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Can Two Wrongs Make A Right? Herders and Farmers Conflicts on the Plateau: The Study of Barkin Ladi Local Government Area, 2001-2018

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***Abstract**: Herders and farmers conflicts in Nigeria have enjoyed a lot of construal and different connotations. The confrontations mostly started as farmers and herder's conflict, then the attacks of suspected Fulani herders, then rustlers and bandits and a lot of others. The mode of attacks and nature of the clashes varies in different times and different places. The conflicts have further opened ways to menace such as the spread of Fulani bandit, the rise of cattle rustlers and other criminalities such as the activities of societal miscreants, and conflict entrepreneurs. All the attacks and confrontations often have negative bearings on people lives, properties, businesses, houses, food and agricultural produces. This study attempted to examine herders and farmers conflicts in Barkin Ladi Local Government Area of Plateau State and how it has affected societal progression. The study generated data from array of both published and unpublished materials such as text books, journal papers, newspapers, magazines, white paper of reports of panel of investigation and commission of inquiry, internet materials, seminar and conference papers and a lot of others. The main instrument used to generate data was interview. In interpreting our data, the relationship between herders and farmers conflicts and development was established at both theoretical and empirical level. Empirically, we used a qualitative and historical method that was critical and analytical in providing descriptive and historical details. This was further complemented by descriptive analysis. It was established that the activities of groups such as the Bigol, bandit and some youth of the Berom who often indulged in cattle rustling is at the heart to the incessant attacks that are witnessing in the Local Government Area . The acts have enjoyed a lot of interpolation and have been eroded and broaden by different vices in the society. It was also found out that the attacks have negative impact on lives and properties, farm products, livestock, food production, business and a lot of others. Conclusion was drawn that the herders and farmers confrontation in Barkin Ladi is a migraine to socio-economic development. Recommendations such as control of borders, good governance, improve policing, religious tolerance and a lot of others were proffered.*

Keywords: Herders, Farmers, Conflict, Cattle rustling and Underdevelopment.

1. INTRODUCTION

The history of violent attack in Barkin Ladi Area of Plateau State is dated back in the early part of 2001.It first started as a spillage of the ethno-religious conflict which engulfed Jos North, the headquarters of the state in 2001 and the subsequent ones in 2003, 2004, 2007 and 2011. These attacks were purely on issue of politics, religion, ethnicity and the menace of indigene –settlers divide (Sanni, 2016). The violence and the reprisal attacks in the past were easily handled unlike the nowadays types that are incessant and a recurrent decimal.

The current confrontations are more of the multiplier effect of the attacks in the past. This is because the society has already been exposed to the perils such as proliferation of weapons, drug abuse, ethnic and religious sentiment, indigene-settlers divide, cattle rustling, hate, incite, attitude of non-tolerance, activities of conflict entrepreneurs and a lot of others. The menace is the creation of the previous conflicts and today is seen as herder's and farmers' conflict but there is more to that than narrowing the horizon of the conflict to that perspective (Anderson, 2016). The conflict is more of attacks and reprisal attacks than open confrontation. The attacks do not only center on the herders and the farmers alone. It has expanded its horizon and spread across communities, affects children, women, worship centres, passers on the high way, securities apparatus, among many others (Moses, 2015).

Religion and ethnicity have overshadowed the main casus belli of the conflicts. This has created more harm than good. The attackers mostly hide under instrument such as ethnicity and religion. They are fond of using ethnic and religious artifacts to commit the heinous crimes. When the said herders attacks, the wore attires such as kaftans, shout *Allah hu waku bar*, wore beats, caps and speak language of victims of the attacks so as to attract them out(Williams & Muazam, 2017). On the other hand if the said farmers who

are chiefly the Berom native embarked on a revenge mission, they attack by using the citation of apostolic creed, the lord prayers, baptismal card, wedding picture and a lot of others religious artifacts of their faith to identified their own and as well strike on their perceived enemies.. At a point, persons with long bears are easily seen and treated as enemies from the other side (Aliyu, 2016).

Religion and ethnicity are easily manipulated while the activities of Bigol (a group of young Fulani boys known in Hausa as Dabalde), the indigenous youth that are in to cattle rustling, Bandit groups which comprises of young men from each of the divide are noticeably ignored and snubbed. The Bigol damaged crops intentionally, usually in the night and attacked any farmer who tried to prevent them. This immature young pastoralist beats and tried to killed cultivators in most of the process (Danladi, 2017). The problem usually arose is how to identify them since they moved away as soon as the committed this atrocities and older innocent cattle pastoralist became the unfortunate victims of retaliation by the cultivator or the host community. The young rustlers from the native divide are mostly armed with sophisticated weapon and specialized in the rustling of cow owned by the Fulani to weaken the Fulani herders. Some are in to the act to buy weapons and some partook to make money from it (Sanni, 2016). There are also rustlers who are more of a bandit group. This comprises of youths from both the Fulani and the Berom divide. The member of this group wrecked havoc for their own personal gain.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

One of the obvious reasons that prompted the study is the interest to ascertain the actual causes of the incessant attacks and reprisal attacks in Barkin Ladi local Government Area of Plateau State and why it has become a recurrent decimal. The local Government Area has for long suffered from violent attacks and the state government and the local government failed to make certain the actual cause of these attacks. These continued to widen the horizon of the conflict.

