

The Crisis between Farmers and Herdsmen in the Benue Valley has been in existence for a long time and only began to escalate about four decades ago. This research classifies this Conflict as Economic Although, Ethnic Religious and Political motives have served to exacerbate the conflict. This research has analysed the Socio-Economic Impact of the Farmers-Herders Conflicts on the development of the Benue Valley and finds that farming which constitutes the hub of the Economy in these communities has been significantly disrupted. Many who were producers suddenly became consumers as a result of the crisis.



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IMPACT OF THE HERDERS-FARMERS CONFLICTS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF BENUE AND NASARAWA STATES

Elijah Terdoo Ikpanor



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Catholic Diocese of Makurdi Foundation for Justice, Development and Peace (FJDP)
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This study was commissioned by the Catholic Diocese of Makurdi Foundation for Justice, Development and Peace (FJDP) in collaboration with Centre for Peace and Development Studies, Benue State University, Makurdi with Financial Support from Misereor as background information necessary for interventions in efforts at dousing tensions and violent conflicts between pastoralists and farmers in the Benue Valley.

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DEDICATION

To all victims of Herders-Farmers crisis in the
Benue Valley

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This research is a commissioned work by the Catholic Diocese of Makurdi Foundation for Justice, Development and Peace (FJDP) in collaboration with Centre for Peace and Development Studies, Benue State University, Makurdi with Financial Support from Misereor Germany to whom I owe gratitude for finding me resourceful to lead. I am grateful to Revd. Fr. Remigius Ihyula, the Coordinator of FJDP for all his cooperation and guidance in the course of the research. His flexibility on technical support led to the timely completion of the research. We are equally thankful to Mr. Valentine Kwaghchimin, the Programme Manager of the Project at FJDP for his technical expertise and intellectual response to improving the quality of the research. In the same disposition, I thank Tor, Timothy Faor the Programme Officer for his experienced intervention and contributions to the research. All the members of the Foundation for Justice, Development and Peace (FJDP) team are deeply appreciated for their support to this research.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication	v
Acknowledgements	vi
Table of Contents	viii
Foreword	x
Preface	xii
Disclaimer	xiv
Context Background	1
Aim and Objectives of the study	6
Methodology	7
Research Design	7
Population and Sampling Technique	8
Method of Data Collection	9
Method of Data Analysis	10
Study Area	11
Clarification of Terms	14
Conflict	14

Development	17
Theoretical Perspectives	19
Conflict Theory	20
The Psychological Theories of Conflict	20
Sociological Theories of Conflict	21
The Marxist Political Economy Approach	22
Interrogating the Socio- Economic Impact of the Farmer's – Herder's Conflict on Development in the Benue Valley	23
The Fulani and Cattle Herding in the Benue Valley	23
Nature and Causes of Conflict between Herders and Farmers in the Benue Valley	25
Socio - Economic Impact of the Conflict on Development in the Benue Valley	34
Conclusion	45
Recommendations	49
Bibliography	50

FOREWORD

Dousing Tensions and Conflict between Pastoralists and Farmers in the Benue Valley is a Project designed to promote peaceful co-existence between pastoralists and farmers across the Benue Valley through integrated interventions such as Peace Research aimed at generating well-researched and evidence-based information on tensions between pastoralists and farmers to neutralize biased, sensational and incendiary reporting which causes tension.

In addition, there is Advocacy for Collaborative Early Response basically carried out to influence early response to conflicts between pastoralists and farmers, by security agencies, government ministries, departments and agencies; non-governmental authorities as well as community leaders.

Another component is Trauma Healing and Resilience Building aimed at entrenching healing and integration of survivors of the conflict through coordinated psychosocial support services in displaced persons camps and communities hosting survivors of the conflict and Analytical and non-sensational media reportage of the conflict thus broadcast, print and social media is being influenced to feature evidence-based and non-incendiary reporting of tensions and violent conflicts between pastoralists and crop farmers in the Benue Valley.

MISEREOR (a Development NGO of the Catholic Bishops of Germany), Centre for Peace and Development Studies, Benue State University, Makurdi and the Catholic Diocese of Makurdi Foundation for Justice, Development and Peace (FJDP) is pleased to share with you this Evidence-Based publication on the conflicts between pastoralists and farmers and it is believed that this monograph will go a long way in dousing Herders-Farmers tensions as intended.

Valentine Kwaghchimin
Programme Manager, FJDP Makurdi
7th December, 2020

PREFACE

This research examines the nature, causes and socio – economic impact of the herders’ – farmers’ conflict on development in the Benue Valley which is home to about 70% of the minority ethnic nationalities in Nigeria. Emphasis was however laid on ten local government areas namely, Agatu, Guma, Gwer – West, Logo and Makurdi in Benue state, and Awe, Doma, Keana, Lafia and Obi Local Government Areas in Nasarawa State. The research is both qualitative and quantitative and involves the empirical and descriptive analysis of data obtained from the survey method, oral interviews and published materials. The study is construed within the framework that conflict is a product of many interacting variables hence, the conflict theory, psychological and sociological theories and the Marxist political – economy approach to conflict were adopted for the study. The research observed that conflict between the largely nomadic Fulani herdsmen and the indigenous farming communities began to escalate about four decades ago. It classifies this conflict as economic although, ethnic, religious and political motives have served to exacerbate the conflict. The research traces this conflict to the incompatible modes of economic reproduction practiced by the herdsmen and farmers and identifies encroachment of cattle into farmlands as a major trigger of the conflict. It observes that the sedentary lifestyle of the farmers makes them

more vulnerable to this conflict. In this regard, the socio-economic effects of the conflict includes, loss of lives, injuries, human displacements, trauma, lawlessness, rape, poverty, hunger, prostitution, unwanted pregnancies, diseases, destruction of economic, educational, religious and social infrastructure and the disarticulation of the economy, social life and the severance of family ties. The study therefore opts for the establishment of cattle ranches as the co-existence of nomadic cattle herding groups and sedentary farmers cannot guarantee peace as the two farming practices are in compatible. It also suggests that security agencies act more firmly in addition to the government's increased demonstration of the political will to stem violent conflict regardless of the groups involved.

Professor Joe Tor Iorapuu
Vice-Chancellor, Benue State University,
Makurdi-Nigeria
7th December, 2020

DISCLAIMER

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Context Background

For nearly four decades now, conflict between nomadic herders and sedentary farming communities has become a recurring decimal in the Benue Valley. There are many documented evidence of the hitherto harmonious relationship between these groups but this is fast fading as the tempo of confrontations has continued to accelerate with untoward consequences. The Benue valley which falls within the Central Nigeria area is considered home to a plethora of ethnic groups that are considered indigenous to these areas. These groups include the Tiv, Idoma, Birom, Eggon, Nupe, Jukun, Pyem, Goemai, Kofyar, Igala, Gwari, Chamba, Bassa, and Igede.

Indeed, conflict as a consequence of the incompatible motives of individuals and groups, is a pervasive phenomenon the world over and its impact is quite devastating although scholars have argued that the phenomenon has some positive attributes as well (Varvar, 2002). Also, the dimensions of conflict are as variegated as their impact. While non-violent conflict also exists, the violent form of conflict has been known to inflict untold hardships on human societies throughout history. Clearly, the violent form of conflict has effects which cut across virtually all facets of human existence such as the disruption of the educational and agricultural sectors, destruction of infrastructure and socio economic collapse (Sule, 1988). Equally important is the fact that, conflict has been responsible for the disruption of food production

activities, processing and supply, hence, it has produced its most devastating effects on human societies in the form of injuries, starvation and death.

Inarguably, death stands out as the most noticeable effect of conflict but such other undesirable effects like, human suffering and conditions of uncertainty such as the displacement of people cannot be ignored. Conflict also leads to a decline in production output and the collapse of infrastructure which may seem insignificant compared to the loss of lives (FAO). However, this decline in production output and the collapse of infrastructure also deserve attention because they undermine the ability of conflict survivors to subsist and recover especially in an area like the Benue Valley where subsistence agriculture forms the bedrock of the economy. This is more so as an economy that is rooted on agriculture, will be severely affected when the destruction of crops and livestock causes reduced food security or famine and even death.

Indeed, in many cases, deaths resulting indirectly from conflict such as through famine exceed deaths from direct violence. These material losses, which are often overlooked represents an important aspect of assessing the severity of a conflict. It also provides a guide to the design of long-term policy for dealing with conflict situations. This is an indication that the indirect costs of war are typically greater than the more straightforward or direct costs; and that they continue long after the end of a conflict (FAO).

We have already alluded to the fact that ethnic groups inhabiting the Benue Valley are generally agrarian groups and agricultural activities constitute the hub of their economy. Apart from the fact that

an overwhelming proportion of these groups is engaged in farming activities directly, many others are involved in the conduct of other activities that are more or less related to agriculture. The dominance of farming activities especially crop production among these groups is actually a long established practice. This practice in addition to the absence of other major economic activities like manufacturing, means the disruptive nature of conflict will have profound effect on farming and the economy of the area.

