ARABLE LAND RESOURCE CONFLICT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT
Access to land resources has remained crucial to livelihood and household sustenance. The control of arable land resource invariably results in conflicts and concomitant food crisis and youth development challenges in Nigeria. In addition adverse effects of individual and community land disputes, the recent conflicts between the Fulani herdsmen and indigenous farm owners have resulted in destruction of lives and crops. Employing the content analysis approach, the study x-rays these conflicts and their effects on general livelihood security, and
concludes that the popular challenge of land tenure system is a security risk to socio-economic and environmental development of the Nigerian state. It recommends urgent review of land use and arable land development policy.

Keywords: Arable land, Resource conflicts, Land tenure

INTRODUCTION

Resource conflict amongst farmers and herdsmen has increased in recent time in the middle belt and southern zones of Nigeria. Policy gaps and underdevelopment of grazing lands have been blamed for this worsening arable land resource conflict. Land ownership and utilization have directly and indirectly defined the dimensions of most agricultural land conflicts, which are becoming fiercer and increasingly widespread in Nigeria, largely due to increasing production activities for the increasing human population (Gefu and Kolawole, 2005; Fasona and Omojola, 2005).

Mutual fear of deep-rooted hostility exists among the Fulani herdsmen and host farmers. The age-old problem escalated in the last decade and has assumed a violent dimension whereby communities are being internally displaced, lives and property are being lost while hunger and insecurity have become the order of the day. The conflicts occur when Fulani herdsmen move into non-Fulani homelands with their cattle. This usually leads to the destruction of farm crops. Thus, the herdsmen provoke their victims to acts of communal and individual resistance (preventing entry into farms, killing or stealing cattle, or poisoning fields). In response, the herdsmen wage deadly attacks on host communities.

One of the recent proposals meant to address this problem is in form of a bill at the National Assembly of Nigeria seeking to establish grazing routes and reserves for Fulani herdsmen in all the states of the country. This paper focuses on the legislative impediments to provision of sustainable grazing routes and reserves in Nigeria. Specifically, the paper
sought to (1) identify the link between arable land, resource conflict and underdevelopment (hunger, gender insecurity, resource injustice, unemployment and unproductive manpower population) of Nigeria; (2) examine the land reform and grazing bill policy and its role in addressing resource conflict and Fulani herdsmen crisis in Nigeria; and (3) determine the relationship between resource conflict and underdevelopment of rural economic livelihood in Nigeria.

Theoretical Review

The Eco-violence Theory

Homer-Dixon (1999) developed the theory of eco-violence which seeks to explicate the relationship between environmental factors and violent conflicts. Its basic assumptions are (a) decrease in the quality and quantity of renewable resources, population growth, (b) resource access acting singly or in various combinations to increase the scarcity, for certain population groups, of cropland, water, forests, and fish, thereby reducing economic productivity, both for the local groups experiencing the scarcity and for the larger regional and national economies, and (c) the affected people may migrate or be expelled to new lands, thereby triggering ethnic conflicts when they move to new areas, while decreases in wealth cause deprivation conflicts (Homer-Dixon, 1999:30).

Competition over scarce ecological resources has been aggravated in contemporary times owing to the impacts of climate change, which has exacerbated ecological scarcity across the world (Blench, 2004; Onuoha, 2007), thereby engendering violent conflicts. Therefore, the theory offers insights into the nature and dynamics of the arable land, resource conflict and underdevelopment indications in Nigeria. The pressure over arable land and the attendant resource conflicts get worse amidst ever shrinking resources, livelihood crisis, imminent policy deficiencies on grazing and pastoral governance by Nigerian leaders. Increasing population growth
rate has continued to exert great pressure on available land resources with varying environmental and socio-economic implications (Dietz, Ruben and Verhagen, 2001; Tarhule and Lamb, 2003; Fiki and Lee, 2004).

