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## Resource competition between nomadic pastoralists and sedentary crop farmers in southern Taraba State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

This article entitled “Resource Competition between Nomadic Pastoralists and Sedentary Crop Farmers in Southern Taraba State, Nigeria” aimed at exploring the dynamics of resource competition as it affected nomadic pastoralists and sedentary crop farmers in Southern Taraba State, Nigeria. Research design adopted was descriptive that depended on judgmental sampling technique. Secondary sources of data collection (books, journal articles, monographs, internet materials among others) were sourced from Nigerian libraries and internet. The documentary data were subjected to content validity before qualitatively analyzed into the study. Findings revealed that environmental degradation caused by climate change and shrinking of Lake Chad Basin was the remote factors that trigger resource competition between nomadic pastoralists and sedentary crop farmers in Southern Taraba State, Nigeria. The resource competition has negative consequences on economy, humanitarian, political and social life of the people. Federal government has proposed Cattle Colony, National Livestock Development Plan, Rural Grazing Area, while Taraba State government promulgated Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranching Establishment Law No. 7 of 2017. Regrettably, the resource competition continues unabatedly hence the adoption of Relative Deprivation Theory to deepen the understanding of the series of crises between farmers and herders in Southern Taraba State, Nigeria. The study recommends that federal government should fund ranches; establish National Climate Change Commission as well as revive Lake Chad Basin Commission. These would be panacea for resource competition between nomadic pastoralists and sedentary crop farmers in Southern Taraba State, Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Pastoralists; Nomadic; Sedentary Farmers; Southern Taraba; Nigeria

### 1. Introduction

Unarguably, agricultural activities (farming and herding) depend on the nature and character of the environment. Geographers [1, 2, 3,4 ] had attested in their various writings that environmental availabilities such as water and land nutrients are the major determinants of agricultural productivities. In other words, land could be available, but whenever, nutrients and water that help crops to grow are lacking, that land could best be described as barren. Land that contains nutrients and water are scare. It is mostly available in a semi-arid zone. 5[p.2] further explained that, “this zone falls between the arid lands where... livestock-based production systems are possible and the humid zones that can support crop-livestock production system...”. Southern Taraba State, is a classic example of semi-arid zone in Nigeria. Fulani herdsmen who practice nomadic pastoralism come from the far northern states of Nigeria; Borno, Yobe, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, Gombe, Zamfara State as well as foreign countries such as Senegal, Mali, Niger, Chad, Cameroun to Southern Taraba for the purpose of rearing their livestock. The peasants who are sedentary crop farmers and native of Jukun, Tiv, Kuteb, Chamba etc cultivate crops such as maize, guinea corn, rice, cassava, yam, melon among others.

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6[p.14] rightly observed, “the socio-economic lives of both the farmers and the herders within a particular geographical setting revolved around land...competition between crop farmers and animal rearers over access and control of fertile land within a particular area, is inevitable and hence can easily escalate into violent conflicts” (Ordinarily, the current violent conflicts between herdsman and farmers in Southern Taraba is strange. 7 [p.80] recalled that, “Fulbe herders...exchange some animal products they produced with farmers for grain, thus supplementing the diets of each respective group...their interdependence, thus created “symbiotic relationship...”. Even 8[p.1] equally confirmed that “historically, relations between herders and sedentary communities have been harmonious...they lived in a peaceful, symbiotic relationship: herders’ cattle would fertilize the farmers’ land in exchange for grazing rights”.

Regrettably, this symbiotic relationship and harmonious living have resulted in perpetual enemies that are worse than cat and dog. The competition for ownership and access to land trigger the conflict. Confirming this assertion, 9 [p.142] maintained that, “at the centre of farmers-herder conflicts is the issue of access to and use of land and water resources... Land and water resources are diminishing...due to several factors, causing intense competition and violent conflicts over their usage”. 10 [p.3] posited that:

Difference in climatic conditions and changes...in the North propelled herdsman to move across regions, especially from North to the Central and Southern Nigeria to access better grazing resources in order to ensure quality food security for their herds. This often takes place during crop cultivation season. While driving cattle across regions, sometimes destruction of crops occurs and becomes sources of conflict between farmers who claim customary right over land and herdsman who are regarded as strangers.

