

Pastoralism, Neo-Pastoralism and Farmers Conflict in Nigeria: The Imperative of Law

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Abstract

The aim of the paper is to address the question of Pastoralism, Neo-pastoralism and the role of law in Nigeria. It is an undeniable fact that, the Nigerian state, particularly the northern part of the country is witnessing a surge in disagreement and ruthless violence between farmers and pastoralist groups. The paper argues that these premeditated conflicts have largely been attributed to the increased use of advanced and sophisticated weapons by several farmers and pastoralist groups. And these conflicts are escalating due to the combined effect of several factors: growing Insecurity, an increase in livestock numbers; which are leading to heightened competition over natural resources, climate change; which is pushing pastoralists further south, and the expansion of cultivation by farmers. We attempt to investigate how pastoralism is practically giving way to neo-pastoralism; a corrupted, advanced, and weaponized form of pastoralism which involves larger herds and increased use of arms. As it were, the Northern Nigeria is largely used as a case study to explore these new dynamics of conflicts resulting from this growing phenomenon. To fulfill this requirement, the trajectory of this paper is in two fronts: the first exposes the possibilities of neo-pastoralism as the premise for the aggravated increase in armed clashes between these groups. The second front reflects on the imperative of law with the intent of elevating the culture of tolerance that makes for the peaceful coexistence that is needed between the pastoralists and farmers in contemporary Nigeria.

Keywords: Pastoralists-Farmers conflict, Neo-Pastoralism, Grazing Reserves, Cattle Rustling, Banditry, Law.

Introduction

“Where there is conflict, there is a real or apparent disorder. Such situation hampers growth in all its forms, as the truth of entities or humans is either denied or not arrived at”.¹ In recent times, there has been a brutal surge in violence between the Nomadic herdsman and a handful of rural farmers. Although the wrangling between both parties have been occurring for centuries. However, recent clashes between both parties have increasingly been fatal and traumatic, which practically suggests the use of adverse arms and weapons by both parties. Unleashing this cruel mayhem upon themselves and the public, the fatalities of these clashes debuted at an alarming level in 2017, which at that time accounted for the largest number of conflict-related death in the country.² Apparently, the surge in violence between Pastoralist groups and Farmers, as well as an increase in cattle rustling and the resultant need for protection against rustlers is most likely attributed to an increase in the use of arms by both parties.³ Farmers are both victims and actors, likewise the pastoralists in conflicts between pastoralist groups themselves and between farmers. Conflicts between pastoralists and farmers are often triggered by and contributing to communal tensions; they are often instrumentalized along ethnic and religious lines.

The broil between both parties is further driven by the seasonal migration of the pastoralists with their herds and competition for land and water, however, one basic issue as well as about how these essential natural resources are managed and allocated between these groups. Banditry and

¹. Paul T. Haaga, A Philosophical Reflection on the Spectre of Conflicts in Nigeria and the Fecundity of Faith and Reason, *Africa and Emerging Trends in Global Politics, Peacebuilding and Security: Essays in Honour of Rev. Fr. Dr. Innocent T. Jooji*, (Kaduna: Pyla- Mak Publishers, 2021), 188.

². Olayinka Alaja. Why Clashes Are on the Rise between Farmers and Herdsmen in the Sahel. *The Conversation*, May 2, 2018. <https://www.google.com/amp/s/theconversation.com/amp/why-clashes-are-on-the-rise-between-farmers-and-herdsmen-in-the-sahel-95554/> (Accessed 14th January 2023).

³. Olayinka Ajala. "New Drivers of Conflict in Nigeria: An Analysis of the Clashes Between Farmers and Pastoralists", *Third World Quarterly*, (2020), 2.

cattle rustling are also part of the problem, especially in areas where the state is weak or where state officials are linked to armed groups. In conflict hotspots, there has been heavy loss of life and displacement among both farmers and pastoralists. Notwithstanding, there are mutual benefits to trade and productivity in regions where there is peace and good natural resource management, as the two sectors reinforce and complement each other.⁴ This study thus posits that the drift in the nature of pastoralism in Nigeria is gradually giving way to more sophisticated, corrupt and militarized cattle ownership and management, which has been labeled as neo-pastoralism.

