

The Politics of Herders and Farmers Crisis in Nigeria under President Muhammadu Buhari; an Appraisal of the North and South Dichotomy of Nigeria

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Abstract: The actions of herders in Nigeria under President Muhammadu Buhari, have turned into a nightmare, particularly in the southern region of the country. The politics of the farmers and herders problem in Nigeria under President Buhari are examined in this study, with particular emphasis on the North-South divide. A historical research design was used in the study. Both primary and secondary types of data were employed by the researcher. Focus group discussions and key informant interviews (KII) carried out in particular regions of Northern and Southern Nigeria are the main sources of data. Internet prints, text books, journals, news publications, and libraries were used to collect secondary data. The environmental scarce resources and power theory was used in the study. The national assembly enacted an anti-grazing law, which the southern governors have also signed, but herders did not abide by it because they are largely supported by Northern elites who owned and control the livestock. In order to strengthen democracy and dislodge regional, religious, and geopolitical sentiment that has long assaulted Nigerian democracy, rule of law, equity, fairness, and inclusivity in Nigerian governance, the researcher consequently advised that the United Nations intervene externally in Nigeria.

Keywords: Dichotomy, Farmers, Herders, North, Politics, South.

Introduction

A herder is someone who maintains, breeds, or takes care of cattle, according to the International Crisis Group (2017) report and definition. The roots and history of the herders and farmers problem, however, cannot be overstated because herding and pastoral movement by herdsmen are as old as Nigeria and global warming and climate change, which stretch back to the 17th century, respectively (Meyer, 2018). This has organized the depletion of environmental resources and contributed to political unrest, particularly in Nigeria where desertification and flooding are secondary repercussions (Meyer, 2018).

According to Benjaminsen & Ba (2009), the herding-farming conflict has not been effectively handled and contained, and as a result, Nigeria's political and economic structure has been negatively affected. In Nigeria, herders and farmers had a cooperative relationship and engaged in competition between the 12th and 13th centuries, according to Adebayo (1991). In 1995, Ellwood said that RUGA was established in Nigeria in order to control and accommodate grazing operations as well as to settle any conflicts between farmers and herders. According to Davidheiser and Luna (2008), the confrontation between colonial farmers and herders signaled the start of changes to the socio-political and physical landscapes. As a result, there was less compatibility between farmers and herders and less informal land tenure and resource use than before. The conflict management mechanisms brought by the colonists, which are foreign to the natives, served the interests of the colonial overlords. However, there have been and continued to be conflicts in Nigeria between herders and farmers, which has grown more concerning as they are occurring more frequently under President Muhammadu Buhari. .

Odoh and Chigozie (2012) claim that these conflicts have had the greatest negative effects on the economy and population of Nigeria. They have also led to political instability within and between the afflicted states. This is also evident in the amount of resources used to try to tackle the problem and in how much unemployment there is as a result. This is due to Olaoye's (2014) assertion that agriculture significantly contributes to the growth of Nigeria's economy and GDP. According to International Crisis Group (2017), President Buhari's administration has not made it a priority to take clear and transparent efforts to offer better protection for both herders and farmers. His government is becoming seen with skepticism by many in central and southern regions. Thus, Southern regions are putting every necessary effort to secure the people through the anti-grazing law.

The presidency, under the leadership of Muhammadu Buhari, reportedly referred to the governor of South's prohibition on open grazing as having legal ambiguities ("The Nation's daily," 2021). He charged that

the governors were striving to demonstrate their dominance while engaging in dangerous security concerns for politics. The decision to prohibit herders from grazing from the North to the South "on foot" is a violation of their constitutional freedom as Nigerians to live and conduct business in any region of the nation, according to Abuja's seat of authority. At a meeting on May 11, 2022 in Asaba, the capital of Delta State, the 17 Southern governors unanimously voted to put the ban on open grazing into effect. They demanded that the Livestock Transformation Program be funded by the Federal Government. They also took other decisions including calling for a national dialogue and restructuring of the country to pave the way for state police and a review of the revenue formula. The People's Democratic Party (PDP) Governors' Forum reportedly supported the Southern governors' choice, as reported in the country's leading newspapers on May 25, 2021. Following a meeting in Lagos. However, every leader of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in the Southwest supported the Southern governors' stance on restructuring and prominent figures, including Chief Bisi Akande, who presided over the meeting, Asiwaju Bola Tinubu, Chief Segun Osoba, and elder statesman and former chief of the military staff Gen. Alani Akinrinade, were present. On May 20, however, Abubakar Malami, the Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, compared the prohibition on open grazing to prohibiting a southern spare parts vendor from conducting business. Nigerians took exception to his viewpoint, which the Presidency appears to have adopted, and criticized the reasoning behind it.

