

## **POLITICAL ECONOMY OF PASTORALISM AND RURAL INSECURITY IN BENUE STATE, NORTH-CENTRAL, NIGERIA 2010-2017**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The movement of pastoralists from one place to another in search of greener pasture for their cattle has caused serious conflict between them and crop farmers'; this has posed serious security challenge in the rural area of Benue State. This conflict has been viewed as common feature of economic and livelihood struggle. However, the desperation by the Fulani herdsmen have in recent years has taken more dangerous dimension with acquisition of modern weapons and communication devices. Incidence of killing, robbery, rape and kidnapping by the Fulani herdsmen has inflicted pain on most farmers. Therefore, the basic thrust of this paper is to examine the effect of the activities of Fulani herdsmen in Benue State and identify its implication for rural security. The study collected data from primary source relying on questionnaire and interview for data collection; also, secondary method of data collection was used to complement the primary sources; journals, newspapers and books were used. Qualitative method of data analysis was used. The conflict theory anchored on political economy was adopted as a framework of analysis. The paper reveals that activities of Fulani herdsmen militate against agricultural production, destruction of lives and property and result in massive unemployment. This paper recommends that government should make policy on grazing reserve and prohibit open grazing and make ranching compulsory for cattle owners to avoid spreading of diseases and destruction of crops by the cattle. The study equally recommends the enactment of laws to prohibit the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and disarm the arms bearing herdsmen.

**Keywords:** Pastoral Transhumance, Rural Insecurity, Benue State, North-Central, Nigeria.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The importance of cattle grazing in livestock production cannot be overemphasized. That is why cattle herdsmen or pastoralist strive to maximize every available opportunity in order to move their herds to the place with greener pastures and favorable climate conditions in order to keep their herds healthy and robust. Cattle transhumance is a dominant mode of mobile pastoralism in

Nigeria. It is characterized by a seasonal forth-back movement whereby herdsmen move their cattle southwards during the dry season in search of greener pasture. This movement is reversed during the rainy season when the herdsmen move back their flock northwards in prospect of a more favorable grazing. This annual movement follows a more or less regular migratory pattern, given rise to a network of transhumance routes and corridors in most parts of Northern Nigeria. (Okoli and Chukwuma, 2015).

Okeke (2014) observes that, over the years, transhumance corridors and routes in Nigeria have increasingly become a theatre of ecological conflicts. With particular reference to North-Central region of Nigeria, the wave of crises on the transhumance fields of Plateau, Nasarawa, Benue, and Kogi States has become worrisome (cited in Okoli and Chukwuma, 2015). The adjoining States of Kaduna, Niger, Taraba, and Kwara have also had their own share of the crisis (Okoli and Atelhe, 2014). According to Okoli and Althehe (2014) the recent evidence shows that the crisis has worsened into struggles for survival characterized by immense arms-bearing and violence. This development has given rise to instability and insecurity that threaten relative peace and security in the affected areas.

Nigeria being an agricultural endowed nation with great arable land and favorable climate conditions for agriculture has since its amalgamation in 1914 by the British colonialist and with its citizens constituting mainly peasant farmers has engaged in both subsistence and commercial agriculture (Adisa, 2012). It is worth noting that, agriculture constituted the mainstay of the Nigerian economy before the discovery of oil in a commercial quantity in 1958, when nearly every cultivable crop in the tropics is produced in Nigeria, “the variety of food crops cultivable in Nigeria has made the country less dependent on importation of most of its staple food items” (Uhembe 2015, p.2).

Meanwhile, Nigerians have depended on the Fulani cattle grazers for their daily supply of beef which constitute more than 70% of the animal protein in the country (Mustapha, 2009, p. 15). The Fulani herdsmen fend for their cattle by herding them from one location to another in search of greener and luxuriant pastures. This practice has been established as a culture by the Fulani and had before now been observed with the highest ethical standards, whereby the herded animals were prevented from grazing on crops. There existed what Okoli and Althehe (2014, p. 5) called “a symbiotic relationship between the herdsmen and the crop-farmers”. This led to a mutual respect and cross cultural relationships among the migrant Fulani herdsmen and the sedentary farmers. However, Okoli, et al (2016, p. 4) observes that:

Livelihood interest in the context of an ever shrinking ecological space, characterized by resource scarcity, livelihood crisis, population explosion, and

resource competition has changed the character and the dynamics of these long established relationships between Fulani herdsmen and farming communities.

