

The Impact of Herdsmen-Farmers' Conflict on National Integration in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

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Abstract

Herdsmen-farmers' conflicts have taken a calamitous dimension, which threatens the security, peaceful co-existence and national integration of Nigeria presently. This paper investigated the impact of herdsmen-farmers' conflicts on national integration in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. It adopted descriptive research method using secondary sources of data and frustration-aggression theory as the theoretical framework. The paper argued that there has once been peaceful relationship between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria with few cases of minor misunderstandings but the conflict took a new dreadful wave due to certain factors such as climate change, population explosion, and porosity of border, proliferation of arms, poverty, unemployment and the ineptitude action of government to these conflicts, among others. The paper argued that though some efforts have been made to address these clashes, such efforts appeared to be inadequate and thus achieved limited success. The paper further argued that persistent herdsmen-farmers' conflict has now been threatening the peaceful co-existence and national integration of culturally segmented societies in Nigeria. The paper thus recommended, among others, that the government should formulate and implement proactive policies devoid of sentiments, bias and partisanship in curbing these conflicts. Government should demonstrate the political will in solving this problem by involving traditional rulers in the search for peace and harmony, using dialogue and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) methods. Value re-orientation should be intensified through public enlightenment drive and the media so that Nigerians will appreciate the values that bind them together more than those that divide them and thus enhance tolerance of individual differences of other ethnic-nationalities towards national integration.

Keywords: Farmers, Herdsmen, Herdsmen-farmer's conflict, Impact, National integration.

Introduction

Harmony is a vital constituent needed for the peaceful interaction, co-existence and national integration because it connotes the major function of the state, which is to promote unity, non-violence, economic growth and human development (Oghuvbu & Oghuvbu, 2020). In Nigeria however, herdsmen-farmers' conflict has been a persistent incidence for about two decades now, which has thus challenged the quest for national integration within the country (Nwankwo, 2021). Hitherto, there has been peaceful relationship among herdsmen and farmers across the states in Nigeria, except few cases of minor misunderstandings, which did not claim life (Nzeh, 2015; Doyin, 2017).

Furthermore, the adequacy of land for both herdsmen and farmers, given the few numbers of cows that the herdsmen bred and the subsistence nature of farming then, afforded both parties

the opportunity to exist side-by-side peacefully without detrimental struggle over scarce resources (land and water) and this level of cordiality had usually existed between the herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria until recently (Goke, 2018; Aliyu, Ikedinma & Akinwande, 2018).

However, the tide has taken another dimension with the recent alarming incidences of herdsmen-farmers' conflict, which has taken a destructive and calamitous dimension in Nigeria. This current wave of herdsmen-farmers' conflict was attributed to the increase in population of both the farmers and the herdsmen in need of farming land, grazing land, and water resources. The farmers blamed the herdsmen for damaging their crops by failing to control their animals on grazing while the herdsmen equally accused the farming communities of cattle rustling (Adeleke, 2018). Other causes of the herdsmen-farmers' conflict include change in climate condition leading to draught and desert encroachment, improvement in technology that brought about irrigation, the need to cultivate and produce more of the cash crops newly introduced (Aliyuet al, 2018).

The consequences of the present persistent occurrence of the herdsmen-farmers' conflict have been alarming and it is estimated that over 10,000 people have been killed over the past decade with more than 6,000 of them being casualties in the past two years (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2018; Ilo, Jonathan-Chaver, & Adamolekun, 2019). Also, it was reported that the death toll resulting from herdsmen-farmers' conflicts in 2016 alone was about 2,500 persons and that between 2011 and 2016, fatalities averaged more than 2,000 deaths (International Crisis Group, 2017), between 2017 and May, 2020, Herdsmen conducted 654 attacks, killed 2,539 peoples and kidnapped 253 people in Nigeria (Akinloye, 2020).

