

State Fragility and the Accentuation of Conflict in Nigeria: A Critical Evaluation of Herdsmen-Farmers' Conflict in The Fourth Republic

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Abstract

In developed nations where the government and its institutions are strong, the tendency for resolving conflicts promptly and dispassionately is usually high. In Nigeria, however, conflicts are generally intractable to resolve due to the fact that the government with its institutions is ostensibly regarded by the citizens as weak and bias because of the need to realise vested interest of entrenching Fulani hegemony. This paper examines state fragility and the accentuation of conflict in Nigeria focusing on herdsmen-farmers' conflicts in the fourth republic. It adopts descriptive method of research, using the secondary sources of data, while failed state theory and frustration-aggression theory were employed as theoretical tools of analysis. The paper contends that factors like climate change, resources, water, porosity of borders, ethnic/religious bias, among others, prompted the herdsmen-farmers conflict. It further argued that the weakness of government and the declining state capacity resulting in government inability to discharge its responsibility of providing security for its citizens accentuated the crisis thereby bringing about loss of lives, wanton destruction of properties, and displacement of people and desertion of communities in Nigeria. It averred that government inept attitude towards resolving the conflict made the efforts of stakeholders inadequate and ineffective thus making the conflict apparently hydra-headed and multifaceted. The paper thus recommends, among others, that government should strengthen the various security outfits in order to cope with the enormity of herdsmen-farmers conflict; eschew ethnic/religious bias in dealing with the prevalent herdsmen-farmers conflict; implement the laws regulating the acquisition and use of arms without any bias by ensuring that those who flout the law are sanctioned accordingly. In addition, government should embark on enlightenment campaign to educate citizens on the need for tolerance and peaceful co-existence.

Keywords: Accentuation, Conflict, Farmers, Herdsmen, State fragility.

Introduction

In international politics, the state and its agency are the prime elements of analysis and are often assumed to correspond to its capacity for sustaining appropriate bureaucratic and coercive structures (Madhuraj, 2020). However, most states in Africa, Nigeria inclusive, do not measure-up to these prerequisites for state capacity, which thus resulted to the classification of African states as fragile states (Williams, 2013). State fragility is regarded as the weakness of state institutions to provide physical security, including the basic needs of survival for citizens, while such weakness leads to corruption, ineffectiveness, undemocratic practices, as well as failure of state authority and legitimacy (Adeto, 2019).

The condition of fragility has been associated with various combinations of the inability to provide basic services and meet vital needs, unstable and weak governance, persistent and extreme poverty, lack of territorial control, and high propensity to conflict (Graziella & Andrea, 2011). These indices characterise the present condition in Nigeria as a state because over the years, the issue of civil unrest has been a recurring decimal in Nigeria's political, economic and socio-cultural landscape prior to Nigeria's independence and it still lingers in post-independence era (Abodunrin, 2019).

Nigeria has witnessed series of conflicts ranging from communal crises, civil war, electoral crises, ethno-religious conflicts, herdsman-farmers crises, banditry, among others, which threatened its territorial integrity and its overall survival as a state (Awotokun, Nwozor & Olanrewaju, 2020). Each of these dimensions of conflicts has critically affected the stability of the nation and can all be traced to the weakness of state institutions to restrain these arrays of crises (Abodunrin, Oloye & Adesola, 2020).

Pathetic and worrisome in the present development is the on-going pillaging, raping, killing and kidnapping by the so-called Fulani herdsmen. It was reported that the death toll resulting from conflicts between herders and farmers in 2016 alone was about 2,500 persons and that between 2011 and 2016; fatalities averaged more than 2,000 deaths (International Crisis Group, 2017; Awotokun et al. 2020). It was also estimated that over 10,000 people have been killed over the past decade with more than 6,000 of them being casualties in the past two years (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2018; Ilo, Jonathan-Chaver, & Adamolekun, 2019). Likewise, it was reported that between 2017 and May 2, 2020, Fulani herdsmen conducted 654 attacks, killed 2,539 peoples and kidnapped 253 people in Nigeria (Akinloye, 2020).

However, Nigeria's government has been assessed to have failed to provide the needed security for all her citizens, most especially, the herdsmen attack. Government's ineptitude towards handling the initial crisis has made its widespread conceivable. This has led concerned people to have the opinion that government has not only failed in her basic responsibility of securing the lives and property of her citizens, but has also been insensitive to the plight of the affected persons in the various clashes. This situation has led to several accusations being levelled against government as being indirectly involved in encouraging the conflict (Onwuka, 2018; Abodunrin et al, 2020).

Thus, conflict dynamics such as the herdsmen-farmers crises may be conceptualised a symptom or a consequence of state fragility because conflict and state fragility fuel each other as the realities on the ground demonstrate. In other words, state authority, effectiveness and legitimacy in Nigeria are weakened by the damaging effects of conflict, and state fragility manifests itself in and contributes to the conflict process with a serious consequence on lives and properties, development and even the survival of the country (Clapham 2017; Coleman & Tieku 2018).

The declining capacity of the Nigerian state is considered a substantial contributory factor to the upsurge of conflicts such as the herdsmen-farmers' conflicts which in turn presents Nigeria as a state possessing the characteristics of a fragile state. Against this background, this paper examined state fragility and the accentuation of conflict in Nigeria with a focus on herdsmen-farmers' conflict in the fourth republic.

In order to achieve its objective, the paper is grouped into five sections. The first section treats the conceptual clarification and the theoretical underpinnings of the paper. The second section examines the overview of herdsmen-farmers conflict in Nigeria as well as discusses the various factors that prompted the crises. The third section deals with the evaluation of government's efforts toward curbing the herdsmen-farmers' conflict in Nigeria. The fourth section appraises the nexus between state fragility and conflict in Nigeria while the fifth section gives the conclusion and recommendations.

Conceptual Clarification

Understanding State Fragility

The term state fragility can be conceptualised and understood in a number of ways. State fragility is symbolised by extractive state institutions that expropriate power and wealth, thereby impoverishing the people and blocking economic development, and at the same time initiate savage conflict (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). Fragility can be conceived as low capacity and poor state performance with respect to security and development. A state is fragile when it is unable to provide for basic human security or create the public goods and conditions needed for gains in human development (Jakkie & Timothy, 2013). Fukuyama (2015) avers that state fragility is the failure of the perceived

legitimacy of the government that binds the population together by making them willing to accept its authority both internally and externally.

