

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF LEADERSHIP RESPONSES TO SECURITY CHALLENGES IN SOUTH SENATORIAL ZONE OF NASARAWA STATE, 2011-2023

Esther K. Akila¹, George A. Genyi² & Chukwuma A. Okoli³

^{1,2,3}Department of Political Science Federal University of Lafia, Nasarawa State Nigeria,
akilaesther3@gmail.com

DOI: 10.64290/aijpam.v3.i3.12

Abstract

Conflicts in Nigeria's North-Central region have increasingly reflected recurring farmer-herder clashes, communal violence, and armed attacks amidst complex interaction between population growth, unhealthy inter-ethnic relations, governance challenges, and uneven development between urban and rural communities. These security challenges have significantly shaped livelihood systems and social relations. This paper is, therefore, focused on comparing how conflict dynamics manifest differently across settlement types within Nasarawa South Senatorial Zone, as well as leadership responses to the conflicts. This study adopted a qualitative comparative research design to examine leadership responses to security challenges in the South Senatorial Zone of Nasarawa State between 2011 and 2023. Anchored on a qualitative approach based on empirical analysis, the paper identifies land competition, resource scarcity, and identity politics as major drivers of conflict in the focal area. The paper also observes a clear urban-rural divide in conflict experience in the focal area with rural residents facing physical violence, displacement, food insecurity, and disruption of agricultural activities, while urban populations encountered socio-economic stress through migration pressures, weakened local economies, and declining social cohesion. More so, the paper notes that while Al-Makura's administration operated under conditions of severe ethnic mobilisation and adopted a more force-centered approach, Sule's administration confronted diffuse insecurity and relied more heavily on dialogue and institutional partnerships. The study concludes that conflicts in Nasarawa South Senatorial Zone were not isolated security events but structurally embedded crises shaped by governance gaps and competition over natural resources. It recommends integrated rural security frameworks, inclusive land-use policies, community-based peace-building mechanisms, and balanced urban-rural development strategies as pathways toward sustainable conflict mitigation and regional stability.

Keywords: *Conflicts, Insecurity, Development, Peace-building and Stability.*

Introduction

Conflict remains one of the most persistent challenges confronting human societies, particularly within agrarian regions, where competition over scarce resources intersects with identity crisis and governance challenges to shape livelihood systems and social relations. In Nigeria's North-Central geopolitical zone, which consists of a complex heterogeneity of people and cultures, violent conflicts have increasingly assumed complex socio-economic and spatial dimensions. The zone is home to a complex plurality of ethnic minorities considered indigenous while other groups such as the Fulani, Hausa and Kanuri are considered migrant settlers in the area (Genyi, 2017). Among the most affected areas is Nasarawa State is the South Senatorial Zone, comprising predominantly agrarian communities with socio-economic stability depending largely on land, agriculture, grain

markets and pastoral activities. Between 2011 and 2023, the zone experienced recurrent episodes of violence linked mainly to farmer-herder conflicts, communal disputes, boundary/land issues, armed attacks, and security interventions, thereby reshaping patterns of settlement, rural-urban settlements, production, and social relations.

Farmer-herder conflict, as one of Nigeria's most serious internal security threats, is rooted in long-standing competition over land, grazing routes, and water resources (Okoli & Azom, 2019, Ioryue, 2024; Nnam, 2025). Historically, farming and pastoral communities maintained mutually beneficial relationships. However, demographic expansion, climate variability, environmental degradation, and weak land governance systems have intensified struggles over natural resources across the North-Central geopolitical zone, including Nasarawa State (Nwankwo, 2024). These pressures have transformed localised disagreements into protracted violent confrontations with significant humanitarian and developmental consequences.

Furthermore, in Nasarawa South Senatorial Zone, conflicts are strongly associated with unresolved land arrangements and increasing encroachment on agricultural and grazing spaces. Empirical studies reveal that disputes over farmland boundaries, migration of pastoral groups, and inadequate conflict management institutions have generated cycles of reprisal attacks, displacement, and destruction of livelihoods (Janet, Kundi, Oga, & Alkali, 2024). The socio-economic implications extend beyond immediate violence, contributing to poverty, food insecurity, disrupted education, and weakened rural economies (Adebajo & Owolola, 2024).

