

## Farmer-Herder Conflict: Exploring Governance of Security in Ondo State

Alexander Ifunanya Dike

Department of Political Science & Public Administration  
Igbinedion University Okada, Edo State

\*Corresponding author: dike.alexander-leo@iuokada.edu.ng

### Abstract

*Conflict between farmers and herders is a major problem which has displaced indigenous agrarians from farming occupation across Nigeria. It is competition of right to farming and right to open grazing. Against this background, this study mainly investigated security governance covering surveillance of herding grazing in Ondo state. The study adopted cross-sectional survey design and 300 respondents, participated using accidental sampling technique since it is exploratory study. Data were collected and analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. At the level of demographic characteristics, 97.7% were farmers and specialised in cropping (67.9%) and plantations (30.2%) farming. At the level of farm-output, 89.9% rated high and 99.7% derived livelihood from farming. At the level of farm-input, 89.9% relied on personal investment: cost of investment was double digits of million naira. At the level of security, 95.9% attested open grazing of herders was major threat to farming; 69.9% were displaced from farming by violent activities of herders; 89.9% attested, herders were armed with weapons; and 88.8% expressed consistent fear at the encounter of herders on farm land. At the level of government response, police patrol was deployed to check assaults of herders and this was visible in the day-time patrol. Whereas 98.9% revealed that night grazing was prevalent and destructive to farm crops and plantations, police patrol was visible in day-time and excluded agriculture zones. Farmers in the study lamented destructive activities of herders which largely reduced farm yields, displaced farmers and depleted income for survival. Governance of security covering agriculture zone should be holistic in formal and informal approach.*

**Keywords:** Security governance; farmer-herder relation; food security; conflict resolution; agriculture zone

### Introduction

Farming is a traditional occupation in Africa. The sector employs more than 65% labour force and consisted male and female farmers who derive livelihood for survival (Micah, 2020). Nigeria is an arable land that thrives various activities of farming which cut across cropping, plantation, animal husbandry and cash crops. Indeed, farming was the mainstay revenue source of Nigerian economy prior to discovery of crude oil in commercial quantity in 1956 (Micah, 2020). Across North and South, there were bubbles of farming activities which offered stable income for farmers to sustain family and food security. The cocoa cash crop of the west; the groundnut pyramid of the north; and the rubber/Palm oil

extraction of the east were evidence of farming potential in Nigeria (Ministry of Agriculture, 2020). The regional government of the colonial and post-independence thrived governance on the basis of agriculture income and revenue (Micah, 2020). The western region was successful in the provision of free education through grants and income from cocoa cropping. The government of the region was successful to show the entire world gains of agriculture and potential thereof when it constructed the first highest building in Africa which composed multiple floors. The building is known as at the present, cocoa-house located in Ibadan Oyo State, Nigeria. Potential in farming is enormous and offer many opportunities for the labour force engaged in the sector. Farming is a source of income, food surplus, survival not only for the farmers, it offers food security for the entire the nation.

Food security is a major policy of Nigerian government (Federal Ministry of Agriculture, 2019) to eradicate hunger, supplement nutrition and promote healthy society. Indeed, the government of President Buhari earmarked road map to achieve security through multi-billion-naira investment in agriculture. It is the policy of government through Central Bank of Nigeria to offer agric loans, establish agricultural pricing commission and supply of farm inputs fertilizer at subsidized rate to farmers across Nigeria. Government of Nigeria has offered huge investment in agriculture which cut across irrigation, farm extension workers, farm supplies and crop mopping to sustain farmers' income (Central Bank of Nigeria, 2019; Federal Ministry of Agriculture, 2019). Nigeria is an agrarian society which has more half of its population farmers. Invariably, farming is multifaceted not only cropping but also animal husbandry. This suggests that there are those in the sector of animal herding or otherwise herdsmen. The herdsmen keep cattle, sheep and goats as source of income. The herders provide grazing routes for their animals to feed and survive. There is symbiotic relationship between farmers and herders within mutual agreement (Micah, 2020). This occurs where herders graze the land after crop harvest to offer replenishment of soil through animal manures. The farmers and herders cohabit in smooth relationship to promote mutual benefits. There was designated season that offered herders discretion to graze the farm land and without conflict. In some occasion, trade by barter occurred through exchange of animals and crops in smooth peaceful atmosphere. It was a period of sanity and trust between ethnic groups. Unfortunately, the once peaceful symbiotic has derailed drastically.

