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Trends and patterns of
cattle grazing and
rural violence
in Nigeria
(2006-2014)



Philip Ademola OLAYOKU*

Trends and patterns of cattle grazing and rural violence in Nigeria (2006 – 2014)

Executive summary

Relying on the Nigeria Watch database from June 2006 to May 2014, this study analyses the root causes, dynamics, evolution, and politicisation of cattle grazing conflicts in Nigeria. After reviewing the historical, political, and socio-economic contexts, it identifies the key actors in lethal rural violence from cattle grazing as herdsmen, farmers, community members, vigilantes, security operatives, government officials, and, in rare cases, religious leaders. The study also highlights the intensity and the time frame of such violence. No cycles were identified. The North Central region appears to be the hotbed of these conflicts, though the problem remains spread across different parts of the country and occurs at different times of the year.

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INTRODUCTION

The recent classification of some Fulani herdsmen as Boko Haram collaborators by the Nigerian military and politicians (McGregor 2014) reveals the complexities of violent clashes between cattle breeders and sedentary agriculturalists across different parts of the country. The alleged involvement of camel pastoralists from the Republic of Niger in some conflicts in the north-western and central regions of Nigeria also highlights the need to investigate the multidimensional causes and the politicization of a problem that spills over to neighbouring countries (Blench 2010; Krause 2011; Abass 2012; Audu 2013; McGregor 2014). Blench (2010), for instance, analyses the relationship between herdsmen and farmers as an economic exchange of dairy products for grain, access to local markets, and the provision of manure on arable land while the cattle consume crop residues. However, he claims that religious and cultural factors, among others, are key to peaceful relationships that became less cordial as the Fulani migrated further south. This has led to several agitations in the past, notably by the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN), which advocates for the social, political, economic, and cultural integration of Fulani in communities where they settle (Awogbade 1987).

Climate changes, the migration further south, the growth of agro-pastoralism, the expansion of farming on pastures, the invasion of farmlands by cattle, assault on non-Fulani women by herders, blockage of stock routes and water points, freshwater scarcity, burning of rangelands, cattle theft, inadequate animal health care and disease control, overgrazing on fallow lands, defecation on streams and roads by cattle, extensive sedentarisation, ineffective coping strategies, ethnic stereotyping, and the breakdown of conflict intervention mechanisms—these are usually identified by scholars as the root causes of

such violence in rural areas (Folami 2009; Ofuoku and Isife 2009; Adekunle and Adisa 2010; Blench 2010; Odoh and Chigozie 2012; Solagberu 2012; Audu 2013, 2014; Bello 2013; McGregor 2014). In line with this, Abass (2012) contends that the major source of tensions between pastoralists and farmers is basically economic, with land-related issues accounting for the majority of the conflicts. This can then be situated within the broader context of the political economy of land struggle, traceable to a burgeoning demography in which there is fierce competition for fixed space to meet the demands of the growing population (Olabode and Ajibade 2010; Solagberu 2012).

However, Blench (2010) has observed that ecological and economic determinism may not capture the complexities embedded in the conflict contexts of these groups. Sellen (1996) also advocated for contextual analyses of ‘local socio-ecological conditions’ and diversity of pastoral populations in accounting for their nutritional habits. Therefore, there is need to overcome the socio-cultural stereotyping of the nomadic life and relate experiences to their contexts, while taking cognisance of the holistic functioning systems of local economies (Gefu and Gilles 1990). In more recent times, transhumant herdsmen coexist with agro-pastoralists and farmers who have also taken to cattle breeding (Awogbade 1987), and this has redefined their perceptions of and relationships with each other. Of these herdsmen, the Fulani are highly visible. Yet there are about 14 other groups who practise pastoralist activities in Nigeria, including the Arabs, Kanuri, Kanembu, Shuwa, and Touareg (Braukamper 1996; Blench 2010).

Within this context, it is pertinent that researchers engage the complexities attendant to these relationships rather than jump to quick conclusions. From a methodological point of view, the problem is that violence from cattle rearing is not well reported: in the

past eight years, it accounted for 615 deaths out of a total of 61,314 fatalities in the Nigeria Watch database. A major reason for this may be the location of the occurrence of incidents in rural and, sometimes, border areas that are neither easily accessible nor attractive to reporters. Journalists often prefer to capture the trendier news of insurgencies from Niger Delta militants or Boko Haram, which have taken the limelight and captured people's interests. Moreover, stereotypes abound about the Fulani herdsmen, as issues related to their occupation are sensationally alluded to in political and religious contexts. However, this has in no way undermined the negative effects of fatalities from cattle grazing, as shall be subsequently discussed in this study. Undoubtedly, the loss of human lives, land, animals, plants, and crops has many security, social, political, and economic implications, including an impact on livestock production in Nigeria (Folami 2009; Adekunle and Adisa 2010; Bello 2013).

