



UNPACKING THE COMPLEXITIES AND CONTRADICTIONS IN FARMERS-HERDERS CONFLICTS: IMPLICATIONS FOR COMMUNITY SECURITY IN OYO STATE

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Abstract

Literature has revealed that there is a continuous farmers-herders conflict in many parts of Nigeria, leading to the loss of lives and properties. In particular, Oyo State has witnessed intermittent conflict between farmers and herders over cutthroat competition for land and water resources, which are the main thrusts of the socio-economic survival of both parties. However, there is a dearth of knowledge on the dichotomy of conflicting relations between farmers and herders on community security. Therefore, this study investigated the security challenges of the incessant farmers-herders conflict and recommended conflict transformation strategies to resolve the farmers-herders conflict in Oyo State. Adopting a mixed research design, quantitative data were gathered by administering 550 copies of the questionnaire, while 503 were retrieved. Consequently, 13 Key Informant Interviews (KII) and 6 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted between September and November 2024. The quantitative data were interpreted using percentages, while the interpretation of qualitative data was based on content analysis. The findings of the study revealed security challenges of farmers-herders conflict in Oyo State, among others were intolerance of both parties towards amicable use of agro and pastoral resources 79%, overrating the economic value of cattle over farm produce by herders 76%, porous border 60.7% access to arms and lethal weapons 66.5% and killing and maiming 72.3%. The study concluded that the farmers-herders conflict has negatively affected community security in the study area. The study recommends that a neighbourhood watch security approach be constituted and traditional rulers repositioned to resolve farmers-herders conflicts in the study area.

Key Words: Farmers-Herders Conflict, Community Security, Transformation, Multi-dimensional Approach and Traditional Ruler.

Introduction

The relationship between farmers and herders is characterised by a blend of collaboration and discord in many areas. In the Middle East, Asia, Africa and America, conflicts between indigenous farmers and herders have repeatedly arisen owing to ethnic disparities and resource competition. Despite being ethnically and socially distinct, herders are neighbours to farmers with whom they maintain socio-economic links (Babangana, Yakubu, Harris, & Hussaini, 2019). Farmers-herders conflicts erupt into altercation largely over usage of resources such as land and water, which are the main thrust of the farmer-herders relationship and have heightened insecurity in countries such as the Central Cameroon, Southwest of Burkina Faso, Central African Republic (CAR), DR Congo, Mali, Northwest and Côte d'Ivoire, Tanzania, Senegal, Mauritania, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Togo, Ghana, Horn of Africa (Krätli & Toulmin, 2020). The conflict has led to the displacement of people and loss of lives and property on the side of farmers and herders (Moritz, 2010; Bukhari, 2017; Aliyu and Abdulahi, 2018; Usman, 2019). The farmers-herders violence in Nigeria posed a great threat to security in some states such as Anambra, Enugu, Ebonyi, Rivers Abia, Imo, Plateau, Benue, Kwara and Oyo States. The States mentioned above have vegetation suitable for rearing cattle and land fertile for agriculture coupled with water. The situation heightened insecurity and persistent attacks had made Nigeria an insecure state to live in (Global Terrorism Index 2014). Nevertheless, the favourable weather conditions and abundant fertile land necessitated the massive migration of herders to Oyo State, which would have been a blessing rather than a curse. The complex interplay between the purely agrarian society and the migrated pastoralists has escalated tensions, leading to conflicts over land use, water and cultural differences.



The understanding of the dynamics of these clashes is crucial for addressing the multifaceted security challenges that arise in these communities, impacting negatively not only the livelihoods of the people involved but also the overall stability of the area, such as Akinyele, Orire, Alakia, Ibarapa North, Saki West, East, Saki, Kisi, Ibarapa, Ago-Are, Iganna, Iseyin, Ayete, Igboho, Igangan, Ayetoro, Ogbooro, and Ofiki (Aliyu and Abdulahi, 2018; Usman, 2019).

The insecurity and stagnation of socio-economic relations in the study area are linked to persistent and incessant altercations between farmers and herders. The dynamics of farmer-herder relations exist within a cultural context marked by interwoven coexistence and, concurrently, by ethnic and cultural disparities, as well as contention over land and water rights, which are fundamental to the economies of both groups. These social relations have effects on the socio-economic development of the study area. This paper investigated the security impacts of conflictual relations of farmers-herders conflicts who are ethnically but economically related neighbours living in Oyo State, Nigeria.

