

## **HERDSMEN – FARMERS CLASHES IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NATIONAL SECURITY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper discusses the incessant clashes between the pastoral Fulani herdsmen and sedentary farmers in Nigeria, which poses serious security challenge to the nation. The paper examines the causes of incessant clashes between the herdsmen and farmers which include the competition for land for farming and grazing; the impact of climate change in the Sahel region and the Lake Chad basin in particular, thus resulting in massive drift of herdsmen and their cattle to the Middle Belt region and Southern Nigeria. There was also the proliferation of weapons in the Sahel region and, indeed, in Africa due to political upheavals, terrorism, insurgencies and arms smuggling etc. Also, the causes of violent clashes between herdsmen and farmers could be traced to the destruction of farm crops by herdsmen's cattle in the course of grazing, and the reprisal attacks by some host communities. Besides, the incidences of cattle rustling and killing of herdsmen's cattle sometimes provoked violent clashes between herdsmen and some host communities. The implication of these violent clashes includes the loss of many lives and properties, and the threat to peace and security across the nation. The clashes were said to have resulted in the destruction of valuable properties and investments worth \$14.7 billion, and 6,500 deaths of Nigerian citizens between 2010 and 2015. Besides, the violent clashes were said to have resulted in displacement of about 62,000 people from their homes. Moreover, it could instigate ethno-religious conflict in the country. Also, the clashes had resulted in the loss of large quantity of farm crops, thus exposing the farmers and the entire nation to hunger and starvation. Likewise, the act of cattle rustling deprived cattle owners their invaluable wealth, and the main source of the nation's protein and fiber content. These result in the drop in the nation's nutritional value, and as well the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Finally, the violent clashes tend to overstretch the capabilities of security agencies to maintain peace and security under the democratic system. Thus, the Federal Government should live up to its responsibilities and curb the incessant clashes between herdsmen and farmers. The establishment of modern commercial ranches with necessary infrastructure may help in this regard.

### **INTRODUCTION**

This paper discusses the incessant violent clashes between the pastoral Fulani herdsmen and sedentary farmers in Nigeria. The relentless bloody clashes between herdsmen and farmers in different parts of the country pose serious threat to sustainable economic growth, and as well constitute a major challenge to national security in the country.

This paper also critically examines the factors that have given rise to persistent violent clashes between herdsmen and farmers in their host communities, which presently threatens national cohesion and stability. Indeed, the violent attacks on most farming communities by suspected Fulani herdsmen had become one of the greatest security challenges facing

contemporary Nigerian society. The available records have reportedly shown that between 2010 and 2015, Nigeria lost 6,500 citizens and 62,000 others were displaced from their homes in 850 violent clashes between herdsmen and farmers in the Middle Belt Region of the country (New Telegraph Editorial, November 3, 2017). Besides, a staggering sum of \$14.7 billion worth of properties and investments were said to have been lost within the same period as a result of violent clashes between the herdsmen and farmers in many villages and communities. (New Telegraph Editorial, November 3, 2017).

It should be noted, however, that several violent clashes between the herdsmen and farmers had occurred in many parts of the country particularly in Benue, Southern Kaduna, Nasarawa, Enugu, Edo, Delta, Ekiti and Abia states since 2015. These attacks have had dire consequences for the country especially in terms of large number of lives lost, many valuable properties and flourishing communities destroyed, and their negative impacts on national security. It was in view of the bloody and destructive nature of the clashes and their persistence in many areas of the country, that it was reported that the herdsmen had been classified by the global terrorism index (GTI) as “the fifth deadliest terror group in the world” (See The Guardian Editorial, April 28, 2016).

Moreover, the incessant clashes between herdsmen and farmers, in addition to the Boko Haram insurgency in the North-East, and the militancy in the Niger Delta region, all had resulted in Nigeria sliding to the unenviable ranking to the 13<sup>th</sup> position on the world peace index. This presupposes that Nigeria had been ranked as the 13<sup>th</sup> least stable country in the world, that is, on the Fragile State Index (FSI). The ranking was reportedly released by the Washington based *Fund for Peace* (FFP) in May 2017 (See Eze, 2017). Earlier on, in November 2016 the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) was said to have ranked Nigeria in its report as “the third most terrorized nation in the world” (See Onani, 2016). This was in consideration of the activities of various armed groups that engaged in violent attacks on the citizens, especially innocent and defenseless citizens in different parts of the country. This often resulted in wanton killings and destruction of properties.

With specific reference to the incessant clashes between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria, the ugly phenomenon has been described as the “emerging threat to national security and unity”. Besides, the violent clashes had been viewed as “hydra-headed in nature” and which poses serious security challenge in the country (See Onani, 2017). This, therefore, requires proactive and effective strategies to curb the menace. Thus, this paper examines the causes of the incessant clashes between the herdsmen and farmers in different parts of the country, and as well highlights its implications for economic growth and national security.

### **Causes of incessant clashes between the herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria**

Historically, the Fulani herdsmen have been a nomadic people. They have also been itinerant by nature, moving from their original home land in the Sahel savannah towards the South in search of pastures for their cattle and other livestock. Babarinsa (2016) observed that since the 19<sup>th</sup> century the herdsmen from the North have always been leading their cattle and horses to the South. He stated that as at then “nobody ever thought of the Fulani herdsmen as the ‘Army of the Night’ ..., visiting lonely homesteads with death and destruction”. He noted, however, that even now despite the menace of some groups amongst them, most herdsmen are peaceful entrepreneurs, minding their business. The recent ugly phenomenon of incessant clashes between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria are as a result of multi-dimensional issues or causes. They include the following.

