



Conflict Resolution: The Case of Fulani Herders Versus Native Farmers in Nigeria

Ameh A. Ejeh

Department of Religion and Cultural Studies, Benue State University, Makurdi, Nigeria.

*Correspondent Author: ufadaameh@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

More than ever before in the history of Nigeria, the need and urgency for conflict resolution have become crucial, especially in the interaction between Fulani herders and native farmers, who, as far as Nigerian society is concerned, must develop a symbiotic relationship for a harmonious and peaceful co-existence. Because it has become abundantly clear that we do not need the model of rocket science analysis to know that the way forward is not open grazing but Ranching, which is the preferred method and common practise of animal husbandry today in civilised societies around the world, It is the identification of these strategies for harmonious and peaceful co-existence through symbiotic relationships that is the objective of this paper. By using historical and analytical methods and drawing on both primary and secondary sources, the paper will critique the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari and identify the negative principles and policies therein that are inimical to peaceful and harmonious relationships in Nigeria. As President Muhammadu prepares to leave Office, these areas need to be highlighted and brought into greater focus. The administration of President Muhammadu Buhari is used here, therefore, more like a case study of the absence of fruitful dialogue, which must, as a matter of urgency, be constituted and employed to stem the tide of gradual degradation and possible devolution of our country, Nigeria, and bring the country back on track for harmonious and peaceful co-existence.

Keywords: Conflict Resolution; Symbiotic Relationship; Peaceful Co-existence; Fruitful Dialogue; Fulani Herders.

1. INTRODUCTION

It would be naive to envisage a situation that is totally conflict-free in human relations because we are, though members of the same human nature and society created *imago Dei*, people who are naturally inclined to exhibit our socio-cultural differences in the way we relate to one another (Rosenthal, et al., 1991). It is, however, worthy to state that differences in personality, background, and values, among others, manifest variety beckoning to be harnessed for the fruitful and positive development of society. It is therefore fair to state that, although not altogether conflict-free, the nomadic Fulani and native farmers have, over the decades, had a relatively peaceful relationship as each pursued their course for livelihood. In recent times, however, certain factors have put a dangerous strain on this relationship. Some of these factors include: the greater migration of Fulani herders down south in search of better grazing fields because of desertification, depletion of the Lake Chad basin waters negatively impacting vegetation as a

result of the encroachment of growing desert; the general climate change and the attending negative effects; the population increase that we have all witnessed in recent years, and, resource control issues that accompany it.

Conflicts, then, unavoidably arise between the Fulani herders who sometimes complain of cattle rustling, and the native farmers who experience destruction of farms and crops as well as lives and properties (Adeyeye, 2020). Aside from these factors, however, we have the immediate causes of conflict between Fulani herdsmen and native farmers that have been directly driven by what is now popularly called the *Fulanization* and *Islamization/Sharialization* policies of the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari. This has become an indisputable position that qualifies, *ipso facto*, for a case study of conflict in dire need of resolution (Ikezue & Ezeah, 2017). Nigeria today is on a speedy downward slide into collapse and devolution because of this conflict between the Fulani herdsmen and native farmers. This downward spiral is

a situation that cries out for urgent attention and viable resolution before Nigeria degenerates into a total and irreparable devolution. Something must be done, and done quickly, to stem the tide of this imminent collapse that is about to befall us as a country.

The paper is therefore divided into the following chapters: A Summary-Review of the Relationship between Fulani Herders and Native Farmers in Nigeria; An Analysis of the Different Factors and Perspectives of the Conflict between Fulani Herders and Native Farmers The Role of the Administration of President Muhammadu Buhari in the Conflict between Fulani Herdsmen and Native Farmers An Urgent Need for Fruitful Dialogue for Conflict Resolution; Recommendations for the Way Forward; and the Conclusion.

