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NOMADISM AND SEDENTARY VICTIMIZATION: THE FULANI- HERDERS CONUNDRUM IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Nomadism which refers to a way of life of people who do not live continually in a place but move cyclically and periodically is such that have been associated with much exertion of violence throughout record history. Following this custom of hostility, the nomads create intense tensions culminating in the lost of lives and property, vis-à-vis exacerbating security challenges among target communities they find vulnerable per time. The *Khaldunian* theory of social change holds that the nomads have marked characteristics which predisposes them to ferocity and also, besides perceived vulnerability, usually look out for a few enviable features in their would-be victims' environments before launching attack to take over the much-desired resources which they so crave. Lending support also to this line of thought is the Routine Activity theory of crime victimization espoused by Felson and Cohen which was explored alongside Khaldun's theory to provide a reliable framework for the study. The paper particularly, sought to explore some nomadic factors that may be responsible for the terroristic

trajectory of Hausa-Fulani herders in Nigeria with special interest in divulging few possible ways the victim communities might have contributed to their chronic victimization. The paper observed that farmers keep losing lands in their own communities, because of the absence of capable guardian to protect the sedentary farmers from the attacks of Fulani herders. In view to tackling this quagmire this crime trend has generated, it was recommended among others that a strong *asabuyya* be developed among sedentary communities, egocentrism which pernicious politicians exploit to get into power be strongly condemned beginning from the family level.

INTRODUCTION

Nomadism is a specific way of life practiced in dry belt of Old World that has throughout history been strongly associated with violence. Sociologically, it is viewed as a mode of culture whose internal processes, governing factors and external appearance essentially obey the elementary 'law' of safeguarding survival (Schlolz and Schlee 2015; Ukwaiyi, Okpa, & Dike, 2018). It was on this basis of protection of livelihood that nomadism became prone to warlike behaviour. Their environment required that they be naturally militant and perpetually prepare for combat if they must keep their animals which was their main source of wealth and themselves against wild animals and other groups of persons (Ebingha, Eni & Okpa, 2019; Okpa, Ilupeju & Eshiotse, 2020). They acquire equestrian skills which gave them the capacity to strike-with-the-speed-of-light as well as terrifying effectiveness and they make all adult males serve as warriors. To acquire their essential resources, they either tend and breed their herds, attack sedentary agricultural settlements or other nomadic bands to steal all that appear attractive and movable to them (Wisman, 2008; Agba, Okpa, & Ogar, 2020). The attacks most time do not just leave the victims short of resources, but with loss of lives of their loved ones as well as their relatives. Sometimes the headers kill to create fear and intimidation in the minds of their target victims and on other occasions they do mayhem in response to resistance posed by the original settlers of their target areas (Ukwaiyi, & Okpa, 2018; Ukwaiyi, Okpa, Adewoyin, Angioha, & Udom, 2017). The criminal options that are often explored to secure survival is what has made nomads a repugnant and as such a problem particularly to the Sedentary populations in Asia, Middle East, Africa and other parts of the world. According to Brotten (2021), Since 2010, there have been over 15,000 deaths linked to farmer-herder violence in West and central Africa with more incidence occurring in Nigeria and Half of the occurrences happening between 2018 and 2020.

In Nigeria, Herders are mostly Fulani, lending an ethnic dimension to strife (International Crisis Group 2017). These Fulani-herder have for many years terrorised several sedentary people group in many parts of Nigeria among which include: the middle-belt also known as the food basket of the Nation, the South-south, South-east, South-west as well as the Northern region. Although the most impacted states are Benue, Taraba, Nasarawa, and Plateau where development have also been very slow. Egbuta (2018) noted that Amnesty International in January 2018 alone, reported 168 deaths in connection to the herders-farmers fracas and International Crisis Group (ICG) (2017) maintained that with an estimated death toll of approximately 2,500 people in 2016, these clashes are becoming as potentially dangerous as the Boko Haram insurgency in the north east. In a similar remark, Statista Research Department (2021) argues that the

number of Christians killed by Fulani Herdsmen between 2015 and 2020 is 7,400 while Boko Haram was only responsible for about 4000 Christian Deaths. Furthermore, ICG (2018) observed that in the first half of 2018, more than 1,300 Nigerians died in violence involving herders and farmers accounting for about six times more civilian lives than the Boko Haram insurgency. These in addition to creating fear has undermined the states, region nation's development in no small measure.