Pastoral Fulani are not interested in occupying land permanently like some sedentary crop farmers. They continue to wander the entire country in search of greener pastures for their herds. This nomadic pastoralism fosters confrontation with sedentary crop farmers, due to crops destruction. 11[p.3] further confirmed that, “...the competition with the crop farmers over land has resulted in the destruction of crops and water resources leading to constant conflicts with the indigenes”. There is a general belief that Fulani herdsman are strangers, hence have no right over land. This belief has brought tension between the indigenes who are sedentary crop farmers and the nomadic Fulani. The contestation over land ownership is not restricted to Southern Taraba State, Nigeria, but it extended to other West African countries such as, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Benin Republic, Togo to mention but few. In their opinion, 12[p.43] maintained that, “pastoralists in West Africa dry lands have little legally recognized tenure security over their traditional grazing lands. In many countries, pastoralism is not legally recognized... Pastoral lands have been subjected to expropriation by the state and marginalized in favour of agricultural use”. It is this conspiracy between state and sedentary crop farmers that triggers violent conflict. Fulani herders also complained bitterly about cattle-rustling, poisoning of water, expansion of farms into cattle routes, as well as nonchalant attitude of government officials towards responding to their plights. Added to this, is the fact that Fulani pastoralists regard their herds as part of their lives. Their economy and social status are determined by the number of herds, they acquire, therefore anything that happens to their herds happen to them directly. State is seen as corrupt organization that can never be fair, just or impartial according to herdsman, therefore, cases must be settled by themselves. For instance, in 2013, about 3,000 Fulani herdsman were displaced by the indigenous communities in Taraba State. [13] recorded that about 500 herdsman were reportedly killed while 23,000 herdsman were forced to move into Cameroun. [14] hinted that the outbreak of conflict between farmers and herders in 2019, led to the displacement of about 70,600 people in Taraba State. Food crisis that associated with the displacement of both farmers and herders can only be imagined than experienced. As 15 [p.134] stated, “farmers’ can no longer farm peacefully because of Fulani herdsman. These Fulani herdsman and farmers’ clash have pitched... each other... leading to loss of live, valuable properties and destruction of vast expanse of arable agricultural farmlands, thereby posing serious threat to food security, since farmers for fear of attack could no longer go to farm and harvest their farm produce”. This could be the reason while [16] described, “Fulani herdsman as the second most dangerous group in Nigeria after Boko Haram group”[17p.10].

Federal government has responded to herdsman-farmers’ crisis through deployment of security operative to Southern Taraba, initiation of National Livestock Transformation Plan, Cattle Colony, Rural Grazing Area while Taraba State Government promulgated Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranching Establishment Law not of 2017. Regrettably, none of these responses has curtailed the farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria. Despite this, pertinent questions that require answer are:

- Which theoretical framework can effectively explained resource competition between nomadic pastoralists and sedentary crop farmers in Southern Taraba State, Nigeria?
- What are the remote factors that trigger resource competition between nomadic pastoralists and sedentary crops farmers in Southern Taraba State, Nigeria?

- What are the consequences of resource competition between nomadic pastoralists and sedentary crop farmers in Southern Taraba State, Nigeria?
- What are the responses of Nigerian State to the resource competition between nomadic pastoralists and sedentary crop farmers in Southern Taraba State, Nigeria?

In terms of structure, the first part of this article deals with theoretical framework, while the second section addresses materials and methods of the research. The third part is the remote causes of the crisis while the fourth section attends to the consequences of the crisis. The responses to the crisis is the fifth section before the last part which is conclusion and recommendations, including the references.

### 1.1 Relative Deprivation Theory

The theory of relative deprivation was propounded by [18], an American Social Psychologist in 1940, as an explanatory tool used in comparing the welfare of African American soldiers serving in the southern camps with African American soldiers serving in the northern camps during the second world war; 1939-1945. Having undertaken rigorous findings, [18] came to a conclusion that despite racial discrimination, African American soldiers in the southern camps had better welfare than their counterparts in the northern camps. According to [18] the concept; relative deprivation is a judgement that one or one's in-group is disadvantaged compared to a relevant referent; and that this judgement invokes feelings of anger, resentment and entitlement.

Explaining further, 19 [p.381] posited that, "relative deprivation arises from a subjective feeling of discontent based on the belief that one is getting less than one feels entitled to. When there is a gap between aspirations and reality, social discontent is likely to result". It is determined by perception of inequality which is cognitive element as well as feeling of discontent that give birth to affective element. The cognitive element is associated with self-realization that deprivation exists, while affective element serves as a response to the deprivation.

Furthermore, central to the understanding of relative deprivation theory is the concept of comparison. One has to compare oneself with another in a similar situation; however social discontent emerges, whenever, there is a realization that differences exist. As 19 [p.382] captured it, "when these comparisons reveal a large gap between achievement and aspirations, people often feel sufficiently motivated to attempt social change, especially when comparison are made on an intergroup basis rather between self and others". This theory suggests that those that feel deprived of essential needs; such as money, rights, political participation or social status, are likely to organize or join social movement that aimed at obtaining those things they are deprived of [20]. It is based on this assumption that, [18] explained further that individuals undergoing relative deprivation must have experienced three psychological processes. These processes are, "(1) they first make cognitive comparisons, (2) then cognitive appraisals that they or their in-group are disadvantaged, and finally (3) that these disadvantages are seen as unfair and arouse angry resentment" [21p.12]. [21] further stated that relative deprivation theory postulates a subject that shapes emotions, cognitions including behavior." It links the individual with the interpersonal and intergroup levels of analysis" [21 p.12]. Added to this, is the view of [22] who classified relative deprivation into two categories. The first is the egoistic, which focuses on individual relative deprivation. It is driven by an individual feeling of being treated unfairly compared to others in the group. The second is fraternal which anchors on group relative deprivation. It is associated with massive group social movement, like riot, the aim is to effect a social change. According to 21 [p.13], "feelings of group relative deprivation should be associated with group serving attitudes and behavior such as collective action and outgroup prejudice, whereas individual relative deprivation should be associated with individual-serving attitudes and behavior such as academic achievement and property crime".