2. A SUMMARY-REVIEW OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FULANI HERDERS AND NATIVE FARMERS IN NIGERIA

It is pertinent to state that, *ab initio*, there was a relatively peaceful and harmonious relationship, which one could describe as "symbiotic", between the Fulani herders and the native sedentary agrarian communities that host them. As nomadic pastoralists, their visits were mostly seasonal, made in search of greener pastures and better grazing fields (Motta, et al., 2018). They made an appearance in the dry season, during which they would migrate southward and then move back to the north during the rainy season. The native host communities, mostly sedentary and subsistence farmers, benefited from the supply of beef and dairy products from the nomadic pastoralists, while in turn accommodating them as they carried out their grazing under controlled conditions devoid of any encroachment into or possible destruction of farms (Fricle, 1993). At this time, the Fulani herders were easily identified by their rugged and simple appearance, equipped only with ordinary sticks used to control the animals. As time went on, although in isolated cases, a reasonable degree of familiarity developed in some of the communities where the Fulani herders would settle temporarily in makeshift camps for a rather prolonged stay, which in some instances produced a level of rapport in relationships that led to intermarriage between the families of the Fulani herders and the natives of the host communities (Otatonu Ajilima, Person Interview).

Unfortunately, these early times have changed, a change not for the better but one that has and continues to breed tension, conflicts, and terror,

resulting in massive losses of lives and properties. It is worthy of note that part of the background to this negative relationship between the Fulani herders and native agrarian communities was also laid in the "divide and rule" policy of the British colonial era. A good example is the concerted efforts made by the colonial government between 1914 and 1947 to accommodate and settle the pastoralists in all provinces of the Northern region, including Benue province, without adequate provision for mechanisms to address and resolve foreseeable conflicts that might arise between the native farmers and Fulani herders (Rath, 2022). In more modern times, however, the rise in conflict dates back to about the early 1980s, with the intensity of deadly campaigns by the Fulani herders against the native sedentary agrarian communities here in Nigeria then growing in the run-up to the elections that produced President Muhammadu Buhari and his ascendancy to the high office of national leader (Okoli & Ogayi, 2018).

Besides, both ecological and demographic changes have been identified as major factors for this new negative change in the relationship between the Fulani herders and native sedentary agrarian communities because, in recent decades, the migration of Fulani herders down-south from the Sahel region to the Savannah rain forest area has increased dramatically, just as it has with the general population in the country. These factors, when added to other growing negative developments, started to raise the temperature and heat up the conflict level even further (Best and Idyorough, 2003). Most notable among these is that, while the earlier group of Fulani herder-migrants carried only simple sticks to control the cows, the new group, who are mostly younger pastoralists, are seen openly parading military-grade assault weapons as they move around freely in and out of the host communities. These weapons, such as the AK47 and AK 49, are being equally used freely against the native host community members at the slightest provocation, giving rise to mass casualties among the unarmed native villagers. With the ascendancy of their kin, President Muhammadu Buhari, to the highest office in the land, an equally high degree of audacity has been growing among the Fulani herders.

For instance, in total disregard for the sacredness of ancestral land, this new wave of pastoralists believes and openly states that land is for no one, specifically as they hold claim to space for pastures. While the presidency prefers the use of the term "cattle herders" instead of "Fulani herders" and

would rather describe the conflict as "mere clashes", the native community members as well as other observers insist that these are Fulani herdsmen, and what we have is in fact a situation of callous massacre and terror because of the high level of casualties suffered in the native communities. This assessment is justified and supported by the fact that, as noted before, the Fulani herders and their militia are now heavily armed with automatic assault weapons and firearms visibly displayed, in spite of this being against the law, as opposed to the natives, who are deprived of such privilege and are therefore disproportionately at the receiving end of the violence that ensues. It is to this effect that the Fulani militia has been designated as the fourth most deadly group of terrorists, following ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria), al-Shabaab, and Boko Haram (Ojo, 2020).

3. ANALYSIS OF DIFFERENT FACTORS/ PERSPECTIVES OF THE CONFLICT BETWEEN FULANI HERDERS AND NATIVE FARMERS

In social conflict theory, life in society is, more or less, a competition carried out between individuals and groups of different segments of people in the community. Struggles for power and control of resources are therefore identified in social conflict theory as major factors responsible for conflict in society. In some cases, this could constitute a struggle for survival in which desperation becomes the leading motivating force. Competition in itself, done in a healthy manner, produces growth and increases quality in society. Unfortunately, however, a great deal of competitive exercise degenerates into unhealthy and toxic situations where what ensues is a kind of raw struggle for power and control of resources done in a negative way. Such has become the case with the Fulani herdsmen in their continuous migration south from the Sahel region to the regions of the Savannah and rainforests in search of greener pastures and better grazing fields. Many other factors converge to produce this negative situation in the relationship between Fulani herdsmen and native farmers in Nigeria that needs to be identified because of the dynamic and evolving nature of the conflict:

