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Resource Scarcity and Fulani Herdsmen/Tiv Farmers' Crisis in Benue State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aimed at exploring the dynamics of the resource scarcity as it resulted in Fulani herdsmen/Tiv farmers' crisis in Benue State, Nigeria.

Methodology: Descriptive design adopted in this study, depended on judgmental sampling technique. Secondary source of data collection (books, journal articles, monographs, internet materials among others) were sourced from internet and Nigerian libraries. These documentary data were subjected to content validity before analyzed qualitatively into the study. In order to deepen knowledge on Fulani herdsmen/Tiv farmers' crisis in Benue State, the study adopted group theory as its framework of analysis.

Findings: Findings revealed that climate change is the major factor that forced Fulani herdsmen from the Lake Chad Basin to migrate to Benue State; thereby causing resource competition with Tiv farmers. The Fulani herdsmen/Tiv farmers' crisis has led to security risk, economic loss, humanitarian crisis as well as political division in Benue State. Findings equally revealed that, the federal government of Nigeria has responded to this crisis by proposing various measures, which include Inter-Ministerial Technical Committee, Cattle Colony as well as National Livestock Transformation Plan among others. Regrettably, these measures have not been able to offer lasting solution to the crisis; hence, its impacts continue existing unabated.

Recommendation: This study, therefore, recommends wise use of water resource in Lake Chad Basin, reforestation in the northern Nigeria, as well as immediate implementation of Great Green Wall Initiative, as panacea for Fulani herdsmen/Tiv farmers' crisis in Benue State.

Keywords: *Climate Change, Crisis, Farmers, Fulani, Government, Group, Herdsmen, Resource Scarcity, Tiv*

Introduction

Fulani who are also known as Fulbe is an ethno-linguistic group that is found in not less than 15 countries of Sub-Saharan Africa. These countries include; Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Cameroun, Ghana, Burkina Faso, The Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal including Sierra Leone.

Miller (2007) cited in Davidheiser and Luna (2013) maintained that, “by the year 2000, there were 13 million Fulbe speakers inhabiting an area of over 3000 square miles, from Mauritania in the North to Cameroun in the South, Sudan in the East and Senegal in the West” (p. 78). The major characteristic of the Fulbe is the pastoral lifestyle. Tiv is the fourth largest ethnic group in Nigeria that spread across Benue, Taraba and Nasarawa state and have an approximated population of about 5 million people, according to 2006 National Population Census (Imo, 2017). They are mainly farmers who survive through cultivation of seasonal crops such as; yam, potatoes, cassava, cocoa yam, maize, guinea corn among others. Mensah, Adamtey and Abdulai (2016) posited that, although their relations are a mixture of cooperation and conflict, conflict has often become more likely due to competition for space. The fact is that farmers and herders are partners in agricultural production, and each of them depends on one another.

Extant Literature World Bank Overseas Evaluation Department (1994) cited in Davidheiser and Luna (2013) recalled that Fulbe herders exchanged some of the animal products they produced with farmers for grain, thus supplementing the diets of each respective group creating interdependence, thus created “symbiotic relationships” between pastoral and settled agricultural system based on a certain commonality of interest. International Crisis Group (2017) also confirmed that historically, relations between herders and sedentary communities have been harmonious. They lived in a peaceful, symbiotic relationship: herders’ cattle would fertilize the farmers’ land in exchange for grazing rights.

Regrettably, this interdependence and the symbiotic relationship that had existed for ages, have given way to competition and its associated conflict over scarce resources. Kahl (2006) cited in Mensah et al., (2016) decried that scarce resources, such as crops land, water, fish and forest tend to deepen socio-economic deprivation in a society. This deprivation easily grows and develop into grievance, social bitterness, increasing rebellion and social unrest, thereby culminating in temporal or sustained violence and conflict. The herders/farmer conflict in Benue State is primarily driven by a competition for land, water and forage. The Fulani herdsmen and Tiv farmers are, however competing for these scarce resources. The truth is that, Tiv farmers have rights to their farmlands and the produce from their farms. The Fulani herdsmen also have rights to pasture and water their cattle anywhere, not only in Benue State, but in entire Nigeria. However, a total control over these herds is lacking, some of them could go astray and destroy people farms, thereby bringing problem. Baidoo (2014) cited in Mensah (2016) posited that, “...farmers often kill them instead of reporting the destruction...they (herdsmen) also accused farmers of using agro-chemicals for farming that could affect the health of cattle when they graze. The herdsmen added that, armed cattle rustlers attack them...therefore, they need to protect themselves with sophisticated weapons.” (p.5)

According to 2015 Global Terrorism Index, Fulani herdsmen are the fourth deadliest group in the world. This group is responsible for 1229 deaths in 2014 (Cited in Imo, 2017). This figure could be underestimated for instance, Duru (2016) reported massacre that took place in Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State in February, 2016 that led to the death of at least 7000 people killed by Fulani herdsmen. Duru (2016) cited in Ndubuisi (2018) decried that the

villagers observed that despite heavy gunshots by the herdsmen, no military or security presence was felt. Adetola (2016) cited Institute for Economics and Peace (2015) that in 2015, at least 100 farmers and their families were gruesomely murdered by Fulani herdsmen in villages and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPS) camped in Ukura, Per, Gafa, and Tse-Gusa areas of Benue State. Similarly, in March 2016, Fulani herdsmen launched another attack on Agatu Local Government of Benue State, thereby killing 800 people. The communities affected by this attack were Aila, Akwu, Adagbo, Okokolo, Ugboju, Odugbeho, Obagaji and Egba (Imo, 2017). International Crisis Group (2018) also reported that, “from 1st to 7th January, armed men widely believed to be herders angered by the law, raided six farming villages across Logo, and Guma Local Government Areas, killing over 80 people. The attacks have continued with over 300 more killed in the state since then.

