



Rights to life and movement in the herder-farmer conflicts in Nigeria

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Abstract

When Mr. Egba, his son and nephew were killed in his vehicle by herders on their way to his farm in the forest reserve along Obiaruku-Benin Road, Obiaruku, Delta State an urgent sense of the need to study and review the relationship between the farmer and the herder arose intensely in the researcher the victims being relations in native Ezionum kingdom in Ukwuani Local Government Area Delta State Nigeria. This paper which adopts the doctrinal method re-examines the various theoretical and ideological foundations upon which the conflictual relationship between the two agricultural groups can be understood in the face of recent violent evidence and pre-existing literature on the subject. It finds that while technological advances made in the agricultural sub-sector have recently brought the two groups into more intimate co-existence and collision, no serious attempt has been made by the State to curtail the violent bent which the herders have taken by colluding with Islamic militants to wage a pseudo war of land conquest over ethnic communities. The extent to which the forest and game reserves have been occupied as hideouts and fortresses of the herders and their militant groups all over the country only supports the claim by this paper that the herders have taken after the Niger Delta militants and see the ethnic farmers as prey to be eliminated if possible, kidnapped for ransom and terrorized out of the grazing spaces all over the country and this has appeared to be the manifest policy of the Buhari administration to pacify the Fulani for winning a national election in 2015 after a third failed attempt.

Keywords: Herdsmen, Farmers, Conflicts, Human Rights, Militants

Introduction

Conflict studies are prone to positions with variables determining them. The climate change arguments in the world today are strong fields that cannot be ignored whenever issues bear on such areas as the Sahara region and movement of nomads. Improvements in the application of technology to agriculture and animal husbandry have also impacted on previous less conflictual relationship between the pastoralist and the sedentarised farmer. The rise in ethno-religious conflicts has equally accentuated the already waiting-to-explode conditions. Recourse to violence and the bearing of arms by the pastoralist has been informed by the hostilities he encounters in a vulnerable environment that he plies his seasoned culture of nomadic life. The farmer has thus come to be at the receiving end when the pastoralist invites Islamic militant wing into the conflict. As to what becomes the immediate cause of any incident of violence in the relationship between the farmer and the herder leading to loss of life and property remains debatable but the remote causes have largely been well articulated in recent studies. The current study therefore seeks to factor recent evidence of the conflict into the pre-existing body of knowledge to examine what has changed and what is changing in the continued relationship between the two groups and the role being played by the state to stem or to abet the conflicts. The role of a state in any conflict is very crucial especially when it is not a direct party in the conflict. But in the developing world as in Nigeria, it has been shown that the state can hardly be neutral in any conflict zone. It is either the state is siding with a party or such a party is exploiting its relationship with the state to gain undue advantage against a party which may usually not be in control of the levers of power.

The pastoralist has since considered and acknowledged the Buhari's state his own state in the farmer-herder conflicts.

Theoretical framework

Perhaps the Marxian theory of social conflict can best explain the face-off between the farmer and the herder in Nigeria. It postulates that society is in a state of continuous or perpetual conflict over limited resources in this case, land and water (www.investopedia.com. 18 August, 2022). Conflict theory examines any social phenomenon through the prism that there is a natural human instinct towards conflict (www.https://corporatefinanceinstitute.com. 18 August, 2022). It states that tensions and conflicts arise when resources are unevenly distributed between social groups in society (https://www.thoughtco.com. 18 August, 2022).

It is based on the claim that groups are permanently in competition for control of limited resources resulting in inequalities in the groups. The three main strands of the theory are that man is self-centered and self-interested; resources are scarce and limited; and conflict is unavoidable within and between social groups (https://en.m.wikipedia.org. 18 August, 2022). On a general note, conflict theories are perspectives in sociology and social psychology that stress a materialist interpretation of history, dialectical method of analysis and a critical stance towards existing social structures and arrangements; and a political programme of change, reform or revolution. For instance, it postulates that crime is a function of the conflicts that exist in society (Siegel, 2022, pp. 254 -284) [34].

A major characteristic of Marxist conflict theory is that it is based on economic reductionism. Of all the factors that control the behavior of man, the economic factor is the most dominant. The face-off between the herder and the farmer in conflict theoretical perspectives must therefore be best understood and explained from the economic materialist point of view and not from the ethnic, racial, religious, political, psychological and legal points of view. These other viewpoints are not irrelevant but are secondary or super-structural in Marxian analysis and explanation of the problem. Ojemire (2022) [27] was therefore very apt when he raised the question and resolved it as follows: For centuries, the pastoralist has been migratory with minimal conflicts between him and the farmer, so why the spike in violence in recent years? 'The driver of the conflict is economic in nature with land related issues at the centre': accessibility to land and water. Olufemi (2022) was also using the economic reductionist view point when he argued as follows: Plateau State is home to about 40 ethnic groups and has been a hot-bed of the conflict (between Muslim Fulani pastoralists and Christian Berom and Irigwe farmers) often painted in ethno-religious colours. But analysts have said that climate change and scarcity of land and water is pitting the two groups against one another not faith. Similarly, Ikezue and Ezeah (2017) [13] captured the argument as follows: the face-offs are being interpreted as being politically, ethnically and religiously motivated but they are under-grid by questions of land and water resources. Thus, the conflict being mostly an agrarian resource complex, an inaccurate interpretation of a neo-feudal agrarian problem has turned the narrative into one rooted in political, cultural and ethno-religious beliefs and other distorted definitions which have aided aggressive encroachment and reprisal aggression between the parties leading in most cases to mutually destructive violent attacks (https://www.reliefweb.int. 2 November, 2021).

