

Innovations

Fulani Herdsmen insurgency and sustainability of livelihood in Benue and Plateau states of north-central Nigeria

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Abstract

Sedentary farmers in Nigeria's north-central region, and indirectly other regions of the country, have stopped worrying about the impending threats posed by climate change and field attacks from rodents, pests, and diseases on their crops, and have instead focused on Fulani nomad attacks, which have resulted in hundreds of deaths and the destruction of hundreds of homes. Unfortunately, the public's trust and support have been eroded as a result of the federal governments and its security agencies' failure to end the insurgency, and the situation appears to be in a coma. Based on this premise, the study believes it is appropriate to investigate the root causes of the national insurgency, with a focus on northern Nigeria, specifically Benue and Plateau States. According to the study, the means of sustenance of Nigerian citizens' livelihoods in Benue and Plateau states have been threatened since the self-described Fulani-herders militancy first appeared in the country. The study employed a qualitative, explorative historical research design to achieve its goals. As a result, the study relied heavily on secondary sources, such as book reviews, journal publications, dailies and periodicals, official government documents, and online sources. The study also draws on the Instrumental theory of violence, which holds that acts of terrorism and insurgency are purposefully chosen by state or non-state actors in order to significantly alter a sociopolitical system. Alternative policies are essentially proposed to reduce this type of insurgency in Nigeria, particularly in the north-central region.

Keywords: 1.Fulani herdsmen, 2.Insurgency, 3.Sustainability, 4.Sedentary farmers

Introduction

The conflict between Fulani herdsmen and farmers is caused by disagreements over how to use vital resources like farmland, grazing areas, and water, according to the literature that is currently available on the subject. In search of pasture for their cattle, Fulani herders can travel hundreds of miles in large groups. To protect their livestock in the modern era, they are armed. They frequently argue with sedentary farmers who accuse them of ruining their crops and letting their animals run wild while grazing. Instead, the need for self-defense is justified by the herders' claims that they were attacked by gangs from farming communities and had their cattle stolen by bandits and cattle rustlers. Odo and Chilaka (2012) contend that the conflict between farmers and herders, which was previously limited to Nigeria's North-Central region, which was home to the Christian Berom farming community in Plateau State as well as those of Benue state, has evolved into what some observers, analysts, and scholars view as militancy and a new form of terrorism in the nation.

Some claim that the conflict between farmers and Fulani herders in Benue and the Plateau States has evolved from a simple one between the farmers and the herders to tit-for-tat killings with Christian and Muslim nomadic herders as

the victims. The Fulani herdsmen have been forced to move further south in search of grass and water due to the ongoing effects of climate change on grazing lands, which has exacerbated security issues there (Odo & Chilaka, 2012). In Nigeria, farming is still a common occupation for rural residents despite what appears to be a shift away from agriculture toward a mono-economic practice and an over-reliance on oil. We cannot ignore the fact that agriculture is still a common occupation for many people in Nigeria's North Central region of Benue, Plateau, and significant others. It has also continued to contribute to the country's entire Gross Domestic Product even though oil has been the country's mainstay and an elitist business venture for a privilege few since the 1980s (GDP). Farming is still a common occupation and a source of income for rural dwellers and a few elites in the country, including the Fulanis who, despite being known for livestock farming, are still in the country despite the conflict between farmers and herders and the loss of sources of livelihood for local farmers (Adisa & Adekunle, 2010; Abubakar, 2012; CBN Financial Watch, 2016).

In essence, the resurgence of the Fulani cattle herders has led sedentary farmers across the nation to refocus their concerns from the threat of Fulani nomads to the impending dangers of climate change and attacks from rodents, pests, and diseases on their crops. Some analysts and observers claimed that since the Fulani herdsmen began their violent campaign against sedentary farmers, and subsequently on innocent Nigerian citizens, they are spreading the jihadist ideology of re-colonizing and Islamizing the north-central and other regions of the country. Notably, this has sparked outrage and increased racial awareness among the nation's many ethnic groups. Following the uncontrollable attacks on towns and villages across the nation, properties were destroyed and thousands of people were forced to leave their homes. As a result, there was an increase in anti-Fulani sentiment in some regions of the nation, and the hashtag "Fulani herdsmen" became frequently popular on social media (Oluka, Ativie, and Efeosa-Temple, 2019:1267) To this end, Fulani herdsmen have been declared by the international community as the world's fourth deadliest militant group, although the Federal government of Nigeria is yet to do so.

