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**STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF HERDSMEN-
FARMERS' CONFLICTS: A SUSTAINABLE STEP
TOWARDS THE RESOLUTION OF FULANI
HERDSMEN VERSUS FARMERS' CONFLICT IN
BENUE STATE, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

This paper examines an alternative approach that would lead to a more effective solution for managing herdsman and farmers' conflict in Benue State, north-central Nigeria. The approach employed was the qualitative approach to data analysis. Findings from the analysis show that the conventional approaches to managing conflicts have proven to be ineffective contrary to expectation. It is the obvious failure of the conventional methods of conflict resolution that informed our choice of an alternative strategy called the strategic conflicts management option. This option consists of mapping out external strategies and building the internal competence of the actors involved in conflict management; this also includes building the capacities of the parties who are primarily engaged in conflict. The study concludes that the strategic option proposed for conflict resolution would produce a better outcome than the conventional methods which have been found to be ineffective.

Key words: conflict, management, strategic, mapping, capacity building, capability, competence

Introduction

The whole of human society is involved in one form of conflict or the other. While some are inter-state conflicts, others are internal or domestic conflicts. The prevalence of social conflicts pitched the whole of mankind against each other. Conflicts or wars are going on in Ukraine, Iraq, Syria, Palestine or Gaza. In Africa,

countries such as Rwanda, Egypt, Libya, Liberia, Tunisia, Sudan, South-Sudan, South Africa, Mali, Somalia, Kenya, and Senegal just to mention but a few, were or are engulfed in one form of conflicts or the other. Nigeria is not left out in this social debacle. In recent times, the persistence and recurring character of conflicts in the

country has assumed unparalleled dimensions.

Several militia groups such as the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), the Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF), the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the Egbesu Boys, the dreaded Boko Haram sect, the Ombatse Militia, the Niger Delta Avengers and most recently the hydra-headed Fulani-farmers conflict in the north-central states and other parts of the country have threatened security, undermined good governance and constrained sustainable development in contemporary Nigeria. Inter and intra-ethnic rifts have polarized Nigerians and pitched them against each other.

However, of the various communal conflicts recorded in Nigeria so far, the conflicts between Fulani herdsmen (pastoralists) and other Nigerian communities appeared to have increased in intensity. Mostly in recent times, what could have been responsible for the escalating trend in the conflicts between communities and the Fulani herdsmen? Meanwhile, a critical examination of documented studies has shown that land and its resources as well as religion and political inclinations have been the bane of the unending disputes between the

herdsmen and the various communities (Duru, 2013). Additionally, the question of ethnicity is equally fundamental to understanding the dynamics surrounding the Fulani insurgency in Nigeria. Pointedly, the spate of armed invasion of communities in Nigeria by Fulani herdsmen is fast gaining momentum. More so, the warfare strategy adopted by the insurgents has also advanced in sophistication (Williams, Muazu, Kaoje and Ekeh, 1999).

Benue State of Nigeria is one of the States that is worst hit by the activities of Fulani insurgents in recent times. The States of Plateau, Nasarawa, Taraba, Enugu, Kogi, Zamfara and Adamawa were not spared. Specifically, in Benue State, since 2012 till date, the spate of insecurity in rural communities caused by the activities of Fulani herdsmen has been quite alarming. Several communities in Benue State namely Agatu, Gwer-West (Naka), Gwer East, Guma Local Government, Ayiin and Ugba in Logo Local Government, Katsina-Ala and Buruku Local Governments among others have come under severe attacks by Fulani insurgents. In a single attack, more than a hundred lives were reported lost and properties worth several million naira were also lost (BSGN, 2014). Obviously, this has grave implication for good governance and sustainable development in Benue State and Nigeria in General.

Majority of the communities attacked by the dreaded herdsmen were agrarian communities. Benue State is known to be the food basket of the nation. The bulk of the food crops produced in Benue State actually come from these communities that were often attacked by the herdsmen. As a result of the incessant attacks on these communities, many were forced to flee their homes and abandon their farming activities. Several of these people unintentionally became refugees. Food production output declined as many farmers could not sustain their farming activities. The income earning capability of the affected farmers also fell drastically. Poverty and hunger loom large; while government agricultural development efforts in the affected communities were severally hampered, vaunted and thwarted. Obviously, this development portends grave implications for food security, peaceful co-existence, good governance and sustainable development.

Ideally, society thrives better, if they are devoid of conflicts. This explains why a crisis free environment is investors' destination. Nations or societies develop faster when the atmosphere for doing business and other economic, political, social and cultural activities is peaceful.

