

Rethinking the Herdsmen-Land Cultivators Crises in Nigeria: A Historical Perspective

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Abstract: Peaceful coexistence is crucial to socio-economic development. In a country like Nigeria where political, ethnic and religious crises are the order of the day, economic development becomes slow, at best, and elusive at worst. Herdsmen and land cultivators clashes have cost the country so much in terms of finance and loss of lives. Consequently, if nothing tangible is done to ameliorate the situation, more finance and human lives would go down the drain. The study takes a historical perspective on the clashes between herdsmen and land cultivators with the aim of identifying the causes and effects, as well as projecting possible solution. Textual analysis of existing literatures was carried to boost hindsight on previous researches on the subject. Also, face-to-face interviews with some resource persons were also conducted to ensure that historical methodology was adhered to. The study shows that the crises have assumed ethno-religious dimension among other findings. Consequently, deliberate, concerted and sincere effort by the different tiers of government is recommended to resolve the psychological impact of the crises.

Keywords: Herdsmen, land-cultivators, farmland, conflict, ethno-religious dimension.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian polity is a heterogeneous one, with varying and similar ethnic nationalities such as Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Ijaw, Fulani, Tiv, Ibibio to mention but a few. These different peoples have been coexisting (though not without some forms of disagreements) for centuries. The spate of ethnic and religious crisis in the country has enjoyed prominence in the light of existing literature. For instance, Tonah (2006) asserts that conflicts and violent clashes between farmers and nomadic cattle herders have been a common feature of economic livelihood in West Africa. These conflicts between farmers and nomads are triggered by regular competition between farmers and nomadic herders for farmland, pastures, water, trees and the use of rangeland in general (Akpaki, 2002). To this end, the crisis between Fulani nomads and sedentary farmers; the cause of the crisis; and possible solution constitute the preoccupation of the paper.

The sedentary and pastoral Fulbe (Fulani), who are product of inter-mixture between sedentary Tukolor in the area and incoming Berber nomads of the desert north, who were migrants from the middle Senegal area (Erim, 2006). Population explosion and lack of farming and grazing land, occasioned by overgrazing in the Gambia and Senegal, forced the Fulbe out of the area into wanderings. By the 12th century,

the Fulani migration had traversed Niger, Borno, Adamawa, the Cameroun and Futa Jallon Highlands in Guinea. The above account had earlier been opined by Orugbani (2005), which suggests that the Fulani original home was in the Senegal valley, from where they migrated and settled in Hausa land centuries before the 19th century. Most of the Fulani in Hausa land (dominated by sedentary farmers), as he continued, were nomads who wandered from place to place with their cattle. The Hausa and Fulani complimented each other economically, in that, the Fulani supplied dairy needs of the Hausa, in addition to the manure provided by the cattle, while the Hausa provided the Fulani with grains (Orugbani, 2005; Ofem and Inyang, 2014). However, water from the existing small ponds, which both Hausa and Fulani needed, fuelled conflict in the existing cordiality between them, especially during dry season when water was in short supply.

With the changing trend, the cause of the crisis has assumed a complexity, as it is no longer a matter of competing for water from the small ponds. Access to land has subtly been included among the cause of the crisis. While the farmers own lands (according to existing land tenure system) on which they cultivate their crops, the Fulani herdsmen, on the other hand, wander from place to place (without recourse to land ownership system) grazing their cattle. The nomadic herders do not care about land ownership because they are always on the move depending on the prevailing dynamic climate conditions. The age-long open grazing system makes it necessary for nomads to embark on seasonal migrations from North to South. This situation has become an all season's affair overtime. This constricting approach towards the use of land tends to constitute the primary cause of the crisis as we shall see presently.

II. THE HERDSMEN - LAND CULTIVATORS CLASHES: AN OVERVIEW

The clash between the Fulani nomads and settler farmers dates back to centuries before the 19th century and was usually instigated by insufficient water ponds to serve the needs of the Fulani nomads, as well as that of the Hausa farmers. However, the dimension the clash has assumed in recent times calls for concern. The 2015 Global Terrorist Index puts Fulani herdsmen as the fourth deadliest militant group in the world, with a record killing of 1,229 people in 2014, an alarming increase from the 63 killings in 2013, as reported by the Vanguard Newspaper (April 27, 2014).

