

## **The Armed-Fulani-Herdsmen and Violent Attacks Against Farmers and Farming Communities in Nigeria: An Overview**

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**Abstract.** The conflict between the Fulani herdsmen and Farmers in Nigeria is a long-aged rivalry. However, the occurrence of violent attacks by the Fulani herders against the farmers and farming communities has been so terrific in the recent time. This paper examines and outlines these incessant attacks and draws the implications. The paper argues that the attacks go beyond the usual conflict that is known between the two groups; that there are two different sects of Fulani herders in Nigeria: the armed and unarmed herders; that the armed-herders are the perpetrators of these violent attacks and they may be another form of an insurgent group in the country. This is because their violent attacks continue to threaten the life and security of Nigerians in and around the affected communities, and the food security of the country as a whole. Therefore, the paper suggests that open grazing should be abolished and the creation and use of ranches should be encouraged among herders in order to end the attacks.

**Keywords:** Fulani herdsmen; Farmers; Armed; Violent; Attack; Nigeria

### **1. Introduction**

The insecurity resulting from the insurgent, militia, and terrorist attacks is one of the major challenges the Nigerian government has been battling within the recent years. Nigerians had experienced and continue to experience brutal and violent attacks from different insurgent groups such as the Boko-Haram and Niger Delta Militants over the past few years (Adesina, 2013). These attacks range from kidnapping to killing and raping of children and women, sporadic shooting of unarmed and innocent citizens, burning and destruction of houses and properties, bombing (including suicide bomb attacks) and so on (Jackson, 2007; Adesina, 2013). For instance, the violent activities of Boko Haram insurgency in the northern part of the country had claimed many lives, incapacitated and displaced thousands, and destroyed properties worth multi-billions of Naira (Omede, 2011; Obi, 2008).

With the incessant occurrence of violent attacks on Nigerians, Nigeria has been included among one of the most dangerous and insecure countries in the world (Olukayode & Urhie, 2014). However, in recent time, the activities of the insurgent

groups (Boko-Haram and the militants) have been considerably degraded by the Nigeria military. The sporadic shooting and persistent coordinated bomb attacks have reduced tremendously. Nonetheless, suicide bomb attacks still occur at an interval in some states in the north-eastern part of the country. This shows that the insurgent groups have been technically overpowered to some extent (Pérouse de Montclos, 2016). However, another major phenomenon that continues to threaten the life and existence of some communities in Nigeria is the violent activities or attacks by the Fulani cattle breeders (also known as Fulani herdsmen) against farmers and farming communities in the rural areas (Ubelejit, 2016). Although the clash between the Fulani cattle breeders and the farmers is not a new occurrence in Nigeria, several cases of killings between the two groups were reported to have taken place before and years following the Nigeria independence in 1960 and the problem lingers till today (Tenuche & Ifatimehin, 2009). Researchers have documented the interplay of different factors responsible for these clashes. Among which include trespass and destruction of farmlands/farm-crops by Fulani herdsmen, issues regarding land disputes and ownership, struggles for grazing in the light of the dwindling of arable land, ethnic or religious or other sentiment issues, and cattle rustling (Odoh & Chilaka, 2012; Ubelejit, 2016; Bello, 2013; Adisa & Adekunle, 2010).

However, the Fulani herders' attacks against the farmers and innocent people (including women and children) living in the affected rural communities are terrific lately. The recent attacks according to the Global Terrorism Index are beyond the usual clash between the two groups (LaFree et al, 2016). It appears that the herders have taken after the violent insurgent groups, this is because these attacks are more of terror and genocide

(Dimelu et al, 2017). Though the herdsmen were known for wreaking havoc and maiming their challengers or enemies whenever there are clashes but the manner and rate at which they perpetrate these violent crimes in recent times have increased outrageously (Higazi, 2016).

So far, many communities have been razed leaving a countless number of people being killed, hundreds raped, thousands displaced and many rendered incapacitated by the Fulani herdsmen (Ubelejit, 2016). Though there is no official statistics or systematic data gathering that specifically provide the total number of people killed by the Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria. Various cases of the attacks were reported by the media. However, the 2015 Global Terrorism Index reported that about 63 people were killed by Fulani Herdsmen in 2013 and 1,229 in 2014 (START, 2015). In addition, the 2017 Global Terrorism Database reported that the Fulani herdsmen extremists have killed over 2,500 people in Nigeria between 2012 and 2016 making them responsible for more deaths than Boko-Haram insurgent group in 2016 (Institute for Economic and Peace, 2017). Furthermore, it was also reported that not less than 2000 lives were lost and over 12 thousand persons displaced across four states in Nigeria (Nasarawa, Benue, Plateau and Kwara) between 2007 and 2010 as a result of herders attacks on communities (Adisa & Adekunle, 2010). Additionally, the Amnesty International reported that 894 and 1813 people were killed across 17 states in 2017 and 2018 (between January and June) respectively (New Telegraph, 2018).