Another problem which also motivated the study is the tenacity of the conflict and how it has wrecked havoc on lives and properties. A lot of persons were killed and sumptuous of properties worth billions of naira were destroyed. There are incidences of population displacement, proliferation of weapons, food insecurities, mutual suspiciousness and a lot of others. It is in line with this thinking that the following research questions were posited to guide the study:

(a) What are the unfeigned causes of the herders and farmers conflicts in Barkin Ladi Local Government Area of Plateau State?
(b) What are the effects of these incessant attacks on development in Barkin Ladi Local Government Area of Plateau state?

3. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the study is to examine the herders and farmers conflict in Barkin Ladi local government area of Plateau State

The specific objective of the study include to:

(a) Identify the actual cause of the herders and farmers conflicts in Barkin Ladi Local government area of Plateau State
(b) Assess the effects of the incessant attacks on the development in Barkin Ladi Local Government Area of Plateau State

4. ASSUMPTION OF THE STUDY

(a) The activities of cattle rustlers (Bigol, Bandit, youth from the native ethnic group) have significant influence on the incessant attacks of farmers and herders in Barkin Ladi Local Government Area of Plateau State
(b) The incessant attacks of farmers and herders have significant effects on the development in Barkin Ladi Local Government Area

5. METHODOLOGY

At a time like this when the world is universally exchanging cold war for hot peace, research and studies on conflict must be action oriented and be geared towards informing policy making and facilitating constructive interventions. This concern informs not only how our field work was carried out but also how this report is presented. With a view to establishing how the conflicts and attacks started, we consulted records of report of commission of inquiry and panels of investigation. The files consulted include inter-departmental correspondence, intelligence reports, petitions and newspaper articles. The information derived from all these sources explains the nature of the conflict in the past and how it has transcended to the incessant attacks. We supplemented the sourced materials with interview across different sections of the population and believing that those residents in the most affected villages knew best on how their problems could be solved, we placed greater emphasis on approaches that had led to the incessant attacks and why and how it could be resolved.

We sought to know from each informant how she or he thought the menace could be handled. The impression we got was that the people have a good knowledge of how to live harmoniously with each other but lacked any serious institution for galvanizing their knowledge into concrete policies. Most of our informant believed that the conflicts were politically-motivated by the elites. In addition to the information collected from the aforesaid sources. We are also systematic in our report. We adopted a historical approach, systematically narrating and analyzing what happened at different periods, and trying as much as possible to reduce the number of our value judgments. We deliberately adopted this method to enable those who want to

use our data for intervention purposes to have a true picture of what happened rather than getting misled by our interpretation of what happened as well as their predisposing factors, and how the conflicts were managed in the past, especially by the government, and what future interveners could do.

6. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

(a) A HERDER & A FULANI HERDER

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English stressed that the word *Herder* originated from the *Old English* word *Herd* – and this denotes a keeper or owner of large group of animals. It is also seen as somebody who tends to domesticate animals. It's also somebody who keeps and drives animals in groups, especially in an open pasture or land.

The word is Synonymic to wordings such as pastoralist, herdsmen, herdspersons, livestock farmers, breeders, ranchers, squire, breeders and a lot of others. The word herder as applied to the context in Nigeria is someone who is in possession of livestock most especially cows. They are mostly referenced as persons who domesticate animals such as cattle, sheep, goats, donkeys, Carmel and a lot of others. According to Stevenson (2016), a herder in Nigeria is someone who herds livestock and from the Fulfulde speaking ethnic group. Sanni (2015) sees a herder in Nigeria as any individual who own a large collection of livestock such as sheep, cows, goats, horse, donkey, Carmel and lots of others. The two definitions above attempted to point out that the word herder in Nigeria parlance is a generic name for any individual from any ethnic setup that rears or keep livestock. The definition also narrowed the meaning of the concept to only individuals who keep cattle and failed to incorporate other keepers of animal such as, sheep, goats, dogs, pigs and other domestic animals.

The term Fulani herders on the other is seen as any person from the Fulani ethnic group or Fulfulde speaking language of the Nilo-Sahara family who keeps livestock or domesticated animals such as cows, sheep, goats, Carmel, donkeys and a lot of others. Stevenson (2016) advocated that a Fulani herder is livestock keeper and may be either transhumance or living a sedentary lifestyle. He went further to stress that the Fulani herders must not necessary be from Nigeria. He or she can be from other countries. The Fulfulde speaking ethnic groups are also in countries such as Mauritania, Senegal, Mali, Chad, Cameroon, Niger and a lot of others.