It should be recalled that a civil society group, based in Benue State (Movement Against Fulani occupation (MAFO) had filed a suit at Economic Community of West African State (ECOWAS) Court at Abuja demanding from the Federal government to pay a sum of 800 billion Naira (equivalent to 1.6 billion Dollars) for failing to protect the people of Benue State (Femi & Peter, 2017). In the same vein, the Situation Room, a coalition of over 70 civil society groups, had issued a statement in Abuja, on 24th January 2018, lamenting that Nigerian nation appears to be descending into chaos and the security agencies have exhibited unparallel incapacity and incompetence to deal with the problem (International Crisis Group, 2018, p. 18). This group demanded for immediate sack of all the security chiefs. Perhaps, it could be as a result of this call that prompted the then Inspector General of Police, Ibrahim Idris to dispatched 663 Police personnel to support the existing Police force in Benue Command. President Buhari also reacted by ordering the Inspector General of Police (Idris) to relocate to Benue state. Regrettably, the Police Chief spent two days in the state and left (Fikayo, 2018, p.1). Similarly, on 7th February, 2018, Nigerian Army announced Operation “Cat Race” that aimed at curbing conflict and criminality in Benue, Taraba, Kogi, Nasarawa, Niger and Kaduna State. This exercise was followed with “Operation Whirl Stroke 1” mainly for Benue, Nasarawa and Taraba State. The Nigerian Air Force also responded to the Benue crisis by deploying 1,300 Air Force Personnel and two Mi-35 Helicopters gunship to the Middle Belt (International Crisis Group, 2018).

However, more other examples could still be cited, but the pertinent questions that bother the researcher are:

- (i) Which theoretical framework can effectively explained Fulani herdsmen/Tiv farmers’ crisis in Benue State?
- (ii) How does climate change contribute to Fulani herdsmen/Tiv farmers’ crisis in Benue State?
- (iii) What are the consequences of Fulani herdsmen/Tiv farmers’ crisis in Benue State?
- (iv) What are the responses of federal government of Nigeria to Fulani herdsmen/Tiv farmers’ crisis in Benue State?

In terms of structure, this journal article is organized into six sections. The first section deals with the introduction while the second section addresses the theoretical framework. The third section discusses materials and methods of the study while the fourth section discusses the climate change and its contribution to Fulani herdsmen/Tiv farmers’ crisis. The fifth section deals with the consequences of the crisis in Benue State. While the sixth section concentrates on the responses of federal government to the Fulani herdsmen/Tiv farmers’ crisis. The last section is the concluding remarks and references.

Group Theory

The intellectual foundation of group theory could be traced to the idea of pluralism, which was developed in early 20th centuries by great thinkers; such as Figgis, Maitland as well as Cole. Arthur Bentley (1908) reviewed the works of these scholars and propounded a new version of pluralism in his work (*The Process of Government*) and titled it group theory. This theory had almost gone into extinction but for the effort of David Truman (1964) who published his work, “*The Governmental Process.*” Truman used the group theory to analyze his data on the process and activities of government of the United States. Similarly, Earl Latham (1952) also titled his work, “*The Group Basis of Politics*” and used group theory in arguing his point. However, the interesting aspect of these scholars was that they all belong to the behaviorist school. Their concentration was on theory building and fact finding.

Johari (2011, p.310) posited that the group theorists, as they are called, take it for granted that society is a mosaic of numerous groups living in interaction with each other. In other words, groups are many in every human society, and they are constantly interacting with one another. Isaak (1985, p. 26) also argued that group exists when men with shared interest organize, interact and seek goals through the political process. The key notions are “interaction” or “relationship”, “interest” and “process or activity”. In the light of this, Bentley (1908) defined group as a certain portion of the men of the society, taken, however, not as a physical mass cut off from other masses of men, but as a mass (of) activity, which does not preclude the men who participate in it from participating likewise in many other group activities (Varma, 2011, p.163). In the same vein, Truman (1964) described group as, a collection of individuals which on the basis of one or more shared attitude, makes certain claims upon other groups in the society for the establishment, maintenance, or enhancement of forms of behavior that are implied in the shared attitudes (Varma, 2011, p. 164).

Furthermore, a deduction from all these definitions and explanations reveals that interaction is the first building block of group theory. Johari (2011) argued that group theorists see society as a mosaic of groups living in numerous constant interactions with one another. Johari (2011, p.311) also maintained that a group can emerge only when the interactions among its individual members are both relatively frequent and sufficiently patterned to produce directional activity. Added to this, is the fact that, in any given society, groups are many and individual is free to join two or more groups at the same time. The central issue here is the activity, which the group performs, not the association itself. As Varma (2011, p.163) clarified it, the fact that the same individual can belong to various groups also makes it clear that the activity, particular to the group was more important than its structural composition.

Closely related to the activity is the concept of interest. It is worthy to note that interest binds an individual to a group. A group exists in a social system that permits individual to express desire and protect interest anytime. Bentley (1903) regarded interest as a fundamental factor that is central to the understanding of group behavior. Varma (2011, p.163) also posited that interest is a shared attitude concerning a claim or claims to be made by one group upon certain other group in a social system. Truman’s (1964) conception of group is based also on the notion of interest. In the same vein, Ray (2009, p. 19) equally added that every group is basically an interest group. However, since groups are many in the social system and an individual is free to join any group of his choice, despite the fact that resource is scarce, there is a tendency for conflict to occur. Conflict comes due to insurmountable interest of each group. Johari (2011, p. 313) asserted further that the competing groups that make up society...involved in the process of interaction and competition and the existence of the

divergent lines of conflict guarantee that all individual groups are kept in check by the simultaneous activities of other groups.

