

## **HERDSMEN TERRORISM AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL ORDER AND DEVELOPMENT**

**EKE C. CHINWOKWU (Ph.D)**  
Department of Sociology, Federal University Lafia,  
Nasarawa State, Nigeria  
E-Mail – [eke.chinwokwu@gmail.com](mailto:eke.chinwokwu@gmail.com)  
Phone: +2348033276402

### **Abstract**

*This paper interrogates the nexus between herdsmen terrorism and criminal justice and its implications for social order and development in Nigeria. Never in the history of Nigeria, inclusive of the Nigeria-Biafra war of 1967-1970 has Nigeria been greatly polarized with intense passion in both religious and ethno-cultural lines as currently experienced and expressed due to the persistent terror attacks of herdsmen militia. Political elites have couched on the situation of the day to fan embers of divide and rule or divide and win, not only to escalate the crisis but to continue their political dominance at the detriment of the masses. Efforts of government to contain the situation received condemnation as body language of government seemed antitheses to their avowed statutory role. The paper believes that the terrorist attacks of herdsmen militia across the country is astronomically worse than Boko Haram insurgency with great potential of upsetting the geographical landscape of the Nigerian state if drastic countermeasures are not put in place. Stakeholders' summit is imperative to solving the menace, backed by legal framework regulating movement of herders. The paper made use of content analysis of extant literature on terrorism, insurgency, herdsmen/farmers conflict and newspaper reviews in its research methodology.*

**Keywords:** Herdsmen militia, Terrorism, Social Order, Criminal Justice, Development

### **Introduction**

#### **Statement of Problem**

In the last two decades, Nigeria has faced various forms of violent attacks and threats of violence ranging from Niger Delta militias, Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Boko Haram and other violent extremisms. However, in all the cases, government has taken firm stand and legislative decisions to curb the menace of some of these violent activities. But in the case of herdsmen militia terrorist attacks across the country, government seems incapacitated, overwhelmed and lack of concern for the magnitude of deaths caused by their attacks instead according to Bolashodun, (2018 n.p), "The only thing worse than the tragedies that we have witnessed over the years – including the act of madness in Plateau State – is government making excuses for the killers". This is in spite of brazen evidence that Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders' Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) and Miyetti Allah Kautol Hore Association of Nigeria (MAKHAN) under whose watch these terrorist attacks have been carried out, openly claim ownership and boost of these violent attacks and went on to issue fresh violent threats of terrorism as if government and the criminal justice system are within their control and authority in disregard to the implications of these killings on social order and development in Nigeria. More so, the least government has done is to make false claims that the perpetrators of these crimes will face justice, yet none of the perpetrators have been prosecuted if arrested or convicted instead the same government arrested five people (Christians) alleged to have killed a herdsman and instantly without wasting time Justice Abdul-Azeez Waari of Yola High Court on June 13, 2018 in Adamawa State sentenced them to death by hanging (Hammaugabdo, 2018; Umar, 2018; Ekong, 2018). What kind of

criminal justice do we have in Nigeria? Is it a case of one law for all but different interpretation and application for different people? Are some people in Nigeria above the criminal justice and free to commit violent crime with impunity and without borders? Is government aware of the principles of the rule of law and its implication to all citizens? Why does the criminal justice turn its face away from one crime and with brazenness and zeal deal with another? Is this a case of one (superior) making the law while another (inferior) obeying the law?

Sometime in 2015, the Global Terrorism Index (2015) emerged with a classification in which Fulani herdsmen (herdsmen militia) were named as a terror group and listed as the fourth most deadly terrorists group in the World. As at that time, nobody envisaged that the group under the auspices of the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) and Miyetti Allah Kautol Hore Association of Nigeria (MAKHAN) would have caused the kind of catastrophe and insecurity currently experienced across the country. It has been noted that between 2010 and 2013, herdsmen militia killed a total of 80 people but in 2014 alone 1,229 people were killed with Benue, Taraba, Nasarawa, Plateau, Kaduna and Katsina states worst hit (Sunday, 2016; Ndukwe, 2016). In the same vein, between 2014 and 2016 a total of 4,194 Christians were killed, 2,957 were seriously injured while 264,051 people displaced from their homes (Adamu & Ben, 2017). According to the Chairman of Benue State All Farmers Association of Nigeria over forty five Million Naira have been lost by farmers in Benue State within the last nine months while over 20,000 children are forcefully out of school due to herdsmen terrorism (Obichie, 2018). The dynamics, pattern and intensity of herdsmen attacks across the country has generated serious concerns internationally and domestically. Recent attacks, killings and destruction of communities, farmlands, schools, churches and other social amenities by herdsmen militia have raised serious concern as these have severe consequence on social order and development.

Herdsmen militia has free access across the country with their dangerous weapons including AK 47 as if the law prohibiting the use of firearms does not apply to them. The most pertinent is that government and their security forces seem to be at comatose in combating the criminal impunity of the herdsmen militia. The application of criminal justice in regard to the menace seems to be a far cry to the problem. The implication is that most people have become refugees in their home country, resulting to severe human crisis across the country. More so, as many people have abandoned their homes and farmlands to herdsmen militia and their cows, food security, health crisis and other disasters loom. This means that there is great danger and general insecurity in the country. Thus, former President Olusegun Obasanjo had observed that “the greatest danger to national security coming after external aggression is the feeling of insecurity among citizens, a situation that could result in indiscipline, loss of trust in authority, frustration, apathy, desperation, agitation, anarchy, lawlessness” (cited in Dambazua, 2007 p.153). According to Chinwokwu (2018 p.5), “This, ironically and succinctly expressed the feeling of Nigerians and the current situation of insecurity in the country especially when the government security apparatus seems completely off-balance in tackling the situation”.

