

Herdsman Crisis and Its Implication On Social Security in Benue State

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Received: 22/11/2023 | Accepted: 29/11/2023

Published: x/11/2023

Abstract

In recent years, there has been a building tension and conflict between Herdsmen and rural farmers in Benue State. The crisis between the two social and economic groups reached a peak under the era of President Mohammadu Buhari who also was one of the patrons of Myetti Allah, a social cultural organization of the Fulani Cattle Society who also in public space media statements vowed to wage a war in Benue State to guarantee their access to grazing routes and reserves. The attending consequences of the conflict has been the displacement of human population as well as disruptions of the economic life of the people of Benue State. This paper examines the Herdsmen crisis as it impacts on the social security of Benue State as from the 1990s to 2020. The methodology the paper adopts is the use of both primary and secondary sources. The paper posits that the way forward is for both State and Federal Government to defend and protect the rights of the two social groups through the provision of basic economic infrastructure that can support both grazing and farming.

Keywords: Herdsmen, Crisis, Social Security, Benue State

Publish by IJAH 2023.

INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century. Nomadic herdsman terrorism have taken centre stage in the discourse of conflict and development in Africa and sub-Saharan Africa. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, there has been a near collapse of ideological politics in Africa; giving birth to ideological conflict based on ethnicity and religion. Ideological politics in Nigeria often hides under the disguise of religion and ethnicity: thus concealing the selfish intent of the Nigerian political class, the exploitation and mobilisation of radical political Islam threatens civilisations and development in Europe, America, the Middle East and Africa. Nomadic groups such as Berbers, Tuaregs, Beiodum Arabs and the Fulanis have mobilised radical Islamism combined with a network of terrorist groups such as Algadea, Al-Shabab, and Boko Haram to unleash terror on sedentary farming groups across the West African Sub-Region.

In this discussion, we shall explore the conflict between nomadic herdsman and farmers in Nigeria

and how that has come to impact on democratic sustenance in Benue State. We shall begin by looking at what the problem is.

THEORETICAL ISSUES

There is hardly any society in world history where there is a total absence of conflict and crisis that sometimes degenerate into ethnic and religious wars. The fact is that conflicts and crises are a normal part of human and societal development. But the social engineering of such conflicts must also be an integral part of a society if it is to survive and develop. The Herdsmen terrorist invasion of Nigeria, particularly the Tiv society of Benue State, is an aspect of modern conflict that belongs to the realm of nation-building challenges in Africa in the post-independence era. Since the emergence of the modern nation-state in Africa, scholars are interested to finding out how African nations can mobilise their ethnic and

religious resources to achieve development and transformation. The gap between developed and underdeveloped nations lies in the ability of a nation to mobilise her ethnic and religious resources through qualitative education and economic empowerment to achieve national transformation.

In Africa, it appears ethnicity and religion are a curse to nation-building: a major factor in conflict and underdevelopment on the continent. Africa, with its diverse and rich cultural groups has to a large extent failed in mobilising her cultural resources to achieve national greatness. For instance, the Asian nations like India and China have overcome this challenge of nation-building. But Africa, and most especially sub-Saharan Africa, is still infested by ethnic and religious colorations in her developmental drive.

The conflict between nomadic herdsmen and sedentary farming populations dates back to antiquity. In the Old Testament of the Bible, there are replicated stories on the conflict between herdsmen and farmers such as the conflict between Can and Abel, Abraham and Lot. Esau and Jacob as well as King David. Racist historians were quick to frame out theoretical positions that justified the superiority of nomadic herdsmen over that of sedentary farming groups based on the religious foundations of the Bible. These racist historians went further to invent the Hamatic-hypothesis to justify a superiority of the civilisation of fairer-skin nomadic groups over that of black African sedentary farmers.

