

## A Critical Stylistic Study of Selected Newspaper Reports of Clashes between Fulani Herders and Farmers in Nigeria

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**Abstract.** This paper examines media reports of the clashes between the Fulani herdsmen and farmers, using the framework of the Lesley Jeffries' critical stylistics. The study aims to lay bare the ideological dimension of the reports and the linguistic devices encoding such ideologies. The clashes as reported in the *The Punch* and *The Guardian* newspapers between 2016 and 2018 supply the data for the study. The newspapers are selected based on their perceived wide circulation and readership. Twenty news reports, ten each, are randomly selected for analysis. The tools such as naming, equating and contrasting are employed to analyse the data. Noun phrases and nominalised verbs such as *Fulani gunmen*, *killer- herdsmen*, *assailants*, *invaders* construct the society's worldview about the Fulani herdsmen. Some material action intention [MAI] verbs such as *swooped*, *spewed*, *killed* convey the deliberateness of cruel activities of the Fulani herdsmen. Different types of speech quotes, particularly direct speech [DS], also serve as a tool of the speech presentation of the participants in the texts, a device that is likely to implant the opinions of the participants in the reader's mind. Equating and contrasting serve as a device to establish the society's belief about the kind of equivalence and opposition that exist between the participants in the texts, while certain subordinate rankshifted clauses serve to foreground the writers' main priority in the texts. This paper concludes that the critical stylistics analytical approach enhances the reader's understanding of the hidden ideology embedded in the media texts.

**Keywords:** Critical Stylistics, Crisis, Fulani Herdsmen, Farmers, Media Ideology

### 1. Introduction

Frequent and bloody clashes between the Fulani herdsmen and farmers have been widely reported by the Nigerian media and have occasioned remarkable tension and outrage in Nigeria and beyond. The conflicts whose frequency rose sharply in the last four years have resulted from the value the Fulani herdsmen place on their cattle and the heightened interest in agriculture among Nigerians. There are in fact apocryphal reports that the Fulani place more value on a cow than they do on a human being. The cattle ranching system being a rarity in Nigeria, the pastoral Fulani graze their cows wherever they can find lush vegetation. Given that the animals require a large amount of grass, which is not always available, the cattle often destroy crops, thus resulting in inevitable conflict between the Fulani and the farmers.

Employing the analytic principles of stylistics, the paper evaluates the ideological issues underlying the newspaper reports of the clashes. The analysis is undergirded by the assumption that ideological perspectives are consciously or unconsciously built into the text, impinging upon the reader's opinion and interpretation of the reports. The critical engagement of the reports benefits from the principles of Critical Stylistics as enunciated by Lesley Jeffries,

combining them with insights from traditional stylistics.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2:1 News and News Values

A report of recent event, news is the published or broadcast account of an occurrence (Ufuophu-Biri, 2006:12). Dare (2006:58) sees news as a set of values implicated in social, political, economic and cultural situations in which it is published. It is not every event, activity or incident which automatically qualifies as news. Certain factors such as tradition, technology, and organizational philosophy, and policy, economic, political and ideological orientation influence what are accepted as news values by different media outlets. These are external and internal pressures which influence journalists' decision on which stories are covered, how issues are interpreted, and the emphasis given to them. Although different cultures or factors influence different media houses, there are some universally accepted news values as pointed up by Esimokha(2013:20) and Ufuophi-Biri(2006:13). Such factors include timeliness, proximity, consequence and impact, human interest, oddity and novelty, conflict and magnitude.

### 2:2 Media Discourse and Ideology

It is the view of this paper that there is no ideologically free discourse. Every text is a conveyor of ideology, given the nexus between texts and the writers' cultural and political beliefs. Every discourse practice bears the text producer's socio-political imprints. Dare (2016:3) has suggested that "words are inseparable from the concepts and value they convey..." He posits further that, given the fact that language, or rather, the use of it is 'subjective', "it is inconceivable to expect any form of objectivity in any representational discourse". This position is consistent with Critical Discourse Analysis's view of all forms of discourse as conveying ideological values. In fact, Jeffries (2010:6) unapologetically asserts that "all texts are ideological."