Farmer-herdsmen conflict has remained the most preponderant resource-use conflict in Nigeria (Ajuwon, 2004; Fasona and Omojola, 2005). The necessity to provide food of crop and animal origin, as well as raw materials for industry and export in order to meet ever growing demands, has exerted more pressure on land (Nyong and Fiki, 2005). The competition between these two agricultural land user-groups, however, has often times turned into serious overt and covert manifestation of hostilities and social friction in many parts of Nigeria. The conflicts have demonstrated high potential to exacerbate the insecurity and food crisis particularly in rural communities where most of the conflicts are localized, with reverberating consequences nationwide.

According to de Haan (2002), destruction of crops by cattle and other property (irrigation equipment and infrastructure) by the pastoralists 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 pastoralists. Ingawa, Ega, and Erhabor (1999) reported that the key underlying causes of farmer-herdsmen conflict in Nigeria are:

- Changing resource access rights, whereby traditional access rights to communal grazing and water resources are being obstructed by the individual tenureship of arable farmers. This is particularly severe on the traditional trek routes, which become favorite cropping sites because of their better soil fertility resulting from the concentration of animal manure from the trekking herds in these areas. Within the fadama areas, this is exacerbated by the fragmented nature of the crop plots, which makes prevention of animals straying in the crop plots difficult.
• Inadequacy of grazing resources, as increasing crop cultivation (and increasing commercialization of the crop-residues) and poor management of the existing grazing reserves have resulted in a significant reduction in available livestock feed resources, in particular in the Northern States. Moreover the high value crops introduced by NFDP (tomatoes and onions) produce almost no crop-residues for livestock feeding. Finally, the regulation that twenty percent of the fadama would need to be set aside for grazing (National Agricultural Policy, 1988) has not been adhered to.

• Decline in internal discipline and social cohesion, as the adherence to the traditional rules regarding grazing periods, and the authority of the traditional rulers is breaking down. This is exacerbated by increased rent seeking of the formal and traditional authorities in managing resource access.

The causes and effects of farmer-herdsmen conflict have attracted considerable theoretical and empirical analyses, but conflict actors and victims’ coping mechanisms have not received sufficient attention in the literature (Adisa, 2011b). Bob et al. (2008:28) state that inequality is often a consequence of political, economic and social processes that concentrate resources in certain hands at the expense of others. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the vast majority of the black population have limited access to land ownership and related natural resources, resulting in high levels of vulnerability and resultant conflicts over land (Bogale et al. 2006; Rugege et al. 2007). Pastoralists usually graze over areas outside farm lands, and these have been accepted to be the norm from time immemorial. Their movements are opportunistic and follow pasture and water resources in a pattern that varies seasonally or year-to-year according to availability of resources (FAO, 2011). The patterns of movement may be controlled by seasonal climate variations. However, increase in population, drying of
waterholes, shifting in rainfall pattern leading to drought as a result of the changing climate affects both sectors of agriculture. At the same time, household agricultural production systems are becoming more and more integrated into the global economy, thereby increasing the demand and pressure need of arable land values. These, coupled with the ineptitude of arable land governance and the increase widespread of economic hardship creates avenue for resource conflicts. Both customary and statutory land management systems are often not responding adequately to the tenure insecurity these changes bring (Djire et al., 2014).

Extensive livestock production in the form of pastoral livestock keeping is among the most suitable means of land use in arid areas of Africa because of its adaptability to highly variable environmental conditions (McCarthy et al., 2000). Livestock here signifies cattle, sheep and goats. In Nigeria, most pastoralists do not own land but graze their livestock in host communities (Awogbade, 1987). While a few have adopted the more sedentary type of animal husbandry, the increasing crises between farmers and pastoralist presupposes that grazing is a major means of animal rearing in Nigeria. The sedentary type of animal husbandry also proves to be more expensive, difficult to manage and inefficient for the rapid growing market of an ever increasing populations like Nigeria. Pastoralism remained the most ancient trade that is still strong and self-provisioning. While many pastoral regions are the focus of current farmer-pastoralist conflict studies, the long history of sustainability and resilience evidenced by these cultures and their contribution to the economy is of great interest. In Nigeria, there is a large proportion of the population involved in herding and are making a significant contribution to the economy. The groups of people that are actively involved in pastoral activities in Nigeria are the Kanembu, Kwoya, Manga, Fulbe (Fulani) and the Shuwa Arabs. The Fulbe are the largest owners of livestock accounting for about 90% of the nation’s stock, contributing one third of the Agricultural Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 3.2% of the national
GDP (Nuru, 1984; Fabusoro and Oyegbami, 2009). The Nigerian cattle market generates only 6.8 billion USD of a potential 20 billion USD annually due to local strives and inability of government to fully recognise the industry (Okello et al., 2014).

