

Entrepreneurship Development and the Socio – Economic Implications of Herdsmen Attacks In Benue State, Nigeria

James T. Aan

Department of Sociology, Benue State University Makurdi

Abstract: - Herdsmen attacks in Benue State where the people are predominantly farmers/artisans have serious social and economic implications for entrepreneurship development of the state. Between 2013 and 2018, the state recorded 53 violent herdsmen attacks. Fifteen of the 23 local government areas in the state were affected: 2,438 people were killed, 750 were seriously injured, with 200 people still missing, 99,427 households were displaced in the attacks. Property worth 400 billion Naira and crops worth 25 billion Naira were destroyed. This study critically examined these implications using Google chrome and Google scholar to access internet data on herdsmen attacks in Benue State. In – depth interviews were also carried out with victims of the attacks, as well as government officials, and some security officials. The technique of data analysis was content analysis. The study found out that (1) the reasons for the herdsmen attacks includes: disagreement over the use of land and water, terrorist activities of Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria, harsh climatic conditions among others. (2) The magnitude of herdsmen attacks in Benue State is very high: (3) The consequences of the herdsmen attacks include: food insecurity, impending civil war, and imminent disintegration of Nigeria; (4) The socio – economic challenges of entrepreneurship development in Benue State include: shortage of raw materials, loss of long term savings for start – ups and expansion of business ventures, and others. The study concludes that restructuring of Nigeria’s federation in line with the citizens’ the political, social and economic interests is a must.

Keywords: - Benue State, entrepreneurship development, herdsmen attacks, socio – economic implications.

Introduction

The killing of people, displacing them from their homes, destroying their properties and sources of their livelihood are serious enough for any normal human beings to be concerned. The Janjaweed attacks on the people of Southern Sudan between 2003 and 2008, which were as serious as the current herdsmen attacks in Benue State and other states in the Middle Belt of Nigeria, gave the United Nations Security Council, the United State of America and the International Criminal Court enough concern to intervene in the Sudanese crisis. Why have the herdsmen attacks in the Middle Belt of Nigeria, especially in Benue State given the international community enough concern to intervene?

Since 2013, the Middle Belt of Nigeria particularly Benue State has recorded increasing numbers of herdsmen attacks, which seems to be deadlier than the Boko Haram insurgency in the North Eastern part of the country. These series of herdsmen

Attacks obviously have serious socio – economic challenges on the entrepreneurship development of Benue State. And since these socio – economic challenges are likely to have negative effects on the survival of the people, the state and perhaps the whole nation, this study believes it should be the concern most people who desire to survive and it should not be taken for granted.

The general objective of this study was to provide historically grounded explanations for the herdsmen attacks on the people of Benue State, as well as compare the hostile and violent development between herdsmen and crop farmers in the state with other modern societies, in which herdsmen and crop farmers live in harmony together as a way forward. While the specific objectives were (i) to identify the reasons for the herdsmen attacks in Benue State, (ii) to examine the magnitude of the herdsmen attacks in Benue State, (iii) to explain the

consequences of the herdsmen attacks in Benue state and Nigeria as a whole and (iv) to explain the socio – economic challenges and their implications on entrepreneurship development in Benue state.

Conceptual clarification

The concepts clarified in this section are entrepreneurship development, restructuring and socio - economic. UNDP (1999) defines entrepreneurship development as the process of enhancing entrepreneurial skills and knowledge through structural training and institutional building programmes. Entrepreneurship development aims to enlarge the base of entrepreneurs in order to hasten the pace at which new ventures are created and existing ones expanded. This accelerates employment generation and economic development. However, for this study entrepreneurship development simply means the creation of new ventures and the expansion of the existing ones. Restructuring on the other hand refers to organizing society in a new and different way such that the interests of the different social groups in it are well taken care of politically, socially and economically.

While socio-economic in this study refers to the relationship between social and economic factors or conditions which affect the quality of life, having direct and indirect impact on the patterns of social behavior and norms. The economic factors in socio-economic concern the sources of people's income generating activities, as well as non-income generating activities which determine the distribution of wealth and consumption patterns in society, such as occupations and domestic chores. The social factors on the other hand concerns the less-tangible factors such as status, class, personal dignity, freedom of decision making, personal safety, freedom of association, freedom from fear of physical harm, and the extent of participation in civil society.

The genesis of herdsmen attacks in the Middle Belt of Nigeria

Man as a social animal, is always interested in knowing where he is in time and space, why he is where he is and why certain things happen the way

they do (Dzeremo, 2002). An understanding of the past equips man with the intellectual tools to better handle happenings around him more effectively and efficiently.

The Middle Belt of Nigeria is made up of Adamawa, Benue, Kaduna, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau and Taraba states inhabited by over 200 indigenous ethnic groups and settlers (NOUN, 2004). The major indigenous ethnic groups in the zone are Bassa, Nupe, Gwari, Birom, Angas, Igala, Igbira, Tiv, Idoma, Igede, Agatu, Alago, Eggon, Yergam, Mada, Rukuba, Jarawa, Afizere, Jukun, Waka, Ankwei, Kagoro, Kaje, Mumuye, Bachama, Jaba, Kambari, Kadara, Borgawa, and Yoruba; who are predominantly crop farmers and fishermen who have been living in the area before the 17th century. Among the prominent settlers and latecomers to the region are the nomadic Fulani herdsmen, who as Nigerian citizens are indigenes of Sokoto, Kebbi, Zamfara, Bauchi, Gombe, Katsina, and Kano states (NOUN, 2004 & Elewa, Ukangwu, Nwachukwu, and Nwaubani, 1988).

