

## **Herdsmen and Farmers Conflict in Nigeria: A Threat to Peace-building and National Security in West Africa**

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### **Abstract**

*One of the recurrent security challenges that confront many states in the country is the scourge of Fulani herdsmen. The attacks by the herdsmen on the sedentary communities have been increasing with each passing day. Much has been written on farmers and Fulani herdsmen conflict in Nigeria. The menace posed in the different communities they migrate to for purposes of grazing their cattle is becoming very alarming. They are more and more constituting major security challenges to their host communities. The propensity towards engaging the land and farm owners of the sites they graze their cattle is increasing by the day as they update their arsenal with highly sophisticated weapons. This is the prevalent security challenge in some communities and states in Nigeria. There have been escalations of reported attacks by Fulani herdsmen who brutally kill natives of the invaded farming communities including women and children in various states across the country. Worst affected states include Benue, Nassarawa, Plateau, Taraba, Kaduna, Adamawa, Zamfara, Oyo, Imo, Cross-River and Enugu. There are recurrent clashes of interests between the host farming communities and the nomadic cattle herders. The major causes by our findings revealed that; Destruction of crops by the cattle, Contamination of stream by cattle, disregard for traditional authority, Over-grazing of fallow land, sexual harassment of women by nomads, Harassment of nomads by host youths, Indiscriminate defecation on roads, theft of cattle, stray cattle, and indiscriminate bush burning. The study also observed that there is no resource sustainability in Nigeria hence; it is difficult for the majority of its citizens who require land for farming and grazing to have access to land. And this is one of the major causes of conflict between the parties.*

*The paper therefore, recommended that the problem can be minimized through extension agency intervention to identify stakeholders and development trust between the disputants using the*

*mechanism tagged —local development plans (LDP) which is community initiated process to reduce tension over access and the use of land and effective participation in decision-making and economic activities in the communities and among others.*

**Keyword:** *Conflict, Farmers, Herdsmen, Peace-building, National Security, Nigeria, West Africa*

## **Introduction**

In recent years, there have been a number of conflicts between farmers and Fulani herdsmen throughout the country which have culminated into violent conflicts and the loss of lives and properties. The competition between these two Agricultural land user-groups, however, has often times turned into serious overt and covert manifestation of hostilities and social frictions in many parts of Nigeria. The conflict has demonstrated high potential to exacerbate the insecurity and food crisis particularly in rural communities where most of the conflicts are localized, with reverberating consequences nationwide. Thus, competition for land between and within various user groups has been the ban of mankind since time immemorial.

Farmer-herdsmen conflict has remained the most preponderant resource-use conflict in Nigeria (Ajuwon, 2004; Fasona and Omojola, 2005). The necessity to provide food of crop and animal origin, as well as raw materials for industry and export in order to meet ever-growing demands, has led to both “intensification and extensification” of land use (Nyong and Fiki, 2005). The competition between these two agricultural land user-groups, however, has often times turned into serious overt and covert manifestation of hostilities and social friction in many parts of Nigeria. The conflicts have demonstrated high potential to exacerbate the insecurity and food crisis particularly in rural communities where most of the conflicts are localized, with reverberating consequences nationwide.

Non-agricultural user groups compete with the Agricultural user groups on one hand, while there are various levels of intral-user group competition on the other. Indeed competition for land use is becoming keener and fiercer, largely due to increasing human and animal populations. It has been illustrated that increasing population growth rate has continued to exert great pressure on available land resources with varying environmental and socio-economic implications.

They can either stabilize or destabilize social relations among herders, farmers, and local populations, particularly in developing sustainable social capital, conflict resolution, and peace-building. The roles of non-state actors play vary according to their goals, actions, available resources, and dominant strategies, as well as their relationships with other grassroots organizations.

Communal conflicts between Fulani herdsmen and host communities usually arise when grazing cattle are not properly controlled and consequently graze on cultivated plants like cassava, maize etc. in farms of host communities. Attempts by the owners of such farms to register their grievance of destruction of their livelihood (food crops and cash crops) by the cattle of Fulani herdsmen is always stoutly resisted thereby degenerating into communal conflicts. Host communities sometimes register their grievances by placing restrictions on movement and grazing of cattle in designated areas and enforcing compliance through coercive measures decreed by the host community vigilante which may take the shape of killing stray cattle or arresting and prosecution defaulters. When the communities attempt to moderate their activities or request their exit, the Fulani herdsmen become aggressive and attack the host community sometimes with the assistance of hired mercenaries. Fulani herdsmen normally attack their target communities at the time they are most susceptible such as mid-night or prayer days, when they are in their churches, incessantly killing people with sophisticated weapons, looting properties and burning houses. (Durojaiye 2014) Fulani Herdsmen are “believed to have killed at least 1,229 people in Nigeria in 2014, according to the latest Global Terrorism Index (GTI)” (Ludovica 2014).