Linking this theory, relative deprivation to the subject-matter, it is not difficult to locate where the crux of competition is hiding. It is all about ownership and access to land. 11[p4] maintained that "...for farmers, land is considered a highly valuable entity. It is not just considered a means of livelihood, but also a source of wealth, and a source of conflict... lack of access to land does not only deprive them their major source of livelihood, but threatens their existence as human being". Regrettably, the value attached to land by the people of Southern Taraba, is similar to the affection a Fulani pastoralist has for his cattle.[23] cited in 11 [p.4] posited that, "the most treasured object in a Fulani's life is his cattle, which he kept on land. The quantity he keeps is the measure of his wealth... to this end, both farmers and herders will do everything to maintain access and rights to any portion of land". Confirming this point, 24[p.113] hinted that, "for the herdsmen there is no life without cattle and they can go whatever mile to ensure that their source of livelihood is sustained". The Right of ownership of land is always given to the indigenes while settlers are seen as non-indigenes. The indigenes have Certificate of Origin from the Local Government Councils (Wukari, Donga, Ibi, Takum, Ussa) while the non-indigenes, especially the Fulani herdsmen are denied such right. 25[p.3] decried that, "while the settlers are struggling for inclusion, the indigenes are pushing the path of exclusion that they see as a sure ways of benefitting from

the scarce available resources". Explaining further, 17[p.30] recalled his exclusive interview with a Berom farmer who lamented that:

They want to rule and control everything, how can settlers be ruling the indigenes. They want the indigenes to be getting permission from them before they can do anything. Something that cannot happen when you go to Fulani land, or have you ever heard of Igbo, Yoruba, or Berom people that have migrated to Fulani land in Northwest or Northeast of the country for decades to be fighting over land. This is because we know our place. If they are saying that they are not strangers...why are they fighting us?

Relative deprivation does not only limit to ownership and access to land. Fulani herdsmen are seen as the most violent group that worth no support from the government. Sedentary crop farmers have been supported by government in various ways ranging from soft loans to programmes such as River Basin Development Authorities (RBDA), Nigerian Agricultural Cooperative and Rural Development Bank (NACRDB), Agricultural Development Project (ADP), Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Green Revolution Programme (GRP), Agricultural Credit Guaranteed Scheme (ACGS), Anchor Borrower Scheme (ABS) among others [26]. Regrettably, government has not been able to initiate policy or embark on a programme that would alleviate the burden of livestock breeders in Nigeria. 10 [p.23] maintained that, "...they feel discriminated because, while the state makes budgetary inputs on how to improve crop production, the state has failed to make budgetary provisions for the development of ranches and yet tried to force cattle breeders into unfavourable ranching conditions". In the same vein government has never caution farmers that they have expanded farms into cattle routes. The expansion of farms and settlements into cattle routes, is the major factor that makes cattle go astray and enter into farmlands which results in fracas between farmers and herders. Unfortunately, whenever, crisis erupts, government always support farmers. According to 27 [p.26], the Alkalis or judges will always say "it's the cattle that move to meet farm, it's not the farm that move to meet the cattle". Fulani herders are bound to pay for the damages or ready to go to jail. However, this is for law abiding Fulani. 8[p.15] also added that:

Pastoralists hated... corrupt police who extracted fines and bribes while...protracted court processes immobilized their herds. Furthermore, local political leaders have tended to favour sedentary farmers, whose votes they crave, over itinerant herders, who may not be around at election time. Consequently, herders feel increasingly marginalized and are largely distrustful of local political leaders as conflict mediators.

The deviants among them would evade arrest, rather confront farmers with machetes, guns and ever ready for war. As 28 [p.10] stated, "the encroachment of grazing fields and routes by farmers is a call for war... whenever, we turn, we find the land reserved for our cattle to feast, taken over by farmers... it becomes difficult for our herds to move and graze without veering into crop fields...once that happens, the farmers confront us and we have no option but to fight back".

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## 2. Materials and methods

This article entitled "Resource Competition between Nomadic Pastoralists and Sedentary Crop Farmers in Southern Taraba State, Nigeria, has a descriptive design that anchored on the secondary sources (books, journal articles, monographs, internet materials, conference papers etc) of data collection. These documentary data were sourced from Nigerian libraries and internet, subjected to content validity before analyzing it qualitatively. However, the use of qualitative method of analysis assisted the researcher to embark on an in-depth study of resource competition between nomadic pastoralists and sedentary crop farmers in Southern Taraba State, Nigeria.