Today, there is cacophony of conflict between farmers and herders which snowballs into perpetual suspicion and fear. It smacks of the question of reason why the present status quo. There is palpable fear among crop farmers across nook and cranny of Nigeria especially the south and central north reeling horrible experience from dastard activities of herders. There is no love lust of the yestar days of symbiotic gains. It is hues and cries of havocs wrecked by herders on crop plantation which deteriorate availability of crop food and dwindle income to farmers. There is increasing conflict ensue by dastard open grazing on farm land, deliberate destruction of farm crops by herds of cattle, wanton killings of farmers and forceful takeover of farmlands by herders (Micah, 2020). There is evidence to show destructive tendency of herders in the form of arms and ammunition paraded to scare farmers, carryout open grazing, midnight grazing on farms and killings of farm men and women (Ministry of Agriculture, 2020). The case of Benue farmers' massacre, wonton killings in West and East are evidence of dastard activities that now bedeviled agriculture sector, the once romantic labour force that offered significant opportunities. The cries have always been the influx of herdsmen perpetrating torment on farmland and collapse of security to check the menace. More importantly, there is question of security governance to oversee deteriorating situation of killings the agriculture sector. Government is saddled with responsibility to provide security of life and properties to all citizens and secure peace. Farmland is crucial segment of property due to its economics value to owners. The farmers hire labour, purchase inputs and invest enormously to gain high yields. It is the expectation that farmers recoup investment through in the harvest season and reinvest portion to survival perpetual. However, it is pathetic and unfortunate to watch such investment destroyed in the twinkle of an eye by activities of herders. Yet government exists to checkmate willful destruction since it serves as arbiter and protection for life and properties. It is the responsibility of government to govern the security in the interest of all. Unfortunately, farmers across Nigeria and specifically the case in Ondo state, continue to groan in pains of herders' destruction. This is the main focus this study.

Against this background, the study's objectives were designed to:

1. Examine security governance covering protection of farmlands. This was designed to check availability of police post near farm settlement, police patrol, duration of the patrol, coverage and collaboration with interest groups in farming sector

2. Assess farmers' perception of herders' activities.

### **Literature Review**

Violence recedes when individuals, groups, and governments have incentives not to use it to pursue their objectives, and when not using it eventually becomes the norm. Institutions create incentives to reach agreements (cooperation) and enforce them (commitment). When institutions of governance—the specific institutions for making and implementing policy—solve cooperation and commitment problems in ways that create incentives not to use violence, security prevails. When they do not, violence prevails. In the absence of cooperation, contending sides walk away from the bargaining table, and citizens do not comply with government rules. When commitment is lacking, warring factions renege on peace agreements, policy makers' default on their promises to transfer resources to discontented groups or regions, disputants fail to abide by court judgments, the police abuse citizens instead of protecting them, and violence ensues. The framework of security is constitutive elements of three factors of governance for development: the relative distribution of power among individuals and groups with conflicting preferences; the bargaining arena where conflicting interests are mediated and policy choices are made and implemented; and the barriers to entry to this arena (Ahmad, 2015). Accordingly, violent conflict is the result of three types of breakdowns in governance; all rooted in cooperation and commitment problems: (1) the unconstrained power of individuals, groups, and governments; (2) failed agreements between participants in the bargaining arena; or (3) the exclusion of relevant individuals and groups from this arena (Arjona, Nelson & Zachariah, 2015). The grazing land is not supposed to be farmland for cropping which serves survival purpose of farm owners. There is breakdown of collective agreement, cooperation and commitment.

