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CONTRIBUTORS

1. **Jacob Iorhen Yecho, Ph.D**
Federal University, Dutsin-Ma Katsina State.
2. **S.O. Ajegi Ph.D.**
Department of Economics, Benue State University, Makurdi, Nigeria
3. **Nwanne joseph chinedum**
Department of political science University of nigeria nsukka
& **Ayogu, chiagolum elochukwu**
Department of political science Nigeria police academy Wudil, kano state
4. **Akwen, Gabriel Tyoyila & Adejoh, Sunday**
Department of Political Science and Diplomacy Veritas University, Abuja
5. **Apam, james phd.**
Department of political science, Benue state university, makurdi.
6. **Nyor Gabriel Aza,**
Department of Political Science, Nigeria Police Academy Wudil , Kano
& **Aneh Moses Daniel**
Department of Political Science Benue State University, Makurdi.
7. **Otinche Sunday Inyokwe, PhD**
Department of Public Administration,
Kennedy Okechukwu OLOLO, PhD
Department of Sociology, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University Lapai. Niger State
& **Yusuf Abdullahi OGWUZEBE, PhD**
Nigeria Security Printing and Minting Company, Headquarter, Abuja
8. **Gushibet Solomon Titus**
Department of Economics Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Jos, Jos.
& **Mailamba Ishaya John**
Deptertmenrt of Econs Nigerian Police Academy Wudil, Kano State,
9. **Chinge Ayuba Dodo**
Department of Political Science, Nigeria Police Academy, Wudil, Kano State.
10. **Egbule philip onyekachukwu**
Department of social studies, College of education, Agbor, delta state,
& **Mezieobi, c. Kelechi**
Research fellow Department of globalization studies -University of derby,
United kingdom.
11. **John Tor Tsuwa, Ph.D.**
Department of Political Science, Benue State University, Makurdi
Valentine kwaghechimin
Justice Development and Peace Commission, Catholic Diocese of Makurdi
& **Kenneth Iyo**
Benue State House of Assembly, House of Assembly Complex, Makurdi

THE FARMERS/HERDERS CONFLICTS IN THE MIDDLE BELT REGION OF NIGERIA:
A FOCUS ON THE TIV/FULANI CONFLICT

By

John Tor Tsuwa, Ph.D.
Department of Political Science,
Benue State University, Makurdi

Valentine kwaghchim
Justice Development and Peace Commission,
Catholic Diocese of Makurdi

&
Kenneth Iyo
Benue State House of Assembly,
House of Assembly Complex, Makurdi

Abstract

The Middle Belt region of Nigeria is highly heterogeneous in nature both in terms of culture, identity and religion. This region in recent times has witnessed a plethora of violence in recent times especially between farmers and herders with devastating consequences on the socio-economic and politico-cultural composition of the area. This paper investigates this phenomenon using secondary sources of data collection and analyzing same within the arguments of the political economy approach and discovers that, the need for grazing land by the herders for the economic interest to tender for their cattle and the farmers desire to use their land for farming activities which is their main occupation of the people of the area has become the major causality factor of the persistent farmers/herders conflicts in the area. To resolve this problematique, the paper recommends that there should be massive conservation of the environment through the planting of trees, the Land Use Act of 1979 should be reviewed and ranches be created in the North for the herders for grazing purposes. This will prevent them from migrating to the Middle Belt region for grazing purposes.

Key Words: Conflict, Farmers, Herders and Middle Belt

Introduction

The Middle Belt has over the years, been associated with key challenges ranging from violent conflicts, diseases outbreak, pandemics and crime. Amongst these, violent conflicts constitute the worst-impacting phenomenon. Different schools of thought blame the incidence of land-based, political and religious violence in the region on deep-rooted hate in the social relations of the region's inhabitants. While this is not totally untrue, a demographic analysis of the region provides further clarification on the sources of violence in the middle belt region of Nigeria.

Firstly, the region accounts for over 60% of the country's 250 ethnic groups cohabiting together in small autonomous communities. These people have diversities in their social, political and economic setting which they use as basis for contesting over state and community resources which generates conflicts. For example, these mass of people have contrasting values and practice Christianity of Islam and Traditional religion. In addition, they survive on income-generating activities that they *perceive* to be incompatible with one another. These perceptions are strongly held by the group who now consider the other group as been antithetical to their corporate socio-economic existence. In other to safeguard their corporate existence and survival, these groups become hostile to one another manifesting in actual violence and conflict.