The relationship between the herder and the farmer is an interactive one. The meanings and values produced from the interactions can lead to conflict. Symbolic interactionism (https://www.dictionary.com; https://www.thought.com and https://www.journals.sagepub.com 20 August, 2022) is a sociological paradigm that sees interaction and meaning as central to society and assumes that meanings are not inherent but are created through interactions. It analyzes human interactions by concentrating on the meanings individuals or groups assign to things in the world around them, including words and objects. The work, *Understanding the Herder-Farmer Conflict in Nigeria* (https://www.accord.org.za. 13 December, 2018) interrogated the theoretical underpinnings, trends and dynamics of the conflict and found that one of the major sources of the conflict is the proliferation of small and light weapons. The work, based on the social conflict theory believes that conflict occurs when two or more groups of people opposed to one another in social interaction reciprocally exert themselves in an effort to attain scarce and incompatible resources with the result of overreaching one another. It believes that availability of land and water had diminished due to the numerous factors enumerated below leading to clashes between the farmer and the herder.

The economic relationship between the herder and the farmer had therefore been simultaneously conflicting and complementary. The complex relationship had always been anchored on co-existence and co-operation on the one hand and competition and conflict on the other. Unfortunately, the increasing stress placed on water holes and land to graze arising from natural factors such as climate change etc have further strained their relationship. In a manner of re-stating the obvious, such other factors are rapid rising population inducing urbanization, industrialization, bush burning, cattle rustling and stealing, trampling on crops, ethnic and religious differences, poverty, sexual harassment of women by pastoralists, influence of political and economic elites on the herders and undermining of traditional dispute resolution mechanisms (Brottem, 2021; Baderinwa, 2019) [9, 7].

The counter point of the Marxist theory of conflict in the explanation of the herder farmer face-off is Emile Durkheim (https://en.m.wikipedia.org 18 August, 2022) theory of social conflict which was built on functionalism. It postulates that continuous conflict within and without social groups is because man is inherently egoistic while collective consciousness (norms, beliefs and values) forms the moral basis of the society, resulting in social integration. He believed that it was culture, religion, language etc shared by a group, community or society that gives a sense of social connection and solidarity between and amongst people and bind them together as a collective (https://www.thoughtco.com 30 September, 2019).

Therefore the view point that the economic base or the economic factor explains all there is in social conflict is a half-story. All other factors such as ethnic, political, religious, moral, legal are as influential as the economic base and to restrict social analysis or emphasis to the economy is to move about and around abstractions. Functionalism is thus a system of thinking based on the ideas of Durkheim that looks at society from a broader perspective examining the necessary structures that makes up society and how each part helps to keep the whole stable (https://www.khanacademy.org 9 October, 2013).

In applying the Durkheimian theory to the herder-farmer conflict, Leif Brottem (2021) [9] in *The Growing Complexity*

of *Farmer-Herder Conflict in West and Central Africa* submitted that the rise of the violence was more pernicious than the fatality figures associated with it as it was 'often amplified by the emotionally potent issues of ethnicity, religion, culture and land.' However, much as the conflicts have continued to be framed in religious overtones, The Pillar Explainer (2022) ^[37] has submitted that the *United States Commission on International Religious Freedom* raised the question in 2020 to the effect that experts and practitioners have continue to debate the extent to which religious ideology plays a direct role in promoting and driving the conflicts in west and central Africa. But the settled view is that if religious ideology is not driving the conflicts, the conflicts are impacting and aggravating religious tensions in the sub-continent.

Brottem argues that population pressure, growing social inequalities, climate change, changes in land use and resource access, declining trust between communities, industrialization, urbanization, theft of livestock etc have altered and rendered the traditional neo-feudal dispute resolution mechanism less effective in many areas where the conflicts have erupted violently and more importantly, militant Islamist groups have exploited the resulting inter-communal tensions and disagreements to foster recruitment into their ranks complicating the security landscape with violent extremism. The Pillar believes that amidst the escalating tensions, Boko Haram and various Islamist militant groups have armed young Fulani men with military standard combat firearms and weapons framing the agrarian economic and political disagreements in religious garb and baying for more violence. The neo-pastoralists practice of arming herders by their employers (who are government elites and politicians all over the Country) with arms and ammunition or being accompanied or escorted by armed militants and bandits has also led to the increased perception by the farming communities that herders are terrorists and agents of Boko Haram insurgency. Through the proliferation of political elites' participation in animal husbandry in south-east, south-west and indeed all over the country, the business of cattle rearing has increased the tensions as the elites have fed into the over-simplification of the Boko Haram-Fulani herder hegemony. The elites have enabled the violence by weaponizing the Fulani they engage in transhumance (to drive livestock); thereby increasing the level of hostility between the farmers and the herders seeking grazing space. Ethnicity is also said to be very crucial in the recruitment of men into the conflicts and equally very crucial in the processes of raising funds for the conflicts apart from kidnapping for ransom.

Is'haq Modibbo Kawu has also brought the Fulbe pastoralist perspective to the fore. He believes that the Nigerian State has been arm-strung in its various initiatives through the Buhari administration to tackle the herder-farmer conflict in Nigeria and as such, pastoral production has been in serious crisis in the face of farming communities. Arguing that the struggles over land, water and routes have predisposed the pastoralist to 'terrifyingly violent conflicts' with farmers, neo-colonialism and neo-capitalism has failed to provide education, capacity and jobs for the growing population that is mainly dominated by youths. While in the south the frustrated youths have taken to drug addiction and abuse or a contrary burning desire to flee abroad, in the north neo-liberal capitalism, which is dictated to by imperialism, has turned the young pastoralist to a hardened criminal and a bandit.

The socio-cultural behavior of the younger generation has

thus been distorted by imperialism. While the non-pastoralist has jettisoned the age long tradition of understanding of being compensated when his crops are destroyed, the pastoralist has also abandoned the age long tradition of being paid damages for any killed livestock. Both have taken to violent ways and self-help rather than the sociological structure provided by the State and the society to control and examine behaviour. Both have also taken to rustling livestock with the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and the bearing of same by the pastoralist. This was also the finding of *The Dialectics of Insecurity in Anka and Maradun L.G.A of Zamfara State, Nigeria*, a research work conducted by Bello and Abdullahi (2021) ^[8]. Another research work, *Pastoralist and farmer-Herder Conflicts in the Sahel*, reached a similar conclusion that although livestock rustling and stealing was an integral culture of pastoralists as a medium of re-stocking herds after droughts or providing young herders with bride wealth, the practice had become arguably rampant due to civil wars and proliferation of arms in the Sahelian region of Africa and that political elites and insurgent groups have keyed into the conflicts foster their own agenda (<https://www.climate.diplomacy.org>. 18 August, 2022).

