

Transboundary Migration and Herder-Farmer Conflicts in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study extensively examined transboundary migration and herder-farmer conflicts in Nigeria. It specifically looks into how the frequent influx of migrants through the porous border led to the severity of violent conflicts between herders and farmers. This transboundary migration is propelled by factors like competition for finite natural resources, weak governance, porous borders, and climate change. Cross-border migration posed a wider security consequences such as national instability, community tensions, rural insecurity and deaths of thousands of citizens. Documentary approach was used to acquire data for the study. To find trends, narratives, and institutional reactions to the herder-farmer issue, content analysis was used to examine secondary sources. The findings revealed that lack of effective regional migration policies, lax border restrictions, and the spread of small guns all contribute to transboundary migration's substantial exacerbation of herder-farmer conflicts. The report emphasizes that although state-level anti-grazing legislation and security measures have been implemented, they have mostly been ineffective and reactive. It was recommended that in order to properly monitor and control cross-border movements, the government should improve immigration control and surveillance systems along Nigeria's borders. Second, in order to govern transhumance and migration in a way that strikes a balance between mobility rights and national security concerns, regional cooperation is required to support multilateral agreements and coordination among West African nations under ECOWAS protocols.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria has significant challenges to monitor and control transboundary movements because it has 4,047 kilometers of shared land border with Benin, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon (Isaac et al, 2024). Cradled in 923,768 square kilometers of land, Nigeria shares 770 kilometers of land with Benin to the west, 90 kilometers with Chad in the northeast, 1,500 kilometers with Niger to the north, and 1,700 kilometers with Cameroon to the east (Onyekachi, 2018). This permeability of these boundaries promotes the occurrence of transnational crime, smuggling, and irregular migration (Isaac et al, 2024). Cross border crimes include trafficking in arms and persons, trafficking in drugs, armed banditries, theft of vehicles, smuggling and activities of nomadic pastoralists, who moved their herds across country borders without consideration to border regulations (Onyekachi, 2018). Spread of light and small guns also happens to be another of the prominent security challenges faced by transboundary migration across Nigeria's borders. The flood of illicit weapons has intensified the level of violent conflicts and criminality in the nation, this is because it is mostly as a result of weak borders and inadequate customs intervention (Isaac et al, 2024).

The authors, Shaibu and Edegbo (2015) defined the concept of migration to mean the movement of animal, human, goods and services in a national political territory. While trans borders migration involves the movement of animals, human beings, including goods and services, across national political boundaries using either land, air, or water. Migration, as advanced by Shaibu et al (2020), is the movement of people from one point on the globe to a varying point in the world to occupy permanent or semi-permanent residence, normally across a political border. Crossing the border of a political or administrative unit for a minimum period. The migration includes the movement of refugees, people who have been displaced, uprooted people, and economic migrants. Migration, at its simplest can be understood as movement of people from one place to another. The movement of a person or group of persons, whether across an international border or within a State, is migration according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM). It is a movement of a population, whatever type of movement it may be, its duration, composition and causes. It also involves migration of refugees, displaced

persons, economic migrants and persons moving for other reasons such as family reunification (IOM, 2014; Obi et al, 2021).

Transboundary migration is the relocation of people from one country across national borders. It involves entering another country for changing periods to benefit from economic, political, or social opportunities or to commit the crime (Onyekachi, 2018). In Africa, all those countries have been touched by transnational migration, to all degrees. Some people choose to migrate; Others are compelled to do so because of natural disasters, coup d'états, insurgencies, dictatorships, wars, and conflicts. The conflict in Africa is often caused by migration pressures and scarcity of resources (Obi et al, 2021). From a wider development perspective, environmental degradation has features of a proximate cause of internal and trans-border migration. The root of the causes is located in population pressure on land and the pattern of resource use. Demography and political economy, that is, are the most salient causal factors (Shaibu et al, 2020). Spitz cited by Shaibu and Edegbo (2015) describes the effects of drought, famine and low-intensified onset of food scarcity related to slow deterioration of environments as silent drivers.

Under the 1979 ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of People and Goods, ECOWAS citizens are entitled to go to and live in the territory of any membership state so long as they have valid travel documents and international health certificates. It also offers member states the opportunity to reject admission of citizens who are inadmissible by their own country's law. Even though all ECOWAS countries signed the protocol in 1978, coastal countries some coastal countries, including Nigeria, have raised issues about the protocol's implications for national security (Laville, 2021).

The porous nature of Nigeria border give opportunities migrants particularly nomadic herders. Disputes between nomadic pastoralists and settled farmers are not new things in Africa. Nevertheless, their level of occurrence and strength appear to be rising in various West African nations (Higazi and Abubakar Ali, 2018; Token, 2015). Laville, 2021). Herder-farmer clashes usually occur along coastal States after partial or complete destruction of farming land following the interaction of herds in transhumance. Compared to all the living ECOWAS members, this violence has killed more Nigerians (Higazi and Abubakar Ali, 2018) in the past few years. Between 2018, the number of people killed in Nigeria due to herder-farmer violence; said to have killed over 1,300 and displaced over 300,000 (ICG, 2018). Farmers–pastoralists violence in West Africa has become more explosive, lethal, and effective in the past decade resulting in thousands of deaths and a surge of complex emergencies (Akov & Asua, 2021). Conflict between transhumant pastoral herders and sedentary farmers/host communities has continued to be the major source of insecurity in many West African states (Nwangwu, 2025).