Some scholars often view the conflict between nomads and farmers, or the conflict between fairer-skin races and black African groups as a clash of civilisation. For instance, all the empires of the Western Sudan were founded by Black African Kings. But the eventual decline and collapse of these empires was linked to the activities of the fairer-skin races and nomads.

In recent times, Tuoregs and Berbers have destroyed much of what was left of Timbuktu, a central learning centre for the Mall Empire.

Racist historians who wanted to justify the export of European civilisations in Africa adopted the framework of the Hamatic-hypothesis in explanation of change and development in Africa as well as the brutal exploitation and enslavement of Black Africa. The Hamatic hypothesis stated that, in the divine ordination of God, Black Africans were destined to be the slaves of the White and fairer races. This idea is adopted from the Old Testament background in which Black Africans were a cursed race destined to be the Hewers of wood and Fetchers of water.

European slave masters exploited this religious foundation in the forced slavery of Africans in the New World. In later centuries, Arab slave dealers employed the same theoretical stereotypes in the dehumanisation of Black African. Islamic expansionism in Africa between the 9th century A.D up to the 18th century in Africa re-enforced

these racial stereotypes in the brutal exploitation of Black Africa. The way and manner in which herdsmen often butcher farmers in the recent invasion of Benue State reflect the idea of the inferiority of farmers to herders; Black Africans to the fairer races. The brutal and cruel killings often leave a message that the sedentary farmers are sub-human creations. These acts of killings are deliberate and deeply rooted in the racial hatred of the fairer-skin nomads against black African sedentary populations. The mutilation and cruelty of killing are meant to send one lesson to every black African that they are subhuman. Racial killings manifested in America during the era of slavery and in South Africa during the apartheid era. In New World society, white supremacists armed with the same theoretical thought embarked on the genocide and lynching of Black Africans across America. White supremacists like the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) adopted gory sight in the genocide of the black Africans. In the era of apartheid in South Africa, it was the same theoretical foundation that inspired the Afrikaners to butcher and kill black South Africans. Scholars have argued that in Africa, since the 1990s, there has been near-state collapse arising from the crises and contradictions of underdevelopment fuelled by ethnic and religious politics that has led to the emasculation and impoverishment of the African populations. The exploitation of religion and ethnicity is often a smokes screen or disguise that conceals the selfish intentions of the ruling political class which is often based on primitive accumulation. In Africa, primitive accumulation is the goal in politics often negating good governance, development and transformation. The idea is that, the ruling elites become richer at the expense of the poor masses who become divided and factionalized. A good example of failed states in Africa includes: Somalia, Sudan, Congo, and Central African Republic. On her visit to Nigeria in recent times, Hillary Clinton, then Secretary of State of the United States of America, warned of a possible state collapse during the Obasanjo era. The Boko Haram War in the North-East of Nigeria and the Herdsmen invasion across central Nigeria are all indicators of a near-state collapse. Poverty in Nigeria has increased by 70%, real wages at 95% and unemployment by 60%, the breakdown of law and order in which life has been devalued is deplorable. These are all indicators of a near-state collapse. The farmer-herder's crisis is viewed as a disguise and diversionary tactics of the ruling elites to conceal their poor performance in terms of their delivery of development and transformation of the Nigerian state. The political elites, since 1999 have nothing to show in terms of real development and thus, the only diversionary measure is to create crisis and conflicts in which the masses are often recruited as cannon fodder. In the same way, since 1999 to date, the Nigerian political elites have come to depend heavily on the mobilisation and recruitment of thugs, ethnic militias

and religious movements, as a way of gaining relevance on the corridors of political authority and control. These ethnic militias and militant religious movements overtime, have become a source of terror on the Nigerian psyche. In the search for survival and political control, these militias of both Fulani and Tiv extractions in concert with other terrorist groups, have come to unleash mayhem on the civil population of Nigeria in the disguise of a farmers-herder's crisis. Professor Yemi Osinbajo, the Vice President of Nigeria has always pointed out that:

"The farmers-herdsmen crisis in Nigeria has been politicised, there is no ethnic or religious coloration to it."

