

# Fulani Herdsmen Crisis and the Socioeconomic Development of Benue State, Nigeria

OTU OFFIONG DUKE\*, DICKSON DAVID AGBAJI\*\*

\*Department of Public Administration, University of Calabar, Nigeria

\*\*Yenching Academy of Peking University, Beijing, China.

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**Abstract**– Every government’s responsibility remains that of pursuing and sustaining the security and wellbeing of its citizens and its territory against internal and external aggressions. However, Nigeria experiences several political and socio-economic challenges and violent conflicts which threaten her socio-economic development, peace, and security. Youth restiveness and resource control struggles in the Niger Delta region, the neo-Biafran secessionist movement of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in the southeastern region, and the Boko Haram’s mayhem in the northeast are quintessential cases of violent conflicts in Nigeria. Still, another internal security challenge is brewing in Nigeria’s Middle Belt region; epitomized in the Fulani Herdsmen communal clashes in the region. This study examined the political violence in Benue, Nigeria, to ascertain its impact on the sustenance of socioeconomic development and national security in Nigeria. It argued that several factors account for the crisis from climate change to desertification and ethnoreligious issues and that on the government seems less dedicated to solving the menace.

**Keywords**– Fulani herdsmen, development, national security, conflicts, Benue State.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Every government’s responsibility remains that of pursuing and sustaining the security and wellbeing of its citizens and its territory against internal and external aggressions. However, as Duke, Agbaji and Bassey (2017) purported, since her independence from Britain on October 1, 1960, Nigeria experiences several political and socio-economic challenges and violent conflicts which threaten her socio-economic development, peace, and security. Youth restiveness and resource control struggles in the Niger Delta region, the neo-Biafran secessionist movement of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in the southeastern region, and the Boko Haram’s mayhem in the northeast are quintessential cases of violent conflicts in Nigeria. Still, according to SB Morgen Intelligence (2015:4), “another internal security challenge is brewing in Nigeria’s Middle Belt region.” This is the menace of communal violence epitomized in the Fulani Herdsmen communal clashes in the region.

Benue State is a largely Tiv community in the Middle Belt suffering, in alarming proportions, from the jeopardy posed by the Fulani Herdsmen in the different locations they migrate to for purposes of grazing their cattle. Some scholars like Akevi (2014) and Ubelejit (2016) posited that the herders’ perpetuated violence is Nigeria’s second greatest security challenge. According to Ubelejit (2016), the herders’ tendency to occupy the land and farm owners of the sites they graze their cattle increases daily as they update their arsenal with highly sophisticated weapons. Fulani herdsmen violence poses a serious threat to the legitimacy of Nigeria’s federal system. The violence in the Tiv community has heightened to the point where it can be said that socioeconomic improvements have been sacrificed on the altar of underdevelopment. These tragic conflicts carry with them additional dangers that if not checked, borrowing from Oravee (2015) may spread and result in a Tiv and Fulani Herdsmen holocaust. To that extent, therefore, this study examines the phenomenon of political violence in Benue, Nigeria, to ascertain the impact this is having on the sustenance of socioeconomic development and national security of the area.

## II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Benue is one of Nigeria’s most resource-endowed States with a large landmass. Popularly called ‘Nigeria’s Food Basket’, Benue’s vast and fertile landmass ordinarily, ought to be an advantage as it can fast-track rapid socio-economic development, especially in terms of space for agricultural practices; but the reverse seems to be the case, with the upsurge in violent crimes in recent times. This affects the security of lives and property in the different communities of the State. Since the past decade, the major security challenge confronting the region is the Fulani herdsmen communal clashes. This unfortunate development is gradually killing Benue’s major

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industry, rice milling (Akighir, Ngutsav & Asom, 2011), thus, triggering an evolving national food crisis and upsetting the socioeconomic structure of the community – increasing poverty and unemployment. Also, the crisis disrupts crop planting, animal rearing, and flow of (agricultural) investments since no investor would prefer to invest in a crisis-ridden community. This is bad for economic security because when businesses are shut-down, the wealth the economy generated per individual (i.e., nominal GDP per capita) diminishes as well (Chandra & Bhonsle, 2015).

More so, figures of the number of people who have lost their lives and are displaced, and the amount of property and livestock lost as a resultant impact of the Fulani herdsmen conflagrations in Benue State is frightening. Thousands of people have become refugees in their own country leading to as many social problems as starvation, illiteracy, high mortality rate, and spread of diseases.

Given the foregoing, the study can be summarized in the following questions:

1. What is the nature of political violence in Benue State?
2. What are the impacts of political violence in Benue State?
3. What strategies is the government applying to curtail the menace of political violence in Benue State?

### III. LITERATURE REVIEW

While Nigeria and the world focus attention on the actions of the movement known as Boko Haram, another internal security challenge is brewing in Nigeria's Middle Belt region and Benue State in particular. This security challenge is epitomized in the Fulani herdsmen clashes with the rural farming communities in Nigeria's north-central region. According to SBMI (2015), unlike the more high profile and internationally recognized Boko Haram insurgency, the Fulani herdsmen violence in the Middle Belt is under-reported in both the domestic and international media, and the government's response to it has been a sort of denial that this conflict exists, with senior government officials preferring to focus on Boko Haram.