Hence, the major concern that preoccupies the mind of many Nigerians is whether the Fulani herdsmen are not another form of a terrorist group in Nigeria. Given the manner in which this group attacks and kills people (often with sophisticated arms). It is

worrying whether if these arms-bearing Fulani herdsmen are not another dimension of insurgent organisation springing up to take over from the degraded rebellious groups. It is against this background that this paper examines the violent activities of the Fulani herdsmen against the farmers and farming communities with an understanding that the group may be a new form of terrorist organisation or insurgent group in the country. Previous theoretical analysis and empirical research focused mainly on the causes of the herders-farmers clash in Nigeria. However, none of these research works addressed this phenomenon as a likely or a development of a new form of insurgency in Nigeria. The objective of this paper, therefore, is to examine the nature of Fulani herdsmen attacks and aggression, the implications of the attacks and proffer recommendations on how to contain the menace.

## **2. Who are the Fulani Herdsmen?**

Fulani herdsmen are ethnic group found in West and Central Africa. They are largely nomadic breeders or pastoralists whose primary livelihood is raising livestock (cattle, goats and sheep) (Tenuche & Ifatimehin, 2009). Usually, the Fulani engage in the random movement of livestock through towns and across borders because they do not have a fixed abode. They move from place to place and their movement largely depends on the season and pastoral state. In addition, availability of water, extreme winds, high temperatures also influence their choice of area (Bello, 2013). In the recent years, however, changes in the climate patterns have also influenced their movement (Higazi, 2016). The Fulani herdsmen are found in countries like Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ghana, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Mauritania, Mali, Nigeria, and Niger (Bello, 2013).

The Fulani ethnic group settled together with the Hausas and other ethnic groups in the Northern part of Nigeria. These ethnic groups integrated and lived together long before the existence of Nigeria. The majority of Fulani herdsmen have a primitive ideology and are pagan worshipers, while very few are Muslims (Bello, 2013). Today, the Fulani and Hausas are the major ethnic groups that dominate the northern states in Nigeria, with a population of over 30 million (Institute for Economic and Peace, 2017). In addition, due to the nature of their occupation, they are also found in other parts of Nigeria today. They drive their cattle from the north to the south, west and eastern part of Nigeria dominated by other ethnic groups (Ubelejiti, 2016).

Furthermore, the Fulani herdsmen move across the states in the country and to other neighbouring countries to graze their livestock openly. Usually, they drive or graze their livestock in the forest far from cities and towns; though there are some shanty communities located in these areas whose primary occupation are farming. Typically, an average Fulani herder carries a stick and small weapons such as arrow and dagger, and swords while managing or driving cattle to protect himself and the livestock against wild animals and cattle rustlers (Higazi, 2016).

The roles of the Fulani herdsmen in the provision of meat for Nigerians and the economic development of Nigeria cannot be overemphasised. Nigerian Fulani herdsmen provide the bulk (about 95%) of the livestock (beef) consumed in the country. They contribute immensely to the economic growth and development of the country through the production and selling of cattle (Ofuoku & Isife, 2009). The minister of agriculture, Chief Audu Ogbeh, recently

announced that around 80,000 to 90,000 million cows are consumed in Nigeria daily. This shows the significant role the Fulani herdsmen play in Nigeria (Al-hamin, 2017).

The Fulani herdsmen like other groups in the country formed an organization called the Miyatti-Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) which is the apex body of all Fulani cattle breeders in Nigeria. There are also branches of MACBAN across the states and local governments in the country. MACBAN is an officially registered association that caters to the affairs of all herders in Nigeria. It should be noted, however, that MACBAN is not an association of Fulani herdsmen alone, it also comprises of non-Fulani cattle owners who rear their cattle in private ranches. Grazing cattle and other livestock across states and towns (open-grazing) is commonly done by Fulani herders, non-Fulani cattle rears are usually private investors that make use of cattle field or ranches (Ofem & Inyang, 2014).