Benue clashes between natives and herdsmen on April 27, 2014, tend to mark the watershed. As chronicled by Peter Duru (2014), the relationship between Benue farmers and the Fulani herdsmen has remained a flashpoint for other communities in parts of the country, where the natives and herdsmen have been engulfed in bloodletting. The Fulani were assimilated into Benue society, where they intermarried and consolidated their settlement. The hospitality of the Benue people, as well as the green belt Benue valley that provided grazing area for the herds, made the Fulani spread across the twenty three local government areas in the State. However, the peace enjoyed by both parties went sour in 1989, following the murder of Chief Lordy Akaahena, the Paramount Ruler of Nzorov, in Guma Local Government Area, allegedly by the herdsmen after which bloodbath erupted between the Tiv and the Fulani. This spate of killing, which extended to the riverine community of Agatu in the Idoma speaking area of the state, lasted for two years and was resolved to further arms-length coexistence between both parties. Similarly, Adeleye (2013) suggests that Rukubi and Madagba villages in Doma of Benue State were attacked by the Fulani who were armed with AK-47 rifles, leaving over 60 persons dead and about 80 houses burnt.

But in recent times, the interaction between the Fulani and the natives became strained such that the successive altercations became bloodier. On July 5, 2013, Fulani armed pastoralist allegedly launched an attack on Akor village in Nzorov Local Government Area, where about 20 people were killed and the village razed. On the same day, Tse-Ormeagh, Tse-Kondom, Tom-Ayin and Lordye villages were purportedly burnt by the rampaging herdsmen and mercenaries. The villagers fled to Gbjimba, the headquarters of the council, for safety. From that point, the entire Guma Local Government Area came under siege. The invaders reportedly established their base in Nzorov from where they launched attacks on neighbouring Ihiarev and Gwer Local Government Areas of Benue State. About 150 people were reportedly killed in the repeated attacks on Agatu. Meanwhile, attacks on the village of the Paramount Ruler of Tiv land, HRH Ochivere Alfred Akawe Torkuta, left about 40 people dead, in addition, three villages: Tse-Torkula, Angyom and Tse-Usenda in Guma Local Government of the state, were sacked by invaders.

The attacks shifted to Tse-Ortom Adogoro, the home town of the former Minister of State for Trade and Investment and Supervising Minister for Aviation, Dr. Samuel Ortom, also in Guma Local Government Area where about 100 houses and huts in the village and neighbouring communities located about 45 kilometres from Awe Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, were razed. Following the reprisal attacks by natives of Agatu and Gwer West Local Government Area, the marauders sent the natives packing after killing 126 farmers and occupying their lands and homes. Barely five days to the end of Governor Gabriel Suswan's administration in May 2015, over 100 farmers and their family members were reportedly massacred in villages and refugee camps located in

Ukura, Per, Gafa and Tse-Gusa Local Government Areas of Benue state. According to another report, in July 2015, suspected herdsmen attacked Adeleke, a community on the outskirts of the state capital, Makurdi.

Similarly, Vanguard Newspaper (April 8, 2015) reported that 10 herdsmen were alleged to have invaded the farm of the former Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Chief Olu Falae, killing one of his Odudua People's Congress (OPC) security guards. It would be recalled that five Fulani herdsmen were, at the time, standing trial at the State High Court over kidnap of Chief OluFalae in October, 2015, a situation which Ondo State Government had to cough out five million naira ransom for the release. In December 2015, six persons were killed in Idele village of Oju Local Government Area. A reprisal attack by youths in the community led to the death of three Fulani herdsmen, whose heads were cut off. On February 29, 2016, over 500 Locals were killed and 7000 displaced in an attack in Agatu Local Government Area by herdsmen (THIS DAY, September 3, 2016).

According to a report by Henry Umoru (August 26, 2016), suspected herdsmen invaded Ndiagu community of Attakwu Akegbe-Ukwu in Nkanu-West Local Government Area of Enugu State on Thursday, August 25, 2016 and slaughtered a Catholic seminarian, Lazarus Nwafor. The herdsmen reportedly numbering about 50, armed with machetes with which they severely injured four members of Ogbodo Nwarum family, where Nwafor lived as a tenant. Moreover, it was also alleged that the herdsmen slit the stomach of a six-month pregnant woman, Mrs. Nwarum, during the attack that started at about 02:15 hours. Four months earlier, there was similar attack on Ukpabi Nimbo community in Uzo-Nwani Local Government Area of the State, where several persons were reported dead. Reacting to the incident, HRH Igwe Greg Ugwu expressed surprise over the development. In his words "there was no issue at all between them and my people. The only thing I heard is that they entered into the heart of the community on Wednesday afternoon and a woman sounded a gong, after which the cow scattered. They got the cows together and left only to return in the night" (Vanguard, August 26, 2016).

