of Regional Security Network, 'Amotekun' and the politics of its legality

Amidst persistent reports on criminal activities which are traceable to trans-border armed herders' attacks under the influence of blood chilling ordeal suffered by many communities and families who are travelling through the highways of Southwestern states. The governors in the



region have found it necessary to take the bull by its horn to secure lives of their people from armed herders' rampage, Amotekun was set up as a Southwest security network (Vanguard Newspapers, 2021). The governors' have decided to make sure that peace and security reign in their region where kidnappers as armed bandits have strategically located in the major highways such as: Ibadan -Ife expressway, Ikire-Ilesa, Ore Benin, Akure to Owo as well as the Owo-Akoko that links Southwestern states to other states. Many Nigerians like Mrs. Funke Olakunri, the daughter of Afenifere, Yoruba socio-cultural group and four monarchs from different communities were murdered on this road (Vanguard Newspapers, 2021). Likewise, Olagunju, the youth leader of Afenifere who was kidnapped on 17th of February 2025 and later regained his freedom after 12 days in captivity affirmed the presence of armed herders who have created over 55 kidnappers camp, locations in Southwest with Ondo state having the highest number, followed by Ekiti and Osun State (Punch Newspaper, 2025) According to him:

The criminal has established well organized camp across southwest states, Nigeria strategically positioned for their operations with Ondo state 27 camps, Ekiti state 16 camps, Osun 7 camps and Ogun state 5 camp (Punch Newspaper, 2025).

The security initiative, *Amotekun* is descriptively referred to leopard in Yoruba language. Is made of non- arm bearing group of vigilantes. It was timely established to serve as community resilience vigilante monitoring agent to confront the challenges, and to compliment community policing arms of the federal government police force that is structured at curtailing crime through provision of the reliable native intelligent fact gathering in collaboration with the inhabitants of communities. The regional outfit however, could not had been spared from criticism like other policies formed to curtail many security challenges. While it is considered laudable and welcome development with believe that it would bring an end to security experience in the region; it was regarded as illegal act by some. The chairman of a socio-cultural cattle Breeders Association of

Nigeria (MACBAN) Miyetti Allah for example, had absolved Fulani of armed bandit activities when he argued that bandits are not Fulani or How can Fulani kill their brothers and rustle their cattle? He reiterated that:

Herders have lost almost 27 million cows in the last ten years to bandits and Amotekun initiative by the Southwestern governors to be sincere with you is targeted at Nigeria's Fulani ethnic group; and that Yoruba tribe are preparing ready to deploy real life leopards on a bandits and violent herders. This are the same Yoruba people that summoned thunder and lightning to eradicate cattle that were feeding on their farms, these people have powerful charms, I have witnessed the first hand of powers they have and now they are bringing Amotekun which means leopard, what is the probability that they will unleash mistrial leopard on our cattle therefore there is need to arrest of Yoruba leaders that are championing the cause of restoring security to the Southwest Region and encouraging ethnic cleansing (KII interview, 17.6.2024).

The initiative was sternly criticized and declared illegal by the then Attorney General of the Federation. Malam Malam, who referee to Nigeria, a sovereign entity which is governed by laws that meant to sustain its corporate existence of its federating units with Federal Government having exclusive power over matters of national security (Punch Newspaper, 2019). His declaration over Amotekun as an illegal outfit however, had deepened the 'cold war' between the North and South as it was agreed to have gone contrary to the constitution of Nigerian law. Many Nigerian however perceived his declaration very wrong argued that: if it is lawful, constitutional and democratic for the Nigerian government could give support to the institutionalization and establishment of Sharia and the use of Sharia police like, (HISBAL) along with civilian joint task force (CJTF) of counter terrorism in the Northeast against insurgent, why rejecting the establishment of operation Amotekun as a regional security outfit knowing fully that Nigeria Police has been overwhelmed with insecurity?