However, it is often imagined how the social system survived the stress or collapse in view of the competing interests. Bentley (1908) introduced the concept of government as a mediator of conflict and the stabilizer of the social system. Ray (2009, p.19) posited that presumably, government is the mediator in the struggle among groups, and the source of rules and restraints. Similarly, Truman (1964) cited in Varma (2011, p.166) also maintained that government functions to establish and maintain a measure of order in the relationships among groups. Government also contains groups that are drawn from the social system and they represent various interests. In other words, members of government are also interested parties in any group issue. As Isaak (1984, p.268) confirmed, governmental institutions are groups of a special kind...because they have interests and compete with other groups.

In terms of application of the theory, it is important to note that there are two major ethnic groups (Fulani herdsmen and Tiv farmers) in this crisis. This people had good relationship before the crisis, undoubtedly, resource scarcity, increased in population, and above all, climate change is the major reasons why Tiv farmers and Fulani herders abandoned their aged long symbiotic relations, rather engaged in physical confrontation that is characterized by violence. Manu (2014) cited in Boateng (2015) associated conflict in any given society to insatiable wants of human needs. As Bentley (1908) and Truman (1964) earlier stated, competition for scarce resources is the major reason for community or inter-party, including group conflict in Africa, generally. Boateng (2015, p. 13) explained further that farmers want to protect their means of livelihood, while the herders are also determined to survive within such environment. The two parties try to gain access and control over scarce resources which is dwindling. In the same vein, Okoli and Ateihe (2014, p. 21) believed that as the population increases, there would surely be a corresponding increase in demand for land, water, forest products and grazing land in areas inhabited by farmers and herders. The consequent rapid population growth has caused scarcity of farm and grazing lands which hitherto were abundant. More land is cultivated, dominated by small scattered farms but less is available for grazing, making it difficult in these areas.

Regrettably, the competition for scarce resources led to the massive death of both human and cattle, including destruction of property and displacement of human settlement. This has angered the locals, thereby creating divisions among the two ethnic groups – Tiv and Fulani. The Tiv people, who are predominantly Christians, see the Fulani attack as a subtle form of Jihad. It should be recalled that in March 2016, Samuel Uche, The Prelate of the Methodist Church of Nigeria had argued that, “we are aware, there is a game plan to Islamize Nigeria, and they are using the Fulani herdsmen to initiate it” (Kamarueen & Godwin, 2017, p.1).

The Biafra’s separatist group, Movement for the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) in the South East has described the attacks against Tiv farmers and other southern states (Anambra, Cross River, Enugu, Ebonyi, Imo, Abia, Rivers, Akwa Ibom among others) as part of the northern plot to overwhelm the people of the south and forcefully convert them to Islam. The MASSOB also ordered the Fulani herdsmen to leave Biafra land or face their wrath. This eviction came as a result of April 2016 attack on Nimbo in Enugu State that led to the death of 16 people; including women and children. Similarly, Olasipo Ayokunle, the President of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) had warned that, “if the government fails to stop the provocation by Fulani (herdsmen), they should be prepared for war.

No ethnic group has monopoly of violence and no ethnic group should be a monster to other” (Kamarudeen & Godwin 2017, p.1). The Tiv ethnic extraction has also opposed the massacre by Fulani herdsmen. Samuel Ortom, the Governor of Benue State lamented that, he had sent series of letters to President Muhammadu Buhari and Ibrahim Idris, the former Inspector General of Police, alerting them of herders militia strikes on Tiv farmers in his state, regrettably, nothing was done until the 1st January 2018 massacre, before government responded. The 1st January 2018 massacre that led to the death of more than 80 people in Logo and Guma Local Government Areas of Benue State, prompted His Royal Majesty, James Ortese Ayatse, the Paramount Ruler of Tiv nation to argued that the attacks were, “well planned...nothing short of ethno cleansing and genocide against the Tiv nation” (International Crisis Group, 2018, p.14). The response from Leonard Karshima Shilgba, the Tiv ethnic leader to the massacre could be seen as a threat to Nigerian state. Shilgba maintained that the Tiv people would also demonstrate that they equally have the right and also the capacity to raise a standing army of thousands from each ward and kindred (International Crisis Group, 2017, p.8)

Contrary to the popular opinion that, Fulani herdsmen and their militias are responsible for all the killings and criminalities that are existing in Benue State in particular and the Middle Belt in general, the Fulani continues to deny having knowledge of any of the massacre. Mohammed Sa’ad Abubakar III, the Sultan of Sokoto and spiritual leader of Nigerian Muslims had said repeatedly that Fulani herder that killed, should be prosecuted as criminal and even terrorists (Ankeli, 2016) though many Nigerians especially Southerners do not believe in him. Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeder Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) has accused the government and its security agencies of nonchalant attitude towards arresting the murderers of over 1000 Fulani herdsmen, including women and children and the stealing and slaughtering of over 2,000,000 cattle (between June 2017 to January 2018). Jonde Jam; Fulani Youth Association of Nigeria (JA FU YAN) a Fulani socio-cultural group vowed that it must surely retaliate, “if the federal government fails to act fast...speedy justice for the victims...the only way to peace” (Idris, 2017, p.1).