Pastoralism is economically viable to the extent that it contributes significantly to the economy of many developing countries despite continued underinvestment (Hatfield and Davies, 2006). It contributes largely to the growth of local economies, and a cumulative contributor to the nation’s GDP and plays a major role in providing on-demand protein to the wider population. In this part of the world, where inland fish is meagre and offshore fishing have not been well explored to provide sea food as part of a diet, meat, milk as well as butter are the major sources of protein. In addition, thousands of Nigerians make a daily living from the sale, transport, processing and marketing of livestock products that include meat, milk, butter, hides and skins, bones and as ploughing power to farmers. In the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) alone, 4,000 goats and over 400 cattle supplied by the Fulbe are slaughtered every day (Okello, 2014). In Yola town, north-east of the country, over 160 cattle, 600 sheep and 450 goats supplied by the Fulbe are slaughtered every day (informant interview). Cattle owners are the only people paying the Jangali (per head cattle levy) to the government since prior to independence (Adebayo, 1995). This tax, being an additional taxing system imposed by the British colonial system still exists (Okello et al., 2014). There is no doubt that the economic importance of pastoralist is significant to the Nigerian economy. Hence, arable land resource conflict between the farmers and pastoralist require a proactive policy action which the paper tends to examine.

**Causes and consequences of farmer-pastoralist conflict**

Past conflicts were solely due to overlap of farmlands with cattle routes, where farmers grow crops on the routes. But recently, this conflict has
escalated, taking another dimension of ethnic and religious undertone with little effort from government or community leaders at addressing them.