In particular, Oyo State has witnessed intermittent conflict between farmers and herders due to violent competition for water resources and land, which are the main thrust of the socio-economic survival of both parties. The perennial farmers-herders' conflicts have led to an insecure farming environment, displacement, and insecurity of lives and properties, thus causing uncoordinated relations between ethnically different but economically related groups. Despite the continuous feud between the two contending parties, there is a dearth of knowledge on the security implications of the conflict between the farmers and herders in the study, which is the gap and justification for the present study. Though there are lots of works on farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria, such as Adelakun, Adurogbangba and Akinbile (2015), Eniola, Adeleke and Okanlawon (2016), Oyedokun and Lawal (2017), none of the works focused on the specificity under study, a gap this study intends to bridge. For example, the study conducted by Adelakun et al. (2015) focused on the socio-economic effects of farmer-pastoralist conflict on agricultural extension service delivery in Oyo State, Nigeria. Eniola, Adeleke, & Okanlawon (2016) focused on transhumance pastoralists on agricultural practices in Oke Ogun area, and Oyedokun and Lawal (2017) focused on the management and resolution of the crop farmer and Fulani herders conflict in Oyo state using community leaders, without their studies being focused on Oke Ogun area. Therefore, this study investigates the insecurity indices of farmers-herders conflicts and provides transformation strategies to improve security and ensure amicable resolution of the conflict in Oyo state.

Ajadi (2004) asserted that Oyo State comprises five administrative zones. The regions are Ibadan, Ogbomoso, Oyo, Ibarapa and Oke Ogun. Oke Ogun consists of four regions: Kajola Iseyin, Irepodun, and Ifedapo. The two administrative zones, the Oke Ogun and Ibarapa zones of Oyo State, Nigeria, are the study area. The Oke-Ogun area is politically and administratively called the Oyo North Senatorial district. The area consists of ten (10) local government areas, which are Saki East, Saki West, Atisbo, Oorelope, Kajola, Olorunsogo, Itesiwaju, Irepo, Iwajowa, Iseyin and eight (8) Local Council Development Areas. The towns within the scope of the study are Ijio, Idiko Ile, Idiko Ago, Iwere-Ile, etc, in Iwajowa Local Government, Igboho town, the headquarters of Oorelope Local Government, Saki town, the headquarters of Saki West Local Government, Iseyin, the headquarters of Iseyin Local Government and Ayete, Aba Tapa and Igangan in Ibarapa North Local Government area. The area of study is termed the Food Basket of Oyo State because the people are purely agrarian, and major in the production of food crops such as yam, millet, maize, and cassava, which are equally productive food for the cattle (Ajadi, 2004; Ibrahim, 2020)

Literature Review

Previous studies on the origin of farmers' and herders' conflicts have established negative impacts on the security of lives and properties. Stanley et al. (2017) alluded that farmers-'herders' conflicts occurred due to population growth, expansions of settlement and encroachment of cattle routes, while Olagbaju and Awosusi (2019) ascribed these conflicts to socio-linguistic issues. Adewuyi and Bakare (2020) concluded that the collapse of traditional conflict management mechanisms and the nurturing of political and ethnic strife contributed to farmers' and herders' conflicts. Davidheiser and Luna (2008) assert that subsistence farming and minor surplus production were prevalent as herders and farmers maintained a reciprocal relationship. The herders traded livestock products for grain. This strengthened the mutual relationship between the farmers and herders in the past. However, colonialism transformed



the classical mutual engagement and intergroup relations between herders and farmers. The incursion of the Land Use Act of 1978 compounded the situation, undermining the cooperative system and encouraging incompatibility between the farmers and herders in Nigeria. In the post-independence era, the conflicts are aggravated due to urbanisation, demographic pressure, increased influence of the global economy, scarce pastureland and competition for natural resources (Davidheiser and Luna, 2008).

