

PERSPECTIVE ON INTER-RELIGIOUS CRISIS: FULANI HERDSMEN IN NIGERIA AS A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Previous scholarships have established that many religious crises in Nigeria have been caused by political, religious, social and economic factors. But the Fulani-herdsmen (ethnic factor) crisis in focus, which is seen by many, especially the Christian body as a major source of religious crisis in the country, has been under-explored. The educational, individual and corporate bodies have also attempted to proffer solutions to the religious crisis in Nigeria in the past, but little has been done on this issue from the Christian perspective, especially the current Fulani herdsmen crisis. This is the gap that the researcher intends to fill. Using the secondary sources of data collection, the paper will employ “St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Augustine’s theory of just war, which emphasizes the taking away of someone’s life as a wrong act and that every state is duty-bound to defend the life of their citizens and uphold justice. Using the comparative approach of interrogation, the researcher will strongly support those who argue strongly in this paper that the Fulani Herdsmen are predominantly Islam. And since the great grandfathers of the Fulani in Nigeria were Muslims and while they were still alive, they were majorly involved in the Holy War agenda known as Jihad, to spread Islam in every nook and cranny of this nation, until they were no more; then it can only be imagined that the present Fulani herdsmen who are wantonly killing innocent citizens of the country and displacing people from their ancestral homes surely carry with it a religious connotation. However, the research will employ legal Christian solutions in tackling this current menace and bring about a lasting peaceful society that secures lives and property.

Key Words: Fulani herdsmen, Religion, Islam, Christianity, Killings.

Introduction

Recent events of simultaneous brutal killings across the length and breadth of this nation have become a worrisome matter that cannot just be swept under the carpet. Over the years, the state of the nation has witnessed the rise of a deadly Islamist terrorist group known as Boko-Harram.¹ As efforts were being made to tackle the killings of this deadly sect, all of a sudden, the Fulani herdsmen killings which before 2015 used to be tagged as just a mere farmer-herder's tussle by observers suddenly took a religious colouration as most of the killings attributed to the herders' went beyond farmers alone to the targeted Christian population. This is the claim of the Christian body and others.² This paper will therefore first discuss the aim and objectives of the study, a statement of the problem, and some traces of the literature review before looking at the brief history of the Fulani herdsmen crisis in Nigeria, arguments and counterarguments of the crisis as having a religious connotation and subsequent solutions to the crisis from the Christian perspective.

Aim and objectives of the study

¹ "Boko-Harram" started like a joke in the year 2002 under the leadership of Yusuf Mohammed. After his arrest, he was quickly killed before a trial on him would start. But today "Boko-harram" has wrecked havoc in the North East Nigeria. Many school children have been kidnapped and innocent souls, lost. See "Boko Haram Nigerian Islamic group" <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Boko-Haram>. Retrieved on 13/06/2021.

² In the Northern region, that is predominantly Islam, the activities of the Fulani herdsmen has greatly affected states like Adamawa, Benue, Plateau, report has it that these killings were more aimed at the major Christian dominated areas.

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This paper seeks to explore the ethnic perspective on the inter-religious crisis in Nigeria, using the Fulani herdsmen crisis as a case study.

The objective of the paper is to:

- i. Review previous scholarship on the causes and solutions to the inter-religious crisis in Nigeria.
- ii. Give a brief overview of the Fulani herdsmen crisis in Nigeria.
- iii. Highlight the arguments of the crisis as a mere farmer-herders' clash.
- iv. Highlight the counterargument of the crisis as having a religious connotation.
- v. Determine whether the Fulani-herdsmen crisis was a mere farmer-herder clash or not.
- vi. Suggest possible solutions to the crisis.