The Benue Valley covers the present central Nigerian states of Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Plateau, southern Kaduna and southern Bauchi (Ochefu, 2002). It extends from Taraba State and stretches southwards to the confluence of the Rivers Niger and Benue in Kogi. The region is reputed as possessing a highly complex multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-cultural society. It is thus the home of what is sometimes referred to as the minority groups in Nigeria such as, Tiv, Idoma, Jukun, Nupe, Birom, Igbira, Igala, Chamba, Alago, Bassa, Angas, Igede, Eggon, Kuteb, Nyifon among several others. The region is largely covered by the guinea savannah vegetation and supports the production of a wide range of crops ranging from cereals and fruits to tubers. Its adequate supply of rainfall and the presence of fresh water bodies have combined to make the place suitable for the habitation of farming groups – a situation which attracts cattle herders into the area.

Many factors like desert encroachment, the depletion of the Lake Chad in the far northern part of Nigeria as well as many other factors have been identified as pushing nomadic cattle herders into

the Benue valley. Arising from the incompatible and dominant economic modes of both the farming communities and the cattle herders, conflict has become a recurring decimal between both groups in the Benue Valley. Initially, these conflicts were far apart, spontaneous and not sustained. Then, clashes between the farming groups and nomadic herdsman were isolated cases of cattle encroaching into farmlands and causing damage to crops as well as cattle rustling. These were largely cases between individual farmers and the herdsman which could be resolved within the communities although violent clashes also occurred in some situations.

The farmers' – herders' conflict in the Benue Valley has since the beginning of the century assumed frightening dimensions as farming communities are getting decimated while herds of cattle are rustled. Indeed, there are many written works that have addressed the causes, trajectory and effects of this conflict. However, many of these sources tend to dwell on the lives lost, those injured and value of property destroyed especially as these are the immediate or most visible effects of conflict from the media and the larger society. Thus what one often finds regarding the impact of these conflicts can be described as generalisations which can as well be described as mere records of the toll. It can however be argued that the actual impact of conflict is varied, far – reaching and cuts across different dimensions which require a methodical investigation before appropriate classifications can be made. In this connection, this study is sets out to interrogate the socio – economic impact of the farmers' – herders' conflict in the Benue Valley with the aim of providing valuable information that would

contribute to the knowledge building process by enhancing our understanding of the immediate and after effects of the conflict on the groups involved.

There is no doubt that conflict poses challenges against peaceful co-existence especially because it arises from incompatible motives between groups. There is no doubt that conflict creates serious and undesirable outcomes in spite of some of the positives that can be drawn from it. Violent conflict particularly can lead to the loss of lives and property. It can lead to injuries, trauma, uncertainties, pain and difficulty, hunger and disease. There is also the disarticulation of the economy and distortion of social cohesion and order. This is in addition to the collapse of infrastructure which may seem insignificant compared to the loss of lives but cannot be ignored either. In spite of this plethora of undesirable consequences of conflict, the farmers' – herders' conflict in the Benue Valley continues to rage as its scope and sophistication continues to expand.

The aforementioned adverse effects of conflict notwithstanding, there is the tendency by many including scholars to generalise these effects in spite of the peculiar situations that can be obtained in every conflict situation.

Again, considering the fact that conflict makes development elusive, to a society, there is the need to specifically address issues that would facilitate the understanding of herders' – farmers' conflict in the Benue Valley. Such issues as the factors responsible for conflict between herders and farmers in the Benue Valley, the main features of the conflict between herders and farmers in the Benue Valley, the extent to which development in the Benue Valley has been affected by the socio - economic impact of

the herders – farmers conflict, and the ways through which the herders – farmers’ conflict in the Benue Valley can be addressed for enhanced development deserve to be considered.

The study derives significance from the fact that it addresses a phenomenon that is steadily creating a range of undesirable and inimical consequences for humanity generally and the Benue Valley in particular. The study is therefore significant because as it will help in enhancing our understanding of the causes, dimensions and impact of conflict in the study area. It therefore provides explanations that can improve the conflict management strategies in the area of study in order to minimise the adverse effects of conflict on socio – economic development in the area. With its empirical and analytical orientation, the study is important because it marks a clear departure from the predominant socio – political perspective from which the phenomenon of conflict is often treated.

Thus, for a study that addresses the lacuna that exists regarding the empirical impact of conflict on socio – economic development in the Benue Valley, this study is considered important in the sense that it will help in the formulation of post-conflict management strategies and as such more informed decisions should be taken by stakeholders such as the government, conflict management experts, policy makers and researchers in addressing conflict related situations. The significance of this study is also anchored on the belief that, by proffering workable recommendations to address the impact of conflict on socio – economic development in the Benue Valley it will be an important contribution to already existing knowledge in this field of study and as such

it will trigger further research in this area as a result of reactions or contributions to its findings.

Findings derived from the qualitative and quantitative approach which used both questionnaire and oral interviews show that the herders – farmers’ conflict in the Benue Valley can be classified as an economic conflict. It has also been found that the herdsmen – farmers’ conflict in the Benue Valley is a resource based conflict. This means the conflict is rooted in the struggle over resources which include land, water and grazing areas. According to the study, every attack by the pastoralists is blamed on cattle rustlers. Although the farmers allege that the herders often use rustling as an excuse to launch predetermined attacks on unarmed and defenceless civilians. A large majority also of the farming population believes that the socio economic effects of conflict on development in the Benue Valley are essentially negative. Farming, schooling, church activities and market activities are the major areas affected alongside a plethora of psychological and social consequences. Such effects as hunger and disease, displacements, and deaths are therefore recognised as socio - economic impact of herdsmen – farmers’ conflict on development in the Benue Valley. Similarly, schools, farms, homes and places of worship form part of the infrastructure that has been ravaged by the conflict.

Aim and Objectives of the study

The aim of this study is to explain the nature, causes and socio – economic impact of the herders’ – farmers’ conflict on development in the Benue

Valley. In more specific terms therefore, the following constitute the objectives of the study:

- i. To identify the factors responsible for conflict between herders and farmers in the Benue Valley.
- ii. To explain the main features of the conflict between herders and farmers in the Benue Valley.
- iii. To explain the extent to which development in the Benue Valley has been affected by the socio-economic impact of the herders – farmers conflict.
- iv. To suggest ways through which the herders – farmers’ conflict in the Benue Valley can be addressed for enhanced development.

Methodology

The study relied on the survey research (quantitative) approach and the qualitative research approach. Data for the study was obtained from both primary and secondary sources of information all of which were subjected to a process of descriptive analysis. The sources of information for the study were a combination of the survey method with oral interviews and the library method. The survey method and oral interviews provided the primary sources of data. The library approach, provided the secondary sources of information that were used for this analysis. Within the context of secondary sources, both published and unpublished materials dwelling on conflict generally were considered useful for the analysis, literature review, theoretical and conceptual framework. In this connection, theses, dissertations articles, papers and the like were equally consulted for the study. It is important to also mention here that personal observations, the

examination of security reports, NGOs and government officials and interaction with victims significantly contributed to the findings of the study.

Research Design

The research is both qualitative and quantitative. It involves the analysis of data obtained from the survey method as an approach which relies on public opinion with regards to their views pertaining the issues under consideration. For this study, these opinions were obtained through the administration of questionnaire (made up of structured questions) and unstructured questions or oral interviews. The structured and close – ended questions have a characteristic limitation of restricting respondents from expressing wider opinions on issues and they lack flexibility in the responses. They therefore narrow the perspectives surrounding issues. However, the structured questions ensure that the responses are obtained in easily measurable terms and this is what made them to be used here. The unstructured questions were also used in the study to provide respondents the freedom to express themselves without limiting them like the structured questionnaire.

Population and Sampling Technique

The second population is made up of residents of ten local government areas in Benue and Nasarawa states. The LGAs are; Agatu, Guma, Gwer –West, Logo and Makurdi local government areas of Benue state, and Awe, Doma, Keana, Lafia and Obi local government areas of Nasarawa State. The of

populations the local government areas based on the 2006

Population Census is as follows:

Agatu,	113,083
Guma,	191,599
Gwer –West,	122,145
Logo	169,063
Makurdi	297,398
Awe,	113,083
Doma,	138,991
Keana,	81,801
Obi	148,977
Lafia East	329,922
Total:	1,604,532

The population of 1,604,532 is too large for the present research to cover in its entirety and as such, a systematic sampling process was adopted for the study as an aspect of the survey method. Sampling here refers to process the of obtaining a portion of a larger population for research purpose (Osula 2005). The sampled subjects were typical of the larger population and therefore expected to represent the opinions of the larger group from which they were selected. (Semetko, 2004:334). It is important to point out here that sampling as a research process can limit the generalisation of the findings because one cannot be certain that the sample that was selected for this study perfectly represents the opinion of the entire population in the study. The sample size of the study was therefore cut down to 430. Out of this sample, 400 were served with the close – ended questionnaire while the remaining 30 were subjected to the open ended oral interviews. The 400

respondents were randomly selected while the remaining 30 for the oral interviews were purposively chosen as deliberate efforts were made to approach those who had knowledge about the conflict.

Method of Data Collection

Data for this study was mainly obtained through the survey method and the data was derived from primary and secondary sources. The method of data collection was the questionnaire and oral interviews which involved a total of 430 respondents from the 10 LGAs used for the study. This means that 43 respondents were obtained from each of the 10 LGAs (10 respondents were administered with the questionnaire while 3 were subjected to oral interviews in each of the 10 LGAs). The research instrument used for the 400 members of the population was a questionnaire with 10 close ended questions. The flexible oral questions were used for the remaining population of 30 respondents who were subjected to oral interviews. The randomly selected respondents and the responses derived from the 400 copies of the questionnaire served as primary data for the study. Oral interviews were also conducted to elicit information from 30 respondents and the responses served as the qualitative aspect of the research.