This paper therefore is to examine the confrontation that has ensued between the Fulani herdsmen and farmers in the middle belt with particular focus on the Fulani and the Tiv farmer's conflict.

Theorizing the Problematique

The central issue in the farmers / herders conflict is land. Land to the farmers is an economic asset that its ownership and usage not only determine the productivity of the owner but also shows the wealth of the owner. As farmers, they need the land for cultivation of their crops and since majority of the people in the area are farmers, their economy is purely determined by the land available to them for farming. The shifting cultivation practiced by the farmers also shows the reason why they desire large portions of land which they cannot relinquished. Land is therefore the main productive instrument for the farmers. This is what helps the people to produce and distribute their livelihood. Land and its resources is therefore the main item of wealth creation, distribution and allocation. It accords power and status to the owners and the non owners who work on the farms of the owners. It creates the position to use rational choice on how to allocate land and its resources and how such is managed for productive and distributive purposes.

The behavior of the herders is also economic in nature as they migrate with the sole aim of searching for green pasture for their cattle. The herders usually tend these cattle for the owners who might be political, traditional or economic big wigs. The cattle are a major source of income and wealth for them and the distributive effect accord status to them. It is therefore a rational choice to invade the farms of the farmers to feed their cattle without considering the implication of that on the economic interest and condition of the farmers. This usually brings the struggle for the land which subsequently leads to violent conflicts between the two groups. We can therefore conclude that, the economy is central to the conflicts between the farmers and the herders in the middle belt region of Nigeria.

Conceptualising Conflict

There are divergent explanations of what constitute conflicts. This paper is therefore not dwelling on all these varied definition of conflict but it will only try to only describe conflict. According Akpan-Ita, Agev & Gana (2011) Conflict is any form of perceived or actual incompatibility in goals, values, beliefs, and competition over scarce resources. It is also defined as a consequence of ineffective communication. Conflict is neither positive nor negative; it is its outcomes that are either positive or negative. The outcomes of any conflict are determined by the style used in managing it. Consequently, a violent approach to any conflict will only beget more violent outcomes.

Conflicts are usually based as argued earlier on issues especially those associated with scarce resources. Conflict is said to be resource-based when it is caused by a competition over land or any natu-

ral or man-made resource perceived to be scarce. It is political if control of power and authority is the cause of rivalry. Value-based conflicts are those that originate from perceived threat to dignity of the human person, faith and belief. Conflict can be looked at from two lenses based on their nature of manifestation. One of the lenses argues that conflicts are irrational and destructive and as such, it is the negative aspect of human life. Conflict therefore should be avoided and can actually be avoided if humans are conscious of their overbearing interests that are stimulating conflicts especially when they are desirous of individual and collective development.

The second lens perceives conflict as a corrective mechanism that is inherent in human interaction. Conflicts to this lens wake society up from slumber and shake it up to mobilize resources for development. To this, conflict is necessary if people or a group of people are willing to develop. We can therefore argue that conflict is a part of life that emerges from the desires of the actors who insist on achieving their goals over others and against all odds. We conclude in line with Madubuike (2014:8) that conflict is a genetic factor develops into three distinct areas. First is the motivational drive to achieve a goal in life; the pursuit of life ambition that will lead to happiness and social recognition in the society. Secondly, it is the contradicting value judgment, which leads to crisis of choice, interest, and violence. Thirdly, it involves cultural manipulation of individual rights, which results in injustice, inequality and personal differences.

Brief Historical Timeline of the Conflict

The Fulani and Tiv once lived peacefully together. Different historical sources on the ancestral origin of these two ethnic groups point to the fact that Tiv and Fulani lived harmoniously in the past. Tracing the Tiv/Fulani relationship, Abeghe (2005:3) had stated that, Bantu, a South African power broker married a Fulani woman and bore many children amongst them was Tiv, but Tiv left his brothers at infancy, so when the Tiv later encountered their lost brother- Fulani during their migratory journey from the congo to their current place of abode.