The farmers-herders conflict can be placed into the context of a political economy of land struggle against the background of an expanding population and its international demand. Consequently, pasture, water, and land are in greater need. Furthermore, mass agricultural expansion projects intensified competition for limited pasture and land by decreasing the viable lot of land for pastoralism and settled existence. Also the effect of gold mining, corporate mining and other mining activities restrict access to land use (Omitola, 2024). Herding practice is a high risk business to violence, but the exact predisposition of the herding business to violence differs between studies and these are climate change and environmental security, increasing population and urbanization, manipulation of cultural and ethnic identities, Lake Chad area insecurity, and free movement of persons and goods protocols (Nwangwu, 2025). The dichotomy between herdsman and farmers in Nigeria has since the restoration of democratic rule in 1999 become a perennial challenge. Indeed the conflict triggered by the exigency of the country's ecology has left deep scars and scars of hundreds of lives lost and viable communities at the middle-belt region of Nigeria desolated even deserted. Actually, cattle grazing induced conflicts formed 35% of all reported crises in Nigeria, during the period 1991-2005 (Ukaogo, 2019).

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the last two decades, trans-border migration has increased steadily, during which the number of the international migrants globally has increased by over 77 million (an increase of 50%) approximate. A good part of this growth happened between 2000 – 2010, with Africa especially sub-Saharan Africa recording the highest annual average growth rate in migration with 2.8 percent (Onyekachi, 2018). For the last two decades, global

trans-border migration has had an upward trend but consistent and culminated in a near 50% increase to the global immigrant population that is roughly 77 million people (Isaac et al, 2024).

International Organization for Migration (IOM) defines transborder migration as the movement of individuals from one place to another beyond the borders of their normal residence not less than 3 months but not for more than one year (12 months) except where its relocation to that country is not for recreational purposes or the purpose of holiday, to visit friends or relatives or for purposes of commerce, medicine or religious pilgrimage (Isaac et al, 2024). Migration is a powerful depiction of spatial flows that provides not only life and momentum to the dynamic global political economy; but momentum for change in demography and environment. Africa's migration history, which is complicated and only deeply rooted in historical antecedents. Therefore, migration policies in Africa – nay, in Nigeria started to form after getting her independence in the early 1960s. This paper examines the nexus between transnational migration and environmental security in Africa using the theoretical evidence and empirical evidence from Nigeria (Obi et al, 2021).

Concerns about the various effects of these phenomena, particularly as they affect the national security of sovereign states in the sub-region (especially Nigeria, which is the region's economic and demographic superpower), have grown as a result of the size and scope of trans-border movements in sub-Saharan Africa, the growing proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW), the rise of radical anti-state movements and ideologies, and the increasingly aggressive activities of migrant pastoralists (Onyekachi, 2018). The scale and scope of cross-border migration in sub-Saharan Africa, the proliferation of SALW, the rise of radical anti-state movements and ideologies, and the increasingly aggressive behavior of nomadic pastoralists have all led to growing concerns about the complex effects of these phenomena, especially with regard to the national security of sovereign states in the sub-region (particularly Nigeria, which is the region's economic and demographic powerhouse) (Isaac et al, 2024).

Recent empirical research examines the relationship between herder-farmer conflict risk in Africa and herder migration driven by climate change (Eberle et al., 2020; McGuirk and Nunn, 2020; Laville, 2021). Saying that environmental insecurity is widespread in Africa is pointless. The trend in conflicts linked to challenges produced by migration and the environment is concerning (Obi et al, 2021). The continuous violent disputes between these two groups of agro-land users have been found to be mostly caused by climate change and environmental scarcity (Cabot 2017; Nwangwu, 2025). Climate change and environmental security are the root causes of the conflict (Akov and Asua 2022).

Human life and livelihood systems are at risk due to climate change. It is a multifaceted phenomenon that has a major negative socioeconomic impact. Lake Chad in northeastern Nigeria and the Sahel region of West and Central Africa are among the regions affected by the current climate shift. There are more and more documented instances of the Lake Chad environment's ecosystem being disrupted. Food security, general human security, and the security of the Nigerian state are all at risk due to the consequences, which have resulted in ongoing clashes between herders and sedentary farmers (Dim et al, 2022).