John (2014) studied the predicaments of the pastoralists and farmers and the true stories behind their conflicts and how these can be resolved. His results show the existence of one-sided reporting by the media, research articles and interested parties. Majority of those reports tend to highlight and report cases in which the pastoralist faulted farmers and tend to ignore the other side of the stories or even their losses (John, 2014). This appears to aggravate the situation and adds to the speculation and allegations of the pastoralist. Other studies show farmers encroachment on cattle routes is the real cause (Nformi et al., 2014). These mystify who is wrong and how these conflicts can be addressed. Ethnic jingoists and politicians have been benefitting in these strives and without doubt; have succeeded in creating a divide between the farmers and pastoralist, especially in communities that are less educated. Leaders at the Federal, State, and Local Governments and even at community levels become perplexed and ruminate on how these issues can be resolved.
Farmers and pastoralist in many localities and different countries make their livelihood within the same geographical, political, and socio-cultural conditions which may be characterized by resource scarcity (Braukämper, 2000) or political inequality (Bassett, 1988). Farmer-pastoralist conflicts have been associated with the conflict of land resource use exacerbated by dwindling resources (Blench, 2004). Some researchers have linked this crisis to the theory of eco-violence (Okoli and Atelhe, 2014), where environmental factors and exploitation of scarce resources leads to conflict and violence. This may explain the dwindling grazing resources (land, pasture etc.) and poor management of existing grazing reserves (Adisa, 2012) as culpable. In addition, the population is dynamic and ever increasing compared to land that is relatively static. The population growth rate of Nigeria per year is 3.2% (National Population Commission, 2012). Therefore, more and more people will continue to compete over arable land resource. Other researchers (Okoli et al., 2014; Odoh and Chigozie, 2012; Abbass, 2012) relate the causes of conflict to the global climate change and the contending desertification and aridity that has reduced arable and grazing lands, forcing pastoralist to move southwards in search of pasture for their livestock. Climate change-induced rainfall shifting patterns/amount and desertification reduces crop lands, and farmers have to follow these patterns, leading to overlap on grazing lands. The Fulbe herders in Nigeria, for example are faced with rapidly vanishing grass, forcing them to switch from the Bunaji cattle breed, which depends on grass, to the Sokoto Gudali, which readily browses (FAO, 2001). The pastoralists are also competing with large-scale agricultural schemes that narrow the grazing lands. The use of tractors, herbicides and fertilizers have revolutionized agriculture in the country leading to more and more grazing lands being farmed extensively (Iro, 2010). As farmlands increase to the detriment of grazing lands, animals can easily veer into farmlands and destroy crops.
Land acquisition by capitalist farmers exacerbates the upsurge of conflict as pastoralists can no longer find where to pass let alone where to stay (Abbass, 2012). Changing access rights as traditional communal property are being replaced by private ownership (Adisa, 2012). It is common to see that Burtalis (cattle pathways) close to cities do not exist anymore as houses and filling (petrol/gas) stations have taken over their places. Cattle now have to compete with motorist to the only path that is tarred road. There are many other predominant causes. Blockage of waterholes by farmers and fishermen, crop damage by pastoralist livestock and reprisal attacks on pastoralist by sedentary farmers when ethnic or religious disputes occur somewhere else (Umar, 2002; Abbass, 2012; Audu, 2014). Also, allocation of grazing lands as government layouts without compensating the pastoralist, breakdown of law and order and taking side by local rulers or Judges responsible for dispute resolution (Rasak, 2011; Fabusoro and Oyegbami, 2009). Others are gradual decline of social cohesion, ethnocentric and religious intolerance of leaders who are themselves sedentary farmers and conflict of cultures (Abbass, 2012; Bello, 2013). Hence, it is important to note that these conflicts have direct impact on the lives and livelihoods of those involved. They also disrupt and threaten the sustainability of pastoral production and agriculture in West Africa (Moritz, 2010). These conflicts reinforce circles of extreme poverty and hunger, and destroy social status, food security and affect mostly the most marginalized groups that include women and children. This affects education of children leading to obstacles in their development and mass displacement. Consequentially, this debilitates the once mutually existing farmer-pastoralist relationships. This awful situation becomes worst, especially when either the farmer or the pastoralist is categorized into a group relating to religion, tribe or region. Abbass (2012) warned that the disharmony in pastoralism and sedentarism reflect enhanced sedentarisation and increased pastoralism leading to constant conflict with the agrarian societies.
Some farmers practicing mixed farming attests that their animals have in one way or another affected other farmers, likewise sedentary pastoralists were in one way or the other affected by farmers (Nformi et al., 2014). This shows that the issue of farmer-pastoralist conflict is more or less shared problem. Therefore, this may not warrant isolation of farmers or pastoralists into ethnic or regional groupings for the sake of levying blames on any as the case may be. Blench (2010) observed that judicial commissions set up to handle conflict issues do not yield any effective action. Both farmers and pastoralists are in dire need to settle these conflicts preferably by the customary institutions rather than the Courts. Even though, many of these conflicts are settled outside courts through the customary institutions, a lot of people are not aware of the existence of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). The ADR is formal and centres are provided within cities and towns. The arbitrators are professionals at law and cases are solved fairly quickly outside the courts. In Nigeria, the ADRs are established by Arbitration and Conciliation Act, Cap. A 18 of the Laws of the Federation of Nigeria (2004).