Herero (2003) and Krätli and Toulmin (2020) linked the farmers' and 'herders' conflicts to historical error, highly complex, exacerbated by colonial masters who had led to bloody conflicts in African States such as DR Congo, Nigeria, Rwanda and others. Abubakar (2012) and Osuchukwu and Enemuoh (2020) affirmed colonial policies over land, and successive land use Acts created an atmosphere of insecurity in land and water use. The influx of herders into Southwest Nigeria altered the peaceful relationship between farmers and herders, thus creating unresolvable conflict relations which led to the loss of lives, properties and disruption of economic activities (Aliyu et al., 2018; Nzeh, 2015; and Doyin, 2017). Scholars such as Abubakar (2012), Olaniyan et al. (2015) and Stanley et al. (2017) agreed that acute changes in climatic conditions lead to huge migration, compounding unhealthy competition for limited resources that ultimately increases armed struggle around the world. Aminu (2012) pointed out that inaccessibility to resources, ethnic marginalisation, degradation, and climatic change are rooted in the conflict between farmers and herders, which are all security issues in Nigeria. (Aminu, 2012). Chinwokwu (2017) focused on the glamourisation of Fulani herders's criminality on 'Nigeria's national security and the magnification of insecurity threats of the herders by the media, Abdulbaqi and Ariemu (2017). Various studies established failure of security architecture, operational deficiency, security laxities, complexities and complacencies, as well as uncoordinated management of intelligence reports led to insecurity (Olugbenga, 2013; Maya et al, 2016, ICG, 2017, Babagana et al., 2019, Osadola et.al, 2024 and Muhammed et.al, 2024).

Conclusively, scholars such as Olaniyan, et al., (2015) and Stanley, et al., (2017) agreed that climate change, population increase, destruction of crops/routes, and other factors contribute to competitive rather than complementary relations between the ethnically but economically related parties.

Theoretical Framework

In the analysis of farmer-herders conflicts, scholars have used different theories, such as structural functionalism theory which sees society as a system which has every part working together for the stability, solidarity and security of the system (Merton, 1969), conflict theory stated that society is dynamic and constantly undergoing changes driven by inter-conflict (Karl Marx, 1818-1883). The environmental scarcity, eco-survivalism and the social capital theory presume that the network of people that enables an individual or group of people to enjoy or achieve certain benefits and engage in actions (Bourdieu, 1986). The previous studies employed the above conflict theories. This study adopted the protracted social conflict theory developed by Edward Azar in the early 1970s and Ryan in 2008. The theories investigate social issues deep-rooted in society for a long period with seemingly impossible solutions and their capacity to compound and heighten insecurity. Azar (1986) posits that the foundation of Protracted Social Conflicts lies in the interplay of underdevelopment, structural deprivation (encompassing economic, political, and psychological factors), and communal or identity divisions. This indicates that Protracted Social Conflict is multifaceted, with numerous elements contributing to its onset and persistence. The variables may include economic, political, institutional, religious, cultural, geographical, psychological, and colonial elements. Protracted social conflict typically arises when authorities or power holders systematically discriminate against a group or deny them basic human needs based on their identity, leading the affected groups to feel powerless to seek redress and ultimately resort to violence (Azar, 1985).

Exploring the protracted social conflict using the model of under-development, structural deprivation (economic, political and psychological elements) and communal or identity cleavages. The need to satisfy some economic desires of farmers and herders promotes violence and unhealthy competition between farmers and herders in land and water use. Differences in culture, identity and language underlie the misunderstanding. The herders attached different cultural and economic values to the rearing of livestock, which blinded them to the values farmers attached to cultivated crops. This has caused a security breach, limited their livelihood and impoverished the people. The frustration, often



experienced by the parties to the conflict, as well as discrimination or claims by the farmers and herders to ownership of land and source of water, triggers conflict in the Oke Ogun area of Oyo State, Nigeria.