Sanni (2015) also stressed that a Nigerian Fulani herder is different from a Fulani herder that comes from others countries or neighboring countries. He attempted to draw an analogy by stressing that the Nigerian Fulani herders posses certain attribute such as acculturation, friendliness, sociability and that differentiate them from Fulani herders from other countries. Johnson (2016) in the same direction state that the loose border in the northern part of the country created grounds for the infiltration of other Fulani Herders of other countries into the shore of the country. He stressed further that what the two groups shared in common is religion and the language which they speak. There are some differences and variation in languages they speak. This can be seen in their stress pattern, intonation and usages of vocabulary. The Nigerian Fulani ethnic group speaks Hausa language fluently and conflates with the Hausa people while those penetrating through the border have no knowledge of the Hausa language.

In Nigeria, most of the Fulani herders are members of the Meyetti Allah Cattle breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN), a group that seek to protect, organize and defend and carter for the needs of Fulani herders in Nigeria. The Nigerian Fulani herders are not mostly transhumance as compare to their compatriot in Cameroon, Chad and Niger.

(b) FULANI BANDITS AND CATTLE RUSTLERS

The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English stressed that the word bandit is coined from the Italian word bandito and it denote banned. The word is synonymic to wordings such as: thieving, robbery, violence, crime and lawlessness. Fulani bandits according to Stevenson (2016) are group of persons from the Fulani ethnic group or Fulfulde speaking group who are into the act of rustling of cows of both Fulani herders and other herders from other ethnic groups. They are called in Fulfulde as *Bigol* and in Hausa language *Dabalde*. In an interview with the secretary of MACBAN, Mangu Branch, the Fulani bandits are into groups and operate with strategies and planned skills. He went further to say that:

> The Fulani bandits are in peers and mostly come in groups. They are into different set up. First, they will set certain part of the groups that would act as spies, then after spying where livestock like cows are kept; they will come either in the night or daytime with three other divisions. The first division would be in a group of four persons with sophisticated ammunition like guns and matched to send away the herders and after which, a ritual will be done to aid them to run with the stolen cattle. The last division or group would stay put to fight the police or the herder, if he/she attempted to run after them.

Sanni (2016) advocated that the Fulani bandits rustled cows of both Fulani herders and non Fulani herders (i.e. herders from other ethnic groups). He went further and

buttressed that the herders have certain persons or dealers who often act as link between the Fulani bandits and the buyers of the rustled cows. He went further to stress that most of the people involved in the act are young men who have either lost their cattle or persons of dubious character. Anderson (2016) also advocates that the Fulani bandits are specialist in cow rustling and robbery of people in the highways, market, business ground and other places where money can easily be gotten.

This type of practice is common in Barkin Ladi, Mangu, Jos South, all of Plateau State, Bauchi State, Gombe and most states in the Northern part of the country. The act is purely practiced by Fulani and Nigerian Fulani ethnic groups. Persons that mostly involved into the act are young group of persons and most of them are heartless, non-tolerance and mostly under the influence of drugs.

Cattle rustler in Nigeria is a generic name for any persons or group of persons that rustle livestock, such as cows, sheep, goat, Camel, donkeys and a lot of others. What differentiates Fulani bandits from cattle rustlers are ethnic background. The cattle rustler can comprise of the Fulani persons and other persons from different ethnic set up. The Fulani bandits are purely person who are from the Fulani ethnic groups. They shared the same attributes such as rustling of cows, usage of guns and also robbed people (Nathan, 2017).

With the increasing cases of herders and farmers conflicts in Nigeria, some persons or group of persons often hide under the auspice of the herders and farmers conflicts to rustled livestock during such skirmishes. A cross sectional interview with both Fulani herders and herders from other ethnic group in the seven districts o F Barkin Ladi shows that the ethno-religious conflicts and farmer-herders confrontations in most of the villages in the area had opened way to an organize and planned system of cattle rustling in the Local Government Area. Danladi (2017) enthused:

> We cannot actually say that the rustlers are from this ethnic group or the other. Police have caught persons from different ethnic groups. For instance, in Plateau state, a lot of Fulani persons were caught, some Berom people were caught, some Ngas and Taroh peoples were also caught and in Bokkos, the Ron and Kulere people were also found involved in the act. In Benue and Taraba, some people from the Tiv ethnic group and a lot of others were also found among the rustlers. It cut across different states and communities. There was a point in which the rustlers relate with cow butchers.

