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**Exploring Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanisms in the Settlement of the Fulani
Herdsmen-Farmers Conflict in Nigeria**

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Abstract

Nigeria has been confronted with insecurity arising from the herders-farmers conflict in different parts of the country. The conflict is caused in part by spiraling migration of pastoralists from the far northern to central and southern parts of the country due to ecological scarcity and competition over grazing land and space, one of the consequences of climate change. The north central states of Niger, Benue, Taraba, Nasarawa, and Kogi are the hotspots of the ensuing clashes. The motivation for this research is the need to redirect our attention on a more pragmatic approach to resolving or managing this interminable conflict. There is a compelling need to explore a practicable method to bring about sustainable peace in the region. The paper argues that the Western model of conflict resolution has not been able to address the problem. Therefore, an alternative approach should be adopted. The traditional African conflict resolution mechanisms should serve as an alternative to the Western conflict resolution mechanism in bringing Nigeria out of this security quagmire. The herders-farmers conflict is pathological in nature which justifies the use of old traditional method of intra-communal dispute settlement. Western dispute resolution mechanisms have proved inadequate and ineffective, and have increasingly stalled conflict resolution in several parts of Africa. Indigenous method of dispute resolution in this context is more effective because it is re-conciliatory and consensual. It is based on the principle of *citizen-to-citizen* diplomacy through the involvement of the elders in the community who are equipped with historical facts, among other things. Through a qualitative method of inquiry, the paper analyzes relevant literature using the *conflict confrontation framework* of analysis. The paper concludes with recommendations that will help policymakers in their adjudicatory role in communal conflict resolution.

Keywords: herders-farmers conflict, conflict resolution, conflict transformation, traditional African diplomacy

Introduction: Historical Background

Before the beginning of the 20th century, the conflict between herders and farmers in the savannah belts of West Africa had begun (Ofuokwu & Isife, 2010). In the last one and half decades in Nigeria, a rising wave of the Fulani herdsmen-farmers conflict was noticed, causing the destruction of lives and property, as well as the displacement of thousands of people from their homes. This is traceable to centuries of pastoralists' movement with their cattle from the east and west across the Sahel, the semi-arid zone south of the Sahara desert that includes Nigeria's far northern belt (Crisis Group, 2017). In recent history, the drought in the 1970s and 1980s in the Sahel region and the associated migration of a huge number of pastoralists into the humid forest zone of West Africa led to an increased incidence of the farmers-herders conflict. Besides, the conflict occurred from spontaneous reactions to provocations and planned attacks by one group against the other. The conflict, like other ones in the country, has assumed a new dimension of high magnitude, bringing to the fore the problematic and inchoate nature of the Nigerian state. This is attributable to structural *cum* predispositional and proximate variables.

The government, beginning from the time Nigeria gained its independence from the British, was aware of the problem between the herders and farmers and as a result enacted the Grazing Reserve Act of 1964. The Act was later expanded in scope beyond the promotion of livestock development to include legal protection of grazing lands from crop farming, establishment of more grazing reserves and encouragement of nomadic pastoralists to settle in the grazing reserves with access to pasture and water rather than roaming the street with their cattle (Ingawa et al., 1989). Empirical record shows the intensity, cruelty, huge casualties, and the impact of the conflict in states such as Benue, Nasarawa, Taraba, and so on. For instance, between 2006 and May 2014, Nigeria recorded 111 herders-farmers conflicts, which accounted for 615 deaths out of a total of 61,314 fatalities in the country (Olayoku, 2014). Similarly, between 1991 and 2005, 35 percent of all reported crises were caused by the conflict over cattle grazing (Adekunle & Adisa, 2010). Since September 2017, the conflict has escalated with over 1,500 people killed (Crisis Group, 2018).

The Western conflict resolution mechanism has failed in resolving this conflict between the herders and farmers in Nigeria. This is why the herders-farmers conflict cannot be resolved in a Western court system in Nigeria, partly because these groups have no fate in the Western adjudicatory system. The model does not allow the victims or parties to express their views or opinions on how best to restore peace. The process of adjudication makes freedom of expression and the collaborative conflict resolution style difficult to be applied in this case. The conflict requires a consensus between the two groups on the appropriate way to address their concerns.

The critical question is: Why has this conflict persisted and assumed a more lethal dimension in recent times? In answering this question, we seek to examine the structural *cum* predispositional and proximate causes. In view of this, there is a need to explore alternative conflict resolution mechanisms to reduce the intensity and the frequency of the clashes between these two groups.