One of the fundamental issues that continues to shape global development policy is climate change. The effects of climate change are becoming more and more noticeable in Africa, which has a limited ability to adapt to these effects. In Africa, drought and desertification have resulted from climate change, which has implications for regional safety and security (Lenshie et al., 2022). According to Obi et al. (2021), the shortage of natural resources and environmental concerns in particular have made migration a worldwide issue. The study suggested that as migration policies, conflict management initiatives, and climate change adaptation are not isolated levers but rather operate within the larger political economy, they must be integrated and translated into tangible projects.

In the context of the farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria, numerous studies have demonstrated the connection between migration and conflict. For instance, a research by Oke et al. (2021) discovered that herders' migration in pursuit of resources has resulted in violent clashes with farmers, which have claimed lives and damaged property. The study also highlighted how government regulations like the Land Use Act exacerbate the conflict by limiting farmers' and herders' access to land resources.

The function of governance in handling the conflict between Nigerian farmers and herders was examined by Adewuyi and Olorunfemi (2020). According to the study, a major contributing reason to the conflict's escalation has been the absence of efficient governance frameworks and regulations. According to Bayala et al. (2023), these 2890 agro-land users' ethnicity and cultural identity are important conflict factors. Since Western Africa gained its independence, the political marginalization of pastoral communities, the undervaluation of pastoralists' economic contributions, and the exaggeration of the detrimental ecological effects of grazing have all contributed to the ongoing politicization of herder-farmer conflicts (Benjaminsen et al., 2012; Laville, 2021).

The blatant identity component of Nigerian herder-farmer disputes is also connected to this politicization. It is rare for farmers and herders to have similar ethnic and religious identities. Additionally, among Sahelian nomadic pastoralists, the Fulani ethnic group is the most prevalent. These problems frequently have the tendency to transform herder-farmer disputes into difficult-to-resolve intercommunal disputes in Nigeria, which are sustained by a systemic stigmatization of nomadic pastoralists through stereotypes (Eke, 2020). Identity-based national policy narratives, such as the Islamization and Fulanization of the Christian South, are one way that this stigmatization occurs (Chukwuma, 2020; Chiluwa and Chiluwa, 2020).

The effect of climate change (as measured by temperature) on the likelihood of herder-farmer conflict in Africa is examined by Eberle et al. (2020). Additionally, their findings imply that herder-farmer conflicts are more likely to occur in cells with mixed settlements at the border between farmland and rangeland, particularly when abrupt migratory shifts upset long-standing, mutually beneficial agreements between farmers and herders.

According to McGuirk and Nunn (2020) and Eberle et al. (2020), competition over the remaining fertile land is what leads to conflicts in transition areas. They don't, however, check for grassland in the cell where the conflict manifests. Conflicts in pasture-areas imply that resource-grabbing tactics could be the cause of herder-farmer disputes in Niger after the drought. Informal agreements resolve property rights conflicts and govern the administration of shared resources (Eberle et al., 2020).

When Krätli et al. (2020) addressed the conflicts between farmers and herders by pointing to the increasing competition between production systems (pastoralists and farmers), which are meant to be inherently incompatible, they highlighted a significant one. Ange and his colleagues (2014) noted that poorly managed transhumance efforts and uncontrolled flows could also result in violent clashes between farmers and herders, which is another good explanation.

According to Azalou et al. (2021), the main reasons why farmers and herders clash in Benin are farmers stealing water reservoirs for market gardening, cattle herders damaging crops (whether standing or in storage), and farmers establishing fields in pastoral areas. Another element to take into account is the pressure from herder migration from Benin's bordering nations, which can exacerbate the country's problems (Afouda, 2023). In areas afflicted by violence, land conflicts are frequently viewed as a security risk that should be resolved through mediation and bolstering the rule of law (van Leeuwen et al., 2022). The government of Benin has granted towns complete authority to establish units dedicated to resolving disputes between farmers and herders. Additionally, government-deallocated organizations are in place to manage and supervise agricultural activities at the department level. According to the Government of Benin (2018), a public organization known as the "Territorial Agricultural Development Agency (ATDA) has been established at the level of each Agricultural Development Pole (PDA) with the responsibility of managing the agricultural development in the sector."

In the nations and areas where transhumance systems are practiced, disputes between farmers and herders are frequent (Alidou, 2016). Human history, according to Ezeibe (2009), is the history of moral conflicts shown in diverse disputes and contradictions between and within different religions, ethnic groups, regions, or classes. Conflict, according to Ezeibe (2009), is a state of unease, unrest, and/or rioting that disturbs the peace and tranquility of society. One departure place (a pastoral zone in Niger), multiple destination zones (pastures in Nigeria), and many "transit areas" between them are all included in the itinerary for cross-border transhumance between Niger and Nigeria. A rivalry for the resource in an environment with disrupted conventional arrangements may be the cause of conflicts that arise at the destination (where the resource resides). However, if the departure and destination are far apart, conflict may arise during travel (Laville, 2021).