Methodology

The study utilised a mixed-method approach incorporating both qualitative and quantitative research designs. The qualitative design involves the use of questionnaires, whilst the qualitative approach utilises Key Informant Interviews (KII), Focus Group Discussions (FGD), and stakeholder observations in the context of farmers-herders conflict in Oyo.. The primary data were sourced from farmers, herders, security personnel, government agents and community leaders involved in the conflict. Secondary data were sourced from government documents, journals, books, libraries, national archives, internet materials and other relevant materials on farmers-herders conflict in the State. A multi-stage sampling technique was adopted to determine the study population. Firstly, Oyo State was purposefully selected because of its favourable disposition to agricultural activities and cattle rearing. Secondly, five (5) local government areas were purposively selected to include Saki-West, Iwajowa, Ibarapa North, Iseyin, and Oorelope. The population of the people resident in the study area is about 1194700 (NPC web and National Bureau of Statistics wed), while five hundred and fifty (550) respondents were purposively drawn from five (5) local government areas in the study area. The data below shows the distribution of the copies of the questionnaire for the respondents in each Local Government Area: – Orelope LGA- 66, Iwajowa LGA- 66, Ibarapa North LGA- 66, Saki West LGA- 181, and Iseyin LGA- 171. The variation in the distribution of the questionnaires was a result of the population strength of the local government areas under study.

The interview schedule was in two phases; the semi-structured interview and Key Informants Interview (KII) were used to elicit deep responses from the respondents, while observation was adopted to cross-check information collected from the questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire was subject to face and content validity by conflict experts who adjudged the instrument to be valid, after which it was administered to 10 farmers and herders outside the study area. The internal consistency reliability of the questionnaire was determined through Cronbach's Alpha statistics. The Cronbach's Alpha obtained indicates a strong reliability value of 0.979, which shows that the instrument used was reliable and valid since the 'Cronbach's Alpha value is more than 0.7. Descriptive statistics, such as simple percentage frequency distribution, were employed for the quantitative data. Items were scored for each variable, and after coding, they were analysed. Their mean values and standard deviation were obtained. Simple percentage frequency distributions were computed to compare the degree of influence of the variable under study.

Discussion of Findings

Social-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents in the Study Area

Table 1 shows the distribution of the respondents who participated in the study. The result showed that participants in the study were male, 63% and 36.9% were female. This suggests that farming and animal husbandry are male-dominated and oriented agricultural activities that demand physical strength, which most females may not possess, especially in a culture where masculinity is equivalent to power and strength. Table 1 shows the age distribution of the respondents in the study area: 4.5% were 50- above years old, 28.4% were between 42-49 years old, 48.7% were 4 - 41 years old, between the ages of 26-33 years old were 16.3% while 1.9% were 18 – 41 years old formed the respondents of the study. The productive age dominated the respondents and could make ends meet without seeking a white-collar job. The marital status of the respondents, as shown in Table 2, revealed that 20% of the respondents were single, 17.8% were divorced, 12.1% were widows, 13.6% were not willing to state their marital status, and 36.6% were married. This implied that a higher number of the respondents were married. The result amplified the role farmers' or herders family members played in ensuring productivity. Table 1 revealed that 80.5% of the respondents were indigenes, while 19.4% were non-indigenes residing in the study area. This reflected that herders were settlers. The residents of the study area were predominantly farmers. The figure shows the results on the religious distribution of the respondents. Also, 36.1% of respondents were Muslims, 33% were Christians, 19% were traditional worshippers, and 11.8% were unwilling to state their religion based on personal reasons. This variation disproved the religious dimension of farmers-herders conflict in the study area. The contending parties compete for resources such as water and land, which are either for farming or grazing in the study area. The finding



revealed that the religious sentiment of the interveners, such as traditional rulers, community leaders or security agents, might have influenced the process or outcomes of mediation and intervention.

The 'respondents' educational qualification data revealed in Table 1 that 18.1% of the respondents completed primary school education, 7.2% had no formal education, 37.3% were secondary or technical graduates, and 37.3 % were graduates from tertiary institutions. Table 1 revealed the occupational distribution of the respondents; 42.7% of the respondents were into farming, 32.8% were trading, and 24.4% were herding. The study affirmed in Table 1 that % 62.8% were into crop or cash farming, while 37.1% were into livestock. The respondents' distribution showed that the area was purely an agrarian society and that the herders had been in the minority. Moreover, Table 1 revealed that 33.2% of the respondents have stayed in the study area for 21 – 30 years. A total of 27.2% of respondents have stayed in the study area for 11 – 20 years, 11.8% of respondents have stayed there for 1- 10 years and above, while 28.4 % of the respondents have stayed there for 31 years and above. Lastly, Table 1 shows the type of settlement distribution of the respondents; those who lived in the village were 36.3 %, 45.7 % lived in the town, and the remaining 17.1% lived in the hamlet. Table 1 showed that 'most of the respondents' studies were stakeholders. The selected local governments are versatile farmers who have enjoyed immeasurable gains and profits from agriculture. The majority have their means of livelihood and source of income from Agriculture. The vast majority living in the study area enjoyed the agrarian nature, and the provision available in the arable land was fully tapped by the residents of the study area.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents in the Study Area