## **Impact of climate change**

Climate change has been identified as one of the major causes of intractable violence involving herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria. In recent years, the northern part of the country has been increasingly exposed to the adverse effects of global warming resulting in increase in drought, desertification and deforestation. It has been estimated that as a result of the impact of global warming in the Sahel savannah area of the country, States such as Borno, Sokoto, Yobe, Adamawa, Gombe, Jigawa, Kano, Nasarawa and Kaduna lose up to 350,000 hectares of land to desertification annually (See Ogunjobi, 2017)

Besides, as a result of the negative impact of the climate change, the Lake Chad which has been the major means of livelihood of the peoples within the Lake Chad basin was said to have shrunk to ten percent of its original size. This was largely due to the intensity of drought over the years. With the shrinking of the Lake Chad surface to only 2,500 sq. km in 2017, fishing and agriculture were said to have been reduced drastically (Akosile, 2017). This, in effect, was said to have adversely affected the livelihood of over 5 million people and fuelled insecurity in the region (See Taiwo-Obalonye and Olanrewaju, 2016).

The insecurity and poverty generated by the impact of climate change in the Lake Chad basin compelled many herdsmen to move southwards with their cattle and families, seeking for pasture as well as safe haven for socio-economic survival. In many cases, the migrant herdsmen came in conflict with the sedentary farmers who have been occupying their communities and as well planting crops in their farmlands. Thus, Professor Jerry Gana noted that the receding Lake Chad and its subsequent effects had forced herdsmen out of their domain leading to incessant clashes between herdsmen and host communities. He, therefore, suggested that redirecting water to the Lake Chad by countries that bordered it, including Nigeria, could be the solution to the killings and violence attributed to herdsmen (See Adebayo, 2017).

It is in view of the pervasive insecurity which the negative impact of climate change has given rise to in the Lake Chad basin, that the Federal Government of Nigeria and Republic of Chad was reported to have sought for assistance from the African Union and international donors for \$50 billion dollars to recharge the drying Lake Chad (See Daily Sun, January 30, 2017). The water for recharging the Lake Chad hopefully would be directed from Central Africa.

## **The effect of population explosion within Lake Chad basin**

The population explosion within the Sahel region, especially the Lake Chad basin has contributed to insecurity in the region, and Nigeria in particular. According to Akosile (2017) the countries around Lake Chad (that is Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Cameroon) are within the area of high demographic growth. He noted that the region's demographic growth is one of the highest in the world. He cited, as an example, that in the past 50 years, the population of countries in the Lake Chad region had quadrupled from 60 million in 1960 to more than 243 million in 2017 (Akosile, 2017). The burgeoning population of the area has put much pressure on available resources in the environment. The pressure, in addition to the effects of climate change, has resulted in fierce competition for available scarce resources such as water, green pasture and arable lands amongst groups. In most cases, the competition had given rise to bloody conflicts and emigration. As already stated, the herdsmen in the area had

continually moved southwards with their cattle leading to incessant clashes with the sedentary farmers in the Middle Belt region and Southern Nigeria.

### **Land dispute**

Land dispute between the pastoral herdsmen and sedentary farmers appears to be the major cause of the internecine conflicts between the herdsmen and host communities in different parts of the country. The farmers, in most cases, are the hosts of the herdsmen who migrated in search of pastures for their cattle, and for business associated with breeding and marketing of livestock in their areas of settlement. The bone of contention, had, in many cases, been the issue of land; the framers need land for growing their crops, while the herdsmen seek to retain the land for grazing their cattle.

Thus, the contention for arable land as means of livelihood, and for occupational practice, pitches the herdsmen and farmers in long-drawn conflicts, especially as herdsmen cling to traditional open grazing practice. For instance, in reference to the bloody crisis between the Mambilla community and Fulani herdsmen in Sarduana Local Government Area of Taraba state in June 2017, in which about 200 people were reportedly killed, Governor Ishaku attributed the crisis to land dispute. According to Governor Ishaku:

The recent crisis in the Mambilla was all about land. It was not ethnic or religious. The 3 percent population of the Fulani in the Mambilla owned practically all the land. While this is not their fault, the 90 percent of the Mambilla are left scrounging for land (See Alli, 2017).

Governor Ishaku reportedly noted that this situation was the basis for conflict just, according to him, as was the case in some parts of Southeastern Nigeria (See Alli, 2017). The dispute over land between herdsmen and some ethnic groups in Taraba state had given rise to incessant bloody conflicts. Olorok (2017) reported that following attacks by suspected herdsmen in Sarduana Local Government Area of Taraba state, a group of ethnic nationalities under the aegis of *Save Our Soul Group* had asked the Acting President, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo to “bring the leaders of Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) to book” for alleged atrocities committed by herdsmen in the state. The group also reportedly resolved to engage the services of 10 Senior Advocates of Nigeria (SANs) to “seek justice for those killed in the attacks at the International Criminal Court at the Hague” (See Olorok, 2017).

Similarly, since 2011 there have been persistent clashes between the herdsmen and Berom communities in Plateau state. The bone of contention, as was in the case of Taraba state, has been the ownership and control of land. The protracted dispute had given rise to horrendous killings in some parts of Plateau state in recent times, occasioned by allegations of massive destruction of farm crops by herds (See Idegu, 2017). Also, in Southern Kaduna, land dispute was said to be the major issue that fuel the bloody clashes between the farming communities and herdsmen in the area. The Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA) had reportedly attributed the attacks on communities in Southern Kaduna to the recreation of grazing reserves. The church leaders were said to have urged the government to stop the move to enable peace and security to reign. The church leaders were said to have also asked the government to ensure that lands forcefully occupied by herdsmen were restored back to the rightful owners (See Alabelewe, 2017).

Thus, the issue of land for grazing and farming pitches the pastoral herdsmen against sedentary farmers in host communities in many parts of the country. It was to minimize the incessant conflicts between herdsmen and farmers over land that some states such as Benue,

Ekiti and Taraba had enacted Anti-Open Grazing Laws and tried to encourage herdsmen to adopt ranching practice. However, the herdsmen appear not to have accepted the ranching system particularly as the designated ranching sites presently lack necessary facilities (See Negedu, 2017).