Following the incessant attacks by the herders, President Muhammadu Buhari, a Fulani, has responded to the public outcry and ordered the security forces to crack down on the cattle raiders. The presidency has also attempted sometimes past to established "ruga settlement" which in Fulfulde language means "small settlement for herders" throughout the country and among the non-Fulani settlements in the Middle Belt and also in southern part of the country, although his effort was seen as alternative to peace and safety of lives and properties in some quarters while in some as a deliberate attempt to conquer the country for his kinsmen (Oluka et al., 2019). But the issue is much more complicated than it seems to be and larger than what it is conceived by political analysts, observers and the intelligence community. To this end, Global Terrorism Index (2018) and Orji (2019) have had to argue that the insurgency of Fulani militancy has widened the scope of the conflict with deadly incidents increasingly reported not only in the north-central but also in southern parts of the country, raising fears that the violence could threaten the fragile unity that exists among Nigeria's diverse ethnic groups. Soomiyol and Fadairo (2020:94) identified drought and desertification as the cause of the herders' migration to the southern belt. The North-Central farmers, particularly those in Benue State, are negatively impacted by this overtime in uncontrollable ways that also affect farmers in the Southern Belt of the nation.

Gever and Essien (2019) and Ogebe (2019), respectively, argued that Benue state presented one of the most affected areas by land-use conflict between farmers and herdsmen in recent years, along with some of the states of the north-central. According to Soomiyol and Fadairo (2020), citing a Vanguard Newspaper report from 2019, Benue state experienced the worst incursions of militant herdsmen, with the rural communities of Agatu, Markudi, Guma, Logo, Buruku, Tarka, Gwer-west, and Otukpo suffering the most. This insurgency in Benue reached its height in early 2016 after the state government passed an anti-grazing law, when the militant herdsmen stormed Aguta local government area and killed more than 2000 people in what the UN called a genocide attack (Abugu & Onuba, 2018). Plateau State has also experienced its own shares of the incursion of its towns and villages by the Fulani herdsmen's militancy with scores of properties destroyed, many displaced and hundreds killed since the resurgence attacks against rural dwellers across the country.

Statement of the Problem

The ongoing farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria is not a recent development, but the change in focus and targets from what scholars, observers, analysts, and the intelligence community initially perceived as a straightforward conflict between Fulani nomads and sedentary farmers to a heightened herders' militancy in almost all regions of the country has sparked a range of opinions on the domestic and international stage. Most concerning is the change in terrorist-related tactics, targets, and sophistication used by nihilistic nomads, who have killed innocent residents in some states of the southern region of the country, which includes the Eastern, Western, and South-South geopolitical zones, as well as in the North-Central Region of Benue and Plateau states. When the conflict between Fulani herders and farmers first began, some scholars, analysts, and observers all centered or rather connected the conflict's root causes around a single narrative: "the scarcity of natural resources," which is frequently caused by climate change and, as a result, drives herder migration to the country's southern region in search of pasture for their cattle.

The recent herding-related violence against Nigerian citizens, regardless of their tribal, cultural, or religious affiliation or where they live, has changed the narratives and perceptions surrounding the reasons behind the so-called Fulani herders' insurgency. The heightened trend of insurgency, according to Akerjiir Anastasia (2018:4), must be positioned in relation to the sociopolitical divisions between the Fulani extraction and the Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, and other minority ethnic groups throughout the nation. Many have also linked this brand of militancy to the ideology of Islamic radical jihadists rather than to a simple conflict between Fulani herdsman and sedentary farmers. Awotokun, Nwozor, and Olanrewaju (2020:625) attribute the country's worsening security issues to the government and its security agencies' apparent inaction in the face of the violence and carnage carried out by these insurgent groups, particularly the Fulani-herdsman attacks, on the one hand, and the clear solidarity and support shown by the pro-Fulani groups of the Miyetti Allah on the other (FNM).