President Muhammadu Buhari criticized anti-grazing regulations, according to "This Day News" (2022). He criticized Southern state governors who have outlawed open grazing in their jurisdictions as ridiculous. While Mr. President's protests the ban on open grazing, he remains silent about the murder, rape, banditry, assault, and other crimes that the AK-47-wielding Fulani herdsmen conduct while caring for their cattle and cows. President Buhari seemed to have a personal prejudice in favour of his Fulani clan. Why should the president of a nation, who should consider the entire nation to be his constituency, go to the point of prioritizing the Fulani herdsmen's private business over public right and interest? Why should Mr. President support Fulani herdsmen if Nigeria is a multilingual, multiethnic, and multinational society? This questions arises out of the fact that his position does not reflect the common goals and objectives of the diverse interest groups and ethnicities that make up Nigeria. Where has this president been throughout the past six years while herdsmen have been raping, killing, and maiming their victims with impunity and robbing them of their farmland? Has he not realized that thousands of innocent Nigerians have been killed or injured by Fulani herders in the previous six years under his watch? Why has the value of human life dropped so low in this government? Is President Buhari aware that over the past three years, numerous Nigerian courts have repeatedly upheld state governments' legal authority to enact anti-grazing regulations in their particular states? Is the president aware that the passage of anti-grazing measures in various federation states has resulted in relative peace, security, and tranquility in the aforementioned states? These questions were the motivation behind the governors of the Southern states disregard of President Buhari's objection, just as they disregarded the ridiculous anti-grazing stance lately espoused by the Federal Attorney-General and the Minister for Justice. The reiterated that anti-grazing legislation has come to stay and no matter whose ox gets gored, state governors are prepared to uphold the law to the letter.

Another fact inciting the Southern governors response is the issue that Mr. President still seemed not comprehend the significance and operation of Nigeria's presidential democracy. Additionally, the issue was made worse by the fact that the president's managers and handlers are not doing their job of assisting the president in having structured, wise, and cogent views on important matters of governance. As can be inferred from the devolution of powers in the Exclusive, Concurrent, and Residual Lists under the 1999 Constitution and under the Land Use Act, under presidential democracy the Houses of Assembly and governors of the federation can enact anti-grazing laws to be binding in their respective states in order to protect the lives of their respective citizens.

Duties influence and are a condition of right. For instance, where the right to life of their fellow citizens begins, the "right" of Fulani herdsmen to kill their neighbors while raising their cattle ends. Besides, what is sauce for the goose is equally sauce for the gander. The fundamental question becomes, if Mr. President is expressing the alarm that the Fulani herdsmen are denied grazing right, why is he not similarly raising the alarm that the same Fulani herdsmen are killing, maiming and raping Nigerian citizens? The Land Use Act grants sole ownership of all lands in Southern Nigeria to Southern State Governors (not the Presidency or Fulani herdsmen), who are free to grant, convey, or assign the use or title of those lands to any applicant who meets the requirements for such a grant, conveyance, or assignment. As is glaringly clear, President Buhari has often been begged by Nigerians from all walks of life to do away with the provincialism and nepotism that give rise to secessionist and separatist movements in the country. Nigerians have also been pleading with him to reverse the country's lopsided political appointments, but he has likewise refused to do so. Instead of making changes to the lopsided political appointments, Mr. President keeps preaching about how the unity of Nigeria cannot be

negotiated. As a result of President Buhari's nepotism, provincialism, and small-town mindset, Nigeria's unity became currently seriously in jeopardy.

It is important to note that, before Buhari took office, the Fulani herdsman who grazed livestock in Southern Nigeria were not equipped with AK-47 rifles, much alone capable of swiftly dispatching their victims. Unfortunately, these Fulani herders have started carrying firearms and engaging in all manner of criminal activity since Buhari took office. The president is now arguing for these criminals' "right" to open grazing rather than bringing them to justice. To stop the deadly conflicts between herders and farmers nationwide, President Muhammadu Buhari has ordered the repair of grazing areas nationwide as of June, 2022. The president said his administration is working on different ways to promote peace between farmers and herders and questioned the legitimacy of the recent restriction on open grazing in the southern area of the country. According to a statement by the presidential spokesperson, Garba Shehu, additional measures are being adjusted to address the security issues brought on by armed herders around the nation, which have resulted in fatalities.