In addition, the study drew its population from Fulani, Jukun, Tiv, Kuteb, Chamba, Berom, Taraba State, Plateau State, Benue State, Middle Belt, Nigeria, Christian Association of Nigeria, Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria, Miyetti Allah Kautal Hore, National Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs, among others. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that Jukun, Tiv, Kuteb, Chamba, are the natives that practice sedentary crop farming while Fulani are the nomadic pastoralists that roam the entire Middle Belt region including Southern Taraba State, Nigeria. The choice of Southern Taraba State as sample of this study is judgmental, in view of the fact that there is proliferation of extant literature on farmers-herders' crisis in other Middle Belt states such as Benue, Plateau, Nasarawa and Kogi. The dearth of materials on farmers-herders' crisis in Southern Taraba State has resulted in misleading information. It is hoped that this study would strengthen argument and further serve as reference materials for scholars as well as public commentators.

### 2.1 Remote Factors that Trigger Resources Competition in Southern Taraba

Unarguably, environmental degradation caused by climate change and shrinking Lake Chad Basin are the remote factors that trigger resource competition between nomadic pastoralists and sedentary crop farmers in Southern Taraba State, Nigeria.

Environmental degradation can be described as reduction or decline in resources, caused by natural factors. These resources could be fresh water, fish, arable land, plants, animals, mineral resources, air, to mention but few. 29[p.37] further explained that, “these resource often come in variable quantity and quality. Human... exploit these resources for survival and sustenance. The misuse or overuse of these resources affects their quality and or quantity in comparison with their pristine availability in the environment”.

The environmental degradation could take a form of depreciation in quality and quantity of resource which nature provides. It involves deterioration of rangeland, deforestation, degradation of topsoil, inappropriate disposal of waste, depletion of fresh water, pollution of air and water systems, animals facing extinction among others [29]. This deterioration of natural environment has direct negative impacts on human existence. 30[p.29] argued, “people began to move whenever land degradation is coupled with political pressure, armed conflict, ethnic tension, growing poverty, deteriorating services and infrastructure. Socio-economic and political factors accelerate the chain of processes leading to migration and conflict.”

Climate change which is often referred to as global warming could be described as a rise in average surface temperatures of the earth, mostly caused by burning of fossil fuel. It is one of the major factors that causes environmental degradation. 23[p.15] argued that, “climate change has brought about shrinking of environmental space and an increase in natural resources scarcity. This in turn results in increased competition and pressure on available resources and conflicts among the user groups”. Relating the bad effects of climate change to the issue in context, 9[p.142] decried that, “climate change causes conflicts, as pastoralist migrate from areas characterized by drought and lack of feed into new areas in search of water and feed for their livestock”. This forced migration caused by climate change triggers conflicts between indigenes and migrants who are the settlers. The conflicts occur due to scarce resources that foster competition. Confirming this point, 28 [p.22] hinted that: “one of the major factors leading to current conflicts over land that are related to climate change is migration, when certain locations become inhospitable to people due to desertification, decreased food yields, etc the resulting migration (both internal and trans-border) might lead to clashes between the existing population and the migrants”.

This argument has been supported by known scholars, [1, 29, 31, 20, 12, 23] among others. Even 11[p.31] maintained that, “climate change actually puts pressure on the herders to move into more favourable regions with lush grass resulting in conflicts and tension”. Global warming has affected the entire Sahel region. Countries like Mali, Niger, Sudan, Senegal, Chad, Central Africa Republic have already been taken over by desert. In Nigeria, there is no difference. According to 28[p.21]:

The Sahara desert already occupies 35% of land mass in Nigeria, and is creeping southward in Nigeria at a rate of 0.6 kilometres a year at the same time the deforestation is taking place at 3.5% per year. In addition, the Sudano-Sahelian region of Nigeria has experienced a 3-4% decrease of rainfall per-decade since the beginning of the nineteenth century, the number of rainy days in the north has decreased from 150 to 120 in the last thirty years... Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kano, Kaduna, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, Yobe and Zamfara states could turn desert or semi-desert in the twenty first century.

Regrettably, these are states with abundant livestock under the care of Fulani pastoralists. However, since live cannot exist in a desert, they have to migrate to the Central and Southern Nigeria, in search for greener pastures for their herds. Citing Plateau State, as a point of reference for all other states in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria, including Southern Taraba, 17[p.35] stated that:

Climate change forced the migration of herdsmen to Plateau State which before now had good natural vegetation for animals to feed on. So there is a clash of interest at the point of farmers and herdsmen on the crops and the cattle. The cattle graze in the farm field and destroy crops, the farmers react by killing cattle or injuring the herdsmen they met on the field which results in a crisis that gets blown into full conflict, if it is not resolved amicably.

