HERDERS-FARMERS CONFLICT IN NIGERIA: APPLYING MARTIN BUBER'S DIALOGIC APPROACH

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Abstract
Herders- Farmers conflict in Nigeria happens to be one of the major challenges that have threatened the security and unity of Nigeria. This conflict has persisted unresolved for years. It has even taken an ethno-religious dimension. This dimension of the conflict has created an impasse with respect to the conflict resolution. Sequels to this, the following questions are raised: Why farmers-herders conflicts? Or, what is the fundamental cause of herders- farmers' conflict in Nigeria? What are the propelling causes of farmers-herders conflicts in Nigeria? Are these conflicts politically or religiously motivated? Consequent to the above, this research adopted Martin Buber's dialogic approach as a panacea to the malady. The concept of dialogic according to Buber is a philosophy of interpersonal relationship which he calls "I-Thou" (Ich-Du) relationship. Buber argued that I-Thou relation is a relationship of genuine dialogue, active listening, active responses, responsibility, reciprocity and inclusiveness. It is also a relationship for open-minded persons for the sake of peaceful coexistence. Accordingly, his concept of I-Thou relation saw human person as an end in itself and not as a means to an end through genuine dialogue and concrete encounter. In fact, Buber maintained that the concept of dialogic is a relational phenomenon thus it is a subject-to-subject relation. Using the philosophical tools of analysis and hermeneutics, this research hence concludes that Buber's dialogic presents a leeway towards addressing herders-farmers crisis in Nigeria.
Keywords: Dialogic, Interpersonal Relationship, Conflict, Reciprocity

Introduction

Conflict is one of the major and inevitable challenges that faces multiethnic nations such as Nigeria. Nigeria is one of the most populous West African countries that has about 250 ethnic groups with multi-lingua-franca. Ab initio, Nigeria has encountered sundry conflicts such as religious conflicts, ethnic conflicts and so on. In recent times, it is remarkable that farmers-herders conflicts are the major insurgencies that pose security threat among Nigerians especially the communities where herders move about with their cows. This stems from the fact that farmers-herders conflicts have caused barbaric molestation, unhealthy rivalry, dehumanization, violence, riots, heinous crimes, callous attitudes, and even wars threat. Consequently, conflict has made this era an era of war, rebellion, destruction and disaster. Within this purview Eneh submits that:

> We have a great need to establish peace and cultivate the spirit of peaceful co-existence among people and nations. It is extremely pertinent in our era of war and destruction. This period in human history has perfected weapons of death and nations callously have invented and legalized nuclear weapons to effect an omnicidal war. It is no longer the sophisticated weapons to exterminate the rivals, but

> all the human life. The choice we have today is either to ensure peace or non-existence (105-6).

Sequel to this background, researchers of this piece deems it salient to discuss the topic: *"Farmers-Herders Conflicts in Nigeria: Applying Martin Buber's Dialogic."* Conversely, there are many dialogic approaches to the stirring issue but within the context of this work; Buber's dialogic approach would be of potential benefit to the problem at hand. Buber in his work *"I-Thou"* expressed the notion of dialogue or dialogic as a relationship of mutuality or *I-Thou* relationship, which is a relationship of genuine listening, response and genuine dialogue and communication. It is a relationship where one sees the other as *"Thou"* and not as *"It"*. This presupposes that when one sees the other as *"thou"* one sees the other as oneself that is as a 'subject'. On the contrary, when one sees the other as *"It"*, it implies that one objectifies the other with no liberty of genuine listening, response and dialogue. To this effect, researchers of this piece recommends Buber's concept of dialogic as a way out of farmers-herders conflicts in Nigeria which when practically applied would resuscitate peace and harmonious co-existence but if it is neglected would take Nigeria and Nigerians back to Hobbesian state of nature where man is wolf unto his fellow man.

Historical Review of Farmers-Herders Conflicts in Nigeria

Farmers in Nigeria depend on their farm or agricultural produce for sustainability and income as the case may be. Every farming season is usually a season of joy and agricultural investment. This follows from the fact that farmers especially commercial ones invest heavily in farming with the aim of reaping during the harvest season. In the same vein, herders are known for animal husbandry and rearing of animals especially cows and cattle. Most of these headers are of Fulani extraction and they are basically nomads. This succinctly implies that they move with their cattle from one place to another in search of greener pasture. It is crystal clear that the greener pastures ought to be mere grasses that are not crops and farm produce of farmers. The conflicts arise when these herders allow their cows to invade farmers' farm to graze on their farm produce. Farmers usually retort and agitate against this dubious actions though in non-violent approach but most times they are attacked by these herders when they (farmers) complained or agitated.

