

Application of Conflict Wheel Model in the Analysis of Farmers-Herders Conflict in Adamawa State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examines the causal factors of the lingering conflict between farmers-herders in the Adamawa. Specifically, it emphasizes issues, dynamics, context, causalities and exit options. The application of the conflict wheel theory suggests, the negative consequences of desertification and decline in ecological resources has in this case informed an unhealthy competition for access to mutual ecological resources between farmers-herders as one of the factors that brought about the deadly conflict. Further analysis reveals the context which has consistently increased in scope, cannot be divorced from existential socio-economic, political, and cultural realities of the Nigerian state. While Causalities seem to be multidimensional encompassing, conflict between two production systems, government inactivity and pre-existing security challenges in the region amongst others discussed. Given the central role of the state in enforcing law and social stability, it is imperative that government at various levels review pre-existing strategies and adopt robust and inclusive strategies. Similarly, the importance of counter desertification and conservative policies cannot be downplayed, and climate conscious pastoral and herding initiatives will also go a long way in averting future ecological resource-based conflicts.

Keywords: Farmers-Herders, conflict, ecological resources, grazing routes and arable farm lands

1. Introduction

Farmers-herders conflicts between different pastoralist groups in and across the Sahel states was mostly local, sporadic and low intensity conflicts without direct involvement of governments and government security forces. At times they can, however, trigger or interact with more violent conflicts, or co-opt with communal or ethnic confrontations. They frequently revolve around issues concerning land use (crop cultivation vs. grazing), including disputes over access to water and livestock raiding, but have taken on deadly dimension in Nigeria's northeastern Adamawa State. Unhealthy, and poorly regulated competition for scarce ecological resources, have over the years resulted in perennial and growing violent conflicts in terms of frequency, intensity and geographic scope between crop farmers and nomadic cattle herders in the state, Nigeria and beyond.

Underpinning the escalation in frequency of deadly conflicts between farmers-herders in Nigeria is a confluence of a host of environmental and demographic forces, with emphasis on desertification resulting from climate change, and population explosion (Ningxin, 2018). Expectedly, with the depletion of arable land for subsistence farming largely because of increasing urbanization and the adverse effect of drought along the Lake Chad basin, arguably intensified the unhealthy competition for ecological resources between herdsman and farmers leading to violent confrontations, loss of human life, forced displacement, as well as the destruction of crop fields and livestock (Okeke, 2014).

Although a lot of academic and policy papers have been put out in an attempt to demystify the underlying causalities of the deadly conflict, inconsequential attention has been paid to conflict areas outside of Benue, Taraba and Nasarawa, where ethnic tension has since forayed its way into the conflict, altering the dynamics of the conflict. To address this gap, this paper examines the structural causes, actors, context, dynamics and implications and possible options of farmers-herders conflict in Adamawa state. Unlike Benue and other states mentioned above, farmer-herders conflict in Adamawa state presents a unique and divergent case for the following reasons. In Adamawa for instance, both farmers and herders are predominantly from the same ethnic origin, which diminishes the causal effect of ethnicity, at least in

theory. Furthermore, they tend not to be sharply divided along dominant religious doctrine in Nigeria, which are Christianity and Islam.

To analyze the farmers-herders conflict in study areas, the research employs Wheel of Conflict or Conflict Wheel Model (CWM) as proposed by Bernard Mayer and Christopher Moore. The CWM is a graphic representation of the factors that give rise to potential conflict or accounts for existing ones. CWM ideally begins with the overview of a conflict, before analyzing specific aspects. The Wheel symbolizes wholeness and movement, once the various aspects have been examined; they need to be brought together again, to get the conflict analysis rolling. The six components of the CWN include Actors, Issues, Dynamics, Context, Causation, and Options, each seeking to account for genesis and transformation of conflicts (Centre for Security Studies, 2015). Should we agree that; aforementioned triggers are sufficient but not necessary conditions for conflict manifestation, and that no single trigger in a conflict stands alone. Then it will suffice to argue that, a multitude of factors come together to form the basis of conflicting group relations. Within this line of thought, conflicts are best analyzed when they are placed in an interdependent position, as represented in the CWM.

