THE ROLE OF BENUE STATE ANTI-OPEN GRAZING AND RANCHES ESTABLISHMENT LAW IN ENHANCING PEACE-BUILDING IN BENUE STATE

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Abstract
Perennial clashes between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria have not only exacerbated inter-ethnic disharmony but have stunted food production and reinforced circles of poverty and hunger in the country. With the increasing number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the country, the clashes are becoming potentially dangerous as the Boko-Haram insurgency in North-Eastern Nigeria. Benue State is one of the States in the country that has suffered traumatic attacks from herdsmen with attendant high death toll and large-scale destruction of farmlands, environmental degradation, and pollution caused by open rearing and grazing of livestock. To stem farmers-herders’ clashes, the Benue State government enacted the ‘Open-Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law, 2017. This paper assesses the efficacy of the Anti-Open Grazing Law in enhancing peace-building in the State. Anchored on the theory of structural functionalism, the paper relies on documentary sources for the generation of data. The study found out that the law brought momentary peace to the State but it failed to realize its objectives as no ranches were established; and the herdsmen continued to use the border areas with the neighboring states to launch attacks and make incursions into the State to graze in opposition to the law. Amongst other suggestions, the paper recommends that, states adjoining each other should synergize and enact similar law to ward off the threat of herdsmen; government; civil society groups and private investors should collaborate and set up ranches.

Keywords: Farmers-Herders’ Clashes, Anti-Open Grazing Law, Insecurity, Peace-Building.

1. Introduction
Since the return to democratic rule in Nigeria in 1999, farmers-herders’ contestations have been rife. The frequency, intensity, and geographical spread of these clashes have not only heightened the fragile relations among ethnic nationalities in the country, but this has unleashed devastating humanitarian and economic toll (International Crisis Group, 2017). With an
estimated death toll of approximately 2,500 people in 2016 (International Crisis Group, 2017), and nearly 1,700 violent deaths between January and September 2018, according to Global Terrorism Index (GTI, 2018), the farmers-herders’ conflict has become Nigeria’s gravest security challenge now claiming more lives than the Boko-Haram insurgency (Bada, 2018).

These recurring clashes have been attributed to a myriad of factors; prominent among the causes of the herders-farmers’ clashes according to Global Terrorism Index (GTI, 2008) are population growth and desertification. The impact of climate change has dried up fertile land in the Northern part of Nigeria, which the herdsmen had historically used for pasture, and this has pushed the herdsmen to move southward in the country to look for grazing land. Consequently, the struggle over access to farmlands and the exploitation of land-related resources has pitched the herdsmen against sedentary farming communities in the southern part of the country (Hembe, 2000; Aluaigba, 2008). This is reinforced by the mode of production and distribution practiced in the society. In the central and southern part of Nigeria as emphasized by Aluaigba (2008), the livelihood of the people is dependent on land owned by families and communities on which they practiced subsistence farming for survival and day to day living. But in recent times, population expansion, climate change and unstable farm practices have ignited competition for land resources and this has significantly contributed to the violent conflict between herdsmen and farmers in the country. Farmers-herders conflict has also been attributed to ‘Jihadist expansionism’. World Watch Research (WWR, 2016) has linked the clashes between herdsmen and farmers to the Islamic injunction that, ‘Komai na Allah ne, ko wane fili na Allah ne, ba naku ba, ba na kafirai ba, na Allah ne’ ‘Every piece of land belongs to Allah and not you; it is not for infidels but for Allah’. Herdsmen use this religious justification “to conduct jihad displacing local communities from their land and to make room for their herds, to occupy those lands and to spread Islam” Africa Conflict and Security Analysis Network (ACSAN, 2017, p.18).