Applied across disciplines, the concept of 'ideology' conveys different semantic values in various fields. Pointing out that the concept finds application in the social sciences, in politics, and the mass media, van Dijk (2000:6) notes the contextual variability of ideology. Having traced its invention to a French philosopher, Destutt de Tracy, he claims that the philosopher employed it originally to mean "science of ideas," arguing that what Tracy regarded as ideology would be better called psychology or even cognitive science today.

Crouteau and Hoynes (2003: 159) see ideology as "a system of meaning that helps define and explain the world and that makes value judgment about that world". They also agree that ideology relates to such notions as worldview, belief, system, and values; they, nonetheless, postulate that ideology is broader than these terminologies. They further argue that:

When Marxists speak of "ideology", they often mean belief systems that help justify the actions of those in power by distorting and misrepresenting reality. When we talk about ideology, then we need to be careful to specify what is meant.

Ideologies are the mental frameworks comprising language, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representation that different groups use to understand and explain the workings of society (Hall, 1986:97). This scholar posits further that ideologies function as symbolic systems of thought to organise, maintain, and stabilize particular forms of power relations.

Van Dijk (2000:6) sees ideology as: *the basis of social practices; a vague and controversial notion; a system of beliefs; false consciousness or misguided beliefs; a general notion.*

The following points may be noted regarding ideology: First, ideology regulates social practices and shapes both the individual and group behaviour within social strata. It is a norm that glues people together as a social group and exonerates or excludes those considered as ex-groups, deviants or aliens. Second, the vague, complex, and elusive nature of the term ideology is observed, generating controversies among the

scholars across the world. Third, ideology carries the idea of the worldview, value systems, attitudes or beliefs held to be true by individuals, groups or society. These are shared by in-group members to evaluate how the group or society should function. These beliefs are, sometimes, neutralized to become common sense in society. Fourth, ideology could be exploited to obscure the reality of power exploitation. Last, ideology is used across different disciplines but with varied semantic implications. That is why van Dijk (ibid.) stresses that ideology is widely used in the social sciences, in politics, and the mass media. Ideologies refer to those ideas that are shared by a community or society (Jeffries, 2010:5). She posits further that ideologies are a very important aspect of the world that we live in, and these are communicated, reproduced, constructed and negotiated through language.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

#### **3:1 Critical Stylistics**

Focusing on the ways in which social meanings are manifested in language, an approach largely informed by critical linguistics and critical discourse analysis ( Norgaard, Montoro, and Busse, 2010, p11), Critical Stylistics evolved in 2007. The effort was pioneered by Lesley Jeffries in reaction to the alleged lack of thoroughness of critical discourse analysis in critically analysing a text. Thus, “it developed to strengthen this weakness, to provide a rigorous method of doing critical analysis. Critical Stylistics functions, like any other critical linguistic approaches, as a method of finding the ideology in any text” (Jeffries, 2014:412). Critical Stylistics integrates stylistics and critical discourse analysis by synthesizing those tools previously used in the former approach to the study of meaning in literary texts with those found in the latter together to form a comprehensive set of tools of critical analysis. Essentially, the strength of Critical Stylistics really lies in its provision of ten textual-conceptual tools. These tools are highlighted as follows:

#### **3:2 Naming and Describing**

Naming and describing as a critical tool focuses on the various ways in which text producers exploit language to describe the world (Jeffries, 2010:17). Noting that this device evaluates the way language gives text producers the power to name an entity, Jeffries suggests that a noun phrase has a facility that allows more information about a referent beyond the choice of a head word. This affords a writer the capacity to bundle “many world- views and opinions together into a noun phrase.” Included in the toolkit is representing actions/events/states. This focuses on the verbal element of the clause, which allows a writer to choose verbs that influence how readers interpret the information conveyed in the clause. Next is equating and contrasting. This evaluates how texts portray different entities to the reader as either equivalent to each other or opposed to each other (Jeffries, 2010:51).

#### **3.3 Exemplifying and enumerating**

Exemplifying and enumerating is another tool. This combines two related textual functions together (Jeffries, 2010:66). Jeffries (ibid) recognizes that there is no linguistic difference between the two functions. These two devices function as means of presenting lists in English. Exemplifying is exploited where items are used to provide examples of a category with no claim to comprehensiveness. Among the tools is also prioritizing. This examines how the structure of a clause functions to foreground some information and background other information (Jeffries, 2014:415). Assuming and implying is also identified by Jeffries. This is a device employed by text producers to build ideologies which appear to be common sense into a proposition, and such ideologies so conveyed become less susceptible to criticism (Jeffries, 2010:93).