Besides the death and the slow development experienced by the victim communities, the number of internally displaced persons camps around these communities are also growing thereby further putting pressure on the National resources of the entire region and the nation at large as it cost a lot of money to manage the teeming population of economically unproductive people. According to Egbuta (2018) the persistent attacks in Benue state have had a spill-over effect on the neighbouring state of Nasarawa. In January 2018, the News Agency of Nigeria reported that over 18, 000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) were in 11 camps in Nasarawa state alone. This alone further predisposes to victimization on another level and child delinquency as guardianship is weakened coupled with poverty which according Okpa, Eshiotse, Ofem, Sylvester & Andrew (2021) induces child labour that is an already established risk factor for child offending.

Still on the economic consequences, a 2015 study shows that the federal government was losing \$13.7 billion in revenue annually because of herder-farmer conflicts in Benue, Kaduna, Nasarawa and Plateau states (Mercy Corps, 2015; Okpa, & Ukwaiyi, 2017; Ukwaiyi, Okpa, & Akwaji, 2019) The study found that on average these four states lost 47 per cent of their internally-generated revenues. Citing the Nations (2017), ICG (2017) posits that in March 2017, Benue state Governor Samuel Ortom asserted that attacks by Herders coming from more northerly states, and possibly also from Cameroon and Niger, had cost his state N95 billion (about \$634 million at that time) between 2012 and 2014. Today, the cost of basic farm produce is so high that survival crimes are beginning to get resuscitated owing to farmers victimisation.

Herders and farmers violence were mainly because of the increased need of herders to access grazing lands and farmers who tried to prevent the Fulani herders from coming to their lands. The increasing proliferation of small arms and light weapons as well as the effect of climate change and desertification, depleting arable land for farming, scarcity of lands, growth in urbanization, cattle rustling, wanton attacks of herders by bandits in rural areas, lack of political will to tackle the challenges, and protection of selfish political interest are other major causal factor leading to trans-human movement from North to the South annually and its attendant enduring crises in Nigeria (International Crisis Group 2017; Bukari, Sow, & Scheffran; 2018; Egbuta 2018; Tade, 2020; Okpa, & Ekong, 2017; Ukwaiyi, Adewoyin, John & Ofem, 2017).

To tackle this puzzle, the president Buhari (Nigeria) administration had attempted a failed Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) which was suspended, the introduction of the livestock Intervention which is considered inimical by most southern states. A few states like Benue and Ekiti have enacted the Open

Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Law, some others have created regional security networks like Omatekun in the South West and the “Ebube Agwu” in the South East to protect their territories. Yet the menace has continued in the nation without a solution (Okpa, Ajah, & Okunola, 2018; Ukwaiyi, Adewoyin, & Okpa, 2018). There have been quite a few studies on the Nomads and their nefarious activities in Nigeria but no significant amount of work considered the role of the victim communities in their own victimization. Hence the relevance of this paper which designed to consider the interplay of the acts and omission of the sedentary people groups and how these have facilitated their victimhood.

Snapshot of the Fulani- herders’ crises in Select states in Nigeria between 2017 and 2020.