According to Gbor (2006:33), the problem between the Fulani and the Tiv started when the Tiv refused to inter-marry with Fulani. The reasons for Tiv refusal to give their daughters to Fulani can be deduced first from the Tiv general dislike for giving their daughters to *Atoatiev* or *Uke* (non - Tiv). Again, it can be argued that, the Tiv regarded the Fulani women as lazy people that could not do well on the farm and so not worth being married to. The Tiv also did not fancy "the washing of the anus" of the Fulani during their prayer times as they (Tiv) regard it as an unholy and dirty habit that their (Tiv) daughters could not adopt. This Tiv action soon created Tiv/Fulani suspicion, resentment and fear.

According to Gbor (2006:34), despite this misunderstanding and subsequent departure of the Tiv away from the Fulani, there was a symbolic gesture of a gift of a cow to the Tiv by Fulani to continue the relationship between them Thread of suspicion and anger started between the two supposed brothers over alleged abuse of trust in intermarriages and custodianship of cattle. The conflict at this stage was however non-violent and expressed only through name calling. The Fulanis consistently referred to Tiv as "Munchi" while the Tiv referred to the Fulanis as "Upul" and latter in the 19th Century as "Bajah".

In Benue state, the conflict between the Fulani and Tiv had de-escalated in much of 1700-1800. However, violent confrontations resumed in around 1804-17 when forces of Usman Dan Fodio attempted to institute an Islamic state in Benue. The stiff resistance faced by the horsemen of Usman Dan Fodio further reiterated the unwillingness of the Tiv to cohabit with their Fulani counterparts. Following the conquest of Old Oyo (currently Illorin) and parts of Kogi, the Jihadists were preoccupied with building Islamic structures in the states they had conquered. Thus, violent confrontations subsided through the late 1800s.

By mid 1980s, climate change impact and deteriorating livelihoods in North East and North West Nigeria began to induce southwards migration of Fulani herdsmen. The Middle Belt then was yet to be hit by adverse climate change and variability. Farmers were practicing shifting cultivation because there was sufficient land to accommodate their farming system. It is wont to argue here that, the Ti

adjudge their royalty and wealth on the number of wives, children and farm they own. As a result of this, they need land for large farming activities which affords them the opportunity to have large farms for each of their wives and the revenue and food gotten from these farms afford them the opportunity to take care of their numerous children. To this, the Tiv man attaches unbendable value to his land and is prepared to die defending his land.

During this period, the Fulani negotiated their entry into Tiv communities through legitimate gatekeepers though such negotiations were not documented in writing. They also resided amidst the Tiv in areas designated as "Luga" or "Angwa-n-Fulani". They lived with their families and according to the laws of the host communities. Where in error, grazing activities resulted in encroachment or destruction of crops, cattle owners paid adequate compensation. They also acknowledged the powers of community leaders to evict them hence, were compliant to native land use laws.

Towards 1990, Fulanis began to introduce a new strategy of entry that was strange to the host community. A few Fulani would negotiate with community gatekeepers only for them to see more than the expected numbers of herdsmen arrive for grazing. This made grazing activities difficult to monitor. In 1991-1995, the Tiv farmers complained of breach of agreed terms by Fulani. Tsuwa (2014:110).

More cases of destruction of crops on-farm and in-store by cattle was being reported while they increasingly became unwilling to pay compensation to affected parties. Again, instead of the usual traditional process that conflicts between these groups were resolved, the Fulani jettisoned this approach and began opting for the court. This was a clear indication that existing community justice systems were becoming incapable of handling disputes between the two as a result of the new interest.

With access to financial resources more than the Tiv farmers, the Fulani won most of the cases they took to court. Because of this development, Tiv communities began to bar entry of the Fulani into the land. By mid 1990s, most communities turned down requests of Fulani for grazing space. They then adopted the "armed grazing" strategy where they negotiated with money and guns without an option of rejecting both. They used individuals who had internal conflict with community leaders as informants and as entry points.

The wars in Libya, Congo, Sudan, Cote D'Voire, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Liberia increased access to arms thereby swiftly evolving the unstable peace between the two ethnic groups to a stage of crisis prevalent today.