This internecine conflict between herdsmen and farmers has unleashed bloodbath leading to the loss of lives and the displacement of thousands of people in the country. In the Middle belt region of the country for instance, preliminary investigation by ACSAN (2017) shows that a total 854 people lost their lives in 2014. Apart from this, the attacks have sharpened ethnic, regional and religious polarization in the country which threatens to undermine national stability (Bada, 2018).
From an initial reported case of 18 attacks between 1999 and 2010, the violent confrontation between herdsmen and farmers has not waned but has rather escalated as 271 attacks were recorded in 2011 and 2015 (SRM Intelligence, 2016). Hence, the electronic and print media have been inundated with news of deadly attacks by herdsmen on farming communities across the length and breadth of the country. A catalogue of attacks recorded by, Nwanegbo, Umara and Ikyase (2017) shows that on the 1st, August, 2018, 16 lives and 37 houses were burnt in Nasarawa State. In Plateau State, 16 lives were lost and 14 houses were burnt on the 8th, June, 2013. Also, 3 persons were killed and 23 houses burnt in Plateau State on the 3rd, June, 2013. In Adamawa State, 64 lives were lost and 32 houses were burnt in clashes between herdsmen and farmers on the 11th, October, 2017. In Ondo State, Shimawua (2019) reports that on the 24th September, 2015, former Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Olu Falae was abducted and held captive by some Fulani herdsmen. In 2018 alone, statistics indicate that 300,000 people were displaced as a result of farmers-herder’ clashes (World Report 2019 - Nigeria).

Benue State happens to be one of the States in Central Nigeria that has experienced the most devastating attacks from armed herdsmen in recent times. Statistics from the Benue State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) show that it has registered 80,000 internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) across four camps located in Guma and Logo Local Government Areas of the State. While the State Governor, Samuel Ortom claimed that the State had lost assets and property worth over N95 billion and over 2000 lives to the crisis (Daga, 2018). The Local Government Areas badly affected are Guma, Gwer-West, Gwer-East, Logo, Makurdi and Agatu. In 2014, these local governments and other towns on the border with Taraba state recorded approximately 458 deaths and attacks on over 350 communities (ACSAN, 2017). These attacks by herdsmen have also created a refugee crisis in the state. In Makurdi local government alone, ACSAN (2017) reports that there were ten different camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in 2016. They included the uncompleted Aper Aku Housing Estate, North Bank; St Mary’s Primary School Daudu, Roman Catholic Mission Primary school Ahwa; Makuedi LGEA Primary School, Agan; Makurdi LGEA Primary School, Low Cost, Makurdi LGEA Primary School, Tyodugh and Makurdi LGEA Primary School, Wurukum. Apart from these IDP camps in Makurdi local government, there are IDP camps in Ugba and Anyiin in Logo Local Government Area; Zaki Biam, Kyado and Jootar in Ukum Local Government Area. The living conditions in this IDP camps are deplorable as there are insufficient toilet facilities, potable water and congestion in the available spaces. Available records for 2014-2016 shows
that 542 households with 4804 persons were sharing 12 blocks of classrooms meant to accommodate fifty pupils per class (ACSAN, 2017).

Both the government and non-governmental organizations have responded to these violent attacks. The State government response includes deployment of security forces to conflict areas for peace-keeping, supply of relief materials, establishment of Commissions of Enquiry, initiation of social programs meant to stop hostilities and embrace peace and tolerance and inauguration of a Task force code named, ‘Operation Zenda’ to combat crime in the state. Non-governmental organizations on the other hand have organized workshops and seminars meant to sensitize the people on the dangers of armed conflicts. In spite these efforts the clashes between herdsmen and farmers still persist in the state and buoyed by the that policies such as farm settlements apart from ranching will tend to accentuate a highly discriminatory settlement policy that will encourage mutual distrust and segregation among ethnic nationalities and aggravate the seemingly already strained unity of the Nigerian federation (Daka, Olaniyi &Wantu, 2019); the Benue State government enacted the Anti-Open Grazing and Ranches Establishment Law, 2017 which came into effect on 1st October, 2017. This study is an assessment of the Anti-Open Grazing Law in Benue State. It seeks to analyze the effectiveness of the law in enhancing peaceful coexistence between herdsmen and communities in Benue State.

