

BOKO HARAM, FULANI HERDSMEN AND POSSIBLE HUMANITARIAN CRISES: EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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Abstract

Each collection of people forming a group or nation has its problems every now and then. The steps it takes to deal with its problems is of a great importance. However, concerted efforts have to be taken to avert the existence of ideologies that can be easily perpetuated and/or taken advantage of, to cause harm. Nigeria has been on the crossroads of perilous ideologies inspiring newer forms of expressions and causing the nation untold pains and immense losses. The Boko Haram menace in the past 8 years has caused the nation human and physical losses running into billions of naira. Monies that would have been used for both human capital and physical developments, is used to curb the menace. Boko Haram has inspired existing theologies to be emboldened to get to the level it got. Today, it is the “Fulani herdsmen” that are the angels of death and destruction. Thereby, it is not flogging-a-dead-horse to write on Boko Haram in the light of the Fulani herdsmen.

Keywords: Boko Haram, Fulani Herdsmen, Fundamentalism, Famine and Emigration

1. Introduction

Socrates once said: “an un-reflective life is not worth living”. This Socratic axiom is true in every facet. Otherwise one exists under the total control of external but control phenomena. These external phenomena become the

unnecessary driving force of the person's life. Therefore, the person loses control of himself and his destinies. The same applies to a nation, especially one like Nigeria in midst of the teething problems of “change”. Nigeria has known religious violence in most of its post- independence history and the last 9 years have not been different. The funny feature of that history has been that there has been a reason why this form of violence has prevailed. Some of them have hinged on the sensitivity and volatility of religion, but the inability to evaluate and deal with the root causes has perpetuated such violence. This therefore is a challenge.

Many Nigerian socio-political scientists have rightly argued that Boko Haram is a reflection of extant theological mentality within Nigeria's Islam that has its origins decades of era back. Consequently, they avow that it could be an upshot or continuation of previous Islamic movements. However, there seems to be recognised efforts at using military force to contain them. Just at the flint of their existence, we now hear of “Fulani herdsmen” that could have been emboldened by Boko Haram's “successes” to extend their disaster nationwide.

Consequent, what problems could the “Fulani herdsmen” terrorism bring to the nation? To answer this question, this article will unfold in four Sections: the first shall look at the inspiration behind Boko Haram's ideology and expressions, the second shall attempt to show that the sect is becoming a theological ideology that can inspire, encourage and empower new forms of insurgency and terrorism, part three shall look at the consequence of the hate and destruction and finally this presentation shall proffer solutions. It will obviously end with a conclusion.

2.0 Background to *Boko Haram*: a brief presentation of causes

Informed minds in Northern Nigeria are playing the ostrich by seemingly pretending that Boko Haram's rise and terrorist outrages have caught them, the region and the nation unaware. But that is a dramatized hiding of their heads in sands of self-deception by further denying the roots of this ugly side of our humanity and nation's history. That Boko Haram, its disciples and its victims are localized to Northern Nigeria should be instructive and mind awakening, so as to make an honest review of what the root causes of the group's rise are. We need to ask what it is about the past or the present that has led us to this ugly and deadly path (Matthew Hassan Kukah, 2015, p.1). This is what the first part of this paper shall briefly uncover.

2.1 Africa's religiosity and Fundamentalism

A distinguished academic on African Philosophy and Religion, John S. Mbiti (African Religion and Philosophy, 1989, 1) once wrote that “Africans are notoriously religious”. That brand of African notoriety became the fertile ground into which non-African religions like Christianity and Islam planted themselves and grew. These non-African religions having become matured in the continent now shape its culture, social life, political organizations and economic activities (John S. Mbiti, Introduction to African Religion, 1991, p.10). The downside of this notoriety is the tendency to fundamentalism described by Joseph Salihu (2012, p.41) as being about the formation of faith communities along religious lines, which confers religious identities to individuals within, with the determination to exclude those who do not belong; where even their coreligionists who are not considered serious enough, qualify for exclusion.

