

Population Growth and Herders-Farmers Conflicts in Nigeria

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Abstract: Rapid population growth otherwise known as population outburst is one of the complex issues that are bedeviling the progress of most nations in the Sub-Saharan Africa. Nigeria, the most populous nation in Africa for long has been in this albatross. The ugly development has impacted deleteriously on the issue of herders and farmers conflict in Nigeria. This menace is not only inconsequential but has direct bearing on food production, human security, property safety and protection. The incidence is more pronounced in the North-Central geopolitical zone and some few other states in the North-West and North-East geopolitical zone. The central objective of the study is to examine population explosion in Nigeria and its adverse influences on herders and farmers conflict in Nigeria. The study generated data from array of both published and unpublished materials such as: text books, journal papers, newspapers, magazines, white paper of reports of panel of investigation and commission of inquiry, internet materials, seminar and conference papers and a lot of others. The main instrument used to generate data for the study was interview. In interpreting our data, the relationship between population burst in Nigeria and the incidence of herders and farmers conflicts was established at both theoretical and empirical level. Empirically, we used a qualitative and historical method that was critical and analytical in providing descriptive and historical details. This was further complemented by descriptive analysis. It was established that rapid population explosion has enormous influence on herders and farmers conflicts in Nigeria. Recommendations such as: Awareness creations, population education, family programmes education, farmer's education, control of borders, good governance, improve policing, religious tolerance and a lot of others were proffered.

Keywords: Population explosion, Herders, farmers and conflict

1. INTRODUCTION

Rapid population growth is one of the problems that are fast growing in the Sub-Saharan Africa. The world's population had increased from 1.65 billion in 1900 to 3.02 billion in 1960. The United Nations estimated that the world had reached 6 billion in the later part of 1999 (Sanni, 2016). Thus, the size of the population nearly quadrupled in the span of 100 years, an unprecedented rate of increase. The scene is more pronounced in the Third World Countries than in the already developed societies. In the sub-Saharan Africa, rapid population has defied a lot of solution due to over adherence and emphasis on act such as: tradition, religion system and the low level of literacy that is common in most of the societies (Moses, 2015). The National Population Commission in 1991 stressed that the population of Nigeria was 120 million and in 2006, it projected the country's population as 158 million. Work of other related agency such as: National Bureau of Statistics and National Orientation Agency guesstimate the population of the country as 180 to 200 million as against the NPC revelation in 2006 (National Population commission, 2006).

The Nigerian government for long has kept implementing sumptuous of reforms to improve the quality of life and standard of living of the people but all to the contrary. This is due to the continued rises in the country's population (Uzuegbunam, 2005). This ugly incidence has opened way to the rise of the hydra headed monster known as headers-farmers' conflict in Nigeria. This unwanted development was built from pressure associated with competition for resources such as land. Land and land resources are at the heart of the herders and farmers conflicts in Nigeria (Cinjel & Akende, 2016). The rapid growth in the country population and the immense need for socio-economic ventures such as: urbanization spread, large scale settlement, industrialization and settlers and indigene categorization have opened ground for conflict and most especially between the farmers and herders (Cinjel & Akende, 2016). This development further has attendant consequences on act such as: pollution, deforestation, land occupation and rising demand for individual and animal consumption for food, water and other natural resources (Moses, 2015).

The unprecedented surge in the country population combined with the rising pressure on land and land resources have impacted negatively to the growth of farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria. This menace spread across every nook and crannies of the country but more predominant in the North Central geo-political zone of the country (Moses, 2015). A lot of persons and property were destroyed and the conflict kept re-occurring despite the effort of government in finding lasting solution to the menace. This ugly scene is a serious setback to food security and other socio-economic development in the country (Cinjel & Akende, 2016).

Competition for land resources and its off-putting locus on farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria is one of the fundamental problems which have prompted this study. The competition for land resources is sharpened by the unchecked and uncontrolled population growth in the country. Arable lands that were previously being used as grazing area were turned as ground for crop farming and places that were known as animal routes are now occupied with human structure and settlement (Stephenson, 2016).

The pressure on land increases as both the human and the animal population increase. The land is a static variable that neither increase nor decrease and consequently the outburst of the herders and farmers confrontation.

Another problem which also called for this study is how the competition for the land resources has opened way for act such as crop damage. Information gathered from both the pastoralists and cultivators tend to relate the immediate cause of the conflict of herders and farmers is the scenario of crop damage by the animal of the herder (Anderson, 2016). The damage often attracts quick reaction from the cultivator either in the form of litigation or open clash. Most of these scenes are common during the dry season farming period.