Hence, the stories of the nefarious activities of the average migrant herdsmen started reverberating across the country; from Benue to Taraba, Delta to Edo, Kaduna to Nasarawa, Katsina to Adamawa, and Kogi to Enugu etc. The news of how herdsmen have constituted themselves into a great threat to human and food security by their brazen and deliberate killings and destruction of crops resulting in unavoidable crisis and bloodletting became a daily occurrence (Olayoku 2014). Crop farmers across the country are becoming apprehensive over the negative attitude of the cattle grazers who unleash their herds on the poor farmers' crops destroying them to a point of no redemption. As a result, farmers of cassava, rice, maize, guinea corn and groundnuts incur extra cost to put hedges round their farms to prevent the marauding cattle whose owners have grown most insensitive to the plights of the average farmers.

According to Ubelejit (2016, p. 27) besides the destruction of crops by cattle, "the herdsmen have been found involved in criminal activities like murder, raping, blocking of traffic and stealing, resulting in deadly clashes as part of reactions involving the herdsmen and communities". This has led to proliferation of arms by herdsmen, they use these arms to eliminate their perceived enemies in a desperate attempt to take over their land for grazing. It is on this basis that the study focuses on how the activities of Fulani herdsmen undermine the security of lives and property in the State especially in the rural areas.

Herders- farmers' conflict has become rife in Benue State. This is because Benue State presents a centre for pastoralists and Benue people are predominantly farmers. Crop destruction is the bane of the conflict between farmers and herdsmen. While crop farmers often accused the herdsmen of negligence and indiscipline, the herdsmen often maintained that, the farmers block their traditional transhumance routes that it was never their intention to lead cattle into people's farms. They claim that, in some instances, a few cattle stray into farms and feed on crops, admitting that it is very difficult to control the cattle especially when the grasses are tall.

According to Fulani herdsmen, the cattle can easily hide behind the grasses and latter go into people's farms (Abubakar and Yakubu, 2014). Hence, when crops are destroyed, affected farmers get angry and may inflict wounds and/or kill the cow or attack the herdsmen. Ofuoku (2009) state that, the most frequent causes of such crises is the destruction of crops by cattle. Their cattle go into the farm to feed on the foliage of crops while the herdsmen watch the destruction of crops and pretend not to notice such destruction. This supports Hegberg (1998) assertions that, in pre-harvested period, cattle frequently destroy and eat up ripped crops as they are led from the field to their camps". Moreover, polluting of the streams is also regarded as a source of conflict. The stream is the source of domestic water supply for most rural farming

communities. The host community members believe that the pollution of stream can lead to the outbreak of cholera, typhoid fever and liver-fluke. This therefore informs the reaction of the affected communities to the invasions of the herdsmen. Whereas, the Fulani herdsmen saw these resources as common resources, to which they could either lay claim or possess and therefore refused to be restrained (Adekunle, Adisa and Solagberu, 2010). This reaction resulted into violent confrontation with its effects on economic and human activities, as well as the sustainability of environment in terms of socio-political and economic development Baxter, (1977), Moss (1977), and Mankin (1986)., in his view Egwu (2015, p. 18) observes that:

What has framed the conflict between nomadic cattle grazers and sedentary crop farmers is global in nature, and efforts to grapple with the challenges needs to draw from existing regional and sub-regional frameworks, and from existing initiatives intended to address the problems. At the sub-regional level of Africa, for example, the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) has recognized the critical role livestock mobility plays in preserving the environment and maximizing livestock productivity.

This has led to increased migration of the Fulani herdsmen, this has led to increased tension in several communities in Nigeria and in the rural communities of Benue State as migrant Fulani invade farms with their cattle and eat up crops and cause untold hardship to the host farmers. Apart from the common language that usually attracts their movement, herdsmen find a safe place in the North-central zone because of the available vegetation in the area. The audacity with which they shepherd their flocks to graze on any available vegetation in their routes has often attracted protests from the community. This scenario has given rise to an unhealthy rivalry between rural farmers and the herdsmen leading to violence, loss of lives and property.

