

Fulani Nationalism and the Use of Herdsmen to Forcibly Acquire Land Belonging to Natives in Nigeria

Frederick O. Igwenyere

Ph.D. International Relations Candidate, Department of Political Science and International Relations, Faculty of Business and Economics, Eastern Mediterranean University, Famagusta, North Cyprus, via Mersin 10, Turkey

Corresponding email: Fredigwe568@gmail.com

Institutional email: 20600047@emu.edu.tr

Abstract

Fulani people can be found in many African states, especially in West Africa. The Fulani who are mainly nomads and Muslims, migrated to Nigeria in the 13th Century and conquered the Hausa ethnic group in the 18th Century. Thereafter, they established their rule over the Hausa and other ethnic groups in Northern Nigeria through the Sokoto Caliphate. The study analyses how the sedentary Fulani use the nomads, herding cattle across the country to acquire land from the natives through intimidation and violence forcibly. The sedentary Fulani who are often well educated and sophisticated use their positions in government to protect and defend the herdsmen. Many authors have attributed climate change as the main reason causing the conflicts between Fulani herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria. The study does not support this assertion. Rather it finds that the attempts by native farmers to resist land grabbing by the nomads lead to conflicts. The study adopted a qualitative method to review some earlier literature on the phenomenon and proffer solutions to the avoidable and unnecessary clashes that have led to the deaths of many farmers and other natives across the country.

Keywords: Herdsmen, Farmers, Clashes, Nigeria

1. Introduction

The herdsman-farmer conflict in Nigeria is a phenomenon that has confounded many in recent times. Many reasons and explanations have been given by scores of authors and commentators as the causes of the conflict. Some have attributed the underlying factor to climate change (Odo and Chigozie, 2012). However, what many agree is the main cause of the rampant conflict between farmers and Fulani herdsman is resource scarcity (Adekunle and Adisa, 2010). To understand the genesis of this conflict, it's important to dive into a brief history of the Fulani, their origin in Nigeria, and their mode of herding cattle. The Fulani people are widely spread across Africa but are mostly found in West Africa. They had roots in the Middle East and North Africa (Anter, 2015). They migrated to Nigeria in the 13th Century and have since constituted a significant part of northern Nigeria. Fulani people are mostly nomads, whose way of grazing poses significant challenges to farmers across Nigeria (Ibrahim, 1966). Fulani nomadic cattle herders were accustomed to moving their cattle southwards during the dry season in search of water and vegetation. As a result of climate change, they now move their cattle southwards during the rainy season, when cultivation of crops usually takes place. This pits them against farmers when their cattle damage crops (Odo and Chigozie, 2012). The pastoralist Fulani are usually accompanied in their migration by their sedentary kinsmen. The latter are generally better educated; and are fanatical Muslims and shrewd politicians than the former. The sedentary Fulani supply the necessary political and military strategy when the pastoralist Fulani face opposition from farmers. The sedentary Fulani also mobilise them for jihad when the occasion arises (Ezeonwuka and Igwe, 2016). However, the pastoral Fulani play a major role in the production and supply of meat, as they own a significant percentage of the country's livestock population, which contributes up to one-third of agricultural Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and about 3.2 percent of Nigeria's overall GDP (Eniola, 2007). Customarily, Fulani herdsman live in temporary structures called 'ruga' (Eniola, 2007). It's not settled when the conflict between Fulani cattle herders and farmers started in Nigeria, but the frequency of the conflict is a recent phenomenon. Despite all the reasons adduced as the major and underlying causes of the frequent Herder-Farmer conflict in Nigeria.