Power sharing, resource redistribution, dispute settlement, and sanctions and deterrence are identified as potential ways governance can prevent, reduce, or end violent conflict (Leonard, 2009) Yet they succeed only when they constrain the power of ruling elites, achieve and sustain agreements, and do not exclude relevant individuals and groups. The cost of violence to development outcomes is staggering. In 2015, violence cost the global economy US\$14.3 trillion, or 13.4 percent of the global gross domestic product (GDP), and

this cost has risen by more than 15 percent since 2008 (Institute for Economics and Peace [IEP], 2015). IEP identified violent conflict has a negative impact on GDP per capita. Civil war reduces economic growth by 2.3 percent a year (Collier 2007; Dunne & Tian 2014). Violent crime hinders economic development as well (Dell, 2015). At the micro level, violence results in changes in household composition, losses in the productive capacities of household members, the destruction of productive assets and livelihoods, and displacement (Ibáñez & Vélez 2008; Justino 2009). Violence and its threat also indirectly impede trade, investment, and growth because of the uncertainty and the loss of trust and cohesion they generate (Knack & Keefer 2017; Zak & Knack 2011). For example, violent conflict directly cost Iraq 16 percent in per capita welfare from April 2011 to April 2014 and Syria 14 percent. The case is similar in Nigeria due to herders' conflicts with farmers. However, when the foregone benefits of trade integration between the two countries and their neighbors are taken into account, the total cost of war almost doubles, to 28 percent for Iraq and 23 percent for Syria (Ianchovichina & Ivanic 2016).

In traditional societies, when security was still in the hands of private individuals and groups, the credible threat of violence through retaliation served as a deterrent against violence, and it was the main determinant of order and security. Modern societies, by contrast, are fundamentally characterized by a concentration of security arrangements in the hands of the state, which has a monopoly over the means of violence and coercion (Weber 1965; Mann 1984). At its core, the state's monopoly over violence is the outcome of a collective agreement among powerful actors, an elite bargain, really, over who can use violence and when its use is acceptable (Wallis 2016). The use of violence and coercion under this agreement is organized by the state, which typically enforces the agreement. The monopoly over violence is an ideal that few states attain in all places at all times. It is the outcome of complex historical processes that unfold over decades, if not centuries (Wallis, 2016). The elite bargains that give rise to this monopoly are contested, renegotiated, and reasserted every day, everywhere. The capacity—the stock of material and technological and human resources available to the state—to enforce these bargains and deter groups tempted to defect or renege on them is uneven and discontinuous over time and space. There is monopoly of state security which is exercised to check violence in every society. The

monopoly is presented in varieties of state coercive apparatuses like police, military and paramilitary formations.

Nigeria is supposed to wield the security monopoly to check menace of herdsmen security challenges that bedeviled farm settlement areas. There is continuous rancor on frequent basis leading to wanton killings of unsuspecting farmers and destruction of farmland in the vicinity of state security monopoly. The situation of the crisis has become worrisome in the glares of elite security available to confront the situation. It is rather pathetic to the plight of farmers who watched arable crops and life investment destroyed in the twinkling of an eye by herders. There is so much palpable fear around farm zone which accommodates thousands of full-time farmers. Nigeria has recorded more than eight thousand violent crimes in the farm zones and this claimed more than thousand lives, mostly farmers (Ministry of Agriculture, 2020). The horror of herder-farmer crisis reached peak in the last five years where farmers are target of assaults and farmland destruction cutting across West, East, Central and parts of North (Micah, 2020). There is consistent reportage in traditional media and social media which claimed the pains and vampire of bloodshed suffered by farmers, crop land destruction, kidnapping of victims for ransom and assassination in the spectrum of farm zone (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2015; Micah, 2020). The open grazing of cropland and continuous subjugation of farmers have remained the heartbeat of some state governments pushing legislative tool to control the menace. There is now law in some southern states of Nigeria and Benue state which prohibit open grazing and impose stiff punishment (Ministry of Agriculture, 2020). It is glad to see that governments at geopolitical zones are proactive to stem the horror. Yet, there are pockets of recalcitrant herders who disobey the law, engage in open grazing and farmland destruction. It is indeed continuous crisis that is dangerous to collective existence.