Conflicts between farmers and nomadic cattle headers have been a common feature affecting the economic livelihood in West African (Tonah, 2006). In the period before the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the problem was mainly restricted to the savannah belts of West Africa. Cattle rearing were mainly prevalent in the guinea, Sudan and Sahel Savanna belts where crop production was carried out only during the short rainy season on a small scale. This gave the cattle herders access to a vast area of grassland. As time went on and with the introduction of irrigated farming in savannah belt of Africa, and the increased withering of pasture during the dry season, less pasture was available to cattle herders. The herdsmen had to move southward to the coastal zone where the rainy season is no longer and the soil retains moisture for long, in search of pasture and water a movement called transhumance (blench 2010). This gave rise to an

increased pressure on natural resources and a stiff competition for available resources between farmers and herders.

Conflicts in resource use are not uncommon and perhaps not unnatural in human ecosystem Moore (2005) noted that conflict per se, is not bad: it is perhaps a necessity in the evolution and development of human organizations. But when conflict degenerate to violent, destructive clashes, they become not only unhealthy but also counterproductive and progress threatening, Nyong and Fiki (2005) pointed out that resource related conflicts were responsible for over 12 percent decline in per capita food production in sub-Saharan Africa. Competition driven conflicts between arable crop farmers and cattle herdsman have thus become common occurrence in many part of Nigeria.

Much of the very violent and heavy casualty communal conflicts triggered by Fulani Herdsmen occur in the middle-belt of Nigeria in general and Benue State in particular. In the case of Benue State there have been highly devastating conflicts that have claimed so much lives and properties engendered by Fulani Herdsmen in communities of local government areas such as Agatu, Guma, Gwer West, Makurdi, Kwande, Katsina-Ala and Loggo. The communal conflicts orchestrated by Fulani herdsman in Benue State had claimed the lives of more than 5000 victims in the first half in the year 2014. The victims include women and children and they sacked more than 100 communities and have thrown thousands of refugees into Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camp located Makurdi. Earlier more than 200 people were killed by Fulani Herdsmen in the Shengev community in Gwer West Local Government Council with strange substance that looks like bio-chemical weapons. (Ugbechie 2016, Akevi 2014) What this means is that their sophistication and combat readiness is increasing by the day as they are apparently armed not just with AK47 riffles but with strange weapons. Very recently, precisely March 2018, more than 10 communities in Five different local governments have been raised off, leading to mass burials in three different occasions with Agatu Local Government having the highest figures of death and with many buildings razed down to the rubbles and more than 500 lives lost in what was described by Governor Orthom as "genocide against his people" by Fulani Herdsmen. The high casualties associated with these conflicts have attracted the attention of Human Rights Watch. Human Rights Watch in December said clashes in the nation's central region had killed 3,000 people since 2010. (Baka 2015) Their combat readiness and sophistication gives them the

courage not only to attack host communities but to confront and attack constituted authorities that are heavily protected with state of the art military convoys.

The situation is not too different in Taraba State which is a neighbouring state to Benue State. The southern senatorial zone of Taraba State has for some months now witnessed unprecedented and sudden influx of Fulani Herdsmen and the relationship between the Fulani and the Tiv in both Benue and Taraba states is intensely becoming strained because of incessant attacks on the Tiv by the Fulani's with very high human casualties and loss of properties. (Baker 2015) Evidently the constant attacks on the Tiv from Taraba State by Fulani Herdsmen had made most landowners in the affected communities to flee their homes in search of safe alternatives.

There have been a number of crisis in Wukari with gruesome murders of dozens of people and wanton destruction of property. According to Aji (2014) the "Red Cross yesterday said in Wukari, Taraba State that about 77 people lost their lives during the crises between some Fulani herdsmen and the indigenous people of the area few days ago." More than 40 other people were getting treatment for various degrees of injuries sustained because of the attacks by Fulani Herdsmen.

In Kaduna State the story is not different as Fulani Herdsmen cause communal conflicts. According to Shiklam (2014) "Rampaging gun men suspected to be Fulani herdsmen on Tuesday killed about 123 people in seven villages in Sanga local government area of Kaduna state in an onslaught which started on Monday night." The invaders had earlier slaughtered 38 people in sporadic attacks on Kabamu and Ankpong villages.

Although subsiding, the crisis that tore communities of Plateau State apart in violent conflicts with gruesome murders was not unconnected to the siege by Fulani Herdsmen. Recently it was Zamfara state where more than 200 villagers were killed by Fulani herdsmen in an orgy of violent attacks that lasted for three days. Some of the worst hit communities are Dansadau and Yargaladima village in Dansadau Emirate of Maru Local government area.

Eastern Nigeria is not left out in the onslaught of Fulani Herdsmen with respect to communal conflicts. Some communities of Enugu State are also under siege. As the case in other instances, the crisis is caused by the indiscriminate search for cattle pastures by the Fulani herdsmen. In the process they encroach on farm lands and their cattle destroy food crops and cash crops. Instead of these herdsmen to take responsibility for the destructions caused by their cattle they confront and challenge farm owners expressing their plight. Such challenges get heated and leads to

conflicts which creates great insecurity to host communities because the herdsmen are said to be well armed.