All of these difficulties led to a variety of opposing explanations for the recent herdsman militancy in the nation and its effects on the viability of livelihoods in the North-Central region of the nation, particularly in the states of Benue and Plateau. The impunity and dissident behavior of the nomadic merchants who have chosen to use force to expand their enterprise of cattle rearing for commercial purposes is one obvious issue connected to this insurgency of the nomad Fulani militants. This was made possible by the Central Government's and its security organizations' failure to stop the resurgence of the herdsman's militancy. But it has also become very challenging to generalize anything about the Fulani herdsman because, for the most part, these nomads operate independently and don't even know one another. This makes it extremely challenging for the government and its security agencies to develop any long-term strategy to take them out and put an end to the insurgency (Orji, 2019). It is on these premises that this study examines the fundamental causes of the Fulani-herders' militancy in Nigeria with a focus on the North-Central, particularly in Benue and Plateau States, and most importantly, the effects of this form of insurgency on the sustainability of livelihoods of the Nigerian citizens, especially in Benue and Plateau States.

The study raised the question of whether there is a connection or relationship between Fulani-herdsman militancy and food insecurity and lack of sustainability of the livelihoods of Nigerian citizens, especially in the North-Central, based on the premises of the myriad problems emanating from the herdsman insurgency in the country's north-central and other parts of the country. Generally speaking, the purpose of this study is to pinpoint the root causes of the conflict between sedentary farmers and Fulani pastoralists (or nomads) in Nigeria's north-central region and to investigate the impact of Fulani-herdsman militancy on both the region's middle belt and other regions of the nation.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to examine Fulani-herdsman insurgency and sustainability of livelihood in Benue and Plateau States of the North-Central Nigeria.

While the specific objectives are to:

- Examine the fundamental causes of the insurgency of the Fulani-herders in Nigeria.
- Examine the effects of the Fulani-herders insurgency and sustainability of livelihood in Nigeria, particularly Benue and Plateau States,
- Examine the extent to which government has responded to ameliorate Fulani herdsmen insurgency in the country, particularly in Benue and Plateau States, and
- Examine policy options likely to ameliorate the menace of the Herders' attacks in the country, particularly in Benue and Plateau States.

Method of the Study

This study adopted the historical research design which is qualitative and explorative in nature. This implies that the study employed qualitative approach and relied extensively on archival and secondary sources of data which helped to get background informations on the study area and strengthened the literature review and theoretical framework. The informations from secondary sources such as textbooks, journal publications, dailies and periodicals, government official documents, and internet materials, provided the informations used to address the objectives of the study and generalization in the subject areas of the study.

Review of Related Literature

For the purpose of this study and for clarification, it has become imperative to provide conceptual definitions of the terms “Fulani herdsmen” and “Farmer” since the focus of this study is Fulani militancy and which its origin is traced to the conflict between Fulani herdsmen and sedentary farmers in Nigerian States, towns and villages.

Fulani Herdsmen:

The Fulani ethnic nationality also known as the Fulbe or Peuls and are widely dispersed and culturally diverse people across the West African sub region. In Nigeria, the Fulani tribe lives in the states of northern Nigeria. The origin of the Fulani people was traced to the Senegambia area over one thousand years ago. By the Eighteenth Century, a good number of the Fulani tribe migrated to Niger and Benue rivers areas, now known as Nigeria after the amalgamation of northern and southern protectorates in 1914 by Sir Frederick Lord Lugard, the colonial Governor-General of the protectorates of Nigeria. Currently, the largest concentrations of Fulani are in Nigeria, Niger, Senegal and Guinea. In these countries, they became the ruling class and intermarries the local population of the Hausa ethnic nationality. The general language of the Fulani tribe is known as Fulfulde or Fula or Pulaar with over five major dialects: Futa Toro, Futa Jallon and Masina in the North-West and Central Nigeria; and Sokoto and Adamawa in the North-East (Ajiye, 2018:609).