#### **3.4 Negating, hypothesizing, presenting others’ speech and thought, and representing time, space and society**

The remaining tools are negating, hypothesizing, presenting others’ speech and thought, and representing time, space and society. This first evaluates a textual practice that conveys “non-

existent version of the world” (Jeffries, 2010:106). This is linked to the verb in a clause to foreground a picture of what is not the case to the reader. The second is exploited to build ‘the writer’s view of how the world is or might be, or how it ought to be or how they wish it was” (Jeffries, 2010: 114) in a hypothetical or subtle way that makes it appear like society’s worldview. The third x-rays how text producers quote others. This facility is employed by the writer to mediate the words and thoughts of the participants discussed in texts, through the text authorial voice. This device can serve as a manipulative weapon, which may create a gap between ‘the original version and any quotation, even when no malice is intended” (Jeffries, 2010:130). The last involves deixis, which relates to those worlds whose reference depends on the context in which they are. The general effect of deixis, according to Jeffries (201: 148), is to construct a focus on particular time, place and social circumstance of the interaction which is underway.

#### 4. Data Presentation and Analysis

Drawn from *The Punch* and *The Guardian*, the data come from the reports of the clashes between the Fulani herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria. *The Punch* and *The Guardian* are perhaps the most important newspapers in Nigeria in view of their wide circulation and the prestige associated with them. Twenty news reports, ten from each of the papers, between 2016 and 2018, are subjected to analysis. The analysis is carried out using textual-conceptual tools serving as ideology-carriers in the text.

##### 4.1 Naming and Describing

Naming and describing constitute an effective strategy employed by the reporters to convey ideologies in the texts under study. Apart from the fact that the writers’ choice of nouns carries ideological values, even the structure within which the nouns occur conveys remarkable ideological information. The nouns and noun phrases in the texts are suffused with the reporters’ worldview, opinion and belief, an observation that is applicable even to the headlines. Consider the following:

**Text 1: Fulani gunmen attack Kaduna village, kill monarch, nephew**  
[*The Punch*, May 1, 2016, p9]

**Text 2: Killer herdsmen deserve maximum punishment, says Buhari**  
[*The Guardian*, Jan 5, 2018, p7]

**Text 3: Buhari reaffirms crackdown on killer herdsmen**  
[*The Guardian*, May 4, 2016, p5]

**Text4: Sultan, JNI urge govt to arrest Killer-herdsmen**  
[*The Guardian*, May 2, 2016, p3]

The writers’ choice of noun phrases in the headlines is significant. Headlines are an important factor in the reader’s judgment of news stories. They serve as a summary of the news. News writers usually seek to capture the reader’s mind from the headline. So, the choice of the noun phrase *Fulani gunmen* in text 1 projects a negative worldview about Fulani herdsmen. Therefore, while the word *Fulani* functionally modifies the referent *gunmen*, the headword *gunmen* itself reveals that the writer sees the referent as professional killers. The choice of NP items by the other reporters in the texts highlighted above is not different from the ideological perspective of the one considered earlier. Essentially, the text writer of text 4 compounded *killer* and *herdsmen* as a single word, to him, there is no distinction between the two. The term “herdsmen” is thus constructed as killer. The point discussed here is also noted in the newspaper article titled “Of herdsmen, henchmen, guns and goons” in *The Punch*, published on May 6, 2016, which serves as an extra-textual material to the data used for the analysis. This shows that newspaper reporters generally see Fulani herdsmen as negative elements. Similarly, the reporter of the below text also constructs them negatively.

**Text 5: The invading herdsmen were said to have attacked Gaambe-Tiev, Ayilamo and Turan villages in Logo LGA on New Year’s Day at the time the people were returning from the New Year’s service. The assailants**

were said to have descended on the communities around 9pm on Monday and continued....

[*The Punch*, Jan 3, 2018, p2]

The desire to name the gruesome identity of the Fulani herdsmen as clear as possible to the world has compelled the writer of text 5 to make recourse to words such as *invading herdsmen* and *assailants* in the report. Interestingly, both words *invader* and *assailant* are from the same semantic net. They mean raider or attacker. The writer's choice of these naming words is significant. It constructs Fulani herders as peripatetic invaders, professional killers to the world.