### **Effect of Insecurity in the Sahel region**

The pervasive insecurity in the Sahel region since 2011 has contributed immensely in compelling many Fulani herdsmen across the Sahel region to move southwards into the Middle Belt region and Southern Nigeria. The *Arab Spring* which led to the overthrow and subsequent death of Libyan leader, Col. Muammar Gaddafi on October 20, 2011 resulted in political chaos in the Sahel region. Thus, there was the emergence of various armed groups within the Sahara and Sahel environment, each contesting for power, influence and political authority within a specific geo-political area. The Aljazeera Documentary Reports entitled “*Orphans of the Sahara*” and “*Shadow war in the Sahara (Sahel)*” clearly reveal how the Sahel-south of the Sahara had been embroiled in political upheavals since 2011, culminating in French military intervention and occupation of Northern Mali in March 2013. The French intervention was ostensibly to crush the Tuaregs’ rebellion aimed at creating *Azawad* state in Northern Mali and to restore Malian sovereignty in Bamako. (See *Aljazeera* Documentary Report on the Sahara Region, 2014 and 2017).

The political chaos generated by the Tuaregs’ rebellion and the activities of other armed groups such as the Boko Haram, al-Qaeda and other armed groups in the Sahel region compelled many herdsmen to migrate further southwards into the Middle Belt region and Southern Nigeria. Thus, it was in the context of this scenario that many groups of herdsmen operating in Nigeria were said to be foreigners (Taiwo-Obalonye, 2017). The Northern Governors Forum reportedly revealed that many herdsmen who were involved in issues of insecurity were immigrants from Senegal and Mali. The governors, therefore, were said to have resolved to “work with relevant stakeholders to secure Nigeria’s borders and register Fulani immigrants entering into the country to rear cattle” (See Vanguard, January 26, 2017).

In a similar view, the Secretary General of MACBAN, Alhaji Ibrahim Abdullahi reportedly stated that there were also Fulani herdsmen who migrate into Nigeria from neighbouring countries of Cameroon, Niger and Chad. He noted that such category of Fulani herdsmen were motivated to move because of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) protocol on nomadic trans-human movement. He also noted that Nigeria has porous borders, which encourages all manner of people to migrate, thus posing serious challenges to the nation (See Ebije, 2017).

Moreover, the competition for natural resources in the Sahel region of Africa by the world powers, which had been described as “the re-colonization of Africa”, has contributed immensely in broadening the scope and intensity of insecurity in the region. The mining operations by world powers in the region had resulted in the displacement of a large number of people, including herdsmen from their original homelands. For example, the United States of America (USA), France and China engaged in mining of precious minerals such as uranium, coltan, copper, gold, oil and gas in the Sahel region (See *Aljazeera* Documentary Report, May 13, 2017). These economically exploitative activities led to the displacement of a large number of inhabitants, many of whom drifted southwards into Nigeria as herdsmen and labourers. This situation brought serious pressure on the host communities and their resources particularly in the Middle Belt region and Southern Nigeria.

### **Destruction of farm crops by herdsmen's cattle**

The vociferous complaints by farmers that cattle belonging to herdsmen destroy their farm crops while grazing appears to be one of the major causes of incessant clashes between herdsmen and their host communities in Nigeria. In Benue State, for example, it was said that massive influx of herdsmen and their cattle into the state as from 2011 had resulted in fratricidal conflicts between the Fulani herdsmen and their host communities. The Chairman, Peace and Reconciliation Committee on Agatu-herdsmen's conflict, Mr. Akpa Idu observed that for over five decades the people of Agatu in Benue state had lived in peace and harmony with the Fulani pastoralists in their midst. He noted that at that time reports of destruction of farm crops by Fulani cattle were settled by the 'Gado' or Village head and sometimes at the police station. He noted, however, that between 2011 and 2012, the herdsmen began to carry highly sophisticated weapons such as AK47 rifles as against their traditional swords and sticks. He noted specifically that on March 5, 2013, the herdsmen attacked the Agatu communities with swords and sophisticated weapons, thus resulting in massive killings and destruction of properties in many Agatu communities along the bank of River Benue (See Duru, 2017).

Also, in Benue State, Iorhemen (2017) reported that at least four sedentary farmers were killed, while many others were rendered homeless following violent attacks by Fulani herdsmen who invaded Gbemecha ward in Gwer East Local Government Area (LGA) of Benue state. He noted that the incident occurred on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017 as "a result of the herdsmen who invaded the community to graze their cattle". He further noted that the herdsmen on arrival at the local government in the wee hours of that day "proceeded to food barns and other places where food items were stored by the farmers, and destroyed them leaving the remains for their cattle to feed on" (See Iorhemen, 2017).

In Ugaga village in Cross River state, a herdsman was reported to have hacked off the hand of a farmer who tried to stop cattle from entering his tomatoes farm. The northern part of Cross River State was said to have been besieged by many herdsmen who fled from Benue State following the implementation of the Anti-Open Grazing Law in the state. This was said to have prompted many farmers in Cross River State to guard their farms from being destroyed. The destruction of farm crops by herdsmen's cattle had sometimes resulted in reprisal attacks by some host communities with its attendant loss of lives and property. In the case of Cross River state, violent clash was said to have been averted by the prompt intervention of the Governor, Professor Ben Ayade in collaboration with some security agencies (See Una, 2017).

Thus, in most places such as Benue, Plateau, Abia, Ondo, Ekiti, Delta, Enugu and so on, the major cause of clashes between herdsmen and farmers had been the issue of invasion of farmlands by herdsmen's cattle, and the consequent destruction of farm crops and food barns. This had often given rise to violent conflicts between the herdsmen and farmers in different parts of the country.

However, it should be noted that some members of the Fulani herdsmen's leadership had, in some cases, tried to mediate between herdsmen and host communities to avert violent clashes. In Delta State, for instance, the Fulani cattle rearers under the aegis of *Gan Allah Fulani Development Association* (GAFDAN) resolved to "issue identity cards to herdsmen as part of efforts aimed at ending the incessant clashes between them and farmers". It also decided to identify genuine herdsmen. Besides, the GAFDAN Secretary-General Alhaji Sule Bayan reportedly stressed on the need for both herdsmen and farmers to live in peace. He

reportedly warned herdsmen to desist from crop destruction, robbery and kidnapping (See Ahon, 2017).