Pastoralism and Neo-Pastoralism: The Question of Meaning and Nature

Pastoralism at large refers to extensive livestock breeding, which in the context of this research and Nigeria being the case study means different breeds of cattle, sheep and goats, depending on the ecological zone. Pastoralism generally requires some form of mobility of herders and their livestock, often on a seasonal basis between dry and rainy seasons, and day-to-day between favorable pastures and water points. Pastoralists have different herding practices and different types of migration.

Thus, the movement of pastoralists and their livestock between seasonal pastures and the migratory season is called transhumance, which in Nigeria often requires them to board large and heavy vehicles and have their livestock stacked for long-distance migrations only, otherwise, they move through the bushes and forest to reach favorable pastures. Patterns of life among pastoralists range from nomadic and trans-humance pastoralism to settled or semi-settled agro-pastoralism. Agro-pastoralism combines farming and livestock breeding and requires

⁴ UNOWAS Study, "Pastoralism and Security in West Africa and the Sahel" *Towards Peaceful Coexistence* (August 2018), 19.

settlement to cultivate crops, but the mobility of livestock for transhumance is maintained.⁵ Traditionally, Pastoralism for the most part is associated with certain ethnic groups in Nigeria, dominantly the nomadic Fulani people whose herds involve small-scale livestock for their livelihood. Having accounted for the meaning of pastoralism, it remains as one would expect, that a discourse on Neo-pastoralism should ensure in the paragraphs that follows.

The term neo-pastoralism is quite a complex phenomenon. However, Ajala defines it as “a new form of cattle ownership characterized by large cattle holdings owned by non-pastoralists, kept by salaried herdsman, often involving the use of sophisticated arms and ammunitions, arising from the need to hide stolen wealth, proceeds of trafficking or income derived from terrorism with the underlying aim of deriving profit for investors.”⁶ Practically, neo-pastoralists often involve the use of weapons by these herdsman.

Neo-pastoralism is dominantly gaining ground in most parts of the North-Eastern Nigeria because increased operations and control of large territories by extremist groups have contributed to expanding neo-pastoralist operations in the country. This phenomenon builds relationships with armed or terrorist groups, with whom they exchange many goods and services. In addition, these actors buy weapons from armed groups or subcontract the security of their activities. As such, the unauthorized proliferation of diverse varieties of weapons has been a factor exacerbating cattle rustling and inter-communal clashes, particularly between herders and farmers which pose a threat to the

⁵. UNOWAS, *Pastoralism and Security*, 21.

⁶. Ajala, "New drivers of conflict in Nigeria", 4.

security of states and individuals.⁷ Haven mentioned that, while the average herd size of traditional pastoralists ranges from 10 to 50, herds linked to neo-pastoralism typically range between 100 to 1000.⁸ Based on these intriguing numbers, and in this part of the world, neo-pastoralism, is a thriving business largely attributed to livestock deals, arms sales and other illegal activities.

Neo-pastoralism is rapidly gaining a lot of attention and dominance strictly in view of the fact that cattle ownership is realistically deemed a lucrative investment because of the exorbitant price of cattle in Nigeria. Considering the fact that; an average size adult cow in some part of Nigeria particularly Mariri in Kaduna state (one of, if not the largest livestock market in Nigeria), would cost between N130,000 - N170,000. Bearing in mind these cattle are cheaper in the north, potential investors would purchase and transport these cattle to the West and South, where it is sold between three hundred to four hundred thousand naira (N300,000 - N400,000) per cattle. Thus, these alluring numbers, coupled with the difficulty in identifying cattle ownership make it an attractive venture for non-traditional pastoralists.⁹

Notwithstanding, Andy Catley and Aklilu both posit that poverty amongst the pastoralist community has not decreased regardless of the hike in cattle prices and the expansion in the export market. They argued that in the past decades, the number of poor pastoralists has increased greatly.¹⁰ This claim can supposedly be true coupled with the fact that the traditional pastoralist ideologies are somewhat primitive, and on this

^{7.} Léonard Usongo and Baschirou Moussa, The Dynamics and Impacts of Transhumance and Neo-Pastoralism on Biodiversity, Local Communities and Security: Congo Basin. *CBFP*. (2021), 33.

^{8.} Ajala, "New drivers of conflict in Nigeria, 4.

^{9.} Alaja, "Why Clashes Are on the Rise between Farmers and Herdsmen in the Sahel."