## **2.1 Conflict between Farmers and Fulani Herdsmen**

Agriculture (farming and livestock) is the backbone of Nigeria. Prior to the discovery of oil in 1958, agriculture accounts for 97% of the Nigeria revenue and export earnings. Though Nigeria depends so much on oil for her revenue today; yet agriculture still remains the most lucrative industry in the country (Braithwaite, 2002). Much of the foodstuff and meat consumed in Nigeria are produced locally by the Farmers and Fulani herders. Thus, both the Farmers and Fulani herdsmen are among the major actors that drive the economic growth and development of Nigeria (Omorogiuwa et. al., 2014).

However, the Fulani pastoralists-farmers' conflicts is a major challenge facing the

agriculture industry in Nigeria. In the recent years, the clash has grown, degenerated and intensified. Today, the tension poses a serious threat to national cohesion and security (Bello, 2013). Scholars, national and international organisation have carried out several studies to understand the problem between the herdsmen and farmers and provided recommendations on how to address the factors that may be responsible. Among the highlighted challenges include the increase in the population and the struggle for the available resources and the open grazing system adopted in Nigeria (Babatunde et al, 2015; Ofuoku & Isife, 2009; Odoh & Chilaka, 2012; Institute for Economic and Peace, 2017).

Nigeria's population according to the 2006 population census is over 170 million (National Population Commission, 2006). Today, the actual population of Nigeria is not known. The National Bureau of Statistics roughly put the figure around 192.3 million in 2016 (NBS, 2016). The United Nations projected that Nigeria's population will be around 364 million in 2030 and 480 million by 2050 (United Nations, 2015). However, the increase in population is without adequate planning and policies that will ensure equitable distribution of the available resources among people and the various groups (Rosenthal, 2015).

For instance, the demographic increase has led to the development of new urban areas and expansion of the existing ones. It has also increased the need for more constructions, cultivation of more farmlands (production of more foods) and raising more livestock to meet the demands of the people. Consequently, there is enormous pressure on the available resources (land and water) and an increase in competition between the cattle breeders, farmers and other interest groups. In addition, most of the construction

developments and farmlands were done on the transhumance grazing routes making it very difficult for breeders to move around or graze their livestock (Oseni, 2012; Babatunde et al, 2015).

Furthermore, the impacts of desertification and low rainfall in Northern Nigeria caused by climate change have forced many herdsmen to migrate with their livestock to the southern part where there is abundant rainfall and where the majority are farmers. In the process of migration, farmlands are usually destroyed by the livestock (Ubelejit, 2016). Also, the livestock sometimes grazes on farmlands leading to the destruction of crops.

In response to these destructions, farmers occasionally grow some poisonous plants on their farmlands to poison the cattle that feed on the crops. The situation thereby results in conflict between the two groups leading to attacks on the farmers and farming communities for killing the livestock, and counter or revenge attacks by the farmers. In addition, the presence of cattle rustlers and widespread of cattle rustling around the farming communities gave the herders the impression that farmers and the people in those communities were responsible for stealing their livestock. Thus, this negative mental state progressed and escalated to a serious conflict between the two groups (Odoh & Chilaka, 2012; Higazi, 2016).

## **2.2 The Arms-Bearing Fulani Herdsmen's Violent Crimes**

As noted earlier, a typical Fulani herder carries arrow and dagger, cutlasses, and sword to protect himself and livestock against the wild animals and possibly armed robbers or cattle rustlers (Ofuoku & Isife, 2009). Today, a division of Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria now carry deadly sophisticated

weapons such as AK-47 assault rifle and hand-grenades around to protect themselves (Al-hamin, 2017). These weapons are being used against the farmers and farming communities whenever there is any clash between them. The use of these weapons has resulted in a number of killings and destruction of communities in Nigeria. For the purpose of this paper, information and reports on the recent attacks from the daily newspapers were collated from 2015 to date as follows:

- December 13, 2015: 14 persons were killed and several houses razed in an attack on a village in Kwata Area of Jos, Plateau State. The attack was carried out by the Fulani herdsmen following a threat from the group.
- January 17, 2016: 3 people were killed in an attack on Gareji community in Taraba State.
- January 23, 2016: close to 60 people were killed (including a police DPO) in 4 communities (Demsare, Wunamokoh, Dikajam and Taboungo) of Adamawa State.
- February 2, 2016: over 7 people were killed in an early morning attack on Agatu community of Benue State.
- February 7, 2016: 10 people were killed in Tom Anyiin community and another two were killed in Abbi community of Enugu State four days later on 11th February (Henry, 2017).
- February 24, 2016: About 300 people (including children and women) was killed following the attack on 5 communities (Aila, Ugboju, Akwu, Odugbeho and Enogaje) in Agatu local government of Benue State.
- February 29, 2016: Another 50 persons were massacred in Agatu area of Benue State.

