

The Political Economy of Fulani Herdsmen Activities and Inter-Ethno-Religious Relations in Nigeria's Forth Republic: Issues and Prospects

Oluwasuji Clement Olawole*, PhD¹, Omodia Stephen Monday, FCIM², Oyinloye Babatunde³

¹Faculty of Social and Management Sciences, Political Science and Public Administration Department, Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba, Akoko South West, 23482, Akungba, Nigeria

²Prof. Faculty of Social and Management Sciences, Political Science Department, Edo State University, Iyamo, Edo State, Nigeria

³Political Science and International Studies Department, Afe Babalola University, Ado State, Ado Ekiti Nigeria

*Corresponding author

Oluwasuji Clement
Olawole

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Abstract: The political history of Nigeria is characterised with an unprecedented level of insecurity. Inter-communal and inter-ethnic clashes, religious violent, and armed robbery, assassination, murder, gender based violence, and bomb explosions have been on the increase leading to enormous loss of lives and properties and general atmosphere of siege and social tension for the people. In recent times, inter-ethnic relations tension has resonated in Nigeria. This is due to the activities of some ethnically motivated groups. "The Political Economy of Fulani Herdsmen Activities and Inter-ethnic Relations in Nigeria's Forth Republic: Issues and Prospects", focused primarily on the activities of the nomadic Fulani herdsmen in some parts of Nigeria such as Kaduna, Enugu, Benue, Ekiti, Taraba, Nasarawa, Plateau, Kogi States, etc. In these conflicts, many lives and cattle are lost and properties destroyed. This paper examines the causes of the incessant Fulani herdsmen and farmers conflicts in Nigeria. Secondly, to underscore the nexus between the incessant conflicts and interethnic relations in Nigeria, and thirdly, to overview the alternative options to ameliorate the incessant conflicts between the Fulani herdsmen and the hosting farming communities vis-à-vis to douse the ethno-religious dimension of the conflict.

Keywords: Fulani herdsmen, Farmers, Inter-ethnic Relations, Ethnicity, Conflicts.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria, undoubtedly the most populous black nation in the world with an estimated population of about 170 million with over 250 ethnic groups and about 400 languages like any other states exists primarily for the protection of lives and properties and ensuring the well-being of the people. However, the political history of Nigeria is characterised with an unprecedented level of insecurity. Inter-communal and inter-ethnic clashes, religious violent, and armed robbery, assassination, murder, gender based violence, and bomb explosions have been on the increase leading to enormous loss of lives and properties and general atmosphere of siege and social tension for the people. Eliagwu [1] contends that: the period 1980-2005 (alone) witnessed at least 140 violence conflicts and crises. About 100 of these selected conflicts occurred since May 1999. In these conflicts, many lives were lost and properties destroyed. Often, quite a large number of people are displaced and find themselves operating as refugees within their countries. Ibrahim and Igbuzor [2] put it succinctly:

...it has been estimated that no less than ten thousand lives have been lost to violence of different natures and character. While communities and groups fight each other, state agents have also been involved in the perpetration of violence and destruction as reflected in the Odi and Benue crises.

Nigeria is a nation suffering from many woes, such as Boko Haram, Fulani herdsmen in clashes with Christian farmers, famine-like conditions in the North-East, drought and refugee crisis quickly add up to make Nigeria a very trouble country [3]. The menace posed by Fulani Herdsmen in the different communities they migrate to for purposes of grazing their cattle is becoming very alarming. They are more and more constituting major security challenges to their host communities. The propensity towards engaging the land and farm owners of the sites they graze their cattle is increasing by the day as they update their arsenal with highly sophisticated weapons.

Daily, the society and the media is inundated with alarming and scaring news such as “herdsmen burn 22 hectares of cassava and rice plantation land”, “73 people killed in Benue”, “Taraba killing!!! Death toll rises to 60”, “herdsmen killed 700 people in Jonathan administration”, “Sad!!! Fulani herdsmen kill final year student in Benuestate”, Fulani Herdsmen strike again kill 10 farmers in Benue”, “herdsmen kill woman, destroy 200 acres of farms”, “herdsmen attack Benue state leaving 500 persons missing”, “19 people killed by Fulani herdsmen in Jos village attack” (Fulani Herdsmen Archives, Information Nigeria, www.informationng.com). More worrisome is the ethno-religious dimension of the conflict. For instance, in Jos, Plateau state, since 2001, ethnic clashes over the grazing and control of farm lands have pitched the indigenous ethnic Christians Berom people against the Hausa Fulani population. In sustained attack on communities such as Riyom and BarkinLadi, entire families have been wiped out in some instances, with attacks occurring daily on homes, fields and roads. Farms are looted, homes burnt, grain stores destroyed and crops cut down, depriving survivors of shelter, sustenance and income [4].