^{10.} Andy Catley, and Yacob Aklilu. "Moving up or Moving out? Commercialization, Growth and Destitution in Pastoralists Areas." In *Pastoralism and Development in Africa: Dynamic Change at the Margins*. (Routledge: Oxon, 2013), 89.

note, they firmly depend on their herds and livestock to survive. However, when unforeseen circumstance hits and they, unfortunately, mislay these means of survival, they end up becoming stranded and trapped within the claws of poverty.

In pastoralist communities whereby poverty is on the rise, which has seen traditional pastoralists priced out of business, makes them available to cheap sources of labour. Often when politicians own herds of livestock, members of their communities or ethnic groups are most likely employed to herd the cattle and other livestock in return for wages in a manner which is painted as local empowerment. This perhaps is to legitimize illicit wealth obtained in a preprandial manner. Interviews reveal that the patron-client relationship prevalent in Nigeria, especially Northern Nigeria, results in this type of business structure whereby hired traditional pastoralists are made to think that they are being empowered.¹¹

Historical Rendition of Pastoralist-Farmer Conflict

The struggle over grazing land and scarce resources has over the years resulted in perennial and growing violent conflicts in terms of frequency, intensity and geographic scope. Underpinning the escalation in frequency of conflicts in Nigeria is a confluence of environmental and demographic forces, especially desertification caused by climate change and population explosion. Pastoralist-Farmer's ruthless aggression accounted for a hiking number of conflict-related deaths in the country. Clashes between both parties have been occurring for centuries, and the dynamics of the conflict have thus changed dramatically due to the unauthorized proliferation of advanced and sophisticated weaponry.¹² Kwaja and Ademola-Adelehin, as cited by Sule, posit that the Middle

^{11.} Ajala, "New drivers of conflict in Nigeria", 6.

^{12.} Ajala, Why Clashes Are on the Rise".

Belt, Geo-politically known as North Central Nigeria, is undeniably the major food production and pastoralist hub in the country where most pastoralists and farmers maintain their livelihood on a subsistence basis. Both pastoralists and farmers regard this region as the land of milk and honey, due to the rich and abundant natural resources it retains, so therefore, any threat to their livestock and crops is a direct threat to their means of survival, thus leaving both groups with no choice but to forcefully protect their own source of livelihood by any means necessary.¹³ The clashes between pastoralists and farmers in many parts of the country have been attributed to the destruction of farmlands by the cattle herd by the pastoralists. Collaborating this fact, Haaga opines that, the current face-off between most communities' crises amongst the farmers and herdsman in most parts of Nigeria is largely due to the invasion of farmer's lands by the herders. This behavioral pattern of Herders ultimately destroys crops and sometimes results to hunger in many parts of Nigeria in the subsequent year.¹⁴

It must be noted that these herdsman are migrants who occasionally transit southward usually in the dry season to seek greener pastures for their livestock. The movements have therefore been characterized by cattle entering the farmers' land and sometimes causing serious damage, which eventually leads to terrific conflicts between farmers and the pastoralists.¹⁵ Interestingly, the weapons purchased by the neo-pastoralists to protect their cattle are also used to attack farmers whenever there are disagreements over grazing routes or the destruction of farmlands by these travelling pastoralists.¹⁶

^{13.} Sule, Peter "Open grazing prohibition and the politics of exclusivist identity in Nigeria, 3.

^{14.} Paul T. Haaga, "Interrogating the Spectre of Insecurity in Nigeria from the Perspective of Social Contract Theory, *Or-che Uma African Journal of Existential Philosophy*, Department of Philosophy, Benue State University, Vol. 5, No. 2, (2018), 10- 11.

^{15.} Bello and Abdullahi, Farmers-Herdsman Conflict, Cattle Rustling, and Banditry, 3.

^{16.} Ajala, "New drivers of conflict in Nigeria, 10.