Furthermore, the Relative Deprivation theory is relevant in this discourse; it states that collective action by groups especially those who feel frustrated or cheated or disgruntled by socio-economic conditions of change or conflict resort to aggression. However, potentials for collective violent aggression vary strongly with the intensity and scope of relative deprivation within the collectivity and this in turn depends on the availability of alternatives for satisfaction of the social resource deprived the group. Thus those with alternative may not take to violent aggression. The Fulani's inability to have unhindered access to land for grazing is always a potential causative organism of conflict with the farmer. The fact that grazing routes and reserves are not systematically mapped out, leaves the Fulani on a frolic in the fields which would incur the wrath of the farmers and this would lead to casualties on the Fulani and his livestock. A retreat bid is made by the Fulani only for the group to return in explosive reprisal and vengeance. The Fulani may first accuse the farmer of impeding the stock route or rustling cattle before the group tramples on crops and attack simultaneously (Ikezue & Ezeah, 2017) ^[13].

Differences in perception by herders and farmers of the social value and use of land and changing patterns of land use and reform have also defined the social relations of the competition and conflict (Ojemire, 2022) ^[27]. A Research Study by Saifullahi et al. (2021) ^[34] examined the relative deprivation suffered by the pastoralists, for instance, as a push factor for migration from one region to another. The Deprivation-Aggression theory provided the framework of the research study by Ikezue and Ezeah which found that state's inability to equitably distribute and allocate land resources for cattle routes and grazing on the one hand and farming on the other hand was at the root of the crisis. In a bid in search for land, herders have had to be forced into government forest reserves which in turn have made matters worse as the forests become hideouts for the criminal gang and extremist groups amongst the Fulani. The bid further exposes the herders to cattle theft and other forms of insecurity to which many herders have responded by arming themselves for protection making them largely indistinguishable from bandits, insurgents and Boko Haram extremists.

Legal framework

But who are the herders? They are the Fulani. According to the Pillar Explainer (2022) ^[37] the Fulani are the largest nomadic tribal, ethnic group in the world. They are spread across the whole of northern Africa particularly in the hot zones. They constitute an ethnic minority in every African country they are found. They are estimated at 25 million as at 2022 and are mostly Muslims. There are about 12 to 13 million of them in Nigeria and they pick up approximately six percent of the Country's population. They are nomadic and or semi-nomadic herders of cattle, sheep and goats who travel long and distant areas of Africa to provide grazing land for their livestock.

The legislative framework regulating the relationship between the farmer and the Fulani in Nigeria is fluid and imprecise. According to Adeniyi (2021) ^[2] pastoral laws have remained incipient and generally incoherent. Even where they exist they are framed in the understanding of the farmer usually considered the owner of the land because he interacts with it on a largely permanent basis rather than the herder whose world view is nomadic and who interacts with the land on a fairly temporal basis and moves on. The role of legal authorities is equally skewed in favour of the farmer who is sedentary and the odds are against the nomad who exists on the fringes of society sometimes in a state of outlawry. To state that he is not captured in legislative frameworks is not an overstatement as can be demonstrated by his lifestyle. He is not often included in the decision making process and being migratory in natural lifestyle, he is either not available to deliver his input in the rule making process or he is itinerant and a stranger to the decision and the rule making process of a settled lifestyle. His culture is sometimes the anti-thesis of a traditional, local, customary settled life of the pre-colonial north and the neo-colonial northern Nigeria. Because of the large extent of his migratory waves of movement across the continent, the herder may not be prepared to condescend to a particularly localized culture and ways of life. He can therefore be hardly subjected to any localized regulatory norms or is he prepared to consciously learn and internalize any and be subject judicial administration. Because Islam is a universal religion with a complete judicial system or structure which the nomad has come to embrace, however varied the interpretations and sects, he is at home with the general principles of Islamic and Sharia world view but averse to western justice system. Because he has given his life and culture to the 'cow and the grass' the ownership of the land is not a matter of serious concern to him. Often, what the nomad appears to have and desire in culture and lifestyle is the right of passage and not the ownership of the land and water resources. Land belongs to Allah.

If the Fulani does not preserve his nomadic lifestyle, then to him, the world has collapsed and has come to an end and what is left is permanent rebellion. They could fight to the end than to lose a generation of their posterity to the city and western lifestyle. The theory of relative deprivation and aggression is very apt in the explanation of the relationship between the Fulani and the farmer whether the farmer is a Christian or non-Christian, non-Fulani or Muslim farmer. The level of deprivation may vary as noted earlier but the reaction of the Fulani is very significant in this study. The nature of the deprivation and the reaction may be egoistic, self-induced, self-referred, fraternal, mercenary and violent. This is because, for the Fulani, an injury to one Fulani is an injury to

all. The Fulani are thus very conscious of the relative deprivation that they suffer at both individual and collective levels from both the farming communities and the State and their reaction to the deprivation can take both individual and collective levels against the communities and the State. In other words, an individual Fulani can assuage the deprivation meted to the collective while the collective can assuage a deprivation meted to an individual Fulani. Most often, economic deprivations have religious connotations and interpretations and for the Fulani, the Jihad is the permanent option readily to be used because they have, as recent studies have revealed, a militant armed wing across the continent that is mercenary in outlook and composition ready to respond at a twinkle of an eye. It is in this vindictive connection that Governor El-Rufai of Kaduna State once claimed that, anyone who kills a Fulani takes a loan of lifetime and no matter how longer it takes, the one must repay the loan with death. In other words, the Fulani does not forgive.