#### 4.2 Equating and Contrasting

Equating and contrasting is available tool of foregrounding ideologies. Writers sometimes make recourse to equating and contrasting as a device to build up their ideologies, especially in the society in which the culture of similarities and dissimilarities exists. Coincidentally, Nigeria, where the events covered took place, is a place deeply rooted and integrated in a culture that polarises between socio-political views and religious beliefs. "Texts have the capacity...to set up new synonymies and oppositions, sometimes between words that we would never relate to each other out of context, and sometimes, between phrases or clauses, or even whole paragraphs" (Jeffries, 2010, pp51) Jeffries (2010:52) recognizes that language, particularly English, has a lexical system with the possibility for words to be semantically similar or semantically opposed. So, our analysis is now to evaluate equivalence and opposition creation in the texts. Let's examine the following:

**Text 6: GUNMEN suspected to be Fulani herdsmen on Sunday night invaded the Fadan Karshi village, killing its district head and his nephew. Fadan Karshi is Sanga Local Government Area in the southern part of Kaduna State.**[ *The Punch*, May 3, 2016, p9]

**Text 7: THE Federal Government declared on Tuesday that the gun-wielding herdsmen, attacking and killing residents of communities in various Parts of the country, were members of a terror group based**

**outside the country.**[ *The Punch*, May 11, 2016, p9]

[*The Punch*, May 11, 2016, p 9]

**Text 8: UKPABI Nimbo in Uzouwan Council of Enugu State has remained in the headlines since Monday's attack by gunmen suspected to be Fulani herdsmen...**

[*The Guardian*, May 1, 2016,p6]

[*The Guardian*, May 1, 2016, p 6]

**Text 9: Fulani herdsmen: Farmers, hunters, youths amass arms**

[*The Punch*, May 7, 2016,p3]

[*The Punch*, May 7, 2016, p 3]

**Text 10: Fulani herdsmen are killers, not victims\_\_ Taraba govt**

[*The Punch*, Jan 15, 2018, p 2]

**Text11: On Sunday, however, despite the opposition that had been Mounting against their presence in different communities in the South-West, South-South and South-East of Nigeria, the herds- Men boasted that it was their constitutional right to graze their cattle anywhere in the country.**

[*The Punch*, May 3, 2016, p 8]

**Text 12: He urged President Muhammadu Buhari to urgently declare the rampaging herdsmen as terrorists following the recent massacre in Benue and other parts of the country.**

[*The Punch*, Jan 11, 2018, p.11]

There are cases of equivalence creation in the above texts. Text 6 employs an infinitive verb "to be" after a reduced relative clause as a syntactic trigger to equate Fulani herders with gunmen. In text 7, the writer seems to be sensitizing the reader about the socio- political status of the reported place. The people of the southern part of Kaduna are weak. They have no voice. They are at the bad receiving end of the

nefarious activities of the Fulani herdsmen. Text 8 employs intensive relational equivalence to show the relationship between the gunmen reported as fomenting trouble in Ukpabi Nimbo in Enugu state and Fulani herdsmen. The trigger for this semantic equivalence is 'to be' and this equates Fulani herdsmen with gunmen. Text 9 shows a case of opposition creation in the report. The colon in the text is stylistically significant. It syntactically triggers the writer's construction of the difference between the Fulani herders and farmers. The Fulani herdsmen represent a group while the other group includes farmers, hunters and youths. So, the colon performs the pragmatic function implying 'versus'. Here the writer is conveying to the reader that the battle line has been drawn between the two parties. The Fulani herdsmen, which are portrayed as a dominant force oppressing the less powerful group, are said to be reacted against. The less are seeking freedom from long years oppression. The writer thus presents the image of revolution against the dominance force.

Text 10 combines the triggers of both parallel opposition *Fulani herdsmen are killers* and negated opposition ... *not victims* together to show the relationship between the subject *Fulani herdsmen* and the complement *killers* and to unveil the real identity of the *Fulani herdsmen* to the world. This writer is thus equating *Fulani herdsmen* with *killers*. The reporter uses concessive opposition in text 11, which is triggered by the word *despite*. Here the writer constructs the intransigent disposition of the herdsmen in question to the pathetic plight and the protest of their host communities the country all over. It is essentially noteworthy to assert that the writers of the reports made recourse to almost all the available triggers of equivalence/opposition creation.