A social media source, (<http://breaking.com.ng>), quoting newspapers, reported that, the year 2016 has recorded over 700 deaths following Fulani herdsmen attacks. Also, media review of February 18, 2016 had it that five persons were killed by Fulani herdsmen at Okoloko village in Agatu Local Government Area of Benue state. Furthermore, on March 5, 2016, another 500 persons were killed by the rampaging herdsmen following a siege on the communities in the Local Government Area and these communities included Aila, Akwu, Adagbo, Okoloko Ugboju, Odugbeho, Ogbaulu and Obagaji. On April 12, 2016, Fulani herdsmen attacked two villages in Gashaka Local Government Area of Taraba State, killing 15 people. A week later, 25 Local Government Areas in Delta State shut down activities on the Benin-Asaba expressway, while protesting the alleged killing of over 23

people in their areas by herdsmen. On April 21, 2016 farmers in Lagun, Iyana, Offa, Atagba, Lapata and their surrounding communities in Lagelu Local Government Area of Ibadan, Oyo State, alleged that a group of Fulani armed men attacked their communities at night, injured a guard and carted away with valuables. April 25, 2016 recorded 40 deaths due to Fulani herdsmen attack on Ukpabi-Nimbo in Uzo –Uwani Local Government Area of Enugu state. On June 16, 2016, a 45 years old father was shot dead by gunmen suspected to be Fulani herdsmen in Ossisa community Ndokwa East Local Government Area of Delta state. At least 59 deaths were recorded four days later following recent attacks on Benue communities such as Ugondo, Turan and Gabo Nenrev in the Logo Local Government Area of the State, by suspected herdsmen.

Moreover, it was reported in the Vanguard newspaper (September 29, 2016), that suspected Fulani herdsmen armed with dangerous weapons including guns, attacked and kidnapped the Rector of Tansi Major Seminary, Rev. Fr. Dr. Emmanuel Dim, while two other priests Rev. Frs. Jude Chukwunke and Jude Ezeokanu, who were in the same vehicle with him, escaped with various degrees of gunshot wounds. The Director of Communication, Nnewi Diocese, Rev. Fr. Hyginus Aghaulor, claimed that the herdsmen called and demanded a ransom of 2.5 Million Naira. Unfortunately, there is a standing order by the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) that ransom should not be paid for the release of any kidnapped priest. Recently, it was reported in the Sun newspaper of January 24, 2020, that herders destroyed a rice farm with produce worth 17 million naira in Akpugo in Nkanu East Local Government Area of Enugu State. The farm belonged to Mr. Ekene Uzodimma, a former gubernatorial candidate of United Peoples Party (UPP). It was equally alleged that the herders who invaded the farm threatened to deal with anybody who dared to stop their cattle from grazing. Similarly, herdsmen allegedly attacked Kwatas village in Bokkos Local Government Area of Plateau State, killing 13 people. A reprisal attack by Plateau youths resulted in the burning down of 23 houses and one mosque on Fulani settlements in the state. Reacting to the killing of Plateau indigenes, the Governor, Lalong Simon, ordered for the immediate arrest of all Fulani leaders and community heads in some local government areas of the state (www.legit.ng/1297245-plateaus-state; www.viewpointnigeria.org/breakingnews).

III. CAUSES OF THE CLASHES

Various possible causes of the Fulani herdsmen attacks have been advanced by some analysts and researchers and these causes can be categorised into covert and overt causes. Overtly, an article titled, “everything you need to know to understand the Fulani Herdsmen crisis in Nigeria” published on a social media (www.naijaland.com) argues that the violent approach of the Fulani herdsmen is as a result of the activities of cattle rustlers and the inability of the relevant authorities to come to their aid despite scores of complaints they registered.

According to this source, Fulani herdsmen, being wanderers reportedly encounter cattle rustlers and made complaints to the relevant authorities, who failed to investigate the issue, as a result they (the herdsmen) resorted to carrying arms about. In the course of grazing, they frequently trespass on farmlands owned by local farmers, destroying crops and other valuables. Attempt by farmers to prevent them from wreaking havoc on their farmlands, is met with stiff and violent resistance. Studying four Fulani clans in Plateau state, Ezeomah (1985) opines that the reasons for the seasonal movements of the nomadic Fulani, is motivated by many factors, some of which are their desire for independence and freedom from interference and supervision by sedentary authorities, freedom from cattle rustling, avoidance of disease-infested areas and as an overriding factor, the never ending search for new pasture—a constant quest for people who do not own any land of their own. Similarly, a study on some areas in Cross River State, conducted by Ofem and Inyang (2014), identified the causes of the conflict to include: destruction of crops; contamination of streams by cattle; disregard for traditional authority by the herders; over-grazing of fallow land; sexual harassment of women by the herders; harassment of herders by host youths; indiscriminate defecation on road by the cattle; theft of cattle; straying cattle; and indiscriminate bush burning.

The Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association, a socio-religious group organized in 1970 to which the pastoralists belong, sought and gained attention and recognition of the Federal Government and six northern states governments, where it expressed the following concerns.

- The recognition of nomadic Fulani as an integral part of the nation
- Recognition of nomads’ and herding problems
- The need to secure cattle routes and provide grazing reserve.
- The need to prevent bush fire
- The need to provide education and health services and
- The need for representation of nomadic Fulani at local, states and federal governments to enable them put across their problems and seek solutions.

The concerns articulated above and the inability of succeeding governments to pay adequate attention to them, consequent upon the problem of cattle rustling may have reinforced the violent tendencies of the pastoralists who may be going through a feeling of rejection and neglect in a society they were supposed to be an integral part of.

On the other hand, the Federal Government, through the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Babachir David Lawal, blamed the herdsmen attacks on the influx of foreign herdsmen into Nigeria, a situation which presumably needs to be checked by appropriate authorities such as the immigrations and customs officers. In furtherance, he pointed out by implication, that ignorance of the herdsmen in the area of modern practice in cattle rearing is another cause of the

hostility between nomads and sedentary farmers (Vanguard, September 29, 2016). The implication was adequately captured in the following words, ‘...that the government will do the needful to enlighten Fulani herdsmen on how to make cattle rearing more profitable by utilizing the ranches and reaping other social and political benefits that such settlements will offer’.

The contradicting understanding of the concept of land ownership constitutes a major factor in the Fulani herdsmen and settler farmer’s clashes. While the Fulani see land as a collective property, the sedentary farmers believe in individual land ownership as well as collective ownership. According to IEP report, the tension between the Fulani and the other ethnic groups border on the use of land and they may also be religious elements to the conflicts. Some communities, particularly among the Tiv, may also be largely Christians, which adds a religious dimension to the conflict with predominantly Muslim Fulani groups. When Hausa rulers were conquered in the early 19th century by the Fulani jihadists under Usman Dan Fodio, the Sultan of Sokoto became the head of the Fulani Empire as well as the owner of all Fulani lands and others conquered by them. Land tenure was organized according to Maliki Islamic law of inheritance. Essentially, it made land the property of the state, which alone could grant right of use and could at any time withdraw or revoke such rights. But, when the British occupied the Fulani Empire, it removed absolute land ownership from the Sultan and abolished all fief holdings and slave villages. To further maintain a firm grip on land, the British proclaimed the Land and Native Right Law No. 9 of 1910. This law made all lands, in Northern Nigeria, property of the government which had to give consent before granting a right to occupy and use land. The Government however gave respect to the Native Law (Sharia) and to the Customary Laws existing in the local areas.

A study conducted by Ezeomah (1985) which compared relationship between sedentary land cultivators and nomads based on data generated from four Fulani clans (Iyakp’ en, Oagamma’ en, Gammako’ en and yasanko’ en), who migrated from Kano, Sokoto and Katsina to occupy Miango/Jebu, Kwon, MazatRopp and BakinLaddi in Plateau State suggests that population explosion and its consequent expansion to inhabited area, is a major cause of the crisis between the nomads and the land cultivators. The selected clans indicated the access to grazing was easier in the past, because grass used to be more abundant as a result of sparse population density (both theirs and those of the sedentary people). The only difficulty they encountered both during grazing and within their encampments were attacks by predatory animals. But from the time the British pacified these areas to the present, the land cultivators had spread from the foothills they farmed to the plains.

The respondents described their present locations as thick bushes where land cultivators never farmed. However, in response to increasing population pressure, land cultivators

have in recent years established some of their homes near Fulani camps and have even cultivated the land very close to Fulani camps. In a similar situation, the population of the Fulani families and that of their animals have also increased. For instance, their animals were estimated at 15,000 in Miango/Jebu locations, at the time of the study. Such a cattle population also required a large expanse of land for grazing. Similarly, the increase in the population of land cultivators necessitated the extension of land for cultivation. And consequently, the areas of land, needed to support the growing population, are all the more important because the traditional methods of herding and farming remained largely unchanged. As the herding and farming groups got closer over the years, they developed certain relationships in the land use and social interactions. Due to conflict of interest (access to land), these interactions turned violent, a position fully supported by Murray-Bruce (2015).

