

'We don't have anything': understanding the interaction between pastoralism and terrorism in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Since 2011, the Sahel has been bedevilled by insecurity spawned by communal strife, social fragmentation, and religious extremism. Some of the security conundrums in the region are perpetrated by some pastoralists who have turned criminals and established strong ties with terrorist groups such as Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM), Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), and Boko Haram. Whilst the reasons for the emergence of militant jihadism have been largely explored in the vast corpus on terrorism, less attention has been devoted to understanding-cum-explaining the reasons pastoralists take up arms and join terrorist groups. The few scholarly publications on the problematic posit that the reasons for pastoralists' resort to terrorism in the region lie in political ecology and pastoralist populism. In this article, I contend that these dominant explanations sidestep the socioeconomic context within which pastoralists struggle to eke out a bare existence as well as the varied everyday abuses perpetrated by state and non-state actors against pastoralists. Drawing on the relative deprivation conceptual framework advanced by the American political scientist Ted Gurr, I argue that pastoralists join terrorist groups because they perceive discrepancies between their past and present socioeconomic condition but also as a consequence of marginalisation and everyday abuses against pastoralists. I illustrate the pastoralism-terrorism nexus with the crucial case of Nigeria—Africa's most populous state and largest economy.

KEYWORDS

Economic deprivation; grievance; dispossession; terrorism; pastoralism; Nigeria; Africa; Sahel

If you compare yourself with others, you may become vain or bitter, for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself.

—Max Ehrmann, *Desiderata*

Introduction

Despite being a melting pot of cultures (Arabic, Islamic, and nomadic), the Sahel—this includes parts of Nigeria, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, Senegal, Mauritania, Chad, Eritrea, Cameroon, and Sudan—is one of the world's most deserted and conflict-ridden regions with millions of Sahelians in need of humanitarian assistance and protection due to

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widespread poverty, armed violence, food insecurity, malnutrition, drought, and climate change.¹ In the last three decades, some pastoralists in the region have increasingly turned to terrorism, thereby exacerbating armed violence and food insecurity in the region. The question that animates this research is this: why do pastoralists take up arms and join terrorist groups? In answering this question, Benjaminsen and Ba contend—with a political ecological perspective focused on Mali—that pastoralists join jihadist groups because of an anti-state, anti-elite and pro-pastoral jihadist discourse, because people have become increasingly fatigued by and disgruntled with a predatory and corrupt state, which extracts rent from the rural peasantry, and because the development model imposed by the state has not responded to pastoral priorities.² For their part, Raleigh, Nsaibia, and Dowd posit that the insecurity from former pastoralists being recruited by jihadist groups in the Sahel is due to ‘pastoralist populism’ in that jihadist groups tap into communal cleavages in order to form alliances with pastoralists to engage in brutality and cyclical attacks.³ Whilst these two articles shed light on the problematic from different perspectives, the socioeconomic context within which pastoralists operate and which compels some of them to join terrorist groups is largely underexplored.

In this article, I draw on the relative deprivation theory and the Nigerian context to contend that pastoralists engage in terrorism due to a conjunction of material deprivation and perceptions of marginalisation relative to other occupational groups. In Nigeria, pastoralists-turned-terrorists are predominantly Fulani pastoralists concentrated in the northwest geopolitical zone of Nigeria who are not just economically deprived but feel ethnically marginalised compared to other ethnic groups such as the Hausa. The Fulani are the largest nomadic group in Nigeria—and in Africa and—are renowned in Africa for their ‘rearing of cattle, pastoral transhumance, and nomadism’.⁴ This conjunction of pastoralism and ethnicity tends, unfortunately, to give terrorism in northwest Nigeria an ethnic colouration. I should state from the outset that terrorism in Nigeria’s northwestern region is not synonymous with Fulani pastoralists—there are other ethnically mixed terrorist groups in the northwest region that are not made up of Fulani pastoralists.⁵ Indeed, it would not only be an oversimplification of the intricate security issues in the northwest geopolitical zone to suppose that *all* terrorists in the region are pastoralists but also a form of ethnic prejudice, nay stereotype, to associate *all* Fulani pastoralists with terrorism. This is precisely why Mark Moritz and Mamediarra Mbacke—drawing on the famous lines of the Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie—warn against the ‘danger of a single story about Fulani pastoralists’ in that such negative stereotypes single out one group, link them with violence or insecurity, and ‘do not contribute to any meaningful solution of the violence and insecurity in West and Central Africa’.⁶ Besides, the British social anthropologist Roger Blench observes that—besides the Fulani—there are about fourteen other pastoralist peoples in Nigeria including the Berber, Kanuri, Kanembu, Yedina, and Arabs.⁷ Taking these critical observations into account, my focus in this article is on pastoralists-turned-terrorists in Nigeria since November 2021 when the Nigerian government declared pastoralist groups such as the *yan-bindiga* (gun owners)—that is, militia groups established by the Fulani to ‘protect themselves and their cattle and to avenge vigilante atrocities’⁸—and other herder-allied militia groups as terrorists.⁹ It is also worth noting that terrorism is not synonymous with jihadism: not all groups classified as terrorists are necessarily jihadists as terrorism could be inspired by political or religious ideologies that are not Islamic in orientation.¹⁰

Hence, in discussing pastoral terrorism, I am by no means suggesting that the pastoralists who engage in terrorism are jihadists. Barnett, Rufa'i and Abdulaziz have provided compelling evidence that pastoral terrorists are not motivated by jihadist ideologies and have little or no interest in joining jihadist groups so that the supposed crime-terror nexus that suggests the jihadisation of pastoralists' militia groups in northwestern Nigeria is a mere speculation that does not reflect empirical reality.¹¹ Likewise, this is quite axiomatic from the statements of a pastoral terrorist leader in Zamfara state who denied being affiliated with any jihadist group like Boko Haram, Ansaru, and ISWAP: 'We are not a religious movement, we are not after any material gain. We organise ourselves to protect our people who are being killed in Nigeria'.¹² And I focus on the unique Nigerian context to interrogate the pastoralism-terrorism nexus not only because it is Africa's most populous state and largest economy but also because it harbours the largest number of Fulanis in Africa (see Table 1).

Nigeria is one of the most insecure states in the world with various security conundrums—namely, terrorism from violent non-state armed groups such as Boko Haram, Ansaru, and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) in the northeast; street gangs and cultists in the southwest; Biafran separatists in the southeast; farmer-pastoralist conflicts in the northwest and Middle Belt; oil militancy in the Niger Delta; and maritime piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. Amidst the economic ravages of the coronavirus pandemic, Nigeria's security challenges have been compounded by the rise of terrorist groups—'armed bandits' in the vernacular parlance—composed of former pastoralists who terrorise citizens in the northwest geopolitical zone through criminal activities such as kidnapping, looting, murder, and cattle rustling. As of 2019 'more than 8,000 people have been killed—mainly in Zamfara state—with over 200,000 internally displaced and about 60,000 fleeing into Niger Republic'¹³ as a result of the activities of pastoral terrorists in the northwest geopolitical zone. The pastoral terrorists have also killed more Nigerians than ISWAP, Boko Haram, robbers, kidnappers, and cultists combined, and were responsible for 47.5 per cent of killings in 2019.¹⁴ From 4 to 6 January 2022, an 'estimated 200 people were killed and 10,000 displaced in attacks . . . in the northwestern Nigerian state of Zamfara'.¹⁵ The extent of the horror wreaked on

Table 1. Population of Fulani by Country.

Country	Fulani population	Total population of country
Nigeria	16,800,000	190 million
Guinea-Conakry	4,900,000	13 million
Senegal	3,500,000	16 million
Mali	3,000,000	18.5 million
Cameroon	2,900,000	24 million
Niger	1,600,000	21 million
Mauritania	1,260,000	4.2 million
Burkina Faso	1,200,000	19 million
Chad	580,000	15 million
The Gambia	320,000	2 million
Guinea-Bissau	320,000	1.9 million
Sierra Leone	310,000	6.2 million
Central African Republic	250,000	5.4 million
Ghana	4,600	28 million
Côte d'Ivoire	1,800	23.5 million

Source: Sangare 2019.

local communities in the northwest geopolitical zone by pastoral terrorists is captured by one local writer in the following way:

The stories are heart-wrenching. People burnt alive. Worshippers slaughtered while praying. Farmers watch as the farm produce they looked after for months gets burnt. Parents submit their daughters to the terrorists. Whole communities accepting the new normal of paying protection money to the terrorists. One woman picked a goat and ran with it thinking it was her little child. The stories are grim. They talk of a region under siege, with no helper in sight. One can't even keep track of the death toll or locations where the ever-happening terror attacks take place.¹⁶

With the current security conundrum involving pastoralists-turned-terrorists, the thesis of 'ungoverned spaces'—that is, spaces wherein "territorial state control has been voluntarily or involuntarily ceded in whole or part to actors other than the relevant legally recognised sovereign authorities"¹⁷—has been frequently invoked to explicate the rise and persistence of pastoral terrorism in Nigeria. The fundamental contention is that pastoralists' ability to terrorise other citizens in Nigeria's northwest is the consequence of the inability of the Nigerian state to govern its numerous forests and rural areas. Proponents of the theoretical framework 'ungoverned spaces' recommend that, to extirpate pastoral terrorism, the state must (re)assert its authority over forests and rural areas. For instance, Ojo contends that 'establishing a functional state institution in the remote environments, as well as reinforcing the institution by empowering the vulnerable local dwellers who are currently governed by informal institutions remains fundamental in safeguarding human security in the country'.¹⁸ Olaniyan and Yahaya maintain that '[t]he forests must be governed and the illegal users must be dislodged and permanently prevented from controlling the spaces'.¹⁹ In a similar vein, Onwuzuruigbo argues that northern Nigeria's ungoverned spaces are responsible for the upsurge in terrorist and criminal activities in the region: 'Northern Nigeria's forests are ungoverned spaces bereft of government presence and control. Government agencies and institutions are either totally lacking or neglected – where and when they are present in the forests. Cattle bandits invade and usurp the ungoverned forests, converting them to theatres of cattle rustling and havens for cattle rustlers. The consequence for northern Nigeria has been the alarming increase in incidences of cattle rustling and other ancillary crimes such as kidnapping, killing, and armed robbery'.²⁰ Kaduna State Governor Nasir El-Rufai corroborates these scholarly sentiments by recommending carpet-bombing of forests in the troubled region in order to extirpate pastoral terrorists:

I've always believed that, you know, we should carpet-bomb the forests; we can replant the trees after. Let's carpet-bomb the forests and bomb all of them. There will be collateral damage, but it's better to wipe them (bandits) out and get people back to our communities so that agriculture and rural economics can pick up ... These bandits operate in the periphery because their hiding place is in the forest. It's a major problem.²¹

Whilst pastoral terrorism in Nigeria's northwestern region is evidently connected to weak state capacity to govern territorial spaces and a military approach is required to curb the security challenge, the socioeconomic context within which the terrorists are embedded has been given less scholarly attention. Understanding the socioeconomic context would mean paying attention to a non-military approach to pastoral terrorism in the northwest geopolitical zone through apposite socioeconomic interventions.

Departing from the ‘ungoverned spaces’ thesis, I contend in this article that pastoral terrorism is a survival strategy in circumstances of economic deprivation and marginalisation of pastoralism which, in turn, breed grievances and perceptions of ethnic exclusion amongst pastoralists. This article draws on the relative deprivation conceptual framework and qualitative data culled from newspapers, journal articles, books, local and international reports to explicate why the current conundrum of pastoral terrorism exists in northwestern Nigeria. It suggests that a military approach alone cannot quell the terrorist groups devoid of concomitant social interventions by the state and federal governments. Because pastoral terrorism is the product of relative deprivation, social interventions such as the provision of social amenities, educational facilities, youth employment, ranches, and grazing areas to nomadic pastoralists in the northwest geopolitical zone would largely address the multifarious socioeconomic concerns of the ferocious terrorists as well as prevent the recruitment of youths from pastoralist communities into terrorist groups. This article is orientated around five sections. In the first section, I shall discuss the relative deprivation theoretical framework. In the second section, I delve into the social roots of Nigeria’s security problems as well as the genesis of pastoral terrorism. In the third section, I explain how current pastoral terrorism in the northwest geopolitical zone stems from the longstanding farmer-herder conflicts in the northwest geopolitical zone. In the fourth section, I assess the modus operandi of pastoral terrorists focusing on how they are recruited and their criminal activities including kidnapping, cattle rustling, murder, and looting. Finally, I explore federal and state responses to terrorism in the northwest geopolitical zone and the necessity of employing non-military—that is, social intervention—measures to eradicate it.