The period between 2011 and 2023 represents a critical phase in the evolution of insecurity within Nasarawa State. Violent incidents such as the 2021 attacks on rural communities, which resulted in dozens of civilian deaths, illustrate the escalation of communal violence linked to farmer-herder disputes and identity tensions (Genyi, 2017). Similarly, the 2023 Akwanaja airstrike, carried out during counter-insurgency operations, highlights how state security responses have also shaped conflict experiences and civilian vulnerability within pastoral settlements (Obuje & Useer, 2024). These events underscore the multidimensional nature of conflict in the region, involving both non-state actors and formal security institutions.

Conflict experiences differ significantly between urban and rural environments. Rural communities within Nasarawa South Senatorial Zone bear the direct burden of violence through loss of lives, destruction of farms, forced migration, and breakdown of traditional livelihood systems. Conversely, urban centres such as Lafia and Doma, experience indirect consequences manifested in rapid population influx, unemployment pressures, housing shortages, and increased urban insecurity. Studies on displacement in Nasarawa communities demonstrate that rural violence often triggers rural-urban migration, thereby transferring conflict pressures into urban socio-economic systems (Jibrin, 2025). This urban-rural interaction reveals that conflict is not spatially confined but operates through interconnected social and economic networks.

Despite growing scholarship on conflicts in Nigeria, limited attention has been devoted to examining comparative urban and rural experiences within specific senatorial zones, particularly during recent periods of intensified insecurity. Existing studies largely focus on national or state-level analyses, leaving a contextual gap regarding how conflict dynamics manifest differently across

settlement types within Nasarawa South Senatorial Zone, as well as trends and types of conflicts, as well as comparative analysis of leadership responses to the conflicts. Understanding these variations will contribute to the ongoing discourse on human security, rural transformation, and conflict governance in Nigeria by demonstrating how spatial inequalities influence vulnerability, resilience, and conflict outcomes. Furthermore, examining urban and rural conflict experiences will provide deeper insight into sustainable conflict mitigation strategies capable of promoting peace and socio-economic stability in Nasarawa State and North-Central geopolitical zone at large.

The aim and objectives of this paper is to identify the major security challenges that affected the South Senatorial Zone of Nasarawa State between 2011 and 2023. Examine the leadership responses adopted by government authorities, Compare the effectiveness of leadership responses across the Local Government Areas in the South Senatorial Zone during the study period. Recommend strategies for strengthening leadership capacity and improving responses to security challenges in the South Senatorial Zone of Nasarawa State.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Conceptual Review

Conflict - Conflict refers to a situation in which two or more individuals, groups, or communities pursue incompatible interests, values, goals, or claims over resources, power, identity, or territory, resulting in disagreement that may escalate into violence if not properly managed. Although conflict is a natural aspect of human interaction, its destructive manifestations often undermine social cohesion, governance, and development. In conflict studies, violent conflict is distinguished from ordinary disagreements by the use or threat of force to achieve political, economic, or social objectives (Ramsbotham et al., 2016). Similarly, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) views conflict as arising from multiple and interconnected political, economic, and social factors that require comprehensive institutional responses to prevent violence and sustain peace.

Insecurity refers to a condition in which individuals, communities, or states face persistent threats to their lives, property, livelihoods, and well-being due to violence, crime, terrorism, communal conflicts, or weak governance structures. It reflects the absence of safety and the inability of state institutions to provide adequate protection for citizens. Human insecurity extends beyond physical violence to include political, economic, social, and environmental vulnerabilities that threaten human survival and dignity. Consequently, insecurity undermines governance, social stability, and sustainable development by creating an environment of fear and uncertainty.

Development - Development is a multidimensional process involving sustained improvements in the economic, social, political, and institutional well-being of individuals and societies. It encompasses not only economic growth but also poverty reduction, improved education and healthcare, good governance, social inclusion, human security, and enhanced quality of life. Contemporary development thinking recognises that sustainable development cannot be achieved in environments characterised by persistent conflict and insecurity, making peace and security indispensable components of development.