The lingering and unabated herdsmen- farmers' conflicts across the country has thus caused many havoc such as loss of lives, farm damage, vandalization of properties, kidnapping, raping and arsons, among others, which has snowballed into serious threat to peaceful co-existence of the different ethnic nationalities in Nigeria (Oyeyipo, James & Sanda, 2016; Aliyu et al, 2018). Against this background, the study examined the impact of herdsmen-farmers' conflict on national integration in Nigeria with a focus on the fourth republic.

Defining Herdsmen-Farmers' Conflict

Herdsmen are nomadic or semi nomadic herders whose primary occupation is raising livestock and they usually move their herds from one place to another in search of pasture and fresh water (Okoro, 2018b). They are often armed and visibly move about with weapons (like daggers, machetes and arrows) to protect their livestock. The more disturbing issue about the herdsmen is that they also block the highways with their cattle, rob and kidnap people, keep them captives in the bush and demand for ransom. The herdsmen have also been involved in the rape of old and young women and burning of communities (GTI, 2015) and due to their violent nature and associated killings, the group was recently described as the world's fourth deadliest militant group (Mikailu, 2016).

Farmers also called agriculturists are persons who engage in agriculture, raising living organisms for food or raw materials. The term applies to people who do some combination of raising field crops, orchards, vineyards, poultry, or other livestock (Okoro, 2018b). Thus, farmers connote both the ones that herd or raise livestock like cattle, goats, sheep, among others, and those that involve in crop planting in the field, but for this study, farmers are regarded as the set of people that grow food crops in the field which are often called peasant farmers/subsistence cultivators only (Oghuvbu & Oghuvbu, 2020).

Conflict connotes clash or disagreement between two or more groups who have incompatible differences and conflict has been regarded as an integral part of human existence



and social relations because it is inevitable in any social gathering, community, societies and state at large (Olagbaju & Awosusi, 2019). Conflict is described as a felt struggle between two or more independent individuals over perceived incompatible differences in beliefs, values, and goals, or differences in desires for esteem, control, and connectedness (Wilmot & Hocker, 2011). Conflict is a situation where two or more parties pursue similar goals but believe that such goals are achievable by just one of them and employ every resource within their disposal to hinder the other party from attaining such goal (Aliyu et al, 2018).

However, herdsmen-farmers' conflicts refer to the clashes of interest between peasant/subsistence cultivators and nomadic live-stock keepers (Okoro, 2018a). Herdsmen-farmers' conflicts encompass crises of different types such as ethnic conflicts, interest conflicts, resource disputes, evictions, killings, arson, kidnapping and cattle rustling (Hussein, Sumberg, & Seddon, 1999). Herdsmen-farmers' conflicts are the verbal and lethal disagreements among and between the herdsmen and the farmers as a result of their competition over the available (scarce) resources (land and water resources) (Aliyu et al, 2018).

Therefore, appraising the foregoing, herdsmen-farmers' conflict could be defined as the clash of interest between the herdsmen and farmers over the ownership and usage of land and water resources which claimed many lives as well as led to the destruction of valuable properties.

Understanding National Integration

National integration is one of those elusive concepts in political discourse which attracts plethora of definitions. Meredith (cited in James, 2020) referred to national integration as a process by which members of a social system develop linkages and location so that the boundaries of the system persist over time and the boundaries of sub-systems become less consequential in affecting behaviour. Shah and Ishaque (2017) asserted that national integration is a consistent development in which diverse sections of society are provided with identical prospects and equal rights to enjoy several amenities devoid of any discrimination.

National integration is thus the bringing together of people of different racial or ethnic groups into unrestricted and equal association, as in society or an organization. It is the process through which people living within the geographic boundaries of a country forget their difference of race, religion, and language and feels the spirit of unity and allegiance to their nation (Osimen, Balogun & Adenegan, 2013). It is the feeling of unity within diversity wherein a national identity is supreme. National integration in Nigeria is thus the bringing together of the different ethnic, racial, religious, economic, social, and political groups into unhindered, equal, and balanced association on national issues (Akinyetun, 2020).

The spirit of national integration is often directed towards the goal of harmonizing all interests through a form of dialogue and representation and paying less emphasis on differences that may be divisive and conflictual using the instrument of fairness, justices and equity in the sharing of resources, benefits, opportunities and responsibilities. This development is expected to guarantee stability, longevity and prosperity of the polity as long as the inhabitants' decide to remain within the polity (Onifade & Imhonopi, 2013, cited in Kalagbor & Harry, 2020).