In this study, the focus will be on the Fulani (Fulbe na'i) because of the scope of their pastoral activities and their political visibility. The attacks by Fulani herdsmen have in recent years taken more sophisticated dimensions with the use of new types of weapons and communication devices. In consequence, the sedentary agrarian communities have resorted to self-defence through local vigilante groups (Abass 2012; McGregor 2014).¹ This has further aggravated violence, with destruction of lives and properties. According to Fasona and Omojola in 2005, conflicts resulting from cattle grazing actually accounted for 35% of all reported crises between 1991 and 2005 in Nigeria (Adekunle and Adisa 2010). The North Central states of Taraba, Nasarawa, Plateau, and Benue have also been identified

¹ The adoption of vigilante groups is not only peculiar to Nigerians. Pastoralists in the North Western region of Cameroon also adopted this measure to check cattle theft (Manu et al. 2014)

as the most affected areas in the country (McGregor 2014; Nigeria Watch Newsletter 2014).

THE HISTORICAL, POLITICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT OF PASTORALIST–FARMER CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA

According to Azarya (1996), the Fulani pastoralists of West and Central Africa trace much of their current political, religious, and socio-cultural identity from the eighteenth and nineteenth century *jihād* which sedentarized them within conquered communities. The Fulani are said to originate from Senegambia, before spreading across some 20 states in West Africa and the Sahel, up to Western Sudan and the Central African Republic (Blench 1994; Shehu and Hassan 1995; Blench 2010; McGregor 2014). In Nigeria, they are the mainstay of the meat and milk industry, accounting for about 90% of cattle herd ownership, which makes up 3.2% of the GDP (Abass 2012; Koster and de Wolff 2012). They rear different species of cattle, such as the *Keteku*, *Muturu*, and *Kuri*, but the *Zebu* is identified as the most common (Awogbade 1987; Iro 1994). They also supply skins, bones, and horns as complementary products.

The pastoralist system involves young men who tend the herd while the women cook and sell animal products in the market.² The elders, in their own stead, are in charge of developing and managing resources at the levels of the community and domestic units (Awogbade 1987; Iro 1994). Despite the development and the centralisation of the state dating back to the colonial era, these informal governing mechanisms have been key to understanding the challenges the pastoralists face with farmers, explaining their social stratification and their

² This roles makes them important channels of communication between their communities and urban centers, transmitting vital information about prices, disease outbreaks and trade conditions (see Shehu and Hassan 1995)

seemingly egalitarian nature (Dyson-Hudson 1990; Bradburd 1996; Okello et al. 2014).

From a historical point of view, certain scholars refer to the fact that conflicts resulting from cattle grazing have existed for as long as the practice of agriculture (Blench 2010; Abbass 2012). In the Nigerian context, however, colonization, together with the fall of the Sokoto Caliphate and the introduction of *jangali* (cattle tax), marginalized the Fulani and dispersed them further towards the South (Azarya 1996; Okello et al. 2014). According to Ofuoku and Isife (2009), the advancement of farming through irrigation and the increased decimation of pasture across the savannah also extended the scope of conflicts, through transhumance, to the coastal zones which were more ecologically viable (Blench 2010). This evolution was complemented with the provision of affordable trypanocides, which provided a coping means for the herders in the tsetse-infested humid regions of southern Nigeria (ibid.). Thus, the period from May to September, during the rainy season, has been identified as the intense period of clashes between pastoralists and farmers over arable land, when the Fulani return northwards with their cattle as the vegetation begins to appear. These clashes result from the invasion of the arable land by the cattle during this peak season of crop production (Adekunle and Adisa 2010; Abass 2012).

The failure of the government in mediating such conflicts and setting up judicial commissions cannot be underestimated because it pushes communities to take the law into their own hands. After the initiation of the first national livestock development project (NLDP) and the enactment of a grazing law by the Northern Nigeria Legislative Assembly in 1965, the authorities tried to provide grazing lands in order to make the nomadic Fulani sedentary (Awogbade 1987). In collaboration with organisations such as the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), the objective was to enhance

productivity and to demarcate 4,125 grazing lands across Nigeria, covering about 4.3 million ha, some of the lands being equipped with boreholes, fences, fire breaks, veterinary services, access roads, and dams (Awogbade 1987; Abass 2012; Koster and de Wolff 2012). The predominant types of ranches were to be individually owned by farmers with large investments; there were few options for cooperatives and a collective management of the herds. Since 2009, grazing routes have also been marked out through Nasarawa, Benue, Plateau, Kastina, Bauchi, Abuja, Sokoto, and Adamawa. According to Abass (2012), however, only 270 of these official grazing lands are functional.