### **Methodology**

This study was carried out in selected farm settlement in Ondo state. Three farm settlements were listed from North and Central senatorial districts. Two settlements (Akoko and Owo-Ose) were covered from the north and one settlement (Akure) was covered from the central. The three settlements constitute largest farm zones in Ondo state; it is centre of Federal Government pilot agricultural scheme in the state; and had experienced incessant

herdsmen’s crisis (Federal Ministry of Agriculture, 2019). Ondo state is an agrarian state which consisted more than half of the labour force in farming. The herders in the state are migrants from the northern Nigeria. Research design was exploratory and captured few respondents as participants. This was a survey study to explore activities of herders across farm settlement. Sample size consisted of 300 respondents. Sampling procedure consisted of purposive and accidental sampling. Purposive sampling was applied to select study area due to characteristics that fell within criteria of study. The farm settlements consisted of cluster of farmers on large scale commercial farming. It was possible to locate these farmers easily in the settlement zones. Accidental sampling was applied to select respondents based on availability and interest. Purposive method was applied to derive sample size. This applied where researcher works with available respondents that consented to participate in the study after several efforts of persuasion. Data were collected and analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitative method derived quantitative data derived through numeric. This was sources using structured questionnaire instrument. Qualitative method derived qualitative data configured thematic attribute. This was done using semi structured questionnaire. Consent of respondents was sought prior to application of instrument. Identities of respondents were kept anonymous.

## Results and Discussion

**Table 1: Availability of Security Posts**

Variables	Akoko farm settlement		Owo-Ose Farm settlement		Akure Farm settlement		Total	
	Freq. (100)	Percent 100.0	Freq. (100)	Percent 100.0	Freq. (100)	Percent 100.0	Freq. (300)	Percent 100.0
What is your gender?								
Male	65	65.0	71	71.0	69	69.0	205	68.3
Female	25	25.0	29	29.0	31	31.0	95	31.7
Are there security post near your farm settlement?								
Yes	100	100.0	79	79.0	65	65.0	144	81.3
No			21	21.0	35	35.0	56	18.7





external invasion?	9 91	9.0 91.0	20 80	20.0 80.0	21 79	21.0 79.0	50 250	16.7 83.3
Yes								
No								
What do you think about capability of security agents to secure farm settlement?								
Good	12 88	12.0 88.0	10 90	10.0 90.0	18 82	18.0 82.0	40 260	13.3 86.7
Poor								

The items contained in Table 1 measured availability of security services in farm settlement locations. The intention of the researcher was to check presence of police and other security forces that covered patrol of farm location in the era of escalating conflict between herders and farmers. Preliminarily, gender of respondent was classified into male (68.3%) and female (31.7%). It showed for each settlement male (65.0%) and female (25.0%) in Akoko settlement; male (71.0%) and female (29.0%) in Ose-Owo; and male (69.0%) and female (31.0%) in Akure settlement. Farming occupation thrived for both male female in the farm settlements which serves as means of survival. Indeed, the farmers in the settlements have occupied the space more than a century as inheritance of forefathers or migrant farmers. The farmers revealed the settlements were a peaceful colony of farming which was the mainstay of their livelihood. However, the influx of herdsmen lately has disrupted the bubbling funs of peace and created palpable fear.

There was conscious effort to verify availability of security posts in the farm settlements. Approximately, 18.7% confirmed there was security post located near the farm settlements. This figure was paltry less than 81.3% that pointed that security posts were not nearby to the settlements. The settlement in Akoko location did not have nearness to security post; 21.0% in Ose-Owo attested to nearness and 35.0% in Akure also indicated nearness to security post. The farm settlements were not in the proximity of security calls and perhaps this made attacks possible and invasion of farmlands by herders.