Adding to the religious and territorial tension is that many communities are displaced by the herdsmen and the villagers are in perpetual exile. Yet, the Federal Government which controls both the army and the police has not dealt with the armed herdsmen to allow the farmers to return to their farms. Many cannot return to their farms in southern Kaduna and Riyom Local Government Council in Plateau state. The inability of the Nigerian government to remove the cattle herdsmen who are predominantly Muslims from the villages and farmlands belonging to predominantly Christians has added to the religious hatred and claims that the Muslims have backing of the government to grab lands belonging to the Christians; to wipe out both the ethnic tribes and Christians as a religion and spread Islam.

It is therefore imperative in this paper to examine the causes of the incessant Fulani herdsmen and farmers conflicts in Nigeria. Secondly, to underscore the nexus between the incessant conflicts and interethnic relations in Nigeria, and thirdly, to overview the alternative options to ameliorate the incessant conflicts between the Fulani herdsmen and the hosting farming communities vis-à-vis to douse the ethno-religious dimension of the conflict. To achieve this, the paper is subdivided into six sections: the introduction; the menace of the Fulani herdsmen activities in Nigeria; the causes of the Fulani herdsmen and farmers conflicts; the nexus between the Fulani herdsmen and farmers’ conflict; Socio-political and economic effects of Fulani herdsmen activities and its ethno-religious dimension; and lastly conclusion and recommendations.

The Menace of Fulani Herdsmen Activities in Nigeria

The violent clashes between Fulani herdsmen and sedentary farmers in Nigeria do not constitute an alien phenomenon. It has been in existence for decades which has resulted in the extensive and unquantifiable loss of lives and property. The constant conflicts have threatened the security of the state, reduce the economic productivity, and deepened the food crisis [5]. The conflict reached a crescendo in the recent times from “2014 with Fulani herdsmen killing 1,229 people in comparison with 63 deaths in 2013. With more than 500 deaths in July 2016 ... The escalation of the crisis has made many Nigerian and international observers including the United States to consider Fulani herdsmen as the second most dangerous group in Nigeria after Boko haram group” [5].

There have been escalations of reported attacks by Fulani herdsmen who brutally kill natives of the invaded farming communities including women and children in various states across the country. Worst affected states include Benue, Nasarawa, Plateau, Taraba, Kaduna, Adamawa, Zamfara, Oyo, Imo, Cross-River and Enugu. The incursion by Fulani herdsmen is the second greatest security challenge confronting Nigeria. The attacks by the herdsmen on the sedentary communities have been increasing with each passing day [6]. In most cases, communal conflicts between Fulani herdsmen and host communities usually arise when grazing cattle are not properly controlled and consequently graze on cultivated plants like cassava, maize etc. in farms of host communities. Attempts by the owners of such farms to register their grievance of destruction of their livelihood (food crops and cash crops) by the cattle of Fulani herdsmen is always stoutly resisted thereby degenerating into communal conflicts. Host communities sometimes register their grievances by placing restrictions on movement and grazing of cattle in designated areas and enforcing compliance through coercive measures decreed by the host community vigilante which may take the shape of killing stray cattle or arresting and prosecution defaulters. When the communities attempt to moderate their activities or request their exit, the Fulani herdsmen become aggressive and attack the host community sometimes with the assistance of hired mercenaries. Fulani herdsmen normally attack their target communities at the time they are most susceptible such as mid-night or prayer days, when they are in their churches, incessantly killing people with sophisticated weapons, looting properties and burning houses. Much of the very violent and heavy casualty communal conflicts triggered by Fulani Herdsmen occur in the Middle-Belt of Nigeria in general and Benue State in particular. In the case of Benue State there have been highly devastating conflicts that have claimed so much lives and properties engendered by Fulani Herdsmen in communities of local government areas such as Agatu,