CATTLE GRAZING AND LETHAL VIOLENCE:
ANALYSIS OF TRENDS ACROSS NIGERIA
(JUNE 2006–MAY 2014)

During the past eight years, the Nigeria Watch database has recorded 615 violent deaths related to cattle grazing, out of a total of 61,314 violent fatalities in Nigeria. The analysis that follows was undertaken with 111 relevant cases, which were reported by the press across the 36 states of Nigeria from June 2006 to May 2014. It seeks to understand the frequency, the intensity, the patterns, and the geography of such violence, based on a study of 7 incidents in 2006, 9 in 2007, 6 in 2008, 13 in 2009, 9 in 2010, 15 in 2011, 17 in 2012, 27 in 2013, and 8 as at May 2014.

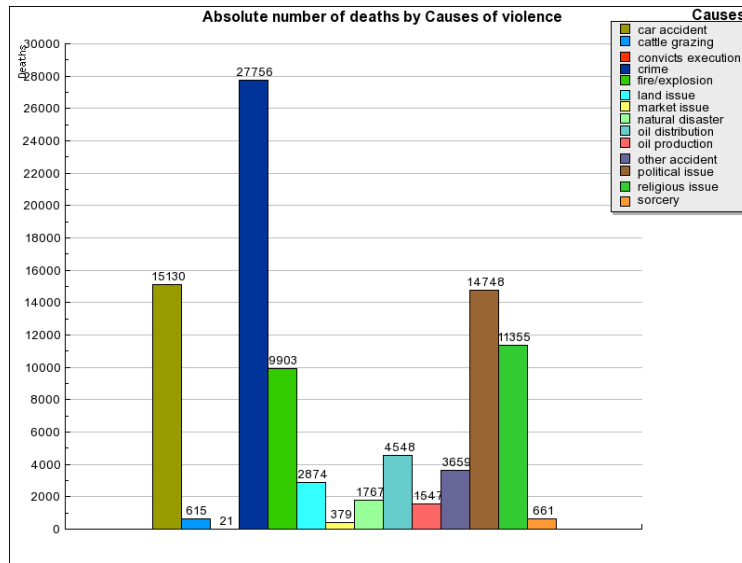


Figure 1 - Causes of violent deaths in Nigeria, cumulated figures (June 2006–May 2014)

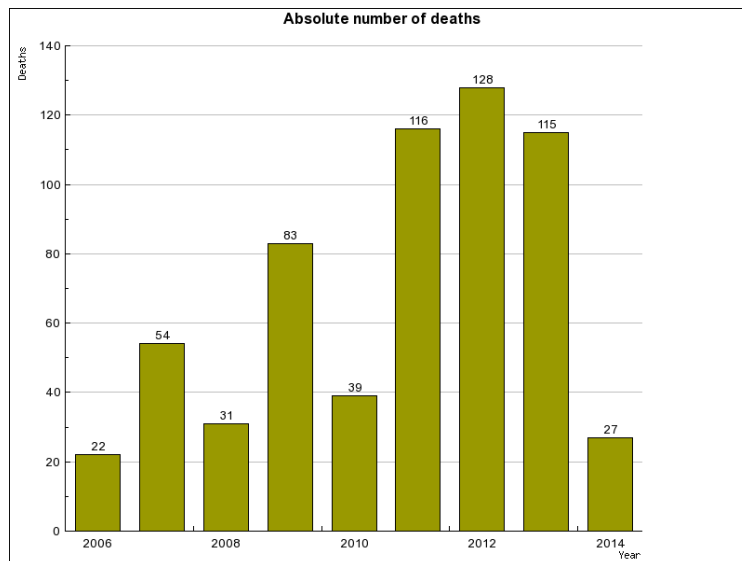


Figure 2 - Violent deaths in Nigeria caused by cattle grazing, per year (June 2006–May 2014)