However, it has been argued by conflict analysts or scholars, that conflict could

sometimes serve as a tool for resolving societal differences and assist in stabilizing human society by maintaining strong social cohesion (Cosser, 1956; Okoli, Chukwuma and Atelhe, 2014). This claim notwithstanding, the prevalence of social conflict portends danger for any civilized society, and if not properly managed, it may, after all, hamper societal development.

Herdsmen-farmers conflicts in Nigeria in general, and Benue state in particular has become a monster; it has claimed thousands of human lives and orchestrated higher magnitude of destruction of properties worth billions of naira (Ogwola, 2017; Okoli, Chukwuma and Atelhe, 2014). Nigeria, a nation-state that is in dire need of development cannot afford to accommodate herdsmen and farmers conflicts because of its grave implications or effects on development. Several studies have shown that pastoralist-farmers conflicts have been a recurring decimal; and yet it has adversely produced one of the most heinous effects on Nigerian societies in recent years in terms of the lost of human lives and properties, both of which are highly strategic and *sine qua non* for sustainable development (Albert, 2010; Bello, 2015; Williams, Muazu, Kaoje, & Ekeh, 1999).

The aim of this paper is therefore to analyze the strategic dimensions of the conflict under study with the view to proffering strategic solutions towards its amicable and lasting resolution. This article focuses on the conflict between Herdsmen and farmers in Benue State; by strategically analyzing an alternative method or procedure for combating the scourge of violence and achieve a lasting peace in Benue state and Nigeria in particular.

The specific objectives of this paper include:

- i) To examine the causes of the Fulani herdsmen and Benue Farmers in north – central Nigeria
- ii) To analyze the roles of stakeholders in the conflicts between Fulani and farmers in Benue state
- iii) To propose an alternative mechanisms or approach for resolving the Fulani-farmers conflicts in Benue State

Conceptual clarification

i) Strategic management

The word Strategy is derived or coined from a Greek term *strategos*, which means the art of an army general; especially that which the general deploys in warfare planning and

administration. A strategy is therefore the ideas, decisions, and actions that enable firms or planners to succeed in their endeavors. Steiss (2003) defined strategic management as the art and science of formulating, implementing, and evaluating cross-functional decisions that enable an organization to achieve its objectives.

ii) Conflicts

In this study, conflict means a social condition in which individuals or groups engage each other in the pursuit of socially, economically, politically and culturally incompatible goals. It also implies a struggle by opposing parties over scarce resources, power and claims to status.

iii) Peace

Peace refers to the idea of total harmony and absence of hostility. It is a state of tranquility or harmony. In the context of this study, peace implies both social and political conditions. Socially, peace connotes a situation where there is agreement, harmonious co-existence and social tranquility.

Politically peace is described as a condition that ensures justice and social stability; either through formal or informal institutions, practices and norms. Justice and equity are critical to achieving social stability and harmony.

iv) **Security**

Security denotes freedom from threats, anxiety or danger. As rightly put by Nnoli (2006), security, in objective sense can be measured by absence of threat, anxiety or danger. From a subjective sense, security is a value associated with confidence in physical safety and other most cherished values. More so, security is defined as resistance to, and protection from harm applied to any valuable assets, such as a person, dwelling, community, nation, or organization (Imobighe, 2003).

Theoretical Foundation of the Study

The theoretical foundation of this study is anchored on the theories of *human needs*, *ethnic absolutism* and *conflict of interest*.

The theory of *human needs* was expounded by John Burton (1979, 1997). This approach to ethnic conflict explains that

ethnic groups fight because they are denied not only their biological needs, but also psychological needs that relate to growth and development. These include peoples' need for identity, security, recognition, participation, and autonomy. This theory provides a plausible explanation of ethnic conflicts in Africa, where such needs are not easily met by undemocratic regimes (Irobi, 2005). Both the herdsmen and farmers in Benue have needs which are both biological and psychological. Most importantly the needs for identity, survival, security, recognition and autonomy are considered very critical to their collective existence. Whenever these needs are denied of them, they would preponderantly react and this would normally trigger violent outburst.

The theory of *ethnic absolutism* stipulates that conflict is a reaction by one ethnic group over the attempt to be dominated by another ethnic nationality. The theory of 'ethnic absolutism' is deep rooted in ethnic sentiment or racial prejudice. Gilroy in Haralambos and Holborn (2008) is credited for coining the term 'ethnic absolutism.' Gilroy noted that people who promote one ethnic group above the others are ethnic absolutists.

