

RESOURCE CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: X-RAYING THE BURDENS OF FARMERS-HERDERS CLASH AND PIPELINE VANDALISM IN NIGERIA'S FOURTH REPUBLIC

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ABSTRACT: The study investigated resource conflict management strategies and socio-economic development; it x-rayed the twin burden of farmers-herders clash and pipelined vandalism in Nigeria's fourth republic. Nigeria continues to experience recurrent conflict over access to and control of natural resources. The farmer-herder conflict has escalated into a national crisis, especially in the North Central and Middle Belt regions, resulting in hundreds of deaths annually and undermining agricultural production. Simultaneously, the Niger Delta faces persistent sabotage of oil infrastructure, costing the country billions of dollars in revenue while polluting the environment and displacing communities. Despite various policy responses, these conflicts persist, suggesting deeper systemic issues. The study adopted four objectives with the frustration-aggression theory by Dollard et al. (1939) to guide the analytical construct. The study adopted the qualitative research design which is leveraged on the use of textbooks, articles from online journals and newspaper publications. The findings of the study indicated that current state-led approaches are reactive and fragmented, lacking the inclusivity and sustainability needed to foster socio-economic development. The study concluded that while efforts have been made to address these conflicts, many strategies fall short due to their reactive nature and failure to tackle structural issues. The study recommended among others that multi-dimensional conflict management strategy anchored on participatory governance, environmental justice, and livelihood support as viable means of ensuring long-term peace and prosperity in Nigeria's Fourth Republic.

Keywords: Resource Conflict, Farmers-Herders, Pipeline Vandalism, Socio-Economic Development, Nigeria, Fourth Republic.

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INTRODUCTION

Resource conflicts have become a defining characteristic of socio-political and economic instability in Nigeria. It is therefore ideal to acknowledge the fact that resource conflict refers to disputes arising from competition over natural, economic, or strategic resources, often leading to tensions, violence, or geopolitical struggles (Homer-Dixon, 1999). These conflicts can occur at various scales, from local disputes over land and water to international confrontations over oil

and minerals. The scarcity, distribution, and control of resources significantly influence socio-political stability, economic development, and environmental sustainability (Brauch, 2017).

Several interrelated factors contribute to resource conflicts like; environmental and climatic factors, economic factors, greed and insecurity and cultural and population factors. Among the most persistent and destructive of these resource conflicts in Nigeria are the farmers-herders conflict and pipeline vandalism. These conflicts are rooted in the complex interactions of ethnic tension, environmental degradation, governance failure, and socio-economic disparities (Okoli, et al, 2014). Essentially, it is crystal clear that Nigeria is blessed with abundant natural and mineral resources, both the tapped and untapped, yet these resources have not positively impacted on the lives of the people from where they are derived in southern Nigeria.

The government itself have equally not done so well in implementing amicable conflict management strategies as an indicator of ensuring relative peace in the struggle over land, water and grazing area in the country, hence the exploitation and management of these resources have been marred by conflicts that threaten socio-economic development. Two of the most critical manifestations of resource conflict in Nigeria's Fourth Republic (1999–present) are the persistent clashes between farmers and herders, and the widespread incidence of pipeline vandalism. These conflicts are symptomatic of deeper structural and governance failures in resource allocation, environmental justice, and conflict resolution.

The farmer-herder conflict, primarily in the North-Central, North-West, and parts of Southern Nigeria, is driven by competition over land and water resources due to desertification, climate change, and population growth (Okoli & Atelhe, 2014). Similarly, pipeline vandalism prevalent in the Niger Delta entails the deliberate destruction of oil infrastructure, often as an expression of grievance over environmental degradation, unemployment, and perceived marginalisation (Omotola, 2010). Both conflict types have resulted in significant socio-economic costs: loss of lives, displacement, food insecurity, and decline in oil revenue. The Fourth Republic was expected to usher in democratic governance and sustainable development. However, inadequate conflict management frameworks have contributed to the escalation of these resource-based conflicts. Thus, examining the impact of these conflicts and the effectiveness of management strategies is essential to understanding how they affect Nigeria's socio-economic development.

