

# Fulani Mobile Herdsmen and the Risk of Political Violence in Edo and Delta States of Nigeria

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## Abstract

The article examines the nature, causes, effects and implications of the conflict between Fulani mobile herdsmen and farmers in Edo and Delta States of Nigeria in the face of shrinking resources, and escalating levels of violence. It is noted that if unchecked, these sporadic clashes between groups seeking livelihood security can degenerate into an identity conflict, given the distinctive ways in which the political and religious identities of the two groups are constructed. The paper ends with recommendations on possible ways for resolving the conflict between pastoralists and farmers in the two states of Nigeria.

Keywords: Fulani herdsmen, mobile pastoralism, Edo states, Delta state

## Introduction

Recent conflicts between farmers and Fulani mobile herdsmen in Edo and Delta States date back to 2010 when violent incidents were reported in nearly 12 locations in Edo State,<sup>2</sup> and 14 locations in Delta State.<sup>3</sup>

This pattern of conflict is not peculiar to Nigeria, as it is replicated across Africa (Suhrke 1996; Baechler 1998; Percival & Homer-Dixon, 1998; Homer-Dixon, 1999; Gleditsch, 2001 & 2002, and Young & Sing 'Oei, 2011). Since the beginning of the 1990s, conflicts over shrinking natural resources have been the order of the day. Of major concern since the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are, the clashes between farmers and herders, including Fulani mobile herdsmen in particular (Blench,

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2 Abudu, Aghenebode, Akpakpava farms, Auchu, Azagba, Benin, Ekpoma, Evboe-Isi, Ewu, Eyah, Fugar, Igara, Igueben, Irrua, Irukepén, Jattu, Okhuesan, Ologbo, Orhonigbe, Ubiaja, Ukhun, Ukpala, Uromi

3 Abavo, Abbi, Abraka, Aboh, Agadama-Ohoror, Agbor, Amai, Amorgi, Aragba, Ashaka, Bomadi, Burutu, Ebedei, Emede, Enhwe, Eziokpor, Ezionun, Irri, Iyede-Ame, Jesse, Koko, Kwale, Mosorgar, Obiaruku, Oghara, Ogume, Okpai, Oleh, Onorgbokor, Ontisha-Ukwuani, Orogun, Ossissa, Oviore, Owologbo, Ozoro, Patani, Sapele, Umuachi-Afor, Umuebu, Umukwata, Umunede, Umutu, Uzere, and environs

2004: 1). The herder-farmer confrontation which has been wide spread in the north-central region of Nigeria is now a common feature in Southern Nigeria, particularly in Edo and Delta States of Nigeria.

This situation raises several fundamental and epistemological questions, such as: What are the causes of the upsurge in farmer-herder conflict? How do the global trend of climate change and the increase in population growth and migration affect conflict dynamics? What are the effects and implications of the conflicts for the states concerned and the parties to the conflict? The aim of this article is to address these questions with reference to the situation in Edo and Delta States of Nigeria.

Several studies have been carried out on the occurrence of conflicts in north-central Nigeria (Gyase and Ajene, 2006; Alubo, 2008; Okotie and Ugwu, 2011; Abbas, 2012; Nchi, 2013), including Nasarawa state (Blench, 2004; Adogi, 2013). However, no serious attention has been paid to similar conflicts in the southern part of the country, particularly Edo and Delta States, despite the prevalence of conflicts between Fulani mobile herdsman and the farmers in recent times.

The objective of this article is to examine the nature, causes, and effects of conflict between Fulani herders and farmers, and their implications for the states and the parties involved. Specifically, it investigates: (i) the nature and causes of the conflicts, (ii) the effects of the conflicts on the parties involved, and (iii) the implications of the conflicts on the communities, the two states, and the country at large.

The paper employs a new framework of analysis based on the Relative Deprivation Approach to explain the herder-farmer conflict. In applying the Relative Deprivation Theory to the herder-farmer conflict in Edo and Delta States, a new perspective is opened to the motives and drivers of the conflict. When farmers' crops are destroyed, or herders' cattle are denied of grazing grounds, such deprivations threaten the economic survival of two sets of actors with competing interests within the same ecological space, since their very existence depends on access to land, either for farming or grazing purposes.

### **Method of Study**

This article seeks to explain the conflict pattern and its consequences using a qualitative approach. Data was generated from primary and secondary sources using three instruments developed by the researcher based on the knowledge of the areas under investigation.

The instruments of data collection were: (a) Key Informant Interview (KII); (b) In-depth Interview, and (c) Focused Group Discussions (FGD). The KII was used to source for primary data in 18 Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Edo and Delta States of Nigeria.

A total of six (6) field workers were employed, each covering three (30 Local Government Areas in the 18 LGAs in the six Senatorial Districts in Edo and Delta States. Of these, 9 LGAs are in Edo State and 9 in Delta State, with each State having 3 field workers deployed (see distribution in Table 1 below).