Fundamentalism ordinarily tends towards preaching, practicing, perpetuating and propagating the extreme features of any religion to the detriment of what makes “sense” in it. By so doing, the “negative” aspects of the religion that do not give room for constructive reasoning takes dominance and can become a veritable tool against peace and security. What fundamentalism has reduced religion into is aptly captured in these words of Matthew Hassan Kukah (2015, p.1) when he said:

Today, Religion faces a serious crisis of identity around the world. Although conflict has been part and parcel of the narrative of most religions, events in the last few years have created so much anxiety that it seems safe to say that ordinary believers and non-believers are visibly terrified by what is being done in the name of religion. The key actors who have turned religion from a weapon of love to an arsenal of fear and savagery claim that they are acting in the name of religion. They believe that they are acting to expand the frontiers of power and authority of their religion. They believe they are defending the religion and working for God. As it is, they have become the worst advertisement for both their Religions and how non-believers see both.

2.2 Fundamentalism and the Condition Created by Islam in Northern Nigeria

A sizeable number of the Adherents to Christianity and Islam in Nigeria are all guilty of fundamentalism. This religious disposition has created a spirit of

superiority where one religious identity is privileged and made superior to the other. Thus leading to the gradual polarisation of the two communities. This is not surprising because the isolation of those who do not belong is one of the features of identity and community formation (Joseph Salihu, 2012, p.41). In the North, the assumption that Christianity is inferior to Islam has ostensibly been held by Muslims for as long as I can remember. It is so dogmatized and widely held that Christians are looked upon as second class human beings. Therefore, it is an anathema for a Muslim woman to marry a Christian man. Each time respected Christian voices challenge this mentality, they are arrogantly told that this is what Islam teaches, that the religion allows Muslim men to marry Christian girls (and hopefully make them Muslims), while Christian men cannot marry Muslim women. The extremes that these religious identities create have become tools for war and death, and markers that seem to determine where an average Nigerian can be and how far s/he grows in our society.

Furthermore, the Northern political class has used it to advance, perpetuate and entrench their political ambitions and desires. Where those desires cannot be met, they create religious crises to resolve antagonisms within the cleavages of their political classes. In the pursuit of their personal exploitations for accumulation, they become consciously blind to the boundaries of religion and ethnicity. Hence, people are held hostage by the darker forces of politics as politicians generate and deploy hostile narratives to divide the people (Matthew Hassan Kukah, 2015, 5.4). Consequently, they allow every form of fundamentalism, extremism and fatalism to exist unchecked, uncontrolled and uncensored as long as it guarantees them a source of identity, power and control. Therefore, they live by their own 'dubious creed' of being Muslim, such as preaching and promulgating Sharia Law, that is actually only binding on the poor; they come to power on the basis of a Democratic society, but they turn around and declare Sharia to generate a false consciousness among the poor that they want a theocracy; they preach a religion that encourages education, yet the North is the most uneducated part of the country, because they do not forcefully and clearly encourage an all-embracing educational development. For instance, Abba Mahmood (2012) while reacting to this issue once remarked that the population within the last 25 years has doubled (in the North), while the number of schools has remained almost the same, thus making the education gap between the North and South of Nigeria to be more than 63 years. The downside being that there are over 15 million children in the North who do not go to school. By so doing, these politicians and elite hold the talakawas (ordinary

people) in the bondage of ignorance. Since, they ordinarily do not wish to live by the same standards, they live their own Islam in the capitals of the world away from the prying eyes of their own people (Matthew Hassan Kukah, 2015, pp.3-4). That is why a few of them never accept that religion is the basis of more than 85% of the crises in the region. But the fact that they consciously and/or through negligence engender religious crises is highlighted in the level of blame games they play against each other after any ethnoreligious crisis. Joseph Salihu (2012, p.4) captures it thus:

after every conflict, politicians come out to blame themselves for the violence. They insist that it is part of politicians' effort to manipulate gullible people to realise obnoxious ambitions. For example, after the reprisal attacks in Kano resulting from the Shendam-Yelwa massacre, Atiku Abubakar, the then vice-president, in a remark on Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) on May 12, 2004, blamed politicians for the unrest. Ironically, the rioters converged at Umar Ibn Khattah Juma'at Mosque before embarking on the 'peaceful' demonstration, which left the loss of lives and properties in its wake.