There have been various reasons articulated by scholars as to the cause of herdsmen militia attacks which has resulted to killings, sacking of communities and taking over of sacked communities. Fasona, Fabusoro, Sodiya, Adedayo, Olorunfemi, Elias, Oyedepo, and Oloukoi (2016) pointed out that poor resource governance was the main issue causing their actions. For them, their action was a grave “threat to both natural and human security” (p.88). Muhammad, Isamila, and Bibi (2015), stated that the cause was due to the contamination of rivers by cattle, spraying of farms with weedicides and insecticides considered by herders as a way of preventing their cows from grazing. There is also the issue of raping women, burning of bushes, communication barrier, and cultivation of crops along grazing routes, cattle rustling and killing as some of the reasons for the herdsmen and farmers crisis. Olaniyan, Francis and Uzodike (2014), Okolie and Atelhe (2014), Bello (2013), Odoh and Chigozie (2012) noted that the reason for herdsmen and farmers crisis was due to climatic change and exploitation of scarce resources. They opined that climate change and increased desertification brought to bear a burden of lack of green pasture which drove them to migrate to the Southern Nigeria in search of grasslands. This is worsened by land grabbing by political elites in the North, who have used their privileged positions to seize grazing lands in Northern Nigeria for their personal use, thereby blocking access of those lands for grazing. It is quite disheartening that “The law on criminal trespass has been jettisoned to provide the enabling ground for Fulani people to unlawfully, forcefully and

criminally take over people's land in the name of grazing" (Chinwokwu, 2017 p.37). But the question is that "Do these reasons equal the human death record in this their pursuit for grazing space? This may be considered when you consider the reasons given by some other scholars for the killings. Some has described their terrorist behavior as a form of resistance (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004) or struggle for liberation and social justice (Ramsey, 1993) or religious obligation of war (Levtzion, 2000). The issue of resistance and struggle for liberation and social justice are very tempting to be accepted, but whose land are they struggling for? Or whose power are they struggling to gain liberation and who is denying them of social justice when their victims are dire need of justice? Perhaps, the only plausible narrative is that which hinges on religious obligation of war (war of conquest and occupation).

Some scholars have also discussed about the social and economic effects of the menace of the Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria (Ajibefun, 2018; Udemezue & Nwalieji, 2017), however, none of the extant literature interrogated the nexus between herdsmen militia attacks and criminal justice and its implication on social order and development in Nigeria. This paper will attempt to look at the position of the criminal justice in *pari pasu* with the herdsmen militia terrorist attacks and holistically determine the reason the menace have persisted in spite of government efforts, and its implications for social order and development in Nigeria.

### **Conceptualization of Concepts and Theoretical Exposition**

Terrorism is a relative concept that has no generally acceptable definition. This is based on the idea that "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter" (Garrison, 2004 cited in Chinwokwu, 2018 p.19). To find a basis for an acceptable definition (Imobighe, 2007) highlighted four critical elements of terrorism which must be investigated. These include:-

- i. Terrorism occurs in an environment of conflict and discord, and hence it is a product of conflict escalation.
- ii. Terrorism is a violent mode of response to a conflictual relationship.
- iii. The target of terrorism is not limited to the parties directly involved in the conflictual relationship, but includes everybody directly or remotely associated with the principal actors or combatants.
- iv. The objectives of terrorism are varied and not always Political (cited in Chinwokwu, 2018 p. 22)

Based on these characteristics, Imobighe (2007:14) simply says that terrorism represents:

The indiscriminate and random use of different level of violence against an opponent or the ancillary interests of such an opponent with whom one has an adversarial relationship, in order to strike fear into the latter and impose one's will on the opponent or tailor the opponent's action towards a desired goal.

It is pertinent to note that this definition brought to the front burner the idea of state terrorism. This means that government carries out acts of terrorism against citizens. This was done when Odi in Bayelsa State, Zaki-Biam in Benue State and most recently in Gwer Local Government Area of Benue State. Government are also known to cause attacks to be carried out in which they claim political opponents are responsible. This is known as false flag alarm. However, in attempt to avoid the problem of defining terrorism, the Nigerian Parliament while passing the bill on Anti-terrorism under Section 2(c) 2011 defines a terrorist as:

Anyone who causes an attack upon a person's life which may cause serious bodily harm or death; kidnapping of a person; destruction of government or public facility, transport system, an infrastructural facility including an information system, a fixed platform located on the continental shelf, public plaza or private property likely to endanger human life or result in major economic loss" (Chinwokwu, 2018 p.25).

The operations of MACBAN and MAKHAN and their foot soldiers clearly fall within the Nigerian definition of what constitute a terrorist act, yet government and the criminal justice have remained silent in criminalizing them, but with zeal and backings of the criminal justice the activities of Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) was prompt and within a flash of lightening classified them as terrorists, even when their activities lies within the struggle for freedom and survival as a people (freedom fighters) and arrested members were charged for treason. This double standard and application of criminal justice tantamount to

injustice and could spell doom for social order and development. The statue of justice is blind with a scale of balance on the left hand and a sword on the right hand. The sword on the right hand symbolically represents the criminal justice system which execute or enforce the law and justice, and in this case, the police and the court are required to use their power without prejudice or discrimination. Ironically, the sword tends only to be used against those whom government decides rather than what the law and justice detect.

Social order is imperative for development in any organized society. Section 17 (1) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999), as amended in 2011 states "Social order is founded on the ideals of freedom, equality and justice" It specifically stated in Section 17 (2a, b) that "Every citizen shall have equality of rights, obligations, opportunities before the law and "The sanctity of the human person shall be recognized and human dignity shall be maintained and enhanced". This means that human life is supreme and inviolable and this must be protected and most especially there will be no discrimination before the law as all is equal before the law. But in situations where cows take over people's homes and individuals are killed mercilessly while law and justice look the other way round and the culprits are not arrested, what then is the place of the government in safeguarding the sanctity of life. In a country where criminal justice which ought to be neutral and blind folded, has to unveil to dispense justice implies that social order and development are lacking. Government stance in entrenching injustice and criminal impunity in the social order could serve as the ignition key to light the already heated oxygen bomb.