One thing that should dominate the discourse is the political and social dimensions that the crises have taken. Indigenous farm owners, as well as non-indigenous farmers who are often left at the mercy of the heavily armed Fulani herdsman, hold the view that the Federal Government of

Nigeria, dominated by members of the Fulani ethnic group using the herdsmen for an expansionist agenda (Nwosu, 2017). In other words, the conflict is deliberate and it's fuelled by Fulani nationalism. This view emanates from the arms support given to the herdsmen, their defense and protection by the Federal Government of Nigeria, and governments of the states where the state governors are Fulani. Nationalism usually is employed to push for the interests of a particular group (Smith, 2010). So, it's this nationalistic feeling that the study finds nudges the sedentary Fulani and the Fulani nomads to collaborate to ensure their collective survival in Nigeria, by killing especially native farmers and appropriating their land. So, this view opposes the views of many authors, commentators, and scholars, who have majorly attributed the frequent clashes between farmers and Fulani herdsmen to climate change. The view of the author concerning the main reason for the conflict, calls for introspection among scientific researchers in Nigeria, who have written extensively on the topic of farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria. The role of a scientific researcher as an objective researcher should not be sacrificed on the altar of political correctness. It is true that a scientific researcher's perspective on a certain social phenomenon influences his appreciation of the social phenomenon. Yet, the insistence on value neutrality should lead him to demand a revolutionary disjunction between facts and values, in one dimension, and define the idea-type idealization in another (Weber, 1949). However, this does not suggest a fundamental separation of facts from values. The mechanism for unearthing the social phenomenon called the farmer-herder conflict demands that researchers call to aid, the historicity of the conflicts, to unravel the real facts on ground. The explanation of the conflicts through the lens of scarce resources alone can be said to be inadequate or less comprehensive in any sense.

The importance of understanding the political elements in the crisis will go a long way in curbing the menace. The type of social research, researchers should be interested in, is an empirical science of solid reality. Social scientists are admonished to take cognizance of the peculiarity of the reality surrounding them. This can be attained by striving to understand or master the relationships and the social, political, and cultural happenings in their emerging manifestations, and also critiquing the causes of their being historically so, and not in any other conceivable manner (Weber, 1949). The results of scientific experimentations or studies must be seen to be valid for all scientific social researchers, discarding their personal biases. This will eliminate the possibility of empirical irrationalism.

The Fulani example immensely underscores the concept of nationalism in which shared sentiments produce a form of identity that joins individuals in political and social solidarity (Anderson, 1983). The conflict involving farmers and Fulani herdsmen emanated from the national feelings of the Fulani ethnic group, to collectively survive as a group in Nigeria. There is no other way they can successfully displace the farmers and other natives without, coming together as a group and using force to do so. In this sense, conflict is desirable to them; and farmers must resist since their existence is largely dependent on the lands.

1.1. Importance of the Research

The conflict involving farmers and herdsmen in Nigeria has led to unnecessary loss of lives. There is the need to properly situate the problem to stop these carnages. A problem cannot be solved when its cause has not been properly identified. This study is geared towards unearthing this problem, with the hope that the menace will be put to rest. The critique of this study is expected to compel lucidity on the crisis. The study rejects the validity of the outcomes of previous studies on this phenomenon and offers to provide a clearer insight into the conflict.

1.2. Research Questions

1. Is Climate Change the Major Trigger to the Farmer-Herder Clashes in Nigeria?
2. How can this Menace be stopped?

2. Literature Review

It is not certain when the herder-farmer conflicts in Nigeria started. However, some clashes involving them were even witnessed as far back as in the 1960s (Ibrahim, 1966). Fulani nomadic herdsmen who rear different types of cattle such as the muturu, the zebu, the keteku, and others were welcomed and respected by their host communities across Nigeria. This could be a result of the fact that they played an important role in the economic life of their host communities. The herdsmen were friendly and peaceful. They were known to have exchanged their butter and milk for agricultural products of the subsistent farmers whom they lived in their communities. The Fulani herdsmen also reared the livestock of these farmers and fertilized their fields by grazing cattle on them following harvests (Ezeonwuka and Igwe, 2016). Despite a few occasions of violence involving the two groups, their relationships were both cordial and symbiotic. There was evidence of occasional destruction of farms by cattle belonging to the herdsmen. Nonetheless, both parties had always devised ways of resolving these problems.