Statement of the problem

Previous scholarships have established that many religious crises in Nigeria have been caused by political, religious, social and economic factors. But the Fulani-herdsmen (ethnic factor) crisis in focus, which is seen by many, especially the Christian body as a major source of religious crisis in the country, has been under-explored. The educational, individual and corporate bodies have also attempted to proffer solutions to the religious crisis in Nigeria in the past, but little has been done on this issue from the ethnic perspective, especially the current Fulani herdsmen crisis

Literature review

Previous scholars think that Religious conflict in Nigeria is to be viewed from two perspectives; Firstly the intra-religious conflict and second, the inter-religious conflict. The former deals with conflicts within religions, where some denominations and factions may not view themselves as part of a broader whole while the latter deals with the conflicts involving one religious faith with another different religious faith. E.g, Islam and Christianity³

Causes of Religious Crisis in Nigeria

Previous scholars posit that there are many factors responsible for the causes of the religious crisis in Nigeria. They range from political and religious factors, where scholars like P. John and M. O. Yusuf noted that since independence in 1960, Nigeria has experienced many conflicts, like the 1967-70 Biafra civil war.⁴ Moreover, when any Nigerian government that is supposed to operate based on the principles of a secular state turns to patronising religious activities, then, the crisis is imminent. According to them, the 2015 election took a religious dimension, just like the one of 2011. Arms were imported from South Africa, using the CAN chairman's private jet, this of course made the Muslim brothers during the 2015 elections also vote for a candidate from their faith and

³ J. Paden, Religion and Conflict in Nigeria countdown to the 2015 election. United States institute of peace www.usp.org. Retrieved 29-05-2022.

⁴ J. Paden, Religion and Conflict in Nigeria countdown to the 2015 election. United States institute of peace www.usp.org. Retrieved 29-05-2022.

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even threatened that should he lose, the nation would be set ablaze⁵.

Another area considered to have issues bringing about religious conflict is the social factor. This according to scholars ranges from the social media, intolerant of ethnic diversities and external or foreign influences.⁶

S.U. Erivwo cites the role of the press in 1987 in Kafachan as means of inciting religious tension between the Muslims and Christians. The radio, dailies and television program devoted their front page. The public was misinformed by members of the press through a biased report. And this made the Muslims and Christians to be at each other's throats.⁷ Another scholar that contributes to this point is Ikechukwu⁸.

The economic factor is also another area that has caused religious conflict in Nigeria as posed by scholars. Piterf observes that Financial and leadership tussle, the establishment of religious institutions for profit making, poverty, greed and grievance are the major issues that bring about the religious conflict here. This factor deals more with Intra-religious

⁵ Y. M. Olalere. (ND) Muslims and Contemporary Nigerian Politics, Department of Educational Technology, University of Ilorin.15. See also E. Ohajanwa. S. 2013. Basics of peace and Conflict Resolutions, Owerri: Cinoyz Word Services, 121

⁶ O.U. kalu (ed), 1976. Religions; A Journal of the Nigerian Association of the Study of Religions, Nsukka; Dept. of Religion. Uni. of Nigeria

⁷ S.U. Erivwo 1976, The Study of Religion as an Academic Disciple in Religions vol.1, Dec.1976, 7-20.

⁸ Ikechukwu, 2012. A historical Survey of ethnic Conflict in Nigeria. Asian Social Science, vol.8, No 4, 1.

conflict. It is on record that due to economic reasons many pastors do involve in financial tussles with their church leadership, as such break away from their new churches. That is the more reason why most of the sermons revolve around prosperity.⁹ In all these, as explained above, there is yet a need to address this religious crisis from the ethnic perspective, using the Fulani herdsmen issue as a case study, a vacuum created that this research intends to fill.

The Solution to Religious Conflict in Nigeria.

The following bodies have relevant roles to play in the efforts to overcome religious conflict within Nigeria as suggested by previous scholars, they include:

The Educational Institutions: M.A. Bidmos suggest that in all tertiary institutions where religious studies are offered as an academic discipline, cross-fertilization should be instituted. This is a situation where a student offering Christian studies as his major would have to offer some courses in Islamic studies and those who major in Islamic studies also offer some courses in Christian studies. With such exposure, parochialism and narrow-mindedness, which breed misperception and misinterpretation among youths, could be nipped in the bud as a way of tolerating others from other faith.