Criminal Justice is an intertwining of government agencies which seek to achieve control of crime, minimization of crime and the imposition of punishments for the commission of crimes (Schubert, 2018). In other words, the objective of the criminal justice is to protect citizens by ensuring effective crime control and reduction of fear of criminal victimization through arrest, investigation, detection, prosecution and conviction for the maintenance of law and social order, peace and tranquility that ushers development in the society. It is hard, therefore, for development and social order to thrive in chaotic and disoriented society enmeshed in constant killings and threats of violence. There is general apprehension of threat of violent attacks by herdsmen terrorists, insecurity and fear of crime in the country with government seemingly incapable of taming their heinous criminalities. However, the United Nations Economic and Social Council Resolution 2005/21 states that "...effective criminal justice systems can only be developed based on the rule of law and ... the rule of law itself requires the protection of effective criminal justice measures" (United Nations, 2006 p.vi). The implication of this concept is that criminal justice is dependent on effective application of the rule of law. The United Nations (2011 p.v), provides a broad definition of rule of law. According to them:

It refers to principle of governance in which all persons, institutions and entities, public and private, including the State itself, are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated, and which are consistent with international human rights norms and standards. It requires, as well, measures to ensure adherence to the principles of supremacy of law, equality before the law, accountability to the law, fairness in the application of the law, separation of powers, participation in decision-making, legal certainty, avoidance of arbitrariness and procedural and legal transparency.

This definition is very important and critical in the country's effort to build a lasting democratic structure in Nigeria, but it seems however by default or deceit the pertinent instruments and ingredients in this definition are lacking in our current political dispensation. These are supremacy of the law, equality before the law, accountability to the law, fairness in the application of the law, separation of power and justice have been jettisoned for parochial and chauvinistic ethno-religious and politico-economic interests which have rendered criminal justice incapacitated to defend the rights and lives of ordinary citizens. Government stance on the rule of law since 2015 has been antithetical to criminal justice thereby exacerbating the impunity of herdsmen terrorism across the country. Thus Chinwokwu (2013 p.270) asserts:

As long as government continues to distance the masses from their land and appropriate their rights without due process, government cannot be seen to be egalitarian as it does not take into consideration the principles of corporate governance, which involves freedom of choice, rule of law, transparency, justice and accountability.

This posture of government expressly demonstrated in symbolic body gestures seems to explain a kind of conspiracy which has heightened the act of terrorism on peasant farmers by herdsmen militia. According to Van der Linden (2015) conspiracy theory is based on the view that “some covert and powerful individuals, organizations or groups are intentionally plotting to accomplish some sinister goal” (cited in Chinwokwu, 2017 p.33). The conspiracy theory believes that some powerful elites in the society use the poor to achieve their hidden and personal interests to the detriment of the masses (Barkun, 2003; Byford, 2014). Chinowkwu (2017 p.33) asserts that “The silence of government on these attacks is ominous and an affirmation of their complicity in the conspiracy aimed at achieving a common group long desired interest”. This theory is greatly supported by the Governors of Benue, Enugu and Plateau States. For instance, the Governor of Enugu State informed the general public after the attack of Nimbo village, Uzo Uwani Local Government Area on April 24, 2016 by Herdsmen militia that the law enforcement agencies have prior knowledge of the attack and yet could not prevent it (Bolashodun, 2016).

### **A Brief Overview of the Extent of Herdsmen terrorism**

The terrorist activities of herdsmen militia have severely caused great loss to human lives and property across the country particularly in Benue State which has been the major battle field. It is on record that out of the 23 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Benue State, the herdsmen militia has attacked 14 Local Government Areas. The herdsmen militia not only attack, kill and pursue the people out of their homes and farms, they also take active possession and occupation of conquered areas. This was the assertion of Onwubiko (2018 n.p) who argued “Indeed the invaders had the temerity to settle down in those ‘conquered’ territories and have begun to rename them as it suits them”. This narrative pose a serious question on justice and criminal justice because none of the people involved have been prosecuted despite the open claim of responsibility for those crimes by Miyetti Allah. It is informative to recognize that since 2015, over 1,500 people have been killed in Benue State by herdsmen militia in 47 attacks (Iorhemen, 2018). Earlier on the Institute for Economics and Peace statistics recorded that herdsmen militia killed 1,229 people in 2014, 63 people in 2013 and 100 people in May 2015 alone (David, 2016). More so, the Amnesty International reported that 549 people were killed by herdsmen in 2017 and thousands of people displaced. It is claimed that 1,351 people were killed by herdsmen militia in 10 weeks between January 2018 and March 2018 (Godwin, 2018; Ndujihe, 2018). In all these, over seventy thousand people have been made refugees in their own country in addition to loss of over One Hundred Billion Naira (Iorhemen, 2018). Mention has to be made of some specific cases to illustrate the intensity and severity of the Fulani militia nuisance in the polity.

On April 15, 2014, herdsmen militia attacked Nwokyo, Wukari Local Government Area, Taraba State and killed 10 people while 18 others were seriously injured (*Nigerian Eye*, 2014). On September 21, 2015 herdsmen attacked and kidnapped the former Minister of Finance and Secretary to the Federal Government Chief Olu Falae in his farm in Ondo state. The kidnappers (Fulani herdsmen) demanded for a ransom and were paid ₦5 Million (Five Million Naira) before releasing him (Oluwole, 2015). On August 25, 2016 herdsmen militia killed over 5 persons including a Seminarian of the Catholic Church in Ndiagu Attakawu Akegbe Ugwu Community in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu state. (Nathaniel, 2016). On December 22, 2016 Fulani militia attacked Agbarha kingdom in Delta and kidnapped the traditional ruler Orhifi Enemor II. The herdsmen militia demanded for ₦50 Million (Fifty Million Naira) ransom for his release. On January 5, 2016, herdsmen militia kidnapped and killed the traditional ruler of Ubulu Uku kingdom in Delta state Chief Edward Akaeze Ofulue III (Jones, 2016; Amaize & Ahon, 2016). On December 25, 2016, 10 people were killed in Southern Kaduna by herdsmen militia. On January 11, 2017 herdsmen militia attacked Sabon Daga village in Bosso LGA of Niger state and killed 4 persons while several others were seriously wounded (Abimboye, 2016; Abimboye, 2017).