#### 4.3 Representing Actions/ Events/ States

The device of representing actions/events/states is also noticed in the texts. We examine this tool at the verbal element of a clause (also known as the predicator). This is where the actions and processes that take place between the participants in the text are constructed. Here the reporters choose the lexical verbs that better

convey the issues in a way that suits their ideological stance. Jeffries (2010:41) identifies the following material actions: material action intention [MAI], material action supervening [MAS] and material action event [MAE]. Let us bring out some examples from the text.

**Text 13: In the latest attack, they swooped on the community early in the morning and started with those who had gone out for farm work. They came with machetes, they came with guns, and they came with other dangerous weapons. They came here to kill everybody.**

[ *The Guardian*, May 1, 2016, p7]

[*The*

*Guardian*, May 1, 2016, p 7]

**Text 14: When Herdsmen Spewed death on Community**

[*The Guardian*, May1, 2016, p 6]

**Text 15; Herdsmen Kill 50 in Benue communities**

[*The Guardian*, Jan 3, 2018, p1]

**Text 16: Herdsmen Kill 20, burn houses in fresh Benue attacks**

[*The Punch*, Jan 2, 2018, p 2]

The choice of verbs and sentence structure in all the above texts is significant. In each, material action intention verb and active sentence structure are employed. However, texts 13 and 14 require attention. The writers' choice of the verbs *swooped* and *spewed* in each is metaphorical. While the former expresses the suddenness and the swiftness of the reported attack, the latter portrays the gravity of the attack. Each further conveys the object as the prey of the unfortunate event. While synecdoche *community* is used as objects in both texts, text 14 uses this synecdoche with another personified object *death*, to further present the image of the cruel action of Fulani herders. Active sentence structure is used to convey the community as the weak, which are oppressed by the strong. The choice of verbs and sentence structure in texts 15 and 16 is also similar to this ideological perspective.

#### 4.4 Presenting Others' Speech and Thoughts

Media reports are usually replete with the use of quotations. Reporters frequently employ quotations as a graphological device, for two main functions. The first is to rivet the reader's attention while the second is to implant the participants' opinions in the reader's mind in a subtle manner that better influences his/her judgment about the reported issue. So, this strategy allows the writer to manipulatively detach himself or his opinion from the text, thereby letting the reader hear the participants' opinions. Generally, there are two kinds of quotations, namely direct and indirect speech. This traditional division, however, has been further developed into five by Leech and Short (1981, 2007) and Semino and Short (2004) as noted by Jeffries (2010: 132). These new categorizations are presented as thus, beginning from a progression from least faithful to the original version at the first (NRS) to the most faithful at the last (DS): Narrator's Report of Speech (NRS), Narrator's Report of Speech Act (NRSA), Indirect Speech (IS); Free Indirect Speech (FIS); and Direct Speech (DS).

**Text16: The Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigerian (sic) has said Fulani herdsmen, who have allegedly been involved in serial killings in various communities in the country, kill their host in self-defence.**  
[*The Punch*, May 5, 2016, p 2]

**Text 17: "The cattle rustlers have displaced the Fulani in Katsina, Zamfara, Kebbi, Kaduna, Nasarawa, Plateau and Benue and in some parts of Kogi. Millions of cattle have been taken from these herdsmen. So when somebody says a Fulani man killed somebody, I wonder why? How? It's only a poor Man that fights. "But you, as the military people, you know self-defence is an art. In the military, if you are attacked you have to defend yourself. You have been squeezed; you have to find a way to survive."He said when the Fulani were killed in the bush; nobody carried it in media, admitting that it was not enough for anybody to kill innocent persons.**  
[*The Punch*, May 5, p 2]

**TEXT 18: The minister explained that most of the herdsmen, arrested by security agents for launching bloody attacks o Nigerians, had confessed that they were citizens of some countries that bordered the northern part of Nigeria. Lokpobiri told the committee that the herdsmen they arrested could not speak any Nigerian languages, which had further established their claims of being foreigners. He said, "We have discovered that the herdsmen, attacking Nigerians across the country are not Fulani but another gang of Boko Haram Insurgents from other countries. " Those arrested cannot speak Fulani or any other Nigerian language. Fulani herdsmen are going about with their legitimate business, looking for something to take care of their family."**

[*The Punch*, May 11, 2016,p 9]