According to NOUN (2004) the Fulani are nomadic herdsmen who move back and forth with seasons: to the south in dry seasons and north in the wet season. They are known to have had a long history of interactions with the crop farmers and fishermen of the Middle Belt of Nigeria stretching as far back as the 19th century. The Fulani nomadic herdsmen's first contact with the people of the Middle Belt was during the Uthman Dan Fodio's jihad (a religious war intended to forcefully convert the people to Islam). According to Eluwa et al (1988), only the people of the present Benue, Plateau and parts of Kwara states escaped the jihad, while the rest of the region were victims of the war.

After the jihad, the Fulani nomadic herdsmen who are largely Muslims learnt to live in peace and harmony with their non – Muslim neighbors for long period until the early part of the 21st century when violent conflicts developed between the Fulani nomadic herdsmen and their crop farmers neighbors over the use of land and water due to population growth and harsh climatic conditions.

Since 2013, the conflicts have degenerated into non - provocative attacks on the crop farmers by the herdsmen in the Middle Belt of Nigeria (All Africa, 2018).

According to All Africa (2018), rising conflicts between herdsmen and crop farmers in Nigeria is already six times deadlier in 2018 than Boko Haram's insurgency, killing more than 1,300 people since January. The conflicts the report said have evolved from spontaneous reactions to provocations and now to deadlier planned attacks, particularly in Benue, Plateau, Adamawa, Nasarawa and Taraba states. The report adds that the conflicts are fundamentally land use contests between herdsmen and crop farmers across Nigeria's Middle Belt. The conflicts have taken on dangerous religious and ethnic dimensions, however, because most of the herdsmen are from traditionally nomadic Muslim Fulani, while most of the crop farmers are Christians of various ethnic groups. The report pointed out that since the violence escalated in January 2018, an estimated 300,000 people have fled their homes. Large scale displacement and insecurity in parts of Adamawa, Benue, Plateau and Taraba states hinder farming as well as herding, driving up food prices. The report warns that the conflict poses a grave threat to Nigeria's stability and unity and could be worse, if nothing is immediately done to stop the violence (All Africa, 2018).

Ishaku (2017) compares the herdsmen attacks in the Middle Belt of Nigeria the Janjaweed attacks on the black people of Southern Sudan between 2003 and 2008. Janjaweed he says are a militia group of nomadic Arab pastoralists who carried out a systematic genocide against black African Dafuris between 2003 and 2008 in an attempt to forcefully take over land, power and control of the Southern part of Sudan from non- Arab communities. The Janjaweed attacks Ishaku (2017) says continued until 2007 when the United Nations (UN) Security Council called for the disbanding of the group in Sudan due to the danger the continued activities of Janjaweed constituted to international peace and security. Following United Nations declaration, the

United States of America declared the activities of Janjaweed as genocide. In July 2008, the International Criminal Court (ICC) filed charges of genocide against the Sudanese President Bashir Omar. According to McKay (2011), by the time United Nations and the International Criminal Court intervened in the Southern Sudan attacks, about 520 people lost their lives in the Janjaweed attacks; about 178,258 households were displaced causing millions of people to live in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps (McKay, 2011 cited in Ishaku, 2017).

Although, the United Nations and the International Criminal Court have not intervened in the Fulani herdsmen attacks in the Middle Belt of Nigeria, Ishaku (2017) says there are striking similarities between the activities of Janjaweed in the Southern Sudan and the Fulani herdsmen attacks in the Middle Belt of Nigeria. According to Ishaku:

The similarities between the two groups in terms of racial, ethnic, religious, occupation and modus operandi are too striking to ignore. More so, the two groups, though being non – state actors, are known to enjoy proxy support of the power establishment where they operate (Ishaku, 2017: 150).

From Ishaku's point of view, the herdsmen attacks in the Middle Belt of Nigeria and the Janjaweed attacks in Southern Sudan are not just similar in their methods of operation but also have similar motive: to forcefully take over peoples land, usurp power and control them. Wegh (2017) seems to agree with Ishaku (2017) that the Fulani herdsmen attacks are beyond seeking grazing land for cattle. Wegh believes that part of the motive for the herdsmen attacks in Benue state is to revenge and subdue the people and control them for the wrong done to the herdsmen in the past. Wegh quoted the National Secretary General of Gan Allah Fulani Development Association (GAFDAN) Saleh Bayeri, who in 2016 said:

The Fulani herdsmen have this instinct of wanting to take revenge. It is in their nature. It is inherent, and in his blood even from his traditional activities. So if you strike a Fulani man today, wait for him another time. So when you hear that herdsmen

attacked a community, just ask if there was no any clash say, ten, fifteen years ago (Bayeri, 2016 cited in Wegh, 2017: 110).

Similarly, Ishaku (2017) quoted the Governor of Kaduna state, Mallam Nasir El – Rufai who twitted on July 15, 2012 saying:

We write this for all people to read. Anyone, soldier or not that kills a Fulani takes a loan repayable one day, no matter how long it takes (El – Rufai, 2012 cited in Ishaku, 2017: 164 – 165).

Ortom (2018) also agrees with Ishaku (2017) that the Janjaweed attacks in Southern Sudan and the Fulani herdsmen attacks in the Middle Belt of Nigeria especially Benue state have common motive: to forcefully take over peoples land, usurp power and control the people. However, unlike Wegh (2017), Ortom believes that the main motive for the Fulani herdsmen attacks in Benue state is the continuation of the Uthman Dan Fodio 1804 jihad. In his words:

The herdsmen attacks on several communities across the state are beyond grazing crisis but rather the continuation of the 1804 conquest and the occupation agenda of the jihadists (Ortom, 2018, Punch, September 15).