1. **The Nature Factor:** Among the obvious factors readily observed are the ecological and demographic configurations that continue to increase on the negative side as climate change/global warming remains on the rise. The survival and wellbeing of farmers and herders, in general, depends to a great extent, on climatic

conditions, in one way or another. As noted before, the encroachment of the desert from the Sahara towards the Sahel region along with related negative consequences force the Fulani herdsmen to continue to migrate from the north downwards to the middle-belt and southern parts of the country. The climatic factor is a global phenomenon that affects the weather conditions around the world with ripple negative effects that people of different parts of the globe are left to contend with (Toure and Fadayomi, 1992).

2. **Resource Control:** Following up as a direct consequence of the natural factor is the steady increase in migration from the north down south year after year. And, as this is going on, there is a corresponding case of population growth, urbanization and demographic shifts with farmers now being in need of more space/land and to move further afield for farming activities. A good study of population census reveals that around the time of Independence, in the year 1960, the population of Nigeria stood at about 35 million people. Sixty years later, however, Nigeria is in the region of 190 million (National Population Commission, 1991). Consequently, a geometric increase in need and demand for food products and other means of livelihood accompanies a population rise of this magnitude. As industrialization and urbanization lays claim on available space of land, inevitable clash begins to develop between the Fulani herders and indigenous/native sedentary farmers. Pitched against each other, the struggle for control of resources become inevitable especially around the fertile valley of the Benue river which is most suitable and most productive for both farming and grazing alike (Adebajo, 2022). In the inevitable conflict that ensues, Fulani herders complain of rustling of cattle while native farmers directly suffer mass destruction of farm/crops accompanied with loss of lives, arson and loss of other properties.

3. **The Religious Factor:** There is a historical dimension to the religious factor that must not be left unidentified. Analysts are particularly interested in the religious factor as a significant dimension in the conflict between Fulani herdsmen and native agrarian farmers because, most of the Fulani herdsmen, if not all, are Muslims while the overwhelming majority of the native farmers in the host communities are

Christians (Esposito, 2003). Because of the activities of the Jihad of Usman Dan Fodio in 1804, and attendant consequences, a ground-work of suspicion has been sufficiently laid. As a matter of fact, many have designated the activities of Fulani herdsmen as another phase of Jihad, rightly or wrongly. It is a suspicion that is strengthened as it gains legitimacy because of similarity in *Modus Operandi*: Occupation and Expansion fueled by the ambers of religious extremism. It is also believed that this religious sentiment is equally behind the position of the Fulani herdsmen convinced that all land belongs to Allah as they seek unfettered access to grazing fields.

4. **Lack of Political Will:** For President Muhammadu Buhari, one could argue that the lack of political will is driven by his tribalistic and nepotic attitude that propels him to passionate defense of his kinsmen and kinswomen, regardless of how detrimental that is to the effectiveness of his office as national leader. The same lack of political will is present in the manner by which the conflict of Fulani herders versus native farmers is handled by other leaders because of selfish interests, cowardice and egocentric desires. It is this mind-set governing the approach to the Fulani herders versus native farmers crisis that has impeded and held back any possible development in a positive direction towards a viable resolution. Even at the regional level, the protocol on Trans-human Movements instituted by ECOWAS member states, although the details of the framework are yet to be fully worked out, has been received poorly, again, because of near absence of the political will needed for effective implementation. Legislators demonstrate considerable reluctance in the enactment of laws just as the executive remains nonchalant in any positive move to proffer viable solutions to the conflict.
5. **Impunity:** Closely related to the lack of political will is the nagging case of impunity that is witnessed on a daily basis in the conflict between Fulani herders versus native agrarian communities. Just as the leaders refuse to fulfill their promise to Nigerians and deliver on their mandate to the people, the security agents, structured only around the president, have continued to turn a blind eye to the numerous atrocities being committed by the Fulani