The herder-farmer conflicts that have persisted in Nigeria for generations have clearly not been resolved by their resolutions. However, the people of the southern state, indeed, the people of all the states in Nigeria have a right to expect that their elected leaders and representatives will find solutions to issues of governance and rights, rather than wiping their hands off difficult decisions by issuing "not in my state" bans. It is also true that their announcement may not be legal given the constitutional guarantee that all Nigerians have access to the same freedoms and rights in each of the country's 36 states (as well as the Federal Capital Territory) regardless of where they were born or currently reside. Fortunately, for whatever purpose, this declaration has been preempted, and Mr. President, who has legitimately been more concerned about these issues than any other citizen, in consultation with farmers and herders alike, commissioned and approved an actionable plan of rehabilitating grazing reserves in the states, starting with those that are sincere about the problem and compliant with stated requirements.

Through these rehabilitated reserves are now been reformed, the Federal Government is implementing broad-reaching and practical changes that enable various communities to coexist side by side: supporting farmers in cultivating their fields, herders in tending to their livestock, and Nigerians everywhere in maintaining their safety. These facilities include veterinary clinics, water points for animals, and facilities for herders and their families, including schools. Thus, the environmental scarce resources and power theories were both used in this investigation. This is due to the fact that each of them made a strong case for how resource depletion and war are related. Additionally, it serves as a foundation for understanding how governments might use their political clout to end or exacerbate internal strife. Homer-Dixon (1994) predicted that by the year 2050, the world's population will surpass nine billion people and that global economic output might quadruple.

As a result, there will be a considerable increase in the scarcity of renewable resources, a decline in the quality of agriculture and forests, a drying up of the aquifers, and a big shift in the climate. Therefore, if such environmental scarcities worsen, they will undoubtedly spark armed conflicts, especially in developing nations. However, because poor societies like Nigeria would be severely damaged, this violence will be widespread and chronic on a national level. Perhaps Nigeria is already experiencing severe difficulty, with a lack of water, greenery, forests, and particularly fertile terrain contributing to unexpected social and environmental issues. Coleman (2000) claimed that the majority of confrontations involve the use of power. He focuses on the power tactics that are frequently employed during conflicts as he examines the ramifications of conflict resolution. One of the most common fallacies regarding power is that it operates exclusively in one direction, has a place, and is used in an antagonistic and competitive manner. According to him, when a person has access to valuable resources or power and uses it to further personal, interpersonal, or environmental goals, frequently through a variety of influencing techniques, it can be productive. Some people are more authoritarian in nature, emphasizing deference to authority.

Coleman claims that since power conflicts are seen as a win-lose battle because power is competitive and "power is placed over view." Perhaps studies have revealed that powerful people or groups "tend to like power, utilize it, rationalize possessing it, and try to keep it; therefore, they are less interested in low-power individuals and have an unreflective propensity to rule. Low-power groups frequently become hostile toward high-power groupings and encounter pushback. In the light of the on-going discuss, the researcher was poised to investigate the politics of farmers and herders' crisis under President Buhari, with particular interest in the North and South dichotomy.

Statement of Problem

The rule of law despite its provision for inclusive governance to account for Nigeria's diversity, and the fundamental human rights guaranteed by Section 33 of Chapter 4 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the government of President Muhammad Buhari has politicized the horrific maiming and frequent invasion of farms, churches, and other places of worship by pastoral herders with the intention of killing

defenseless residents who are just engaged in their regular daily activities for their well-being. Despite the fact that herders have claimed lives, President Buhari's federal administration in Nigeria has been slow to punish them. Additionally, they have not done much at all to control these herders' behavior or create fear in them, especially given that they frequently carry weapons. It took the Nigerian federal government under Buhari until this point to let the national legislature to label herders as terrorists.