2. Statement of the Conflict

Securing access to water is a crucial prerequisite to pastoralists' mobility and hence, their ability to cope with difficult weather conditions in the Sahel. Farmers, on the other hand, have profited from agricultural modernization and favorable land reforms to gradually expand cultivations onto pastoral land. As farmers and herders utilize the same land, conflicts can arise, especially when herds encroach on cultivated areas damaging crops, or when water resources become heavily strained. Such conflicts are frequently exacerbated by government policies which encourage settled agriculture and common perceptions of nomadic pastoralism as unproductive and detrimental to the environment. Additionally, there is also a general lack of government engagement in pastoralist areas (Benjaminsen et al., 2012; Schilling, Scheffran and Link, 2021 and Amnesty International, 2018).

Resultantly, historical evidence suggests, both groups lived harmoniously and enjoined a relationship of cooperation before now, a relationship which deteriorated in the wake of adverse climate effects amongst other structural causalities (Amnesty International, 2018 and Open Society for West Africa Initiative, 2017). Preliminary observation of farmers-herders conflict in Adamawa reveals; the six local government areas of, Numan, Lamurde, Toungo, Demsa, Fufore and Yola South local government (henceforth study areas) are most affected by the conflict.

The intensity of conflict in the study areas derives largely in the occupation of most residents who are pastorals and farmers, who depend on mutual eco-resources of arable land and water for their sustenance. In Adamawa for instance, the impact of desertification has resulted in deforestation and migration of herders, who in search of grazing fields are known to have in other times forayed into private farmlands (Moritz, 2018). Furthermore, the conflict has also destroyed the relationship of mutual economic and social interdependence once shared by both groups at different times. As opposed to enjoying harmonious relationships, there exist high levels of mutual suspicion and antagonism between both groups.

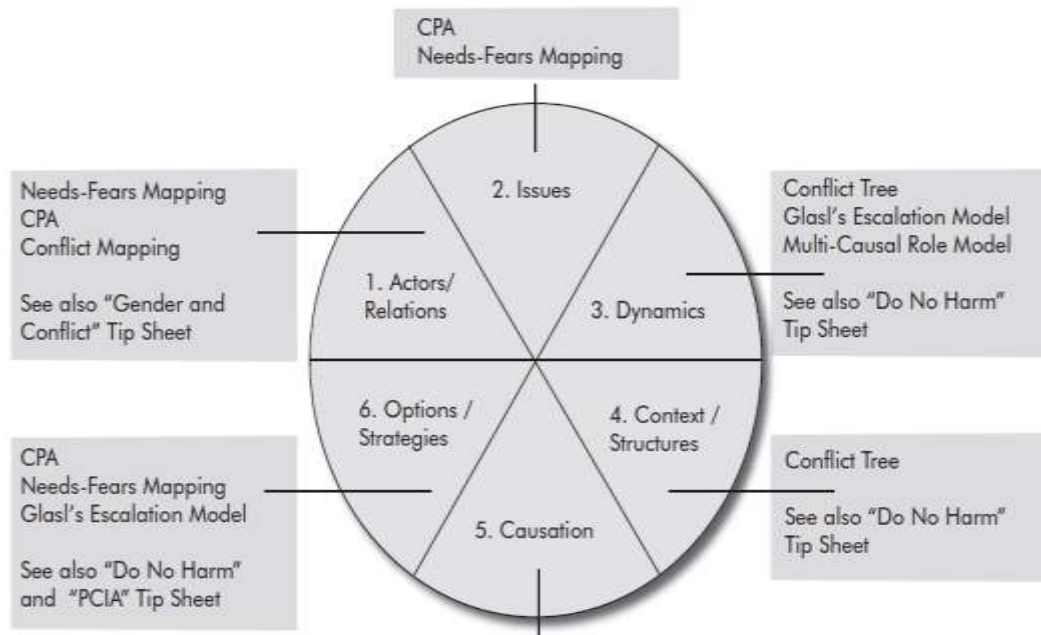
At its peak 2017-2019, farmer-herder conflict has become Adamawa's major security challenge after terrorism, claiming far more lives than the Boko Haram insurgency. It has displaced a conservative estimate of 370, 000 persons, reignited ethno-religious fault lines, and far-reaching polarization in conflict areas and beyond (International Crisis Group, 2018). The blow-back of farmers-herders conflict arguably has a ripple effect in the larger society, resulting in instances where sympathizers of both groups are at loggerhead. In what follows, the study attempts to locate conflict timeline and transformation, using the framework of Conflict Wheel Model.