Furthermore, Baranyi and Powell (2005) argue that the conceptions of state fragility, weakness and failure converged around two ideas. First, fragility refers to certain states' inability and/or unwillingness to provide essential public goods like protection from external threats, rule of law and basic social services to most of their citizens. Second, fragility is a matter of degree ranging from states that have ceased to exist in all but name and cannot provide protection or welfare to anyone, to certain states that can deliver most public goods to most of their citizens.

Hence, fragility is the combination of exposure to risk and insufficient coping capacity of the state, system and/or communities to manage, absorb or mitigate those risks (Kendra, Scott & Håvard, 2016). Fragile states are thus poor countries that are generally unable to fulfil the basic functions of a state: to provide public goods to citizens, including law and order, services such as health and education, and the basic institutions for inclusive economic growth and political liberty. Such states are especially prone to environmental degradation and economic collapse, which can further exacerbate group-based grievances and inequalities. They are also generally highly corrupt. Fragility often results in major social and security crises, including protracted political crisis and instability, armed conflict, and the general escalation of both violence (both social and interpersonal) and social unrest (Kendra et al, 2016).

From the above exposition, state fragility is defined as a situation or condition in which a state is experiencing poor governance and weak institutions that are unable to discharge its anticipated responsibilities which thus trigger a lot of acrimonies such as conflict, poverty, insecurity, among others, within the state.

Explaining Conflict

Conflict is regarded as an integral part of human existence and social relations because it is inevitable in any social setting, community, society and state at large (Olagbaju & Awosusi, 2019). Thus, conflict connotes clash or disagreement between two or more groups who have incompatible and irreconcilable differences. It is a situation where two or more parties pursue similar goals but have the conviction that such goals are achievable by just one of them and therefore employ every resource within their reach to hinder the other party from attaining such goal (Aliyu & Akinwande, 2018). Mullins and Christy (2013) asserted that conflict is a behaviour projected to obstruct the achievement of some other person's plans. Conflict is thus described as a felt struggle between two or more independent individuals over perceived incompatible differences in beliefs, values, and goals, or differences in desires for esteem, control, and connectedness (Wilmot & Hocker, 2011).

Furthermore, conflict as a state of incompatibility is described as a situation in which the concerns of two or more individuals operating within the same unit appear to be incompatible (Darling & Fogliasso, 1999). It is a situation that surfaces the moment one party perceives that another party has adversely affected, or is about to gravely affect something that the first party desires (Robbins, 2005). Also, Maltosa (1999) emphasised that conflict often expresses itself in the form of violence, and once it assumes this character, it becomes undesirable and counter-productive. However, Bloomfield, Ghai, and Reilly (2003) canvassed that conflict itself is not necessarily a negative process but one of the most powerfully positive factors for change in a society. Hence, conflicts can be harmful or harmless to humankind (Adeleke, 2018).

From the explication above, conflict could thus be defined as a condition of disparities between two or more groups which in turn results to the use of force or violence towards achievement of individual objectives.

Defining Herdsmen-Farmers' Conflict

The Fulani originated from the Senegambia before spreading out into about 20 states, which cut across West Africa and the Sahel as well as Western Sudan and Central African Republic (McGregor, 2014). The people are found in large number in Nigeria but while some have moved into the cities, many are still living as semi-nomadic herders. However, these group who own and rear herds of animals like cattle for commercial purposes are called herdsmen. Fulani herdsmen or Fulani pastoralists are nomadic or semi nomadic herders whose primary occupation is raising livestock and they usually move their herds from one place to another in search of pasture and fresh water (Okoro, 2018b).

Also, they are often armed and visibly move about with weapons (like daggers, matchets, arrows etc) to protect their livestock. The more disturbing issue about the herdsmen is that they also block the highways with their cattle, rob and kidnap people, keep them captives in the bush and demand for ransom. The herdsmen have also been involved in the rape of old and young women and burning of communities (GTI, 2015). Due to their violent nature and associated killings, the group was recently described as the world's fourth deadliest militant group (Mikailu, 2016).

On the other hand, farmers (also called agriculturists) are persons who engage in agriculture, raising living organisms for food or raw materials. The term also applies to people who do some combination of raising field crops, orchards, vineyards, poultry, or other livestock (Okoro, 2018b). Therefore, based on the above broad definition, farmers include both the ones that herd or raise livestock like cattle, goats, and sheep, among others, and those that involve in crop planting in the field. But for the purpose of this

paper, farmers are regarded as the set of people that grow food crops in the field and are often called peasant farmers/subsistence cultivators only.

Herdsmen-farmers conflicts are conflicts between peasant/subsistence cultivators and nomadic/transhumant live-stock keepers (Okoro, 2018a). Hussein, Sumberg, & Seddon (1999) see herdsmen-farmer conflicts as comprising different types of conflicts, including ethnic conflicts, interest conflicts, resource disputes, political action, evictions, killings, cattle raiding and cattle rustling. Farmers-herdsmen conflict is basically the verbal and lethal confrontations that farmers usually have with the herdsmen as a result of their competition over the available resources of grazing farmland on one hand, and drinking or use of water for irrigation on the other hand (Aliyu & Akinwande, 2018).

Theoretical Framework

In order to explain the relationship between state fragility and the prevalent herdsmen-farmers' conflict in Nigeria, this paper is anchored on failed state theory and frustration-aggression theory. Ordinarily, a state is defined to an entity charged the power of maintaining a monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force within its borders but when this is broken (e.g., through the dominant presence of warlords, paramilitary groups, armed gangs, or terrorism), the very existence of the state becomes dubious, and the state becomes a failed state (Okoro, 2018a).

Anyanwu (2005) asserted that a failed state is a term that refers to nation-states that have failed at some of its basic conditions and responsibilities as a sovereign government. In other words, a failed state is one that has feeble and flawed institutions like the police and judiciary as this invariably leads to a partial or complete breakdown of law and order, poor performance by the executive as well as the legislature in addition to the bureaucracy, and the armed forces that must have lost their capacity and professional independence. It also suffers from decaying infrastructures, faltering utility supplies in all sectors, deteriorating basic human-development indicators such as high infant mortality and illiteracy rates, while at the same time creating a perfect environment for corruption and negative growth rates to thrive and flourish (Amaechi, 2017).