### **Influx of foreign herdsmen into Nigeria**

The influx of foreign herdsmen and their cattle into Nigeria, particularly in recent years as a result of the impact of climate change as well as growing insecurity in the Sahel region, has aggravated the problem of clashes between pastoral herdsmen and sedentary farmers in the country. There has been “red alert” on hotter earth as carbon dioxide emissions result in recorded higher global warming (See Muanya, 2017). As already stated, global warming has given rise to intense drought, desertification and deforestation in the Sahel region. This has given rise to the influx of foreign herdsmen from different countries such as Chad, Niger, Mali, Senegal and Ethiopia into Nigeria and further southwards into the Middle Belt region and southern part of Nigeria for grazing their cattle. This has resulted in stiff competition for available land spaces as well as lush vegetation between herdsmen and host communities, thus leading to bloody clashes in many cases.

The influx of many foreign herdsmen into the country has been attributed to the existence of many porous borders within Nigeria’s territory. Omonobi and Ovuakporie (2017) reported that Nigeria has 1,100 illegal entry points into the country, while only 97 were approved border posts. With the large number of porous and unmanned borders, the foreign herdsmen and their cattle usually have unrestricted and unfettered access into the country which exacerbated inter-group conflicts in the country. The Assistant National Secretary of MACBAN, Alhaji Ibrahim Abdullahi has advised that to minimize clashes between herdsmen and farmers in the country, the Federal Government should ensure that those migrating into the country should provide details of where they are coming from, and where they are going. He further advised that they should as well state the purpose of their entry into Nigeria so that the government and its security agencies would control them (See Ebije, 2017).

### **Possession and use of sophisticated weapons by herdsmen**

The possession and use of sophisticated weapons by some herdsmen is of recent development. Traditionally, the Fulani herdsmen were noted for carrying their swords and sticks as means for controlling and protection of their cattle and themselves. Odiwri (2017) observed that up till now, the herdsmen merely carried short sticks with which they hit and checked the movement of the cows. He also noted that at other times, they had bows and arrows and catapults with which they warded off wild animals wanting to prey on their cattle. He was then said to have lamented that “Fulani herdsmen of today are sometimes more armed than soldiers on “Operation Lafiya Dole”.

Also Prof. Oyeniran Abioje traced the use of sophisticated arms and ammunition such as AK 47 by the herdsmen to 1980s when, according to him, some political and business elite in Northern states began to invest in cattle business (See Punch, June 29, 2017). It appears that the primary aim of providing weapons for herdsmen by cattle owners was to protect them and the cattle under their care. This seems justifiable in view of the rampaging activities of cattle rustlers. However, the increasing use of sophisticated weapons by herdsmen to attack host communities created the impression that they were on a mission to conquer defenseless Nigerians. In view of this situation, Kupoluyi (2016) urged the Federal Government to intervene without further delay and enforce the restriction on the use of firearms by sanctioning violators without any discrimination.

It should be noted that the smuggling of arms and ammunition into the country has made it easier for some individuals and groups to procure deadly weapons with relative ease. The Coordinator, Presidential Committee on Proliferation of Small arms and Light weapons, Mr. Dickson Orji had reportedly revealed that there were over 3 million illegal weapons circulating in the country. He noted that as a result of this precarious situation, “at least an innocent Nigerian dies daily by the gun” (See Eze, 2017). The sources of illegal weapons appear to be varied. In the first place, some illegal weapons were said to come through Nigeria ports, perhaps sometimes undetected. *The Guardian Editorial* (June 1, 2017) reminds us that:

The weapons trade is a highly sophisticated business. It is often conducted in utmost secrecy, known only to a gang or coterie. It belongs to the elite club of the society. Poor people do not get involved in arms importation. It is, therefore, very clear that very powerful persons are involved in the illegal importation.

The *Guardian Editorial*'s conclusion that weapons trade belongs to the elite club and is “a highly sophisticated trade” is undoubtedly correct. For instance, Dania (2017) reported that the alleged importer of 661 pump action rifles, Mahmud Hassan threatened to kill himself if a custom officer refused to collect N8 million naira bribe from him and probably set him free. Thus, the Department of State Services (DSS) was said to have revealed that between January and October 2017, about 2,671 pump action rifles had been seized by the Security agency (See Omonobi and Ovuakporie, 2017).

Secondly, with numerous porous borders the importation of illegal weapons into the country could be a possibility. The DSS was reported to have stated that Nigeria has about 1,100 illegal entry points (See Omonobi and Ovuakporie, 2017).

Thirdly, the political upheavals in some African countries such as Mali, Chad, Libya, Central African Republic and Nigeria have given rise to the proliferation of arms and ammunition in the Sahel region. For instance, the fall of Col. Muammar Gaddafi in 2011 was said to have resulted in the massive circulation of illegal weapons within Libya and, indeed, in the Sahara-Sahel region. The *Aljazeera News Report* on the political situation in Libya revealed that there were about 20 million weapons for about 6 million people in Libya. The report noted that this situation created security chaos in the country which, no doubt, aggravated the security nightmare in the Sahel region as many armed groups emerged and had access to caches of arms (*Aljazeera New Report*, October 28, 2017).

As already stated, the Tuaregs' rebellion in Northern Mali in March 2012, coupled with the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, the al-Qaida operations in the Northern Mali, and civil wars in Chad and Central African Republic, all resulted in massive proliferation of illegal weapons in the Sahel region, and the Lake Chad basin in particular. The herdsmen who infiltrated into Nigeria from these war-torn countries might have been among beneficiaries of these cheap, but deadly weapons. The Assistant Secretary-General of MACBAN, Alhaji Ibrahim Abdulahi observed that many countries in the Sahel region of Africa from where many of the Fulani herdsmen come from were engulfed in political crises. He noted that in countries such as Chad and Central African Republic (CAR) weapons had become like “satchet water or a loaf of bread there”. He noted further that “people from these countries regard it as normal to hang AK 47 on their shoulders” (See Ebije, 2017). The Fulani herdsmen from these countries, therefore, obtained sophisticated weapons such as AK 47 primarily as instrument of self defence and for the protection of their cattle. The use of the



weapons to attack and kill people in host communities tended to portray armed herdsmen as “terrorists in disguise” (See *The Guardian Editorial*, April 28, 2017; Kupoluyi, 2016).