Owing to the seasonal southward migration of Fulani herdsmen, they usually enter into contention with indigenous people of the Middle Belt region for farmland. This contention bordered on the destruction of their crops by the cattle of the Fulani herdsmen, and the theft or rustling of livestock by the farming communities. Inevitably, while the natives complained and attacked the herders, the herders recourse to organized violence. This marked a transition away from the original lifestyle of the herders. Akinyetun (2016) called this transition the change of occupational tactics: staff to a gun. Akinyetun (2016:39) explained that:

*The Fulani in the course of carrying out their pastoral nomadic activities has been seen to have changed tactics from mere land grazing to barrel-induced-land grazing. In short, the spate of killing and kidnappings as perpetuated by the Fulani nomads calls for great concern before this fetus is given birth to and culminates into another sect, or plunges the country into a primitive, primordial and pedestrian state of nastiness, solitary and brute.*

The attacks by the farming communities and reprisal attacks by the herders led to several fatalities on both sides. Ubelejit (2016) argued that the communal conflicts orchestrated by Fulani herdsmen in Benue State claimed the lives of more than 5000 victims in the first half of 2014. The herdsmen sacked more than 100 communities; throwing thousands of refugees into internally displaced person camps located in Makurdi. Also, Abdulbarkindo and Alupsen (2017) opined that a total of 853 people lost their lives just in the period between January 2014 and March 2014 alone. Of the 853 deaths: Fulani herdsmen claimed to have lost 214 people (in addition to 3200 cows), an estimated 633 Tiv people were killed (excluding women and children who died later in camps), and six government soldiers were also killed.

The killings were indiscriminate, with everyone as targets, regardless of age, gender or class. This is because 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 case in point was the event where the convoy of the Governor of Benue State, Gov. Gabriel Suswan, was ensnared and attacked by 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 (Ubelejit, 2016; SBMI, 2015).

The fundamental question now is: how do these herders get their weapons? From the information derived from the interviews organized with victims, security officials and senior government functionaries, Abdulbarkindo and Alupsen (2017) noted that the herdsmen were involved in transporting small arms into Benue State using cows and donkeys. Sometimes these weapons were hidden in sacks of grain, beans and rice transported on the back of donkeys as they move from place to place. They further added that according to some military sources, some of the herdsmen use Hilux Jeeps and motorcycles to carry out their attacks. The weapons in use include AK-47 assault rifles, homemade rifles, handguns and Molotov cocktails (Abdulbarkindo & Alupsen, 2017; Akinyetun, 2016; ICG, 2017).

Furthermore, it is believed that there are some religious connotations to the violence. Abdulbarkindo and Alupsen (2017) were of the view that:

*Thousands of churches have been destroyed and thousands of Christians have been killed, displaced or injured. Like conventional terrorist organizations, Islamic radical sects and jihadi groups, the ideology of the Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen goes beyond the mere feeding of sheep and the search for greener pastures. It is inevitably linked to the program of Dawah (the propagation and expansion of Islam). It is based on the ideology... "Komai na Allah ne. Ko wane fili na Allah ne, ba naku ba, ba na kafirai ba, na Allah ne" (Translation: Everything belongs to Allah. Every piece of land belongs to Allah and not you, it is not for you infidels but Allah). The use of the name Allah supports specifically the Islamic concept of God, and the obligation for Muslims to do his will.*

Evidence suggests that Christians are being targeted for violence on the account of their faith. According to the fieldwork by the Africa Conflict and Security Analysis Network (ACSAN) and the data collected from Benue State Emergency Management Agency (BSEMA) and Young Professional Association in Makurdi (in Abdulbarkindo & Alupsen, 2017), the estimated number of Christians killed and injured in Benue State between 2014 and 2016 were 4194 and 2597 respectively. The same groups reported that the estimated number of Christian homes and churches reported damaged or destroyed in Benue State between 2014 and 2016 were 195,576 and 30 respectively.

The Fulani herdsmen crisis, deemed only less deadly than Boko Haram, the Islamic State (IS) and Al-Shabaab globally (David, 2016), affects the socio-economic development of the Nigerian State. According to the studies carried out by Nweze (2005), Okereke (2012), Bello (2013) and Ajibefun (2018), the major social effect of the menace of Fulani herdsmen are loss of human life, sexual harassment of human life, small arms proliferation, sour national social relationship, and high cases of rape, among others. Likewise, Ajibefun (2018) discovered that the major implications of the Fulani herdsmen menace were the reduction in output and income of farmers/nomads, loss of produce in storage, displacement of farmers, scarcity of agricultural products, loss of house and properties and infrastructural damages. Likewise, in a 2015 study carried out by Mercy Corps (cited in ICG, 2017), the Fulani herdsmen violence accounted for the federal government's loss of \$13.7 billion in revenue annually because of herder-farmer conflicts in Benue, Kaduna, Nasarawa and Plateau states. The study further found that on average, these states lost 47% of their internally-generated revenues.

Duke and Agbaji (2018) have argued that violent conflicts lead to refugee crises in the affected regions. McGregor (2017) opined that the violence led to poor security of human and property. With little protection offered by state security services against the incessant violence, many farmers have begun abandoning their plots to seek safety elsewhere, leading to food shortages, depopulation of fertile land, and further damage to an already fragile economy. So, Isola (2018) argued that those remaining in the villages are afraid to travel to farms in remote locations due to fear of violence from herdsmen. The implication of this situation is ominous on food production. There are already reports that prices of foodstuff have increased in some of the affected states while refugee problems have escalated.

The reasons for this violence are myriad. They range from encroachment on farmland, cattle rustling, scarcity of freshwater, age-long disagreements, to climate change. Be that as it may, this has created a volatile situation where the herders who were known to only walk around with bows and arrows and daggers now carry sophisticated weaponry like AK-47 and assault rifles; using these to raid villages and agrarian communities leaving a high death toll and massive displacement of denizens of attacked and neighbouring communities in the wake of their attacks. Owing to the foregoing, the Global Terrorism Index (2015) described the herdsmen as the world's fourth deadliest militant group.

According to Abass (2012), the major source of tensions between pastoralists and farmers is economic, with land-related issues accounting for the majority of the conflicts. This can then be situated within the broader context of the political economy of land struggle, traceable to burgeoning demography in which there is fierce competition for fixed space to meet the demands of the growing population of man and animal (especially sheep, goats and cattle) alike.