But studies have shown that it is not all wild and outlawry with the Fulani. They have organized and recognized pre-colonial structures in response to the anticipated conflicts between them and their host communities and the State. In the pre and post-colonial times and before the conflicts began to assume unimaginable militant proportions, the Fulani paid cattle tax (namely Jangali) and had Ruga system. A Ruga was an elected official amongst the Fulani ethnic group who regulated the grazing areas and the migratory routes (called Burti) within his group and within a given geographical and administrative territory. He was responsible for the settlement of all manners of conflicts between his kinsmen and the farming communities. A research study by Njoku (2022) ^[24] claims that colonialism and the introduction of the common law in the face of the Sharia and the suppression of the Sharia judicial system during colonialism up till date has given rise to the current violent waves of conflict being experienced all over Nigeria. Njoku believes that the colonial common law system of conflict resolution is an alien mechanism different from what the Fulani and the northern host communities used to operate before the advent of the British. Another study by Makinta (2017) ^[15] examined the role of traditional rulers and institutions in the management of the conflicts between the herders and the farmers looking at such variables as the age, net-worth, and experience of the farmer and the size of the farm and came to the conclusion that the traditional means of the resolution of the conflicts was more satisfactory to the parties than the western English court system. In fact the bedeviled afflictions of the English court system in terms of technicalities and delays have sold the soul of the neo-colonial system before both the farmers and the herders. Because disputes are not easily and quickly resolved in the Nigerian modern court system, conflicts have proliferated and parties have rather resorted to self-help and the armed militant wing of their various groups. The resolution of social conflicts through armed struggle is an abnegation of the civilization of the west.

Mistrust and distrust in court adjudication process and mediation process have inhibited resolving routine disagreements amicably and informally. And as found by Leif Brottem (2022) in his research study the recent paradigm shift in livestock ownership from the Fulani pastoralists to the petty-bourgeoisie: politicians and wealthy urban dwellers with high economic net-worth arming and weaponizing the Fulani herder: have raised suspicion and generated the perception that herders are representing elite interests and this

has resulted in breakdown of the traditional arbitral systems of mutual dependence and resolution of conflicts such as cessation of sharing crop residue, extortionate demand for rental fees dues and damages. Court disputes have raised value of livestock and farm produce beyond and above even human life such that rather than taking to seeking redress, anger and venom prevail and whenever the parties have recognized that the dispute is beyond what was real, they key back to ancient and primordial religious and ethnic animosities. They began to find that their ways and differences can no longer be regulated by the regular norms. Standoffs become the order of the day and sooner than later hostilities would ensue and a little tinder will spark off violence.

Ideological framework

Ranching is even viewed suspiciously by the typical Fulani nomad as it signifies a dramatic change in his lifestyle which he is not ready to embrace culturally. It is viewed as a western model of animal husbandry and essentially Weberian. Weberism is the oriental euro-centric development theory put forward poignantly by Max Weber's disciples like Talcott Parsons (2021, p. 307) that African societies must develop through the western pattern of civilization: that is from hunting and gathering to feudalism; from feudalism to capitalism etc. The Fulani nomad is within the periphery of hunting and gathering salted by Islamist world view. The study and finding in *Pastoralist and Farmer-Herder Conflicts in the Sahel* (<https://www.climate.diplomacy.org> . 18 August, 2022) concluded that conflicts have been exacerbated by government policies which tended to encourage settled agricultural communities. This posture of government has promoted the common perceptions of nomadic pastoralism as unproductive and detrimental to the environment. This is because all attempts by State authorities to encourage and morph nomadism into a relatively more organized sedentary practice by way of ranching have been largely rebuffed by the nomadic Fulani. Yet, the practical resultant yield of nomadic and ranch-cows are dramatically different. Ujah (2021, p. 4 – 5) ^[38] states for instance that a Nigerian cow under the control of a Fulani nomad in the wild produces an average of a liter of milk daily while an average cow in a ranch produces an average of 100 liters per day.

Due to the repugnant disposition of the Fulani herder to government overtures to animal husbandry, government policies in the agricultural sector have tilted in favour of farming and according to sources cited supra pastoral hubs and spaces have remained marginalized and characterized by poor presence of public utility services and absence of effective security provisions and a general lack of government involvement. This has not only negatively affected prompt government security response in times of conflict and distress, Brottem(2022) has argued convincingly that militant Islamic groups' tactic of targeting government security and medical services has impeded the provision of sustainable security. Likewise, militant Islamic groups aggravate instead of ameliorate conflicts and look upon government agencies as evil. These have upped tensions around resource access and heightened insecurity in the zones prone to their activities.

In other words, much as the security agencies have significant roles to play in quelling or adjudicating in conflicts, they are sorely misunderstood not only by the Fulani but their militant wings. Security agencies are considered biased and partisan

against the Fulani pastoralist. And because improvements have been made in veterinary medicine making it possible for livestock to become more resistant to cattle and other tropical diseases in the southern rain forests and thus, making the stay of the nomads and livestock relatively permanent and regular all over Nigeria, this perhaps explains why the conflicts have become more explosive over the past few decades. The Pillar³⁶ has also canvassed further that advances in agricultural technology have equally led to extensive land coverage in recent decades thus cutting off the herder's access to extensive spaces hitherto considered as exclusive cattle migratory routes and sources of water which the Fulani had earlier considered and understood to be protected spaces. These pushes and advantages gained by both parties have also become hindrances to mutual co-existence consigning them to their tents of mutual suspicion.

In the research study, *What an Irrigation Project reveals about farmer-herder Conflict in northern Nigeria*, Adeniyi (2021) ^[2] demonstrated how the Middle Rima River Valley Irrigation Project provoked conflicts between the herders, the farmers and even the Dam Officials who accused the herders of often veering off stock routes to damage irrigation facilities. The study brought to bold relief the dialectical tussles over farmer-herder productive systems. While the irrigation project advanced farming practices, the pastoralists who were used to grazing in the open spaces around the project turn in for cultivation were shoved aside without alternative provisions.