Closely related to the climate change is the shrinking of the Lake Chad Basin. Lake Chad Basin has been a major source of livelihood for fishermen, farmers as well as pastoralists from the four riparian countries Chad, Cameroon, Nigeria and Niger. At the peak of its existence far back 400 BCE, the lake was estimated to have covered 400,000km<sup>2</sup>. Climate change that usher-in drought and desertification, especially the 1960 incidence, lead to drastical reduction in the size of the lake. 29[p.43] explained further that, “in the 1960, it had an area of more than 26,000km<sup>2</sup>. Between 1966 and 1997, it shrunk from 25,000km<sup>2</sup> to less than 1,500km<sup>2</sup>... And between 1994 and 2004, it receded further dramatically, covering just an area of some 532km<sup>2</sup>. In essence the lake has shrink by about 90% of its size...”. The shrinking of the lake has negative impact on the farmers, pastoralists and fishermen, since their source of existence have been taken away by climate change. The Lake Chad Basin had the highest potential for environmental sustainability. The lake was like the

Middle Belt region of Nigeria in terms of semi-arid characteristics. Farmers cultivated various crops (corn, rice, guinea corn, yam, tomatoes, potatoes among others), pastoralists enjoyed good vegetation; especially livestock feed, while fishermen caught over 80 species in the lake. 29 [p.45-46] decried that:

...as a result of environmental changes since 1970s, including fluctuations in the level of lake, there have been considerable changes...the lake which provides water and grazing lands for pastoralists and herders...continue to diminish, economic livelihoods have been significantly disrupted, such that local populations relying on the lake for their survival have followed it receding waters.

The reduction in water volume and the subsequent drying of the Lake Chad have led to decline in natural resources which the locals depended on. Farming, fishing including pastoralism can no longer exist due to its shrinking. Farmers, fishermen and the pastoralists have to change occupations or relocate to the southern and central part of Nigeria, where their source of livelihood still exists. This movement to the southern and central part of Nigeria triggers crisis between the indigenes and settlers due to competition over scarce resource. As 32 [p.325] captured it:

As a result of the decrease in the level of the lake, the aquatic vegetation along shores of the lake totally disappeared... the continuous drying of the Lake Chad has serious ecological, social and economic consequences for the West African sub-region; above all, it has led to intense competition and conflict between the various resource-users in particular, between farmers and pastoralists.

The Lake Chad recession has brought untold hardship to many whose livelihood depended on it. It has led to poverty, unemployment as well as forced migration. This is why United Nation Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) called it “ecological catastrophe” and further predicted that the lake would disappear in the horizon of one century. This disappearance would result in a devastating impacts on Nigerian, Cameroonian, Chadian and Nigerien population. [33, 34].

## **2.2 Consequences of Resource Competition in Southern Taraba**

The resource competition between nomadic pastoralist and sedentary crop farmers in Southern Taraba, has resulted in the under listed consequences.

### *2.2.1 Economic Consequences*

The main occupation of the people of Southern Taraba is farming. Farmers in Wukari, Donga, Ibi and Takum Local Government Areas cultivate guinea corn, groundnut, maize, millet, beans, cassava, rice, cocoyam, sweet potatoes, sorghum including yam. It is from the proceed of these crops that they use in caring for themselves as well as sending their children to schools. Regrettably, farmers lose their farmland with crops in it to heartless herders who graze on the land, feed their cattle with the crops and above all burn the farm with fire. Farming is a seasonal activity in Southern Taraba. Therefore, any destruction on the crop, has devastating effects on the entire year. Sedentary farmers cannot sit by and watch their entire labour for the year vanish. As 11[p.34] put it, “the farmers sometimes kill the cattle belonging to herders while some harass the young and lonely herders who graze cattle near their farmland”. Expectedly, nomadic pastoralists are always armed with sophisticated weapons such as AK 47 as well as poisonous machetes. They must, violently attack farmers thereby resulting in death. This creates panic, hence, farmers especially women cannot go to farm due to fear of attack, kidnapping even rape by the nomadic pastoralists. 35[p.6] explained further that, “with the outbreak of conflict, agricultural activities are abandoned, crops are destroyed and communities that made substantial income from the sales of agricultural produce now have to depend on relief supplies”. The aftermath of this crisis, is the creation of artificial scarcity of food, not only in Taraba State, but the entire Nigeria. “The artificial scarcity created by the frequent attacks of the herdsmen on citizens... lead to inflation, which in turn lead to devaluation of the Naira” [36 p.4]. Inflation occurs due to the fact that few food crops are available while poor buyers spend the whole of their incomes for the little that are available in the market. In addition, 35[p.4] decried that, “loses in terms of property (goods, houses, business premises) have not yet been fully ascertained. Some survivors have permanently lost all they labored for in their lives. As a result, one can safely argue that the aggregate of such instances, negatively impact economy of their communities and by extension, the rest of the country”.

The table below indicates items lost or destroyed in three Local Government Areas of Southern Taraba State (Ibi, Takum and Wukari) within 2013-2015. In Ibi Local Government Area (LGA) 10 Churches and 24 private houses were destroyed. Takum Local Government Area (LGA) lost 2 Churches and 15 family compounds. Similarly, Wukari Local Government Area had 49 Churches, 37 private houses, including 39 shops destroyed by the Fulani herdsmen. The number of farmlands, crops and properties that were destroyed during the crises were too numerous to mention according to [37].