Nwekede, Nwankwo, Aro and Dauda (2018) mentioned that the causes of the herders-farmers clashes involve several factors which they explain to include the maladministered government's pastoralist policy. This involved the usurpation of designated grazing reserves across the 19 Northern states by politicians who saw the reserves as lucrative, thereby, creating a shortage of land, water and other resources. Others problems include environmental degradation arising from desertification and the shrinking of Lake Chad Basin which forces many pastoralists' communities to move further into areas outside the regular pastoral routes. Also, existing cattle rustling militias and other criminal elements prompt the proliferation of small and light weapons leading to bloody herders-farmers attacks and stimulating allegations that the herders have links to Boko Haram, ISIS, and Al-Shabaab (Nwekede et al, 2018).

Furthermore, Ahmadu and Ayuba (2018) classified the causes of violence into two: remote; and immediate causes. The remote cause of violence between herders and farmers can be seen in the general deteriorating fortunes of pasture in some parts of Sub-Saharan Africa since the early 1990s. according to Ahmadu and Ayuba (2018:35), this cause arises from:

*...the effects of desertification, land degradation, unstable rainfall and other climatic factors, 'pushed' the Fulani pastoralist to abandon their respective traditional ecological range in the neighbouring countries of Chad, Niger and Cameroon republics, and moved inwards into Northern part of Nigeria. This led to increasing demand for land, water and pasture. Besides, major agricultural expansion programs (Fadama Program and River Basins irrigation projects) also contributed to shrinking lands for both pastoralism and sedentarism which led to competition over limited land and pastures.*

On the other hand, the immediate causes include the deliberate attitudes of farmers and herders alike towards themselves. For instance, the herders contaminate water by dragging their cattle into water ponds while farmers poison the water ponds with harmful insecticides intentionally meant for killing herds to prevent pastoralists from contaminating their only source of water. Another point is cattle rustling and violent attacks on the herders by criminal elements who view them as invaders of the host communities. This has resulted in the herders carrying sophisticated arms and ammunition to protect themselves and their cattle. Given all of these, Ahmadu and Ayuba (2018) believe that group solidarity – in the form of collective action to defend and attack – is the major precipitator of violent acts between herders and farmers.

More so, while seeing the rainy season as the intense period of clashes between the herders and farmers owing to the availability of arable land, Imo (2017:49) identifies other factors that cause violence to include:

*climate changes, the migration further south, the growth of agro-pastoralism, the expansion of farming on pastures, the invasion of farmlands by cattle, assault on non-Fulani women by herders, blockage of stock routes and water points, freshwater scarcity, burning of rangelands, cattle theft, inadequate animal health care and disease control, overgrazing on fallow lands, defecation on streams and roads by cattle, extensive sedentarisation, ineffective coping strategies, ethnic stereotyping, and the breakdown of conflict intervention mechanisms as the root causes of such violence in rural areas.*

#### IV. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopted Johan Galtung's (1969) models of conflict, violence and peace. He opined that conflict could be viewed as a triad construct, with a manifest and visible 'behavioural' component (B) linked to two latent and invisible 'Attitude' or 'Assumption' (A) and 'Contradiction' (C) components. Thus, we can only talk about having a violent conflict when all components are available. Contradiction refers to the underlying conflict situation, which includes the actual or perceived 'incompatibility of goals' (and ways of attaining the goals) between the conflicting parties generated by what Galtung (in Ogo-Oluwa, 2017) called a 'mismatch between social values and social structure'. Attitude or assumptions includes the 'perceptions and misperceptions, the fear and the prejudice held by the antagonistic groups. These attitudes tend to be negative, develops demeaning stereotypes against each conflicting groups, and are often influenced by emotions such as fear, anger, bitterness and/or hatred. For Demmers (2012), the manifest, empirical and observed side, behaviour, is the more spectacular and visible of the three and the one that attracts the most attention owing to its characteristic nature. It involves all-out threats, coercion, onslaught, violence, discrimination, and mayhem perpetrated by antagonistic groups.

According to Ogo-Oluwa (2017), Galtung saw 'conflict' as a dialectical and dynamic process in which structures, attitudes and behaviour are constantly changing and influencing one another. As the dynamic develops, it becomes a manifest conflict formation, as parties' interests clash or the relationship they are in becomes oppressive. Parties then organize around this structure to pursue their interests. This dialectical nature of violence is captured by Demmers (2012):

*A conflict spiral may, for instance, start in C. Let us say someone's access to land is blocked by someone else (C). This may be experienced as frustration (A), and this frustration may lead to aggression (B). In return, aggressive behaviour may bring a new contradiction into the relation (for instance, the aggressive behaviour of the frustrated party may be incompatible with the other party's concept of happiness). Hence, we have a new C, which may give rise to a new round of attitudes and behaviours, which may lead to new contradictions and so on. Violence breeds violence, and we may see an escalatory dynamics that runs its course like a fire: only stopping when the house is burnt down. Galtung describes how the parties may burn out in the A corner from emotional exhaustion, or in the B corner from physical fatigue. However, A and B may also be restrained, and the contradiction may be superseded.*

The relevance of this theory for the study is that it creates an understanding of the fact that the major contradictions or conflict of interest between farmers and Fulani herdsmen, on the one hand, are the destruction of farmlands, cattle's grazing and eating up farmer's crops, and on the other hand, the killing and rustling cattle's. This depicts the 'C' component of Galtung's analysis. These contradictions stand in the way of peaceful coexistence of the herders and the farmers resulting in the development of assumptions and attitudinal dispositions which can fuel clashes. In this vein, the ethnoreligious category of the herder's prompted the farmers to perceive the herders to be Boko Haram affiliates, as such enemies or threats to their land that must be avoided or hindered from entering the land. This epitomizes the 'A' component of Galtung's analysis. Incompatible goals, measures for attaining the goals and stereotypic assumptions, suspicion, and resentments all interact to create a chain reaction of violent outbursts. The opposing groups now rally round their ideas of truism – their interests or goals – as justifications for the execution of violent conflagrations. According to Ogo-Oluwa (2017:6):