In the second half of 2006, 22 deaths resulting from cattle conflicts were recorded in the months of July (Imo and Kaduna), August (Zamfara and Rivers), and September (Kano, Delta, and Rivers). September

accounted for the highest number of incidents per month (3), while Kano State was the most affected, with 10 fatalities, followed by Rivers (5 deaths in August and 3 in September). The main stakeholders involved were the police, the army, armed gangs, political groups, and communities, with victims on all sides. On 15 September 2006, for instance, soldiers were reported to have invaded the Elele Community in Rivers to avenge the disappearance of the cattle belonging to their ‘fellow northerners’; yet another report claimed that these were herdsmen dressed in army uniform.³

In 2007, the number of deaths resulting from cattle conflicts doubled to 54, spread across the months of January (Zamfara, Delta, and Osun), February (Jigawa), March (Cross River), June (Kebbi), July (Rivers), and December (Borno and Zamfara). Different weapons were used, from guns in Delta⁴ to bows, arrows, charms, cutlasses, and spears in Borno.⁵ The highest number of captured incidents was in January, across Zamfara, Delta, and Osun. However, the highest number of casualties was recorded in Delta State, which accounted for 17 deaths as against 14 in Borno. The protagonists in the violence were usually armed gangs, the police, and communities. The Zamfara episodes in January and December also involved Fulani reportedly coming from the Republic of Niger. In most cases, the Fulani were perceived as aggressors, with allegations of rape and murder alongside

³ Azubike and Ugborgu. 2006. Murder at Midnight. *Newswatch*. 2nd October, 2006 p 64; CEHRD Monitor. Soldiers Kill Policeman, 2 Others over missing Cattle. Accessed from http://www.nigeriawatch.org/index.php?urlaction=evtView&id_evt=2936&rang=1 on 11 September, 2014

⁴ Habu, I. 2007. 2 Policemen, 5 Others die in Communal Clash. *Daily Champion* December 26, 2007 Accessed from http://www.nigeriawatch.org/index.php?urlaction=evtView&id_evt=2936&rang=1 on October 9, 2014.

⁵ Musa, N. 2007. Seven die in Borno pastoralists, farmers' clash. *The Guardian*. December 25, 2007. Accessed from http://www.nigeriawatch.org/media/doc_acc/G2007-12-25.pdf on 9 October, 9 2014.

that of destruction. However, in Kebbi, Jigawa, and Osun, they were portrayed as victims, with their villages razed by neighbours and their cattle either stolen or killed.

In 2008, reported fatalities resulting from cattle conflicts dropped to 31, occurring in the months of January (Jigawa), April (Anambra), July (Jigawa), November (Taraba), and December (Katsina and Jigawa). The highest number of incidents (5) happened in the North (Jigawa, Kastina and Taraba). However, the highest number of fatalities accounted for was in Anambra, with 9 casualties, followed by Taraba and Jigawa, with 7 and 6 respectively. The stakeholders in these clashes were largely Fulani herdsmen and farmers in communal-based conflicts. In all the reported cases, the Fulani were portrayed as aggressors because their cattle invaded farmland.

In 2009, the number of fatalities more than doubled the figures of the previous year, with 83 deaths spread over the months of April (Benue), June (Plateau and Jigawa), July (Jigawa and Benue), September (Borno), October (Kebbi), November (Imo), and December (Nasarawa, Oyo, and Zamfara). June, July, and December had the highest occurrence per month, while 11 of the 13 reported cases took place in the North. Jigawa again recorded the highest number of incidents, with 4 reported cases between June and July. Nasarawa had the highest number of deaths (47) in the most sustained crises, which lasted 2 days: in addition, mercenaries were allegedly hired from the neighbouring states of Taraba and Kogi. The reported case in Borno also reflected trans-border actors from the Republic of Niger and Chad; in this case, rebels dressed in military uniforms and armed with sophisticated weapons raided Fulani communities in Abadam and Mallam Fatori.⁶

⁶ Musa, N. 2009. Bandits Attack Three Communities, Kill One. *The Guardian*. September 20, 2009. P.5

The 2010 incidents related to cattle grazing then dropped to 39 fatalities during the months of January (Adamawa and Oyo), February (Ogun), April (Plateau), May (Benue), June (Niger), July (Plateau), August (Adamawa), and October (Plateau). The highest number of reported incidents was 2 in January, while Niger State had the highest number of casualties (15). Out of a total of 9 cases, 7 occurred in the North. In Adamawa, where the international cattle market of Mubi attracted foreign robbers, the violence lasted for 7 days. This particular case involved suspected Cameroonian armed bandits with sophisticated weapons.⁷ The use of sophisticated weapons and the portrayal of the Fulani as victims was also captured in a report on Plateau State, by the spokesperson of the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN), as they clashed with Berom farmers, losing a young Fulani alongside 30 cows.⁸