Furthermore, Bentley (1949) and Truman (1964) had proposed that government must serve as a mediator in every conflict, in order to maintain stability. The Nigerian state has also responded accordingly, though its efforts have not mitigated the crisis completely. It should be recalled that Benue State government enacted anti-grazing law in May, 2017. According to the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law 2017, the law permits livestock to graze only on ranches. The law also requires people who rear livestock to buy land and establish ranches, prohibits movement of animals within the state, except by rail or road. Additionally, the law spells out punishments, including five years jail terms or a 1 million naira (about \$3,000) fine, for anyone whose cattle are grazing outside a ranch (section 19(4) and (5)).

The Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) and Miyetti Allah Kautal Hore (MAKH), the two prominent socio-cultural association of the Fulani ethnic group, differ in their opinion on Open Grazing Prohibition Law. MACBAN, for instance, expressed its willingness to obey the law, but requested that its implementation date should be shifted in order for it to sensitize its members on the ranching. Regrettably, the MAKH openly rejected the law and threatened to prevent its implementation on the grounds that it contradicts the constitutional provision for freedom of movement. The group views the law as discriminatory and counter-productive to peaceful coexistence of the herdsmen with other

citizens and called it “obnoxious and a recipe for anarchy” (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2017, p. 16).

Similarly, in 2012, National Grazing Route and Reserve Commission Bill was presented by Senator Zainab Kure (a Senator representing Southern Niger State) to the senate for passage into law. The major aim of this Bill was to enact a law that creates National Grazing Route and Reserve Commission Bill throughout the entire 36 states of the federation. The legality of the Bill was questionable in view of the fact that land belongs to the state not federal government. Mohammed, Ismaila and Bibi (2015) cited in Amusan, Obegunde and Akinyemi (2017, p.39) decried that division among lawmakers on the legality of the federal government step to appropriate lands from any state of the federation for use as grazing reserve. However, stalled the Bill’s passage at third reading while some have argued that the government and the upper house failure to promulgate a law to establish grazing reserve indicate poor commitment to finding lasting solution to the conflict.

State Governors, especially those from the northern states, saw the Bill as the remedy to the herders/farmers crisis, while others contend that acquisition of land for grazing across the nation was a part of effort to advance the expansionist agenda of the Fulani who are historically associated with Islamic Jihad (Amusan, Abeginde & Akinyemi, 2017, p. 41).

Materials and Methods

This article depended on the secondary sources (books, journal articles, monographs, internet materials, conference papers etc.) of data collection. These documentary data were sourced from Nigerian libraries and internet, subjected to content validity before analyzing it qualitatively. However, the use of qualitative method of analysis enabled the researcher to embark on an in-depth study of resource scarcity and Fulani herdsman/Tiv farmers’ crisis in Benue State, Nigeria.

In addition, the study drew its population from Fulani, Tiv, Idoma, Hausa, Igede, Taraba State, Plateau State, Benue State, Adamawa State, Middle Belt, Nigeria, Christian Association of Nigeria, Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria, Miyetti Allah Kautal Hore, National Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs, among others. Furthermore, it is worthy to note that Tiv, Igede and Idoma are the natives of Benue State that practiced sedentary crop farming while Fulani are the nomadic pastoralists that roam the entire Middle Belt region including Benue State. The choice of Benue State as sample of this study is judgmental, in view of the fact that there is proliferation of extant literature on farmers-herders’ crisis in other Middle Belt States such as Taraba, Plateau, Nasarawa and Kogi. Similarly, other communities (Idoma and Igede) in Benue have attracted scanty scholarly works except Tiv community. The dearth of materials on farmers-herders’ crisis in Benue State (especially Tiv community) has resulted in misleading information. It is hoped that this study would present facts and further serve as academic materials for scholars in Nigeria and international community.

Climate Change Triggers Fulani Herdsmen/Tiv Farmers Crisis in Benue State

Unarguably, herders/farmers crisis is not new in West Africa generally, and Nigeria in particular. Extant literature (Fasona, & Omojola, 2005; Fabusaro, 2009; Adisa & Adekunle, 2010; Bello, 2011; Abbass, 2014), have documented a lot on the socio-economic and security implications of this crisis on Nigeria. The principal causes which these scholars have identified as factors that trigger the crisis, include, population growth, loss of northern grazing lands to the expansion of human settlements, technological and economic changes (new livestock and farming practices) crime (rural banditry and cattle rustling) among others

(International Crisis Group, 2017). Surprisingly, little attention is given to climate change, despite the fact that, Amusan, Agbegunde, and Akinyemi (2017) identified climate change as the major driver of Fulani herdsmen and Tiv farmers' crisis in Benue State.

Climate change is often referred to as global warming and it can also be described as a rise in average surface temperatures of the earth, mostly due to the burning of fossil fuels. In 2007, the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) identified floods, heat waves, desertification, violent winds, outbreak of disease and the food insecurity as the major effects of climate change. In the northern part of Nigeria, especially, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Kano, Jigawa, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, Yobe and Zamfara, where pastoral activity is the major occupation of the inhabitants, indeed, not less than 50-75 percent of their land is now desert. The area is also infected by parasitic disease that mainly affects cattle, commonly known as trypanomiasis or sleeping sickness. These environmental changes have wrecked agriculture and human livelihoods, forcing millions of pastoralists and others to migrate south, in search of productive land (International Crisis Group, 2017, p. 3).