This is the official version or narrative of the Federal Government of Nigeria under President Muhammadu Buhari. While the State Governments like Benue State accuses Fulani herdsmen militia under the sponsorship of Miyetti Allah as the source of the farmers-herders conflict, the Federal Government of Nigeria blames it on the activities of ethnic and religious militias politicised by the ruling political elites. The conflict between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria is interpreted by some Scholars as an outcome of the poor underdevelopment of the forces of production as well as factors of production. Agricultural production in Nigeria is factored on the use of crude primitive forces where the factors of production are grossly underutilized. The pastoral and farming economy are controlled by crude forces of production and hence the conflict inherent. In countries such as Brazil and Argentina, with a larger cattle population than Nigeria; where the ranching economy has been put into place, there is hardly conflict between herders and farmers. Rather, the large economies of scale provide supplements between the herders and farmers. Pastoralism and farming are complementary in nature, depending on the state of development of the respective industries. No country has achieved development on the basis of nomadic pastoralism much in the same way that no country has achieved no development on the basis of subsistence farming. This underscores the recent move by the National Economic Council in Nigeria that States affected by the farmers-herder's crisis should adopt the economies of Ranching as a way of regulating peace between farmers and herders and thus achieving development. The government of Benue State, under Governor Samuel Ortom has adopted Ranching as an economic policy that can provide for peace and security between farmers and herders in the short term and the long term. The Anti Open Grazing and foresight that protect Benue farmers; creating the enabling environment for herdsmen and farmers to co-exist and exploit the large economies of scales. There is the angle of the elite conspiracy between the Tiv and the Fulani political elites. The idea is that, in politics and political formations, there is always a string of patron and client ties that exist between majority ruling groups and minority political

class. In Nigeria, since independence, a patron client tie has been a major feature and characteristics of Nigerian politics. Actors in the political field do not play the game in isolation but in concert with one another. Minority groups will always seek patronage from majority groups. During the era of George Akume as Governor of Benue State, Alh. Atiku Abubakar was installed as the zege mule u Tiv by the Tiv Traditional Council, this political relationship between the Fulani political class and the Tiv ruling class has continued to have far reaching implications on the development of the Tiv nation. Also, former Governor Gabriel Suswam allegedly entered into understanding and partnership with the Sokoto Caliphate and Emirs on grazing reserves in Benue State. It is speculated that under President Goodluck Jonathan, states in Nigeria received billions of naira to facilitate grazing reserves in their states. This has been the born of contention between Miyetti Allah and respective states in Nigeria in recent times. The conspiracy of silence by the political elites in Benue State further confirms that perhaps these allegations are true. Democracy as a concept both in theoretical and practical terms means different things to different people, depending on the background, space and time of an existing society. To the ancient Greeks, where the idea of democracy evolved, it implies the government of the commonest people by the commonest people for the common good. It was a system of government envisaged where the Aristocrats and the nobility sit together with commoners in deciding the political development of the Greek State. This idea was a revolutionary one in which the equality of all groups within the Greek State was protected. The idea of equality of all groups in a democracy and the need to protect their material happiness is a central idea that runs all through ancient democracies, up to the French and American revolutions. In the French and American revolutions, as well as the English revolutions, beginning from the sixteenth century up to the Nineteenth century, the fundamental ideas of democracy were centred around the equality, liberty and fraternity of all men, irrespective of their race, creed or background. In all the democratic movements of the Nineteenth and Twentieth century, both liberal and socialist democracy, as practiced by the West and the East, the prevailing foundations of democracy rooted on the equality of all groups and their right to the pursuit of material freedom as enshrined in the fundamental human rights of all human races. The formations of the United Nations by the Twentieth century rested on the foundation of human rights in which both majorities and minorities in the World system had equal protection and access to material freedom. The Charter of fundamental human rights is also a critical corner stone of Nigeria's democracy since Independence. The Constitution of Nigeria since 1999 provides for these basic freedoms for all existing groups irrespective of their

religion or creed. For example, it is part of the democratic right as enshrined in the Nation's constitution for the Federal Government to protect life and property of all groups irrespective of their religion or ethnic affiliation. It is also the right of all groups in Nigeria to access material development provided by the State irrespective of affiliation or creed.