Individual And Corporate Efforts: Scholars like; Professor Ismail Balogun, formerly of the University of Ilorin thinks of

⁹ Peterf, 1997. *The Growth of the Church in Africa*, Jos: CAPRO media services Pub. Division, 452

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inviting individuals to help curtail religious conflicts¹⁰. Corporate bodies should also be formed together with the existing ones like the Islamic Study Group of Nigeria (ISGON), organized by Professor Abdul Kareem Hussein to address the issues of religious conflicts¹¹

Lastly is the Need for Dialogue: Scholars like M.A Gerard¹² and J.K. Ayantayo notes the need for accepting the equality of religions because all religions are equal in terms of the origin of the world, man and the hereafter.¹³ There is also a need for identifying and accepting religious pluralism, whereby everyone will come to accept the fact that there are many other religions in society aside from the one being practised by an individual or group of individuals.¹⁴ These solutions however do not sufficiently address from the ethnic perspective of inter-religious crisis, using Fulani herdsmen in

¹⁰ I. A.B. Balogun, 1978. Religious Understanding and Corporation in Nig. Ilorin. See also this Inaugural Lecture entitled: Utilizing Religions for Peaceful, Unity and Progress in Nigeria, University of Ilorin January-22-1981.

¹¹ For example, in 1983, the group organized a national seminar to which Christians were invited as co-participants to examine the menace of alcohol which was and still is threatening the stability of the Nigerian society. See The Resolutions. This was adopted at the first national symposium on Alcohol and national development, held at the Arts Theatre, Iganmu, Lagos, Nigeria on Sat. 10th Sha-aban 1403 (21st of May, 1983), organized by the Islamic Study of Nigeria, Lagos

¹² M. A. Gerard Forde. 2013, A Journey Together, Ireland: Cois Tine, 7-8

¹³ J.K. Ayantayo. 2018. Rescuing God from his Abductors. An Inaugural Lecture Delivered at University of Ibadan, Ibadan: Ibadan University Publishing House. 30.

¹⁴ J.K. Ayantayo. 2018. Rescuing God from his Abductors. An Inaugural Lecture Delivered at University of Ibadan, Ibadan: Ibadan University Publishing House. 30.

Nigeria as a case study, a vacuum created that this research intends to fill.

Brief overview of the Fulani herdsmen crisis in Nigeria

The history of the Fulani herdsmen crisis cannot be overemphasized. The report has it that before this period, there was a common relationship between the herders and the local dwellers. And even if there was a misunderstanding, it was never a matter of life and death. The researcher himself could still recall some events during childhood¹⁵, when he was just 5 years of age, when there used to be a massive influx of Fulani herdsmen with cattle, passing through the heart of the town where he left with his family. The Fulani women used to come around selling '*fura*' and '*nunu*' a form of local milk that interested the dwellers. There was no crisis of any sort, especially in Benue State. However, the story began to change when the herdsmen were seen carrying guns (AK 47) around. Soon afterwards, we started hearing about Fulani herders' and farmers' crises. One could still believe that the situation was just a mere misunderstanding between the aforementioned parties, but when the number of victims of the said crisis started increasing, another suspicion was gradually being perceived, especially when some members of the government started making careless and intentional statements that suggest otherwise¹⁶. Just imagine the report below:

¹⁵ S.E, Ikyernum. 4th /May/2021. Male. Scholar. Oral Interview on Fulani relationship in Ihugh, Benue State.

¹⁶ It was the Federal Government that was justifying the killings of the citizens by accusing some governors of making laws against open grazing. See <https://theeagleonline.com.ng/it-will-be-difficult-to-believe-fg-not-colluding-with-insurgents-to-exterminate-christians-can>. Retrieved on 13/06/202

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ACAPS reports that since 2016, a lot of lives, numbering about 3600 were killed in the farmer herders' crisis. More so, about 62,000 Nigerian citizens lost their homes in the North Central region where the conflict is high. This resulted in many herders and farmers losing their lives, and crop production declining. This conflict has severe expenses on the country where 2.3 million dollars of its revenue were lost¹⁷.

Also, from 1980-2019, it was reported that there were in total of 1,785 gruesome attacks and invasions witnessed in about 32 states in the country. This resulted in the loss of 28,878 lives. There are also a total number of 121 Muslim riots cutting across 19 states, killing over 9,451 lives. Again, there is a record of 963 different attacks from the herders of Fulani extraction. The groups were responsible for 6,615 murders in 32 states. The report further stated that in Southern Kaduna where the Christians are dominant, hundreds and thousands have been killed including a highly placed traditional ruler. No one has been held responsible for the attack to this day. The herdsmen were also in the Agatu area of Benue State and other Christian communities on massive and aggressive manslaughter. In Anyiin and Logo local government of Benue state, the attacks have been constant as scores and scores of people are losing their lives daily. The act (killings) is so perpetual that many have lost count of the number of casualties.