Recent evidence and literature review

Boko Haram had been the major bloodletting insurgency in Nigeria destroying the lives of innocent citizens until recently when the conflict between the herder and the farmer became more pronounced. This occurred as soon as the Buhari administration was inaugurated after the 2015 general election. In his inaugural statement, the regime made a categorical statement to the effect that it was 'for everybody and for nobody'. But since after the first tenure and mid-way into the second, it has already dawn on Nigerians for whom the regime came into power and also against whom. Like every other administration since the commencement of the return to civil rule, one form of fault-line or the other dogs the regime but principally the conflict between the Fulani herders and the farmers. According to Orakpo (2021, p. 24 – 25) ^[32], unconscionable destruction of lives and properties has resulted from the conflicts. They began mainly in the Middle Belt states of Benue, Plateau, Adamawa, Nasarawa, Taraba, Yobe, Zamfara, Niger and Kogi. Reverend Samuel Ayokunle (Orokpo, 2021) working in consortium with other religious leaders has maintained the general path in the explanation of the causes of the conflict. They attribute the conflicts to climate change while acknowledging other fault lines like poor vegetation caused by global warming. As canvassed by Orakpo, many international experts have fingered desert encroachment, unpredictable weather conditions, sudden sea rise, rapid population growth, unsustainable agricultural practices and flooding as the causes of the conflicts between the two dominant traditional agricultural economic activities. Jennifer Che (Orokpo, 2021) is reputed to have painted the emerging worst case scenario of the two pronged sea rise from the Atlantic Ocean and the encroaching desertification from the Sahara projecting the dire consequences into some centuries to come. This phenomenon has a deep rooted historical base. Webster

et al. (1967, p. 4) ^[42], in *The Growth of African Civilization: The Revolutionary Years: West Africa since 1800* state, 'Although the Hausa and Bambara farmers valued the manure of the Fulani cattle as fertilizer for their crops, arguments arose, especially in the dry season, when both farmers and herders wanted water from the small pools.' Herders have a right to the source of their livelihood, so they move from place to place in search of pasture for their cattle thus pitting them against farmers who also have a corresponding right to protect their crops (Orokpo, 2021). To protect their farms from being grazed and ravaged, some farmers spray DDT on the farms and even pollute the small pools such that cattle become poisoned and die in their numbers leading further to bitter acrimonies. Sometimes, the herders complain that their grazing routes are overtaken by farmers and buildings of sedentarized indigenes which lead to clashes because when the herders move to cross, crops of farmers certainly come under trample.

Growing population and urbanization also require a stated case. Bello Maigari, Secretary, Amansea Cattle Market Association, Anambra State captured it thus, 'When I came to Awka in 1986, there were some areas that cows were allowed to graze but now (by 2020s) if you go to those areas, they have been built up and there is no way you can stop people from building houses.' He continues, 'If a Fulani man is keeping his cattle in a place and he comes back to find that the place has been overtaken, it becomes an issue.' Sometimes there is outright exclusion of the herders which create a sense of marginalization that overtime may explode into crisis. And situations of these natures are exploited by the violent herders and even the Boko Haram sect. Maigari posits that most of the time when an attack on Fulani herders occurs in an area, the sect uses the opportunity to kill and plunder innocent people.

Allan Savory (cited in Orokpo, 2021) believes that the herder and the farmer need one another to survive. And that the land needs livestock to heal. To foster this, desertification and climate change must be tackled. What causes desertification and climate change is livestock, coal and oil. Charles Reith (cited in Orokpo, 2021) agrees with Allan Savory and advances the argument further to the effect that a lot of people think that desertification is caused by global warming. Global warming makes it severe. Desertification is caused mainly by unsustainable land use and other lack of basic knowledge of how to responsibly manage cattle over grazing areas. Therefore holistic use of land, livestock and people is important because livestock is not the bane but how livestock is managed and currently the management system must shift to ranching (Orokpo, 2021, p. 24 – 25). Issues of this nature which has global colouration has predisposed Jaminu Abiola to state that sometimes, Nigerians criticize government for a global problem in that such problems are usually outside the control of the national government (Osa, 2021, p. 24). But the incidents are not always coming with global colouration. For example, a family of five on Easter holiday in Ondo State was kidnapped in the Ajowa-Akoka area. The incident was attributed to the deplorable condition of the Ajowa-Ayere highway. The family, Ibrahim Olisa, a native of Daja Ajowa, his wife and three children were abducted at gun-point between Ajowa – Akoko and Ayere in Kogi State. Herdsmen also attacked three women in Ekiti State after two farmers were killed in Isaba-Ekiti. The six arms-wielding herdsmen stormed the farm settlement and unleashed mayhem on the three women who sustained life-threatening injuries and were

admitted at Ikole General Hospital. The three women had only N200 when ransom was demanded from them and rape attempts were rebuffed by them. These enraged the herdsmen who cut them to pieces with machetes to the extent that it was to take the grace of God for them to survive having lost so much blood (Dayo et al., 2021, p. 10) ^[10].

Commitment of State to security

The bulk of the violent herders, according to Audu Ogbeh (Hassan Wuyo, 2021, p. 9) ^[12], former Minister of Agriculture, are those marching in from neighbouring African countries of Mali, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad and Cameroon. They come in very large numbers without restrictions showing no regards to boundaries, States and regions. They believe that they are free to enter any farm, eat up the crops and rape and kill anyone in their way raising any objections to their wanton and callous disposition. Therefore Nigeria should seek amendment to Article 3 of ECOWAS Protocol especially as regards the free movement of cattle and other livestock to make provisions for restrictions and permits.

The Nigerian State had never in its history let down its guard on security spending even though much of it is stolen. Since after the last civil war, the Nigerian military might is second to none in the West African sub-region. In fact she is the police man of West Africa. At the height of insecurity in the 2020s the Defence headquarters was making a request for the annual sum of \$2 billion for three years coming up to \$6 billion in order to fight insecurity. In addition to the gigantic request, the Chairman House Committee on defence was equally requesting to pass a bill to seek for alternative sources of funding the Armed Forces in addition to the annual request of \$2 billion (Yakubu & Salem, 2021, p. 5). On 4th May, 2021 Mrs. Zainab Ahmed, the Minister of Finance, had disclosed that she had released N1.08 trillion to the army for purchase of arms to prosecute the war on insurgency stating, 'It may not be enough but what have been budgeted and what have been approved had been provided' (Okoli et al., 2021, p. 5). With the chunks of trillions set aside for prosecution of endless war on insurgency in the last one decade since it broke out in Niger Delta ending in private pockets, only a mad military would make a coup. The chances of a coup are thus slim and what has happened in Chad and Niger is far apart from Nigeria. What can threaten Nigeria, according to Azu, is not military take over but the army of surging unemployed youths basking in poverty and justified rage. There is a fight for the soul of the youth in Nigeria between the bandits and the State (Azu, 2021, p. 20; Umoru, 2021, p. 35).

