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# ON LANGUAGE AND IDEOLOGICAL DISCOURSES: FARMERS-HERDERS' CLASHES IN SELECTED NIGERIAN NEWSPAPERS

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**Abstract**
Ideologies and discourse strategies in media are crucial for a comprehensive understanding of conflict. This research analyzed the discourse strategies and underlying ideologies in selected news reports on the conflict from Daily Trust, Vanguard, leadership, and Guardian newspapers. The study purposively picked the four newspapers because of the wide range of coverage in Nigeria. Some extracts were picked from the four newspapers for analysis. The analyses were conducted using Van Dijk's socio-cognitive model of Critical Discourse Analysis alongside Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar. The study identified three dominant ideologies—historicist, humanitarian, and welfarist—which shaped the use of specific discourse strategies in media coverage of the herdsmen-farmers conflict in Nigeria. The study concludes that there exists a significant correlation between political ideology and the discourse strategies employed to project it in news reports concerning the herdsmen-farmers conflict in the Nigerian print media. They should avoid the use of harsh and hateful words in their reports. This may induce provocation that usually results in more crisis.

**Keywords:** Conflict, Discourse strategies, Herdsmen-farmers, Ideology, Print media

## Introduction

A wide range of conflicts, including political, religious, environmental, ethnic, and resource-related, are common in Nigeria and the broader West African region (Abbass, 2009; Blench, 2010). In recent years, Nigeria has experienced a growing number of conflicts, primarily associated with the problems between farmers and herders (Olayoku, 2014; Olaniyan et al., 2015). It should be emphasized that in previous times, there existed a harmonious and enduring partnership between agricultural producers and pastoralist tribes, which facilitated their collaborative efforts over many years (Shettima and Tar, 2008). Despite the presence of some sources of contention, the agricultural producers and the pastoralists maintained a longstanding economic relationship and shared a rich history. As per Shettima and Tar (2008), pastoralists engage in the transportation of their livestock to graze on agricultural lands owned by crop farmers. In return, the farmers depend on the pastoralists for protein in the form of dairy products necessary for their daily consumption and manure to enhance the fertility of their fields. This shows that the two benefit from each other. Recently, the good relationship between the two has been thwarted as there have been repeated clashes between them. One of the topical issues in Nigeria in recent years is the resurgence of conflicts between suspected Fulani herdsmen and rural farmers across many Nigerian states. Among these conflicts are; the Agatu bloodbath in Benue State, the Nimbo massacre in Enugu State, and the unending


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Southern Kaduna killings in Kaduna State. These are different notable instances where tens of community members were killed and property worth millions of naira were destroyed in each attack. As a result of this repeated violence, the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) has ranked herdsmen the fourth deadliest militant group in the world with a record killing of 1229 people in 2014 (Eyekpimi, 2016) and nearly 1700 people in 2018 which was six times more than those killed by Boko Haram. Nevertheless, several academics have proposed several credible hypotheses that highlight the elements accountable for the deterioration of the reciprocal partnership, which has nowadays led to a rise in the dispute. (Braukamper, 2000). To enhance clarity, a structuralist approach concentrates on the origin and elucidates the factors contributing to farmer-herder conflicts. Conversely, a processual approach examines the possible result of a dispute or conflict between farmers and herders, which escalates into a full-fling conflict and becomes a self-sustaining and self-stimulating process, as is the situation in Nigeria (Sandole, 1999). This present study examines the discourse strategies used by the media in reporting the incessant conflicts between Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria and how such strategies are deployed to effectively represent various ideological learnings in news reports.

**Review of Existing Literature on Helders-Farmers' Conflicts in Nigeria**

In their study, Ononye and Osoba (2020) analysed the language metaphors and conceptual mappings used in Nigerian media coverage of disputes between herders and farmers. The analysis included thirty items that were meticulously selected from three Nigerian newspapers, namely The Punch, The Guardian, and Vanguard, published between October 2017 and September 2018. These reports were examined using concepts from metaphor theory and elements of critical stylistics. The analysis demonstrates that two elements in the conversation are conceptually associated with the realm of animal habitat and/or hunting of game. The activities and tasks of news participants include game hunting and the selection of attack sites as animal habitats. It is highly pertinent to the current study since it specifically examines the confrontation between herders-farmers and the Nigerian print media. Nevertheless, the two studies have contrasting areas of emphasis. While the study conducted by Ononye and Osoba (2020) focuses on elucidating metaphorisation tactics in news reports, the present study emphasises discourse strategies and ideology in news stories about the conflict.