In this paper, therefore, national integration is perceived as the process of ensuring that the diverse ethnic-nationalities, which are culturally segmented within the country are brought together to achieve a high sense of common belonging, mutual understanding, nationalism and patriotism towards well-being of their country. It simply involves peaceful co-existence or co-habitation of people of different ethnic groups within Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework



This paper adopted Frustration-Aggression Theory as its illuminating framework. The Frustration-aggression theory was proposed by John Dollard, Neal Miller, Leonard Doob, Orval Mowrer and Robert Sears in 1939 and was further developed by Neal Miller in 1941 as well as Leonard Berkowitz in 1961. The theory espouses that frustration emerges when circumstances interfere with a goal-response and it often leads to aggression. Thus, aggression is an outcome or result of blocking or frustrating a person's efforts towards attaining certain goal(s) (Myers, 2007; Faleti, 2015).

Frustration causes antagonism, but when the source of the frustration cannot be challenged, the bellicosity gets displaced onto an innocent target. The theory depicts a scenario where groups of people or individuals become frustrated as a result of conflict resolution outcome, or sometimes as a result of government or institutional intervention which did not favor the groups or the individuals, making the conflict to escalate. The theory further posits that frustration caused by interference in goal-directed activity produces a 'readiness' for aggression which if 'triggered' can result in aggressive response (Oli, Ibekwe, & Nwankwo, 2018). According to Rationis (2014), the trigger could be an insignificant element of behavior, such as a casual joke, gesture or mild criticism which would normally be overlooked, but to the frustrated individual who is already waiting for an opportunity to show his frustration, it may provoke aggressive response or reprisal.

In applying this theory to this paper, the goal or aim of every farmer during planting season is to have bountiful harvest, then sell the farm produce and make profits. On the other hand, the herdsmen would always want to have well fed and healthy cattle and be able to make profits as well. When any of these expectations was not realizable, either by the cattle eating up and destroying the farmers' crops or that the farmer encroached on grazing reserves or use water reserved for cattle to irrigate their farms, aggression would be triggered. Either of the parties that felt frustrated to achieving their economic goals may decide to revenge so as to show their displeasure and as a result conflict will occur (Oli et al, 2018; Okoro, 2018a).

Overview and Causes of Herdsmen-Farmers' Conflicts in Nigeria

The herdsmen are largely Fulanis, a migrant, ethnic population scattered throughout many parts of West Africa, from Lake Chad in the East, to the Atlantic coast. Within this sub region, they are concentrated mainly in Cameroon, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Nigeria. The Fulani in Nigeria are a part of the Fula ethnic group, which has existed in some form for thousands of years and there are about 50 million Fulani in Africa today, with the largest community located in Nigeria, where they make up one of the nation's largest ethnic groups (Levinson cited in Erondu & Nwakanma, 2018). The Fula or Fulani or Fulbe people are almost solely Muslims, with a semi-nomadic lifestyle, earning them the appellation of "Fulani herdsmen". The Fulani people belonged to a large Fula-led empire in West Africa in 1903, namely the Sokoto Caliphate but when this caliphate was abolished by the British, its people remained, and have endured to the present day (Levinson, 1996; Nwogu, 2018).

Prior to the beginning of 20th century, herdsmen-farmers' conflicts were restricted mainly to the savanna belts of West Africa where cattle rearing were mainly prevalent in these belts: Guinea, Sudan and Sahel Savanna where crop production was carried out according to short raining season and on small scale. According to Tonah (cited in Ofuoku & Isife, 2018), since the Sahelian drought of the 1970s and 1980s, and the accompanying migration of a huge number of pastoralists into the fringes of the humid forest zone of West Africa, there has been a massive increase in the incidence of herders-farmers' conflicts.