According to Call (2008), state failure focuses on three gaps that the state is not able to provide when it is in the process of failure; capacity, when state institutions lack the ability to effectively deliver basic goods and services to its population; security, when the state is unable to provide security to its population under the threat of armed groups; and legitimacy, when a significant portion of its political elites and society reject the rules regulating power and the accumulation and distribution of wealth. Failed state then implies that the state has been rendered ineffective and is not able to enforce its laws uniformly or provide basic goods and services to its citizens because of (variously) high crime rates, insurgency, extreme political corruption, an impenetrable and ineffective bureaucracy, judicial ineffectiveness, military interference in politics, and cultural

situations in which traditional leaders wield more power than the state over a certain area (Olivier, 2013).

A failed state thus lacks the ability to minimise internal conflict as it cannot formulate and implement public policies to provide and deliver effective services to its citizenry. However, because of this condition of failed state in Nigeria, herdsmen have continued to kill unabated and they may also be rightly characterised, like the Boko Haram insurgency. Thus, Nigeria is characterised to be in a state of anarchy, which means lack of government, a state or society where people can kill, maim and destroy properties with impunity and without any sanctions being applied against them in accordance with law or as stipulated by law (Okoro, 2018a)

The frustration-aggression theory as espoused by John Dollard in 1939 and expanded by Miller (1941 cited in Faleti, 2015) contends that the reason for the display of aggression by people is the feeling of not being able to completely get what they actually deserve. In other words, when what people get is lower than their expectations, they result in conflict. Faleti (2015) remarked that it is the difference between 'expected need' and 'actual need' that propelled some conflicts. Frustration-aggression theory conceives conflict as the outcome of frustration of an individual or group from being unable to attain their legitimate desire (Aliyu & Akinwande, 2018).

The theory as advocated by Dollard et.al. (1939) posits that the occurrence of aggressive behaviour always presupposes the existence of frustration and, that the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression. Miller (1941) rephrased the notion stating that frustration produces instigations to a number of different types of responses. Also, Olu-Adeyemi (2017) averred that a number of variables influence the use of violence as well, for example, the culture, the society, and the political environment. The culture must at least accept, if not approve, violent action as a means to an end. Violence is also more likely if the current leadership (government) and/or the socio-economic/political system are seen as irresponsible.

Frustration-aggression theory explains the farmers-herdsmen conflict in the sense that, they both feel they are entitled to pasture land and water due to the nature of their occupation. The farmers feel that, by virtue of being the indigenous owners of the land, there should be no further reduction on the limited available land which is not commensurately owned with their given demographic explosion and that herdsmen's encroachment on their land is a hindrance to attaining their full farming potential, since they have large families that cultivate large expanse of land. The Fulani on the other hand feel that the farmers are problems to them in accessing pasture, land and water, thereby mal-nourishing their cattle and reducing their market value by making them less attractive. The herdsmen's major preoccupation is to have a large herd of cattle, and any

hindrance to achieving such a goal is confronted with very strong aggression and attack (Aliyu & Akinwande, 2018; Okoro 2018a).

An Overview and Trends of Herdsmen-Farmers Conflict in Nigeria

Herdsmen-farmers' conflicts have existed since early beginning of agriculture in Africa (Fratkin, 1997). But it's continued evolving violent nature against the backdrop of social differences, resource scarcity, increase in the population of resource users, lack of adequate grazing reserves and poor state of the existing ones, unequal resource distribution and the consequent failure of patrimonial states (Olagbaju & Awosusi, 2019). The first crisis between herdsmen and farmers was recorded in 1948. The second was in 1951 this led to the migration of Fulani Bororo to Sudan. In 1955 there was a clash/genocide which led to the Sudanese Government issuing a quit notice to all Fulani Bororo to relocate to their home countries. These people were mainly from Borno, Sokoto and Kano States in Nigeria (Abodunrin et al, 2020).

Since 1999, Nigeria has been a theatre of violent conflict to the extent that it witnessed over forty ethno-religious and communal conflicts between 1999 and 2002 (Odunlami, 2017). These conflicts have been exacerbated with the raging battle between Fulani herdsmen and farmers of Nigeria's North Central region, though the problem remains spread across different parts of the country (Ciboh, 2015). Herdsmen and farmers clashes are dated to 2012 in Nigeria (Aliyu & Akinwande, 2018). Before then, there has been peaceful relationship among farmers and herdsmen across the states in Nigeria, except few cases of minor misunderstandings that did not claim life (Nzeh, 2015; Doyin, 2017). According to Omawumi (2016), the current conflict started because of farming, grazing land and water. The farmers accused the herdsmen of damaging their crops by failing to control their animals while the herdsmen equally claimed that the farming communities steal their cattle (Adeleke, 2018).

However, the conflicts between farmers and herdsmen in Nigeria has been very frequent, and most predominantly in the North Central, resulting in serious consequences which include loss of property worth billions, displacement of people from their residents, killing of cattle's, among others (Beetseh, Tion & Terwase, 2018). The sampled incidences of herdsmen attacks between 2013 to January 2021 are presented in table 1 below:

Table 1: Instances of Incidences of Herdsmen Attacks on Nigeria 2013 to January 2020.

S/N	Date	Location	Nature of Attack & Consequences
1	February, 2013	Agatu LGA of Benue State	Communities attacked by armed-herdsmen in military uniform, killing about 500 persons, several injured, houses and food items burnt down.