In spite of various interventions by federal and state governments, international donors, and civil society organisations, both the farmer-herder conflict and pipeline vandalism continue to undermine Nigeria's socio-economic stability. Thousands have been killed or displaced due to communal violence between farmers and nomadic pastoralists, threatening agricultural productivity and rural livelihoods. Similarly, pipeline vandalism has led to severe environmental degradation, loss of revenue, and the disruption of oil production, which constitutes over 80% of Nigeria's foreign earnings (Nwankwo & Ifeancha, 2011; Epelle, 2011, p.7).

The persistence of these conflicts raises critical questions about the effectiveness of existing conflict management approaches. Government responses ranging from military deployment and legal reforms to peace-building initiatives have largely been reactive and fragmented. There is a noticeable gap in integrating inclusive, preventive, and development-oriented strategies in managing resource conflicts. In a bid to fill in the gap, there are salient questions that needs to be unearthed that has been a burden on Nigeria's fourth republic which borders on; What are the underlying causes and patterns of farmer-herder conflicts and pipeline vandalism in Nigeria since 1999? What are the socio-economic impacts of these conflicts on national development? How effective are the conflict management strategies adopted by the

government and other stakeholders? What sustainable approach to resource conflict management that promote socio-economic development in Nigeria's fourth republic?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study adopted the Frustration-Aggression theory to guide the analytical construct on resource conflict management and socio-economic development, x-raying the burden of farmers-herders clash and pipeline vandalism in Nigeria's fourth republic. It is instructive to note that the Frustration-Aggression Theory was first propounded by John Dollard and colleagues in 1939, and later revised by scholars like Leonard Berkowitz. The central postulate of the theory is that aggression is always a consequence of frustration, and frustration always leads to some form of aggression (Dollard et al., 1939). Frustration, in this context, refers to the blocking of an individual's goal-directed behaviour, while aggression is defined as behaviour intended to injure or destroy the source of the frustration. Later reformulations, such as Berkowitz's (1989) cognitive-neoassociation model, refined the theory by suggesting that frustration creates a readiness for aggression, but whether aggression actually occurs depends on cues in the environment that signal aggression as an appropriate response.

The Frustration-Aggression Theory provides a useful lens through which to understand the emergence and persistence of resource-based conflicts in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, particularly the farmers-herders clashes and pipeline vandalism. Essentially, pastoralists experience frustration due to desertification, shrinking grazing land, population pressure, and lack of government protection. On the other hand, farmers are frustrated by the destruction of their crops and land by herders. Both groups feel deprived and neglected by the state, and this mutual frustration often erupts into violence. Thus, the theory explains how unmet economic and environmental needs contribute to aggression between communities (Abbass, 2012).

Secondly, in the oil-producing Niger Delta, communities suffer from unemployment, poverty, and environmental degradation. These challenges are seen as the result of exploitation by oil companies and neglect by the federal government. The local population's frustration manifests in sabotage of oil infrastructure, militancy, and kidnapping. This aligns with the theory's assertion that prolonged and unresolved frustration breeds collective aggression (Omotola, 2010). In the same vein, understanding that aggression is rooted in socio-economic and political frustration suggests that effective conflict management must go beyond military responses. Therefore, policies should aim at addressing the root causes of frustration, such as poverty, resource marginalisation, and land insecurity. This requires developmental interventions, dialogue platforms, and equitable resource allocation.

The theory underscores the link between peace and socio-economic development. Reducing frustration through inclusive governance, job creation, and environmental justice can reduce aggression and, by extension, prevent further conflict. This highlights the importance of development-oriented approaches in resource conflict management. In summary, the Frustration-Aggression Theory helps to explain how socio-economic deprivation and systemic inequality generate violent responses in Nigeria. It also justifies the need for a proactive and inclusive resource conflict management strategy as a pathway to national development.

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Conflict

There have been a plethora of attempts at conceptualising the term, conflict. According to Akpuru-Aja (2009) conflict involves two or more parties that have or perceive incompatibility in their interests and values or in strategy of achieving the ends desired. He further maintained that conflict is a frustration based attitude of protest against lack of opportunities for development and against lack of recognition and identity. Again, the pursuit of incompatible interests and goals by different groups, the use of force and armed violence in pursuit of incompatible interests and goals produce armed conflict.