Most of the traditional cattle routes with water were already encroached due population growth; making it impossible for the pastoralist to have access to water. For example, Abdullahi (2007) indicated that area that was supposed to be reserved for grazing purpose in the North-East and Central of the country were encroached due rapid population growth and the quest for commercial production. Thus one of the reasons why the pastoralist inequitably damaged crops of farmers was the inefficiency in the management of the limited resource, especially land.

It is against this background that the following research questions were posited to guide the study:

- (a) How does population burst enhance competition for land resources in Nigeria?
- (b) What is the relationship between rapid population growth and the incidence of Herders-farmers conflict in Nigeria?
- (c) In what ways do poor management of land resources contributes to herders-farmers conflict in Nigeria?

The main objective of the study is to examine the impact of population explosion on the herders-farmer's conflicts in Nigeria. The specific objectives includes to:

- (i) Access the influence of rapid population growth on the competition for land resources among herders and farmers in Nigeria
- (ii) Examine the effect of poor management of land resources on herders-farmers conflicts in Nigeria

2. METHODOLOGY

At a time like this when the world is universally exchanging cold war for hot peace, research and studies on population and conflict must be action oriented and be geared towards informing policy making and facilitating constructive interventions. This concern informs not only how our field work was carried out but also how this report is presented. With a view to establishing how the conflicts and attacks started, we consulted records of report of commission of inquiry and panels of investigation. The files consulted include inter-departmental correspondence, intelligence reports, petitions and newspaper articles. The information derived from all these sources explains the nature of the conflict in the past and how it has transcended to the incessant attacks. We supplemented the sourced materials with interview across different sections of the population and believing that those residents in the most affected villages knew best on how their problems could be solved, we placed greater emphasis on approaches that had led to the incessant attacks and why and how it could be resolved.

We sought to know from each informant how she or he thought the menace could be handled. The impression we got was that the people have a good knowledge of how to live harmoniously with each other but lacked any serious institution for galvanizing their knowledge into concrete policies. Most of our informant believed that the conflicts were politically-motivated by the elites. In addition to the information collected from the aforesaid sources. We are also systematic in our report. We adopted a historical approach, systematically narrating and analyzing what happened at different periods, and trying as much as possible to reduce the number of our value judgments. We deliberately adopted this method to enable those who want to use our data for intervention purposes to have a true picture of what happened rather than getting misled by our interpretation of what happened as well as their predisposing factors, and how the conflicts were managed in the past, especially by the government, and what future interveners could do.

3. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

(a) A Herder & A Fulani Herder

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English stressed that the word *Herder* originated from the *Old English* word *Herd* – and this denote a keeper or owner of large group of animals. It is also seen as somebody who tends to domesticate animals. It's also somebody who keeps and drives animals in groups, especially in an open pasture or land.

The word is Synonymic to wordings such as pastoralist, herdsman, herdspersons, livestock farmers, breeders, ranchers, squire, breeders and a lot of others. The word herder as applied to the context in Nigeria is someone who is in possession of livestock most especially cows. They are mostly referenced as persons who domesticate animals such as: cattle, sheep, goats, donkeys, Carmel and a lot of others. According to Stephenson (2016), a herder in Nigeria is someone who herds livestock and from the Fulfulde speaking ethnic group. Sanni (2016) sees a herder in Nigeria as any individual who own a large collection of livestock such as: sheep, cows, goats, horse, donkey, Carmel and lots of others. The two definitions above attempted to point out that the word herder in Nigeria parlance is a generic name for any individual from any ethnic setup that rears or keep livestock. The definition also narrowed the meaning of the concept to only individuals who keep cattle and failed to incorporate other keepers of animal such as: sheep, goats, dogs, pigs and other domestic animals.

The term Fulani herders on the other is seen as any person from the Fulani ethnic group or Fulfulde speaking language of the Nilo-Sahara family who keeps livestock or domesticated animals such as cows, sheep, goats, Carmel, donkeys and a lot of others. Stephenson (2016) advocated that a Fulani herder is livestock keeper and may be either transhumance or living a sedentary

lifestyle. He went further to stress that the Fulani herders must not necessarily be from Nigeria. He or she can be from other countries. The Fulfulde speaking ethnic groups are also in countries such as: Mauritania, Senegal, Mali, Chad, Cameroon, Niger and a lot of others.

Sanni (2015) also stressed that a Nigerian Fulani herder is different from a Fulani herder that comes from other countries or neighboring countries. He attempted to draw an analogy by stressing that the Nigerian Fulani herder possesses certain attributes such as: acculturation, friendliness, sociability and that differentiate them from Fulani herders from other countries. Johnson (2016) in the same direction states that the loose border in the northern part of the country created grounds for the infiltration of other Fulani Herders of other countries into the shore of the country. He stressed further that what the two groups shared in common is religion and the language which they speak. There are some differences and variation in languages they speak. This can be seen in their stress pattern, intonation and usages of vocabulary. The Nigerian Fulani ethnic group speaks Hausa language fluently and conflates with the Hausa people while those penetrating through the border have no knowledge of the Hausa language.