Gap in Literature

While numerous studies have explored the internal dimensions of herder-farmer conflicts in Nigeria, limited scholarly attention has been paid to the role of transboundary migration, particularly how cross-border movements of pastoralists from neighboring countries contribute to the escalation, complexity, and regionalization of these conflicts. This gap hampers the development of comprehensive conflict prevention strategies that incorporate regional security cooperation and border governance. Therefore, the study examined the impact of transboundary migration on the dynamics, frequency, and intensity of herder-farmer conflicts in Nigeria, with a view to identifying the underlying drivers, security implications, and responses necessary for conflict mitigation.

METHODOLOGY

The qualitative approach used in this study relies on secondary sources. The documentary approach was specifically used as method of data collection was used in this study. Since the necessary information is already available to the public, the documentary method is best suited for the study. To draw conclusions from the given facts, it is necessary to evaluate, analyze, illuminate, and extract important information. Reputable books, journal articles, journals, and other pertinent materials authored or documented on transboundary migration and disputes between farmers and herders were used to extract pertinent content.

The generated data was analyzed using content analysis. Its adoption is justified by the fact that it allows the researcher to critically analyze the document's content in order to understand its thoughts and ideas and measure the message it conveys (White et al., 1966). However, because content analysis is multi-dimensional, interactive, and descriptive, it is appropriate for analyzing documentary evidence (Dim et al, 2022).

Theoretical Framework

Conflicts between herders and farmers have persisted in Nigeria, particularly in the northern and Middle Belt areas. Transboundary movement patterns, especially those of nomadic or semi-nomadic herders (many of whom are Fulani) traversing national boundaries from neighboring countries like Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, have been a greater factor in these conflicts. Competition for land and water resources has increased as a result of these movements and environmental deterioration. According to the Environmental Security Theory, one of the main causes of violent conflict is environmental degradation, particularly when it results in a shortage of resources. Building on Thomas Malthus' theories, the Neo-Malthusian school contends that natural constraints and population pressures might outstrip the supply of resources, resulting in social stress, competition, and conflict (Homer-Dixon, 1999).

In the Sahel, deforestation, drought, and desertification have decreased the amount of water and grazing land available. These patterns have gotten worse due to climate change, which has pushed herders southward into Nigeria's agricultural areas. Tensions rise when farmers and herders vie for limited resources (Benjaminsen & Ba, 2009). Pressures from the environment transcend national boundaries. In quest of pasture, several herders from Niger, Chad, and Cameroon travel to Nigeria, causing "transboundary migration." Due to Nigeria's porous borders, there is no control over this movement or conflict resolution (Okoli & Atelhe, 2014). Competition between farmers and herders is heightened by this inflow, which also puts more strain on local resources. In the past, tensions have been reduced by using local conflict resolution techniques, such as those between Fulani pastoralists and indigenous farmers. But these systems have been overloaded by the volume of transboundary migration, resulting in violent cycles of retaliation (Adamu & Ben, 2019). Conflict between herders and farmers is increasingly being viewed by the Nigerian government as a national security issue. This reframing is explained by the Environmental Security Theory, which holds that the distinction between environmental problems and security concerns becomes more hazy when population shifts and environmental deterioration put a burden on state capacity and fuel violence (Ide, 2018).

The Environmental Security Theory, especially its Neo-Malthusian version, offers a thorough framework for comprehending how transboundary migration and environmental stress fuel herder-farmer disputes in Nigeria.

Both political and ecological solutions are needed to address these problems, such as bolstering regional conflict resolution organizations, investing in climate adaption, and enhancing border governance.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Despite significant financial investments in the security sector and the creation of a Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in collaboration with Nigeria's immediate neighbors, trans-border-related insecurity persists in northeastern Nigeria (Onyekachi, 2018). There is evidence that illegal migrants have a major role in terrorist activities in Nigeria (Onyekachi, 2018). Moving people, animals, products, and services over national political borders by land, air, or sea, usually with the intention of establishing permanent or semi-permanent residence, is known as trans-border migration. Refugees, displaced individuals, uprooted people, and economic migrants are some of the categories who are affected by this phenomena (Shaibu et al., 2020). Even though migration is frequently triggered by extreme environmental disasters, more gradual environmental degradation is a major contributing factor. From the standpoint of development, population pressures on land and resource usage patterns are the most prominent causative elements for environmental degradation, which is seen as a direct cause of both internal and trans-border migration (Shaibu et al., 2020).

The ECOWAS Transhumance Protocol of 1998, the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Residence and Establishment, and the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Goods and Persons in West Africa are just a few of the ECOWAS protocols that have liberalized migration and had a major impact on regional migration patterns (Aniche et al., 2022; Iwuoha and Mbaegbu, 2021; Nwangwu et al., 2020).

Transboundary herding, a long-standing agricultural activity in Africa that has significantly increased conflict among agro-land users, especially between Fulani nomadic pastoralists and peasant farmers/host communities, has been made easier by these protocols (Nwangwu, 2025). Pastoralists have been migrating to Nigeria from Central and West African nations in greater numbers in recent years (Adzande, 2019), and the rate of migration both within and across borders has increased dramatically.