2. Conceptual and Theoretical Discourse:

Peace- Building

This refers to repairing relationships and social institutions that can help the disputing communities to be re-united. It involves ‘a range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development’ (UN Secretary- General’s Policy Committee, 2007). Peace building as noted by Maise (2003) seeks to create incentives for non-violent behavior, reduce fear among the general population and begin the process of instilling trust in institutions and the larger peace process. It entails developing constructive personal, group, and political relationships across ethnic, religious, class, national, and racial boundaries.

Peace building can be understood as a supplement to preventive diplomacy. It encompasses measures put in place to circumvent emerging conflicts, prevent violence and bringing lasting
and sustainable peace in post conflict situations. The main aim of peace building is improving human security. It seeks to resolve injustice in a non-violent manner and to transform the cultural and structural conditions that generate deadly or destructive conflict. Hence, peace-building includes a wide range of efforts by diverse actors in government and civil society at the community, national, and international levels to address the root causes of violence and ensure civilians have freedom from fear, freedom from want and freedom from humiliation before, during, and after violent conflict (Barnett, Kim, O’Donnell & Sitea, 2007).

Peace-building addresses economic, social and political root causes of violence and fosters reconciliation to prevent the return of violence. It aims to change beliefs, attitudes and behaviors to transform the short as well as long term dynamics between individuals and groups toward a more stable, peaceful coexistence. Peace-building is an approach to an entire set of interrelated efforts that support peace. Strategic peace-building activities address the root causes or potential causes of violence, create a societal expectation for peaceful conflict resolution, and stabilize society politically and socio-economically. Successful peace-building activities create an environment supportive of self-sustaining, durable peace; reconcile opponents; prevent conflict from restarting; integrate civil society; create rule of law mechanisms; and address underlying structural and societal issues.

It should be noted that in as much as the aim of peace-building overlap with those of peace-making, peace-keeping and conflict resolution. It is quite distinct from these three concepts. Whereas peace-making entails stopping an on-going conflict, peace-building takes place before the commencement of a conflict or once it ends. It also differs from peace-keeping which essentially aims to prevent the resurgence of fighting following a conflict and does not address the root cause of violence or create societal change as peace-building does. It is also different from conflict resolution which does not include some components of peace-building such as nation building and socio-economic development.

3. Theoretical Framework

Institutions, policies and laws are created to serve specific functions in the society. In an attempt to study and analyze the beneficial impact of a phenomenon to the society, the functionalist theory becomes relevant. This study is therefore anchored on Merton’s (1957) theory of functionalism. Functionalism addresses society as a whole in terms of how its
constituent elements; namely norms, customs, traditions and institutions contribute to the stability of the whole. The theory sees the society/community as a system of interconnected parts that work in harmony to maintain a state of balance and social equilibrium for the whole. Functionalist theorists such as Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) were concerned with the question of how certain societies maintain internal stability and survive over time. He maintained that such societies tend to be segmented with equivalent parts held together by shared values, common symbols and identity.

The central concern of functionalism is to explain the apparent stability and internal cohesion needed by societies to endure over time. Societies are seen as coherent, bounded and fundamentally relational constructs that function like organisms, with their various (or social institutions) working together in an unconscious, quasi-automatic fashion toward achieving an overall social equilibrium. All social and cultural phenomena are therefore seen as functional in the sense of working together, and are effectively deemed to have "lives" of their own. They are primarily analyzed in terms of this function. Therefore, the social structure is the network of statuses connected by associated roles.

In every society, there is the economic system, the political system and the legal system that co-exists and works in harmony to maintain social stability. Hence the legal system functions to enhance peace and order in the society as well as national development. This brings out the imperative of laws in the society as absence of laws will lead to breakdown of order which will affect societal equilibrium. The Benue State Anti-Open Grazing and Ranches Establishment Law, 2017 is part of the efforts by the Benue State government to use the instrumentality of law to address the violent clashes between herdsmen and farmers and promote peace and stability in the State. The target of the law is to safeguard life and property; enhance peaceful co-existence; create a congenial environment for large scale crop production and enhance the production of high quality and healthy livestock for local and international markets.