¹⁷https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/products/files/20170320_acaps_thematic_report_nigeria_farmers-herders_violence.pdf

While it is on record that the herdsmen have touched almost every state in the federation, it does affect mostly Christian communities across Plateau, Taraba, Adamawa and Enugu which are more on the receiving end of the crisis¹⁸. Just recently, in the South Western region, the killings, attacks and kidnappings by the Fulani herdsmen became so worrisome that an activist (Sunday Igboho) rose to the occasion by issuing a seven-day ultimatum to the Fulani community in Igangan, Ibarapa North LGEA in Oyo state, over allegations that they are the ones who are responsible for the kidnapping and rising insecurity in the area. He reiterated that he cannot continue to fold his arms and watch the rapid killings. He thus asked the Alhaji and his people to go back to the North; otherwise, if they continued to stay in that place, they should be able to face any repercussions that arise¹⁹.

The above warning Sunday Igboho quickly got a response as the security forces were sent immediately to restore order. However, the reverse is the case when there is a report of the killings by herdsmen in other different parts of the country. The security forces would not respond quickly, only to appear later when people and properties were killed and destroyed. The question of the real intentions of the Fulani herders and the farmer's crisis in the country has therefore become a topic for

¹⁸ <https://theeagleonline.com.ng/it-will-be-difficult-to-believe-fg-not-colluding-with-insurgents-to-exterminate-christians-can>. Retrieved on 13/06/2021

¹⁹ J. Oke and A. Dalibi. (Sun Jan 17 2021). "Oyo: Sunday Igboho Issues Quit Notice to Fulani" <https://dailytrust.com/oyo-sunday-igboho-issues-quit-notice-to-fulani>. Retrieved on 13/06/2021

debate. While some see it as a mere farmer-herder crisis²⁰, others see it as an opportunity for the herdsmen to misbehave since one of their own (President Muhammadu Buhari) is in charge²¹. However, some attribute the crisis to having a religious colouration. We will therefore go ahead to discuss the argument for and against the farmers and the Fulani herdsmen crisis before taking a position.

ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST THE FARMERS AND THE FULANI HERDSMEN CRISIS IN NIGERIA

The argument for a mere farmer-herders clash

The first argument was put forward by the former emir of Kano (Sanusi Lamido Sanusi). And this is why he said that Nigeria as a country has two basic ethnic groups; the masses and elites. That, as soon as you have acquired some wealth, you have become part of the tribe known as the elite. But if you are poor, you belong to the mass tribe. If for any reason

²⁰ Chukwudi is of the opinion that the conflicts arising from the herdsmen and the farmers in recent time is occasioned by urban development, the demand for farmlands and places for grazing lands, the need for getting more pasture and the quest for water and the ceaseless continuous migration. (See Chukwudi Gbadebo Njoku. Farmer-Herder Relations in Nigeria: Historical antecedents and the way forward for social cohesion Research Fellow, Building Blocks for Peace Foundation,

²¹ S. Awhefeada says that Under Buhari's watch the herdsmen, who have made the president their patron, have carried on the mission of Ahmadu Bello. They are doing this in all parts of Nigeria. That, there is no state within the North Central region and South that the herdsmen have not touched with their killings. (See S. Awhefeada "Accomplishing Sardauna's mission" 15 January 2018/2:37am. <https://m.guardian.ng/issue/accomplishing-sardaunas-mission/> Retrieved on 13/06/2021)

you want to become an elite from the common class and you need more power, wealth or desire to have any elective position, all you need to do is to sow seeds of religion, ethnicity/tribalism among the commoners who are also known as the masses, to gain their sympathy for your aggrandizement. That; this is happening at both state and national levels. Unfortunately, when the election is over; when they have gotten into power, they decide to join the so-called rival enemies of yesterday to celebrate, while the disgruntled masses keep on fighting one another. He describes this as a strategy that is been used more than 300 years ago as a strategy for war, where someone from a lower class, who wants to dine with the high, mighty and influential, would steer up major actors across the religious or tribal divides and use it to gain power. And ones he is there, he mingles immediately with the so-called bitter rivals and sues for peace with those of higher class and turns his back on the same masses that got him there, leaving others to suffer and keep grudges on their behalf²²