Peace-building - Peace-building refers to the long-term process of preventing the recurrence of violent conflict by addressing its root causes while strengthening institutions, governance structures, social cohesion, and mechanisms for peaceful conflict resolution. It involves political, economic, social, humanitarian, and security interventions aimed at promoting reconciliation, justice, inclusive governance, and sustainable development. According to the United Nations, peace-building seeks to strengthen national capacities for conflict management and establish the foundations for lasting peace through locally owned and inclusive processes.

Stability - Stability refers to a condition in which political institutions, social relations, economic systems, and security structures function effectively without significant disruption from violent conflict or persistent crises. A stable society is characterised by effective governance, respect for the rule of law, public trust in institutions, social cohesion, and the capacity to manage disputes peacefully. Stability is therefore both an outcome of successful peace-building and a prerequisite for sustainable development because it creates an environment conducive to investment, economic growth, and social progress.

Theoretical Framework

To elucidate the underlying dynamics of conflicts and their varying impacts across social and spatial environments, this study adopts the Eco-Violence Theory as a framework to explain the nature, causes, and consequences of conflicts in the Nasarawa South Senatorial Zone between 2021 and 2023, particularly within urban and rural contexts. The Eco-Violence Theory, advanced by Homer-Dixon (1999), explains violent conflict as a consequence of environmental scarcity interacting with socio-economic and political conditions. According to the theory, environmental pressures such as land degradation, population growth, climate variability, and resource depletion intensify competition over essential livelihood resources, thereby increasing the likelihood of social conflict.

In agrarian societies such as those found in Nasarawa South Senatorial Zone, access to land and water resources constitutes the foundation of economic survival for both farmers and pastoralists. Rapid population expansion, desertification in northern Nigeria, and shrinking grazing routes have contributed to increased southward migration of pastoral groups into farming communities. Homer-Dixon (1999) argues that such ecological scarcity often produces three major effects: reduced agricultural productivity, economic marginalisation, and weakened institutional capacity to regulate resource access. These conditions create fertile ground for violent confrontation. Studies on farmer-herder conflicts in Nigeria support this theoretical position, demonstrating that environmental stress combined with weak governance structures transforms traditional sharing of resource arrangements into violent struggles (Okpeh, Okoli, Azom, & Ugwu, 2021). Within Nasarawa South Senatorial Zone, rural communities experience direct manifestations of eco-violence through farm destruction, displacement, and livelihood loss, while urban areas encounter indirect pressures arising from migration, unemployment, and overstretched infrastructure. Thus, Eco-Violence Theory is relevant to this study because it explains how environmental and livelihood insecurities contribute to recurring rural conflicts that subsequently extend their impacts into urban settlements.

Trends and Types of Conflicts

Rural communities in Nasarawa South Senatorial Zone often serve as primary theatres of violence, experiencing direct attacks, farm destruction, displacement, and food insecurity. A major dimension of the problem lies in the unequal experience of conflict across spatial settings. Women who participated in the Focus Group Discussions (FGD) across communities in Nasarawa South Senatorial Zone explained that the persistent conflicts in the area are driven by a combination of ethnic tensions, tensions from Tiv and Alago around Assakio, Agyaragu and Botsa, competition over land and farming resources, political manipulation, youth unemployment, and the activities of armed groups. Many of the women noted that disputes between farmers and herders have become more frequent due to increasing pressure on land, destruction of crops by cattle, and inadequate government intervention. Participants also emphasized that political actors often exploit ethnic and religious differences during elections, thereby deepening mistrust and hostilities. Communities around Obi local government In several rural communities, the women lamented the proliferation of small arms, poverty, and lack of educational and economic opportunities for young people, which they argued contribute significantly to youth involvement in violence and criminality. Some discussants further observed that weak security presence, delayed justice, and perceived marginalization of certain groups have worsened the insecurity situation in the zone. Collectively, the women maintained that the interaction of socio-economic hardship, poor governance, identity politics, and environmental pressures continues to fuel recurrent conflicts in Nasarawa South Senatorial Zone. Conversely, urban centres increasingly face indirect consequences such as population influx from displaced rural dwellers, unemployment pressures, rising informal settlements, and heightened urban insecurity. Displaced persons from Doka, Assakio, and Agyaragu moved to Lafia around shinge and Kurukio axis. Existing national and regional studies largely treat farmer-herder conflict as a generalized phenomenon, thereby overlooking how conflict impacts differ between rural production spaces and urban receiving communities.