This continued to be a problem in Nigeria and has created a lot of distrust and hatred among ethnic groups in the society. The Nigeria Fulani ethnic group mostly becomes irritated when cases of rustling affects them or is linked to their ethnic group. They often argued that, it is not all the Fulani speaking people that herd and so also, they are not the only group of people that herds cows in the society. The issues of pointing accusing fingers like the usage of wording such as "suspected" Fulani herders in recent time have receive renunciation and rebuff from the Fulani ethnic in Nigeria. MACBAN, for long has being defending the Fulani herders and stressing the need to differentiate between activities of societal miscreants and Hoodlums in the society who often rustled livestock, loot and robbed people of their belonging than always labeling the Fulani people as suspected whereas, the actual perpetrators are in the dark (Danladi, 2017).

(c) The Concept of Conflict

Conflict arises from the pursuit of divergent interests, goals and aspirations by individuals or groups in defined social and physical environments. Change in the social environment, such as access to new political position, or perceptions of new resources arising from development in the physical environment, are fertile grounds for conflicts involving individuals and groups who are interested in using these new resources to achieve their goals. By thus recognizing the inherent nature of conflict in heterogeneous and competitive situations, people, more or less compellingly, sustain their societies as ongoing social system through the resolution, transformation and management of conflicts (Cinjel & Akende, 2015).

One of the most quoted traditional definitions of conflict regards it as "a struggle over values claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure, or eliminate their rivals" (Coser, 2010: 10). In the same direction, Park and Burgess (cited in Abdu, 2010) argue that "conflict is designed to resolve divergent dualism and achieve some kind of unity even if it is through the annihilation of one of the conflicting parties".

Conflict may not be regarded only in a negative light of dysfunctional or disjunctive process and a breakdown of communication as some scholars tend to suggest (Lundberg, 2000). Conflict is a conscious act involving personal or group contact and communication. Together with, though distinct from competition, struggle, and contest, etc. conflict is a normal process of interaction particularly in complex societies in which resources are usually scarce. Although conflict may generally exist "wherever incompatible activities occur" (Deutsch, 2000:156), and may result in a win-lose situation; the

resolution, transformation and management of conflict may produce a "win-win" outcome.

7. NATURE AND HISTORY OF CONFLICTS IN BARKIN LADI (2001-2015)

The genesis of the skirmishes in Barkin Ladi areas appears similar in many respects even though, with peculiar circumstances. It is often a disagreement between the locals and Fulani herdsmen or others tagged settlers which degenerate easily into a sectarian disputes resulting in a cycle of violence. The side initially at the receiving end mobilizes for reprisals, then counter-reprisals and so it continues (Turaki, 2015). As in many parts of the country, the Fulani herdsmen famed rightly or wrongly, not to allow any aggression against them un-revenged no matter how long it takes, had settled in many parts of Barkin Ladi Local Government Area of Plateau State and other neighbouring local government areas for a century (Kuna, 2015). However, the antagonism between the Fulani and the indigenous groups appear to be worsening. Various reasons have been adduced from different quarters, not least is the mutual suspicion and hatred generated by previous crisis (Kuna, 2015).

The several peace advocacy programmes by government, traditional rulers, Non- governmental agencies, religious institutions and the State Task Force deployed to maintain peace in the state have not done the magic. Rather, the problem appears to be spreading to areas hitherto seen as peaceful. The Plateau State Special Task Force (STF) charged with the responsibility of maintaining peace in the State stated in a special report released in 2015 that the genesis of the Fulani and Berom conflict especially, the recent ones are solely cattle rustling. The State Task Force also blamed the availability of arms in the hands of the civilians as one of the critical factors that allowed the escalation of the crisis in the areas (Cinjel & Akende, 2015).

Stephenson [2015] argued that the crisis is predominantly between Berom who are Christians and Fulani who are predominantly Muslims on the other hand. He went further and stressed that there were several accusations and counter-accusations by the warring parties where Berom often accused the Fulani herders of grazing on their farmlands and the Fulani on the other hand accused Berom of rustling their cattle. In 2010, the conflict was not too pronounced. It was predominantly within few localities in the area. These are *Kassa, Marit, Fan* and *Mazat* areas. On 10th April, 2010, a group of unknown gunmen attacked the central area of *Kassa* village. This attack resulted to the dead of five [5] persons and twenty-one [21] houses were razed down. The gunmen were said to be dressed as soldiers. This thus created a room for hostile confrontation between the two groups in the above mentioned communities. The violence was characterized by the destruction of houses, cattle and denial of access to communities of the warring groups [Cinjel & Akende, 2015]. On 24th November, 2011, there was another outbreak of hostility between the *Berom* and the *Fulani* in *Hiepan*g areas .This conflict resulted to the death of twelve [12] persons, destruction of several houses and properties. A 24 hour curfew was imposed as a result of the conflict in the local government and this affected movement on the highway which links the Central and Southern local government areas to the State Capital(Jos) situated at the Northern Zone of the State (Interview in Barkin Ladi, October 2, 2015)