Furthermore, Olateju (2010) investigates the provision of effective English literacy and numeracy education to the herdsmen in Osun State, Nigeria. The impetus for the investigation emerged from the ongoing conflicts between the herders and their neighbours. The International Reading Association facilitated a functional literacy project taking place in Osun State from April 2007 to June 2009 involving a total of 48 participants, consisting of 22 adults and 26 children and youths. Two camps were established in the rugged terrain to provide temporary housing for the herdsmen. The herders were provided with early morning educational sessions on the recognition of geometric forms and the enunciation of the letters of the English alphabet, as well as the construction and enunciation of basic English terms relevant to their occupation and everyday activities. However, this study, which also focuses on herdsmen, is notably distinct from the current


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study. This study investigates how ideology is expressed using the technicalities of language.

Gever and Essien (2017) also investigated newspaper coverage covering the conflict between farmers and herdsmen in central Tiv land of Benue State, Nigeria, the study specifically emphasised text format, frequency, prominence, depth of coverage, the language of reports and audience assessment of this coverage. Two newspapers – *Daily Sun* and *Daily Trust* – were selected for the study which covers 12 months (one year). The study adopted content analysis and survey with email and telephone interviews as instruments for its survey. Findings showed, among others, that the text format for both newspapers was mostly straight news (64.5%). The findings also showed that the newspapers covered only the conflict as it happened with little attention paid to victims of the conflict in newspaper reportage. The result of the study showed that 71.3 per cent of the stories on the conflict were published on the inside page. The study finally recommended that Nigerian newspapers need to refrain from episodic reportage, they need to set a proper agenda for the Nigerian public on conflicts. Further studies are also recommended to include more newspapers in the sample. Gever and Essien's study is related to the present study in that it is based on the Nigerian print media and the concern is on the conflict between herders and farmers in Nigeria. Nevertheless, its focus is different from the present study; it is a non-linguistic study that focuses on the conflict in the media with particular attention on text format, frequency, prominence, depth of coverage, and audience assessment of this coverage. However, the present study is interested in how language is used to couch ideology in the news reports on the conflict.

Akerjiir (2018) in his study focuses on the underlying factors that are responsible for the increasing farmers-herders' conflict in the Ukpabi-Nimbo community of Enugu State, Nigeria. The study sets out to investigate the structural and processual variables in understanding the conflict. It also examines the relationships that have existed over time due to the change in the mode of interaction and the role of government in response to the conflict. Using a qualitative research approach for the study, the study engaged 20 participants from the farmer's community and neighbouring community using interview guides, participant observation, and Focus Group Discussion (FGDs). The data acquired were analysed by describing the situations. Findings revealed that one specific factor can't be pointed out as the cause for the increase in the conflict between the farmers and the herders. It was revealed that the various factors responsible for the escalation of the conflict are soil erosion caused by the change in climate, destruction of farmlands caused by cattle grazing done by the Fulani herdsmen, cattle rustling, and cattle theft done by gangs and groups called "Malaysian Boys", they are also raping and using the situation in the community to terrorize the people. It was also discovered that the government's response to the conflict was slow. In 2016, security forces were deployed to a community after an attack had been carried out by the said Fulani herdsmen, even though there was an earlier warning before the attack took place. The study concludes that the investigation into the increasing farmers-herders conflicts in the Ukpabi-Nimbo community is far beyond what the eyes can see, looking at the various factors involved in the escalations and the unclarity as to who is behind the sequences of events. The present study is markedly different from Akerjiir's (2018) study. The


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present study is based on the print media in Nigeria. This is not the focus of Akerjiir's study.