According to Nwaopara et al (2016, p. 3) “the incidents of killings, rapeing, robbery, maiming and kidnapping by the armed cattle herdsmen have inflicted pains on most crop farmers even as farm produce have been drastically affected”. Insecurity makes it impossible for rural dwellers who are mostly farmers to go to farm thereby limiting production, distribution and supply of agricultural products to the populace. Insecurity has also led to rural urban migration, whereby rural farmers migrate to urban centre for security reasons.

The crisis between Fulani herdsmen and farmers is a threat to security of lives and property and an impediment to agricultural production with mass displacement of farmers from the affected communities. It has drastically reduced agricultural production. This has been amply demonstrated by relative shortage of farm produce in the rural urban markets of North-Central Nigeria (Chukwuma, 2016). This could also be judged by the soaring prices of essential commodities in these areas. This conflict has led to strained relationship between the herdsmen

and the farmers. The pastoralist regards settled farmers as their potential enemies that threaten their survival and destiny. On the other hand, the farmers regard the herdsmen as intruders in their communities who are bent on destroying their farm products. This has created an atmosphere of mutual distrust and animosity which threatens peaceful co-existence in these communities. Consequently, this paper establishes the link between activities of Fulani herdsmen and insecurity rural areas in Benue State.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The subject matter under investigation can be explained from a number of theoretical standpoints. Prominent among them are “eco-violence theory”, “ecological existentialism”, Frustration-aggression theory” and “conflict theory”. However, our theoretical analysis in this study is conflict theory anchored on political economy paradigm.

The major proponents of this theory include: Max (1818-1883); Weber (1864-1920); Wright Mills, Gene Sharp (1928); Hornby (1995); Odoh-Alan (2012); and Sears (2008) Conflict approach is one of the major theoretical approach in sociological thought. In general, the conflict perspective assumes that social life is shaped by groups and individuals who struggle or compete with one another over various resources and rewards Osadebe (2014). It draws attention to power differentials, such as class conflict and generally contrast historically dominant, ideologies, it is therefore a macro level analysis of society. Karl Marx is the father of the social conflict theory, which is a component of the four paradigms of sociology. Certain conflict theories set out to highlight the ideological aspects inherent on traditional thought (cited in Nzeh,2015, pp. 22-23).

According to Nzeh (2015) this theory claims that society is in a state of perpetual conflict due to competition for limited resources. It holds that social order is maintained by domination and power, rather than consensus and conformity. Conflict theory has been used to explain a wide range of social phenomenon, including wars and revolution, wealth and poverty, discrimination and domestic violence. It ascribes most of the fundamental developments in human history, such as democracy and the coin/rights to capitalistic attempts to control the masses rather than to a desire for social order. The theory revolves around concepts of social inequality on the discussion of resource and focuses on the conflict that exist between classes (investopedia; 2016). The traditional definition of conflict is struggle over values and scarce resources in which the aim of the opponent is to neutralize, injure, or eliminate their rival Coser (1956). Conflict theory was propounded by Karl Marx and his ‘critique of capitalism’ and has since developed along a number of lines (Osadebe, 2014). This theory was later advanced by sociologists, like Lester P. Ward and Ludwig Gwmpłowicz, to encompass the dynamics of conflict along virtually every social division, not just economics.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, due in large part to the work of American sociologist C. Wright Mills, the focus of conflict theory shifted to disparate areas like class, race and religion to the umbrella notion of power, especially power in the hands of elites. Since the end of cold war, however, conflict theory has refocused on the power dynamics between different social groups, and with individual with the consensus of society. Conflict occurs when there is a struggle between or among groups over limited resources.

The application of the theory is that Fulani herdsmen attacks emanates from their quest for survival on scarce resources (land). Both Fulani herdsmen and crop-farmers depend on land for cultivation and for grazing which is likely to precipitate violence among the groups. Conflict involves serious disagreement, argument, struggle and serious difference of opinions, wishes or a clash. The threat is directed at the opponent to limit or eliminate the access of the opponent to some resource or goal. This could be seen in cases of land disputes between crop farmers and grazers in the grass-fields where they share the same environment for farming and grazing. The herdsmen who are the aggressor sees the crop farmers; as one who is out to block their means of survival and livelihood. whiles, farmers sees t herdsmen as intruders who are bent on destroying their farms. That is why Marx said in communist manifesto that “the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle”. All class struggle is political struggle. The host community sees the herdsmen as people who want to take over their land and control them.