Another critical concern is the developmental implication of sustained insecurity. Empirical evidence indicates that agrarian conflicts significantly undermine agricultural productivity, food security, and human welfare across affected Nigerian communities (Obikaeze, Oduntan, Fajobi, Kayode, and Eteng, 2023). Persistent violence discourages farming activities, interrupts market systems, and weakens local governance structures, ultimately threatening sustainable development outcomes. Yet, policy responses often remain reactive and security-centered rather than addressing structural drivers such as land governance failure, climate-induced migration, and socio-economic marginalization.

Rural communities experienced the most direct impacts through village attacks, displacement, destruction of farmland, and loss of lives, exemplified by violent incidents such as the 2021 Nasarawa attacks, where dozens of civilians were reportedly killed amid farmer-herder tensions linked to disputes over grazing and agricultural land use. Between 2022 and 2023, insecurity further evolved with the emergence of kidnapping, militarized responses, and accidental

civilian casualties, including the 2023 airstrike incident in Akwanaja that resulted in significant loss of pastoralist lives. These developments demonstrate how rural settlements increasingly became theatres of violent confrontation, while urban centres such as Lafia and Doma experience indirect consequences manifested in population influx, pressure on infrastructure, rising unemployment, and heightened fear of insecurity.

Aside from the foregoing, it is equally evident that farmer-herder conflicts in Nigeria have evolved beyond simple resource disputes into multidimensional crises involving identity politics, weak institutional regulation, and contested narratives of belonging and citizenship (Okpeh, Okoli, Azom, & Ugwu, 2021). In this regard, they observe that agrarian conflicts in North-Central Nigeria are fundamentally linked to livelihood struggles and failures in state capacity to effectively manage rural security and resource governance systems. These governance gaps often create conditions where violence becomes normalized as competing groups seek self-help mechanisms for survival and protection. Within Nasarawa South Senatorial Zone, these dynamics are reflected in recurring communal clashes, rural attacks, migration pressures, and militarized responses that reshape both rural and urban social environments.

Urban-Rural Conflict Experiences in Nasarawa South Senatorial Zone, 2011-2023

The conflict experiences of urban and rural communities in Nasarawa South Senatorial Zone between 2011 and 2023 demonstrate a significant spatial divide in terms of exposure, vulnerability, and consequences of insecurity. While both urban and rural populations were affected by the recurring farmer-herder conflicts, communal violence, and criminal activities that characterized the period, the nature and intensity of their experiences differed considerably. Rural communities in Doma, Obi, Keana, Awe, and the agrarian outskirts of Lafia constituted the principal theatres of violent confrontations.

These areas experienced recurrent clashes over land ownership, grazing routes, water resources, and questions of indigeneity and citizenship. They contend that, the transformation of historically cooperative farmer-herder relations into violent conflicts in Nasarawa State was largely driven by ecological pressures, demographic expansion, competition over diminishing resources, and institutional failures. As a result, rural populations were disproportionately exposed to killings, destruction of crops and property, cattle rustling, forced displacement, and the disruption of agricultural livelihoods.

The burden of conflict on rural communities was particularly severe because agriculture remains the dominant source of livelihood in the senatorial zone. Evidence from Doma Local Government Area indicates that farmer-herder conflicts significantly undermined agricultural production, reduced household incomes, and increased poverty among peasant farmers which aligns with the works of Moh'd and Samu (2025). The destruction of farmlands and displacement of farming households not only threatened food security but also weakened local economic systems dependent on agricultural activities. Similarly, Musa .Sylvester, & El-Kas, (2021) found that persistent conflicts between farmers and herders negatively affected agricultural productivity across Nasarawa State by limiting access to farmlands and creating an atmosphere of fear and

uncertainty among rural producers. Consequently, rural communities experienced conflict as a direct threat to both human security and economic survival.