The results show that the main cause of herder-farmer disputes in Nigeria is rivalry for scarce resources, which is made worse by climate change and environmental degradation. The primary driver of these disputes continues to be economic survival, especially with reference to land access (Omitola, 2024). Competition for land and resources is exacerbated by herder migration, particularly in regions where farmers rely on scarce water and land resources (Omitola, 2024).

According to recent empirical research, herder migration brought on by drought is linked to an increased likelihood of conflict (Eberle et al., 2020; McGuirk and Nunn, 2020). Despite incomplete knowledge of the locations of grasslands throughout Nigeria, herders use transhumance to gradually obtain pastoral resources in an effort to increase the size and health of their herds (Laville, 2021). Competition in the context of disrupted customary arrangements can lead to conflicts at both destination zones (where resources are situated) and during transit if the departure and destination sites are far apart (Laville, 2021). The reduction of agricultural and grazing land due to desert encroachment has a direct impact on the central regions of Nigeria (Obi et al., 2021).

Table 1: Core factors in farmer–herder conflict in Nigeria

Categories	Components	Details
Socio/economic factor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - burning of range land - farmers beat up - limited grazing resources - farm fragmentation - population growth (human and livestock) 	The authors characterize “burning of range land, farmers beaten up, limited grazing resources and farm fragmentation” as causal factors that can lead to conflicts. The last ones (the ones in red) are structural factors that can worsen the conflict and

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - language barrier - cultural differences 	make communication and acceptance difficult.
Security factor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sexual harassment attacks on Fulani women by farmers - setting traps across cattle routes 	
Production practices factor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fallow farmlands - farming across cattle routes 	Those two factors have been found to increase the conflicts.
Institutional factor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - claim of citizenship - ownership of land 	

Source: Afouda (2023).

In 2014, the herdsmen were even named the fourth largest terrorist organization by the Global Terrorism Index, behind only Boko Haram, ISIS, and Al-Shabab (Ukaogo, 2019). Conflicts between farmers and pastoralists have grown to be a major security issue in Nigeria during the last 20 years, particularly in the North Central area (Mbah et al, 2021).

Conflicts between farmers and herders have significantly increased in recent years:

In Nigeria, agropastoral conflicts are six times more deadly than Boko Haram, according to the International Crisis Group (2017). Fulani herdsmen were reported to have killed 1,229 people in 2014, compared to 63 in 2013. Coordinated attacks against local farmers in 2017 included the Agatu massacre in Benue state and the killing of 40 people in Nimbo, Enugu state (Obi et al., 2021). Over 2,500 people were killed in Nigeria by Fulani extremists between 2012 and 2016 (Ukaogo, 2019). Herdsmen were the fourth-largest terrorist organization in the world in 2014, behind Boko Haram, ISIS, and Al-Shabab, according to the Global Terrorism Index. Clifford Ndujihe's timeline of the crisis from January 2016 to May 18, 2017 shows that at least 8,626 people died (Ukaogo, 2019). According to the Nigeria Watch database, between 2005 and 2014, 3.79% of all violent deaths in the nation were caused by land disputes and cattle grazing (Obi et al., 2021).

Table 2: Harder's attacks

DATE	CASUALTIES
January 17, 2016	Three people were killed in Gareji village in Taraba State. In nearby Adamawa state, between 30-60 people were killed including a police DPO in Demsare, Wunamokoh, Dikajam and Taboungo.
February 9th, 2016	Herders invaded Ugwueshi community in Agwu Local Government Council of Enugu State and their cattles destroyed the host community's crops. (Guardian, April 24th, 2016) p. 14.
February 20-28, 2016,	Series of herdsmen attack occurred in Agatu, the thriving but sleepy town in Benue state recording over 600 casualties. In Abii Enugu state, the entire community suffered severe attack leading to the declaration of several individuals missing and on the 2 March, 2016, residents of Ossissa, in Ndokwa, Delta State fled their homes following attacks by herdsmen.
March 7, 2016	Eight people were killed and the next day, 12 were killed in Mbaya-Tombo, both in Benue. There were more deaths on March 13, 2016; then 15 more on March 17.
March 26, 2016	76 residents of Ugwunesi in Awgu LGA in Enugu State were arrested and detained by soldiers for holding a meeting to discuss the problem of herdsmen attacks in their area.