**Table 1** Overview of Items lost or Destroyed in Ibi, Takum and Wukari L.G.A

LGA	Churches	Houses	Shops/business	Family compound
Ibi	10	24		
Takum	2			15
Wukari	49	37	39	
Total	61	61	39	15

Source: Adamu, A., Ben, A., Violent Conflict in Divided Societies: The Case Study of Violent Conflict in Taraba State. [Internet] 2008 [Cited 2022, Jun 2]. Available from [https://www.academia.edu/19068568/Violent\\_Conflict\\_in\\_Divided\\_Societies\\_The\\_Untold\\_Story\\_of\\_killings\\_in\\_Taraba\\_State](https://www.academia.edu/19068568/Violent_Conflict_in_Divided_Societies_The_Untold_Story_of_killings_in_Taraba_State).

The herders also have a lot to lament. Some of them have lost their entire livelihood to crisis. “With the on-set of the conflicts...a large number of livestock were burnt or killed”... as a result, a large number of the cattle herders along with their animals fled from the state to the neighbouring states...” [38, p.172]

### 2.2.2 Humanitarian Consequences

Farmers-herders’ crisis in Southern Taraba, has led to forceful relocation of people from their places of abode to Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps. The deplorable conditions, that the people of Southern Taraba experience, could only be imagined than experienced. The Local Government Councils, Taraba State Government even Federal Government do not think about them. Majority of them stay in primary schools, churches, health centres while some are accommodated by the public spirited individuals. Lamenting their conditions, 39 [p.120] decried that:

The camps are overcrowded and lack safe drinking water, poor sanitation is compounded by open defecation...camps are housed in primary schools, in some cases up to 100 people are jammed into a classroom while others sleep in the fields at the mercy of rains and mosquitoes... girls and women are exposed to the risks of sexual harassment, assault and rape, both by outsiders and fellow IDPs, and vulnerable to desperate survival mechanisms involving sexual exploitation.

Between 2013 to 2015, Ibi Local Government IDP camp at Ibi town had 690 internally displaced persons, while Takum Local Government IDP camps at Peva had 2889 internally displaced persons. In Jato which is in Takum Local Government Area, 1850 internally displaced persons were accommodated there. [37] explained further that, the total number of internally displaced persons accommodated in those three Local Government Areas at their IDP camps were 5,429. In the same vein, children education has also been affected. Parents have to run with their children who were schooling in primary as well as secondary schools. Unfortunately, the IDP camps do not have schooling facilities, and Taraba State Government does not think towards that direction. Future of these children is uncertain, hence, some could be illiterates due to crisis that they know nothing about. Lucky ones among them, who may return back to school, are bound to face challenges. As 36[p.5] noted “when the schools are closed, the school timetable... is adjusted, thereby prolonging the students’ duration of study”.

### 2.3 Political Consequences

Farmers-herders’ crisis has given opportunity for opposition to criticize Mohammadu Buhari, the President of Nigeria, who is Fulani by tribe. It should be recalled that whenever Fulani herdsmen attack community in Taraba State or any other state in the Middle Belt, the government would condemn the attack, sympathize with the victims, and assured of arrest of perpetrators. Unfortunately, Buhari’s government does not go, beyond that. Fulani herdsmen are committing crimes with impunity, yet federal government is claiming to be on top of the situation. The lackadaisical attitudes of government officials could be seen by some people, especially those in the Middle Belt and Southern Nigeria as the major factor that emboldened Fulani herdsmen to embark on wanton killings of sedentary farmers. 39 [p.16] explained further that, “his inability to curb the escalating violence, and particularly his long delay before visiting the hardest hit states, have been roundly condemned in the Middle Belt and South and also by some Northern leaders who accuse him of lacking empathy for the groups bearing the brunt of the conflict.

This could be the reason why Hager, a prominent Benue elder wrote an open letter to President Buhari on 5<sup>th</sup> July 2017. In that letter, Hager posited “you betrayed Nigeria’s democracy and promoted genocide” [10,p.19]. Similarly, 10 [p.20] further maintained that:

...the man behind the mask is not interested in peace and development of the state. And since the rate of attacks is increasing, and taking place almost at same period in targeted states of Benue, Taraba, Adamawa and Kaduna State, the

political image of Buhari as a person and his All Progressive Congress (APC) party is negatively affected and the support for the president and his party is decreasing.

Nigeria is a complex society that exists on ethno-religious sentiments. The indigenes of Southern Taraba see the killing and massive displacement of the villages that took place at the eve of Buhari second term as a secret agenda to institutionalize Islam in Christian dominated area, and further prolong the regime of a Fulani man, President Buhari. It should be recalled that Middle Belt, did not want Buhari for second term. "It is because...the President...refused directly and publicly to condemn his kinsmen, and the failure to arrest and prosecute his Fulani herdsmen who invaded towns and villages" [8, p.20]. Regrettably, Bello Bodejo, the President of Miyetti Allah Kautal Hore (MAKH) boldly proclaimed that, "Fulani across the country would resist any attempt to stop Buhari from serving a second term" [39, p.17].