**Table 1: Area of study in Edo and Delta States of Nigeria**

State/Senatorial district	Field worker	Linguistic diversity	LGAs covered
Edo North	1	Etsako	Etsako North Etsako Central Akoko Edo
Edo Central	1	Esan	Esan Central Esan West Esan South-East
Edo South	1	Edo	Uhunmwode Orhiounwon Ikpobaokha
Delta North	1	Ukwuani	Ndokwa East Ndokwa West Ukwuani
Delta Central	1	Urhobo	Ethiope East Ethiope West Ughelli North
Delta South	1	Isoko	Isoko North Isoko South Bomadi
Total	6		

Source: *Field Work, 2015.*

The six (6) individuals selected for data collection were research assistants (fieldworkers) who are familiar with the environment and understand the local dialect. These assistants were briefed by the researcher on the essence of the research and the technique of data collection.

Thus, as can be seen from Table 1 above, Edo and Delta States have three senatorial districts each. Out of the six (6) senatorial districts of Edo and Delta States, three (3) LGAs were picked from each of the district, with one field worker in-charge of the three

LGAs (see Table 1 above). In-depth interviews were conducted with the above-mentioned chiefs, youth leaders, and family members of the victims of attacks by suspected Fulani herders. The FGDs were conducted among chiefs, youth leaders, relative(s) of victims, and in some cases, survived victims of the clashes.

Finally, secondary data were gathered from various sources, including libraries, textbooks, journals, dairies, magazines and newspapers, as well as relevant government official records.

### Area of Study

The study was conducted in Edo and Delta States of Nigeria, formally known as Bendel State. The two states were created in August 1991. Edo State is made up of three senatorial districts - Edo North, Edo South, and Edo Central - with 6, 5 and 7 LGAs each, respectively, while Delta State is made up of three senatorial districts of Delta North, Delta Central, and Delta South, with a total of 25 LGAs, distributed 9, 8, 8 and respectively (see Tables 2 & 3 below).

**Table 2: Edo states local government area/headquarters**

State/senatorial district	Local government area	Headquarter
Edo North	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Etsako West</li> <li>2. Etsako North</li> <li>3. Etsako Central</li> <li>4. Owan West</li> <li>5. Owan East</li> <li>6. Akoko-Edo</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Auchi</li> <li>2. Agehenebode</li> <li>3. Fugar</li> <li>4. Sabogida-Ora</li> <li>5. Afuze</li> <li>6. Igarra</li> </ol>
Edo Central	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Esan Central</li> <li>2. Esan West</li> <li>3. Esan North-East</li> <li>4. Esan South-East</li> <li>5. Igueben</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Irrua</li> <li>2. Ekpoma</li> <li>3. Uromi</li> <li>4. Ubiaja</li> <li>5. Igueben</li> </ol>
Edo South	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Oredo</li> <li>2. Egor</li> <li>3. Orhionmwon</li> <li>4. Ovia South-West</li> <li>5. Ovia North-East</li> <li>6. Uhonmwode</li> <li>7. IkpobaOkha</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Benin</li> <li>2. Urelu</li> <li>3. Abudu</li> <li>4. Igwobazuwa</li> <li>5. Okada</li> <li>6. Ehor</li> <li>7. Idokpo</li> </ol>
Total	18	

Source: Field Work, 2015.

**Table 3: Delta states local government areas/headquarters**

State/senatorial district	Local government area	Headquarter,
Delta north	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Oshimili North</li> <li>2. Oshimili South</li> <li>3. Aniocha North</li> <li>4. Aniocha South</li> <li>5. Ika North</li> <li>6. Ika South</li> <li>7. Ndokwa West</li> <li>8. Ndokwa East</li> <li>9. Ukuwani</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Akwukwu-Igbo</li> <li>2. Asaba</li> <li>3. Issele-Uku</li> <li>4. Ogwashi-Uku</li> <li>5. Owa-Oyibu</li> <li>6. Agbor</li> <li>7. Kwale</li> <li>8. Aboh</li> <li>9. Obiaruku</li> </ol>
Delta central	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ethiope East</li> <li>2. Ethiope West</li> <li>3. Ughelli North</li> <li>4. Ughelli South</li> <li>5. Sapele</li> <li>6. Uvwie</li> <li>7. Okpe</li> <li>8. Udu</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Isiokolo</li> <li>2. Oghara</li> <li>3. Ughelli</li> <li>4. Otu-Jeremi</li> <li>5. Sapele</li> <li>6. Effurun</li> <li>7. Orerokpe</li> <li>8. Udu</li> </ol>
Delta south	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Isoko North</li> <li>2. Isoko South</li> <li>3. Warri North</li> <li>4. Warri South</li> <li>5. Warri South-West</li> <li>6. Burutu</li> <li>7. Bomadi</li> <li>8. Patani</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ozoro</li> <li>2. Oleh</li> <li>3. Koko</li> <li>4. Warri</li> <li>5. Ogbe-Ijaw</li> <li>6. Burutu</li> <li>7. Bomadi</li> <li>8. Patani</li> </ol>
Total	25	6

Source: *Field Work, 2015*

Edo and Delta States lie within the equatorial rain forest belt of Nigeria, characterized by thick forests and evergreen vegetation. In Edo State, the topography is largely made up of high lands around Edo North and Central and in parts of Edo South, around Ikpoba hills, with other low-lying lands which the people use for farming that are today known as Ikpoba farms. In Delta State, apart from the Northern Area that is largely hilly, Delta South and Central are low lying regions noted for agricultural activities. The main occupation of the people is farming. As an agrarian society, the people of Edo and Delta State produce important food crops, such as yam, cassava, plantain, maize, rice, groundnuts, assorted fruits and vegetables, as well as cash crops such as rubber,

oranges, and palm-nuts, among others. In addition to the aforementioned, the two states are known for important minerals, namely granite and limestone from Edo, and large quantity of crude oil from Delta. In addition to the foregoing, fishing is practiced in the two states.