Covertly, there is increase in the population of cattle, which is not occasioned by a natural course of procreation, but an infiltration into the cattle business by politicians. The above situation has worsened the situation and reinforced the violent nature of the herdsmen. A respondent, who pled anonymity, alleged that some politicians use cattle business as safe haven to hide their looted funds from the peripatetic eyes of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). As a result of the above, the population of cattle has surpassed the population of experienced herders. Therefore, Alhajis, who own the cattle and double as middlemen between other investors and the herders, use labourers or assistants in place of experienced herders. Consequent upon the above, the cows managed by these labourers or assistants usually stray into farms and destroy crops, thereby provoking land cultivator. A herd of cattle, according to Bello (2013) comprises between one and a hundred cattle, with an average of fifty-one cattle in a herd. Also, an average herding experience is about 10.1 years. The implication is that herders who fall short of the average experience is not qualified to manage a herd with up to 51 cattle. Traditionally, optimum Fulani herd size lies between eighty and a hundred cattle and the gender composition of the administration of a herder, which consists of beefers, milkers, breeders, carriers and stock beautifiers, has more of women than men – which Iro (1994) puts at a ratio of 4:1. In a situation where an average herd of about 51 cattle is handed over to inexperienced herders, the cattle are bound to stray regularly into cultivated farm lands and consequently destroy cultivated crops. Farmers, on the other hand, would not fold their arms to watch their crops being destroyed by these straying cattle without reprisal attacks. The damage caused by straying cattle constitutes the major cause of the conflicts between nomads and farmers.

An incident at Umukalu-Umuazuba-Asa in Ukwa West Local Government of Abia State, which almost degenerated into herders-cultivators clash, lends credence to the above. Farmers in that village complained of how cows have been destroying crops they labour to cultivate. They claimed to

have reported to the police and even soldiers at checkpoint, but no solution seemed forthcoming. It was even suspected by the villagers that the soldiers and police refused to act on their complaints because the leadership of both (army and police) were under Hausa/Fulani, the ethnic nationality which dominates cattle herding. A remorseful herdsman (who pleaded anonymity) in his explanation confirmed that the damage inflicted on cultivated farmlands is caused by labourers usually employed by Alhajis as the population of cows increase. In furtherance, the herdsman claimed that reports have been forwarded to Alhajis on several occasions concerning the problems caused by those labourers. Unfortunately, nothing has been done to mitigate the problem.

Also, there are suspicions and observations at different quarters that the herders-cultivators conflicts have assumed both ethnic and religious dimensions. To these observers, the Fulani ethnic nationality is on a mission to subjugate and dominate other ethnic nationalities and the victim fear that the actions and inactions of the federal government suggest a secret conspiracy between the Fulani and the federal government. To this end, a social media report, posted by Benilily, at 17:42hrs on November 1, 2014, has it that the Premier of the defunct Northern Region, Sir Ahmadu Bello, made the following declaration on October 12, 1960, less than two weeks after independence, “the nation called Nigeria should be an estate of our grandfather Othman Danfodio. We must ruthlessly prevent a change of power. We must use the minorities in the North as willing tools and South as conquered territories and never allow their future”. It was also reported by the same media that Omololu Ogunmade corroborated the above report when he posited that a defunct newspaper, THE PARROT, published a shocking comment by the then Premier of Northern Nigeria, Sir Ahmadu Bello, where he was quoted to have said, “The new nation called Nigeria should be an estate of our great grandfather, Uthman Dan Fodio. We must ruthlessly prevent a change of power. We must use the minorities in the North as willing tools and the South as a conquered territory and never allow them to have control over their future” (www.nairaland.com).

Similarly, in a video uploaded on a social media (Facebook) by Femi Fani-Kayode, on January 15, 2018, at 11:42hrs, a human rights activist, Mark Adebayo, opined that the killings across Nigeria, especially the non-Fulani dominated areas of Southeast, South-south, Southwest and the Middle Belt, are not perpetrated by herdsman, rather they are perpetrated by organised ethnic cleansing mechanism orchestrated by nomadic ethnic militia, under the auspices of the Miyetti Allah, whose life-patron is President Muhammadu Buhari. This is a very weighty allegation. However, an attempt to defend Mr. President is to provide answer to the rhetorical question raised by Governor Samuel Ortom of Benue State, which he referred to President Buhari. When President Buhari visited Benue State to condole with the people after suspected herdsman killed more than 70 people in January, Governor Ortom referred to a press conference granted by the Miyetti

Allah Kautal Hore in May, where its leaders declared thus, “more blood will flow in Benue if the ranching law is not rescinded”. It was a big threat which the governor adjudged a ‘hate speech’ and requested that President Buhari should order the arrest and prosecution of the leadership of the Miyetti Allah Kautal Hore. The request was presented rhetorically in the following words, “Your Excellency, how can a group claim responsibility for the killings that happened and is going about scot free?” (The Cable).