On January 1, 2018 73 people were killed by herdsmen militia in two Local Government Areas of Benue State. On March 6, 2018 26 people were killed by herdsmen militia in Omusu village at Ojigo ward Edumoga in Okpokwu Local Government Area, Benue State. On April 24, 2018 40 people were killed by herdsmen militia in Tse Umenger in Mbadwen ward and Mbakpaase in Sagher of Guma LGA, Benue State. On April 24, 2018 2 Catholic Priest and 17 Parishioners were brutally killed while at morning Mass by herdsmen militia at St. Ignatius Quasi Parish Ukpok Mbalom in Gwer Local Government Area, Benue State.

On May 19, 2018 six people who went to buy land for their Thrift and Corporative Society's crop farming were killed by herdsmen militia in Gwer LGA, Benue State. On June 22, 2018 22 persons were killed by rampaging herdsmen militia in Dawayan village of Adamawa State. On June 23, 2018 120 people were killed by herdsmen in Gidin Akwati Gashis District of Plateau State while returning from a burial ceremony of one Late Jakawa. As a result the Plateau State Government declared dusk to dawn curfew in Riyom, Barkin Ladi and Jos North LGAs (mostly affected by the attacks) as reprisal attacks spread in the state (Godwin, 2018; Duru, 2018; Ogundipe, 2018; Ebuzor, 2018; Akinrujomu, 2018a; see Appendix 1). People abandoned their homes and farmland; children abandoned school as their schools have been destroyed by herdsmen militia while social amenities have been destroyed with increase in child mortality in internally displaced camps.

### **Politicking Rhetoric of Herdsmen militia Identities**

The government of Nigeria seems to be confused in identifying the criminals who have been terrorizing their citizens without any check. The inability of government to accept the reality that the rampaging killers of Nigerians are Fulani people put a question mark in their capacity to deal with the problem. Since the inception of APC government on May 29, 2015, they have spent most of their valuable times blaming past administrations for the woes in the country including insecurity without proffering any solution. The government even exposed their ineptitude, ignorance and risk national security by claiming that the attackers are foreigners. This is the most uncharitable statement made in respect of the insecurity problems initiated by herdsmen militia in Nigeria. The worst of it all is that government seems to be oblivion of the danger of the rampage on national security and development or even on the unity and corporate existence of the country. They have never seen the herdsmen terrorist attack and killing of innocent citizens as threat to national security or even a security issue to be discussed. This exactly demonstrates the motive of the body language of security apparatuses and their incapacity to combat the menace.

Most recently, for want of explanation, government accused politicians of sponsoring herdsmen attacks in Nigeria and the Presidential spokesman Mallam Garba Shehu alleged that the killing had political undertone. But they failed to state the people being sponsored; is it the Libya splinter group or mercenaries from Somalia or Mali or Nigerians? To buttress this allegation the Vice President Prof. Osibanjo who represented the President during the graduation ceremony of Senior Executive Course 38, 2016 held at the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), Kuru near Jos in Plateau State, stated that militants with light and heavy weapons who escaped from troubled Mali and Libya have infiltrated the ranks of Fulani herdsmen. It was this reason that there was increased Fulani herdsmen attack across the country. The President also said there was evidence to buttress this justification as the reason for the increased violent attacks of Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria (Akinrujomu, 2016; Chinwokwu, 2017). On May 14, 2016 on a CNN programme in London President Muhammadu Buhari also alleged that the rampaging Fulani herdsmen attack in Nigeria were militias from Libya. This was reiterated recently in London and the United States during his discussion with leaders of both countries in April 2018. He also claimed that cattle routes and grazing areas allocated for herdsmen grazing in the North have been seized by influential individuals for farms (Ewubare, 2016; Chinwokwu, 2017).

On April 25, 2018, while addressing the leaders of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Abuja, President Muhammadu Buhari blamed the herdsmen attack in Nigeria as a result of failure of member states of ECOWAS to implement the protocol on free movement in the sub-region. This is coming on the heels of herdsman attack of St. Ignatius Catholic Church, Upkor-Mbalom Parish in Gwer East Local Government Area of Benue State where two priests and 17 worshippers were wickedly murdered in cold blood. Most appalling is the international jamboree the Minister of Information, Mr. Lai Mohammed has undertaken by visiting the Voice of America (VOA), Washington Post, Washington Times, Reuters, Wall Street Journal, Cable Networks News (CNN), New York Times and Al Jazeera explaining the performance of President Buhari and how individuals who are against Buhari's re-election in 2019 are sponsoring the herdsmen attacks in the country (Ewubare, 2018). Perhaps, it would be pertinent to ask "Since government has knowledge and evidence of those who are killing their citizens and their sponsors, what have they done to stop it?"

The implication is that government has evidence that the killings in Nigeria by herdsmen militia are perpetrated by foreign militias, yet none of these foreign invaders of Nigerian territory has ever been arrested by security forces. There are a number of allusions to the statement made by President Buhari: government has evidence that those killing their citizens are foreigners, yet their hands are tight such that they cannot protect their people from foreign attacks; the country is under invasion by foreigners and government cannot protect her borders and citizens; foreigners have field day across the country without any challenge from security agencies of government; government has corroborated with foreigners to carry out genocide and ethnic cleansing in the country; present government is no longer fit to rule the people as it cannot execute its responsibility to the people; government has ulterior motive by allowing foreigners to move around with firearms and killing people without challenge from the security forces; government has failed, weak and incapable to function as a responsible and efficient government. The worst that can happen to any nation is when her government fails in their statutory responsibility to defend her citizens against external threat and internal security tensions. It is this perceived lack of justice and inability to defend the vulnerable in Benue State over herdsmen killings that made Statesman Paul Unogo, the Chairman of Northern Elders Forum (NEF) resign his position of the group (Gwangwanzo, 2018).