In 2012, Barkin Ladi witnessed another outbreak of hostility in *Kakuruk* village and *Matse*, a border area of *Riyom* Local Government. On 9th July, 2012, *Kakuruk*, a village under Gashish was stormed with violence. According to Lomang (2013), sixty-three (63) persons were killed at the early part of the conflict and at the ground of their mass burial, forty-three [43] persons were also killed along with the then Senator representing the constituency (Gyang Dantong) and the then member serving and representing Barkin Ladi at the State House of Assembly (Gyang Fulani). He asserted further that a day after the orgy of hostility, One hundred and fifty (150) dead bodies were discovered linked to the Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) building and the victims died in an ensuing inferno as the attackers were said to have stood by to shoot anybody that tried to escape. STF spokesman at that time, Capt. *Salihu Mustapha* also acknowledged that the attackers dressed in military uniforms and were heavily armed and also wore bullet proof vests. He went further and admitted that twenty-one (21) of the assailants were killed and two soldiers were also killed in the shoot-out (Turaki, 2015). The Meyeti-Allah Cattle Breeders Association dismissed the act as propaganda. The group repeatedly denied the allegation that they were behind the frequent attacks. They also denied the allegation that some of them were among the cattle rustlers. In an interview with the then Secretary, Plateau State Chapter of The Meyeti- Allah-Cattle Breeders Association (MACBAN), Mohamadu Nuru Abdulahi alleged that the crisis of Barkin Ladi Local Government Area had continued because those who were benefiting from it would not give up.

On 18th May, 2013, *Gana Ropp* witnessed another hostile attack which resulted to a lot of deaths and destructions. The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) accused the Muslim of igniting the violence. In their narratives, they argued that twenty-two [22] persons died on the first day of the attack and a day after, another twenty [20] bodies were confirmed dead by the attack. Furthermore, the organization accused the State Securities of bias, alleging that it always acted in the interest of the *Fulani* Muslims. They observed that it was a failure of the securities to fetch and punish the perpetrators of the previous violence that encourages the attacks. However, Muslim groups in the community denied these accusations and, in turn accused the Christians of intolerance and deliberately trying to undermine Islam through their hatred for anything Islamic.

The Plateau State government under the immediate past governor, Jonah Jang after an exceptionally long security council meeting on the series of confrontations that

took place in 2013, reached the conclusion that cattle rustling was behind the communal clashes between the Fulani and most communities in Barkin Ladi Local Government of Plateau State. These also flow with the view of the then leader of the Special Task Force of the State, Capt. Ikedichi Iwela who equally asserted that the problem in Barkin Ladi was obviously cattle rustling and reprisal attacks. He went further and cited instances where cattle rustling had become an occupation for some people, a development being resisted by herders in a bloody manner. On the 26th November, 2013, four (4) communities were attacked in one night. In the attack, thirteen (13) persons were killed in *Katu Kapang*, eight (8) persons were killed at Daron, nine (9) persons at *Tul* and seven (7) persons at *Rawuwu*. A week after, the Chairman of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Plateau State Chapter, *Soja Bewarang* officiated a mass burial of 51 persons, killed at *Talu* area of the same local government and the victims were predominantly pregnant women, children, and aged persons who could not run. A statement signed by Captain *Salihu Mustapha*, the then media officer of the State Task Force at the time, alleged that the coordinated attacks were carried out at night and he asserted further that the prime cause was cattle rustling.

On 20th June, 2013, there was also a hostile confrontation in the central area of the Local Government Area, one (1) person was killed and thirteen 13 others were injured and on the 3rd of July, two (2) weeks after the incident, two [2] women were killed at *Gwarang*. On the 20th of April and 3rd May, 2013, *Lukfie* and *Ruku* were attacked respectively by unknown gunmen. The whole of the villages were ransacked, six (6) persons died in the attack and most of the houses in the two communities were razed down including two churches and a public owned school. *Kantoma* (Ladi) and *Ganan Daje* were also attacked on the 3rd August. In the attack, ten (10) persons were killed, seven (7) houses were also razed in the attack and plethoras of crops were destroyed (Turaki, 2015).