However, in the past, in Nigeria, the herdsmen have engaged in fighting with other local groups, particularly the Jukuns, Eggons, and the Tivs for space and resources, as the



disputes primarily focused around access to land and water resources. But, never had the herdsmen resorted to such widespread terrorist activity as it is currently. It is difficult to forget the horror experiences of Numan, Demsa and Lamurde among other local governments in Adamawa State. Other states which have tasted the bitter side of this crisis are Benue, Plateau, Delta, Enugu, Katsina, Taraba, Imo, among others (Kwaghga, Beetseh, Tion, Dzever & Terwase, 2018). Nweze (2005) observed that in Imo State, for instance, between 1996 and 2005, 19 people died and 42 people were injured in this rising incident of farmers and herders' conflict and the violence that accompanied it.

That figure has skyrocketed in recent times to the extent that between 2010 and 2013, 80 people were recorded killed by herdsmen while more than 1,200 were killed in 2014 alone (Nwogu, 2018). In addition, the Punch Newspaper report of 10th September 2018, revealed that clashes between herdsmen and farmers in Gon, Nzumosu, Boliki, Nyanga and Bukoto, communities all in Numan Local Government Area of Adamawa State led to the death of 27 people while about 500 people, mostly women and children were displaced with property worth millions of naira destroyed (Kwaghga et al, 2018).

Furthermore, the recent Southern Kaduna experience and that of some communities in Benue, Enugu, Delta, Abia, Oyo, Ekiti, Ondo, Ogun, Nassarawa, Gombe and Bauchi States are classical instances of this crisis. Benue and Kaduna States seemed to have received more shares of these conflicts with the attacks that left an outrageous number of lives and property lost and destroyed (Chiakaan, Pwashikai, Alyegba & Nweze, 2019). The International Crisis Group (2017) revealed that in 2017 alone, the herdsmen group killed at least 2500 persons in Enugu, Benue, Taraba, Zamfara, Kaduna, Plateau, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau, Cross Rivers, Adamawa, Katsina, Delta and Ekiti states with many thousands displaced from their homes in these places.

Also, Amnesty International (AI) which is a global human rights watchdog reported that clashes between herdsmen and farmers in Adamawa, Benue, Taraba, Ondo and Kaduna states have resulted in 168 deaths in January 2018 alone, with scores of communities razed and hundreds of buildings destroyed (Sahara Reporters, 2018; Erondu & Nwakanma, 2018). It was equally reported that in 2019, 169 attacks of the herdsmen were recorded resulting in 524 deaths with several cases of kidnapping across Nigeria. Between January and May 2020, there were also 141 attacks of herdsmen in which 335 people were killed and 137 kidnapped (Akinloye, 2020).

It is pertinent to stress that the herdsmen-farmers' conflicts have become an unending phenomenon in Nigeria and several factors has been adduced for the alarming trends of these conflicts in Nigeria. These driving factors include climate change (Genyi, 2017; Shehu, 2018); rapid population growth (Doyin, 2017; Egbuta, 2018; Awotokun, Nwozor & Olanrewaju, 2020); poverty, unemployment, and reduced livelihood opportunities (Chiakaan et al, 2019; Agbu, Musa & Zhema, 2020); government's silence or negligence towards the conflict (Okoro, 2018a; Olagbaju & Awosusi, 2019); problems relating to land and water use, obstruction of traditional migration routes, livestock theft and crop damage (Mikailu, 2016; Alade, (2018), the porosity of borders and proliferation of small and light weapons (Bamidele, 2018); among others.

Towards Curbing Herdsmen-Farmers' Conflicts in Nigeria

The menace of herdsmen-farmers' conflict has become a prevalent, continuous and catastrophic incidence in Nigeria. However, several efforts have been made to address the appalling conflicts between the herdsmen and farmers in the country.

The first initial attempt made by the northern regional government toward the herdsmen-farmers' conflicts in the country is the creation of grazing reserves in 1965 which allocated large portions of land to be exclusively used by herders to rear their livestock (Peace and Security Forum, 2017). However, the grazing reserve system was not supported adequately

but the government was still in the process of initiating legislations to legitimize the grazing reserves before natural factors such as population growth and other related consequences like urbanization and migration encroached on these designated areas reducing the herders' chances of accessing the reserves (Abodunrin, Oloye & Adesola, 2020).