The Nigerian Army has a fair share in the causes of insecurity in North-west zone, particularly, Niger State. The vast unused army land in Kontagora Local Government Area which measures more than 40 kilometers in size has been described as the habitat of the bandits at Matan Kari, Fagai, Ozowo, Bihima and Kan Libo mountains. Intelligence report has been shown to the effect that attacks are launched from the wasted army land and retreats are made into the same forest after attacks. The forest connects neighbouring Zamfara and Kaduna States from Niger State. The flat tops of the mountainous Kontagora forest provides landing pads for a white helicopter that is frequently sited whenever there was going to be a major attack in the North-west. The topography also provides residence for bandits making their dislodgement difficult in the Mariga axis. The unfenced and

porous land remains the reason bandits had been having a field day in the zone and it is from there they attack all the surrounding villages and towns in Kontagora with attendant rustling of cattle and keeping of hostages. Yet, the army had denied permission for entry into the forest to chase the bandits out arguing that the attackers were not bandits (Omonobi, 2021, p. 27). Before long, Kontagora town was thrown into anguish when bandits killed the son of the Emir, Alhaji Bashar Saidu Namaska on his father's farm at Masuga village together with those who were working with him on the farm. Several others who did not have cash on them to give to the bandits to pacify them were beaten up mercilessly and abducted. The deceased son of the Emir was the Surdauna of Kontagora who had been holding forth for his father who had been ill for a long time (Mosadomi, 2021, p. 3). In a similar vein, Mr. Egba, his son and nephew from Ezionum (Akpuofa, 2021, p. 11) in Ukwuani Local Government Area of Delta State were all murdered on their farm road in the forest reserve between Edo and Delta States. Lamenting that they could no longer access their farms for fear of being killed by herdsmen the women of the Area Council took to the Abraka-Agbor road to appeal to Solomon Ajede, the Council boss to help recover their farm produce. The State has been in the fore front in defence of the Fulani menace from the top most hierarchy of government. The Minister of Justice, Abubakar Malami SAN (Ndujihe, 2021, p. 5) has been forth coming in the debate about the constitutionality of open grazing. The Chief Law officer of the Federation argues that within the context of the enshrined constitutional rights in the 1999 Constitution as amended, no Nigerian can be denied his fundamental human rights of movement. But others have been quick to point out that Malami's position is spurious in that he intends to extend the inalienable rights to animals in defence of a culture that gives more care and preference to cattle than human beings. They argue that to cling to an anachronistic model of animal husbandry which is evidently injurious to harmonious relationship between herders and farmers as well as the local community is arrogant, according to Governor Akeredolu SAN of Ondo State (Ndujihe et al., 2021, p. 26).

Against climate change argument

The argument that climate change is the principal cause of the current conflicts and crises in Nigeria is to stretch the imagination too far and to beg the question and present a partial analysis. It cannot explain forcible conversion of people from their religion into another or their displacement from their ancestral habitation through violence and Jihad. But Antony Blinken, US Secretary of State has pooh-pooed the position the Federal Government through President Buhari that the erosion of the Lake Chad basin has led to conflict over resources and has led in turn to new migratory wave patterns that put people in collision courses, food insecurity, spread of diseases all of which produces an environment in which terrorism, criminality and other forces of violence are more likely (Vanguard Comment, 2021, p. 18).

In fact, there has also been a strong argument against climate change as the real reason for the current insecurity and conflicts between the nomadic Fulani and the farmers. The Vanguard argues that climate change opinion as the root cause of insecurity in Nigeria bears the hues of a narrative spun by the sponsors and perpetrators of the killings to divert attention from their actual and evil agenda: 'The conflicts in

Nigeria are mostly man made due to our traditional ethnic fault lines, the indigene – settler factor and centralized security structure which has proved incapable of securing the people' (vanguard Comment, 2021, p. 18). The people of the Middle Belt had already known much earlier that under cover of grazing, a lot of mercenaries have been brought into Nigeria. And in doing that, the State is using the narrative of herders-farmers conflict. 'There is nothing like herders and farmers conflict. It is that people who are foreigners have been brought in to kill Nigerians, take over their land and change the demography' (Okoli, 2021, p. 5)

For instance, Bassa and Allawa communities in Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State have not known peace since mayhem was unleashed on them leaving them under the grip of fear of bandits. This occurred three days after the withdrawal of the Military Joint Task Force that had been providing security in the axis. The withdrawal of the MJTF followed the killing of six soldiers and a policeman attached to the withdrawn Task Force. The Allawa Games Reserve in the area had been the abode of the bandits terrorizing the communities. The forest Reserve belongs to the State government. Resulting from the attacks over 100,000 youths from the communities in the area became restive and morphed into the Lakpma Youth Assembly to call on the State government to restore the Task Force as it appeared government was incapacitated or unwilling to do the needful as it further appeared to suggest that the Niger State government had ceded Allawa-Bassa and indeed the entire Lakpma axis to bandits and terrorists (Mosadomi, 2021, p. 21).

Banditry started in Niger State between 2015 and 2017 with mere cattle rustling by foreign Fulani nomads. It later morphed into full blown war with many lives and properties worth millions of naira lost. Since then not fewer than 120 persons have been lost to the insurgency and the communities have lost count of missing persons. They have paid over N180 million as ransom to the bandits within the period the consequences of which are desertion of ancestral homes, destruction of economic activities, hunger, diseases and humanitarian crises with no succor in sight.