Demographically, population growth had been on the increase in Edo and Delta States, since 1963, when the two states were still under the mid-western region, through 1976, when the region was renamed Bendel state, until 1991, when it was split into Edo and Delta states, (Statistical Year Book, 2005). However, the growth did not pose a serious threat to agricultural activities since land was plenteous in the 60s and 70s (Udu, 1981) (See Table 4 below). But, as Adogi (2003) noted just as in the case of Nasarawa state, the new trend of massive migration of people into the Edo and Delta states has resulted in a stiff competition for farmland, leading to confrontation and violent conflicts. There have also been cases of, incursions into communal farmlands of neighbouring communities to meet the growing demands for food in urban areas. Such incursions have fuelled inter-communal conflict over contested lands.

**Table 4: Population Census Figure of Edo and Delta States of Nigeria**

Region/States	Year	Population in Million
Mid-West Region	1953	1.49
Mid-West Region	1963	2.53
Bendel State	1973	3.24
Edo State	1991	2.16m
Delta State	1991	2.59m
Edo State	2006	2.23m
Delta State	2006	4.11m

*Source: National Population Census Priority Table, 2009.*

In Edo state, places like Abudu, Aghenebode, Auchu, Ekpoma, Evboe-Isi, Ewu, Fugar, Igara, Igueben, Irrua, Iruokpen, Jattu, Orhonigbe, Ubiaja, Uromi, and their environs have enlarged and extended their farms to meet-up with growing demands for food in urban areas. This is unlike in the 1960s and early 1970s where they mainly engaged in subsistence farming and produced only for families' consumption, with the little surplus being sold in local markets. Some of the farm produce from Edo State is transported to Delta State to urban centres like Warri, Sapele, and Ughelli, among others.

In Delta State, like Edo, agricultural activities have been intensified and farmlands have also grown in size in places like Abavo, Abbi, Abraka, Agbor, Emede, Irri, Iyede-Ame, Kwale, Obiaruku, Ogume, Orogun, Umunede, and Uzere, while fishing activities have

been growing in Bomadi, Burutu, Patani, Koko, etc. to meet the demands of a teeming population. Thus, in addition to agricultural activities, the communities in the last eight (8) places above have become known for fishing.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Several theories have been used in explaining the movement of pastoralists from the north to the south because of the negative effects of climate change on vegetation. Rising temperatures and lack of rainfall have led to prolonged drought in parts of northern and central Nigeria. The drying up of grasslands and pastures has caused the movement of herders with their cattle southwards in search of greener pastures.

In this study, the Eco-violence Theory and the Relative Deprivation Theory has been adopted as a composite theory and framework of analysis. As advocated by the main proponent of the theory, Homer Dixon (1999), the Eco-violence theory seeks to explicate the relationship between environmental factors and violent conflicts in each social formation. It posits that decreases in the quality and quantity of renewable resources, coupled with population growth and resource endowment act singly or in various combinations to increase the scarcity for certain population groups of cropland, water, forest, and fish (Okoli and Atelhe, 2014). The resultant effect is a reduction in economic productivity for both the local groups experiencing the scarcity and for the larger regional and national economies. When this happens, the affected groups may be compelled to migrate (or be expelled), to new lands (Okoli and Atelhe, 2014). Migrating groups, as well known, often trigger ethnic conflicts when they move to new areas and clash with their hosts over resources, while a decrease in wealth can also trigger deprivation-related conflicts (Homer-Dixon, 1999).

Implicit in the Eco-violence Theory is the assumption that competition over scarce ecological resources engenders violent conflicts. The ecological scarcity across international frontiers has been aggravated and exacerbated by the impacts of climate change in recent times (Onuoha, 2007; Blench, 2014). In effect, ecological scarcities pave the way for competition and this condition tends to precipitate violent conflicts among groups.

This theory fits well into this study because it gives an insight into the nature and dynamics of the Fulani herdsman/farmers conflicts in Edo and Delta States of Nigeria. On a general note, the herder-farmer conflicts have been driven by the desperation of the affected groups to protect and advance their livelihood interests in the context of an ever-shrinking ecological space in northern and central Nigeria, characterized by resource scarcity, livelihood crisis, population explosion, and resource competition (Okoli and Atelhe, 2014).