According to Miller (2005), conflicts are a fact of life, inevitable and often creative. It occurs when people pursue goals that clash or seem to. According to Epelle and Uranta (2014, p. 529), “conflicts assume violent character when physical force is exerted for purposes of violating, damaging or abusing”. Consequently, violent conflict occurs when parties seek to attain their goals by forceful means and try to dominate or destroy the opposing parties’ ability to pursue their own interests (Cheta-Macleans & Tobins, 2023).

Resource Conflict

Resource conflicts arise due to competition over natural resources such as land, water, minerals, and energy sources. These conflicts manifest in various forms, ranging from local disputes to large-scale geopolitical tensions (Giordano, 2020). The complexity of resource conflict necessitates a conceptual review that integrates theoretical frameworks, typologies, and contributing factors. Furthermore, resource conflict is broadly defined as disputes arising from the scarcity, distribution, or exploitation of natural resources (Homer-Dixon, 1999). The term encompasses direct confrontations, structural inequalities, and socio-political tensions linked to resource management.

Resource Conflict Management

Resource conflict management refers to the processes, strategies, and mechanisms employed to prevent, reduce, or resolve disputes arising from the competition over natural and man-made resources such as land, water, minerals, forests, oil, and gas. These conflicts often occur when multiple stakeholders such as governments, communities, companies, or ethnic groups seek control, access, or ownership over the same resource, especially in regions with weak governance, unequal resource distribution, or environmental degradation (Homer-Dixon, 1999; Cheta-Maclean & Ololube, 2023; Ololube et al., 2025).

Resource conflict management involves both preventive and reactive measures, including policy formulation, negotiation, mediation, legal adjudication, community engagement, and sustainable resource governance. It aims not only to resolve immediate tensions but also to address the root causes of conflict, such as poverty, exclusion, and lack of participation in decision-making (UNEP, 2009).

Socio-economic development

Socio-economic development is measured with indicators such as gross domestic product (GDP), life expectancy, literacy and levels of employment. Changes in less tangible factors are also considered, such as personal dignity, freedom of association, personal safety and freedom from fear of physical harm and the extent of participation in civil society. In the same vein, Wilson (2022) asserts that development must be vested with a compass which has to do with the improvement of the living condition of a country or a people from where it was to where it intends to be. Chrisman (2019) views socio-economic development as a process of societal advancement, where improvements in the wellbeing of people are generated through strong partnership between all sectors, corporate bodies and other groups in the society.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Okopi et al. (2024) carried out a study on Farmers -Herders Rivalry and its Implications for Food Security and Household Income in Nigeria: Interrogating the trending issues. The study contributes to the discourse by examining the multifaceted impacts of farmers-herders conflicts on food production, livelihoods, and economic well-being of Nigerians. Drawing from a review of existing literature, empirical data, and case studies, the research explored the root causes, dynamics, and consequences of farmers-herders conflicts in Nigeria. It scrutinizes how these conflicts disrupt agricultural activities, destroy crops and livestock, displace communities, exacerbate food insecurity, and deplete household income, particularly among vulnerable populations. Building on these insights, the paper proposed a set of recommendations for addressing farmers-herders conflicts and enhancing food security and household income in Nigeria. These recommendations encompass strategies for conflict resolution, sustainable land use policies, livelihood diversification, strengthening government institutions, and promoting inter-communal dialogue and cooperation. When recommendations are implemented, stakeholders work towards mitigating the adverse effect of farmers-herders conflict, promoting peace-building and inclusive development in Nigeria.

Mahdi et al. (2024) carried out a study on The Impact of Farmer-Herder Relationships on Insecurity and Food Production in Nigeria. The study relied on secondary sources of data analysis and argued that frequent clashes between herdsmen and farmers and the activities of Boko Haram, banditry, kidnappings for ransom, displacement, burning down of farm produce and weak state security and strategic system have exacerbated severe food crisis in the country most especially in the agricultural driven areas. It recommends that government should enhance agriculture and human security.

Okoli and Orinya (2013) conducted a study on the security implications of oil pipeline vandalism in Nigeria and found a significant negative impact on national revenue, local livelihoods, and environmental sustainability. The authors identified that poor management of oil resources and exclusion of local communities in decision-making processes contribute to the persistence of vandalism.