Moritz (2010) in his study outlines a processual approach that we cannot underplay the role of ethnic, political, and religious variables when focusing on the increasing herdsmen-farmers' conflict in Nigeria. Moritz's line of reasoning flows from the continuity of herders-farmers' conflict as a process that is leading to "near mutual genocide" between the different ethnic groups which in turn has led to the death of hundreds and displacement of thousands (Moritz, 2010). The sustainability of agricultural and pastoral production in West Africa and Nigeria at large is affected by this process in the long run as the increase in conflict has affected the economy and the source of livelihood of the different groups. Furthermore, Moritz (2010) also states that structural factors contribute to farmers-herders' conflicts. Nevertheless, not all forms of conflicts in his framework necessarily lead to large-scale violent ethnic clashes emerging among local communities.

## Methodology

The dataset consisted of news articles about the violence between herders and farmers, obtained from four Nigerian national English-medium newspapers (Daily Trust, The Guardian, Leadership, and Vanguard) using purposive sampling. The selection of newspapers was based on their status as national newspapers, which positions them as some of the largest media entities in the country in terms of circulation and readership. The time frame of 2017-2020 was selected because of the consistent reporting by the media on the outcome of events in the hostilities. From a pool of over eight hundred news stories on the conflict, a deliberate selection of one hundred and fifty (38 from *Daily Trust*, 37 from *Vanguard, 38 from Guardian, and 37 from Leadership*) published between 2017 and 2020 was made. The selection criteria were the focus on crisis and violence between herders and farmers. Nevertheless, due to spatial constraints, this study only examined a small number of text samples. The provisions of the CDA and transitivity system guide the data analysis.

## Findings and Discussion

### Ideology and Discourse Strategies in News Texts

### 1. Historicist Ideology

The historicist paradigm is employed to demonstrate that the current state of affairs can be comparatively analysed concerning previous favourable or unfavourable occurrences in history (Van Dijk, 2000). That is, using historical events to analyse the current political scenario. Historical periodism is the conviction that each historical era possesses distinct beliefs and ideals that can only be comprehended within its proper historical perspective.

***Historicist Ideology and the Strategy of Negative Other-Presentation***

**Text 1:**

> "Quickly, narratives have begun to coalesce around the notion that the Fulani are dangerous marauders, with some people suggesting that they be banned outright from Yoruba land because they are 'taunting' or 'declaring war' against the 'titanic'


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> 'Yoruba race.' They are called 'terrorist groups masquerading as nomadic herdsmen' and as, in fact, indistinguishable from_Boko Haram. These narratives have joined older narratives in Nigeria's North Central region or Middle Belt, about how the perennial conflicts between farmers and Fulani herdsmen in the region is a continuation of the Sokoto Jihad. Recently, a Middle Belt intellectual by the name of Obadiah Mailafia wrote in a Nigerian listserv called *USA Africa Dialogue Series* that the conflict between farmers and Fulani cattle herders is nothing more than the intensified recrudescence of the Fulani Jihad**,** which started in Sokoto and ended in Ilorin with the story of the betrayal of the Are Ana Kakanfo by Alimi."

The examples above demonstrate the use of lexical terms that portray the Fulani as herdsmen, therefore presenting a negative picture of them. For example, referring to the Fulani as 'dangerous marauders' portrays them as aggressors who go about disturbing the peace of their peace-loving neighbours in southern Nigeria. The adjective, 'dangerous' collocates with the noun 'marauders' to paint a picture of a people who are out to damage and destroy not just their neighbours but their property too. This alleged quality of theirs has made some people even accuse them of looking for ways to start a war with the Yoruba in southern Nigeria. The implication of this, according to the text, is that they are the assailants in the farmer-herdsmen conflict. Further, in the same excerpt, they are derogatorily referred to as 'terrorists' in the mould of the dreaded 'Boko Haram'. This negative comparison has serious implications for them. Boko Haram is a group that has been recognised by the Nigerian government and other world governments as a very deadly and destructive terrorist organisation.

