

Ungoverned Spaces and Menace of Herder-Farmer Conflict in Ondo State, South West Nigeria

ADEBAJO ADEOLA ADERAYO¹ , OREBANJO ABIODUN OLUSOLA² 

AFFILIATION:
Tai Solarin University of
Education, Nigeria

CORRESPONDENCE:
adebajooa@tasued.edu.ng. &
orebanjoabiiodun@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated how ungoverned spaces promote herder-farmer conflict in Ondo state, South West, Nigeria. Descriptive research design was adopted for the study. Questionnaire, interview and focus group discussion were used to obtain primary data. Simple random sampling technique was employed in selecting 200 respondents. Eighteen in-depth interviews and two discussions were conducted. Quantitative and qualitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and content analysis. Findings showed that herders used ungoverned spaces as hideouts to carry out attacks against the communities. Herder-farmer conflict led to loss of lives, destruction of property, disruption of socio-economic activities, food insecurity and distrust among ethnic groups. Amotekun security outfit plays crucial roles in monitoring and checkmating herders who use the unmanned forests as hideouts. Anti-grazing law is effective in restricting the movement of herders causing crop destruction. It recommended that the ungoverned spaces should be used for siting of local industries, tourist centres and mechanised farm settlements in order to create employment opportunities, boost food production and eliminate hideouts for the criminal elements. Drones can be deployed to monitor the operation of herders in the forests. Amotekun security outfit should be trained and adequately equipped with weapons for maximum delivery. **Keywords:** Amotekun, Farmers, herders, herder-farmer conflicts, ungoverned spaces

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menyelidiki bagaimana ruang yang tidak diatur mendorong konflik gembala-petani di negara bagian Ondo, Barat Daya, Nigeria. Desain penelitian deskriptif diadopsi untuk penelitian ini. Kuesioner, wawancara dan focus group discussion digunakan untuk memperoleh data primer. Teknik simple random sampling digunakan dalam memilih 200 responden. Delapan belas wawancara mendalam dan dua diskusi dilakukan. Data kuantitatif dan kualitatif dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif dan analisis isi. Konflik gembala-petani menyebabkan hilangnya nyawa, kerusakan harta benda, kerawanan pangan dan ketidakpercayaan di antara kelompok etnis. Pasukan keamanan Amotekun memainkan peran penting dalam memantau dan memeriksa penggembala yang menggunakan hutan tak berawak sebagai tempat persembunyian. Direkomendasikan bahwa ruang yang tidak diatur harus digunakan untuk penempatan industri lokal, pusat wisata dan pemukiman pertanian mekanis. Drone dapat dikerahkan untuk memantau operasi penggembala di hutan. **Kata kunci:** Amotekun, Petani, penggembala, konflik gembala-petani, ruang tak beraturan

INTRODUCTION

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In the recent times, Nigeria has been bedeviled with security challenges threatening its corporate existence. Security challenges confronting the country include but not limited to banditry, kidnapping, terrorism, insurgency, political violence, resource-based conflict, agricultural related violence and threats of secession. The insecurity arising from the challenges has taken its tolls on human lives, property and socio-economic wellbeing of the Nigerian masses. One of the factors remotely promoting some of the security challenges is the presence of ungoverned spaces that spread across different geo-political zones in the country. The inability of government to provide security measures to adequately curtail the growing insecurity has further compounded the problem.

Ungoverned spaces are the places where government does not have control due to lack of presence of the security agents giving room to criminality to proliferate without any form of curtailment. In other words, ungoverned spaces are the uncontrolled land territories vulnerable to occupation and control by violent non-state actors such as terrorists, insurgents, militant herders and other criminal elements who maintain organized networks to perpetrate their reign of terror. Ungoverned territories exhibit the characteristics of absence of basic institutions of the state to enforce rules and regulations, law enforcement agency and social amenities (Ojo, 2020). As contended by [Whelan \(2006\)](#), ungoverned spaces are present in some West African states such as Niger Delta and Northern Mali where there is little exercise of government authority control. In Somali Coast, Northwestern Ethiopia, Northern Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gulf of Guinea and Central Africa Republic have ungoverned territories which allow proliferation of illicit and criminal activities ([Whelan, 2006](#)). In the North West and North Central, violent clashes between herders and farmers are driven by the ungoverned spaces making it easy for the criminal gangs such as herdsman militias to maintain their networks.