In the case of Edo and Delta states, the story is different. Climate change and increased population growth have induced migration of Fulani mobile herdsman from the far north and central regions of Nigeria to the south in search of grazing fields, which in turn has led to new conflicts between the herdsman and the sedentary farmers in Edo and Delta States of Nigeria. Against this background, the crux of the theory of eco-violence, as Okoli and Atelhe (2014: 80) put it, “is that the desperate quest for survival by groups in a competitive and resource-scarce [environment] is likely to precipitate violent conflict”.

The Eco-violence Theory has its root in the political ecology perspective; its assumptions are therefore connected to the perspective. The theory observes patterns of political ecology in an attempt to establish a standard analytical tool capable of analysing micro issues pertaining to resource conflict (Okoli and Atelhe, 2014: 80).

The Relative Deprivation theory, on the other hand, was propounded by a sociologist, Samuel A. Stouffer (1900-1960), after World War II, in his study entitled “The American Soldier” (1949). This theory was originally used to explain the origins of social movements that gave birth to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Right Acts of 1965 (Morrison, 1971) that were born from African-Americans’ feelings of deprivation in relation to the Caucasian segment of society, especially the racial segregation in public schools that was pervasive throughout the United States. African-American students were considered inferior to the white Caucasian students as judged by limited resources and teacher quality.

Relative Deprivation is used in a sense that when crops are destroyed, it deprives farmers and their families of their livelihoods because they depend solely on the farm produce for their entire survival. The same applies to the mobile herdsman because their survival also depends solely on their cattle. Herders trek thousands of miles in the bush from the North to the South because it is a matter of survival. The introduction of mobile phones in these territories has changed the pattern of movement due to increased connectivity in social life. Mobile phones have become a new talking drum of everyday in Africa that has aided mobile herdsman in effective communication in their sojourning life in the wilderness (de Bruijn et. al., 2001; de Dijk, 2005a, 2005b & 2006; de Bruijn, 2009; de Bruijn and Dijk, 2012).

One criticism of this theory is that, while absolute deprivation clearly leads to feelings of discontent and ultimately efforts to effect change, feelings of relative deprivation may, or may not lead to the creation of social movements and collective identity (Morrison, 1971; Flynn, 2008). Second is the theory’s lack of focus on the individual. Critics assert that sociologists tend to examine individual (egoistic) and collective (fraternal/group) relative deprivation, but ignore self-referenced relative deprivation (Singer, 1992).

The strength of the theory is that it is very useful in explaining social movement and revolution, and serves as a catalyst in examining one's belief about fairness and justice in society, and it influences economic belief, political attitudes, voting behaviour and social action (Khran and Harrison, 1992). Finally, it serves as a foundation of multiple theories of psychology and can also be used in the fields of economics and sociology (Khran and Harrison, 1992).

### **Eco-Survivalism and Eco-Violence: Towards an Understanding of the Herder-Farmer Conflict in Contemporary World**

Violence has been conceptualized as the belief in, and resort to the use of force or aggression in the pursuit of group interests (Okoli, 2013, and 2015). The author, however, see the military as an institution that believes in, and resorts to the use of force in the pursuit of its goals. Since it has the means of coercion and the monopoly of violence, it knows how to organize for violence, capture violence, and give violence a sense of direction (Aboribo, 2013). Some argue that mobile herdsman move around [and] see every place with pasture as an area to be occupied. It does not matter whether such areas are inhabited or not. Moving into new areas give them the opportunity to access resources that support their livelihoods. This is a new phenomenon adding to causes of conflict. Thus, as Ajayi and Crowder (1976: 6) rightly point out:

*The expansiveness is tempting and throughout history has served to beckon man to roam and survey the land beyond the next hill to capture it for his own, and to leave on it the imprint of his activities.*

From the foregoing, the school of thought sees herders as imperialists. Thus, the manifest 'militant' posture of the Fulani mobile herdsman must be understood with reference to their individual and collective worldviews vis-a-vis group subsistence and survival that has much to do with pastoral life.

It is imperative to state here that the past two decades had witnessed clashes between Fulani herders and farmers in Nigeria. These herdsman are believed to be the largest mobile pastoralist group in the world, spreading across West and Central Africa – from Senegal to the Horn of Africa. Mobile herdsman are found in Benin Republic, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central Africa Republic, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo, and as far as Egypt, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda.

For the average Fulani herdsman, mobile pastoralism is a way of life and a source of survival and mark of common heritage. The herds, which are their livelihood, mean more to them than anything else in life. As the popular anecdote goes "if a Fulbe's wife is

giving birth at the same time as his cattle, the Fulbe (Fulani) leaves his wife and attends to the cattle first”. Thus, to touch their animals, is to touch the very root of their survival. By the same token, any threat to his herd is not only a threat to his survival but also to his entire being or existence. Abbas (2012: 331) encapsulate the thinking of the Fulani nomad in the following expression:

*Our herd is our life because, to every nomad, life is worthless without his cattle. What do you expect from us when our source of existence is threatened? The encroachment of grazing field and routes by farmers is a call to war.*

This has serious implications for the Fulani and the settled native farmers in any given social formation. A typical Fulani pastoralist would care less about life if the survival and sustenance of his herd come under serious threat (Okoli and Atelhi, 2014). This again explains the extent or the magnitude of aggression and vindictive violence that the Fulani pastoralists often manifest in their disputes with settled farming communities (Young and Sing ‘Oei, 2011).