Some of the present day Fulani traditions recount the pre-Islamic origin and almost all of the Fulanis are Muslims and observe the standard Islamic religious practices. They also learn and recite the Holy Scripture known as Qur'an or Koran. All Fulani communities have a strict division of labour according to age and sex. While men tend the cattle, work in farms, engaged in businesses and employed in civil services and other forms of engagement, women are responsible for managing the household: cooking, cleaning and caring for the children. A few of them also work as teachers, nurses and secretaries in the public sector (Ajiye, 2018).

In spite of these general features of the Fulani people, there are also plethora of conceptual definitions of who the Fulani herdsmen are. Okoli (2016:22) notes that the concept of “Fulani militancy” is a relatively new in the lexicon of contemporary social discourse in Nigeria but its discussion has dominated social discourse in respect times following the level of damages it has caused to the socio-economic security of Nigerian citizens all over the country. To this end, he sees Fulani militancy as “the manifestation of violent extremism by the Fulani-nomads in their livelihood contestation with crop-farmers within their common ecological domain. For Ngbea and Ngbea (2019:2) Fulani herdsmen or Fulani pastoralists are nomadic or semi-nomadic herders whose primary occupation is rearing of livestock. A number of people see some as the real Fulani pastoralists whose major occupation is rearing of cattle while the semi-nomadic Fulanis make transhumance migration and return to their camps or homes. For Abdulbarkindo and Alupsen (2017) cited in Ngbea and Ngbea (2019:2) see Fulani herdsmen as a group of people whom are simply in consistent search for greener pastures for feeding their herds.

Sedentary Farmers

Like the term “Fulani herdsman”, the term “farmer” has several descriptions from different scholars and individuals alike. For the purpose of this study, it is also pertinent to provide conceptual definition of the term “farmer” considering the perceptions of the different scholars who have tried to provide conceptual explanations to the term having succinctly provided same for the term Fulani herders or herdsmen. Dyer (2007) cited in Ajiye (2018:611) opines that “originally, the term farmer was used to describe a tenant playing the role of a leasehold rent (a farm), often for a Lord’s manorial demesne”. The term also applies to people who are often engaged in a combination of cultivation of field crops, orchards, vineyards, and poultry birds and rearing of livestock. A farmer is also a person who cultivates land or crops. On broad perspective, a farmer is an agriculturist- a person engaged in agriculture for the purpose of raising living organisms for food and raw materials for industries (Ajiye, 2018:611). The conflict between the farmers and Fulani herders impacted negatively on sustainability of the livelihood of farmers in the north-central and in other affected parts of the country, and the herders who are also engaged in the business of rearing of cattle for commercial purposes.

Empirical Review

Major Causes of Fulani-Herdsmen Militancy in Nigeria

The clashes between farmers and Fulani herders initially driven by scarcity of natural resources following a change in climatic condition or rather climate change in Nigeria has undoubtedly shifted from lack of natural resources to political as well as clandestine motives. However, as the crisis increases, it becomes clear that the herders’ militancy will take an extended time to combat by the government and its security agencies. Some scholars, analysts and observers of this development have had to argue that the crisis which started in the northern part of the country, specifically, from the north-central between sedentary farmers and Fulani nomads now has clandestine undertone yet to be unveiled by the intelligence agencies or known but has been kept secret from the public. Although, the fundamental cause of the crisis still remains scarcity of natural resources, desertification, and deforestation, among others.