3. Conflict Wheel Model Analysis of Farmers-Herders Conflict in Adamawa State

Before moving on to discuss the iniquities of CWM, it is imperative to state that conflict as we have come to know it, remains a dominant but transformative feature of man's attempt at communal living. The decision of who gets what, when and how continues to generate conflicts amongst competing individuals or groups, with each seeking to maximize utility. The mutual dependence of farmers-herders on ecological resources, has seemingly increased the frequency and scope of conflict, a situation exuberated by dwindling ecological resources. To make sense of conflicts from a set of scientific assumption necessitates that conflict are analyzed within the dictions of verifiable set of theories of hypotheses.

The CWM, as earlier highlighted includes one of the frameworks for analyzing conflict. The logic behind the model, obtains from a line of thought which suggests conflicts are not spontaneous neither are they exclusive to a single denominator, rather they are a result of interactions between competing actors vying for control over mutual resources or human needs.

The CWM is thus represented in the diagram below labeled figure 1.



Source: Centre for Security Studies, 2015

4. Conflict Actors

Whether structural or otherwise, people are central when thinking about conflict analysis. The study uses the term actors to refer to all those involved in or affected by conflicts. They include conflicting parties in this case farmers-herders, individuals, groups (association of farmers-herders) and institutions contributing to conflict or being affected by it in a positive or negative manner, as well as those engaged in dealing with the conflict or its implications (government, indigenous leaders, non-governmental organizations). Ideally, actors differ as to their goals and interests, their positions, capacities to realize their interests, and relationships with other actors.

With regards to conflicting parties, who are considered key actors in the context of this analysis, a report submitted by Open Society Initiative for West Africa (2019) suggests, relations between herders and sedentary farming communities have been harmonious. They lived in peaceful, symbiotic relationship; herders' cattles would fertilize the farmers' land in exchange for grazing rights. But tensions have grown over the past decade, with increasingly violent flare-ups spreading throughout Nigeria. The frequency and scale of these communal conflicts have become alarming (Leadership Newspaper, May 17, 2011). Nonetheless, it is obvious that the farmers and herders are related in one way or the other. Farmers need cattle for animal traction, while herders need bush, where farmlands are located, for movement with their cattle and grazing. They are also related because cattle survive on grass and hay, while crops grow healthy with animal manure. This led to relationships of some sort and as pointed out by the proponents of conflict theory; conflict arises out of social interaction. Hence conflict is inevitable between farmers and herders. But the foundation of conflict is not only relationship but struggle for scarce resources in the course of social relationship (Salihu, 2018). The inability to co-exist harmoniously, has led to involvement of other actors, in the likes of government and traditional institutions who are charged with the responsibility of securing the lives and properties of citizens. By virtue of social contract, Adamawa state government, the Federal Government and by extension security agencies are all regarded as actors in the context of this analysis.

5. Conflict Issues

With emphasis on needs and desire to meet such needs, issues can be summed up as the bone of contention or disagreement that leads to conflicting group relations. With regard to various issues informing and transforming the farmers-herders conflict, it is essential to bear in mind not just overt, physical violence, but also the sometimes subtly disguised forms of structural, religious and cultural undertones that sustains such conflicts. As to the components of conflict, the focus should not only be on hostile behaviors, but also on prejudiced attitudes and incompatible interests. From such wider perspectives meaningful insights may be developed about the multidimensional sets of issues contested by conflicting groups (Kotze, 2012).