Moreover, in the second text below, the news article displays lexical elements that are employed to emphasise and depict the Fulani herders and their supporters in an unfavourable way.

**Text 2:**

> "TIV Community in Kadarko, Keana Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, Thursday, protested alleged incessant killings, and forceful seizure of their farmlands and homes by suspected Fulani herdsmen in the area. Addressing journalists in Kadarko, Keana local government of Nasarawa state, spokesman for the Tiv Community, Mr William Audu accused the traditional ruler in charge of Kadarko chiefdom, the Osokadoko, Mr Umaru Dodo of conniving with the Fulani herdsmen to kill, harass and take over their lands. He alleged that since the emergence of the traditional ruler Osokadoko about a year ago, the Tiv Community in Kadarko who had co-lived in the area for over 100 years as one people with non-indigenes had not seen peace rather have been exposed to incessant attacks and forceful occupation of their lands by suspected herdsmen." (Fulani herder attacks: Tiv protest killings, land seizure in Nasarawa, *Vanguard*, May 16, 2020)

The lexical items – "incessant killings," "forceful seizure of their farmlands and homes," "incessant attacks," "forceful occupation," "macheted by suspected herdsmen," "conniving with the Fulani herdsmen to kill, harass and take over their lands," refer to the activities of the Fulani herdsmen and their allies in making life


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difficult for farmers and land owners, especially farmers whose life and livelihood are being destroyed by the herdsmen.

The above projects the militarist ideology of the alleged herdsmen who are said to be responsible for the ceaseless killing of unarmed farmers and the forceful take-over of their farmlands and homes. Such lexical items as "incessant attacks" and "forceful occupation" negatively highlight the activities of the herdsmen and portray them as calculative and destructive. It is not a one-off attack but a repeated one. The adjective, 'incessant' signifies something that never stops. They keep attacking the farmers to utterly destroy them and take over their land. Their motive is laid bare in the following expression: 'forceful occupation of their lands by suspected herdsmen'.

***Historicist Ideology and the Blame Transfer Strategy***

**Text 3:**

> "Regrettably, the Nigerian media, otherwise known as the champions of Nigeria's democracy because of the positive role media professionals played during the military era, have not invested or deliberately refused to venture into investigative journalism after all their years of "enormous successes". Rather, they have continued to spread fake news and verbatim reports with screaming and sensational headlines on the herders/farmers clashes especially in Benue, Nassarawa, and Taraba states, a practice that has created more fear than hope for Nigerians. Most people accused the Nigerian media of turning a blind eye to some killings, the same way they underreported the alleged massacre of 800 Fulanis with their families as well as the burning of their homes in Taraba State by a local militia in 2017. The killings of 12 and missing 14 herdsmen in Oyo state as well as the killing and burning of 7 Fulani travellers in Gboko Motor Park in Benue State did not receive wide coverage by the Nigerian media compared to how they give emphasis when the suspects were herdsmen."

The strategy of Blame Transfer is employed in text 3 above. The Nigerian media is accused of being partisan and not doing enough investigative journalism in their reportage of the herdsmen-farmers conflict. Here, the crisis between the farmers and the herdsmen is presented to be blown out of proportion by the Nigerian media. In addition, a series of killings of Fulani in Taraba, Oyo, and Benue States more than a year ago before the article was published is brought to focus. The public is reminded of how the media underreported the killing of Fulani people in several states of the federation. The meaning inherent in this extract is that the Nigerian media is biased and not objective in reporting the conflict between the farmers and herders. Here, the accusation of ethnic profiling is transferred to the Nigerian media which is accused of zooming in on the faults of the Fulani herdsmen alone while backgrounding the faults of other actors in the conflict.