However, this movement for survival would not been mandatory but for the shrinking of the Lake Chad Basin which is one of the African lakes that provides fresh water, fish and pasture for more than 20 million people living in about 30 shore-line communities of the four pariah countries – Chad, Cameroun, Nigeria and Niger. Science in Africa 2003, cited in Onuoha (2007) added that 11.7 million people in Nigeria, 5.0 million people in Chad, 2.5 million people in Cameroun, 193,000 thousand people in Niger, and 634,000 thousand people in Central Africa Republic derived their livelihood from Lake Chad Basin. They raise their cattle, sheep and camels and also involve in fishing and farming along the basin. Regrettably, after the drought of 1970, the lake lost its depth, thereby forcing many herders to abandon pastoral business or migrate to the south, due to insufficient pasture for their animals (Rudincova, 2017). Rizzo (2005, p.46) equally confirmed that, “as the fresh water and other resources of the lake continue to diminish; economic livelihoods have been significantly disrupted, such that local populations relying on the lake for their survival have followed its receding waters. The result has been the incidence of resource conflict.

Though the climate change has been identified as the key factor in the shrinking of the Lake Chad Basin where the Fulani herdsmen were pasturing their animals, human factor, especially the modern irrigation system also contributes to the drying of the lake. Large and unsustainable irrigation projects built by Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroun also result in shrinking of the lake. Onuoha (2007, p. 47) further maintained that most significant was the construction of both the Yaguou-Tekele dyke (on the Chari-Logone) and the Magu dam by Cameroun in 1979, and the series of dams by Nigeria. These dams include the Tija Dam on River Yobe, the Alau Dam on River Ngadda and Yeder Dam on River Yederdam other examples of such projects include the South Chad Irrigation Project (SCIP) in Nigeria and Mamdi Polder Project in the Republic of Chad.

Ordinarily, most Fulani herdsmen that migrate to the Middle Belt (including Benue state) normally come during December and left by June when rain starts falling in the far north. International Crisis Group (2017, p. 3) decried that, over last two decades, available pastures shrank in the far north, herders have been staying in the Central Zone, longer-from December to June, or July...some have chosen to graze their herds there permanently. This has triggered disputes over land and water use with sedentary crop farmers. Similarly, in another interview, a senior staff from Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria (ARCN) also attributed the root causes of the crisis between the herdsmen and the farmers in the Middle Belt to climate change. The officer of ARCN asserted that climate change forced the migration of the

herdsmen which before now had good natural vegetation for the animal to feed on. So there is a clash of interest at the point of the farmers and herdsmen on the crops and the cattle. The cattle graze on the farm field and destroy crops, the farmers react by killing cattle or injuring the herdsman they meet on the field which results in a crisis that get blown into full conflict (Okwor, 2016, p.35).

Again, since climate change is a global phenomenon, herdsmen from other African countries such as Mali, Niger, Sudan, Senegal, including Central Africa Republic take the advantage of ECOWAS Protocol on Transhumance (1998) to complicate the strained relationship between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria. Okwor (2016, p. 36) decried that non-Nigerian Fulani now graze in Nigeria, they do travel mostly in the night and escape after destroying peoples' crop. This attitude of non-Nigerian Fulani contradicts the ECOWAS Protocol on Transhumance (1998). United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel-UNOWAS (2018, p.13) advised that in agro-pastoral areas where pastoral activity and farming co-exist, transhumance is meant to occur along routes or cattle tracks defined decade ago. Where transhumance routes are blocked, the movement of the livestock is curtailed. However, this is not the case in Nigeria, hence the herders/farmers crisis.

Consequences of Fulani Herdsmen/Tiv Farmers Crisis in Benue State

The Fulani herdsmen and Tiv farmers crisis in Benue State has led to various consequences, among which are:

(i) Security Risk

The major challenge posed by the herders/farmers crisis over scarce resources is the security risk, which affects the both parties equally. Falanta and Bengesi (2018, p.21) posited that the consequences of recurrent natural resources use conflicts between farmers and pastoralists include death, destruction of properties, destruction of crops, hunger, lack of peace, poverty and economic deterioration. Similarly, Benjaminsen (2009) cited in Paaga (2013, p.149) also maintained that many conflicts in terms of clashes between two communities resulted into loss of peoples' live. The death of 82 Tiv farmers in Guma and Logo Local Government Areas of Benue State on 1st January 2018, following the enactment of Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law 2017 by the state government has led to serious threat to lives and property in the entire state. It should also be recalled that Agatu community in Benue South Senatorial District was also attacked in February 2016. This attack led to the death of 300 people and destruction of properties worth millions of naira (UNOWAS, 2018).

However, it is worthy to note that Fulani herdsmen are also victims of some of the crises that occur between them and the sedentary farmers. Regrettably, most scholars (Adigi, 2013, Ayih, 2003, Alimba, 2014, Adisa, 2011, Bello, 2013, Okoli & Atelhi 2014 etc), including media reportage (Punch, Daily Time, Champion etc) refuse to accept the fact that Fulani herdsmen also bear burden of the crisis with the Tiv farmers. As Boateng (2013) captured it, the media reports always put the farmers at the receiving end. It thus suggests that herders are the bunch of people who go about perpetrating crimes. The reports failed to expose how vulnerable the herders are and the frustration they go through. The reports also did not assess the contributions of the herders to the economic development of the country.