Furthermore, the farmers in the settlements were asked availability security patrol. Some 34.3% found security patrol around their area; 65.7% felt there was not any serious patrol by security agents. Really, it was not that police and other security forces did not move near the farm settlements, but it was not consistent and rather ineffective to protect farm settlements. Evidently, an overwhelming 80.3% mentioned that there was no night patrol in the settlement which could have served to check nocturnal activities of herders. Only 12.0%, 21.0% and 26.0% respectively in the three settlements confirmed short time night patrol. The real situation in the farm settlements was an invasion by herders on crops and plantations of cash crops, grains and tubers which mostly took place in the night. The attacks of herders were deliberate to create conflicts and dislodge farm owners.

Unfortunately, the situation was helpless due to lack of consistent security presence. Here, 20.0% indicated that security posts were short distance to the farm settlements; majority (80.0%) identified distance between nearest security post and farm settlements as long distance. Similar case was observed in the three settlements. A non-trekking distance existed between the farm settlements and police posts. This means any emergency and invasion by herders were possible without help from security agents since it was not possible to resist attacks due to on-the-spot distance. The problem was further compounded in the settlements because of overwhelming engagement of the police. The police appeared to be the only visible security around to call. There was no other security apart from the police present in Akoko settlement; paltry 21.0% and 24.0% respectively in Ose-Owo and Akure settlement pointed that they sight other security personnel in the patrol. This was quite inadequate and inimical especially where 85.0% attested that the police were the only option to call. Yet some situations were evident that the police were not available to call due to overwhelming duties.

The farmers were asked to indicate whether there were other security programmes executed by government to supplement the current security outfit. Only settlement in Akure (12.0%) listed supplementary security offered by government. Akure is a capital city and so it is expected that government is visible first before transcending other location. But it is desirable that quick response is benefitted by other adjoining locations like Akoko and Ose-Owo settlements. The farmers in the settlement were asked whether or not they were secured against invasion given the condition of prevailing security. Only 16.7% felt they were



Did your settlement has any record of casualties caused by herdsmen?	15	15.0	15	15.0	40	40.0	70	23.3
Yes	85	85.0	85	85.0	60	60.0	230	76.7
No								

Items in Table 2 identified some physical encounters with herdsmen in the farm settlements. The intention of the researcher was to show in concrete term the brutality inflicted by armed cattle breeders across some farm settlements in Ondo state. In the preliminary, farmers were asked whether they had encounter with herders on their farmlands. There was none among the farmers that did not experience encroachment by armed herders. The implication is that cattle breeders infiltrated every nook and cranny of the three farm settlements in Ondo state. These settlements are major producers of grains and tubers in commercial quantity. The invasion was not movement of flocks in the forest seeking grasses to eat. But 85.0% of the farmers attested that the invasion was carried to destroy crops and huge investment of farmers. This was the prevailing situation in the three settlements. Unfortunately, the invasion of farmers' crops was not only carried in the day time (6.7%), but majority of the dastards acts of herders were hatched in the dead of the night (74.7%). This was night grazing that caught farmers unawares and shocking. The settlements attested the willful and wonton destruction by night grazing of Herders'.

Painfully, majority of the herders were seeing armed with light weapons to scare victims away while destroying farmers' livelihood. In this case, 74.7% of the farmers proved that herders were armed moving with sophisticated guns with their flocks. This was similar situation in the three settlements. As a result, there were pockets of casualties identified by farmers due to force of coercion and ensue conflict to resist farmland invasion by Herders. Some 23.3% of the farmers in the study settlements listed cases of deaths caused by herders. The ugly situation in the Ondo State farm settlements has continued unabated due to rising security tension between Herders' and farmers. While the farmers claimed that farmlands were their inheritance and sources of livelihood; herders claimed that there was need to find green grasses for cow at the expense of crops and farmers' huge investment.