March, 2016	500 People Were Killed By Rampaging Herders Following A Siege On Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State. The affected communities Akwu, Adagbo, Okokolo, Ugboju, Odugbehu, Obagaji. (Premium Times, March 125th, 2016).
April 3-7, 2016	Between April 3 and 4 about 7 and 16 people were killed in Ohali-Elu, in Rivers State.
April 9, 2016	In Ilado, Ondo State, OluFalae, former SGF, was attacked and a security guard was killed.
April 10, 2016	Between 15 and 44 were killed in Angai, Dashole, Dori and Mesuwa villages, all in Taraba State.
April 18, 2016	There was news that another 18 people had been killed in Moor.
April 20, 2016	Soldiers were attacked in Agatu, Benue, and a policeman was declared missing
April 25, 2016	Herdsmen attacked Nimbo Community of Uzo-Uwani LGA in Enugu and killed no fewer than 46 persons.
November 25, 2016	Dungun Mu'azu community in Sabuwa Local Government Area of Katsina State was thrown into crisis as armed herdsmen cut down seven men and one woman in a nocturnal reprisal attack.
April 2016	Fulani herdsmen invaded seven communities in Uzo-Uwani council in Enugu State, and destroyed their crops with their cattles and raped their women. These communities are Nimbo, Ngwoko, Ugwuijoro, Ekwuru, Ebor, Enugu Nimbo, Umuome and Ugwuachara. Saturday Sun, April 30th, 2016) p. 8.
April, 2016	Fulani herdsmen attacked two villages and killed 15 people in Gashaka Local Government Area of Taraba State. (Punch, April 13, 2016.
April, 2016	Herdsmen swoop on Olu Fale's farm after the previous attack, killed the security guard and destroyed the crops in the farm in Ondo-State.
August, 2016.	Herdsmen numbering about 50, armed with matches and rifles attacked Ndiagu community of Attakwu, Akegbe-Ugwu in Nkanu-West Local Government Council of Enugu State
October, 2016	Armed Fulani herdsmen opened fire on villagers who attempted to stop their cattle from grazing on their farm lands in Umuekune, Irete in Imo State. (The Sun, October 30th, 2016).
January 1st, 2018.	73 people were killed and about 500,000 displaced in Benue State by the invasion of Fulani armed herdsmen (Ortom, 2019).
January 4, 2017	Five indigenes of Abraka and Obiarukwu both in Ethiope East and Ukwani local government areas of Delta State, were reportedly killed during a clash between farmers and suspected herdsmen along the boundary of the neighboring communities.
January 8, 2017	Five Mobile Policemen and two civilians died in an attack by suspected herdsmen in Demsa Local Government Area of Adamawa State. The Mobile policemen were deployed to Kwayina, Gideon Dadi and Kurlai communities after clashes by residents with armed herdsmen that left more than 40 persons dead. Apart from the policemen, two other bodies were recovered after the attacks.
January 9, 2017	No fewer than five persons were hacked to death by suspected herdsmen in two separate attacks in Abraka and Obiaruku, both in Ethiope East and Ukwani Local Government Area of Delta State

January 15, 2017	Nine people including a Police Inspector and a Superintendent of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corp (NSCDC) were killed by herdsmen in RafinGona and BCC Gbagyi villages in Bosso local government area of Niger State.
January 17, 2017	Three persons were killed and five injured when herdsmen opened fire in SamaruKataf market in Zango-Kataf Local Council of Kaduna State.
January 24, 2017	15 persons were killed by rampaging Fulani herdsmen, who attacked farmers in Ipiga village in Ohimini Local Government Area of Benue State. Some armed herdsmen stormed the neighbouring Ajegbe village, where they grazed their cattle and destroyed farmlands. From there they moved into Ipiga village, shooting sporadically, though they met a stiff resistance from the locals. A bloody fight erupted and two of the herdsmen were reportedly killed, while about 13 of the villagers were also killed.
February 10, 2017	Eight people were confirmed dead in Zamfara State, following a clash between community members and suspected herdsmen in Rukumawa Tsafe Local Government Area.
February 21, 2017	Fulani herdsmen launched attacks on four communities in Southern Kaduna killing no less than 21 people.
March 1, 2017	Three persons were killed in clashes involving indigenes and suspected herdsmen in some communities of Delta and Rivers states.
March 2, 2017	No fewer than 10 persons were killed in a renewed hostilities between herdsmen and farmers in Mbahimin community, Gwer East Local Government Area of Benue State.
March 6, 2017	Two persons died in a clash between suspected herdsmen and residents of Omumu community in Ika South Local Council of Delta State.
March 11, 2017	Seven people were killed when herdsmen attacked a Tiv community, Mkgovur village in Buruku local government area of Benue State.
March 14, 2017	One person was killed and several others injured when herdsmen and the people of Umuobasikwu, Ozuitem community in Bende local government area of Abia State clashed.
March 28, 2017	Three persons were feared killed while six others sustained injuries as a group suspected to be herdsmen attacked Emuhu community in Ika South local council of Delta State.
May 8, 2017	Three persons were confirmed killed by herdsmen in Tse-Akaa village, Ugondo Mbamar District of Logo Local Government Area of Benue State.
May 10, 2017	The Delta Police command confirmed that an inspector was killed and three other policemen injured by suspected herdsmen in Abraka, Ethiopie East LGA of the state.
May 12, 2017	Suspected herdsmen beheaded a commercial motorcycle rider identified as Udoka Ossai and six farmers who are indigenes of Ossissa community in Ndokwa East Local Government Area of Delta State.
May 13, 2017	Less than one week after many people were killed by herdsmen in three communities of Logo Local Government Area of Benue State, armed herders struck again on May 13 killing eight more people.
May 18, 2017	Two persons lost their lives after suspected herdsmen attack in AfamUku, in Oyigbo Local Government Area of Rivers State. ⁵⁶ These losses may not be one-sided as the herdsmen also suffer considerable loss of cattle.