In Nigeria, most of the Fulani herders are members of the Meyetti Allah Cattle breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN), a group that seeks to protect, organize and defend and cater for the needs of Fulani herders in Nigeria. The Nigerian Fulani herders are not mostly transhumance as compared to their compatriots in Cameroon, Chad and Niger. Thus, there is a difference between a Nigerian Fulani herder and a Fulani herder that infiltrate into the shore of the country to herd.

(b) The Concept of Conflict

Conflict arises from the pursuit of divergent interests, goals and aspirations by individuals or groups in defined social and physical environments. Change in the social environment, such as access to new political position, or perceptions of new resources arising from development in the physical environment, are fertile grounds for conflicts involving individuals and groups who are interested in using these new resources to achieve their goals. By thus recognizing the inherent nature of conflict in heterogeneous and competitive situations, people, more or less compellingly, sustain their societies as ongoing social systems through the resolution, transformation and management of conflicts (Cinjel & Akende, 2015).

One of the most quoted traditional definitions of conflict regards it as “a struggle over values claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure, or eliminate their rivals” (Coser, 2010: 10). In the same direction, Park and Burgess (cited in Abdu, 2010) argue that “conflict is designed to resolve divergent dualism and achieve some kind of unity even if it is through the annihilation of one of the conflicting parties”.

Conflict may not be regarded only in a negative light of dysfunctional or disjunctive process and a breakdown of communication as some scholars tend to suggest (Lundberg, 2000). Conflict is a conscious act involving personal or group contact and communication. Together with, though distinct from competition, struggle, and contest, etc. conflict is a normal process of interaction particularly in complex societies in which resources are usually scarce. Although conflict may generally exist “wherever incompatible activities occur” (Deutsch, 2000:156), and may result in a win-lose situation; the resolution, transformation and management of conflict may produce a “win-win” outcome.

Hence Coser (2010: 10) elaborate definition of conflict becomes a useful clarification. He averred that:

Social conflict may be defined as a struggle over values or claims to status, power, and scarce resources, in which the aims of the conflicting parties are not only to gain the desired values but also to neutralize, injure, or eliminate their rival. Such conflict may take place between individual, between collectivities, or between individuals and collectivities. Inter-group as well as intra-group conflicts are perennial features of social life (Coser, 2010: 10).

Conflict can hardly be discussed outside the concept of pluralism. Smootha (2005) cited in Abdu, (2010) points out that both pluralism and conflict are related in complex ways. Furnivally (2000) subscribed that plural societies are vulnerable to conflicts and this is as a result of divergences in goals. He used the “Medley people”, a society in *Burma* and *Java*, where *Europeans*, *Chinese Indians* and the indigenous groups were perceived to “mix but do not combine,” to depict a situation of co-existing diverse and cultural arrangements involving dominance and subordination in the same social setting. Recent and current ideas of pluralism regard it as multidisciplinary and multidimensional, and defined it in the context of cultural diversity and social segmentation of an encapsulating society.

(c) Concept of Population and Population Explosion

The word population has suffered from a lot of mental misconception. It has been defined in a lot of ways by different scholars. Moses (2015) defined population as the total number of person or people who have inhabited an area, region or country. In the same direction, Stephenson (2016) sees it as all of the people who inhabit an area, region or country. Saleh (2014) sees it as the people of a particular nationality, ethnic group, religion or class who live in an area. The aforesaid definitions only confined the term to only inhabitation and have failed to integrate the consonance to its composition and distribution.

Redmond (2016) sees population as the total human inhabitants or a specified area, such as a city, country or continent at a given time. Population study as a discipline is known as demography. It is concerned with the size, composition, and distribution, their patterns of change over time through birth, deaths and migration and the determinants and consequence of such change.

Population studies yield knowledge important for planning, particularly by government in fields such as: health, education, housing, social security, employment and environmental preservation.

Population explosion otherwise known as rapid population growth, population outburst and population upsurge is concept that has been conceptualized in a lot of ways. Redmond (2016) sees it as the rapid and drastic rise in the number of people over a period of time. Saleh (2016) defined the term as a sudden rapid increase in the number of individuals living in an area. This may be as a result of an increase in birth rate or a decline in mortality. Most of this growth is now taking place in the world's developing countries, where rate of natural increase are much higher than they are in the industrialized countries

4. POPULATION BURST AND HERDERS-FARMERS CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA

Confrontation between *herders* and *Fulani* continues unabatedly in Nigeria despite the effort of government to promote unity in the country. The conflict between farmers and herders in Nigeria is now a recurrent nightmare and despite all the effort of government to put an end to the issue, the situation is escalating to an austere level. It started in North east, and then it shifted to the Middle Belt areas such as: *Plateau, Nasarawa, Benue* and *Taraba*. It has now spread down to both south east and South West of the country. It involves a lot of issues and it has been interpreted in different ways by different persons (Obateru, 2010).