- March 2, 2016: Ossissa community in Ndokwa area of Delta State was attacked by herdsmen.
- March 7, 13 and 15, 2016: 8, 12 people were killed and many injured in an attack on Mbaya-Tombo community of Benue State.
- April 3 and 4, 2016: About 7 and 16 people were killed in Ohali-Elu community of Rivers State.
- April 12, 2016: Nigeria Police reported that several houses were razed and about 15 persons were killed by suspected Fulani herdsmen in Dori and Mesuma village of Taraba State. Though the community member claimed it was 40 persons.
- April 18, 2016: 100 persons were killed, 21 schools and primary health care facilities were destroyed in an attack on Moor community in Kwande area of Murdi, Benue State.
- April 20, 2016: Soldiers were attacked in Agatu, Benue, and a policeman was declared missing.
- April 26, 2016: About 40 persons were killed, 10 houses and 1 church razed in an attack on 7 communities (Nimbo Ngwoko, Ugwuijoro, Ekwuru, Ebor, Enugu Nimbo, Umuome and Ugwuachara) at Uzo-Uwani Local Government of Enugu state.
- May 20, May 2016: Two persons were killed and six seriously injured following an attack on the Oke-Akole community in Ekiti State. Not fewer than 37 persons were killed and several others injured in a violent Fulani herdsmen attack in Kajuru, Kajuru local government of Kaduna State.
- November 25, 2016: herdsmen slaughtered 7 men and a woman in Dungun Mu'azu community in Sabuwa Local Government Area of Katsina State in a reprisal attack.
- January 4, 2017: 5 persons were killed in Abraka and Obiarukwu both in Ethiope East and Ukwani local government areas of Delta State.
- January 8, 2017: 5 Policemen and 2 civilians were killed in an attack by suspected herdsmen in Demsa Local Government Area of Adamawa State.
- January 9, 2017: over 5 persons were hacked to death in two separate attacks on Abraka and Obiaruku communities of Delta State.
- January 15, 2017: 9 people including a Police officer and a member of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC) were killed by herdsmen in an attack on Rafin Gona and BCC Gbagyi communities in Bosso local government area of Niger State.
- January 17, 2017: Three persons were killed and five injured when herdsmen opened fire in Samaru Kataf market in Zango-Kataf Local Council of Kaduna State.
- January 24, 2017: 15 indigenes and 2 Fulani herdsmen were killed in an attack on Ipiga community in Ohimini Local Government Area of Benue State.
- January 24, 2017: 5 students of the College of Education, Gidan Waya, Jema'a Local Government Area, Kaduna State, were shot dead by suspected herdsmen.
- February 10, 2017: 8 people were killed in an attack on Rukumawa Tsafe Local Government Area of Zamfara State, following a clash between community members and suspected herdsmen.
- February 21, 2017: more than 21 persons were killed by Fulani