In the case of Ezeagu Local Government Area of Enugu State consisting of more than forty communities, the aggression and violent activities of Fulani herdsmen have grounded agricultural and economic activities in most of the communities. The superior arms wielded by the invading herdsmen render the local vigilante group helpless. The herdsmen are armed with AK47 raffles and the government is obviously not doing enough to checkmate the trend. People no longer go to the farm nor sleep well at night for fear of aggressive attacks in Ezeagu community by the herdsmen. (Ozobu 2014) The situation is very pathetic and can cause economic depression in the area.

Very recently the menace posed by Fulani Herdsmen with respect to communal conflicts would have engulfed the Obimma Community, in Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State but for the diplomatic and prompt intervention of the State Governor. Evidently the herdsmen were harassing farmers and their cattle destroying cash crops and food crops in Obimma Community. The decisive intervention of the governor saved the community from the scourge of Fulani herdsmen which nearly degenerated into full blown conflict.

The magnitude of attacks on host communities by Fulani herdsmen assumes such a sophisticated dimension that more often than not the host communities are overwhelmed by their might. This is reminiscent of warfare waged by highly sophisticated warriors. The most pathetic issue is the gruesome manner in which attacks are carried out. In this regard Vande-Acka (2014) noted that “some suspected Fulani herdsmen had attacked Uipkam in Guma.

The tragedy of the commons suggests that pastoralists, primarily driven by self-interest in their use of land and water resources, overgraze the land; in pursuing their immediate interests, they compromise the long-term interests of all grazers (Iro, 2015). The tendency to simply blame pastoralists from these perspectives obscures the multiple meanings cattle have for pastoralists, and how the choices they make are informed by the survival strategies of pastoralist households. Closely associated with this is the tendency to see nomadic Fulani herders as the primary perpetrators of rural banditry, including cattle rustling. The fact that Fulani nomads are familiar with the forest tracts tends to reinforce that perception. There are documented instances of pastoralists who resort to rustling after losing cattle to disease, inclement weather, and violence; there also are Fulani nomads active in the international syndicate of cattle rustlers. Fulani

herdsmen, however, are also victims of the illicit transactions (IRIN, 2013). There were reported cases of cow population depletion around the Birnin Gwari in Kaduna State, an area that reportedly experienced cattle theft by criminal gangs.

### *Conceptual Issues*

#### *Security:*

The concept of security has undergone a transition from traditional conceptualization to a non-traditional meaning, traditionally; security management was the unilateral function of the state especially if we consider the intellectual view(s) of some political theorists like Thomas Hobbes who argued that the essence of a state is to provide law and order, which are attained through (effective) security management.

However, in an attempt by the state to actualize the purpose of its creation (through social contract), it has found it necessary to acquire legitimate use of force (violence). This idea has made security issue a function of effective monopoly of violence, which the state applies to engender strict conformity and complaisance to state laws by the peoples for effective security management. But, in contemporary time, definition of security goes beyond the traditional military ways of protecting the state against internal and external aggression. The fact is that since the end of the cold war, security management has assumed a new dimension, external threat to security resulting from international hostilities and aggression that characterised the cold war era has been replaced with non-traditional security threats like information warfare, drug trafficking, nuclear pollutions, disease epidemics like HIV-AIDS, corruption, human trafficking, (internal) insurgency among others. Nevertheless, this situation has led to multidimensional approach in security discourse and management. Now, governments have now realised that they can no longer monopolise the business of security in local domains as well as the world at large. This has led to extending the security community to include private players in security business, NGOS and above all the civilians take the centre stage in security management. Well, on the question of definition of the term security, it is not a mischief to say that there are various definitions of the term (security) without any consensus among scholars in their conceptualization. And thus, to some, security can be defined as: -----an all-encompassing condition in which individual citizens live in freedom, peace and safety; participate fully in the