### **Activities Herdsmen and Rural Insecurity in Benue State**

There has being an ongoing grass root war in the North-Central states of Nigeria especially Benue State between Fulani cattle herdsmen and crop-farmers. It is an age long problem, but it has escalated in the last few years and has taken a very dangerous dimension. This crisis occurs when Fulani cattle herdsmen move into non Fulani home lands and their cattle destroys crops. Thus, “the Fulani herdsmen provoke their victims to acts in resistance. In response the Fulani cattle herdsmen wage terrible attacks on farming communities (Okeke 2013, p. 67).

Historically, the activities of Fulani herdsmen show that “the phenomenon has progressively metamorphosed from rudimentary communal skirmishes to organized armed confrontation in its apparent dynamics of degeneration” (Chukwuma, 2016, p. 22). In its latest manifestation, “the phenomenon depicts a genre of violence characterized by immense arms-bearing and brutal sophistication” (Okoli & Atelhe, 2014). According to Okeke (2014) in almost every state in Nigeria, Fulani cattle herdsmen graze where they like, destroy crops, block traffic, rape women, beat up hunters and occasionally unleash deadly attacks on villagers where there is slightest resistance to their movement.

According to Bolanriwa (2012) Nigeria has recorded several violent conflicts in several rural communities since 1999 to 2018 that have resulted in over 5,000 deaths and over 300, 000 have been displaced. Towards the end of 2012, the killing by the Fulani herdsmen in the middle Belt began to take on a systematic and methodical pattern that increasingly looks like a deliberate plan to wipe out native ethnic groups either by killing or displacing them in order to take control of lands and fields in the region. On March 28, 2015, the clashes between Fulani and Tarok in plateau state resulted in deaths of 18 persons. The communal conflicts caused by Fulani herdsmen in Benue State had claimed the lives of more than 3000 victims in the first half in the year 2014. The victims include women and children sacking more than 100 communities and have thrown thousands into refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPS) camp in Benue State (Nte, 2016). Earlier, more than 200 people were killed by Fulani herdsmen in Shengev Community in Gwer West Local Government Council with strange substance that looks like bio-chemical weapons (Akevi, 2016).

The Fulani herdsmen activities according to Olayoku (2014) have been ranked second after the Boko Haram activities in Nigeria and also considered as the 4th terrorist group in the world. Before the activities of Fulani herdsmen in Benue State, there have been series of activities by the herders in the North-Central and Southern Nigeria (Okeke,2014). In spite of the development and the centralization of the state dating back to the colonial era and post-colonial Nigerian state, there have been a southward expansion, since the early twentieth century of areas where Fulani are now co-owners and politically dominant. To consolidate their control, the Hausa-Fulani has been putting much political and economic pressure on the indigenes to convert to Islam in the first half of the 1960s. Ahmadu Bello, premier of Northern Nigeria, embarked on several campaigns on Central Nigeria that were meant to convert 'pagan' to Muslims (Crampton, 1979).

The Southward migration of the Hausa-Fulani is responsible for the on-going ethno-religious conflicts on the Central States of Nigeria, but to a greater extent, Plateau, Nasarawa and Benue States. In Plateau State, the conflicts between Fulani herdsmen and farmers is co-existence with the conflicts over indigene ship in the State, especially between the predominantly Muslim Hausa-Fulani, on the one hand, and the predominantly Christian Berom in the area around the state capital, Jos. Tensions between the Hausa and different Christian communities in Plateau State eventually snowballed into deadly conflicts in September 2001 and May, 2004 leading to the declaration of state of emergency in the state on 18 May, 2004. (<http://www.irinnews.org/report49927/nigeria.obasanjo-declares-state-of-emergency-on-plateaustateandenkikipedia.org/woko/fidelis-Tapgun>). In the last few years, the conflict spread to the rural areas and the Fulani became bloody source. The activities of these herders have been ongoing in almost every state in Nigeria and Benue State has become worse hit.. In nearly every community in the state, "Fulani herdsmen graze where they like, destroy crops, block traffic,

rape women, beat up hunters and frequently wage deadly armed attacks on villages where there is the slightest resistance to their depredations” (Okeke 2014, p. 73). The Fulani herdsmen have been seen to be the major cause of rural insecurity in Benue State and the rural communities in the state have been experiencing series of attacks as a result of this migrant herdsmen and as Morgan (2016) opined, the total number of reported incidents between 1997 and 2015 was 461, with the last majority occurring between 2011 and 2018 on the Middle-Belt, South-East and South-South region.