Deducing from what the Emir is saying, he is simply implying that left alone the struggle for power, wealth and fame by our greedy leaders, who use religion, especially as a yardstick to play on the emotions of people to get their selfish ambition accomplished at all cost, religion would never have been a source of conflict in Nigeria. That is partly true because, most of the innocent farmers who have been killed by herdsmen militia have no aspiration, whatsoever to contest for any

²² Nayok. (2016). Emir Sanusi's Speech; Sir. Olaniwun Ajayi's Book Lunch at Muson Centre. Retrieved from <https://www.nairaland.com/3126898/emir-sanusis-speech-launching-sir> on 20th-07-2017.

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elective position or to even move from the masses to the elite tribe. They were simply massacred in their homeland; in the land of their ancestors. And the association for these herders claims responsibility whenever it happens. Even the federal government confirms the killings as due to the refusal of the Governors to allow open grazing. So, the emir's position does not hold water.

Another position is that of J.N. Chukwudi. He posits that the crisis re-occurring with both groups (herdsmen of Fulani extraction and the farmers) in recent times is a result of urbanization, and the demand for farm lands and cattle grazing as well as a desperate move for pasture and water, which also includes migration of herders at new, unfamiliar locations, the increase of the use of arms, and the eventual failure of the Ruga system among others²³. This is also partly true, as there are still large areas of uncultivated lands in Nigeria, especially in the North, where the Fulanis can still use it as a grazing resort. Nigeria is underdeveloped. The country has never come to that era where land is scarce for grazing. Even the country's natural resources as of now are been under-utilized. So, this position is at par with what is happening.

Another says the problem is likely to be seen as a result of tribal and religious sentiment and struggle that started before the coming of the colonial masters, but since not much of those conflicts have been recorded in Nigeria's history, then

²³ C. G. Njoku. Farmer-Herder Relations in Nigeria: Historical antecedents and the way forward for social cohesion Research Fellow, Building Blocks for Peace Foundation

contemporary factors are to blame. This is the position of M. O. Omilisu.²⁴ The question that this position does not answer is what contemporary factors the author is talking about. For there can be no other factor than ethnoreligious struggle.

Another point of defence for the argument is the carrying of guns by the Fulani herdsmen for just protection. Mohammed, speaking in Bauchi on 11th February 2021 said the AK-47 rifles were being used as defence from cattle rustlers and other unforeseen safety issues on the road. That, the AK-47-bearing herdsmen had no other choice than to do so because of a lack of government commitment to securing their lives and livelihood²⁵. The question the Governor fails to answer is why then does the government sanction and arrest any person found with the same weapons which he/she uses for protection²⁶ but justifies others (Fulani herdsmen) for carrying the same weapon? And why were these weapons not licensed for the herdsmen to carry until the present administration, which is

²⁴ M. O. Omilisu. (2016). Roving terrorists or innocuous cattle grazers? Between herdsmen's economic survival and community annihilation in Nigeria. *Cultural Relations Quarterly Review*. Summer.

²⁵ S. Toromade. (Feb 11, 2021) Bauchi Governor Mohammed says herdsmen need AK-47 to defend themselves. <https://www.pulse.ng/news/local/bauchi-governor-bala-mohammed-says-herdsmen-need-ak-47/8cf3fnz>

²⁶ Sometimes in January, 2018, a certain sponsored security volunteers by the Government of Benue state as claimed by the Nigerian army were arrested and guns seized from them by the Nigerian military at Arufu, a boundary between Taraba and Benue State. Although the state government in response to the allegedly sponsored group, denied the claim, may be owing to cowardice. And even with the justification that these guns were meant for protection of the community, it was still a crime to the military to do so. But nothing of such will ever happen to Fulani-herdsmen carrying guns. (See E. Onyeji. Jan. 10, 2018. We train no Militia, Benue Govt replies Nigerian Army. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/we-train-no-militia-benue-govt-replies-nigerian-army.html>. Retrieved on 13/06/2021).

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headed by a Fulani man, a patron of the herdsmen association the one to license it? This is a serious ethno-religious bias that should be called into question. The above points put forward by the defenders of the Fulani-herdsmen crisis as being just a mere farmer-herder crisis or a means to defend themselves or just a ploy by the elite tribe to hold onto power cannot hold water, as reasons given can only be a theory that is conspiracy based.