Review of grazing reserves
The Land Use Act of 1978 has granted equal rights and opportunities to Nigerians to live in any part of the country un-deterred and regards all citizens as Nigerians and not Natives, unlike the previous Land Tenure Act of 1962 that did not spell this out (Rasak, 2011). According to this law, the Federal government has the capacity to redraw the boundaries between cattle routes, range lands and farmlands accordingly and envisage co-existence of various groups. Furthermore, the Nigerian Grazing Reserve Act of 1964 was passed for the purpose of accessing grazing lands to the Pastoralists, thereby encouraging sedentarisation and addressing conflict with a plan to improve productivity and social amenities (Awogbade, 1978; Ibrahim, 2012). This, in broader sense was expected to address constraints facing the cattle market and disease control
(Ingawa et al., 1989). However, even though this law was passed, very little implementation was observed. Looking at the impending farmer-pastoralist conflict and a reduced cattle production, in which Nigeria imports about 23% of cattle from the neighboring Sahel countries, the government again enacts the National Agricultural Policy of 1988. The law stipulates that a minimum of 10% of the national territory that is 9.8 million acres be allocated to grazing reserves. However, only 2.82% was acquired out of 313 reserves (CIEL, 2006; Ibrahim, 2012). The most recent attempt to establish grazing routes and reserves across the 36 states and the FCT was the National Grazing Route and Reserve Commission bill of 2011 (Kumolu, 2014). On 3rd July 2012, a bill titled ‘The National Grazing Route and Reserve Bill’ was presented to the Nigerian Senate for deliberation (Daily Trust, 2012). The bill however, state of the Federation. The inability of the upper house of assembly and the government to promulgate a law establishing grazing reserves raises doubt on the government’s commitment to finding a lasting solution to the conflict. It also raises questions on the government’s failed to scale a third reading as the Senators were divided over whether the Federal Government was constitutionally empowered to create grazing reserves and stock routes in any commitment to reduce her dependency on oil, and working towards post-oil Nigeria, since her oil reserves may last only up to the year 2053 based on 2012 production rate (World Bank, 2012b).

Sedentarisation is another method used by governments to resolve the farmer-pastoralist conflict. However, RECANIGER (2009) shows that pastoral systems are 20% more productive than sedentary animal rearing. The reasons are that sedentarisation require intensive maintenance of field bio-mass to avoid depletion. Of course, even governments in developed countries would find it difficult to provide basic requirements that will encourage pastoralists to settle in designated areas. Several researches have been conducted to determine causes and effects of farmer-pastoralist conflicts. However, limited research has been carried out on the expansion
of farmlands and the dwindling pastoral land area, which are the principal causes of conflict. This study intends to build upon the research conducted by Gefu and Gilles (1990), who comparatively studied and analysed changes in land uses meant for grazing and crop production in Nigeria. Their results showed that within a period of 35 years (1951-1986), land primarily meant for livestock grazing diminished by 41.8%, while the number of livestock almost doubled. Such rapid change in land uses has set stage for a land use conflict between pastoral land use and other land uses in Nigeria. Against the backdrop of the above this paper examines the argument that arable land resource conflict is the major cause of farmer-pastoralist underdevelopment and livelihood insecurity in Nigeria.

**Impact of resource conflict on livelihood development in Nigeria**

- Global Terrorism index (GTI: 2015) which shows that two countries, Iraq and Nigeria, account for 53 per cent of all deaths from terrorism in 2014.
- In the case of Nigeria it noted that in 2013, Fulani militants killed 1,229 people in 2014, up from 63 in 2013 owing to ongoing conflicts over access and control of land between the semi-nomadic Fulani herdsmen and farmers in north-eastern Nigeria.
- According to Fasona and Omojola in 2005, conflicts resulting from cattle grazing actually accounted for 35% of all reported crises between 1991 and 2005 in Nigeria (Adekunle and Adisa 2010). The North Central states of Taraba, Nasarawa, Plateau, and Benue have also been identified as the most affected areas in the country (McGregor 2014; Nigeria Watch Newsletter 2014).
- Farm land conflict is not only affecting farmers’ income but also misfortune the whole development of a country. Whenever there is farm land conflict among farmers it is obvious that their agricultural productivity decreases from time to time that is a threat for their
livelihood. Agricultural productivities hampered highly and shrink by the farm land conflicts (Sekeres, 2010).

These are not the only economic crisis of farmers, but also they are vulnerable to different unnecessary expenditures in time of accusation because of land conflict. They are expected to cover legal counselor costs, transport costs, personal living costs, material costs and others that weaken their income. Even though farmers spend all these costs to win their case, sometimes they can be losers which demoralize them in addition of their cost crisis. Against the backdrop of the above, resource issues have maintained chronicles of violent conflict around Nigeria and Africa to be precise.