In contemporary times, the pastoralist-herder crises often merge into inter-ethnic or ethno-religious conflict, as in the case of Benue, Kaduna, Nasarawa, Plateau, Taraba, Zamfara, and other states. This generalizes the violence between communities, taking it beyond clashes between cattle herders and crop farmers in the fields to wider ethnic or ethno-religious conflagrations.¹⁷ Some of the attacks are retaliatory as well. Take for example the unending series of carnage in Zango Kataf L.G.A, in the Southern Kaduna region, which has practically been retaliatory by nature of frequent attacks on both parties. Likewise, members of one of the largest ethnic groups in Plateau State; the Berom ethnic group, tend to be abhorrent towards the pastoralists and have most times resorted to killing pastoralists cattle to prevent them from grazing on their lands. This led the pastoralists to a retaliatory attack, which resulted in the killing of hundreds of people in Berom communities.¹⁸

In related research, Peter Sule quoting Soriola, argued that 'Cattle surpasses everything; it's even more important than father and mother if cattle die, then *Fulbe* dies.'¹⁹ This goes to lengths to show you how the pastoralists would by any means necessary protect his most prized and valued possessions. Thus, with regard to the incessant attacks on farmers, several farming communities launch counterattacks on pastoralist communities, further fuelling violence between the groups.

This paper discovers that the unending aggression between the pastoralists and farmers in most parts of the country, particularly the northern region is majorly caused by the destruction of farmlands by the cattle owned by the herdsmen, the contamination of water and indiscriminate defecation by the cattle, as well as disregard for the

^{17.} UNOWAS, "Pastoralism and Security", 76.

^{18.} Ajala, "New drivers of conflict in Nigeria, 12.

^{19.} Sule, Open grazing prohibition and the politics of exclusivist identity in Nigeria, 3.

traditional authority of their host communities. The farmers on the other hand were also found to blockage of cattle routes and water points, as well as harassing the pastoralist and some of their women as well by sexually harassing them and thus igniting the feud between them and the pastoralists. It was also found that climatic change is also responsible for pastoralist conflicts.

Consequently, it often led to desert encroachment and scarcity of water in most of the region. Water, which is an essential resource and vitally required for agriculture production, has been very scarce due to climate change and therefore is responsible for the pastoralists and farmers' conflict. Both the pastoralists and the farmers always need water for their sustenance. So therefore, scarcity of water which technically has been responsible for insufficient grazing of land has led to violent conflicts among the pastoralist groups and farmers.²⁰

Beyond Pastoralism and Trajectory of Neo-Pastoralism in Nigeria

Pastoralism, whereas in the past, was a matter of keeping livestock by traditional pastoralists or herders, apparently in present time it has become a profession involving the keeping of herds of unprecedented size belonging to politicians, businessmen, paramount rulers and just anybody or a group who are financially capable to afford it, and were as a matter of fact, attracted by the potential monetary gain involved. Thus, based on these findings, Investment pastoralism can as well be referred to as neo-pastoralism. Far from being solely a family subsistence activity, pastoral livestock farming has also become an investment opportunity for prospective investors seeking to diversify their capital. Therefore, civil servants, pensioners, traders, and petty business owners amongst many others, buy livestock and entrust them to pastoralists or hired

²⁰. Bello and Abdullahi, Farmers Herdsmen Conflict, Cattle Rustling, and Banditry, 3-7.

herders to carter for them. The actors involved in neo-pastoralism in Nigeria possess political and economic influence and the power to take over land and areas belonging to village communities. Thus, neo-pastoralism as an emerging phenomenon is a source of conflict in the areas affected. As with traditional pastoralism, the problems associated with neo-pastoralism also include herder-herder and the seemingly inevitable herder-farmer conflict. This emerging phenomenon has indeed proved to bear the seeds of conflict in it.²¹

Additionally, neo-pastoralism in Nigeria often goes hand in hand with violence and quite a handful of other premeditated incidents such as cattle rustling and banditry, especially in rural areas where pastoralists are said to operate efficiently. Azeez and Aliyu further posit that cattle rustling emerged as a major security challenge in the country, particularly the northern region, whereby at the economic level, it constitutes a major threat to the livelihood of herders and those who depend on cows for their survival. Likewise, at the socio-political level, the activities of rustlers have resulted in thousands of displaced persons, premeditated murders, and the destruction of lives and properties, thereby vehemently disturbing the security of the region.²² However, the drifting inrush of neo-pastoralism in the country, herding thousands of cattle, pastoral--related conflicts and cattle rustling have in recent times been incessant and lethal due to the use of more advanced and sophisticated weapons by the actors of these conflicts.