The year 2011 saw a meteoric rise to 116 in the number of deaths resulting from cattle conflicts. These clashes occurred in January (Cross River and Plateau), February (Benue and Plateau), April (Abuja), May (Plateau), June, (Nassarawa and Benue), July (Imo), August (Plateau and Nasarawa), November (Kastina), and December (Zamfara). The highest number of incidents was in February and June, with the North accounting for the majority of the reported cases. The highest number of fatalities was recorded in Benue, with 38 in June and 27 in February. However, of the 15 reported cases in that year, Plateau State accounted for the highest number of occurrences with 4 incidents, while Benue and Nasarawa had 3 each. The most sustained violence lasted for 5 days in Benue, as against 3 in Nasarawa. The major cause of such conflicts was the invasion of farmland by cattle breeders, leading to attacks and reprisals from both

⁷ Onah, M. 2010. Trans-border Bandits Kill 10 in Adamawa. *Thisday*. August 18, 2010. P. 8

⁸ Lalo, M. 2010. Fulani Herdsman, 30 Cows Killed in Jos. *Daily Trust*. October 21, 2010. P. 2

groups. The high casualty figures recorded in Benue State were not unconnected with the spread of violence across different communities as people were displaced, and the alleged engagement of Fulani “mercenaries” from Lake Chad, together with the use of sophisticated weapons, bulletproof vests, military uniforms, horses, and motorbikes.⁹

The highest number of deaths resulting from cattle conflicts was recorded in 2012, with the total number put at 128 during the months of January (Delta), February (Enugu, Taraba and Nasarawa), March (Benue, Borno and Delta), April (Nasarawa and Abuja), May (Nasarawa and Cross River), June (Taraba and Abuja), November (Jigawa), and December (Ogun). The highest number of incidents was 4 in February, while the highest number of fatalities was recorded in Cross River, with 40 casualties in May, though Benue had a total of 30 deaths in March. Also, of the 17 recorded cases, the North recorded 12, especially in Taraba and Nasarawa. The most sustained incident lasted for 3 days in Nasarawa and Benue, while the key actors included soldiers, the police, Fulani herdsmen, and local farmers. In Nasarawa, for instance, 50 armed Fulani were reported to have attacked a border town (Shatse) at dawn, and both sides claimed casualties, including the loss of 500 cows.¹⁰ Some cases were even more complex. In Delta State, it was alleged that armed herdsmen, dressed in uniforms, were confronted by the locals after their cattle had destroyed farms, women were raped, and some headless bodies were found. However, the military were also reported to have killed 2 persons in their bid to restore peace, though this was denied by their spokesperson. The search for northerners by indigenes for retaliation then gave an ethno-political dimension to the crisis. Former Niger Delta militants joined the conflict,

⁹ Uja, E. 2011. 18 killed in Dawn raid of Benue Communities. *The Nation*. February 15, 2011. P 3

¹⁰ Joseph, H. 2012. 4 killed in renewed Farmers/Herders Feud in Nasarawa. *Daily Trust*. Accessed from http://www.nigeriawatch.org/media/doc_acc/DT2012-02-17h_2.pdf on 14 October, 2014.

with other youths allegedly robbing travellers and overpowering the police.¹¹

The total figure for the reported casualties resulting from cattle conflicts dropped slightly in 2013 to 115 deaths spread across the 12 months: January (Benue), February (Delta), March (Benue and Kaduna), April (Plateau, Delta and Kogi), May (Zamfara, Nasarawa and Benue), June (Zamfara, Nasarawa and Kaduna), July (Benue and Oyo), August (Nasarawa), September (Benue), October (Benue, Jigawa, and Kastina), November (Kwara and Sokoto), and December (Akwa Ibom and Bayelsa). The two most deadly crises were recorded in Benue, with 20 fatalities in September and 17 in May. The longest clashes lasted 2 days in Delta (February) and Benue (September), while 22 of the 27 incidents took place in the North. In Benue State, Idoma farmers took revenge on Fulani cattle breeders for the alleged destruction of harvested farm products and pollution of water, while Tiv farmers allegedly collected N150,000 to allow cattle to graze in violation of the law which had abolished such land tax, leading to violent clashes and the displacement of women and children from the community.¹² In Kaduna, there was also a case of armed bandits killing soldiers and vigilantes during an early morning raid, with thousands of Fulani fleeing their residence in the aftermath.¹³