However, some human environmental activities such as deforestation, bush burning, urbanization, drought, absence of ranches and so forth have made it so difficult for headers to graze their cows. In which case; they peripatetically travel with their cows from one village or city to another in search of greener pastures. This notwithstanding; does not in any way justify headers' encroachment into farmers' farmland to invade their crops and plants. Unfortunately, farmers have always conceive loss in terms of crop yield and production hence, they decide not to fold their arms and watch their crops and plants being destroyed by herders' cows without adequate compensation either from the herders or government. The government most times keeps dormant over such intrusion and animal invasion in farmers' lands. In the light of this quietude, farmers agitated against herders' encroachment on their farm

produce which its corollaries most times end in outrageous conflicts that often cause lives and property.

According to the Global Terrorism Index 2015, Nigeria has experienced the largest increase on death from terrorism in 2014. There were 7,512 fatalities from terrorist attacks in 2014, an increase of over 300 per cent. The country houses two of the five most deadly terrorist groups in 2014; Boko Haram and Fulani militants (4). Fulani militants killed 1,229 people in 2014, up from 63 in 2013. In 2014, Boko Haram killed on average 15 people per attack whereas Fulani militants killed eight per attack (22). On March 16, armed men thought to be ethnic Fulani herders entered the farming community of Egba, in central Nigeria's Benue State. Ostensibly angry about the loss of grazing pastures to expanding croplands, they proceeded to slaughter at least 80 men, women, and children. The Egba massacre represents the bloodiest episode in a string of clashes between pastoralist and agriculturist communities in rural Nigeria that, according to Nigerian media, claimed approximately 620 lives during the first seven months of 2015 (Baca). In Enugu precisely Uzo-uwani experienced Fulani herders attack in 2016 where about fourty (40) lives were lost and so many properties where annihilated.

It is expedient to assert that some states in Nigeria such as Zamfara, Kogi, Ebonyi, Benue, Kaduna and Plateau states just to mention but a few have experienced horrible and heinous activities of these Fulani herders especially among farmers and different communities in these states. In January 2018, Benue state experienced in one day the massacre of 73 people by herdsmen. According to *Thisday* Newspaper of 26th April, 2018, as reported by Sahara reporters, 13 people were killed by gunmen suspected to be Fulani militia. Yet to be identified gunmen had on Tuesday killed 19 people, including two priests, in two attacks in Ukor Mbalon Gwer Local Government Area of Benue state. The *Guardian News*paper reported that 32 persons were killed in communities in Dekina and Omala L.G.As of Kogi state on March 16th, 2018 (Olaniyi). *Pulse Nigeria News* reported that in Zamfara, herdsmen killed 26 when they attacked Kuru-kuru and Jarkuka villages in Anka L.G.A. in the same vein, at least 30 people were feared killed following deadly attacks in Ukun L.G.A of Benue state and Jandeikyula village of Wukari L.G.A of Taraba state (Egbas). *Sun News* also reported that Fulani herdsmen killed fifty (50) in ethnic villages of Gojefa, Bujum Yashi, Bujum Waya, Sabonlayi and Bujum Kasuwa villages in Numan L.G.A of Adamawa state on Tuesday 10th of July, 2018.

According to the International Crisis Group (ICG) as reported by Gbenga Bada, a Pulse Nigeria News editor, "over 1,300 Nigerians have been killed in herders-farmers conflicts in Nigeria in just seven months. The group in a recent report released on Thursday, July 26, 2018, pointed out that violence between Nigerian herders and farmers has escalated, killing more than 1,300 people since January 2018. The conflict has evolved from spontaneous reactions to provocations and now to deadlier planned attacks, particularly in Benue, Plateau, Adamawa, Nasarawa and Taraba states. The group stated thus:

> The farmer-herder conflict has become Nigeria's gravest security challenge, now claiming far more lives than the Boko Haram insurgency. It has displaced hundreds of thousands and sharpened ethnic, regional and religious polarisation. It threatens to become even deadlier and could affect forthcoming elections and undermine national stability *(Pulse Nigeria News).*

Statistically, farmers-herders conflicts in Benue have resulted to the loss of about four hundred (400) lives. Recently, some Fulani herders claimed that they lost three hundred (300) of their cows in Plateau state and that resulted to loss of two hundred 200 human lives in Plateau state. It is dishearten that these Fulani herders and fanatic Miyeti Allah Islamic group compared the lost cows to human lives which were taken by these heinous herders. In the light of incessant killing and death of Nigerians, Saleh Alhassan, secretary general of Miyetti Allah Kautal Hore's in an interview with Channel's TV as reported by Bada said:

> We have lost estimated two million cows since this crisis started in Plateau and Taraba states, in Southern Kaduna and in parts of Kogi and Niger states. We have equally been victims in Zamfara and a few other states in the North. For instance, 800 of our people were killed by a militia group in Mambilla Plateau. We also suffered the killing of 97 of our people by Bachama militias in Numan, Adamawa State. In Southern Kaduna, to be specific, in Kajuru, we lost 103 members. So far, 5,000 of our people have lost their lives in the last 10 years, since this crisis erupted. The most painful thing is that nobody has been put on trial. Nobody has been charged. In Southern Kaduna, for instance, in 2011, 400 of our people were murdered and nothing was done to the people who perpetrated this dastardly act. Today, the killers are walking on the streets as free citizens. Nobody was arrested or prosecuted *(Pulse Nigeria News).*

To this end, the ICG pointed out that:

> Three factors have aggravated this decades-long conflict arising from environmental degradation in the far north and encroachment upon grazing grounds in the Middle Belt: militia attacks; the poor government response to distress calls and failure to punish past perpetrators; and new laws banning open grazing in Benue and Taraba states" *(Pulse Nigeria News).*

Ideal cattle rearing ought to be done in ranches that are places set aside for animal grazing. In the western world, herders manage their cattle in ranches thus cattle are not allowed to roam round the streets as it is in Nigeria today. Unfortunately, Nigeria has no specific ranches where cattle herders can graze their cattle and the corollaries of this are incessant roaming of these cattle round the streets of Nigeria. Most times, these cattle cause serious havoc on the road such as auto clash, cattle attacks on human beings and invading of farmers farm produce. Looking at the nature of things, it seems that the government is incapacitated to handle Fulani herders' attacks. To this end, there is need for a way forward which this piece suggests Buber's dialogic approach.

Buber's Dialogic: The Concept of I-Thou and I-It Relationship

Buber began his philosophy of dialogic with his concept of *I-Thou* and *I-It* relationships by his postulation thus:

> To man the world is of twofold in accordance with his twofold attitude. The attitude of man is twofold in accordance with his twofold nature of the primary words which he speaks. The primary words are not isolated words but combined words. One primary word is the combination *I-Thou*. The other primary word is the combination *I-It*; wherein without a change in the primary word, one of the words *He* or *She* can replace *'It'*. Hence the *'I'* of man is also twofold. For the *'I'* of the primary word *I-Thou* is different *'I'* from that of the primary word *I-It* (Buber, *I-Thou* 3).

Buber argues that the primary words do not signify things but they intimate relations. Primary words do not describe something that might exist independently of them, but being spoken they bring about existence. Primary words are spoken from the being. If *Thou* is said, the *'I'* of the combination *I-Thou* is said along with it. If *'It'* is said, the *'I'* of the combination *I-It* is said along with it. The primary word *I-Thou* can only be spoken with the whole being. The primary word *I-It* can never be spoken with the whole being (Buber, *I-Thou* 3). This implies that when one speaks to another that is, (*thou*), one is referring to a 'subject' like oneself and as such one is referring to a whole *thou* like oneself who has the tendency of genuine response. On the contrary, when one refers to another entity that is (*it*), one is referring to an 'object' which one observes and communicates to without any genuine response. Buber maintains that when *'thou'* is spoken, the speaker has nothing for his object. For where there is a thing there is another thing. Every *'It'* is bounded by others; *'It'* existed only through being bounded by others. But when *'thou'* is spoken there is nothing. *'Thou'* has no bounds. When *'thou'* is spoken, the speaker has nothing; he has indeed nothing. But he takes his stand in relation (Buber, *I-Thou* 4).