Methodology

The method adopted for this research is discourse analysis, an open ended discussion on conflict and conflict management. A discourse allows for a qualitative analysis of

socio-economic and political issues which are empirical and historical, and provides a framework for analyzing intractable conflicts. This also involves a review of extant literature from where relevant information is gathered and analyzed. Documentary evidence allows for a deeper understanding of the issues under investigation. Thus, articles, text books and other relevant archival materials are utilized to elicit necessary information. The paper combines theoretical perspectives that seek to explain intractable conflict. This approach provides in-depth information on local peacebuilders (elders) who are knowledgeable in the traditions, customs, values, and feelings of the people.

Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanisms: An Overview

Conflict arises from the pursuit of divergent interests, goals, and aspirations by individuals or groups in defined social and physical environments (Otite, 1999). The conflict between the herders and farmers in Nigeria is as a result of a disagreement over grazing rights. The idea of conflict resolution is based on the principle of intervention to change or facilitate the course of a conflict. Conflict resolution provides an opportunity for parties in conflict to interact with the hope of reducing the scope, intensity, and effects (Otite, 1999). Conflict management is an outcome-oriented approach which aims to identify and bring to the negotiation table leaders of the conflicting parties (Paffenholz, 2006). It involves the mobilization of cultural practices such as hospitality, commensality, reciprocity, and belief systems. These cultural instruments are deployed effectively in the settlement of conflicts. According to Lederach (1997), “conflict transformation is a comprehensive set of lenses for describing how conflict emerges from, and evolves within, and brings about changes in the personal, relational, structural, and cultural dimensions, and for developing creative responses that promote peaceful change within those dimensions through non-violent mechanisms” (p. 83).

The conflict transformation approach is more pragmatic than a resolution because it provides the parties a unique opportunity to transform and rebuild their relationship through the help of a third party mediator. In the traditional African setting, traditional rulers, chief priests of deities, and religious administrative personnel are mobilized in the management and resolution of conflicts. The belief in the supernatural intervention in conflict is one of the ways of conflict resolution and transformation. “Traditional methods are institutionalized social relationships... Institutionalization here refers simply to relationships which are familiar and well established” (Brammah, 1999, p.161). In addition, “conflict management practices are considered traditional if they have been practiced for an extended period and have evolved within the African societies rather than being the product of external importation” (Zartman, 2000, p.7). Boege (2011) described the terms, “traditional” institutions and mechanisms of conflict transformation, as those that have their roots in the local indigenous societal structures of precolonial, pre-contact, or prehistoric societies in the Global South and have been practiced in those societies over a considerable period (p.436).

Wahab (2017) analyzed a traditional model in Sudan, the Sahel and Sahara regions, and Chad based on the Judiyya practice — a third party intervention for restorative justice and transformation. This is designed specifically for pastoral nomads and settled farmers to ensure peaceful coexistence among those ethnic groups that live in the same geographic area or that interact frequently (Wahab, 2017). The Judiyya model is used to settle domestic and family matters such as divorce and custody, and disputes over access to grazing land and water. It is also

applicable to violent conflicts involving property damage or deaths, as well as large inter-group conflicts. This model is not peculiar to these African groups alone. It is practiced in the Middle East, Asia, and was even used in the Americas before they were invaded and conquered. In other parts of Africa, other indigenous models similar to Judiyya have been adopted in settling disputes. The Gacaca courts in Rwanda is a traditional African model of conflict resolution established in 2001 after the genocide in 1994. The Gacaca court did not only focus on justice; reconciliation was at the center of its work. It took a participatory and innovative approach in the administration of justice (Okechukwu, 2014).

We can now take a theoretical path from the theories of eco-violence and constructive confrontation to lay a good foundation for understanding the issue under investigation.

Theoretical Perspectives

The theory of eco-violence derives its epistemological foundation from the political ecology perspective developed by Homer-Dixon (1999), which seeks to explain the intricate relationship between environmental issues and violent conflicts. Homer-Dixon (1999) noted that:

Decreased in the quality and quantity of renewable resources, population growth, and resource access act singly or in various combinations to increase the scarcity, for certain population groups, of crop land, water, forests, and fish. The affected people may migrate or be expelled to new lands. Migrating groups often trigger ethnic conflicts when they move to new areas and while a decrease in wealth will cause deprivation. (p. 30)

Implicit in the eco-violence theory is that competition over scarce ecological resources engenders violent conflict. This trend has been aggravated due to the impacts of climate change, which have exacerbated ecological scarcity across the world (Blench, 2004; Onuoha, 2007). The herders-farmers conflict occurs during a particular period of the year — the dry season — when the herdsmen move their cattle southward for grazing. The problem of climate change causing desertification and drought in the north is responsible for the high incidence of conflict between the two groups. The herdsmen move their cattle to those areas where they will have access to grass and water. In the process, the cattle may damage the crops of the farmers leading to a protractible conflict. It is here that a theory of constructive confrontation becomes relevant.