Report of the Political Bureau (1987), had earlier blamed continued communal, religious and ethnic conflicts in Nigeria on the British who during the colonial period destroyed or modified the systems and ethos of governance that prevailed during the pre – colonial period. The report observed that the Nigeria which the British inherited on the advent of colonial rule had a legal system firmly anchored in the mores, ethos and moral conscience of the people within each polity. However, in 1863, English law was formally introduced into Nigeria. The new legal system brought a new culture of legalism: the notion of rule of law different from morality. In theory, the ‘rule of law’ meant that every person, no matter his or her status was subject to the law of the land. Unfortunately, the introduction and implementation of the concept and practice were attended with the same hesitation, vacillation and reservations that attended the devolution of

authority and responsibility to Nigerians. At independence in 1960, the report said Nigeria inherited a weak socio – political structure, defective and unbalanced federation, an intensification of ethnic consciousness and rivalries, a subverted indigenous ethos of government and culture, and above all, inexperienced leadership. Most of the apparatuses of the state: a civil service not primarily geared to development; a police force alienated from the interests of the ruling class and increasingly torn apart by regional sentiments; and a judicially wedded to the protection of the interests of the power elite and could not meet or support aspirations an emergent state; the parliamentary constitution did not contain adequate provision for positive socio – economic transformation and national integration, it encouraged regionalism. From all indications, there was little doubt that independence Nigeria, despite the euphoria that greeted her at birth, was headed for a turbulent and crisis ridden future. The report concluded by recommending the restructuring of the Nigerian federation.

The 1994 – 1995 Constitutional Conference of the Gen. Sani Abacha’s military regime also recommended the restructuring of Nigeria. Similarly, 2012 public hearings on Constitutional Amendment conducted by the National Assembly during the Goodluck Jonathan’s administration recommended the restructuring of Nigeria. A former Nigeria’s Attorney – General and Minister of Justice Muhammed Bello Adoke during the 13th Convocation Lecture at Benue State University, Makurdi in 2013 advocated for the restructuring of Nigeria through constitutional amendment. According to him, ‘There is the need to weigh the contending views on a scale of balance to ensure that any decision taken is one which not only takes cognizance of socio – economic consciousness, but also recognize the uniqueness and peculiarity of our democracy’ (Adoke, 2013:5). However, the present Muhammadu Buhari’s administration right from its inception said the restructuring of Nigeria is a no go area. Despite this, agitations for the restructuring of Nigeria have continued especially with the impunity

that the Buhari's administration has treated the herdsmen attacks in the Middle Belt of Nigeria.

The socio – economic challenges of herdsmen attacks on entrepreneurship development

The continued attacks of herdsmen on farming communities in Nigeria surely have grave socio – economic challenges for entrepreneurship development in some states and the nation as a whole. A study carried out by Adisa and Adekunle in 2010 on the socio – economic challenges of farmers and herdsmen conflicts in Kwara state, Nigeria revealed that farmers in the state incurred huge losses in farm yields, farm income, human lives, occupations, properties as well as human displacement resulting to high rate of poverty in the state (Adisa and Adekunle, 2010).

Similarly, a study by Oli, Ibekwe and Nwanko (2018) on the prevalence of herdsmen and farmers conflicts in Nigeria revealed that, the affected communities face a lot of social and economic challenges as a result of the conflicts. Major social and economic challenges are: death of human beings, displacement of people causing them to stay in refugee camps or stay with family member or friends in safer areas over stretching their economies creating a circle of poverty, insecurity, destruction of farms, destruction of properties worth millions of Naira, loss of farm incomes, food insecurity and the closure of schools obstructing smooth teaching and learning. All these the authors say have grave social and economic consequences on the affected farm communities and the economy of the whole nation (Oli, Ibekwe and Nwanko, 2018).

According to Sunday Sun, 3rd June 2018, if escalating violence between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria has brought a heavy human cost, its impact on local economies is also significant. Population displacement and continuing insecurity have disrupted agricultural and business activities in Benue State. Thousands of farmers fearing herdsmen attacks are unable to work on their farms. Food production in the state is estimated to have dropped from 65% in 2013 to 33% in 2018, gradually resulting to mass poverty in the state.

Kpelai (2009) identified, insecurity, limited manpower, lack of business role models, and limited funds as the major socio – economic challenges constraining entrepreneurship development in Nigeria.

Cattle rearing in modern societies

Both cattle rearing and crop farming are industries or entrepreneurial activities, which people in many traditional and modern societies engage in as means of livelihood. They are life time activities. They were practiced in most traditional societies as nomadic pastoral and shifting cultivation of crops. However, rapid population growth and harsh climatic conditions have over stretched the use of land and water forcing herdsmen and crop farmers in most modern societies to embrace modern animal husbandry and crop farming techniques. According to USDA (2012) animal husbandry varied widely across cultures and time periods. Originally, livestock were not confined by fences or enclosures, but these practices have largely shifted to intensive animal farming, sometimes referred to as factory farming. Now over 99% of livestock globally are raised on factory farms such as ranches and cattle centers. Modern animal husbandry relies on production systems adapted to the type of land available.

In Nigeria however, the Fulani nomadic herdsmen have refused to embrace modern techniques of rearing animals resulting to continued violent conflicts with crop farmers across the nation (All Africa, 2018). When the Benue State in 2017 passed the anti – open grazing law in order to curb the continued violent conflicts between herdsmen and crop farmers, the socio – cultural association of Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria, Miyetti Allah Kaure Hore (MAKH) through its National Secretary, Saleh Hassan rejected and protested against the law on the ground that the law is inimical to the Fulani herdsmen's centuries old pastoralist culture of migrating with the seasons. According to Hassan (2017) 'anti – open grazing laws are nothing but populist agenda designed by visionless and desperate politicians to destroy our means of livelihood. These laws are oppressive, negative and

fundamentally against our culture as the Fulani pastoralists'. The herdsmen also claimed that the law denies their constitutional rights to free movement and residence in any part of the country (The Punch, 8 November 2017).