Fulani nomadic herdsmen were hitherto associated with carrying sticks while tending their cattle. However, since the Government of former President Muhammadu Buhari, who is Fulani, began in 2015, they were often seen, armed with AK47 rifles and other dangerous guns. It's safe to argue that although the activities of herders moving their cattle from one place to another in Nigeria, brings these herdsmen into confrontation with local farmers (Okoli and Atelhe, 2014), the major factor fuelling the conflicts is the audacity of the Fulani ruling class in using the herders to take over land belonging to native Nigerians forcibly. There have been provocative statements from the Fulani ruling class, supporting the encroachments on the land owned by natives by their herdsmen kinsmen. In Nigeria, these Fulani leaders have been heard to have claimed that "Allah has given them Nigeria as their inheritance" (Ezeonwuka and Igwe, 2016). This will be discussed in detail in a subsequent section. This typology of statement often makes the Christian south wary of Fulani herdsmen who are mostly Muslim. Finally, the recent surge in conflicts between herders and farmers in Nigeria has its roots in the superior-inferior complexes, as exhibited in the hubris of the Fulani ruling class in Nigeria. Their attempts to use the herdsmen to chase natives away or kill them to acquire their land, leave the endangered natives with no other option than to resist extermination by fighting back (Gwamma, 2006). In January 2002, Fulani herdsmen and their families suffered heavy casualties, as over 90 of them were killed in Plateau State, north-central Nigeria, which has remained a hot spot for the farmer-herder crisis in Nigeria (Armed Conflict Report, 2009). This singular incident showed that there is always resistance when one group tries to oppress or dominate the other.

3. Conceptual Issues

Conflict may be perceived as evil yet it may be used to resolve differences in political, social, cultural, or economic statuses. In other words, it may serve as a bulwark against inequality in a capitalist system. Karl Marx explains that inequality is a product of capitalism and a group or individuals subjected to inequality by the capital may use a violent confrontation to change their status (Ritzer and Stepnisky, 2014). In his historical materialism thesis, he links conflicts to economic structures and social institutions (Faleti, 2007, p. 43). Conflict is a scheme fashioned to settle divergent interests and attain some kind of satisfaction by a group, notwithstanding, if it involves annihilation of one of the parties to a conflict. So, conflict is perceived as inevitable in the cultural, economic, political, or social relationship of different groups, once there is a clash of interests (Francis, 2006). Decreases in the quantity of renewable, unequal access to land can

compel a group to migrate or be expelled to strange lands. Usually, when one of these occurs, migrating groups may cause ethnic conflicts, if they attempt to occupy land belonging to their host communities (Homer-Dixon and Blitt, 1998). Conflict is usually linked to negative developments and the phenomenon amounts to a struggle over values and claims to scarce power, status, and resources. This explains conflict as a way of resolving problems emanating from opposing interests that groups may have (Coser, 1956). The only way the Fulani herdsmen can dispossess native farmers of their land is through the use of force. The farmers will resist this attempt since their survival largely depends on their lands. This divergence of interests will eventually culminate in a conflict. Thus, conflict serves as an agent for dispossessing farmers of their lands. Conversely, it serves as an agent of resistance for the farmers and other native Nigerians.

4. Methodology

4.1 Data Collection

The qualitative method is used to answer the research questions. The study employed secondary materials such as books, journals, and statements by prominent Fulani leaders. Questionnaires and surveys are important in this type of study. However, since there is adequate literature covering this phenomenon, the study decided to make use of secondary materials instead of primary materials and quantitative methods.