Expectedly, Tiv farmers cannot fold their arms and allow Fulani herdsmen to kill and destroy their properties without any retaliation. Extant Literature (Abbass, 2014; Ahmadu, 2011; Bell, 2009; Dosu, 2011; Forson-Asimenu, 2011; Mortiz, 2012) confirmed that Fulani herdsmen are also killed by the Tiv farmers whenever there is a fracas between the two. Dosu

(2011, p.16) for instance hinted that, “the herdsmen and cattle owners... claimed to have lost some of their animals through physical attacks and poisoning, through the use of agro-chemicals by the farmers. In the same vein, UNOWAS (2018) posited that it is not uncommon for pastoralists to be killed by hostile farmers and their livestock either stolen or shot. Furthermore, where farmers-herders disputes escalate, pastoralist camps have been attacked by villages resulting in heavy casualties. Sexual and gender-based violence has become frequent on both sides, with high death toll among women and children in some of the attacks on pastoralist and farmers alike.

(ii) Economic Loss

Besides deaths and destruction of properties, Fulani herdsmen and Tiv farmers Crisis has led to huge economic loss on both sides. Samuel Ortom, the Governor of Benue State has said that the attacks by Fulani herdsmen on Tiv farmers have cost the state a sum of 95 billion Naira-equivalents to 635 million Dollars between 2012 and 2014. In the same vein, Nzor-Tiv Global Association, a socio-cultural group in Benue State maintained that attacks on Agatu communities by Fulani herdsmen led to a loss of properties worth 65 billion Naira-equivalent to 204 million Dollars in 2016 (Adesina, 2017). International Crisis Group (2017, p.8) explained further that, the loss of large cattle herds, crops (due to population displacements and damage to irrigation facilities) as well as increase in transport and labor costs in post-conflict environment, increase poverty and food insecurity in affected communities and beyond.

There is no need to dispute the fact that, the sources of livelihood, of the Tiv farmers have been hindered by the crisis. Farmers are no longer free to go and cultivate the land due to fear of attack by the Fulani herdsmen. As Dary, James and Mohammed (2017, p.149) put it, farmers dreading to go to farms for fear of being attacked, prevent them from undertaking farming activities such as planting, weeding and harvesting. When farmers’ crops are destroyed by cattle, they lose their investment and are exposed to livelihood insecurity.

In the same vein, small-scale agro-business operators such as palm wine tappers, palm kernel oil extractors, palm oil producers and cassava producers are afraid of entering bush for their economic activities, due to fear of Fulani herdsmen. Mensah, Adamety and Abdulai (2016, p.47) decried that crops of farmers are often devoured by stray cattle leading to low outputs and great losses. Traders in raw agricultural produce face dangers travelling between the farm gates and market centers. Female traders indicated that they are usually molested sexually and their monies confiscated by herdsmen.

Some of the Fulani herdsmen who evade arrest in Benue State migrate with their cattle to the neighboring states of Nasarawa, Plateau, Cross River, Adamawa and Taraba. Their departure from Benue State is associated with hardship due to inadequate fodder for their herds in those states. International Crisis Group (2018, p.13) lamented that this predicament in states that make up of Nigeria’s bread basket could affect food production nationwide, drive up already high food prices, imperil business related agriculture, and deepen already widespread rural poverty in the North Central geo-political zone.

(iii) Humanitarian Crisis

Among other consequences of Fulani herdsmen/Tiv farmers’ crisis in Benue State is the humanitarian crises that befall Tiv people. International Crisis Group (2018) maintained that between September 2017 and June 2018, an estimated 176,000 Benue indigenes were displaced from various villages by Fulani herdsmen. Most of the displaced persons stayed with their kindred in safer places while majority of them settled in Internally Displaced

Persons (IDPs) camps. Joseph (2018, p.1) lamented that, the camps are overcrowded and lack safe drinking water, and poor sanitation is accompanied by open defecation. Communicable diseases outbreak is the major challenge to the health of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Presently, there is Lassa fever and Polio outbreak in most of the camps (Gbajimba et al., 2021).

Benue State government does not have enough human resources to combat the outbreak. This led to the death of many IDPs. This lack of adequate manpower is compounded with deterioration in health facilities in the villages and the camps. Health facilities have been targeted during the crisis with the Fulani herdsmen. The attack led to restrictive access to basic services as well as prevention of health professionals from working in the local areas where their services are most needed. However, the outbreak would not have occurred, if Benue State government had intensified vaccination, especially among the local dwellers before the crisis. Narrating the situation of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), Humanitarian Needs Overview (2015) maintained that almost 75% of the affected persons do not have access to health care and the remaining Primary Health Centers (PHCs) have been overwhelmed by the recent influxes of IDPs. 80% of the displaced persons do not have sustainable access to water, sanitation and hygiene. Poor hygiene behaviors are contributing to outbreaks of water-borne diseases, increase in mortality and mobility.

In order to avert further deaths in the state due to inhumane conditions of the Internally Displaced Persons, in the camps, Mr. Dickson Tarkighir, a member of House of Representative, representing Makurdi/Guma Federal Constituency had appealed to federal government in 2018 for special intervention. In that appeal, Tarkighir lamented that “our people are starving to death in their own land and the irony is that we are farmers” (International Crisis Group, 2018, p. 13).

It should also be recalled that in February 2018, a United Nations Inter Agency Rapid Assessment Mission deployed to Benue and Nasarawa States’ Internally Displaced Persons’ (IDPs) camps; decried that, women and children represent about 80% of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) population. Sexual violence, transactional sex, early marriages and physical violence were some of the threats faced by displaced women and girls (UNOWAS, 2018, p. 83)

Political Division

The Fulani herdsmen/Tiv farmers’ crisis in Benue State has degenerated into political division between the Tiv people and their fellow northerners (especially the Hausa/Fulani extraction). In 2016, Civil Liberty Organization (CLO) and Movement for Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) had accused President Buhari of deliberately failing to stop herders’ aggression. In their accusation, they maintained that his pastoral Fulani background and his position as life patron of the cattle breeders association (MACBAN) buttress their charges (Kluew, 2018, p.1).