Democratic sustenance depends on how a nation mobilises all her democratic institutions and forces to achieve the goal and objective of development and transformation. In other words, all the forces of democracy within the nation: The Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary must provide the fundamental basics of a democracy which is factored upon basic human rights and material happiness. Democracies and their institutions exist to develop the material happiness of her people. This is the fundamental goal of democratic sustenance that democracy must provide sustainable development based on the following: good governance, equal development, human security, sustainable infrastructural development, income and wealth distribution. etcetera. Using one theory alone cannot provide adequate framework for our discourse. We shall therefore, combine all these theories in the discus of our focal subject matter.

HISTORY OF HERDERS CRISIS IN BENUE STATE

The Fulani and the Tiv people had relations that date back to the pre-colonial era where the two groups existed on a platform of mutual coexistence and dependency. Scholars like Akiga Sai pointed out that the Tiv and the Fulani had common shared friendly interactions that gave birth to stereotypes in which the Fulani referred to the Tiv people as *munchi*. It is important to note that this is a stereotype as the word *munchi* is a Jukun derivative which means *mitshi* meaning stranger. The idea that the Tiv people ate the Fulani cows is ahistorical as it is a fabricated story by the Fulani elites to prejudice the Tiv people John Orkar pointed out that the Tiv people were in the Benue Valley as far back as the 14th century. This was the period the nomadic Fulanis were expanding across the Hausa states in the North that led to the conflict between the Hausa Kings and the nomadics. It was not until 1803 in the Sokoto Jihad led by Usman Dan Fodio that the Fulani caliphate was established in the far North. European scholars like R.A. Sergeant pointed out that the Tiv people were the most predominant population in the Benue valley stretching from the Adamawa Mountains down to as been in a cowed debt. the Niger and River Benue confluence area. The Tiv people had a vast population without an imperial design and structure; a fundamental problem that eventually led to the loss of the Tiv to the Fulani during

the colonial era. The British colonial rule of the twentieth century through the indirect rule system was a major game changer between the Fulani and the Tiv people. By the twentieth century, the Fulanis had the Sokoto caliphate, a solid political structure that British colonialism through the indirect rule system depended on. This led to a change in the balance of power in favour of the Fulani ruling group as against the Tiv people. All of the Tiv population came under the northern region together with other minority groups under the control of the Sokoto caliphate. This was great opening door and a window of opportunity for the Sokoto caliphate led by the Sultan of Sokoto to embark on the internal colonisation of minorities in the North. This background is very important in understanding the Tiv riots of 1960 to 1965 in which the Tiv people led by Joseph Tarka of the United Middle Belt Congress fought against the Fulani colonisation of Tiv society by the Northern People's Congress led by Sir Ahmadu Bello. The Tiv revolts and resistance was a major struggle against the Fulani imperial control of Tiv society compelling the Tiv nation to embrace Islam. The Fulani ruling class through institutions such as the native authority, native courts, police and even the institution of the Tor Tiv created in 1945, as well as District Heads and Chiefs all came under the domination of Islam. In the politics of the 1950s upto the 1960s. The key political actors in Tiv society under the Northern People's Congress were converted to Islam. For instance, Lushakyaa Anja, Takera Oradi, and several others had to play it along with Islam to have political relevance in the northern region. In the military, men of Tiv extraction with a good romance with Islam had a better patronage of the Fulani ruling class. It is therefore, not strange that in contemporary herdsmen crisis in Benue state, the voice of the Tiv military elites is almost non-existent Scholars in Nigeria have pointed out that since the creation of modern Nigeria, the goal and the ambition of the Fulani political class has been centred on the internal colonisation of minority groups in Nigeria. In 1960 for instance, Sir Ahmadu Bello in the Parrot Newspaper declared that: *"Nigeria is the estate of their grandfather Usman Dan Fodio. It was the birthright of the Fulanis to rule, to prevent minorities from having real independence, to use ethnic minorities in central Nigeria as willing tools, to extend the Sokoto caliphate to the Atlantic."*

