

**A CONTEMPORARY HISTORY OF FARMERS-HERDERS CRISES IN NIGERIA
UP TO 2019**

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RESEARCH PROPOSAL

The scarcity of land and water have been strategic to farmer-herder relationship in sub-Saharan Africa. In pre-colonial period, both herders and farmers moved from one place to another in search of land and water for their occupations. Herders or pastoralists were mobile and moved from one field to another where their cattle could feed on grasslands and water. Similarly, farmers were mobile in that they moved from one farmland to the other. For herders, once there were no more edible plants for their cattle, they moved to another area. This made them to be very far from their original settlements and technically had no permanent residence. For the farmers, soil fertility, rainfall and topography determined their movement. Many farmers had farmlands that were far from their homes and on several occasions, large number of farmers had to shift or move to new farm-settlement. Gradually, the Benue River of Nigeria became the confluence of various herders and farmers. This was because the best farmlands also formed the best grazing fields. Consequently, there were reported incidents of conflicts between Fulani herders and other groups in the region in the 19th century.

In the 20th century, there were incidences of conflicts between herders and farmers which occurred in the two pastoral corridors of Northeast and Northwestern Nigeria. The Lake Chad region formed the main area for these conflicts in this period. Indeed, violence became common and widespread between newly arrived herders and their host farmers leading to several killings and destructions. The relationship between herders and farmers became a national security problem in the 21st century. The accessibility of arms illegally obtained by Herdsmen contribute to violent confrontations with farmers. In 2018, the Nigerian government raised alarm over the circulation of about 4.5 million illegal small arms and light weapons and pushed for a bill to prohibit the proliferation of these arms (Punch Newspapers, 27 March 2019). While there in no concrete record of the number of arms in possession of herdsman, oral interview with officials of the Nigerian Army reveal that some section of the herdsman make the trafficking of small arms as their full business. Among the list of weapons used by herdsman AK-47 assault rifles, homemade

rifles, hand guns and Molotov cocktails.

According to Bagudu (2018) Fulani herdsmen are in possession of military grade rifles, machine guns, bombs and military uniforms. This assertion is supported by the recovery of such weapons from herdsmen during military raids in Fulani dominated areas. Raids by the police resulted in the collection of weapons including AK-47 and G3 rifles, Beretta and Browning pistols and various types of ammunition (Soetan, 2017). The period between 2009 and 2018 witnessed series of herder-farmer conflicts in Yoruba states of Ekiti, Ogun, Ondo, Oyo, and Lagos than any period in their history. These conflicts have degenerated to various attacks resulting in destruction of farmlands, kidnapping and killing of women and children.

Research Objectives

The general objective of this study is to historicize farmers-herders relationship in Nigeria up to 2019. The specific objectives of this study however are to:

- i. Determine the factors leading to incessant clashes between herdsmen and farmers between 1999 and 2019
- ii. Examine the role of small arms and politics in herders-farmers conflict
- iii. Discuss the response of the federal government of Nigeria in managing herders-farmers conflict in Nigeria
- iv. Examine the consequences of farmer-herder conflicts on national security and socio-economic development of Nigeria



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