herdsmen and their militia. For instance, on several occasions, the Miyetti Allah (MACABAN) have openly acknowledged before the camera in their press conferences that they are indeed responsible for the killings and arson, and that this would continue until the Anti-Open grazing law is repealed. Yet, no member of the Miyetti Allah association has been so much as questioned by the security agents for the killings and other atrocities perpetrated by them. Besides, we have Fulani herders in possession of military grade assault weapons such as AK-47 and AK-49 in open view of the public with impunity even though this is against the law of the land. In the meantime, every other person is prohibited from carrying even as simple as den gun for self-defense and protection leaving the native farmers proportionally disadvantaged as they stay on the receiving end of the violence that ensues (Cottrol & Diamond, 1991). We need no rocket science analysis model to realize that this is a situation that calls for justice which is a prerequisite for any peaceful resolution of conflict. Outright and open perfidy practiced by the Fulani herdsmen and their militia on a daily basis shall lead to more negative outcome. The cases of Agatu massacres over and over again without adequate government intervention stand out as good examples (Ochalefu K'Ogodumu, Personal Interview).

6. **The Case of Saboteurs:** Another nagging issue is the case of saboteurs. It is a matter of thorn in the flesh and that constitutes a major obstacle in the efforts towards the resolution of the conflict between the Fulani herders and the native agrarian communities. Among the native communities, in some cases, there are leaders/village heads who connive with the Fulani herdsmen to secure comfortable accommodation for them in the villages. In this process land is unilaterally ceded to the Fulani herders in mid-night backyard deals at the expense of the natives. By the time the actual owners of the land realize this, the Fulani herders would have already take occupation of the land. Then, there is conflict. The act of sabotage is also manifested in the case of our political leaders who lobby for the president and cheer him on to curry favour from him for selfish, egocentric and ill-motivated reasons.

4. THE ROLE OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF PRESIDENT MUHAMMADU BUHARI IN THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE FULANI HERDSMEN AND NATIVE FARMERS

One could argue that President Muhammadu Buhari has demonstrated beyond all reasonable doubts that he is a determined promoter of Islamic religion and a passionate defender the Fulani agenda. And for this reason, besides direct cases of insecurity, his criticism has been strongest in these two areas: *Islamization/Sharialization* and *Fulanization* of our country, Nigeria. It is, equally, in these two areas that the president has failed woefully to effectively lead Nigeria and address the conflict between the Fulani herdsmen and native farmers in our country. The president as an individual and his administration as a body, therefore, qualify for a case study of a situation where fruitful dialogue and conflict resolution mechanisms for peaceful co-existence have not been adequately deployed and implemented. In this segment therefore, the paper will address the criticisms of Muhammadu Buhari, first in the area of the perceived efforts to *Islamize/Sharialize* the country and secondly, his determination to *Fulanize* Nigeria through his avowed resolve to actualize the Fulani agenda.

In August, 2001, President Muhammadu Buhari, allegedly, made this remark at the conference organized by the Supreme Council for Sharia in Nigeria, hosted in Kaduna where he had this to say:

I will continue to openly and inside of me show total commitment to the Sharia movement sweeping all over the country; God willing, we will not stop the agitation until it is totally implemented all over the country (Agbibo, 2015, p. 5).

As a devout Sunni Muslim, President Muhammadu Buhari believes in the supremacy of the Sharia law. In his speech in Kaduna at the ...

It is a legal responsibility which God has given us, within the context of one Nigeria, to continue to uphold the practice of Sharia wholeheartedly, and to educate non-Muslims that they have nothing to fear...What remains for Muslims in Nigeria is for them to re-double their efforts, educate non-Muslims on the need to promote the full implementation of Sharia law... (Agbibo, 2015, p. 5).

As one of the boardroom voices and advocates of the Sharia, Muhammadu Buhari was equal to the task in the manner in which he presented his words of exhortation. The boardroom advocates make up the elite voice that handles sensitization and advocacy duties and programmes in the Islamic communities. They promote extremist and radical doctrines, such as the encouragement of dying for Sharia as a noble and worthy cause through which one becomes a martyr. Part of their function too is to prepare the field soldiers and provide a kind of ideological framework, some kind of menu or diet for the adherents to feed upon, in such a way that radicalization and extremism are effectively deployed in Muslim communities, breeding the likes of suicide bombers. As they die in the process, they believe that their death is for a worthy and noble religious cause. It is a similar mindset that propels extremists and radical Islamic adherents such as Boko Haram and ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria), inspiring and guiding them in all their operations. The boardroom group also initiates and supervises social and political mobilisation programmes to counter the secular ideologies that are relevant to the neutral position of a secular state.