Argument Against: the herdsmen crisis as having a religious colouration

Christians are not happy with the gruesome killings, which have a more devastating impact on Nigerian Christians. The report given by CAN (Christian Association of Nigeria) on the murder of the Chairman of CAN in Michika LGEA of Adamawa State, in the person of Rev. Andimi, Lawan, by the known herdsmen group revealed that the killing was done, due to his refusal in converting to Islam. They further reiterated that the terrorists are very open about their Islamization of the country, Nigeria. They have made the states in the North East as killing platforms. And so, even the presidency is justifying the acts of these herders, by accusing some governors of not supporting open grazing with their anti-grazing laws; claiming also that these murders have nothing to do with genocide against Christians but just a mere herders-farmers' clashes. Also, the association confirmed that the Miyetti Allah has claimed responsibility for the different killings going on in many parts of the country. They went further to confess that although some Muslims have also been killed; however the

major focus is Christians. The association concluded that it will be very difficult to disassociate the government from the centre with the insurgents trying to Islamize the country by exterminating the Christians.²⁷

Another evidence of argument from the Christians' perspective is the eyewitness testimony of one of the repentant Fulani militia²⁸, who was sneaked into Benue State for intelligence gathering after being given thorough training before he later became a born-again child of God. Upon confession, he said that "He speaks Tiv as fluently as any ancient Tiv man. That He knows all the districts, streams and landmarks in Tivland and he knows a great deal about the Tiv history. When asked how he came to learn how to speak Tiv and all the information he got about the Tiv people?. He said that he was among those the Jihadist was training to later launch attacks on not just Tiv nation but the rest of Nigerian tribes that are yet to be Islamized. But that, Christ appeared to him and he gave his life to Christ to the anger of his father who was a Shiek. He further disclosed that he has mastery of over 5 different Nigerian languages, aside from Hausa and Fulani and that all those trained for the Jihad received similar training., the training enhances beneficiaries to flow easily with locals such that they become insiders who could inform hit-men on soft spots. Since this is evidence of an eyewitness who could still be traced to confirm this confession, it can only be right to ascertain that there is a huge "Islamization" agenda that has been in the

²⁷ <https://theeagleonline.com.ng/it-will-be-difficult-to-believe-fg-not-colluding-with-insurgents-to-exterminate-christians-can>. Retrieved on 13/06/2021

²⁸ Pastor Tijani. Living Faith Church, Aliede and Lecturer, WOFBI (Word of Faith Bible Institute. 05/18/2021

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pipeline for decades now and the society will have to be placed on alert.

S. Awhefeada while analyzing the Fulani-herdsmen crisis by tracing the beginning of the menace to the great grandfather of the caliphate “Ahmadu Bello” during the speech he made shortly before the independence said, the killings going on in different parts of the country attributing to the herdsmen has their approval. And that the crisis of the Western Region in 1962 happened due to the Northern People’s Congress (NPC) led by Ahmadu Bello in his quest to conquer the West. That the UMBC commonly known as the United Middle Belt Convention headed by Joseph Tarka also tried to suppress the superiority of the Northern agenda. This led to the so-called, Tiv riots of 1964 and the military response in suppressing them with their weapons. Both events were crucial to the downfall of the First Republic which led to the January coup of 1966. He further reiterated that under Buhari’s watch, the herdsmen have continued with the mission of Ahmadu Bello. And they are taking their jihad campaign to different parts of the country.

There is just no state in the North Central and the South that has not received their share of the dreaded Herdsmen neo-Jihadists. He further continued that the most recent killings are in Benue State. But unfortunately, none of the killers has been apprehended by the armed forces. Yet, the Army only used six days to crush those behind the New Year’s Day killings in the Port-Harcourt area of Rivers State. He is also of the opinion that the Nigerian military has been tormenting the South

recently with such dreaded military actions, tagging it different names like Operation Python Dance and Operation Crocodile Smile, but have not done so in like manner to stop the inhumane acts of Dan Fodio sons. Nigerians would, therefore, need to arise and put an end to this menace²⁹

S. Awhefeada's analysis is well captured, as he traces the crisis to the very foundations of the mission of the Fulani oligarchy, which is Islamization by Jihad as led by Uthman Danfodio. If the above is anything to go by, then S.E Ikyernum while analyzing how the Muslims strategize to spread their faith to others, sometimes do use different means to do so. One of them is the patience required in scheming to meet their target. It can take a Muslim mission hundreds of years to accomplish but certainly, the baton is always passed from generation to generation until the mission is accomplished³⁰. Thus, the aforementioned author's position and view surely have an iota of truth in it.