*...this is when we see cattle's been killed by groups of farmers for destroying crops and herdsmen retaliate by destroying properties. They develop hostile attitudes and conflictual behaviour... And so the conflict formation starts to grow and intensify. As it does so, it may widen, drawing in other parties, deepen and spread, generating secondary conflicts within the main parties or among outsiders who get sucked in. This often considerably complicates the task of addressing the original, core conflict.*

## V. IMPACTS OF THE FULANI HERDSMEN VIOLENCE ON THE SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

Violent conflagrations between Fulani herdsmen and crop farmers in several Nigerian agrarian communities waning national insecurity. These violent conflicts impact the socio-economic and political development of the nation as well as the trends of relationships between different ethnic nationalities in Nigeria. One of the first consequences is the loss of human lives: Fulani herdsmen violence usually leads to the loss of human and animal lives. SB Morgen Intelligence (2015) reported that over 30 persons were reportedly killed in Kwande, Katsina-Ala and Logo Local Government Areas of Benue State when suspected Fulani mercenaries dressed in military uniforms sacked 6 villages in the three council areas. Likewise, 18 people were said to have been killed at Tse Ibor, Tombo and Mbawa all in Logo Local Government Area, while another 7 were killed at Anyiase near Kashimbila in Kwande local government area.

In the following month, as Burton (2016) recorded, between April 5<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> of 2016, 4 people were killed by Fulani militants in Benue State, about 17 people in Taraba and 40 people in Enugu State. For Oli, Ibekwe and Nwankwo (2018), while the Fulani herdsmen claimed to have lost 214 people in addition to 3,200 cows, the Tiv people reportedly killed are estimated to be 633 excluding children and women who died in ramshackle camps in 2014. They add that about 458 deaths recorded and over 350 communities owned by the Tiv people in Guma, Gwer-West, Makurdi and other towns at the border with Taraba state have been ravaged by the violent herders and community denizens are now living in IDP camps.

Furthermore, the destruction of crops and animal is widespread. According to Oli et al (2018), more than 40 million worth of crops is usually lost annually due to invasion of cattle in the Middle Belt and South-South regions of Nigeria. This has not only created an impediment to the survival of the host communities but has forced many crop-farmers to abandon farming for occupations with a lesser impact on the nation's GDP growth like Okada riding (commercial motorcycling) and other artisan work. For instance, the unfortunate development of the Fulani herdsmen crisis is gradually killing Benue's major industry, rice milling (Akighir, et al, 2011), thus, triggering an evolving national food crisis and upsetting the socioeconomic structure of the community. Also, the crisis disrupts crop planting, animal rearing, and flow of (agricultural) investments since no investor would prefer to invest in a crisis-ridden community. Little wonder, in his analysis of the herders-farmers crisis, Imo (2017) revealed that the nomadic herdsmen suffer from material damages when the crop farmers inflict physical injuries on the cattle by using cutlasses, spears or guns or by poisoning the cattle.

More so, the violence has led to a humanitarian crisis and the displacement of people. The herders-farmers violence accelerates the massive displacement of the citizenry who attempt to flee for their lives the predatory and violent attacks perpetrated by the marauding herders. Thousands of people have become refugees in their own country leading to as many social problems as poverty, starvation, high mortality rate, and spread of diseases. There were reports of displaced farmers and herdsmen alike. Added to this are the cases of human right abuses, torture, raping, and kidnapping occurring within affected communities. For instance, the herders were attacking, kidnapping, torturing and killing communities' denizens. A case in point is the capture, torture and gruesome mutilation of Mr John Anule of Adaka community of Benue State in 2014 (SBMI, 2015).

Still, the result of the herders-farmers violence at the social level leads to mistrust and unhealthy prejudice between the Fulani ethnic nationals and crop farmers of the host communities. Burton (2016) noted that a large proportion of the Fulani people are entirely nomadic without any form of military training. So, the atrocities of the violent herders rubs-off on the personalities of the non-violent

ones causing a large scale prejudice, suspicion, anxiety and clashes against the Fulani ethnicity. According to Oli et al (2018), some persons have cited a Fulani expansionist agenda as being behind these attacks resulting from mistrust. A Twitter hashtag to that effect, #MAFO (Movement Against Fulani Occupation) was launched and there were allegations of possible government collusion in this perceived expansionist agenda.

Furthermore, added to the economic impacts are the academic impacts. Duke et al (2016) wrote that UNESCO estimates that Nigeria is home to 45% of the global school drop-out population and has 10.5 million children out of schools. Taking a cue from this, it may be safe to state here that the farmers-herders violence is increasing these numbers today because of the shutting down of all the schools in some states in Nigeria thereby leading Nigeria to mass illiteracy. As Oli et al (2018) wrote:

*...pupils and teachers ... were seen scattered in the premises under intense fear as herdsmen left their cattle to invade classrooms during learning session... That day's academic activities were not only truncated but also the psychological trauma experienced by the pupils that forcefully ran out of classrooms for fear of harm may not be quantified. The herdsmen were seen roaming the school premises and they left their cattle to move freely inside classrooms until the late intervention of some security personnel (Oli et al, 2018: 36-37).*