Though the functionalist theory is useful as it focuses on the structural aspects of the social system and studies the processes which functions to maintain social equilibrium, but in spite of its utility, it has a major drawback. A recurrent criticism of the structural functionalist view is that it neglects the often-negative implications of social order. Critics maintain that the perspective justifies the status quo and the process of cultural hegemony which maintains it and it does not encourage people to take an active role in changing their social environment.
even when doing so benefit them. This therefore is a major drawback to the application of this theory.

4. Farmers-Herders’ Clashes in Benue State and the Emergence of the Anti-Open Grazing and Ranches Establishment Law, 2017

Since the return to civil rule in 1999, the electronic and print media has been awash with screaming headlines on attacks on communities and villages by herdsmen such as ‘Benue Massacre’ (Tell, November, 5, 2001). ‘Militia men killed 52 and burned 300 houses in Benue and Delta’ (The Guardian, May, 19, 2003). About 500 people killed by rampaging herdsmen following a siege on Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State. The communities affected include, Alia, Akwu, Adagbo, Okokolo, Ugboju, Odugbeho, Obagaji and Egba (Premium Times, March, 12, 2016). Some other attacks chronicled by Herald Express 24/1/2018 tagged ‘Timeline of Attacks in Benue State’

I. March 2, 2017; no fewer than 10 persons were killed in renewed hostility between herdsmen and farmers in Mbavihin Community, Gwer East Local Government Area.

II. March 11, 2017; seven persons were confirmed killed when herdsmen attacked a Tiv community, Mkovur Village in Buruku Local Government, Benue State.

III. May 8, 2017: 3 persons were confirmed killed by herdsmen in Tse-akaa village, Ugondo, Mbaman District of Logo Local Government, Benue State.

IV. May 13, 2017: 20 people were killed in a conflict between Tiv farmers and herdsmen at Nzorov in Guma Local Government Area

V. January 24, 2017: 15 persons were killed by rampaging Fulani herdsmen who attacked farmers in Ipiga Village in Ohimini, Local Government area, Benue State.

On the 1st January, 2018, the State was thrown into deep mourning when herdsmen invaded and carried out coordinated attacks on six communities namely, Tomatar, Umenge, Akor Villages in Guma Local Government and Ayilamo, turan, Ngambe-tiev in Logo Local Government Area of the State leaving over 73 persons dead, scores injured with many houses and property destroyed Jacob, (cited in Daga, 2018, p.3). A total of forty-nine from herdsmen from 2017-2017 have been recorded in the state, Ibrahim (cited in Daga, 2018, p.2).
Findings from a study carried out by Women Environment Programme (WEP) 2012 in Gwer West, Makurdi and Guma Local Government Areas indicate that the cause (s) of the intermittent clashes between farmers and herders in Benue State range from the struggle over the ‘material’ needed for ‘existence’ that is the ‘the green land’. In other words, alluvial soil in Benue State is rich and fertile which the farmers covet it to grow their crops on it and the herdsmen while pasturing their cattle most at times the cattle stray into farms eating crops and destroying farm produce on which the farmers depend on for their material existence and this triggers conflict between herdsmen and farmers. Other causes include encroachment on grazing routes and reserves by communities and unemployment by youths which precipitates cattle rustling.

As part of government efforts to stem the bloody clashes between herdsmen and farmers in the State and promote peaceful co-existence as well as inter-ethnic harmony, the State Government enacted the Benue State Anti-Open Grazing and Ranches Establishment Law in May, 2007. The objectives of the law are

I. Prevent the destruction of crop farms by open grazing;
I. Prevent clashed between nomadic livestock herders and crop farmers;
II. Protect the environment from degradation and pollution caused by open rearing and over grazing of livestock;
III. Optimize the use of land resources in the face of overstretched land and increasing population;
IV. Prevent, control and manage the spread of disease and enhance the production of high quality and healthy livestock for local and international markets and;
V. Create a conducive environment for large scale crop production.