Many of the ungoverned territories provide links with porous borders through which the migrant herdsman come in and out of the country. One of the violent conflicts that has ever had devastating effects on the Nigerian populace is herder-farmer conflict. The destructive nature the conflict has assumed is alarming due to lack of political will by the federal government of Nigeria to take proactive measure to stem its tide. Consequently, the governors of Benue, Ondo, Ekiti, Ogun, Oyo and Lagos states took a drastic measure to establish anti- open grazing laws in order to restrict herders's movements, which most of the time causes destruction of crops and contamination of water sources. Also, the South-West, Nigeria, the state governments came together to establish Amotekun security outfit in order to complement the efforts of the security agents in curbing violence perpetrated by the herdsman. Studies have been carried out on how ungoverned spaces have caused insecurity like banditry, kidnapping, insurgency and terrorism in Nigeria ([Ojo, 2020](#); [Aniche, 2021](#)). Also, literature abound on the menace of herder-farmer conflict and humanitarian challenges in Nigeria ([Ugwumba, 2018](#); [Adebajo, 2020](#); [Adebajo & Iseoluwa, 2020](#)). However, literature seems very scanty on how ungoverned spaces promote herder-farmer conflict in South West, Nigeria, with a particular attention on Ondo state. Therefore, the paper investigated the ungoverned spaces and herder-farmer conflict in Ondo state, South West, Nigeria. Specifically, the paper attempted to discuss the negative impacts of herder-farmer conflict on human lives, property and socio-economic activities of the people in Ondo state, South West, Nigeria, and investigated the extent to which ungoverned spaces promote herder-farmer conflict in Ondo State, South West, Nigeria. The research questions that guided the study include what are the negative impacts of herder-farmer conflict on human lives, property and socio-economic activities of the people in Ondo State, South West, Nigeria ?, and how do the ungoverned spaces promote herder-farmer conflict in Ondo state, South West, Nigeria? Two hypotheses stated in null form were tested in the study. They are

Ho₁: Herder-farmer conflict does not affect socio-economic security of the people in Ondo State, South West, Nigeria. Ho₂: Ungoverned spaces cause herder-farmer conflict in Ondo State, South West, Nigeria. Environmental theory is adopted as an explanatory framework. The theory proposes that as the world population increases, it would exceed the resource base which will cause environmental destruction, widespread hunger and violent conflicts. The major exponents of the theory are [Homer- Dixon \(1994\)](#), [Homer-Dixon & Blitt \(1998\)](#) and [Homer-Dixon\(1999\)](#). In the opinion of Dixon, decreasing supply of environmental resources such as grasses, freshwater and land can lead to violent conflicts between or among the users. Besides, large population movements occasioned by environmental stress can induce group identity conflicts in a society, particularly ethnic violence. In addition, severe environmental scarcity will increase economic deprivation and disrupts key social institutions which can induce deprivation conflicts like insurgency and civil strife. From the view of [Dixon \(1999\)](#), degradation and depletion of environmental resources leads to scarcity of renewable resources. To him, environmental scarcity acts as a long-term stressor aggravating risk of violent conflicts. Kaplan also envisioned the coming anarchy as there will be future decline of the state authority. Further, Kaplan espoused that conflict will occur due to environmental degradation which is contrary to the proposition of cultural differences earlier advanced by Samuel Huntington that clash of civilization can cause violent conflicts. Arguing further, Dixon posited that as environmental scarcity worsens, the rate and extent of sub-national group identity conflicts increase as typified between herders and farmers. Despite the propositions of the environmental scarcity theory and its relevance to the paper, it failed to capture other variables that can cause and aggravate conflict such as religion, ethnic differences, incompatible cultures, values and norms. The theory is applied to the study because analyses how clashes occur between farmers and herders as a result of drought and desertification leading to

scarcity of environmental renewable resources such as grasses and water needed by the two conflicting parties. The degradation of natural resources due to overgrazing and effects of climate change compel herders to move from the arid North to the other Southern parts of the country which often results in violent clashes between them and farmers due to destruction of crops by cattle.