The Federal Government established the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) in 1989 with a view to curbing the conflicts between the herdsmen and farmers. NCNE is supported by the Nigerian legal system and the main goal of the program was to integrate nomadic pastoralists into national life through mobile basic education and skill acquisition which is a program intended to integrate the herdsmen into society through education (Rosenje & Adeniyi, 2021; Egbuta, 2018).

A National Grazing Reserve bill was sponsored in 2016 at the National Assembly to address the herdsmen-farmers' conflicts but the bill did not survive due to opposition from different stakeholders, who based their rejection on the grounds that the bill contradicts the provisions of the Land Use Act of 1978 which vests all powers related to the regulation of ownership, acquisition, administration, and management of Nigerian land with the state governors (Land Use Decree, 1978). Thus, State governments and their representatives at the National Assembly have always opposed any attempt to establish grazing reserves in their domain. They perceived it to be an act of usurping the constitutional powers vested in them by the 1999 Constitution (Kwaja, & Ademola-Adelehin, 2018).

With a view to curbing the escalating conflicts and mass killings resulting from herdsmen-farmers' conflicts, the government in 2018 approved a 10-year National Livestock Plan at a cost of about 179 billion naira. The plan seeks the establishment of 94 ranches in 10 pilot states of the federation but state governments, especially in the South and North Central areas rejected the proposal on the grounds of not having enough space for such projects (Alli, 2018; Egbuta, 2018).

As part of measures to end the persistent conflicts between herdsmen and farmers in various states, government at state levels began to enact legislations prohibiting open grazing in their respective state. For instance, Benue, Ekiti and Taraba states are leading the enactment of state laws prohibiting open grazing. On 22nd May 2017, Benue state enacted the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law 2017 (Channels TV Report, 2017) and its implementation began on 1 November 2017 (Kwaja, & Ademola-Adelehin, 2017). Ekiti and Taraba states also signed Bills prohibiting open grazing in their states. Thus, laws made open grazing an illegal activity and punishable by law (Rosenje & Adeniyi, 2021).

In 2019, President Mohammedu Buhari initiated the creation of Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) settlement but his decisions were met with fierce criticism and opposition because it was widely believed by Nigerians that, it was not the best way to bring an end to the menace (Abodunrin, et al, 2020). Besides, as a way of enhancing security and curbing the menace of herdsmen-farmers' conflicts, states in different geopolitical zones came together to form security outfits to complement the efforts of the federal security apparatus. Governments of Southwest constituted the regional security network called "Operation Amotekun" (Sessou, 2020); the Northern region constituted "Operation Shege KaFasa" (*This Day*, 2020); the Eastern part of the country constituted "Eastern Security Network" as an appendix of the IPOB (Nwaiwu, 2020) while Southeast governors constituted "Ebube Agu (Glory of a tiger)" (Anioke, Ikhilae, Duruiheoma & Njoku, 2021) to address the worsening insecurity in their respective regions.

It is however, instructive to emphasize that most of the measures put in place to address the menace of herdsmen-farmers' conflicts have contributed little to the amelioration of the crisis in Nigeria. This situation therefore depicts the government as showing



nonchalant attitude and possibly incompetence towards handling the herdsmen-farmers conflict. Invariably, this has led concerned people to insinuate that the government has failed in her basic responsibility of securing the lives and property of her citizens as well as promoting national unity.

Herdsmen-Farmers' Conflicts and National Integration in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

The dilemma of herdsmen-farmers' conflicts that beset Nigeria as a nation is posing a serious threat to the country's national integration, in the sense that, it has questioned the basis of national unity, thus leading to the emergence of several disuniting acts within the country. Apart from the general effects on loss of lives, animals, farm crops, there are soil erosion, poisoning of water and displacement of farmers and pastoral problems, among others, making the crisis to snowball into tribal and religious clashes as witnessed in Southern Kaduna, where Christians are being killed by Muslims, which was occasioned by herdsmen-farmers' conflicts, in which the killing is still raging, thereby threatening the integration of the various culturally segmented societies domicile in the state (Aliyu, et al, 2018).