Relative deprivation and its discontents

The concept of ‘relative deprivation’ was first coined by the American sociologist Samuel Stouffer who is also the developer of survey research techniques. In *The American Soldier*—a comprehensive survey of American soldiers in World War II—Stouffer discovered that even though the United States Army (USA) corpsmen got promotions relatively quickly compared to the military police, they were a more frustrated bunch. The research explained that the relevant comparison which caused frustration amongst the airmen was not the military police but their own peers. The airmen compared promotions with their peers such that many felt aggrieved when they noticed a discrepancy between anticipation and attainment. According to the relative deprivation model, ‘an individual responds with anger and resentment to an undeserved disadvantage, which is then followed by an increased likelihood that they behave aggressively towards the source of their deprivation’.²² Stouffer’s unique observation was later taken up by other sociologists to explore various sociological problems. Robert Merton, for example, drew on the relative deprivation theory to advance the ‘reference group theory’ which posits that individuals and groups define themselves and assess their opinions by comparing themselves to others.²³ Reference groups are an individual’s frame of reference which is used to order the ideas of self, role performance, aspirations, ambitions, experiences, and cognition—in short, they are largely determinant of a person’s social ties, attitudes, and self-identity. But such comparisons could breed frustration especially when one feels that one’s peers earn or fare better than one. Relative deprivation can thus

be defined as ‘wanting what one does not have, and feeling that one deserves whatever it is one wants but does not have’.²⁴ Walter Runciman specifies the relative deprivation theory in the following formal manner:

A is relatively deprived of X when (i) he does not have X, (ii) he sees some other person or persons, which may include himself at some previous or expected time, as having X (whether or not this is or will be in fact the case), (iii) he wants X, and (iv) he sees it as feasible that he should have X.²⁵

Runciman broadens the meaning of relative deprivation by highlighting two different senses of the concept: egoistic (individual) relative deprivation and fraternal (group) relative deprivation.²⁶ With egoistic relative deprivation, the individual feels personally deprived as one unfavourably compares one’s social position or situation to better off members of a specific group of which one is a member. For example, a high school teacher who believes she should have been promoted faster than her peers would feel personally deprived and may take action to address the issue within the school where she teaches. Conversely, fraternal relative deprivation has to do with the unfavourable comparison of one’s social position or situation to better off members of another social group of which one is not a member. This is axiomatic from racial discrimination where members of a particular racial group feel marginalised in comparison to the privileges enjoyed by another racial group: such perception of marginalisation ossifies into the formation of social movements—like the American Civil Rights Movement, the Chicano Movement (El Movimiento), or the American Indian Movement (AIM) in the United States—to counter perceived social inequality. Individuals and groups compare themselves with others in society but also with their own past status as well as their expectations for the future. In this sense, relative deprivation has a ‘time component’ as individuals and groups make comparisons across time. The conjunction of egoistic and fraternal relative deprivation leads Smith and Pettigrew to underline four basic components of relative deprivation without which the theory would not function—namely, that individuals and groups who experience relative deprivation

(1) first make cognitive comparisons, (2) then make cognitive appraisals that they or their in-group are disadvantaged, (3) perceive these disadvantages as unfair, and finally (4) resent these unfair and undeserved disadvantages.²⁷

Relative deprivation must, of course, be understood in the context of absolute deprivation. According to Tobias Greitemeyer and Christina Sagioglou, whereas absolute deprivation ‘refers to the lack of capacity to afford one’s basic physical needs such as food’, relative deprivation ‘refers to a social phenomenon arising when individuals cannot afford what most others in their environment can ... combined with the perception that the own predicament is unjust and the resultant feelings of anger and/or resentment.’²⁸ In other words, relative and absolute deprivation are intimately intertwined even though they are conceptually—or theoretically—distinct. This is in large part because absolute deprivation affects the comparisons or cognitive appraisals that individuals and groups make with one another and across time. As Paolo Verme rightly explains the interaction between absolute and relative deprivation:

When a society is doing better because GDP is growing and because this growth is equally benefitting everyone in society, mean income and welfare are moving upwards. This may

not affect my position in society (everyone moves up by the same degree and my relative position does not change) but affects the comparison of my present status with my past status: I feel better because I'm doing better. Hence, absolute gains affect relative gains . . . and if we really wish to measure the importance of relative deprivation in explaining happiness and satisfaction we need to take absolute deprivation into account.²⁹

Initially, the theory of relative deprivation was predominantly used in sociology and psychology. However, it was due in large measure to the influence of the American political scientist Ted Gurr that the theory of relative deprivation was imported into political science and utilised to explain varied forms of political violence. In his highly influential work entitled *Why Men Rebel*, Ted Gurr defines relative deprivation as 'actors' perception of discrepancy between their value expectations and their value capabilities' where '[v]alue expectations are the goods and conditions of life to which people believe they are rightfully entitled. Value capabilities are the goods and conditions they think they are capable of getting and keeping'.³⁰ Gurr's central argument is that collective violence—coup, riot, protest, revolution, rebellion, terrorism—occurs when there is a discrepancy between what people have and what they think they should have as perceived abjection breeds frustration which, in turn, leads to aggression. Consider, for instance, welfare values such as food, shelter, physical comfort, and health services: when people feel they have less of these than they should or could have then they are prone to engage in criminal activities or other forms of collective violence. This is specifically why Gurr holds that structural inequality is a breeding ground for incidents of social-cum-political disorder like looting, armed insurgency, banditry, riots, protests, armed robbery, civil wars, and terrorism.

The significance of the relative deprivation theory is that it does not focus on absolute deprivation alone but rather shows that social judgements are shaped by standards set by social comparisons.³¹ The theory sees relative and absolute deprivation as intimately intertwined. But like all theories which are essentially 'idealisations',³² relative deprivation theory has been criticised on at least three grounds. The first criticism levelled against it is that it generalises from macro-level phenomena to micro-level phenomena without being cognisant of the fact that 'macro units are usually too broad to determine individual data, and individuals have unique properties that cannot be inferred from macro data'.³³ This criticism thus suggests that the theory is implicated in ecological fallacy. But this criticism does not differentiate between individual relative deprivation and group relative deprivation—a distinction that is so central to the study of collective violence. Reviews of the theory often neglect this aspect. When Gurr discusses collective violence, he uses the group relative deprivation variant which applies to group—rather than individual—behaviour. This distinction is significant because '[f]eeling deprived may inspire participation in collective behaviour, but only if the person feels deprived on behalf of a relevant reference group'.³⁴ Second, relative deprivation has been criticised on the ground that it cannot explain why some people who are deprived of rights and resources do not rebel or protest. In other words, grievances are ubiquitous but not everyone acts on their grievances. A related criticism is that relative deprivation cannot explain why some persons join social movements that do not directly benefit them. For example, McCarthy and Zald are of the view that 'the heavy focus upon the psychological state of the mass of potential movement supporters within a collectivity has been accompanied by a lack of emphasis upon the processes by which persons and institutions

from outside of the collectivity under consideration become involved; for instance, Northern white liberals in the Southern civil rights movement, or Russians and Cubans in Angola'.³⁵ The combination of these criticisms have led some scholars to conclude that the theory's findings are either contradictory or inconclusive,³⁶ that the focus should be on social and political structures,³⁷ and that the rational actor model should be used in place of relative deprivation to explain all forms of political violence.³⁸

Whilst the above criticisms of relative deprivation theory are quite cogent, they do not necessarily rule out Ted Gurr's theoretical import: the significance of comparisons on various forms of collective or political violence. Criticisms of the theory utilise indicators of *absolute* deprivation instead of *relative* deprivation when these concepts are not the same: individuals and groups may not suffer from absolute deprivation but may still feel discriminated and marginalised. Indeed, the relative deprivation theory is about 'people's perceptions rather than actual deprivations, yet critics tend to focus on the actual instead of the perceived deprivations'.³⁹ Perceptions of deprivation may or may not be congruent with actual material deprivations. Moreover, the theory is not oblivious to the social and political structure; rather, it embeds individual and group dissatisfaction within the larger social, political, and economic structure and encourages the analyses as much of individuals' and groups' opinions as of other variables such as the political environment, culture, and social norms.

Regardless of the compelling criticisms levelled against the relative deprivation theory, it has strong explanatory power and relevance in predicting, explaining, and understanding collective violence. A relatively recent quantitative study by Tobias Greitemeyer and Christina Sagioglou corroborates that people 'appear to be more frustrated when they have sufficient resources to fulfil their material needs but are aware that most others are better off compared to when their resources are insufficient but most others are worse off'.⁴⁰ Accordingly, rather than discard relative deprivation as if it could not be employed to expound upon, or explicate, political phenomena like collective violence, we would be better off with seeking potential areas where it could be used to explicate armed violence. In the next section, then, I shall explain how Nigeria's various security issues derive from relative deprivation before turning to the interaction between relative deprivation and pastoral terrorism in Nigeria.

The social roots of pastoral terrorism in Nigeria

Before delving into the social roots of pastoral terrorism, I would like to shed light on the links between relative deprivation and various security challenges in Nigeria. Indeed, it is quite difficult to comprehend pastoral terrorism in northwestern Nigeria without an apposite grasp of the linkages between relative deprivation and security conundrums in other parts of the Nigerian state. It is no coincidence that the violent activities perpetrated by non-state armed groups in Nigeria—oil militancy in the Niger Delta; Boko Haram terrorism in the northeast geopolitical zone; and Biafran separatist agitations in the southeast geopolitical zone—have occurred in contexts of perceived marginalisation, that is, relative deprivation.

Oil militancy—beginning in the 1990s in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria—occurred in a context of perceived marginalisation of the Niger Delta people that drove youths from oil-rich communities in the region to take up arms in rebellion against the state.⁴¹

Consider, for example, the following observation by Kimiebi Imomotimi Ebienna on what led youths in the oil-rich Niger Delta to armed violence:

In his bid to transform himself into a civilian president, the late military dictator General Sani Abacha invited youths from all the local government areas of the federation to participate in the Two Million Man March in Abuja, an event which resulted in a serious number of backlashes, especially in the Niger Delta. Hundreds of youths were mobilised to attend the Abuja programme from the poverty-ridden and development-elusive interior enclaves of the Niger Delta. While in Abuja, the youths from the Niger Delta saw, for the first time in their lives, express roads with four lanes, roads that were free of potholes, bridges built over dry land (flyovers) that contrasted with the absence of bridges across creeks and rivers back home, and beautiful streets and high-rise buildings. The youths at first thought that they were in a foreign land, but after several inquiries they were told that they were in Abuja, the federal capital of Nigeria, a new city built by oil revenue sourced from the Niger Delta. The perception of relative deprivation among Niger Delta youths amplified by exposure to the magnificent new Federal Capital Territory awakened the people of the region to the surreptitious and persistent transfer of wealth from the Niger Delta to other regions . . . Therefore, after seeing Abuja in its impressive splendour, the youths returned home to fight for the development of their land and to secure resource control.⁴²

To buttress Ebienna's contention regarding the resort to violence amongst youths in the Niger Delta, Omeje opines that '[i]n the face of protracted grievances of neglect and injustice, compounded by the inability of the rentier state to make significant sacrifices to uplift the Niger Delta region, the oil-bearing communities are compelled to resort increasingly to the use of violence.'⁴³ The Niger Delta militants felt that multinational companies, politicians, and their fellow citizens in other regions of Nigeria were living large whilst the oil-producing communities did not receive much economic benefit from the state in spite of the wreckages of oil exploration in the Niger Delta that destroyed the waters—the main source of livelihood—of fishing communities in the region. For this reason, the Niger Delta militants engaged in criminal activities such as abductions, pipeline vandalisations, car bombings, and extortions in order to attack the Nigerian government and oil infrastructures. This compelled the federal government to make concessions by granting amnesty to the oil militants in 2009.⁴⁴

Like oil militancy in the Niger Delta, radical Islamic terrorism found a home in northeast Nigeria which is one of the poorest geopolitical zones in Nigeria with high unemployment, low literacy, and poor infrastructures.⁴⁵ This absolute deprivation in a state which has enormous resources stimulated perceptions of injustice amongst radical Islamists in the northeast geopolitical zone. Muhammad Yusuf—Boko Haram's founder and a charismatic Muslim preacher—commanded a huge following in large part because he provided his followers with material and financial resources to weather the storm.⁴⁶ So persuasive was his message about the moral depravity—particularly the pervasive corruption or 'culture of corruption'⁴⁷—of the Nigerian political system that he ultimately founded Boko Haram in 2002—a terrorist group that has gone transnational, wreaking havoc not only in Nigeria but in Niger, Chad, and Cameroon (the Lake Chad Region), thanks to its strong connection to al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Yusuf and his followers were brutalised by the military, and he was eventually killed in 2009. News of his demise radicalised his followers who took up arms to contest the corrupt Nigerian state. Abubakar Shekau—Yusuf's successor—reformed the terrorist group. He condemned what he saw as the federal government's neglect of the abject

condition, and marginalisation, of Muslims in Nigeria. In one of his many vitriolic speeches, Shekau stated that '[e]veryone knows how they killed our leaders, and everyone knows how they treat us. Everyone knows what they have been doing to Muslim people in this country for some time. For example, in the town of Kaduna, in Zangon Kataf, in the villages, they did many things to the Muslim community of this country, and these things happened without a fight'.⁴⁸

Likewise, the resurgence of Biafra separatism in the southeast geopolitical zone after Nigeria's democratic transition in 1999 owes to Igbos' perception of marginalisation and political exclusion in Nigeria since independence.⁴⁹ What Igbo separatists aspire to is an independent Biafran state that takes them out of the sphere of perceived ethnic marginalisation by Hausa and Fulani political elites who ostensibly do not have the interests of the Igbo at heart.⁵⁰ Indeed, '[t]he current agitation for the state of Biafra by the youth is, to an extent, an expression of resentment over their material conditions. Although such conditions generally reflect the broader contradictions of the Nigerian political economy, they are often understood as ethnic bias and exclusion.'⁵¹ The perception of relative deprivation amongst Igbos in democratic Nigeria is explicitly captured in the social anthropologist Daniel Jordan Smith's ethnographic account in Igboland:

Ever since Igbos lost their bid for independence [in 1970], the prevailing popular political discourse in southeastern Nigeria has been that of marginalisation. In columns by Igbo writers in newspapers and magazines, in letters to editors, in comments made to call-in programmes on local radio and television stations and, most of all, in everyday conversations, the Igbo preoccupation with their marginalisation in post-war Nigeria has been profound. Igbo complaints about their marginal status take many forms, including claims that federal government resources are channelled disproportionately to other regions, that rules for appointments to civil service positions are deliberately weighted against Igbos, and that official information and state data collection exercises such as census-taking are purposely designed to undercount Igbos and thwart their rightful share of political representation and government revenues.⁵²