Similarly, Aroh et al. (2010) examined the effects of pipeline vandalism in the Niger Delta and found that apart from causing oil spillage and environmental degradation, the practice has led to the loss of lives, displacement of people, and destruction of farmlands. Their findings pointed out that youth unemployment and the lack of corporate social responsibility from oil companies exacerbate the problem.

Ainna (2022) carried out a study on beyond amnesty and adversarial conflict management strategy for sustainable peace and development in the Niger delta region. The study did not only explore the dynamics of the violent conflict but also evaluated the effectiveness of the two major conflict management approaches of the federal government and the activities of ethnic militias together with criminality in the region. It further revealed the motive behind the persistence of violence, prevalence of economic and security threats in the region. The study which adopted an analytical-critical method contended that there is a possibility of a recurrent violence in the region in the near future, should the prolonged negotiations between the government and the Niger-Delta people eventually fail to metamorphose into the long-awaited visible developmental transformation of the area. The study therefore concluded that there is an urgent need for the Nigerian state to be genuinely committed to social justice in order to record an enduring peace, socio-economic stability and sustainable development in the Niger Delta region.

THE CAUSES AND PATTERNS OF FARMER-HERDER CONFLICTS AND PIPELINE VANDALISM

While researchers and scholars may agree to the fact that the causes of farmers-herders clash may be as a result of climate change and desertification, land use pressure and population growth, weak land tenure and legal frameworks and ethnic and religious polarization; the causes of pipeline vandalism in the southern Nigeria is absolutely different as it takes a different resultant approach.

Climate Change and Desertification versus perceived marginalization and injustice

It is instructive to note that climate change has led to the shrinking of grazing lands and water bodies in Northern Nigeria, prompting herders mostly Fulani pastoralists to migrate southwards in search of pasture. This migration brings them into direct competition with sedentary farming communities (Okoli & Atelhe, 2014). Climate change and pressure on resources are major constraints to adequate grazing and cattle rearing especially in poor agrarian regions of the world like the sub-Saharan Africa. The transhumance movements of cattle rarer in search of vital pasture to mitigate the effects of desertification and other climatic conditions that heated their original ecological zone brought them in close contact with farming communities in the Lake Chad basin. This led to several conflicts between native farmers and newly arrived pastoralists over crop damage by cattle and, also access to land and its resources. Overtime, the print media in Nigeria have engaged its readers with screaming captions on exploding conflicts between these two production communities. Some of these headlines include Nigeria: Fulani-banish by desert, rejected by their countrymen (DailyTrust, May 25, 2009); Nigeria: Farmer-herder clashes increase as pasture shrinks (IRIN, June 8, 2009). Nigeria: Two killed in Farmer/Herdsman clash' (DailyTrust, December 20, 2009); Borno Herdsman, Farmers unending feud' (DailyTrust, January 18, 2009).

While climate change and desertification is perceived as a variant cause of farmer-herders clash in Northern Nigeria, perceived marginalization and injustice is indicated as a part of the causes of pipeline vandalism in the southern part of Nigeria which can be both justified as the wholesome cause of resource conflict in Nigeria's fourth republic. Communities in the Niger Delta often feel marginalized despite being the primary source of Nigeria's oil wealth. The lack

of basic infrastructure, environmental degradation, and poverty drive youths to vandalize pipelines as a form of protest (Ikelegbe, 2005). According to Okoli and Orinya, (2013), vandalism is an action involving the deliberate destruction of public or private property within the civic domain. It also denotes willful destruction of public or government property in-keeping with criminal or political intent. In the context of Nigeria, acts of oil pipeline vandalism comprise the willful breaking of oil pipelines with the intent to misappropriate petroleum products, disruption of petroleum production, and the securing of political appeasement (in connection with either IOCs or the government) (Okoli & Orinya, 2013).

The cause of this vandalism over the years is backed with the claim that the Niger Delta, despite being the source of over 80% of Nigeria's crude oil exports, has long suffered from socio-economic and political exclusion (Ikelegbe, 2005). Communities in this region face widespread poverty, environmental degradation, high unemployment, poor infrastructure, and limited political representation, despite the enormous wealth generated from their land (Epelle, 2004). According to Obi (2010), the federal government's centralized control over oil revenues anchored in the Petroleum Act (1969) and Land Use Act 1978) has alienated host communities from ownership and benefits of oil resources, while exposing them to the adverse consequences of oil extraction such as pollution and loss of livelihoods. This has fostered deep-seated grievances and a sense of betrayal among local populations (Epelle, 2004).