Suffice it to say that the loss in lives and properties were suffered ONLY by the Christians living in Kano city, North-west, Nigeria.

The narrative does not stop there. Our history has been a fruitless but dishonest attempt at resolving the problems the British colonial regime created, especially before Independence, because the political elite has never been patriotic and honest both to their faith and nation. Rather than rebuilding our nation, we have spent a lot of time blaming and holding one another responsible for sins that are beyond us. There has grown a strange idea that somehow, Christianity and the West have a relationship of sorts. Yet, those who hold this theory do not extend the argument further by logically claiming that Islam and Arabism should be the same!

It is this twisted logic that believes that somehow, someone like myself should take the blame for invasions of Afghanistan, Iraq, or Libya. For being a Christian, I should take the blame for some cartoons drawn in a country I have no friends in and have never been to, that I should be responsible for a Miss World contest even though no daughter from my village has aspired to participate in it. For all this, a Mr. Matthew should have all his life's work sent up in smoke by irate Muslims, and so should Christian Churches and institutions be razed to the ground. Now what do we hear? The parents and uncles of the children who

cause these mayhems do not raise a loud voice against them and the whole process. They stutter about peace and tolerance and weakly plead that we move on. Happily, in his address to the Catholic Bishops' Conference during his Presidential campaigns to the 2015 general elections, General Mohammed Buhari stated that all this must end and every devil, hiding under religion will be named and cast out. Well, so far he has not fulfilled it. This is what has laid the foundation for what is now Boko Haram. The Sect began as a revolt against this mendacity, subterfuge and hypocrisy. Therefore, that the Sect, its disciples and its victims are localized to Northern Nigeria should be instructive (Matthew Hassan Kukah, 2015, pp.2-4).

3.0 *Boko Haram: A Group and an Islamic Theological-Ideology?*

The argument in this section is to indirectly ask fundamental questions. Is it the group *Boko Haram* that now exists in the guise of "Fulani Herdsmen" or is it the group that has inspired and emboldened the "Fulani Herdsmen" to not only attack the Christian agrarian communities in the Northeast and Northcentral, but to make their insurgency a nationwide attacks as far as the West, East and South-south? Or could both aspects be the case? Is that the group disguising as herdsmen, together with inspired elements attacking the nation?

3.1 As a Group (Sect)

There is no novelty historicizing that Boko Haram was founded by Mohammed Yusuf in 2002 in the city of Maiduguri in Borno State in North-eastern Nigeria with the aim of establishing a Shari'a government in Borno State under former Governor Ali Modu Sheriff. The group owned a religious complex that had a mosque and school where many poor Muslim families from across Nigeria and neighbouring countries enrolled their children for strictly and purely Islamic education. Yusuf successfully attracted followers from unemployed youth "by speaking out against police and political corruption" (Henry Ovwigho Ukavwe, 2014, p.63). The Sect called itself: *Jamā'atu Ahlis Sunnah Lādda'awatih wal- Jihad* meaning "People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad". But became popularly known as Boko Haram, a phrase of Hausa Language, the Lingua Franca of Northern Nigeria after English. It is simply translated as Western education (and civilization) is forbidden. The nomenclature of the group, either in Arabic or Hausa, implies that its members wished to live by what they considered the true tenets of Islam in order to bring to the fore core Islamic precepts that had been generally neglected by supposedly a vast majority of the Nigerian Muslims, especially those of the political class.

Consequently, their name portends a strong opposition to human laws personified by the State and bad governance, westernization and its corruption of Islam. Therefore to achieve the goal of their existence, it became committed to Islamizing the whole country and possibly replace the nation's various levels of government with an orthodox Muslim leadership. This began their full insurgencies in 2009 that inevitably engendered a Federal Government attack on its nest (Emeka Christian Obiezu, 2013, pp.1-2). The 2009 government's quelling which killed 800 of them and destroyed their mosque and headquarters in Maiduguri resulted in their migration, in 2010, from insurgency to full blown terrorism against the nation and neighbouring countries, causing widespread havoc, loss of thousands of human lives and the destruction of billions of dollars of properties (Henry Ovwigho Ukavwe, 2014, p.62). They ransacked the whole region, reducing centuries of traditions, heritages and identity to rubble, and leaving in its wake a Nigeria in the precarious and dangerous state it finds itself at present.