Urban centres, particularly Lafia, experienced a different dimension of conflict. Unlike rural settlements that served as battlefields, urban areas primarily faced the indirect consequences of violence occurring in surrounding rural communities. One major effect was the influx of internally displaced persons (IDPs) fleeing attacks in rural settlements. Observing the situation in Lafia and studies on displacement in Nasarawa State reveal that many victims sought refuge in urban centres where they depended on relatives, friends, humanitarian organizations, and government assistance for survival (Yikwab & Tade, 2022). The movement of displaced populations into urban areas increased pressure on housing, healthcare facilities, educational institutions, and other social services. Urban residents also experienced rising food prices, increased unemployment, and heightened concerns about criminality associated with the proliferation of displaced populations and economic hardship. Therefore, while urban communities were relatively insulated from direct physical violence, they bore substantial socio-economic costs resulting from prolonged rural insecurity.

Another notable distinction between urban and rural conflict experiences lies in the issue of victimization. Research conducted in Lafia and Obi Local Government Areas demonstrates that both farming and pastoral communities perceived themselves as victims of violence; however, the forms of victimization differed significantly. Farming communities reported destruction of crops, loss of land, forced displacement, and fatalities, whereas pastoral groups experienced cattle rustling, loss of livestock, restrictions on movement, and human casualties (Yikwab & Tade, 2019). These findings suggest that rural conflict experiences were multidimensional and affected different livelihood groups in distinct ways. The resulting cycle of retaliation often prolonged conflicts and deepened intergroup mistrust within affected communities.

Furthermore, communal conflicts in Nasarawa South increasingly assumed ethnic and political dimensions between 2011 and 2023. Adokwe (2017) observes that many communal conflicts in the zone, particularly those involving Tiv and Azara communities, were rooted in struggles over identity, political representation, citizenship rights, and access to resources. As observed from the focused group Discussion, women in the rural communities were often the most vulnerable victims, experiencing displacement, economic deprivation, and social dislocation. In contrast, urban centres benefited from a stronger presence of security agencies, government institutions, traditional authorities, and civil society organizations that contributed to conflict management and mitigation. Although these institutions did not eliminate insecurity, they reduced the likelihood of large-scale violence within urban areas compared to rural settlements.

The conflict landscape became even more complex after 2018 following the implementation of anti-open grazing policies in some neighbouring states. Research indicates that these policies altered migratory patterns and contributed to the relocation of pastoral groups into parts of Nasarawa State, thereby increasing pressure on existing land resources and intensifying local conflicts (Yikwab & Tade, 2020). Consequently, rural communities became increasingly vulnerable to recurring violence, while urban centres continued to absorb the humanitarian and

economic consequences of displacement and insecurity. Government responses were often criticized as inadequate, reactive, and lacking the institutional capacity required for sustainable conflict resolution (Usman & Mohammed, 2022).

In comparative terms, therefore, the urban-rural divide in Nasarawa South Senatorial Zone reveals two distinct but interconnected conflict realities. Rural communities experienced direct exposure to violence, loss of lives, destruction of livelihoods, displacement, and food insecurity. Urban communities, on the other hand, experienced conflict indirectly through demographic pressures, humanitarian challenges, economic disruptions, and governance burdens associated with managing displaced populations. This divergence underscores the necessity for differentiated policy responses. While rural areas require interventions focused on land governance, agricultural security, resource management, and community peacebuilding, urban areas require strengthened social welfare systems, humanitarian support mechanisms, and institutional capacities capable of managing the secondary effects of conflict. The persistence of this divide between 2011 and 2023 demonstrates that sustainable peace in Nasarawa South Senatorial Zone cannot be achieved without simultaneously addressing the structural drivers of rural violence and the socio-economic consequences experienced in urban centres.