The facts remains that the people so far arrested by government security forces show that they are Nigerians and not foreigners. Most importantly, none of the so-called foreign militias or mercenaries has been arrested by security agencies in Nigeria (Nathaniel, 2016; Uzodinma, 2016; Vanguard, 2016; Premium Times, 2016; Chinwokwu, 2017). Government is not telling the truth, hiding the facts of the matter, deceitful or shielding the true identity of the culprits with ulterior motive.

### **Herdsmen Militia Attacks at the Interplay of Criminal Justice**

The activities of Fulani herdsmen is not only a crime but a crime against humanity (Chinwokwu, 2017), yet criminal justice and its agents seem to be at comatose in combating the criminal impunity. The Nigerian legal system proscribe acts of criminal trespass, killing (especially intentional killing), rape, arson, kidnapping, terrorism and willful damage of property which the Fulani herdsmen are alleged to have committed across the country. Most of these crimes attract life imprisonment and death at conviction because of their severity. The police who are at the forefront of criminal justice seem to lack the capacity to execute their statutory powers of apprehension, investigation, detection, prosecution and provision of law and order; because they are responding to a body language from above. The implication is that their stance has instead of containing the criminal impunity has rather exacerbated and complicated the crime problem; thereby sustaining the attacks and killings.

Social order demands freedom, equality and justice which are *sine quo non* to democratic principles on which criminal justice is built and sustained. The crux is that partiality to criminal offenders breed social disorder cum anarchy with consequent lack of development in any society. There is no society that thrives under anarchy and social disorder no matter how sophisticated and developed the country. When criminal justice which ought to be the watchdog of society fold its hands, look the other side while criminal impunity is permitted on one side of the society, then criminal justice loses its credibility and capacity to keep the society safe for the common man.

There are several instances where criminal justice failed to ensure neutrality in order maintenance. The Nigerian law forbids the possession of dangerous weapons, but herdsmen are freely seen openly with such weapons as AK 47 without any challenge from the police rather the police are swift in arresting local hunters with less dangerous weapons as Dane gun. On March, 2016, 76 people from Ugwuneshi autonomous community, Awgu Local Government Area, Enugu State, who were trying to rescue their wives and daughters against rape Fulani herdsmen were arrested by the police (Akinkuotu, 2016). This was the same complaint by a resident in Taraba when he expressed that the military arrested our people instead of our killers. On June 13, 2018 five people (Christians) were sentenced to death by hanging for killing a herdsman by Justice Abdul-Azeez Waari of Yola High Court in Adamawa State (Umar, 2018), yet in the last decade no Fulani herdsman has been prosecuted or convicted for the several killings committed by them. In most instances, the police and military officers – agents of government have been alleged of complicity in the acts of criminality committed by herdsmen militia. This means that those who are legally empowered to provide the shield in criminal justice lack integrity and competence to ensure social order. The implication is that

anarchy looms as most farms and communities have been deserted for cows and herdsmen. Government development efforts are meaningless and useless without social order entrenched in justice, fairness, equality and freedom enforced and sustained by effective and workable criminal justice system. Crime and criminality must not be allowed to overwhelm the good intentions of government no matter how nepotistic and ethnocentric governance may be in the discharge of its constitutional responsibilities. Criminal justice becomes effective when it operates unhindered for the wellbeing of all citizens irrespective of tongue, tribe, religion and sex. When criminal justice is perceived to operate discriminatorily, governance capacity to offer development and social order is dwarfed.

### **Prevalent Forces Sustaining Herdsmen Militia Attacks and Government Complicity**

What are the compelling forces that have persisted by sustaining the criminal impunity of herdsmen terrorist across the country? There are various reasons articulated in this paper as probable remote and immediate forces that have sustained the prevalence of herdsmen terrorist acts in Nigeria.

#### **a. Generational Vengeance and Malice**

There is this generational feature which is inherent and associated with Fulani ethnic group which has strong bond on malice and retribution. The Fulani believe very strongly on Mosaic Law which places man at the lowest level of human development. This is what Thomas Hobbs (1588-1679) in his state of nature described as “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short” (Edwards, 2002 n.p), personified by vengeance and bloodletting “an eye for an eye”, “a tooth for a tooth”. This means that the Fulani do not forget or forgive their perceived enemies no matter how long; they hold very strongly to malice, vengeance and retribution which in modern society are counterproductive to social order and development. For example, most of the attacks that have been carried out by herdsmen in various communities were related to vengeful killings (Akinkuotu, 2016; Ikenwa & Adeyemi, 2016). They have given various reasons for their attacks such as the community killed or stole their cow or that they killed or injured their own sometime ago (Okorie, 2016). This kind of culture and mental attitude is very dangerous to human interaction, association and peaceful co-existence without which social order and development become a mirage.

#### **b. Lack of Government Commitment and Nepotism**

Government concern to the herdsmen welfare and cattle rustling without commensurate sign of sympathy to victims of various murderous attacks depict lack of commitment and nepotism especially as elaborated by several body language of the President and APC government. Government efforts at combating the menace have been mere window dressing and deceit especially as shown when the former Inspector General of Police Mr. Idris Abubakar was ordered to go and stay in Makurdi but instead went and stayed in Nasarawa without any action by the President. Ironically, there is no sincere desire to end the crisis rather there is a grand design to empower the herdsmen through the establishment of ranches or colonies across the country as Seven Billion Naira (₦7 Billion) was earmarked in the 2018 for that purpose. Government has not made any effort to compensate victims of the herdsmen attacks in order to rehabilitate or resettle them. The shield given to herdsmen terrorists indicates that the safety and lives of animals are more important than the safety of humans. The priority therefore, is to prevent cattle rustling, ensure free access for grazing, impoverish farmers, establish Fulani dominance, allow the proliferation of prohibited firearms as long as they are being carried openly by herdsmen and keep away from trouble spots while lives and communities are destroyed. This kind of posture militates against any meaningful effort to tackle the problem. Government has not been able to arrest any foreign invaders so as to show to Nigerians that actually Nigeria is under invasion. Foreign militants alleged to be attacking Nigerian communities is a diversionary propaganda to perpetuate a decided agenda.