Guma, Gwer West, Makurdi, Kwande, Katsina-Ala and Loggo. The communal conflicts orchestrated by Fulani herdsmen in Benue State had claimed the lives of more than 5000 victims in the first half of year 2014. The victims include women and children and they sacked more than 100 communities and have thrown thousands of refugees into Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camp located Makurdi. Earlier more than 200 people were killed by Fulani Herdsmen in the Shengev community in Gwer West Local Government Council with strange substance that looks like bio-chemical weapons [7]. What this means is that their sophistication and combat readiness is increasing by the day as they are apparently armed not just with AK47 rifles but with strange weapons. Very recently, precisely March 2016, more than 10 communities in Agatu Local Government were razed down to the rubbles and more than 500 lives lost in what David Mark (Former Senate President) described as “genocide against his people” by Fulani Herdsmen [7].

The high casualties associated with these conflicts have attracted the attention of Human Rights Watch. Human Rights Watch in December said clashes in the nation's central region had killed 3,000 people since 2010 [8]. Their combat readiness and sophistication gives them the courage not only to attack host communities but to confront and attack constituted authorities that are heavily protected with state of the art military convoys. A scenario where the convoy of the Governor of Benue State (Gabriel Suswan) was ambushed and attacked by these herdsmen on his way from Tse-Akanyi village in Guma Local Government Area where he went to commiserate with the victims of conflict with Fulani Herdsmen elucidates the picture better. The fact that Governor Gabriel Suswan eventually summoned an emergency security council meeting and solicited the intervention of the international community showed that communal conflicts perpetrated by Fulani herdsmen in Benue State is getting out of control. This is corroborated by [7] when he posits that: “earlier this month, some local Governments in Benue State were savagely attacked by suspected Fulani herdsmen who killed hundreds of people, torched houses, sacked some communities and occupied them.”

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

alternatives. There have been a number of crisis in Wukari with gruesome murders of dozens of people and wanton destruction of property. In Wukari, Taraba State that about 77 people lost their lives during the crises between some Fulani herdsmen and the indigenous people and more than 40 other people were getting treatment for various degrees of injuries sustained because of the attacks by Fulani Herdsmen [7].

In Kaduna State the story is not different as Fulani Herdsmen cause communal conflicts. According to [7], “Rampaging gun men suspected to be Fulani herdsmen on Tuesday killed about 123 people in seven villages in Sanga local government area of Kaduna state in an onslaught which started on Monday night.” The invaders had earlier slaughtered 38 people in sporadic attacks on Kabamu and Ankpong villages. Although subsiding, the crisis that tore communities of Plateau State apart in violent conflicts with gruesome murders was not unconnected to the siege by Fulani Herdsmen. Recently it was Zamfara state where more than 200 villagers were killed by Fulani herdsmen in an orgy of violent attacks that lasted for three days. Some of the worst hit communities are Dansadau and Yargaladima village in Dansadau Emirate of Maru Local government area.

Eastern Nigeria is not left out in the onslaught of Fulani Herdsmen with respect to communal conflicts. Some communities of Enugu State are also under siege. As the case in other instances, the crisis is caused by the indiscriminate search for cattle pastures by the Fulani herdsmen. In the process they encroach on farm lands and their cattle destroy food crops and cash crops. Instead of these herdsmen to take responsibility for the destructions caused by their cattle they confront and challenge farm owners expressing their plight. Such challenges get heated and leads to conflicts which creates great insecurity to host communities because the herdsmen are said to be well armed. In the case of Ezeagu Local Government Area of Enugu State consisting of more than forty communities, the aggression and violent activities of Fulani herdsmen have grounded agricultural and economic activities in most of the communities. The superior arms wielded by the invading herdsmen render the local vigilante group helpless. The herdsmen are armed with AK47 rifles and the government is obviously not doing enough to checkmate the trend. People no longer go to the farm nor sleep well at night for fear of aggressive attacks in Ezeagu community by the herdsmen. The situation is very pathetic and can cause economic depression in the area. Very recently the menace posed by Fulani Herdsmen with respect to communal conflicts would have engulfed the Obimma Community, in Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State but for the intervention of the State Governor. Evidently the herdsmen were harassing farmers and their cattle