From the foregoing exegesis, it can be understood that the rising wave of violence in Edo and Delta states is driven by the struggle for survival in the new environment in which the Fulani pastoralists have found themselves. Survival here means herders, surviving with their animals, who will do anything to survive, be it with their cattle eating up farmers’ crops, and herders themselves feeding on farmers’ produce, and animals from farmers’ traps, among others. When this happens, farmers retaliate by killing herder’s cattle and this could lead to religious, social or political violence if not properly managed. As has been observed, any attempt by farmers to resist, disinherit, victimize or marginalize the Fulani herdsmen in their new ecological domain has been adjudged by the nomads as invitation to war.

This has been the case in the farming communities in Edo and Delta states of Nigeria. The relationship between herdsmen and farmers has been locked in a vicious circle of eco-violence and vendetta to the extent that sign-boards have been mounted by farming communities in strategic areas indicating that anywhere they see cattle on farmland, they will certainly kill them, and that if this is a call to war, these communities are ever-ready for that war.

### **The Nature and Causes of the Conflict in Edo and Delta States of Nigeria**

Climate change, eco-survivalism, and ecological conflict have been issues addressed by several scholars in this area of study (Blench and Bendo 2003 and 2014; Onuoha, 2007; Abbas, 2012; Okoli, 2013 and 2014). For scholars in the area of study the prevailing

thinking is that climate change or extreme climate variability and outcomes, such as environmental degradation, desertification, desert encroachment, inadequate rainfall, droughts, loss of wetland, and volatility, etc. often precipitate conflict (Blench, 2003 and 2004; Onuoha, 2007; Olorunfemi, 2009; Nchi, 2013).

The conditions in the semi-arid zones had forced farmers to migrate southwards, both seasonally and permanently to look for greener pasture. The resultant effect of this search for fertile land is the cultivation of hitherto uncultivated areas in river flood-plains by migrants, thus leading to disputes and conflicts with their traditional owners (Blench, 2004).

As the linear trend of rainfall in the period, illustrated in Table 5, and Figures 1 and 2 further below show, the amount of rainfall was more or less steady, with only a slight variation. Also, as illustrated in Figure 2, the linear trend of temperature gradually increased within the period although with slight variation. This change in temperature had its own implication in the very long run. The steady increase in temperature, as was in Northern Nigeria and the Middle Belt, was what caused the environmental hazard that forced pastoralists to migrate Southward to the Middle Belt and finally to Southern Nigeria, including Edo and Delta States. The resultant effect of the above is environmental hazard for the States and Communities in question.

This environmental hazard caused by climate change has created an atmosphere of eco-scarcity that has placed high premium on the available resources and thereby paved the way for fierce competition and desperate struggle for subsistence. Thus, using logical manipulation for political analysis, one finds that herder-farmer militancy in the context of 'anti-nomadic' struggle, equates with occupation of cultivated farmers' land over settled native farmers' repression or responses.

This in effect simply means that in any given social formation, or uncultivated areas in river flood-plains or grazing fields, where the Fulani herdsmen are prevented from utilizing the resources, the only option left for them would be increased militarization and pre-emptive attacks. In Bayelsa, Benue, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Ekiti, Kogi, Nasarawa, Ondo, Plateau, Rivers, Taraba, among others, which are all armed-nomadic crises-prone zones, farmers have been engaged in conflicts with nomads over their farmlands.

In view of this, the situation does not only precipitate crisis, but it simply becomes a matter of survival. This conflictive relation between nomads and farmers has been intensified and exacerbated by the claims and contestations over land ownership and/or tenure rights.

Thus, as Okoli and Atelhe, (2004: 81) succinctly put it:

*As farmers take up more of the river-bank for farms, they come into conflict with the other users, especially the herders and fisher-folk. The herders have been coming to the river for many years for the grass and tend to consider they have ownership rights. When they arrive and find their grazing grounds covered by tomatoes, they may become angry.*

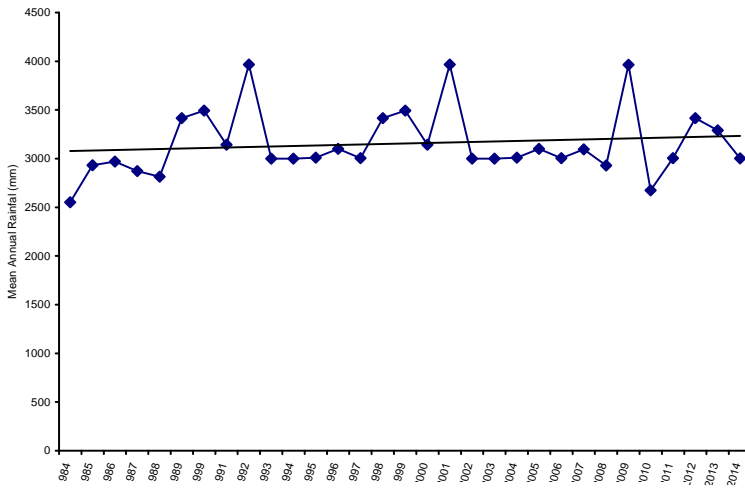
**Table 5: Mean Annual Concentration of CO<sub>2</sub>, Temperature and Rainfall for the Period of 1984 - 2014**