A more heartbreaking situation manifests itself in the day-to-day effects on individual Nigerians of the adoption of Sharia law in the northern part of Nigeria, which remains an infringement on human rights and the rights and freedoms of Nigerians, especially because Nigeria is a secular state. As we have witnessed, Christians in the northern Muslim states are subjected to Islamic laws as Sharia is extended to cover non-Muslims, putting them under the control of Sharia law, for example, by having non-Muslims prosecuted for drinking beer. The adoption of Sharia is a contradiction of Article 10 that proscribes any State religion, especially because not only does the Constitution declare secularity to the state of Nigeria but also because Section 1(3) affirms the Supremacy of the Constitution over any other law that is inconsistent with it (Okhifoh, 2021). The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria may have allowed for the creation of individual State Sharia Law Courts of Appeals, but this is in cases relating to personal legal matters. To extend this privilege to the purview of Criminal Justice would be a contradiction and violation of Section 1(3), which specifically affirms the Supremacy of the Constitution over any other law. President Buhari manifested a similar fidelity to Sharia law when, at the inauguration on May 29th, 2019, he used the Sharia Law Bag while he took the oath of office. It would be

recalled that this practise is among the regulations stipulated by the Joint Conference of Islamic Organisations in Abuja on November 28, 1989.

The second area where criticism of President Muhammadu Buhari is rife and forceful, and justifiably so, is in his avowed support for and defence of Muslim causes. Although, on the day of his inauguration, the president, to the admiration of many, declared that he would be "for nobody" in particular but "for all". It has become abundantly clear, however, that right from his DNA instincts, he declared for the Fulani agenda and the Miyetti Allah, for whom he is a life patron. President Buhari has employed all manner of tactics to advance the Fulani agenda: We have gone through Cattle Colonies, the *e-visa* Ready Entry Visa policy for Fulani from all of West and North Africa to flood Nigeria, the Fulani Radio, *RUGA*, the Land and Water Resource Bill, the CAMA-2020 Law, the Reactivation of Grazing Routes, and a host of others. These, along with other insidious policies, have been employed by Mr. President and his cronies to actualize his grand agenda: The *Fulanization* of Nigeria.

It is easy to understand why an individual in a position of power would extend some favours to his kinsmen and kinswomen, but this rises to the level of outrage when billions of Naira are being dolled out by the Buhari administration to the Fulani agenda on a yearly basis. Come to think of this: The Fulani, as an ethnic group in Nigeria, make up only about 5% of the Nigerian population. How can we have a situation where the remaining 95% of the Nigerian population is being sacrificed for the Fulani people? What is the Fulani ethnic group contributing to the development of our country, Nigeria? And this becomes even more heartbreaking when the security component of it all is added on to it. For instance, the APC strongman, Alhaji Abubakar Kawu Baraje, confessed that the bandits who today have taken over most of the northern states are partly made up of the thugs hired by Muhammadu Buhari and imported into the country to help secure success for him in his re-election bid (Okwelum, 2022). With the election over, these thugs have not been adequately accommodated and settled, and, not being able to return to their home countries, they resorted to self-help, but in a very destructive and deadly manner: Mass School Kidnappings. The earlier nature of kidnappings is now being upgraded to a highly lucrative business where ransom collected from one operation is immediately invested in the next, and the cycle of kidnapping operations is maintained. What a lucrative business.

Our villages and rural areas are awash with the presence of widows and orphans, all the makings of Fulani herdsmen and militia, who use military-grade assault weapons on the natives at the slightest provocation. Mass murderous rampages and arson, witnessed on a regular basis, are out there for everybody to see, especially in the Middle Belt (and particularly in Benue State), but when confronted about this, President Muhammadu Buhari had this to say: "The present header, I am told, carries an AK-47, and people are even blaming me for not talking to them because maybe (they say) I look like one of them. There is more injustice in this aspersion... The Benue subsistence farmer knows that the Nigerian cattle herder that he knows doesn't carry anything more than a stick, occasionally something to cut grass to feed his cattle" At the death of seventy-three indigenes of Benue State in January 2018, which took place during just a single night's campaign by the Fulani herdsmen and their militia, the condolence message received from President Muhammadu Buhari was: The Benue people should learn to accommodate and live well with their neighbours" (Gemade, & Inja, 2020).