#### **c. Ethnocentric and Group Interests**

The rule of law is the foundation of democracy and good governance in any society but where ethnocentric and parochial primordial personal and group interests have overriding influence in decision and policy making; criminal justices are trampled upon. It is a public discourse that the acts of terrorism and killings committed by herdsmen militia especially in Benue and Taraba States are ethnic cleansing, genocide and politico-religiously motivated. Thus, the composition of those who provide security for the country coupled with the body language of the President and the security agencies tally with the idea that the level

at which the killings are being sustained. It is an act of impunity of governance to completely ignore, ridicule and sideline the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended in 2011 Chapter 14(3) which provides that the composition of government should be carried in such a way to reflect federal character, promote unity and loyalty by ensuring no predominance of persons from an ethnic group, yet 88% of federal appointments into security and national administration positions are occupied by Hausa-Fulani Muslims (Adamu & Ben, 2017). This is executive political recklessness and insensitivity to the unity, social order and development in the country. When group interests and ethnocentric considerations are given priority over national interests and patriotism in governance, then what is anticipated is chaos as being experienced currently across the country.

#### **d. Politico-Economic War of Domination**

The menace and criminal impunity of herdsmen terrorist attacks countrywide, especially in North-Central States of Nigeria seems to be a revival of Hausa/Fulani aged desire to politically and economically dominate the country. This is relevant when considerations are focused on the series of attacks on Churches, Schools and other social infrastructures that have no direct association with grazing route or grazing reserve. Most reflective of this phenomenon is the fact that peasants, who ordinarily cannot afford to feed themselves, are found in possession of dangerous weapon, like AK 47 which is muted to cost over ₦300,000.00 (Three Hundred Thousand Naira); there should be deliberate effort to unravel this sudden paradigm shift from rags to affluence. The government narrative that the militia herdsmen attacking Nigerian citizens are foreigners makes no sense to the victims of these killings. The contending and trending narrative that political and economic dominance and expansion is the underlying motive in the prevalence of militia herdsmen attacks in most communities in Nigeria seem most acceptable as government seems to shield the killers. The attitude of the herdsmen depicts the general attitude of the Fulani's ideology of 'borne to rule mentality'; which invariably has been inculcated in the psyche of their youths which spurs them to violence and taking anything they want without remorse as if it is their birthright. The nexus between politico-economic war of domination and herdsmen terrorism are interwoven at the level in which criminal justice is incapacitated to act against herdsmen terrorists.

#### **e. Failure to Contain Utterances of the Umbrella Organization**

The political and various hate speeches that have been uttered by Miyetti Allah and government incapacitation to caution them is one of the greatest impetus that have sustained the continual attacks of the herdsmen without any sign of respite in perspective. The herdsmen militia group is an arm of the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) and Miyetti Allah Kautol Hore Association of Nigeria (MAKHAN). The organization has at different occasions defended the terrorist attacks of herdsmen militia. The umbrella organization MACBAN and MAKHAN have offices throughout the states and local government areas of Nigeria. They are registered, well organized and structured. Government has been relating with them, but failed to halt their illegal killings across the country. MACBAN has several times claimed responsibility for their actions hinging their reason on revenge, yet government has failed to contain their killings. Government was swift in action to criminalize Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) as terrorists, even when they had never been found to attack citizens or overrun communities just because they are Igbo people, but herdsmen criminal impunity and their killings cum sacking of communities is not considered a national security threat talk less of criminalizing them. Even when the Global Terrorism Index (2015) classified Fulani herdsmen as a terror group and the fourth most lethal terrorists group in the World, they are still treated as kings. It seems that those who aid, abet or conspire with others consciously or unconsciously to harm, main and kill other groups do not criminalize the action of the criminals because they are in authority or position not to do so instead they criminalize the act of those who stand to defend themselves against their attackers.

#### **Implications for Social Order and Development**

Herdsmen terrorist activities are serious internal security challenge facing this country aside from Boko Haram insurgency. Therefore, government practical action in combating it is imperative for social order and development. Social anarchy, consequent of government discriminatory justice is critical to the emergence of self-help protective strategies by citizens. When government consciously and persistently presents itself as weak in combating rising herdsmen terrorism, it may give way to anomic and fatalistic

suicide. Anomic and fatalistic suicides are common in societies where regulative powers of society are dislocated and weak (Ritzer, 2011). In this regard, the operational ineptitude displayed by government forces in handling various acts of violent attacks by herdsmen terrorists is interpreted as dislocation of government functions. Social anarchy is bound to occur when people seek for self-help as means of defensive mechanism against threats to lives in the face of government failure to entrench justice, fairness and equality in the midst of rampant criminalities of herdsmen terrorism in the polity. Effective governance entails consistent efforts to take drastic and enduring policy decisions to combat violent extremism without discrimination. No matter how enticing and juicy government economic policies maybe, no investor will risk his business in a state which is wallowing in insecurity.

There is inherent perception of loss of confidence in the ability of government to protect the lives and property of citizens especially within the most affected states (Benue, Taraba, Adamawa, Nasarawa, Kaduna, Kogi and Plateau). When government credibility in saving the lives of citizens is doubtful, what becomes the basis of that government to continue in power? Government's claim that herdsmen militia killings Nigerians are foreigners, yet it is unable to arrest, investigate and prosecute them is ominous for social order and development; it is the height of government hypocrisy and insensitivity to the insecurity problem in the country. Criminal justice has been rendered incapable in defending the weak against the strong. In this circumstance, social order and development are unrealizable, unsustainable and far from citizens' cry.