Bandits have taken their atrocities to no fewer than 18 of the 25 Local Government Areas of Niger State and are unwilling to halt their infamy despite threats from security agencies. They seemed to be more daring after being challenged by security agencies thereby sending shock waves and fears into residents of the remaining Local Government Areas. Farmers that their Local Governments had been attacked by the bandits live in fear of possible attacks by the daring bandits. It is revealing to relate and render the experiences of some of the farmers and victims to bring up the pictures in bolder relief (Mosadomi, 2021, p. 20).

Adamu Useni Allawa (Mosadomi, 2021, p. 20) a yam farmer who also cultivates millet and maize lamented that he was eager to return to his farm but can only do so if there was improved security in the farms: 'I have a bitter experience which is still fresh in my memory. It is about my uncle and his friends who the bandits met on their farms and shot them to death instantly without any sympathy. Some of these bandits after attacking and killing our people even run away with their seedlings and we are left with virtually nothing to start fresh planting. We have relocated to Pandogari and have become refugees in a strange environment doing nothing.' Umaru Adamu Allawa said his hope also rested on government provision of more security to enable him and

others go back to their various farms. 'If the banditry continues, there is no hope for us to go back to the farm.' Bala Usman, a public servant and farmer states, 'With the present insecurity in my area comprising Lakpma, Munyan and Rafi Local Government Area, the farmers are no longer able to go to their farms. The implication is that it will surely affect the economy of the areas concerned, the State and the country in general.' Other places having similar problems were Shiroro, Mariga, Munyan, Paikoro, Rijau, and Mashegu Local Government Areas (Mosadomi, 2021, p. 20).

Registration Option

Professor Ladipo Adamolekun (2021, p. 32) has reviewed the conflict between the herders and farmers across Nigeria and has advanced measures to curb the bloodletting that has been going on. He notes that a significant proportion of the cattle owners as have been identified in far flung areas like Cross River, Akwa Ibom, Enugu and Bayelsa States in the south-south of Nigeria and in the south west Yoruba country do not belong to the Fulani race but the indigenous people. His study shows that Yoruba more than Hausa-Fulani owe the cattle in the south-west. In Benue, Kogi and indeed across the middle belt the same scenario exists. Thus, the ethnic profiling that the Fulani are killers is suspect. But this is half of the story. The second half of the narrative is that it is widely acknowledged that herders are Fulani predominantly. But what proportion or percentage are from Nigeria and what proportion or percentage are mercenaries and foreigners is yet to be determined and this may be a Herculean task.

Furthermore, what proportion of the herders is of school age and is not in school is another dimension of the mathematics. Adamolekun submits that the very first step in the road to finding headway in the conflict should be that all school age herders should be withdrawn from herding cattle and sent to school. He queries, 'Why should Yoruba, Ibo, Tiv etc cattle owners hire Fulani children of school age to herd their cattle while their children are in classroom?' All cattle owners who employ mercenary-foreigner herders are complicit in their criminality and they should know that if the foreigners are illegally brought into the country in ignorance of the law they would not be excused. Since cattle owners who employ the mercenary and foreign herders or even the authentic Fulani out of school children or legitimate adult herders are a significant part of the problem, they must be involved in resolving a significant part of the problem and must be central members of the Live Stock Business (Traders) Committee not really Miyetti Allah Katul Hore. Adamolekun therefore believes that registration of cattle owners is imperative. 'It must be acknowledged as a critical issue in finding a comprehensive solution to the conflicts. The Register of cattle owners would expose the Fulani and the owners, the nationals and the foreigners, the violent and the non-violent. Cattle owners who are keeping Fulani school age children out of school for purpose of herding cattle for them while their children are in the classroom would be exposed and penalized.

The Middle Belt Forum (Agbakwuru et al., 2021, p.10) led by Dr. Pogu has made extensive submissions supportive of the positions of Professor Adamolekun on registration. The Forum had cried out over the years on the influx of foreigners into Nigeria under uncertain and misleading circumstances and routes. It believes that many of the attacks that take place in the country are aided by foreigners. The Forum states, 'We disagree that these foreigners just come in. We believe that

many of the attacks that happen are aided by foreigners. We believe people bring them in for some purposes: election and revenge. And we believe that the government is not telling us the whole truth.' The Forum opposed the Ruga and Cattle Colony not because it was bad in itself but because nobody knew how many foreign Fulanis were on the Nigerian soil. So the Forum insisted that every community must know their local Fulani and would not just be giving land to aliens. Dr. Pogu states, 'If we know all the Fulani that are coming in then we will know how to handle them because many are already having identity cards.' On the issue of the communities keeping registers to fish out strangers, the Forum canvassed that the register ought to contain the names of the local Fulani that were known to the people so that whenever unknown herdsmen were noticed in the communities the security agencies would be put on alert. For PADEF, the issue of herdsmen is not just terrorism it is about expansionism and primordial interest which ought not to be allowed to overshadow Nigerian interest.

But Governors Babajide Sanwo-Olu of Lagos State and Abiodun of Ogun State would like caution to be factored into the profiling of the ethnic Fulani. In his work: *This is Lagos of my dream* Sanwo-Olu (2021) stated that, 'We have seen huge security challenges that have shaken the foundations of our country. We need to be very careful not to turn the security issues in our land into an ethnic, religious or tribal war. We need to be careful to ensure that we bring out and we isolate criminally-minded people in our community. Let's avoid tribalizing it, giving it an ethnic colouration or turning it into a religious issue.' Abiodun on a similar note states, 'I must say that the Fulani have lived with us in Ogun State for hundreds of years. The Seriki Fulani from that particular corridor speaks better Yoruba than I do because his father was born there.' But part of the problem we realized was ethnic profiling. 'Criminals are criminals and criminals abound everywhere, whether in the Niger Delta, Igbo land or Hausa land. For instance, 'The Governor of Niger State spent a night with me, by the time he got back, 50 people had been kidnapped and we cannot be profiling them based on ethnic grounds and be saying "Oh the Fulani have kidnapped Fulani or Hausa men in Niger" Our people have had a problem with drawing a line between peaceful Fulani people, who are traditionally herdsmen and bandits who are cattle rustlers who will steal cattle, take the cattle to farmlands belonging to people graze them thereon and attack the people.' This would certainly generate crisis as indigenous farmers would counter attack against innocent Fulani people living thereat. The Fulani would suffer from the loss of the rustled cattle and suffer from the attack of indigenous people.