Root Causes of the Conflict

The root cause of the conflict is ownership and control of land between the Tiv farmers and the Fulani herdsmen. Whereas the former are unwilling to part with the fertile Benue Valley which remains a source of livelihood security to them, the latter is unwilling to limit their activities in North East and North West Nigeria where grazing lands are fast going into extinction without compensatory development of grazing reserved areas (GRAs). Hagher (2013:5) arguing on the sources of the conflict opines that:

...the story of clashes between Fulani herdsmen and farmers abound. In all cases, it starts with a Fulani herdsman or herdsmen driving their cattle into crops farms to graze. The farmers in order to protect their crops, farms and livelihood attack the Fulani or attempt to chase them away. The Fulani retaliate by opening fire or violently defending their cows by killing or maiming the farmers. The conflict escalates as the Fulani migrate from that scene to yet another

From the above, it is clear that the conflict between Fulani herdsmen and farmers has been staged in different parts of Benue, Nasarawa, Plateau, FCT Abuja, Bauchi, Sokoto, Yobe, Cross-River, Ogun, Oyo, and Enugu states. Clashes with Tiv take place in Benue and Nasarawa states where Tiv farmers have lived for over three centuries; farming for food and livelihood security.

Structural Sources of the Conflict

The inhabitants of the Middle Belt region demonstrate unwholesome competitiveness over land. The tenurial system practiced in the region recognizes community leaders as "land owners" hence inducing the antithesis of the existence of "settlers", a status often rejected by migrants who uphold the provisions of the Land Use Act of 1979 that there are no "owners" of land; only "tenants". These are often used as veritable constituencies for perpetrating violence. Constitutional and legal frameworks which would have provided basis for strong action weak in provisions. For example, the Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 as amended recognizes the right of these two groups to gainful income generation. The Land Use Act of 1979 on the contrary has contradictory provisions. For example, it has mentioned the concepts "indigene" and "settler" but failed to explain the basis for classification of "indigenes" and "settlers". Another cause of the conflict is climate change impact. This has resulted in the extinction of grazing areas in North Eastern and North Western Nigeria hence forcing downwards, the migration of herdsman hitherto not residing in the Middle Belt. Also, the impact of climate change has impoverished land for farming hence making larger proportions of farmers less willing to part with their lands.

Failure to reach a bargaining zone, this is an overlap between the minimum lands demanded by Fulani herdsman for grazing and the maximum land that Tiv farmers are willing to part with has resulted in coercive approaches by the former to acquire grazing lands; and the latter to protect their lands. We can therefore argue that, the increasing pressure and unhealthy competition for land is caused by bad governance. As a result of bad governance, a significant proportion of indigenous people have been relegated to non-skilled jobs particularly farming, grazing or fishing.

One of the grievances held by farmers is the fact that grazing compacts the land thus impoverishing the soil and further making it difficult for tillage activities to be carried out using manual implements like hoes. However, governance systems have failed to address the dwindling access of communities to improved farming inputs and technologies by farmers in states of Nigeria's Middle Belt particularly Benue, Nasarawa, Plateau.

Proximate Sources of the Conflict

Proximate conditions such as ungoverned border spaces in North East Nigeria, the wars in Libya, Cote D'voire and recently Mali and Central African Republic have equally resulted in easy distribution and access to small arms and light weapons (SALWs), spread of arms-manufacture technology as well as smuggling of migrants and militias (SOMMs) which are used to inflict violence within communities, especially those that lack the powers to defend themselves.

There is strong communal support for violence. Some of these violence stakeholders are policy makers, political and religious leaders. The agenda of interest groups such as Miyetti Allah and the utterances of the Sultan of Sokoto concerning the conflict further raises questions concerning the political will to address it. According to Hagher (2013:6) the Sultan of Sokoto during a Tiv-Fulani meeting in June 2012 insists that:

The Fulani are Trans-border peace loving people who are attached to their cattle. The Fulani can kill in order to defend their cattle and are easily provoked. They are courageous fighters who do not easily forgive adversaries.

Technically, this conflict is explained by the combat-readiness theory which holds that available capacity for violence is a facilitating condition for violent conflict. This "capacity for violence" includes access to arms, willing users of the arms and drugs. These have been increasingly made available by international merchants from failed states such as Libya, Central African Republic, Congo DR, Cote D'Voire, and Mali.