Year	CO <sub>2</sub> (mmt)	Rainfall (mm)	Temperature (°C)
1984	344.58	2553	26.45
1985	346.04	2932	26.45
1986	347.93	2971	26.44
1987	349.16	2872	27.00
1988	351.56	2814	27.10
1989	353.07	3416	26.89
1999	354.35	3493	26.80
1991	355.75	3142	26.80
1992	356.38	3966	26.70
1993	357.07	3000	26.57
1994	358.82	3001	27.10
1995	360.80	3010	27.20
1996	362.59	3100	27.23
1997	363.71	3005	27.31
1998	366.65	3416	27.26
1999	368.33	3493	27.38
2000	369.52	3142	27.27
2001	371.13	3966	27.49
2002	373.22	3000	27.42
2003	375.77	3001	28.23
2004	377.49	3010	27.67
2005	379.80	3100	27.82
2006	381.90	3005	27.95
2007	383.78	3094	27.69
2008	385.59	2931	27.44
2009	387.37	3963	32.60

2010	389.85	2674	32.77
2011	391.63	3005	28.90
2012	393.82	3416	29.20
2013	396.98	3291	30.50
2014	398.61	3002	31.20
Mean	369.44	3154.24	27.90
Standard Deviation	16.28	345.47	1.68

Source: Warri Metrological Station, 2015.

**Fig. 1: Time Series Showing the Mean Annual Rainfall from 1984 -2014 in Ughelli Metropolis**



**Fig. 2: Time Series Showing the Mean Annual Temperature from 1984 -2014 in Ughelli Metropolis**

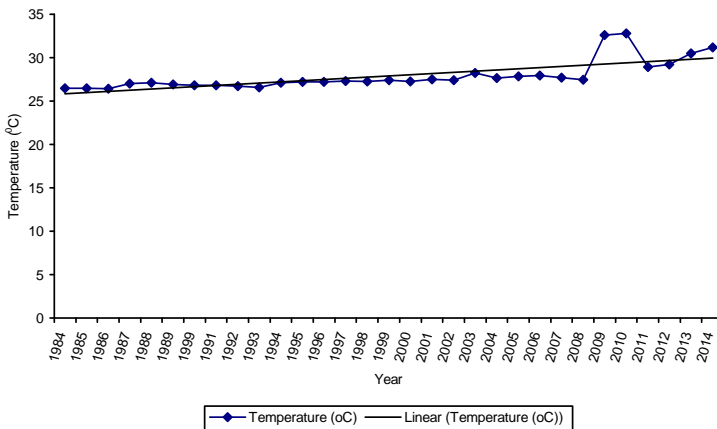


Table 6: Selected Incidents of Nomad-Farmer Clashes in Edo and Delta States, 2011-15

SENATORIAL STAGE/DISTRICT	LGAs	Communities	Date of incidents	Acts of Violence	Total No of People Killed during the incidents	Nature and Degree of destruction
EDO NORTH	Etsako West; Etsako North; Akoko Edo	Auchi, Aghenebode, Igara	10 January 2012; 18 March 2014	Indiscriminate grazing/bush burning, destruction of crops, contamination of water, disregard to traditional authority, sexual harassment of girls, defecation of cattle on road, harassment of pastoralists by youth, cattle rustling/straying	6	Over 1000 people displaced; Serious quarrel; Fight ensued and several were injured on both sides.
EDO CENTRAL	Eesan; Central; Esan West; Esan South-East;	Ewu, Ukhun, Okhuesan, Village Ukpala, Ubiaja	November 2014-January 2015; 18 December 2013; 01 January 2015; 10 November 2013	Destruction of crops Killing of cattle Robbery Rape Kidnapping	1	Fighting between groups, Killing of cattle

EDO SOUTH	Uhunmod, Orhionmwoh, IkpopaOkha	Eyah, Azagba, Evboe-Isi Ologbo	16 April 2013; 16 March 2014; 18 January 2014; 7 May 2011; 03 January 2010	Killing Rape Destruction of crops Theft	7	Fighting between groups; several were injured; 'natives' chased nomads; Rape and Murder
DELTA NORTH	Ndokwa, East, Ndokwa, West, Ukwuani	Ossissa, Umuachi- Afor, Onitsha- Ukwuani, Ogume, Amorgi, Ogiliamai, Umuebu, Obiaruku, Amai	11 March 2008; 14 July 2008; 2 November 2014; March 2013; 25 July 2015; 25 October 2010; 18 February 2011; 6 July 2012; 18 May 2013; 15 July 2015; 4 July 2015; April 2012	Destruction of crops Sudden attack Killing Missing farmer Missing herdsman Rape	28	Some of the incidents did not lead to confrontations, in others there were Sudden attack at night; several were injured;
DELTA CENTRAL	Ethiophe East, Ethiophe West, Ughelli North	Abraka, Jesse, Agadama/ Ohoror	20 March 2015; 29 May 2015; 06 June 2013; 08 June 2015; 07 February - 29 Apr 2013	Killing Rape Destruction crops	16	Serious fighting between groups; killings; slaughtering of cattle; several were injured
DELTA SOUTH	Isoko North, Isoko South, Bomadi	Uzoro, Enhwe, Bomadi	2014; 19 July 2015; 15 Mar. 2015	Destruction of crops Rape Killing	5	No confrontation followed one of the incidents; 8 were injured during fights following each of the other two incidents.