Table 2.8:1 Incidence of Attacks in some selected Villages in Barkin Ladi

	Villages	Number of Attacks			Destroyed Lives & Properties	
		2013	2014	2015	Life	Property
1	Dorowa	2	1	2	29	37
2	Kassa	2	2	1	21	27
3	Marit	1	2	1	13	16
4	Mazat (NTV)	1	1	NA	16	41
5	Heipang	1	1	-	13	NA
6	Kakuruk	2	2	1	NA	11
7	Gindin Akwati	2	1	1	-	29
8	Gashish	1	2	1	76	NA
9	Ganan Daje	1	2	-	NA	16
10	Katako	1	1	1	21	17
11	Fan	2	1	1	17	15
12	Ruku	2	1	-	Deserted	NA
13	Lukfie	2	1	1	Displaced	Deserted
14	Kuba	2	1	1	Displaced	23
15	Darong	1	1	NA	27	NA
16	Fit Makisho	1	2	-	Displaced	Deserted
17	Manja Hota	2	1	1	7	11
18	Rawuwu		2	-	Displaced	Deserted
20	Gana Ropp	2	2	2	Displaced	Deserted
21	Kura falls	1	2	1	NA	59
22	Katu Kapang	2		1	NA	63
23	Kukek	1	1	-	Displaced	Deserted
24	Kakuruk	2	2	-	106	Deserted

Source: B/Ladi LGA Security Unit, 2015.

8. INCIDENCES OF HERDERS AND FARMERS ATTACKS IN BARKIN LADI (2016 & BEYOND)

Plateau State and specifically Barkin Ladi local government areas situated in the northern senatorial district that is conflict prone has enjoyed significant level of peace in the later part of 2015 and 2016. The rates of attacks were minimal and the state governor was applauded for sustaining peace unlike it was in the time past. It was toward the later part of 2017 that the state began to witness another new phases of attacks. It first started in Bassa on 3rd October 2017 where a young Fulani herder was murder by a native of Irikwe (Danladi, 2017). Drastic action was taken by the state

government and the securities apparatus in the state and the culprit was arrested. Despite the arrest, there was a reprisal attack in the community and 11 persons were confirmed death. Securities were mounted to avoid further attacks.

After a relative peace of a month and some week, the attack in Barkin Ladi erupted. It started with the incidences of cattle rustling and then the attack in Foron where 11 people were found death and several houses were set ablaze. The situation was controlled with the intervention of the state government and the joint task force in the state. Peace restored and people returned to their normal business. No arrest was made to ascertain the culprit behind the odious act. In that same month, there was a confrontation between police officers of the special Anti Robbery Squad (SARS) and youth of the main town over an alleged arrest of youths which the officers acclaimed to be suspected robbers (Nathan, 2017).

In 2018, there were several cases of cattle rustling and pocket of attacks in the villages in the Local Government Area. The Fulani herders in villages such as Gashish, Sho, Foron complained of the continuous increases in the incidences of cattle rustling in their domain. Meyetti Allah cattle breeders Association in Nigeria (MACBAN) , a religious turned socio politico-economic ethnic pressure organization of the Fulani in the state pay a solidarity visit to the governor and complained of the menace of the increase incidence of cattle rusting in the state. The group accused the Berom youth as the suspects carrying out such act (Interview on 15th September, 2018). The Berom native situated in areas such as: Fan, Foron, Dorawa, Bishichi also complained of how their cattle were rustled and accused the Fulani herders as the suspects too. The incidence became a blame game where each divide is pointing accusing finger on the other. The state government and the securities apparatus in the state did all they could to arrest persons perpetrating the act but all to the contrary (Interview on 15th September, 2018).

On 12 April 2018, there was a report of the missing of 200 cows. 36 cows were also killed and 100 were rustled. The herders report the scene to the Joint task force and in attempt to pursuit the rustlers, three soldiers got missed. Their corpses were not seen and their phone numbers after some days were tracked around an open space in Sabon Gari but their corpse were not seen. On 30th April of 2018, a butcher who went to collect his debt from a Berom woman was machetes to death in Fan. He was a Muslim and a native of Mangu but was erroneously killed because of his long bear (Interview on 15th September, 2018). One week after the incidence, a Fulani commercial motor cyclist took a Berom native in a village in Foron and later was not seen. These developments continue to spur distrust and hatred among the Berom and the Fulani in the local government Area. There was accumulation of tension and grievance among the two groups. It was widely speculated that there will be attacks after the celebration of Ramadan. The incidences of cattle rustling kept re-occurring among the two groups and no person was caught as culprit behind the ugly scene (Interview on 15th September, 2018). .

A Week after the Ramadan celebration that is on the 24th of June, 2018, over 150 corpses were found following the 48 hours siege in five villages of Gashish District of Barkin Ladi. The villages were Xland, Gindin AKwati, Ruku, Nghar, Kura falls and Kukuruk .Other affected are Rakok, Kok, Razak and Ndin, all in Ropp district. The Plateau State governor in person of Bar. Simon Lalong had to cut short the APC convention he was attaining in Abuja in order to come and take charge of the security situation in the affected areas. The attackers were said to be the suspected herders and there were variation in the number of persons killed as the police public relation officer adduced 11 and other groups such as BECO, BYM, and COCIN were stressing 200 and more. There were reprisal attacks on the 25th, 26th, and 27th .Federal high ways and other routes in the affected areas were not only block but a lot of innocent persons based on religious pigmentation were kill as projection (Interview on 15th September, 2018). 11 of the suspected Fulani herders were arrested along with 13 Berom youths who projected and as well were found with sophisticated weapon were arrested. On 29th August, 2018, there was also an attack in Abonong village and Dorawa of Barkin Ladi Local Government Area. In the attack, a pastor and his wife and other three persons were killed .A church was set ablaze and three other persons were missed. On 6th of September, there was also a fresh attack in Barkin Ladi Local Government Area. The affected communities are Nding Suisut village. According to the police public relation officer of the state, Tyop Terner, two persons were killed, four injured and 12 houses were set ablaze. The attackers came two days after 5 local miners were killed in Gana Ropp of the same Barkin Ladi Local Government Area (Interview on 15th September, 2018).