LITERATURE REVIEW UNGOVERNED SPACES, HERDER-FARMER CONFLICT AND SECURITY CHALLENGES

Literature abounds on the challenges the ungoverned spaces constitute to national and human security globally. [Diggins \(2011\)](#) contended that state security is not dependent on a balance of power but weak or fragile states jeopardize global security. As asserted by Diggins, fragile states represent chaos, disorder and underdevelopment and they threaten the security of the developed world, particularly the Western world. From the perspective of [Raleigh and Dowd\(2013\)](#), the terms failed states and ungoverned un-governed spaces are commonly used due to the fact that they served the interests of the states and international powers in and across the Sahel and that Sahel states are effectively governed by variety of agents, and because the states are among the poorest, largest and most underpopulated African nations, the states are limited in exercising control over the areas. So, characterizing other spaces that are not under the control of the state as ungoverned is merely to obscure how power is exercised in the states ([Raleigh et al, 2013](#)). However, they submitted that the violent actors who engage with the state or international forces, western interests and others do not need large and ungoverned spaces to carry out their activities.

As argued by [Ojo \(2020\)](#), a strong connection exists between ungoverned spaces and insecurity that is presently prevalent in Nigeria. Ungoverned spaces constitute the unguarded places where security agents cannot exercise control or authority. For instance, the Boko Haram insurgents found ungoverned spaces

of Sambisa as hideouts where they live and orchestrate different attacks against the civilians. From the perspective of [Okoli and Lenshie \(2018\)](#), ungoverned spaces cover places of governance deficits or areas that have constituted general concerns to national security. The ungoverned spaces are exploitable and contested spaces under the illegitimate control of gangs, local armed groups, militants and/or warlords due to under-governance, misgovernance or the total absence of governance within a defining space ([Okoli et al, 2018](#)). Arguing further, [Okoli et al, \(2018\)](#) stated that the problems of ungoverned spaces are caused by the size of the state, population growth, density and spatial distribution, pattern of wealth distribution, urbanization, globalization and increasing wealth of violent non-state actors and lack of capacity by government to exercise effective control of territorial boundaries. [Ojo \(2020\)](#) asserted that the size of Sambisa Forest can be compared to the geographical landscape of Lagos state in South Western Nigeria or Belgium, provides avenue for kidnapping and abduction of civilians. It is equally used as a platform not only for operation, coordination and organization of activities, but as a logistical base for the insurgents and havens for keeping abductees. So, Boko Haram terrorists and other criminal elements continuously exploit the unguarded nature of the forest to execute heinous activities. In addition, most of the bandit activities are hatched out in the ungoverned spaces in different parts of the country as there are no technological devices to monitor what goes on in the forests.

In the opinion of [Campbell \(2018\)](#), terrorists are not the only users of ungoverned spaces in Nigeria, there are other criminal gangs like militant herders and cattle rustlers, other criminal elements carrying out activities that constitute threats to security of lives and property. In the North East and North Central Nigeria, the criminal gangs have continuously exploited the unmanned thick forests to perpetrate heinous crimes against rural dwellers. The rural communities have resulted to self-help by putting in place vigilante groups and local hunters who monitor

the activities of the bandits carrying out criminal activities. In the opinion of Ukwuoma, [Oke and NIMFEL \(2020\)](#), ungoverned spaces are physical or non physical landmasses where there is no state's presence and they span through the Cross River forest, connecting Sambisa forest in Maiduguri via Bauchi - Jos axis to Katsina, Zamfara up to Kebbi State in Nigeria([Ukwuoma, et al, 2020](#)).

The 'ungoverned' spaces are said to be zones that lay beyond the reach of government and thus pose a significant threat to security and stability ([Onwuzuruigbo, 2020](#)). They are often perceived as fertile grounds within which terrorist organisations incubate and thrive, proliferating drug trafficking, criminal networks and the presence of illegal migrants and, therefore, containing these spaces falls within the strategic frontier of security priorities. Thus, these ungoverned spaces serve as criminal safe havens where they organize, plan, raise funds, communicate, recruit, train, transit, and operate in relative security ([Villarosa, 2011](#)). In the foregoing, Nigeria has a large land area in form of forest, desert or water such as Sambisa forest in the North-East, the creeks in the South-South, Mangrove forests in the South- East and South-West, and similar areas in Nigeria are left unmanned and uncatered for by civil government or security agencies and are used by criminals and bandits in Nigeria. In a contrary aversion, ungoverned spaces do not lack governance influence but are still within the control of the centralised government, but they may be under-governed, ill-governed, contested and exploited spaces by violent non-state actors who use them for proliferation of criminal activities.