In addition, one major neo-pastoralists' central argument when explaining armed pastoralism is that their herdsman need protection from these bandits and rustlers. It is based on this notion, that the national

^{21.} Usongo and Moussa, *The Dynamics and Impacts of Transhumance and Neo-Pastoralism*, 33.

^{22.} Olaniyan, Azeez and Aliyu Yahaya. *Cows, Bandits, and Violent Conflicts: Understanding Cattle Rustling in Northern Nigeria. Africa Spectrum* 51, no. 3 (2016), 101.

secretary of *Miyetti Allah*; an ethnocentric and controversial pastoralists group in Nigeria, in an interview posit that: If you see a Fulani man handling AK-47, that is because cattle rustling has become so much that one wonders if there is security in the country.²³ It is pertinent to note that the adverse aftermath of the use of these arms acquired for the sole purpose of the supposed herder and herds protection by unlicensed, and unprofessional neo-pastoralists, are also used when there is a conflict between the pastoralists and farmers, which has always left hundreds of victims dead in an inhumane and barbaric way.

Thus, having established the fact that neo-pastoralism builds relationships with armed or terrorist groups, with whom they exchange many goods and services, whereby these actors buy weapons from armed groups, its paramount to also take note that unauthorized proliferation of weaponry into the country, especially through the northern borders has been a factor exacerbating terrorism, cattle rustling, and most particularly, the pastoralist and farmer's conflicts. However, this conflict between pastoralists and farmers has gone on for decades in Nigeria, especially in the north, which has resulted in the death of approximately 3600 people and displaced over 300,000 since 2014. Studies show that the actors involved in this barbaric aggression possess significant numbers of factory-produced small arms manufactured in Europe, East Asia, the Middle East and North America. Some of the weapons were linked to a major trafficking network from Mali and Niger. However, northern Nigeria is one of the affected regions of unauthorized arms proliferation that are majorly trafficked from Ivory Coast, Turkey and

²³. Othman Ngelzarma. Fulani National Leader: Why Our Herdsmen Carry AK47s. The News Nigeria, May 2016. <http://thenewsnigeria.com.ng/2016/05/fulani-national-leader-why-ourherdsmen-carry-ak47s/> (Accessed 14th January 2023).

Libya, whereby the aftermath of this event has led to thousands of people dead and displaced.²⁴

The Imperative of Law Towards Possible Solutions to the Pastoralists Conflicts in Nigeria

Drawing from the preceding discourse and the current existential condition between *Pastoralism and Neo-Pastoralism* as presented, Nigeria has been, and continues to be, the scene of multiple conflicts between herders and farmers and these conflicts have led to the breakdown of Nigeria as a country. Human lives are lost, infrastructure is destroyed, education and health services have suffered, and the environment is damaged. The tie that previously linked Nigerians is broken, social solidarity and cohesion has collapsed, and political tension is generated. In conflicts such as these, the imperative of law in conflict resolution plays an imperative role in resolving conflict in the 21st.²⁵

Since one of the basic function of law is to defend the citizens from [evil](#) that is, those who would seek to harm the weak for no good reason, the government needs to enforce the laws that will strengthen peaceful and harmonious mutuality between the farmers and herders in the community. Also, imperative efforts are direly needed at the national and state levels, in close coordination with local populations, to respond to heightened conflicts between pastoralists and farmers in Nigeria. Lessons from how similar conflicts have been prevented or resolved in other countries in the region, and across Africa, could inform Nigeria's

²⁴. PM News. Report: Weapons used by Killer-herdsmen from Turkey, Libya, Ivory Coast. January 30th, 2020. www.pmnewsnigeria.com/2020/01/30/report-weapons-used-by-killer-herdsmen-from-turkey-libya-ivory-coast/%3famp=1. (Accessed January 27th, 2023).