The theory of constructive confrontation follows a medical model in which destructive conflict processes are likened to a disease — pathological processes that adversely affect people, organizations, and societies as a whole (Burgess & Burgess, 1996). From this perspective, it simply means that a disease cannot be completely cured, but the symptoms can be managed. Like in medicine, some diseases at times tend to be very resistant to drugs. This is to suggest that conflict processes are themselves pathological, especially a conflict that is intractable in nature. In this case, the conflict between the herders and farmers has defiled all known solutions because of the core issue involved, which is access to land for livelihood.

To manage this conflict, a medical approach is adopted which follows certain steps to diagnose the problem of a patient suffering from a particular medical condition that appears incurable. As it is done within the medical field, the traditional approach of conflict resolution first undertakes a diagnostic step. The first step is for the elders in the communities to be involved in conflict mapping — to identify the parties in the conflict, along with their interests and positions. These elders in the communities are assumed to understand the history of the relationship between

the various groups. In the case of the Fulani migration history, the elders are in a position to relate how they have been living over the years with their host communities. The next step of the diagnosis is to differentiate the core aspects (underlying causes or issues) of the conflict from the conflict overlays, which are problems in the conflict process that get laid over the core issues making the conflict difficult to be resolved. In an attempt to make the two parties to shift their hard line positions in pursuit of their interests, a more constructive approach should be adopted. This leads to the constructive confrontation approach.

The constructive confrontation approach will help the two parties to develop a clear understanding of the dimensions of the problem both from their own perspective and that of their opponent (Burgess & Burgess, 1996). This dispute resolution approach enables people to separate core issues in the conflict from those issues that are diversionary in nature, helping to develop strategies that will be of interest to both parties. In the traditional conflict mechanisms, there will be a separation of the core issues instead of politicizing them which is a characteristic of the Western model.

These theories provide explanation for understanding the core issues in the conflict and how it will be tackled to ensure a peaceful coexistence between the two groups in the community. The working model is the theory of constructive confrontation. This lays credence to how traditional institutions can be employed in resolving this interminable conflict between the groups. The use of elders in the administration of justice and settlement of the lingering disputes requires the constructive confrontation approach. This approach is similar to how the Umuleri-Aguleri protracted conflict in the southeastern part of Nigeria was resolved by the elders. When all efforts to settle the violent conflict between the two groups failed, there was a spiritual intervention through the chief priest who delivered a message from the ancestors on the impending doom that was to befall the two communities. The message from the ancestors was that the dispute should be settled peacefully. The Western institutions such as the court, the police, and the military option were not able to resolve the dispute. Peace was restored only with a supernatural intervention, adoption of oath-taking, formal declaration of “no more war” which was followed by the signing of a peace treaty and the performance of ritual cleansing for those who were involved in the violent conflict that destroyed many lives and property. The violator of the peace accord, they believe, faces the wrath of the ancestors.

Structural *cum* Predispositional Variables

From the above conceptual and theoretical explanation, we can deduce the underlying structural *cum* predispositional conditions that are responsible for the Fulani herdsmen-farmers conflict. One factor is resource scarcity that leads to an intense competition between the groups. Such conditions are the product of nature and history, which can be said to set the stage for the incessant incidence of conflict between the two groups. This was aggravated by the climate change phenomenon. This comes with the problem of desertification caused by a long dry season from October to May and low rainfall (600 to 900 mm) from June to September in Nigeria’s far north that is arid and semi-arid (Crisis Group, 2017). For instance, the following states, Bauchi, Gombe, Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, Yobe, and Zamfara, have about 50-75 percent of land area turning into a desert (Crisis Group, 2017). This climatic condition of global warming causing drought and the shrinking of pastoral and farm lands have forced millions of pastoralists and others to migrate to the north central region and southern part of the country in search of productive land,

which in turn affects the agricultural practices and livelihoods of the indigenes.