Buber's Concept of I-Thou (*Ich-Du*) Relationship

The primary word *'I-Thou'* establishes the world of relation (Buber, *I-Thou* 6). The *"I-Thou"* relation is the pure encounter of one whole unique entity with another in such a way that the other is known without being subsumed under a universal. Not yet

subject to classification or limitation, the "*Thou*" is not reducible to spatial or temporal characteristics. "*I-Thou*" relation *participates* in the dynamic, living process of an "other" (Scott, *Internet Encyclopedia…*). I-Thou (*Ich-Du*) is a relationship that stresses the mutual, holistic existence of two beings. It is a concrete encounter, because these beings meet one another in their authentic existence, without any qualification or objectification of one another. Even imagination and ideas do not play a role in this relation. In *I–Thou* encounter, infinity and universality are made actual (rather than being merely concepts). Buber says that the '*I-Thou'* relation is a direct interpersonal [intersubjective] relation which is not mediated by any intervening system of ideas. No objects of thought intervene between *I* and *Thou* (Scott, *Martin Buber's I and Thou*).

In addition, *I-Thou* is a direct relation of subject-to-subject, which is not mediated by any other relation. Thus, *I-Thou* is not a means to some object or goal, but is an ultimate relation involving the whole being of each subject. In the *I-Thou* relation, the *I* is unified with the *Thou* (Scott, *Martin Buber's I and Thou*). *I-Thou* is a relation in which *I* and *Thou* have a shared reality. Buber contends that the *'I'* which has no *Thou* has a reality which is less complete than that of the *'I'* in the *I*-and-*Thou*. The more that *I*-and-*Thou* share their reality, the more complete is their reality (Scott, *Martin Buber's I and Thou*). Buber argues that all *I-Thou* relation reflects some kind of contact with the eternal *Thou*. God is the eternal *Thou*. God is the *Thou* who sustains the *I-Thou* relation eternally. In the *I-Thou* relation between the individual and God, there is a unity of being in which the individual can always find God. In the *I-Thou* relation, there is no barrier of other relations which separate the individual from God, and thus the individual can speak directly to God. The eternal *Thou* is not an object of experience, and is not an object of thought. The eternal *Thou* is not something which can be investigated or examined. The eternal *Thou* is not a knowable object. However, the eternal *Thou* can be known as the absolute Person who gives unity to all being (Scott, *Martin Buber's I and Thou*).

However, the *I-Thou* relation between the individual and God does not become, or evolve from, an *I-It* relation, because God, as the eternal *Thou*, is eternally present as actual Being. Buber contends that the *I-Thou* relation between the individual and God is a universal relation which is the foundation for all other relations. If the individual has a real *I-Thou* relation with God, then the individual must have a real *I-Thou* relation with the world. If the individual has a real *I-Thou* relation with God, then the individual's actions in the world must be guided by that *I-Thou* relation (Scott, *Martin Buber's I and Thou*). Furthermore, Buber submits that love, as a relation between *I* and *Thou*, is a subject-to-subject relation. Buber claims that love is not a relation of subject-to-object. In the *I-Thou* relation, subjects do not perceive each other as objects, but perceive each other's unity of being. Love is an *I-Thou* relation in which subjects share this unity of being. Love is also a relation in which *I* and *Thou* share a sense of caring, respect, commitment, and responsibility (Scott, *Martin Buber's I and Thou*). Therefore, it is pertinent to establish that in *I-Thou* relationship or intersubjectivity of Buber, there is mutuality and reciprocity, understanding and commitment, genuine dialogue and listening. The authenticity of the *I-Thou*

relationship is the foundation on which the living community is built and to which it must return, again and again, for renewal (Edwards 410).