Increased food insecurity and internally displaced persons may be the genuine harvest of untamed outcome of rampaging herdsmen terrorism across the country. The attacks and occupation of communities by herdsmen has already created various forms of crisis. This may be skyrocketed, unless firm actions are taken to combat their operations. Farmers have been chased out of their farmlands, thereby reducing food production. The people who are not in internally displaced persons' camp, who want to go to farm, cannot do so because of fear of criminal victimization from herdsmen militia. The fear of herdsmen militia is now the beginning of safety and freedom from death. How can social order and development be achieved in a tune of symphony of destruction and fear? There is a symbiotic correlation between justice, social order and development and without enduring social order entrenched in effective security there can be no sustainable development.

The acts of terrorism and threats of violence by herdsmen place severe impediment for a sustainable national development and peace, aside from the fact that these attacks have gulfed huge financial losses, caused loss of capital development and human capital flights. Nigeria has not only been described as the poorest nation in terms of per capita earning (Ewodage, 2018) but also as a risk nation in terms of business investment (Yusuf, 2018). There is no gainsaying those herdsmen terror attacks have impacted negatively on the socio-economic and political lives of the people. The Nigerian state has never been polarized as we have it today since after the civil war. There is massive destruction of social facilities across the country especially where herdsmen militia have launched their heinous attacks. Socio-economic activities have deteriorated resulting to low production and reduction in gross domestic product of the country. The implication is that insecurity affects social order and development. The impact of the challenges arising from uncontrollable herdsmen terrorism in Nigeria is better imagined than contemplated.

## **Conclusion**

Nigeria's nascent democracy is threatened by discriminatory application of the rule of law; consequently, criminal justice seems to suffer the bulk of this mess. In Nigeria, the constitution is presupposed to be supreme in principle and in practice to all citizens irrespective of ethnic background, race, sex, religion, and age, economic or political class. In this regard, justice is dispensed equally and fairly to all without discrimination. But here, criminal justice operation seems to apply differently to persons depending on ethnic and parochial interests and this has been aptly demonstrated by the inability of the ruling APC government and its agencies to combat the criminal impunity of herdsmen militia across the country. This has created bad blood and considered as a silent expansionist war and genocide especially as exhibited in some states like Benue, Kaduna, Taraba, Adamawa and Plateau. The implication is that social justice is hanging on the balance with its consequent effects on social order and development which pose great threat to the sustainability of the Nigerian state. Political will to initiate policies that make development real before

the masses; strategic partnership in fighting the scourge of herdsmen terrorism and full enforcement of rule of law in government actions are critical for the survival and sustenance of the Nigerian state.

### **Recommendations**

In order to strike a balance, the paper presents salient recommendations as a policy guide to usher a better criminal justice for improved social order and development. They are:

Government's recognition that herdsmen militia activities in Nigeria are acts of terrorism is the first decision to solving the menace. The assurance that criminals and potential criminals are subjects to the same law and none is above the law must be sustained. The assurance that crime does not pay and offenders certainly must face the law is critical to deterrence in this regard. Therefore, criminalization of herdsmen criminal activities and their organization is fundamental in combating their criminal impunity.

The rule of law is the foundation of democracy. A constitution devoid of the principles of the rule of law no matter the disguise is no democracy, but a mere tyranny couched in anarchy. National security interests that tend to suppress the rule of law are dictatorial and not democratic in practice. Government must avoid discriminatory application of justice, if social order and development is required for sustainable national unity and growth. There should be a seamless application of the rule of law without bias, if the unity and cohesion of the country is beneficial to us.

Government efforts must be geared towards the regulation of the open movement of animals. It is imperative to organize a stakeholder's summit on the best way to carry out the business of animal rearing without killing humans for sub-humans (animals). Human lives must always be seen as above that of sub-humans and must be accorded that recognition in all respects without much ado. The lives of animals no matter what cannot equate human life, and most importantly no matter how you train, educate or feed the animal, it can never produce a human being or share ideas with you. Therefore, proper legislation on the movement of these animals is critical in combating the menace of herdsmen terrorism.

Criminals who commit crime must not be shielded by the same government whose responsibility is to arrest, investigate, prosecute and maintain order in the society. Government must maintain its neutrality in ensuring law and order in the society. Nigeria must be exemplary in all things as the big brother of Africa. The country is too big to accommodate all ethnic groups without any rancour, if the appropriate rules and laws are obeyed and justice dispensed equally without discrimination. Unless, efforts are made to ensure the rule of law at all levels, Nigeria may never pass the level of socio-political and economic dependency.

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**APPENDIX 1: Some Killings by Herdsmen Militia**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Local Government Areas</b>	<b>States</b>	<b>No of Victims</b>
1	3/1/2015	Sanga	Kaduna	15
2	3/1/2015	Mangu	Plateau	10
3	23/01/2015	Takum	Taraba	1
4	27/01/2015	Zango-Kafat,	Kaduna	18
5	29/01/2015	Wukari	Taraba	30
6	15/03/2015	Agatu	Benue	90
7	20/04/2015	Donga	Taraba	7
8	25/04/2015	Barkin & Riyom	Platau	70
9	15/05/2015	Gwer West	Benue	8
10	19/05/2015	Barkin Ladi	Platua	27
11	24/05/2015	Logo	Banue	100
12	4/7/2015	Barkin Ladi	Plateau	2
13	8/7/2015	Gassol	Taraba	2
14	11/7/2015	Gassol	Taraba	24
15	12/7/2015	Kokona	Nasarawa	5
16	14/07/2015	Gassol	Taraba	2
17	17/07/2015	Katsina Ala	Banue	13
18	19/07/2015	Kokona	Nasarawa	2
19	31/07/2015	Ropp	Plateau	1
20	20/08/2016	Barkin	Plateau	2
21	28/08/2015	Bokkos	Plateau	2
22	30/08/2015	Foron,	Plateau	2
23	30/08/2015	Kanam	Plateau	2
24	31/08/2015	Bokkos	Plateau	5
25	3/9/2015	Riyom	Plateau	1
26	3/9/2015	Barkin Ladi	Plateau	5
27	6/9/2015	Gassol	Taraba	2
28	6/9/2015	Riyom	Plateau	3
29	9/9/2015	Riyom	Plateau	2
30	10/9/2015	Gassol	Taraba	1
31	12/9/2015	Ibi	Taraba	10
32	13/09/2015	Barkin Ladi	Plateau	20
33	13/09/2015	Donga	Taraba	6
34	15/09/2015	Ibi	Taraba	9