Furthermore, the loss of grazing reserves as a result of high demand by individuals and governments for various uses have put pressure on the limited land available for grazing and farming. In the 1960s, over 415 grazing reserves were established by the northern regional government. These no longer exist. Only 114 of these grazing reserves were formally documented without the backing of legislation to guarantee exclusive usage or take measures to prevent any possible encroachment (Crisis Group, 2017). The implication of this is that the cattle breeders will be left with no other choice than to occupy any available land for grazing. The farmers will also be confronted with the same land scarcity.

Another predispositional variable is the claim by the pastoralists that the farmers were unduly favored by federal government policies. Their argument is that the farmers were provided with enabling environment in the 1970s which helped them to use water pumps in their farmland. For instance, they claimed that National Fadama Development Projects (NFDPs) helped farmers exploit wetlands which helped their crops, while the cattle herders had lost access to grass-abundant wetlands, which they had previously used with little risk of livestock straying into farms.

The problem of rural banditry and cattle rustling in some states in the northeast has been responsible for herders' movement toward the south. There is an increasing activity of cattle rustlers in the northern parts of the country by bandits. The herders then resorted to carrying arms in order to defend themselves against rustlers and other criminal gangs in farming communities.

The Middle Belt people in the northcentral region of the country claim that the herdsmen believe the entire northern Nigeria belong to them because they conquered the rest of them; that they feel that all the resources, including land, are theirs. This kind of misconception breeds ill-feelings among the groups. Those who share this view believe the Fulani want the farmers to vacate the alleged grazing reserves or cattle routes.

Precipitant or Proximate Causes

The precipitant causes of the conflict between the herders and farmers are linked to an inter-class struggle, that is, between the peasant Christian farmers and poor Muslim Fulani herdsmen on the one side, and the elites who need lands to expand their private businesses on the other. Some military generals (both in service and retired) as well as other Nigerian elites involved in commercial agriculture, especially cattle rearing, have appropriated some of the land meant for grazing using their power and influence. What is known as *land grab syndrome* has crept in thereby causing scarcity of this important factor of production. The scramble for land by the elite triggers conflict between the two groups. On the contrary, the farmers in the Middle-Belt believe the conflict is orchestrated by the Fulani herdsmen with the intention to exterminate and annihilate the Middle-Belt people from their ancestral land in the northern part of Nigeria in order to extend the Fulani hegemony (Kukah, 2018; Mailafia, 2018). This kind of thinking is still within the realm of conjecture because there is no proof to back it up. Some states have introduced laws banning open grazing, particularly in Benue and Taraba. Interventions such as these have in turn aggravated this decades-long conflict.

Another cause of the conflict is the accusation by the pastoralists that the state institutions are very bias against them in the way they are handling the conflict, especially the police and the court. The police are often accused of being corrupt and bias, while the court process is described

as unnecessarily prolonged. The pastoralists also believe that local political leaders are more sympathetic toward the farmers because of political ambitions. What can be deduced is that the farmers and herders have lost confidence in the ability of their political leaders to mediate the conflict. For this reason, they have resorted to self-help by seeking revenge as a way to get justice.

Party politics *cum* religion constitute one of the major factors fueling the herdsmen-farmers conflict. Politicians tend to manipulate the existing conflict to attain their political objectives. From a religious perspective, the indigenes who are predominantly Christians feel they are being dominated and marginalized by the Hausa-Fulani who are predominantly Muslims. In each attack, there is always an underlying religious interpretation. It is this ethno-religious dimension that makes the Fulani herdsmen and farmers vulnerable to manipulation by politicians both during and after elections.

Cattle rustling remains a major trigger of the conflict in the northern states of Benue, Nasarawa, Plateau, Niger, etc. A number of herdsmen have died in an attempt to protect their cattle from being stolen. The perpetrators steal cow for meat or for sale (Gueye, 2013, p.66). Cattle rustling is a highly organized crime with sophistication. It has contributed to the rising incidence of violent conflicts in these states. This means that not every herders-farmers conflict should be explained through the prism of land or crop damage (Okoli & Okpaleke, 2014). The herdsmen claim that some villagers and farmers from these states engage in cattle rustling and, as a result, they decided to arm themselves to defend their cattle. On the contrary, some people have argued that cattle rustling can only be carried out by the Fulani nomads who know how to navigate the forest with these animals. This is not to exonerate the farmers. This situation has created unnecessary animosity between the two groups.