- herdsmen in an attack on 4 communities in Southern Kaduna, Kaduna State.
- March 1, 2017: 3 persons were killed in a clash involving indigenes and suspected herdsmen in some communities of Delta and Rivers states.
  - March 2, 2017: At least 10 persons were killed in a hostile attack by the Fulani herdsmen on Mbahimin community, Gwer East Local Government Area of Benue State.
  - March 6, 2017: 2 persons were killed in a clash between suspected herdsmen and residents of Omumu community in Ika South Local Council of Delta State.
  - March 11, 2017: 7 people were killed in an attack on by herdsmen on a Tiv community, Mkgovur village in Buruku local government area of Benue State.
  - March 14, 2017: 1 person was killed and several others injured in a clash between herdsmen and the farmers of Umuobasikwu, Ozuitem community in Bende local government area of Abia State clashed.
  - March 28, 2017: 3 persons were killed while six others sustained injuries as suspected herdsmen attacked Emuhu community in Ika South local council of Delta State (Henry, 2017).
  - May 8, 2017: 3 persons were killed by herdsmen in Tse-Akaa village, Ugondo Mbamar District of Logo Local Government Area of Benue State.
  - May 10, 2017: The Nigeria Police, Delta Police command reported that an inspector was killed and three other policemen injured by suspected herdsmen in Abraka, Ethiope East LGA of the state.
  - May 12, 2017: Suspected herdsmen beheaded a commercial motorcycle rider and 6 farmers who are indigenes of Ossissa community in Ndokwa East Local Government Area of Delta State.
  - May 13, 2017: 13 persons were killed by herdsmen in three communities of Logo Local Government Area of Benue State.
  - May 18, 2017: 2 persons were killed by suspected herdsmen in an attack on Afam Uku, in Oyigbo Local Government Area of Rivers State.
  - January 1, 2018: more than 50 persons were killed in coordinated herdsmen attacks on six communities in Benue State.
  - January 17, 2018: 4 persons were killed in an attack by suspected armed herdsmen in Logo and Guma Local Government Areas of Benue State.
  - January 18, 2018: A farmer was killed on his farmland by suspected armed Fulani herdsmen at Afon in Imeko-Afon Local Government of Ogun State.
  - January 21, 2018: Three persons were killed, houses razed and food barns set ablaze by armed herdsmen in an early morning attack in Kikon Village of Numan Local Government Area of Adamawa State.
- (Marie-Therese, 2015; Adams, 2016; Ameh-Comrade, 2016; Ameh-Comrade, 2017; Seun, 2016; Emeka et al, 2016; Gbenro & Jesusegun, 2016; Don, 2018; Winifred, 2018; Daud, 2018). All these attacks were those reported by the media. It is important to note, that there are several others that were not reported or covered and that attacks and killings have not stopped.

Hardly, a day will pass without a report or news of herders' attack against farmers and innocent Nigerians.

All these violent attacks according to the Chairman and some members of the herdsman association (Miyatti Allah; Benue State branch) were a response to the occupation of the grazing routes, various farmer's attacks on their members and cattle rustling in those areas (Isenyo, 2017). In a study conducted by Abbas on the Fulani herdsman, it was cited from one of the herders interviewed that 'Our herd is our life because, to every nomad, life is worthless without his cattle. What do you expect from us when our source of existence is threatened? The encroachment of the grazing field and routes by farmers is a call to war' (Abbas, 2000: 331).

It is generally known that pastoralism for Fulani herdsman like farming for the farmers is a heritage, way of life, and means of subsistence. However, the tones of violence and aggression by the Fulani herders indicate that any threat to their means of subsistence consciously or unconsciously amounts to a war. The implication of this is that the Fulani herdsman would eliminate whomever that stand in their way from grazing, even if their way is another person's farmland or means of subsistence. This clearly describes the magnitude of aggression that the Fulani herders hold towards their rivals and it explains why these attacks are not just mere rivalry clash. It should be noted, however, that most of the attacks by farmers as analysts reported are usually in response to the invasion of farmlands and damage of crops and are usually against the livestock not the herder in person (Al-Chukwuma & Atelhe, 2014).

The presence of herdsman (armed or unarmed) in communities across the country, therefore, continue to elicit fear in the people. According to the 2015 Global Terrorism Index, the Fulani herdsman is the fourth most deadly terrorist group in the world in 2014 (START, 2015). Their terror activities in the recent times have also earned them the deadliest group responsible for more deaths than other insurgent groups in the country (Institute for Economic and Peace, 2017). It is important at this juncture to briefly look at the meaning of terrorism and the characteristics of a terrorist act.

### 3. What is Terrorism?

Terrorism is a sensitive and divisive term which different intellectuals and societies often viewed differently (Richard, 2008). There is no consensus on the meaning of terrorism. The majority of researchers adopted definitions given by the international agencies directly associated with the government. For instance, the UN Security Council Resolution 1566 (2004) defines terrorism as criminal acts, usually committed against civilians with the intent to cause death or grave bodily injury, or taking of hostages, with the purpose to incite a state of terror in a group of persons or particular persons, intimidate or compel a government or an international organization to do or to refrain from doing any act (United Nations, 2004).

In another dimension, the Arab Convention for the Suppression of Terrorism adopted by the Council of Arab Ministers of the Interior and the Council of Arab Ministers of Justice in 1998 defines terrorism as any act or threat of violence of whatever motive, perpetrated by an individual or group with the agenda to spread or cause panic among people by harming them, or placing their lives, liberty or security in danger; or causing damage to the environment or property, or seeking to

threaten national resources (League of Arab States, 1998).