There are plethora of variations among scholars as related to the conflicts of herders and farmers in Nigeria. There are a lot of connotations as relate to the differences between a *Fulani*, *Fulani herders*, *herders* and *Fulani bandits*. In the word of Aliyu (2015), a *Fulani* is a person whose root and origin is traced from the Fulfulde speaking groups of the *Nilo-Sahara* family of *West Africa* and *Fulani herders* are *Fulani* persons that herd livestock like cows and other animals. There are also the *Fulani bandits* who are into the act of rustling, attacking communities and looting their belongings. He went further to stress that the *Fulani bandits* may not necessarily be all from *Fulani ethnic group*. He enthused:

This group of persons can come or be from different background. They are just hoodlums and miscreant who move from one area to the other to wreaked havoc and loot the belonging of people. They, rustled, rape, kidnap and abduct people for ransom. They also appear on our highways to rob people of their belongings (Aliyu, 2015: 45).

Saleh (2016) also advocated that a lot of persons wrongly assumed that all attacks are carried away by the *Fulani* ethnic groups not knowing that there are other ethnic groups that herd livestock like the *Fulani group* and it is not all *Fulani* persons that herd. Some are into sedentary lifestyles and sumptuous of profession to earn their living. It is common that most of the attacks are labeled as *Fulani herders* and this is because it is the *Fulani* ethnic groups that are commonly known as herders. In the word of Davidson (2016), *Fulani* who often come to communities to attack are those that have lost their livestock to either rustlers or to community clashes. He advocated that even the *Fulani herders* knew within themselves that some of them were into rustling.

The emergency of urbanization, climatic changes and variation in seasons has opened ways to the *herders* and *Fulani* conflicts in Nigeria. This is based on the thinking that a lot of herder's route and areas which they were previously being used as grazing land have turned to either farmland or residential homes. This development led to the shortage of resources such as land for grazing and for cultivation. The effect of this is manifested in the clash between the *farmers* and the *herders* (Cinjel & Akende, 2015).

The incidence of *herders* and *farmers* confrontation kept worsening despite several attempts by the Nigerian Police and Military to quell down the issues. The Meyetti Allah cattle breeder Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) continued to reject those claims that the attacks are from *Fulani herders* and precisely, Nigerian *Fulani herders*. They kept stressing that perpetrators are both societal hoodlums and miscreant or from other countries (Cinjel & Akende, 2015).

This suggestion was further supported by the *Sultan of Sokoto* who on several occasions blamed the scene to the activities of rustlers, reprisal attacks and loses border control in the country. A lot of states in Nigeria have suffered from series of attacks which are mostly labeled as *Fulani herders' attacks*. It has affected states such as: *Plateau, Benue, Nasarawa, Enugu, Anambara, Edo, Ondo* and a lot of others. In 2015, Lamorde Local Government Area and *Gerie village* precisely in Adamawa state was attacked by suspected herders in their communities. In the attack, 60 persons were found dead and the police DPO was also killed (Sanni, 2016).

In *Benue* state, a lot of persons and properties worth billions of naira were destroyed as a result of the attacks. The attacks have spread in Local Government Areas such as: *Agatu, Bukuru, Guma, Gwer West, Gwer East, Logo, Kwande* and *Katsina Allah*. Between 2011 to 2014, suspected *herders* had attacked dozens of communities in four local government areas of *Benue State* – *Gwer-West, Gwer-East, Bukuru* and *Agatu*. In December 2015, six people were killed at *Idele* village in *Oju* Local Government Area. In the same month, a reprisal attack by youth in the area saw three (3) *Fulani herdsman* killed and beheaded. The *Oju* killings were followed by an attack in January at *Uha Nyiey*. Between 10 to 20 March, 2016, there were series of attacks in *Benue State* (Cinjel & Akende, 2015).

The attack on Friday March 10, 2016 begun in *Mkgovur village* on the outskirts of *Buruku* town when the *Fulani herders* were prevented from grazing their cattle on the farm lands owned by indigenous Christian community. This later resulted to a serious confrontation in the evening in which 10 people were killed and on 20th of the same month, 6 people were killed in *Tarkara* Local Government Area of the state. In one of the attacks, the then chairperson – *Mrs. Phoebe AKoom* narrowly escaped from the attackers. On the 10th April, 2016, *Kwande* Local Government Area was attacked and 10 persons were reportedly confirmed death

and 20 days after, *Buruku* was attacked and another 20 persons were confirmed death. In *Agatu*, a territory occupied by citizens of both *Nasarawa* and *Benue* State, there was an attack on 6th September 2016, in the confrontation, a lot of houses were set ablaze and a lot of persons were killed in the *Fulani herders* and *farmers* confrontation. On March 24th, 2017, 5 herders were also killed and over 500 cows were rustled. These incidences led to the displacement of thousands of persons to other neighbouring communities. Keana Local Government Area of Nasarawa State was also attacked by unknown gunmen (Johnson, 2016).