Responses of Leadership Regimes in Nasarawa State to Security Challenges in Nasarawa South Senatorial Zone, 2011-2023

From a comparative perspective, the period between 2011 and 2023 in Nasarawa State represents two major leadership regimes: the administration of Umaru Tanko Al-Makura and that of Abdullahi Sule. The two administrations governed during distinct security environments and adopted different policy approaches toward violent conflicts affecting the Southern Senatorial Zone (Awe, Doma, Keana, Lafia, and Obi). The zone experienced ethnic violence, the Ombatse crisis, farmer-herder conflicts, criminal banditry, communal clashes, and displacement crises. The two administrations reflected different leadership styles, one was largely reactive and coercive, while the other attempted a more institutional and preventive strategy. The Southern Senatorial Zone became one of the most conflict-prone regions in North-Central Nigeria. During Al-Makura's tenure, violent mobilization around the Ombatse movement, ethnic competition, and communal violence shaped the security landscape. By contrast, during the Sule administration, farmer-herder conflicts and criminal violence became more dominant.

Table 1: Responses of Al-Makura and Sule Administration to Security Challenges in Nasarawa South Senatorial Zone, 2011-2023

Variable	Al-Makura Administration (2011-2019)	Sule Administration (2019-2023)
Leadership style	Crisis-response and security-centered	Institutional and dialogue-centered
Major security threats	Ombatse violence, ethnic conflict	Farmer-herder conflict, banditry, communal attacks
Security strategy	Deployment of force and commissions of inquiry	Mediation, security partnerships, early intervention
Approach to conflict management	Reactive	Preventive and multi-sectoral
Relationship with local actors	Often contentious	More consultative
Security emphasis	Suppression of armed groups	Community peace building

Source: researcher's compilation

Al-Makura Regime (2011-2019) - Militarized Responses and Political Challenges

The Al-Makura administration assumed office at a time of increasing political and ethnic tensions. One of the most severe security threats emerged from the Ombatse movement. Violence culminated in the Alakyo killings in 2013, where security personnel were ambushed and killed. Reports and inquiry findings suggested extensive destruction and fatalities linked to the broader crisis.

The administration's responses included establishment of judicial commissions of inquiry, deployment of security agencies, crackdowns on suspected militias, public condemnation of ethnic militancy, increased military operations in conflict areas, Governor Al-Makura rejected proposals suggesting amnesty for Ombatse members and insisted on prosecution and law enforcement measures. The administration also publicly argued that political actors sponsored violence and emphasized punitive measures. There were several observers who criticized the aspects of the government's handling of the crisis. Political controversies emerged regarding relations between state actors and Ombatse-related groups, creating debates over impartiality and crisis management.

The strengths of Al-Makura's security performance include rapid deployment of force, use of formal investigative mechanisms, strong rhetoric against armed groups, while the weaknesses include heavy dependence on coercive approaches, limited community reconciliation initiatives, delayed structural interventions, perception of politicization in some security matters.

Sule Regime (2019-2023) - Institutional Responses and Preventive Security Governance

Upon assuming office in 2019, Abdullahi Sule inherited a transformed security environment. Large-scale ethnic militia violence had reduced, but farmer-herder conflicts, displacement, and organized criminality persisted. His administration emphasized inter-

community dialogue, cooperation with traditional institutions, strengthening local conflict-resolution mechanisms, collaboration with federal security institutions, broader preventive security arrangements. The administration sought to reduce conflict escalation through consultation and localized peace-building frameworks. Security management increasingly moved beyond military deployment toward governance-based responses. Compared with the earlier administration, Sule's strategy reflected principles associated with human security and conflict prevention.