A respondent who is a Law expert and Senior



Advocate of Nigeria (SAN) thrown his support to the Amotekun outfit; according to him: Amotekun is protective and supportive outfit established by the governors; it has its roots in in 1979 constitution and the previous constitution before it 1960- 1963. He retreated that it is constitutional, it is legal and prosper and that if this outfit had been established about 10 years ago, the issues of kidnapping killings and other banditry actions could have been reduced drastically. In same vein., a governor from Southwestern state, and chairman of Nigerian governor forum reiterated that insecurity experienced by the people remained the reason why Amotekun security outfit was formed: He states that:

As elected leaders, our primary responsibility, according to Section 14 (2) of the Nigerian Constitution 1999 as amended, is the security and welfare of citizens. That was what informed the governors coming together to fashion out a way to complement the work of the mainstream security agencies overstretched in their efforts to arrest the menace that have afflicted the entire communities in our states and the country. So, if you ask me, Amotekun is nothing but a confidence building strategy for our people in the six states of the Southwest (Governor Akeredolu, Punch Newspaper, 2019)

He illustrates the purpose of the outfit when he stated that

Amotekun is an unavoidable child of circumstance it was initiated to compliment the effort of conventional security agencies that appear to have been hampered by the absence of intelligence gatherings and that when fully in operation would serve the purpose of local momentum and intelligence gathering for the Police, Army and other conventional security agencies. Amotekun scheme however, is not targeted at any ethnic group and just as its benefits are to be reaped by all Nigerians without ethnic sentiment or religion placement. It would work as holistic security outfit comprising of regular police, local vigilante group including local hunters and if there is any fear allay by other groups such should be disregarded (Governor Akeredolu, Punch Newspaper, 2019).

Amotekun according to its founder would not have only improved the security but as well boost the economy of the region and influence other regions in the country. The fear of Amotekun to many during the interview was observed to have been misplaced while its creation as security outfit was confirmed to be a welcome development, more so for regions of Southern Nigeria which have been encircled overwhelmed by all manner of criminality as kidnapers, banditry, armed robbers and cultists. While it is believed that not all these criminal elements are from the North it bad for anyone to conclude that Amotekun targeted the Northern indigenes.

It is believed that Southwest governors have chosen complimentary steps that is not unwelcome to the cooperate existence of Nigeria. This is because devastating attacks of insurgents in the northeast and increasing bandit attacks through middle belt like Benue, Taraba, Nasarawa and Plateau states where insurgent was not common have shown that there is a nexus between Boko Haram terrorists in the Northeast, the bandit in the Northwest and occurrence of kidnapping in the Southwestern states. The seemingly reduction in the report, cases of banditry, kidnapping, and other criminal activities through synergy between Amotekun and the leadership of conventional security agencies by arresting crimes activities before they occur in the communities and major highways in the Southwest states in recent to many interviews; stance the idea that Amotekun an indication of well-coordinated regional security outfits is possible to pressure fear in the minds of bandits and kidnapers, while reducing occurrence insecurity situation in the country to ensure the sustenance of livelihoods and peaceful co-existence.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This work examined the importance of geographical differences and climate change, as well as the many government policies on resource management, The socio-economic, political and cultural differences vis-a-vis competition over access to resources and conflict between herders and farmers. Struggle over access to shrinking resources were discovered as major factors for



conflict. The work agrees with the reality of climate change which has caused a significant impact on human security through its effects on Nigerians livelihoods. It further its argument that the unwanted infiltration of herdsmen, armed bandits and incessant conflicts gone beyond this causal narrative of resource competition. And that the reality of a complex socio-economic relations, political and economic causes played a pivotal role to which climate change had contributed. Thus, combination of socio-economic need and ethnicity with historical experience provides a proof to farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria states; though base on dwindling resources with increase struggle.

Above all, while climate change has its possible security inferences as it is acknowledged; the existence of climate change as a threat exacerbator was identified as a call for threat minimizer. These threat preventive measures can be found in government policies and capacity for climate adaptation, economic development, mitigation and conflict prevention; all which can be measured within the purview of government for sustainable peace, security and development. It is observed that due that climate change and ethno-religious conflicts that plagued the states, especially the central states and some areas of Northern states had led to influx of armed herders' attacks and conflict in Southwestern

Going by these evidences on climate change multiplier effects; timely government decisions with good policy will have a greater impact on future challenges than the inaction and delay tactics exhibited by the past governments. Breaking the link between the impact of climate change and conflict in Nigeria would require comprehensive policy responses from governments and communities' stakeholders. Therefore, this work suggests, more effective policy and proactive decision making on climate change, its adaptation, mitigation and resources conflict management as imperative measures to integrate development and international security concerns Nigerian states. Climate adaptation and mitigation policies in Nigeria should involve financial and technological inputs, including the good understanding and application of indigenous

knowledge and coping strategies. Adaptation to climate change should also target a faster increase in productivity that involve a range of social and economic factors, such as promoting education and literacy among the inhabitants and groups in a given states, communities and Nigeria at large.

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