In 2015, it was recorded that there were more casualties from herdsmen violence than from Boko Haram. It clearly shows that the most potent threat to the existential continuity of the Nigerian State has shifted from Boko Haram to the rampaging Fulani herdsmen.

In an interview with one of the survivors in Benue State , the herdsmen attacked at about 5:15 am on March 10, 2016, the armed herdsmen number over 500 struck, killing 3 people. The following week, March 16, 2016, eleven more bodies were recovered and 14 victims were lying critically injured at general hospital Makurdi, St. Theresa hospital Makurdi. Invasion of Agatu community known as Benue massacre Atelhe (2016) by roaming Fulani herdsmen followed similar massacre of hundreds of natives in another farming community. The one that looks more or less like a genocide was the recent one in Guma and Logo were in January 1, 2018 at the wake of the new year when 15 people were slaughter as if that was not enough on 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> January, over 58 persons were killed and the crisis continued unabated till 5<sup>th</sup> of January which brought the total death toll to 73 and the federal government paid deaf ears to the plight of Benue people. The Fulani herdsmen activities on rural communities in Benue State can be seen to be stimulated by three factors which includes:

- a) Benue State serves as the major routes to and from the Northern parts of the country and also to the neighboring countries.
- b) Climate change
- c) The killing of cattle in Agatu LGA

In elaborating these factors, Benue State is seen as a major routes or gateway to and from the Northeastern region. This factor has also been seen as one of the major causes of crises between the Fulani herdsmen and the rural farmers Arinze and Akinyemi (2016) argued that the reason North-Central States especially Benue regularly comes under attack from Fulani herdsmen has been revealed, he leader of the Hausa community in Benue State, alh. Garus Gololo Was quoted by one of the national dailies as telling News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) “that 90 percent of the herdsmen moving from the Northeast to the North-Central and South-South regions passes through Benue State to where they are going”. The spate of Fulani herdsmen attacks in Benue State is because it is a major routes to and from the Northern part of the country to the Southeast

and South-south regions and the neighboring countries where these Fulani herdsmen come from before accessing any part of the Southeast or South-South so criminals also take advantage of these routes. There are also many routes which the herdsmen from neighboring country use to connect the state. The two major routes or corridors in Nigeria include, one, the North-West corridor which runs from Benin Republic and Niger through Sokoto, Zamfara, Borno, and Kwara States, terminating in the South-West.

The second route in the North-East which runs from Niger, Chad and Cameroon Republics through Borno, Yobe, Adamawa, Jigawa, Kaano, Plateau, and Nasarawa and terminate in the Niger-Basin, in Benue State, the route that poses threat to peace between farmers and herdsmen in Benue state. Most of them that are migrant herdsmen decided to settle in some rural communities in Benue State while grazing around. This is seen as one of the vital factors that triggered the activities of these herdsmen in rural communities in Benue State. Meanwhile, Benue State is the only State that provide gate way for migrant, this is situation is being worsened as a result of Nigeria porous borders and ineffective migration laws and settlement pattern in the country and in Benue State.

Odoh and Chilaka (2012, p. 112); Okeke (2014, p. 66); (Abugu and Onuba 2015, p. 46); Adosa (2011, p. 10); Ubelejit (2016, p. 29) oppose the view of Arinze and Akinyemi (2016)) and Sambo (2016) and argued that “the activities of herdsmen in rural communities which have undermine rural security in Benue State is centered on the change in climate”. Ubelejit (2016, p. 29), the most fundamental reason why Fulani herdsmen migrate to other areas is because of desert encroachment (desertification) of the Sahara region caused by climate change. A lot of communities are heavily dependent on natural resources and it is also very crucial for individual well-being. Climate change significantly undermines individual livelihoods and community growth thereby undermining the capacity of state to provide social services and economic opportunities requisite for state development and stability.