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	317	63
Female	186	36.9
Total	503	100
Age	Frequency	Percentage
18-25	10	1.9
26-33	82	16.3
34-41	245	48.7
42-49	143	28.4
50 and above	23	4.5
Total	503	100
Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	98	19.4
Married	185	36.6
Divorcee	90	17.8
Widow	61	12.1
Not willing to state	69	13.6
Total	503	100
Citizenship Status	Frequency	Percentage
Indigene	405	80.5
Non-Indigene	98	19.4
Total	503	100
Religious	Frequency	Percentage
Muslims	182	36.1
Christians	166	33
Traditional Worshippers	96	19
Not Willing to State	59	11.7
Total	503	100
Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Primary	91	18.1
Secondary/Technical Education	188	37.3
Tertiary Education	188	37.3
No Formal Education	36	7.1
Total	503	100



Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Farming	215	42.7
Trading	165	32.8
Herding	123	24.4
Total	503	100
Types of Farming	Frequency	Percentage
Crop/cash Farming	316	62.8
Livestock	187	37.1
Total	503	100
Length of Stay in the Area	Frequency	Percentage
1----- 10	60	11.8
11----- 20	137	27
21-----30	162	33.2
31----- above	144	28.4
Total	503	100
Types of Settlement	Frequency	Percentage
Village	183	36.3
Town	230	45.7
Hamlet	90	17.8
Total	503	100

Source: Field Survey (2024)

Analysis of Results on Causes of Farmers-Herders Conflicts in Oke Ogun Area

The analysis of the results of the responses on the causes of farmers-herder conflicts and security implications on the livelihood of Oke Ogun people is revealed in Table 2 below. From the result in presented in table 2, the percentage of supported is 76.3%, the not supported is 17.8%, and 8.7% neutral response affirmed that intolerance attitudes of the parties towards the use of agro-pastoral resources caused the conflicts between herders and farmers in the study area. The table showed that the overrating of the economic value of cattle over 'farmers' economic value caused the conflict and impacted the security of the study area. The result revealed a supported response of 76.9% and not supported of 23.2%. The result showed that the implacable nature and habit of the herders was another cause and security threat of the conflicts between the farmers and herders in the study area, with a not supported response of 15.1%, a neutral response of 8.1% and a supported response 76.7%. The result also revealed that killings and maiming caused and affected the security of the parties in conflict; as shown in the table, the supported response was 72.3%, a few 1.8% neutral responses, while the not supported response was 25.8%.

The result shown in Table 2 revealed that 77.3% supported responses, only 7.8% neutral responses, 7.3% not supported responses, and 14.9% ignorance of the cultural values caused and resulted in the breach of security in the study area. Furthermore, Table 2 showed 64.5% supported response, while the not supported response was 24.0% and 11.4% neutral to insensitive needs, to economic, psychological and emotional needs of either farmers or herders caused conflict. Table 2 equally revealed that 60.9% had a supported response, 31.5% had a not supported response, and 7.4% had a neutral response to the illegal incursion of cattle into farmland. In furtherance of the findings of this study, the study area is proximate to the international border of the Benin Republic, as shown in the table, with 60.7% supported response, only 4.5% neutral, and 34.5% not supported response. Accessibility to arms and leather weapons contributed to the prolongation of the conflict between herders and farmers in the study area, with a supported response of 66.6%, only 9.4%, a neutral response of 14.0% and 23.9% not supported responses. The influence of drugs, alcohol and other hard substances is revealed in Table 2; the supported response is 64.5%, with only 8.7% neutral response, while 27.0% not supported responses

Table 2: Analysis of the security impacts of Farmer-Herders Conflicts in the Study Area

S/ N	Security Impacts of Farmer-Herders Conflict	FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE				
		SA	A	IN	SD	D
1.	Intolerance of both parties towards the amicable use of agro-pastoral resources	201(39.8)	197(39.1)	30(5.9)	59(11.6)	16(3.1)