**Text 4:**

> "Southern and Middle Belt Leaders Forum (SMBLF) on Tuesday aligned with the Governor of Kano State, Dr Abdullahi Umar Ganduje, calling on President


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> Muhammadu Buhari to end the protocol on free movement which allows herdsmen from other countries to freely move into Nigeria. The forum in a joint statement by Yinka Odumakin (South West); Chief Guy Ikokwu (South East); Senator Bassey Henshaw (South South) and Dr Isuwa Dogo (Middle Belt) said Ganduje's position reflects the lawlessness of the armed herdsmen that has led to the loss of hundreds of lives across the country. It called on the President to rise to the duty of his office to protect all Nigerians and hearken to the call of Governor Ganduje to halt these movements and prosecute those who are committing crimes against humanity under the guise of herding. The forum decried that it took a whole nine months for the police to arrest some of the herdsmen who killed the daughter of Afenifere Leader, Chief Reuben Fasoranti." (Daily Trust, June 17, 2020).

In text 4 above, we have a to-infinitive clause 'to rise', and 'to protect', used regarding the President. This extract reveals that the President has not been proactive in protecting innocent Nigerians from the marauding herdsmen. Further, the extract reveals that the President has failed to bring to book those herdsmen who have been fingered to be behind the killings of Nigerians. The statement credited to the Southern and Middle Belt Leaders Forum (SMBLF) reveals the lawlessness of the herdsmen and the negligence of the Buhari-led administration. By employing the strategy of blame transfer, the Southern and Middle Belt Leaders shift the blame on the President. The verbs ('to rise', 'to protect', 'to halt', and 'to prosecute') presuppose that the President has neglected his duties of protecting the citizens of the country, and the verbs presuppose that the President has allowed lawlessness and brutality from herdsmen to continue unabated. The verbs 'halt' and 'prosecute' in the statement reveal that the President has not done enough to wade into the conflict and stop it, and also to bring to justice those who have erred in the eyes of the law.

**2. Humanitarian Ideology**

***Humanitarian Ideology and Transitivity System***

**Text 5:**

> **Herdsmen threat: We are committed to the safety of Igbo-Southeast Governors.**
> "The South East Governors' Forum, an umbrella body of the five governors in the South East geopolitical zone, reacted to the alleged insensitivity of the governors over the threat to security in the zone by Fulani herdsmen, insisting that the governors were committed to the welfare of the people. Specifically, the union was reacting to the alleged killing by herdsmen of one Mazi Ozoemena Iriaka, a 65-year-old man, who hailed from Umuekpu-Agwa community in Oguta local government area of Imo State."


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In Text 5, the ideology underlying the news report advocates a rejection of violence as an effective approach to dealing with the herdsmen conflict in the Southeast. The governors in the South East geopolitical zone of Nigeria are being positively represented in the extract. They are portrayed as humanitarians who are interested in protecting the lives and interests of all and sundry in the region. Various expressions are used to represent the governors and the humanitarian ideology advocated in the text. In the first paragraph, the sentence 'the governors were committed to the welfare of the people' fulfils the conditions of Halliday's transitivity system, especially the material clause. Here, 'the governor' is the ACTOR described as sympathetic to making sure the people of the region are safe and fine. This is realised by the MATERIAL PROCESS 'committed to'. The GOAL 'the welfare of the people', speaks volumes about the humanitarian ideology that the governors are said to have adopted. Further, in the second paragraph, the governors are represented positively through expressions such as 'working tirelessly to ensure the security of lives and property', 'extended dialogue', 'expressed their displeasure', etc. The governors are portrayed as deeply concerned about the welfare and the well-being of their people. In ensuring that their people live peacefully, they are said to have 'expressed their displeasure' to the Inspector-General of Police, leading to a reversal of the decision made by the police chief.

In the third paragraph, the transitivity system is further used to couch and entrench the humanitarian ideology. The first clause in the paragraph, 'each state in the region has got its security outfit', is an example of a material clause.
This portrays the governors as people who are peace-loving and who do not want to take laws into their own hands. Again, it portrays them as lovers of their people who can go to any length in negotiating with them.

**3. Welfarist Ideology**

Welfarist ideology is a political system in which the government takes on the central role of ensuring the basic health, education, and financial welfare of all citizens. This is achieved through programs and policies, often supported by data and statistics to demonstrate their impact and effectiveness.