In Enugu State, 40 persons were killed in *Uzo – Uwam*. The attack took place on April 25th, 2016. This led to the transfer of the state commissioner of police in the state. An eye witness to the scene – *John Eze* narrated that he had just returned to the community the weekend the incident happened. He ascribed in an interview granted to *Naija.com* that:

As early as 6:30 AM that morning, there was this loud noise and many of us rushed out, we saw the *Fulani herders* with guns and machetes moving toward us. We ran into the bush while some of us ran into the bush while other move to nearby villages. I lost two of my brothers and my in – law in the attacks.

Honourable *Chukwemakwe Ujam* raised the issue in the National Assembly and blamed the *Fulani* as the *casus belli* of farmers versus *Fulani* conflicts in Nigeria but the motion was kicked by Honourable *Aminu Shagari* who sees it as an insult on the *Fulani* ethnic groups. It was in the same year, the former secretary to the Federal Government – *Olu Falae* was abducted in his resident by the *Fulani herders*. In another comment on the persistent attacks of the herders attacks in Nigeria, *Senator Ben Bruce* acknowledged that the attacks of the herders in the country was very common and had claimed a lot of lives and properties than the *Boko Haram* attacks. He urged the government to adopt a drastic action to control the spread of the conflict across other states in the country (Johnson, 2016).

In 2017, there was plethora of the herders and farmers confrontations across different states in the federation. In *Southern* part of *Kaduna*, a lot of houses, lives and properties valued at billions of naira were destroyed by the herders. The state governor in a comment subscribed that the herders were compensated not to attack and he stated that the attacks were as a result of the cattle of the herders which were rustled in the past in the affected communities. The attack further spread to state like *Taraba* and *Benue* State (Cinjel & Akende, 2016).

Jos for long has been a scene for the hostile confrontation between farmers and herders. The frequent attacks have paralyzed sumptuous of economic and social activities in Jos South, Barkin Ladi, Riyom and Bokokos Local Government Area. In Riyom, Jos South and Bokokos Local Government Area, a lot of communities were deserted as a result of the persistent attacks by the suspected herders in the areas. Stephenson (2016) enthused:

In Jos South, a lot of villages along Bishichi, Dogo Nahawa, and Fan have been deserted. In Barkin Ladi, Sho, Marit, Gana Rop and a lot of others are isolated as a result of the attacks. In Bokokos, Majahota, Kuba, Yirpya and a lot of others were also deserted. The economic and social activities in the area are at their ebb as a result of the frequent attacks (Stephenson, 2016:10).

President Buhari has been accused of being silence to the confrontations and attacks by the *Fulani herders*. However, the president broke his silence on 27th April, 2016 placing his action ahead of his words. He condemned the attacks by the *Fulani herdsmen* and directed a crackdown on the killers. The president equally gave orders asking security chief to secured areas were the suspected *killers herders* are functioning.

5. THEORITICAL UNDERPINING

Systemic theory of conflict was utilized as the theoretical framework of the study. The theory provides a socio-structural explanation for the emergence of violent social conflict. The position of this theory is that reason(s) for any social conflict lie in the social context within which it occurs. Johnson (2016) noted in the case of political violence, “any analytical penetration of the behaviour characterized as ‘purposive political violence’ must utilize as its tool a conception of the social context in which it occurs.” This paradigm turns our focus to social factors and the effects of large- scale (usually sudden) changes in social, political and economic processes that would usually guide against instability.

Systemic factors that lead to changes in peoples’ material comfort include environmental degradation that reduces access to sources of livelihood, uncontrolled population growth especially in urban centres, resource scarcity and its allocation through lopsided political processes and competition, the negative effects of colonial and Cold War legacies, breakdown of cherished values and traditions that play crucial social control functions, widespread poverty in the midst of plenty, the domination and marginalization of minority groups. These are all examples of systemic causes of conflict.

Systemic sources of conflict are found in every aspect of life and affect large numbers of people even though their influence on the emergence and intensity of conflict are not always so visible to people. Because systemic factors bear directly on the less privileged, preventive strategies that are meant to support social and political stability, initiate people-friendly economic and political reforms, and state policies that genuinely seek to prevent or reduce conflicts between individuals and groups by seriously addressing the underlying issues often yield positive results in the long run because the people will ‘see’ and feel the impacts of such actions as soon as they begin to yield fruit (Obateru, 2016).