Kate Meagher summarises the interaction of relative and absolute deprivation across Nigeria: 'The Islamic insurgency in the north has highlighted problems of marginalisation relative to the more prosperous south, while instability in the Niger Delta and the Nigerian southeast is rooted in claims of marginalisation by northern interests'.⁵³ Just as oil militancy, Biafran separatism, and Boko Haram terrorism emanate from contexts of relative deprivation, pastoral terrorism equally stems from the longstanding marginalisation of pastoralism in Africa in general and pastoralists in northwestern Nigeria in particular which predisposes pastoralists to perceptions of relative marginalisation. There is no better place, I think, to commence an exploration of the social roots of pastoral terrorism in Nigeria than the sociologist Victor Azarya's comparative-historical study of pastoralism in Africa. According to Azarya, social stratification and marginalisation are connected to sedentarisation so that the discrimination of pastoralists in Africa is intimately connected to whether pastoralists fall into the state-forming/state-incorporated type or the segmentary-marginal type.⁵⁴ In other words, sedentarisation is connected to excessive poverty and excessive wealth.⁵⁵ In the pre-colonial era especially after the jihad of Usman dan Fodio (1804–1808), whereas the state-forming pastoralists—the sedentary Fulani—settled permanently, accumulated wealth and knowledge, and appropriated lands, the segmentary-marginal type—the

pastoralist Fulani—were forced by their kinsmen who dominated the political system to either give up pastoralism or face excessive poverty due to a rapid decline in available lands for grazing livestock. As a consequence, some pastoralists gave up nomadism and took to subsistence agriculture; others remained on the fringes of society with no formal education and continued with the nomadic culture. In the colonial era, the sedentary Fulani collaborated with the European colonisers and other sedentary groups such as the Hausa to restrict pastoralists' mobility and to subjugate pastoralism in general. Indeed, the colonial order regarded nomadic pastoralism 'as anathema to development and either tried to force changes on it or, more commonly, left it frozen in time. Throughout colonial Africa agriculture was preferred and encroached on pastoral land . . . Various "development" schemes which tried to put pastoral lands into more intensive use while compensating the pastoralists with largely ineffective extension services ended in general failure and often led to further depletion of land resources'.⁵⁶ Moreover, the marginalisation of Fulani pastoralists continued unabated in the postcolonial era as they remained on the margin of postcolonial developments. Indeed, according to Azarya, the growing interest in wildlife sanctuaries, national parks, and conservation combined with the drought and famine that struck African polities in the 1970s and 1980s meant that pastoralists were increasingly barred from using grazing areas so much so that many pastoralists and their herds of cattle died of famine.⁵⁷ Others either became idle or were pauperised. Still, others moved to urban areas and shantytowns in pursuit of wage labour. The abjection of pastoralists in postcolonial Africa—including Fulani pastoralists in postcolonial Nigeria—is remarkably described by Azarya in the following way:

Whether accompanied by greater movement, as in the case of migrant workers, or less movement, as with those settled around relief centres, the result was usually the same: a further push to the margins of society. Having lost their livelihood, their culture[,] and their self-respect, such groups found themselves at the outskirts of society where even bare physical survival was a matter of intense effort with uncertain results and depended, above all, on other groups' willingness to offer them help or even tolerate their presence. Such pauperisation has become an increasingly common occurrence in large parts of Africa and is, perhaps the ultimate marginalisation of pastoralists in the postcolonial period. While no pastoralist group was immune to it . . . the phenomenon was still more predominant among those pastoralists who did not take part in the profound social changes, such as new stratification and large-scale sedentarisation that followed precolonial state formation.⁵⁸

Adebayo contends that since time immemorial—that is, from the precolonial to the colonial and postcolonial eras—the pastoralist Fulanis were not integrated into northern Nigerian society so that the 'result has been clashes between pastoralists and their hosts whenever animals stray into standing crops'.⁵⁹ In other words, the historical marginalisation of Fulani pastoralists is intimately intertwined with the ongoing farmer-herder conflicts that perturb local communities in northern Nigerian—especially in the northwest geopolitical zone which is, in many respects, the hub of pastoral terrorism in Nigeria. In the next section, I shall explain how pastoral terrorism derives from relative deprivation amongst Fulani pastoralists as they perceive themselves as a marginalised ethnic and occupational group vis-à-vis other sedentary groups such as the Hausa.

Understanding pastoral terrorism in Nigeria

Pastoral terrorism cannot be understood devoid of the skirmishes between peasants and pastoralists over natural resources—land and water—in the northwest geopolitical zone.⁶⁰ But, first, I should start out by explaining the culture and lifestyle of Fulani pastoralists who predominantly constitute the pastoral terrorists in the northwest geopolitical zone. The Fulani—as I stated in the introduction—is the largest nomadic group in Nigeria. The origin of the Fulani is somewhat obscure though a common assumption is that they were all nomads from Egypt and Sudan who then migrated to Senegal, and from there they spread eastwards with their cattle in search of grazing lands, finally arriving in Hausaland in the thirteenth century in what would later become a part of Nigeria.⁶¹ Having migrated to Hausaland in the thirteenth century, a distinction gradually emerged amongst the Fulani with some becoming sedentary (and thereby abandoning the nomadic lifestyle) and others maintaining the culture of nomadic pastoralism (and thereby resisting sedentary lifestyle).⁶² The latter group of Fulani—that is, the pastoralist Fulani—has ‘preserved its bloodline, having refused to become integrated into the host’s society’.⁶³ Mobility is the pastoralist Fulani’s ‘art of not being governed’.⁶⁴ The various origin myths ascribed to the Fulani have been highlighted by Lambrecht as follows:

The origin of the Fulani people is shrouded in mystery. Theories about their relationship to other people are numerous and wide-ranging. They are generally described as ‘Hamites’ of [N]ilotic origin, which would explain the possession of longhorned cattle. Their language, however, is related to that of people from coastal Senegal, the land of the Wolof and the Serer, a thousand miles away from the Nile. East or West? Several romantic suggestions have been put forward: for instance, their relationship to Phoenician crews left behind in coastal settlements during Pharaoh Necho’s expedition that sailed around Africa in the 7th century B.C. Another fanciful hypothesis claims their relation to the Malaysian seafarers who landed along the eastern shores of Africa before settling in the island of Madagascar. Generally well accepted is the suggestion that they migrated from the Nilo-Sudanese areas at a time coinciding with the expulsion from Egypt in 1570 B.C. of the Hyksos, pastoral kings of Asiatic origin. Those who support the theory of western origin postulate that the Fulani lived in the region of the Tekrur where they are still known under the name of ‘Tukuror’, and that at one time they lived in close association with Berber pastoralists who visited the Senegal Valley seasonally with their cattle herds. The intermarriage between Phoenician colonists from Syria and Sudanese Uragara of Berber origin in the region of Fezzan has also been suggested.⁶⁵

Despite disagreements amongst historians, archaeologists, and anthropologists regarding the origins of the Fulani, there is some consensus that the successful jihadi conquest (1804–1808) of Usman dan Fodio—a Fulani revolutionary—against Hausa royals not only ossified the distinction between the sedentary and pastoralist Fulani but also ensured the political dominance of the sedentary Fulani in Hausaland. Ibrahim states that—in the aftermath of Usman dan Fodio’s jihad—the sedentary Fulani ‘followed their newfound political fortune, and intermarrying with the Hausas as well as enjoying the luxury of pagan concubines, has become completely swallowed up by the Hausas in physical features and culture. These men now form the members of the upper strata of society in the country and are generally found in positions of importance and responsibility’⁶⁶ whilst the pastoralist Fulani ‘chose to continue with its pastoral life

and has remained as such . . . Its members have kept the original features of the tribe by refusing to intermarry with other tribes, not even with their kinsmen who have become settled and whom they regard to be degenerate . . . It is now almost a race apart from the aristocratic Fulani who form the ruling caste throughout Hausaland'.⁶⁷ Moreover, whereas the sedentary Fulani 'settled permanently in the cities where they attained a position of great influence and of such importance that they became the accepted rulers of several emirates previously under the jurisdiction of Hausa families'⁶⁸ the pastoralist Fulani neither integrated politically, culturally, and socially with other ethnic groups.⁶⁹ Reed opines that 'there are many small groups of settled Fulani who have forgotten their tribal origin and call themselves simply Fulani or, if pressed, will say they are Hadeijah Fulani or Burmi Fulani or Gombe Fulani and so on, giving the names of places with which they have recently been associated'.⁷⁰ The sedentary Fulani are predominantly Muslim, educated, and engaged in commerce and administration whilst the pastoralist Fulani fuse bits of Islamic practices with traditional beliefs and are generally illiterate and uneducated in the western tradition. Despite these distinctions, the sedentary Fulani have 'retained a cultural bond with the pastoralists which persists up to the present'.⁷¹ What binds the sedentary and pastoralist Fulani is not just the identification with the Fulani culture (*pulaaku*)⁷² but also the shared name.⁷³ The pastoralist Fulani are a minority whose nomadic lifestyle is typically considered primitive and uncivilised by sedentary groups in Nigeria which leads to the derogatory label of 'nomad savage' that is ancient, mediaeval, and modern in its representation of pastoralists.⁷⁴ This distinction between the sedentary and pastoralist Fulani is significant not least because my focus in this article is the latter.

Cattle and mobility are central to the culture of the pastoralist Fulani. Loftsdottir asserts that 'they [the pastoralist Fulani] base their ethnic identity strongly on livestock holdings and the mobility intrinsic to their economy'.⁷⁵ Abandoning the nomadic lifestyle is synonymous with loss of identity as the pastoralist Fulani 'regards cattle as the all-in-all of his life. To him cattle rearing is a way of life rather than an economic activity; cattle are an end in themselves as much as a means to an end'.⁷⁶ Indeed, '[t]o the pastoral Fulani cattle are more important than anything else. They are a measure of wealth, a unit of account, a treasure, a property and yet not a property . . . Everything begins and ends with cattle. The life of their men and women revolve[s] around cattle. All activities, all conversations, and all thoughts centre on cattle'.⁷⁷ Even when the pastoralist Fulani abandon their cattle to search for economic opportunities in the urban spaces, they do not see urban habitation as abandonment of mobility or an attempt at sedentarisation but instead as an 'ongoing journey that will eventually lead them back to the bush'.⁷⁸ The pastoralist Fulani's lifestyle has been—for centuries before the foundation of modern African polities in West Africa—adapted to fit variable environmental and climatic conditions. When the climatic and environmental conditions are quite unfavourable for cattle grazing, the pastoralist Fulani move in search of greener pastures for their cattle—transhumance and nomadism are the pastoralist's survival strategy. But transhumance and nomadism are marginalised by the modern state which prioritises sedentarism over and above nomadism. This is remarkably underlined by Madeline Velluro:

Pastoralists' mobile nature has further marginalised them because most nation states are unpracticed in protecting the rights of, and providing services to, mobile people. Healthcare

and education are often distributed in static buildings (hospitals and schools). Political representation is often closely tied to locality, as citizens engage in governance through local city councils or town halls, answer to law enforcement with a geographically limited jurisdiction, and vote on laws that impact their towns, districts, or provinces. Census data is notoriously poor in capturing the demographics of mobile populations. In this context, mobile groups like pastoralists struggle to access formal governance mechanisms for services like security, justice, and social support. Instead, they create their own mechanisms that are often regarded as illegitimate, antiquated, or backward by the state and the broader international community.⁷⁹

The constraints on pastoralism in the context of farmer-pastoralist conflicts in northwest Nigeria is at the heart of perceptions of relative deprivation amongst pastoral terrorists who are Fulani pastoralists. Two dominant perspectives have been employed to explain the farmer-pastoralist conflicts: (1) environmental scarcity, and (2) political ecology. The environmental scarcity contention draws on the Canadian political scientist Thomas Homer-Dixon's environment-conflict linkage model⁸⁰ to argue that the scarcity of land due to population pressures, climate change, modernisation, and urbanisation engenders conflicts like farmer-pastoralist conflicts.⁸¹ Olaniyan and Okeke-Uzodike, for instance, observe that 'about 35 per cent of land areas that were cultivable before the 1960s are increasingly getting arid in 11 of Nigeria's northernmost states of Borno, Bauchi, Gombe, Adamawa, Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Yobe, Zamfara, Sokoto, and Kebbi'⁸² leading to violent conflicts between farmers and pastoralists. Furthermore, the political ecological argument holds that the politicisation of space—that is, land—is the harbinger of farmer-pastoralist conflicts.⁸³ Benjamin Maiangwa asserts that it is the 'idealisation of a strong sense of belonging to the land and space in which both groups (farmers and herders) carry out their everyday activities that undergird most incidents of farmer – herder conflicts in Nigeria and parts of West Africa'.⁸⁴ Political ecological factors that have been identified as drivers of farmer-herder conflicts include the native-settler dichotomy and questions of autochthony,⁸⁵ land governance,⁸⁶ and the 'politics of the belly' (political corruption) à la Jean-François Bayart.⁸⁷

These two explanations for the farmer-pastoralist conflicts apply, I am inclined to think, to northwestern Nigeria where Fulani pastoralists and Hausa farmers increasingly clash over natural resources such as land and water. The Fulani and Hausa are the two major ethnic groups in the northwest geopolitical zone and—owing to more than a century of contact and cultural syncretism due, as I have earlier explained, to Fulani's migration to Hausaland in the thirteenth century as well as the Sokoto Jihad of Usman dan Fodio in the 1800s—share strong cultural ties. Other ethnic groups in the region include the Kanuri, Zuru, Bajau, Jaba, Tuareg, Zabarmawa, and Gwari. Whilst the Fulani are predominantly pastoralists, the Hausa are typically farmers. According to the ICG: 'The region's estimated population of 33 million (based on figures from the contentious 2006 census) is predominantly Muslim (Sunni). Most of the population (about 80 per cent) are farmers, pastoralists, agro-pastoralists or small-scale entrepreneurs. The region has substantial solid mineral deposits, including gold exploited by artisanal miners in open pit mines.'⁸⁸ As the two dominant groups—the Hausa and the Fulani—in the region share strong religious and cultural ties, one may perhaps expect that violent confrontations between them would rarely occur. However, the inverse is the case as Hausa farmers and Fulani pastoralists struggle over access to land and other natural

resources in the context of environmental scarcity due to population pressures, urbanisation, and climate change in the northwest. Fulani pastoralists could hardly find fertile land to graze their cattle; this meant that their cattle oftentimes encroached on the farmlands of Hausa farmers and destroyed crops. Fulani pastoralists' cattle were usually killed on most of these occasions. Besides, because the Fulanis migrated to Hausaland in the distant past, Fulani pastoralists are considered non-natives or foreigners—'non-indigenes'⁸⁹ in the vernacular Nigerian parlance—by Hausa farmers. This politicisation of land denied Fulani pastoralists the right to graze cattle on lands. Such claims of autochthony also witnessed some Hausa farmers connive with traditional authorities in the northwest to take over the Fulanis' grazing areas for agricultural expansion purposes. Fulani pastoralists faced invidious discrimination from law enforcement agencies especially tax agencies; some were brutally murdered whenever confrontations over land occurred between farmers and pastoralists. As a result, the nomadic lifestyle and means of livelihood of Fulani pastoralists were both existentially threatened. The concatenation of these environmental and political ecological factors, so it seems to me, led and still lead some pastoralists of Fulani ethnicity into terrorism primarily for economic survival and secondarily for physical safety and ethnic revenge against Hausa farmers.