### **Government policies on herdsmen – farmers’ clashes**

Admittedly, the Federal Government has been concerned about the bloody clashes between Fulani herdsmen and farmers in different parts of the country. This is in recognition of the implications for sustainable economic growth and national security. It was in view of this concern that President Muhammad Buhari was reported to have ordered Security Chiefs to end all threat to national security and protect national unity (Ezea, 2017). Besides, the government and its agencies had organized several security summits in order to find solutions to the incessant herdsmen and farmers clashes.

However, some of the policies initiated by the government on the matter appear not very suitable for solving the problem effectively. For instance, although the idea of the formation of agro-rangers to protect farmers and herdsmen from cattle rustlers, kidnappers and other criminal elements appear commendable, yet it may not serve the intended purpose effectively. The proposal to deploy 3,000-strong force for the entire country may not serve any effective use. Farms are located in many different villages and communities, some of which are having issues with herdsmen. Many of them may not benefit from active protection by agro-rangers or any other security agency partly due to dearth of security personnel and mainly due to remoteness and inaccessibility of some communities.

Moreover, the proposal to enact Grazing Reserves Law for the purpose of creating grazing reserves in different parts in the country in order to put an end to incessant clashes between herdsmen and farmers appears not workable. This is because in Southern Nigeria, for instance, individual families own limited portion of lands for which they may not readily give up for grazing reserves. In South-Eastern states, for example, many prominent indigenes of some communities find it not easy to secure land for erecting houses or establishing business ventures. With the population explosion and rapid urbanization in the region, land becomes the most cherished, priceless and invaluable asset in South-eastern states. In Bayelsa State, Governor Henry Dickson tried to avert conflicts between herdsmen and farmers over grazing land by giving the herdsmen the Bayelsa Palm area in Yenegoa as grazing land. The governor while taking the decision stated that:

Bayelsa Palm belongs to the government; we have not given any herdsmen any land other than government land. Bayelsa Palm is the property of Bayelsa state government and it remains in full possession, control and management of the government (See Odiegwu, 2017).

Although there was initially an opposition to the idea of allocating the Palm area to the herdsmen for grazing purposes, nevertheless, Governor Dickson’s administration stood firmly on its decision. It appears that the government’s decision has achieved its goal by minimizing clashes between herdsmen and farmers in Bayelsa state, as most herdsmen and their cattle have been restricted to the area.

In Edo State, the attempt to establish the Edo State Control on Nomadic Cattle Rearing/Grazing Agency met with strong opposition as there were protests and demonstrations against the idea and the bill itself. Prior to the public hearing, the State chapter of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and People’s Democratic Party (PDP) tried to project what they felt was the feelings of the people. They were reported to have urged the Edo state House of Assembly to throw out the bill. They were said to have argued

that “its contents portend grave danger to the present and future generation of Edo people, whose communal and ancestral lands would be transferred and given to a favoured ethnic group in the country” (See Osaze and Igbo- muaye, 2017).

In some states of the federation such as Ekiti, Benue and Taraba, the state governments had enacted Anti-Open Grazing Laws and strongly advocated for the establishment of ranches as panacea to incessant bloody clashes between herdsmen and farmers in different parts of the country. It is, however, important to note that many herdsmen appear to be strongly opposed to, or even defiant to the Anti-Open grazing laws. They reportedly argued that the laws were inimical to their economic interest as they would result in the restriction of the movement of their cattle and consequently the starvation of their livestock (See Negedu, 2017; Bello, 2017).

### **Allegations of indulgence in criminal activities by some herdsmen**

In recent years, there have been vociferous allegations that some herdsmen indulge in criminal activities. These acts of criminality include rape, robbery, murder and kidnapping. For instance, on March 1<sup>st</sup> 2017, Otabor (2017) reported that suspected herdsmen kidnapped three secondary school teachers in Edo state and demanded N30 million as ransom. Also, on July 20, 2017 Akinikuonu (2017) reported that gunmen suspected to be herdsmen abducted the External Auditor of National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), Mr. Zakara Sada along Kaduna-Abuja highway, and later demanded an undisclosed amount of money from the family as ransom. It should be noted that earlier in 2015, the former Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), Chief Olu Falae was reportedly kidnapped by some suspected herdsmen in his farm in Ondo state, and was said to have been later released after payment of ransom. However, his abductors were later arrested, tried and sentenced to life imprisonment. (See Akinrefon, 2017).

Moreover, there were cases of rape involving suspected herdsmen. For instance, Otabor (2017) reported that a married woman was raped by suspected Fulani herdsmen after beating her husband on a farm in Ubuneke-Ivbinro in Owan East Local Government Area of Edo State. The husband of the victim, Umoni Agoni was reported to have said that six armed herdsmen attacked him and abused his wife. Also, in Oyo state a Fulani herdsman was reported to have been arrested after kidnapping a housewife and took her away and raped her for three days. He was said to have been arrested while attempting to negotiate ransom for the victim’s release (See Atoyebi, 2017).

Besides, the spate of killings by suspected herdsmen across the country was one of the major causes of conflicts between herdsmen and their host communities. In Kogi State, for instance, the State High court reportedly remanded Fulani boy in prison for murder. He was reportedly accused of killing one Happy David after the latter warned him against grazing his cattle on his father’s farm. The herdsboy was said to have stabbed David on his back and ran away (See Azania, 2017).

In a related development, the Ndosimili indigenes of Delta State reportedly flayed herdsmen’s killings of farmers in their communities. The Ndosimili Development Union was reported to have condemned the incessant attacks on Ndokwa East Communities by Fulani herdsmen. The Union was said to have expressed worry that “the deliberate destruction of lives and farmlands of Ndokwa East people who are mainly subsistence farmers” (See Bivbere, 2017). Thus, it was in view of the rampant cases of criminal activities allegedly involving some suspected herdsmen in different parts of the country that the Senate was

reported to have urged “the security agencies to halt, arrest and prosecute Fulani herdsmen for raping and killing six Edo women, among other criminal activities across the country” (See Opara and Akenzua, 2017).