destroying cash crops and food crops in Obimma Community. The decisive intervention of the governor saved the community from the scourge of Fulani herdsmen which nearly degenerated into full blown conflict. The attacks are sometimes shrouded in mystery and diabolism [7]. A situation where a multitude of community men are held helplessly captive and slaughtered without any resistance or gun shots depicts elements of clairvoyance. This is because “most of the persons that were slain by their assailants during the crisis at Ayilamo were captured with little or no resistance... to prove this there were no bullet wounds on some of the bodies that were recovered” [7]. This mysterious picture is illuminated on account that most of the men that were captured alive by the Fulani herdsmen were physically strong and well-armed community warriors. Invariably the Fulani herdsmen are very powerful and highly endowed with subjugating and conquering skills. They adopt these skills to survive the challenges of the different communities they migrate to for purposes of pasturing their herds.

The magnitude of attacks on host communities by Fulani herdsmen assumes such a sophisticated dimension that more often than not the host communities are overwhelmed by their might. This is reminiscent of warfare waged by highly sophisticated warriors. The most pathetic issue is the gruesome manner in which attacks are carried out.

Causes of the Incessant Fulani Herdsmen Attack

A lot of reasons have been adduced for the Fulani herdsmen attacks. Some of which are itemised below:

- Destruction of crops by cattle and other property (reservoirs, irrigational facilities and infrastructure) by the herdsmen
- Burning of rangelands and blockage of stock routes and water points
- Increasing rate of cattle theft which, is often accompanied by violence.
- Antagonistic perceptions and beliefs among farmers and herdsmen could compound conflict situation, especially due to failing institutions and fierce competition for resources [9].

In support of above claim, Ingawa, Ega, and Erhabor [10] reported that the key underlying causes of farmer-herdsmen conflict in Nigeria are:

- Decline in internal discipline and social cohesion, as the adherence to the traditional rules regarding grazing periods, and the authority of the traditional rulers is breaking down. This is exacerbated by increased rent seeking of the formal and traditional authorities in managing resource access.
- Particularly severe on the traditional trek routes, which become favourite cropping sites because of their better soil fertility resulting from the concentration of animal manure from the trekking

herds in these areas. Within the fadama areas, this is exacerbated by the fragmented nature of the crop plots, which makes prevention of animals straying in the crop plots difficult.

- Inadequacy of grazing resources, as increasing crop cultivation (and increasing commercialization of the crop-residues) and poor management of the existing grazing reserves have resulted in a significant reduction in available livestock feed resources, in particular in the Northern States.
- Moreover the high value crops introduced by NFDP (tomatoes and onions) produce almost no crop-residues for livestock feeding.
- Finally, the regulation that twenty per cent of the fadama would need to be set aside for grazing

Ubelejit [7] identifies Climate Change and its effects as precipitator of the conflicts. The most fundamental reason why Fulani Herdsmen migrate to other areas is because of desert encroachment (desertification) of the Sahel region caused by climate change. A lot of communities are heavily dependent on natural resources and it is also very crucial for individual wellbeing. Climate change significantly undermines individual livelihoods and community growth thereby undermining the capacity of state to provide social services and economic opportunities requisite for state development and stability. The lack of opportunities to sustain livelihood makes indigenes of such communities very susceptible to conflicts.

Climate change has the potentials of triggering severe disruptions with disastrous consequences for the people. Famines, droughts, and climate-change related disasters could claim thousands or even millions of lives and aggravate existing strains within and among communities. Climate change not only triggers communal conflicts but can engender state failure. Climatic factors have given rise to water related hazards; lack of water causes draughts and excess of water causes floods, high tidal water causes salinity and acidity in soil. This impact negatively on land causing food scarcity and energy depletion, thereby making people to migrate and this spiralling into communal conflicts.

More often than not the catastrophes of climate change degenerate into cutthroat rivalries which causes ethnic conflicts and sometimes religious crisis. This is because there is the tendency of groups bound together by ethnicity or creed to gang up against other groups with a view to protecting their interest on the negative impacts of climate change. Whatever direction the pendulum swings climate change is a major contributor to communal conflict in Nigeria and other third world countries. The Fulani herdsmen are completely dependent on resources of the natural environment and this makes them go all out to get these resources thereby making them susceptible to resistance when