To actualize these objectives, Section 19 (1) of the Law stipulates that no individual or group shall after the commencement of this law engage in open nomadic livestock herding or grazing in the State outside the permitted ranches. Section 19 (2) stipulates that any person or group of persons who contravenes sub section (1) above shall be guilty of an offence and shall, on conviction, be liable to five years’ imprisonment or one million Naira (N1,000,000) fine or both. While Section 19 (3) further stipulates that, in event of damage to farm, crops or property of any person the owner or manager of such livestock shall after evaluation by the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources of the damage, pay the prevailing value of monetary compensation of the farm, crops or property so damaged to the owner.
Also, in event of injury to any person within the state by livestock, the owner or manager of such livestock shall be guilty of an offence and upon conviction be liable to two years’ imprisonment in addition to footing the medical bill of the victim and paying relevant compensations as the Court may determine. But where such contravention causes the death of any person within the State, the owner or Manager of such livestock shall be guilty of an offence of culpable homicide punishable under the Penal Code Law.

Section 19 (4) prohibits movement of livestock on foot from one destination to another in the State and such movement shall only be by rail wagon, truck or pick-up wagon and any person or persons found moving livestock on foot within or across urban centres, rural settlements or any part of the state commits an offence and if the person is a first offender, the person is liable to a fine of Five Hundred Thousand Naira (N500, 000) fine or one-year imprisonment. But if the person is a second offender, he is liable to One Million Naira (N1, 000,000) fine or three years’ imprisonment or both.

The Benue State Anti-open Grazing Law, 2017 Section 5,6,7 and 8 prescribes the establishment of ranches and requires the rancher to approach in writing the owner and family head of the land where he intends to site the ranch. Upon being approached by the rancher, the owner, and head of the family that owns the land after consultation with community leaders and with the endorsement of the kindred Head and the Chairman of the relevant Local Government Traditional Council, may grant his consent in writing for One-year lease of the land and on such terms and conditions as the parties may agree upon. Subsequently, the rancher shall forward a written application for ranching permit to the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources alongside the consent of the owner and family head and kindred head of the land. The Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources shall undertake or cause to be undertaken by professionals an Environmental Impact Assessment of the land applied for by the rancher. A copy of the Report of the Environmental Impact Assessment shall be forwarded to the Ministry of Agriculture, family head and kindred head within which the land is situated for their various and separate considerations and they shall make their views known at a joint meeting convened for that purpose to the Ministry of Agriculture within 90 days. If, upon due consideration, the report of the Environmental Impact Assessment is found suitable and in accordance with this Law, the owner of the land, family head, kindred head and the community within which the land is situated, shall recommend to the Ministry of Agriculture to issue ranching permit to the rancher.
The Commissioner shall upon the receipt of the recommendations of the Ministry of Agriculture, the owner of the land, family head and kindred head and the community within which the land is situated, forward a report thereupon to the Governor who may, if satisfied that the best interest of the State will be served, approve the issuance of a ranching permit to the rancher. The permits must be for a period of not more than one year with renewal subject to the discretion of the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural resources.

Section 19 (7) prohibits livestock owners, managers and ranchers from possession of fire arms licensed or unlicensed on the ranch or outside the ranch. All ranch operators are to engage the services of registered security for the protection of their ranches if they wish to do so. The law also proscribes cattle rustling. Section 20 (1) provides that any person who rustles cattle, or other animals from any ranch commits an offence and shall be liable on conviction for imprisonment for a term of not less than three (3) years of One Hundred Thousand Naira (N100,000). While Section 21, stipulates that any livestock found grazing, wandering, herding in an area not designated in an area not designated as a ranch shall be impounded by the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources or any other person authorized by the Ministry.