In the case of farmers-herders conflict, a surface examination of the conflict suggests, the unhealthy nature of competition for scarce ecological resources of arable land and access to water as the principal issue driving the conflict, to the neglect

of other causalities. According to De Haan (2002) destruction of crops by cattle and cattle herders themselves are the main direct causes for conflicts cited by the farmers, whereas burning of rangelands and fadama and blockage of stock routes and water points by crop encroachment are important direct reasons cited by the cattle herders. Furthermore, farmers-herdsmen conflict has doubled with the increasing rate of cattle theft which is often accompanied by violence. The Miyetti Allah Kautal Hore has claimed that, estimated 5,000 cattle herders have been killed in several states in Nigeria in ongoing conflicts between nomadic herders and local farming communities (Bada, 2018). The necessity to provide food from crops and animals origin, as well as raw materials for industry and export in order to meet ever-growing demands, has led to intensification of land use (Olufemi, 2012). The competition between farmers-herdsmen has transformed into serious hostilities and social friction in Adamawa state and beyond.

Adamawa state has seen recurrent clashes between Fulani herders and farmers from the Bachama ethnic group. Tensions rose sharply after 20 November 2017, when Bachama youth militias attacked three Fulani herders' settlements in Shaforon, Kikem and Kodemi under Numan local government area, killing at least 55 people, including 48 children. That incident sparked reprisals attacks in nearby Demsa local government area in the first week of December (International Crisis Group, 2018). The conflict in Adamawa state aggravated longstanding herder-farmer tension in neighboring Taraba state, where the state government was also proceeding with a plan to ban open grazing, then scheduled to take effect in January. From 4 to 17 January, Fulani and Bachama (and also Yandang, another farming group) fighters traded attacks on each other's settlements, killing at least 124 people and leaving many houses burned, hundreds of livestock stolen or slaughtered, and large farms destroyed, across four local government areas Numan, Lamurde, Wukari, Gassol, Lau and Ibi. Dozens more have been killed in incidents since then, including over 70 who lost their lives from 5 to 8 July in violence between herders and Yandang farmers in Lau local government area. Many farming and herding villages remain on edge (International Crisis Group, 2018).

In addition, in Adamawa, certain individuals have laid claims to the Benue River which flows from neighboring countries. It was also observed that a selected crop of individuals has made attempts to lay claims to streams and rivers meant for communal use, by attempting to stop others from accessing the water. Similarly, the ethnic factor has also come to play in the access or in-access to resources of land and water. Furthermore, conflict approach recognizes that conflict is an inherent aspect of the social system, where a social group tries to dominate another group (Salihu, 2018).

The competition between herders and farmers over access to land and landed resources can also be seen as a competition between two different land users or production systems: agriculture and pastoralism. The logic behind this line of thought, suggests even though both farmers-herders depend on mutual ecological resources for their sustenance, how they use it differs. While farmers nurture their fields from plantation to harvest, herders are migratory in nature. This diverse appropriation of ecological resources by both groups, may in other times result in conflict given that, herders are predisposed to foraging into private cultivation and farmers also may in turn take advantage of vulnerable herders who graze along remote areas.