Briefing news reporters in Lagos, Wednesday 3rd January 2018 on the herdsmen attacks in Benue State Special Adviser to President Muhammadu Buhari on Political Matters Babafemi Ojuda said, 'Perhaps Nigeria does not even have one third of cows that South Africa has, neither does Nigeria has one third of cattle Brazil has. These countries have adopted modern ways of rearing cattle without infringing on farmlands. Nigerian herdsmen must embrace modern cattle rearing techniques' (Vanguard Online News, January 3, 2018).

Theoretical framework

The Power elite theory has been reviewed in this section and used in the study as the basis of analysis. The power elite theory was propounded by Mills (1956). It is a variant of social conflict theory. The theory assumes that (i) Major national decisions are made by the elite, a small upper class which holds most of society's scarce resources: wealth, prestige and power, than do the masses it governs. (ii) Consensus exist among the elite on the basic values and goals of society, however, consensus does not exist among the bulk of people in society on those important social concerns. (iii) Power in society is highly concentrated at the top of a pyramid shape social hierarchy, those at the top of the power structure come together to set policies for everyone. (iv) Public policy reflects the values and preferences of the power elite, not the values and preferences of the masses (Dye and Zeigler, 2003 cited in Macionis, 2005).

According to Mills (1956), most of society's wealth, prestige and power are held by a small wealthy segment of society known as power elite made up of top leaders of corporate organizations (executives and shareholders), heads of the military and leaders of the executive arm of the federal government. Out of the three, Mills argued the top leaders of corporate organizations are the most powerful because of their unique ability to

contribute huge economic resources at their disposal into politics.

Mills (1956) observed that power in society is structured in a pyramid shape with the power elite on top of the pyramid. Below the power elite are members of the legislative arm of the federal government, local opinion leaders, leaders of special interest groups, and at the bottom of the pyramid are the unorganized masses, which are relatively powerless and vulnerable to economic, political and social exploitations. Mills (1956) observed further that members of the power elite have similar class backgrounds and interests; and many of them interact on regular basis. Also, many of them shift back and forth among corporate boardrooms, government and the military sectors.

The power elite theory explains the Nigerian power structure perfectly. The power elite in Nigeria hold most of the country's economic, social and political power. They are made up of top leaders of corporate organizations (executives and shareholders), heads of the military and leaders of the executive arm of the federal government. They have similar class background and shift back and forth between corporate boards rooms, government and the military sectors. For example, President Muhammadu Buhari is a retired army general; he is the former Chairman on Nigeria's Petroleum Trust Fund, and now Nigeria's president. In order to protect his group interests, he has been treating the herdsmen attacks on the farming communities in Nigeria with impunity to the dismay of the helpless masses, and even though there are agitations for the restructuring of the Nigerian federation, he said at the beginning of his administration that restructuring of the country is not on his administration's agenda.

Elite conspiracy is explicitly displayed in the herders/farmers crisis in Nigeria. First, the young herdsmen that move freely in society with AK47 rifles on their shoulders are people who ordinary cannot afford one of such sophisticated weapons because most of them are ordinary hired hands. Meaning that, the weapons are supplied to them the Fulani elites who are owners of the cattle. Second,

there are clear indications that the Fulani elites have allies among rogue political elites in the farming communities of Nigeria. For example, in Benue State it is clear that the Fulani elites are in alliance with a former governor of the state, a former senator, and a current minister of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, George Akume. While on a state visit to President Muhammadu Buhari, in the presidential villa in Abuja on 23rd November, 2018, Senator Akume claimed that it was the Benue people that were killing themselves and not the armed Fulani herdsmen. The Tiv Youth Organization (TYO) responded through its National President, Mr. Timothy Hembraor saying:

We now know that Senator Akume is one of those conspiring with terror groups like Miyetti Allah to sustain the mindless bloodletting in Benue State. If any herdsmen attacks take place in Benue from now going forward, Senator Akume and his Miyetti Allah partners should be held accountable.

Thirdly, the handling of the herders/farmers crisis in Nigeria with impunity by the Federal Government is also a clear indication that the Nigerian elites are interested in the matter.

Due to the protection of sectional interests by the power elite, Bartlett and Steele (2000) have argued that leadership by the power elite is not democratic since the concentration of society's wealth, prestige and power at the top is too great for the average citizens' voice to be heard (Bartlett and Steele 2000 cited in Kendall, 2007).

Significance of this study

Reference has been made in this study to the fact that herdsmen attacks in Benue State are six times deadlier than the Boko Haram insurgency in the north eastern Nigeria. Considering the grave consequences the attacks are likely to have on the social and economic wellbeing of people in Benue State and other affected communities in Nigeria makes the attacks a serious problem that is worth investigating from all angles. Entrepreneurship development is intended to enhance the capacities of existing and potential entrepreneurs in order to reduce unemployment and poverty in society.

Investigating the socio – economic challenges confronting entrepreneurship development in Benue State due to the herdsmen attacks is therefore important.

The review of literature in this study show that previous studies have concentrated mainly on the economic consequences of the herdsmen attacks in Benue State but none addressed the issue of social and economic challenges, which the attacks have confronted the state with in its attempt to develop her entrepreneurship capacity. This makes this study significant for attempting to bridge the gap that the previous studies have created.