***Welfarist Ideology with Figures and Statistics***

**Text 6:**

> "On the Ruga settlement, Ganduje said 200 housing units were planned at the Dansoshiya forest, with similar projects taking place at Falgore forest and other places across the state. He said studies had shown that the incessant farmer/herder conflicts were caused by several factors which included competition for land as a result of population explosion, Fulani movements with their cattle in search of grazing land as well as the migration of foreign Fulani herdsmen. "We realized the need to settle herders in one place and provide all their basic needs to prevent the conflict. Another reason is to stop cattle rustling, modernize cattle rearing and milk production to improve the living standard of Fulani herdsmen," he added. He said about 4300 hectares of land were carved out for the settlement with provision for a

school, hospital, artificial insemination facility, and a police post. He urged Fulani who want to settle in one place to come to Kano from all over the country."
("The long read: Nigeria's War of the Land," *Vanguard*, June 26, 2019).

The above suggests that the Kano State government values peace and agriculture. Governor Ganduje outlines many things that his administration has put in place to ensure that the incessant farmer herders conflict comes to an end. In many places in the state, the government is putting in place 200 units of housing to ensure that the herders are settled in particular locations and made comfortable. To highlight the welfarist ideology of the state government, Ganduje says his administration will "provide all their basic needs" for them. To also stop their cattle from being rustled, the governor plans to "modernise cattle rearing and milk production". The welfarist ideology of the state government is further couched in the following line, "He said about 4300 hectares of land were carved out for the settlement with provision for school, hospital, artificial insemination facility, and a police post." The above suggests that the government is prepared to assume full responsibility of the people by taking care of their basic needs and ensuring that they are fully taken care of.

**Us/Them Dichotomy with Evidentiality and Metaphor**

***Evidentiality***

Evidentiality is the use of evidence or proof to make opinions, claims, or points of view more plausible, reliable, and credible in news reports. According to van Dijk (2006), providing evidence and giving credibility to opinions influence the mental models of recipients/readers by persuading them to accept views as real and true. In using this discourse strategy, evidence or proofs from eyewitnesses/victims or references to authorities are provided to authenticate the in-group's good deeds and out-group's bad behaviour. This becomes evident in conflict news reporting that involves discourses about 'Us' and 'Them'. Instances in the Nigerian news reports are as follows:

**Text 7:**

"Also lamenting the situation, a youth leader in the area, Odikpo Madubueze named some of the attacked communities to include Ifite Anam, Mmiata Anam, Umudeza Ebegbu, and Iyiora Anam as well as Umuikwu Anam, Nzam, Inom, and Onono. 'They were attacked by the herdsmen in January, the beginning of our farming season, and seven people were killed while many sustained both gunshot and matchets injuries.' The youths were not happy that millions of farm crops were being lost in terms of crops destroyed; lives were also lost. The attack by herdsmen on the communities was seen as an affront to the youths of Anambra West, but we were restrained by Bishop Okeke who has always preached peaceful coexistence between the communities and the herdsmen."
("Lamentations in Anambra, as herdsmen take over farmlands," *Vanguard*, July 2, 2020).


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**Text 8:**

> "It was just after dawn and Gabriel had been cooking millet porridge for breakfast when a crackle of automatic rifles rang out in Angwan Aku. "Someone shouted a warning, but we didn't hear," said her husband Dauda, his voice trembling as he recalled the moment. "My mother was killed on the doorstep. My wife tried to run away — but they caught her." He has not left his wife's bedside since. "We do not know why they attacked us," he said. "We didn't do anything to them." The gunmen went from house to house, shooting or hacking to death anyone they encountered — men and women, old and young. Survivors claim that the attackers were "Fulani": they say gunmen spoke the Fulani language and had lighter skin and high cheekbones, the stereotyped look of their group."
>
> ("The long read: Nigeria's War of the Land," *Vanguard*, June 26, 2019).