Dynamics of the Conflict

This conflict has generated a nexus of hate built along religion, ethnicity and politics. Since

resumption of extreme violence in Benue, Nasarawa and Plateau states in 2010, different levels of conflict analysis have been completed by NGOs, the academic community, independent researchers and government MDAs like Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR), Search for Common Grounds. Some of the dynamics identified include:

- **Religion:** This conflict is perceived by some schools of thought to be a struggle by Fulanis to reinforce the ideologies of Usman Dan Fodio which the jihadists were unable to achieve in 1804-17 and a struggle by Tiv to re-establish their rejection of Islam. Though these are largely perceptions, they have caused intensive scrutiny of stakeholders inactions using religious lenses especially security agents.
- **Ethnicity:** This conflict has generated dynamics of ethnic hate. The Michi/Munchi story is gradually being dragged from myth to reality through increasing valleys of hate between "Fulanis" and "Tiv". Some persons associate the conflict more with ethnicity than resources; arguing from the standpoint that if other ethnic groups are cohabiting peacefully with the Tiv, there must have been more to the hate between the ethnic groups.
- **Politics:** The conflict has been linked with political interests. Affected parties of the conflict align the perceived impunity with which killings and destructions are carried out during the conflict with the activities of shadow politicians. Some farmers outrightly accuse stakeholders such as government officials and traditional leaders of mortgaging their lands; while some herdsmen accuse the government of not providing adequate security for their legitimate grazing activities.

The above constitute the unsung dynamics of the conflict.

A. Micro Analysis-

i. Tiv/Fulani Crisis: The Relationship

History holds that the Fulanis and Tiv once cohabited peacefully. A fallout of the Michi (Munchi) story marked the turning point in the spate of hate between these ethnic groups. The manifestations of this conflict including wanton destructions and brutal killings are further dragging the Michi story from a mere myth to a fact.

ii. Religious Undertones of the Conflict

Religious interpretations of the conflict have continued to weaken the efforts of security agents to manage the conflict. The Fulani herdsmen are perceived by predominantly Christian farmers as disguised actors seeking to replicate the Usman Dan Fodio's Jihad that failed to materialize in 1804-17. Similarly, the Fulani herdsmen perceive the Christian-dominated governments of Plateau and Benue as providing inadequate security to their herdsmen hence exposing them and their cattle to violent attacks.

iii. Response of Security Agencies

The issues of inactions during Internal Security Operations in the wake of violence outbreak by security agencies and how these have made communities to lose confidence in the conflict handling capabilities of local police are part of the focus of this paper.

Also of concern is the successive refusal of police to invite the military to act in their aid even when the violence supersedes the force in spite of the clear constitutional mandate for them to do so. This often nurses suspicion of likelihood of informal collaboration with parties for perpetuation of violence.

This is important to mention because, experiences in Rwanda, Congo DR, Senegal and Liberia have shown that police become subject of attack the moment they are suspected by either conflict parties to be collaborating with the other party to perpetuate violence.

iv. **The Traditional Institution and Management of the Conflict**

It must be noted that traditional leaders of both parties have played key roles in managing the conflict. However, some traditional leaders have entered into express or implied pacts with herdsmen to concede some of the land in their community which they acclaim 'their personal land' to the herdsmen without knowledge or consent of their entire communities.

The terms of the concession in some of such communities were not mutually understood and agreed to; by both the negotiating Fulani and these isolated Tiv traditional leaders. Thus, the herdsmen misconstrued actions of the traditional leaders to be a reflection of popular opinion of the community hence felt cheated when upon introduction of grazing activities in the communities, they were confronted by community members.

This explains why traditional leaders have become subject of attacks. It also explains why efforts by traditional leaders to summon negotiation meetings have failed.

v. **The Government of Benue and Nassarawa States- Imperatives for Joint Action**

The conflict has resulted into wanton killings and destruction of properties. The governments of the two states have taken measures to address the conflict. Some of these measures include:

- **Peace Meetings between Fulani and Tiv Leaders:** Following resumption of violence in 2011, several meetings have been organized by the governments of Benue and Nasarawa states towards finding lasting solutions to the conflict. In June 2012, the Sultan of Sokoto was invited to one of such meetings organized by Benue State Government. At least 1 meeting is organized every 12 months in this regards.
- **Financing of Security Agents:** The government of the two states have increased financing for security at state and local government levels. In Benue state, LGAs affected by this conflict receive more financial allocation for strengthening of security than their counterparts without security challenges. This equity approach has improved response to the conflict
- **Policy and Legislations:** in the event of breakdown of law and order, the legislative and executive councils pass resolutions for quick deployment of police and where the fire overwhelms the response of police, state they seek intervention of the military to act in aid of civil authorities.