2	November 9, 2013	Guma LGA of Benue State	Several communities in Guma LG were attacked by armed-herdsmen killing 22 persons & property worth millions of naira destroyed.
3	February 20, 2014	Gwer West LGA of Benue State	Attacks on farmers in 6 wards by armed-Fulani herdsmen killing 35 & displacing many.
4	March 23, 2014	Gbajimba, Guma LGA of Benue State	Attack by armed-Fulani herdsmen, killing 25 persons & injuring 50.
5	March 2013 to January 2015	Communities in Wukari LGA of Taraba State	Attacks on farming communities by armed-Fulani herdsmen, killing more than 100 persons & over 5000 displaced. Homes & farms destroyed.
6	May 24, 2015	Ukra, Gafe, Per & Tse-Gusa in Logo LGA of Benue State	Attacks on these communities by armed-Fulani herdsmen, killing 100 persons & displacing many.
7	January 6, 2016	UdeniRuwa, Nasarawa state	Destruction of farm crops where 38 people killed and many wounded.
8	January 23, 2016	Demsare, Wunamokoh, Dikajam and Taboungo of Adamawa State	60 people including a police DPO killed and properties destroyed.
9	February 7, 2016	Tombu in Buruku LGA, Benue State	Class between the herdsmen and farmers where 10 persons were killed and the community was raided.
10	March 2, 2016	Ossissa, Ndokwa, Delta State	4 persons killed, some wounded, and residents forced to flee their homes as houses were destroyed.
11	March 7, 8, 13, 17, 2016	Mbaya-Tombo, Benue state	Dispute and destruction of farm crops where over 35 persons died and properties were destroyed.
12	April 10, 2016	Dori & Mesuma Villages in Garbabi Ward Gashaka LGA of Taraba State	Attacks on the communities by armed Fulani herdsmen, killing 40 persons, injuring many & burning of houses.
13	April 25, 2016	Nimbo, Enugu State	Attack on the community by armed-Fulani herdsmen, killing 40 persons, destruction of homes & farms.
14	May 6, 2016	Coromo, Dan- Anacha and Mutum Biyu communities, Gassol LGA of Taraba.	The killings were allegedly over a land dispute between the herdsmen and the Tivs where 13 houses, killed 12 people and left 80 others seriously injured.
15	May 15, 2016	Tarfi village, Binnev Ward, in Buruku Local	12 persons were reportedly killed, many seriously injured, many missing

		Government Area, Benue State	
16	June 17, 2016	Logo local Government Area of Benue State	10 persons and scores of farmers displaced
17	June 25, 2016	Koh community in Girei Local Government Area of Adamawa State	A Fulani herder trespassed to a farmland and the owner raised alarm, causing the herder to leave and to reappear with his kinsmen who confronted the farmers where 8 persons killed
18	July 12, 2016	Gbagyi communities in Boss Local Government Area of Niger State	At least 11 persons have died after a clash between suspected Fulani Herdsmen and
19	July 25, 2016	Tse-Adayol in Logo Local Government Area. Benue State	Clash over grazing rights where 10 persons killed, 1 missing and 2 injured
20	August 1-3, 13, 2016	Golkofa in Jema'a LGA, Adamawa state	20 persons killed
21	Sept. 24–26, 2016	Godogodo, Kaduna,	8 persons slaughtered and wounded 8 others
22	October 15, 2016	Godogodo, Kaduna,	At least 40 persons were killed in the attack and many houses burnt
23	November 2, 2016	Nimbo Community of Uzo-Uwani LGA, Enugu state	Reprisal attack where 8 people were massacred (7 men and 1 woman)
24	December 17, 2016	SabonGidan village of Dan Anacha town, Taraba State.	Attack and 20 feared killed many missing and properties destroyed
25	January 9, 2017	Abraka and Obiaruku, both in Ethiope East and Ukwuani LGAs, Delta State	No fewer than 5 persons were killed.
26	January 16, 2017	Rafin Gona and Gbagyi villages in Bosso LGA, Niger State.	9 killed, including a police Inspector and an ASP of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps at least 6,000 persons displaced
27	January 24, 2017	Ipiga village in Ohimini LGA, Benue State	Grazed cattle and destroyed farmlands where 15 persons were killed. A bloody fight that took the lives of two of the herdsmen and about 13 of the villagers
28	February 10, 2017	RukumawaTsafé LGA, Zamfara State	Clash between community members and suspected herdsmen where 8 people were confirmed dead.
29	February 21, 2017	Southern Kaduna, Kaduna State	Fulani herdsmen launched attacks on four communities where about 21 people were killed.

30	March 2, 2017	Mbahimin community, Gwer East LGA, Benue State	Renewed hostilities between herdsmen and farmers in Mbahimin community where no fewer than 10 persons were killed.
31	March 6, 2017	Omumu community, Ika South LGA, Delta State.	Clash between suspected herdsmen and residents of Omumu community where 6 persons died.
32	March 20, 2017	Zaki Biam in Benue state	Grazing right dispute where 50 persons were killed
33	April 1, 2017	Obio Usiere in Eniong Abatim, Odukpani LGA, Cross River State	Raid a community and killed no fewer than 10 persons
34	May 5, 2017	Ussa and Takum Council areas of Taraba State	Clash between farmers and herdsmen where 15 people dead, many sustained injuries
35	May 22, 2017	Ewu community, Esan Central LGA, Edo State	Herdsmen entered farmland raped two women and strangled them to death while 1 was wounded. Crops were destroyed and lots of persons sacked from their farmlands.
36	July 20, 2017	Kajuru village of Kaduna,	Reprisal attacks where 33 killed, Fulani properties destroyed
37	September 09, 2017	Ancha village, Bassa LGA, Plateau state	Reprisal attack after a boy from the herding community was killed. 19 persons were killed
38	October 16, 2017	Nkiedonwhro village, Bassa LGA, Plateau State	No fewer than 29 people mostly women and children were killed
39	October 27, 2017	Irigwe kingdom, Bassa Local Government Area of Plateau State.	No fewer than 75 people were killed, 23 others, injured, about 13,726 persons displaced and 489 houses burnt
40	November 3, 2017	Tombo ward, Gaambe-tiev in Logo LGA, Benue State	Grazing law reactions where 1 killed, 1 injured
41	November 21, 2017	Kikan, Kwadomti and Shefaran Villages of Numan LGA Adamawa State	A reprisal attack where 52 herdsmen were killed
42	December 4, 2017	Numan & Demsa LGAs of Adamawa State	Attacks on farming communities in the two LGAs, killing over 80 persons, many injured, burning of houses and food items. Many displaced.
43	December 31, 2017 –	Benue Communities of Gaambe Tiev, Ayilamo, &	Attacks on these communities by armed-Fulani herdsmen, killing over 50