Systemic theories also seek to explain the relationship between modernization and political disorder and sees movements between different periods of economic and political history as containing large amounts of ‘pull factors’, tension and crises that create conditions of internal conflict and instability. The theory is applicable to the study in the following dimension:

- a) **The inputting elements:** These are factors that bred grounds for the appearance of the conflict of herders and farmers in Nigeria. It also look at how the conflict had been broaden with different interpolation such as the labeled herders attacks, activities of Fulani bandits, activities of cattle rustlers, activities of conflict entrepreneurs and a lot of others. The inputting factors in this analysis are:
- i. **Environmental Degradation:** Environmental degradation of natural environment including the atmosphere, bodies of water, soil and forest – are important cause of herders and farmers conflict in Nigeria. Environmental problems have led to shortages of food, clean water, farm land, grazing land and other resources. As forest, land, air and water are degraded; people who live directly off these natural resources suffer and thus bred room for competition and consequently violent confrontations.
 - ii. **Drought:** This is a condition of abnormally dry weather within a geographic region where some rain might usually be expected. A drought is thus quite different from a dry climate which designates that is normally, or at lease seasonally dry. The term drought is applied to a period in which an unusual scarcity of rain causes a serious hydrological imbalance. Water supply reservoirs empty, well dry up and crop damages ensues. This makes most herders transhumance and easily trespass into farmer’s boundary.
 - iii. **Desert encroachment:** This is also known as desertification. It is the formation and expansion of degraded soil, not to the advancing movement of the current deserts. It is also seen as a decline in the biological and economic productivity of the soil in arid and semi-arid environment resulting from various factors, including human activities and variation in climate. This has led farmers into irrigation and herders to shift to areas where their animal can be well fed and thus, competition and consequently confrontation.
 - iv. **Population explosion:** This is also one of the factors that propelled the herders-farmers conflict in Nigeria. The increase in number of people lead to pressure on land resources such as soil for cultivation or farming, land for grazing and the loose border in the northern part of the country further paved ways for the illegal infiltration of herders from other countries into the shore of Nigeria and consequently battle over land resources ensue.
 - v. **Poverty:** This is also another factor that gives rise to the activities of cattle rustlers, Fulani bandits, activities of suspected herders and insurgents in the country. Societal miscreant easily involved themselves into this act and this can easily be translated into ethnic and religious confrontation in the country.
 - vi. **Urbanization:** This is the spread or expansion of settlement to new areas or formerly unused areas. This can be on areas where herder’s graze reserve or herder’s route. The questions of who owed those areas are often buried. What is often seen are the havoc on farms in such places or houses built on such places and the question of this for long has been- this is our route or grazing land? Beside this, urbanization also comes with its attendant problem such as the rise of crime and this can create room for the activities of cattle rustlers, Fulani bandits and conflict entrepreneurs.
- a. **The process or conversational Mechanism:** In this work, the mechanism which aid and help to transform the menace of herders and farmers confrontation comprises of the following:
- i. **Loose border:** The loose border in the Northern part of the country has further exacerbated the issue. It has encouraged the infiltration of a lot of herders from different countries into the shore of Nigeria and further intensified a lot of attacks and clashes of farmers and herders on land resources and other resources in the country.
 - ii. **Failed and weak policing:** The Nigeria police are not performing their jobs as it is expected of them. They are mostly slow in action and not proactive like their counterpart in other countries. In an interview with a traditional leader in Plateau state, Chief Danladi enthused:

The Nigeria police are not helping issue and not functional at all. Their service to the people is very poor and is not motivational at all. They are mostly concerned with things that would benefit them than the welfare of the people. The local vigilante groups perform far better than them. In a lot of attacks which we have witness and heard in other places, whenever they are contacted, they would either said that their weapons room is either locked or their cars are without petrol and other flimsy excuses. And sometimes, before they would come, the perpetrators have already rendered havoc and nowhere close to be found.

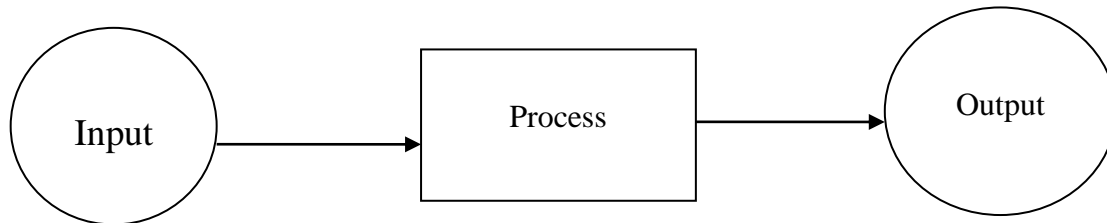
The word “suspected Fulani herders” is a failure on the part of the Nigeria police who for long continued to presume and labeled their unconquered attackers as suspected Fulani herders without concrete and sufficient facts to justify their stands.