Weak land use Act and Land Tenure versus Legal Frameworks

Nigeria's dual land tenure system, combining statutory and customary laws, creates ambiguity over land ownership, contributing to frequent disputes between farmers and herders (Ofem & Inyang, 2014). It is regrettable to note that even the land tenure act as earlier discussed in Nigeria still has a lot of its deficiencies. Owing to the fact that it gives the state an absolute power over land ownership, yet subsequent administrations in Nigeria lacks the political will to adequately address the surge in the conflict over land between farmers and herders. Several studies indicate that the legal frameworks in Nigeria do not adequately protect the rights of pastoralists, nor do they provide for sustainable grazing routes or reserves. The *Grazing Reserve Law of 1965*, which was initially intended to allocate land for herders, has become largely obsolete due to population growth, land encroachment, and urbanization. Furthermore, the lack of legal recognition of traditional migratory routes has led to their blockage or conversion into farmlands, resulting in disputes (Adeoye, 2017). Moreover, the enforcement of land regulations is weak, and land administration is plagued by corruption, bureaucratic inefficiency, and lack of coordination among relevant institutions. This undermines the ability of both farmers and herders to secure legal recourse to conflict resolution through formal channels (Adewumi & Olaniyan, 2011).

In the same vein, Ukpong (2021), land policy in Nigeria (the Land-Use Act of 1978) which puts all lands in the country under the state government can be used to assign lands by the state government for agricultural investment or any other purpose. However, this land policy has some deficiencies because it does not guarantee security of tenure to users, especially small holder groups (Hussein, 2000). In the pretext of development, the land belonging to farmers and pastoralists has been given to state-backed investors. Thus, the pastoralists occupying semi-arid areas are often subject to efforts to alienate their customary pastures and land holdings for purposes of commercial investments or establishment of wildlife conservation areas. Many pastoralists have argued that the Act does not provide for the protection and promotion of pastoralism but exclusively focuses on farming, thereby leading to frequent conflict between

farmers and herders. The policy deficiencies and contradictions have led to unhealthy competition between farmers and herders to appropriate perceived scarce land resources to themselves in order to guarantee self-group survival thus often engendering conflict.

The cause of pipeline vandalism in the Niger Delta region is the legal framework guaranteeing oil exploration in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria which is essentially the Petroleum Act of 1969, and Section 44 (3) of the Constitution 1999 of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The legal frameworks rest on the sure foundation of Sections 158 and 40 (3) of the 1969 and 1979 Constitutions of Nigeria respectively. The Petroleum Act of 1969 is one of the most influential legal instruments governing oil exploration and production in Nigeria. While it was enacted to consolidate federal control over petroleum resources and regulate the oil industry during the Nigeria civil war, its provisions have been widely criticized for fostering alienation, marginalization, and conflict, particularly in the Niger Delta. The Act is considered a root cause of pipeline vandalism, as it institutionalizes a framework that excludes oil-bearing communities from ownership, participation, and benefits derived from petroleum resources extracted from their land (Epelle, 2004). Section 44(3) of the 1999 Constitution states:

“Notwithstanding the foregoing provisions of this section, the entire property in and control of all minerals, mineral oils and natural gas in, under or upon any land in Nigeria or in, under or upon the territorial waters and the Exclusive Economic Zone of Nigeria shall vest in the Government of the Federation and shall be managed in such manner as may be prescribed by the National Assembly.”

This constitutional clause forms the legal basis for the federal government’s exclusive ownership of petroleum resources, including the right to allocate oil blocs, approve licenses, and collect oil revenues without input or consent from host communities (Ikelegbe, 2005). The application of Section 44(3) has disenfranchised oil-producing communities, particularly in the Niger Delta, by denying them ownership rights and access to benefits from the natural resources extracted from their ancestral lands. While the region bears the brunt of environmental degradation such as oil spills, gas flaring, and land loss, it receives minimal developmental compensation, often in the form of underfunded and poorly executed government interventions (Obi, 2010). Therefore, pipeline vandalism is often used as a tool of protest and resistance by marginalized groups. For many youth in the region, destroying or siphoning from pipelines is seen not even as an illegal activity but as a response to constitutional injustice. Militants and community groups have cited Section 44(3) as the legal embodiment of their exclusion and a justification for their actions (Courson, 2009).