The Ministry or any other person so authorized may release the livestock impounded to the owner or manager upon showing good cause and after paying the prescribed fine and expenses as may be determined by the ministry. Any livestock impounded under the law which is not claimed within seven (7) days of such impoundment shall be sold on auction to the public; and the proceeds of such sale shall be deposited in the Consolidated Revenue Account of the State.

Section 24 of the law provides for the establishment of a Special Livestock Open Grazing Prohibition Task Force for the State with units in each Local Government Area of the State. The Special Task Force shall comprise the following, the Special Adviser to the Governor on Security as Chairman while other members include, State Chairman of the Benue State Community Volunteer Guards; representative of the Commissioner of Police; representative of the Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corps; representative of the State Chairman of Nigerian Legion of ex-service men and the representative of Commissioner for Agriculture not below the rank of deputy director as secretary. The Special Task Force is mandated to arrest and detain any person or group of persons engaged in open grazing and other acts prohibited by the provisions of this Law. Such persons shall be handed over to the police or other security agencies immediately.
5. Anti-Open Grazing Law and Peace building in Benue State

The Anti-Open Grazing Law was passed in May 2017 and the implementation took effect in November, 2017. The State Government gave a grace period of five months to carry out awareness and sensitization campaigns on the import of the law. The fundamental question here is, has the Law succeeded in preventing the recurrence or continuation of bloody clashes between herdsmen and farmers in the State? In other words, has the Law promoted lasting and sustainable peace in Benue State?

It is only after a review of the concomitant events, reactions and trends after the enactment of the Law than one can pass the verdict. In fact, the Law proscribes open grazing of livestock in the State and recommends ranching instead. It should be noted that ranching is not only in conformity with international best practices but it has the advantage to confine the livestock to designated areas that are well fenced. This will go a long way away to isolate the cattle from having direct contact from farm lands whose damage usually result to physical confrontation between farmers and herdsmen leaving death tolls and economic losses to the nation. In fact, the strict penalty prescribed for moving of livestock on foot within and across urban centres and rural settlements has led to mass exodus of the herdsmen outside Benue State. Search for Common Ground (2017) and the Forum on Farmer and Herder relations in Nigeria (FFHRN) 2017 in their early assessment of the Anti-Open Grazing in Benue State reveal that; the prohibition of open grazing has already led to a significant exodus of herdsmen with their cows from the state and this has brought relative peace to the State. However, this has ended up as temporary relief because most of the herdsmen that left the State relocated to the neighboring States of Nasarawa, Kogi and Cross River. These neighboring states have not outlawed open grazing of livestock in their states and herdsmen have therefore capitalized on this lacuna. They use the border areas to graze freely and very often stray into neighboring communities in Benue State leading to intermittent clashes between farmers and herdsmen at border communities.

Immediately after the passage of the law in 2017, Miyetti Allah Kautal Hore, a Fulani socio-cultural association rejected it and vowed to resist the law describing it as “wicked, obnoxious and repressive” meant to criminalize the means of survival of the Fulani people and as the “most wicked act any government can do to them and their economic interest” (The Nation, 31st May, 2017). As part of its resistance to the Law, on the 1st January, 2018 just at the heels of the implementation of the Anti-Open Grazing Law in the State, unknown gunmen suspected to be herdsmen attacked Gambe-Tiev, Ayilamo and Turan in Logo Local Government as well
as Umenger, Tse-Akor, Tomatar in Guma Local Government Area of Benue State and 73 persons were left dead and several others were injured. This Miyetti Allah KautalHore claimed responsibility as retaliation to 1,000 cows that were stolen by Tiv youths when they were trying to relocate to Taraba and Nassara States (Odufowokan, 2018). Also 19 people were killed including two Catholic Priests at Mbalom in Gwer East Local Government on the 30th April, 2018 (The Guardian, January, 2nd, 2018). Following the escalation of hostilities and death toll that heralded the implementation of the law, the federal government launched a 44-day military operation code named ‘Ayem Akpatema’ (cat race) with a mandate to halt the killings in Benue, Nasarawa and Taraba State. This operation ran from February 15 to March, 2018 (Uja, 2018).