With regards to the secondary sources of information used for the study, both published and unpublished works were consulted for information from both private and public libraries. The information obtained from this source was mainly derived from

books, journals, and dissertations. Data in electronic form was also sources from the internet. Much of the secondary data was used under the literature review segment and for the theoretical aspect of the study.

Method of Data Analysis

The data from the questionnaire was analyzed using simple percentages for the quantitative aspect of the research. The data from the questionnaire was first of all tabulated and the options bearing significantly higher percentages were deemed as the choice of the respondents while the options with no clear cut differences were considered as being complementary. After the tabulations, the data was textually analysed using both descriptive and discussion approaches. It is important to explain here that although 400 copies of the questionnaire were distributed, only 382 copies of the questionnaire representing 95.5% of the total number distributed could be retrieved. The unreturned copies form a negligible percentage (4.5%) which cannot significantly influence the outcome of the research hence, the analysis here is based on the number of copies returned. Data obtained from the oral interviews and secondary sources was well scrutinised and synchronised with that derived from the questionnaire and analysed textually.

Study Area

The study covers the Benue Valley which falls within the central Nigeria area and which covers the present

central Nigerian states of Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Plateau, southern Kaduna and southern Bauchi (Ochefu, 2002). It extends from Taraba State and stretches southwards to the confluence of the Rivers Niger and Benue in Lokoja, Kogi State. Although the Benue Valley is identified as the geographical scope of the study, it is not every part of the region that has been covered by the study. It would therefore be observed that the term “Benue Valley” has been deployed here to serve as a blanket term which covers the areas addressed by the study. In specific terms therefore, a total of ten (10) local government areas are covered by the study with five (5) local government areas drawn from each of Benue and Nasarawa states. Those covered in Benue state include, Agatu, Guma, Gwer –West, Logo and Makurdi local government areas while those from Nasarawa State are, Awe, Doma, Keana, Lafia and Obi local government areas. Although these are not the only local government areas affected by the herdsmen – farmers’ crisis, these have been the worst hit areas in the two states hence the decision to focus on them.

The Benue Valley region is largely covered by the guinea savannah vegetation and supports the production of a wide range of crops ranging from cereals and fruits to tubers. Its adequate supply of rainfall and the presence of fresh water bodies have combined to make the place suitable for the habitation of farming groups – a situation which attracts cattle herders into the area. The study area is situated between the Savannah and the Rain forest zones and because of its transitional nature, it combines the climatic and vegetation features of the

savannah and the rain forest zones (Agena, 2011). The area witnesses a total annual rainfall ranging from 1500-2000mm every year and a maximum temperature of 35°C. (Okpeh, 2013). The weather or climate in the area is mild and is influenced by two air masses of tropical continental air mass and tropical maritime mass of the Atlantic Ocean. The area experiences two seasons namely, wet and dry seasons and wet season starts from April to November while the dry season starts from December to March.

The area of study is also blessed with mineral deposits such as tin, limestone, salt, granite, laterite, river sand, coal, bauxite, etc. This region is also endowed with large water bodies like the River Benue, valleys and big streams, fertile soil with well grown grasses and vegetation, etc. Historically, the concentration of people of diverse cultural background in the area is been explained to be as a result of the favorable geographical conditions of this region. Varvar (2008) corroborated with this reality by illuminating that:

The physical environment of the area posed very little problems to human habitation and exploitation, and the near absence of mountain ranges and hills allow for relatively easy movement and made it possible for the people to effectively take control and establish settlements over the extensive area. (Varvar,2008:76)

The location of the Benue Valley between the rain forest region of Nigeria and the savannah zones provides enough rainfall and adequate sunlight to sustain the production of a wide range of crops in

this region. The region also has plains and rivers which have enhanced the fertility of the soil in the region as the alluvial deposits from the rivers and the tributaries continue to enhance the natural fertility of the soil in the area. This, rich loamy and marshy soil have contributed to agriculture as the mainstay of the economy of the area since the pre-colonial period. Indeed, the region is reputed for the production of a wide range of crops like, yams, groundnut, guinea corn, millet, soya beans, cocoyam, potatoes, orange trees and mango trees. Palm trees are also grown in large quantities and the seeds are used in the production of palm oil in the area. It is important to point out here that farming in this region is essentially labour intensive and the farmers have continued to rely on the use of household labour.

A combination of factors have made the area of study attractive to a plethora of ethnic groups– many of which are involved in labour intensive agriculture. Also, many of these groups have traditions of origin that trace their origins to areas outside the Benue Valley. These histories point to different factors that informed the migration of the groups into the Benue Valley. This explains why the region has a highly complex multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-cultural status. It is thus the home of what is sometimes referred to as the minority groups in Nigeria such as, Tiv, Idoma, Jukun, Nupe, Birom, Igbira, Igala, Chamba, Alago, Bassa, Angas, Igede, Eggon, Kuteb, Nyifon, Kabba, Gbagyi among several others. It can therefore be observed that the Benue Valley is also a plural polity that is defined by socio-cultural and institutional diversity between (largely minority) ethnic nationalities of various populations. The significance of the region which roughly

coincides with the Middle Belt region of Nigeria cannot be overemphasised.

Indeed, Logam (1985) described the Benue Valley as having the highest socio-political and religious plurality of any of the regional units of the Nigerian federation. It merits mentioning therefore that the region harbours about 70% of the ethnic groups in Nigeria. Of the remainder, seventy five ethnic groups, representing 18%, were found exclusively in the South while forty four, representing 9% of the total were found only in the far (or Islamic) North (Blitz, 1965 cited in Okpeh, 2008: 31). This implies that the region plays host to the largest chunk of ethnic minorities in Nigeria. To this plethora of groups is added the migrant pastoralists whose presence has continued to increase in the region. This is apart from being an arena of contest between Christianity, Islam and the African Traditional Religions. It is important that the contestation for converts and adherents as well as influence and significance between Christianity and Islam are partly responsible for some of the most violent religious conflicts we have experienced in the region and other parts of the country (Agbegbedia, 2014). The above analysis therefore portrays the Benue Valley as a socio-economic and political entity that is inherently conflict prone. (Agbegbedia, 2014).

Clarification of Terms Conflict

Human beings are generally characterised by divergent ideas, beliefs interests and convictions which create incompatibilities that lead to conflict. Indeed, Okpeh (2007 p.24) sees conflict as an

inevitable phenomenon in human society. He also contends that there is consensus among scholars that as an enduring process, conflict is a basic fact of life and it is therefore inevitable. According to Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall (2005) in Eti (2009, p.93), “conflict is an intrinsic and inevitable aspect of social change. It is an expression of heterogeneity of interests, values and beliefs that arise as new formations generated by social change come up against inherited constraints.” More often than not conflict is assumed to be a negative phenomenon, an approach which erodes it of positive values. However, Varvar (2007:34) explains that throughout history, conflict has been a normal way of conducting disputes within human societies. In this connection, he maintains that conflict can be said to be an inevitable aspect of human interaction. Okpeh (2007:25) also argues that contrary to the once popular view that conflict was inherently a negative and dysfunctional phenomenon, conflict can be positive and transformational. Simmel (1955 p.13) also contends that if every interaction among men is association, conflict must certainly be considered as a form of association. Indeed conflict is designed to resolve divergent dualism, which means it is a way of achieving some kind of unity even if it means the annihilation of one of the conflicting parties. However the negative aspect of conflict cannot be ignored because it sometimes degenerates into crisis when it cannot be resolved. The nature of conflict can be argued as being broad because the phenomenon assumes many dimensions which are in some cases expressed through direct or violent confrontation.

With regards to what actually constitutes conflict, it has been observed that several perspectives exist

in the attempt to explain what conflict means. For instance, Burton (1983:26) conceives of conflict as a relation in which each party perceives the other's goals, values interests and behaviour as antithetical to its own. While many issues can be gleaned from the above definition, it is pertinent to mention that conflict generally thrives where interests tend to be incompatible and it is the inability of the parties involved to resolve conflict that creates crises. According to Mckee (1956:35), conflict is a struggle over values or scarce resources in which two contesting groups each seek to impose values or claims on resources over those of the other. To do so, each seeks to maintain or challenge the social structure in terms of his or her own interest. It can therefore be gleaned from the definition put forward by Mckee that it is in the attempt by groups to avoid marginalisation and deprivation that conflict emerges. However the definition has not been able to acknowledge the fact that conflict does not necessarily involve two groups hence it can involve more than two groups. Coser (1956) on his part sees conflict as:

.... a struggle over values or claims to status, power or scarce resources, in which the aims of the conflicting parties are not only to gain the desired values, but also to neutralise, injure or eliminate their rivals.. such conflict may take place between individuals, between collectivities or between individuals and collectivities.

Coser's definition shows that conflict is naturally destructive in the sense that it implies the intention

to inflict injury on, neutralize or subvert the aspirations of opponents. These definitions are proof of the position that conflict is a fluid and infinitely elastic concept which can be twisted into different shapes and has become an issue over which scholars find themselves in disagreement. This lack of agreement does not conceal the fact that conflict primarily implies disagreement among individuals or groups and it is conflict that degenerates into crisis.