Determining the crisis as being a mere herders'-farmers clash or not

Conclusively, other salient anonymous Christian apologists note that the blatant, deliberate, outright and silent refusal of the federal government to regard the Fulani herdsman carrying guns as a terrorist group, but quick to regard harmless IPOB as one points a lot to the fact that there is a religious agenda.

²⁹ S. Awhefeada (15th Jan. 2018). "Accomplishing Sardauna's mission" <https://m.guardian.ng/issue/accomplishing-sardaunas-mission/> Retrieved on 13/06/2021.

³⁰ S.E, Ikyernum. 2023. *"Strategies in Mission for Soul Winning: 19 practical steps*. Germany: Blessed Hope Publishing, 5

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The silence on the part of the Federal government on its inability to give license to other state-sponsored vigilante groups to carry guns for self-defense, but do so to the Fulani herdsmen is tantamount to having a hidden agenda. If there is no hidden agenda, then, the testimony of the eyewitness account as stated above will not be true, or the fact that more Christian communities are being affected by the Fulani herdsmen killings will not be so. Even the president home town (in Kastina State) is intolerant to Christians and their worship. They are not allowed to freely preach Christ or mount any speaker that airs church worship. The *book-haram* a dreaded Islamic terrorist group was quick to regard Buhari before he became president as one of the people they will listen to when they were given conditions of negotiation with the federal government for a cease-fire.

Lastly, the killings affecting more Christians than Muslims going by the number of casualties justifies that the Fulani herdsmen crisis is not just a farmer-herder crisis, but a religious one. Also, the fact that one cannot separate the Fulani and their religious belief (Islam) is a pointer that the crisis is a religiously sponsored killing, commonly called 'Jihad'.

Possible Solutions to the Herdsmen Crisis

The following recommendations are suggested to curb the ongoing inter-religious crisis in Nigeria;

1. The federal and state government must back the law enforcement agents in ensuring freedom of worship in the country.

2. The federal government must be neutral in handling issues that are ethnoreligious and related to avoiding pointing or accusing fingers at members of the public.
3. Security agents should be saddled with the task of checkmating the activities of the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders' Association to avoid inciting violence in the presence of a farmers-herders crisis.
4. The military personnel should also carry out tight security operations in areas of violence and destruction of lives and properties emanating from the Fulani herders' crisis.
5. The use of A.K 47 and other licensed weapons issued to the Fulani herdsmen should be withdrawn and major security alternatives should be put in place to curb cattle rustling.
6. Focus on common values: Rather than emphasizing differences between different religions, Christians can focus on the values and beliefs that they share with people of other faiths. For example, many religions share a commitment to compassion, justice, and peace, which can serve as a basis for collaboration and mutual respect.
7. Build bridges of understanding: Finally, Christians should seek to build bridges of understanding between different religious communities, working to promote greater understanding and respect between people of different faiths. This may involve participating in interfaith events or initiatives or simply reaching out to people of other religions to build relationships and promote mutual understanding.³¹

³¹ See Micheal Youssef, Building Bridges: Christianity and Islam” Leslie Newbiggin.

Conclusion

It is difficult to cohabit with people of other faith due to their sparkling differences, but at the same time, it is not impossible to live in peace with them. The various religious beliefs among religions through in variations still have a space for the doctrine of peace. It is on this basis that the paper was able to critically address. Employing St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Augustine's theory of just war, which emphasizes the taking away of someone's life as a wrong act and that every state is duty bound to defend the life of their citizens and uphold justice. The government of this country must as a matter of urgency ensure that no one is equipped with weapons to take the lives of others in the name of self-defence. They must do everything possible to defend the citizens of this country. This sums up my take on the subject matter.

"The Gospel in a Pluralist Society"

Charles E Winquist. "Interfaith Encounters: Interreligious Dialogue and the Problem of Religious Truth" . Duane Alexander Miller. "A Christian Guide to Interfaith Dialogue"