## 2.4 Social Consequences

The nomadic pastoralists and the sedentary farmers' crisis in the Southern Taraba have created distrust and deepen hatred among ethnic groups in Nigeria. A Fulani man is seen as a murderer who does not worth to live with other Nigerian. The increasing use of hate speech, even among those in religious organizations is a clear indication that Nigeria's unity is at stake.

In March 2016, Samuel Uche, the Prelate of Methodist Church of Nigeria said, "we are aware, there is a game plan to Islamize Nigeria, and they are using Fulani herdsmen to initiate it" 8 [p.13]. The Biafra separatist group described the attacks on the sedentary crop farmers by nomadic pastoralists "as part of a northern plot to overwhelm the peoples of the south and forcefully convert them to Islam" [39, p.14]. Responding to this hate speech, the Islamic group, Nigeria Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) accused CAN of spreading "venom, hatred, calumny and unimaginable malice that smacks of intolerance and political brigandage" 40[p.16]. Even Theophilus Danjuma, a former Chief of Army Staff, addressed Press Conference in Jalingo, Taraba State Capital on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2018, where he accused Nigerian armed forces of complicity in "ethnic cleansing" and urged citizens to rise and defend themselves 39[p.14].

## 2.5 Government Responses to Resource Competition in Southern Taraba

It is arguable for anyone to assume that Nigerian government does not respond to the lingering crisis between the nomadic herdsmen and the sedentary crop farmers in the Southern Taraba. It should be recalled that in April 2014, the former President of Nigeria, Goodluck Jonathan inaugurated Technical Committee on Grazing Reserve headed by the former Governor of Benue State, Gabriel Suswam. Suswam's Committee recommended the recovery and improvement of cattle routes that were encroached by sedentary crop farmers, throughout the entire country. It also recommended that Central Bank of Nigeria should release N100 billion for the construction of ranches throughout the entire 36 states of the federation. According to [8], the money was released, but the execution of the project was terminated due to the inability of Goodluck Jonathan to secure his second term. "The National Executive Council (NEC) approved these recommendations but Jonathan's defeat in the March 2015 elections interrupted their implementation. Although the Central Bank released N100 billion to state governments, they failed to construct any ranches" [8, p.19].

Immediately Muhammadu Buhari was sworn in as the new President of Nigeria on 29<sup>th</sup> May 2015, he promised to end farmer-herders' crisis. President Buhari directed Federal Ministry of Agricultural and Rural Development (FMARD) to formulate a comprehensive plan that would lead to a permanent solution to farmers-herders' crisis in Nigeria. The FMARD recommended short, medium and long term plans, as well as development of grazing reserves and livestock routes in Nigeria. These recommendations were rejected by the Nigerian Governor Forum. Audu Ogbah, the then Minister of Agriculture informed Nigerians on 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 2016 that Federal Government was proposing a Bill to the National Assembly that will prohibit cattle from roaming in cities and villages [41]. The minister further added that government had imported fast-growing grasses from Brazil that would be grown in Nigeria for the nomadic herdsmen. Unfortunately, nobody has seen the grasses till date.

The failure to import these grasses from Brazil led to initiation of a new proposal, Cattle Colony. In order to achieve a long term solution to farmers-herders' crisis in Nigeria, the federal government proposed the establishment of Cattle Colonies in the entire 36 states of the federation. The minister maintained that each colony would cover 5,000 hectares (about 25km by 20km) and contain cluster of ranches. The facilities on the ranches which government would provide include grass, water, veterinary services, mills for converting agro-waste to livestock feed, schools, hospital, markets including agro-rangers [42].

[42] further explained that, "... benefits would include protection from cattle rustlers, fewer farmers-herders' disputes, healthier stock, higher meat and dairy production, and more revenue for state government" [39, p.24]. State government



were asked to embrace cattle colony, by providing lands to federal government, since it will give permanent solution to farmers-herders crisis. Regrettably, 40[p.1] argued that:

It is a ploy to dispose farmers of their right to land, to enable Fulani herdsmen exercise both economic and political control over the people of the area, similar to the erstwhile scramble and partition of Africa and domination by foreign European powers, as well as similar to the formation of the Caliphate Emirate System... the creation of Cattle Colony may eventually lead to the extension of the Emirates and Caliphates, hence the rejection of the concept...".

Natives of the Southern Taraba in particular and the entire Middle Belt in general, see the proposed Cattle Colony as "Fulani Colonization", which if accepted would be equivalent to British imperialism. Their land, people and culture would be taken over by strangers. As 39[p.25] captured it, "many farmers in the Middle Belt and Southern zones viewed the proposal as an indirect attempt by the federal government to take their ancestral land and hand it over to Fulani herders at their expense".