Apart from the challenges posed by ungoverned spaces in Nigeria and implications on national security, international attention has been drawn to the increasing and alarming nature of the conflict between herders and farmers in West Africa sub- region. Adopting different methodological and theoretical prisms, scholars such as [Ogu \(2016\)](#), [Ngbea and Ngbea \(2019\)](#), [Okoli & Dalhatu, \(2019\)](#), [Adebajo, 2020](#), among others, argued

that the incessant conflict between herders and farmers in West Africa and Nigeria in particular portends a threat to the corporate existence of the nations. [Okoli and Lenshie \(2018\)](#) also argued that there is a correlation between ungoverned spaces, nomadic migrancy and violence perpetrated by the Fulani herders against the rural communities in Nigeria; which has resulted in loss of lives and other socio-economic and human insecurities. Arguing further, they asserted that there are hundreds of foot-paths leading to Cameroon, Chad and Niger, linking to Mali, Sudan and Libya and most of the paths are not known to the security agents but are used by criminals to smuggle arms into the country, particularly the Fulani herdsmen who perpetrate rural violence. Not only is the conflict manifesting identity conflict in form of religion, indigene ship and ethnicity, the international dimension it has been subsumed and assumed makes it intractable to resolve despite all applied conflict management mechanisms by stakeholders. Conflicts between the two agricultural groups have recorded negative socio-economic impacts including numerous loss of human lives and livestock, disruption of rural livelihoods, food insecurity, destruction of private and public property, increased number of internally displaced persons with risks and vulnerabilities, hampering of development programmes, deterioration in the quality of life, weakening of political and economic institutions and discouragement of investment locally ([Oladipupo, 2018](#); [Njoku, 2018](#); [Adebajo, 2020](#)). Seemingly, inadequate scholarly attention has not been paid to how ungoverned spaces play a critical role in promoting the persistent conflicts between herders and farmers in Nigeria which can lead to generating possible solution to ameliorate the problem. Hence, the study attempted to investigate the intellectual vacuum.

RESEARCH METHODS

The study adopted quantitative and qualitative methods to gather data to provide answers to the research questions. The

population of the study is Ondo state which is 4, 671, 000 ([National Population Commission, 2006](#)). Since the researcher could not cover the entire population in Ondo State, target population were drawn from Ifedore and Idanre local government areas where the conflict is prevalent. Simple random sampling was utilised in selecting the respondents in the two local government areas. A total number of 200 copies of questionnaire were administered in Ifedore and Idanre local government areas. The population of Ifedore local government area is 176,327 ([National Bureau of Statistics, 2020](#)) While the population of Idanre local government area is 169,732 ([National Bureau of Statistics, 2020](#)). 84 copies of questionnaire were administered in Ijare and Ilase communities in Ifedore local government area while 116 copies were administered in Atosin and Alade communities in Idanre local government area. purposive and snowballing sampling techniques were adopted in selecting the participants of the study. This was to ensure that those who were directly involved and affected by the conflict provide first-hand information. Therefore participants were selected in Ijare, Ilase, Atosin and Alade communities and Obasoto farm settlement, all in Idanre and Ifedore local government areas in Ondo state. In obtaining data, a validated questionnaire, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were used. The in-depth interview was adopted to obtain comprehensive data from the participants who would give detailed information to enhance deep understanding of how ungoverned spaces promote the incessant conflicts between farmers and herders in Ondo state. The copies of questionnaire were administered to farmers, herders, community leaders, the vigilante group, local hunters and the victims of the herder-farmer conflict. The copies of questionnaire were retrieved immediately with the help of a research assistant, hence, a high retrieval rate of 100%. For the in-depth interview, seven (7) participants were interviewed in Ijare, five (5) in Ilase and six (6) in Atosin. A total number of eighteen participants were interviewed in the selected locations.