¹¹ O'Neil, S. 2012. Two Dead as Fulani, Indigenes clash in Delta. *The Nation*. Accessed from http://www.nigeriawatch.org/media/doc_acc/N2012-01-31p9.pdf on 14 October, 2014

¹² Duru, P. 2013. Three killed as Hedsmen, Idoma Farmers Clash. *Vanguard*. January 28, 2013. P 7; Vande-Acka, T. 2013. Fresh Crisis in Benue Claims Two. *Daily Independent*. March 14, 2013. P. Accessed from http://www.nigeriawatch.org/media/doc_acc/I2013-03-14.pdf on 9th October, 2014

¹³ Sabiu, M. 2013. Blood, Tears in Zamfara, Kaduna: IGP deploys Armed Policemen. *Saturday Tribune* June 22, 2013 p. 5

As at 31 May 2014, a total of 27 deaths were recorded for 2014¹⁴ from 8 reported incidents in the months of January (Oyo and Abuja), February (Delta), March (Taraba, Benue, and Ebonyi) and May (Kaduna). The highest number of cases was in March (4), and the highest number of fatalities (10) was in Taraba, also in March. The major actors involved were armed gangs, the communities, and the army, the latter being reported to have perpetrated jungle justice against some Fulani herdsmen who were accused of carrying weapons and who were summarily executed in Saminaka, Southern Kaduna State. In contrast to the usual patterns of clashes between herdsmen and farmers, the soldiers were clearly identified as the aggressors by representatives of both groups (the chairman of the local government council and the president of MACBAN).¹⁵

CATTLE GRAZING AND LETHAL VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA: A GEOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS

A geopolitical analysis highlights that the ethno-religious identity of the actors engaged in cattle conflicts is quite significant. As shown in the maps and the graph below, Northern Nigeria records more fatal incidents (83 of 111), especially in Benue, Kaduna, Plateau, Kogi, Niger, and Nasarawa. These locations are mainly populated by the 'Middle Beltans', whose religious identity is often contrasted with that of Fulani Muslims.

¹⁴ This number had risen to 40 as at 31 August 2014 from a total of 12 recorded incidents.

¹⁵ Bashir, m. 2014. Soldiers Kill 6 Migrant Herders in Saminaka. *Daily Trust*. May 23, 2014. P. 8

PHILIP ADEMOLA OLAYOKU – TRENDS AND PATTERNS 15
 OF CATTLE GRAZING AND RURAL VIOLENCE IN
 NIGERIA

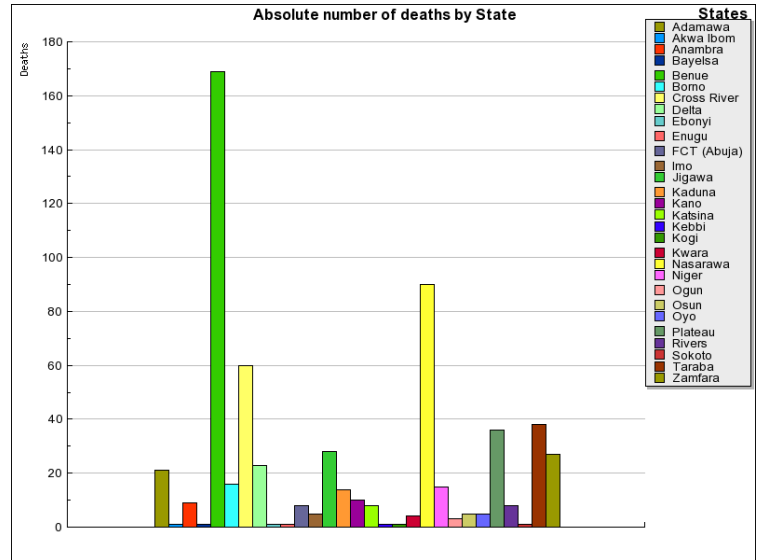


Figure 3 - Violent deaths caused by cattle grazing in Nigeria, per state, cumulated figures (June 2006–May 2014)