they fight back and communal conflicts tantamount. In a related development Valerie [11] noted that “Water is a key resource for sustaining life and society through agricultural production, industry, and hydropower, as well as health and human development at large. No community and economy will prevail without water of sufficient quality and quantity. Water and security are basically interconnected in two ways: Resource crisis can occur over water, especially if the amount available is grossly inadequate and competition increases; Water insufficiency can influence human security and possibly lead to instability, migration, and amplified resource competition.” This is supported by Gareth [12] who noted that in “developing countries, one of the greatest environmental threats is to water. Today, the world’s supply of water per capita is only one-third of what it was in 1970. Water scarcity is increasingly becoming a factor in ethnic strife and political tension.” It is also estimated that approximately 1.4 billion people are living in areas with acute water scarcity. It is predicted that an estimated 5 billion people, who constitutes what is about the current world population, could be living in water-stressed locations by 2025 [13]. In another vein, Valerie [11] noted that “fragile and weak states are not only less capable of adapting to climatic change but also managing and controlling conflicts peacefully. As a consequence, Africa is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, as its ability to cope with the adverse impacts remains low.” Most Fulani communities are in the Sahel zone which has been taken over by desertification thereby compelling the Fulani herdsmen to migrate towards coastal areas in search of pasture and water.

Migration is a rational drive imposed on Fulani herdsmen by climatic conditions Ubelejit [7]. This is succinctly subscribed to by Flavell [14] who said that in the initial stages of environmental degradation, migration can signify a logical and lawful livelihood diversification alternative. It is an adaptation approach for affected people to mitigate the effects of environmental hazards and climate change. “When environmental degradation becomes severe...migration can become permanent and may require relocation of affected populations, either internally or in another country” [14]. This is what is happening in Plateau State, Benue State, Taraba State etc. Ostensibly, these migrations would generate discontent, attrition and conflicts. Climate change impacts abroad could trigger massive migration of people, incite civil conflict and ultimately generate more conflicts and crisis in the world. Change in weather patterns is the causal factor of drought and famine gives rise to shortages in food. The rural-to-urban migration of people exacerbates water scarcity and competition for resources there from [15, 7].

The major alternative is to migrate to other countries and face the consequences. The case of Fulani

herdsmen is a perfect illustration of such migrations. Because of persistent droughts and desertification in the Northern part of Nigeria, most Fulani herdsmen have migrated South in search of green pastures for their cattle. “In terms of migration, the influx of migrants into new areas has been a significant factor in many “environmental conflicts ...large migrations have at times lead to violent conflict, and large migrations may be a consequence of climate change” [16]. This is also the case with Fulani herdsmen whose migration has been causing a lot of violent conflicts for the host communities Ubelejit [7].

A nexus between the Incessant Fulani Herdsmen and Inter-ethno-religious Relations in Nigeria

The minority Question in Nigeria politics had fuelled separatist tendencies among the diverse (more than 250) ethnic groups or nationalities in Nigeria [17]. Thus the emergence of the minority question is linked to the creation of Nigeria’s forcible integration into the international capitalist system as a colonial state by British imperialism [18]. Emphasising the colonial origin of the minority question in Nigeria, Obi [17] contends that:

The political economy of the British Imperialism had the following effects: the creation of a centralised state form for diverse groups of peoples with equally diverse cultures, historical experiences and stages of development; the manipulation of these diversities by the British to prevent any form of unity or national integration, thus preserving the contradiction between the colonial state and the ‘new’ nation.

The contradiction between the colonial state and the ‘new’ Nigerian nation articulated itself, not only in form of inter-group relation, majority-minority group relations, but more fundamentally over the political contestation for access to resources within the colonial political economy. Obi [17] capturing the connection between the creation of the colonial state and the evolution of ethnic nationalities observes that:

...nationalities began to identify themselves as such first in the context of colonial state, and then in the context of the Nigerian multinational state, as they were forced by changing circumstances of history to act politically in defence of their perceived interests vis-a-vis the interest of other competing groups.

The politicisation of inter-ethnic group relations often referred to as the national question is tied to the social relations a pawned by the mode of colonial capitalist accumulation and the inequalities sown between ethnic groups by the differential rate of capitalist penetration. In terms of the patron-client relations that sustained this mode of peasant expropriation, and unequal trade, the majority ethnic groups using the advantage of demography and ‘acting

politically' were able to marginalise the other competing minority ethnic groups within the framework of the three regions: Northern, Eastern and Western. Since each of the three regions in Nigeria coincided with a majority ethnic nationality, it established a basis for future distrust, fear of domination and instability in the Nigerian federation [17].