The interviewees were purposively selected among the villagers, herders, farmers and community leaders in order to get their first-hand views on how ungoverned spaces promote herder-farmer conflict in Ondo state. Two focus group discussions which consisted of seven participants were conducted in Ijare and Atosin. The participants in the focus group discussion were selected majorly from the victims, farmers, members of Local Joint Taskforce, vigilante groups, local hunters, Amotekun security outfit, herders and security personnel in Ijare. Two focus group discussions were conducted to obtain data on how ungoverned spaces promote herder-farmer conflict and the associated effects on human lives and socio-economic security of people in Ijare community area of Ifedore local government.

In all, a total number of fourteen participants constituted the focus group discussions. Essentially, focus group discussion was used to obtain data to complement information obtained through questionnaire and in-depth interview. As there was no reliable sampling frame, purposive sampling was deployed to select the participants in answering the research questions. The groups formed were homogenous in nature and were constituted on the basis of occupation and experience of the phenomenon studied. The rationale for using experience was to obtain ample information from the participants who have deep knowledge about the subject matter. The herders and farmers were not grouped together so that the discussion would not degenerate to crisis thereby affecting data collection. Simple percentage and correlation were used in analyzing the data gathered from the respondents. The qualitative data were coded, transcribed and content-analyzed using different themes and sub-themes. The data collected were also analyzed using the statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This subsection presents and discusses result on the negative impacts of herder-farmer conflict on human lives, property and

socio-economic activities of the people in Ondo state, South West, Nigeria.

Table 1 The negative impacts of herder-farmer conflict on socio-economic activities of the people in Ondo State, South West Nigeria

S/NO	Research Items	SA	A	D	SD
1	People were maimed and killed during the herder-farmer conflict	171 85.5%	18 9%	-	11 5.5%
2	Property like houses and vehicles were destroyed during the conflict	83 41.5%	106 53%	6 3%	5 2.5%
3	Cultivated crops were destroyed as a result of the conflicts	166 83%	17 8.5%	10 5%	7 3.5%
4	Herders and cattle were killed by farmers during the conflict.	6 3%	12 6%	7 3.5%	175 87.5%
5	Family members were dislocated by the herder-farmer conflict	146 73%	51 25.5%	-	3 1.5%
6	The affected communities have been deserted since the commencement of herder-farmer conflict in the State	167 83.55%	13 6.5%	19 9.5%	1 0.5%
7	Economic activities were affected by the conflict	138 69%	42 21%	12 6%	8 4%

Source: Field survey, 2021

As shown in table 1, 94.5% (85.5% +9%) of the respondents’ believed people were maimed and killed in Ondo state is a result of herder-farmer crisis. 5.5% respondents felt that people were not killed during herder-farmer crisis. Over 94% (41.5% + 53%) of the respondents agreed that property like houses, poultry and vehicles were destroyed. Meanwhile, over 91% (83%+8.5%) felt that cultivated crops were destroyed by herder-farmer conflict in the affected areas in the state. Over 91% (3.5% +87.5%) perceived those herders and cattle were not killed when the conflict occurred. While 98.5% (73 + 25.5%) believed that family members were not dislocated as a result of the conflict. 90% (83.5% + 6.5%) felt that communities affected by the conflict were deserted since the conflict commenced. Like the situation in the North Central Nigeria, such as in Benue, Plateau and Nasarawa states where a large number of people were displaced with attendant humanitarian challenges. 90% (69% +21%) believed that economic activities were affected by the conflict be-

tween herders and farmers in the state.

TEST OF HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis 1:

Ho₁: Herder-farmer conflict does not affect socio-economic security in Ondo State, South West, Nigeria

Table 2 ANOVA

Socio-economic	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	6.063	5	1.213	.977	.433
Within Groups	240.812	194	1.241		
Total	246.875	199			

Source: Field Survey, 2021

In table 2 above, it was revealed that herder-farmer conflict affects the socio-economic security in Ondo state ($f=.977$; $p<.05$), therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that the persistent conflict between herders and farmers affects socio-economic activities of the people in the two local government areas selected in Ondo State, South West, Nigeria.