Furthermore, at the height of the herdsman attack on Riyom, Barakin Ladi and Jos South Local Government Areas of Plateau State, which resulted to the killings of over 100 persons, according to Vanguard Newspaper (June 26, 2018), though police confirmed the death of 86 persons, the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association, through its leadership, claimed responsibility for the killings when it described the attacks as “an act of retaliation over the killing of 300 cows belonging to its members”. Business Day newspaper, of the same day, gave the caption, “Buhari dithers as Miyetti Allah claims responsibility for Plateau killings” (Businessday.ng). The ethnic cleansing allegation was equally corroborated by the former Defence Minister, T. Y. Danjuma, when he declared that the killings perpetrated by the herdsman are targeted at ethnic cleansing of Taraba people. The declaration was made during his convocation lecture at Taraba State University (Vanguard, March 24, 2018). It is expected of any sensitive and sincere leadership to protect lives and property within its sovereignty. Therefore, the federal government would have gained the trust of the people from the Southeast, Southwest, South-south and Middle Belt if it had arrested and prosecuted the leaders of Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association and their foot soldiers (the arms-carrying herdsman) for the various killings perpetrated across the country. Consequently, the denial of the suspicion that looted funds, as well as ethno-religious dimension, have infiltrated the cattle economy and as such have exacerbated the social crisis between herders and land cultivators, would suggest supplying answers to the following begging questions: why do herdsman bear sophisticated weapons without deliberate and concerted efforts by security agencies to prosecute them? Why have herdsman been killing unarmed Nigerians without adequate interrogation and prosecution of the culprits? Unfortunately, the inability to provide answers to the above questions tends to pit the Fulani ethnic group against other ethnic groups in the country.

IV. EFFECTS OF THE CLASHES

The effects of the clashes, like the causes, can be categorised into two: physical and psychological. The physical effect of the clash between nomads and the farming communities is quite alarming especially, considering the number of lives lost to such clashes. The Global Terrorist Index Report of 2015 records that Fulani militant attacks claimed 1229 lives in 2014. Meanwhile from 2000 to 2013, Fulani militant attacks killed only 80 persons. Majority of the deaths occurred in the middle belt and unfortunately, nomadic militants target

private citizens. As mentioned earlier about 700 lives were lost to Fulani attacks in 2016. The nomads and the farmers were supposed to live a complementary life, in that, while the nomads provide dairy for farmers and manure for their crops, the farmers would provide grains for the nomads. Regrettably, both parties live in suspicion of each other. In a country where the productive force is destroyed by its supposed citizens at such alarming rate as it is evident in Nigeria, its economy is bound to dwindle.

The economic cost of these clashes has been catastrophic for Nigeria. A recent report by Mercy Corps, a global humanitarian organization, funded by the British Development for International Development (DFID) reported that the endless conflict between farmers and herdsmen across the country, especially in the North-central is costing Nigeria at least \$14 billion in potential revenue annually. This report was issued after a research was carried out between 2013 and 2016 on the causes and effects of the perennial clashes between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria. The report was launched recently at an event in Transcorp Hotel Abuja. While Boko Haram violence in Northeast Nigeria garners the majority of media attention, the study shows that ongoing low-level conflicts are thwarting the country's economic development to an enormous extent. It was equally observed, by Iveta Ouvry, the country's Director of Mercy Corps, that the average household affected by conflict today could see income increase by at least 64% and potentially 210% or higher, if conflicts were resolved. It is expected that the findings would be of interest to the authorities who are frantically looking towards agriculture as an alternative source of revenue following the crash in oil price. The expectation definitely wanes when the authorities fail to stop herdsmen from continuing with their destructive propensities and heinous crimes against citizens.

Bello (2013) drew a dichotomy between the damaging activities of the actors and the repercussions therein. Damaging activities of the herdsmen, cattle rustlers and land cultivators, according to Bello, include: theft of cattle and goats; over grazing and unsustainable land for farming; destruction of crops; hardening of soils, rendering them infertile and difficult when tilling for crop growing; destruction of reservoirs and source of drinkable water; pollution of drinkable water; physical fight with machetes and sticks (he failed to include guns probably because his study was limited to Yobe State); burning of rangelands, fadama and houses; and damage of irrigational facilities. While the consequences include: loss of animals; loss of fertile lands; loss of crop yields, increased labour in pre-farming activities; loss of water and resources; pollution of water; injuries, loss of lives and property; damage to animal feed, soil fertility and property; and infrastructural damage. The above, he factored into physical, socio-psychological, social, economic and political repercussions.