However, this crisis serves as an opportunity for the People Democratic Party to intervene and capture Benue State, which was controlled by All Progressive Congress (APC). The first to leave All Progressive Congress (APC), which Tiv people now regard as Fulani party, was Governor Samuel Ortom. Ortom departure led to mass defection of APC supporters in the state. The northern alliance which the entire north was noted for has been broken irretrievably due to the Fulani herdsmen/Tiv farmers’ crisis. The Southern groups - the Yoruba (Afenifere from the South West), the Igbo (Ohaneze Ndigbo from the South East) and the Pan-Niger Delta Forum (from the South-South) jointly condemned the attack and further paid visit to

Governor Ortom in Makurdi. This visit from the Southern leaders prompted Benue youths to urge Ortom to pull out of the Northern Governors' Forum and the State Traditional Rulers to quit the Northern Traditional Rulers Council (Kluew, 2018). According to International Crisis Group (2018, p. 15), such development could weaken the north's long standing political solidarity.

Federal Government's Response to Fulani Herdsmen/Tiv Farmers Crisis in Benue State

It is inappropriate for anyone to assume that federal government has not responded to the Fulani herdsmen/Tiv farmers' crisis in Benue State. It should be recalled that the first attempt to bring lasting solution to the crisis was made by the former President, Goodluck Jonathan. The then President inaugurated the Inter-Ministerial Technical Committee headed by the former Governor of Benue State, Gabriel Suswam in April 2014. The major objective of the Committee was to recommend measure for the restoration of grazing reserve throughout the entire country (UNOWAS, 2018). International Crisis Group (2017, p.10) highlighted that, "the report issued by Suswam's Committee called for the recovery and improvement of all grazing routes encroached upon by farmers. Additionally, the Central Bank of Nigeria should release a total of 100 billion (\$317 million) to the country's 36 state governments for ranch construction.

The report and its recommendations were accepted by the Federal Executive Council presided over by the former President Jonathan. Unfortunately, the defeat of the then President by the current President Muhammadu Buhari in March 2015 Presidential Election interrupted the implementation of Suswam Committee's recommendations. Despite this challenge, the government of President Buhari, directed the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD), headed by Audu Ogbeh (the then Minister) to formulate a comprehensive livestock development plan for the nation and also assist in finding solution to farmers/herders crisis in Nigeria. The Committee set up by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD) recommended in August 2015, medium and long-term strategies, including development of grazing reserves and stock route (Dapo, 2016, p. 1).

These recommendations triggered condemnation from the Middle Belt States; Benue, Kogi, Plateau, Nasarawa, Kwara as well as some Southern States; such as Imo, Anambra, Ebonyi, Abia, Cross River, Akwa Ibom, Rivers, Edo among others. Their argument was that the Middle Belt and Southern States do not have enough land that could be spared nor designated for the Fulani herdsmen. Audu Ogbeh, the then Minister changed his plan for the preservation of cattle routes, rather encouraged Fulani herdsmen to adopt ranches as the way out of the crisis. He said that federal government was planning to send a Bill on Prohibition of Open Grazing to the National Assembly for its enactment. International Crisis Group (2017) explained further that Audu Ogbeh added that the government had ordered fast-growing grass from Brazil to produce massive hectares of grasses which would be ready for consumption within three months (Zinachidi, 2016, p.1).

However, UNOWAS (2018, p.81) lamented that, these plans did not materialize due to fierce opposition from some interest groups. Again, in January 2018, the then Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development; Audu Ogbeh announced a new plan by the federal government for the establishment of Cattle Colonies" across the country. According to Ogbeh, each colony was to cover 5,000 hectares (about 25km by 20km) and would be a cluster of ranches with resources and facilities including grass, water, veterinary services, mills for converting agro-waste to livestock feed, schools, hospitals and market all secured by Agro-Randers (Vincent, Yusuf & Safina, 2018, p 1).

States governments were expected to provide land while federal government would take care of development and maintenance cost. It was also expected that international supports would come from the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Fund for Agricultural Development among others. The then Minister, Ogbeh, further said that Cattle Colony would bring a lot of benefits among which are protection from cattle rustlers, fewer farmer-herders disputes, healthier stock, higher meat, dairy production and more revenue for state government (International Crisis Group, 2018, p. 24). Expectedly, the reaction that followed the Cattle Colony was unbearable for the government; hence the Minister was forced to abandon it. First, many Nigerians considered the name “Cattle Colony” provocative. It reminds them the history of colonialism in which Nigeria was administered by the Britain. Second, the issue of subsidy which federal government would use tax payers’ money for the development of private business (cattle rearing) was rejected by many Nigerians, especially farmers. Third, the Middle Belt states and Southern states saw it as a plan by the federal government to take their ancestral lands and hand over to the Fulani herdsmen.

International Crisis Group (2018, p.25) added further that many herders are foreign transhumant migrants. Many are citizens of other West and Central African countries, they come to Nigeria in search of pasture during the dry season and leave when the rains begin. They may have little interest in settling in Nigeria where they would be required to pay for cattle feed, water and use of amenities.