Buber's Concept of I-It (*Ich-Es*) Relationship

The *I-It* (*Ich-Es*) relationship is nearly the opposite of *I-Thou* (*Ich-Du). "I-It"* relation is driven by categories of "same" and "different" and focuses on universal definition. An *"I-It"* relation *experiences* a detached thing, fixed in space and time (Scott, *Internet Encyclopedia…*). *I-It* is a relation of subject-to-object (Scott, *Martin Buber's I and Thou*). In an *I-It* (*Ich-Es)* relationship the beings do not actually meet. Instead, the *"I"* confronts and qualifies an idea, or conceptualization, of the being in its presence and treats that being as an object. All such objects are considered merely mental representations, created and sustained by the individual mind. This is based partly on Kant's theory of phenomenon, in that these objects reside in the cognitive agent's mind, existing only as thoughts (Buber, *Connexipedia Article*). In Buber's view, the *I-It* mode entails seeing the other through the lens of one's own needs or distortions. This can take the form of business deals or functional relationships. More insidiously, *I-It* can take the form of abusive or exploitive relationships, in which the other is dealt with on the basis of desires and projections, regardless of the damage done to the other (Fishbane 42) The *I-It* mode is utilitarian and self-focused, and the danger is that one can deny or obliterate the humanity of the other. (Fishbane 42)

Buber argues that in the *I-It* relationship, human beings perceive each other as consisting of specific, isolated qualities, and view themselves as part of a world which consists of things (Scott, *Martin Buber's I and Thou*). When a subject is analyzed as an object, the subject is no longer a *Thou*, but becomes an *It*. The being which is analyzed as an object is the *It* in an *I-It* relation (Scott, *Martin Buber's I and Thou*). Generally, Buber opines that we enter into relationships not with the fullness of our being but only with some fraction of it. This is the *I-It* relationship, as in scholarly pursuits in which other beings are reduced to mere objects of thought or in social relations (e.g., boss and worker), wherein persons are treated largely as tools or conveniences. This form of relationship enables the creation of pure and applied science as well as the manipulation of man by man (Britannica 466). In *I-It* relationship, objects (inanimate or animate) are observed and watched and there is pseudo-listening and pseudo-response. Therefore, *I-It* (*Ich-Es)* relationship is in fact a relationship with oneself; it is not a dialogue, but a monologue. In the I-It (*Ich-Es)* relationship, an individual treats other things, people, etc., as objects to be used and experienced. Essentially, this form of objectivity relates to the world in terms of the self – how an object can serve the individual's interest (Buber, *Connexipedia Article*). Suffice to say that *I-It* relationship is self-enclosed and solitary; there is separateness and detachment, solipsism and freedom.

The Existential Communication in I-Thou and I-It Relationship

Buber characterizes "I-Thou" relations as "dialogical" and "I-It" relations as "monological." In his 1929 essay "*Dialogue*," Buber explains that monologue is not just a turning away from the other but also a turning back on oneself (Scott, *Internet Encyclopedia…*). Within the monological domain, the other is regarded as a thing

among things- experienced and used, whereas in the dialogical sphere the other is met, acknowledged and addressed as a particular being. Buber defines monologue as *Erfahrung* (a 'surface' experience of the external attributes of the other), or as an *Erlebnis* (an insignificant inner experience), in contradiction to *Beziehung* – genuine relationship which occurs between two human beings (Yaron, *Performance Magazine*).

The Concept of Dialogue and Monologue in Buber's Dialogic

Buber proclaims that 'in the beginning is relation'. He assumes that the human being is, by its very nature, *homo dialogus*; that one is incapable of realizing himself without communion with mankind, with the Creation and with the Creator. The Buberian person can also be defined as *homo religiosus*, since the love of humanity leads to the love of God, and vice versa. The Divine Presence participates in every genuine encounter between human beings, and rests upon those who establish genuine dialogue: 'Above and below are bound to one another. The word of a person who wishes to speak with a human being without speaking with God is not fulfilled; but the word of one who wishes to speak with God without man goes astray.' Dialogue is founded on mutual response and responsibility. Responsibility exists solely where there is real response to a human voice (Yaron, *Performance Magazine*). Dialogue is more than talking. It is not the straightforwardness of talking to or at, rather it is communicating with or between. It is "a relation between persons that is characterized in more or less degree by the element of inclusion" (*Essay on Martin Buber-Dialogue, www.123helpme.com*).