Similarly, the herdsmen-farmers' conflicts has been perceived to pose threat to national unity as the level of intolerance among the herds men and farmers in Nigeria has deteriorated to unimaginable level of arms struggle resulting in countless deaths among villagers with the attendant reduction in the population of the peasant farmers, which have direct impact on the lives and livelihoods of those involved and led to the displacement of economically productive population of the country (Beetseh, 2018; Akinkuolie, 2018; Okoli & Atelhe, 2014). This in reality has led to the sky rocketing of prices of farm produce thereby making life unbearable for the subsistent families (Chiakaan et al, 2019).

Herdsmen-farmers' conflict has currently been raised to the level of the same co-extensiveness (cover the same area or range) with religious and culture conflicts because most farmers tend to be of the same ethnic group and mostly Christians especially in the middle belt and south west regions of Nigeria while most pastoralists are Fulani and predominantly Muslims (Ahmed-Gamgum, 2018). In an event of a conflict between these groups perceived as either ethnic or religious conflicts because of their closeness in such lines. A good example of this was the 2010 Jos crisis that erupted from leadership tussle between the Hausa residents and the settlers in the area. The aggression on the Hausa was easily transferred to the Fulani because it was perceived that they are of the same religion. This misrepresentation was partly responsible for the southern Kaduna crisis, where scores of Christians were gruesomely murdered and many churches burnt down (Aliyu et al, 2018).

Furthermore, the violence perpetrated by the Fulani extremists has been politicized along ethnic/tribal, cultural and religious lines. It is assumed that there is an ethnic conspiracy by the Fulani from top to the bottom, to use violence to strike fear among these farming communities in order to lay claim to land resources. Each time they attacked communities, the government of Nigeria dismisses their attack as nothing but community clash, resource conflict or political conspiracy by opposition elements. The import is that the president who is of Fulani extraction seems to be sympathetic to his kinsmen, going by his handling of their crisis purportedly initiated them (Mkom, 2018). Political analysts therefore, argued that government nonchalant attitude to the herdsmen-farmers' conflict could thus be regarded as a grandiose design to cloak Fulani hegemony on Nigerian societies. Consequently, several communities have been constrained to resort to seeking justice through reprisal (Agbu et al, 2020; Enor, Magor & Ekpore 2019).



Due to the protection the Fulani extremists get from the security agents and the central government, there was a loud call for the people to rise up and protect themselves if not, they will all die (John, 2018). For instance, the former Governor of Ekiti State, Mr. Ayodele Fayose has been allegedly indicted for making inciting comments capable of affecting the integration of different tribes in the country when he said farmers in his state should begin to use any means to protect themselves against militant Fulani herdsmen (The News, 2017). Many people misconstrued him to mean that he has ordered farmers to take laws to their hands. In the same vein, the Benue state Governor, Samuel Ortom has ordered Fulani herdsmen to leave Tombo-Mbalagh in Buruku Local Government Area within two days. He has ordered security agents to lead herdsmen out of the community (Aliyuet al, 2018).

Several other governors and stakeholders have issued such foregoing statement as a result of the disastrous nature of the herdsmen-farmers' conflict in their community. Such is the recent case of an ultimatum issued by the Ondo State Governor, Rotimi Akeredolu to the herdsmen in the state's forest reserves, which sparked outrage between the Yoruba Council of Elders (YCE) and the Northern Elders Forum (NEF) (Kabir, 2021). Likewise, an activist in Oke-Ogun axis of Oyo State, Chief Sunday Adeyemo (popularly known as Sunday Igboho) equally ordered the herdsmen in Ibarapaarea to leave, attributing such ultimatum to the spate of banditry and killings happening in the area (Amaize, Akinrefon, Duru & Ojomeyela, 2021). In response to this clamor, the Fulani herders declared that only President Muhammadu Buhari can order the Fulani herdsmen to leave Oyo State or any South Western State in Nigeria (Ikeru, 2021). However, these discrepancies led to several media attacks and counter-attacks.