This declaration by Ahmadu Bello has deep imperial intent as manifest in contemporary herdsmen expansion in Nigeria. To achieve the objective of internal colonisation, certain structures were put in place such as the idea of nomadic education. National nomadic commission, grazing routes and grazing reserves, and the politicisation of the military top command controlled by the Fulani military elites. The 1980s and 1990s, the regimes of Generals Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha witnessed a gradual introduction of the Islamic agenda in

Nigeria. Gen. Babangida for instance. Initiated Nigeria in the Organisation of Islamic Countries (O.I.C). The protest of Christians in Nigeria did not change the fundamental intention of the Islamic north. The O.I.C controversy was soon followed up by the Abuja declaration of all Islamic Nations which promised one major thing: the islamisation of the top military brass of Nigeria, the introduction of Sharia in northern states, the control of political leadership by the Islamic class. These were structures and institutions designed to check the Christian control of the politics of Nigeria. During President Olusegun Obasanjo's era, Sharia movements and Islamic insurgents became widespread across the north and reached a peak during the President Goodluck Jonathan's era with the emergence of the Boko Haram. The rise and expansion of militant Islam and political Islam in the West African sub-region is traceable back to the era of Barack Obama as President of the United States of America. Since the Obama era, political Islam has been on the rise in the Middle East spreading across North Africa with an outpouring into sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, President Barack Obama, created a military command for Africa that was stationed on the high Mediterranean Sea of North Africa. The Obama administration recruited, trained and equipped radical Islamic militants to overthrow and bring down regimes in the middle East and north Africa that were none compliant to the ideological stream of the Western World. Since then, Nations like Iraq and Syria came under Islamic wars, the same for Libya, Tunisia and Egypt that came under the insurrection of the Arab spring. In the aftermath of the Arab spring which left collapsed regimes in the Middle East and North Africa. This led to proliferation of both small scale and medium scale arms in the hands of Islamic insurgents across Africa.

In North Africa, nomadic herdsman groups like the Berbers and the Tuoregs, armed and mobilised by Islam carved out territories in Mali and Niger. France responded quickly by dismantling the Islamic States in the West African sub-region. However, the dislocation of these Islamic groups found outlets of expansionism into Nigeria, Chad and Cameroun through the creation of terrorist groups like the Boko Haram and the Fulani militia group sponsored by Miyetti Allah.

In recent history, the farmers-herdsman crisis in Nigeria is traceable to the emergence of Miyetti Allah, a socio-cultural group of the Fulani people. The emergence of herdsman terrorism in Nigeria is tied to the activities of Miyetti Allah and a series of loosed network between Miyetti Allah and nomadic herdsman across West Africa. These terrorist groups backed by the state and institutionalized ethnicity, are well armed and equipped, also trained in the act of modern warfare using both light and medium scale weapons in paving the way for Fulani expansionism across Nigeria. Their mouthpiece has been Miyetti Allah and the military class in Nigeria that have refused to call them to order. The argument has always