As Hausa farmers and Fulani pastoralists increasingly competed over scarce resources, they both mobilised armed groups for protection. Hausa farmers accused Fulani pastoralists of complicity in criminal activities in the northwest geopolitical zone. On the one hand, Hausa communities formed vigilante groups called the *yan sa kai* to protect their villages. The vigilantes—and they were composed of young men from mainly Hausa peasant communities—'particularly targeted many town-dwelling Fulani who, because of their ethnic affiliation with the cattle-herding Fulani in the forests, were accused of complicity in criminal activity. Sanctions included arbitrary arrests, torture, indiscriminate confiscation of cattle and extrajudicial killings, with suspects sometimes hacked to death in markets and other public places. Sometimes vigilantes burnt down Fulani settlements, forcing the victims to flee into the forests.'⁹⁰ On the other hand, the Fulani formed militia groups by recruiting from young pastoralists called the *yan-bindiga* not only to avenge vigilante atrocities but also to protect themselves and their cattle. Indeed, '[t]hese [militia] groups raised funds for arms acquisition from a combination of community contributions and a range of other activities allegedly including kidnapping for ransom. As violence escalated, they increasingly acquired more sophisticated firepower, much of it in the form of arms smuggled in from the Sahara and the Sahel via international routes'.⁹¹ These antagonisms which increasingly took on an ethnic dimension created chaos as reprisal attacks between Fulani pastoralists and Hausa farmers became the norm. With arms proliferation and porous borders in the Sahel region, organised criminal gangs composed of Fulani pastoralists who felt socially, economically, and politically excluded—due in large part to the decline of available grazing lands for cattle herding and the perceived corruption that saw pastoralists' grazing areas handed over to mainly Hausa farmers—exploited the politically unstable environment to engage in nefarious criminal activities beyond protection of themselves and their cattle or revenge of vigilante atrocities.⁹² These pastoral terrorists conduct myriad criminal activities to earn a living as the society and government in the northwest geopolitical zone are perceived as incapable of protecting Fulani pastoralists' interests and providing them with alternative economic opportunities as nomadism and transhumant lifestyle are

increasingly under threat from sedentarist policies. This perception of relative deprivation amongst some Fulani pastoralists is the root of pastoral terrorism in northwest Nigeria. The pastoral terrorists compare their previous situation when they could graze cattle on lands and forests and nurture their nomadic identity devoid of abuses to the present condition when they can no longer do so. These discrepancies coupled with their future expectations of a better life for Fulani pastoralists relative to Hausa farmers also generate ethnic grievances. Thus, it is against this background of perceptions of exclusion, dispossession, and marginalisation amongst some Fulani pastoralists that we must comprehend pastoral terrorism in northwestern Nigeria.

As I have noted in the theoretical framework, relative and absolute deprivation intimately intertwine. The relative deprivation of Fulani pastoralists who have turned terrorists must be situated in the context of absolute deprivation in Nigeria in general and in the northwest geopolitical zone in particular. For, as I say, the absolute deprivation in Nigeria and in the northwest region impacts on Fulani pastoralists' relative deprivation and opportunities for socioeconomic emancipation in the absence of the nomadic occupation. Despite being the largest economy in Africa, Nigeria is the 'poverty capital of the world'⁹³ with 40.1 per cent of the total population classified as poor which translates to 82.9 million Nigerians out of an approximately 190 million population who live on less than \$1 a day and \$381.75 a year. During the coronavirus pandemic—the period when abductions of schoolchildren in the northwest geopolitical zone by the pastoral terrorists skyrocketed—unemployment reached a record high of 33.3 per cent with youth unemployment of 53.4 per cent.⁹⁴ Moreover, the 'social indicators in Nigeria are amongst the worst in the whole world. In every five children, one dies at the age of five. Over 12 million children are out of school and there are about two million AIDS orphans'.⁹⁵ Nigeria's condition is classic case of 'growth without development' not least because 'being the largest economy in Africa does not translate to a reduction in its poverty level. The condition of poverty in Nigeria has become an absurdity in which, in the face of economic growth, two-thirds of the Nigerian population live in abject poverty'.⁹⁶

Whilst poverty at the national level is extremely high, there are notable discrepancies in the levels of poverty regionally as the poverty rate differs from one geopolitical zone to another. Nigeria is divided into six geopolitical zones: northcentral or the Middle Belt (Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau, Abuja); northeast (Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, Yobe); northwest (Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, Zamfara); southeast (Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo); southsouth or the Niger Delta (Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Rivers, Delta, Edo); and southwest (Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Oyo). According to geopolitical zones, the northwest—where from the pastoralists-turned-terrorists originate and terrorise with reckless abandon—is the most impoverished with a poverty rate of 77.7 per cent.⁹⁷ And, generally, the northern geopolitical zones are poorer relative to the southern geopolitical zones. Commenting on the poverty level in the northwest geopolitical zone, the ICG report states that:

As of 2019, all seven states in the zone had poverty levels above the national average of 40.1 per cent, led by Sokoto (87.7 per cent), Jigawa (87 per cent) and Zamfara (74 per cent). Millions lack access to basic health care and clean water, and immunisation coverage is far below national goals. Whilst the region has a long and proud history of Islamic and Arabic scholarship, apathy towards, and inadequate investment in, formal education over the

decades have contributed to a literacy rate of 29.7 per cent. The zone currently has the highest number of out-of-school children in Nigeria. On top of those who do not attend school at all, millions of children are in the poorly resourced and ill-supervised Quranic school system, or *almajiranci*, which produces cohorts of unskilled youth.⁹⁸

A 2018 report on Nigeria by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) corroborates the ICG's observations. With regard to Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)—as calculated by the Oxford Poverty Human Development Initiative (OPHDI)—*all* states in the northwest geopolitical zone record the highest levels of multiple deprivation (see Figure 1) above the national average MPI score of 0.303: Zamfara (0.605), Sokoto (0.548), Katsina (0.52), Jigawa (0.552), Kebbi (0.553), Kano (0.434), and Kaduna (0.311).⁹⁹ In terms of the intensity of poverty across the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria, the northwest region has the highest percentage of intense poverty at 45 per cent (see Figure 2). And, when it comes to human development: again, *all* states in the northwest geopolitical zone have Human Development Index (HDI) scores below the national average of 0.521 with Zamfara, Sokoto, and Katsina performing

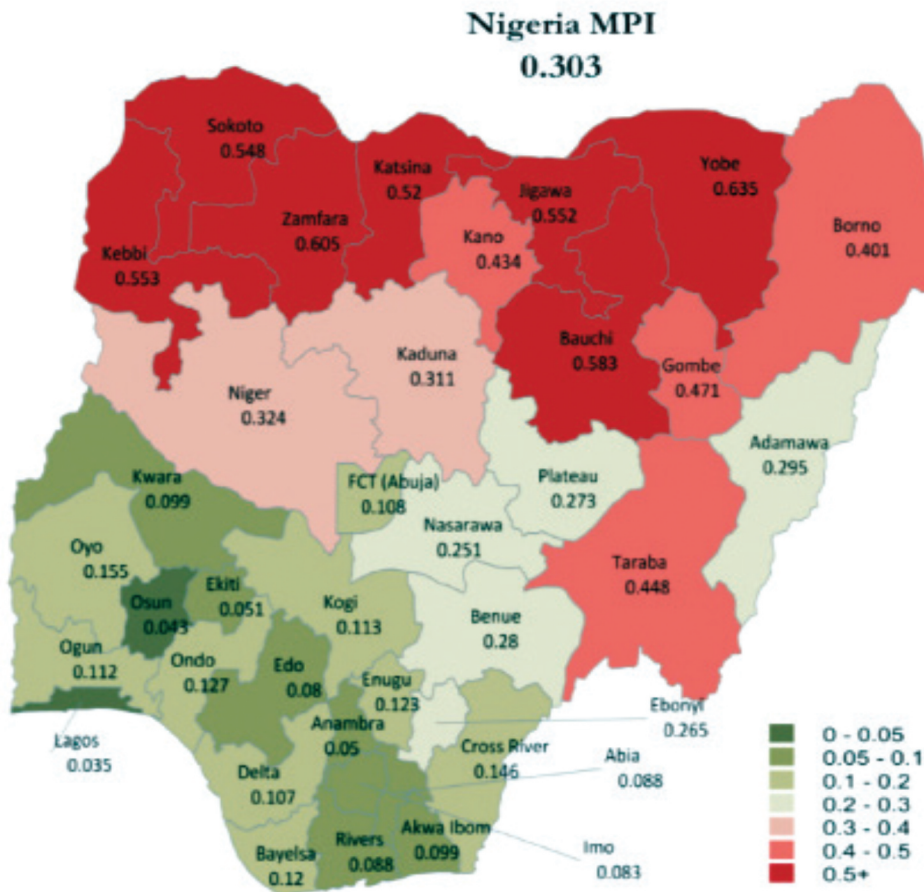


Figure 1. Multidimensional Poverty Index – OPHDI 2017. *Source:* UDHR

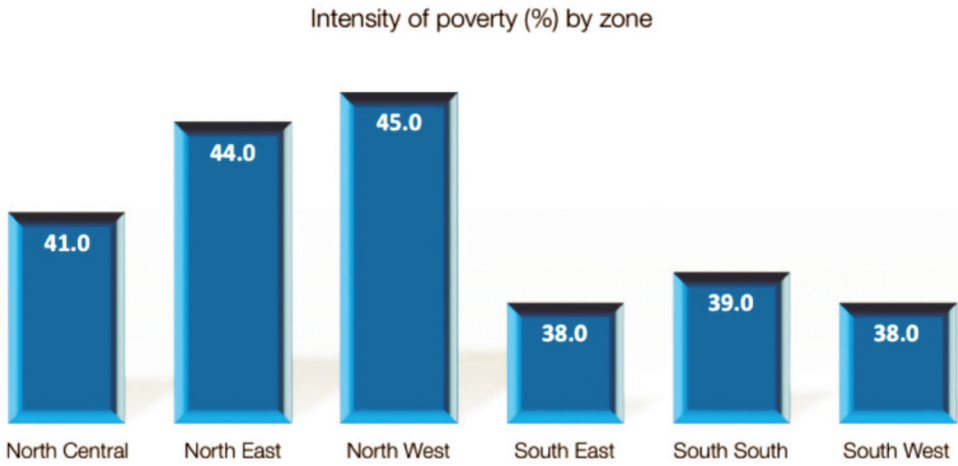


Figure 2. Intensity of poverty by zone. Source: UNDP, 2018.

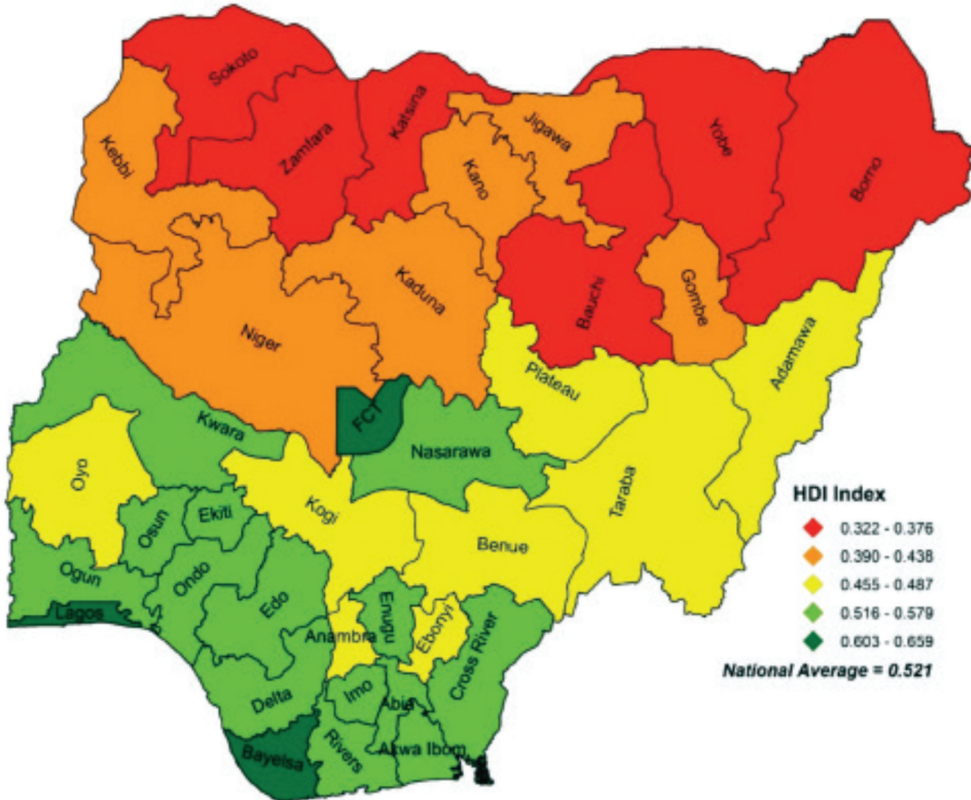


Figure 3. State level Human Development Index – UNDP 2018. Source: UNDP, 2018.

the worst amongst the seven states in the region (see [Figure 3](#)). In sum, states in the northwest geopolitical zone record some of the lowest human development in Nigeria.