It must be noted that one gap in the approach of the two states is the absence of joint security patrol for the two states. The International JTF Model has proven to work in the counter-terrorism plan of ECOWAS. It would be good to domesticate this by setting up a common platform for response to the conflict by the two states. This will include an inter-state joint security team and a Trans Benue-Nasarawa early warning system for conflict monitoring and early response.

vi. **Breeding, Grazing and Control of Animals**

Across the world, there is a shift in paradigm in the breeding, grazing and control of animals from the traditional extensive system to semi-intensive battery range system. Countries such as U.S.A, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania are large producers of cattle and other livestock. However, cases of violent conflicts between cattle breeders and farmers are absent or insignificant.

The clashes between farmers and herdsmen put to question, the approach adopted in Nigeria. Apart from harmful impact on crop farming activities, unconfined breeding and grazing of animals especially cattle, exposes human habitation in grazing zones to harmful diseases

spread by cattle or cattle-carrying vectors. Some of these include Bovine Tuberculosis and even typhoid fever where cattle and men share sources of water.

In Nigeria, there is absence of legislations at federal and state level in this regards. Bills currently at different stages in national and state legislatures have not addressed some of these key components hence making it an imperative for legal frameworks regulating breeding, grazing and control of animals to be instituted.

B. Macro Analysis

1. Arms Surveillance Gaps and Ungoverned Border Spaces

At least 200,000 km² areas of Nigeria's border spaces are not monitored. 40% of these ungoverned spaces are under direct control of terror cells. The terror cells have a nexus with arms and drug merchants who use the linkage to smuggle arms and light weapons (SALWs) into local communities.

Also, communal violence have recorded significant shift in paradigm from purchase of arms to setting up of arms factories within communities where lethal weapons and firearms are manufactured and used to perpetrate violence. These arms factories are often established with the knowledge of gatekeepers. This is indicative of the fact that even within communities, there are ungoverned spaces.

The poorly coordinated arms surveillance and control at border points and within communities is majorly a consequence of weak collaboration, poor coordination and frail synergy between and amongst security agents, non-state actors etc for the control of SALWs. Rivalry between Police and SSS in management of intelligence information as well as Nigeria Custom Service, Police and the Military in Response operations are clear examples.

This has facilitated violent attacks in North Central Nigeria. The concept "Gunmen" which is a manifestation of this phenomenon has gained popular usage in the reportage of conflicts in the middle belt.

2. Smuggling of Migrants and Militias

One of the key characteristics of conflicts between herdsmen and farmers in the middle belt is the use of expatriates as combat militias. This strategy is reinforced by the fact that Nigeria is surrounded or connected to countries that have experienced wars via the waterways and deserts. These include Mali, Cote D'Voire, Libya, and South Sudan.

Migrants from these war zones have interest in Nigeria because of loose immigration control measures and weak national identity management systems. Their infiltration increase the proportion of combat-ready populations as paid violence becomes their sole source of livelihood. NAPITIP, Nigeria Immigration Service and other security agencies need to rework their strategy towards curbing this.

3. Weak Climate Change Impact Management

The close of 1990s witnessed accelerated response to Climate Change Management. At least 6 of every 10 states in the North launched afforestation and conservation programs. These projects were however, poorly managed, hence the increased extinction of grazing lands. The fast-encroaching deserts have necessitated southwards migration of herdsmen thus igniting violent clashes.

While international funding organizations contribute their quota, states in Northern Nigeria must institute "Grazing Land Recovery" programs to make migration unattractive to herdsmen and forestall violent conflicts between farmers and herdsmen.

The option of designating grazing reserves will only address the conflict in the short term. This is because the realities of Malthusian principle will aggravate the conflict in the long term.

- ii. **Closure of the Makurdi cattle market:**
There has been alleged involvement of cattle market traders and buyers in underhanded activities in respect of the conflict. A closure of the market will result into a dispersal of violent cells as may be operating in disguise at the market. This will strengthen intelligence gathering and subsequently, result in the exposure of shadow actors of the conflict.
- iii. **Prosecution of persons indicted by intelligence information:**
Experiences in Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Congo DR, Liberia, and Bosnia/Herzegovina have shown that sustainable peace in post-conflict era is realized only if perpetrators of violence are punished for their acts. Security agents have in independent agency intelligence systems, indicted key stakeholders. Prosecution of these people will reassure victims that the judicial system is intolerant to impunity. It will equally serve as a deterrent to other actors.
- iv. **Provision of emergency relief and trauma healing to victims of the conflict:** A palliative approach to peacebuilding holds that conflicts are bound to re-escalate at a worse scale if conflict management systems do not provide relief and trauma healing to persons affected by violence.
This is because the feeling of victims that they have lost 'everything' often instigates the desire to revenge at a magnitude that disregards dignity in the human person.