The strategy of evidentiality is deployed to portray the negative actions of the Fulani herdsmen in the extracts above. The negative acts of the herders are reported in detail, and in concrete, visualizable terms. Further, various aspects of the 'victims' horrible ordeals in the hands of the herders are recounted in the two excerpts above. The use of evidence has the power to be easily imaginable as episodic mental models (van Dijk, 2006). This is the case with actions such as 'They were attacked by the herdsmen in January' and 'seven people were killed while many sustained both gunshot and matchet injuries'. The references to victims – being attacked, being killed, and sustaining gunshot and matchet injuries – provide strong proof that the people might have indeed been killed and injured by the herders. This view is substantiated by the view that one of the victims was trembling while narrating his ordeal and that of his family members. In addition, the survivors fingered the attackers as Fulani portraying the Fulani herdsmen negatively and provoking empathy for the victims of the carnage.

To substantiate claims, references are made to authorities who are likely to have firsthand information on the real situation in the affected areas. For instance, a youth leader in the area, Odikpo Madubueze named some of the attacked communities,' and 'were restrained by Bishop Okeke who has always preached peaceful coexistence. While the youth leader named the affected communities and some of the victims of the attack, the second authority 'Bishop Okeke' is accorded respect for being a preacher of tolerance and peaceful coexistence. The mental model of the event is one in which both the youth leader and the Bishop play useful roles in their communities and also engage in the ideology of restoration of peace and security.

**Text 9:**

> "The Secretary-General of Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF), Elder Anthony Sani, said the RUGA scheme for Fulani herdsmen has come to stay because states could not provide alternatives. How does this stance tally with IPOB´s agitation? RUGA, or whatever new name the cow-loving Fulani regime in Aso Rock may have christened their Fulanisation agenda, is a brazen attempt by Sokoto Caliphate to forcefully displace and supplant indigenous populations in the disastrous British


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> manufactured contraption known as Nigeria with Fulani migrants from across West Africa. Therefore, RUGA is at odds with everything IPOB stands for.
> The ideal of a true egalitarian, democratic, civilised, and developed Biafra, which is what IPOB is dedicated to accomplishing, is inherently incompatible with this very form of primitive nomadic practice favoured by the Fulani.
> To allow RUGA to be implemented in our land as presently envisaged is to surrender to a fate worse than that endured by Hausas today, who have been thoroughly conquered, ravaged, and rendered useless in their land by Fulani invaders. We won't allow state-sponsored terrorists who enjoy government protection to use the RUGA scheme as a cover for an armed invasion of Biafraland. They can do their cattle selling a business like everybody else as long as they remain law-abiding as Biafran businessmen and women do in Fulani-controlled Arewa north."
> (To allow RUGA is to surrender to a worse fate suffered by Hausas, *The Guardian*, July 19, 2019)

In Text 9 above, Nnamdi Kanu as interviewed by *The Guardian* uses lexical items that show the dichotomy between the US and THEM. In this instance, a dichotomy between the Igbo people and the people of Fulani extraction. Expressions such as "the cow-loving Fulani regime," "primitive nomadic practice favoured by the Fulani," "Fulani invaders," and "state-sponsored terrorists". Through these expressions, the Fulani herdsmen are presented as the other who is backward, and primitive. They are considered as not measuring up to the standard of the US, the in-group. They are invaders who are bent on claiming other people's land and property. The members of the US are represented as Biafra and are said to be civilised and democratic. This accounts for their development according to Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra. This is unlike what the herdsmen are known for.

**Text 10:**

> "In a disturbing round of violence that started on New Year's Day, and is still raging, no fewer than 80 people have been killed in terror attacks by men suspected to be Fulani herdsmen…. GTI named the Fulani herdsmen the fourth known deadliest terror group in the world, after Boko Haram, ISIS, and al-Shabaab. According to the report, in 2013, the Fulani killed around 80 people in total, but by 2014 the group had killed 1,229."
> (Herdsmen Farmers Crisis FG, Nigerian Army Have Restored Peace to Warring Communities *Leadership* January 10, 2018)

Evidentiality in the text above has to do with the editor's attitude towards the deadly nature of the Fulani herdsmen and their activities. Through the utilisation of linguistic resources that largely belong to the semantic field of aggression, the Fulani herdsmen are othered. Lexical items such as, "violence", "terror", "attacks" and "killed" point in one direction: that the Fulani herdsmen kill and destroy, thus, they are destructive. The editor cites the large number of people that have so far been killed by the Fulani herdsmen, quoting the


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Global Terrorism Index (GTI) as an authority to support his evidence that the Fulani herdsmen are very deadly. The bad sides of the Fulani herdsmen are emphasized. The text below deploys metaphor as a strategy to other the herdsmen.