Pastoralists are amongst the poorest inhabitants of the severely deprived northwest region: the children of nomadic pastoralists are less likely to be literate or to acquire formal education and more likely to be formally unemployed. Realising the abysmally low school enrolment amongst nomadic communities, the Nigerian government established the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) in 1989 to coordinate and implement the Nomadic Education Programme (NEP), an educational initiative geared towards ‘providing and widening access to quality basic education for nomads in Nigeria, boosting literacy and equipping them with skills and competences to enhance their well-being and participation in the nation-building process’.¹⁰⁰ Despite the promise of the NEP, the Nigerian educational system has ‘generally failed the nomadic communities. All the education indicators have revealed that the nomadic groups are at the bottom of the table in national statistics pertaining to enrolment rates, participation, classroom performance, gender balance, achievement, progression to the next level of education and training’.¹⁰¹ A relatively recent survey of the NEP’s achievements in the northwest region shows that the performance is abysmally below par as nomadic education is hampered by myriad woes especially the dearth of teachers, funding, and infrastructure.¹⁰² In Kaduna state, for example, ‘80 per cent of teaching and learning in the existing 318 nomadic schools occur under trees due to massive shortage of infrastructure’.¹⁰³ This same pattern—of inadequate funding, dilapidated infrastructure, and dearth of teachers to educate children in nomadic communities in the northwest region—is comparatively constant in Kebbi, Katsina, Kano, Jigawa, Zamfara, and Sokoto states.¹⁰⁴

Uneducated, unemployed, unskilled, young people who feel betrayed, neglected, and marginalised by a corrupt political system that does not provide basic resources and social amenities are vulnerable to criminality and political violence.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, ‘[e]ndemic corruption and state violence not only fuel outrage, but exacerbate conditions of poverty and inequality that are key drivers of radicalisation’.¹⁰⁶ It is therefore no coincidence that pastoral terrorists in the northwest geopolitical zone emerge from a context of absolute deprivation which—combined with land dispossession and marginalisation by mainly Hausa peasants in collaboration with local authorities—predisposes them to sentiments or perceptions of social exclusion and relative marginalisation.¹⁰⁷ This is axiomatic from the statements of Shehu Rekep—a notorious pastoral terrorist—who opined that the reason for pastoralists engaging in terrorism is due to their lack of education:

This whole agitation is caused by lack of education. None of us here is educated. Only in isolated cases do you have someone who would go and settle in another place and go to school. They are very few. Anyone you see that has gone to school, it is possible it was because a minister or someone important is married to his sister and brought him close. The rest of us in the bushes are not educated. But there is also adult education and other trainings for trade. The law says they should empower the citizens and secure them and their property. None of that happens. We are not being secured. We don’t have anything to depend on; it is only us and the trees that are here, and the gun we are wielding.¹⁰⁸

Pastoralists’ lack of education and access to basic amenities which impact on lives and opportunities for social emancipation leads them to feel deprived relative to other

ethnicities in Nigeria. In a BBC Africa Eye documentary entitled *The Bandit Warlords of Zamfara* pastoral terrorists' responses to questions regarding why they have chosen to engage in terrorism corroborate the interaction between absolute and relative deprivation. This is quite obvious in the explanations of a pastoral terrorist in the documentary:

How have the Fulani become so worthless in Nigeria? There is no veterinary hospital. We have nowhere for them [cattle] to drink. Don't cows have any value? Everyone needs meat. Everyone needs milk. Walk into town, it's like they've seen a hyena. Many Fulani have university degrees, [but] the government never considers them. I swear, if 1,000 Hausas sit an exam alongside a single Fulani man, they will pass all the Hausas and fail the Fulani man. There is no one to help us. Only God. If you see Fulani resorting to so-called terrorism, it's because of this.¹⁰⁹

Connected to pastoralists' general lack of education and access to the most basic necessities is the problem of the precarious future of nomadic pastoralism, a centuries-old occupation and lifestyle that caters to the basic needs of pastoralists. For Fulani pastoralists—and this observation applies to many African pastoralists—cattle serve 'as the medium of transformation, in a *total* economy of signs and practices, between a material economy of things and a moral economy of persons'.¹¹⁰ I have already stated in this article that political ecological factors such as land rights and the decline of grazing areas due to the allocation of lands to farming communities by local governments in ways that oftentimes do not promote pastoralists' interests have conspired to render several Fulani pastoralists destitute. Consider, for instance, the ICG report which lucidly captures the allocation of lands to farming communities in Zamfara state wherefrom pastoral terrorism initially took root before gradually diffusing to other states in the northwest geopolitical zone:

In Zamfara state, the government decided to clear large forests and grazing reserves in the Kuyambana forest and in parts of the Maru and Zurmi local government areas. This action disrupted life in Fulani hamlets, some centuries old, limiting the availability of pasture for their livestock. The allocation of land to farmers also resulted in encroachment on, and blockage of, livestock grazing routes, and created conditions for increased trespass on farmlands by herders and more demands for compensation for damaged crops. Whilst farmers complained of herders trespassing on their farms and damaging crops, herders protested the compensation they had to pay for damaged crops, and complained that farmers, district heads, police and courts were colluding against them in a corrupt process.¹¹¹

At the dawn of the new millennium, '[t]he seizure of grazing land from reserved areas in Zamfara state affected an estimated 20,000 Fulani people, dispossessing many of them and constraining their access to land'.¹¹² Indeed, there is the sense of relative deprivation, a sense of injustice, amongst Fulani pastoralists who have taken to terrorism to address perceived marginalisation *as* ethnic Fulanis and *as* pastoralists—the perception of discrepancies between what they had, what they have, and what they think they should have. Pastoral terrorists feel marginalised in a state which has abundant natural resources but nothing to give them as an alternative to nomadic pastoralism, a cultural and economic practice that has seemingly proved impossible to sustain due to environmental and political ecological factors. A paradigmatic example of the interaction between relative deprivation and pastoral terrorism in northwestern Nigeria is axiomatic, I think, from a journalist's interview conducted with one group of pastoralists turned terrorist in

Sububu Forest in Zamfara state: the pastoral terrorists contended that terrorism is their only means of economic survival as grazing lands have been taken over by farmers and cattle herding has become extremely unprofitable. One of the pastoral terrorists retorted that the reason for resorting to terrorism is their sense of neglect by the Nigerian government which does not treat Fulani pastoralists like every other ethnic-cum-occupational group in Nigeria:

The reason is that we have been neglected. This country is rich with natural resources, but we (the Fulani) have not been educated, we are not protected, we get killed, but we are always reported as the aggressors. We are never considered in anything, we only get killed . . . They stopped looking after the Fulani. Their forests and grazing areas were taken over. You will see one person having as much as 1,000 hectares, just because he is rich . . . We are also deprived of keeping cattle because of lack of grazing areas. They have taken over the grazing areas; even the grazing routes are no longer there. Soldiers would take over our cattle, vigilante would confiscate, and gunmen would rustle. We have been rendered poor.¹¹³

The above response shows the connection between relative and absolute deprivation amongst the pastoral terrorists. Indeed, it is their absolute deprivation—their present condition of material lack—which impacts on their feeling of being deprived relative not only to their past situation but also with regard to other ethnic and occupational groups such as Hausa farmers. If the nation is endowed with natural resources such as land, oil, and gas—so the pastoral terrorists’ sentiments go—how come we (the Fulani) have been deprived of land, grazing areas, and resources to maintain not just the nomadic lifestyle but also our means of livelihood compared to other ethnic and occupational groups? Why can’t members of the Fulani ethnic group—especially the pastoralists amongst them—be as educated as other ethnic groups and have access to land and resources? Additionally, the responses of the pastoral terrorists regarding why they engage in criminal activities corroborates relative deprivation as they compared their situation in northern Nigeria to those of Niger Delta militants who were given amnesty:

[President]Yar’Adua was a Muslim Hausa man from Katsina, but he went to the South and offered amnesty to Niger Delta militants. Our own insurrection was older than theirs, but he went and struck a deal with them and disregarded us. Because we are in the North where there is no oil, he directed that we should be killed. The government gives preference to crises in rich places. Maybe because there is no oil in the North we are considered as second-rate citizens. Herders are not being considered. We get attacked in the forests. Any person who is kidnapped and detained in the bush eventually gets released, but Fulani men are detained perpetually in prisons. About 96 per cent of prisoners in Nigeria are herders.¹¹⁴

Although it is somewhat difficult to verify the claim that 96 per cent of prisoners in Nigeria are pastoralists, it is incontrovertible that there is a perception of relative marginalisation amongst pastoral terrorists in Nigeria. Besides the economic deprivation that pastoralists experience in the impoverished northwest geopolitical zone, there is also the problematic of human right abuses of pastoralists in the region. Indeed, there is a consensus amongst researchers that Fulani pastoralists were brutalised, tortured, and killed by ethnic militia-cum-vigilantes—the *yan sa kai*—established by mainly Hausa farmers and traditional authorities in rural communities to curb crime in Zamfara state where it is generally believed that the ongoing pastoral terrorism commenced. Since Nigeria’s return to democracy in 1999, vigilante groups have become ‘an endemic feature of the Nigerian social and political landscape’¹¹⁵ as they are found in virtually all regions

of Nigeria. Vigilantism in Nigeria—and in other parts of Africa where the practice exists—is a ‘common or popular response to ambiguities and ambivalence regarding the authority of the state’.¹¹⁶ However, in spite of the laudable efforts of vigilante groups to regulate social order in remote and isolated communities where the state itself has seemingly failed to ‘monopolise violence’ à la Max Weber, they have also been associated with excessive brutality, extortions, armed robbery, ethnoreligious violence, and extra-judicial executions which explains why vigilantes in Nigeria have ‘assumed a status synonymous with the fractured and violence-ridden image of Africa’s most populous nation’.¹¹⁷ Amidst the criminally motivated attacks that occasionally involved youths from pastoralist communities as well as the farmer-herder conflicts that pitted mainly Hausa farmers against predominantly Fulani pastoralists, the *yan sa kai* were quite ruthless—like other vigilante groups across the federation—in their treatment of pastoralists and, in so doing, became a source of anarchy and insecurity.

There is some consensus amongst researchers that the final straw—or, to borrow the Canadian writer Malcolm Gladwell’s phrase, the ‘tipping point’¹¹⁸—that radicalised pastoralists was the *yan sa kai*’s murder of the Fulani activist Alhaji Isheyi—a Fulani pastoralist who often negotiated conflicts between mainly Hausa farmers and predominantly Fulani pastoralists—in Zamfara state in August 2012.¹¹⁹ Indeed, in the aftermath of Isheyi’s murder ‘[pastoral] terror groups used his murder as justification for the reprisal and mass killings in the region. They acquired more sophisticated weapons and became deadlier than ever across Zamfara, Sokoto, Katsina, and Kaduna states’.¹²⁰ This can be deciphered from the assertions of Hassan Dantawaye, a pastoral terrorist: ‘Many of our [Fulani] people were killed by these people [the *yan sa kai*]. After realising that the government was not ready to stop the killing of our people . . . we decided to pay back with reprisals. From that day, we decided to kill at least 50 people whenever one of us was killed’.¹²¹ Similarly, due to the pervasive ethnic profiling by the *yan sa kai* and attacks pastoralists faced, Shehu Rekeb—the pastoral terrorist whose narratives I have hitherto quoted—opines that there is no government in Nigeria: ‘Anyone who told you there is government authority is just making empty claims. If you have a gun with which you protect yourself, that is just your government’.¹²² This corroborates the anthropologist Daniel Jordan Smith’s contention that the state’s absence in the provision of goods and services to citizens means that every household is its own government in Nigeria.¹²³ Over time, however, the *yan bindiga* established by Fulani pastoralists to protect themselves and their cattle mutated into full-blown terrorism and became not just ‘merchants of terror’¹²⁴ but also agents of social disorder.