It is important to note here that when Boko Haram started its terrorism, particularly against Christians at the inception of their nefarious activities, they had tacit support from the Muslims in Northern Nigeria. I had Muslims friends who openly bragged to me that the Sect was fighting their cause against Christians and Westernization. The silence among the Northern leadership was so "deafeningly loud" and clear. When they began hitting at Islamic targets, the Muslims began saying "These Boko Haram people are not Muslims. They do not represent us". The questions I asked my Muslims friends then were who do they represent? Is it because they now hit Islamic targets, that they do not represent you anymore? Matthew Hassan Kukah (2015) answered my questions when he reacted in his responses to such claims in these words:

Well, first, they are your own children. You must take responsibility for what has made them what they are today and to the rest of society. They claim they have been inspired by the Quran and no other holy book. They say they want to build an Islamic state. So, they are Muslims. After all, from the debates of the Constituent Assemblies of 1979, 1988, and 1995 and beyond, did their fathers and grandfathers not stage walk outs demanding Sharia Law? Was it not to tame them that President Babangida declared what he called, no-go areas in the debates about our Constitution (page3)?

3.2 As An Islamic Ideology

My greatest fear today is, Boko Haram is not just any more an Islamic sect, it may have become a Nigerian Islamic theological ideology: an Islamic system of ideas and ideals forming the basis of theological theory and policy, which must be forcefully spread and ruthlessly imposed and enforced on non-Muslims in Nigeria and beyond. The Nigerian Laureate, Wole Soyinka, once said in an interview he gave to Channels Television Nigeria that; “once an idea has taken hold, you cannot destroy that idea, you may destroy the people, the carriers of that idea on the battle fields, but ultimately it's not the end of the story”. The threat behind it all is that an ideology (especially a theological ideology) cannot be contained and like Wole Soyinka said, it does not die. It metamorphoses itself into different shades of opinions and other ways of manifestations and expression. Joseph Salihu (2012) corroborates this view when he said;

Once religion becomes ideology it is no longer contained within the sphere of the sacred but mingles with other spheres in an attempt to transform them. What is otherwise private religion becomes public religion and competes fiercely with other meaning defining agencies in the society (page 41).

“Boko Haram” is moving away from the private affair of a Nigerian Islamic sect to becoming the theological principle for action. This new status as an ideology has moved it away from the sacred sphere to intermingle and adopt a socio-ethnic identity, thereby inspiring newer forms of insurgencies and terrorisms across the nation, threatening the peace and security of Nigeria. While the Federal Army is busy containing the group in the North-eastern part of the country where they are predominantly based, its other theologico-ideological form is distinguishing itself in a near ethnic cleansing in what is now tagged in Nigeria as Fulani Herdsmen attacks. These “Herdsmen” are busy raking the whole nation inflicting harm, death and destructions across the nation akin to what Boko Haram as a sect did in the Northeast and the Northwest of Nigeria. They stealthily pounce on agrarian communities to catch them unawares, and then they attack, overrun and ransack whole agrarian villages with machetes, AK 47 rifles and other kinds of weapons to kill human and animal lives, burn down homes and destroy their means of livelihood in their wake. This is generating

heavy rural-urban migration from those agrarian communities to the nearest cities of the part(s) of the country they have attacked. The major consequence being the strong possibility of famine in Nigeria, since the attacked communities cannot stay in their lands to farm now that the farming season is about to begin. Also those people of neighbouring villages, whose farmlands are deep in the hinterland, might become too afraid to go to their ancestral farms for fear of stealth attacks.