Ethnic and Religious Polarization versus Youth unemployment

The farmer-herder conflict over the years have taken an ethno-religious dimension in Nigeria as most herders are Muslim Fulani and many farmers are Christians from other ethnic groups, deepening mistrust and social division (Iro, 2017). In the same vein, Ahmed (2019) opined that ethnicity and religion are disintegrative and destructive social elements capable of threatening the peace, stability and security of Nigerian state. This impression has been upheld by many but it is important however, to state that ethnicity and religion on their own are not disintegrative and destructive elements however, the way and manner they are being used and manipulated within

the context of Nigerian politics by the political class, perhaps becomes not only disintegrative and destructive but also inimical and antithetical to peace, stability, security and development. Similarly, Abbas (2018, p. 8) remarked that:

Ethnic, religious and cultural divide have remained very crucial and potent in the general perception of the contest for survival between Fulani pastoralists and farmers in Nigeria purportedly leading to the contemporary violent conflicts. Even though they are weak as root causes of the contestations between pastoralists and farmers, they play the powerful role of fuelling and persisting of the strife.

The pattern at which this clash usually manifest are often cyclical and seasonal, peaking during dry seasons when herders move their cattle southward. The conflicts are mostly violent, characterized by attacks, reprisals, and mass killings, especially in states like Benue, Plateau, Taraba, Kaduna, and Nasarawa. The conflict has shifted from traditional, localized skirmishes to widespread, weaponized confrontations involving organized militia (International Crisis Group [ICG], 2017).

Climate change has also led to the shrinking of grazing lands and water bodies in Northern Nigeria, prompting herders mostly Fulani pastoralists to migrate southwards in search of pasture. This migration brings them into direct conflict with sedentary farming communities in the Middle Belt region (Okoli & Atelhe, 2014).

A factor that might be attributed to (or be a cause of) the rise in acts of pipeline vandalism in the Niger Delta is the current level of unemployment, which has forced many people to take to resort to this kind of activity, including acts of oil workers' kidnap and misappropriation of oil as a means of economic survival. Although unemployment is a national issue in Nigeria, confirmed by reports of the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), unemployment in the Niger Delta appears to be something of a unique set of circumstances given that the region accounts for the bulk of Nigeria's foreign exchange revenue. Of concern is the fact that some of the oil multinationals operating in the region hire the services of personnel from outside the region, while the few that are hired from the region are often routinely disengaged, thereby increasing the number of unemployed among the younger generation (Ugwuanyi, 2013).

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF THESE CONFLICTS ON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Nigeria's national development has been severely hampered by recurrent internal conflicts, particularly the farmer-herder crisis and pipeline vandalism. These conflicts have become endemic and as we have noted are driven by socio-political, environmental, and economic factors. Their impacts extend beyond immediate casualties and destruction; they stifle national productivity, efforts, deter foreign investment, damage infrastructure, and intensify poverty and human displacement. As Nigeria strives to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), these persistent crises undermine efforts toward economic growth, social stability, and environmental sustainability. The socio-economic impacts are therefore elucidated as thus:

Economic Disruption and Loss of Agricultural Output

The farmer-herder conflict, primarily over land and water resources, has led to widespread killings, destruction of farmlands, crops, and livestock. This has significantly reduced agricultural productivity in key regions such as Benue, Plateau, and Nasarawa states. As a result, food insecurity has escalated, and inflation in food prices has become more pronounced (Idris, 2018). The World Bank (2020) reported that agricultural GDP in affected regions dropped due to reduced planting activities, displacement of farming communities, and persistent fear of attacks. The loss of agricultural output not only affects rural livelihoods but also undermines food security and increases Nigeria's reliance on food imports, which strains foreign reserves and weakens the balance of payment situation (Okoli & Atelhe, 2014).

Sabotage of National Oil Revenue and Infrastructure

Pipeline vandalism, especially in the Niger Delta, has resulted in massive losses in crude oil and gas production. Given that oil accounts for over 80% of Nigeria's export earnings and about 50% of government revenue, vandalism directly threatens national revenue (Ezirim et al., 2015). The Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) recorded losses of billions of naira annually due to pipeline sabotage and illegal tapping of crude oil (NNPC, 2020). In addition to economic losses, vandalism damages critical infrastructure, causes oil spills, and leads to costly repairs, thereby diverting resources that could have been used for development projects such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure (Obi, 2010).