These constantly heavily armed AK 47-toting herders began by encroaching on farmland for grazing and destroying crops, which of course resulted in clashes with farmers. In the last seven years, more lives have been lost as a result of this under the presidency of President Buhari. Today, this has evolved into horrific murder in churches and the rape of women in the farm lands, particularly in the southern region of Nigeria. The efforts of the 17 governors of the Southern states notwithstanding, who joined forces to pass a resolution outlawing open grazing in their individual jurisdictions, only a little discernible impact has been felt, and it did nothing to deter herders' criminal operations on farmlands, particularly in southern Nigeria. Herders continued to graze their livestock in the open with much greater impunity, moving around with AK-47 ammunition and being well-prepared for a fight. Perhaps they have the support of Mr. Muhammadu Buhari and other northern elites who believe they are Nigeria's first-class citizens while the south is an unbeliever. By protecting these herders, President Buhari has shown his support for them. Even though technocrats, human rights groups, and patriotic Nigerians have pleaded and urged him to take legal action about this. The president however, has seemingly refused to change his view point as he is a Hausa-Fulani man, just like these herders, and that he benefits from open grazing since he owns cattle. The problem of the study posed as a question therefore is, what is the divide in the North and South's viewpoints given the politics of farmers and herders crisis under President Buhari's administration?

Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study is to examine the politics of herders and farmers crises in Nigeria under President Muhammadu Buhari. The specific objectives are:

- i. unfold the politics of herders and famers crises in Nigeria
- ii. Examine the links between president Buhari led government and the heightened herders & farmers crises in Nigeria
- iii. Utilizing the environmental scarce resources and power theory to explain the continuous, endless crisis between herders and farmers.

Research Questions

- i. What are the impacts of anti-grazing laws on herders and famers crises in Nigeria?
- ii. What is the relationship between herders and gruesome murdering of farmers, raping of women in the forest, kidnapping and political instability in Nigeria?
- iii. How does environmental scarce resources and power theory tend to explain the continuous crises between herders and famers in Nigeria?

Methodology

The historical design was used for this research. The study made use of both primary and secondary data that were printed in newspapers, journals, and on the internet. Key informant interviews and FGD 2022 are examples of primary data. The researcher went to Abuja's newspaper offices to get secondary data. Primary information on specific regions of a few northern and southern states of Nigeria was obtained through focus group discussions and key informant interviews. The researcher traveled to these states, as well as several of the respondents' local government areas. In each of the three northern and southern Nigerian states' local governments, six (6) people were chosen to participate in the FGD namely a police officer, two farmers, a hunter, a food vendor, a herder by the ranch. In each of these local administrations in these three states, one important informant was questioned. Six traditional chiefs in all three from the north and three from the south of Nigeria were questioned by KII. The states were also picked because they are frequently in the news as being the most recent targets of herder attacks under president Buhari and they all have things in common with the topic of discussion.

Results

The conversations and responses from respondents/participants of the various FGD groups held in the chosen states of the north and south of Nigeria served as the foundation for the findings and outcomes. Perhaps the researcher's queries were answered differently by them because of their different locales. Benue, Zangara, and Yobe are the northern Nigerian states chosen, while Delta, Imo, and Ondo are the southern states. The southern region is in group A, whereas the northern portion is in group B, according to the classification of the

two regions. Each state has two local administrations that were numbered 1 through 6. The following inquiries were made to each of the groups:

1. What is the primary reason for the ongoing disputes between farmers and livestock herders that we read about and see? How do these issues affect you as a local resident who farms and makes a living in the area?

In the past, Mrs. Margaret, a primary school teacher and farmer from the Abraka community in the Ethiopia East Local Government Area of Delta State, said that she and the Fulani cattle men would work together in the wilderness. However, that was many years ago, and all of a sudden they started fighting and killing our people because our people tried to prevent them from feeding their cows on our farm lands. Sometimes they can even assist us in lifting our farm products on our bicycles, and I have personally given them drinking water. In 2017 March 15th, my neighbor was killed in the farm by this cattle man but her son was able to get away and rushed to the neighborhood, where he informed the king. The livestock herders had already fled when the youths were summoned to the jungle. We have repeatedly reported to the police and the King, but the King and the police D.P.O. will instead claim that their hands are tied because they follow the commissioner of police's orders directly, who is in turn controlled by the inspector general, who was chosen by president Buhari (FGD, 2022).

According to Mr. Emeka Anyaogu, a food vendor from the Obiaruku community in the Nkwale local government area of Delta state, "I used to sell a plate of food for 300 naira around 10 years ago, but today's plate of food is 930 naira due to the cost of food stuffs." I have been purchasing vegetables and okro from the market source at an astronomical price, for example, ever since Fulani cattle men killed my customer who used to supply me with both at a very low cost. This is especially true now that farmers no longer frequently go to their farms due to a fear of the unknown (FGD, 2022).