process of governance; Enjoy the protection of fundamental rights; have Access to resources and the basic necessities of life; And inhabit an environment which is not detrimental to their health and wellbeing (see South Africa White Paper on Defence, 1996). Not only in terms of the internal security of the State, but also in terms of secure systems of Food health, money and trade (Waever 1995). To begin with, it is worth defining what is actually meant by the term 'security'. Neither security – nor its opposite, insecurity – are objective or measurable feelings; they are, as Wood and Shearing (2007) argue, 'imagined'. 'Security' is used to cover a much wider range of conditions than the most salient examples relating to crime. It is used in international relations, and in relation to welfare payments. In French, *sécurité* is used even more broadly, indicating safety as well as security in the English sense. Security is also a 'natural' process. There are many examples in the natural world of animals, plants and even viruses developing security tactics by pursuing certain behaviours or even by building security structures. Possibly the best capture of the essence of security is by Zedner (2003b: 155, cited in Wood and Shearing, 2007: 4). Security is both a state of being and a means to that end. As a state of being, security suggests two quite distinct objective and subjective conditions. And as an objective condition, it takes a number of possible forms. First, it is the condition of being without threat: the hypothetical state of absolute security. Secondly, it is defined by the neutralization of threats: the state of 'being protected from'. Thirdly, it is a form of avoidance or non-exposure to danger... As a subjective condition, security again suggests both the positive condition of feeling safe, and freedom from anxiety or apprehension defined negatively by reference to insecurity. Security implies a stable, relatively predictable environment in which an individual or group may pursue its ends without disruption or harm and without fear of disturbance or injury Robert & Gion (2004). It is also important to recognise the growing body of work that sees security in a much broader framework, as 'human security' (Commission on Human Security, 2003). The UN Commission examined a wide range of insecurities based in legal, environmental, economic, educational and health contexts as well as in 'traditional' security areas and explored their links to one another. As Kofi Annan argue that; human security in its broadest sense embraces far more than the absence of violent conflict. It encompasses human rights, good governance, and access to good education and healthcare and ensuring each individual has opportunities and choices to fulfill his or her own potential. Every step in this direction is also a step towards reducing poverty, achieving economic growth and preventing conflict. Freedom from want, freedom from fear and



the freedom of future generations to inherit a healthy natural environment – these are the interrelated building blocks of human, and therefore national, security. (Commission on Human Security, 2003: 4)

Abraham Maslow describes an insecure person as a person who "perceives the world as a threatening jungle and most human beings as dangerous and selfish; feels rejected and isolated person, anxious and hostile; is generally pessimistic and unhappy; shows signs of tension and conflict, tends to turn inward; is troubled by guilt-feelings, has one or another disturbance of self-esteem; tends to be neurotic; and is generally selfish and egocentric.

***Theoretical Issues:***

**The Neo-Malthusian Theory on Population**

It has become a universal phenomenon in social sciences for facts to be investigated or examined precisely within a paradigm rather than in an isolated manner. For (Goode & Hatt 1952) theoretical orientation functions mainly or bridging the range of facts that are to be investigated .in an empirical theoretical base, it is necessary to develop a sound theory which is capable of explaining the wise concepts and relationships in the study the essentiality of theoretical paradigm in a study. Is also a pigeon hole in the fact that social science research is theory based and its operations are guided by relevant principles of human behavior (Goode & Hatt 1952).

There seems to be insufficient empirical studies focusing on how farmers and herdsman perceive and cope with mutual conflict. The Malthusian theory predicts that world population would soon exceed the resource base and lead to serious environmental destruction, widespread hunger and violent conflicts. The essential argument presented in his work titled —an essay on the principle of population Thomas Malthus (1803) maintained that population growth can and will outstrip the food supply. To him, human populations grow exponentially (i.e., doubling with each circle) while food production grows at an arithmetic rate (i.e., by the repeated addition of a uniform increment in each uniform interval of time). Thus, while food output was likely to increase in a series of twenty-five years intervals in the arithmetic progression and so on, population was capable of increasing in the geometric progression and so forth. This scenario of arithmetic food growth with simultaneous geometric human population growth predicted a future when humans would have no resources to survive on. He maintained that problems arising from marriage were

likely to be less serious than those caused by a continuation of rapid population increase. The positive checks to population growth are any causes that contributed to the shortening of human lifespan. He included in this category poor living and working conditions which might give rise to low resistance to disease itself, war, and famine. This invariably may result to all unwholesome occupations, severe labour, and exposure to the seasons, extreme poverty, bad nursing of children, great towns, excesses of all kinds, the whole train of common diseases, wars (violent clashes), plagues, and famines.

Like Thomas Malthus, the neo-Malthusian position argued that resource scarcities can cause violent intra-state conflict under unfavourable conditions (Homer-Dixon, 1999 & Kaplan, 1994). He used three hypotheses to link environmental changes with violent conflict. First, he suggested that decreasing supplies of physically controllable environmental resources, such as clean water and good agricultural land, would provoke conflicts. The second hypothesis stated that large population movements caused by environmental stress would induce "group-identity" conflicts, especially ethnic clashes. The third hypothesis suggested that severe environmental scarcity would simultaneously increase economic deprivation and disrupt key social institutions, which in turn would cause "deprivation" conflicts such as civil strife and insurgency (Homer-Dickson, 1994).

The theory serves as a good explanation for the study of nomadic herdsman and farmers' clashes in Nigeria. Malthusian theory emphasizes poor living and working conditions of a teeming population which might give rise to low resistance to disease itself, war, and famine. This invariably may result to all unwholesome occupations, severe labour, and exposure to the seasons, extreme poverty, excesses of all kinds of common diseases, wars (violent clashes), plagues, and famines.