	January 2, 2018	Turan in Logo LGA; Umenger, Tse-Akor & Tomatar in Guma LGA	persons, several others injured & displaced. Property (houses) & farm land destroyed.
44	January 6 - 15, 2018	7 Communities in Lau LGA of Taraba State	Attacks on farming communities in Lau LGA of Taraba State by armed-Fulani herdsmen, killing over 80 persons, destruction of homes & farms; displacement of high number of persons.
45	March 3, 2018	Sardauna LGA of Taraba state	Herdsmen were attacked and 15 persons lost their lives
46	March 5, 2018	Omosu Okana villages in Okpokwu LGA in Benue State	Herdsmen reprised attack where 24 persons Killed, many wounded, and many missing
47	March 14, 2018	Ogane-Enugu and Ikende communities in Dekina LGA of Kogi State	The herdsmen invaded the communities when everyone has slept, 25 persons killed, several houses burnt
48	March 19, 2018	Agbenema in Opada/Ofejiji Ward, Omala LGA Kogi State	Herdsmen Invaded the community where 19 killed, houses burnt
49	April 4, 2018	Mbiya & Bassan communities in Takum LGA in Taraba State.	Attacks on the villages by armed-Fulani herdsmen, killed 5 persons, displaced many & destroyed of farms & property.
50	April 12, 2018	Jandeikyula village in Wukari L G A of Taraba State	25 persons killed and property worth hundreds of millions was destroyed
51	April 14 & 16, 2018	Several communities across Nasarawa state	32 Tiv villagers killed, many displaced
52	April, 28, 2018	Onocha-Olona, Aniocha - North LGA, and Ubulu-Uku, Aniocha South LGA, Delta State	Disagreement over destruction of crops by herdsmen's cattle where 2 persons killed in Aniocha-Olona, and 6 persons seriously injured in Ubulu-Uku
53	May 5, 2018	Gwaska, Kaduna State	Attack on the community by armed-Fulani herdsmen, killing over 55 persons, destruction of houses & farms.
54	May 25, 2018	Yorro LGA of Taraba State	Reprisal attacks and 5 people were killed
55	June 4, 2018	Dinya Village, Gassol LGA, Taraba State	Land resource, 4 farmers killed
56	June 6, 2018	Tse Shan, Tse Nyamkyume in Saghev, Guma LGA and Tse Ngo Jov Tombo Logo LGA	9 persons killed, over 45 houses set ablaze and several persons missing

57	June 23-24, 2018	Communities in Barkin Ladi, Riyom, Bokkos, & Mangu LGAs of Plateau State	Multiple attacks on farming communities by armed-Fulani herdsmen leading to 233 deaths, several injured & property destroyed. High number of IDPs
58	June & July 2018	Communities in Numan & Demsa LGAs of Adamawa State.	Attacks on farming communities in the two LGAs by armed-Fulani herdsmen, killing over 100 persons, many injured, burning of houses and food items. Many displaced.
59	February 10-11, 2019	Kajuru, Kaduna State	Attacks on farming communities by armed-Fulani herdsmen, over 151 killed, several persons injured, property & farms destroyed and many displaced.
60	May 5-7, 2019	Kona Communities in Ardo-Kola LGA of Taraba State.	Attacks on Jukun-Kona communities by armed-Fulani herdsmen, killing of 20 persons, burning down of houses & farm produce; displacement of persons.
61	January 9, 2020	Kulben Village of Kombun District of Mangu LGA of Plateau State.	Attack on the community by armed-Fulani herdsmen, killing more than 12 persons.
62	January 26, 2020	Kwatas, Bokkos LGA	Attacks by armed-Fulani herdsmen, over 26 persons killed & several persons displaced.
63	February 13, 2020	Avwon, Agadama, Ohoror, & other communities in Ughelli LGA of Delta State	Attacks by armed-Fulani herdsmen, killing 10 persons; property & farms destroyed.
64	May 11, 2020	Yelewata community in Guma council of Benue State	Herdsmen attack on the community where 2 women were killed and many others were injured.
65	May 12, 2020	Gom in Numan LGA of Adamawa State	Attack on the community by armed-Fulani herdsmen at 2am, killing more than 10 persons & burning of houses.
66	June 6, 2020	Torkula, Kaseye and Kponko villages in Guma LGA of Benue State	Herdsmen attacked the three villages and killed many people
67	June 14, 2020	Adana Village in Agatu LGA of Benue State	Suspected herdsmen stormed the village and killed 9 farmers
68	July 12, 2020	Chibwon Village in Zango Kataf LGA of Kaduna State	Suspected herdsmen raided the village, killed 7 persons and burn 20 houses.
69	August 23, 2020	Orire LGA of Oyo State	Suspected herdsmen chopped off the hand of one farmer, raped 2 ladies and

			destroyed farmlands.
70	September 10, 2020	Kardoroko, Keana LGA of Nasarawa State	Suspected herdsmen killed 2 Tiv farmers
71	November 23, 2020	Ilado Village in Akure North LGA of Ondo State	Suspected herdsmen invaded, burnt farms and injured workers on the farm
72	November 27, 2020	Ajaokuta LGA of Kogi State	Suspected herdsmen kidnaped 2 staff of Ajaokuta Steel Company Ltd and 1 other resident
73	January 8, 2021	Okokolo Community in Agatu LGA of Benue State	Suspected herdsmen attacked and injured many people
74	January 12, 2021	Boole Village, Ijabe Community in Odo-Otin LGA of Osun State	Suspected herdsman macheted a farmer to death on his farm
75	January 13, 2021	Asaba-Oghara Road, Delta State	Suspected herdsmen kill PDP councillor-ship candidate and kidnapped 2 people

Source: Agbu, Musa & Zhema, (2020); Okoro, (2018b); & Authors Update from Nigerian Dailies

Thus, armed herdsmen have terrorised, kidnapped, and killed, raped, burnt farming communities, property and taken-over lands belonging to the farming communities for their grazing activities. Their activities have also resulted in the loss of revenue by the States, threatened national unity, diversion of budgetary allocations for the maintenance of internally displaced persons (IDPs) camps, loss of human capital and damage to the country's international image (Enor, Magor & Expo 2019).

Factors Promoting Herdsmen-Farmers' Conflict in Nigeria

There are a number of factors promoting herdsmen-farmers' conflict in Nigeria. Firstly, the declining state capacity of the Nigerian state resulting in its inability to intervene by taking appropriate preventive actions through quick response to distress calls and early warning signs are some of the factors fuelling herdsmen-farmers conflict in Nigeria. Poor response to distress calls has made it difficult to stop crises that would have been prevented if government had responded promptly and accordingly (Egbuta, 2018). Also, politicians are beginning to see the socio-political friction as an ambience for political advancement, and have succeeded in widening the divide between the farmers and herdsmen, especially in North Central and North East Nigeria (Olagbaju & Awosusi, 2019).