I call the fulani herdsmen's attack as the "new form" of Boko Haram or have been emboldened by the "successes" of the Sect or both, because the particular ethnic group called the Fulanis, whose identity Boko Haram has adopted are nomads known nationwide to be peaceful people. In fact, the Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) a pan-Hausa-Fulani socio-political strong voice for the Northern region says; "The traditional Fulani nomads have coexisted peacefully with their host communities and have been grazing their cattle for decades all over Nigeria without any such attacks" (Vanguard Newspaper, 28th April, 2016). Apart from some skirmishes between the Fulanis and their host communities over farmlands and grazing areas that were amicably resolved in the past, they were not known for the level of barbarism ingloriously displayed by the "Fulani herdsman". The upshot of this new "Boko Haram" and/ or emboldened groups is, emigration and Famine.

4.0 Emigration and Famine: A Strong Possibility and an Enormous Consequence

4.1 Understanding Peace and Security

A person who is not an expert in socio-political science would understand peace and security as a condition where individuals, institutions, regions, nations and the world move ahead and about without any threat; but in a more domestically stable and democratically governed geographical space and social milieu, so that human rights and dignity can be respected and maintained, respectively. Therefore peace and security presuppose the existence in the right quantity and quality of basic human needs: the right to food and freedom from hunger and want of needs, freedom from diseases and epidemics, from environmental degradation and exploitation and sub-human treatment. So one may deduce, any military, terroristic and insurgency-like attacks denying people their human rights, causing irrational destruction of natural resources against an individual,

people, nation and the world, threatens peace and security. For peace and security are the preconditions for socio-economic development (“Peace and Security”, 2016, pp.264-265). Boko Haram as a group and an Islamic ideology has threatened the peace and security of Nigeria to the level of possible deprivation of the right of food and free-unhindered movement about the country. They have threatened the nation's democratic set up that has the power and wherewithal to guarantee peace and security. Nowadays the “Fulani herdsmen” have caused destruction of lives and resources through insurgency and terrorism, and hence, possibly increased the crime rate in some of the destabilized areas. What they are going to leave in their wake is famine and emigration. It is wise at this juncture to take a closer look at the threat of emigration and famine in Nigeria and its implication.

4.2 Evaluating the Magnitude of the Problem: Emigration and Famine

Let us now visualize the magnitude of the emerging dire situation at hand. The inhabitants of those communities attacked and destroyed by Boko Haram in almost all parts of the North-east are still finding it difficult to return to their ancestral homes. Most of them have not received any psychological help that will enable them to rebuild their lives there. As a result, they either are afraid to return to those places for fear of renewed attacks by Boko Haram and/or they find them too traumatic to return to. The emigrations Boko Haram's attacks forced them to make from their ancestral homes to neighbouring villages and cities within Nigeria, and outside Nigeria to Cameron, Chad, Niger and beyond, did not leave in some of them any nostalgia about their original homes, because of the gory images they have in their memories of what Boko Haram did to their immediate family members, kith and kin in front of them. The emigrants from these communities to villages and cities within Nigeria are now living in cramped spaces, where the government does not have the capacity to provide in basic quantities and qualities drinking water, electricity and good roads. Most of these cities are littered with nearly non- functional government hospitals, unproductive schools and no appreciable food provision system in place. There is no tangible government measure for providing these amenities in the midst of the current crises. Worst still, endemic political corruption encourages most government officials to first of all enrich themselves with every palliative measure on the ground before using the dredges to alleviate as much as possible those who really need help. Now imagine what happens when the limited resources are overstretched in those villages and cities where these refugee Nigerians live, and should unfortunately, there be an outbreak of diseases in

those outstretched villages and cities, I leave you to visualize the disaster that will follow the spill over to neighbouring African countries in its wake. The gloomy picture does not end here. There are a few of those emigrants in Internally Displaced Persons' (IDP) camps, who just barely survive at the mercy of nature and God. UNHCR estimates that 1,510,205 are IDPs (UNHCR, West Africa, 2016).

In addition to this bleak situation with such staggering figure of UNHCR that has prevailed for over 4 years, add also the increasing number of those agrarian communities that the "Fulani herdsmen" have attacked in Adamawa, Taraba and Southern part of Kaduna State, in Plateau and Benue States, in Delta, Edo and Enugu States and in Ogun, Ekiti and Ondo States. In principle, Nigeria organises itself around six geopolitical zones: North-west, North-east, North-central, South-south, South-east and West. Adamawa and Taraba States are in the North-east, Kaduna State is in the North-west, Benue and Plateau States are in the North-central, Delta and Edo States are in the South-south, Enugu State is in the Southeast and Oyo, Ekiti and Ondo States are in the West. The "Fulani herdsmen" have hence attacked every sub-region of the nation, and most of these States are the "food baskets" of the nation. Without those agrarian communities that are in constant attacks by Fulani herdsmen in recent times, those States cannot be called "food baskets of the nation".