### **Nature of Cattle Herding System in Nigeria**

Cattle herding is dominated almost entirely by the Fulani tribe in Nigeria. Iro (1994) gave a vivid documentation of the herding system of the Fulani in Nigeria, and most of what is presented hereunder was derived from his account. According to him, herding is a daunting task, and contrary to widespread belief, it is not the delight of the Fulani- they herd not as a matter of choice but as a necessity. Iro (1994) found that about 75% of the sampled nomadic pastoralists maintained that cattle herding is not only toilsome, but also becoming increasingly strenuous.

The optimum Fulani cattle herd size lies between 80 and 100. With a preponderance of female over male at ratio 4:1, the Fulani maintains a balanced functional species composition that is made up of 'beefers, milkers, breeders, carriers, and stock beautifiers'. Iro (1994) also stated that the slow-maturing Sokoto Red cow and the lyre-horned White Fulani cattle are the mainstay of the pastoral Fulani holdings. White and Wickens (1976, cited by Iro, 1994) disclosed that the White Fulani, though less hardy, has higher milk and beef yield compared with the Sokoto Red. Cattle belonging to individual family members are usually herded together, with male family members assuming automatic rights to all cattle, making it difficult to determine cattle ownership by female family members. Fulani men possessing less than twenty cows are seen as poor, while women having six cows are considered as rich (Iro, 1994). Women, however, own most of the small ruminants and all of the poultry (Swinton, 1987 in Iro, 1994). Though most Fulani men herd cattle well past the middle age, herding is dominated by the youths, while decisions about grazing are mainly made by the elderly family members. The Fulani herdsman makes excellent use of sign language, the cane and verbal command to drive the animals, with faster animals occupying the front rows. During migration, a typical herd consisting of several family units move in a column of up to five meters wide and two kilometers long. And by the time it passes any given point, 'everything that stands at that point is destroyed' (Fricke, 1979; and Vengroff, 1980 as cited in Iro, 1994). Describing the annual herding cycle of the Fulani, Iro (1994) stated that the herding season begins with southward movement of the herd and along rivers and stream valleys from October to December – marking the end of rainy season and beginning of dry season. January to February is the harmattan season that is characterized by longer grazing hours, herd splitting, and more frequent visits to stable water sources. These thus increase southward movement of the herds. The months of March and April are usually the toughest for the herdsman and his cattle, as it is the hottest period in the grazing calendar. Indeed, he now herds his cattle only in the evenings and nights (Riesman, 1977, as cited in Iro, 1994). May and June signify the end of dry season and vegetation begins to appear. This also marks the beginning of northward movement of cattle herds. From this period up till September, which is the peak of rainy season, though characterized by cattle-breeding, more milk production and shorter grazing hours, cattle herding coincides significantly with arable crop production. Farmer-herdsmen conflict therefore becomes prevalent during this period.

### **Causes and Effects of Herdsmen and Farmers Conflict in Nigeria**

For a long time, the seasonal movements have made many States in Nigeria to not only grapple with the increasing presence and the activities of herdsmen in the name of promoting their nomadic culture of pasturing but more worrisome is the new dimension of bearing sophisticated weapons of war to terrorize farmers, and either as a result of lack of attention or they deliberately allow their cattle to stray, trample on the crops and forcefully eat up farm crops of farmers, they also contaminate streams which serve as source of water for human consumption. Hence this leads to outbreak of disease in the community. The pastoralists engage in raping women, abducting and killing farmers. Their tactics for large scale violent attacks on villages and towns is to come in 100s to attack at night when people are asleep and carting away valuables. It is also discovered that they have taken kidnapping, and arm robbery activities on the highways.

Traditionally when conflicts occur tension is raised and to resolve the conflict, farm owners reported the cases of conflict to their traditional rulers and the police. And where a herdsman or men are confirmed to have been responsible for example, some of the communities study, the destruction of crops such herdsman are fined to pay compensation. But it came to a time when farmers refuse the idea of collecting compensation because they don't want to be living on compensation because it lacks life sustenance component. Farmers believe that their crops are as important as cattle is important to the herdsmen as such have requested herdsmen to stop causing trouble by taking their cattle away from farmlands. Because of the increasing violent attacks on human life there is often a revenge mission between youth in the affected areas and the Fulani herdsmen or their cattle are killed and eaten or left to rot and where there is bush burning which is to the advantage of farmers and disadvantage of grazers. Also over the years, increasing number of States was rocked by perennial clashes between herdsmen and farmers over usage of land and non-compliance with State and community laws on security and revenue payments. At the end of violent confrontations lots more life, properties and settlements were destroyed. The population of farmers is reduced; population of widows, widowers and orphans increase, more money is expended on arms and security provision services. These among other effects are responsible for low acceptance of Fulani in their host communities.

Open grazing has been roundly condemned and blamed as the reason why cattle herders clash with local farming communities over the control of land all over the country, with such clashes leading to the death of hundreds over many years.