Findings from the interviews and focus group discussions conducted showed human lives were affected as some people died during the violent attacks by the herders. It was revealed that people died including women and children. Women lost their breadwinners leaving them vulnerable to economic vagaries of life in meeting the needs of their children. As found out, there is an increasing rate of crimes due to the fact that of the locals lost their economic power as a result of disruption of farming and trading activities. An incident of a 67-year-old woman gruesomely murdered and her vital body parts severed and taken away by herders was cited during the interview. The killers of the woman have not been apprehended and prosecuted to serve a deterrence. Aside killing of people, some locals were wounded leaving their care on the widows who are struggling to make ends meet. Another negative impact of the conflict revealed was the

destruction of property such as farm settlement in Obasooto in Idanre, houses, motorbikes and vehicles were also damaged. According to the participants, it took the intervention of the vigilante groups and Amotekun security outfit to stop further destruction of lives and property.

Further, the interviewees corroborated those cattle destroyed crops on farmland in Ondo State. One of the people interviewed in Ijare community said one of the negative consequences of the conflict is reduction in farm output because farmers can no longer plant for the fear of cattle destroying their crops. One of them explained that as a farmer for so many years in the community. He has suddenly become a motorcycle rider to earn a living due to destruction of his crops by cattle, to which no compensation was paid. As pointed out by the farmers, the herders destroyed farm crops worth millions of naira. Crops such as cassava, cocoyam, yam, pineapples, plantains and other leguminous plants were eaten up by cows without any compensation paid to the owners of the farm. However, a Fulani herder in a focus group discussion revealed that he singlehandedly paid compensation to the owner of the crops that got destroyed by his cattle without the farmer informing the police. Another herder pointed out that their cattle were killed as a retaliation for destruction of farm crops, hence, they had to launch a revenge attack on the community where the act was perpetrated. However, the farmers in a focus group discussion made it clear that they have nothing to do with the killing of the thirty-six (36) cows that were struck to death by the gods of the land through thunderstorm. They pointed out that the cows were killed because the herders took their cows to the sacred land. The claim that the cows were killed by gods cannot be proved for lack of evidence because the explanation belongs to the realm of metaphysics which cannot be subjected to scientific analysis. But to the locals in the communities, they uphold this belief that the unseen beings can wrought vengeance against their enemies. It is noteworthy to state that apart from loss of human lives, de-

struction of property and disruption of socio-economic activities, distrust exists among different ethnic groups in the communities, particularly Yoruba and Fulani, portending danger to peaceful co-existence in a multicultural, religious and linguistic society like Ondostate.

2. This subsection presents and discusses the result on how ungoverned spaces promote herder-farmer conflict in Ondo state, South West Nigeria.

Table 3. Ungoverned spaces and herder-farmer conflict in Ondo State

S/N	Research Items	SA	A	SD	D
1	Ungoverned spaces are used as hideouts by herders in Ondo State	180 90%	20 10%	- -	- -
2	The weapons used during herder-farmer conflict are hidden in ungoverned spaces in Ondo State	187 93.5%	13 6.5%	-	-
3	Ungoverned spaces in Ondo State are not monitored by the security agencies	14 7%	166 83%	-	20 10%
4	Vigilante groups guard the ungoverned spaces in Ondo State	98 49%	56 28%	9 4.5%	37 18.5%
5	Security agents do not patrol the ungoverned spaces because they maintain social affiliation with the herders, hence, conflict cannot be prevented	74 37%	49 24.5%	29 14.5%	48 24%

Source: Field survey, 2021.

In table 3 above, 100% of the respondents felt the ungoverned spaces are used as hideouts by herders where nefarious activities are carried out. This clearly depicts that the criminally inclined herders use the thick forest as hide outs to perpetrate heinous activities against the communities. Over 90% believed that the ungoverned spaces are used by the herders to keep their weapons. 90% thought that ungoverned spaces in Ondo state are not monitored by security agents. Lack of presence of the state in the thick forests make them vulnerable for use by criminally inclined herders. The fact that none of the respondents

disagreed with the position portends that government does not give adequate attention to protection and safeguarding of the lives and properties of the citizens as stipulated in Chapter 2, Section 14 (2b) of the 1999 constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria (as amended). 77% perceived that vigilante groups guard the ungoverned spaces. 61.5% (37%+24.5% of the respondents thought that security agents do not patrol the ungoverned spaces because they maintain social affiliation with the herders, hence, the conflict cannot be prevented.