Soomiyol and Fadario (2020) identified drought and desertification occasioned by climate change as the root cause of the conflict between farmers and herders in the country. They thus argue that drought and desertification have degraded pastures and dried up many natural water sources in Nigeria’s far-northern belt and forced large number of herders to migrate to the south belt in search of grassland and water for their herds causing an adverse effect on agricultural production and sustainability of the north-central farmers in recent time. In affirmation to this standpoint, Gever and Essien (2019:103) argue that north-central Nigeria in which Benue State (the food basket of Nigeria) is located as well as other parts of the country including Plateau State are faced with many security challenges of the most threatening of all is the perennial clashes between farmers and herdsmen following regular migration or movement of the Fulani herders from place to place in search of greener pasture for their herds and that which has far-reaching implication or effects on the sustainability of both parties in conflict: the Fulani nomads and sedentary farmers alike (Gever & Essien, 2019).

Complementing this standpoint, Oke and Olawale (2019:84) state that the menace of the Fulani-herdsmen militancy and which had risen like a wildfire was attributed to what seems like genocide (ethnic cleansing) and complicated by the porous nature of the country’s borders, political mitigation and environmental and climate change. Also complementing this standpoint, Adishi and Oluka (2018:12:14) trace the cause of the conflict, first, between farmers and Fulani herdsmen, and two, the recent shift from a mere conflict to herdsmen militancy, to climate change. They argued that the precursor of the crisis between farmers and Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria is lack of natural resources following the regular change in climate or environment in the country, and the growing intensity and frequency of desertification, drought, deforestation and other extreme weather disasters. All of these are associated with the reasons for the perennial drift of the Fulani herders with their cattle from the northern part of the country to the southern part as well as the north-central that are more lush for pasturing or grazing (Adishi & Oluka, 2018).

Assessing the source of trigger of the Fulani herdsmen militancy in Nigeria Alaba (2015) affirmed that the Fulani herdsmen killings across the country is the aftermath or effect of a combination of a heap auxiliary, financial, political, social and verifiable variables, including the frontier inheritances of a silly national limits, irredentism and deformed national character principle, as well as underdeveloped political establishments and absence of administrative authenticity; monetary underdevelopment, destitution and asset shortages. There is also the absence of impediment by the previous pioneer controls and flanking states, extraordinary militarisation and implantation of little arms, as

well as uncertainty and absence of peace, ethnic, phonetic and religious cleavages, dictatorial and harsh types of administrations. Also of critical concerns are issues of political debasement, military intercession in legislations, and most significantly, ecological weights destabilising the procedure of equitable change; and territorial fighting virus (Alaba, 2015).

Okoli (2016:23) argues that the challenge of the majority of existing legal and policy mechanisms governing land-use and urban development in the country is in addition to the contemporary climatic and demographic changes that endanger the sustainability of the Fulani pastoralist. He claimed that this is never advantageous for the Fulani herders' way of life, which puts them at a disadvantage because they frequently have to fight for survival in clearly hostile and indifferent environments. Unquestionably, all of these important factors contributed to the farmers-herders conflict in the nation and the recent rise in Fulani-herder militancy throughout the nation, particularly in the North-Central Belt.

Effects of Fulani-Herdsman Militancy on Sustainability of Livelihood in Benue and Plateau States

The North-Central or Middle Belt has unquestionably been one of the regions most impacted by the farmers-herders conflict brought on by climate change as well as a lack of available land and water. Benue State is thought to have been the Middle Belt state most severely impacted by recent Fulani herdsman militancy. Plateau state, where numerous ethno-religious and communal crises have been documented recently, is also severely impacted. Nte (2016) had to make the case that many of the violent conflicts started by Fulani herdsman militias took place in Nigeria's Middle Belt, particularly in the states of Plateau, Benue, and Taraba. A greater number of casualties, losses in lives and property, and evictions of residents from their ancestral homes in the most affected areas to the neighboring villages, towns, and states have been reported in the case of Benue state due to the herders' incredibly destructive and serious activities (Nte, 2016).