## **Implications for Peace-Building and National Security in Nigeria**

Presently, there are negative portrayals of Fulani herdsmen in the Nigerian media. Media outlets have projected an image of a young Fulani herdsman clutching an AK 47 rifle and other dangerous weapon while herding cows, rather than the traditional long sticks they carry. The local media covering the violent conflicts have portrayed herdsmen often as violent perpetrators in farming communities. This has reinforced a public image associated with dangerous cattlemen. The perceived inaction of the police and other state security apparatuses to provide sufficient protection for farmers and residents of rural communities in Nigeria has led to alternative forms of security, such as the mobilization of local hunters and vigilantes. This has led to the lynching of herdsmen who are seen as security threats in some communities. In retaliation, herdsmen have mobilized militias to attack villages and rural communities, leading to the death of citizens. The current government has conducted security interventions in communities undergoing violence from cattle rustling, but has not intervened in the herder and farmer violence clashes. This view tends to present the federal government as taking sides with the violent herdsmen due to shared ethnic identity as the president, who is a Fulani.

In many of the affected rural communities, farmers are driven out of villages, ultimately becoming refugees in neighboring states. Those that remain in the villages are afraid to travel to farms in remote locations due to fear of violence from herdsmen. The implication of this situation is ominous on food production. Already, there are reports that prices of foods have increased in some of the affected states while refugee problems have escalated. People have left their villages in the Benue state and migrated to the Nassarawa state, where the governor has voiced his inability to cope with the spillage. There are similar situations in other states as well.

Countless attacks have been attributed to herders after an escalation simmering tension with local farming communities, tension that was worsened by the implementation of anti-open grazing laws in Benue and Taraba, two of the worst-hit states. Even though the research, noted that Fulani extremists were less active in 2017 with deaths dropping by 60% to 321, and attacks dropping by 51% to 72, the group has been on rampage in 2018. It was observed, while deaths committed by Fulani extremists decreased following the peak of 1,169 deaths in 2014, violence

from the group in 2018 is expected to surpass that peak. Nearly 1,700 violent deaths were attributed to the Fulani Ethnic Militia from January to September 2018. An estimated 89% of those killed were civilians.

According to Global Terrorism Index report in 2018, it's noted that the large-scale violence is perpetrated by both sides "who engage in mass village raids" that involve wanton violence. 78% of the deaths committed by Fulani extremists since 2010 have been carried out as armed assaults," the report indicated. The paper also observed that the Fulani Ethnic Militia is the deadliest of the bunch of Muslim Fulani herdsmen who have taken up arms against farmers in largely Christian areas. The Fulani herders are primarily Muslim while the southern farmers are predominantly Christian, which adds a religious dimension to the conflict over resources. Christian farmers in the south perceive the influx of Muslim herders as an Islamisation of the country at a time when Boko Haram's presence in the country is still strong.

The Global Terrorism Index in 2018 also noted, that the escalation is as a result of population growth, desertification and the distribution of arms throughout Nigeria. It also described the conflict as an economic plight which has forced herders to aggressively push into the south to feed their cattle. Land scarcity, the over use of resources, and climate change have dried up fertile land in Northern Nigeria which the Fulani have historically used for grazing, driving many further south into states inhabited by farmers. At its core, the herder-farmer violence occurring in Nigeria revolves around the economic plight resulting from the worsening drought and land degradation in Nigeria's northern regions. The livelihood of Nigeria's Fulani population is threatened as desertification of their land pushes them south.

### **Coherent Policy by the Government on Farmer-Herders Conflicts in Nigeria**

Governments regard the peace and unity of Nigeria as paramount and non-negotiable. As such they take measures to ensure that this is achieved because Section 1 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 is supreme and no any person or group of persons take control of government of Nigeria or any part of Nigeria except in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution; and section 2 Nigeria shall be one and indivisible Sovereign State with a federation of States and the Federal Capital Territory. And has a wide range of objectives and rights to citizens based on democracy and social justice, for example section 17 (3) (a) requires the State

to make policies to ensure that (a) all citizens without discrimination on any group whatsoever have the opportunity for securing adequate means of livelihood as well as adequate opportunities to secure suitable employment. This means both herdsmen and farmer are to be protected to move around to practice their business in accordance with the law of the State. However fundamental freedoms (section 37 rights to private and family life, section 38 right to freedom of thoughts conscience and religion.

Section 39 has limit to any person or group of persons would exercise it. Section 45 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 States “(1) *Nothing in section 37,38,39,40,and 41 of this constitution shall invalidate any law that is reasonably justifiable in a democratic society:-* (a) in the interest of defence public safety, public order, public morality or Thus just as the herdsmen and indeed any other group of persons have a right to migrate to any part of the country the law does not allow the destruction of host communities life culture household property and land.

#### ***The Objectives of the proposed law by the Federal Government***

According to Section 3 of the law, the following were listed as the aims and objectives.