From the foregoing discussion, it is lucid that one of Fulani pastoralists’ motives for resorting to terrorism—apart from their economic deprivation that I have explained—are the human rights abuses and failure of the state to deliver justice when pastoralists encountered issues with Hausa vigilantes and farmers. Put simply, the rebellion of pastoralists in the form of terrorism is a reaction to pastoralists’ repression by vigilante groups in collaboration with state and traditional authorities. This is underlined by Bello Turji—a notorious pastoral terrorist in Zamfara state—who himself witnessed extrajudicial executions perpetrated against pastoralists by the Hausa vigilante groups, leading to the loss of some members of his family as well as his family’s livestock and means of livelihood. Turji recounts the ruthlessness of the *yan sa kai* in the following way:

If a farm is encroached on, one would be taken to the village head or the DPO (Divisional Police Officer) and the person would be fined beyond proportion. That enraged some of our people and some took up arms. What did the government do? The went ahead to legalise *yan sa kai* group. You will find a vigilante has become a leader in a town and has armed everyone—the lunatic, the sane person[,] and drug addict. How could they serve justice the same way? In all these happenings, the security agents looked on. They . . . will catch and slit the throat of a person in their (security personnel's) presence. The first time I saw someone slaughtered was on a market day in Shinkafi when vigilantes brought a man close to the abattoir and cut his throat.¹²⁵

Connected to the human rights abuses of the *yan sa kai* which engendered the *yan bindiga* is the inefficient and corrupt justice system that failed to deliver justice to pastoralist communities on several occasions when there were clashes between farmers and pastoralists over land or cattle trespasses on peasants' farmlands. Indeed, the failure in the administration of justice coupled with corruption in the judiciary and law enforcement agencies compelled pastoralists to think of themselves as marginalised relative to mainly sedentary Hausa farmers. Once again, these conundrums are quite evident in the sentiments of a pastoral terrorist in Zamfara state who claimed that he became a terrorist because of the pervasive corruption in the legal system and the seemingly utter absence of judicial redress for pastoralists who were victimised by sedentary Hausa farmers and the *yan sa kai* in concert with law enforcement agencies:

The Emir of Shinkafi witnessed how 1,000 of our cattle were rustled away by criminals in Shinkafi to the area of Zurmi and Maradun LGAs in Zamfara state. My parents and family reported the matter to the court but unfortunately, nothing was done. Not long after, the soldiers and *yan sa kai* killed my stepfather, and nothing was again done about it. There is no place to report this injustice. Therefore, I feel the only way out is to bear a gun and fight for my freedom. All the security agents and the emirs that were supposed to protect me were unable to protect me. But had these agencies have assisted me and provided me with justice, I would never kill anybody.¹²⁶

Amidst the security panic created by pastoral terrorists in the northwest geopolitical zone, a seemingly 'controversial' Muslim cleric has emerged who negotiates ransom payments for families, relatives, and friends of pastoral terrorists' victims: Sheikh Ahmad Gumi. In his several negotiations to free captives, Gumi has equally highlighted the relative deprivation amongst the pastoral terrorists: they feel excluded not only because of lack of economic opportunities for them in the northwestern Nigeria but also due to the marginalisation of nomadic pastoralism and unfair treatment of Fulani pastoralists by Hausa vigilante groups in conjunction with law enforcement agencies.¹²⁷ For Gumi, the terrorist activities of pastoralists are a strategy to draw the attention of the government to the existential neglect of pastoralists: what the pastoral terrorists yearn for, in other words, is social justice. As a notorious pastoral terrorist called Aleru once stated: 'We only protest with guns. We know no journalists. We don't know where to protest. Our protest is to take up arms and storm villages. That's when the government will wake up and acknowledge our problems. If they ask, we will tell them our problems'.¹²⁸ Gumi has recommended negotiating with pastoral terrorists to address their myriad grievances rather than expending copious resources on military warfare. References are often made to the amnesty programme in the Niger Delta which saw the demise of oil militancy in the region. As he puts it: 'Just as we had the Niger Delta conflict

resolved with an amnesty which comes with reconciliation, reparation, and rehabilitation packages, so will the herdsmen crisis be resolved. In fact, there is a need for a Marshal[l] plan to educate the nomadic pastoralist so that no citizen is left behind. No military, especially of a poor economy, can win guerrilla warfare'.¹²⁹ But Gumi's remarks have been lambasted by various ethnic, religious, and regional groups for backing terrorists and encouraging pastoral terrorism in northwestern Nigeria.¹³⁰ If everyone took the same route—so the counterarguments from groups opposed to Gumi's remarks go—would that not embolden rather than stem terrorists, especially pastoral terrorists?

In any case, I do think that the primary motive of pastoral terrorism is social justice which, in turn, derives from the structural inequality, poverty, and perceived marginalisation of pastoralists in Nigeria, especially in the northwest geopolitical zone. For pastoral terrorists and their herder-allied groups terrorism is a legitimate form of protest for social emancipation from the ravages of economic deprivation and rampant human rights abuses seemingly backed by a predatory political system that alienates pastoralists. In this sense, terrorism is—at least for pastoral terrorists—an emancipatory enterprise, albeit illicit. In other words, pastoral terrorism is an illegal industry directed towards enriching thousands of disaffected pastoralist youths who perceive discrepancies between what they had, what they have, and what they think they should or could have in terms of the provision of welfare values. Pastoral terrorism is a representation of the anguish of the precariat over their excruciating social condition as well as their unflinching desire to change it.

Social injustice is not a 'given' but the deliberate construction of political actors who demarcate lives between the desirables and undesirables—that is, between those who must live and those who must die.¹³¹ It is doubtless that some pastoralists' resort to terrorism for survival mirrors the condition of some Nigerians for whom various criminality of sorts is a legitimate way to protest against abjections manufactured by the state through its political elites' mismanagement and misappropriation of public funds and repressions of the creative potentials of the citizenry. Without a doubt, the problematic of pastoral terrorism in northwestern Nigeria lends significance to the plausible observation that '[m]ost Nigerian practices of organised crime, including document fraud, embezzlement and large scale smuggling, originate in politics and the state itself, or at least have important and durable connections to the state'.¹³² One would not be mistaken, then, to describe the Nigerian state as a 'colossal collection of impoverished masses, a crumbling Tower of Babel built on the rickety foundations of oil rents collected and squandered by its leaders'.¹³³ Political elites in the northern geopolitical zones of Nigeria have failed to provide public goods and to protect inhabitants of the region leaving many youths from impoverished communities to engage in terrorist activities. Indeed, '[r]ather than addressing these social ills, unscrupulous northern politicians use the reservoir of the unemployed for recruitment into political thuggery, spreading a taste for violence and easy money across these ravaged communities'.¹³⁴ In the next section, I shall delve into the activities of pastoral terrorists in the northwest geopolitical zone so as to make sense of the appeal of terrorism in the context of relative marginalisation.

The modus operandi of pastoral terrorists

Though criminality of sorts has always existed in the northwest geopolitical zone, pastoral terrorism became a national issue since 2011.¹³⁵ The first major attack from

the pastoral terrorists occurred on 5 April 2014 in ‘Yar Galadima—a village in Maru local government of Zamfara—where over 200 people were slaughtered as the terrorist carted away with monies and several valuable resources.’¹³⁶ The pastoral terrorists carry out attacks from forests and bushes in rural areas and typically wield AK-47s, machetes, G3s, and AK-49s on motorcycles.

As I have noted in the previous section, the primary motive is economic emancipation, so they engage in lucrative—though, by every means, illicit—activities: kidnapping for ransom, cattle rustling, and looting. Kidnapping is quite lucrative in Nigeria. An SB Morgen report on the kidnap-for-ransom economy in Nigeria notes that ‘between June 2011 and the end of March 2020, at least \$18.34 million has been paid to kidnappers as ransom. Even more frightening is that the larger proportion of that figure (just below \$11 million), was paid out between January 2016 and March 2020, indicating that kidnapping is becoming more lucrative.’¹³⁷ Pastoral terrorists’ victims are forced to pay between \$2,000 and \$20,000 on average for the release of captives.¹³⁸ A village head who was regained his freedom stated the following: ‘I was freed because I am the traditional leader but they asked me to raise at least 100 million [\$238,335] ransom before those in captivity would be freed’.¹³⁹ Pastoral terrorists often have informants in local communities that keep them posted about the whereabouts of potential victims. The terrorists sometimes send letters to victims before attacking them. Captives whose relatives do not comply with the demands or deadlines of the terrorists are potential victims of gruesome massacres. Sunday posits that ‘the kidnappers are open to negotiating the ransom money but if the victim’s family refuses to pay or fails to raise the money, they show no remorse in killing and dumping the body in the forest. There are places of torture too, where victims are pressured with cruel punishments to comply’.¹⁴⁰ Since December 2020, kidnapping—especially of schoolchildren, health workers, and university students—has become one of the most lucrative sources of pastoral terrorists’ income.

Beyond kidnapping, cattle rustling is also lucrative as the economic value of cattle has increased over the years. Examining the cattle business, for instance, Olayinka Ajala asserts that an ‘adult cow in Nigeria could cost as much as ₦350,000 (US \$1,000), and this makes it lucrative for potential investors’.¹⁴¹ For the pastoralists, as I have already stated in previous sections of this article, cattle represent ‘social-security guarantee and inheritable assets for the herder’s family, particularly for his offspring. So central is the herd as pastoral capital that, aside from functioning as a means of production, storage, and transport, and a way to transfer food and wealth to the Fulani, its size indicates the social status of the individual or family and evokes an unspoken dictum to strive to increase the herd’.¹⁴² It is unsurprising, then, that given the lucrateness of cattle and the social status they confer on pastoralists, terror gangs made up of pastoralists engage in cattle rustling. Precisely because not every Fulani or every Fulani pastoralist is a terrorist or indulges in such terrorist activities, settled Fulanis and pastoralist Fulanis who are not part of, or support, one of the myriad terrorist groups in the northwest geopolitical zone are occasionally victims of pastoral terrorism.¹⁴³

It is noteworthy that the northwest geopolitical zone—especially Zamfara state—is particularly endowed with large deposits of mineral resources like gold, gypsum, emerald, sapphire, lead, tourmaline, silver, barite, silica sand, granite, clay, and sandstones. It is estimated that ‘80 per cent of mining in these areas is carried out illegally and on an artisanal basis, involving over two million people who depend on illegal mining activities

for survival'.¹⁴⁴ The illegal miners in the region are mostly poor and unemployed living in rural areas. Pastoral terrorists profit from illegal mining by attacking villages and local communities where local artisanal miners live and carting away with gold and precious mineral resources.¹⁴⁵ Revenues derived from the sale of stolen gold and precious mineral resources are used to purchase arms including motorcycles that are readily available in the region. These weapons are used to further unleash mayhem on communities in the northwest and northcentral geopolitical zones. With the presence of mineral and natural resources, pastoral terrorists have incentives to continue their terrorist activities, thereby rendering the conflict intractable. As Lujala notably underscores: '[i]f resources are located inside the actual conflict zone, the duration of conflict is doubled'.¹⁴⁶ In this sense, the concatenation of illegal mining and terrorism produces a seemingly unending cycle of violence.

Pastoral terrorists' activities have had a plethora of social, economic, and humanitarian consequences for citizens and the Nigerian state. Victims' families have had to relocate or shut down their businesses after paying hefty ransom fees; victims experience physical, sexual, and psychological abuse during captivity; several schools in the region have been shut due to anxiety that the armed bandits may attack them; internally displaced persons (IDPs) and camps have skyrocketed as has human trafficking; and, of course, resources that could have been invested in building requisite infrastructure and improving educational and medical standards—areas in which the Nigerian state and the northwest geopolitical zone are extremely deficient—are diverted to military and defence expenditures. Dread of the terrorists has led to some women in local communities in the northwest geopolitical zone submitting themselves and their loved ones to the terrorists to satisfy the terrorists' carnal pleasures. This is explicit in the statements of one female survivor: '[W]hat happened was that our husbands ran away for their lives. We were left at our homes with children crying as sounds of gunshots were greeting our ears. It further made us confused and shattered. These armed men met us and gathered us all. They demanded sex so that we can secure our lives and escape with our husbands.'¹⁴⁷ Another female survivor lamented the pastoral terrorists' demand for sex in Zamfara: 'Many of us had sex with these people in our rooms, some in the open spaces, others were taken into the bush to dance the tune for the whole day. After the incident, they all left us. This is heartless!'¹⁴⁸ Nigeria's security agencies are also overstretched due to the proliferation of insecurity in virtually all parts of Nigeria. Food insecurity in the northwest geopolitical zone is a 'coming anarchy'¹⁴⁹ as farmers have abandoned farming activities and their communities for security reasons. As one aggrieved farmer in Kaduna state noted:

Now, we are here living like refugees in our own state begging for food. Meanwhile, just like many others you are seeing here, we have our farms; we are not liabilities, but these people have prevented us from going to our farms. I invested about N2million [\$4,886] on my farm but now I can't go there. Even before our coming here, I couldn't visit the farm anymore because of the bandits; they kidnap people on their ways to farm. In fact, I have spent about 30 days now without visiting my farm and you know what that means for a farmer, who is supposed to be harvesting by now.¹⁵⁰

Amidst these difficulties, the Nigerian government and the state governments in the northwest geopolitical zone have not been idle; they have responded to pastoral terrorism in various ways by either using the hard or soft approach. In the next section,

I shall explore state responses to, and the future of, terrorism perpetrated by pastoralists in the northwest geopolitical zone and why—like Nigeria’s counter-terrorism strategy against Boko Haram terrorists that some scholars consider a failure¹⁵¹—both the federal and state governments’ soft and hard measures have failed to extirpate pastoral terrorism.