²⁵. Paul T. Haaga, *Ubuntu* "Philosophy as an Archetype to Resolving Conflict in the 21st Century Africa", *Religion, Theology and Education in the 21st Century: Festschrift in Honour of Distinguished Emeritus Professor Msgr. Cletus Tanimu Gotan*, (2022), 113-114.

response. This can also include lessons from how other countries have modernized, transformed and regulated their livestock sector and animal movement for the benefit of both pastoralist and farming communities (e.g. Brazil).²⁶

Pertinently, pastoralism works best as a part of a regulated system where space for livestock and pastoralists is demarcated and protected from encroachment, i.e. herding routes, grazing areas, and access to water. Thus, the pastoralist conflicts may be reduced if sufficient infrastructure and effective policies and laws are put in place to guide the principles or activities of farmers and pastoralists communities in Nigeria. Take for example, the Ladduga cattle grazing reserve in Kachia Local Government Area of Kaduna State was created in 1988, and the Fulanis moved in after the state government gazetted and demarcated Ladduga in 1996. The reserve, with the size of over 70,000 hectares of flourishing grazing land is home to thousands of cattle and other livestock.²⁷ While the cattle feeds and fattens on rich plains of land, the pastoralist likewise enjoys certain privileges such as rushing clean water, medical care, electricity and most importantly, security.

Ladduga is one of its kind in Nigeria, it accommodated its rich fields to over 4,000 Southern-based herdsmen following a series of eviction threats issued to them amidst tensions.²⁸ Ladduga, being a state-owned taxation-free reserve with astonishing amenities enjoyed by both herds and herders, free from rustlers and bandits and the fear of being harassed and attacked by farmers or farming communities, should be a perfect

²⁶. UNOWAS, "Pastoralism and Security", 79

²⁷. The Vanguard. Arms haul in Kaduna controversial village. *Vanguard*, April 6, 2014. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2014/04/arms-haul-in-kaduna-controversial-village/amp/>. (Accessed January 2nd, 2023).

²⁸. Lami Sadiq and Mohammed I. Yaba. Ladduga community". *Daily Trust*, February 11, 2021. <https://dailytrust.com/over-4000-southern-based-herder-relocated-to-kaduna/>. (Accessed January 2nd, 2023).

example and a reason as to why the federal government, in an attempt to de-escalate and dwindle the surge in violence between the pastoralists and farmers, direly needs to demarcate, at least two to three tax-free National reserves such as Ladduga in the southern region, and likewise another in the northern part of the country, particularly a suitable place situated along the border lines.

The creation of this proposed grazing reserve by the federal government, will drastically ease the tension and calm the broil between both parties, because a pastoralist migratory route will be established to help herders navigate, to and fro, southwards to the demarcated grazing reserve when its migrating season. As such, there will be lesser encroachment and destruction of farmlands and crops by migratory herds. Thus, with or without the proposed grazing reserve, it will not stop the pastoralists from eventually migrating southwards, or anywhere in the country with their herds in search of better pastures, it is for this reason that demarcating and creating these grazing reserves by the federal government as proposed, would eventually come in handy to both the pastoralist and the southern farmers, this because, the safety of the pastoralists and their herds will be ensured while grazing on the demarcated reserves and without the fear of being harassed by those farming communities. Likewise, the farmers on the other hand will be assured of their farms being intact and safe, without the fear of loose and wandering herds devastating their crops by either accidental and careless, or intentional encroachment by herders.

There are, in fact, discrepant policies and laws that legislate pastoralism at the national and state levels, particularly the anti-grazing state laws, which emerge to contravene the free movement policy enacted in the Constitution. One of the factors which make it adversely impossible in resolving issues on pastoralism is the blockages to the enactment of laws

that can rectify these challenges. As such, relevant laws and policies on the pastoralists' conflict should be developed that are both all-inclusive and beneficial to both groups.²⁹

To this end, the government should remodel, review and enforce the existing laws (such as the 1965 Northern Region Grazing Reserve Law), and create new ones to check the behaviour of both pastoralists and farmers and to provide a framework for resolving disputes between them. For example, the Nigerian government could enforce laws prohibiting open grazing and makes it mandatory for pastoralists to obtain permits for grazing on specific lands or reserves. This would aid in calming the aggression between both parties over access to land and would also promote better land use practices. In addition to executing these laws and enacting new ones, the government could also invest in developmental programs that will promote peaceful coexistence between pastoralists and farmers. This could include programs that provide incentives for pastoralists and farmers to work together, such as joint marketing arrangements for crops and general livestock. The government also could establish specialized courts or tribunals to hear and resolve disputes between pastoralists and farmers fairly and impartially. This would help ensure that conflicts are resolved through peaceful means and would also promote the rule of law.