Additionally, the Nigeria Terrorism (Prevention) Act 2011 under Part 1 (2) described terrorism as ‘an act which is deliberately done with malice, aforethought and which may seriously harm or damage the country or an international organization; which is intended or can reasonably be regarded as having been intended to:

- (i) unduly compel a government or international organization to perform or abstain from performing any act;
- (ii) seriously intimidate a population;
- (iii) seriously destabilize or destroy the fundamental political, constitutional, economic or social structures of a country or an international organization; or
- (iv) otherwise, influence such government or international organization by intimidation or coercion; and
- (v) involves or causes, as the case may be:
  - an attack on a person's life which may cause serious bodily harm or death;
  - kidnapping of a person;
  - destruction to a Government or public facility, a transport system, an infrastructure facility, including an information system, a fixed platform located on the continental shelf, a public place or private property, likely to endanger human life or result in a major economic loss;
  - the seizure of an aircraft, ship or other means of public or goods transport and diversion or the use of such means of transportation for any of the purposes in paragraph (b)(iv) of this subsection ;

- the manufacture, possession, acquisition, transport, supply or use of weapons, explosives or of nuclear, biological or chemical weapons, as well as research into, and development of biological and chemical weapons without lawful authority;
- the release of dangerous substance or causing a fire, explosions or floods, the effect of which is to endanger human life;
- interference with or disruption of the supply of water, power or any other fundamental natural resource, the effect of which is to endanger human life (Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2011).

Furthermore, Fletcher (2002) highlighted six major characteristics of terrorism and terrorist groups: a. the victims are usually civilians or innocent persons; b. terrorists are private actors against states; c. terrorists have motives (political, religious, or economic), believing unleashing terror on the civilians will compel the governments to change or adjust certain policy; d. terrorists act as organized groups; e. terrorism must have a theatrical aspect and; f. terrorists feel guiltless.

In addition, Fletcher (2006) observed that terrorism is not just an ordinary crime but a different dimension of crime, a more lethal form of crime, and a kind of dangerous crime having some of the elements of warfare. One major distinction between terrorism or terrorists and other criminal offenders is that criminal offenders commit crimes in private, they deny it when accused or confronted and try to cover them up. The terrorists, on the other hand, usually claim responsibility and are proud of their actions. In addition, terrorists, unlike other criminal offenders, do not target a specific individual

but rather a group of people or a whole nation. Terrorism creates a level of fear and distress that are beyond the apprehension of ordinary crimes (Saif-Alden, 2006).

Various literature on terrorism illustrates that there is no single form of terrorism, rather a range of various techniques terrorists use to unleash terrorism are provided. In addition, terrorism is not limited absolutely to a particular motive religious or political. Motives behind terror attacks are different and vary across terrorist groups. Generally, all forms and motives of terror have a common component, imposing fear on a specific group of people or nation and not on individuals (Krueger & Malečková, 2003; Hoffman, 2006; Krieger & Meierrieks, 2011).

From the foregoing, it can be observed that terrorism is an act of violence or threat by an organised armed group with a motive(s), against another group (usually unarmed) causing serious panic and unleashing havoc which results in death, physical injury or endangers safety of lives and property of the group and the security of a state.

Are the Fulani Herders' Attacks Acts of Terrorism? Looking at the nature of herders' violent attacks, the definition of terrorism and characteristics of terrorist activities described, the violent activities of armed-Fulani herds are close to that of terrorist or insurgent groups like Boko-Haram. This is because the attacks are premeditated, deliberate and intended to cause harm, injury, death and extermination of ethnic groups and communities (in northern and southern part of Nigeria) that are known to be the backbone of the country in foodstuff production. Additionally, these violent attacks have claimed several lives, caused fear and placed the entire affected states' liberty and security in danger; damaged

farmlands, storages and other agricultural crops which have in many ways jeopardized national resources and economic structure of the country (Dimelu et al., 2017).

The distinction between the armed-herders and Boko-Haram is that while the Boko-Haram try to dominate or take over zones or communities after an attack is launched, the armed-herders usually flee the scene after wreaking havoc on the communities. In addition, Boko-Haram uses suicide bombers, armed-herders do not use suicide bombers (Okoli & Atelhe, 2014). However, both groups share some common characteristics. For instance, engaging in a shootout with security operatives, throwing grenades, sporadic shooting at innocent people (including women and children), kidnapping, raping, reaping away victims' property, destructions of properties and government installations and so on (Ofem & Inyang, 2014;; Chaynes, 2014; Pérouse-de-Montclos, 2016). Therefore, the nature of the armed-herds' attacks on farmers and farming communities can be equated with acts of terrorism.