5. Discussion

5.1. Factors Responsible for the Clashes between Herdsmen and Farmers across Nigeria

In a study conducted not too long ago, it was discovered that deliberate grazing of cattle on farms, farmers' encroachment on land reserved for grazing, and indiscriminate bush burning by Fulani herders were the major factors contributing to conflicts between these two groups in some states of the country (Adeoye, 2017). Some have attributed the crises to a scarcity of resources (Adekunle and Adisa, 2010). Some authors such as Abbas (2009) have linked the conflicts to claims and counterclaims over the use of farmlands and cattle routes across the country. While (Odo and Chigozie, 2012) attribute them to climate change. All these findings may be true. However, they are neither the major factors triggering the clashes nor are they the main contributing factors to their escalation. At the base of the clashes is the perceived blocking of the interest of one group by the other (Idowu, 2017). From time immemorial, local farmers and non-

local farmers alike have been living side by side with the Fulani nomadic herders peacefully. They indulged in trade by barter and always devised pacific ways of resolving their differences, arising from herders' cattle destroying crops and plants. The presence of the farmers never threatened the local people hosting them. The herders were allowed to erect their ruga (the customary Fulani encampment comprising temporary structures made of stalks) on the land belonging to their host communities (Eniola, 2007). However, the problem started when the sedentary Fulani began to use the herdsmen for land grabbing and jihad. Statements by some notable Fulani leaders like Bello Badejo that, 'Fulani own all lands in Nigeria' (Nwachukwu, 2021) and 'Allah has given Nigeria to Fulani' (Ezeonwuka and Igwe, 2016) built suspicions in the minds of local communities where Fulani herdsmen usually camp. So, statements such as these immensely fuelled the clashes. Another interesting factor in the conflicts is the country's seeming inability to regulate the mutual coexistence among the citizens of the country (Fiki and Lee, 2004). The intractable problem of indigene/settler in the country is one of the contradictions of the Nigerian state. As long as this is allowed to fester, conflicts involving herders (seen as settlers and invaders) and farmers (indigenes) will continue unabated. The presence of these herdsmen is enough to threaten the farmers, notwithstanding whether or not the 'settlers' actually want to dispossess the farmers of their land. To deescalate the conflicts or to avert future occurrences of conflicts involving local communities and nomadic Fulani herdsmen, both the central and state governments must discourage the movement of cattle from one place to the other. The herders should be encouraged to ranch their cattle while some form of subsidy may be provided to them by the central government. This would certainly allay the fears of the local communities that the central government is solidly behind their ordeal in the hands of the nomadic herdsmen (Nwosu, 2017).

5.2. Cases of Fulani Herdsmen Invading Local Farming Communities and Non-Farming Communities

As stated earlier, conflicts between herders and farmers have become a recurring decimal. They have become the new normal in the country. Before now, there had been cases of clashes between local communities and Fulani herdsmen. However, these clashes rarely resulted in the deaths of either party. Sometime in June 2002 about 30 people were hacked to death in clashes between these two groups in Plateau State. On 4th March 2003, over 100 people (the majority of them farmers) were killed in Adamawa, northern Nigeria over land use (Irin News, 2003).

Armed conflicts involving Fulani herdsmen and their host communities have occurred in over 20 communities in Nigeria (Taiwo, 2010). On 25 April 2016, about 500 Fulani herdsmen who were armed to the teeth invaded a rural, farming community in Enugu State called Nimbo and massacred over 40 villagers without any form of challenge by security forces. The attitude of the security forces in not intervening to save the community was curious because they were alerted beforehand concerning the invasion by these herdsmen. The police and the army arrived only when the attacks had ceased and the attackers fled (Igata, 2016). The governor of the state informed the public that he alerted the security forces of a possible attack but they chose not to act on the intelligence (Ugwuanyi, 2016). The seeming inability of Nigeria's security forces to apprehend and prosecute Fulani herdsmen often emboldens them to act with impunity. In 2017, the nomadic herdsmen once again invaded Agatu, in Benue State, central Nigeria, and hacked over 400 villagers to death. Following, the gruesome killings, the survivors fled and the herdsmen took over their abandoned land. Once again, there was no intervention by Nigeria's security forces to protect the victims of this heinous crime (Ikezue and Ezeah, 2017). It has been alleged that most of these killer herders are non-Fulani Nigerians (Ikezue and Ezeah, 2017). This led credence to the fears of many Nigerians that the Fulani herdsmen are being used by the sedentary Fulani for an expansionist agenda (Nwosu, 2017). Recently, over 100 villagers were massacred by the Fulani herdsmen in Christian communities in Plateau State. The conflict erupted over attempts by the herdsmen to dispossess the communities of their land (Jannmike and Nanlong, 2023). These attacks one may argue have the trappings of a premeditated ethnic cleansing. Farmers are usually the victims because they are unarmed while the herdsmen are heavily armed. These characteristics of the conflicts oppose the views that the major factors contributing to the clashes are climate change, destruction of farms, indiscriminate bush burning, and encroachment on cattle routes. The questions that are germane here are: Who arms the herdsmen? Why are they armed? Why are they allowed to kill with impunity? The study will attempt to proffer answers to these questions in another section.