HYPOTHESIS 2:

H₀₂: Ungoverned spaces do not cause herder-farmer conflict in Ondo State

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Standard. Deviation	N
Ungoverned spaces	7.84	.385	200
Herder-farmer conflict	10.07	1.068	200

Table 5. Descriptive Correlation

Correlations		Ungoverned spaces	Herder-farmer conflict
Ungoverned spaces	Pearson Correlation	1	-.106
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.135
	N	200	200
Herder-farmer Conflict	Pearson Correlation	-.106	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.135	
	N	200	200

Source: Field survey, 2021

Table 4 above revealed that 200 respondents participated in the study, the mean score on ungoverned spaces is 7.84 and standard deviation of .385, while the mean score on herder-farmer conflict is 10.07 with 1.068 as the standard deviation. As revealed in the correlation table, there is relationship between ungoverned spaces and herder-farmer conflict (r=.135; p<.05). Therefore,

the null-hypothesis is rejected, meaning that ungoverned spaces cause the incessant conflict between herders and farmers in Ondo state, South West, Nigeria.

Data obtained from interviews and focus group discussions corroborated the perceptions of the respondents on how ungoverned spaces promote herder-farmer conflicts in Ondo state. They revealed that the thick forests are used as hideouts where heinous activities are perpetrated against the host communities in Ondo state. The farmers revealed that weapons used by herders are kept in the ungoverned spaces where no security agents will see them for apprehension. By implication it is obvious that illegal influx of weapons into the thick forests where the herders used as hideouts made it easy for the prosecution of the conflict since smalls are readily available. One of the community leaders interviewed mentioned that the herders hide and keep their weapons in the unmanned spaces by the security agents to launch attacks. But one of the farmers made an allusion that there is a close interaction between the security agents and herders in the communities possibly on the basis of religious, cultural or political attachment. He queried why the security agents have found it difficult to apprehend any of the herders whose cattle destroyed crops and also killed people. It was assumed that there is a complicity between herders and security agents in the State because of one form of connection or the other. So, majority of the participants were of the view that ungoverned spaces promote herder-farmer conflict but the presence of the local vigilante groups and Amotekun security outfit has stemmed the tide in the rural communities or else, it would have erupted into the same magnitude experienced in Benue and Nasarawa state, North Central Nigeria. Though, one of the interviewees made it clear that the vigilante groups and local hunters are readily available than the security agents, the police or military. Although, the training of the vigilante and Amotekun security out groups does not measure up to that of the conventional security agents. Also, weapons possessed by the vigilante groups and hunters are not so-

phisticated like those used by security agents and herders. It was found out that the local security providers like Amotekun security outfit, vigilante and local hunters are not remunerated by government but depend on stipends given by the members of the community instead of them to be enlisted in the payroll of government. In addition, there is no readily available patrol vehicles to enhance their regular movement in the ungoverned spaces in order to scare away herders from inhabiting the places. Majority of the participants suggested that the deployment of technological devices such as CCTV, drone and satellite to monitor any activities taking in the ungoverned areas. It was also suggested that the ungoverned spaces should be used as mechanised farming, tourists centers and for the establishment of local industries to generate jobs for the unemployed.

DISCUSSION

Findings revealed that herder-farmer conflict has negative impacts on human lives, property and socio-economic activities of the people in Ondo state, South West, Nigeria. People in the rural communities where the conflict is prevalent lost their lives. Women lost their husbands and children leaving them with trauma that may not heal on time. Children became orphans because their parents were killed during the conflict and this makes life unbearable for them. Social activities were affected due to the conflict between herders and farmers. Social activities like burial ceremonies, religious functions, associational meetings, among others, were disrupted as a result of the conflict. Houses, schools, farms and health centers were destroyed. Disruption of planting of crops, family disorganization, waste of resources, increase in social vices were experienced in the areas of study due to loss of economic activities. There was displacement of local population from their ancestral homes forcing some of them to relocate to urban areas. The findings corroborate the perspectives of [Oladipupo \(2018\)](#), [Njoku \(2018\)](#) and [Adebajo \(2020\)](#) on the challenges posed by the incessant conflicts

between herders and farmers in West Africa nations including Nigeria, that the conflict has led loss of lives, farm produce, property and social dislocation, family disintegration, displacement of people with diverse risks and vulnerabilities.