On 19th June, 2018, Ogbeh announced a new initiative, National Livestock Transformation Plan, as a result of the above mentioned criticisms. In his words, National Livestock Transformation Plan aimed at encouraging a more gradual switch from open grazing to ranching (Hussein, Vincent, Yusuf & Safina, 2018, p.1). “Open grazing is no longer viable, that’s why we are switching to ranching, he said” (International Crisis Group, 2018, p.25). According to Ogbeh, the federal government had chosen ten states – Adamawa, Benue, Ebonyi, Edo, Kaduna, Nasarawa, Oyo, Plateau, Taraba and Zamfara as pilot states for the scheme (Daniel, 2018). The plan was to establish 94 ranches in 24 locations across the states. International Crisis Group (2018, p.25) maintained that to participate in the plan, cattle herders are expected to organize and register as cooperatives that will then be able to rent land from state governments and also benefit from loans, grants and subsidies. The federal and state government are expected to provide a total of 70 billion naira (about \$195 million) for the pilot phase spanning three years, while private interests are expected to invest in excess of 100 billion naira (about \$ 278 million) between fourth and tenth years.

This new plan has been accepted by All Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN) and Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association (MACBAN) but Miyetti Allah Kautai Hore (MAKH) differs slightly from other groups. Saleh Alhassan, the National Secretary of Miyetti Allah Kautai Hore (MAKH) hinted that, “we are fully in support of this policy, but...we want to completely transform from open grazing to highly mechanized farm of livestock production which is ranching, we need a period of not less than 25 years” (Osinubi, 2018, p.1). This excuse given by Alhassan ignited a re-thinking by some of the states; Ebonyi and Edo (Southern states) as well as Benue State (Middle Belt state) who asked for exclusion from the pilot scheme. These states argue that they lack sufficient land for ranches but opposition is driven by the fear that allowing Fulani groups to settle in their midst risks further conflicts in the future (Nabob, 2018, p.1).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Though Nigerian government has made series of attempts to address the herders/farmers crisis in Nigeria, it has not been able to curtail its escalation. The reason is not far. Indeed, Nigerian government has not been able to diagnose the fundamental of the crisis, rather continue to treat the symptom. Consider the confusion that came from the federal government of Nigeria, immediately after the wanton killings of Tiv farmers in Logo and Guma Local Government of Benue State by Fulani herdsmen on 1st January 2018. The then Minister of Defense, Mansur Dan-Ali attributed the death of 82 Tiv farmers to the blockage of longstanding herding routes and the enactment of anti-grazing law in Benue State (Samson, 2018). Department of State Services (DSS) assessed the killings erroneously and linked the attacks to the handiwork of Islamic State in West Africa Province's fighters who have infiltrated Central and Southern parts of the country (Usiaka, 2018, p.1). Again, Ibrahim Idris, the then Inspector General of Police associated the killings with "hoodlums and miscreants but that the escalated killings were triggered by anti-grazing laws (Dickson, 2018, p.1) passed by Benue State House of Assembly. Even the President of Federal Republic of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari made the same mistake during his meeting with leaders of Benue State on 16th January, 2018. International Crisis Group (2018) posited that he urged them to accommodate their herders' countrymen, he subsequently said, the killers were fighters trained by the late Libyan Leader, Muammar al-Qadhafi, who are now streaming across the Sahel to West Africa (Ramachandran, p.23).

All these views contradict the opinion of known scholars (Diamond, 2005; Hall, 2009; Parantis, 2009) on resource conflict. Diamond (2005, p. 498) for instance, maintained that problems of deforestation, water shortage and soil degradation in the third world foster wars there. United Nations Environmental Program (2007, p. 60) also stated that climate change is directly considered to be related to conflict such as desertification has added significantly to the stress on the livelihoods of pastoralist societies, forcing them to move south to find pasture. Therefore, the solution should be anchored on the climate change nothing else.

Leaders of Lake Chad region should intensify effort to rejuvenate Lake Chad Basin. This could be done through education on adaptation measures, sponsorship of scientific research as well as collaboration with international community. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (1993) equally advised that the international community should have every interest in responding to the need to preserve and rehabilitate the environment before degradation leads to massive refugee flows, violence and persecution (Grote & Warner, 2010, p. 35). The adaptation measure here is concerned with wise use of the scarce natural resources, especially water. States in the Lake Chad region should be discouraged from constructing further dams in the basin. As Coe and Foley (2001, p. 47) had observed that the competing demands for fresh water by the riparian states of Lake Chad, mostly through massive irrigation projects, account for almost 30 percent of the observed decrease in lake area since the early 1960s (Onuoha, 2009). This should be discouraged, in view of the current crisis between farmers and herders in the Middle Belt region, as a result of the shrinking of Lake Chad Basin. Even Rizzo (2015, p. 24) also suggested that to enhance water and food security in the region, Lake Chad Basin (LCB) countries must commission studies, carryout pilot projects, and scale up initiatives to decrease water wastage and improve the means by which water is used and transported.

Meanwhile, since all these would require long term planning, northern states of Nigeria where desertification has engulf about 70 percent of their land mass should start embarking on reforestation. Reforestation would checkmate drought and desertification as well as help

in retaining wetness on the land. In the same vein, federal and state governments should intensify effort towards implementation of the Great Green Wall Initiative for the Sahara and the Sahel. The project initially called for planting a 15km wide belt of trees, running 7,775km across nine African countries from Senegal to Djibouti” (International crisis Group, 2017, p. 15). Regrettably, Nigerian government has not started implementing this Great Green Wall Initiative. This confirms Rudincova’s (2009) opinion that climate change itself does not produce conflict, but the lack of effective governments which are not able to deal with environmental issues may lead to conflict (p. 118). This should not continue further and the time to act is now.

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