5.3. Political Dimension to the Conflicts

Farmers and herders had once coexisted peacefully and exchanged dairy and agricultural products in Nigeria until the sedentary Fulani began to use the herders to acquire land belonging to farmers through the use of force (Ezeonwuka and Igwe, 2016). Having stated this. It is important to say that across Africa, especially the West Africa sub-region, history is replete with

the incidents of the Fulani successfully conquering their former host communities militarily, socially, and politically. In most cases, they inadvertently ended up becoming racially and culturally immersed and consequently lost their traditions and language but not religion (Ezeonwuka and Igwe, 2016). So, it's not that the idea of the Fulani taking over land belonging to natives and subjugating such people is a recent thing in Nigeria or across Africa. However, the idea of using the nomadic herdsman to achieve this is a recent phenomenon in Nigeria. Before former President Buhari, a Fulani man assumed the leadership of Nigeria, there had been cases of the sedentary Fulani using the herders to acquire land. However, this intensified under President Buhari. The cases were mostly restricted to northern and central Nigeria, but with the coming of Buhari, they were extended to southern Nigeria. In 2018, following a spate of killings by Fulani herders, especially in Benue State, central Nigeria, the Federal Government was accused of not apprehending any of the culprits and had done nothing to prevent the killings. However, the Federal Government attributed the conflicts to anti-open grazing law being operated in the state. It advised farmers to devise a way of accepting and coexisting with foreigners in their midst.

The attitude of the Federal Government was seen as openly endorsing the killings by herders and the eventual taking over of land abandoned by local farmers by the herdsman (Tukur, 2018). Former Governor Nasir El-Rufai of the northern state of Kaduna, a Fulani man once admitted going to Niger, Chad, Mali, Senegal, and Cameroon to pay some herdsman whom he referred to as 'foreign Fulani herdsman' to stop killing farmers in his state (Opejobi, 2016). Many Nigerians interpreted this as his being actively involved in the conflicts between herders and farmers in Kaduna. They wondered how he was able to identify the killer herdsman and trace them to their respective countries. Sometime, in early 2021, the then Bauchi State Governor Bala Mohammed defended the killer Fulani herdsman for arming themselves with AK-47. He argued that they used AK-47s solely for self-defense against cattle rustlers. He was responding to a notice to quit issued to the killer herders in southern Nigeria, specifically Ondo State, and Governor Ortom's condemnation of the activities of the herdsman in his state, Benue (SaharaReporters, 2021). Bauchi state Governor had also in 2019 argued that Fulani herdsman from Chad, Niger, and other countries bordering Nigeria would benefit from a proposed National Livestock Transformation Plan being canvassed by the Federal Government. By this scheme, Fulani herdsman and their livestock would be put in designated 'colonies' across the country.