Source: Fieldwork, 2015.

Table 6 above shows the six (6) senatorial districts in Edo and Delta States, with the eighteen (18) Local Government Areas and the various communities where herder-farmer clashes took place, together with the various causes and effects, as well as the number of persons killed and the nature and degree of destruction involved.

Given the conditions above, i.e. climate change and inadequate rainfall, farmers would like to manage their farmlands to feed their families. Thus, any herder trying to encroach on that farmland would be regarded as dangerous and intrusive (Blench, 2004; Okoli and Atelhe, 2014). Thus as Nchi (2013: 221) pointed out:

*As Fulani pastoralists undertake their...movement to the southern part of the country... they regularly clash with farmers as the inevitable rogue [sic] herdsman allow their cattle to enter farms and eat up the crops. Altercations that follow usually end up in violence, with loss of lives and properties by both sides.*

It is appropriate to note that the phenomenon in Edo and Delta States of Nigeria is the same as it has ever been in northern and central Nigeria. In Edo and Delta, the Fulani herders believe that because they have paid dues to the kings (majority of who are politically enthroned) in the communities, they have free access or license to any land in the area; and as such, their cattle can easily traverse people's farms and devour their crops without any challenge from sedentary farmers. This, exactly, is the case in farmlands in Edo and Delta states of Nigeria.

The kings, majority of whom are political appointees, hardly do anything tangible to resolve these problems because the herdsman had already paid homage to them by giving them what they want; so the kings turn a deaf ear to whatever is happening in the communities to the detriment of its inhabitants. In an attempt to resolve this and to settle scores with the Fulani herdsman, the youth sometimes take the laws into their own hands. These happenings are in line with what Okoli and Atelhe (2014: 81) observed in Nasarawa state:

*When the people's sources of livelihood are threatened as a consequence of the ecological vicissitudes and vagaries associated with climate change, desperate tactics are employed to ensure survival. This arguably explains the perennial pastoralist/farmer debacle in Nasarawa state.*

To situate the herder-farmer conflict in a sound analytical frame, one should critically examine the nature, causes and dynamics of the conflict in northern and Middle Belt

of Nigeria as against the Edo and Delta States under review. The conflicts in Edo and Delta are not necessarily caused by environmental degradation, desertification/desert encroachment, loss of wetlands, inadequate rainfall/drought, and extreme climate variability and volatility, that are brought about by climate change or certain ecological changes and outcomes, which often precipitate conflict as found in the north-central region of Nigeria (Blench, 2003; Onuoha, 2007). Nor is the conflict ethnic, political or religious as often misrepresented or misinterpreted by people, since the beginning of the 1990s in particular (Adogi, 2003; Okoli and Atelhe, 2014), but a desperate struggle for subsistence or survival, that is, the search for arable grazing fields or greener pasture for their herds. This mobile life style has led to conflicts between herders and farmers because, most of the time, the Fulani herds destroy the farmlands of the settled native farmers.

The nomad-farmer conflicts in Edo and Delta have been occasioned by the rising migration and settlement of the Fulani pastoralists in these states in search of fertile grazing fields. The migration to these areas brings the Fulani pastoralists into conflictive relations with native farming communities that have exclusive rights to land ownership and inheritance. Thus, the crisis must be understood in this context.

The herder-farmer conflicts in Edo and Delta are in line with what Nchi (2013), in his recent work, observes in Nasarawa: that the conflicts have copious economic undertones. According to him, “these are clearly economic conflicts and are not sectarian in anyway. You have migrant pastoralists on the one hand and sedentary farmers on the other hand fighting for pasture and farmlands” (Nchi, 2013: 222

It is clear from the foregoing discussions that there is a nexus between pastoral migration and increased herder-farmer conflicts in Edo and Delta States of Nigeria. However, unlike the north-central region, pastoral migration has been the major factor accounting for the spiral of farmer-herder conflict in the two states.

Concomitant with this is that the conflict has been politicized, that is, unlike in the north-central region where politicization is achieved through subtle mobilization of communal, ethnic, religious and other primordial identities or parochial sentiments in prosecuting group struggles (Adogi, 2013; Okoli and Atelhe, 2014). This is not the case in Edo and Delta States because “politicized” kings and chiefs are enthroned by governments and there are ‘big-men’ who own the cattle herded by Fulani pastoralists.