## VI. GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO ADDRESS THE FULANI HERDSMEN-FARMER CRISES

Anytime there is a massacre of people in a state by Fulani herdsmen, there is an outcry by Nigerians for the Federal Government to take action. According to Onwuka (2018), most times, there is only a verbal response from the government; a plea for people to live together in peace or a promise to arrest the perpetrators. But nobody gets arrested (Onwuka, 2018). Abdulkarkindo and Alupsen (2017) purported that the inaction of the Nigerian government towards Hausa-Fulani violence has allowed the culture of impunity to grow. In the absence of government security, some local communities decide to defend themselves against Hausa-Fulani herdsmen attacks. The government claims that the perpetrators of the massacres are unknown and that accounts for the inability to arrest anybody. But as Onwuka (2018) wrote, affected cattle herders groups always give reasons for their attacks. Onwuka (2018), reporting on the Fulani herdsmen attacks in Benue State in January 2018, quoted Mr Garus Gololo, Chairman, Benue State Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association (which has President Muhammadu Buhari as its grand patron), who was interviewed by the British Broadcasting Commission (BBC):

*"We weren't grazing. After the Benue government banned grazing, we were relocating to Taraba State through Nengere border town of Nasarawa State. They came and stole one thousand cows from us, so we retaliated and killed them'... Such comments show that the perpetrators of the acts are not unknown. They appear at peace meetings and disclose why they carried out their attacks on the concerned people. They go to TV and radio stations as well as newspaper houses to grant interviews to explain why they carried out their attacks. Usually [because] ... their cattle were stolen by the community."*

The government's attitude towards the killings is not one that takes the clashes seriously. One can argue that the government sees the Fulani herdsmen crises as a mere misunderstanding that has little impact on the overall national security of Nigeria; a mere misunderstanding where the farmers are usually the aggressors and the herdsmen the victims whose actions are justifiably reactive to the farmers' hostilities. So, Abdulkarkindo and Alupsen (2017) added that critics blame the government for using double standards. For instance, the government placed a terrorist label, arrest, imprison and prosecute members of IPOB and deployed military forces against the Niger Delta Avengers. Yet, the government has refused to arrest or prosecute Hausa-Fulani herdsmen (Abdulkarkindo & Alupsen, 2017). Instead, there appears to be a policy-framework underway to establish grazing fields for the herdsmen. The Minister of State for Agriculture and Rural Development, Heineken Lokpobiri, reaffirmed the government's plans to establish cattle ranches as a lasting solution to prevent the frequent clashes between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria. This proposal, however, has been rejected both by the affected states (chiefly, those in the south) and the herdsmen under the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association. According to the report by *Premium Times* (2018), the herdsmen insisted on having grazing reserves and routes.

More so, the proposal by the government has been the only significant attempt by the government to checkmate the Fulani herdsmen crises. But Abdulkarkindo and Alupsen (2017) described this as being seen by many as a tacit endorsement of the plans of the Hausa-Fulani herdsmen by authorities of the Nigerian government. They added that the government is not serious about ending the herdsmen-farmers clashes in Nigeria. This is epitomized in the fact that a large chunk of appointments into key offices, particularly key security offices that should protect the lives and property of all citizens, are dominated by Hausa-Fulani Muslims. This is, even more, worrying for Christians who are already victims of attacks by Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen (Abdulkarkindo & Alupsen, 2017).

This perspective of being marginalized or dominated by a particular ethnoreligious and occupational group has led to state-led policy and legislative actions to quail the perilous attacks and bring about peaceful coexistence. In Benue State:

*“an indigenous group is known as the “Movement Against Fulani Occupation” (MAFO) emerged to raise awareness about the atrocities of the Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen against Christian communities. These efforts by MAFO led to the introduction of an Anti-Open Grazing and Establishment of Ranches Bill by the Benue State administration under Governor Samuel Ortom. The bill received accelerated passage in the State House of Assembly and passed into law in May 2017. If implemented successfully, there are hopes that this could be a viable way out of the current crisis and a model for other states, since the traditional way of grazing is no longer sustainable... the state intends to establish a special task force responsible for enforcing the Anti-Open Grazing Law (Abdulkarkindo & Alupsen, 2017: 40-41).*

In all, the Buhari government’s actions, attitudes and body languages to the Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen crises in the Middle Belt region have been largely lackadaisical. For Onwuka (2018), the government’s attitudes show that the government treats issues concerning the President’s kinsmen and people of his religion different from the way other groups are treated. The more people complain about this divisive attitude to governance, the more the government remains inactive and unperturbed.

## VII. CONCLUSION

This study discussed the Fulani herdsmen crisis and its impacts on the socio-economic development of Benue State, Nigeria. This study argued that though the Fulani herdsmen crisis is slightly less dangerous than the Boko Haram insurgency, its repercussions are as grievous or threaten national security. Thousands have been killed, tens of thousands have been displaced from their homes, businesses have been shut down and farmlands and markets have been rendered desolate owing to the hostilities. It may not be out of place to opine that Nigeria is experiencing one of its biggest challenges to national security in the 21<sup>st</sup> century which if not accorded the necessary attention would destroy what is held as a cherished national value, i.e., maintaining a unified and geographically recognized state.

This study discussed the causes of the Fulani herdsmen crisis to include desertification, climate change and religious motivation, among others. Thus, one can argue that the hostilities are part of the Islamic expansionist agenda of extremist groups. Data of the number of Christians killed and churches razed are testimonies. Or as Abdulkarkindo and Alupsen (2017) opined, the control of grazing routes of Benue State by the Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen will give them easy access to other communities in the south. Again, it will further cement the domination of the territories of minority Christian groups in the north. Likewise, this study discussed that the government seem to be reluctant to tackle the hostilities because even with the consistent attacks and killings, little or no perpetrator has been brought to justice.