Applicability of Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

Nigeria is considered a fragile state with large-scale violent conflicts between different ethnic groups. As previously noted, the reason is not far from the failure of the state institutions responsible for the maintenance of law, order, and peace (the police, judiciary, and the army). It is an understatement to say that there is an absence or near absence of effective modern state-based institutions to control violence and regulate conflict. This makes traditional approaches to conflict management an alternative in resolving the herders-farmers conflict. In the present situation of the country, it is apparent that the Western method has been less effective in resolving this intractable conflict due to the deep-rooted nature of the conflict and value differences between the groups. Thus, the traditional mechanisms are explored below.

The institution of the elders' council which is an age-long institution in African society could be explored to see that this intractable conflict is nipped in the bud before it escalates to unimaginable proportion. The elders are peace facilitators with experience and knowledge of the issues causing the dispute. They also possess mediation skills highly needed for a peaceful resolution of the herders-farmers conflict. This institution cuts across all communities, and it represents track 3 level diplomacy which is citizens oriented and which also recognizes the mediation role of the elders (Lederach, 1997). The elders' diplomacy can be explored and applied to this conflict. The elders have long experience, wisdom, and are familiar with the migration history of every group in the community. They are able to undertake a diagnostic step by mapping the conflict and identifying the parties, interests, and positions.

The elders are the trustees of customary practices and enjoy the respect of the youth. This

makes them very useful in mediating a lingering conflict of this nature. The elders from both groups can apply their indigenous cultures to resolve, transform, and manage this conflict within their domains without government intervention, since the parties have lost confidence in the state institutions. This approach is re-conciliatory because it allows for the restoration of social harmony and good social relationship. The elders are guided by the idea of social cohesion, harmony, openness, peaceful coexistence, respect, tolerance, and humility (Kariuki, 2015).

The traditional approach is not state-centric. It promotes healing and closure. To ensure genuine reconciliation, the elders will make both parties eat from the same bowl, drink palm wine (a local gin) from the same cup, and break and eat kola-nuts together. This kind of public eating is a demonstration of genuine reconciliation. It enables the community to accept the guilty person back into the community (Omale, 2006, p.48). An exchange of visit by the leaders of the groups are usually encouraged. This type of gesture has shown to be a turning point in the process of rebuilding relationships (Brimah, 1998, p.166). One of the ways the traditional conflict resolution works is to reintegrate the offender into the community. This leads to genuine reconciliation and social harmony without any bitter resentment. The goal is to rehabilitate and reform the offender.

The principle behind the traditional conflict resolution is restorative justice. Various models of restorative justice practiced by the elders could help in bringing to an end the incessant clashes between the herders and farmers as they are aimed at the restoration of social equilibrium and harmony between the groups in conflict. Arguably, the local people are very familiar with the African native laws and justice system more than the complicated system of English jurisprudence that dwells on technicality of law, which sometimes set free the perpetrators of crimes. The Western adjudicatory system is characteristically individualistic. It is centered on the principle of retributive justice which negates the essence of conflict transformation (Omale, 2006). Instead of imposing the Western model that is completely alien to the people, the indigenous mechanism of conflict transformation and peacebuilding should be explored. Today, most traditional rulers are educated and can combine the knowledge of the Western adjudicatory institutions with the customary rules. However, those who may be unsatisfied with the verdict of the elders can proceed to the court.

There is also a method of supernatural intervention. This focuses on the psycho-social and spiritual dimension of conflict resolution. The principles behind this method are aimed at reconciliation, as well as mental and spiritual healing of the people involved. Reconciliation forms the basis for the restoration of communal harmony and relationships in traditional customary system. True reconciliation normalizes relations between conflicting parties, while perpetrators and the victims are reintegrated into the community (Boege, 2011). In resolving this intractable conflict, the ancestors can be invoked because they serve as the link between the living and the dead. In the various communities where this conflict takes place, the spiritualists can be called upon to invoke the spirit of the ancestors. The chief priest can impose a decisive verdict in a conflict of this nature where the groups are making claims that appear irreconcilable similar to what happened in the Umuleri-Aguleri conflict. They will all assemble in the shrine where kola, drinks, and food would be shared and prayers offered for peace in the community. In this type of traditional ceremony, anyone who does not want peace could be cursed. The chief priest has the power to invoke divine sanctions on non-conformists. From this explanation, one can conclude that the terms of a peace settlement in the traditional setting are generally accepted and obeyed by community members for fear of negative repercussions such as death or incurable disease from the spirit world.