Buber maintains that in a real conversation (that is, not one whose individual parts have been pre-concerted, but one which is completely spontaneous, in which each speaks directly to his partner and calls forth his unpredictable reply), a real lesson (that is, neither a routine repetition nor a lesson whose findings the teacher knows before he starts, but one which develops in mutual surprises), a real embrace and not one of mere habit, a real duel and not a mere game—in all these what is essential does not take place in each of the participants or in a neutral world which includes the two and all other things; but it takes place between them in the most precise sense, as it were in a dimension which is accessible only to them both. Something happens to me—that is a fact which can be exactly distributed between the world and the soul, between an "outer" event and an "inner" impression (Buber, *Between Man and Man* 241/2). Dialogue is unique because it evolves through a process and particular quality of communication whereby parties achieve a "connection." This connection between participants allows for each party to potentially change the other, or be changed by the other (Marin Buber's Dialogic…, *www.bartleby.com/essay/martin-Buber's*-).

Therefore, in dialogue "all real living meets" says Buber. Genuine dialogue depicts the real essence of intersubjectivity or *I-Thou* relationship. Dialogue treats intersubjectivity as a genuinely relational phenomenon. There is freedom, commitment and risk in dialogue. This presupposes that the two persons in dialogue must experience freedom of each other, commitment to each other and bear the risk of response to each other in order to avoid the risk of objectification of each other.

Monologue is the direct opposite of dialogue. Buber defines monologue as *Erfahrung* (a 'surface' experience of the external attributes of the other), or as an *Erlebnis* (an insignificant inner experience), in contradiction to *Beziehung* – genuine relationship which occurs between two human beings (Yaron, *Performance Magazine*). It involves only one mind or one self. In monologue, the *"I"* confronts and qualifies an idea, or conceptualization, of the being in its presence and treats that being as an object. All such objects are considered merely mental representations, created and sustained by the individual mind. This is based partly on Kant's theory of phenomenon, in that these objects reside in the cognitive agent's mind, existing only as thoughts (Martin Buber, *Connexipedia Article*). The idea of monologue can also be found in Descartes cogito where the doctrine of solipsism strives over intersubjectivity. There is neither genuine listening nor genuine response in monologue rather the speaker speaks only to himself by qualifying and objectifying the other. Hence, monologue is self-centered and unresponsive, and there is no active communication as in dialogue.

Farmers-Herders Conflicts in Nigeria: A Perspective of Buber's Dialogic Approach

It is noteworthy to establish that Martin Buber's concept of dialogic would be salient panacea to the malaise of farmers-herders conflicts in Nigeria. However, Buber's concept of dialogic is a philosophy of mutuality, reciprocity, genuine relationship and genuine dialogue. It is a philosophy that generates peace through mutual interaction and conversation, that is, *'I-Thou'* relationship. The concept of dialogic perceives one as '*thou'*. "I-You" relation is characterized by such features as: presence, directness, mutuality, exclusivity, responsibility and impermanence (Gorzna 47).

One can opine that farmers-herders conflicts in Nigeria strive because Nigerian government does not have the insight of dialogic of Buber. Hence, people do not perceive one another as '*thou'* instead people perceive one another as '*it*.' They express more of the hindrances of dialogue instead of using dialogue to generate peace. According to Buber, seeming is one of the hindrances of dialogue which he describes as the essential cowardice of man. The fullest manifestation of this is found in the propagandist, who tries to impose their own reality upon others. This could be found in Fulani herdsmen and Boko Haram's attacks on communities in Benue, Borno and other North-eastern parts of Nigeria. The invaders tried to impose their own realities upon these communities. They (invaders) never considered them (communities) as thou rather they considered them as it. This singular act of seeming prevents dialogue and reduces man as it and not as thou. Buber maintains that *I-It* relationship is subject –object relationship which does not have genuine dialogue, listening and response. In this relationship, an individual is regarded as an '*It'* that is toss around as mere thing other than *thou*. Perhaps with Buber's dialogic approach, herder would be given adequate orientation on how to make use of ranches or grazing field for their cows instead of encroaching into farmers' farm land. It would also instigate intersubjective spirit that would uphold human dignity and foster respect for human rights. Thus, Fulani herders should respect the rights of farmers and farmers should also do the same without prejudice or bias.