6. Dynamics

Dynamics refer to the escalation level of the conflict, the intensity of interaction, the temperament and the energy of a conflict that transforms people (CSS, 2015). Farmers and herdsmen conflict have remained the most preponderant ecological resource-based conflict in Nigeria (Salihu, 2018). Unlike other parts of the country who share in similar conflicts between farmers-herders, the case of Adamawa largely varies, thus introducing the possibility of another dimension to the conflict. Increase in the spate and propensity of the attacks on farming communities or grazing herds has been exuberated by pre-existing religious tensions between devotees of Christianity and Islam respectively. Beyond the resource dimension, in Benue, Plateau and Taraba where both groups are largely of different ethnic origins (Tiv-Idoma versus Fulani herders) and followers of disparate religious faith, ethno-religious dimension has forayed into the conflict. In Adamawa however, the farmers and herders are largely of the same descent, though they may be of different religious faith, the persistence of the conflict largely differs from those obtained in other parts of Nigeria (Salihu, 2018). Similarly, the effects of proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) in altering the dynamics of the conflict between farmers-herders cannot be downplayed. While speaking during an interview with Nigerian Tribune, Kautal Hore's Secretary-General, Saleh Alhassan, lamented that enough has not been reported about the murder of herdsmen. According to him, cattle herders have been brutally killed, with at least two million cows lost without any consequences for the perpetrators (Bada, 2018).

One of the dire consequences of farmers-herdsmen conflict has been the loss of many lives during each violent encounter between the farmer and herder communities. In five years, (between 2010 and 2015) available records have shown that 6,500 Nigerian citizens lose their lives; 62,000 households were internally displaced from their residences and villages, in 850 violent clashes between herdsmen and farmers in the Middle Belt Region (New Telegraph Editorial, November 3, 2017). Also, a sum of \$14.7 billion worth of properties and investments have been lost within the same period as a result

of violent clashes (New Telegraph Editorial, November 3, 2017). Similarly, 2016 there was an estimated death toll of about 2,500 arising from herdsmen attacks (International Crises Group, 2017). Farmers and herdsmen conflicts in Nigeria have grown and intensified over the past decade and today pose a threat to national survival and integration. Against the backdrop of ongoing analysis, it will suffice to claim the conflict between farmers-herders in Adamawa state has escalated over time. In amongst other factors, access to SAWLs, competition for dwindling ecological resources as claims by both groups bothering on destruction of farm produce and rustling cattle herds.

7. Context

In abstract terms, context denotes the situation or circumstances within which a phenomenon exists, which helps us to understand or explain such phenomenon. In this instance, context is used to explain the structural conditions that informed the violent conflict between farmers-herders in the study areas. Before moving on to analyze the context within which farmers-herders conflict thrives in Adamawa state; it is important to note, the state in question has also had its fair share of Boko Haram Insurgency, banditry amongst other security challenges as obtains in various degrees across Nigeria. The study suggests, security challenges posed by the later has weakened community policing and over-shadowed other security challenges. Until very recently, Adamawa remains one of the worst states affected by the atrocities of Boko Haram (Campbell, 2016).

Secondly, efforts of the federal government to diversify Nigeria's economy, revive agriculture and promote manufacturing and consumption of local contents, is evident in the various policy efforts geared towards the promotion of agriculture as an alternative source of national revenue. Due to this emphasis on agricultural production, many people are going into farming; likewise, more people are also embracing livestock and cattle breeding in particular. The effect of this agricultural surge is that there is a competition for the available land resources between farmers and herdsmen. A dimensional problem arises as cattle do graze on the farms of farmers and farmers in retaliation attacks the cows of the herdsmen. The herdsmen go on reprisal attacks. Hence, the attacks and reprisal attacks by farmers and herdsmen leads to destruction of lives and properties and precipitate food insecurity (Ajibo et al, 2018).

Against this, it is the opinion of the study, existential realities that characterizes insecurity in the Northwest and neighboring Northeast overshadowed the signs of brewing conflicts between farmers-herders. In addition, both groups seemingly attempt to justify their position either as victims or culprits on the basis of retaliation. Claims and counter claims of destruction of farm produce and cattle rustling arguably top the list of circumstances that inform violent conflicts between farming communities and nomadic herders in Adamawa state.

8. Causation

In no particular order, a host of factors have been suggested to be liable for many of the conflicts that happen between the farmers-herders in Adamawa state and beyond. Some of the key factors obtained in mainstream literatures are thus discussed below.