Methods

The study adopted a descriptive research design, which focuses on tracing the development of social forms over time and comparing those developmental processes across cultures (Babbie, 2007). This study considered recorded content of herdsmen attacks on Benue State communities in media reports, government reports, recorded data in academic textbooks and journals, from 2013 to 2018. The period was considered significant in the study because it covered the time Benue State experienced systematic and organized herdsmen attacks that were considered deadlier than the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria.

Materials

Data for the study were collected through documentary sources and in – depth interviews. Internet data were accessed using Google Chrome and Google Scholar. Over 60 newspapers and journal articles on herdsmen attacks and their socio – economic consequences were reviewed, however only the articles that discussed issues relating to entrepreneurship development and documentary sources which had detailed accounts of the herdsmen attacks on Benue State communities from 2013 to 2018 were selected for the study were selected. On the whole, 38 of such articles were used in the study. The sampling technique was purposive. In – depth interviews were carried out with 20 victims of the herdsmen attacks, 4 government officials, 4 State vigilante officials, 2

academics, 2 youth, 2 elder state men and 2 women. Content analysis was used in the analysis of the data in the study.

Data presentation and analysis in this study were done qualitatively using narratives. The presentation analyses were carried out based on the specific objectives of the study.

Results

Data presentation and analysis

Table 1: Reasons for herdsmen attacks in Benue State

<i>Reasons for the herdsmen attacks in Benue State</i>	<i>Easy to resolve</i>	<i>Difficult to resolve</i>
1. Disagreement over the use of land and water	√	
2. Cattle rustling	√	
3. Obstruction of traditional migration routes for the herdsmen	√	
4. Terrorist activities of Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria		×
5. Encroachments of settlement and farms on designated grazing reserves	√	
6. High population growth		×
7. Available illegal firearms in the hands of the people	√	
8. Impunity		×
9. Indigenes/settlers claims	√	
10. The passage of the anti – open grazing law in Benue State	√	
11. Revenge		×
12. Harsh climatic conditions		×

Source: All Africa, 2018 & in – depth interviews, 2018.

The data in Table 1 show that several reasons have been given for the continued herdsmen attacks in Benue State. However, when asked to identify reason that have made it difficult to resolve the crisis, the interviewees unanimously identified: terrorist activities in the northern part of Nigeria, high population growth in Nigeria, impunity with which the Federal Government of Nigeria has handled the attacks and the instinct to revenge by the Fulani herdsmen. What this means is that the four reasons identified by the interviewees are the major causes of the continued herdsmen attacks in Benue State.

In an in – depth interview with some of the victims of the attacks, one of the interviewees said:

It has been difficult to resolve the crisis because the Fulani herdsmen do not accept defeat. When we are aware that they are coming, we prepare for them and defeat them. However, they keep coming back for retaliation. Beside this, it is like their religion condones violence. Fulani love violence. Then the way the federal government has so far handled the attacks with insensitivity, makes the attackers to

believe that they are above the law, they can kill human beings and destroy their property without punishment. This makes them to continue with the attacks.

Another interviewee, a Benue State government official lamented that:

The Fulani herdsmen attacks in Benue State are very frustrating especially with the way the federal government has been treating the attacks with impunity makes some of us to believe that there is a hidden agenda about the attacks. With the killings of Christians and the destruction of churches in the state without the federal government sanctioning the attacker and their sponsors confirms our believe that the attacks are beyond acquiring grazing land for cattle but a jihad to Islamize the people of Benue State who frustrated the first attempt in the 19th century. Otherwise, how can President Buhari come to Benue State only to tell us that we should learn to accommodate our neighbors who kill without provocation?

In Table 2 the data show that the herdsmen attacks on Benue State communities between 2013 and 2018 have been well planned using sophisticated weapons such as AK 47 rifles and in some cases chemicals were used. The data show further that the attacks were violent and frequent. Over half the

state has been affected. The impact of the attacks is grave, deadly and destructive. The attacks have been proven in this study to be six times deadlier than the Boko Haram insurgency in northern eastern Nigeria.

Table 2: The magnitude of herdsmen attacks in Benue Sate

<i>Period of the attacks:</i>	From February 2013 to September, 2018.
<i>Nature of the attacks:</i>	Well planned systematic attacks using modern sophisticated weapons including guns and chemicals.
<i>Frequency of the attacks:</i>	The rate of occurrence: very high. The state experienced 53 violent incidences covering 15 out of the 23 local government areas in the state. Local government areas attacked were: Guma, Logo, Ukum, Katsina – Ala, Kwande, Buruku, Tarka, Makurdi, Gwer – West, Gwer – East, Agatu, Obi, Ogadibo, Apa and Ohimini.
<i>Impact of the attacks:</i>	Deadly and destructive. Six times deadlier than the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Persons killed = 2,438 ii. Persons injured = 750 iii. Persons missing = 200 iv. Persons displaced = 300,000 v. Worth of property destroyed = ₦ 400 billion vi. Worth of crops destroyed = ₦ 25billion.

Source: Premium Times, August 10 2016, Punch Newspapers, September 2018, All Africa, July 26, 2018 & Benue State Government, July 5, 2018.

In an in – depth interview, an interviewee, a professor of Political Science said:

The herdsmen attacks in Benue State have been well planned. We know that the traditional Fulani herdsmen went about with sticks and knives for their safety and their animals. In the Benue State attacks, the herdsmen go about freely with sophisticated weapons that are prohibited in Nigeria without arrest and prosecution. Human lives and property worth billions of Naira have been lost to the attacks. The federal government’s insensitivity to the attacks has resulted to the emergence of local and ethnic militia. The people have resolved to protect themselves against the herdsmen attackers. If nothing serious is done by

the federal government to stop the attacks, things will get worse. There will be another civil war and Nigeria may break up just like Sudan.