- (a) To promote the modern techniques of animal husbandry, particularly the rearing of livestock;***
- (b) To promote job and investment opportunities in livestock farming as well as expand the Value chain;***
- (c) To prevent destruction of farm crops and community pond, settlement and property by the open grazing of livestock;***
- (d) To prevent clash between herders and farmers;***
- (e) To regulate and support the growth of livestock farming and manage the environment impact of open livestock grazing;***
- (f) To prevent, control and manage the spread of disease as well as to ease the implementation of policy that will enhance the production of a high and healthy breed of livestock both for the local and export markets;***
- (g) To create a more robust method of addressing the rising livestock density, particularly cattle, in an efficient manner;***
- (h) To promote greater productivity and profitability in the livestock business;***
- (i) To promote and enhance the production of high and healthier breeds of cattle, sheep goats, horse and camels for both local and export markets***

*(j) To promote the establishment of international best practices in dairy and beef industry.*

Under the federal government's plan, cattle herders are expected to be registered and recognised with cooperatives for the purpose of the ranching scheme. These cooperatives will then be able to get rental agreements for land from state governments and also benefit from ranch resources on several terms including loans, grants, and subsidies. The funding of the plan from the federal government and state governments is expected to last for the first three years in the pilot phase for a total of N70 billion while private sector interests and investment between the third and tenth year is expected to be in excess of N100 billion.

The proposed ranch size models, according to the plan, are a cluster of 30, 60, 150 and 300 cows ranches in a location within the donated reserves. Adamawa, Benue, Ebonyi, Edo, Kaduna, Nasarawa, Oyo, Plateau, Taraba, and Zamfara have been selected as the pilot states to launch the plan, with 94 branches to be established and operational in clusters of 4 ranches in 24 locations in those states. In June 2018, the federal government also presented the National Livestock Transformation Plan, a N179 billion 10-year initiative targeted at putting an end to the age long herders-farmers crisis, and to massively improve the livestock industry. The initiative stipulates that ranching is the way forward for cattle rearing in the country.

### **Conclusion Remarks**

It is obvious that Fulani Herdsmen are implicated based on the rising phenomenon of conflict, both as perpetrators in one hand and as victims in the other hand. However, the popular perception shared by most people in the studied communities portrays Fulani Herdsmen belligerent as evidenced by their movements with deadly weapons, there are some times responses to the menace of rustlers targeting their own cattle. It was observed that the cattle not only constitute their primary economic interest, it also define their economic, social and cultural identity. In addition, insufficient attention has been paid to the threats posed to pastoralism over the years by the failure of the grazing reserve's policy, and the overall threat to pastoralism that defined the anxiety facing pastoralists in general.

For a long time, the seasonal movements has made many States in Nigeria to not only grapple with the increasing presence and the activities of herdsmen in the name of promoting their nomadic culture of pasturing but more worrisome is the new dimension of bearing sophisticated



weapons of war to terrorize farmers, and either as a result of lack of attention or they deliberately allow their cattle to stray, trample on the crops and forcefully eat up farm crops of farmers, they also contaminate streams which serves as source of water for human consumption. Hence this leads to outbreak of disease in the community. The pastoralists engage in raping women, abducting and killing farmers. Their tactics for large scale violent attacks on villages and towns is to come in 100s to attack at night when people are asleep and carting away valuables. It is also on the note that, they have taken kidnapping, and arm robbery activities on the highways.

The situation in the country is also one of political exploitation whereby various interest groups seek to gain political capital out of the Fulani situation in order to gain the support and popularity of the masses. It equally shows the interest of chiefs in allocating land to migrants with the potential benefits that accrues to them. Thus, despite the general body of opinion against the perceived anti-social activities of the Fulani, the traditional authorities still went ahead to lease the land to them.

It can be concluded that the causes of the conflict are destruction of crops, harassment of nomads by host youths, disregard for traditional authority, stray cattle, sexual harassment of women by nomads and Indiscriminate bush burning and theft of cattle. The social effect of the menace of Fulani – Herdsmen are loss of human life, sexual harassment of human life, acquiring of weapons/arms, reduction in quality of social relationship, reduction of social support and high cases of rape while the economic effect of the menace of Fulani – Herdsmen are reduction in output and income of farmers/nomads, loss of produce in storage, displacement of farmers, scarcity of agricultural products, loss of house and properties and infrastructural damages. It was further concluded that farmers and Fulani perception of the causes of Fulani Herdsmen and farmers clashes in Nigeria are not different while farmers and Fulani perception of the social effects and economic effects of Fulani – Herdsmen and farmers clashes in Nigeria are different.

### **Policy Recommendations**

1) Representatives of the host communities and Fulani herdsmen should be conveyed under a public forum and involved in the decision making and permitted to take part actively in the planning procedure of restoring peace to most of the affected communities that could bring about the orientation and change of tactics that will lead to greater cooperation between Nigerian security agencies and rural pastoral and farming communities. In particular, the current

perception among security agencies that pastoralists are criminals need to be changed. Involvement of genuine and patriotic leaders from both the pastoralists and farming communities should be encouraged.