Cattle herding is dominated almost entirely by the Fulani tribe and who are mostly Muslims in Nigeria. Though, most Fulani men herd cattle well pass the middle age, herding is dominated by the youths, while decisions about grazing are mainly made by the elderly family members [9]. During migration, a typical herd consisting of several family units move in a column of up to five meters wide and two kilometers long. And by the time it passes any given point, 'everything that stands at that point is destroyed'. The herding season begins with southward movement of the herd and along rivers and stream valleys from October to December – marking the end of rainy season and beginning of dry season. January to February is the harmattan season that is characterized by longer grazing hours, herd splitting, and more frequent visits to stable water sources. These thus increase southward movement of the herds. The months of March and April are usually the toughest for the herdsman and his cattle, as it is the hottest period in the grazing calendar. Indeed, he now herds his cattle only in the evenings and nights [9]. May and June signify the end of dry season and vegetation begins to appear. This also marks the beginning of northward movement of cattle herds. From this period up till September, which is the peak of rainy season, though characterized by cattle breeding, more milk production and shorter grazing hours, cattle herding coincides significantly with arable crop production. Farmer-herdsmen conflict therefore becomes prevalent during this period.

As well stated above, more worrisome is the ethno-religious dimension of the conflict. The consistent attacks of the predominantly Christian Farmers and communities by the predominantly pastoralist Fulani herdsmen has really caused for global concern. What makes the herdsmen attack unique is that the attacks/atrocities are now carried out in various parts of the country: North, South, East, West and Centre unabated. The leadership of the Catholic Diocese of Kafanchan in Kaduna state observed that a total 808 people were killed in 53 villages across the four local government of the state bedevilled by the herdsmen crisis. Equally, 1,422 houses and 16 churches were burnt down during the attack Daily Trust, 2016.

Adding to the religious and territorial tension is the crisis of refugee that has been created. Many communities are displaced by the herdsmen and the villagers are in perpetual exile. The federal Government has been inadequate to curb the menace. People are now

agitated and the call for the structuring of the country has now resonated. Famine, hunger and starvation now loom in the country as the farmers cannot return to their farms. Many cannot return to their farms in southern Kaduna and Riyom Local Government Council in Plateau state and other parts of the country. The inability of the Nigerian government to remove the cattle herdsmen who are predominantly Muslims from the villages and farmlands belonging to predominantly Christians has added to the fact that the federal government has made an hitherto personal cattle rearing a state business and claims that the Muslims have backing of the government to technically wiped out both the ethnic tribes and Christians as a religion and spread Islam.

Socio-Political and Economic Effects of Fulani Herdsmen Activities

The impacts of the herdsmen activities on the people affected, the state and the country at large can only be underestimated. The attacks whenever happens, goes along with varying degree of psycho-socio-political and economic effects on the people. Bello [9] in his study "Herdsmen and Farmers Conflicts in North-Eastern Nigeria: Causes, Repercussions and Resolutions" which was based on Yobe state, opined that:

Most respondents suffered various repercussions as a result of their mutual conflict. The Loss of material resources were, however, more widespread among farmers. Income loss had the highest relative incidence (92.4%) among farmers, followed by loss of yield (79%), household resources (26.5%) and stored products (27.3%). On the part of herdsmen, losses – whether material or not, were minimal. In point of fact, 13.6%, 26.7%, 4.1%, and 3.6% of herdsmen claimed to have suffered losses in respect of their, income, yield, stored products and household resources respectively. However, concerning non-material resources, 21.9% of self-esteem, and 22.2% of quality of relationship herdsmen suffered in losses. These figures in respect of herdsmen were generally far less than those for farmers, meaning that farmers experienced more losses than the herdsmen. Repercussions on both sides ranged from physical, economic, to socio-psychological [9].

Both farmers and herdsmen suffered several negative socio-psychological consequences relating to their respective family lives. It could be due to the fact that whatever happens at work could affect what happens at home. It is hardly possible to find a frustrated person at work that is energized at home. These effects were, however, found to be more pronounced among the farmers than herdsmen, probably due to the fact that farmers suffered more losses than herdsmen [9].

Economically, it is difficult to place the unquantifiable loss attended to the conflict monetarily or otherwise.