been that there are grazing routes and grazing reserves which must be secured for the herdsman at the expense of human life. The formation of Miyetti Allah in the 1980s and 1990 is a water shed in the expansion of militant Islam in Nigeria. Miyetti Allah control great economic and financial strength, richer than states in Nigeria, mobilising the Fulani resource across the whole world, with the sole objective of Fulani occupation of Nigeria through herdsman expansionism. The patrons of the new Fulani militant movement were no other persons but President Muhamadu Buhari, Alh. Atiku Abubakar, Emir Sanusi, the Sultan of Sokoto, and the Fulani ruling elites both in the military and politics. Miyetti Allah and Boko Haram were basically the creation of the northern Islamic class to achieve a Fulani imperialism over Nigeria. In the election of 2011, Muhamadu Buhari is quoted to have said he was going to use everything possible to make Nigeria ungovernable for President Jonathan. These words were factual and prophetic as Boko Haram razed the entire north-east Nigeria and even central Nigeria including Abuja. Since 2013, there has been series of herdsman invasion of Benue State. These attacks have overwhelmed the local governments of Logo, Guma, Makurdi, Gwer West and Gwer East, Ukum, Agatu, Ogbadigbo and others. The attacks have far reaching impacts on social and economic developments in Benue State.

IMPLICATIONS ON SOCIAL SECURITY IN BENUE STATE

What is the legal foundation and basis of Miyetti Allah's claim of grazing routes and grazing reserves across Nigeria against the backdrop of the Supreme Court Ruling in the 1960s that nullifies the idea of open reserves and grazing routes? It is important to note that in the Gazette of Northern Nigeria under the Northern Province, grazing routes and reserves were not created in the Benue Valley. What then is the legal basis of Miyetti Allah's claim of grazing reserves and routes in the Benue Valley? To what extent has the National Assembly and the Judiciary in Nigeria defended the rights of farmers across Nigeria for a peaceful material pursuit against the invasion by herdsman? Herdsman invasion of Benue State since 2012 has virtually destroyed the farming economy displaced people in hundreds of thousands, thus deepening the crisis of poverty in central Nigeria. The Bureau for Local Governments has released statistics to show that the cost of economic destruction by herdsman invasion is near N9b. It is expected that common sense would have told President Muhammadu Buhari Federal led government that the destruction of farming communities compromises the foundation of Nigeria's economy and democratic prosperity. It has been expected, like the norm in the West that any sane

President of the ruling national class will in strongest terms, condemn such an invasion and militarily restrain herders from running over farmlands. What has been the adequate media coverage of the farmers-herders conflict, in such a way that it reveals the salient motives behind the herdsmen invasion, their sponsors, and their agenda for the Nigerian nation? What actually is hate speech when farming communities voice out their dissent, when their kinsmen are murdered in cold blood? The media plays a fundamental role in democratic sustenance by bringing out the ideological issues inherent in a conflict. There is no doubt that media reportage of the farmers-herder's crisis has been suppressed, and trivialized as communal conflicts been operated by criminal gangs Miyetti Allah Kautal Hore and several Fulani nationalist movements have reportedly declared war on Benue State and carried out such intents with impunity. What has been the expected role of security forces and Agencies in ensuring that Miyetti Allah is not only charged with complicity in the murder of innocent lives across Nigeria but also declared as a terrorist group? These Fulani pan umbrella groups have openly declared terror on Benue State and carried it out without any restraint. These has led to the opinion that there is Federal Government complicity to protect powerful groups against weaker groups in Nigeria. This is a threat to democracy as it completely undermines the right of minority groups to survive in a democracy. It also re-enforces the fear that perhaps the Sir Ahmadu Bello declaration of the 1960 is been carried out by Miyetti Allah and other Fulani militant movements. Since Governor Samuel Ortom of Benue State, through the State Assembly, passed the Anti Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law, what has been the expected role of the Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice or the Supreme Court in Nigeria to interpret against the backdrop of the Constitution of Nigeria? What has been the role of the National Assembly to discuss these state laws within the context of the Constitution of Nigeria? In all democratic societies in the World, laws made by the States are either interpreted by the Attorney General of the Federation or challenged in the Nation's Supreme Court. This is done so in order to remove every doubt as to the legality of the law and the enforcement of same.