From the foregoing, one can adduce the reasons behind each geopolitical zone constituting its own security apparatus as part of the attendant effect of herdsmen-farmer's conflicts on national integration. This is so because, most states now see no hope in the collective security architecture of the country due to its ineffectiveness and biasness in dealing with the conflict between the herdsmen and farmers as well as in managing other security challenges in the country. In line with this perception for instance, governments in South Western states, composed mainly of the Yoruba speaking people, collaboratively constituted a regional security network called "Operation Amotekun" (Sessou, 2020). While the self-determination movement in the Eastern part of the country constituted "Eastern Security Network" which is an appendix of the IPOB (Nwaiwu, 2020), the Southeast states' governors constituted "EbubeAgu (Glory of a Tiger)" (Anioke, Ikhilae, Duruiheoma & Njoku, 2021) and governments of the Northern states collectively constituted "Operation Shege KaFasa" (This Day, 2020).

It is worth mentioning here that the persistent herdsmen-farmers' conflicts coupled with other attendant security issues in the country have intensified the disintegration thoughts burning in Nigeria, as several contingents of the nation, especially, the Yoruba and Ibos are clamouring for the realisation of Oodua and Biafra nations through the OPC and IPOB respectively. The IPOB agitation for instance, has been the talk of the town for quite some time (Njoku, 2020) while the Oodua Republic rallies are being held across the six continents of the world (Olumide, 2020). It is also instructive to note that apart from the international and diplomatic approach being brought to bear in the agitation, it is equally being held across some states in Nigeria. What is more, these rallies are being led by important personalities home and abroad while some tribes like Itsekiri are joining hands with the Yorubas (Abiodun, 2021, Agboluaje & Agbor, 2021).

However, from the foregoing, the lingering herdsmen-farmers' conflicts are severely causing disunity in Nigeria as well as the disruption of peaceful co-existence of the major constituents of Nigeria as a nation, thereby drifting the country into anarchy and disintegration.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper discussed the impact of herdsmen-farmers' conflict on national integration, with a focus on Nigeria's fourth republic. It conceptualized herdsmen-farmers' conflict and national integration and revealed that there had once been peaceful relationship between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria though there were few cases of minor acrimonies, which did not result in loss of lives but the present trend of the conflict has taken an awful pattern as a result of certain factors such as climate change, population explosion, porosity of border, proliferation of arms, poverty, unemployment and the ineptitude action of government to these conflicts, among others.

The paper revealed that several efforts have been put in place to curtail the persistent, alarming and disastrous herdsmen-farmers' conflicts in Nigeria but due to the ineptitude and nonchalant attitude of the government towards handling the conflicts, these efforts appeared to be inadequate and thus have contributed little to putting an end to these clashes. Furthermore, the paper disclosed that the pervasiveness of these conflicts has now been threatening the peaceful co-existence and national integration of the culturally segmented Nigerian state because the conflicts are now prompting the people of Nigeria towards self-determination and disintegration. The paper thus concluded that the menace of herdsmen-farmers' conflicts if not tamed, might tear Nigeria apart as a nation.

However, in order to curtail the incessant occurrence of herdsmen-farmers' conflicts and promote national integration in Nigeria, the following recommendations are offered:

1. There is the need to restructure the security architecture of the country to meet the needs of the component units in solving current security challenges of the nation.
2. Government should involve all stakeholders including the traditional rulers in the search for peace and harmony through dialogue and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) methods.
3. There is the need for the government, non-governmental organizations, the media and well-meaning individuals to embark on enlightenment campaigns and social orientation aimed at achieving peace and unity between herdsmen and farmers.
4. Government should ensure effective monitoring of our somewhat porous borders in order to discourage and curb the proliferation of small arms and light weapons so as to guide against such arms getting into the hands of non-state actors illegally.
5. Government should ensure the prosecution of arrested perpetrators of herdsmen-farmers' conflicts to deter future occurrence as well as clear the controversies of government involvement in the conflict.

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