This has had an impact on their economic well-being as well as exposed the residents of the state's internal displaced persons camps to health-related risks. Women, young girls, and children have been exposed to a variety of risks, including sexual harassment, school dropouts, malnutrition, and other issues. Due to the Fulani herders' militancy making it very difficult for them to sustain their daily needs, some have also lost their only source of income. Over time, some people have been murdered and abducted. According to Akinloye (2020), Fulani herdsman carried out over 654 attacks between 2017 and May 2, 2020, which resulted in the deaths of over 2,539 people and 253 kidnapping cases, and which have grown over time. Over 99 attacks that resulted in over 202 fatalities and 12 kidnapping cases were documented in 2017 alone. In 2018, the Fulani herdsman militia's attacks increased in intensity, resulting in over 245 bloodbaths and 1,473 fatalities. There have been over 141 coordinated attacks so far in May 2 that have resulted in over 335 fatalities and 137 kidnapping cases.

Table 1: Some Selected Recorded Attacks by Fulani Herdsman in Benue State

Date/Year	Victims	Town/LGA
6/2/2016	20	Buruku
7/2/2016	100	Bruku
24/2/2016	300	Agatu
28/2/2016	9	Agatu
3/3/2016	1	Logo
5/2/2016	0	Agatu
8/3/2016	40	Logo
8/3/2016	12	Buruku
9/3/2016	8	Logo
10/3/2016	2	Agatu
1/3/2016	0	Senator David Mark convoy attacked.
13/3/2016	90	Agatu
13/3/2016	2	Buruku
13/3/2016	6	Tarkaa

17/3/2016	25	Logo
17/3/2016	15	Buruku
21/3/2016	2	Guma
10/4/2016	15	Tarkaa
18/4/2016	18	Kwande
24/12/2017	2 persons killed	Benue town
1/11/2017	1 killed & several injured	Benue town
5/7/2017	1,878 people killed & 200 missing	Benue state
11/5/2017	4 persons killed	Benue state
10/4/2017	12 persons killed	Benue state
10/3/2017	10 persons killed	Benue state
6/1/2017	5 person killed	Benue state
1/1/2018	71	Logo & Guma L.G.As.
5/3/2018	25	Okpkwu
5/4/2018	30	Gwer West L.G.A.
25/5/2018	17 Catholic worshipers & 2 Priest.	Ayatu-Ikpayongo, Gwer East.
18/5/2018	6	Mbatonbo, Gwer L.G.A.
22/5/2018	2	Markudi.
3/6/2018	8	Tseadough village.
6/6/2018	6	Logo & Guma L.G.A.
11/4/2019	25 killed	Benue state.
14/3/2019	16 people killed & several injured.	Benue state.
2/3/2019	16 killed & several others injured.	Benue state.
28/2/2019	1 killed	Benue state.
20/2/2019	16 people killed	Benue state.
20/4/2020	1 (NSCDC Inspector Joseph Ochogwu).	Benue state.
20/4/2020	8 victims	Benue state.
20/4/2020	Many villagers killed	Chongu Gugor & Tse Gische villages.
20/4/2020	1 farmer killed & 3 villagers kidnapped.	Benue state.
14/4/2020	2 victims	Benue state.
14/3/2020	7 killed	Benue state.
5/3/2020	4 killed & women raped	Benue state

Source: 21st CWI (2016); Atelhe & Cornelius (2018:12); Bazan (2020).

Table 2: Some Selected Recorded Attacks by Fulani Herdsmen in Plateau State

Date/Year	Victims	L.G.A/State
14/10/2017	6 killed & 6 houses burnt.	Plateau state.
9/9/2017	20 killed & 10 injured.	Plateau.
21/2/2017	10 students missing & 800 abandoned.	Plateau.
April, 2018	200 killed & 50 houses burnt.	Plateau state.
6/12/2019	A Christian woman, Mary Machief & her baby daughter.	Plateau state.
7/9/2019	12 killed	Plateau state.
26/5/2019	7 Christians killed, 12 wounded & 12 houses burnt.	Plateau state.
25/5/2019	1 killed	Plateau state.