2.	Overrating the economic value of cattle over farm produce by herders	236(46.9)	150 (29.8)	-----	54(10.3)	63 (12.8)
3.	Implacable nature and habit of herders	199(39.6)	187(37.2)	41(8.1)	-	76(15.1)
4.	Killing or maiming of farmers or herders	182 (36)	183(36.3)	9(1.8)	68(13.6)	61(12.1)
5.	Ignorance of the cultural values of both parties	195(38.7)	194 (38.6)	39(7.8)	35(15.3)	40(7.9)
6.	Insensitivity to the economic and psycho-emotional needs of hired herders and locals	153(30.5)	171 (33.8)	58(11.4)	42(8.3)	79(15.6)
7.	The illegal incursion of cattle into the farmland	149 (29.6)	158 (31.3)	36 (7.4)	72(14.3)	88 (17.2)
8.	Porous border	216 (42.9)	90 (17.8)	23 (4.5)	88(17.2)	86 (17.6)
9.	Influence of drugs, alcohol and other hard drugs	175(34.7)	149 (29.6)	44 (8.7)	71(14.0)	65 (12.9)
10.	Access to arms and lethal weapons	155(30.9)	180(35.6)	48(9.4)	50(9.8)	79(14)

Source: Field Survey (2024)

Key: SA=Strongly Agree; A=Agree, SD= Strongly Disagree; D=Disagree; IN= Indecision

Key: Figures in parentheses are percentages, while those outside parentheses are Frequency counts.

In the same vein data gathered through the interview sessions revealed that, intolerance of both parties towards amicable use of agro-pastoral resources, overrating the economic value of cattle over farm produce by herders; killing and maiming of farmer or herder, ignorance of cultural values, insensitivity to the needs of hired herders, porous border, influence of hard drugs, placement of 'herders' economic values over farmer economic values, access to arms and ammunitions. The study revealed that the above causes are indices of insecurity in the community. The activities of the herders as revealed from the finding in the office of Agro Ranger Corps headquarter in Iseyin, Oke Ogun area, this Agro Ranger is a unit of Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps in charge of agro-related crimes have the following security indices; armed robbery, malicious damages to the farms, Kidnapping, maiming, murdering and raping of women to death. In Ayete, Igangan, Olokete, etc of Ibarapa North Local Government, Iseyin Local Government has a few of its towns; Isalu, Atogun, Ago-Ijio, Araromi, Odo-Ogun, being under the siege of the conflict. Saki West Local government, such as in Saki East Local government, Tede, Ofiki, Ago-Are, Ogbooro and Oorelope Local Government; Fomu, Oloko, Sooro have a fair share of farmers-herders impasse among others (Compendium of Agro Rangers Activities in Oke Ogun, 2024). The findings revealed the role of Fulani elites, wealthy and influential people, in equipping and backing the herders. For instance, the role of former President Buhari in leading the team of powerful Fulani delegations to Oyo State on October 13th, 2000, justified this respondent's response. The Vanguard reported the words of General Buhari while accusing Late Alhaji Lam Adesina, the then Governor of Oyo State, of his government's and state actor's complicity in the killing of over 68 Fulani people and the pervasion of justice in Oke Ogun area. His words *"Your Excellency, our visit here is to discuss with you and your Government our displeasure about the incident of clashes between two peoples... the Fulani herders and merchants are today being harassed, attacked and killed in Saki (Vanguard 14th, 2000).* The result of interview conducted in the study area revealed as follows:

Most of us do not own the cattle but we are tending cattle on behalf of some wealthy and highly placed individuals, some of them are Army General, politicians, businessmen and the likes who even procured guns for us to secure the cattle against hustling and wild animals. Let us come to think of it, how herders who are illiterate could negotiate and buy sophisticated weapons. The owners of cattle equipped and trained the herders on how to use the weapons (KII Field Survey, 2024).