He justified the inclusion of foreign Fulani herders on the basis that a Fulani man is a global or African person. That his nationality was simply Fulani (Mohammed, 2019). Many native Nigerians saw this proposal as an orchestrated plan to illegally take their land and hand same to the Fulani. States from across the country, especially those from the south and central Nigeria vehemently kicked against the scheme. Later, the Federal Government abandoned the plan because it generated a lot of heated debates and suspicions. In 2018, a presidential spokesman Femi Adesina on behalf of the presidency advised subsistent farmers in Benue State to surrender their land to Fulani herders to avoid being killed by the herdsmen (Adesina, 2018).

The open or tacit support given to the killer herdsmen (regarded as the fourth most dangerous terrorist group in the world by the Global Terrorism Index) (Burton, 2016) underscores the point that climate change, resource scarcity, destruction of farms by cattle, the seizure of cattle routes by farmers may somehow lead to conflicts between these groups. However, at the roots of the conflicts is the ambition of the sedentary Fulani to take over land belonging to the indigenous Nigerians across the country and subjugate them militarily, politically, economically, and socially. How may one explain the often quoted rhetoric by some Fulani leaders that, ‘‘Fulani own all lands in Nigeria or Allah has given Nigeria to the Fulani, other than to argue that the killer herders are being used for an expansionist agenda?’’ (Nwosu, 2017). It’s safe to argue that both the sedentary and nomadic Fulani are using Fulani nationalism to achieve their interest across Nigeria. So, the clashes are all about the survival of the fittest. Sometime in 2021, the Human Rights Writers Association of Nigeria warned that then-President Buhari was steadily but inadvertently plunging the country into another civil war, following the latter’s open support to the Fulani herders (Human Rights Writers Association of Nigeria, 2021). Buhari had sequel to this, instructed the Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice to start the process of recovering cattle routes and grazing reserves taken over by native Nigerians across the country.

HURIWA saw this as a scheme to dispossess farmers and non-farmers alike, of their ancestral land and hand them over to his kinsmen. Climate change (Odo and Chigozie, 2012) and other factors such as destruction of crops, intimidation of herders by locals, sexual harassment of women by herders, indiscriminate bush burning, cattle rustling and so on (Ajibefun, 2018, p. 136) may have contributed to the conflicts. However, these are not the major contributing factors. For the umpteenth time, at the roots of the conflicts is the inordinate ambition of the

sedentary Fulani ruling class in Nigeria to sack indigenous natives, through the nomadic Fulani, from their land and forcibly take them for their purpose.

5.4. Consequences of the Frequent Conflicts Involving Fulani Herdsmen and Native Nigerians

The adverse effects of the ubiquitous conflicts involving Fulani herders, farmers, and other native Nigerians are multifarious. These have economic, social, political, and even cultural implications. Looking at the social and cultural consequences, the conflicts can contort the cultures or traditions of the natives subjugated by the Fulani. When groups are conquered, usually the conquerors would impose their own cultures or traditions on the conquered. So, the communities forcibly taken over by the Fulani are at the risk of losing their cultures or traditions to them. The conflicts would breed mutual mistrust between the herders and their host communities. Fulani are known to have fought many holy war (jihad) and those communities that were defeated, were assimilated into Islamic culture or Fulani culture. When Fulani conquered some communities in northern Nigeria, they created emirate system in those communities. The Sultan of Sokoto, the Emir of Kano, the Emir of Gwandu and other prominent Emirs in northern Nigeria are all Fulani.

On the political front, when a community is chased out and disposed of its ancestral land, the demography of such a community changes. It may likely lose its land permanently and this would lead to the community losing its original identity (Ikezue and Ezeah, 2017). The conflicts have dire effects on the country's national security.