While many issues can be gleaned from the above definition, it is important to mention that conflict generally thrives where interests tend to be incompatible hence it results as a clash of interest. This explains why Mitchel (1981) defines conflict as a relationship between two or more parties who have incompatible goals. Otite (1999) also argues that conflict arises as a result of the fact that those involved in it are usually in pursuit of divergent interests, goals and aspirations. Conflict is therefore a product of human interaction hence it is a state of discord which is caused by actual or perceived opposition of needs, values and interests between people.

More often than not conflict is assumed to be a negative phenomenon, an approach which erodes it of positive values. However, Varvar (2002) explains that throughout history, conflict has been a normal way of conducting disputes within human societies. In this connection, he maintains that conflict can be said to be an inevitable aspect of human interaction hence it cannot be completely erased from human societies Okpeh also argues that contrary to the once popular view that conflict was inherently a negative and dysfunctional phenomenon, conflict can be positive and transformational. Simmel (1995) also

contends that if every interaction among men is association. Conflict must certainly be considered as a form of association. Indeed conflict is designed to resolve divergent dualism, which means it is a way of achieving some kind of unity even if it means the annihilation of one of the conflicting parties. However, the negative aspect of conflict cannot be ignored because it sometimes degenerates into violence when it cannot be resolved. The nature of conflict can be argued as being broad because the phenomenon assumes many dimensions as the present study is set to unravel in the Benue Valley.

Development

The concept of development particularly is one of such terms that have been made fluid with the plethora of meanings that people ascribe to it. On this strength, it is worthy to note that economic development is often interchanged with economic growth. However, economic growth can be referred to as increased productivity or more output as a result of the increased efficiency or enhanced exploitation of the factors of production. By extension, growth means quantitative increase in output which is proportional to the output within a given economy or an increase in capacity utilisation especially of the factors of production. Development on the other hand refers to both increase in output and changes in the technical and institutional arrangement by which it is produced. Kindleberger in his attempt to explain the relationship between both concepts pointed out that;

Growth without development leads nowhere, it is also impossible to contemplate development without growth because change in function requires change in size..... That is, until an economy can produce enough to feed its population ... self-sufficiency in food production through growth, it will be unable to allocate a portion of its resources to other types of activity in order to enhance development (Kindleberger,1965).

While it cannot be denied that increased income can lead to development, there is no guarantee to that effect since there can be growth without development. Why people sometimes use the concepts of growth and development interchangeably probably stems from the fact that the process of development usually involves economic growth in the sense that, while economic growth refers to increase in per capita real income, nothing is implied as to the sources of the increase in per capita real income or the character of the factors of production and infrastructural facilities (Goulet, 1991). To Essang (1975) therefore:

Development is the process whereby the real per capita income increases overtime through changes in the quantity and quality of production factors and the institutionalization of the growth process. In particular, development implies not merely the growth of the per capita real income but also its distribution, the sources of growth, the development of infrastructural and administrative framework essential to

sustained and cumulative growth. As such it is a much broader term (Essang, 1975).

Consistent with the citation above, it merits mentioning that both economic growth and economic development walk up to a point where the quantitative changes informed by growth are translated into qualitative changes. Indeed, there is an avalanche of dimensions from which the concept of development is viewed among scholars. These dissenting views as to what constitutes development however have not been able to erode the concept of its basic essence as a desirable form of change with multidimensional effects on societies and humans. In this connection, some of the existing perspectives regarding the concept of development deserve mentioning here. Classical materialists for instance consider development as the accumulation of wealth without regard to whether this translates to improved living conditions. Another lopsided posture is the fact that, palliative indices such as increase in wages and income are used by compradors as the parameters of development without corresponding institutional and attitudinal changes.

Although economic development is sometimes considered from an infrastructural perspective, there is also the human dimension of development which emerged from the United Nations Declaration of the 1970s as the Human Development Decade. This notion contends that, human development occurs when people's choices are expanded at all levels of development. This occurs when people can live long enough with good health, acquire knowledge and have access to the resources needed for a decent

lifestyle. In this regard, economic development should be conceived as a multi-dimensional process involving changes in structure, attitudes and institutions as well as acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and the eradication of absolute poverty.

Theoretical Perspectives

This study is construed within the framework that conflict is a product of several interacting variables. This perhaps explains why there are several approaches and theories by different scholars aimed at explaining the causes of conflict. We have therefore attempted here to discuss some of these theories and approaches as they relate to the understanding of this study. In this regard, the Conflict Theory, psychological theories, sociological theories and the Marxist political – economy approach are discussed with the belief that they will provide the framework within which the study can be understood.

Conflict Theory

Conflict theory recognises conflict as the hallmark of society. The theory contends that conflict results from social and economic forces operating within a society. Proponents of the theory contend that every society is composed of groups which possess divergent interests. In their opinion therefore the structure of society which tends to favour one group over the other is responsible for conflict within society. (Aver, Nnorom & Targba 2013).

According to the conflict theory, some groups exert dominance over others and appropriate unto themselves a disproportionate portion of resources such as wealth and privileges at the expense of the less powerful ones. They also incriminate the activities of the less powerful while they protect that of the powerful persons such situations according to this theory creates violence. (Dauda & Zhema, 2019) The theory avers that, the masses are not bound to society by their shared values, but by coercion at the hands of those in power. This perspective emphasises social control, not consensus and conformity. Groups and individuals advance their own interests, struggling over control of societal resources. Those with the most resources exercise power over others with inequality and power struggles resulting. There is great attention paid to class, race, and gender in this perspective because they are seen as the grounds of the most pertinent and enduring struggles in society which often lead to political violence (Anderson & Taylor 2009).

The Psychological Theories of Conflict

The psychological theories include the rising expectations theory, the relative deprivation theory, and the frustration-aggression hypothesis. The rising expectations theory as a psychological theory contends that, conflict results from the increasing demand which human beings continue to make out of situations. According to the theory human demands are not static hence they continue to expand with the dynamics of society and the inability to meet these demands often leads to conflict. The theory however cannot be used to explain situations in

which even moderate expectations cannot be met. According to the frustration- aggression theory, conflict results from aggression and aggression is in turn a product of frustration. The frustration-aggression theory upholds the notion that, people tend to be more aggressive when they are frustrated. While the theory explains the nature of some of the conflicts that have been witnessed in the Benue Valley, the theory cannot be used to explain every conflict situation in the area of study. The theory of relative deprivation also tends to be related to the preceding psychological theories. According to this theory, there always exists some aspirations among humans. While some of these aspirations can be met, others cannot be realised hence the existence of gaps between what people desire and what they are unable to achieve. Thus, conflict here is interpreted as a product of the discrepancy between what people seek and what is attainable. According to this theory, the wider the gap between what an individual desires and what has been achieved the higher his anger and tendency to create violence.

Sociological Theories of Conflict

The sociological theories on their part have two variants which are most commonly used by sociologists to explain political violence. These are the systemic hypothesis and the group conflict hypothesis. The systemic hypothesis maintains that political violence can best be understood by considering the social context within which it occurs. In his connection, the theory notes that the disparities created by modernity and tradition in modernising

societies lead to violence. The theory contends that this is because a hiatus is created between the elite who are the products of modernisation and those still hanging on to tradition and who remain at the base of the social ladder hence they resort to violence. This theory does not adequately explain the phenomenon of conflict or violence because political conflicts often erupt among the elite who later deploy those in the lower end of the social ladder into it. To this end, it is important to also understand that the causes of conflict within the area of study transcend social classes.

The group conflict hypothesis on its part sees conflict as a product of the struggle for power among various groups within the society. It also assumes that political violence is a consequence of the conflict between political actors within a political system. The theory gives a good insight into understanding the causes of political violence in the Benue Valley. This is because very often, those caught in the conflict or those who even partake in the violence are not aware of the actual misunderstanding between the main political actors even as they are ready to unleash mayhem on those who stand in the way of the group they are supporting.

The Marxist Political Economy Approach

The Marxist political economy approach is an offshoot of Marxism which was advanced by Karl Marx as a critique of the classical political economy. The theory employs the concepts of dialectical and historical materialism to identify and explain the real

subject matter of political economy and to reveal the laws of economic life in society. In this connection, the political economy theory by Marx emphasises the primacy of economic mode of production and distribution in determining all other activities and relationships within society. As such, the economic structure of the society sets the general trend of political interest and alignments.

The theory also contends that, as long as there is economic inequality in a society, the society cannot maximise its political power or democracy as political power will tend to polarise around economic power. This theory, according to Ake (1981), views economic condition as not just setting the tone of politics in a society, but also defining the role of coercion in the society. Thus inequality in the distribution of resources and revenue to various groups in the society will automatically lead the dissatisfied groups to protest overtly. At the same time the haves use their resources to sponsor violence to their advantage. Just as political power tends to breed economic gains in weaker societies, for there is lack of accountability. Since none of these theories can exclusively explain the causes of conflict in Benue Valley, the present researcher has chosen to adopt a combination of the aforementioned theories in explaining the causes of conflict in Benue Valley.