Subsequently, there have been series of attacks by herdsmen on communities in the state leading to loss of lives and property. Due to these recurring attacks, most of the people living at the border towns in Benue state have deserted their villages and are now living in the temporary ‘Internally Displaced Peoples’ camp otherwise known as IDPs. It is unfortunate that three years after the passage of the law, most people at the border towns of Torkula village and Gborigo village in Guma local Government area have deserted their houses and are now living in IDP camps.

Reprisal attacks both by herdsmen and communities in the state have unleashed an orgy of violence in the state. This is as a result of attempts by both herdsmen and communities in the state to ward off the threat from both sides. This has led to the acquisition of sophisticated weapons by both herdsmen and indigenous communities to defend themselves. It is not uncommon to see herdsmen go about rearing animals with dangerous weapons to protect their cattle from being attacked by the communities. On the other hand, communities too have acquired weapons to defend their ancestral land. A fall out of this arms build-up is that criminal elements have taken advantage of these arms to indulge in kidnapping and banditry. This has exacerbated insecurity in the state.

The Anti-Open Grazing Law also places stringent conditions on non-indigenes but not indigenes to apply for ranching leases. This discrepancy between the application of the law to indigenes versus non-indigenes it has been pointed out by Search for Common Ground (SCG, 2017) has heightened the perception that the law is discriminatory. In fact, the media has harped on this perception utilizing incendiary and ethno-religious sentiments to fuel already high tension between the indigenous community and the Fulani.
The implementation of the Anti-Open Grazing Law in Benue state has led to mass exodus of cattle from the state and this has raised the price of beef in the market. The increase in the price of livestock and the attendant high level of youth unemployment in the State has given vent to criminal activities such as cattle rustling. This is likely to cause inter-border clashes or skirmishes between Benue indigenes and the neighboring States of Nasarawa and Kogi that have not enacted anti-open grazing law and may likely aggravate inter-border insecurity between Benue State and neighboring states that have not enacted anti-open grazing law.

6. Conclusion

This study interrogates the Anti-Open Grazing Law in Benue State vis-à-vis the prospect of enhancing peaceful co-existence among ethnic nationalities in the State. It has been found out that the enactment and implementation of the law has led to mass exodus of cattle from the state which brought relative peace in the state momentarily but in the long run it has heightened insecurity in the state. The stiff opposition by Miyetti Allah Kautal Hore who has rejected the law as a threat to the livelihood to the Fulani people and this has prompted reprisal killings by the herdsmen. Consequently, there have been more deaths recorded in the state from attacks by herdsmen with the implementation of the law.

The anti-open grazing law is a bold initiative that has sent signals to pastoralists that they need to modernize and embraces international best practices to contend with the realities of climate change; however it failed to significantly achieve its objectives because the state government underestimated the triangular relationship between pastoralists, the Hausa/Fulani ruling oligarchs and the international collaboration. For an anti-open grazing law to be effective, it needs synergy between states adjoining each other to enact similar law to ward off the threat from herdsmen and be each other’s brother’s keeper.

To sustain long lasting peace in the state through harmonious relationship between herdsmen and farmers, the Benue State Government should collaborate with the private sector and set up ranches in the State due to the capital intensive nature of the business venture bearing in mind the fact that most herdsmen are nomadic and can hardly have the collaterals to secure a bank loan to set up ranches. Also, the federal government should put in modalities to check the proliferation of arms and light weapons that are freely moved in the country and which possession gives pushes both herdsmen and farmers to attack each other. Water management
should be improved by both the federal government and the states. This is in view of the fact that climate change, water shortage, and drought are the major reasons herdsmen migrate southward in search of fresh water and grass for their cattle.

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