Given the nature of the parties involved in the conflicts, that is, the Fulani herdsmen being predominantly of Muslim faith (Nchi, 2013) and the sedentary farming community being predominantly of Christian faith, this factor is enough to introduce ethno-religious

tensions into the herder-farmer debacle in Edo and Delta states where both parties have different identities. Tensions between Muslim and Christian groups have assumed political dimensions, to the extent that neo-Biafran groups in the East are pushing for the Igbo to leave the Nigerian federation.

In some areas of Delta State (Ndokwa West, Ndokwa East, Ughelli North and Isoko South) the herdsmen have their own Sarki (Ruler/King) who forcefully collects tribute or money from some farmers farming on their ancestral farmlands. This, by implication means, the Sarki (who is also a Hausa-Fulani settler) is the de-facto ruler of such communities in which he is seen as a 'guest' of indigenes. This situation contributes to political violence. As one victim lamented when interviewed: "How can they ask me to pay them money before farming on my own farmland? This has never happened in the history of this community" (Ikenyei, 2016). What is likely to give rise to sectarianism in the frequent reports about herdsmen raping women, maiming and killing indigenes, together with the atrocious nature of the killings – slaughtering human beings like animals, of which there are plenty of documented cases. As documented in a recent study project by Aboribo (2013), the herder-farmer conflicts in Edo and Delta have been engendered by the interplay of factors, prominent among which are:

- (a) Destruction of farmlands/farm crops by Fulani herdsmen;
- (b) Provocation of indigenes/host-communities by trespassing on farms or communal property;
- (c) Increasing deprivation and livelihood of natives in their communities;
- (d) Raping of women
- (e) Murder
- (f) Inadequate responses from local government chairmen and politicized kings/chiefs in certain communities;
- (g) Weak land use laws and administration.

Youth in Edo and Delta have organized themselves into communal militia/vigilante groups in the bid to ward off incursions by herdsmen and their cattle, or launch reprisal attacks, fighting back for their interests in their various communities (Aboribo, 2013: 9).

Now that the crisis has not reached to a level where resolution appears precarious, herders and farmers should sit, re-think carefully, and reach amicable settlement as Nigerian citizens.

## **The Implications of the Herder-Farmer Conflicts in Edo and Delta States**

The conflicts in both states have resulted in the loss of lives, property, bodily injury and livelihood crisis. So far, the death toll is estimated as no less than 60. The social effect of the conflicts in Edo and Delta is that, “pastoralists see settled farmers as enemies of their collective survival and destiny, and vice versa. This creates an ambience of mutual suspicion and perpetual tension that threatens peaceful co-existence, security and stability of society.” (Okoli & Atelhe, 2014: 85)

The conflicts have also resulted in the destruction of farmlands and a reduction in actual volumes of farm crops and produce, and by extension, household incomes. Also, reprisal killings of herdsmen and attacks on cattle by farmers have led to huge losses by herdsmen. Farmers in Edo and Delta States find it difficult to work on their farms for fear of being attacked, raped or killed. There are reports of herdsmen feeding on the farm produce and stealing from fish-ponds in sedentary communities. Some farmers reportedly get to their farms only to discover that their yams, plantains, maize, pepper, vegetables, etc. have been stolen by the herders or trampled by foraging cattle. The violence associated with the conflict has exacerbated hunger and human insecurity among farmers and herdsmen in the communities, creating a tense situation that does not augur well for the livelihoods and sustainable socio-economic wellbeing of the people (Nchi 2013; Okoli and Atelhe, 2014).

Okoli and Atelhe’s (2014: 85) argue that, “the primordial claims by the natives to exclusive land tenure rights is out of keeping with the constitutional guarantees of inclusive citizenship rights to legitimate settlement and livelihood in any part of the country... amounts to the violation of Nigeria’s citizenship code.” This is not tenable, it is pejorative and ethnocentric. Apart from the fact that the crisis threatens the collective security of Nigerians, no meaningful development can take place in an atmosphere of crisis.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Herder-farmer conflicts in Africa have been engendered by resource scarcity due to the shrinking ecological space and resources, leading to intense pressure on, and competition for available land. This article argued that environmental scarcities have led to violent struggles for access to, and control over ecological space and resources. Given the nature of Edo and Delta states as ethnic minority, oil producing states, herder-farmer conflicts play into broader identity and regional politics, and violent contestations at the national level are capable of destabilizing the country. If left unaddressed the conflicts in these states can morph into a larger networked conflict as armed herdsmen and community

militias slug it out over access to prime land in two of Nigeria’s potentially oil-rich states.

In the light of the foregoing, efforts should be made to establish dialogue between Fulani herders and farmers, aimed at building mutual understanding and reaching a consensus around peaceful coexistence. There should be plan for gradual disarmament and peace building. Grazing reserves and cattle routes should be clearly delineated. Governments, on their part, should try as much as possible to intervene and resolve conflicts whenever they occur. Herding and farming communities should learn to live together as Nigerians; for there is nothing as beautiful in the whole of creation than to see a group of people – irrespective of race, colour, social status and religion–living harmoniously with one another in a given social formation.

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