Moreover, the use of rituals could be included in the herders-farmers conflict resolution mechanisms. A ritual practice could prevent parties from reaching a dead-end. Rituals serve as conflict control and reduction practices in the traditional African societies. A ritual simply denotes any non-predictable action or series of actions that cannot be justified through rational explanations. Rituals are important because they address the psychological and political dimensions of communal life, especially the injuries individuals and groups suffer which can fester conflict (King-Irani, 1999). In other words, rituals are crucial to an individual's emotional well-being, communal harmony, and social integration (Giddens, 1991).

In a situation where parties are not ready to shift their position, they may be asked to swear an oath. An oath-taking is a way of calling on the deity to bear witness to the truth of the testimony, that is, what one says. For instance, the Aro — a tribe in Abia state in the southeastern part of Nigeria — has a deity called *long juju of Arochukwu*. It is believed that anyone who swears to it falsely will die. As a result, disputes are assumed resolved immediately after swearing an oath before the *long juju of Arochukwu*. Similarly, swearing an oath with the Holy Bible or the Koran is seen as a way to prove one's innocence of any breach or transgression (Braithwaite, 1998, p.165).

In the traditional shrines, jokes can ensue between parties as it was done in many communities in Nigeria. This is a non-institutionalized method in traditional conflict resolution. It was practiced among the Fulani in northern Nigeria. John Paden (1986) illustrated the idea and relevance of joking relationships. The Fulani and Tiv and Barberi adopted jokes and humor to ease tension among them (Braithwaite, 1998). This practice can be adopted in the current conflict between the herders and farmers.

Raiding approach can be adopted in the case of cattle rustling as was practiced among the pastoral communities. This involves a settlement by compelling stolen cattle to be returned or outright replacement or payment of an equivalence in kind to the owner. The effect of raiding lies with the arbitrary and strength of the raiding group as well as that of the opponent who, in some cases, counter-raid rather than giving in.

These approaches are worthy of exploration in the present circumstances the country has found itself. Nevertheless, we are not oblivious of the fact that traditional conflict resolution mechanisms have some weaknesses. However, those who argue that the traditional mechanisms contradict universal standards of human rights and democracy may be missing the point because human rights and democracy can only thrive when there is a peaceful coexistence among the various groups in the society. Traditional mechanisms involve all strata of the society — men, women, and youths. It does not necessarily exclude anybody. The involvement of women and youths is necessary because these are the people who bear the burden of the conflict. It will be counter-productive to exclude these groups in a conflict of this nature.

The complexity of this conflict requires that traditional approaches be employed despite its imperfection. No doubt, modern traditional structures have been privileged to the extent that customary ways of conflict resolution are no longer preferred by the people. Other reasons for this decline of interest in the traditional processes of dispute resolution include time commitment, inability to appeal unfavorable rulings in most cases, and most importantly, corruption of the elders by the political elites (Osaghae, 2000). It is possible that some elders may be biased in their handling of issues, or motivated by their personal greed. These are not enough reasons why the traditional dispute resolution model should be discredited. No system is completely error-free.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conflict transformation hinges on restorative justice. The traditional approaches of conflict resolution, as demonstrated above, is based on the principles of restorative justice. This is different from the Western-style of adjudication which is based on retributive or punitive processes. This paper proposes the use of the traditional conflict resolution mechanisms to resolve the herdsmen-farmers conflict. Included in these traditional processes are the reparation of victims by the offenders and the reintegration of offenders into the community in order to rebuild broken relationships and restore harmony in the affected communities. An implementation of these has peacebuilding and conflict prevention benefits.

Although the traditional mechanisms are not devoid of shortcomings, their usefulness cannot be overemphasized in the present security quagmire the country finds itself. This inward-looking approach of conflict resolution is worth exploring. The Western justice system in the country has proved to be ineffective and incapable of resolving this lingering conflict. This is partly because the two groups no longer have faith in Western institutions. The court system is bedeviled with confusing procedures and unpredictable outcomes, focusing on individual culpability and punishment. It is because of all these ills that the Panel of the Wise was instituted by the African Union to assist in addressing conflicts on the continent.

The traditional conflict resolution approaches can be explored as an alternative for the resolution of the herdsmen-farmers conflict. By providing a trusting space for truth finding, confession, apology, forgiveness, reparation, reintegration, reconciliation and relationship building, social harmony or social equilibrium will be restored.

Nevertheless, a combination of indigenous and Western models of conflict resolution could be utilized in some aspects of the herders-farmers conflict resolution processes. It is also recommended that experts in customary and sharia laws should be included in the resolution processes. The customary and sharia courts in which the kings and chiefs have legitimate authority and the Western court systems should continue to exist and operate side by side.

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