- b. **Bad Governance:** This is also seen as one of the factors that have helped to encourage the herders and farmers conflicts in Nigeria. The Nigerian government has failed to control the infiltration of herders from other countries into the shore of Nigeria. The government has also failed to provide grazing reserves and set laws to control open grazing in the country. This very aspect continues to create fertilize ground for herders and farmers conflict in Nigeria.
- c. **Ethno-religious Intolerance:** The existence of tension and intense hatred toward religion and ethnic groups in Nigeria is also a stimulant to the violent confrontation between herders and farmers in Nigeria. The flame of the sentiment is seen and

spreading to other areas that have no history of such violence in the country. Most conflict usually started from trivial issue but when religion and ethnicity is ingrained inside, it sparked support and mass participation.

- d. **The Output:** The resultant effect of the interaction of the aforesaid variables often give rise to act such as farmers and herders confrontations, cattle rustling, intense aggressions and frustration from religious and ethnic groups, activities of societal miscreant and hoodlums, conflict entrepreneurs and a lot of others. Nigerian government can only succeed in cushioning this act only if it works on the imputing factors and further strengthen mechanism to checkmate the conversion mechanism such as the effects and consequences of the confrontations.

A Schematic Illustration of the Systemic theory of Conflict



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|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| a. Environmental Degradation | a. House borders | a. Farmers and herders clashes |
| b. Desert Encroachment | b. Failed & weak policing | b. cattle Rustling Dispute |
| c. Urbanization | c. Bad governance | c. Frustration Aggression |
| d. Population explosion | d. Ethnic and Religious intolerance | d. activities of Miscreant |
| e. Poverty | | |
| f. unemployment | | |

Source: Adapted by the Arthurs from Anifowose (2016)

6. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

- a. The loose nature of border in the northern part of the country for long has exposed the country to a lot of insecurities and illegal infiltration of herders from other countries and other illegal immigrants into the shore of the country. The intricacy is the difficulty in differentiating between Fulani herders in Nigeria and Fulani herders in other countries. The accusation is often labeled suspected Fulani herders and who actually are these herders? Are the herders from the Fulfulde speaking ethnic of Nigeria or from other countries? The failure to define who actually are the suspected Fulani herders broaden the horizon of the attacks and further lured cattle rustlers, Fulani bandits, conflict entrepreneur and societal miscreant into attacks that most at times are erroneous call herders and farmers conflict. The continual usage of the word suspect instead of searching for the real perpetrator of the act has led groups such as MACBAN and other Fulani groups to be irritated and sees such hand-pointing as insult on their ethnic group in Nigeria.

b.

Table 1: STATES AND YEARS OF ATTACKS

S/N	COMMUNITIES	STATES	YEARS
1	Barkn Ladi	Plateau	2009,2010,2011
2	Riyom	Plateau	2011,2002,2009
3	Jos South	Plateau	2010,2011,2012,2014
4	Bokkos	Plateau	2015,2016,2017,2013
5	Dan Sadau	Zamfara	2009
6	Jama'a	Kaduna	2015,2016
7	Kafachan	Kaduna	2015,2016,2017
8	Gidan Waya	Kaduna	2016, 2017
9	Fadan Karshe	Kaduna	2016,2017
10	Agatu	Nasarawa	2015
11	Agatu	Nasarawa	2015
12	Ibbi	Taraba	2013,2012,2014
13	Wukari	Taraba	2015, 2016
14	Sardauna	Taraba	2017

15	Lamorde	Adamawa	2010
16	Bukum	Benue	2015,2014
17	Guma	Benue	2014,2013,2015
18	Gwer West and East	Benue	2013,2014, 2015
19	Kwande	Benue	2014, 2015
20	Katsina Allah	Benue	2014, 2015
21	Oju	Benue	2016,2017
22	Uhu Nyiey	Benue	2016
23	Tarkara	Benue	2015
24	Uzo-Uwam	Enugu	2013
25	Nasarawa Eggon	Nasarawa	2013
26	Keana	Nasarawa	2014
27	Kadarko	Nasarawa	2013
28	Kadarko	Nasarawa	2014