Interrogating the Socio- Economic Impact of the Farmers' – Herders' Conflict on Development in the Benue Valley

Having observed that conflict between herdsmen and farmers in the Benue Valley dates to as far back

as four decades ago, efforts will be made here to determine the causes of this conflict, its trajectory and how the socio – economic impact of the conflict have affected development in the area of study. However, it is important to first, explain how the pastoralists came to establish their presence in the Benue Valley – a region far removed from the indigenous home of the pastoralists.

The Fulani and Cattle Herding in the Benue Valley

The Middle Belt region of Nigeria is regarded to be the area, which since 1967 belongs to various states which earlier belonged to the provinces of Plateau, Benue, Niger, Kwara States as well as the Southern part of Zaria. These are areas where the pastoralists are predominant as regards cattle breeding (Agbegbedia, 2014). These are also areas of diffusion resulting from a spontaneous heavily scattered propagation of nomadic or semi sedentary full time cattle breeders without adequately fixed legal ownership or usufruct rights to the land they use. In essence, this constitutes a transition to a penetration area in various partial areas of the Jos Plateau, since the peaceful penetration of the settlement areas of other people has developed into an undisputed possession of grazing areas.

Fricke (1993:203) documented the spread of the pastoralists in the Benue Valley and other parts of Central Nigeria. It is common knowledge that the Fulani are predominantly cattle herders although some Fulani dwell in urban settings. Fricke (1993) has pointed out that some of the urban Fulani also own cattle herds that are entrusted under the care of the nomadic herdsmen. Since the herdsmen have

continued to adhere to the dictates of nature, they have had to move down from the Northern part of the country into the Benue Valley as the far north characteristically has a shorter period of rainy season. The herdsman therefore had to move south as the dry season approached following the Inter Tropical Front (ITF) in search of pastures water for their herds. Genyi (2017) cites Iro (1991) as explaining that the Fulani use mobility as a production strategy to access water and pasture and possibly markets. This movement takes the pastoralists to as much as 20 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, making the Fulani the most diffused ethno-cultural group. The group is believed to have been touched but only slightly by modernity in their preponderant dominance of the pastoralist's economic activity. The pastoralist with their cattle move southwards from northern Nigeria into the Benue valley for pasture and water beginning from the onset of the dry season (November to April).

According to Genyi (2017), the Benue valley has two major attractive factors; water from River Benue and their tributaries such as River Katsina-Ala along the river lines. With the tsetse fly - free environment, the Benue valley is hugely attractive to the pastoralists. The return movement begins with the onset of rains in April and continues through June. Once the valley is saturated with heavy rain and movement is hampered by muddy areas threatening the very survival of the herds, coupled with shrinking space for passage due to farming activities, movement out of the valley becomes inevitable (Genyi, 2017). Initially, the herdsman used to move back north as the rains returned and moved up north but climatic changes and adverse conditions in the

north have made their stay down south longer. This presence of the herdsmen in the Benue Valley has implications for conflicts in the Benue Valley.

Nature and Causes of Conflict between Herders and Farmers in the Benue Valley

Two major contradictions actually - pastoralists encroachment and increased land cultivation in the Benue Valley including the fadama areas beginning from the 1980s meant that pastoralists and farmers had to compete directly for access to wetland areas with the consequent increase in conflict (Depres, 1994; Osaghae, 1994). We observed earlier that the groups with the Benue valley hitherto had a cordial relationship with the herdsmen. In many instances, the herdsmen were allotted portions of land upon which they settled and would stay until it was time to move back to the north. However, as more land came under cultivation and with the increased migration of the herdsmen into the Benue Valley, conflict began to persist between these groups. Initially, these were cases of cattle straying into farmlands but these issues were often resolved amicably. However, as the scale of these encroachments increased, the herdsmen could not always pay for the crops destroyed and as such farmers began to deny them areas to settle. The herders on their part began to flee from areas after their cattle has destroyed crops more so as the frequency of these encroachment had increased. As shown in table 4.1 below many of the respondents are convinced that the herders – farmers' conflict is economic. This is especially as most of the outbreaks

have been as a result of the incompatible modes of production practiced by the herdsman and the farming communities in the Benue Valley.

According to Genyi (2017) the conflict between the sedentary farmers and nomadic pastoralists is rooted in the contestation for land-based resources of pasture and water. The politics of this contestation is captured by the arguments and activities of Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association representing nomadic pastoralists and livestock breeders as well as the interpretation of the armed confrontation with the sedentary farmers that bears resemblance to ethnic and religious agenda. Natural factors of environmental limitations such as desert encroachment, population explosion, climatic conspiracy and climate change have combined to give effect to the conflicts. Other factors that provide immediate impetus to the contemporary conflagration are issues like land ownership and use, and the provocation that is generated by grazing and water contamination (Genyi, 2017).

Table 4.1 Which term do you think best describes the herdsmen – farmers’ conflict in the Benue Valley.

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Economic	191	50
Religious	30	7.9
Ethnic	111	29.1
Political	50	13
Total	382	100%

In table 4.1 the analysis shows that the herdsmen – farmers’ conflict in the Benue Valley can best be described as an economic conflict as 50 percent of the respondents made the choice.

As time went on, the farmers began to confront the herdsmen in the event that their crops were destroyed. Of course the herdsmen became hostile and would attack the villagers who resisted their grazing activities in their areas. For instance, in 1989, Zaki Iordye Akaahena a renowned paramount ruler in Guma Local Government area of Benue State and his two sons were allegedly beheaded by rampaging herdsmen. (Vanguard, July 10, 2013 p.20). Some elements within the farming communities had also taken to cattle rustling either for their personal gains or to deter the herdsmen from coming near their communities. There is also the competition for water sources by some of the farming communities with cattle. Most of the farming communities do not have wells and have to draw from streams as their source of drinking water and this same water sources are used by the herdsmen who took their cattle to same sources for drinking. The cattle end up muddling up the water and creating conflict between the

herders and farmers.

The passage of time has only seen to the exacerbation of this conflict. The herdsmen have become deadlier as they resorted to the acquisition of more sophisticated weapons such as assault rifles in order to force their way on the farmers. Farming communities on their part became more organised and armed to defend themselves against the herdsmen. The herdsmen are also accused of recruiting foreign mercenaries to unleash carnage on farming communities under the excuse that the farmers prevent their cattle from grazing on the land and drinking from streams which they described as free gifts of nature. In their argument, the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, entitles everyone including the pastoralists to settle anywhere in Nigeria. President Muhammadu Buhari had in 2018 claimed that the attackers whom farming communities alleged to be responsible for the killings in their communities were actually Libyan fighters who had found their way into Nigeria with the collapse of Muamar Ghaddafi's government in Libya.

It is quite clear that the herders and farmers are engaged in modes of production that are incompatible as the situation continues to worsen in the face of land with the resource in contest being fixed while demand from both sides continues to rise. While this conflict continues to defy solutions, herdsmen attacks on farming communities have become a regular occurrence. These attacks however assumed a more dangerous dimension in 2001. In January 2013, herdsmen attacked some villages in Nasarawa State, killing 10 people and displacing over 5000 people. In a fresh attack on some villages

in Nasarawa State, about 33 people were killed in November 2014. As at 2014, the scale of herdsmen attacks on communities in Benue State for instance had intensified to the extent that 13 out of 23 local government areas in the state had been affected as hundreds of lives had been lost and property worth billions of Naira had been destroyed. More attacks by the armed herdsmen came in 2016. Duru (2016) reports a gruesome attack on Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State in February 2016 in which about 7000 people were driven from six villages by the herdsmen. The villagers observed that despite heavy gunshots by the herdsmen, no military or security presence was felt. Over 200 persons were killed and houses were razed. In April 2016 there was a renewed attack on Agatu by the armed herdsmen. Statistics from the Benue State Emergency Management Agency indicates that no fewer than 30 persons died in the renewed violence with several cases of abductions and rape reported.

In a bid to curb these attacks the Benue people clamoured for a solution to the extent that the Benue State House of Assembly was besieged by the public to compel the Assembly to enact the Open Grazing Prohibition and Establishment of Ranches Law which took effect in November, 2017. However, on 30th May 2017, Miyetti Allah Kautal Hore; the Fulani socio – cultural group, through its National President, Abdullahi Bello Bodejo and National Secretary General Alhassan Saleh, held a press conference in Abuja rejecting the Law and vowed to resist it. They also called on all Fulani in West Africa to converge on Benue for war. An overwhelming percentage of the respondents are convinced that the herdsmen – farmers’ conflict in the Benue Valley

stems from the agitation for resources more so as Miyetti Allah KautalHore claim they should be given access to land and water in the Benue Valley.

Table 4.2 Do you think the herdsman – farmers’ conflict in the Benue Valley is a resource based conflict?

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	320	83.8
No	62	16.2
Total	382	100%

The analysis in table 4.2 indicates that 320 respondents representing 83.8% think that the herdsman – farmers’ conflict in the Benue Valley is a resource based conflict while 62 respondents representing 16.2% thought otherwise.

Table 4.3 Which of these resources is in your opinion the cause of the herdsman – farmers’ conflict in the Benue Valley?

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Land	30	7.9
Water	44	11.5
Grazing Areas	101	26.4
All of the above	207	54.2
Total	382	100%

The analysis in table 4.3 indicates that 207 respondents representing 54.2% believe that the land, water and grazing areas are causes of herdsman – farmers’ conflict in the Benue Valley while 101

respondents representing 26.4 % think the desire for grazing areas is the cause. Water has 11.5% while land has 7.9%.