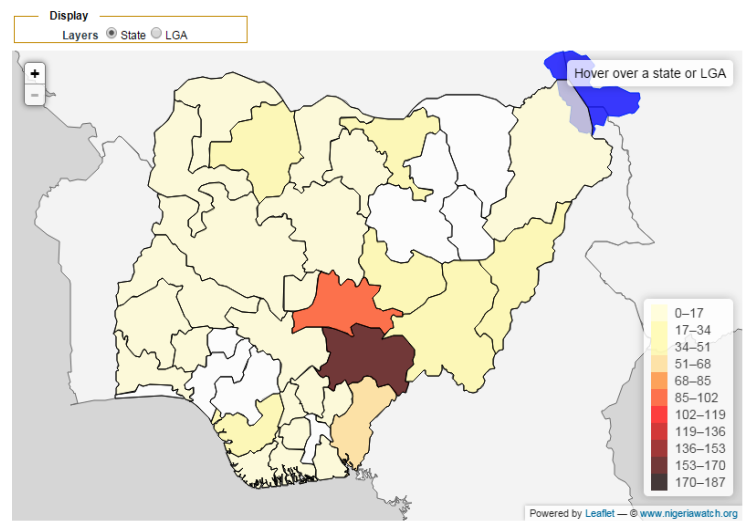


Figure 4 - Map of violent deaths caused by cattle grazing in Nigeria (June 2006–May 2014)

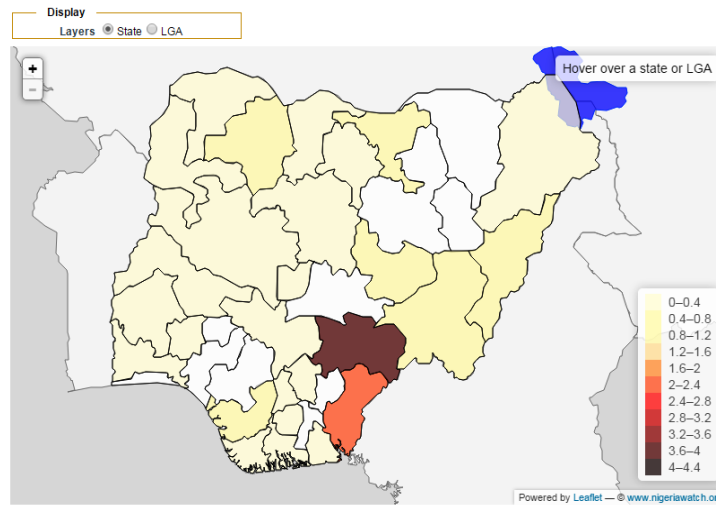


Figure 5 - Map of rates of violent deaths caused by cattle grazing, per 100,000 inhabitants, Nigeria (June 2006-May 2014)

In the North Central region, both the Hausa and Fulani are associated with the Islamic oligarchy and the 1804 *jihad*, in contrast to the indigenes who are predominantly Christian and perceive themselves as being marginalized. Thus, in Benue in 2013, irate youths invaded and destroyed the Sabo market because its Hausa traders were considered the kith and kin of the Fulani herdsmen. In the same vein, the Benue State government reported the Fulani aggressors directly to the Sultan of Sokoto in 2011. Indeed, many people of the Middle Belt champion and perceive their political cause as a resistance to the Hausa/Fulani ethnic conglomerations of northern Nigeria. Even if there were no explicitly religious causes for the attacks, there is an underlying religious-based context of relationships which contributes much to the formation of opposing identities. This historical and ethno-religious dimension makes the stakeholders in cattle conflicts vulnerable to manipulation by politicians, both during elections and while these politicians are in office.

It is important, however, to note that in the North not every non-Hausa community is hostile towards the Fulani. In Kaduna State, for instance, the local government chairman of Saminaka proposed to petition the government on the misconduct of soldiers who extra-judicially killed 6 herdsmen. The context of the involvement of the security forces is indeed very multifarious. While they are sometimes portrayed as aggressors, they also suffer casualties in quite a number of cases, such as in Kaduna in 2013 when armed (purportedly Fulani) bandits killed soldiers alongside some vigilantes. The aftermath, which led to the fleeing of Fulani from the area, is indicative of the expected terror from the military in retaliation for their casualties. In this regard, the involvement of local vigilante groups as security alternatives is quite indicative of the loss of confidence in the state, as the police are said to be incompetent while soldiers allegedly arm assailants and provide them with uniforms for disguise. The border towns in Sokoto, Katsina, Kano, and Borno present a different case because they are easy entry points for foreign “mercenaries”, despite certain shared cultural and religious values between the stakeholders in violence.