Since the findings of this study show that the Fulani herdsmen communal crisis impacts negatively on the socio-economic development of Benue State, this study proposes that rice milling is Benue’s biggest industry. Hence, an enabling environment should be created by the government for rice millers so that more people will participate since rice milling alone generates income that can lead to about 34% reduction in the poverty level of those engaged in it. Likewise, the culture of impunity must be brought to an end. If foreign links are supporting Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen activities, these must be investigated and exposed for further action to be taken. Additionally, there is a compelling need for dialogue and genuine reconciliation between the warring parties, so that enduring peace can be achieved. Lastly, research is required for adequately assessing whether victims of the violence have received any psychological rehabilitation.

APPENDIX

**Appendix 1: The Local Government Areas of Benue State which have Experienced the Fulani Herdsmen Crisis**

S/N	Name of LGA	Main ethnic group	Attacked/Not attacked by Herders	Headquarters
1	Ado	Idoma, Akweya	attacked	Igumale
2	Agatu	Agatu	attacked	Ogbagaji
3	Apa	Idoma, Abakpa	Not attacked	Ugbokolo
4	Buruku	Tiv	attacked	Buruku
5	Gboko	Tiv	attacked	Gboko
6	Guma	Tiv, Jukun	attacked	Gbajimba
7	Gwer-East	Tiv	attacked	Aliade
8	Gwer-West	Tiv	attacked	Naka
9	Katsina-Ala	Tiv, Hausa, Etulo	attacked	Katsina-Ala
10	Konshisha	Tiv	Not attacked	Tse-Agberagba
11	Kwande	Tiv, Nyifon	attacked	Adikpo
12	Logo	Tiv	attacked	Ugba
13	Makurdi	Tiv, Hausa	attacked	Makurdi
14	Obi	Igede	Not attacked	Obarike-Ito
15	Ogbadibo	Idoma	Not attacked	Otukpa
16	Ohimini	Idoma, Abakpa	Not attacked	Idekpa
17	Oju	Igede	Not attacked	Oju
18	Otukpo	Idoma	attacked	Utukpo
19	Tarka	Tiv	attacked	Wannune
20	Ukpokwu	Idoma	Not Attacked	Okpoga
21	Ukum	Tiv	attacked	Sankera
22	Ushongo	Tiv	Not attacked	Lessel
23	Vandeikya	Tiv	Not attacked	Vandeikya

Source: Abdulbarkindo and Alupsen (2017).

**Appendix 2: Estimated Number of Christians Killed and Injured in the LGAs Under Consideration (2014 –2016).**

S/N	Name of LGA	No. of Christians Killed	No. of Christians Killed
1	Agatu	967	1051
2	Gwer-East	15	21
3	Gwer-West	772	264
4	Makurdi	494	248
5	Guma	1426	606
6	Tarka	52	16
7	Buruku	25	0
8	Katsina-Ala	91	0
9	Logo	204	721
10	Ukum	42	24
11	Kwande	72	6
14	Obi	34	0
	Total for all LGAs listed above	4194	2957

Source: Abdulbarkindo and Alupsen (2017).

**Appendix 3: Estimated Number of Christian Homes and Churches Reported Damaged or Destroyed Per LGA Under Consideration (2014 –2016).**

S/N	Name of LGA	No. of thatched and tin-roof Christians homes damaged and destroyed	No. of churches damaged and destroyed
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1	Agatu	7,663	4
2	Guma	63,718	5
3	Gwer-East	447	0
4	Gwer-West	37,416	7
5	Katsina-Ala	11,399	1
6	Kwande	21,443	2
7	Logo	28,807	4
8	Makurdi	24,683	7
	Total for all LGAs listed above	195,576	30

**Source:** Abdulbarkindo and Alupsen (2017).

#### Appendix 4: Timeline of Fulani Herdsmen Attacks

S/N	Date	Place of incidents	Number of Victims
1	8/07/2012	Mash village in Riyon L.G.A, Plateau State	Senator Gyang Danton killed in a stampede, 50 victims attacked and injured
2	30/09/2012	Isoko North L.G.A. Delta State	1 person murdered in his farm
3	2/2/13	Inoli, Ologba, Olegeje, Olegede, Adana	Many lives lost Inminy and Abugbe communities in Benue State
4	23/4/13	Mbasenge community in Guma L.G.A. of Benue State	10 farmers were killed Benue State
5	7/5/13	Agatu	47 mourners killed and to policemen were also killed
6	14/5/13	Ekwo-Okpanechenyi, Agatu L.G.A. in Benue	40 persons killed
7	5/7/13	Nzorov, Guma L.G.A in Benue State	20 persons killed
8	31/07/13	Agatu L.G.A. in Benue State	8 persons and 112 cows were killed
9	7/11/13	Ikpele and Okpopolo communities in Benue	7 person killed and over 6000 inhabitants displaced
10	9/11/13	Agatu L.G.A. Benue State	36 locals were killed, seven villages destroyed
11	20/11/13	Guma L.G.A. Benue State	22 local killed, property destroyed
12	20/1/14	Agatu L.G.A., Benue State	5 soldiers and seven civilians killed
13	20/1/14	Adeke village in Benue state	35 persons killed
14	20-21/02/14	Gwer West L.G.A. Benue State	35 persons killed, 80, 000 persons displaced and sacked six L.G.A
15	24/2/14	TIV community along Naka Road, Makurdi	Eight people were killed
16	6/3/14	Kwande, Katsina/Ala and Logo L.G.A.s, Benue State	30 persons were killed