Glossary of recent cases of arable land, resource conflict and underdevelopment in Nigeria

- As at 31 May 2014, a total of 27 deaths were recorded for 2014 from 8 reported incidents in the months of January (Oyo and Abuja), February (Delta), March (Taraba, Benue, and Ebonyi) and May (Kaduna). The highest number of cases was in March (4), and the highest number of fatalities (10) was in Taraba, also in March.
- Also, scores of persons have been reportedly killed in the Fulani herdsmen invasion of Ukpabi-Nimbo in Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area of Enugu State (Vanguard Newspaper apr 25, 2016).
- On 4th March, 2016, Agatu people in Benue state were reported to have triggered crisis by Killing over 10,000 cattles of the Fulani Community and the Fulani herdsmen in turn, were reported to have killed hundreds of Agatu people. Similarly, fifteen people were reportedly killed and eighteen others injured in Nwokyo, Wukari Local Government Area of Taraba State following another attack by Fulani herdsmen numbering over 300 and dressed in military uniforms. On the average, 40 houses were burnt and properties worth several millions of naira were
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FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The movement of pastoralist from one area of the country to another is usually caused by the increasing demand for fresh grazing grounds especially during draught period, when the pastoralists move southwards because of the availability of pasture. In most cases, the pastoralists do encounter problems with the local people because farmers’ crops were being destroyed by their cattle (Olaleye et al, 2010). This accordingly have worsened resource conflict patterns and can be said to even grow more complex if not duly addressed by legislative action that will contain and manage grazing process in a way it won’t metamorphose into another ethno-religious war.

The paper thus contends that most of the underdevelopment challenges and resource curse arguments of the Nigerian state is a product of arable land resources mismanagement and underdevelopment politics by the political class of our nation. Hence, there is poor political will by the government to strengthen its legal and constitutional structures above personal and ethnic consciousness that is still a clog to wheel of our national and human development in Africa.

The finding of this research effort shows that the pattern of resource conflict has taken some dominant relationship between the Fulani herdsmen and arable farmers in the southern Nigeria. This situation has resulted to incessant bloody conflict between the two interest groups in these regions. Our findings thus indicate that, in Nigeria, the level of institutional failure on the part government to promote people-centred bills in order to accommodate, mediate and resolve the lingering differences between concerned interest is still at infancy and would most likely

destroyed. In fact, the only Millennium Development Goal (MDG) project in the area was destroyed in the process (https://www.naij.com/64564.html - Tessy Igomu).
implode into a lethal war that will be both expensive and devastating for the government to handle if not given the desired proactive responses.

CONCLUSION
The paper concludes that conflicts associated with arable land politics and resource injustice are some of the most profound issues perverting attendant socio economic predicaments of our present day development uncertainties in Africa.

The causes of most of these conflicts have been diverse, and more specific to the backdrops of policy and institutional weakness of the African governance and leadership towards rural economic development.

That the ineptitude in conflict management of arable land justice, resource governance, pastoralist, and sustainable rural economic development in Africa presents untold challenges to agricultural development and food security in the region.

The study concludes that the popular challenge of land tenure system and access to land for commercial production of agricultural resources is a security risk to socioeconomic and environmental development of the Nigeria State.

RECOMMENDATIONS
From the foregoing submissions, the study recommends that:

• There is need for conscious and active policy drive by government to review land use policy, agricultural and pastoral policies, as well as peace and conflict management policies.
• Policy efforts should be increased on resolving all arable land and resource conflict interests and to specify clear boundaries for peaceful coexistence among groups, livelihood security and economic development of Africa.
Arable land resource management should be encouraged through resilient policy structures that will address complexities arising from limitations and imbalances of arable land conflict in Africa.

The potential:
- 50 percent of the world's remaining uncultivated land is in Africa.
- 450 million hectares of this land are not forested, protected, or densely populated.

The current value of food markets on the continent is estimated at $313bn.
By 2030, the World Bank estimates that Africa's agriculture sector could constitute a $1tn opportunity.
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