Other socio-economic effect of the conflicts can be itemised as bellow:

- Reduction in output and income of crops. This comes as a result of the destruction of crops and indiscriminate burning.
- Displacement of farmers and families. In most cases, many farmers are displaced and become refugees.
- Land degradation. Consistent grazing and the movement of the cattle worsen the quality of the soil and make the land bad for cultivation.
- Loss of lives. This is unquantifiable, because once there is an attack; countless number of people is affected: children, women, aged and young. Some people are badly injured or maimed.
- Loss of the spirit of integration of Nigerian tribes or ethnic groups, mutual respect, understanding and peaceful co-existence.

It is important to know that whenever it happens and whatever the causes of Fulani herdsmen-farmers conflicts are, it is evident that the conflicts have been of great negative repercussion.

- These range from economic repercussions such as loss of income/resources/yield.
- Physical such as home/farm destruction, bodily injury or death of family member.
- Socio-psychological repercussions such as emotional exhaustion
- The social, economic and political tensions created as a result of numerous escalations of violent conflicts have raised fundamental national questions for the survival of the Nigerian State. The failure of the state to manage and resolve such conflicts has put a question mark on the suitability or relevance of the federal structure to the Nigerian reality [9].

Importantly, the inter-ethnic socio-political and economic relation in the country is seriously undermined and tension of outbreak of interethnic war is looming. Inability to nip the conflict in the bud may snowball a serious conflagration of the polity.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The activities of the Fulani herdsmen are alarming with unquantifiable loss of lives and property. The ethno-religious dimension of the conflict between the herdsmen and the farmers' is more worrisome as this is challenging the basic fabric of the country. The hitherto, peaceful coexistence is now at the precipice. Various reasons have been adduced for the clashes; some of which are: destruction of farmlands which stems as the need to feed the cattle arises; climate

change etc. Whatever the causes, the attendant psycho-socio-political and economic implication of the conflicts are unquantifiable in loss of lives and property. The indivisibility of the country is threatened. History of civil war is waiting to be repeated.

For continuous harmonious inter-ethnic coexistence and security between Fulani herdsmen and farmers the following way out should be adhere to:

- Government must make policies that are designed to enhance the Fulani herdsmen by ensuring that they secure rights to land use in order to reduce insecurity and mitigate the spate of conflicts. This will, among other things, bring about peaceful coexistence between the Fulani herdsmen and host communities. This also enhances the security of the cattle, to access grazing space or resources without pouncing on farmers' crops.
- Law on the grazing reserve should be amended and improve upon.
- For a sustainable peace to reign there must be a deliberate design to enlighten and mobilize the parties in conflict to understand the ecology and the resources available in the localities. This opens a window for interdependence and complementary among groups in the optimal use of the resources for collective benefit and equitable access.
- The State Government should make herdsmen keep to the agreed routes and farmers avoid farming across them with stern government policy and strict compliance.
- Factors associated with the conflicts must be properly appreciated and managed by appropriate institutions involved in the conflict resolutions. Hence, local governance in the conflict must not be over looked. Traditional strategies may be combined with the emerging ones. This relates on how communities create local structures and networks for the purposes of engagement, participation, inclusiveness, mutual partnership and transformation of the environment through equity in resource utilization.
- Structures must be created for and by communities generate networks and feedback by ensuring that people relate to each other amicably for common use of resources and ensure a safety first principle in cattle grazing movements and pasture as well as crop production [9].
- There should be legislation to remedy the effect of desertification in the Sahel region and other Fulani communities. Government should come up with policies to create grazing reserves and dams for pasture and water in states that are predominantly Fulani so that they don't stray long distances in search of pastures.
- The government should rid the country of proliferation of small arms. The government and the

law enforcement agents should outlaw the herdsmen procession of arms and ammunitions.

- Open grazing should also be banned. Individuals should provide ranches for their cattle. The herdsmen should be educated in the modern ways of rearing cattle especially in the best and modern way in accordance to the global best practices. Lessons can be learnt from the practices in the South Africa, Brazil and other developed countries.
- A Special Inter-Religious Commission should be set up by the government. Whose duty will be primarily to interface with the community leaders, herdsmen associations and religious groups. This will largely be involved in education and enlightenment of the people or groups involved in the conflict. The Commission should also be saddled with the responsibility of preaching peace and tolerance between the farmers and herdsmen and various religious groups: Muslims and Christians alike.

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