17	12/3/14	Ukpam village of Mbabaai, Guma L.G.A. of Benue State	Fulani Herdsmen 28 persons killed, property destroyed and several farms burnt
18	10/3/14	Umenger	Former Governor Suswam's convoy attacked. He and convoy managed an escape
19	12/3/14	Gbajimba, Guma L.G.A.	25 persons were killed, 50 injured, several properties destroyed.
20	25/3/14	Agena village	7 corpses recovered by police
21	29/3/14	Four villages in Agatu L.G.A.	19 people were killed and 15 others abducted
22	10/4/14	Shengev community in Gwer West L.G.A.	15 people left dead.
23	30/3/14	Agatu L.G.A.	19 locals were killed and 15 abducted.
24	10/4/14	Four villages in Ukamberaga/Tswarev ward of logo L.G.A.	Six people killed and property destroyed.
25	15/4/14	Obagaji, Headquarters of Agatu L.G.A	12 youths were left dead
26	10/9/14	Five villages in Ogbadibo L.G.A.	Several scores were left dead.
27	5/03/2014	Riyom L.G.A. in Plateau State-Gwon, Torok, Gwanwereng and Gwarim in Rim Districts of the L.G.A	Not less 10 people killed, over 100 houses burnt.
28	9/03/2014	Angwan Sakwai in Kaura L.G.A of Kaduna State	Over 57 people killed, Houses and property burnt.
29	5/04/2014	Galadima village Fulani Assistants (community leaders/residents in a meeting)	200 people killed and an unknown number injured
30	7/04/2014	Gassol in Taraba State	Several deaths and destruction of property.
31	19/04/2014	Benin-Asaba Expressway, Delta State	23 people killed.
32	21/07/2014	Vunokilang police station in Girei L.G.A. Adamawa. Four villages via: Demsare, Dikajam, Wunamokoh and Taboungo raided.	DPO killed alongside 30 other people in the attack, several houses and property burnt.
33	21/09/2015	Ilado village, Akure North of Ondo State	Former SGF, from Minister of Finance and chieftain of Afenifere, Chief Samuel Oluyemisi Falae was abducted N100m ransom demanded after 96 hours
34	21/09/2015	Lagelu L.G.A. of Oyo State (Iyana, Offa, Atagba, Lapata, Saki, ago-Are, Oje-Owode villages)	Valuables stolen, lives and property lost and villagers displaced
35	27/1/15	Abugbe, Okoklo, Ogwule and Ocholoyam in Aguta L.G.A.	Fulani Herdsmen 17 persons were killed.

36	30/1/15	Five villages in Logo L.G.A	9 persons were killed.
37	15/3/15	Egba village in Aguta L.G.A.	Over 90 locals, including women and children, were killed.
38	27/4/15	Three villages at Mbadwem, Guma L.A.G.A.	28 person were killed, houses and farmlands were razed.
39	11/15/15	Ikyoawen community in Turan Kwande L.G.A.	5 person killed and 8 injured.
40	24/5/15	Ukura, Gafa, Per and Ise-Gusa in Logo L.G.A	100 people were killed and several properties destroyed.
41	7/7/15	Imande Bebeshi in Kwande L.G.A	1 local was killed.
42	5/11/15	Buruku L.G.A.	12 persons killed and 25 others injured.
43	8/2/16	To-Anyiin and Tor-Ataan in Buruku L.G.A.	10 people were killed and over 300 displaced.
44	21-24/2/16	Agatu L.G.A.	Over 500 locals were killed and 700 displaced
45	9/3/16	Ngorukgam, Ise Chia, Deghkia and Nhumbe in Logo L.G.A	8 residents were killed
46	11/3/16	Agatu L.G.A.	Attack on the convoy of Senator David Mark. No casualty recorded.
47	13/3/16	Tarka L.G.A.	Six people including an APC youth leader were killed.
48	29/2/16	Edugbeho Agatu L.G.A.	11 persons killed including a Police Inspector.
49	10/3/16	Obagaji Agatu L.G.A.	Two persons killed.
50	5/3/16	Agatu L.G.A.	Houses burnt. Security forces prevented killings.
51	18/02/2016	Agatu L.G.A., Benue State comprising of communities such as Aila, Akwu, Adagbo, Okokolo, Ugboju, Odugbeho, Ogbaulu, Egba and Obagji.	Over 300 persons were killed. Houses, schools, health centres and worship centres were razed down
52	18/02/2016	Okokolo village, Agatu L.G.A. of Benue State	Five persons killed.
53	12/04/2016	Gashaka L.G.A. of Taraba State	15 persons killed.
54	25/04/2016	Nimbo in Uzo-Uwani L.G.A. of Enugu State made up of seven villages	About 40 persons reportedly killed, over 2000 people were displaced, Houses and churches destroyed.
55	16/06/2016	Ossissa community in Ndokwa East L.G.A. of Delta State	A 45-year old renowned farmer was shot.
56	20/07/2016	Communities in Benue State such as Ugondo, Fulani Herd Turan, Gabo	At least 59 Deaths were recorded.

		Nenzev, in Logo L.G.A	
57	13/10/2016	Kagoro Gidan Waya road in Kaura L.G.A. of Kaduna State	Two police officers were killed. Two other police officers injured
58	15-16/10/2016	Godogodo Area of Southern Kaduna in Jama'ah L.G.A.	20 people killed.
59	14/11/2016	Abam community of Arochukwu L.G.A. of Abia State	Several people killed and others sustained various degree of injuries
60	15/10/2017	Bassa L.G.A, Nkyie DONGHWRO village in Jos, Plateau State	26 people killed, houses and property destroyed.
61	24/1/17	Ipiga village in Ohimini L.G.A.	15 persons were killed.
62	2/3/17	Mbahimin community, Gwer East L.G.A.	No fewer than 10 people were killed in a renewed hostility.
63	11/3/17	TIV community, Mkgovur village in Buruku L.G.A.	Seven people were killed
64	8/5/17	Ise-Akaa village, Ugondo Mbamar District of Logo LGA	3 persons were confirmed killed.
65	13/5/17	Three communities of Logo L.G.A. Benue State	18 persons killed
66	09/12/17	Omala L.G.A. in Kogi State	One person killed.
67	02/01/18	Guma and Logo L.G.A. in Benue State.	49 persons killed, several homes burnt down, farms, crops and property destroyed.
68	5/01/18	Numan L.G.A. in Adamawa State	Several people killed.
69	6/01/18	Tombu village in Logo L.G.A. of Benue State	11 persons killed.
70	04/01/18	Dan-Anachatowa in Gassol L.G.A. of Taraba State, Jandeikyula village in Anyam Kwever, Wukari L.G.A.	12 persons killed, and several others wounded
71	10/01/18	Lau L.G.A. of Taraba State	55 persons killed and several others wounded.
72	14/01/18	Dangaji village in Nirnin Gwari L.G.A. of Kaduna State	10 people killed, several others injured, property looted, houses razed down.
73	14/01/18	Unguwar Gajere Kutemeshi District of Fu Birnin Gwari L.G.A. of Kaduna State	10 persons killed.
74	16/01/18	Oke-Ako and Irele communities in Ikole Fulani Herdsmen L.G.A. of Ekiti State.	1 person (Babuba Dengi) killed.
75	19/01/18	Ovwor-Olomu in Onicha-Olona community in Aniocha North and Ugheli South Areas of Delta State	At least one persons killed, 3 persons injured one woman raped
76	20/01/18	Majiankhai village, Barkin Ladi L.G.A.,	A hunter identified as Daniel Wallam was