In terms of the affinity between the theory of ethnic absolutism and the issue of communal/ethnic conflict in Nigeria, few people would

oppose the view that ethnic sentiment is considered one of the chief causes of conflicts in the country. It is true that Nigeria is an ethnically plural society; the cultures of the various ethnic groups differ significantly; this is also true of their religious beliefs. To make matters worse, most, if not all of these ethnic nationalities, are engaged in unholy quest for supremacy and resource control. This development bred ethnic resentment and prejudice which often led to conflicts (Ogwola, 2017).

Similarly, some scholars have observed that:

Ethnicity becomes more pronounced when it is used to distinguish one ethnic or social group from another within specific territory. It is further believed that individuals have ethnic allegiances irrespective of whether they are from the minority of a state's population or the majority; with the result that ethnicity becomes a sentiment expressed by both the majority and minority population. Often than not, this social pluralism usually leads to differences of interest and this is where the possibility of ethnic conflict starts to emerge (Thomson, 2000:58, in Benedict, 2011).

In contemporary Nigeria, ethnic agitation or absolutism is displayed in horrendous magnitude. This argument is supported by the spate of ethnically motivated violence such as the Urhobo-Itsekiri conflicts in Delta State, the Umuleri-Aguleri conflicts in Anambara State, the Fulani pastoralist-farmers conflict in Bauchi State, the Fulani-Agatu and Fulani-Tiv conflicts in

Benue State, the Zango-Kataf crisis in Kaduna State, just to mention but a few.

Conflicts of interest perspective

The theory of conflict of interest is rooted in Marxist thought. Although the emphasis of the Marxists, especially Karl Marx is on class differences and contradiction (sometime called the structuralism), however, one of the core areas of his philosophical thoughts is in the area of conflict of interests (Mark and Engel, 1950 in Haralambos and Holborn, 2008). The idea of conflict in human society originated from the observation that society is made up of people with different interests. Thus, it is believed that social arrangements will tend to benefit some groups at the expense of the others (Haralambos and Holborn, 2008). Where interests differ, the potential for or likelihood of conflicts is always present. Similarly, different groups pursuing separate interests are likely to clash and produce some degree of instability in the society. Except differences in people's interest are properly and adequately managed, they could produce serious negative impact on society and destabilize peace and order. Lockwood (1966) in Haralambos and Holborn (2008), corroborated the Marxists stance on the 'conflict of interest perspective' He argued that since all social systems involved competition for scarce resources, conflicts

of interest are built into society. As people's interests differ, so also are their value preferences.

Narrowing this proposition to our discourse, we could understand that the conflicts between the herdsmen and the farmers in Benue have bearing on the struggle for land and its resources. The Fulanis need the vegetation to feed their cattle; the farmers on the other hand need the land for cultivation. It is a struggle for survival. Where these interests clash, and indeed they had clashed, conflicts would normally erupt.

Appreciating Fulani Herdsmen-Farmers Conflicts in Nigeria

Several studies have been conducted on the Fulani-farmers conflicts in Nigeria. For example, in a study conducted by Women for Environmental Programme (2012) which specifically targeted critical actors and stakeholders in the Fulani-Farmers conflicts in Benue State, it was found that the origin of the conflict was the struggle over the 'material' needed for 'existence'. The struggle between the two groups was because each was struggling to survive or exist and each group depends on the same material called the 'green of the land (i.e. the soil and its pasture).

Another study by Ogwola (2017) which examined Fulani-Agatu conflicts in Benue

state showed that the geographical location of Benue State, which provides favourable climatic conditions for all-year-round livestock grazing, and making it attractive to nomadic Fulani, is a long standing source of conflict arising from encroachment of cattle on the farm crops. The traditional land use pattern and the incompatibility of crop farming and free grazing method practiced by nomadic Fulani are huge sources of conflict. This finding is also corroborated by Negedu (2005), while studying the constraints to cassava production in Kwara State. He found that over 90% of the farmers interviewed indicated that their greatest production problem is the destruction of their farms by cattle.

Another study by Okoli, Chukwuma and Atelhe, (2014) on Fulani-farmers conflicts in the South-South of Nigeria also shows that the increasing statistics of violence associated with herdsmen and farmers conflict in Nigeria is attributed to the increased desperation of the herdsmen and farmers competing for both farming and grazing lands, and couple with the practices of corrupt political and traditional leaders who tend to benefit more from the conflicts. The continuous availability and proliferation of guns and other light weapons, combined with a general breakdown of law and order have triggered

conflicts between herdsmen and farmers in some quarters, while the activities of cattle rustlers always lead to reprisal attacks on farmers in such areas.