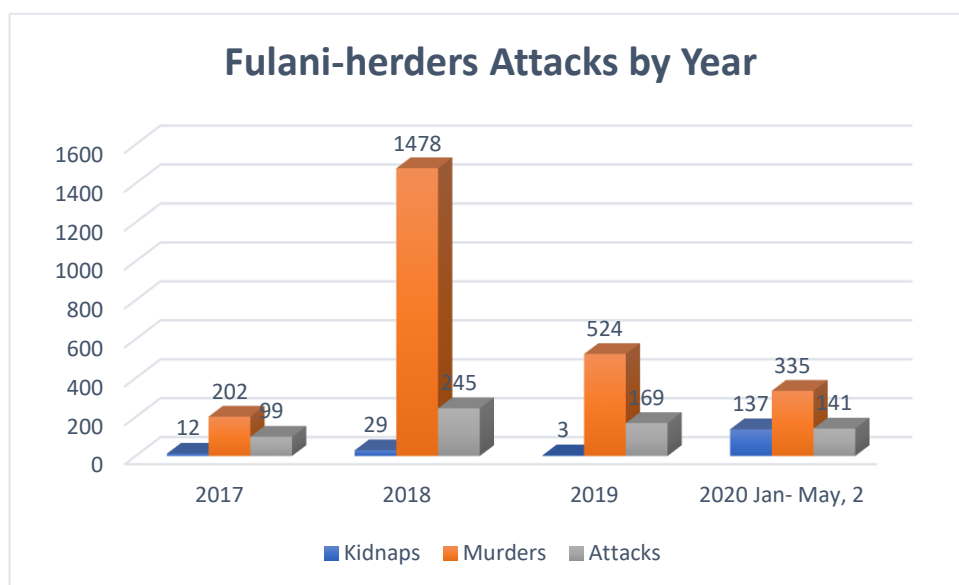


Figure 1

Source: Culled from Akintoye, (2020)

The above indicates that between 2017 and May 2, 2020 herders have conducted 654 attacks which resulted in the killing of 2, 539 and the kidnaping of 253 people in Nigeria. A breakdown analysis of the chart shows that in 2017 there were 99 attacks where 202 killed and 12 kidnapped. In 2018, 245 attacks were recorded with 1478 deaths and 29 kidnaps. In 2019, 169 attacks, 524 deaths and 3 kidnaps were recorded while in 2020 from January 1 to May 2, 141 attacks producing 335 deaths and 137 kidnapped went on record. The above statistics according to Akinloye (2020) was obtained from ‘working Document-Fulani Militia’s Terror: Compilation of News (2017-2020)’ authored by Report Jose Luis Bazan and independent research analyst based in Brussels, Belgium. He claims that the Fulani herders systematically plan and direct their attacks and that most killed were farmers who were Christians and that the Fulani militia were usually armed with AK47. The below detailed table on select farmer’s victimization corroborates the forgoing.

Table 1: showing select incidences of Sedentary farmer's victimization

S/N	Date	Location	Incident
1	June 13, 2001	Benue State	A Fulani herdsman trespassed into the farm of a Tiv farmer. His herds destroying crops in the farmland
2	April, 2006	Ubulu-Uku, Aniocha Local Council, Delta State	Herdsmen destroyed farmlands in 63 communities
3	April 19, 2016	Lagun village, Lagelu Local Council, Oyo State	18 herdsmen invaded farms of the communities
4	April 27, 2016	Obiaruku, Ukwani Local Council, Enugu State	Herdsmen held 8 farmers hostage for hours.
5	May 20, 2016	Oke-Ako Ekiti, Ikole Local Council, Ekiti State	Fulani herdsmens' attacks killed 2 people and injured 11 others over disagreements on cattle grazing on natives' farmlands.
6	December 25, 2016	Four Local Government Councils in Southern Kaduna	808 Christians killed in Southern Kaduna and farm produce worth millions of naira destroyed and many towns forcefully taken over by suspected Fulani cattle herdsmen.