Besides, it was also found that ungoverned places play a crucial role in promoting herder-farmer conflict in the areas of the study. This finding corroborates the argument of [Okoli and Lenshie \(2018\)](#) on how ungoverned spaces cause and promote violence by Fulani herdsman who smuggle arms to perpetrate killings and destructions against the indigenous communities in Nigeria. Findings showed that herders use the unmanned thick forests to hide themselves and their weapons deployed in attacking the host communities, particularly when cows were killed. The finding is in consonance with the position of [Ojo \(2020\)](#) that there is a strong connection between ungoverned spaces and insecurity. Ungoverned spaces are the areas unmanned by the security agents which gives room to the proliferation of social vices like banditry, kidnapping, cattle rustling, armed violence and armed robbery. What makes the matter more dangerous is the inability of the security agents to apprehend the criminally inclined herders perpetrating heinous activities in the state. As found out, non-apprehension of the militant herders can be due to the fact that they have political, religious, ethnic and cultural affiliations with the security agents. None of the herders that killed people has been apprehended in the state by the security agents. In addition, the local security providers such as Amotekun security outfit, vigilante groups and local hunters have played critical roles in curtailing the activities of the herders thereby stemming the tide of the conflict which would have taken a more dangerous dimension like what is obtainable in the North Central Nigeria. Findings on how ungoverned spaces serve as promoter of herder-farmer conflict in Ondo state, South West Nigeria corroborates the early argument of [Ukwuaoma, Oke and Ninfel \(2020\)](#) who opined that absence of security agents in unmanned thick forests paved way for bandits, kidnapers and

herding militias to hide and launch attacks on the civilians.

CONCLUSION

The paper concluded that ungoverned spaces promote the conflicts between herders and farmers in the selected communities in Ondo state, South West Nigeria. The herders used un-manned forests to perpetrate heinous activities against the communities which often leads to violent conflicts with negative consequences. It is evident in the study that the security agents are not effective in protecting lives and property in the selected communities and that is the reason the locals prefer community policing as an effective measure to man the ungoverned spaces and also combat the conflict between herders and farmers. Evidently, the conflicts between farmers and herders have affected human lives, led to death of human beings and animals, destroyed property and farm crops, disrupted economic activities and caused to friction among ethnic groups particularly between Yoruba and Fulani in the locations of the study.

It was also established that the government policy of anti-open grazing has been effective in curtailing unrestricted movement of herders in locations of study which reduced the cases of incessant conflicts between herders and farmers. Also, the measure has led to the relocation of herders out of the state which has ushered in relative peace in the state. In order to address the problem, there is need for deployment of security agents to the ungoverned forests in other parts in Ondo state so that they can be monitored and guarded so as to prevent them from being used as hideouts by criminal elements to foment crisis.

There is need to adequately equip the Amotekun security outfit, vigilante and local hunters in order to enhance their performance on the job. Therefore, financial and logistical supports should be provided by the Ondo state government to the Amotekun security outfit so as to combat the curb the heinous activities of the herders. Due to poor incentives and breakdown of the patrol vehicles which most of the time hamper effective

delivery of security provision in the communities, the vigilante and local hunters should be remunerated and provided with necessary modern weapons for effective delivery of their duties.

Inter-agency collaboration and adequate networking are needed among the local security outfits in order to adequately respond to early conflict warning signals in the state particularly between herders and farmers. Most of the ungoverned spaces in the state can be used for siting industries by individuals and government which will provide employment opportunities for the people. In another sense, they can be used for tourism to generate income to the government even at the grassroot level. Partnering with the private organisations is imperative so as to create ranches in some relatively peaceful states in the North in order to prevent incessant migration of the herders to other parts of the country in search of grasses and water for their cattle. Lastly, it is important that government should intensify efforts in mitigating effects of climate change which causes environmental resource scarcity compelling herders to move from the semiarid North to the Southern parts of the country including Ondo state. More advocacy is needed on the importance of creating a sustainable ranching system for the herders in order to curb incessant migration which most of the time leads to violent conflict.

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