Increased Insecurity and Displacement

The farmer-herder clashes have resulted in the uncontrollable death of farmers and internal displacement of hundreds of thousands of people, especially in the Middle Belt region (International Crisis Group, 2017); while militancy and oil sabotage in the Niger Delta have made many areas uninhabitable due to pollution, insecurity, and military operations. This displacement contributes to urban overcrowding, rising unemployment, and pressure on social services in cities. Moreover, the insecurity associated with these conflicts deters both domestic and foreign investment, further weakening Nigeria's economic growth prospects (Blench, 2010).

Environmental Degradation and Health Consequences

Oil spills caused by pipeline vandalism have devastated local ecosystems in the Niger Delta, polluting water sources, destroying aquatic life, and rendering farmlands infertile (UNDP, 2006). This environmental degradation worsens poverty and health conditions among local populations. In the north-central region, herder incursions on farmland have led to the dastardly killing of aboriginal farmers, destruction of crops and water pollution, which also contribute to depopulation and long-term environmental and public health challenges (Adisa, 2012).

Undermining National Unity and Policy Implementation

These conflicts exacerbate ethnic and regional tensions, thereby undermining national cohesion and fueling distrust between communities and the state. The inability of the government to

effectively manage the farmer-herder conflict and pipeline vandalism weakens the legitimacy of state institutions and reduces its capacity to implement national policies (Ibeanu, 2006). Furthermore, because of these conflicts, resources are frequently diverted to fund military operations, security logistics, and emergency responses rather than long-term development planning. This results in an opportunity costs that slows down national development and reduces Nigeria's competitiveness in the global economy.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES ADOPTED BY THE GOVERNMENT AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Government Strategies in Managing Farmer-Herder Conflict

The Nigerian government has adopted several conflict management strategies to address the farmer-herder clashes, these include:

Legislative Measures: States like Benue, Ekiti, and Taraba enacted anti-open grazing laws to curtail the movement of herders and reduce friction with farming communities. While these laws aim to prevent clashes, their implementation has been met with resistance, especially from pastoralist communities who see them as discriminatory (Olaniyan et al., 2015).

Military and Police Interventions: Joint military operations such as “Operation Whirl Stroke” have been launched to maintain law and order in conflict-prone areas. Although these interventions have led to temporary peace, they have not really addressed the underlying causes of the conflict such as desertification, unemployment, and age-long historical grievances (Adamu & Ben, 2019).

National Livestock Transformation Plan (NLTP): The NLTP was introduced in 2019 to modernize livestock farming and encourage ranching. While this initiative has placed potential, its implementation has been slow and politically contentious, with limited infrastructure and poor political will affecting its success (International Crisis Group, 2020).

Inter-ministerial technical committee on grazing reserve: Obasanmi & Enoma (2022) averred that in 2014, the Federal government inaugurated an inter-ministerial technical committee on grazing reserve. The report of the committee called for the recovery and improvement of all grazing routes encroached upon by farmers and recommended that the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) release a sum of N100 billion to the country for ranch construction. The recommendation did not see the light of day because the then government of Goodluck Jonathan was defeated in the 2015 election (Morger, 2017). It was later reported that CBN released 100 billion naira to state governments which was not utilized for the purpose it was meant to serve.

By 2016, the Mohammadu Buhari administration through the advice of Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD) set short, medium and long term strategies which would have encouraged the development of grazing areas in all the states in the country. Most states in the central and southern areas rejected this plan. In March 2016 (the same year), the FMARD announced the proposal to import grass from Brazil into the grazing reserve in order to increase the consumption of grass by cattle and boost their output. This pronouncement again failed because it was strongly opposed by public opinion (Obasanmi & Enoma, 2022). Following

recent crisis in Benue, the federal government had again proposed the development of cattle colonies in the various states of Nigeria but the proposal failed due to ethnic and political tensions behind the proposal.