Also, Burton (2016) noted that government's silence or negligence on the need for increased grazing space has influenced the conflict. He maintained that there has been little action on the part of the government to resolve these problems and some quarters believe that it is just being politicised for selfish gains. The herdsmen therefore have grown restless and their impatience has culminated into violent actions.

The violence perpetrated by the Fulani extremists has also been politicised along ethnic/tribal, cultural and religious lines. In the case of ethnic/tribal line, it is not arguable that the herders are predominantly Fulani who are mostly Muslims, while the farmers are predominantly non-Fulani peoples of the mostly Christian dominated Middle Belt region of Nigeria. The government at the centre and some states that share similar identities with the former are accused of tacit support for the herders who engage in these marauding attacks (Enor et al, 2019).

It is assumed that there is an ethnic conspiracy by the Fulani from top to the bottom, to use violence to strike fear among these farming communities in order to lay claim to land resources. Any time they attack communities, the government of Nigeria dismisses their attack as nothing other than community clash, resource conflict or political conspiracy by opposition elements, and the government seems to be sympathetic to the activities of its kinsmen going by its handling of their terror in the country (Mkom, 2018) which has prompted several communities to resort to seeking justice through reprisal (Enor et al, 2019).

The environment, in form of climate/environmental change and resource scarcity, is often seen as a major driver of herdsman-farmers conflicts because climate is a critical factor in the activities of herdsman and farmers (Okoro, 2018a). The changing climatic condition, generally referred to as global warming, is no doubt taking a toll on the survival of herdsman and farmers business (Okoli & Atelhe, 2014). The desert encroachment from the Sahara towards the Sahel region and other associated climatic conditions have continued to affect the livelihood of herdsman as they push further south in search of available space, pitching them against farmers and host communities (Abbass, 2012). This global phenomenon is currently affecting many parts of the world with attendant consequences including the herdsman-farmers conflict (Egbuta, 2018).

Furthermore, constant urbanisation and demographic shifts in the present-day world has increased the tendency and likelihood of farmers to move further afield for farming activities. At independence in 1960, the Nigerian population stood at about 35 million people (Mbachu, 2008). However, 60 years later, it has soared to over 180 million people and the growth is expected to persist in the near future (Nana, 2017). Thus, population increase of this magnitude means geometric increase in the demand for food products as a basic human need, as well as increase in the quest for farming space for farmers (Mwamfupe, 2015; Doyin, 2017). Conversely, industrialisation and urbanisation have continued to claim all available land, leaving little or nothing for farmers' survival. The continued movement of herdsman southwards in search of pasture for their animals has pitched them against farmers, eventually leading to conflict and destruction (Abah & Petja, 2015).

Rural banditry also ignites herdsmen-farmers conflict. The rise in value of livestock has recently attracted criminals who desire to rustle cattle for profit, a situation triggered by high youth unemployment and limited outlook for improved livelihoods (Okoro, 2018a). The high price of cattle has also brought in new more sophisticated groups of rustlers, coordinating attacks to profit off cattle theft and trade. Thus, bandits are taking advantage of the general insecurity in Nigeria to engage in widespread 'rural banditry' (Bagu & Smith, 2017).

The increasing cases of cattle rustling coupled with the poisoning of foliage for livestock have been known to trigger conflicts between herders and farmers. The high incidence of cattle rustling frustrated the herdsmen and thus the aggression, which herders often unleashed on farming communities could be linked to the theft of their livestock (Olaniyan & Yahaya, 2016). The Fulani herdsmen have also alleged that their neighbours usually poison the vegetation around leading to the mass death of their cattle. Also, the porous nature of Nigerian borders coupled with the proliferation of small arms and light weapons provided them the much-needed weapons for self-protection, which were later deployed for aggression and criminality (Awotokun et al, 2020).

State Fragility and Conflict in Nigeria

For any geographical entity to be considered a 'state', it must fulfil certain criteria which include population, government, defined and recognised territorial boundaries, capacity, and freedom to engage with other states because the sovereignty of a state is derived from the above characteristics (Philpott, 1999). Fragile is defined as a set of quantities or properties that are disproportionate (Carment, Prest & Samy, 2009). The term fragile state remains relatively problematic and the point at which a state becomes fragile remains a topic of debate (Kaplan, 2014) because of the various terminologies such as failed states, ungoverned territories, or collapsed states that are used interchangeably (Maiangwa, 2012).

Nevertheless, there is a consensus among scholars that a state as an entity has certain responsibilities and obligations towards upholding and ensuring sufficient safety and security, social well-being, and representation of its people. Failure or success in fulfilling some or all of these duties then becomes the basis upon which a state can be considered fragile, failed or stable. Therefore, the main assumption of this concept is that a state becomes fragile from the moment it loses the ability to guarantee the development, safety of its citizens and monopoly of force (Stewart & Brown, 2009).

Nigeria's status as a fragile state has been worsening within the last one and half decades despite being among the top five strongest countries economically and militarily in Africa. The Fragile State Index, a rigorous and in-depth ranking list of countries in the world from the most fragile to the least fragile conducted by the Fund for Peace, gives a better analysis of the Nigerian case. Since the year 2007, the country

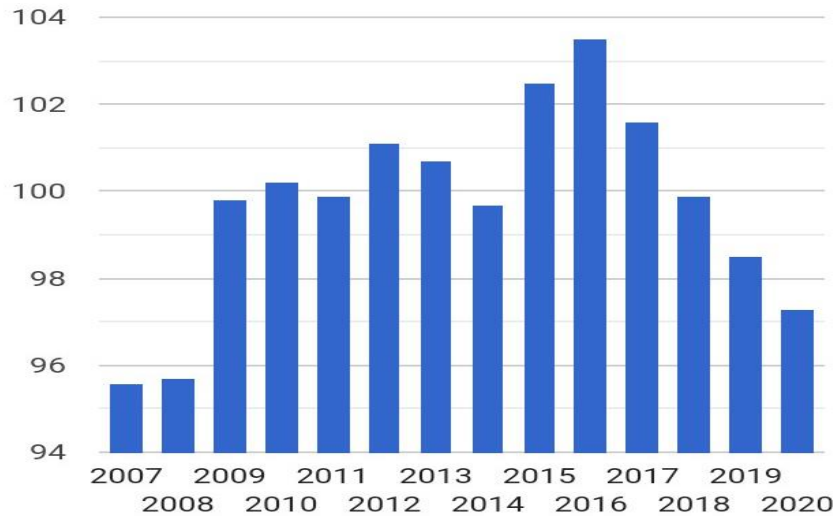
has been on the decline from position 17 to 14 in 2020 out of 178 countries that were ranked, as indicated in the Tables 2 & 3 below:

Table 2: Nigeria's Fragile/Failed State Index 2005-2020

Year	Indicators												Rank	Total Score
	DP	RD	GG	HF	UD	EC	SL	PS	HR	SA	FE	EX		
2007	8.2	5.6	9.5	8.5	9.1	5.4	9.1	8.7	7.1	9.2	9.5	5.7	17 out of 177	95.6
2008	8.2	5.1	9.4	8.2	9.2	5.9	8.9	8.7	7.5	9.2	9.3	6.1	18 out of 177	95.7
2009	8.5	5.3	9.7	8.3	9.5	6.6	9.2	9.0	8.6	9.4	9.6	6.1	15 out of 177	99.8
2010	8.4	5.8	9.5	8.1	9.3	6.9	9.4	9.1	8.8	9.3	9.4	6.2	14 out of 177	100.2
2011	8.3	6.0	9.6	7.7	9.0	7.3	9.0	9.0	8.6	9.1	9.5	6.9	14 out of 177	99.9
2012	8.4	6.5	9.7	7.6	8.9	7.5	9.1	9.1	8.6	9.2	9.8	6.6	14 out of 177	101.1
2013	8.5	6.6	9.8	7.0	9.2	7.3	8.8	9.3	8.6	9.5	9.4	6.3	16 out of 178	100.7

2014	8.3	6.9	9.8	7.0	8.9	7.3	8.8	9.0	8.7	9.5	9.5	6.0	17 out of 178	99.7
2015	8.8	7.5	9.9	7.1	8.8	7.6	9.1	9.1	8.8	9.9	9.8	6.0	14 out of 178	102.4
2016	9.1	7.7	8.4	7.4	8.8	7.7	8.8	9.4	9.1	9.7	9.9	6.5	13 out of 178	103.5
2017	9.1	7.5	9.2	7.2	8.6	8.0	8.6	9.2	8.9	9.2	9.6	6.5	13 out of 178	101.6
2018	9.1	7.5	9.3	7.2	8.3	8.0	8.3	8.9	8.6	8.9	9.6	6.2	14 out of 178	99.9
2019	9.2	7.2	9.4	6.9	8.1	7.8	8.0	8.9	8.3	9.0	9.9	5.9	14 out of 178	98.5
2020	9.3	6.9	9.1	6.6	7.8	7.9	8.1	8.9	8.4	8.7	9.9	5.7	14 out of 178	97.3

Source: Author's compilation from the Failed/Fragile States Index Reports by The Fund for Peace. Retrieved from: www.global.fundforpeace.org

Table 3: A Chart Showing Nigeria Fragile State Index (2007-2020)

Source: The Global Economy (2020)

The Tables 2 and 3 above provide a robust indication of economic, military, political, social, and cohesion indicators. The economic indicators cover, among other issues, the level of inequality, inflation, access to essential services as well as poverty levels. Social indicators include the level of violence (peace), human resource index, amount of people displaced internally and externally, mortality rate. Political indicators include corruption, governance, access to illegal arms, aid received, among others (Fund for Peace, 2019).

Based on these indicators, scholars and policy-makers have attempted to provide explanations to the declining status of Nigeria as a fragile state. Brinkel and Ait-Hida (2012) attribute Nigeria's status to increased poverty levels and the prevailing insecurity in various parts of the country. The country's status has also been explained through bloody ethno-religious conflicts like the Kafancha-Kaduna crisis of the 1980s and Kaduna Sharia riots of 2000 that jolted the country's political and economic landscape, coupled with others like armed banditry, herdsman-farmers' conflict, Boko Haram insurgency, among others (Agbibo, 2013).

Other explanations derive from the lack of sufficient security personnel – Nigeria's police to the citizen ratio is approximately 1 to 600 against the United Nations recommendation of 1 to 400. This deficit, coupled with other socio-economic factors, creates sufficient room for the radicalisation of the majority of unemployed youth in

the ungoverned territories and also hinders intelligence-gathering, thus making it difficult for the security forces to promptly respond to incidents of violence (Nyadera, Kisaka & Agwanda, 2020).

Agbibo (2013) underscore the fact that the declining state's efficacy and legitimacy is a precursor of insecurity and since states tend to employ repression as a quick fix for festering tensions, very little is achieved in solving legitimate grievances; instead citizens' rejection of state institutions occurs as frustration increases among youths who become soft targets for fundamentalists. These circumstances have created enough grounds for groups burdened with repression, deprivation, and frustrations in many countries including Nigeria to evolve into violent actors and when these groups gain footing in a fragile state, the government either becomes too incapacitated to respond to the emerging security threat or too unpopular to initiate any non-lethal measures. The result, as in most fragile states, is the counterproductive use of costly hard power (David, Asuelime & Onapajo, 2015).

Therefore, it is very unlikely that fragile states will have in their possession requisite tools for responding to emerging armed groups other than repression. The effect is that factors like marginalisation and corruption that engender fragility will ignite a vicious cycle of fragility through the emergence of street protests and militia groups that lead to the decline of investments and an increase in unemployment (Brinkel & Ait-Hida, 2012; Duke & Agbaji, 2020).

This scenario depicts Nigeria's predicament in dealing with emerging security threats from armed groups. The evolving security threats from Boko Haram and herdsmen crises would have been quelled if the country had considered measures suggested in various policy papers. But due to poor governance and weak state institutions as well as corruption, available policy measures are replaced with the use of lethal force (Nyadera et al, 2020).

Evaluation of Government's Efforts towards Curbing Herdsmen-Farmers Conflict in Nigeria

Government's ineptitude towards handling the crisis between herdsmen and farmers has made it probably prevalent, and this has led concerned people to hold the opinion that government has not only failed in her basic responsibility of securing the lives and property of her citizens, but has been insensitive to the plight of the victims/affected persons in the various clashes (Duke & Agbaji, 2020). Thus, this situation has led to several accusations being levelled against government as being indirectly involved in encouraging the conflict between the herdsmen and farmers (Abodunrin, et al, 2020) as a mechanism of entrenching Fulani hegemony over other ethnic nationalities in Nigeria.