However, it should be noted that its not all herdsmen that indulged in acts of criminality as case studies have shown above. Indeed, only some criminal elements among them did. Babarinsa (2016) reminds us that despite the menace of the criminal elements among the herdsmen who he described as “the Army of the Night”, “most herdsmen are peaceful entrepreneurs, minding their business”. He noted that since 1804, the Fulani have had tremendous influence in the course of Nigerian history. For instance, the Fulani pastoralists promote inter-regional economic dependency on trade. They are among Nigerians willing to move into regions other than that of their birth to establish business (See Ijomah, 2011).

In, a similar view, the Sultan of Sokoto, Muhammad Sa’ad Abubakar III had reportedly described the marauding herdsmen causing havoc across the country as criminals. The Sultan was said to have stated emphatically that:

We don’t support anybody picking up arms to kill another person. The person is a criminal, whether you are a Fulani herdsmen, Yoruba or Igbo or from Middle Belt (Omonobi and Duru, 2017).

The Sultan was reported to have observed that the country’s major problem with regard to the incessant bloody clashes between herdsmen and farmers, and other security challenges, was inability of the successive governments to implement several decisions and recommendations emanating from security summits. He was said to have attributed this to “selfishness and dishonesty” (See Omonobi and Duru, 2017).

### **Violent Attacks and Reprisals by herdsmen and host communities**

The violent attacks sometimes carried out by the herdsmen on their host sedentary farming communities and vice versa, appear to be the major cause of hostility between the two groups. As already stated, the herdsmen had reportedly attacked several host communities for some reasons. These include competition over grazing land by pastoral herdsmen and sedentary farmers; the incidences of cattle rustling and reprisal attacks on host communities. Also, there was the issue of destruction of farm crops by herdsmen’s cattle and revenge attacks by sedentary farmers over the loss of their means of livelihood etc. These conflicts between herdsmen and farmers had resulted in the death of thousands of people, and destruction of valuable properties across the country.

In Benue state, for instance, it was recorded that “no fewer than 3,920 persons lost their lives in the bloody crises between Agatu farmers and Fulani herdsmen in Agatu Local Government Area between 2013 and 2017. It was also recorded that property, farmlands and economic trees worth several billions of naira were lost during the period under review (See Charles, 2017). The killings in Benue sate by suspected herdsmen were so rampant that by March 2017, Governor Samuel Ortom was said to have ordered armed herdsmen to leave Benue state within 72 hours. According to him, the decision was informed by the need “to protect the lives and property of the citizens”. He was also said to have directed the security agencies to have the erring herdsmen arrested and prosecuted (See Tsokar, et al, 2017). However, the Commissioner of Police in-charge of Benue State, Mr. Bashir Makama reportedly declined to implement the order of Governor Samuel Ortom. He rather countered the order of the governor, arguing that nobody has the right to order anybody out of the State, adding that Benue State is for every Nigerian (See Odiwri, 2017).

Also, the Governor of Kaduna state, Mallam El-Rufai reportedly revealed that about 20,000 people had been unjustly killed in the state since 1980 (See Isenyo, 2017). Apart from other factors such as politics, religion and ethnicity, the major cause of bloody crisis in Kaduna state had been the fierce contention for land between the Fulani herdsmen and the minority groups inhabiting the Southern Kaduna area. The struggle to acquire lands for grazing by the pastoral herdsmen, and the determination by the sedentary farming communities to retain their lands for crop cultivation has provoked series of killings over the years. This often resulted in violent attacks and reprisals between herdsmen and farmers in different parts of the country, and in Southern Kaduna in particular.

### **The Incidences of cattle rustling**

The incidence of cattle rustling in Nigeria appears to be a recent criminal behavior just as kidnapping of persons for ransom. In the past itinerant Fulani herdsmen moved from the North to the Middle Belt, and to the South without molestation either to themselves or their cattle. However, in recent years there have been increasing reports about cattle rustling particularly in the North and Middle Belt region.

The Governor of Zamfara state, Abdulaziz Yari was reported to have stated that the issue of cattle rustling had been on for over a decade. He noted, however, that the issue of cattle rustling in the state had been off and on, and that there had been many efforts made by both the state and federal governments to curb the menace (Agbakwuru, 2017).

The incidences of cattle rustling in the North East, North West and North Central (Middle Belt) geo-political zones have assumed worrisome dimension. This, in effect, contributed to pervasive social insecurity especially in northern part of the country. In Zamfara state, for instance, the issue of cattle rustling and other criminal activities by bandits had reportedly resulted in several bloody massacres of innocent indigenes in their villages and communities, and on their ways to markets, Ibrahim (2017) stated that until 2010, Zamfara state was regarded as one of the most peaceful states in the country. He further stated that until 2010, indigenes of the state especially those who live in rural communities slept in the open without fear of attacks. He noted, however, that as at 2016 there was upsurge in criminal activities characterized by armed robbery, cattle rustling, burglary and raping of minors. He noted that killings of innocent citizens started when clashes began to occur between suspected cattle rustlers and the Fulani herdsmen. He noted that at that point, there were series of complaints by the Fulani herdsmen that some criminals armed with sophisticated weapons had invaded the state and were dispossessing them of their cattle. He further noted that with the support of the vigilante groups, the Fulani herdsmen carried out a search for their cattle in the neighbourhood. Ibrahim reported that the Fulani herdsmen were able to identify some suspected cattle rustlers and, in the process, slaughtered them in the presence of their families. He stated that this reprisal action by the herdsmen occurred in about seven Local Government Areas of Zamfara state. The incidences of cattle rustling and acts of banditry were said to have disrupted agricultural activities which has been the bedrock of the people's economy, and as well created security nightmare in Zamfara state (See Ibrahim, 2017).