A hunter named Mr. Ovie claims, "I have frequently crossed across with these cattle herders challenging farmers on several occasions. Most of the time I wind up mediating disputes between them and farmers. The farmers might mostly show me their crops that these livestock have already harmed when I inquire what the issue is. When questioned about the issue, the herders, however, usually accuse the farmers of attempting to prevent them from going into the bush to feed their flocks. Because they are the only ones who can provide orders to the police and army to put a stop to this unlawful attack by Fulani herdsmen, I personally do not believe that the Nigerian government had good intentions for us, the population. Because these herders have more powerful weapons than I do, I sometimes feel nervous when I go hunting (FGD, 2022).

2. Do you believe that the federal government of Nigeria has made a beneficial or negative contribution to the ongoing conflict between farmers and herders that has nearly spread throughout all of Nigeria, especially under the current president?

Alhaji Jibrin, on the other hand, has a cattle ranch in the Delta State hamlet of Obiaruku along the Abraka Warri route. Upon being questioned, the man replied, "I own some of these cows you see here. My boys usually take them to the bush for grazing, but what I can assure you is that I have never instructed my boys to go and kill farmer. Because sometimes when they do, it brings me so much trouble, I end up spending all I have made settling and recovering my cows from the community and their forests. The majority of these boys do not comprehend English, which is a language that is widely spoken in this region's south, which is one of my toughest challenges. They frequently say that the farmers were trying to converse with them when they returned from the woods, but since they could not understand one another, they assumed the farmer was abusing them and yelling at them to leave the forest. Maybe this is where things start to go wrong. And with regard to the AK-47, those weapons were provided to them as a form of animal defense as they occasionally spend the night in the woods (FGD, 2022).

High chief Samson Akpor, a traditional leader in the Delta State community of Enreni in the Ugheli North Local Government Area, responded to a question by saying, "In all my life, I have never seen this kind of leadership style. As I speak to you now, my people no longer have the right to enter their own farm land." This is not just out of fear; our king gave these Fulani herdsmen permission to build their own society in our country. This is so awful that before accessing their own ancestral territory, our people must report to the king in charge of the herder's community and maybe obtain a gate pass (KII, 2022). Despite the anti-grazing law in Delta state, the chiefs in council have written to the state governor in vain. He should not be in Abuja watching an unidentified gunman kill our citizens, rape our women, and evict farmers from their farms; he is there to safeguard lives and property. Personally, I wish I had been much younger to fight against these dangerous Fulani guys known as herders who, in my opinion, are working toward a covert takeover of Nigeria. But because these are his tribe men, Buhari will not warn them (KII, 2022).

We are responsible for looking for our lands, culture, and people. However, since we have previously attempted to resist them but were all given orders from above to go to the police command and were all made to

sign an agreement promising never to harm these herders, there is not much we can do to help our own people combat these cattle guys at the moment. I am not even sure what kind of democracy we have here; perhaps our governors are also under pressure to take action. We are therefore dependent on President Buhari's brutal policies to survive, as despite the fact that numerous farmers have been slaughtered by herders in the bush, our state's anti-grazing law has not been enforced (KII, 2022).

Approximately seven to ten years ago, according to Mrs. Omonigho Omadide, cassava became a rare item. Because of their fear of being killed by Fulani cattle men in the bush, our people no longer engage in intensive farming. I used to process and sell a lot of cassava to feed my family and pay for my kids' school expenses. But most recently, I have started trading fish, which is less profitable and long-lasting than my farm company. As we now buy food items, including cassava, from the market, sometimes I and my kids must survive on the meager food we have. We just hope that one day God would deliver us from wicked leaders who are unable to safeguard our lives and our agricultural fields (FGD, 2022).

3. Do you think President Buhari's administration, in particular, has had a favorable or bad impact on the ongoing conflict between farmers and herders that has nearly spread throughout all of Nigeria?

Mr. Toju, a farmer from the Owo community in the Ondo state local government region, claims that "Our people are farmers, and we depend on and subsist by farm products." However, since the election of President Buhari, the activities of the Fulani cattle men have increased to the point where our people are no longer able to access their farmlands out of fear. They destroy our crops with their cattle, rape our women in the farm, and then kill them after they have been raped. These herdsmen have so many unchecked rights, thanks to the Buhari government that they smash into churches, maim people, and get away with it. At least forty (40) persons, including four children, were killed when gunmen broke into the St. Francis Catholic Church in Owo on June 17, 2022. This incident made headlines. We have not received any supportive responses from the central government despite this heinous crime. This is the best I can do to prove that the Buhari administration houses terrorist and Boko Haram sponsors who pose as Fulani cattle herders. Because I have never seen cattle herders using an AK-47 to walk around in my entire life.