Federal and state responses to pastoral terrorism

Because pastoral terrorism has been largely considered a problem of ‘ungoverned spaces’ the federal government and state governments in the northwest geopolitical zone have largely employed military measures to curb it in addition to some ineffective non-military measures. This could be divided into carrots and sticks. The sticks are mainly military and airforce operations as well as legal measures. Military and airforce measures include *Operation Sharan Daji*; *Operation Puff Adder*; *Operation Diran Mikiya*; *Operation Hadarin Daji*; *Operation Thunder Strike*; and *Operation Harbin Kunama III*.¹⁵² These measures entail that the military raid forest enclaves wherefrom the terrorists operate. Whereas the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) neutralise the terrorists through aerial surveillance missions, the Nigerian Army (NA) employ soldiers on the ground to identify pastoral terrorists’ hideouts in forests, to prevent abductions, looting, and cattle rustling, and to release captives in pastoral terrorists’ numerous camps.¹⁵³ Legal measures include passing laws to stem whatever is perceived to fuel the violence such as the use of commercial motorcycles and illegal mining. For example, in early April 2019, the Nigerian government—convinced that illegal mining drives terrorist activities in the northwest geopolitical zone—banned mining in Zamfara and other states in parts of the region where mining activities are conducted.¹⁵⁴ This neither prevented illegal mining nor looting, cattle rustling, and kidnapping by the criminal gangs. Of course, banning artisanal and small-scale miners from engaging in illegal mining would not resolve the grievances of pastoral terrorists who have joined terror gangs; rather it would serve as the breeding ground for poor residents to engage in criminal activities in collaboration with foreign nationals as is already evident in Nigeria.¹⁵⁵ As I see it, the interdiction of illegal mining does not mean much as economic opportunities are not created for young people—especially the youth in pastoralist communities—in the northwest geopolitical zone. And although commercial motorcycles have also been banned in states in the northwest geopolitical zone, the terrorists have enormous ties to motorcycle vendors who supply them with unregistered motorcycles.¹⁵⁶

Telecommunication services were temporarily shut down in some states in the northwest region—Zamfara, Sokoto, and Katsina—and sale of fuel in jerrycans were banned in September 2021 in an attempt to blunt the mobility of pastoral terrorists. But these measures pushed the pastoral terrorists to neighbouring states where they continued to wreak havoc on local communities.¹⁵⁷ The measures also severely impacted the lives and livelihood of residents in the concerned states with many who depended on telecommunication services to eke out an existence lacking requisite resources to weather the storm.¹⁵⁸ Depending upon how you look at it, the sticks have largely failed to extirpate pastoral terrorism in northwestern Nigeria. This has led some states in the northwest geopolitical zone—like Zamfara and Katsina—to urge locals to arm themselves and confront pastoral terrorists.¹⁵⁹

The carrot includes negotiating with pastoral terrorists and offering them amnesty. For example, the governors of Zamfara, Katsina, and Sokoto negotiated with some of the pastoral terrorists in 2019 but the peace deal was rather short-lived as the terrorists returned to their terrorist activities some months after they were granted amnesty. The failure of the amnesty programme has been attributed to the fact that the pastoral terrorists ‘lack central command and a common goal, so it has been difficult to bring them all to a common negotiation. Moreover, agreements with one group are not binding on others’.¹⁶⁰ In other words, the pastoral terrorists are not a monolithic group but a conjunction of many different unorganised or loosely organised terror gangs. Treating them as a single group with one leader has been profoundly counterproductive. But there are as well concerns that most of the recalcitrant pastoral terrorists never gave up their arms and that the guns-for-cash programme instead emboldened bandits with more money to purchase more arms and more motivation to raid villages and rape women with gross impunity. Rewarding pastoral terrorists who surrendered their arms with money and cars caused panic amongst residents that terrorism might be indirectly legitimised as a credible means of earning a living. Anyadike intimates that ‘[t]he money incentivised gun ownership, creating more criminals, which a negligent state government then failed to pay. Some bandits—being bandits—also cheated and only pretended to quit, returning to crime full-time when the cash ran out’.¹⁶¹

All these approaches have so far failed because, as I see it, they are focused on short-term fixes devoid of long-term solutions through social interventions. The military might succeed in quashing pastoral terrorists in their camps and hideouts but not in extirpating the ethnic grievances and economic frustrations of pastoral terrorists. Indeed, it seems to me that—given the roots of pastoral terrorism in perceptions of ethnic and occupational marginalisation coupled with economic deprivation amongst some pastoralists—neither the military approach nor amnesty programme proposed by Gumi will effectively curb pastoral terrorism in the northwest geopolitical zone. This is largely because the problem requires long-term fixes possible through social interventions in the northwest geopolitical zone that address pastoralists’ relative and absolute deprivation. This is comprehensible from an interview with one of the pastoral terrorists who was asked why the peace deals with the state governments failed to gain traction amongst pastoral terrorists. The pastoral terrorist noted the relative and absolute deprivation of pastoralists and called for Fulani pastoralists to be treated the same way as other ethnic groups like the Hausa and the Yoruba:

There was a peace accord and we stated our grievances and what should be done, but we were abandoned. You asked for armistice and that was agreed, but you left that person in the forest with a gun and nothing to substitute. What do you expect? How do you want that person to survive? Of all the promises made to us, none was fulfilled. What we demanded was to be treated the same way as their children, who are enrolled in schools and given jobs. Hausa, Yoruba and the Fulani should be treated equally.¹⁶²

Furthermore, the pastoral terrorist stated that the relative deprivation of pastoralists should be addressed for peace to reign in the northwest geopolitical zone: ‘Our pastoralists should be employed, just like their children. Our children should also be enrolled in schools so that we become knowledgeable as well. In this country there is oil, gold and so many other natural resources, but we don’t know how they are managed. We

know nothing other than spending time under trees. There is no difference between us and the animals we herd.’¹⁶³ The pastoral terrorist also underlined their sense of relative deprivation across time—that is, how Fulani pastoralists were treated well under previous administrations and how they have now been excluded and denied access to education, social amenities, and lands and forests for cattle grazing:

We are even giving consideration for dialogue under this administration because we thought the president would be the one to put Nigeria back in shape. But we discovered that he could not fix the country from the time he praised Obasanjo, the late Yar’Adua and Jonathan. These people are not praiseworthy. It would have been better if he praised Abacha because under him, pastoralists were educated and there was allocation in the budget for nomadic communities. There has not been anything like that since Obasanjo became president.¹⁶⁴

Some other groups of pastoral terrorists who reneged on the amnesty proposal noted their absolute deprivation and do not wish to accept any peace deals if they do not come with social interventions for Fulani pastoralists: ‘In some of our communities, there is no potable drinking water, no accessible road, no good health care delivery service or any form of social facility and until the state government addresses these problems, we will not embrace the peace accord and reconciliation.’¹⁶⁵ The grievances of pastoral terrorists are also decipherable in a letter by Bello Turji—one of the major leaders of pastoral terrorist groups—calling for dialogue on the grounds that the Nigerian government and traditional rulers promise to take care of Fulani pastoralists like other ethnic and occupational groups and halt the stigmatisation of Fulani pastoralists in Nigeria.¹⁶⁶ Whilst the motive for the conciliatory letter is somewhat unclear, there is no denying that pastoralists join terrorist groups in the region because of the perception of deprivation and human rights abuses against pastoralists relative to other ethnic and occupational groups. For Turji, peace can be restored in the region if the extrajudicial killings and abuses of pastoralists by the *yan sa kai* are halted. As he put it: ‘There should be fairness in protecting the lives of innocent people who are being killed, and to ban the *yan sa kai*’.¹⁶⁷ Additionally, in Turji’s view, peace deals and amnesty with pastoral terrorists did not work because of the incessant ill-treatment of pastoralists by the *yan sa kai* as well as the Nigerian government through its abuse of power—in short, Turji sees the fair treatment of pastoralists under the law as one of the pathways to peace and prosperity in the northwest geopolitical zone:

I want them to treat all of us as Nigerians; whether we are Hausa, Fulani, Yoruba or indeed any other ethnicity one may come from. There is also the *yan sa kai* group with whom we [Fulani pastoralists] started all this fight before the government came in. If the government had brought them to order, things wouldn’t have been this bad. Because it’s a volunteer group – they were not established by law.¹⁶⁸

What is perhaps incontestable from pastoral terrorists’ answers is that the national wealth neither trickles down to the poorest of the poor nor do pastoralists receive fair treatment from state and non-state actors—and this *fact* makes some pastoralists perceive themselves as marginalised as they see other ethnic communities and occupational groups faring better than theirs. Pastoralists’ absolute deprivation impacts on their perception of being deprived compared to other groups in the federation. Without social interventions, pastoral terrorism will continue in the foreseeable future and probably evolve into a lethal force that could destabilise the northwest geopolitical zone and, by extension,

neighbouring countries in the Sahel. Indeed, '[h]ow poverty is distributed within and across regions and identity groups constitutes an important mechanism through which it feeds into grievances and radicalisation'.¹⁶⁹ This is precisely why John Campbell is unmistakable, I believe, to aver that peace can only be restored in the northwest geopolitical zone if the federal and state governments address structural inequalities such as youth unemployment, poverty, lack of education, and government mistreatment of pastoralists.¹⁷⁰

Conclusion

Pastoralists join terrorist groups as a consequence of relative deprivation which is a conjunction of economic deprivation and ethnic grievances stemming from the past given how pastoralists were and are brutalised and perceive themselves to be a marginalised group. My contention counteracts perspectives that explain pastoral terrorism as the product of pastoral populism or political ecology by accentuating the neglected socio-economic dimension. Moreover, the argument based on 'ungoverned spaces' thesis assumes that a military approach is sufficient to curb terrorism in the northwest geopolitical zone. Whilst this measure is obviously imperative to eradicate terror groups, it is not sufficient as it does not address the factors—for example, youth unemployment, mistreatment, poverty, and illiteracy—that force pastoralists to take up arms for survival and revenge. Rather than work towards the provision of public goods for pastoralists in the northwest geopolitical zone, the state and federal governments have invested copious resources on defence, banning motorcycles and artisanal mining, shutting down telecommunication services, and criminalising ransom payments as if these were the real sources of the conundrum. Pastoral terrorism will decline when the state and federal governments address relative deprivation amongst pastoralists and provide plausible alternatives to wealth acquisition and economic emancipation beyond pastoralism. This could be achieved in at least three ways. First, the state must invest in education, healthcare, and social amenities in the northwest geopolitical zone which happens to be the most impoverished zone in Nigeria. Pastoralists should have access to education, healthcare, and the basic necessities of life. Second, the state must provide ranches or restore grazing areas for pastoralists some of which have been taken over by elite sedentary farmers. Finally, the state must address ethnic grievances by prosecuting human rights abuses and extrajudicial killings of pastoralists by the police, the military, and ethnic vigilante groups in the region. Although my research utilises the lived experiences of disaffected pastoralists in the Nigerian context to shed light on the social roots of pastoral terrorism, future research could perhaps explore the role of relative deprivation in the interaction between pastoralism and terrorism in other geographical contexts within and beyond Nigeria as pastoralists' culture and economy are existentially threatened by political, environmental, and ecological factors in a world where nomadism is securitised as the antithesis of what it means to be rational, modern, and civilised.

Notes

1. Muggah and Cabrera, 'The Sahel is engulfed by violence'.
2. Benjaminsen and Ba, 'Why do pastoralists in Mali join jihadist groups?', 3.

3. Raleigh et al., 'The Sahel Crisis Since 2012'.
4. Higazi, 'Farmer-pastoralist conflicts on the Jos Plateau, central Nigeria', 368.
5. For example, the ICG report noted two other criminal and terrorist groups in the northwest geopolitical zone that are ethnically mixed. See ICG, 'Violence in Nigeria's North West'.
6. Moritz and Mbacke, 'The danger of a single story about Fulani pastoralists', 2. For more discussion of the demonising narratives about Fulani pastoralists in Nigeria, see Ejiofor, "Fulanis are foreign terrorists: the social construction of a suspect community in the Sahel".
7. Blench, 'Pastoralists and National Borders in Nigeria', 112–113.
8. ICG, 'Violence in Nigeria's North West'.
9. The federal government's proscription order reads as follows: 'Notice is hereby given that by the Order of the Federal High Court Abuja, in suit No. FHC/ABJ/CS/1370/2021 dated 25th November, 2021 as per the schedule to this Notice, the Activities of Yan Bindiga Group, Yan Ta'adda Group and other similar group in Nigeria are declared to be terrorism and illegal in any part of Nigeria, especially in the North West and North-Central Regions of Nigeria and are proscribed, pursuant to sections 1 and 2 of the Terrorism (Prevention) Act, 2011 . . . Consequently the general public is hereby warned that any person or group of persons participating in any manner whatsoever in any form of activities involving or concerning the prosecution of the collective intentions or otherwise of the groups referred to in paragraph 1 of this Notice will be violating the provisions of the Terrorism (Prevention) Act, 2011 and liable to prosecution' See Oyero, 'Finally, FG declares bandits as terrorists'.
10. Because terrorism can be influenced by ideologies or sentiments that are not always Islamic in orientation, it is possible to have various forms of terrorism such as Christian terrorism, ecoterrorism, right-wing terrorism, left-wing terrorism, Saffron terror, Jewish religious terrorism, misogynist terrorism, and so on. I focus on pastoral terrorism as a form of terrorism committed by disaffected pastoralists. It is motivated by the desire to right the wrongs committed against pastoralists. Pastoral terrorism has a unique ideological component and is not necessarily jihadist or Islamic.
11. Barnett et al., 'Northwestern Nigeria'.46–69.
12. Abdulaziz, 'How I Joined Banditry'.
13. ICG, "Violence in Nigeria's North West'.
14. Daily Trust (DT), 'Bandits Kill More Nigerians than Boko Haram, Robbers, Kidnappers, Cultists, Others'.
15. Aljazeera, 'At least 200 dead in bandit attacks in northwest Nigeria'.
16. Yusuf, 'Who cares that North bleeds?'.
17. Clunan and Trinkunas, *Ungoverned Spaces*, 17. An alternative—perhaps more inclusive—definition of 'ungoverned spaces' is given by the US Department of Defence as '[a] place where the state or central government is unable or unwilling to extend control, effectively govern, or influence the local population, and where a provincial, local, tribal, or autonomous government does not fully or effectively govern, due to inadequate governance capacity, insufficient political will, gaps in legitimacy, the presence of conflict, or restrictive norms of behaviour. "Ungoverned areas" should be assumed to include under-governed, ill-governed, contested, and exploitable areas" See Taylor, 'Thoughts on the Nature and Consequences of Ungoverned Spaces'.
18. Ojo, 'Governing "Ungoverned Spaces" in the Foliage of Conspiracy', 101.
19. Olaniyan and Yahaya, "Cows, Bandits, and Violent Conflicts", 101.
20. Onwuzuruigbo, 'Enclaves of Banditry', 186.
21. Alabelewe, 'El-Rufai: carpet bombing of forests will end banditry'.
22. Greitemeyer and Sagioglou, 'The experience of deprivation', 517.
23. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure*.
24. Walker and Smith, 'Fifty years of relative deprivation research', 2.
25. Runciman, *Relative deprivation and social justice*, 10.
26. Ibid.
27. Smith and Pettigrew, 'Advances in Relative Deprivation Theory and Research', 2.