**Text 11:**

> "Several attack *attempts have been made* by the suspected Fulani herdsmen, particularly *targeting* Bassa and Riyom and other peripheral areas of the community. This had caused *morbid fear* and *panic*, which have *drained* the *little resistance* left. Yesterday's attack, *which resulted in the slaughtering of many community members, loss of properties, and sacking of some groups of people*, has left the few *survivors* with various degrees of *gunshot wounds and machete injuries*, which they now *live with*."
>
> (Ban Herdsmen Migration for Peace in Nigeria, *The Guardian* Oct. 07, 2019)

In the texts above, there are peculiar choices of conceptual metaphor from the domain of hunting and gathering, which have been observed to fall into two patterns; namely, those describing the herdsmen activities (e.g., "attempts…made", "targeting", "slaughtering", "sacking", and those representing the effect of their activities on farmers (e.g. "morbid fear and panic", "little resistance", "gunshot wounds", machete injuries", and "live with." One important point to be made here is that these metaphorical items have been deployed to conceptualise the activities going on in the herder-farmer conflict discourse as those largely relating to the hunting of game. For instance, by describing the herdsmen's activities in the reported stories as "taking the security agents off guard" "targeting and slaughtering many community members" or "sacking the survivors" most of which "now live with" the agony, an insight is offered into the kinds of preying attack unleashed on their victims. In fact, without including the bearers/recipients of these actions, one can easily relate them to actual game hunting. The farmers, on the other hand, are described as having '*morbid fear* and *panic'*, putting up '*little resistance*', and sustaining '*gunshot wounds and machete injuries*'. These acts underscore the consequence of herdsmen's activities in the discourse.

The linguistic metaphors used call to mind the effect of hunting on the prey. Two patterns of linguistic metaphors have been observed; namely, verbs/verb phrases (e.g. "targeting", "slaughtering", and "sacking"), and noun phrases (e.g. "morbid fear and panic", "little resistance", "gunshot wounds", and "machete injuries"). It can perceptibly be said that the verbal category relates to the herdsmen because they are largely reported as agents of the actions. The nominal category, on the other hand, pertains to the farmers because they are mostly represented as the participants receiving or being affected by the actions of the herdsmen. This linguistic pattern is generally significant to the naming strategy found in the news reports.

## Conclusion

The present study has examined the media portrayal of the land dispute between pastoralists and agriculturalists in Nigeria. The analysis investigated how ideologies are expressed using discourse techniques in news articles. This study posits that a correlation

exists between strategies and ideologies since the strategies serve as manifestations of ideologies. Media discourse encompasses the explicit and implicit discourse strategies and ideologically rooted viewpoints of the media institution. This work has demonstrated the significance of Critical speech work (CDA) in reading news speech and in examining discourse to uncover concealed meanings. The application of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in examining discourse methods has significantly enhanced our understanding, appreciation, and discovery of the truth in news reporting. The investigation further demonstrated that political ideologies engage in interactions with discourse tactics presented in the news texts. This interaction provides a valuable understanding of the ideational process that is essential in the development of print media news. However, the print media should avoid using hate speech or derogatory expressions in describing the herders, as this may induce provocation that usually results in more crisis.

**Recommendations**

Analyses have been conducted on the language and stylistic characteristics of news in both print and electronic media in Nigeria. A deeper understanding and appreciation of media news reports can be achieved by recognising the connection between ideologies and discourse technologies in news communication. Examining print media reports critically allows us to reveal concealed meanings and ideological assumptions that are inherent in them. Given that print media news primarily presents information and images that are influenced by ideology, future research must investigate the relationship between ideology and television news. Further studies are required to ascertain how the audience's awareness of ideologies can positively impact their understanding of television news.

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