Review of selected cases of herdsmen-farmers conflicts in Nigeria

Evidence has shown that conflicts between Herdsmen and famers in Nigeria are prevalent in virtually all the geopolitical regions of the country (Ogwola, 2017; Okoli, Chukwuma and Atelhe, 2014). For the purpose of this study we shall consider the following cases.

North Central

The bulk of Fulani-farmers conflict incidents have been in the middle-belt (otherwise known as the North Central Nigeria). The reason for the prevalence of the conflicts in this region is that most of the communities, particularly in Nasarawa and Benue states, survive on farming; therefore any attempt to encroach on their farm plots would preponderantly trigger spontaneous reaction. For instance, in Agatu, Benue state, Fulani herdsmen-farmers conflicts had degenerated into mass movement of people from their original homes, abandoning their farming activities and only means of livelihood. Similar circumstances is witnessed in Nasarawa state, Niger and Plateau States where major incidences abound; same are the cases in

Eggon, Tius and Alago in Nasarawa state; Riyon, Barkin Ladi, Mangu, Jos North and Jos South of Plateau state; Bassa, Olamaboro, Misa, Okene and Idah in Kogi state; Guma, Logo, Gwer East and Gwer West communities in Benue State. The implication of these conflicts for all these communities is that economic activities including the production of food is often threatened resulting to wide spread hunger and malnutrition (Okoli & Atelhe, 2013). Yet every attempt made to resolve the conflicts has yielded little or no peace, as there have been recurring incidences.

North West and North East

More so, the North West has of recent come under severe hit of the herdsmen attacks. Communities affected in Southern Kaduna included Zango Kartaf, Kachia, Kafanchan, and Kagoro etc. In Zamfara State several communities were not spared (Ogwola, 2017).

In the north east, the conflicts between herdsmen and farmers have grounded economic activities to palpable halt. In April, 2016, about 44 people were said to have been killed in Angeri, Dashole, Dori and Mesuma villages, in Gashaka LGA of Taraba State; the lists also included the ransacking of several farming communities in Taraba south, particularly Wukari, Donga, Gasol, Mambilla and Takum LGAs.

Similar attacks were also observed in Fufore, Girei, Demsa, Numan, Lamurde, Yola South and Suyuk of Adamawa State (Okoli, Chukwuma and Atelhe, 2014). These are just tips of the iceberg. More cases have been recorded.

South East, South West and South – South

In Abia State, three local government areas that were mainly affected by the activities of the herdsmen were Umunneochi, Beride, Obiafia and Abbi. Enugu State had also been caught up with herdsmen attacks; communities attacked included Nimbo-Ngwoko, Ugwuijoro, Ebor, Enugu-Nimbo, Umuome and Ugwuachara. Similarly, the menace of the herdsmen passes across Akoko, South West, North East, and North West of Ondo State; Osun and Ekiti states were equally touched by the conflicts between farmers and the herdsmen. The tropical rainforest where not also left out of the herdsmen attacks. States such as Bayelsa, Cross River, Edo, Rivers and Akwa Ibom have been attacked by herdsmen in communities where people are predominantly farmers (Mcgregor, 2017; Nwosu, 2017).

It could be empirically inferred from the above cases that the Fulani-farmers conflicts in Nigeria has gained a national outlook. It is therefore more daring than the

Boko Haram terrorism. This is the more reason why the study of this conflict is not only important but is a welcome development. However over the course of time, when there were violent outbursts, government and other stakeholders had responded reactively. This has led to poor handling of the trouble. Often the under mentioned strategies have been deployed with little or no success.

Conflict management mechanisms adopted in the past

In the past, attempts were made to seek ways that would result in the amicable resolution of conflicts, especially those involving farmers and herdsmen in Nigeria. Some of these mechanisms developed to resolve conflicts included the following:

Legal options: This involves adjudication and arbitration

Adjudication; involves courts and litigation process

Arbitration; involves a conflict resolution strategy in which the facilitator of the peace process, called the arbiter (umpire) hears cases from the parties to the conflicts and gives award, which is the verdict, and which is expected to be binding on the parties concerned.