#### **4. Efforts to Combat the Attacks and the Challenges Thereon**

Much of the efforts to contain the violent activities of the armed-herds are from the authorities of the affected states. Little has been done by the central or federal authority. There were cases of non-deployment of security officers to the affected areas by the federal authority to protect people (Al-Chukwuma & Atelhe, 2014). Also, reports revealed that the situation got worsened because the federal government kept mute on the issue and failed to take a genuine step to curb the menace (Erdağ, 2016). Analysts have also claimed that the federal government is handling the issue with levity just like the way Boko-Haram was handled

in its early days (Dimelu et al., 2017; Ameh-Comrade, 2016; Emeka et al, 2016).

It is important to recall that the Boko-Haram which remains the major terrorist group in Nigeria started terrorising the country by attacking police stations, government installations and small communities (Chaynes, 2014). The central government then saw them as a politically sponsored group and little action or effort was made to stop them then until the situation worsened. The group's violent attacks continued and later graduated to terrorism. It appears that the present federal government is also taking the herdsmen violent attacks too for granted. This is because no reasonable arrest and prosecution have been made so far. The Chief Police of the federation perceived the issue as ethnic clash and no single reason has been given to the public as to why no arrest and prosecution of the perpetrators have not been made (Henry, 2017).

All the affected states within their authorities and resources available to them initiated different strategies to solve the Fulani-farmers' conflicts. Among the methods adopted include dialogue, negotiation and dispute resolution between the two groups to be able to come to term. These initiatives resulted in the compensation of both parties for their losses (Okoli & Atelhe, 2014). However, it appears that all these initiatives were palliative and short-term measures. This is because not long after the settlement was made to the affected parties, violent attacks on communities and villages resurfaced again (Okoli & Atelhe, 2014).

After exploring every possible means to stop the killings, some of the affected states came up with laws (anti-open grazing laws) that specifically mandated grazing of livestock only within ranches and criminalised the

movement of animals from place to place except by rail, trucks and other means of transportation. The laws spelt out punishment for any violator, the punishments include imprisonment or payment of fines or both on conviction. Similarly, the laws also protect the herders, livestock and ranches by stipulating severe punishment for any person convicted for attacking herders, rustling cattle or any other animals kept on ranches (Isenyo, 2017).

However, the implementation and enforcement of these laws are the major challenges these states are facing. For such law to be enforced, the justice apparatus (particularly the law enforcement agencies) should be prepared to make an arrest, prosecute and convict violators. In Nigeria, the state authorities (governors) only have the power to make law together with the state legislature. However, they have limited authority to command the law enforcement agencies to enforce the law.

By constitutional provision, Nigeria operates a federal system of government where the central government has absolute power over the control and redistribution of the nation's resources. In addition, the President is the Chief Executive and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federation (Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 1999: Article VI, Part I). That is, the power to control the entire forces in the country lies with the President. Based on this, the Chief Executive of the States (State Governors) do not have the power to control the security agencies to secure their own states. Anytime the forces (such as the law enforcement agencies) are needed to be deployed to restore peace at a particular area, the State Executives will have to get clearance or approval of the President or the National Police Chief (Inspector General).

This arrangement makes it very difficult for the State Executives to enforce any law, it is even more difficult if the central government seems not to be interested in a particular issue. This is the situation most of the states that enacted anti-open grazing laws to protect their citizens against armed-herders found themselves. Thus, the inability of these states to enforce the anti-grazing law did not only increase the violent attacks on citizens, it has also resulted in the attack on the state authority by some members of Fulani herdsmen association (Miyatti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria) who threatened the state governments to retract the laws or face more casualties.

In a press conference, the National President of the Fulani Miyatti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria stressed that ‘the grazing law agenda is destroying herders’ means of livelihood and we are appealing for immediate intervention to save Fulani pastoralists from total destruction of their means of livelihood by current trends from some state governors enacting segregational anti-open grazing law which target primarily the economic livelihood of the herders’ (Isenyo, 2017).