However, in order to at least ease the pastoralist conflict, the imperative of law cannot be overstated. The rule of law is thus essential for ensuring that disputes are resolved peacefully and fairly, and that all parties are held accountable for their actions. As such, a robust legal framework that is well enforced is necessary to provide a stable environment in which the

²⁹. Premium Times News. "How to resolve herdsmen crisis- Nigerian working Groups. *Premium Times*, January 12, 2018. <https://premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/255364-resolve-herdsmen-crisis-nigerian-working-group.html?tztc=1/>. (Assessed April 13, 2023)

conflict can be resolved. On this note and in clear details, the rule of law can play a paramount role in resolving the pastoralists-farmers conflict whereby the Nigerian government, with an intend to ease this aggression, direly need to establish land use policies to Protect the rights of all parties. Land use laws in Nigeria are outdated and not properly enforced, leading to conflicts between both parties over land use.³⁰

To address this, the Nigerian government can enact new laws or amend existing laws to regulate land use and ownership. This could include identifying designated grazing areas for herders and implementing mechanisms for licensing or leasing these lands. As such, these laws should guarantee the rights of both farmers and herders to access and use natural resources such as water and grazing land. This also will help to ensure that neither group is unfairly disadvantaged and it will help to reduce the likelihood of conflict. Similarly, formalizing customary land tenure arrangements should also be adopted in Nigeria. In many African countries, land ownership is often based on customary arrangements.³¹ The government can provide a legal framework for formalizing these arrangements, which will help to clarify land ownership and reduce the incidence of disputes between farmers and pastoralists in Nigeria.

Additionally, while violence is often used to resolve disputes between farmers and pastoralists, and cattle rustling which has been a common form of criminal activity, relevant Laws can be put in place to criminalize and establish severe penalties for those who engage in such activities. This will serve as a deterrent and encourage peaceful dispute resolution mechanisms. In the same vein, the government can provide alternative

³⁰. Jonah, E. Changwak and Tari A. Vahyala. "Policy Issues in Managing Farmer-Herder Conflict in Nigeria." *Humanus Discourse* vol. 2. No. 4 (2022)

³¹. Chimhowu Admos. The New African Customary Land Tenure: Characteristics, Features and Policy Implication of a New Paradigm. in *Land Use Policy*, 81. (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2019). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landusepol.2018.04.014/>.

dispute resolution mechanisms, such as arbitration or mediation, to resolve disputes between farmers and pastoralist. These mechanisms are often faster, cheaper, and more accessible than traditional litigation, which can be time-consuming and costly. The Nigerian Constitution provides for the protection of human rights, including the right to life and property. The government thus ensures that these rights are protected and that those who violate them are held accountable. As such, the government needs to indispensably establish community policing mechanisms that empower local communities to manage security in their areas. This will enable communities to work together to prevent and address conflict and reduce the burden on state security forces.

It is paramount that when this proposed solution to the pastoralist conflicts takes full effect, and with the provision of these Laws, pastoralists found encroaching into one's land and devastating its produce will decisively be punished. Also, farmers found encroaching into herders' migratory route with an intent to cultivate crops will likewise be punished. These laws will in fact deter one's intention to ignite any broil between both parties.

Conclusion

To this end, having exposed the possibility that the surge in violence experienced in Nigeria is largely attributed to the changing nature of pastoralism, which has evolved and metamorphosed into a new adverse phenomenon, labeled as Neo-pastoralism. The study thus argues that the drift in the pastoralist conflict is more complicated than has been studied and reported, and other basic aspects of the conflict have not been identified, thus prolonging the search for a befitting and lasting solution. Also, as not to discount the factors previously identified as being responsible for the conflict, such as the encroachment and destruction of farmlands by pastoralist herds, cattle rustling and banditry resulting in an

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incessant unauthorized arms proliferation, this study thus proposes a possible way out that will drastically ease the tension between both parties whereby sustainable and modern or semi-modern grazing reserve projects is direly needed to be executed by the federal government because pastoralist migratory route will be established to help herders navigate through favorable pastures. Thus, with the intent to unravel a bias-free solution to the pastoralist conflict, it will be imperative to comprehensively look at all the strands of the violence pointed out by this study. Also, more empirical studies are needed to understand the impact of the changes to pastoralism and the new waves of violence this revolution is giving birth to.

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