The attendant security and livelihood crises pose a grave danger to the collective survival of the affected populations because they involve the loss of lives (Okoli and Atelhe, 2014). Over ten months, spanning 2015-2016, it was reported that about 710 people were murdered in eastern Nigeria by the Fulani herdsmen (Mama and Ndujihe, 2016). This particular trend of the conflict could lead to ethnic cleansing, given the identities of the two groups involved. The majority of Igbo people are Christians; conversely, Fulani are Muslims. The killing could be interpreted as a jihad by the Igbo people of eastern Nigeria; while the larger Fulani could attribute the crisis to religious differences. It was surprising that there were no investigations by the Federal Government. Then President of Nigeria, Buhari was accused of aiding the killer pastoralists. The attitude of the Federal Government under President Buhari, a Fulani Muslim toward the crisis in eastern Nigeria may have fuelled this perception. Following the massive killings, no culprit was

ever arrested for the killings. Even his government described Miyetti Allah (an umbrella body for Fulani herdsman) as, ‘a legal stakeholder in our nation and should be respected’ (Shehu, 2019). This was surprising given the fact that the Fulani herdsman group quite like Boko Haram is a terrorist group. A statement such as this gives the impression that the government was in bed with the Fulani herdsman. Indeed, this posed a threat to the existence of Nigeria as a federal union.

The conflicts in their economic ramification, pose unimaginable danger to the sustainability of pastoral farming and crop production in the country (Moritz, 2010). Today, the country is faced with an acute lack of food and other related resources to meet the needs of the population growing astronomically (Solagberu, 2012). Therefore, the conflicts that result in loss of food, skin, income, and so on should be stopped by the Federal Government to avoid hunger and famine in the country. The effective management of conflicts by both the Federal Government and the state governments cannot be overemphasized. In the country, the production of crops is an important characteristic of agricultural activities. Most of the farming activities in the country are carried out by rural-based small-scale farmers, who constitute up to 80 percent of total food needs (Fayinka, 2004). Conversely, Fulani herders play a significant role in the production and supply of meat, skin, milk, butter, and so on. They own a significant percentage of the country’s livestock population, which yields up to one-third of the agricultural GDP, and about 3.2 percent of the country’s total GDP (Eniola, 2007). The construction of Internally Displaced People’s camps by the state governments, to accommodate those displaced by the crises is a drain on the finances of such governments. The funds that should have been channelled into developmental projects are used instead to take care of these people and this does not augur well for the physical or economic development of such states.

6. Conclusion

Scores of literature regarding the ubiquitous and incessant conflicts involving Fulani nomadic herders (popularly known as Fulani herdsman) and farmers or other natives in Nigeria are largely attributed to factors such as climate change, indiscriminate bush burning, resources scarcity, and so on. There is a dearth of literature on the use of Fulani herdsman for an expansionist agenda by the Fulani ruling oligarchs in Nigeria. Or should I say many authors are unwilling to toe this line of discussion? It is difficult to fathom why scores of authors and commentators in the realm of this discourse neglect this fact and dwell on the periphery.

The study does not dispute the fact that those factors contribute to the crises. Rather, it simply argues that they are not the major factors contributing to the conflict. How may one explain the Federal Government's urgency in proposing to establish 'cattle colonies' across the country, while turning a blind eye to the killing of farmers and other natives by Fulani herders? This study explains how Fulani nationalism in no small measure fuels the conflicts. At least, the actions and inactions of notable Fulani leaders, in Nigeria, including former President Buhari, regarding the conflicts buttress this point. Hence, political scientists, sociologists, historians, and others are urged to be more objective while discussing this hydra-headed problem referred to as the farmer-herder clash. One of the major objectives of embarking on this study is to unearth and expose the clandestine motives behind the conflict. It is hoped that the direction of researchers should focus on this dimension of the cause of the conflict. At least, this would go a long way in saving precious lives and resources for national development. The study explains that conflict is unavoidable when two opposing interests clash. As long as one group tries to block the interest of the other, the conflict would be employed to remove this blockage, notwithstanding the possibility of bloodshed. Conflicts do not happen in a vacuum, they occur to justify a group's inclination to survive in a world of scarcity and want.

7. Declarations

Ethics Approval: Not applicable

Consent for Participate: Not applicable

Consent for Publication: Not applicable

Availability of data and material: The datasets used and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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