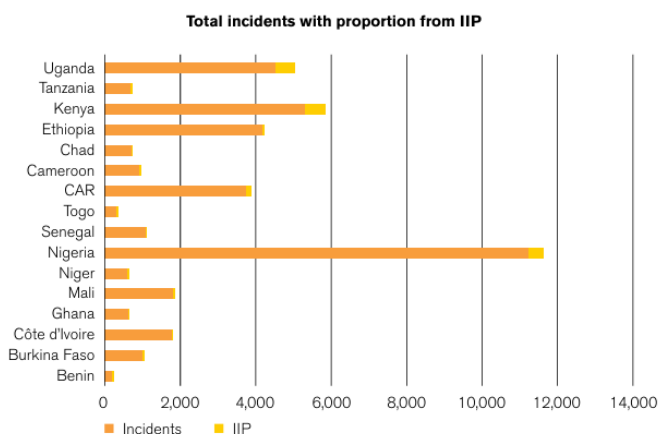
Sources: Ukaogo (2019); Dim et al (2022).

In recent years, many people in North-Central and much of Southern Nigeria have voiced concern over the abrupt and obvious temerity of the herders. In many instances, the herders have switched to assault weapons in place of their traditional herder's stick. "These wanton destruction, audacious incursions into other people's territory cannot continue for too long," said Olusegun Mimiko, the former governor of Ondo State (Dim et al, 2022).

When Krätli & Toulmin (2020) revised their report in the beginning of 2020, it was established that there had been an increase in the overall number of violent occurrences and fatalities. In the 12 months from May 2019 to May 2020, ACLED documented 13,364 fatalities and 5,100 occurrences for the 16 countries in our sample (all included). The majority occurred in Burkina Faso (580 events with 2,231 fatalities), Mali (605 incidents with 2,038 fatalities), Cameroon (783 incidents with 1,452 fatalities), and Nigeria (1,421 occurrences with 4,168 fatalities).

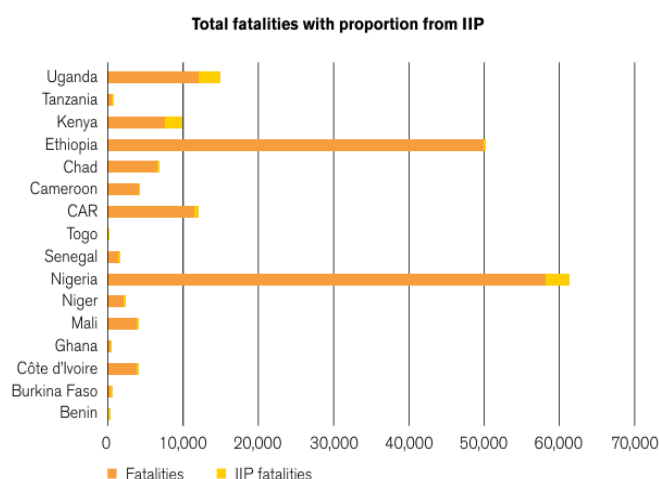
While violence in Niger (305 occurrences and 986 fatalities) and Chad (130 incidents and 731 fatalities) appears to be on the rise, it appears to have somewhat slowed down in the CAR (164 events and 508 fatalities). Togo and Senegal recorded 32 and 8 events, respectively, with 10 and 2 fatalities, while Ghana, Benin, and Côte d'Ivoire recorded 121, 33, and 146 incidents, with 50, 43, and 61 fatalities. According to Krätli and Toulmin (2020), ACLED documented 191 instances in Ethiopia that resulted in 581 fatalities, 289 episodes in Uganda that caused 175 fatalities, 271 incidents in Kenya that caused 293 fatalities, and 21 incidents in Tanzania that caused 17 fatalities.

Figure 1. Incidence of total violence and proportion of Incidents Involving Pastoralists (IIP) by country (1997-2017)



Source: Krätli & Toulmin (2020).

Figure 2: Total fatalities with proportion from IIP



Source: Krätli & Toulmin (2020).

Conflicts between herders and farmers have grown to be a national security issue with important economic ramifications: Beyond the North Central area, these conflicts have extended throughout the entire nation, becoming a source of humiliation and a security worry (Rufai et al., 2023), the national economy is impacted by their direct impact on agricultural productivity (Awotokun et al., 2020), there are significant effects on the agricultural sector, which sustains around 60% of the country's population, supplies food to a growing population, and accounts for nearly 70% of non-petroleum exports (Inusa et al., 2018), the conflicts put the possibility of achieving the global objectives of ending hunger and poverty in jeopardy (Awotokun et al., 2020). According to Peter Okoro et al (2018), they are Nigeria's second-biggest insecurity issue behind Boko Haram.