Intermediate Measures

- i. **Creation of grazing reserve areas (GRAs) in the North-East and North Western states of Nigeria:** One of the complexities inhibiting the effective management of this conflict is the difficulty in monitoring, documenting and regulation of activities of herdsmen. They lay some claims that they have registered their cattle and obtained grazing permits. This is often difficult to dispute or verify hence making grazing difficult. Creation of grazing reserved areas will forestall wild, unmonitored and unregulated breeding and grazing activities.
- ii. **Compensation of families affected by the violence:** The conflict has resulted into destruction of properties, killing of persons and unplanned displacement and migration of affected parties. These have introduced extreme suffering amongst conflict survivors whose dependency has doubled and per capita income reduced. Adequate compensation of these persons affected by conflict will result in mitigating the severe impacts of the conflict.
- iii. **Review of Land Use Act (LUA) of 1979:** Inconsistency in the provision of LUA have created complexities that make management of the conflict difficult. Most communities in Nigeria have rejected the application of LUA and in its place, held unto the traditional land tenure systems practiced before 1979. As the only legal framework that explains legitimate land use, there is need to review the act to harmonize its provisions with those of currently practiced tenurial systems

Some of these variations include the concept of 'individual and community land ownership' recognized by the tenure systems and 'right of tenancy' recognized by the LUA. Another is the constitutional definition of an 'indigene' and a 'settler'. The ongoing constitutional review and the upcoming national confab provide good vitas of opportunity for achieving this. It is estimated that a strong LUA will contribute to resolving over 1,500 violent conflicts in Nigeria.

- iv. States in Northern Nigeria should institute "Grazing Land Recovery" programs to make migration unattractive to herdsmen and forestall violent conflicts between farmers and herdsmen: The fast extinction of grazing lands in north eastern and north western Nigeria has accounted for mass southwards migration of herdsmen with the Benue Valley as attractive destinations. This calls for a need to reclaim desert-consumed lands for grazing.

As practiced in Zimbabwe and Kenya, Irrigation Dams in states of north east and north west could be used to open up grazing reserves where mass of cattle can be kept at semi-intensive range.

Long term Measures

- i. **Triggering aggressive tree planting and green conservation projects in Northern Nigeria:** To achieve sustainable peace in the middlebelt, there is need for rapid response to green conservation. This is a capital intensive project and may require large scale interventions such as tree planting, bush burning control, water supply etc.

Thus, international community should also increase their funding for environmental protection in Nigeria, State governments in Northern Nigeria should engage with local governments and communities to facilitate planting, nursing and conservation of trees and grasses. This will apart from curtailing adversity of climate change impact, avail grass supplies for controlled grazing

- ii. **Increased monitoring, surveillance and control of infiltration and use of Small Arms and Light Weapon (SALWs):** Nigeria maintains borders with countries that are transit zones for international arms markets. These include Benin Republic which is a gateway to the arms networks in Cote D'Voire, Liberia, Senegal, Guinea and Mali as well as Niger which is a linkage point to the terror markets of Libya, Sudan and Chad. Nigeria's nodal connection to terror zones demands for strong surveillance and control of infiltration and use of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs).

However, large proportions of Nigeria's border is not patrolled by security agents thus creating entry points for unwholesome merchants like arms dealers, dug peddlers and militias in search for paid-violence employment. Strong collaboration between and amongst security agencies, border communities and civil society organization thus becomes an imperative for achieving a sealed national border.

- iii. **Monitoring and control of immigrations and trafficking in persons and drugs:** As already noted, Nigeria's border with countries such as Benin Republic which is a gateway to violence zones such as Cote D'Voire, Liberia, Senegal, Guinea and Mali as well as Niger which connects Libya, Sudan and Chad creates an opportunity for inflow of drug sellers and militias in search for paid-violence employment.

To address this, it is important to institute a strong interagency approach to the monitoring and control of trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants. A national identity management system and active collaboration between state and non-state stakeholders will contribute to achieving this.

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