2) There is need for better provision of extension services and input for crops and livestock production. Similarly, there is need for greater involvement of farmers and pastoralists associations in policy formulation and in the implementation of government programmes with regard to crops and livestock production.

3) The Federal Ministry of Agriculture and the States' Ministries of Agriculture and Animal Resources need to devise a mechanism for the branding and registration of all cattle in the country. Cattle traders should also be certified, the livestock markets restructured, and all the country's abattoirs and slaughter houses upgraded and regulated as well.

4) There is the need to provide support to victims of cattle rustling and rural banditry. Government should ensure proper resettlement of sedentarized farmers and native populations who have been in the course of acquiring fields for grazing reserves/routes development so as to keep them from incessant encroachment on the range fields. A token of compensation is needed to allay their grievances. Initiatives like restocking, the provision of seeds and inputs, and the rehabilitation of destroyed buildings need to be considered. The current practices of ignoring victims need to be stopped. Additionally, counseling and health services for persons (especially women and children) who were abused must be provided by the States and Local Governments.

5) Political leaders, traditional rulers and local governments' administrators need to increasingly embrace the pastoral communities and treat them fairly and equitably. The increasing isolation of pastoralists and the ongoing aggression against their communities in many States and localities will only lead to further degeneration of conflict and insecurity. Leaders of pastoral communities need to be duly recognized and taken into confidence in efforts geared towards preventing criminal activities. Thus, the current onslaught on pastoral settlements by security agencies and vigilante need to be stopped; and all cases of extrajudicial killings recorded and investigated.

6) Farmers and Herders' communities should be encouraged to use dialogue to resolve disputes over cattle theft and crops destruction instead of resorting to violence and most importantly, traditional and religious institutions, including relevant government agencies should provide strong support to strengthen dialogue as a process of alternative dispute resolution. Alternative

Dispute Resolution should be integrated in the legal advocacy as an important and cost effective mechanism for resolving conflicts mostly in the communities without bloodshed.

7) Civil society organisations and the media need to strongly "blow the whistle" on the injustices meted on farming and pastoral communities arising from cattle rustling, armed banditry and other forms of deprivation such as the confiscation of grazing lands, the destruction of houses, forceful evictions, and arbitrary arrests and extortions. International support organisations and other human rights bodies need to support this initiative.

8) The Federal Government of Nigeria in conjunction with the relevant State governments should undertake urgent revitalization of moribund grazing reserves/routes in Nigeria and establishment of new model grazing reserves in all the States of Nigeria. It should provide adequate grazing lands for pastoralists, but such lands should not be earmarked on any community's farmland. This can be achieved through accelerated passage of the bill on National Grazing Reserves and Stock Routes Management Commission by the National Assembly. The concept of grazing reserves as shown in this study is a welcome idea to most pastoralists especially with the increasing levels of conflicts with the farmers. There is need to put in additional structures to develop the grazing reserves to accommodate increasing number of livestock producer who had move into this grazing reserve to seek refuge especially in the North-central where these conflicts are prominent. Some grazing reserve had shown that security is a major concern with thousands of cattle being rustled. There is need for adequate security in conjunction with pastoralist and local populations.

9) The conscious Integration of the interests of pastoralists along with crop cultivators as well as other natural land resources users (fishermen, hunters, wood cutters, etc.), in the planning and implementation of agriculture-based or other land use policy programmes and projects (Waters-Bayer and Waters- Bayer, 1994: 227). There is need for the state and local governments to plan and implement an integrated program for settlement of pastoralist without "rigidification" of movement along the customarily recognized stock routes, to link the reserves, with due attention.

10) Improved capacity for governance. The Nigerian state should groom capacity for efficient governance in the areas of regulatory, extractive and distributive competences. With particular reference to resource governance, the state should ensure that pragmatic measures are put in place to bring all resource spheres in the country under effective control. This would entail

repositioning relevant extant governmental institutional mechanisms and strategies designed to guide resource holding, exploitation, and relations for optimal performance.

11) Dismantling of the cattle rustling economy, government should ensure that the demand and supply chains as well as the operational routes, markets, networks, syndicates and infrastructures of cattle rustling are systematically identified and dismantled so as to do away with the criminal practice. Also, Perpetrators of all forms of violence and crime within the transhumance terrain in Nigeria should be properly punished by the Nigerian state so as to deter further committal as well as dissuade criminal impunity.

12) There is the urgent need for the Federal Government to take a decisive action on issues of cattle rustling and armed banditry throughout Northern Nigeria. A thorough investigation need to be carried out by relevant security agencies to unravel the network of armed bandits, including the identification of those involved in supplying arms, rustling of the cattle, transporting the stolen cows to the markets and those buying and disposing off the stolen livestock.

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