It is essentially from this compass that the advocacy and narratives of religious leaders like Sheik Gumi Ahmad and Governor Bello Matawalle of Zamfara must be understood. To Governor Matawalle, 'Not all of them (Fulani) are criminals...Some of them, sometimes were cheated by so-called vigilante groups. They normally go to their settlements and destroy properties and take their animals. They did not have anyone to speak with, so sometimes they go for revenge. When the vigilante group attacks them, they go for reprisals. That is exactly what happens' (Lakemfa, 2021, p. 16).

Socialist alternative narrative

The Socialist alternative in the Nigerian space has not been left out in the narratives of the insecurity crisis facing her. Jaye Gaskia (cited in Akinrefon, 2021, p. 10) an official of

the Peoples Alternative Political Movement (PAPM) a coalition of social forces committed to the emergence of a mass workers party and socialist transformation of Nigeria canvasses that the result and outcome of the legacy of decades of misrule and bad governance has been the current rampant levels of insecurity of lives and properties. 'While bandits in power continue to negotiate with bandits in the forests and on the highways, no single inch of the territory of our country is secure and not a single citizen or resident is safe or can live a life free from fear; armed bandits, armed insurgents, armed herders, armed militias, armed cultists, armed robbers, and armed kidnappers lay siege to the country, exercising varying degrees of suzerainty over large swathes of the territory of the country.'

The Movement believes that the ruling class and all its various factions and fractions have ran out of ideas and are incapable of resolving the security challenges facing the country. It states further, 'The root cause of our existential crisis is the historical incompetence and congenital greed of the country's thieving and ruining ruling class and the exploitative destructive and repressive capitalist system over which it presides. The deteriorating situation concerning the conditions of living of citizens and residents, and their quality of life has now entered a steep and precipitous phase, threatening a catastrophic implosion' (Akinferon, 2021, p. 10).

In the light of the socialist alternative narrative, Nnanna (2021, p. 16) has continued to buttress the fact that self-imposed instability and climate change in the north have steadily driven the northern population southwards in the past 20 years. But that in recent time it has become an implosion. The situation has changed to land grabbing by means of war and conquest. What is happening is no longer migration it is an armed invasion of the southern ancestral lands. In the past five years, there has been a steady influx of strange people masquerading as herdsmen into the south with assault weapons. Many of them are not Nigerians. For six weeks, around March, 2020, most parts of the country were forced into a lockdown to minimize the spread of corona virus. The lockdown was so fierce that some governors closed state boundaries to prevent the influx of people. But while the rest of the population was forced to stay indoors, according to Nnanna, thousands of food, cattle and cement trailers and trucks were used by faceless powerful individuals to bring hundreds of thousands of young people into the south. As soon as they disembarked from the trucks, they were herded into the nearest forests. Some of the trucks contained assault rifles and ammunition. The security agencies were hushed down from the highest quarters to allow the movements. Within a little time, 'We began to see the morphing of the number of camps in the southern forests. They set up settlements made of typical thatched round huts usually associated with people of the Sahel. In southwest 150 camps were identified, in another report, 350 camps were located in the southeast' with Miyetti Allah claiming that the whole of Nigeria is a property of the ethnic group. Nnanna submits that with northerners claiming ownership of the resources belonging to the south, including their ancestral lands, the south, its lands and resources now belong to imperialists masquerading as fellow countrymen signifying simply that the southern citizens are slaves (Nnanna, 2021, p. 16).

Conclusion

In the course of this research, the role of the State, local and international media was stumbled upon in the work of Ikezue and Ezeah. They submitted that while the local media was forthright and impactful in publicizing the conflicts, it was often profiled as partisan and biased by the herders. The international media was equally accused by Ikezue and Ezeah of being disinterested in the ineffective actions of the State in quelling the conflicts. They further indicted the judiciary of inability in seeing that the recommendations of its Commissions of Enquiries are implemented by the State. However, one aspect of the steps taken by the State and for which not much will-power has also been put in store for it is the National Livestock Transformation Plan, 2018. A reading of Ujah suggests that the Plan can be a 'catalyst for building national prosperity' through the agricultural sub-sector as it would help herders to adopt ranching, end roaming about with cattle, put a stop to rustling and reduce the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. How the blue-print would be transformed into practice in the face of unyielding nomadic culture remains to be seen. As for registration of foreign or local Fulani in any community, not much is also expected in its outcomes.

Suggested Recommendations

Some suggestions have been made by researchers whose works have been reviewed and some steps have also been taken or suggested to be taken by the State. It would be helpful to outline all these in some relevant details. Brottem and Adeniyi have suggested that pastoralists who are often excluded in rules and decision making should be integrated in the processes of policy formulation and the social relationship between them and farmers should be improved through dialogue, mediation, involvement of traditional institutions and security agency should apply discriminatory or precautionary approaches in military response to conflict in order to protect vulnerable populations and communities. These were supported by Ikezue and Ezeah who suggested synergy between law enforcement agencies and such populations and communities in terms of early release of information regarding incipient tensions to the security agencies (including State police).

By suggesting that grazing reserves and routes be recreated Ikezue and Ezeah are taken to be suggesting that proper mapping or re-mapping of such spaces should be done. A critical consideration of which tallies with the ad-vocation of cattle colonies by the Buhari administration but which has been resisted by many State governments particularly in the south. According to Adeniyi and Njoku, ranching is preferred as it is in consonance with the adoption of modern agricultural technologies. The Crisis Group on the other hand, has suggested that government should re-double its security to improve its poor response to distress calls, punish the impunity of the assailants and curb their inflammatory rhetoric by bringing them to justice to serve as deterrence to others and hasten livestock reforms and freeze open grazing. Perhaps in response, the Buhari State approved N6.25 billion for the establishment of cattle ranches in eight local government areas of Jibia, Batsari, Dutsinna, Safana, Danmusa, Kankara Faskari and Sabuwa Dandume of Katsina State (Buhari, 2022).

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