The accusations of President Muhammadu Buhari in the areas of *Islamization/Sharialization* and *Fulanization* of Nigeria, which find legitimacy on account of the analysis laid out above, and rightly so, are inimical to the stability and peaceful co-existence of our country, Nigeria. It is also based on these witnessed and documented cases that we all have experienced in the six years of the Buhari presidency that render him unfit for the post of mediator and peacemaker. For any mechanism of conflict resolution to succeed, President Muhammadu Buhari must be excluded, for he lacks what it takes to succeed in dialogue and mediation in the conflict between the Fulani herdsmen and the native agrarian communities.

5. AN URGENT NEED FOR FRUITFUL DIALOGUE FOR CONFLICT-RESOLUTION

Conflict resolution is a mechanism employed in the process of bringing about peaceful solution between two or more parties in the wake of a disagreement or face-off. This disagreement could arise on the basis of a dispute over security, political, emotional, financial or personal matters. When a disagreement arises, it is, in most cases, better resolved by way of dialogue and negotiations. Analysts in social conflict theory generally recommend the following steps in the application of dialogue for conflict resolution: Broadly stated, there must be an agreement

to meet and talk based on established rules and manner of discussion; participants should take turns to express their thoughts and feelings about the subject matter and related topics for discussion; there is the need to clearly identify the subject of dispute and conflict and have it laid on the table for all to see, hear and feel; related options must also be laid out as all participants are each given the chance to express themselves about the various options as these are explored towards resolution of the conflict; Concerted efforts must be made to agree on a solution, or at least, agree to disagree as schedules are equally set up for further meetings and deliberations in future; at each level of the dialogue, the resolution must be stated clearly and evaluated for future meetings and deliberations (Chari et al., 2009).

Because we live in a society where we have people of different backgrounds, personalities, socio-cultural inclinations and values, it is impossible to avoid conflicts all together. It is therefore pertinent to approach relations and interactions, formal or informal, by use of viable mechanisms of conflict resolution when disputes arise. This is based on the realization of the fact of our interdependence in society is necessarily programmed. For any viable development in society, these unavoidable conflicts must be resolved. This explains why we go into dialogue with a relatively open mind and willingness to listen and learn from the opinion of others. It also requires a certain level of discipline and maturity for empathy, where the need arises. While not altogether discarding one's own position, participants on a dialogue table, must be willing to accommodate and compromise when this becomes the necessary strategies for conflict resolution. It is important also to realize that a number of unforeseen 'traps', some common cognitive and emotional hurdles, may unconsciously and surprisingly arise and being in need of attention in the process of dialogue, they must not be ignored. The goal, ultimately, is to arrive at a situation that provides an enabling environment for peaceful and harmonious co-existence in the society. --
-www.pon.harvard.edu

6. RECOMMENDATIONS/THE WAY FORWARD

What is the way forward? To bring about any viable solutions to the problem of Fulani herders versus native agrarian communities, there must be holistic in approach: Way of dialogue; use of legislations, education of the masses/public sensitization, military, policy guidelines and national

orientation, as well as other mechanisms for conflict resolution as laid out above. These must be accompanied with effective policing of troubled communities coupled with arrests and prosecution of perpetrators and violators. These further recommendations are of absolute necessity:

Ranching rather than open grazing: It should be clear by now that we do not need any rocket science analysis model to decipher the preferred and desired option, which is ranching as opposed to open grazing. Experience has manifested over and over again that because open grazing is unavoidable and brings about clashes between Fulani herders and native sedentary agrarian communities, we must go the way of ranching. The general opinion that the majority of individuals and groups of people have expressed shows preference for ranches, as they equally disregard open grazing. At the Asaba Conference of the Southern Governors (May, 2021), ranching was adopted as open grazing was overwhelmingly rejected, but unfortunately, President Buhari rejected this position on the grounds of what he calls "questionable legality" along with the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of the Federation, Mallam Abubakar Malami. In spite of that, it must be understood that the conventional wisdom and what we have as the preferred practise of animal husbandry today, the world over, is Ranching.