## Conclusion

The plight of farmers in Ondo state farm settle was a horrible situation due to the invasion of farm land by herders. This situation paralysed potential of farmers and capacity of sustainable income derived from investment in cropping. This dastard activities of herders' took place in the glaring presence of functional democratic government. Although the farmers attested to the presence of police patrol, there was however glaring inadequacy of security operatives, lack of nearness of police posts, overwhelming police engagement which limited surveillance and illegal authorization of ammunition and small arms possessed by herders exacerbated insecurity of farm settlements in Ondo state. Government at the state level has role to play to checkmate the prevailing situation in order to nip the crisis in the bud. This study therefore identifies some panacea to break the deadlock.

1. This study canvasses the need for governance of security. It is obvious that police is overwhelmed to tackle the security problem created by herdsmen. There is need to establish in Ondo state farm settlements heterogeneous security which captures local hunters, vigilantes and farm desk officers designated to work in collaboration with conventional security operatives. This can improve surveillance and patrol of red spots in and around farm settlements
2. The herders are significant partnership in food security. Government should earmark grazing routes in the three settlements like others to reduce the tension.

## References

- Ahmad, A. (2015). The security bazaar: Business interests and Islamist power in civil war Somalia. *International Security*, 39 (3), 89–117
- Arjona, A., Nelson, K and Zachariah, M. (2015.) *Rebel Governance in Civil War*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.
- Central Bank of Nigeria (2019). *Agribusiness loan: Roadmap*. Abuja: Federal Government of Nigeria
- Collier, P. (2007). *The bottom billion: Why the poorest countries are failing and what can be done about It*. New York: Oxford University Press, 125-139.
- Dell, M. (2015). Trafficking networks and the Mexican drug war. *American Economic Review* 105 (6), 38–79.
- Dunne, J. P., and Tian, N. (2014). Conflict spillovers and growth in Africa. *Peace Economics, Peace Science and Public Policy*, 20 (4), 539–49.

- Federal Ministry of Agriculture. (2019). *Federal government roadmap to food security: Handbook*. Abuja: Federal Government of Nigeria
- Ianchovichina, E. and Ivanic, M. (2016). Economic effects of the Syrian war and the spread of the Islamic state on the Levant. *World Economy*, 39 (10), 1584–1627.
- Ibáñez, Ana, M., and Carlos, E.V. 2008. Civil conflict and forced migration: The micro determinants and welfare losses of displacement in Colombia. *World Development*, 36 (4), 659–76.
- Institute for Economics and Peace. (2015). *Global peace index 2015: Measuring peace, its causes, and its economic value*. Sydney: IEP.
- Justino, P., and Bruno, M. (2016). *Welfare spending and political conflict*. Draft paper, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton, U.K.
- Justino, P., Ivan.C., Rebecca, M., and Müller, C. (2012). *Quantifying the impact of women's participation in post-conflict economic recovery*. HiCN Working Paper 131, Households in Conflict Network, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton, U.K.
- Justino, P., Leavy, J. and Elsa,V. (2009). Quantitative methods in Contexts of everyday violence. *IDS Bulletin*, 40 (3), 41–49.
- Knack, S., and Keefer, P. (2017). Does social capital have an economic payoff: A cross-country investigation. *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 112 (4), 1251–88.
- Leonard. P. (2009). Patronage and political stability in Africa. *Comparative Political Studies* 42 (10), 39–62.
- Mann, M. (1984). The autonomous power of the state: Its origins, mechanisms, and results. *European Journal of Sociology*, 25(2), 185–21
- Micah, D.J. (2020). Food security: Mainstreaming mobile telecommunication services for sustainability. *Covenant Journal of Social Sciences*, 11(4), 23-26
- Ministry of Agriculture. (2020). *Herdsmen massacre Benue farmers in cold-blooded. Makurdi: Benue State of Nigeria.*
- Wallis, J. (2016). *Governance and violence*. Washington, DC; World Bank.
- Zak, P., and Knack, S. (2011). Trust and growth. *Economic Journal*, 111 (470), 295–321.