The traditional/community based methods

This strategy has a semblance of the formal court system whereof the mediator assumes both the role of adjudicators and legal representatives. A common feature of this method of conflict resolution involves giving of award or fine, as the case may be.

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

This method includes:

Mediation; This method of conflict resolution involves the use of a third party, whose role is to facilitate negotiation, communication and dialogue among or between the parties in a conflict.

Collaboration; the collaboration approach is a win-win concept in conflict management. It puts high premium on the interests of both parties in a conflict situation.

Compromise; is a give and take phenomenon. As a strategy, it involves winning and losing – a sort of sacrifice approach to conflict management. In compromise, there is a high concern for one's own interest and for the interest of the others at least in a moderate sense.

Accommodation; When one party to a conflict has high concern for the interest of the other over or above it's (or group) interest, the strategy is simply known as

accommodation. The outcome is thus a loss/win situation.

Avoidance; Avoidance as a conflict resolution strategy de-emphasizes confrontation, which obviously has a high potential for damage. It is simply a loss/loss approach towards conflict resolution.

Analysis of the Strategic Management Option for Conflict Resolution

In this section, we make attempt to answer the questions this study asked earlier in the research questions. Thus discussions and analysis of our findings shall be based on the research questions already posed at the beginning of the study.

Analysis of the causes of the Fulani herdsmen and Benue Farmers' conflicts in north –central Nigeria

The result of secondary data reviewed showed that a range of strategic factors were responsible for the violent orchestration of conflicts between farmers and the herdsmen in Benue state. Among these causes are: (1) struggle over land and its resources; (2) encroachment of herdsmen and their cattle into farmer land resulting in crops damage; (3) the vagaries of weather due to climate change which forces the herdsmen to migrate into the Sahel and rainforest belts that are predominantly farming communities, in search of pasture for their animals (Statistics have shown that the influx of

herdsmen and their cattle from Nasarawa to Benue is on the increase at a rate of 3 – 4% annually; and 1.5 – 2% leave the valley every year while 0.5 – 0.8% of the cattle is consumed as meat in abattoirs, or in the slaughter houses (Federal Livestock Department Report 2004, in WEP, 2012); (4) cattle rustling by local people; (5) ethnicity and religious sentiments; (6) free range grazing practice by herdsmen instead of ranching; (7) high level of poverty and bad governance amongst others (Mcgregor, 2017; Nwosu, 2017; Ogwola, 2017; Okoli & Atelhe, 2013; Albert, 2010; BSGN, 2014; Adisa, 2017).

Analysis of the roles of the actors/stakeholders involved in the conflicts between Fulani herdsmen and farmers in Benue state

This research question seeks to identify and analyze the roles various stakeholders played in the conflicts between Fulani herdsmen and Farmers in Benue state. Evidences from secondary data showed that the following groups are the actors involved in the conflicts.

- **Fulani Herdsmen:** These are the cattle herders who tend the flocks; they are principal actors in the conflict. They are responsible for cattle encroachment into farm lands, and are principle cause of farmers' protests. They orchestrate the killings of most farmers and

villagers. Their grievance is that farmers are responsible for loss of their cattle, especially rustling of their cattle. The Fulanis live a non-sedentary life pattern; they move from place to place in search of pasture for their animals; they prefer free grazing than ranch their animals.

- **Farmers:** They live sedentary life pattern and are found mostly in farm settlement. These too, are principal actors in the conflict. Farmers and herdsmen are directly engaged in the violent confrontations; this had caused the death of several thousands of people, especially on the side of the farmers who are often ambushed by the Fulani mercenaries. The farmers had been accused of rustling the Fulani cattle; but this often happened when their farms are invaded by the animals.
- **Government:** The national and states government are also one of the principal actors in the conflicts. Their roles include maintenance of law and order, mediating between the primary actors in the conflicts and providing relief items to victims.
- **NGOs and CSOs** are also critical actor in the management of the

conflicts. Their entails advocacy, mediation and relief management among others.

- **The International communities:** This include sovereign nations and supernatural organizations. They assist in technical matters and offer material assistance to victims of violence.

Strategic Path way towards Enduring Resolutions of the Farmers and Fulani Herders' conflicts

Having examined the literature on conflict resolutions mechanisms as given under the literature review section in this paper, we would now shift our focus to the third objective. We are recommending here in this study the following strategic approaches towards managing the Fulani-Farmer conflicts in Benue State. For an enduring management of the conflict, we consider that it has to be managed strategically. To manage the conflict strategically, it would entail taking the steps below; that is, **map out external strategies** and **build internal competencies of the actors** involved in the resolution of the conflicts.