According to Mr. Lambert a civil servant and a business man in Jugbere community of Akoko west local government of Ondo state, ' We were all here sited in my shop on February 13th, 2021 when some youths in their numbers moved towards the forest to rescue some farmers from the hands of armed herders. Unfortunately, three farmers had already been killed by gunfire when they arrived, and the herders had fled with their cows into the nearby bush. The same herders also attacked Mr. Boyade at his cashew farm in March of the same year, merely to name a few. As we place our hope in the incoming administration since we have already lost faith in President Buhari, I believe that the federal government of Nigeria, led by him, cannot resolve all of these issues (FGD, 2022).

Obosa-Assa Community in Ohaji/Mr. Egbema's Nwaneri Obioma Buhari and his cabinet colleagues have never given the cries of common people against the unlawful activities of Fulani herdsmen even the slightest attention, according to the traditional head in council of the local government area of Imo State. Buhari actually intended to kill us all and seize our farms. I say this because someone who does not plan has already decided to fail. Buhari has declined to use our legal system to investigate the shady activities of these herdsmen. Consider how our farmland has lain fallow for more than seven years. No farmer wants to take personal risks for their livelihood. Due to their inability to sustain themselves, peasant farmers are now heavily dependent on market commodities for consumption, there are less farm products available, and they are living in poverty. Do we still refer to this regime as democratic, I wonder? They will ignore it if you eventually file an official report with the police station. A police officer once asked me if I wanted him to arrest cows in the wild; that I ought to try to find a method to hold the current administration accountable (KII, 2022)

4. What is the primary reason for the ongoing disputes between farmers and livestock herders that we read about and see? How do these issues affect you as a local resident who farms and makes a living in the area?

Although, it gradually began with farmers and Fulani people in the bush, I believe the war in the Orlu Zone has a political component, according to Mr. Tobeckwuwu, a hunter and food dealer. Political players have taken over the process because the government has not taken any significant action to stop this threat. As I speak, both cattle herders and unidentified gunmen are seen as enemies of our people and their farmlands because they no longer go to the farm. In actuality, we no longer close our eyes while we sleep. Since a few years ago, Orlu has been the hotter and riskiest location in the entire South (FGD, 2022). If I am asked to judge Mr. Buhari, I will not say much because it is a waste of time; even the president is aware that he has broken the social compact and failed the people. How is it possible for a president to be so brazen as to declare that "every Nigerian has the right to movement, including cattle herders, thus nobody should deny them of their rights"?

Said Mr. Eberechukwu. Even when these individuals murder their neighbors, rape women in the woods, and kidnap others, they are still allowed to carry weapons?

Instead, I would argue that this administration is biased since it has never once supported the south. Imagine that despite the fact that the region's open grazing was first prohibited by the 17 southern governors, the same herders continued to perpetrate the region's worst crimes unabated. I will sum up by arguing that the federal government, particularly in southern Nigeria, is the cause of the herders' and farmers' issues. They have continually played a deaf and dumb role on this subject (KII, 2022).

5. What is the primary reason for the ongoing disputes between farmers and livestock herders that we read about and see? How do these issues affect you as a local resident who farms and makes a living in the area? (Group B, northern Nigeria, which consists of the states of Benue, Yobe, and Zamfara)

The farmer and herders' dispute is no longer news to us, said chief Adah, a traditional leader in Benue state's Jimba local government. As a result of Our President Buhari's apparent sentiment that Benue State is one of the southern states that is not backing his administration, we have come to accept our faith. So he feels the best way to punish them is to ignore their yearnings on government aid against Fulani herders destroying farm lands and killing our people. Our hands are tied as the traditional leaders because whatever action we intend to take contrary to what the president holds for us may land us into jail. Beside he has unequal relationship with our Governor Mr. Emmanuel Ortom who also joined the southern governors on anti-grazing bill (KII, 2022). Because Benue people have a special respect for strangers, including cattle Fulani men, a farmer in Gwer local government, and because I am from the Jimba community here in Benue state, I can boast those 15-20 years ago, we lived in peace and accommodated everyone who is a stranger in our land, Mrs. Igweye said. We do not fight them, and they do not hurt us either. But he emphasized that by 2008, conflict between our farmers and cattlemen had already begun. Since Muhammadu Buhari, a Fulani man, was elected president, the conflict has gotten worse. We no longer go farming because daily shooting and killing have taken over. However, I do know that the president is the only one with the authority to put an end to this group, but he refuses to do so because they are his people (FGD, 2022).