The bandits were reported to have threatened to continue their onslaught on villages in Maradun LGA of Zamfara State. They abducted 40 persons from the area and vowed not to release them until their cattle seized during military operations were released to them. The abductors were later given back the 400 cattle seized during the military operations (See Ibrahim, 2017). The Commissioner of Police in-charge of Zamfara State, Alhaji Shaba Alkali was reported to have noted that by November 2016 "the crime situation was alarming as

villages were being attacked and many lives were lost to the activities of armed bandits and cattle rustlers". He, however, stated that by April 2017, more than 1,000 cattle rustlers and other criminals had renounced banditry and had embraced peace in the state (See Salisu, 2017).

It should be noted, however, that there have been reported cases of resurgence of cattle rustling and other acts of banditry in Shinkafi and Maradun Local Government Areas of Zamfara state by November 2017. This was said to have prompted President Muhammad Buhari to give "marching order to the military to crackdown on bandits operating in rural communities in Zamfara state" (See Agbakwuru, 2017). The incidences of cattle rustling were said to have later extended to some other states in the North including Kano, Kaduna, Brono, Yobe, Niger, Plateau, Nasarawa, Jigawa and Benue states. These incidents became a major drawback on sustainable economic growth and as well threaten national security.

In Jigawa state, the State's Command of the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) reportedly arrested five cattle rustlers on January 14, 2017 and recovered more than 200 cows from them. The NSCDC Commandant, Muhannadu Abdu Daruminlya was said to have described one of the arrested suspected cattle rustlers as "a notorious cattle thief" (See Suleiman, 2017).

Also, in Kaduna state, the joint security operations reportedly initiated by Governor Mallam Nasir El-Rufai to end cattle rustling in the state was said to have yielded positive results as security agents recovered over 2000 cows in Birnin Gwari L.G.A on July 21, 2015. It was also reported that the exchange of gunfire between the security agents and the armed bandits led to the death of the three suspects and arrest of nine others. The activities of the bandits were said to have resulted in the death of many people and shutting down business in some parts of Kaduna state (See Akhaine, 2015).

Furthermore, the incidences of cattle rustling were said to have extended to the Middle Belt region thus contributing immensely to the incessant conflicts between Fulani herdsmen and the indigenous communities in Benue, Kogi, Niger and Plateau States. In Benue State, for instance, the State's Police Command in Agatu L.G.A reportedly stated that the Command had recovered over 1000 cows rustled in the area by armed men. The Police Commissioner in-charge of Benue State, Mr. Bashir Makama was reported to have also said that they arrested Joint Task Force (JTF) member and five others for cattle rustling. However, the JTF member was said to have denied the charge, and insisted that the cows in their custody were being conveyed to Oturkpo office after they were arrested for illegal grazing (See Duru, 2017).

In March 2014, Gbabo (2014) reported that not less than 55 persons were killed and over 70,000 people displaced by Fulnai mercenaries in renewed attacks on Tiv communities in Nasarawa state. The Secretary of Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria, Alhaji Mohammed Hussaini was reported to have accepted responsibilities for the killings, but said that "those being killed were armed robbers and cattle rustlers of Tiv extraction hired from Benue State by their brothers in Nasarawa to steal their cows" (See Gbabo, 2014). The use of mercenaries or militias by Fulani pastoralists to protect their cattle in Nigeria is reminiscent to the scenario in Sudan whereby the Arab cattle owners employed the *Janjaweed* Arab militias not only to protect their cattle, but as well to safeguard acquired grazing lands in Darfur region, and Abiye and Kordofan in disputed areas with South Sudan.

## **Herdsmen-Farmers clashes in Nigeria: Implications for economic growth and national security**

The incessant herdsmen and farmers' clashes in Nigeria have grave implications for the country. The implications include the following:

1. The incessant clashes between the herdsmen and farmers in the country could provoke bloody crisis nation-wide, which may destabilize the country. The Serving Over-seer of the Latter Rain Assembly, Lagos, Pastor Tunde Bakare had reportedly warned that if relevant authorities failed to address the incessant killings of other Nigerians by herdsmen, the country would be on the way of another civil war (See Oni, 2017). Similarly, Governor Ifeanyi Okowa of Delta State was said to have called on the Federal Government to, as a matter of urgency, introduce policies to curb "the menace of Fulani herdsmen in the country". He was said to have categorically stated that the "herdsmen's menace is a national challenge, and that it has become something that is affecting all the states of the federation" (Amaize et al, 2017). Thus, there is need for the federal government to tackle the problem to ensure continued national cohesion and stability.

2. The incessant clashes between herdsmen and their host communities had brought about monumental loss of lives and destruction of valuable properties. The available records reportedly shows that between 2010 and 2015 Nigeria lost 6,500 citizens, and 62,000 others displaced in 850 violent clashes between herdsmen and farmers (See New Telegraph Editorial, November 3, 2017). Similarly, the Tiv of Benue State had reportedly pleaded with the Federal Government to protect them from the killings and destruction of lives and properties in the state. The Tiv indigenes under the platform of *Midzough* were said to have claimed that the Tiv nation was under siege from herdsmen, alleging that 1,876 persons, including children had been killed between 2013 and 2016, and that over 100,000 persons were displaced from their homes(See Onyegbula, 2017). Thus, these clashes between herdsmen and farmers and their attendant killings and destruction of valuable properties impacted negatively on national security and development.

3. Moreover, the incessant clashes between the herdsmen and farmers across the country had tended to provoke inter-ethnic hostilities particularly between the Fulani and other ethnic groups. This is more so as the onslaught of the herdsmen continued unabated, and poses a serious national security challenge. To control the situation the Senior Special Assistant to the President on National Assembly Matters (Senate), Ita Enong was said to believe that "the introduction of large scale ranching would put an end to the immediate cause of violence which is grazing on farmers' land and the attendant destruction of crops".

In a similar view, Afe Babalola (2017) reportedly observed that the central issue to the problem between herdsmen and farmers is "the failure of the herdsmen, in many instances, to respect the rights of others on whose farms and property they take their cows to graze". This sometimes provoked disastrous conflicts between the herdsmen and their host communities, particularly sedentary farmers.