On 1st January, 2018 therefore, suspected herdsmen attacked several settlements in Guma and Logo local government areas of Benue state simultaneously. The camp of the Livestock Guards, a formation charged with the responsibility of enforcing the Open Grazing Prohibition and Establishment of Ranches Law was attacked at Tom -Atar, in Shaghev council ward of Guma local government area and a number of the Guards were killed. They also attacked Akor and Umenger villages in Guma local government area. Eye witness accounts revealed that after the attack on the camp of the Livestock Guards, the attackers proceeded to knock on the doors of the villagers and killed those they found indoors as well as all those whom they met on their way while retreating. The same style of attack was visited on Gambev- Tiev, Turan and Ayilamo settlements in Logo LGA (Daily Trust January, 7, 2018). This was indeed, a systematic and well-organised attack against defenseless people who included pregnant women, children and the aged. They were slaughtered, shot, maimed, dismembered and butchered. After the attack, the number of those killed was put at more than 73.

The attack presented above goes to reflect the nature of conflict between the herders and farming communities in Agatu, Guma, Gwer –West, Logo and Makurdi local government areas in Benue State and Awe, Doma, Keana, Lafia and Obi local government areas in Nasarawa State. The incident above particularly gained wide coverage especially because the victims were given state burial but such

is the tale of farmers' herders crisis in these areas which were hitherto farming areas but have been left desolate. One will therefore be compelled to discern the factors responsible for this conflict.

4.4 Which of the following is the most likely cause of conflict between herdsman and farmers' conflict in the Benue Valley?

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Encroachment into farms	183	47.9
Cattle Rustling	109	28.5
Muddling of water sources	90	23.6
Total	382	100%

The analysis in table 4.4 indicates that 183 respondents representing 47.9% believe that the most likely cause of conflict between herdsman and farmers in the Benue Valley is encroachment into farms. 109 respondents representing 28.5 % think that cattle rustling is the most likely cause. Those who feel the muddling of water sources is the most likely cause are 90 and constitute 23.6%.

Table 4.5 How can the herdsman – farmers' conflict in the Benue Valley be addressed?

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Prosecution of Perpetrators	99	25.9
Establishment of Ranches	222	58.1
Creation of Grazing Areas	31	8.1
Ceding of Lands	30	7.9
Total	382	100%

Table 4.5 indicates that 222 respondents representing 58.1% believe that the establishment of ranches is

the solution to the herdsmen – farmers' conflict in the Benue Valley. Another 25.9% representing 99 respondents believe in the prosecution of perpetrators while 31 respondents (8.1%) suggest the creation of grazing areas. Thirty of the respondents (7.9%) feel that lands should be ceded to aggrieved parties in order to end the conflict.

The responses extracted from the respondents revealed the encroachment of cattle into farmlands is the major cause of this conflict as these farms are the only means of livelihood of the farmers. The fact that the respondents identified the establishment of ranches as a way of addressing the conflict between herdsmen and farmers goes to underscore the fact that encroachment by cattle into farmlands constitutes a major cause of conflict between the herders and farmers. They noted that even without destroying crops, the hooves of the cattle compact the soil in a manner that makes tilling and percolation quite difficult. Akase Nev a resident of Anyiin in Logo LGA of Benue State observed that in the past the herdsmen used to avoid farmlands while grazing their cattle and would wait until crops were harvested by the farmers before moving in with their cattle but since they became well armed by wielding AK 47 assault rifles, they now deliberately march their herds into farms and stay on the watch out to flee or attack protesting farmers who have mere machetes to protect themselves.

There are also indications that climate change constitutes one of the major causes of conflict between herdsmen and farmers in the Benue Valley. It was found out that the shrinking of the Lake Chad, desert encroachment and shortening periods of rain in the northern part of the country have induced the

increased migration of the herdsmen into the Benue Valley. Other activities like cattle rustling, insurgency, and the influx of belligerents from foreign conflict areas into the northern part of Nigeria has rendered the place unsafe hence the decision of herdsmen to migrate into the Benue Valley. There are also claims that vigilante groups within the Benue Valley have in some cases gone to extreme levels in their attempts to prevent herdsmen from grazing in their areas of jurisdiction.

Other respondents blamed the herdsmen for refusing to adopt modern methods of cattle rearing such as ranching yet communities are wary of selling land to the pastoralists for fear of attracting more pastoralists into the area and which the farmers fear could lead to pastoralists' domination. In this connection, the pastoralists are said to use people within the Benue valley to buy land in the name of the indigenes after which the land is transferred to the actual pastoralist buyer because the villagers would not sell to the pastoralists. Others still point to the raping of women by herdsmen on farmlands as one of the triggers of the conflict.

There are also thoughts that the Nigerian government has in itself not done enough to bring the conflict under control as those involved in these attacks have not been prosecuted to serve as deterrence for others. This perhaps explains why attacks have continued to be launched ceaselessly and with unmatched impunity. Some members of the public also accuse even the Nigerian military of taking sides in the conflict. For instance, the Nigerian police had labelled the conflict as communal conflicts which carried the implication that the parties involved in the conflict were within the same

community but Rubben Ater claimed this was mischievous because the herdsmen were invaders who were deploying the tactic of hit and run as they were camped in Nasarawa State from where they crossed to attack Benue communities and retreat. Also, the Inspector General of Police who had been advised by Nigeria's President, Muhammadu Buhari to relocate to Benue State and stem the conflict refused to do so and after being questioned, the President disclosed that he was not aware that the IG had not heeded his orders.

Some respondents believe the presence of the pastoralists in the Benue Valley and the conflict between the herdsmen and farmers in the Benue Valley cannot be entirely ascribed to economic factors. To some, religious and political motives are also to be considered in the conflict as it is a battle of supremacy – a Jihad in which the pastoralists are bent on foisting their beliefs, ideals and dominance over the minority groups they could not capture during the 1804 Jihad. This line is further strengthened by utterances credited to Professor Umar Mohammed Labdo who once remarked that the Benue Valley belongs to the Fulani because it had been captured by the Fulani who were magnanimous to allow the groups in the region to continue living freely (Punch Newspaper, 03/02/2018).

Socio - Economic Impact of the Conflict on Development in the Benue Valley

Our discussion here is mainly based on the data obtained from the respondents hence the discussion is both qualitative and quantitative. Having explained the nature and causes of conflict between herdsman and farmers in the Benue Valley, it is important to explain how the socio – economic impact of the conflict affected development in the area of study more so as the respondents all believe there are socio economic consequences associated with the herdsman – farmers conflict in the Benue Valley.

Table 4.6 Are there any Socio-economic impact associated with the herdsman – farmers’ conflict in the Benue Valley?

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	340	89.0
No	42	11.0
Total	382	100%

The analysis in table 4.6 indicates that 340 respondents representing 89% think there are Socio economic impact associated with the herdsman – farmers’ conflict in the Benue Valley while 42 respondents representing 11% do not think so.

Having ascertained that there are indeed socio economic consequences associated with the herdsman – farmers conflict in the Benue Valley, the study went further to find out if these consequences were negative, positive or both. As indicated, data obtained from and overwhelming

percentage of the respondents indicated that the socio - economic effects of the herdsmen and farmers conflict on development in the Benue Valley has been overwhelmingly negative as shown in table 4.7 below.

Table 4.7 How would you describe the socio - economic impact associated with the herdsmen – farmers’ conflict in the Benue Valley?

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Positive	03	0.8
Negative	340	89.0
Positive and Negative	39	10.2
Total	382	100%

Table 4.7 indicates that 340 respondents representing 89% feel the socio - economic impact of herdsmen – farmers’ conflict in the Benue Valley is negative while 3 respondents representing 0.8 % think it is positive. Three of the respondents who represent 0.8% feel the conflict has positive socio-economic impact. Oral interviews indicated that none of the respondents saw any positive element in the conflict. Ruben Ater, a farmer who fled when Tse Torkula Guma LGA of Benue State was attacked and is now staying at the IDP Camp in Daudu with his wife and two children argued that he did not see anything positive from the conflict. In his opinion, the pastoralists can be considered as the beneficiaries of the conflict as they are presently occupying areas that were once farmlands and the actual owners cannot return to those areas as the herdsmen have taken over. He added that farmers who even went back to those

areas to retrieve what was left of their looted farms or houses or even to bury their deceased relations do so at the risk of losing their lives as the herdsmen are always on the prowl and do not hesitate to shoot at anyone they see lurking around. Idris Dalhatu, who had come to Makurdi to retrieve his cattle herd that had been confiscated by the Benue State Livestock Guards argued however that the herdsmen had also been negatively affected by the conflict and had nothing to count as gains from the conflict. In his opinion, the herdsmen including other non – cattle rearing pastoralists could no longer walk freely in the Benue Valley as they have become easy target even without provocation. According to Dalhatu, the pastoralists have lost entire cattle herds to rustling and their women who hitherto sold milk in markets in the Benue Valley could no longer do so because they were no longer safe.

With regards to which sector has been most affected by the conflict, the responses obtained could not single out an aspect that has been the most affected. This indicates that all such sectors as farming, education, church activities and markets have been equally affected as shown in table 4.8 below. A respondent in Awe LGA of Nasarawa state Terseer Akighir pointed out that in such areas that have been vacated as Kaseyo, Umenger and many other places, there was no point trying to figure out which sector of activities had been most affected as there was virtually nobody in some of the attacked settlements to carry out such activities as trading, schooling or any other activity.