28. Greitemeyer and Sagioglou, 'The experience of deprivation', 515.
29. Verme, 'Relative Deprivation, Discontent and Revolutions'.
30. Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*, 24.
31. Pettigrew, 'Samuel Stouffer and Relative Deprivation', 7–24.
32. Appiah, *As If: Idealisations and Ideals*.
33. Pettigrew, 'Samuel Stouffer and Relative Deprivation', 10.
34. Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*, 24.
35. McCarthy and Zald, 'Resource Mobilisation and Social Movements', 1215.
36. Dube and Guimond, 'Relative deprivation and social protests: The personal-group issue'.
37. Skocpol, *Social Revolutions in the Modern World*.
38. Lichbach, 'The 5 per cent Rule', 126–128.
39. Asingo, 'Relative deprivation, protests and voting in Kenya', 65–83.
40. Greitemeyer and Sagioglou, 'The experience of deprivation', 529.
41. Ukiwo, 'From "pirates" to "militants": A historical perspective on anti-state and anti-oil company mobilisation', 587–610; Nwajiaku-Dahou, 'The political economy of oil and "+rebellion" in Nigeria's Niger Delta', 295–313.
42. Ebienfa, 'Militancy in the Niger Delta and the emergent categories', 638.
43. Omeje, 'The State, Conflict and Evolving Politics in the Niger Delta', 332.
44. Agbibo, 'Have we heard the last? Oil, environmental insecurity, and the impact of the amnesty programme'.
45. Agbibo, 'Why Boko Haram Exists: The Relative Deprivation Perspective', 144–157.
46. Agbibo, *Mobility, Mobilisation, and Counter/Insurgency*. 57-85.
47. Smith, *A Culture of Corruption*.
48. Apar, 'The Words of Boko Haram', 41–69.
49. Onuoha, 'Contemporary Igbo Nationalism and the Crisis of Self-Determination in Nigeria', 29–51.
50. Nwangwu et al. 'The political economy of Biafra separatism and post-war Igbo nationalism' 526–551.
51. *Ibid.*, 535.
52. Smith, 'Corruption complaints, inequality and ethnic grievances in post-Biafra Nigeria', 788.
53. Meagher, 'The Jobs Crisis Behind Nigeria's Unrest', 169.
54. Azarya, 'Pastoralism and the state in Africa'.
55. *Ibid.*
56. *Ibid.*, 23.
57. *Ibid.*, 30.
58. Adebayo, 'Of man and cattle', 16.
59. ICG, 'Violence in Nigeria's North West'.
60. Ibrahim, 'The Fulani—A Nomadic Tribe in Northern Nigeria', 171.
61. *Ibid.*
62. *Ibid.*
63. Adebayo, 'Of man and cattle', 2.
64. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*.
65. Lambrecht, 'The Pastoral Nomads of Nigeria', 26–27.
66. Ibrahim, 'The Fulani—A Nomadic Tribe in Northern Nigeria', 171.
67. *Ibid.*
68. Lambrecht, 'The Pastoral Nomads of Nigeria', 26.
69. *Ibid.*, 26.
70. Reed, 'Fulani Tribes and Customs', 423.
71. Blench, 'The Expansion and Adaptation of Fulbe Pastoralism to Subhumid and Humid Conditions in Nigeria', 198.
72. Leger and Mohammad list five key components of *pulaaku* as (1) *Semteende* (shamefulness); (2) *Munyaal* (patience, tolerance, or perseverance); (3) *EnĀam* (kindness); (4) *Ngorgu* (manliness or bravery); and *NeĀĀaaku* (dignity and self-respect). See Leger and

- Mohammad, 'The Concept of *Pulaaku* Mirrored in Fulfulde Proverbs of the Gombe Dialect', 299-306.
73. Here, I use the philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah's idea of nominalism that groups do not have a shared essence but a shared name. As he puts it: 'What holds groups together is often not a shared essence but simply a shared name'. See Appiah, 'Lines of Descent', 148.
 74. Eke, "Nomad savage" and herder – farmer conflicts in Nigeria: the (un)making of an ancient myth".
 75. Loftsdóttir, 'When nomads lose cattle', 53.
 76. Ibrahim, 'The Fulani', 173.
 77. Adebayo, 'Of man and cattle'.
 78. Loftsdottir, 'When nomads lose cattle', 69.
 79. Vellturo, 'The Erosion of Pastoralism in the Sudano-Sahel'.
 80. As Homer-Dixon explains: 'Decreases in the quality and quantity of renewable resources, population growth, and unequal resource access act singly or in various combinations to increase the scarcity, for certain population groups, of cropland, water, forests, and fish. This can reduce economic productivity, both for the local groups experiencing the scarcity and for the larger regional and national economies. The affected people may migrate or be expelled to new lands. Migrating groups often trigger ethnic conflicts when they move to new areas, while decreases in wealth can cause deprivation conflicts such as insurgency and rural rebellion. In developing countries, the migrations and productivity losses may eventually weaken the state which in turn decreases central control over ethnic rivalries and increases opportunities for insurgents and elites challenging state authority. Homer-Dixon, 'Environmental Scarcities and Violent Conflict: Evidence from Cases', 31–32.
 81. See, for instance, Adebajo and Abdullahi, 'As the desert stretches, so does Nigeria's farmer-herder crisis'; Olumba et al., 'Conceptualising eco-violence'.
 82. Olaniyan and Okeke-Uzodike, 'Desperate Guests, Unwilling Hosts', 24.
 83. See, for example, Dafinger and Pelican, 'Sharing or Dividing the Land?'; Brottem, 'Environmental Change and Farmer-Herder Conflict'.
 84. Maiangwa, "Conflicting Indigeneity", 287.
 85. Adebani, 'Terror, territoriality and the struggle for indigeneity and citizenship'.
 86. Dafinger and Pelican, 'Sharing or Dividing the Land? Land Rights and Farmer-Herder Relations in Burkina Faso and Northwest Cameroon'.
 87. Bayart, *The State in Africa*; Moritz, 'The Politics of Permanent Conflict'.
 88. ICG, 'Violence in Nigeria's North West'.
 89. For more on territoriality and the native-settler problematic in (northern) Nigeria, see Adebani, 'Terror, territoriality and the struggle for indigeneity and citizenship in northern Nigeria', 349–363.
 90. ICG, 'Violence in Nigeria's North West'.
 91. Ibid.
 92. Ibid.
 93. Kharas et al., 'Rethinking global poverty reduction in 2019'.
 94. Nwokoma, 'A third of Nigerians are unemployed: here's why'.
 95. Jaiyeola and Choga, 'Assessment of poverty incidence in Northern Nigeria', 157.
 96. Ibid.
 97. Ibid., 161.
 98. ICG, 'Violence in Nigeria's North West'.
 99. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 'National Human Development Report 2018', 22.
 100. National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE), 'Mandate'.
 101. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), 'Use of Radio in a Nomadic Education Programme, Nigeria'.
 102. Vanguard, '30 Years of Nomadic Education: Any impact?'
 103. Ibid.
 104. Ibid.

105. See Meagher and Mustapha, 'Introduction: Faith, Society and Boko Haram', 15; Agbiboa, 'Why Boko Haram Exists', 144–157.
106. Meagher and Mustapha, 'Introduction: Faith, Society and Boko Haram', 18.
107. ICG, 'Violence in Nigeria's North West'.
108. Abdulaziz, 'Tackling Banditry Beyond Governors'.
109. BBC, 'The Bandit Warlords of Zamfara'.
110. Comaroff and Comaroff, 'Cattle and Commodities in a South African Context', 196.
111. ICG, 'Violence in Nigeria's North West'.
112. Ibid.
113. Abdulaziz, 'Tackling Banditry Beyond Governors – Shehu Rekep, Bandits' Leader'.
114. Ibid.
115. Pratten, 'The Politics of Protection', 1.
116. Agbiboa, 'National heroes or coming anarchy?', 274.
117. Pratten, 'The Politics of Protection', 1.
118. Gladwell, 'The Tipping Point'.
119. According to the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD): 'Alhaji Isheyi was a prominent figure in Nigeria's pastoralist community whose murder by Yan Sakai in August 2012 sparked a series of reprisals against Hausa villages in Zamfara. Multiple sources pointed to Isheyi's death as an inflection point in the northwest, a rallying cry for bandits, and a point from which inter-communal relations never fully recovered. In many ways, Isheyi's killing signalled the shift from isolated acts of rural banditry and cattle rustling into full-blown intercommunal conflict and terrorism'. See CDD, *Northwest Nigeria's Bandit Problem*, 12.
120. Jamiu, 'Terrorism Driving New Wave of Crisis In Nigeria's Northwest, Govt Keeps Looking Away'.
121. Altine, 'ICYMI: We decided to kill 50 people for every slain herdsman'.
122. Abdulaziz, 'Tackling Banditry Beyond Governors – Shehu Rekep, Bandits' Leader'.
123. Smith, *Every Household Its Own Government*.
124. Njoku, 'Merchants of Terror', 83–107.
125. Abdulaziz, 'How I Joined Banditry And Why I Want To Quit – Bello Turji'.
126. CDD, *Northwest Nigeria's Bandit Problem*, 9.
127. Ochieng and Kiriungi, 'Sheikh Ahmad Gumi'.
128. BBC, 'The Bandit Warlords of Zamfara'.
129. Opejobi, 'Bandits will remain until Buhari grants them amnesty like Niger Delta militants – Sheikh Gumi'.
130. Ochieng and Kiriungi, 'Sheikh Ahmad Gumi'.
131. Mbembe, *Necropolitics*.
132. Ellis, *This Present Darkness*, 4.
133. Cited in Agbiboa, 'Between corruption and development', 325.
134. Meagher, 'The Jobs Crisis Behind Nigeria's Unrest', 171.
135. ICG, 'Violence in Nigeria's North West'.
136. Omonobi and Maradun, 'Zamfara massacre: Residents flee Unguwar Galadima'.
137. SB Morgen, 'Nigeria's Kidnap Problem', 4.
138. Orjinmo, 'Katsina: The motorcycle bandits terrorising northern Nigeria'.
139. Hassan-Wuyo, 'Kaduna: Bandits release Village Chief to mobilise N100 m ransom for 36 abductees'.
140. Sunday, 'Nigeria's kidnapping cartels thrive in the absence of governance'.
141. Ajala, 'New drivers of conflict in Nigeria'.
142. Olaniyan and Yahaya, 'Cows, Bandits, and Violent Conflicts', 97.
143. ICG, 'Violence in Nigeria's North West'.
144. Ogbonnaya, 'How illegal mining is driving local conflicts in Nigeria'.
145. Abaenogbe, 'Banditry: Questions as govt confirms miners fund criminals terrorising Nigerians'.
146. Lujala, 'The Spoils of Nature', 15.

147. Abubakar, 'Terrorists Sexually Assault Women To Spare Families In Fresh Zamfara Attack'.
148. Ibid.
149. Kaplan, *The Coming Anarchy: Shattering the Dreams of the Post Cold War* (New York: Random House, 2000).
150. Nation, 'How we were tormented, killed, displaced'.
151. Ugwueze and Onuoha, 'Hard Versus Soft Measures to Security'.
152. Campbell, 'Not All Violent Problems Require Violent Solutions'.
153. Odeniyi et al., 'Military bombards bandits in North-West, North-Central forests'.
154. Abolade, 'Why FG banned mining activities in Zamfara'.
155. Ajaja, 'Illegal gold mining'.
156. DT, 'How Unregistered Motorcycles Aid Banditry, Other Crimes In North-West'.
157. Abubakar, 'Nigeria's military crackdown puts squeeze on bandit gangs'.
158. Sahara Reporters (SR), 'How Shutdown Of Mobile Phone Services In Zamfara, Katsina Is Silently Killing Residents – Report'.
159. The Zamfara State's government's directive reads in part as follows: 'Government has henceforth, directed individuals to prepare and obtain guns to defend themselves against the bandits, as government has directed the state commissioner of police to issue licence to all those who qualify and are wishing to obtain such guns to defend themselves. Government is ready to facilitate people, especially our farmers to secure basic weapons for defending themselves. Government has already concluded arrangement to distribute 500 forms to each of the 19 Emirates in the state for those willing to obtain guns to defend themselves' See Umar, 'Banditry: Zamfara Asks Residents To Take Up Arms'..
160. Ojewale, 'Rising insecurity in northwest Nigeria'.
161. Anyadike, 'The longshot bid to end rampant banditry in Nigeria's northwest'.
162. Abdulaziz, 'Tackling Banditry Beyond Governors – Shehu Rekep, Bandits' Leader'.
163. Ibid.
164. Ibid.
165. Nwannah, 'Negotiate with unrepentant Fulani bandits, grant amnesty to them – Sheikh Gumi tells Buhari'.
166. Babangida, 'Banditry: Experts authenticate Turji's letter, say notorious kingpin troubled, frustrated'.
167. Abdulaziz, 'How I Joined Banditry And Why I Want To Quit – Bello Turji'.
168. Ibid.
169. Meagher and Mustapha, 'Introduction: Faith, Society and Boko Haram', 15.
170. Campbell, 'Not All Violent Problems Require Violent Solutions'.

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