Impunity Must Stop: For justice and fair play, the hallmarks of any civilised society in search of peaceful co-existence, to be realised, there must be an end to impunity in the manner in which the government approaches the issue of conflict between the Fulani and the native agrarian communities. As stated above, Miyetti Allah (MACBAN), in total disregard for the sacredness of ancestral land, has openly admitted to the many cases of mass murderous rampages and callous campaigns of arson, leaving behind a helpless and vulnerable cohort of widows and orphans while sending millions of people into IDP camps. The first job of any government that holds claim to any kind of legitimacy is the protection of the lives and properties of its citizens. For any hope of a peaceful resolution of conflict in the case of Fulani herdsmen versus native farmers, those who have committed these atrocities and especially those who have admitted to doing so, as laid out in the paper, must be arrested and prosecuted since no one is above the law.

Strengthening of Institutions: As long as our Institutions remain weak and malleable, the path to justice and peace will continue to elude us. For instance, we have a system, as it is in Nigeria now, where the judiciary, legislative, and security apparatus of the country respond only to the president's whims and caprices, leaving us with nothing short of a dictatorship and one-man regime. The United States of America, for instance, was able to survive the gross incompetence and ineptness as well as the sheer ill-will of Donald Trump and his administration because of the strength of the Institutions of the American government. Why can't we learn from such governments? When Institutions are strengthened and people are enlightened, it weakens the negative effects of tribalism, ethnicity, sectionalism, and religious bigotry.

A Call to Sensitization and Action: Nigerians must awaken to the realities of what is before us. A peaceful revolution should not be put off the table for the consideration of Nigerians as we address this crucial matter of conflict between Fulani herdsman and native farmers. Peaceful National Protests are included in the United Nations recommendations for public expression, and this is used by civilised nations around the globe. It is part of human rights policies recommended in cases where abuse of human rights, like we have in Nigeria today, becomes a major obstacle to the freedom and development of the people. Our country, Nigeria, must come first. Enough of tribalism, ethnicity, sectionalism, and religious bigotry that have consumed the nation. Patriotism must be allowed to reign. Sensitization programmes must be put in place to educate people on ideas and modalities for nation-building and the role of all citizens in this noble venture.

Resignation or Impeachment: Finally, along with other voices of conscientious Nigerians, I recommend that since the protection of lives and properties, the very first duty of any government, has become impossible for President Muhammadu Buhari and his administration, he should honourably resign or be impeached. Many well-meaning and patriotic Nigerians have called for this, the latest being Sheikh Ahmed Gumi (28/7/2021). In this call, he states that:

The bloodshed now is more than the bloodshed during Jonathan's regime...When people are dying everywhere and President Buhari and

the Governors are attending wedding ceremonies, that is what I mean by, I don't care. As I called for the resignation of President Jonathan, I should call for the resignation of President Buhari with immediate effect...Even Jonathan, as bad as he was, he was more democratic. When he saw that here was a problem he relinquished power and said, I don't want bloodshed... ..And so, I say too to my own brother, President Buhari, Resign with immediate effect... (www.tori.ng).

The president must be made to understand, in categorical terms, that no single individual is greater than the country and no one is above the law. Personal ego-centric desires and aspirations must not be allowed to override the country or the common good. Elements of dictatorship, as found inherent in President Buhari and his administration must not be allowed to thrive. No civilized world can survive under such ineptness and ill-will of a leader.

7. CONCLUSION

The paper has focused on the theme of crisis in the relationship between Fulani herders versus native farmers in Nigeria that is, today, in dire and urgent need for resolution. A brief historical analysis of the situation, the various factors and different perspectives of the nature of the conflict, were examined. Pertinent to the situation of the crisis is the role of President Muhammadu Buhari which serves as a case study of ineptness in administration and absence of skills for good governance that calls for urgent attention and resolution to keep Nigeria from devolution. The mechanisms of dialogue and conflict resolution, patriotism and determination, justice and fair-play, as well as honest appreciation of the facts of the crisis are among the recommendations for peaceful resolution and co-existence.