The strengths of Sule's security performance include greater use of dialogue and mediation, increased stakeholder consultation, emphasis on preventive mechanisms, while the weaknesses include continued rural insecurity, persistence of displacement, limited capacity against armed criminal networks. Urban areas, particularly Lafia, benefited from stronger state presence, security infrastructure, and administrative oversight. Rural communities in Doma, Keana, Awe, and Obi often experienced delayed intervention and higher exposure to violence. Table 2 compares urban-rural dimensions of leadership responses

Table 2: Comparative Urban-Rural Dimensions of Leadership Responses

Dimension	Urban Areas	Rural Areas
Security presence	Stronger	Weaker
Government intervention speed	Faster	Slower
Exposure to communal conflict	Moderate	High
Access to humanitarian support	Higher	Lower
Security presence	Stronger	Weaker

Source: researcher's classification

Findings

The study found that leadership responses to security challenges in the South Senatorial Zone of Nasarawa State between 2011 and 2023 were more effective where government authorities, traditional rulers, community leaders, and security agencies collaborated in addressing security threats. However, coordination among these stakeholders was often inconsistent, limiting the effectiveness of security interventions. The findings further revealed that community-based security initiatives, including vigilante groups, community policing, and early warning mechanisms, played a significant role in preventing and responding to local conflicts but were constrained by inadequate training, funding, and institutional support. In addition, the study established that the capacity of both political and traditional leaders to manage security challenges was strengthened through peace-building and conflict resolution skills. Nevertheless, limited inclusion of women, youth, and civil society organizations in security governance reduced the sustainability and effectiveness of leadership responses. Overall, the findings indicate that strengthening collaborative leadership, institutionalizing community-based security structures, and promoting inclusive governance are essential for improving security management and achieving lasting peace in the South Senatorial Zone of Nasarawa State.

Conclusion

The study identified land competition, resource scarcity, and identity politics as major drivers of conflict in Nasarawa South Senatorial Zone. Amidst these drivers of conflict, there is a clear urban-rural divide in conflict experience in the area with rural residents facing physical violence, displacement, food insecurity, and disruption of agricultural activities, while urban populations encountered socio-economic stress through migration pressures and weakened local economies. Leadership regimes the State responded to the security challenges and their responses reflected different governance style and philosophies. While Al-Makura's administration operated under conditions of severe ethnic mobilisation and adopted a more force-centered approach, Sule's administration confronted diffuse insecurity and relied more heavily on dialogue and institutional partnerships. Neither administration fully resolved the structural causes of conflict. Conflicts in Nasarawa South Senatorial Zone were not isolated security events but structurally embedded crises shaped by governance gaps and competition over natural resources. Thus, sustainable security requires integrated strategies that combine security operations with rural development, reconciliation initiatives, and community-based peace-building.

Recommendation

The study put forward the following recommendations:

- i. Strengthening multi-stakeholder security collaboration by government authorities, traditional rulers, community leaders, and security agencies. Indigenes both men and women should institutionalize regular security consultations and intelligence-sharing mechanisms to ensure coordinated and timely responses to emerging security threats.
- ii. Promoting community-based security and conflict prevention task force. Community policing initiatives, vigilante groups, and early warning systems should be strengthened through adequate training, funding, and oversight to enhance local participation in security management and conflict prevention.
- iii. Enhancing leadership capacity and inclusive governance by political and traditional leaders. They should receive continuous training in peace-building, mediation, and conflict resolution while ensuring the inclusion of women, youth, and civil society groups in security decision-making processes to foster sustainable peace and stability.

References

- Adebajo, A. A. & Owolola, O. Y. (2024). Herder-farmer conflict and girl-child education in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. Centre for Peace and Strategic Research, Federal University Dutse.
- Adokwe, C. A. (2017). Effects of communal conflicts and its implication on women in Nasarawa State. Nasarawa State University, Keffi.
- Burton, J. W. (1990). Conflict: Resolution and prevention. St. Martin's Press.
- Danladi, J. Y., & Sule, M. M. (2019). Islam and ethnicity: The case study of Ombatse crisis 2011-2015 in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. *al-Irsyad: Journal of Islamic and Contemporary Issues*, 4(1), 56-70.
- Genyi, G. A. (2017). Farmer-herder conflict and the security of rural livelihoods in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. *Middle Belt Studies*, 5(1), 23-41.