The idea of cattle ranches or cattle colonies, is it a government business or a private business in which the State provides the enabling environment while private Speculators invest in States that support such a business? It is possible to superimpose a cattle economy on an agrarian State against the wish of her people. How fair and justifiable is that under a democracy. In all modern democracies, State within the federation enact laws to protect their local economies, to grow their local economies according to their comparative strength and advantage for an export based economy. Every State exploits and utilizes her natural advantage based on their

human and material resources. Is cattle colony the answer to the economic needs of farming populations in Nigeria?

How rational and legal is it for the federal government to carve out colonies of whatever sort, cattles, pigs and dogs, within the territory of a subunit called the State? The principle of the Federal State gives relative autonomy to the States as against the oppressive and dictatorial wishes of the federal might. The relative autonomy is to guarantee the survival and freedom of minorities against domination by the majority. This is the fundamental principle of State creation in Nigeria, the preservation of ethnic minorities as against powerful entrenched majorities. The question posers above help us to understand how democratic sustenance in Nigeria works, mobilising all the basic institutions of democracy and good governance. These basic institutions must interact in a healthy and legal dialogue in order to produce a democratic society that can achieve the basic ideas free society. In Nigeria, since the farmers-herder's crisis these institutions of democracy have either been weak or ineffective in the sustenance of the Rule of Law. The implication of this ineptitude of the National Assembly and other basic organs of governance in Nigeria is that Nigeria has been reduced into a jungle as described by Thomas Hobbes in 'Life in the State of Nature". The refusal of the Federal Government led security forces to apprehend the sponsors of Miyetti Allah is a clear indication that Nigeria's democratic sustenance remains that of a feudal state in a prebendal setting. The impact of the herdsmen crisis on democratic sustenance in Benue State is the psychological effect on the psych of the average Benue person. The impact in terms of horror can be likened to a holocaust like in Nazi Germany during the Second World War. It is unlikely that the victims of this onslaught may recover even in the next fifty years. The mass burial in January of 2018 is the reminder of a holocaust as well as the recent mass burial of two Catholic priests and 17 persons at Ayati in Gwer-East local government. These burial sites are good reminders of a holocaust memorial like the six million trees planted in the holocaust park in Israel. These sites will remain an unending history in Nigeria's democratic experience especially to the Benue people. The mass graves as a memorial will remind the people of Benue State that there was a President in Nigeria under a democratic dispensation who was reluctant in exercising his constitutional duties by protecting the lives and people in Benue State. The herdsmen invasion has led to the displacement of school children whose parents are farmers as well as the closure of schools, thereby, thwarting their destiny and future. Statistics indicate that over a hundred thousand students are thrown out of schools. Over ten schools destroyed, several teachers killed and several parents displaced. The attack on education compromises the future of education in Benue State. To some extent, looking at the

Boko Haram effect on north East Nigeria. it is evident there is a concerted agenda to destroy the educational foundation of the North. It will take the North over fifty years to recover from this loss. Furthermore, the herdsmen invasion has widened the already existing gap between the gap between the North and the South. The herdsmen crisis impact has created a rift and division between the Benue political class, those who exploit the crises for political gains and those who are patriotic in preserving the Tiv nation from destruction. The crisis has been exploited by the political class either to cover up their deficiencies and failure or to stir disaffection using the masses as cannon fodder.