'I have been in the Nigerian police for 15 years in this Jukun division of Guma area council,' a police officer who begged to remain unnamed said. I have never seen anything like the scores of homicides carried out by these ranchers during the previous five years here. The most unpleasant aspect is that because the farmers are typically taken off guard, they rarely attack back and are instead constantly fleeing. Therefore, they lack the means to defend themselves. When this is brought to our division's attention, the (D.P.O.) will speak with them and submit a report to the (C.P.), but that will be the extent of the report.

Buhari? Do you believe that the federal government of Nigeria has made a beneficial or negative contribution to the ongoing conflict between farmers and herders that has nearly spread throughout all of Nigeria, especially under the current president?

A herder named Musa in the Katuzar hamlet in the Bade local government of Yobe state said, "We occasionally have a disagreement with some farmers, but this only occurs when they block the cows' access to water." Because our state did not outlaw open grazing, and perhaps most of us herders also own farmland, we do not actually have many issues with farmers because agriculture is what keeps us afloat (FGD, 2022).

Although violence is inevitable, according to Baba shehu, a traditional leader of the Shame Kura village in Yobe state's Geidam local government, "Our people have been really helpful to each other." Here, we continue to coexist peacefully by being tolerant of one another. The Boko Haram insurgency, not the conflict between farmers and herders, is our biggest problem right now. Because the likelihood of violence between the herders and farmers is relatively low, possibly the government has not enacted an anti-grazing policy (KII, 2022).

Mr. Abati, a farmer in Zamfara state's Gusau local government area, stated, "I do not think our governor is interested in the open grazing bill." Even though he owns a ranch, he also owns cattle, and his boys still drive his cows everywhere. But all I can say is that Gusau is quite peaceful for the herders (FGD, 2022). Remember that Zamfara, where the president is from, is in the northwest. Mr. Aminu from Kaura Nomada stated that Mr. President is both a farmer and a cattle owner by virtue of our occupation. So I think he can make accommodations for both farmers and herders. In the meantime, he always acts through our Emirs, attempting to make sure they uphold social harmony. Occasionally, he visits every other region of the north-west right before returning to his home state of Kastina to reassure us of his support. We have at least profited from his grants for SME farmers. He deserves praise for his dedication to assisting our farmers (KII, 2022).

Conclusion

Although, the herder and farmer dispute has existed for as long as Nigeria, prior governments controlled it so that it had no sentimental or regional overtones and had no impact on Nigeria's social, political, or economic development. Under President Buhari, this situation has gotten worse in southern Nigeria than it did

in previous years. Furthermore, the political incapacity of President Buhari to prosecute herders who violate Nigerian law by trespassing on farms, churches, killing people unnecessarily, and maiming residents is a contributing factor in the conflict's ongoing nature.

Climate change and environmental resource scarcity are closely related to Nigeria's ongoing herders' and farmers' crises. Open grazing is still practiced despite being prohibited in the 17 southern states of Nigeria. Only a few northern states have yet to outlaw open grazing, though. The difference between northern and southern Nigeria, which the British colonial overlords widened, not only fueled the civil war in the country but also served as a catalyst for protracted societal problems because everyone in the south felt left out on all fronts.

Recommendations

- i. The federal government of Nigeria and political leaders at the local and state levels must learn to uphold the law of the federal republic of Nigeria's constitution, which established and took into account the nation's diversity. This should be done to encourage harmony, progress, and continuity within the Nigerian nation.
- ii. State assemblies should have the ability to create "state police" to safeguard their constituents and borders. This will make it possible for state governments to create laws and set up severe penalties for breaking them. Think about "the anti-grazing bill."
- iii. Because Nigeria is ECOWAS's biggest sibling, the United Nations should be the one to interfere diplomatically, not ECOWAS. Dislodgement of regional, religious, and geopolitical feeling that has long assaulted our democracy, rule of law, equity, fairness, and inclusion in Nigerian governance should be the focus in order to strengthen democracy and promote these values.

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