Salihu (2018) reveals that the depleting and scarcity of ecological space creates an atmosphere of eco-scarcity, which raises the stakes and puts a premium on the available resources. What usually results from this is fierce competition and a desperate struggle for subsistence. In this context, therefore, conflict not only becomes inevitable; it simply becomes a matter of survival. Climate change is one of the major causes of conflicts between farmers and herdsmen. This is so because when there is unfavorable weather the herdsmen will be compelled to leave their original habitation to another area for greener pastures. Lending support to this, Gleick (2010) opines, climate change has been tipped as the greatest single factor to induce migration and population displacement. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, this will affect people displaced by shoreline erosion, coastal flooding, and agricultural disruption. Migration is understood as the movement of people from one geographical region to another. Also, lack of political will by the government to arrest and punish the offenders adequately is one of the factors fueling the activities of herdsmen against farmers and vice versa in Nigeria today.

Another contributing factor is the fact that grazing resources including pasture and water are found in different places at different times of the year, hence the need for constant mobility among cattle herders for opportunistic resource use. This brings them into contact with the resident farmers, and causes competition and conflicts (Abbas, 2014). Based on the foregoing, it will suffice to argue; the principal bone of contention between the farmers-herders conflicts remains the unhealthy nature in which scarce ecological resources are competed for between both groups. Both groups have accused the other of trespassing, destruction of fields, and cattle rustling, which has taken an unfortunate turn. In support of the ecological resource argument, Scholars in the field of environmental security suggests the existence of negative correlation and causality between environmental scarcity and violence (Bachler 1999 in Achumba, 2013).

Another proximate cause of the heightened herder-farmer tension is the introduction of open grazing bans in Benue and Taraba states. Most people in Benue reject any connection between the new state law, which bars herders from letting their

cattle graze where they please, and the escalation of violence. They argue, with some justification, that killings preceded the law and take place in states far from Benue where there is no such prohibition. But introduction of the law further strained relations between farmers and herders (International Crisis Group, 2018). Arguably, the ban and hostility towards open grazing in Benue and Taraba may have informed the influx of herders into Adamawa in their droves contributing more to the conflict in the area. The carefree and un-authorized encroachment into farmlands have led to serious conflicts between the farmers and herdsmen in recent times, because of the damage they cause to crops and fallow lands left to replenish the nutrients after long years of use. The herdsmen's cows often stray into the farmlands of the farmers without permission and destroy crop nurseries or full-grown crops, which they hope to harvest and sell in the near future. This attitude, no doubt, provokes the farmers to go after their animals (Ndubisi, 2018).

Furthermore, the inability of government in most cases to respond quickly to distress calls and early warning signs is an issue that promotes conflict. This negative attitude has made it difficult to stop crises that would have been prevented if the government had responded accordingly to distress calls and warnings (Salihu, 2018). Until very recently, a review of development policies in the agricultural sector often than not places a premium on crop cultivation, to the neglect of herders. Similarly, policies aimed at promoting herding have been met with hostility and in other times politicized. For instance, attempts to reform and fund the National Grazing Reserve Policy have largely fizzled out and little to nothing is heard of the policy. These amongst numerous socio-economic and political factors have contributed in no small measure in driving the deadly conflict between farmers-herders in Adamawa state and beyond. In a nutshell, the multidimensional security challenges bewildering the Nigerian state, has seeming overwhelmed security outfits. As such, the urgency to address farmers-herders conflict has been relegated to the background, in the wake of spiraling banditry and kidnapping across different parts of the country.

9. Options / Strategies

This indicator examines ways to deal with the conflict, strategies that are used or could be used to de-escalate the conflict. Government response to farmers' herders' conflict in Adamawa state can be grouped into military intervention, traditional conflict resolution, the use of farmers-herders national bodies and policy approaches (National Livestock Development Plan, National Grazing Reserves Bill 2016, Nigeria Grazing Reserve Act 1964). In lieu of existential realities and continuous antagonism amongst underlying groups, it will suffice to claim that, government has fallen short in satisfactorily addressing the underlying causalities and grievances. Against which this analysis suggests the following measures elucidated below.