35	15/09/2015	Mangu	Plateau	18
36	1/1/2016	Nkanu East	Enugu	1
37	1/1/2016	Nasarawa Eggon	Nasarawa	12
38	10/1/2016	Agatu	Benue	45
39	17/01/2016	Wukari	Taraba	9
40	25/01/2016	Girei	Adamawa	20
41	6/2/2016	Buruku	Buruku	12
42	7/2/2016	Ogun	Ogun	1
43	7/2/2016	Buruku	Benue	10
44	25/8/2016	Nkanu West	Enugu	5
45	25/12/2016	Southern Kaduna	Kaduna	10
46	11/1/2017	Bosso	Niger	4
47	1/1/2018	Logo	Benue	50
48	1/1/2018	Awe	Nasarawa	2
49	1/1/2018	Guma	Benue	73
50	4/1/2018	Wukari	Benue	6
51	4/1/2018	Gassol	Taraba	1
52	5/1/2018	Lau	Taraba	60
53	6/1/2018	Logo	Benue	16
54	13/1/2018	Birnin Gwari	Kaduna	10
55	13/1/2018	Makurdi	Benue	1
56	14/1/2018	Bassa	Plateau	1
57	14/1/2018	Ibi	Taraba	1
58	16/1/2018	Guma/Logo/Okpokwu	Benue	6
59	20/1/2018	Barkin Ladi	Plateau	1
60	21/1/2018	Numan	Adamawa	6
61	23/1/2018	Ardo Kola	Taraba	9
62	24/1/2018	Bokkos	Taraba	7
63	24/1/2018	Kaiama	Kwara	4
64	25/1/2018	Bassa	Plateau	8
65	26/1/2018	Ukum	Benue	2
66	26/1/2018	Bassa	Plateau	3
67	27/1/2018	Kaiama	Kwara	2
68	28/1/2018	Bassa	Plateau	2
69	29/1/2018	Keana	Nasarawa	7
70	29/1/2018	Guma	Benue	1
71	31/1/2018	Birnin Gwari	Kaduna	9
72	1/2/2018	Gassol	Taraba	4
73	2/2/2018	Song	Adamawa	12
74	5/2/2018	Obi	Nasarawa	8
75	10/2/2018	Gwer West	Benue	2

76	10/2/2018	Bassa	Plateau	3
77	11/2/2018	Jema'a	Kaduna	4
78	12/2/2018	Guma	Benue	2
79	26/2/2018	Kajuru	Kaduna	12
80	27/2/2018	Demsa	Adamawa	20
81	1/3/2018	Sardauana	Taraba	20
82	5/3/2018	Okpokwu	Benue	24
83	6/3/2018	Edumoga	Benue	26
84	7/3/2018	Takum	Taraba	2
85	8/3/2018	Bassa	Plateau	11
86	9/3/2018	Bokkos	Plateau	9
87	12/3/2018	Bassa	Plateau	26
88	13/3/2018	Guma	Benue	7
89	14/3/2018	Omala	Kogi	32
90	14/3/2018	Bassa	Plateau	2
91	15/3/2018	Takum	Taraba	5
92	19/3/2018	Omala	Kogi	10
93	20/3/2018	Birnin Gwari	Kaduna	11
94	22/3/2018	Jos South	Plateau	3
95	24/3/2018	Makurdi	Benue	5
96	30/3/2018	Jema'a	Kaduna	6
97	4/4/2018	Chikun	Kaduna	6
98	4/4/2018	Takum	Taraba	6
99	4/4/2018	Gwer West	Benue	10
100	5/4/2018	Donga	Taraba	5
101	5/4/2018	Gwer West	Benue	30
102	7/4/2018	Bali	Taraba	4
103	7/4/2018	Agatu	Benue	2
104	8/4/2018	Birkin Ladi	Plateau	5
105	8/4/2018	Obi	Nasarawa	4
106	8/4/2018	Keana	Nasarawa	4
107	10/4/2018	Gwer West	Benue	10
108	10/4/2018	Wukari	Taraba	51
109	12/4/2018	Makurdi	Benue	2
110	12/4/2018	Birnin Gwari	Kaduna	2
111	13/4/2018	Bassa	Kogi	5
112	14/4/2018	Logo	Benue	4
113	17/4/2018	Obi	Nasarawa	78
114	18/4/2018	Bassa	Plateau	4
115	19/4/2018	Gwer West	Benue	1
116	20/4/2018	Guma	Benue	31
117	24/4/2018	Guma	Benue	40

118	24/4/2018	Gwer West	Benue	19
119	26/4/2018	Awe	Nasarawa	7
120	19/5/2018	Gwer	Benue	6
121	22/6/2018	Demsa	Adamawa	22
122	22/6/2018	Jos North	Plateau	120
123	22/9/2018	Ukum	Benue	5
124	4/10/2018	Bassa	Plateau	19
125	19/10/2018	Ukum	Benue	2

**Source:** Author's compilation from various national dailies

**Note:** These are some of the killings committed by Herdsmen militia in various parts of the country, The victims of these attacks include Church Priests, Police Officers, Soldiers, Civil defence officers and humanitarian officials. Most importantly, most of these killings have gone without any arrest or prosecution of the culprits.