Source: Culled from Olatunji, O.E. (2017) *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, 4(5):72-89 as cited in Aduma, Chukwuemeka and Eneh (2019: 55-56)

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATION

Khaldunian Theory of Conflict

Ibn Khaldun's theory has been explored by a number of scholars in various fields including history, sociology, political science but not necessarily criminology. His theory was proposed in 1377 in his book titled *Mugaddimah* translated to "Introduction" and have been used to explain development, social change and a number of social phenomena. The theory bifurcates society into two namely the Nomads and the Sedentary people maintaining that at every point in time the society is made up of these set of people with these vacillating statuses. By this, Khaldun was opining that none of these two statuses are permanently maintained by any people group even though the must maintain one at every point in time. The theory went on to differentiate the two categories

of people on the basis of their characteristics. According to the theory, the Nomads were characterized by continuous mobility, subsistence, fierceness, low civilization, asabiyya (a strong blood bond solidarity) owing to their religion while the Sedentary populations were cowardly, luxurious, generally incohesive, low asabiyya, greedy, egocentric, jealous, envious, competitive at ease with corrupt and weak leadership and these traits facilitate their repeat victimization (Charles, 2014; Omonijo & Anyaegbunam: 2020). Asabiyya is very powerful because people from the same asabiyya tend to protect each other at all cost and due to their wild natures, they are strong and competent fighters. As source of livelihood, the Nomads were herders while the Settlers were farmers. The Herders are the Criminals who attack the Sedentary victims for the purpose of taking over their desired possessions which they originally lack. This theory implicates the current study in no small measure as most of its propositions are obvious realities today in Nigeria. The Fulani-herders who have high Asabuyyat apparently ossified by their religious belief have repeatedly launched deadly attacks on the sedentary farmers in many states in the country but more particularly in Benue, Nasarawa, Kogi. A few reasons advanced by the theory as to what makes the Sedentary population chronically victimizable appears to be applicable in the current Nigerian states which shall be discussed in details under subheadings below.

Incohesiveness/organic solidarity

As stated by Khaldun the low Asabiyya among the sedentary groups is one factor responsible for their being overpowered by the nomads. There is obviously low bonding and a high degree of competition as well as divisive spirit among the sedentary farmers leading to a high betrayal and sabotage rate. The herders who apparently already understood that a kingdom divided against itself shall not stand, take advantage of the schism to inflict evil on the victim community. This may be responsible for the slow response the security agencies have often been accused of in advent of crisis between farmers and herders (ICG, 2017)

Leadership Corruption

It is often rumoured that sometimes some chiefs in the victim communities do receive bribe from the herders to strike a deal with them without proper consultation. The herders however, in most cases go beyond the agreement they had with the chiefs thereby creating conflicts between them and the local farmers with attendant consequences. In this same vein, ICG (2017) points out that politicians in attempt to intervene sometimes take side for political interest. Corruption contributes in no small way to the production of weak leadership among the sedentary people as against the strong leadership of the Fulani Herders.

Security Laxity

Until recently, most farming communities dwelled at ease without a strong sense of watchfulness. The governors and indeed the chiefs at the local level did not see any reason for security and combatant training which made them

cowardly and easy preys each time the herders attack. Security was left in the hands of the federal government which is actually not sustainable even in developed nations. The need to procure personal security explains why the demands for the services of private security outfits has been growing exponentially even among first world nations like United States despite the commendable level of government's investment on Private security (Gaines & Miller 2012). It is obvious today that the herders are put at abeyance in some states as a result of private security networks formed by the communities.

Greed

The greed of the victim communities makes them politically parochial and as such vulnerable to the gifts of unworthy politicians whom they collect a token from in exchange for their votes and indeed their future. The politicians who lack the interest of the people who brought them into power get into office and as expected begin to pursue their own personal interest even at the expense of the safety of the lives and property of the sedentary people even though that was supposed to be their first constitutional responsibility. Also, the security agents who were supposed to check arms smuggling chose to get bribed instead and the same weapons they refused to cease has been used in killing a number of them in the course of the many crises that has sprung up, and according to Akinloye (2020), 84 percent of Fulani-herdsmen attack were armed and both soldiers and the police also constitute their victims. By greed the sedentary population sell off their birth right for one "morsel of meat" at the expense of their economic, physical and social security as well as that of their children.