Psychologically, things have fallen apart because the centre can no longer hold (Achebe, 1958). The bond that held the

various federating components in Nigeria has been seriously shaken, leaving cracks on the national integration process. The essence of togetherness and unity in the country has come under serious attacks. There are calls for secession from different quarters. To this end, the activities of the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) both within the country and in the Diaspora suffice as a typical example. Moreover, the existence of a united Nigeria is so threatened that some citizens have called for a re-examination of the amalgamation of the country. Tunde Bakare, the General Overseer of Citadel Community Church, formerly known as the Latter Rain Assembly, represents spoke for this group when he declared thus, "Nigeria cannot be fixed until we fix how we became a nation in 1914" (National Pilot, January 27, 2020).

Many Nigerians are left with doubt on the sincerity of government to protect their lives and property, especially in the non-Fulani components of the country. It was not enough that the former defence minister, T. Y. Danjuma, threatened Nigerians that they would not be able to sleep if they knew what is going on in the country. He further admonished Nigerians to "rise and defend themselves against the killers (herdsmen)". Also, he alleged that depending on the Armed Forces will only lead the victims to their death, because the killers have been protected by the military who cover them (Vanguard Newspaper, March 24, 2018). The above allegation coming from a high profile personality leaves citizens with uncertainty, considering the fact of compromise from government, which was meant to ensure the protection of lives and property.

V. POSSIBLE SOLUTION

Every cause has an inherent effect and the essence of studying cause-effect relationship is to project or proffer solution. The conflict between herdsmen and land cultivators has brought us face-to-face with the dilemma of ensuring food security on one hand and protecting lives and property on the other hand. Consequently, a sustainable solution to the situation will require a holistic approach that would touch on all aspects of the conflict. Therefore, we shall first take inventory of some of the solutions as projected by some analysts. Various suggestions to ending the herdsmen and land cultivators clashes in the country have been projected. For example the Paramount Ruler of Tyoshin kingdom Nagi 11, Ayua Daniel Abomtse, suggested a convention of special ECOWAS conference to address the issue especially because, according to him, most of those creating the problem were cross-border herders. He also suggested an establishment of a joint taskforce made up of civilians of the native boarder communities and the military to flush the perpetrators of the repellent act. This call was made when Senator Mohammed Magoro led the Senate joint committee on National Security Intelligence Defence/Army, Police and Interior Minister on a fact-finding visit on alleged Fulani insurgency in Benue, Nasarawa and Plateau States (Agbede, 2016). Convening a special ECOWAS conference to deliberate on how to curb, especially the external dimension to the clash is a welcome

development. However, besides addressing the external dimension, the internal dimension has to be taken care of, by the Nigerian sovereign state. Therefore, the suggestion of constituting a joint taskforce may end up providing a temporary solution to the problem, considering the demand for military interventions in other parts of the country.

Another measure, proposed by the Federal Government and supported by some citizens, is the creation of grazing reserves in all states of the federation. To this end, it is expected that each state provides certain portion of land to support the project. Addressing a news conference on June 2, 2016, the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Developments, Chief Audu Ogbah, informed that eleven states had provided 55 hectares of land to establish ranches to curb farmers and pastoralists clashes in their states. The states which complied with the directive include: Plateau, Kaduna, Kano Gombe, Katsina, Taraba, Niger, Adamawa, Jigawa, Sokoto and the Federal Capital Territory. One point appears to be obvious, considering the states that made the above donations. The states are all of the northern extraction, which begs the question of whether or not states of the southern regions are in support of the bill. Regrettably, Taraba State Governor, in another development, denied that his state donated any land for the grazing project, a claim which contradicts the information given by the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (Guardian Newspaper, October 9, 2019). The Vanguard Newspaper (May 2, 2019) reported that the Deputy Senate President, Senator Ike Ekweremadu, while addressing newsmen after a meeting of the Southeast governors and stakeholders held in Enugu (a meeting convened in reaction to the attack on the people of Uzo-Uwani by suspected herdsmen), declared that the National Assembly resolved not to support the creation of grazing reserves anywhere in the country. The Ekiti State House of Assembly in an explicit expression of its opposition to the National Grazing Reserves Law pressed a bill, which birthed the Anti-grazing Law prohibiting pastoralists from open grazing (Punch Newspaper, September 8, 2016). Given the realities prevailing on the grazing reserves, it is obvious that it will take a very long time for the National Grazing Reserve Law to gain acceptance of most Nigerians.