While stakeholder involvement in the farmer-herder conflict through the instrumentality of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and traditional rulers have played pivotal roles in peace-building by facilitating dialogue, reconciliation processes, and early warning mechanisms; however, the efforts are often undermined by a lack of coordination among government agencies and limited funding (Egwu, 2017). International partners, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), have supported peace education and capacity building, contributing to a better understanding of conflict drivers. Nonetheless, the sustainability of these externally funded programmes remain uncertain (USIP, 2021).

Conflict Management Strategies in Pipeline Vandalism

Pipeline vandalism, largely driven by socio-economic grievances, oil bunkering, and militant activities in the Niger Delta, has prompted the government to adopt several conflict management approaches:

- **Amnesty Programme (2009):** The Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) initiated by the regime of late Umaru Musa Yar'Adua offered cash incentives, disarmament, and reintegration of former militants. The programme initially reduced attacks on oil infrastructure and improved oil production. However, its effectiveness has waned due to mismanagement, corruption, and failure to address systemic underdevelopment (Aghedo, 2013; Ojewunmi, 2021).
- **Surveillance Contracts:** The federal government awarded security surveillance contracts to former militant leaders like Tompolo and Asari Dokubo and local groups to protect pipelines. While this has reduced some attacks, it has also empowered warlords and created rent-seeking behaviour, risking long-term instability (Oluwaniyi, 2020).
- **Military Task Forces:** The deployment of Joint Task Forces (JTF) in the Niger Delta has yielded some deterrent effects but also led to human rights abuses and loss of community trust, which undermine the legitimacy of the state (Ikelegbe, 2010).
- **Effectiveness and Limitations of the Strategies**
- The effectiveness of these conflict management strategies is mixed. Short-term peace and reduction in violence have been achieved in some cases, but the absence of a holistic, all-inclusive, and sustainable approaches continue to hinder long-term resolution of the conflicts.
- **Lack of community engagement:** Many State-led interventions are top-down and do not integrate community inputs, thus reducing their acceptance and effectiveness (Adeola & Oluyemi-Kusa, 2020).
- **Institutional weaknesses:** Corruption, poor inter-agency coordination, and weak legal frameworks impede the implementation of peace policies.
- **Failure to address root causes:** Structural issues such as poverty, climate change, youth unemployment, and land tenure conflicts are often ignored in favour of militarized responses.

CONCLUSION

The study examined resource conflict management strategies within the context of farmer-herder clashes and pipeline vandalism as veritable means of actualizing socio-economic development in Nigeria's fourth republic. The study indicated that the farmers-herders clash and pipeline vandalism are emblematic of deeper governance, environmental, and socio-economic challenges in Nigeria. While the effects of these conflicts have resulted in several deaths and/or displacement of people, scarcity in food production, oil sabotage, reduction in Nigeria's oil revenue and the rise in religious and ethnic rivalries; it is obvious that the government series of conflict management techniques to mitigate these conflicts has been stymied by weak policy implementation and unrealistic structural and legal frameworks. Therefore, effective conflict management through sustainable and inclusive management strategies is not just a security imperative but a development necessity.

Recommendations

Sequel to the above, the study recommends amongst others:

- Programmes and institutions such as the National Livestock Transformation Plan (NLTP) and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) need to be strengthened to promote ranching and protect modern livestock farming as sustainable alternatives to nomadic herding while also enhancing conflict management through law enforcement, early warning systems, and prompt legal adjudication.
- In the northern part of the country, communities should be empowered through training, land-use mapping, and participatory dialogue, alongside inclusive resource governance involving farmers, herders, local leaders, women, and youth to enhance social cohesion among members.
- In the Niger Delta region, divers skills acquisition programmes, agro-business support, and microcredit schemes can shift dependence from illicit oil activities to legal means of livelihood, alongside support for agro-industrial value chains that will enhance productivity and rural development in the Niger Delta
- Pipeline surveillance technologies such as drones, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and sensor-based monitoring systems should be deployed to help detect and prevent vandalism; while climate adaptation strategies, including drought-resistant crops and water harvesting, should be advocated for to reduce the impact of environmental stress that fuels farmer-herder disputes.
- Platforms for conflict mediation, truth-telling, and reconciliation panels should be initiated to foster long-term trust and accountability; while government policies should integrate community development associations during planning stages and marry local conflict resolution practices with national peace-building frameworks.

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