Mapping External Strategies

An effective step towards managing conflicts requires an understanding of its external dynamics; this is necessary because conflict is a social phenomenon and a fact of human existence. The external

dynamics of conflicts involve the analysis of the role of external actors and other possible external causes: these would include hired mercenaries, the governments, external triggers (for example climate change and the roles religious leaders play in the conflicts); others include the role of the international communities and NGOs, political actors, and poverty incidence generally. This process would require a cross-functional approach rather than isolated actions, as were case in the past. A proper mapping of the causes and actors involved in the conflicts is necessary for planning and formulation of effective and efficient strategies that could lead to amicable and lasting resolution of the conflict under study. Strategic mapping would involve the identification and analysis of the principal and ancillary actors; and as well as the analysis of the causes, effects or consequences of the conflicts on the parties involved in particular and the society or nation in general. This is possible if strategic thinking is applied by the conflict analysts or mediators. Here we refer to principal actors as those parties directly opposing each other in conflict situation. On the other hand, ancillary actors are those external forces whose actions produce certain level of influence over a given conflict situation.

For example, it's been observed that the availability for use of killer mercenaries by herdsmen and farmers has helped to sustain the prevalence of the herdsmen-farmers' conflicts in Benue state (Ogwola, 2017). Also as a consequence of poverty, several of these mercenaries, after been offered a token, had made themselves willing tools in the hands of their benefactors. These chains in the conflicts could be adequately mapped out for strategic analysis. When people are poor because they society or government has failed to facilitate for them job creating opportunities; they are likely to be used as willing tools in the hands of conflicts recruiters who deceitfully see their involvement in the conflict as a means of securing for them a livelihood. This is a possibility, and there are other possibilities. Given the scenario as this one, it becomes expedient for the conflict manager to consider wide range of options than to rely on isolated, yet reactive option. This is where the application of strategic management approach comes in. This approach advocates a proactive and steeply progressive analysis of all elements in a conflict situation based on past experiences and observations.

In summary conflict mapping, in the sense used here, involves a comprehensive understanding, prediction and management of the environment or conditions that

warrant conflict; the factors that cause and sustain conflicts, the identification of the actors and the roles they play in specific conflicts; the analysis and application of workable options and tools for resolving the conflicts; and the understanding of the object of the conflict.

Build Internal Capabilities

Building internal capabilities, implies setting in motion the process of enhancing the ability or competencies of the parties in the conflicts, such that they acquire conflict resolution skills through capacity building for the various internal actors involved in the conflict and its management. This would involve giving conflict resolution education or tips to both parties in the conflicts and other stakeholders. Though conflict is a fact of social life; however its perpetuation is antithetical to human and societal development. Internally, actors who are parts of the internal dynamics of a specific conflict need to be equipped with the tools with which to handle conflict management. This would involve supplying them with appropriate resources and education that could be utilized to resolve conflicts.

It is important to stress that *resources* of the nature and the magnitude talked about here are either tangible or intangible. The tangible resources include: cash, tools and

equipment like weapon, machineries, communication gadgets and viewing cameras. On the other hand, intangible resources include knowledge about defense and combatant skills, intelligence gathering and analysis capability, reputation and confidence building; and others include persuasive skills and mental estimations abilities. These are crucial resources for effective and efficient handling of conflicts.

Studies have shown that conflicts escalate especially when the actors involved could not help much to resolve them because they lack internal capabilities to do so (Ogwola, 2017). Knowledge about conflict is not enough; resources are required to build the capacity which is most paramount. Conflict managers would need to focus on providing the necessary education and resources to parties engaged in a conflict; this would help to build their internal capability to handle conflict situation. Like is often said in the medical parlance, “Prevention is better than cure”.

Conclusion

This paper attempted to propose an alternative approach to managing herdsman and farmers conflicts in Benue State; it proposes that a more effective and efficient approach towards managing the nature of the conflict under study, and other similar conflicts, is to approach it from a more

strategic dimension. This requires the conflicts managers to do a critical mapping of the conflict and then proceed to build the internal capabilities of the parties involved in the conflict. This would mean that conflict can be better approached when it is sufficiently analyzed and understood (mapped out) clearly and if the parties received the necessary competency and education by way of internal capacity building, specifically in terms of education and resource development abilities. We believe that if this solution is applied in the Fulani-farmers conflicts in Nigeria, it will go a long way towards achieving amicable resolution.

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