In another in – depth interview, an interviewee an officer of the Benue State Vigilante Command, also a member of the state Joint Task Force (JTF) lamented about the herdsmen attacks and said:

I am an ex- soldier, I fought the Nigerian civil in the sixties, yet I did not see the Ibo insurgency with the type of sophisticated weapons that the Fulani herdsmen attackers have. These attackers are well trained in the art of warfare. They are not ordinary Fulani herdsmen. I believe there are serious forces that are supporting them. They are well prepared for the mission.

Table 3: The consequences of herdsmen attacks in Benue State

<i>Consequence</i>	<i>Gravity</i>		
	<i>Less serious</i>	<i>Serious</i>	<i>Very serious</i>
1.Destruction of human lives			√
2.Destruction of property worth billions of Naira			√
3.Displacement of people from their homes			√
4.Total destruction of villages and small towns in the state			√
5.School, churches and markets are destroyed			√
6.Destruction of crops and farms			√
7.Strained relationship between Muslim herdsmen and Christian crop farmers		√	
8.General insecurity in the state			√
9.The emergence of ethnic militias in the state			√
10. Proliferation of illegal firearms in the state.			√

Source: In – depth interviews, 2018 & Benue State Government Official Reports, 2018.

In Table 3 the data show that the gravity of the consequences the herdsmen attacks in Benue State are very serious. If the attacks continue, there shall be food insecurity in Benue State and perhaps the whole of Nigeria. A civil war is likely to break out due to the local and ethnic militia who are in position of sophisticated firearms. With a civil war, Nigeria is likely to break up or at least become a failed state.

An elder state man in an in – depth interview said Nigeria is heading for a break up as predicted by the United States of America in 2013. According to him:

Nigerians not just Benue people are fed up with the Fulani aggression in Nigeria. The Fulani generally believe that Nigeria belongs to them alone; all the resources in Nigeria also belong to them alone: power, wealth and control belong to them alone, even though Nigeria is made up of over 400 ethnic groups. What makes the Fulani people superior to the rest of us that they want to enslave? We are ready to break away. It is not possible to live in peace with people that do not value human life like the Fulani people.

Table 4: Socio – economic Challenges of Herdsmen attacks and Entrepreneurship Development in Benue State

<i>Socio – economic challenges</i>	<i>Effects on entrepreneurship development</i>
1. Death of human beings resulting to:	i. Loss of manpower for entrepreneurial activities in the state.
2. Displacement of people resulting to:	i. Loss of manpower for entrepreneurial activities in the state. ii. Loss of means of livelihood. iii. Displaced persons stay with other people overstretching their resources. iv. Kill existing businesses in the state. v. Relocation of existing businesses to other states.
3. Insecurity resulting to:	i. High risk of doing business may retard entrepreneurial activities in the state. ii. Foreign investors may keep away from the state. iii. Business mentors may be lacking in the state.

	iv. Relocation of existing businesses to other states.
4. Unemployment/underemployment results to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Loss of income in turn resulting to high rate of poverty in the state. ii. Abandonment of established businesses/occupations for temporary occupations in order to survive. iii. Change in potential entrepreneurs’ social status from high to low.
5. Closure of schools resulting to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Poor entrepreneurship knowledge and skills acquisition in the state. ii. Killing of businesses in schools in the state such as catering and retailing.
6. Proliferation of internally displaced persons (IDP) camps results to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Poor sanitation and hygiene causing potential entrepreneurs to become infected with diseases and sicknesses and death. ii. Potential entrepreneurs starving to death. iii. Potential entrepreneurs spending their saved start – up capital on consumables in order to survive.
7. Destruction of property results to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Loss of residential and business premises in the state demoralizing many potential entrepreneurs. ii. Loss of collateral for obtaining business loans from financial institutions. iii. Loss of vehicles for private and business purposes creating transportation hardship for entrepreneurs in the state. iv. Demoralization of entrepreneurs in the state causing them to quit their businesses in the state. v. Re – location of businesses to other states by entrepreneurs.
8. Destruction of farms and businesses results to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Shortage of raw materials for entrepreneurship activities in the state. ii. Food insecurity in the state, shooting up of food prices. iii. Loss of farm and business incomes in the state. iv. High rates of unemployment and underemployment in the state in turn resulting to high rate of poverty. v. Low gross domestic product (GDP) in the state and the nation. vi. Entrepreneurs who have obtained loans from financial institutions in the state will not be able to pay back such loans and may be black listed or even have their properties seized.
9. Destruction/closure of markets results to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Entrepreneurial activities in the state will suffer because entrepreneurs will not have markets to buy raw materials and sell their products and services.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii. Internally generated revenue in the state will decline because the destroyed or closed markets will no longer contribute to revenue generation. iii. Revenue collectors in the destroyed or closed markets will lose their jobs and incomes.
10. Total destruction of villages and small towns results to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Complete wipe out of generations of entrepreneurs in the state. ii. Complete destruction of existing businesses in the destroyed villages and towns in the state. iii. Destruction of infrastructural facilities that would aid entrepreneurship development in the state.

Source: In – depth interviews, 2018.