9. THEORITICAL UNDERPINING

Systemic theory of conflict was utilised as the theoretical framework of the study. The theory provides a socio-structural explanation for the emergence of violent social conflicts. The position of this theory is that reason(s) for any social conflict lie in the social context within which it occurs. Johnson (2016) noted in the case of political violence, “any analytical penetration of the behaviour characterized as ‘purposive political violence’ must utilize as its tool a conception of the social context in which it occurs.” This paradigm turns our focus to social factors and the effects of large- scale (usually sudden) changes in social, political and economic processes that would usually guide against instability.Systemic factors that lead to changes in peoples’ material comfort include environmental degradation that reduces access to sources of livelihood, uncontrolled population growth especially in urban centres, resource scarcity and its allocation through lopsided political processes and competition, the negative effects of colonial and Cold War legacies, breakdown of cherished values and

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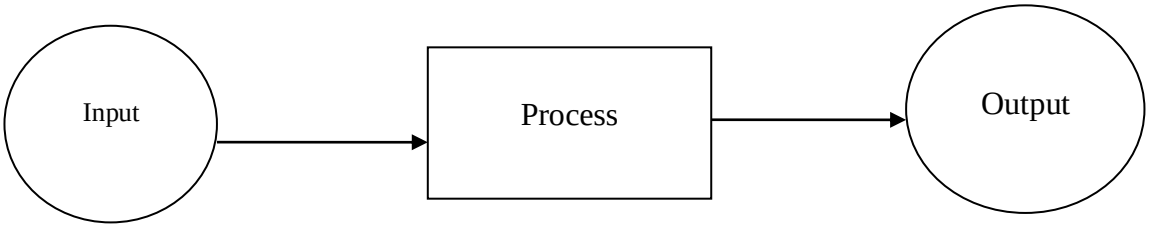
traditions that played crucial social control functions, widespread poverty in the midst of plenty, the domination and marginalization of minority groups by those in the majority, and ethnicity. These are all examples of systemic causes of conflict.

Systemic theories also seek to explain the relationship between modernization and political disorder and see movements between different periods of economic and political history as containing large amounts of 'pull factors', tension and crises that create conditions of internal conflict and instability. The theory is applicable to the study in the following dimension:

a) **The inputting elements:** These are factors that breed grounds for the appearance of the conflict of herders and farmers in Barkin Ladi Local Government Area. The inputs in this study are the precursor to the conflicts in the past. These are: urbanization, poverty, population explosion, religious sentiment, indigene-settlers divide, among many others. It also look at how the conflict had being broaden with different interpolation such as the labeled herders attacks, activities of Bigol and a lot of others

b) **The process or conversational Mechanism:** In this work, the mechanism which aid and help to transform the menace of herders and farmers confrontation comprises of activities such as loose border in the Northern part of the country, weak policing, mutual suspiciousness, bad governance , ethnic and religious intolerance among many others.

a. **The Output:** The resultant effect of the interaction of the aforesaid variables often give rise to act such as farmers and herders confrontations, cattle rustling, intense aggressions and frustration from religious and ethnic groups, activities of societal miscreant and hoodlums, conflict entrepreneurs and a lot of others. Nigerian government can only succeed in cushioning this act only if it works on the inputting factors and further strengthen mechanism to checkmate the conversion mechanism such as the effects and consequences of the confrontations.



A Schematic Illustration of the Systemic theory of Conflict

a. Environmental Degradation	a. Loose borders	a. Farmers and herders clashes
b. Desert Encroachment	b. Failed & weak policing	b. cattle Rustling Dispute
c. Urbanization	c. Bad governance	c. Frustration & Aggression
d. Population explosion	d. Ethnic and Religious intolerance	d. activities of Miscreants
e. Poverty		
f. unemployment		

Source: Adapted by the Arthurs from Anifowose(2006)

10. DISSCUSSIONS AND FINDINGS

(a) In the course of the study, it was found that there was a grave yard peace because the conflicts which would appear resolved have a habit of continuing and that are why we spoke about conflict accommodation instead of resolution. New conflicts tended to surface as old ones were being accommodated. The new conflicts in Barkin Ladi were between the semi- sedentary Fulani Agro- pastoralist and their host communities (.i.e. The Berom). The recent phenomenon of forcing Fulani pastoralists to move after decades of settlement in a location has led to violent conflict. The Fulani told us that in places where they were allowed to settle, they were made to understand that they had no right to land. In short, they were living for a borrowed period of time and the pressure on land increased.