		Plateau State.	killed.
77	21/01/18	Kikon village, Bachama community, Numan L.G.A. of Adamawa State.	Many people killed, many homes destroyed in a violent reprisal attack
78	21/01/18	Ilado village in Akure North L.G.A. of Ondo State	The five-hectare oil Pal plantation farm of a Former Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Chief Olu Falae was burnt down
79	26/01/18	Guma L.G.A. in Benue State.	2 persons and a police officer killed.
80	29/01/18	Guma L.G.A. in Benue State	NNPC Staff killed, 2 others seriously injured.
81	01/02/18	Kagoro village, Kaduna State.	6 persons killed, several others injured and many houses burnt and property destroyed.
82	26/01/18	Huke village, Miango District in Bassa L.G.A. of Plateau state.	3 persons killed (Ahmadu Hwei (male 100yrs), Odo Hweie (male 90yrs) and Gado Kondo (male 70yrs), village Houses burnt and several properties destroyed
83	05/02/18	Waku village in Yogbo community Guma L.G.A. of Benue State	2 persons killed.
84	03/02/18	Yogbo community in Guma L.G.A. of Benue State	2 police officers and 4 others killed.
85	07/02/18	Ogbooro community in Oyo State	SARS commander in Oyo Shen Magu killed.
86	12/02/18	Bakin Kogi State of Jemaa L.G.A. of Kaduna State	4 people killed and one wounded.
87	12/02/18	Guma L.G.A. of Benue State	4 NSCDC officers were killed.
88	12/02/18	Logo L.G.A. of Benue State	Fulani Herdsmen 1 police officer killed.
89	12/02/18	UNILORIN, Kwara State	Multi-Million naira Research and Training farms destroyed.
90	12/02/18	Itigidi, Yakurr L.G.A. of Cross River State.	All Progressive Congress (APC) councillorship Aspirant was shot dead.
91	13/02/18	Akure South L.G.A, Ondo State	L.G.A. workers sacked.
92	13/02/18	Okere Iseyin in Iseyin L.G.A. of Oyo State	12 herdsmen killed while 14 were declared missing.
93	27/02/18	Numan-Demsa area of Adamawa State	Herdsmen PDP spokesmen Sam Zadock killed and 23 others were shot dead.
94	04/03/2018	Leme in Saduana LGA of Taraba State	20 people killed, 12 injured while 300 cattle were rustled
95	05/03/2018	Omosu village in Ojigo ward, Edumoga of Okpokwu LGA of Benue State	10 persons feared dead, several houses burnt down and property destroyed.

96	06/03/2018	Okpokwu LGA of Benue State	24 persons killed, villages deserted and property destroyed
97	06/11/2018	Tiv community, Mkgovur village in Buruku LGA, Benue State	7 people were killed
98	14/03/2018	Umuobasikwu, Ozuitem community in Bende LGA, Abia State	1 person was killed and several others injured
99	27/03/2018	Adam Village, Kwande LGA, Benue State	1 killed, 1 injured, women raped in their farms.
100	28/03/2018	Emuhu community in Ika South LGA, Delta State	3 persons were killed while six others sustained injuries.
101	01/04/2018	Obio Usiere in Eniong Abatim, Odukpani LGA, Cross River State	killed no fewer than 10 persons
102	08/05/2018	Tse-Akaa village, Ugondo Mbamar District of Logo LGA, Benue State	3 persons were killed
103	12/05/2018	Ossissa community in Ndokwa East LGA, Delta State	Suspected herdsmen beheaded a commercial motorcycle rider and six farmers
104	18/05/2018	Afam Uku, Oyigbo LGA, Rivers State	2 persons lost their lives
105	22/05/2018	Ewu community, Esan Central LGA, Edo State	2 people were killed and 1 was wounded. Crops were destroyed and lots of persons sacked from their farmlands

Source: Nkwede, Nwankwo, Aro and Dauda (2018); Oli, Ibekwe and Nwankwo (2018); Abdulbarkindo and Alupsen (2017).

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#### AUTHORS

**First Author** – Otu Offiong Duke (PhD), Department of Public Administration, University of Calabar, Nigeria, [otuduke76@yahoo.com](mailto:otuduke76@yahoo.com)

**Second Author** – Dickson David Agbaji, Yenching Academy of Peking University, China, [dicksonagbaji@gmail.com](mailto:dicksonagbaji@gmail.com)

**Correspondence Author** – Dickson David Agbaji, [dicksonagbaji@gmail.com](mailto:dicksonagbaji@gmail.com), +8618600676036