4. Besides, the clashes between herdsmen and farmers across the country tend to overstretch the capacity of the security agencies to maintain effective surveillance and contain crises in different parts of the country. The pastoral herdsmen and sedentary farmers were said to have engaged in about 850 violent conflicts between 2010 and 2015 (New Telegraph Editorial, November 3, 2017). It is also known that several convulsive conflicts had occurred between the two groups since the last two years, thus leading to disastrous consequences for the nation. Sequel to this, the House of Representatives was reported to have passed a resolution enjoining the President, Muhammadu Buhari "to set up Presidential task force to disarm all herdsmen in the country" (*Daily Sun Editorial*, March 28, 2017).

5. Moreover, the incessant clashes between the herdsmen and farmers have negative effect on the nation's unity and oneness. The former Secretary of the Government of the

Federation (SGF), Chief Olu Falae was reported to have stated that the menace of the herdsmen in the country was worse than the ethnic agitations of the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) and the Niger Delta unrest. He was said to have posited that the herdsmen's activities could disintegrate the nation should the government fail to tame it (Vanguard, September 17, 2017).

6. Also, the clashes between the herdsmen and farmers particularly as it concerns the destruction of farm crops could lead to food scarcity in the country. Food scarcity and its attendant famine portends grave danger to the nation's food security and national stability. Alozie (2017) reported that the herdsmen and their cattle invaded farmlands in Imo State and destroyed over 200 farms in *Amakohia-Ubi* autonomous community in Owerri West LGA. He noted that farm crops worth millions of naira had been lost, and that hunger could ravage the community. The destruction of farm crops by herdsmen's cattle in the course of open grazing negates the government's drive towards achieving national self sufficiency in food production. With the ban on importation of certain food items coupled with the loss of large quantity of locally produced food crops, the large percentage of the Nigerian population might be vulnerable to severe food shortages.

7. Besides, the violent attacks by the herdsmen and the reprisals from the host communities, if not adequately checked by the relevant authorities, could lead to ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria. Kupoluyi (2017) had stated that "the nefarious activities of the Fulani herdsmen, if not curbed, can set the nation on fire in terms of ethno-religious conflict. He urged the Federal Government to intervene and enforce the restriction on the use of firearms, and punish the violators accordingly.

8. Furthermore, the incessant clashes between the herdsmen and some of their host communities, which emanate from criminal act of cattle rustling by bandits results in the loss of cattle, which constitute the valuable economic asset of the cattle owners. This sometimes led to reprisal attacks by Fulani militias with its consequent killings and destruction of some villages in revenge. This was reminiscent to the scenario in South Sudan whereby cattle raids involving some individuals and communities in Dinka, Nuer and Murle ethnic groups etc often provoked bloody revenge attacks. Besides, this act of banditry had given rise to age-long hostility among the South Sudanese ethnic groups, and contributed to the post-independence economic crisis and instability (Njoku, 2013).

Thus, in recognition of the negative impact of cattle rustling on the national economy and social stability, the Police was said to have resolved "to deploy security dogs in remote and flash points areas" (See Yahaya, 2016). This may go a long way to minimize the incidences of cattle rustling which has assumed a worrisome dimension in the North and the Middle Belt region in recent years.

9. Also, the incessant clashes between the pastoral herdsmen and sedentary farmers in Nigeria had given rise to perpetual fear of the unknown especially among the farming communities. Many farmers were said to dread going to their farms unless in company of other farmers and relatives. In view of the situation, an Igbo chieftain was reported to have stated that "the attacks by herdsmen have led to the loss of innocent lives in Igbo land and resulting in culture of pestilence, fear and sometimes defiance" (See Okoli et al, 2017). Thus, the violent clashes engendered perpetual fear and apprehension in the collective psyche of the people, particularly the farming communities.

10. The incessant conflicts between herdsmen and farmers have given rise to substantial loss of internally generated revenue (IGR) by some states and local governments administration in northern part of the country. A civil society organization under the umbrella of the *Search for Common Ground* in its report was said to have declared that Benue, Kaduna, Nasarawa and Plateau states lost 47 percent of their internally generated revenue

annually to farmers and herdsmen's conflicts. (See *New Telegraph*, December 7, 2017). This represents a colossal loss of revenue that could have been utilized for rapid social and economic development.

11. Finally, the violent clashes between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria have increasingly resulted in the militarization of the society. The Bishop of Kaduna Catholic Diocese, Rev. Man-Oso Ndagoso was reported to have noted that insecurity from herdsmen and farmers clash could militarize the country. With specific reference to the bloody clash between herdsmen and farmers in Numan, Adamawa state, Bishop Ndagoso was said to have lamented that "people abandoned their homes on sighting militant groups with weapons". He was said to have argued that "if government could not protect the citizens there was likelihood for emergence of a militarized society". Bishop Ndagoso further stated that the solution to the incessant herdsmen and farmers' clashes was to ensure that herdsmen adopt ranching to feed their cattle (See Alabeliewe, 2017).

## CONCLUSION

This paper has discussed the incessant clashes between the Fulani herdsmen and farmers in different parts of Nigeria. It also highlighted the major causes of the violent clashes between the herdsmen and farmers which include the competition for land; the impact of climate change and the shrinking of the Lake Chad. Some other reasons for incessant clashes between the two groups include the acquisition of sophisticated weapons by herdsmen in contrast to their traditional sticks, bows, arrows and in some cases swords. Also, certain government policies on the matter appear not very effective in finding solution to the conflict. Moreover, the incidences of cattle rustling provoke reprisal attacks which result in killings and destruction of villages by herdsmen.

There is need to establish modern commercial ranches under the public-private partnership arrangement. The ranches should have modern infrastructure such as schools, health and veterinary centres, abattoirs, markets and good road network etc. This may assuage the feelings of the cattle breeders who believe that the Anti-Open Grazing Laws in some states were inimical to their economic interest (See Bello, 2017).

On the whole, the Fulani herdsmen and the farmers are stakeholders in economic development of Nigeria. The issues which cause violent clashes between the two groups should be amicably resolved in the over-all interest of sustainable economic growth, national cohesion and stability. In this sense, the Ooni of Ife, Oba Adeyeye Enitan had reportedly called for caution and proper co-ordination in the efforts to redress challenges posed by Fulani herdsmen in some communities in the country (See Onoyume, 2017).

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