Akin to this, Buber's concept of confirmation which can be described as acknowledgement and recognition of the other would go a long way to curtail the menace of seeming among farmers and herders that are faced with the challenge of conflicts. In confirmation one meets, chooses and recognizes the other as a subject with the capacity to actualize one's own potential. In order for confirmation to be complete one must know that he is being made present to the other (Scott, *Internet Encyclopedia…*). In addition, Buber considers mistrust as one of the hindrances of dialogue. It is crystal clear that herders in Nigeria have no trust of any other person other than their cows and as such they do not love people if not their cows. The mutuality between herders and their cows is stronger to the one that ought to exist between them and farmers as human persons with prolific dignity. Mistrust brings ethnocentrism and tribalism which cause conflicts. The issue of mistrust can be resolved with mutual dialogue which brings trust and love. Buber argues the precondition for peace is dialogue, which in turn rests on trust (Scott, *Internet Encyclopedia…*). Trust promotes I-Thou relationship.

Sequentially, the notion of *I-Thou* relationship stems from mutuality, reciprocity, relation and genuine dialogue. It is a concrete encounter, because these beings meet one another in their authentic existence, without any qualification or objectification of one another (Martin Buber, *Connexipedia Article*). Despite the fact that *Ich-Du* cannot be proven to happen as an event (e.g. it cannot be measured), Buber stressed that it is real and perceivable (Martin Buber, *Connexipedia Article*). Buber's *I-Thou* (I-You) relationship opens avenue for encounter in which people could engage with each other fully through dialogue. To Buber, "all real life is encounter that is driven by dialogue which involves all kinds of relation to self, to others and to all forms of created being" (Ambrose & Quadri, 90). Sequel to the above, self-consciousness for Buber is solipsistic thus it does not bring the notion of the other in mind. Indeed, self-consciousness is one of the main barriers to spontaneous meeting (Scott, *Internet Encyclopedia…*). Perhaps, farmers-herders conflicts in Nigeria are as a result of not being conscious of the other. Hence, people live for selfish gains without minding whether the other is hurt or not. Most times dubious and selfish politicians who manage these cows through the aid of Fulani herders step on others toes provided that their task would be of their basic interest. This could be summarized as ethnocentrism and favouritism which are among the causes of farmers-herders conflicts. To checkmate this problem, Buber's notion of inclusion and relation should be considered and applied. Inclusion, according to Buber, means the ability to develop a dual sensation among those engaged in dialogue: experiencing oneself and simultaneously perceiving the 'other' in its singularity. The inclusion of a person causes one to 'know' one's fellow human being both physically and spiritually, in the Biblical sense of 'knowing' a lover (Yaron, *Performance Magazine*). Accordingly, relation is mutual. My *'thou'* affects me as I affect it (Buber, *I-Thou*15). There is deep sense of reciprocity and mutuality in relation.

To this end, this piece submits that farmers-herders conflicts in Nigeria would be jettisoned when these groups see themselves as *thou* so as to build mutual, inclusive, reciprocal, relational and genuine dialogue in love which would promote peaceful and

harmonious co-existence among farmers and herders. In addition to what Buber says: "to have a genuine relationship of dialogue, both partners must recognize the "Thou" of the other: "Only [persons] who are capable of truly saying Thou to one another can truly say We with one another" (Fishbane 44). According to Martin Buber, an essential building block of community is the concept of dialogue. People often think of dialogue as merely script, or an exchange of words. Martin Buber has presented dialogue as being much more than the exchange of messages and talk that takes place in human interaction. He describes genuine dialogue as "…no matter whether spoken or silent…where each of the participants really has in mind the other or others in their present and particular being and turns to them with the intention of establishing a living mutual relation between himself and them" (*Essay on Martin Buber-Dialogue, www.123helpme.com*). Buber's teaching about the responsive words always carries a strict reference to a reality to be confronted and dealt with in a 'lived life (Yaron, *Performance Magazine*). Buber sought to create a dialogical community which is a third way relation between the 'I-You' and collectivism which helps in the development of genuine community. This open inter-subjective dialogue is essential for holding the society together and sustaining cultural creativity that helps in sustaining mutual relations with a living centre. The building of an effective centre presupposes a foundational ethical outlook that binds people in true and mutual relations together (Ambrose & Quadri, 90).