In the mind of Henry Ovwigho Ukavwe (2014, pp.67-71), the total threat to the government and political stability of Nigeria that has been highlighted in the last two paragraphs imply the fading away of what is called the Nigerian community or society and/or the creation of a new political culture of violence, where "Might is Right" and "Survival of the Fittest" is the best option. Nowadays, Nigerians no longer have trust for themselves; consequently there is a looming civil 'war'.

Having painted a narrative of the ugly situation at hand, let us now look statistically at the magnitude of the problem that shall arise in the event of emigrations. One opinion estimates Nigeria's population as over 186 million ("Nigeria Population Clock", 2016), while another puts it at about 178.5 million people ("Nigeria Population 2014", 2016). This gives us an average of 182 million inhabitants in Nigeria, thus making it the 7th most populous country in the world ("Nigeria Population", 2016). Then Syria in 2013 was estimated to have a population of 22 . 85 million ("Syria/Population", 2016), meaning that Nigeria is 8 times bigger than Syria. If the Syrian crises in the last few years could cause an

unprecedented and ground breaking emigrational movement of the enormity experienced from the Arabian Peninsula into Europe and other nations witnessed especially from 2015, what will happen in a country eight times bigger than Syria? That means the Syrian refugee and emigration crises will be child's play. The fact is that the West African sub- region does not possess the wherewithal and capacity to manage any emigration crises caused by famine from Nigeria. This therefore calls for urgent attention.

5.0 Immediate Proactive Action is An Imperative

I have held somewhere else that Nigeria is a complete abracadabra nation; in that the more you deeply inquire into it in order to examine its problems so as to proffer enduring solutions to them, the less you shall understand it. In 2004 and subsequently 2005, Nigeria was voted the most religious nation in the world. This is probably due to a "high display" of religiosity, which at times becomes extremely bigoted. But ironically, in the midst of this display of great religious presence, Nigeria was voted the most corrupt nation in the world in the same period (George Odufa, 2013, p.117). So all those talks about interfaith and interreligious dialogues are good and should continue as part of the panacea to ethno-religious problems in the country, but there is need for immediate concrete and proactive action against the expected problems to be caused by the "Fulani herdsmen". I suggest ways forward.

This present Government has to begin to envision emergency proactive measures that will nip in the bud the possible outbreak of famine in Nigeria. William H. Shea ("Famine", 1992) asserts that; Famine or shortage of food with which to feed the population can develop when the process of production and delivery of food is interrupted anywhere along the chain (p.769).

He outlines two types of disruptions that bring about famine. The first he says is climatological. In the climatological cause, the production of food, especially grains, is cut off in its initial growth phase due to inadequate rainfall. If this is severe or widespread the population may experience a famine of sufficient severity that some persons die from starvation. Worst still, plant diseases or plagues of insects, especially locusts, may accompany drought conditions and worsen a famine by destruction of crops. The other main type of disruption that can occur in the chain that brings food to human beings results from the factors that destabilize the socio-political conditions necessary for the production of crops and their delivery to the consumer like in siege warfare. In this case, the "Fulani herdsmen" is a directly attacking army that is destabilizing the socio-

political condition necessary for the production of food and even its delivery to the consumer (William H. Shea, 1992, pp.769-770), since they basically attack agrarian communities. The non-availability of food is an immeasurable threat to the peace and security of our nation. Every responsible government has to ensure the availability of it in order to avoid anarchy and chaos. For the security guaranteed by the availability of food is immeasurable. In fact, Nigerians are docile and take any “shit” from Government and its corrupt officials, because of the basic need for food to eat and survive. Government should be consciously aware that this ambient of peace and security is a sine qua non for socioeconomic development and maturity of any nation, especially now that our nation is struggling with the most painful socioeconomic fall in decades. Outright famine will portend disaster of a herculean scale.