Climate change impedes development, intensifies income disparities between rich and poor and ultimately degenerates into communal conflicts. Climate change has the potentials of triggering severe disruptions with disastrous consequences for the people. Famine, droughts and climate change-related disaster could claim thousands or even millions of lives and aggravated existing strains within and among communities. Ubelejit (2016, p. 26), “argues that climate change not only triggers communal conflict but can engender state failure”. In an international alert publication, Smith and Bruijin and Dijk Van (1995) have noted that threats to international stability associated with climate change, is placing some 40 States at risk of climate induced conflict. Climate factors have given rise to water-related hazards, lack of water causes droughts and excess of water causes floods, high focal water causes salinity and acidifies in soil. Abugu

and Onuba (2015) noted that, climate change has contributed to the massive migration of Fulani herdsmen to the two regions the change in climate such as depletion of the ozone layer have led to heat wave, dryness of the covers and lack of pastures for the cattle to graze amongst others and have made life unbearable for the people.

The relative lack of adequate rainfall has made the land to dry, leading to inadequate pastures for cattle and this made the herds to migrate to safe areas in Benue State. Equru (2012) observed that the declining fertility of soil has affected agriculture, which is the major employer of labour in the Sahara region of Africa. He noted that the negative effect of climate change is not static. For instance, cereal production is expected to decline in some areas by up to 50% while others is between 25 – 50%. However, World Bank on their observation indicates that with the wide scale anticipated declines on the drought prone region of Africa, food production may not be adequate to meet the deficient requirements. Also, World Bank reported that between 2010 and 2011 alone, pastoralist in the region lost over two million of herds cattle. However, climate change is not enough reason for these mindless attacks by herdsmen in Benue State and other parts of the country.

On the killing of cattle by farmers.... According to an interview from a herder as cited in Okoli and Chukwuma (2015) “Our herd is our life because to every nomad life is worthless without his cattle. What do you expect from us when our source of existence is threatened? The encroachment of grazing fields and routes and the killing of our cattle by farmers is a call to war... Wherever we turn we find the land reserved for our cattle to feast, taken over by farmers... It becomes difficult for our herd to move and graze without veering into crop fields... Once that happens, the farmers confront us and we have no option but to fight back.”

### **Proliferation of small arms/light weapons and Rural Insecurity in Benue State**

The illegal spreading of small arms and light weapons is what we regard as proliferation of small and light weapons. Proliferation may be defined as the increase of something or the availability of something. According to Malam (2014, p. 260), the “proliferation of small arms and light weapons is adjudged as the most immediate challenge to individuals, societies, and states worldwide, fueling civil wars, organized crime, violence, insurgency and terrorist activities posing great obstacle to security, peace and development”. Many times small insurgencies tend to develop into larger civil wars and possibly destabilize an entire region. This trend especially in Nigeria is attributed to the weakness and fragile nature of the States and their attendant failure to deliver good governance. Small arms and light weapons are often used to forcibly displace civilians, impede humanitarian assistance, prevent or delay development projects, and hinder peace-keeping and peace-building efforts. Ibeanu and Mohammed (2005, p. 2) observes “Nigeria is one of those countries in which the proliferation of illegal small arms and light weapons is

manifested in crisis proportions, but on which, despite its geo-strategic significance, little qualitative and quantitative data and studies can be said to be available". This is due to two main reasons. First, because of protracted military rule, the agenda of civil society was largely focused on, and to a large extent limited to getting the military power. Second, account of fractured civil-military relations, civilian concerned with small arms issues was sure to arouse at best mixed reactions from the military.