Table 4.8 Which of these activities has been affected by the herdsmen – farmers’ conflict in the Benue Valley?

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Farming	102	26.8
Education	94	24.6
Church Activities	93	24.3
Markets	93	24.3
Total	382	100%

The data on Table 4.8 shows that 102 respondents representing 26.8% consider farming as the most affected activity. Education is identified by 94 respondents (21.6%) while Church activities and Markets each have 93 respondents which translates to 24.3%.

Table 4.9 Which of the following can be considered as the socio - economic impact of herdsmen – farmers’ conflict on development in the Benue Valley?

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Hunger and Disease	50	13.1
Displacements	47	12.3
Deaths	50	13.1
All of the Above	235	61.5
Total	382	100%

The data on Table 4.9 shows that 231 respondents representing 61.5% consider hunger and disease, displacements, and deaths as the socio - economic impact of herdsmen – farmers’ conflict on

development in the Benue Valley. Hunger and disease as well as deaths have 13.1% representing 50 respondents each while displacements have been identified by 47 respondents representing 12.3%.

Since 2000 when the herders – farmers’ conflict became quite prominent, the affected communities in the Benue Valley have become vulnerable to deaths arising from direct attacks and residual effects. Displacements have also become the new normal as well as hunger and disease. This has caused quite a serious humanitarian crisis in the region especially since February 2014. Between January and March, 2014, Africa Conflict and Security Analysis Network (ACSAN) indicated that, 853 people had been killed in the Middle Belt region. Out of this number, they claimed to have lost 214 people as well as 320. As at February, 2014, conflict between the two groups had caused the displacement of about 50,000 people in nine of the 23 LGAs in Benue state (Benue SEMA). Also, more than 300 people and almost 12,000 herds of cattle had been killed in the conflict, while a further 32 people (mainly children and the elderly) died in the makeshift IDP camps due to harsh weather conditions in April 2014 according to the group, Christian Aid. According to Abdul barkindo & Alupsen (2017), between 2014 and 2016, a total of 4,194 people in Benue State who were mainly Christians had been killed by the herdsmen and a further 2,957 were injured. In 2016, there were already 10 IDP camps in Makurdi. These were Roman Catholic Mission Primary School North-Bank, St. Mary’s Primary School Daudu, Army Children Primary School North-Bank, Makurdi LGEA Primary School Tyodugh, Makurdi LGEA Primary School North-Bank, Makurdi LGEA Primary School Ahwa,

Makurdi LGEA Primary School Agan, AperAku Housing Estate North-Bank, Makurdi LGEA Primary School Low-Cost, and Makurdi LGEA Primary School Wurukum. By 2017, the combined number of those killed in the conflict in Agatu, Guma, Gwer, Logo, and Makurdi LGAs (Benue State) had increased to 3,106 while 2,647 persons had been injured as indicated in table 4.9 below.

Table 4.10 Number of Christians Killed and Injured in the Herders – Farmers’ Conflict as at 2017

LGA	Number of Christians killed	Number of Christians injured
Agatu	967	1051
Guma	1426	606
Gwer	15	21
Logo	204	721
Makurdi	494	248
TOTAL	3,106	2,647

Adapted from Ngbea & Ngbea (2019) Political and Religious Implications of Herdsmen and Farmers Crises in Nigeria in International Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Studies Volume 6, Issue 2, 2019, PP 1-12.

After peaking in 2014, the herdsmen attacks had dropped only to surge in 2018. On 1st January, 2018, the herdsmen attacked Tom Atar, in Shaghev, Akor and Umenger villages in Guma local government area as well as Gambev Tiev, Turan and Ayilamo settlements in Logo LGA killing more than 100 people. They also attacked Mbapupuu, Mbapa, Mbachohon and Enger, all in Agagbe District of Gwer

West LGA (Benue State) on Thursday, 5th April, 2018. Between 10th January, 2018 and 28th February, 2018, no fewer than 15 attacks had been carried out by the herdsmen resulting in the killing of no fewer than 65 persons. Also on 5th March, 2018, Omusu village in Ojigo Ward of Edumoga, in Okpokwu Local Government Area was attacked by the herdsmen and this left not less than 24 people, including women and children as well as the aged dead.

Amid several other attacks, St. Ignatius Catholic Church, a Catholic Church in Ukpor, Mbalom, a village in Gwer LGA, Benue State was also attacked on 24th April, 2018 and 19 worshipers including 2 Catholic priests were killed. Between January and May 2018, The Eagle Online had documented 375 deaths from herdsmen attacks in the area of study. Apart from those killed in these attacks, many more were injured and traumatised. Many families have also been separated, young girls have been raped, impregnated or forced into prostitution as a result of the conflict. Crime and disorderliness have also become even more widespread as a result of arms proliferation brought about by the conflict. Police posts are attacked as well as government buildings which further exacerbated the state of lawlessness. Gideon Ahura a motorcyclist in Logo LGA of Benue State said the presence of the military around the conflict areas is in itself a setback arising from the molestation, extortion and harassment meted out on civilians by the military who are supposed to bring peace. According to Ahura, the military are often not interested in going to the conflict areas and elect to stay in safer areas where they ask for payments before they can escort the displaced people to their abandoned homes to bury their

deceased relations.

It is worthy to note that the herdsmen – farmers' conflict has had significant socio- economic impact on development in the Benue Valley. Indeed, the socio – economic impact of the conflict are quite varied and cut across such areas like farming. The persistent attacks on many villages have completely brought agricultural production to halt like in parts of Obi, Awe, Keana and Guma local government areas where dwelling places have been razed to ashes and abandoned. In such areas the surviving villagers have also fled for their lives. Many have become refugees in the refugees camps established for same purpose and cannot talk about their farms. Arising from the increased scale of herdsmen attacks, in 2018, the number of internally displaced persons in Benue had increased to 300,000 and this further moved up to 483,699 in 2019 (Benue SEMA). These IDPs are spread across the seven camps in the state which include Abagana, Agan Primary School, Mbawa, Daudu, Ugba and Anyiin.

The economic implication of this situation is the conversion of hitherto producers into consumers. According to Tordue Shaapera, the number of people in the IDP camps is not the exact reflection of those displaced by the conflict. He pointed out that apart from those who are still camped at refugee camps there are many more displaced people who have been absorbed by relations and turned into dependants even as they were the actual producers of food for their immediate communities and the surrounding areas as well as even distant urban populations. These are people who have also lost their homes as well as other valuables including their sense of belonging. Most of those at the IDP camps

are glaringly dehumanised as they live in want, insecurity and uncertainty. Efforts by the government and donor agencies as well as individuals have not been able to meet their needs such as food, clothing and medical care. Issues of disease, rape and pregnancies are common especially as the females in particular have become vulnerable in the face of food shortages. Sanitary conditions are not satisfactory, the cost of sustaining the camps places immense burden on the already lean resources of the state government.

Significant damage has also been caused to infrastructure such as schools, homes, churches, vehicles and farms by the herders – farmers’ conflict. As shown in table 4.10, there has not been specifically targeted infrastructure as the attackers are known to destroy whatever infrastructure they come across. Some of the respondents explained that the herdsmen attacks often coincide with the harvest season which provides the herdsmen the opportunity to loot harvested crops. According to Ephrain Adzer, the assailants used to feed their cattle with the crops left on the farms or the one stored in barns at home. He noted that this too has changed as they virtually destroy everything they can set their eyes on.

Table 4.11 Which of the following infrastructure have been destroyed the most in the herdsmen – farmers’ conflict?

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Schools	93	24.3
Homes	102	26.8
Farms	94	24.6
Places of Worship	93	24.3
Total	382	100%

As shown in table 4.11, the respondents identified homes as the most destroyed infrastructure with 26.8% representing 102 respondents. Schools and places of worship had 93 respondents each representing 24.3%. Farms were identified by 94 of the respondents which represents 24.6%.

Table 4.12 Number of Christians Homes and Churches Destroyed in the Herders Farmers Conflict as at 2017

LGA	Christians Homes Destroyed	Number of Churches Destroyed
Agatu	7,663	4
Guma	63,718	5
Gwer West	37,416	7
Logo	28,807	4
Makurdi	24,683	7
TOTAL	162,287	27

Adapted from Ngbea & Ngbea (2019) Political and Religious Implications of Herdsmen and Farmers Crises in Nigeria in International Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Studies Volume 6, Issue 2, 2019, PP 1-12

According to Abdul barkindo & Alupsen (2017), 195,576 houses and 30 Churches had been destroyed in Benue State as at 2017. Mesuur Kiva, who has been displaced from Agyaragu maintained that Churches were deliberately targeted by the herdsmen more so as the attackers are predominantly Muslims. A 2018 report by the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) also collaborates the assertion that the herdsmen are predominantly Muslims who carry out attacks on a predominantly Christian region thereby introducing religious coloration to the conflict. The killing of two Catholic Priests at the Church in Mbalom further deepened the fears of those interpreting the conflict from a religious angle and, even as the act received global condemnation, the fact that more and more people are being prevented from exercising their religious duties and obligations in the conflict area cannot be denied.