In taking the proactive steps to fight possible famine, Government must not rely totally on its Agencies, because of the monstrous corruption in the political class, where any socioeconomic initiative that does not satisfy their economic gains first before the citizenry does not become a front burner matter to be dealt with. I believe the Ebola outbreak was promptly dealt with, because they knew they will be directly involved in the deaths. Otherwise the Ebola epidemic would have lingered and remained undealt with in prolonged political debates, in which all that the common Nigerian will regularly hear is how they are “on top” of the problem after much damage has been done. Therefore religious organisations and bodies will immensely be of help to government in handling the situation.

Government should as a matter of first magnitude note that our seaports systems and services rank among the most snail speed types in the world. This reminder is made in case Government may want to use our seaports in the expected action. This is important because of the size of our country. For instance, the Minister of Agriculture, Audu Ogbeh said;

We consume seven million tonnes of rice, annually. A million tonnes will fill up 33,334 trailers. You need to put this figures for people to know what a million tonnes amounts to. 33,334 trailers of 30 tonnes each multiplied by seven. One million tonnes loaded in trailer will stretch 495 kilometres which is Lagos – Benin but that isn't all we are also feeding Sudan, sometimes Libya, Chad, Central Africa, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso- they come to buy from Nigeria in the north and recently we had a request from Central Africa because there was a drought there for maize; 37,000 tonnes of maize (Emma Ujah and Gab Ewepu, 2016).

With this volume of consumption of rice alone, the steps to be taken by government should be now. The Minister's words also show that we have responsibility to other African nations, which gives credence to our regional supremacy in the region and enhances the quality of its foreign policy.

Government must deal with this unfortunate outbreak of the Fulani herdsmen forthwith and not keep quiet like the previous administration did when Boko Haram started. It is therefore wrong for Junaid Mohammed, to justify the heavy weapons the "Herdsmen" carry about because they want to defend themselves against Boko Haram who steal their cattle. The reason for the wrongness of Junaid Mohammed's defence is, there is apparently no existence of Boko Haram and their operations in the southwest and southeast of the country where "Fulani herdsmen" have been having field times killing people (Levi Obijiofor, "Herdsmen's callous killings", 2016).

Furthermore, it is not enough to call, like many learned minds like Audu Ogbeh have suggested, for the disarmament of the "Fulani herdsmen" (Emma Ujah and Gab Ewepu, 2016). There must be intelligence gathering in handling of the "Fulani herdsmen" outbreak. It will be very good to know exactly if these men are really Fulanis or armed robbers and hoodlums. This will help the nation not to punish the innocent Fulani herders. The punishment against the Fulanis could come from communities who hitherto had no problems with them grazing in their land. Such communities could expel them from grazing in their land for justifiable fear. This could leave the Fulanis in a crisis of identity and belonging in a nation called their own.

Since the Fulanis move about in order to feed their cows and walk them, then the Grazing Bill supposedly in the National Assembly is not the solution. The establishment of Ranches in the North for them should be the target. This gives impetus to the productive initiate of Audu Ogbeh, who is initiating grass farms for them. Care must be taken to make sure that those responsible for the grass farms are not economic disasters, who would either steal the funds meant for such laudable agricultural initiate or commercialize the cost of the grass to the extent that an average Fulani herder may not be able to afford them for his Ranch. Government should make those Ranches free for them.

6. Conclusion

Nigeria has an enviable history of beautiful and well organised Conferences, assemblies of people to discuss pressing national issues and the formation of

Committees to look at matters that will enhance socio- economic growth and development of the country. At the end of each of these Conferences, Panel discussions and Committee deliberations, a White-paper on solving, with military precision, the problem is issued and presented to the relevant authority seeking solutions to existing problems. Then the White-paper or Official Reports of these groups are sensationally received in the beehive of media frenzy, but unfortunately the whole efforts made and billions of naira spent end there. Nothing more is done to implant the recommendations put forward. This paper is strongly challenging this administration not to be like “our heroes past”.

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