26/4/2020	Husband & wife killed	Plateau state.
15/4/2020	9 people killed.	Plateau state.
9/4/2020	5 people including a pastor, 3 members & a 10 years old boy.	Plateau.
7/4/2020	4 killed	Plateau.

Source: Buzan (2020).

Table 1 and 2 above represented among others several incidences of the Fulani herdsmen activities in Benue and Plateau States in recent years.

Theoretical Framework

The Instrumental theory of Violence was adopted for this study because of its ability to explain organizational structure of violent groups and the dynamics that inform the fundamental reasons why violent or insurgent groups operate the way they do, and their modus operandi such as the terrorist groups of the, al-Qaeda terrorist organization, al-Shabaab, Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and its affiliate Islamic State West African Province (ISWAP), Boko Haram and the Fulani militant herdsmen, etc. The Instrumental theory of Violence is associated with the work of scholars like Edward Mickolus (1976), Richard Betts (1982) and Martha Crenshaw (1985). The theory is premised on the assumption that acts of violence; insurgency or terrorism is often a deliberate choice of action. Furthermore, the theory based its assumption on the basis that political actors or violent groups deliberately employ violence to pursue selfish gains that are often political (Crenshaw, 1985:13).

The major trust or basis of this theory is also on the assumption that violence or violent act in most cases is intentional. To this end, violent acts such as terrorism, banditry, armed conflict and militancy are intentional and for a purpose which is often the expression of dissatisfactions particularly over government policies and programmes, marginalization and underdevelopment of one’s region, to mention but a few. It implies that some violent acts such as militancy and terrorism occur as responses to external and internal stimuli sometimes due to government actions and policies. Since the actions of the Fulani-herdsmen militancy in Nigeria in internal and intentional, as well as for a reason and tactics violent and sophisticated, it conforms to the tenet of the Instrumental theory of violence. Essentially, since the Fulani-herders are non-state actor using violence or act of terror to pursue their grievances against their host communities in the North-Central, particularly in Benue and Plateau States, and by extension, other regions of Nigeria, and for a calculated benefit or value to be achieved or gained from their actions, it conforms with the tenet of this theory.

In the words of Bett (1982), violent action in often cases occurs for several and distinct reasons and with the probability to succeed especially when the status quo is intolerable. In other words, violent groups like the Fulani herders’ militias or militancy, act in anticipation of a reward or out of desperation and response to opportunity or threat(s). Threats from natural resource scarcity or simply natural cause occasion by climate change such as flooding, desertification, deforestation, to mention but a few, has been associated with the reason or purpose for Fulani nomads migration to the south, and desperation to sustain their means of livelihood which is rearing and sales of livestock (Adishi & Oluka, 2018:12). This theory therefore explicitly explain the organizational structure and fundamental reason for the emergence of the Fulani-herders’ militancy in Nigeria’s North-Central of Benue and Plateau States on one hand, and other parts of the country on the other hand.

From the discussions so far, it is obvious that Benue and Plateau States have recorded several attacks orchestrated by the Fulani herdsmen militancy over the years. Several lives and properties have been lost and means of sustaining of livelihoods lost due to displacement and destructions of farm lands belonging to the rural farmers. However, the heightened militancy, kidnapping for ransom, armed robbery, banditry and the Fulani headsman militancy on the one hand, and on the other hand, the rate at which farms and crops are distorted and lives are lost, shows that Nigeria is under a determined violent campaign sponsored by non-state actors for clandestine motive that is either ethnic or religious based, or for political again. This recent militancy doe not only threaten farming activities in Benue State, Plateau State and other affected states of the federal republic but has far reaching implication for economic development and sustainability of the livelihood of farmers and other citizens in these states in particular. On a general perspective, it has negative implication on foreign direct investment (FDI) into the country regarded as unsafe for foreign investors. Essentially, there is decline in food security or production as there is unimaginable decline in population growth due to the persistent killings in the country by the herders, bandits and Boko Haram