It appears that the Fulani herdsmen see the anti-open grazing law as a target against them. In the same press conference, the National President of the association also said that ‘the anti-open grazing law is a negative law because it attempts to expel Fulani herdsmen from their grazing areas...., ....we are completely opposed to the anti-grazing law, and we are worried about the possible crisis that may emerge if such law is allowed to take effect. To us, ensuring the security of citizens should be the priority of government, but this anti-grazing law is nothing but a time bomb if not addressed with wisdom’ (Isenyo, 2017).

These are the tone of threats to the legitimate state authorities by a mere group. The interpretation of the Miyetti Allah’s expressions is simple and clear. Nigerians shall witness more conflicts, more banditry and mayhem, more death and more economic losses and a threat to the national security by cattle herders. It is, however, disturbing that a group will issue such a threat to the legitimate state authorities.

From the foregoing, it can be observed that given the nature of attacks and the number of people killed and continuous threat to the security of the country, the Fulani herdsmen violent attacks on farmers and farming communities are not just mere clash between the two groups rather a terrorist attacks that seek to undermine the peace and security in the country. It can also be observed that the group is using the attacks to coerce the state authorities to change their policies and above all the group have no sense of guiltiness. Thus, the violent activities of the Fulani herdsmen against farmers and farming communities (including innocent women and children) amount to acts of terrorism which must be addressed as such.

## 5. Conclusion

The Fulani herdsmen like the Farmers contribute immensely to the well-being of Nigerians and economic growth and development of Nigeria. However, the violent attacks by a sect of the group have also threatened the peace, security and coexistence of some groups in the country which if not properly handled is likely to lead to a serious threat to the entire security of the country. The Fulani herdsmen attacks on the farmers and farming communities are beyond the usual breeders-farmers clash. It appears that these recent attacks are not just against the farmers and affected communities, it is against Nigeria as a whole. The implications of these attacks can

be viewed in two ways. Firstly, it is an attack against Nigerians most especially innocent man, woman and children. Secondly, it is an attack against the communities (majorly in Adamawa, Benue, Jos, Kaduna, Kwara and Taraba State) that produce the larger per cent of foodstuffs consumed in the country. Therefore, the Fulani herdsmen violent attacks did not only threaten the peace, security and coexistence of the various ethnic groups in the country, it also threatens the food security of the entire country.

This paper concludes that not all Fulani herdsmen carry sophisticated weapons and not all are violent. There are sects of herdsmen that still use conventional tools and weapons such as a stick, arrow and dagger. However, the group of herds that carry sophisticated weapons are those responsible for the killings and destruction of properties. Thus, for these violent attacks to be contained, there is a need to distinguish between the armed Fulani herders that perpetrate all these attacks and other non-violent Fulani herders. With this, it will be easy to identify the perpetrators and strategize on ways to un-arm, arrest and possibly prosecute them.

In addition, the protection of lives and properties of the citizens is the fundamental responsibilities of the government at all levels. However, by the constitutional arrangement, the absolute power to control the entire security apparatus in the country is given to the federal or central government, the federal government needs to be proactive by ensuring that the security apparatus in the country are deployed to unrest areas on time. The lives of Nigerians should not be taken for granted or politicised. If possible, there should be a constitutional amendment that will decentralise the control of security apparatus or allow the state executives to be

able to command the forces to some extent most especially in an urgent situation.

More so, the security apparatus most especially the law enforcement agencies were established and empowered by the law to protect life and properties, maintain law and order, arrest and prosecute any violators of law with or without a warrant. They need not take order or permission from the superior before life is protected. They are empowered by the law to use necessary force to disarm and arrest suspects at the scene of any criminal activity. Therefore, the law enforcement agencies should carry out their obligations as stipulated in the constitution diligently.

Finally, the creation of ranches is the best approach to solve the problem of herdsmen-farmers' conflict in Nigeria. Open grazing is an ancient system of rearing livestock. The Fulani herders need to be sensitised about the modern system used in some African countries like Mozambique and Uganda and developed countries. Open grazing is the cause of these conflicts, the government needs to allow and enforce the use of ranches for all herders in the country.

However, not all herders will be able to afford to establish a ranch; the government (federal, state and local) can establish ranches and rent them out to the herders at an affordable amount. In addition, individuals investors should be encouraged (by ensuring a favourable environment such as affordable tax, reasonable terms and condition of operation etc.) to establish commercial ranches. This will allow the Fulani herders to settle at a place to graze their livestock.

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