Owing to this fact, Buber argues for inter-communal dialogue and emphasizes on education as one of the major avenues of "between." Buber defines "between" as the intersubjective or "interhuman" sphere, the space where two individuals meet (Fishbane 42). This would come through mutual dialogue, love, wholeness, openness, reciprocity, relation and inclusion. Obviously, dialogic of Buber is a strong panacea to the malady of farmers-herders conflicts in Nigeria when it is pragmatically considered and judiciously practiced for better farmers-herders co-existence. Dialogue shows us that there can be disagreements about certain issues and still have a true community (*Essay on Martin Buber-Dialogue, www.123helpme.com*). Hence, farmers and herders in Nigeria need philosophical enlightenment of Buber's dialogic which propagates real meeting of one another as thou. Perhaps this would strengthen a personal farmers-herders bond through trust, support and confidence in one another. Therefore, pragmatic application of Buber's concept of dialogic would definitely go a long way to instigate spirit of mutual togetherness; genuine conversation; genuine wholeness; genuine connection among farmers and Fulani herders in Nigeria.

Evaluation

From the forgoing, it is crystal clear that the rate of destruction caused by the incessant farmers-herders conflicts in Nigeria is enormous. Citizenry are in fear of herders attack thus, insecurity and insurgency are of exponential influence. Nigerian government seems to be insensitive to all these menace probably because the lives and property that are lost are not theirs. There is this echo of political undertone that seems to support the dubious menace that is antithetical to the sacredness of human lives. Irrespective of these killings in various states, Nigerian government still has the impudence to advocate for ranches and colonies in the whole of 36 states of Nigeria.

This singular action appears to be self-evident that these herders are politically motivated to trade fearlessly in all the states in Nigeria even with ammunitions. The fact that farmers-herders conflicts are in political cum economic platform of Nigeria should strike the interest of Nigerian government to seek for better possible solution that would curtail this ugly menace of incessant loss of lives and property order than requesting 10,000 hectares of lands from different states in Nigeria for colonies. Be that as it may, it is picturesque that herders are ignorant of that sanctity of human life. Thus, even when the entire country is offered for colony and ranches, they are filled with conquest mentality. Many people have asked: what is the solution? Which way forward?

To subdue this ugly menace, this piece advocate for effective dialogue for maintenance of peace and harmonious co-existence among farmers and herders in Nigeria through Buber's dialogic approach. However, Buber's dialogic approach may not completely solve the issue of farmers-herders conflicts in Nigeria, but it would be of great importance to its reduction. This stems from the fact that the nature of the conflict appears to be as a result of ignorance of real essence and dignity of human person; that is why the recent herders' attack in Plateau, they seems to equate the lives of 300 cows they claimed they loss with 200 human lives. To arrest this, there is need for adequate education, orientation and mental decolonization. According to Buber, education is one of the major avenues of "between." Buber defines "between" as the intersubjective or "interhuman" sphere, the space where two individuals meet (Fishbane 42). This would come through mutual dialogue, love, wholeness, openness, reciprocity, relation and inclusion.

In addition, Buber's notion of confirmation and inclusion would go a long way to arrest the evil that instigates farmers-herders conflicts in Nigeria. In confirmation one meets, chooses and recognizes the other as a subject with the capacity to actualize one's own potential. In order for confirmation to be complete one must know that he is being made present to the other (Scott, *Internet Encyclopedia…*). Accordingly, inclusion, according to Buber, means the ability to develop a dual sensation among those engaged in dialogue: experiencing oneself and simultaneously perceiving the 'other' in its singularity. The inclusion of a person causes one to 'know' one's fellow human being both physically and spiritually, in the Biblical sense of 'knowing' a lover (Yaron, *Performance Magazine*). Based on this, herders ought to know that farmers need their crops as much as they (herders) need their cows. They (herders) should not encroach in farmers land just because their cows wish to graze anywhere. There is need for confirmation and inclusion of one another through dialogue which brings closeness, mutuality and reciprocity. There is emphatic need for recognition of human dignity and essence thus human should be seen as an end in itself and never as a means to an end.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Buber's dialogic approach does not in any way suggest that there would not be quarrel but it simply entails that amidst quarrel there could be need to understand one another as a being with prolific dignity and essence. To this effect,

Buber argues that dialogue shows us that there can be disagreements about certain issues and still have a true community (*Essay on Martin Buber-Dialogue, www.123helpme.com*). Hence, farmers and herders in Nigeria need philosophical enlightenment of Buber's dialogic which propagates real meeting of one another as thou.

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