The educational sector has also been adversely affected in the Benue Valley as a result of the herdsmen – farmers’ crisis. This is because such facilities as schools are been destroyed during attacks. Apart from the destruction of schools, the prevailing nature of insecurity, uncertainty and the genocidal nature of killings will not allow pupils and students to attend school for the fear of the safety of their lives. Since 2014 when these clashes became even deadlier and led to the occupation of some villages, many schools had been closed down in the affected areas. In the first instance, homes have been destabilised by the conflict and as such, education is distant in the priority of the victims. According to Hungwa Adema, a displaced community leader in Tse Torkula who now lives in Makurdi, hunger, starvation and disease are the most pressing issues.

There is the risk of being hacked to death on the way to school or even getting killed at the school. “This therefore informs the need to avoid gathering children in one place in the name of learning” he said. The adverse effect of this conflict on education has spilt into neighbouring areas as some schools have been converted to IDP camps like the Agan Primary school. The fact that education has been brought to a halt in these areas portends danger for the foreseeable future as the out of school children have an increased tendency of taking to vices.

The impact of the herdsmen – farmers’ conflict significantly impacted on agricultural production in the study area in both direct and indirect ways. Adi Haruna, a farmer in Obi LGA of Nasarawa state explained that an entire villages which were renown for the production of yams which attracted buyers to the area has been completely deserted. This is the same for other crops as those who find themselves on isolated farms stand the risk of losing their lives. Sometimes, women who find themselves isolated are raped before being killed and the fear of these risks has considerably reduced farming. Apart from the farmers killed or displaced, there are many other urban dwellers that were engaged in farming in the neighbouring rural settlements. Sometimes the farms were established through proxies dwelling in these rural areas. The proxies were mainly responsible for securing land on lease, procurement of farm labour, supervision of work and providing security for the farms. Thus, even those who are outside the theatre of conflict have

been prevented from farming activities and yet this is an important component of the production process as many of the distant farmers engage in capital intensive and large scale farming. Trying to present the losses in food production posed by this conflict in terms of tonnage is not quite easy as there are no standard output measuring parameters in place. This is even more so as not all of the output gets to market.

Conclusion

This study covers the herders – farmers’ conflict in the Benue Valley with emphasis on how the conflict has impacted on socio-economic development in the area. The study however embraces such areas as the causes, nature and impact of this conflict on the area. In order to provide a properly rooted background for the study, such aspects as an overview of the study area – the Benue Valley was presented alongside the socio – economic composition and structure of the region. This was considered important as it provided the background against which the impact of the conflict on the peoples of the area could be determined and properly understood. Allusion were also been made to areas outside this scope especially where comparisons were deemed relevant or such was considered basic to the understanding of the study.

It has also been observed that the Benue Valley is home to a plethora of minority ethnic groups as it harbours about 70 % of the minority ethnic nationalities in Nigeria. The pastoralists on the other

hand are considered as indigenous to the far Northern part of Nigeria and are therefore considered as settlers in the Benue Valley region. While the indigenous minority groups are essentially agriculture driven groups, the pastoralists within the Benue Valley are predominantly nomadic herdsman. The presence of the herders within the farming communities in the Benue Valley has placed them on collision course with these communities arising from the incompatible nature of their economies. The indigenous groups are overwhelmingly Christian farming groups while the pastoralists are characteristically nomadic cattle herding Muslim groups.

The study shows that initial relations between herdsman and the groups in the Benue Valley was cordial. This was because land which constitutes the basis of conflict between the groups had not come under intensive exploitation. The study shows that conflict between nomadic herdsman and the farming communities in the Benue Valley dates back to several decades. However, a combination of several factors exacerbated the conflict by the turn of the century such that, beginning from 2001, the dynamics of this conflict considerably changed as the herdsman began to take possession of lands the farmers had fled from. Initially, clashes between herdsman and the farmer were spontaneous and arose from immediate disagreements. This however changed as the factors became even more complex. Factors like increased population leading to more land being brought under cultivation had not yet come into play. Traditional rulers and other individuals have been accused of collecting monies from the herdsman with the promise of granting them access to grazing

areas when they already know this would generate conflict. Also, factors like desert encroachment, insurgency, banditry and cattle rustling in the North had not become as pronounced as it is the case now. This notwithstanding, changes in these variables have led to heightened conflict between the herdsmen and farmers.

The encroachment of cattle into farmlands has often been the trigger for violent confrontations between the herders and farmers although accusations of rustling have often been used by the herders to justify attacks on farming communities. There are indications that once cattle or the pastoralists have been attacked near a settlement, the area becomes a potential area of attack regardless of how long it takes. The pastoralists have been accused of being an unforgiving group who take delight in exacting revenge. Thus, when their cattle is rustled in an area, they make it a point of duty to attack the community regardless of whether the victims of are responsible for the theft of their cows or not. During such revenge attacks, women, children and the aged are not spared.

The herders – farmers’ conflict has had serious socio – economic implications for development in the Benue Valley as many lives have been lost to the conflict and many more continue to be lost to the conflict almost on a daily basis. Apart from deaths, severe injuries in the form of machete cuts and bullet wounds continue to be inflicted on those unfortunate enough to run into the other group. Education in many parts of the Benue Valley where these conflict occur no longer place schooling or education in their order of priority as school buildings even became targets for destruction in these areas.

Farming which constitutes the hub of the economy in these areas has been significantly disrupted. Many households and even settlements which constituted the unit of production have been destroyed or displaced. While some of the farmers were killed, many more have been displaced and cannot return to their homes and farms. Although the herders hardly live within the areas of conflict, there are instances in which herdsmen were also killed during attacks. Some herdsmen also lost their cattle to the conflict. The economic implication of this is the fact that the people who were hitherto producers have been turned into consumers. The predominant collective consequence of which is depleted food production in the area as well as the loss of means of livelihood. Family ties have also been broken as a result of death and displacement of family members as many now live in refugee camps. There are many more who cannot locate their family members whose fate they do not know either. There are also many who have been left traumatised having witnessed the killing of their relations or who were raped and even impregnated. These ordeals still go on in the IDP camps where some of the refugees have to trade sex for food, drugs and clothing.

These socio - economic effects of the conflict have made development efforts in these affected areas a mirage more so as development cannot take place in the midst of conflict. At the moment, schools have been destroyed and others converted to IDP camps, churches burnt, homes and farms looted and destroyed and entire settlements abandoned. And in the face of inactivity, markets cannot hold in these areas as even the dead cannot be buried without

groups being placed on the watch out. The development challenge in these areas has also be passed on to neighbouring urban areas where those directly affected by the conflict have been forced to take refuge. This means increased pressure on available facilities in even the neighbouring places.

It appears the herders – farmers’ conflict has affected the farmers more than it affects the herders. Tersser Akighir remarks that this is understandable as the herdsmen are nomadic and disappear as soon as they attack farming communities. It has also been alleged that the herdsmen recruit mercenaries to prosecute war against farming communities and as such all they need do is to hit and run only to return for further surprise attacks. It was also observed that the herdsmen no longer move along with their families and their cattle herds are kept far from the points of attack. This is because since the herders cannot be easily located and attacked by the farmers, cattle have become the main targets of the farming communities who therefore kill or steal the cattle as a way of exacting revenge. However the pastoralists too have a pedigree for vengeance and would stop at nothing to retaliate whenever their cows are harmed. This makes the rather sedentary farmers more vulnerable as they cannot easily move in view of their permanent settlements, families and farm investments.

Recommendations

Having considered the causes and socio – economic impact of the herders – farmers conflict on development in the Benue Valley, the following suggestions are considered relevant:

1. There is need for the establishment of cattle ranches as the co-existence of nomadic cattle herding groups and sedentary farmers cannot guarantee peace as these farming practices are in compatible. The land available for both groups is fixed yet the demand for land resources can only continue to expand hence discussions and appeals for peace can only serve to conceal the obvious. The days when grazing routes existed are long gone and the available land continues to shrink and as such those olden days cannot be re-enacted.
2. The security agencies in Nigeria should act more firmly in addressing issues pertaining the herders – farmers’ conflict as their position on certain issues leads to their being accused of compromise. The situation where the groups in this conflict sometimes openly confess to carrying out attacks in the name of revenge amounts to anarchy. These agencies should be fair in dealing with all groups and must be seen as doing so. Those who perpetrate crimes such as killing, rape, abduction, torture, arson and looting should be prosecuted to serve as deterrence for those willing to perpetrate crime under the cover of conflicts.
3. More efforts should be made by the government to address the porous nature of the country’s borders in order to stem the influx of arms and ammunition. In this regard, personal identity should be taken more seriously so that human movements across borders can be effectively tracked. This can help in minimising trans-border crimes and the influx of foreign nationals.
4. Early warning mechanisms should be put in place by the government to detect and avert possible

violent conflict situations. The use of proactive measures to avert violent conflict situations and bloodshed no matter how costly this can be, is far cheaper than what is required to arrest a situation that has been allowed to escalate.

5. Government should demonstrate the political will to stem violent conflict regardless of the groups involved.
6. Adequate rehabilitation, counselling and compensation has to be provided for victims of conflicts to enable them readjust and cope with new challenges. This is important as the grievances created by conflict situations are capable of triggering more conflict in what can be termed as a self – perpetuating phenomenon.

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