However, the government strategic responses to the herdsmen-farmers conflict include: the creation of grazing reserves in 1965 which is observed as the first initial attempt

made by the northern regional government toward the herdsmen-farmers' conflicts in the country (Peace and Security Forum, 2017). The grazing reserves allocated large portions of land to be exclusively used by herders to rear their livestock. However, the grazing reserve system was not supported adequately but the government was still in the process of initiating legislations to legitimise the grazing reserves before natural factors such as population growth and other related consequences like urbanisation, and migration encroached on these designated areas reducing the herders' chances of accessing the reserves (Abodunrin et al, 2020).

The establishment of the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) in 1989 is another measure put in place by the federal government, to ameliorate the conflict between the herdsmen and farmers. NCNE is supported by the Nigerian legal system and the main goal of the programme was to integrate nomadic pastoralists into national life through mobile basic education and skill acquisition which is a programme intended to integrate the herdsmen into society through education (Egbuta, 2018).

In 2013 the Federal government established the Great Green Wall Agency to tackle desertification. This was in response to the 2007 African Union Great Green Wall Initiative that aimed at encouraging member states to plant 8 000km of trees along the Southern Sahel to counter the effects of desertification along that area. Continued desert encroachment along the Sahel region as a result of climate change is a major factor responsible for seasonal migration of herdsmen from one region to the other in search of water and vegetation for cattle grazing (Abodunrin et al, 2020).

Also, a National Grazing Reserve bill was sponsored in 2016 at the National Assembly to address the herdsmen-farmers conflicts but the bill did not survive due to opposition from different stakeholders, who hinged their rejection of the bill on the provisions of the Land Use Act of 1978 which vests all powers relating to the regulation of ownership, acquisition, administration, and management of Nigerian land with the state governors (Land Use Decree, 1978). Thus, the Land Use Act is an Act of the National Assembly, and by implication, a binding legislation, unless it is amended. This is the reason why state governments and their representatives at the National Assembly have always opposed any attempt to establish grazing reserves in their domain. They consider it to be usurping the constitutional powers vested in them (Kwaja, & Ademola-Adelehin, 2018).

In reaction to the increasing conflicts and mass killings emanating from seasonal pastoral movements, the government in 2018, as a matter of policy approved a 10-year National Livestock Plan at a cost of about 179 billion naira. The plan would culminate in the establishment of 94 ranches in 10 pilot states of the federation (Alli, 2018). Again, state governments, especially in the South and North Central areas rejected the proposal on the grounds of not having enough space for such projects (Egbuta, 2018).

Furthermore, as part of measures to end the persistent conflict between herdsmen and farmers in various states, government at state levels began enacting legislations prohibiting open grazing in their state. This, they hope, would reduce the risk of herdsmen destruction of farm lands and the associated conflicts. Benue, Ekiti and Taraba states are leading this opposition by enacting state laws prohibiting open grazing. On 22 May 2017, Benue state enacted the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law 2017 (Channels TV report, 2017) and its implementation began on 1 November 2017 (Kwaja, & Ademola-Adelehin, 2017). Ekiti and Taraba states have also signed Bills prohibiting open grazing in their states. This makes open grazing under any guise, an illegal activity punishable by law.

Lastly, in 2019, President Mohammadu Buhari tried to create Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) settlement but his decisions were met with fierce criticism because it was widely believed by Nigerians that, it was not the best way to bring an end to the herdsmen-farmers menace (Abodunrin et al, 2020).

In a nutshell, Nigeria's government has been unwilling to address the causes of the crises because anytime there is a massacre of people in a state by Fulani herdsmen, there is usually an outcry by Nigerians for the Federal Government to promptly take action but most times, there is only a verbal response from the government; a plea for people to live together in peace or a promise to arrest the perpetrators and nobody gets arrested (Onwuka, 2018). Thus, it was purportedly held that the inaction of the Nigerian government towards herdsmen attacks on agrarian communities has allowed the culture of impunity to grow (Abdulkarkindo & Alupsen, 2017; Duke & Agbaji, 2020).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper examined fragility of state and the accentuation of conflict in Nigeria with a focus on the herdsmen-farmers' conflicts in the fourth republic. The paper began with the analysis of the concepts involved as well as the overview of herdsmen-farmers' conflicts in Nigeria. The paper canvassed that certain factors like climate change, porosity of the borders, arms proliferation, ethnic/religious sentiment, and most especially, the weak nature of Nigeria's political institutions coupled with lack of political will on the part of the political leadership are the major factors promoting the pervasiveness of the herdsmen-farmers conflict.

The study revealed that most of all the indicators of a fragile state such as increased level of insecurity, economic decline, uneven development, incidence of massive movement of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDP), civil disorders caused by ethnic, racial and religious conflicts, among others, are currently present in Nigeria's political landscape. The paper, therefore, concluded that the inability of the political leadership to discharge their responsibilities promptly and accordingly has threatened

the livelihoods of its citizens, brought about increasing economic downturn and prompted conflicts of different diversities which threatened human security and the survival of the country. However, in order to salvage the nation from total collapse and brighten the future of the country, the following recommendations are made:

1. Government should wake up to its responsibility and eschew ethnic/religious bias in dealing with the affairs of the country so as to tackle all the prevalent indicators of fragile state in the nation.
2. The perquisites attached to political offices should be reviewed and made less attractive so as to give room for patriotic citizens to participate in government.
3. Government should ensure that it strengthens the available security apparatuses by recruiting qualified security personnel and also ensure that adequate funds are provided for the security agencies to enable them acquire skills and procure up-to-date equipment.
4. Strict measures should be put in place to fight corruption and ethno-religious sentiments because they render fruitless all efforts put in place to combat conflicts in Nigeria.
5. The government at all levels, should in collaboration with stakeholders vigorously pursue a holistic enlightenment campaign to inculcate the need for tolerance and peaceful co-existence in the citizens.
6. Nigerian borders should be well-manned by concerned authorities in order to checkmate the smuggling in of small arms and light weapons into the country while movement of foreign herdsmen into the country should be discouraged.
7. Government should implement laws regulating the acquisition and use of arms without any bias by ensuring that those who flout the law are sanctioned accordingly.

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