Since Cattle Colony could not attract acceptance from state governments (especially Southern States) and the general public, on 19<sup>th</sup> June, 2018, Audu Ogbeh informed Nigerians that federal government had initiated the establishment of National Livestock Transformation Plan. According to Ogbeh, National Livestock Transformation Plan aimed at encouraging gradual switch from open grazing to ranching. "Open grazing is no longer viable that is why we are switching to ranching" 43[p.4]. The pilot scheme would involve 10 states; Adamawa, Benue, Ebonyi, Edo, Kaduna, Nasarawa, Oyo, Plateau, Taraba and Zamfara. 39[p.25] further explained that:

To participate in the plan, cattle herders are expected to organize and register as cooperative, they will then be able to rent land from state government and also benefit from loans, grants and subsidies. The federal and state governments are expected to provide a total of 70 billion Naira spanning three years...while private interests are expected to invest in excess of 100 billion Naira between the fourth and tenth years.

Central and Southern States (Benue, Taraba, Edo, Ondo, Ekiti, Anambra, Imo, Abia, Enugu, Ebonyi among others) continued insisting that they have no land for the Fulani herdsmen to settle and embark on cattle business. Cattle rearing is a private business, therefore, anybody that needs land should apply to the state government. On his part Saleh Alhassan, the National Secretary of Miyetti Allah Kautal Hore (MAKH) posited that "we are fully in support of this policy" but added that, "if we want to completely transform from open grazing to highly mechanized form of livestock production, which is ranching, we need a period of not less than 25 years" 44[p.1];

Failure of National Livestock Transformation Plan (NLTP) to come into existence led to the initiation of Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) policy on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2019 by the federal government. Ayobolu (2019) maintained that; "the policy would create reserved communities where herders will live, grow and tend their cattle, produce milk and undertake other activities associated with the cattle business without having to move around in search of grazing land for their cows".

Audu Ogbeh, the then Minister of Agriculture insisted that RUGA would bring investors and also curb the farmers-herders' incessant crisis. According to Ogbeh, "we will also bring in investors that will set up modern centres where cattle breeders can slaughter their animals. When we do that, a lot of other things will come up" [45,p.1]. Like other initiatives, central and southern states refused to accept RUGA. Their argument was that land belongs to state, therefore anybody that want land should seek permission from state not federal government. Incidentally, on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2019, Bashir Ahmad, the New Media aide to President Buhari tweeted that, "the federal government after consultations with stakeholders has suspended the RUGA settlement project for now" [46, p.1].

Similarly, Taraba State government had also responded to the farmers-herders' crisis through the promulgation of "The Taraba State Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law No. 7 of 2017." The law prohibits open grazing as well as free movement of livestock throughout the entire state. Herdsmen were encouraged to acquire land from the state government and establish ranches for their livestock. The public was adequately informed about the new law. Hence Taraba State radio and television stations continued sensitizing the public on the law prohibiting open grazing. The state message read:

Taraba State needs peace and peaceful co-existence more than ever before. It is with this in mind that the law to prohibit open grazing of livestock and to provide for the establishment of ranches was formulated and not intended to witch-hunt or discourage the tendering of animals. The vision behind it, is in keeping with global best practices and for peace and development to thrive. Your compliance to this clarion call will improve agricultural yield and guarantee qualitative livestock production. Support this endeavor because the future depends on the sacrifice we make today... [10, p.15].

Though six months' period of grace of given before implementation, Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association (MACBA) vehemently rejected the law, and went to court against the government of Taraba State. In their suit, MACBA demanded for \$2000 million from Taraba State government over its failure to protect herdsmen and their cattle in Mambilla. 10[p.23] further stated that, "Fulani...condemned the use of "anti-open grazing" in the law made by the state. They feel, it is an affront on their culture and discriminatory. They wished the state would use alternative words such as Ranch Management that are not harsh on the Fulani people". However, the "Benue Massacre" of 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018, in which more than 80 people were killed by Fulani herdsmen due to open grazing law implementation by Benue State government forced Taraba State government to suspend its implementation indefinitely [39].

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### 3. Conclusion

Findings have been able to establish the causes, consequences as well as responses to farmers/herders' crisis in Southern Taraba State, Nigeria. It has deepened knowledge of the readers on the crisis and would serve as reference material for future research.

#### *Recommendations*

This study recommends underlisted points as the way forward.

- Federal government should fund ranching and further sensitize herders on the need to appreciate this modern method of cattle rearing. Taraba State government on the other hand, should provide land for ranching and stop promulgating laws that are inimical to cattle business.
- Federal government should establish Climate Change Commission. The establishment of Climate Change Commission would help in addressing climate change issues in Nigeria.
- Riparian states of Lake Chad Basin should revive Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), which has been moribund for a decade now. Its revival would assist Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Cameroon in tackling water shortages, thereby minimizing farmers/herders' crises in these states.

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### Compliance with ethical standards

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