Contrary to the position of the federal government, nomadic herding cannot be addressed completely by creating grazing reserves. What the country needs more than anything else is to effectively check desert encroachment and discourage the nomadic push into and across the country, especially in areas inhabited by farmers whose attachment to the land is foregrounded by a different set of values from those of nomads. Given the migration-oriented nature of herding, it is possible that, many of those who have continued to move into different parts of the country are not even Nigerian citizens. Creating grazing lands in the country for the benefit of non-Nigerians at the expense of Nigerian farmers is not only irresponsible; it is unpatriotic. Besides, the manner in which nomads' crisscross national boundaries penetrating deep into countries like Nigeria could undermine national security at many levels. Arms and ammunition can be moved in and around countries without detection. As such, border policing and substantive identity for citizens or legal residence is prioritized. In the interim, efforts should be made to create alternative grazing routes, pending when the government is able to examine possible pathways to reigniting the harmonious relationship of interdependence farmers-herders once enjoyed.

Finally, there should be legislation guiding the activity and the relationships of the Fulani herdsmen with farmers and other Nigerian citizens at large. The rule of law should be applied to all defaulters, that is to say that there should be no sacred cow. Furthermore, there is need for change of behavior. We may have to learn to accommodate, open up to divergent views, with the view to finding common ground that may end up preserving the unity of the people. As in the case of Boko Haram, Niger Delta Militancy, government should not rely exclusively on military aggression; efforts should be made to institutionalize eco-resource conflicts management in a structural manner. Given the significance of both groups in the area of food security, it will not be out of place if structures are put in place principally for addressing grievances as a means to limiting retaliatory attacks on farming communities or grazing herds.

10. Discussion of Finding

Using the CWM the research ascertains the extant role of dwindling ecological resources, lack of a legally established and inclusive framework that would bring both parties to the negotiating table. Furthermore, the conflict has also suffered the bloc-blacks of deep-rooted ethno-religious conflict in Adamawa state. The peculiarities of the farmers-herders conflict in Adamawa present a complex case, not only are both parties from the same communities/regions, the share a common history, dialect, and even similar ways of life, however they're divided along production lines.

While on the subject matter of conflict management, the government at various levels reduced the conflict to ethnoreligious, while communities' leaders and heads of both organizations politicized the conflict. Even though the negative effects of the conflicts are evident, it has been relegated to the sidelines in light of Nigeria's lingering battle with terrorism and most recently banditry and criminal elements.

11. Conclusion

An examination of the farmer-herder conflicts shows that it is not competition for land in general that is responsible for farmer-herder conflicts, but the competition for specific key resources that are critical for the sustainability and/or development of pastoral and agricultural production systems, such as watering areas, wetlands, and fertile lands. The conflicts between herders and farmers in Adamawa state are arguably not only the outcome of competition between two production systems; in many cases they also come forth out of competition between different sociocultural groups. When production systems are associated with specific sociocultural groups, as is the case of farmers-herders (herders are overwhelmingly referred to as Fulani and Muslims, while farmers other tribes and Christians) in Adamawa where herders and farmers generally belong to different ethnic groups and religious faith, farmer-herder conflicts have greater potential to articulate with other tensions and conflicts. Although it is important not to reinforce ethnically divisive tendencies, we cannot dismiss the ethno/religious dimension of farmer-herder conflicts as ancient or primordial. The ethnic dimension of farmer-herder conflicts must be studied within the context of the larger political economy because resource conflicts are often expressed as xenophobia, which can be exploited by local leaders and national politicians alike to whip mass sentiments. A situation exuberated by the unhealthy media reportage and coverage of the conflict, with little or no recourse to the role of the media as gatekeepers of societies. Nonetheless, the onus lies on the government (federal and state) to take more seriously their statutory obligations of protection of lives and property as enshrined in the basics of social contract.

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