During conflicts, when it subside, small arms often remain in circulation, which may lead to additional violence because conflicts may erupt on neighboring communities. In a less conflict prone areas small arms may be used in criminal violence or used in homicides, suicides and accidents. They are frequently the primary tools of terrorists and cattle herdsman in sowing distress and pains (Stohl and Hogendorn, 2010). Small arms include but not limited to double barrel, pistols, rifles and carbines, rifles, submachine guns and light machine guns, while light weapons includes heavy machine guns and hand-held double-barrel and mounted grenade launchers, portable anti-tank and anti-air craft guns, recon rifles, portable launchers of anti-tank and anti-air craft missile systems, and mortars of calibers of less than 100mm (report of the panel of governmental experts on small arms, UN document A/52/298, 27 August 1997) cited in ([www.ijhssnet.com](http://www.ijhssnet.com)) According to Obasso (1999) small arms refers to arms used by a person (s), which include fire arms and other destructive arms or devices such as exploding bombs, incendiary bombs or gas bombs, grenades, rocket launchers, missile, missile systems or landmines; revolvers and pistols with automatic loading rifles and carbines; machine guns, assault rifles; and light machine gun (cited in Uwa and Anthony, 2015). Light weapons' are portable arms designed to be used by several persons working together on a team, and which include heavy guns, portable grenade launcher, mounted portable anti-aircraft cannon; portable anti-tank cannons, non-recoil gun; portable anti-tank missile launchers or rocket launchers; portable anti-aircraft missile launchers; and mortars; with a caliber of less than 100 millimeters.

Ayissi et al (2005), Chiman-Okoro (2011), and Nte, (20011) all states that, out of six hundred and forty (640) million small arms circulating globally, it is estimated that about 100 million are found in Africa about 30 million on Sub-Saharan Africa and 150 million in West Africa, alone and the majority of this small arms and light weapons about 59% are in the hands of civilians, 38% are owned by government and armed forces, 2.8% by police and 0.2% by armed groups.

According to Okeke (2014, p. 418) "the gun trade is worth \$4billion annually, of which up to \$1billion may be unauthorized or illicit. Eight million new guns are manufactured every year by at least 1,249 companies in 92 countries" (Ibrahim, 2003, Stohl and Tuttle 2009); Nte (2011) the proliferation and use of small arms and light weapons in ethno-religion clashes and armed robbery have killed more than 10,000 Nigerians, and average of 1,000 people per year since

1999, John, Mohammed, Pinto and Nkata (2007); Nte (2011) the problem of proliferation of small arms and light weapons are worsened by the inability of the police to reduce violent crime, ensure law and order and provide adequate security to the populace as cited in (Homer Dixon and Blitt, 1998). According to Okeke (2014) the unabated proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria is a product of failure of leadership, poor governance, militarization of the society and State violence leading to poverty, massive unemployment, economic and development crises in Nigeria.

The cause of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons is well documented in the literature. For example, crime, revolts, subversion, sabotage, religious crises, communal conflicts, social agitations, secession movement, insurrection, terrorism, insurgency, roots militancy, electoral violence, social interest, ethnic tensions, cross border smuggling, porous borders, black marketeering local manufacturing etc. Okeke (2014, p. 416) “the illegal availability of small arms and light weapons In the rural communities by the Fulani herdsmen has greatly pose threat to security of lives and impede agricultural production in Benue State”.

These herdsmen armed themselves with sophisticated weapons and so is battle ready to confront the rural people at slightest provocation thereby causing both material and human casualty. (Ubelijit, 2016). Meanwhile, the origins of the illegal arms proliferation could be reduced to three chief sources. One is the ineffective management of our borders (Okeke, 2014). The second one is the, “stockpile mismanagement by our security agencies where weapons meant for government work are bought or sold to armed robbers and non-state agents. The third one is, “the obsolete law used in regulating the arms” (Ayuba and Okafor, 2015, p. 77). The current law is the 1959 firearms Act which has largely remained unenforceable and from 2010-2015 the importation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria has been on the increase. Today, small arms and light weapons are easily affordable to anyone who could pay the price and so access to small arms by the Fulani herdsmen is no longer difficult hence, this have fuelled communal violence in Benue State. Deaths and serious injuries from gun violence are common place because dialogue has given way to armed militancy as a way to resolving grievances.

The increase of small arms and light weapons by the herdsmen on farmer in rural communities of Benue State also resulted to farmer and other community members migrating to urban areas for safety and in search for green pastures. However, as a result of these activities of herdsmen many eligible men that are fit for farming deserted the farms and fled to urban areas. (Nzeh (2015), Fabuso (2006), those who managed to take the risk of farming keep their crop produce at a high price. This is so as the bulk of food supplies in the city centres of Benue state come from these rural areas where the spate of these attacks are high. According to Tukur (2013), the reason is that the herdsmen having access to small arms and light weapons has committed a lot of

atrocities with it, the brutal killings of farmers, raping of female farmers, destruction of houses, properties and farmlands. This is purely the failure of government in controlling arms bearing in the country. Olayoku (2014, pp. 2-4) states that:

The crisis was occasioned by allegations by the rural farmers that the herdsmen take their cattle into their farms for grazing where they damage crops. It was revealed that most of the herdsmen carry sophisticated weapons like AK-47 and pump action double barrel, rifles as they moved about with their cattle and could attack rob or maim people at will.