- Homer-Dixon, T. F. (1999). *Environment, scarcity, and violence*. Princeton University Press.
- Ioryue, D. A. (2024). Farmer-herder conflict and national security in Nigeria: Benue State in perspective. *Kashere Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 2(2), 245-258.
- Janet, J. M., Kundi, P. S., Ogah, A. T., & Alkali, M. (2024). Socio-economic effects and spatial patterns of farmers and herders conflict in Southern Nasarawa State, Nigeria. *POLAC Management Review*, 4(2), 1-15.
- Jibrin, A. D. (2025). Farmer-herder conflict and displacement of people in Keana Local Government Council of Nasarawa State, Nigeria. *Journal of Social Research*, 5(1), 45-60.
- Joseph Gbadeyan Judicial Commission of Inquiry Report on Ethnic Conflicts in Nasarawa State. (2014). Findings on casualties and destruction associated with Ombatse violence. Nasarawa State security reports and public statements on Ombatse investigations and conflict management.
- Moh'd, I. A., & Samu, M. O. (2025). The effect of farmers and herders' conflict on peasants in Doma Local Government Area, Nasarawa State. *FUDMA International Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(1).
- Musa, M., Sylvester, E., & El-Kas, I. G. M. (2021). The impact of herders and farmers conflicts on agricultural activities in Nasarawa State. *Journal of Advanced Academic Research*, 7(10), 319-335.
- Nnam, M. U. (2025). Violent herder-farmer conflicts and human security in Nigeria. *Development in Practice*.
- Nwankwo, C. F. (2024). Farmer-herder conflict and criminality in ungoverned forests of the Benue-Nasarawa-Taraba borderland. *Environmental Challenges*, 15, 100879.
- Obikaeze, C. V., Oduntan, J. O., Fajobi, T. A., Kayode, G., & Eteng, E. E. (2023). Herders-farmers conflicts over farmlands: Implications for human and food security in Nigeria. *ABUAD Journal of Social and Management Sciences*.
<https://journals.abuad.edu.ng/index.php/ajsms/article/view/319>
- Obuje, A., & User, T. (2024). Identity politics and conflict dynamics in Nasarawa South. *African Conflict and Peacebuilding Review*, 14(2), 201-219.
- OECD. (2011). *From power struggles to sustainable peace: Understanding political settlements*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264116498-en>
- OECD. (2020). *States of fragility 2020*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/ba7c22e7-en>
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2024). *Peacebuilding in fragile contexts*. OECD Publishing.
- Okoli, A. C., & Atelhe, G. A. (2014). Nomads against natives: A political ecology of herder/farmer conflicts in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, 4(2), 76-88.
- Okoli, A. C., & Azom, S. N. (2019). Boko Haram insurgency and gendered victimhood: Women as corporal victims and objects of war. *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 30(6-7), 1214-1232.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2019.1650473>
- Omotola, J. S. (2025). Understanding herder-farmer conflicts in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. In J. S. Omotola (Ed.), *Security and peacebuilding in Nigeria*. Springer.
- Omotola, J. S. (2023). Traditional institutions and the management of herder-farmer conflicts in Nasarawa State. In *Traditional Authority and Security in Contemporary Nigeria* (pp. 169-190). Routledge.
- Ombugadu, V. A. (2021). Resurgence of Ombatse traditional institution among the Eggon people of Nasarawa State, Nigeria. ResearchGate.

- Ramsbotham, O., Woodhouse, T., & Miall, H. (2016). *Contemporary conflict resolution* (4th ed.). Polity Press.
- United Nations Development Programme. (2016). *Building inclusive societies and sustaining peace through democratic governance and conflict prevention*. UNDP.
- Usman, A., & Mohammed, A. T. (2022). An assessment of the government's response to farmer-herder conflict in North-Central Nigeria: A study of Benue and Nasarawa States, 2012-2016. *Zamfara Journal of Politics and Development*, 3(1).
- Uvin, P. (2002). The development/peacebuilding nexus: A typology and history of changing paradigms. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 1(1), 5-25.
- Yikwab, P., & Tade, O. (2019). If you kill me, you take the cow: Victimization experiences of farming and herding communities in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research*, 11(4), 273-280. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JACPR-06-2019-0417>
- Yikwab, P., & Tade, O. (2022). How farming communities cope with displacement arising from farmer-herder conflict in North Central Nigeria. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 57(4), 781-796. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00219096211034882>