Ethnic Politics

Most electorates are sedentary as herders moves about without having much opportunity to vote, and a number of those (sedentary) who vote do that on the basis of ethnicity instead of merit thereby putting in leaders who lack both will and what it takes to protect them and their property. The average Northerner would not vote in a Southerner and most Nigerians won't like to vote for citizens from minority states even when there are evidences that they may do better in governance. Also, it is argued that a number of votes from south west for the current administration was on the assumption that the president may die and the vice president who happens to be from the west will take over. As a consequence, today, it appears all the proposed solutions by the present government is such that will jeopardize the welfare of the victim communities in favour of the Herders. As such the issue have remained perennial with no feasible end in view. In the same vein, Findings by Aduma, Chukwuemeka and Eneh (2019: 57) show that Some citizens are beginning to wonder if the lack of response to the farmers plight is based on the fact that the president of the country is a Fulani or the grand patron of the Fulani herdsmen association- The Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders' Association (MACBA).

Victim Provocation

As already observed by ICG (2018:4) among other scholars, sometimes victims confront or steal from the armed herders who are ready for war with nothing to

protect themselves and as such they precipitate their own victimization. In other occasions, they kill and or steal cattle. In this light Li (2018:4) avows that Nigerian reports indicates that thieves have stolen approximately 60,000 cattle in recent years and this goes a long way to provoke the already volatile Herders.

The Routine Activity Theory of Crime Victimisation

This theory proposed by Felson and Cohen (1979) with its most recent modification in 2000 as observed by Tierney and O'Neill (2015), supports Khaldun's theory as expressed above. The theory particularly holds that for crime to occur, four factors must concurrently be responsible namely: the presence of a suitable target, presence of a motivated offender, the absence of a capable guardian and the absence of an intimate handler who restrains the criminal as an authority. The suitable target here in the arable lands that the herders are interested in, the motivated offenders are the herders who probably by the reason of Cattle Rustling, banditry and the reduction in lands in their original habitat in the face of the need to survive (desertification). While capable guardian speaks about the reliable security officials and the handler speaks of the president who happens to be a Fulani man himself and the leaders of the cattle breeder's associations. These are handlers because they have some level of influence over the Herders which non other may have.

According to this theory so long as there remain arable lands in the any community, the farmers keep losing lands in their own communities, there are no capable guardian to protect the sedentary farmers and the handlers fail to restrain the Herders, Farmers victimization will rather increase instead of end in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

The criminal feats of the herders against farmers in Nigeria in particular has come to the point where it now attracts a global academe, para-academe, and political attention with obvious expression of government failure to nip the menace in the bud. This has incontrovertibly contributed to the raise of the nation to the third in rank on the world terrorism index with a score of 8.31 and the first in Africa (Trading Economics, 2021). To this end, the paper was concerned with examining the facilitation community victims consciously or unconsciously provides for their victimization particularly from Khaldun's perspective and recommendations were made in line with the finding. On the basis of the aphorism which state that no mountain is insurmountable the authors are strongly convinced that a strong asabuyya among other recommendations if implemented by the victim communities would go a long way to dowse the long-standing Herders oppression in their respective areas and the restoration of peace with its attendant's development would be a given.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Sequel to the discoveries of this paper the below recommendations were made not just for communities which have suffered victimization, but for the would-be victims as well:

Sedentary communities should develop a strong Asabuyya not just while the battle rages but as a permanent way of coexisting because as established in the study, the herders exploit the weak community spirit of their victims to strike. There should be heightened security education and locally developed security strategies by farming communities to outwit subsequent attacks from the herders. Host communities should take advantage of their better knowledge of their environment to properly map out adequate strategies to undo every external criminal element.

This issue of materialism which makes for greed that is usually exploited by pernicious politicians should be generally discouraged from the family level to the community level. Town hall meeting can be organized periodically to disenchant the spirit of individuals from such avarice that have eaten deep into the fabric of the nation.

Also, ethnic politics which breeds disunity should be done away with and the sedentary communities should be bent on voting and assigning altruistic leaders with the requisite strength of character from the very least level to the highest leadership position there may be, and as espoused by Ayuk et al., (2020), government should be more involved in the welfare of her citizens as against careless disposition of handlers of the Nigeria welfare scheme.

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