The data in Table 4 show that the socio – economic challenges of the herdsmen attacks in Benue State are many and their effect on entrepreneurship development in the state is very damaging such that if nothing is done to stop the attacks, Benue State in the near future will become the poorest state in Nigeria despite her great entrepreneurship potentials. Almost all the interviewees in the in – depth interviews said the herdsmen attacks have serious social and economic challenges on the entrepreneurship development of the state. They lamented that almost everybody in Benue State is negatively affected by the crisis either directly or indirectly. The interviewees pointed out that in 15 local government areas out of the 23 in the state, people have lost either family member, friends, neighbors, colleagues, customers or associates. Then there is the pressure on government and the general public to assist the victims in one way or the other. Economically, it is worse. Prices of food items have gone up because of the attacks. Many people have lost their jobs, incomes and properties. Businesses in the affected local government areas have either been permanently or temporary closed down. There is general insecurity and economic hardship in the state due to the herdsmen attacks. According to a youth leader in Guma local government area:

Most Benue people have lost faith in the unity of Nigeria due to the careless way the federal government has handled the herdsmen attacks in

Benue State. The herdsmen attacks are devilish and crippling. As a university graduate, I could not find paid employment so I started farming for survival. It paid off, I got married, had three children. I also built a two bedroom apartment in my village in addition to that; I bought a brand new motorcycle. The herdsmen attacks claimed all these: my wife, three children, my house and my motorcycle. On top of these, my father and mother including my two sisters were killed in the attacks. I am now a refugee in Makurdi town. My friends are tired of assisting me. Most of them have isolated me. To go back to Guma is a nightmare. I am afraid for Nigeria.

Another interviewee, a widow from Gwer – West local government area in Benue State expressed her social and economic losses due to the herdsmen attacks in these words:

I was a food seller in one of the primary schools in Naka town. I did that for several years and trained my four grown up children in the university. Last year, Fulani herdsmen attacked our side of the town and destroyed both the primary school and our family house. We lost all our properties. My husband, a retired civil servant died of heart attack. My last born, a boy also died of fire burns from the attack. Right now my four grown up children and myself are unemployed. We are scattered in Makurdi town as refugees. I do not know where to begin life at this age.

Findings

Data presentation and analysis in this study reveal that:

1. There are several reasons for the herdsmen attacks in Benue State; however the major reasons are those that have made the resolution of the crisis difficult. They are: terrorist activities of Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria, high population growth, impunity and revenge, and harsh climatic conditions.
2. The magnitude of the herdsmen attacks in Benue State between 2013 and 2018 is very high. The state experienced 53 violent incidences covering 15 out of the 23 local government areas in the state.
3. The consequences of the attacks are grave; about six times deadlier than the Boko Haram insurgency in northern Nigeria.
4. Socio – economic challenges of the herdsmen attacks have serious negative effect on the entrepreneurship development of Benue State.

Discussion

The discussion of findings in this study is done based on the research objectives.

Reasons for herdsmen attacks in Benue State

The first finding in this study indicates that though there are several reasons for the herdsmen attacks in Benue State, four among the reasons are considered by this study as the major ones. These are: terrorist activities of Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria, high population growth, impunity and revenge. These reasons are considered as the major because they made the resolution of the crisis difficult. The Boko Haram terrorist activities in northern parts of Nigeria have created insecurity among the Fulani herdsmen who are indigenes of the northern states forcing them to migrate south where there is relative safety. Terrorist activities take some time to be resolved because they are complex. Both terrorism and religious insurgency are anchored on sentiments, which go beyond sound objective reasoning. The Boko Haram terrorism coupled with claim that the herdsmen attacks in Benue State are the continuation of the hidden agenda by Muslims

to Islamize the people of the Middle Belt makes the crisis difficult to resolve. The killings of innocent Christians and the destruction of churches by the Fulani herdsmen and terrorists give credence to the claim that the herdsmen attacks in Benue State are part of the jihad to Islamize the people of Benue State. This study therefore agrees with Ishaku (2017) who says that the herdsmen attacks in the Middle Belt of Nigeria have similarities with the Janjaweed attacks in Southern Sudan between 2003 and 2008.

High population growth is another reason that has made the resolution of the herdsmen attacks in Benue State difficult to resolve. The population of Nigeria has rapidly grown from 56.6 million in 1963 to 88.9 million in 1999; from 140 million in 2004 to 198 million in 2018 (NPC, 2018). This high population growth indicates that there has been serious pressure on both the herdsmen and crop farmers to migrate and seek for more land away from their indigenous states. And since the problem of population growth takes time to resolve, it is obvious that the herdsmen attacks based on the reason of high population growth will take time to be resolved.

The treatment of the herdsmen attacks in Benue State with impunity by the federal government of Nigeria has also made the crisis difficult to resolve because there is an indication that the power elite in Nigeria have vested interest in the crisis and they want it to be prolonged. Be that the case, the voice of the average Benue Citizens are hardly heard. This study agrees with Bartlett and Steele (2000) that leadership that gives too much power and wealth to the power elite is not democratic.

The public declaration by the Fulani herdsmen that revenge is inherent in their blood and culture and they cannot stop revenging obviously makes the Herdsmen attacks in Benue State difficult to be resolved. Meaning that the only sure way of resolving the crisis is the break – up of Nigeria as rightly pointed out by Wegh (2017: 111), that ‘who would want to have people who by nature want to spill blood as their neighbors?’

The harsh climatic conditions due to global warming resulting to desertification and flash droughts have forced pastoralists from the north to migrate southward where there are adequate grass and water to graze their cattle. This is a problem that cannot be easily resolved, because it requires time and proper planning.

The magnitude of herdsmen attacks in Benue State

The second finding of this study indicates that the magnitude of the herdsmen attacks in Benue State between 2013 and 2018 have wide coverage. Over half of the state has been affected, with thousands of human lives lost, properties worth millions of Naira destroyed, hundreds of thousands of people displaced from their homes, and means of livelihood destroyed. This study agrees with Ishaku (2017) that the herdsmen attacks in the Middle Belt of Nigeria should be declared terrorist activities just as the Janjaweed attacks in Southern Sudan were, as the ultimate solution to the crisis. Besides, if the activities of members of Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) which did not destroy many human lives, nor displaced people from their homes or destroy people's property were declared by the federal government of Nigeria as terrorism, why not the activities of the Fulani herdsmen? Haven't the Fulani herdsmen attacks caused enough insecurity in the Middle Belt of Nigeria for the United Nations Security Council, the United States of America and the International Criminal Court to intervene as they did in the Janjaweed attacks in Southern Sudan?