(b) In the course of the study, it was found that the activities of Bigol, the indigenous cattle rustlers, the bandit group are at the heart of the recurrent attacks. There activities were product of the multiplier effect of the conflict in the past. Interview session with key informants among the divide shows that it was the previous conflicts that have breed ground and room for the act. The nowadays conflicts are directly linked to the activities of rustlers and attendants consequence such as attacks and reprisal attacks. It was also uncovered that people easily resorted to violent attacks when the scenes are coloured with religious and or ethnic pigmentation. The attackers hide under religious background as the basis whereas in actual form, they are not the preeminent causes. The Bigol from the Fulani herders' extraction rustled cows and so also some facet of youths among the Berom ethnic group. There are also some groups

of bandit that are actively in the act and their membership and composition cut across diverse ethnic groups.

(c) Due to the change from the traditional conflict mechanism to that of police and court, organization, politicians, elites and other interest group were formed, claiming to represent the pastoralist farmers. In the course of our research, we discovered that organization like Meyetti Allah and Kaulafore represent the interest of the Fulani herders and groups such as BYM, BECO, PIDAN and a lot of others represent the Berom.

(d) In the course of the study, it was also unraveled that sumptuous of properties such as shops, houses, farms, cows, motors; among many others were destroyed. A lot of persons were killed and thousands displaced. The Berom Youth movement (BYM) revealed in 2018 that within 9 months in 2018, over 300 were killed hundreds injured. There were also the incidences of proliferation of weapons, crops damages, mutual distrust among the settled Fulani herders and their host communities

11. CONCLUSION

Barkin Ladi Local Government Area of Plateau State had witnessed sumptuous number of violent attacks. The ugly scene first started as a spillage of the Jos north crisis of 2001. At its starting, it was violent conflict then it transmute to violent attacks. The attacks are recurrent nightmare that hardly will a month pass without hearing of one form of attack or the other. This menace had lasted for over a decade and it's still rearing up its ugly head. The nowadays attacks are more of the product or function of the multiplier effect of the previous violent conflicts which mostly manifested in the form of the heinous activities of the so called Bigol, the Berom youths who are into cattle rustling and the bandit who have seen the unscrupulous act as lifestyle and profit from it reoccurrence. The violence often started in the form of cattle rustling, attacks on suspected communities and then reprisal attacks.

A lot of spectators and observers have mistook the conflicts and the attacks to incidences such as crops damages, pressure on land, population increase, competition for scarce resources and land dispute. But there is more to the aforesaid elements. The said factors were the precursor of the conflict in the past and at present, have nothing to do with the incessant attacks. The nowadays attacks are purely linked to the activities of the Bigol, Bandit and some groups of the indigenous youth of the local Government Area who are participating in cattle rustling. Religion and ethnicity on the other hand are only exploited to raise the violence to enormous magnitude. The attacks had led to a lot of destruction of lives and properties.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following sets of recommendations were proffered:

a. To effectively manage conflict situation and conflict potentials in the Northern States and Nigeria at large, apart from responding to the underlying factor as identified earlier, there is the need to put in place mechanism for dialogue and civil engagement. Government need to devise structure, train requisite personnel and deploy the necessary equipment for monitoring conflicts and deescalating existing conflict situation, transforming them into ending and sustainable peace. The structure should involve all and sundry; including religious groups, ethnic nationalities, civil societies, the academia, women group and the government.
b. The Nigeria police force and other securities in the country should improve on their mode of carrying out their functions. There should be a transformation from the orthodox and traditional modus operandi to modern and conventional policing approaches. Police officers and securities personnel should be trained and updated with modern trend of handling conflicting situation. The federal government in collaboration with the ministry of police affairs should provide officers with weaponry tools that would help them to approach any situation without hesitation.
c. The usage of the adjective – "suspected" Fulani herders should be checked and review. The pronouncement of the word "suspected" shows that there is element of doubt, uncertainty and unsure on the declaration. This development is a weakness on the part of security personnel in the country. The perpetrator should be identified, named and deal with as spelt out by the law. The security personnel of the country should also create a line and demarcation between attacks that was carried by Fulani herders, Fulani bandits, farmers, Cattle rustlers, social miscreant and conflict entrepreneurs.
d. The Nigerian constitution should define in clear terms laws on activities such as open grazing, the usage of grazing reserve and mediums to solve cases of herders and farmers in the country. This can be strengthen by establishing grazing reserve and specifying penalties for careless and restless grazing, open grazing by minors and a lot of other.

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