One major impact is the destruction of communal life in the rural areas. The rural areas were once the object of peaceful communal existence but insecurity, fear and dismay have disrupted the communal co-existence in rural areas. This has adversely affected the rural areas in terms of development.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I shall attempt to look at the way forward by highlighting some suggestions:

1. There is need for Benue State to join the debate on the restructuring of Nigeria as to what is the position and fundamental interest of Benue people are within the context of Nigeria. There is need to redefine what is Northern Nigeria, either from the perspective of the majority or minority groups. Until we redefine what Nigeria is and what Northern Nigeria is, either geographically or politically, this will continue to be a major impediment to democratic sustenance in Nigeria. In Nigeria, the major challenge is that of entrenched ethnic majorities over that of minority groups, in terms of respect for the rights of minority groups to exist and develop.
2. There is need in the restructuring agenda to consider the role of State Police as a panacea for providing grass-root security. This is because the national security apparatus and infrastructure in Nigeria is ethicized and politicised. Particularly in the north where most police Commissioners, Deputy Inspector Generals. Commanders of military garrisons are of Fulani extractions. This compromises the security of local communities that are minority groups.
3. Miyetti Allah and other militant Fulani groups have repeatedly issued out threats and executed same against States and Communities in Nigeria. This is a major impediment to democratic sustenance as it affects the farmers-herder's crisis. The threats and executions of such threats qualify Miyetti Allah and other Fulani groups as terrorist organisation. The federal government through President Muhamadu Buhari must declare Miyetti Allah a terrorist organisation. This organisation has repeatedly issued out threats against the government of Benue State

and sustained such threats. An organisation that has vowed to mobilise all Fulanis across the world to resist the peaceful co-existence of the people of Benue State undoubtedly is a terrorist organisation.

4. There is every need to globalize the farmers-herdsmen crisis by either constructing global parallels like the ISIS invasion of Europe and America or by exploiting diplomatic windows with international organisations. This struggle. the farmers-herders conflict is not just a local struggle in Nigeria but also global phenomena with significance in Europe and America. In recent times, Islamic terrorists have invaded civilian populations in the United States, France and Britain all in the name of a jihad. The herdsmen invasion of communities in Nigeria has assumed the same characteristics by attacking civilian targets and Churches. This is no more a struggle caused by environmental factors but with intent of a religious war. There has been a globalization of Islam that has come to affect Nigeria and the Christian community in Nigeria should also exploit the same global window. This is notable in the presence of Islamic global institutions in Nigeria like the Islamic Bank. In the recent attack at Avar the Catholic community in Nigeria adopted Papal diplomacy to defend Christians in Nigeria. Such approach and other global tactics can be exploited by groups in Nigeria in the war against militant Islam. After all, militant Islam has become a global issue and we must globalize it from the local front.

5. We must encourage research into history and the return of history in our schools to curb the challenge of ignorance about our historical existence. The government of Benue State should as a matter of priority invest more into history and historical research as well as the publishing of the history of her people to refute the ignorance of the Sokoto Caliphate about the history of Benue people and also to project the Benue people in right historical perspective. History will help us in the identification of the Benue people and how to assert that identity in both national and international politics. This is an important step towards democratic sustenance that will help project the Benue people and their minority aspirations within the context of the struggle for nationhood in Nigeria. The prevailing ignorance about the identity of the Benue people is a major impediment to the sustenance of democracy in that democracy allows minority interest to stamp her group her identity on world politics. Nations such as Serbia, Croatia, North Korea, South Korea and many others are far more much smaller as compared to Benue State both in population and resources but have been able to stamp their identity on the world map.

6. We must employ international media propaganda with a deliberate ideological information thrust that represents the Benue people in the national and international media. The Benue people must tell their story from their

perspective and should avoid the ruling status quo from telling the Benue story from their perspectives.

7. We must modernize agricultural sector emancipating the sector from the crude forces of production and primitive control. It is good that the Federal Government would want to invest in the creation of ranches across Nigeria as a way of removing the impediment in the conflict between herders and farmers. It will be equally good for the Federal Government to work towards the mechanization of farming communities in Nigeria particularly in Benue State as a way of removing the obstacle between farmers and herders. The pastoral and the farming economies should be developed side by side in order to complement each other. The underdevelopment of these sectors has been a major bottle neck in democratic success that could have enhanced the material happiness of the two groups.

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