Again, Murray-Bruce (2015) in his common sense revolution suggests a gradual conversion from open grazing to ranching. According to him, government should re-establish the primordial grazing routes of Fulani pastoralist. The Federal Ministry of Agriculture and the Federal Ministry of Lands, by this suggestion, are to work with the apex Fulani pastoral association, the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association to revive these routes and where they have been farmed or built upon alternative routes be created. Having restored the old grazing routes and established new ones where necessary, the next step is to give a deadline of no less than 10 years to the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeder Association to convert from pastoral cattle rearing to the modern ranching. Seemingly, this would have been fantastic, if not for the ethno-religious

dimension to the crises. Given the prevailing circumstances, non-Fulani regions would hardly accept establishing new grazing routes within their regions in a similar manner they rejected the RUGA project. Besides, giving a ten-year period for transition to ranching would also appear to be a grave mistake, the people of south-south, southeast, southwest and middle belt would want to avoid considering the jumble of killing orchestrated by the herdsmen. To make matter worse for the establishment of ranching system proponents, the leadership of Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association rejected the suggestion in its totality (Hankuyi, 2017; Godwin, 2017).

Various states have taken different alternative dispute resolution mechanism to check the conflicts between breeders and farmers. While Jigawa, Taraba, Niger and Bayelsa states resorted to the provision of permanent grazing reserves, Benue and Ekiti states enacted anti-open grazing laws. The situations in Anambra and Abia states deserve special mention. In Anambra State, for instance, a joint task force Committee was set up, which comprised security operatives, herdsmen – host communities and officials of the state government in all areas where herdsmen operate in the state. At the State level The Committee is known as Cattle Menace Committee, headed by the State Commissioner of Police, with five traditional rulers and leaders of the Fulani community in the state as members. Following this quick intervention of the state government, the conflicts were resolved. Whereas there was agreement that where cattle destroy farmer's crops, the herdsmen concerned would pay the farmer, and if farmer(s) kill cattle, the farmer(s) will pay the owner of the cattle. In Abia State, the tension was intensified by herdsmen who insisted on choosing grazing area in the State (Ugwu, 2017). However, The State Committee is headed by the State Police Commissioner, Mr. Leye Oyebade, and made up of representatives of the State government, traditional rulers, community leaders, youth leaders, leaders of the Hausa/Fulani community and representatives of herdsmen. The State Police command also directed Divisional Police Officers to set up conflict resolution committees, comprising local government chairmen traditional ruler, eminent elites and vigilante groups to check the trend (Alaribe 2016).

The solutions discussed above can only address the overt causes as well as physical effect, if properly and sincerely implemented. The covert causes and psychological effect require more action on the part of the Federal Government. Having taken stock of the various arguments projected as remedies to the pastoralists and farmers clashes, this paper support the idea of converting from pastoral cattle rearing or what it terms 'wild grazing' to the modern business of cattle ranching in which cattle are reserved, reared and bred at a central location suitable for such purpose. In a study conducted by Bamgbose (2016), on the method of rearing cattle to avert the incessant crisis between herdsmen and sedentary farmers, 68.1% of the respondents supported ranching method; 14% of the respondents were in support of

creating grazing reserves, while the remaining 17.9% had varying views. How can the idea of converting to ranching system be achieved? In order not to be equally accused of neglecting herdsmen as an integral part of the country, we support gradual progression from the traditional grazing system to modern ranching system, as practiced by civilized countries like Netherlands, to mention but one example. Moreover, the problem can be minimized through extension agency intervention to identify stakeholders and development trust between the disputants using the mechanism tagged —local development plans (LDP) which is community initiated process to reduce tension over access and the use of land and effective participation in decision-making and economic activities.

There is no gainsaying that the ranching system will naturally resolve the issue of cattle rustling. But we contend in strong term that the 10 years deadline for the suggested conversion is too long a time, considering the ethnic and religious dimensions that have infiltrated the crisis. Therefore, a 3-year deadline is recommended with a provision of soft loan to the cattle breeders (where necessary) to engender a quick transformation from the open grazing system to ranching system.

There is also an urgent need to re-educate and re-orientate both parties on the existing Land Use Act, so that each party would understand its boundary and avoid trespassing. Finally, there is a more urgent need to debunk the mind-set of equating a cow with human life. Reason being that human life is sacred, according to existing constitutions anywhere in the world hence, nobody has any right to filch it from anybody. Moreover, no religion places a cow at parity with human life.

VI. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This paper has taken an insight analysis of the Fulani herdsmen and sedentary farmers' clashes in the country, through a historical perspective. It has revalidated the fact that the Fulani and their neighbours have been co-existing before the 19th century, with minimal disagreements. Urbanization and successive governments inability to address biting issues between the parties, laid the foundation to the conflict of interests that has pitted the Fulani herdsmen against their settler-farmer neighbours. The crises have cost so many lives and properties worth fortune which would have had positive impact on the suffering majority of Nigeria populace.

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