As President Muhammadu Buhari prepares to leave Aso Rock in a couple of weeks, these areas of national interest and discussion need to be highlighted and brought to the front burner. The gross violation of human rights in the continued loss of lives and property must not be allowed to go without adequate application of the law and principles of justice as we ensure that the perpetrators of this heinous crime are made to account for their evil. This paper cannot but conclude on a note of a clarion call to all Nigerians,

both the leaders and the led, as well as the international community to pursue the path of justice for a peaceful co-existence in Nigeria because, that alone will guarantee human development and nation building of our society.

REFERENCES

- Adebajo, A. A. (2022). *Pastoralist-Farmer Conflicts in Nigeria: A Human Displacement Perspective*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Adeyeye, A. I. (2020). Herders-Farmers Conflicts in Nigeria: Issues, Complications and Implications. *Polac international journal of Humanities and Security Studies*, 5(2), 1-14.
- Agbibo, D. E. (2015). Boko Haram, Sharia law and the Nigerian constitution: an unholy alliance?. *International IDEA*, 4-6.
- Best, S. G., & Idyorough, A.E. (2003). *Communal Conflicts and Conflict Management: The Jukin/Chamba-Kuteb Conflict in Takum, Taraba State*. Aboki Publishers Ltd.
- Chari, P. R., Cheema, P. I., & Cohen, S. P. (2009). *Four crises and a peace process: American engagement in South Asia*. Brookings Institution Press.
- Cottrol, R. J., & Diamond, R. T. (1991). The second amendment: toward an Afro-Americanist reconsideration. *Geo. LJ*, 80, 309.
- Despres, L.A., *Ethnicity and Resource Competition in Plural Societies*, (Ibadan: IFRA)
- Esposito, J. L. (2003). *Unholy war: Terror in the name of Islam*. Oxford University Press, USA.
- Fricke, W. (1993). *Cattle Husbandry in Nigeria: A Case Study of its Ecological Conditions and Socio-Geographical Differentians*. Nigeria, Ikot-Ekpene.
- Gemade, C. K., & Inja, T. (2020). Tackling Noise Pollution in Urban Benue: The Role of the Church. *Int. Journal on Biblical and Cognate Studies*, 1, 188-205.
- Ikezue, C. E., & Ezeah, P. (2017). Recurrent conflicts among migrant Fulani herders and indigenous communities of southern Nigeria: A review of literature. *International Journal of Health and Social Inquiry*, 3(1).
- Motta, P., Porphyre, T., Hamman, S. M., Morgan, K. L., Ngwa, V. N., Tanya, V. N., ... & Bronsvort, B. M. (2018). Cattle transhumance and agropastoral nomadic herding practices in Central Cameroon. *BMC veterinary research*, 14(1), 1-12.
- Ojo, J. S. (2020). Governing "ungoverned spaces" in the foliage of conspiracy: Toward (re) ordering terrorism, from Boko Haram insurgency, Fulani militancy to banditry in northern Nigeria. *African Security*, 13(1), 77-110.
- Okhifoh, K. O. (2021). Sharia and the Plight of Non-Muslims In the Multi-Religious Nigeria. *Trinitarian: International Journal Of Arts And Humanities*, 1(1).
- Okoli, A. C., & Ogayi, C. O. (2018). Herdsmen militancy and humanitarian crisis in Nigeria: A theoretical briefing. *African Security Review*, 27(2), 129-143.
- Okwelum, C. O. (2022). The National Question in the Face of a Nigerian Spring. *African Journal of Humanities and Contemporary Education Research*, 8(2), 91-105.
- Rath, T. (2022). *The Dread Plague and the Cow Killers: The Politics of Animal Disease in Mexico and the World*. Cambridge University Press.
- Rosenthal, U., Hart, P. T., & Kouzmin, A. (1991). The bureau-politics of crisis management. *Public administration*, 69(2), 211-233.

INTERVIEWS

- 1) Ochalefu, K. (Personal Interview, Odugbeho in Agatu).
- 2) Mr. Otatonu A. (Personal Interview, Itakpa, Obi Local Government Area).
- 3) Owoya U A. (Personal Interview, Itakpa, Omusu is Edumoga, Okpokwu Local).
- 4) Alhaji Bashir L. (Personal Interview, Agatu is located in Apa Local Government).