The results point to serious governance shortcomings in resolving the conflicts between herders and farmers: one factor contributing to the issue is the incapacity to successfully strike a balance between international norms that encourage the peaceful arrival of normal migrants and the prevention of unauthorized immigration (Ogbonna et al., 2023), herder-farmer conflicts and herder migration southward are exacerbated by the state's incapacity to provide security governance (Lenshie et al., 2021), inadequate security governance has produced uncontrolled areas where migration brought on by desertification feeds hostilities (Lenshie et al., 2021), attacks and forced relocation have increased as a result of the Nigerian government's inability to handle these conflicts, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis by raising the number of people in urgent need of food, security, health, education, livelihood, shelter, protection, and other essentials (Mbah et al., 2021).

The study pinpoints a number of interrelated elements that fuel herder-farmer disputes: migration is being forced by environmental deterioration and climate change, competition for dwindling resources (water and land); governance and institutional shortcomings in resource management; ECOWAS protocols being implemented without sufficient protections, a decline in the amount of pasture and water available per person (Issifu et al., 2022), land governance: historical and modern aspects (Benjaminsen and Ba, 2021), pastoralists from northern Nigeria and surrounding nations are migrating southward, and traditional dispute settlement processes are becoming unstable.

Table 3: Farmers-Headers Conflict areas

Region	Conflict Areas
North-Central	Benue (Agatu, Guma), Plateau (Bassa)
North-West	Zamfara (Anka, Maradun), Katsina (Faskari)
North-East	Borno (Mafa, Konduga), Adamawa (Numan)
South-West	Oyo (Ibarapa), Ogun (Yewa)
South-South	Delta (Uwheru), Rivers (Oyigbo)
South-East	Enugu (Nkanu East), Ebonyi (Ohaukwu)

Source: Omitola (2024).

The continuous national tragedy is exemplified by the 2018 New Year slaughter in Benue state, where pastoralists continue to shed blood on a daily basis without stopping, which has dire consequences for peace and security. Fulani pastoralists' increasing migration and settlement in Nigeria in pursuit of arable grazing fields has largely sparked the herder-farmer conflict, putting them at odds with indigenous agricultural communities who claim sole ownership of the land. It is important to recognize that this movement is a result of environmental instability and global climate change, which are causing disputes over grazing land (Obi et al., 2021).

Pastoralists have been migrating more often both inside and beyond borders in recent years. Both the large-scale migration of pastoralists from northern to southern Nigeria and the vast immigration of pastoralists from other African nations into Nigeria have been linked to long-term, multifaceted practical and policy ramifications

(Adzande, 2019). Social, economic, and environmental problems and obstacles accompany migration in various forms (Obi et al, 2021). The ongoing conflicts between pastoralists and sedentary farmers over fodder for cattle have not stopped (Rufai et al., 2023). The Nigerian Constitution and the ECOWAS Transhumance Protocol both endorse such initiatives. Pastoralist migration has been linked to a number of practical and policy ramifications (Adzande, 2019).

Conflicts between farmers and herders are one of Nigeria's agricultural problems. This is widespread throughout Nigeria and continues to cost the State Government and local communities a great deal of money each year (Afouda, 2023). The Fulani and farmers are the main parties to the clashes. Additionally, this circumstance threatened the possibility of achieving the global targets of ending hunger and poverty (Awotokun et al., 2020). The national economy and political stability are also impacted by the dispute between farmers and herders.

Conflicts between cattle herders and crop farmers in Nigeria have become one of the country's biggest insecurity issues, second only to the Boko Haram invasion, according to another study by Peter Okoro et al. (2018). Awotokun et al. (2020) emphasized that tensions between the two socio-professional groups are the reason for a decline in national agricultural productivity and affect the national wealth.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Transboundary migration especially illegal migration in Nigeria flourishes and this has dent its image in the wider global politics. This free movement of people without regulation has led to frequent influx of migrants particularly Fulanis. The consequence of porous border led to the severity of violent conflicts between herders and farmers with the inclusivity of national instability, community tensions, rural insecurity and deaths of thousands of citizens. This transboundary migration is propelled by factors like competition for finite natural resources, weak governance, porous borders, and climate change.

The findings revealed that lack of effective regional migration policies, lax border restrictions, and the spread of small guns all contribute to transboundary migration's substantial exacerbation of herder-farmer conflicts. The report emphasizes that although state-level anti-grazing legislation and security measures have been implemented, they have mostly been ineffective and reactive. It was recommended that in order to properly monitor and control cross-border movements, the government should improve immigration control and surveillance systems along Nigeria's borders. Second, in order to govern transhumance and migration in a way that strikes a balance between mobility rights and national security concerns, regional cooperation is required to support multilateral agreements and coordination among West African nations under ECOWAS protocols.

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