Source: Curled by the Arthurs from Nigerian Newspapers

- c. In the course of the study, it was found out that there are a lot of variation in the attacks and disputes between the herders and farmers in Nigeria. In some local Government areas in Plateau State such as: Bokokos, Riyom and Jos south, it was obvious that the conflict was between Fulani herders and farmers from the Berom ethnic group. The Fulani ethnic group settled in the area for decades and their attacks toward each other group was direct and physical. This answered the reason why religious and ethnic pigmentation are mostly shaded on the violent attacks. In states like, Gombe, Yobe and Jigawa, it was purely between Fulani herders and Hausa farmers. This is the same in Benue and so also is Kaduna state, the clash was not clear as it was in Jos, and Benue and other states in the North. It was where the usage of the labeled word suspected Fulani appeared. It does not involve only the farmers but most communities. This is the same with states like Enugu, Anambra, Ondo and Nasarawa. In the case of Edo, Delta and Taraba, it is purely farmers and herders confrontations.
- d. Oral sources indicated that increase in population of both settled cultivators and pastoralists, as well as that of the animals, meant an increasing pressure on the limited available natural resources- land and water. This pressure led to keen competition among the producers over the resources. The competition sometimes culminated into open clashes. This factor operated under both underlying and immediate causes of violent clashes between the pastoralists and cultivators in the country
- e. Furthermore, as a result of commercialization of production due to the burst in the country's population, the traditional areas for grazing by pastoralists were eventually taken over by the crop cultivators. Thus one of the reasons why the pastoralists inevitably damaged crops was the inefficient management of the limited resources, especially land, by the local government and traditional institutions.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following sets of recommendations were proffered:

- a. The federal government of Nigeria in collaboration with its states counterpart should set in motion laws to control population growth and the illegal infiltration of herders from other country into the shore of Nigeria. The laws should be applied in practical terms and should also be carried out as stipulated. This will help to lessen if not control the unlawful increase in the country's population and the penetration of herder from other countries into the shore of Nigeria. To effectively manage conflict situation and conflict potentials in the Northern States and Nigeria at large, apart from responding to the underlying factor as identified earlier, there is the need to put in place mechanism for dialogue and civil engagement.
- b. Government need to devise structure, train requisite personnel and deploy the necessary equipment for monitoring conflicts and deescalating existing conflict situation, transforming them into ending and sustainable peace. The structure should involve all and sundry; including religious groups, ethnic nationalities, civil societies, the academia, women group and the government.
- c. The Nigeria police force and other securities in the country should improve on their mode of carrying out their functions. There should be a transformation from the orthodox and traditional modus operandi to modern and conventional policing approaches. Police officers and securities personnel should be trained and updated with modern trend of handling conflicting situation.
- d. The usage of the adjective – “suspected” Fulani herders should be checked and review. The pronouncement of the word “suspected” shows that there is element of doubt, uncertainty and unsure on the declaration. This development is a weakness on the part of security personnel in the country. The perpetrator should be identified, named and deal with as spelt out by the law. The security personnel of the country should also create a line and demarcation between attacks that was carried by Fulani herders, Fulani bandits, farmers, Cattle rustlers, social miscreant and conflict entrepreneurs.

e. Federal government should also put in place schemes for instituting extension services which are geared toward addressing population issues and problems and possibly bring about solutions to them. Schemes such as population education, family life education and population planning should be introduced

8. CONCLUSION

The herders and farmers conflicts are a product of population burst. It is common in society that their governments have not planned for their population growth. This is because issue like its kind often led to unnecessary competition for the limited resources .The resources in this direction is the land and this comprises the bare land, crops, air and water. They are resources that are static and depreciate with time. Whenever population is not plan, conflict is bound to happen. The clashes of herders and farmers in Nigeria are recurrent nightmares that hardly will a week passes without the act not rearing ups its ugly head in the country. It started as a problem in the Northern part of the country and now it has spread virtually to almost all the states of the federation. The conflicts have a lot of interpretation and also vary in its mode of attacks.

It is first labeled as suspected Fulani herder's attacks and then moved to Fulani herders and farmers conflicts. The spread and fast recognition which the conflicts enjoy continued to broaden its horizon. Certain groups such as Fulani bandits, cattle rustlers, conflict entrepreneurs and societal miscreant have further exacerbated the issue, giving it a different interpolation.

Most of the affected states are Plateau, Benue, Kaduna, Nasarawa, and Bauchi and just of recent, Anambra, Ondo, Edo, Enugu and Delta State. This menace constitutes a serious problem in the country. It has bred ground for ethnic and religious tolerance in the society. This is because, it is often assumed that herders are the Fulani and Fulani peoples are mostly Muslims and thus, an ethnic and religious pigmentation is easily added on it to gain support. The clashes of herders and farmers, the attacks of the suspected Fulani herders, activities of Fulani bandit, the act of cattle rustlers, the activities of societal miscreant and conflict entrepreneurs have for long being a serious threat to security in the country.

Nigerian government need to reawaken its securities services and practices according to the modern trend. This will also go a long way to curb the rises of this ugly menace in the society. The issue of loose border, use of assumptive wording such as "suspected" without defining the actual causer of the act, laws on grazing, poverty and youth unemployment should be reviewed and also be checkmated.

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