terrorist organization (Igbini, 2022). The majority of Islamic terrorist organizations in existence today, including the Boko Haram sect in Nigeria, share the same ideas of self-sacrifice and suicide martyrdom as assassins (Ikenga & Efebeh, 2013). Since the death of the sect's founder, Muhammad Yusuf, there have been numerous breakaway factions, including one that uses the platform to further its criminal goals (Efebeh, & Efanodor, 2016). Most worrisome and sympathetic of all, is the inability of the government of the federation to ameliorate all manners of insurgencies in the country north-east, north-central and other parts of the country, declare the Fulani herdsmen militancy as a terrorist group but rather declare Indigenous People of Biafra IPOB secessionist group as such that are harmless and peaceful.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Nigerians have no choice but to believe that this form of conflict has spread beyond the original reason for the conflict that started between the Fulani nomads or pastoralists and sedentary farmers, given the extent or level of damages so far caused by the violent campaign of the Fulani herdsmen in the north central, and now in other parts of the country. There is no question that the federal and state governments' inability to combat this security threat, along with threats from Boko Haram, ISWAP, banditry, armed robbery, and kidnapping for ransom, necessitates joint efforts from Nigeria's neighboring nations, Benin, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger Republics, which have also been suspected of providing safe haven for terrorists over the years. Collaboration with foreign allies who appear to be better prepared and tactically ready to assist the Nigerian government in quelling these insurgencies is also necessary.

- Not much has been said or done to combat Fulani herdsmen militancy in the north-central and other affected states of the country aside from the deployment of military operations against Boko Haram and occasionally against cattle rustlers until recently when the federal government headed by President Muhammadu Buhari attempted to establish "Ruga Settlement," which in Hausa language means "small settlement or colony for herders," in nearly all the states of the federal republic. Given these factors, it is essential to suggest policy alternatives that are likely to reduce the threat of Fulani herdsmen across the nation. The following options are suggested in light of the devastating security threats posed by the self-described Fulani herdsmen militias in the nation's north central region and other regions, as well as the federal government's apparent inability to control farmer-herder conflict brought on by climate change, a lack of natural resources, and laws governing land use.
- In light of recent events in the nation's north-central region, and consequently other regions as well, the government should address the core problems or causes of the conflict between Fulani herdsmen and farmers through effective, workable, sincere, and widely accepted public policy before using excessive military force. The conflict between farmers and herders will undoubtedly be resolved once this is done, and the citizens of the federation's affected states' ability to sustain their way of life will be at its highest level.
- To prevent people from crossing the nation's borders, the federation's government should make sure that adequate border management and control systems are in place. There is no doubt that this will stop all types of illegal movements as well as the proliferation of small and light weapons within the country's borders since it was discovered that the majority of the insurgent members are from the neighboring countries of Chad and Niger.
- The government must give security agencies modern tools for crime detection, such as functional databases and other forms of sophistication needed to combat all types of crimes, rather than politicizing the nation's internal security organizations. This is necessary given how frequently foreigners cross the country's porous borders to work with their Nigerian allies to commit crimes there. This implies that efficient forensic technical devices such as Automated Fingerprints Identification System (AFIS) and Live Scan Fingerprints Capture Device (LSFCD) should be installed and effectively deploy in the country's land borders and airports to enable the security agencies to have a record of foreigners into the country at any given time. This is likely to reduce the involvement of foreigners in the insurgencies in the country including the Fulani herders' militancy.
- In addition, the government should also embark on bio-data registration campaign across the country and ensures that both citizens and foreigners already resident in the country are captured. This undeniably will monitor both resident criminal herders and foreign cohorts from the neighbouring countries for carryout their heinous crimes against Nigerian farmers and innocent citizens. Since every individual citizen's identity is publicly recorded, it will aid men of the police force to identify criminal elements in the country.
- The host communities should also consider the fact that herdsmen do not know everything about their cultural norms but should set boundaries of what is and what is not acceptable from the settlers before admitting the herders into their respective

communities. This no doubt will go a long way to ameliorate the conflict emanating from misconception and contestation of rights and privileges from both parties.

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