In the South South, it is also pertinent to note the high number of casualties reported in Cross River. If northern states like Jigawa, Adamawa, Borno, Taraba, Plateau, and Kastina recorded more fatal incidents, the case of the Ikpanaya community in 2012 shows how a local land dispute can easily degenerate into violence and extend to cattle issues. Engaged to attack another community, the Fulani herdsmen were secondary stakeholders in this crises. Thus, the fatalities captured in Cross River State were not directly linked with grazing activities. But the herdsmen indirectly protected their interests by supporting the indigenes who granted them access to the land in dispute in return for products from their animals. In addition, there was a religious angle to

the crisis, with the destruction of churches by the invaders.

Whereas the South South and the South East are predominantly Christian, such a scenario is very unlikely in the South West, where the Fulani are more assimilated. In the border towns of Ekiti, Oyo, and Osun, herdsmen are sometimes categorised as either 'Bororo' or 'Fulani Ilorin'. Yet they are usually considered indigenes within the latter context. Moreover, among the Yoruba of the South West, it is not uncommon to observe siblings of different religious persuasion. This pluralism, together with a culture of tolerance, largely prevents the ethno-religious manipulation of groups for political purposes, explaining the peaceful management of cattle conflicts between farmers and herdsmen in the region.

CATTLE GRAZING AND LETHAL VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA: A TEMPORAL ANALYSIS

Regarding the time frame nationwide, the data also show that there has been an increase in the number of deaths and occurrences of lethal violence resulting from cattle grazing since 2006 (see Figure 2 above). More specifically, reported incidents significantly increased from 15 in 2011 to 27 in 2012, almost doubling the figures. The rising number of fatalities cannot be said to be directly connected to the sustained duration of the crises, as most of them did not last beyond a day, with a few exceptions in Katsina (8 days in 2008) and Adamawa (7 days in 2007). However, the increase in the number of casualties could be linked to the use of sophisticated weapons, which kill faster than the traditional dane guns, machetes, spears, and arrows.

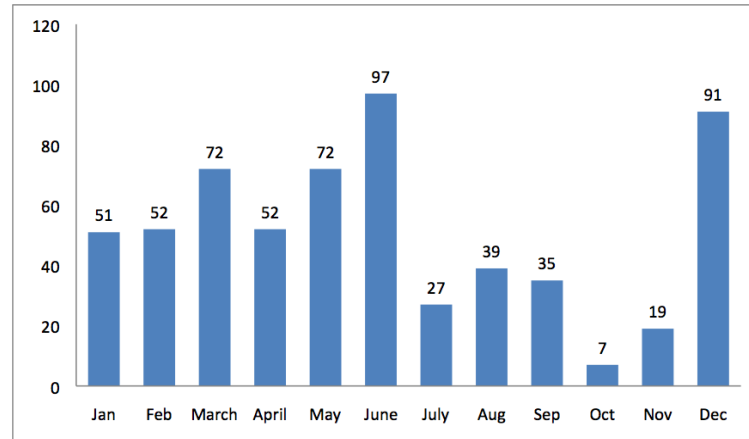


Figure 6 - Violent deaths in Nigeria caused by cattle grazing, cumulative figures per month (June 2006–May 2014)

Figure 6 shows that the months of June and December have the highest number of casualties within the period being considered. Yet fatal cattle conflicts do not stop after the rainy season, as claimed by Adekunle and Adisa (2010) and Abass (2012). The inference to be drawn from this is that there is no cycle of violence, perhaps because of the increasing sedentarisation of the herdsmen. In fact, cattle conflicts do not necessarily involve seasonal movements in search of grazing lands; some of them result from reprisals during the night or at dawn in order to wreak havoc with minimal resistance. The mobilisation of men disguised in army uniform proves the premeditated readiness for these attacks. Sometimes, the problems are also related to the “invasion” of border communities, as in Nasarawa in 2009, and may involve the engagement of foreign “mercenaries” from the Republic of Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, as was reported in the case of the Mubi cow market in 2010.

CONCLUSION

This study has situated and analysed fatal incidents resulting from cattle grazing within its historical, political, and social contexts. Using the Nigeria Watch database data from June 2006 to May 2014, it has identified the major stakeholders as being basically communities of farmers and Fulani. State security agents, the political authorities, and local or foreign “mercenaries” also played a role. The causes, however, were identified to be fundamentally economic and centred around land issues, showing that the creation by the government of grazing routes did not mitigate the problem. In the final analysis, the study revealed that violence from cattle conflicts was not restricted to specific periods of the year and occurred during all months, with the highest number of fatalities recorded in both the rainy (June) and dry (December) seasons.

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List of acronyms

NLDP - National Livestock Development Project

ILRI - International Livestock Research Institute

MACBAN - Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria

MBC - Middle Belt Congress