Also, in most of the places where the Fulani herdsmen had settled, they had usually colonized such areas by claiming ownership, leading to violent clashes with the rural people. Besides farmlands in rural communities where the breeders illegally colonize as grazing grounds, the aggressive nature of Fulani herdsmen is also said to be of great concern to the people (Best Naira News, 2016). (Morgan and Ubelijit 2016) communities in Benue State have been grumbling over the alleged inability of security agencies to curtail the criminal activity of Fulani herdsmen, who had robbed, raped and killed some of their victims apart from destroying their farm lands.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The data used for this research was drawn from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was generated from a field survey carried out in three Local Government Areas of the State plagued by incidence of herdsmen-crop farmers' conflict. The three LGAs are Agatu, Guma, and Logo. Interview was conducted face to face in individual respondents in their homesteads. In total 81 respondents were interviewed; 97% of respondents were male, and 3% were female, reflecting the preponderance of the male gender in both herding and farming activities.

Data generated from the survey was complemented by extensive desk or literature review on the topic pastoral transhumance and rural insecurity. The review provided understanding of domestic dynamics of the problem based on existing research knowledge, books, journal articles, internet materials, newspapers and magazines. Media tracking and records of herdsmen-farmers conflict provided further sources of information.

### **Effect of the Activities of Fulani Herdsmen on Rural Security in Benue State**

The violent activities of Fulani herdsmen in Benue State are a serious threat to rural security, which has adversely affected socio-economic progress of the State. Firstly, the menace of Fulani herdsmen militates against human security. Human security is the protection of people from all forms of socio-existential threats and vulnerabilities (Ayokhai,2013). The perennial feud between the Fulani herdsmen and host communities in Benue state has led to massive loss of

lives and property, population displacements, human injury and livelihood crisis. These conflict have crippled law and order in the affected communities in Benue State (as cited in Iheancho, 2017).

Secondly, the crisis between Fulani herdsmen and crop farmers' is an impediment to food security with mass displacement of farmers from the affected communities. It has drastically reduced agricultural production. This has been amply demonstrated by relative shortage of farm produce in the rural and urban markets of central Nigeria (Chukwuma, 2016). This could also can be judged by the soaring prices of essential commodities in these areas (cited in Iheancho, 2017).

Thirdly, the conflicts have led to strained relationship between the Fulani herdsmen and crop-farmers. The pastoralists regard settled farmers as their potential enemies that threatened their survival and destiny. On the other hand, the farmers regard the herdsmen as intruders in their communities who are bent on destroying their farm products. This has created an atmosphere of mutual distrust and animosity which threatened peaceful coexistence in these communities.

Fourthly, the conflicts have affected the school system, students and pupils can no longer go to school to study this has affected the child of school age psychologically. Children of school age have remained idle and have resorted to crimes and other social vices as a result of non intellectual engagement.

Finally, the violent clashes between the crop-farmers and Fulani herdsmen have resulted in massive unemployment. For example, in Benue State many farmers have not planted or harvested because of the activities of Fulani herdsmen. Many have abandoned their farming occupation which are their means of livelihood and relocated to other places.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

We have examined the activities of Fulani herdsmen in Benue State and determine it implication for rural security. The violent activities of Fulani herdsmen have led to destruction of lives and property, displacement of farmers from their homes, decline in agricultural production and output, massive unemployment and result in strained relationship between the herdsmen, farmers and host communities.

This study recommends that government should play active role by way of legislation and policy to restrict open grazing and prevent these animals from causing destruction to food crops. Government should make ranching compulsory for cattle owners. The paper also recommends that government should enforce it laws against proliferation of illegal arms, all the Fulani

herdsmen using sophisticated weapons should be disarmed. The present situation where these herdsmen are using modern weapons like AK-47 to protect their cattle is unacceptable.

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