Figure 1: A picture of the weapon used by the herders

Source: Internet

The proliferation of arms and light weapons, Table 2 and Figure 1, shows the trends and dynamics of the conflict that negate the previous trajectory of the farmers-herders relationship. The traditional herders moved around with a club, a stick, and sometimes a cutlass for protection and defence. In the



current analysis, assault weapons such as AK 47, PMGP, Revolver rifles, AK 49, etc., changed the face and relationship between the farmers and herders in Nigeria. The analysis and explanation of the kind of weapons in the possession of herders and employed by them in the conflict tilted to the farmers' confirmation that the situation was inimical to a peaceful relationship. For instance, the analysis of the report affirmed that:

In the past, the herders would rather not move with guns but a club (sanda), a cutlass, and a jar of water. Recently, herders have moved around brandishing sophisticated weapons and harassing the farmers at slight provocation, unlike before. The emergence of President Buhari emboldened their unbecoming attitude in the Southwest to avenge the past incident (KII Field Report 2024).

Several attacks in the form of armed robbery, kidnapping and other criminal activities revealed that the weapons in possession of the Bororo/Fulani criminal element are sophisticated and modern, far beyond what ordinary people carry. This continues to amaze and surprise me. The traditional Fulani do not have more than a club (Sanda) and a sword, as I can remember in the past (KII Field Report 2024, a victim of Kidnapping).

The result of the findings in Table 2 agrees that porous borders, migration of herders and access to lethal weapons cause farmers-herders conflict in the Oke Ogun Area. This supported that the farmers-herders conflict and organised crime activities are prominent due to the proliferation of small and light weapons in the Oke Ogun area. The following towns in the study area are the international territorial boundary between Nigeria and Benin Republic, they are; Idiko Ago, Irawo, Ofiki, Saki, Iwere-Ile, Ijio and others are International territorial boundaries between Nigeria and Benin Republic, which aided the transportation of contraband goods such as rice, turkey, vehicles and clothes (Tokunbo cars and clothes), and arms as well as migration of Beninese and Togolese are easier and convenient (KII, Traditional Ruler, 2024).

The findings of the present study aligned with Omolara (2013), Ngalim (2019), Ukwai and Anam (2019) asserts that porous borders facilitate criminal activities, including drug trafficking, money laundering, illegal migration, and the smuggling of small arms, automobiles, illicit clothing, and food products.

Conclusion

The efforts of successive Government in Oyo State and Nigeria generally to explore a better alternative agriculture provides its massive capacity to improve Gross National Income, Gross Domestic Product and Internally Generate Revenue as well as the need for community security affirm the possibility of attaining the best world advanced economy status provided efforts are geared towards making farmers-herders relationship a complimentary rather than conflicting. This transformation, therefore, remains unattainable without coordinated, intended and voluntary efforts from various quarters including academia, Government, non-state actors, and non-governmental and religious circles. This is borne out of the view of Ronald Reagan, who posited, "Government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem" (in his inaugural address as the 40th president of the United States of America).

Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made as solutions to the gaps identified to promote sustainable relations and secure the community for sustainable peace. Given the above, the following recommendations are made:

1. Establishment of a Multi-dimensional approach called Neighbourhood Watch Group which will comprise Vigilante groups, Local Hunters, Odua People's Congress, Amotekun, non-state actors, and the retired Uniform Men. This approach will work modalities within the existing security framework to safeguard, prevent and protect the community from incessant attack, raiding, kidnappings and armed robbery. It is a joint community's strategies that may be vary in operations depending on the peculiarities of threats and gathering intelligence information through their community. This approach serves as a traditional intensive enforcement agent to conduct intensive bush and forest sweeps to in order to free the area from insecurity. There are prodigious local hunters with spiritual and traditional powers to tame these perpetrators and who can perfectly map out the terrain of these bushes and forests around their communities. In ensuring this, the Security Trust Fund can be established where political officer holders, philanthropists, companies, and businessmen/women will be made to contribute and this fund



will be handled by men of impeccable and security conscious people who will understand the danger inherent in mismanaging and wrong disbursement of this fund.

2. Repositioning of the traditional rulers through consistent training and retraining in new roles of mediating, conciliation and transformation of the conflict. Again, the traditional and local leaders' proactive and constant meetings to exchange ideas on insecurity threats in each of their communities through the foot patrol officers charged with the responsibility of patrolling and monitoring the Kraal markets, movement of strangers, beer parlours and clubhouses, and stopping and charging at the various roads. This team will supply intelligence reports to the traditional rulers, security stakeholders and Neighbourhood Watch Group daily for analysis and action on security issues.

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