The consequences of herdsmen attacks in Benue State

The third finding of this study shows that the consequences of the herdsmen attacks in Benue State are grave. The attacks have been proven to be six times deadlier than the Boko Haram insurgency in the northern parts of Nigeria, and if the attacks are allowed to continue, Nigeria as a whole not just Benue State will experience food insecurity, another civil war, and Nigeria might break up the same way Sudan did, or at least become a failed state.

The socio – economic challenges of herdsmen attacks on entrepreneurship in Benue State

The fourth finding of this study reveals that the herdsmen attacks in Benue State have created several socio – economic challenges, which have negative effects on the entrepreneurship development of the state: loss of entrepreneurial skills, incomes and savings, destruction of raw materials, businesses, markets, infrastructure and relocation of businesses from the states to other states in Nigeria. All of which are capable of making Benue State one of the poorest in Nigeria, despite her great entrepreneurship potentials.

Conclusion

Based on the findings presented here, this study agrees with Report of the Political Bureau (1987), that historical evidence points to greater intermingling, interdependence, mutual accommodation and tolerance of the various ethnic groups in Nigeria. Ironically, some of the ethnic groups which constitute a major drawback to true national unity are products of history, representing groups that emerged as a result of deliberate acts of statesmanship and social engineering. The Fulani herdsmen attacks, which the Nigerian power elite have so far, treated with impunity are likely to disintegrate the country unless something positive is done to avert the disaster. This study therefore concludes that restructuring of Nigeria in a new and different way such that the political, social and economic interests of all the ethnic groups are well taken care of is the ultimate panacea for the herdsmen attacks in Benue State.

References

1. Adisa, R. S. and Adekunle, O. A. (2010). Farmer – Herdsmen Conflicts: A Factor Analysis of Socio – economic Conflict Variables among Arable Crop Farmers in North Central Nigeria. *Journal of Human Ecology. Delhi – India, April.*
2. Adoke, M.B. (2013). 'Amending the 1999 Constitution: Prospects and Challenges for National Development'. *Benue State University News, Vol. 21 No. 72, February.*
3. All Africa (2018). Nigeria: Stopping Nigeria's Spiraling Farmer – Herder Violence. July 26.

4. All Africa (2018). Benue State has lost over ₦ 400 billion to herdsmen attacks – Gov... June 13. Retrieved from <https://allafrica.com/stories/201806138114htm/>
5. Babbie, E. (2007). *The Practice of Social Research*. Belmont, C. A: Thomson Learning Inc.
6. Dzeremo, B. (2002) *Colonialism and the transformation of authority in Central Tivland: 1912 – 1960*. Makurdi: Aboki Publishers.
7. Elewa, G. I. C., Ukagwu, M. O., Nwachukwu, J. U. N. & Nwaubani, A. C. N. (1988). *A history of Nigeria: for schools and colleges*. Onitsha: Africa – FEP Publishers.
8. Hembraor, T. (2018). Akume has given Miyetti Allah reason to attack Benue again. <https://www.legit.ng/1210491-miyetti-allah-reason-attack-benue-tiv-youth.html>. Retrieved 17/12/18
9. Ishaku, J. (2017). Janjaweed in North Central Nigeria: Understanding the internal dimensions of the Fulani terrorist activities in Nigeria. In A.S. Ihuah (Ed.) *Herdsmen and Farmers Conflict in Central Nigeria: Learning from the Past. (Conference Proceedings)* Makurdi: Centre for Research Management, Benue State University.
10. Kendall, D. (2007). *Sociology in Our Times*. Belmont, C. A: Thomson Learning Inc.
11. Macionis, J. J (2005). *Introduction to Sociology*. Boston: Pearson Custom Publishing.
12. MAMSER (1987). *Report of the Political Bureau*. Abuja, March.
13. Mills C. W. (1956). *The Power Elite*. New York: Oxford University Press.
14. NOUN (2004). *Ethnography of Nigeria*. Lagos: National Open University of Nigeria.
15. NPC (2018). FG reveals Nigeria’s current population. *Daily Post News, 11 April*. Retrieved from Dailypost.ng> News.
16. Ojudu, B. (2018). ‘Herdsmen must embrace modern cattle rearing techniques – Presidency’. *Vanguard News. Wednesday, January 3*.
17. Oli, N. P., Ibekwe, C.C. and Nwanko, I. U. (2018). Prevalence of herdsmen and farmers conflicts in Nigeria. *International Journal of Innovative Studies in Sociology and Humanities. Vol. 3, Issue 1 January*.
18. Ortom, S. (2018). ‘Herdsmen sacked five Benue LGAs, killed 560 in eight months’. *Punch, September 15*.
19. Premium Times (2016). ‘Investigation: Herdsmen attacks claim 1, 269 lives in Benue’. Saturday, October.
20. The Punch (2018). Benue State lose ₦ 25 billion to herdsmen attacks. September 25.
21. The Punch (2017). ‘Benue defends anti – grazing laws’. 8 November.
22. USDA (2012). *Animal Husbandry. NASS – Census of Agriculture Publication*.
23. Wegh, F. S. (2017). ‘Challenges of Fulani herdsmen attacks to Tiv survival and wellbeing’. In A.S. Ihuah (Ed.) *Herdsmen and Farmers Conflict in Central Nigeria: Learning from the Past. (Conference Proceedings)* Makurdi: Centre for Research Management, Benue State University.