**TEXT 19: "We heard a gunshot and everyone woke up and ran into their various rooms around 10:00 p.m. on Sunday. The gunmen followed the district head right inside his room and killed him, "a resident told journalists. A traditional title holder in their area who pleaded anonymity said another person that was killed was a close relation of the district head. We don't know what is happening. We hardly sleep here with our eyes closed since 2013 when gunmen invaded our communities. These gunmen speak Fulani .Many people are being killed frequently, including women, youth, children and traditional rulers. Something must be done urgently. I want you to recall that this was the district head that received former Governor, Mukhtah Yero, on September 22, 2014 when our women Protested half naked because of the scale of killings by the Fulani going on at that time. Today, the type of killings going on is murdering of isolated people. Cattle are also grazing freely on people's farms in these areas of Sanga and people are afraid to do anything about it."**

[*The Guardian*, May 3, 2016, p 6]

**Text 20: Renowned playwright, Prof. Wole Soyinka, says the Federal Government is responsible for the wanton killings**

**perpetrated by Fulani herdsmen in the country. Soyinka in a statement on Wednesday titled, ‘Holy cow: Impunity Rides Again’, said the government was “looking the other way” as the herdsmen went on the rampage across the country. He said, “Yes, indeed the government is culpable, definitely guilty of looking the other way. Indeed, it must be held complicit.**

[*The Punch*, Jan 11, 2018, p 7]

The first of part text 16 above employs an indirect quote to implant the opinion of the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association about the said criminal activities of the Fulani herdsmen, into the reader’s mind. Given that this association also trades in cattle, the text seems to convey the solidarity between the association and the Fulani herdsmen. What is more, the positive comments of the said association about the involvement of the Fulani herdsmen in ‘serial killings in various communities convey their belief about the crisis to. Text 17 combines both direct and indirect quotes to reveal the opinion of the participant concerned about the murderous acts of the Fulani herdsmen across the country. This text, however, runs athwart text 16, thereby presenting the ambivalent side of the participant’s opinion. Although it may seem that this participant has a mixed opinion about the activities of the herdsmen because of the fluctuation between positive and negative sides observed in his comments, the second part of his argument, however, appears to convey his real strong opinion, for there he exonerates the Fulani herdsmen from being brought to book or made to face the wrath of law for their murderous acts across the country, which to him could be accepted as a sheer act of self-defence. The last part of text 17 shows that the participant has a soft spot for the felonious activities of the Fulani herdsmen.

Text 19 above conveys the speech of two participants in the text. Both participants are intradiegetic commentators of the crises. An intradiegetic narrator refers to a figure that actually belongs in the general narrative (Norgaard, Busse and Montoro, 2010:125).

These participants belong to a group that directly bears the brunt of the attack. The writer employed **DS** to show the degree of the faithfulness of the speech to the original version. These participants’ comments portray the Sanga community as less powerful and victims of frequent attacks. These people are being murdered with little intervention from the government. Text 20 presents the speech of a renowned scholar and activist, Prof. Wole Soyinka. The presentation of this luminary lends credence to the report. This reporter employs different kinds of quotation, to implant the opinion of the scholar in the text. Here the reporter shows the nonchalant attitude of the federal government to the murderous activities of the Fulani herdsmen across the country.

#### 4.5 Prioritizing

Prioritizing is employed in the text. The English clause generally favours an information structure which positions new and important information at the clause final (see Jeffries, 2010:77). Let us see the following example to point out an instance of prioritizing in the text.

**TEXT 21: He said that the Nimbo massacre was analogous to the scenes of the 1966 Civil War where people were forced to flee their homes in search of solace and peace, adding that the current crisis is different particularly as people are not only chased away from their homes, but also from their farms, churches, schools and village markets.**

[*The Punch*, May 3, 2016, p 3]

The device of prioritizing observed in the above overlaps with the device of presenting others’ speech. The instance of overlapping of devices is not impossible to come by in texts. This is due to the fact that the writer’s recourse to a device may directly or indirectly put pressure on other devices (see Jeffries, 2010, for the detail on this). This device foregrounds the writer’s main priority in the text to the reader; and this is embedded in the complement ‘analogous to the scenes...’ This is a complex complement because the headword itself ‘analogous’ is post-modified with series of other linguistic items



with a view to vividly conveying the nucleus of the text to the reader. The choice is no doubt informed by the writer's reminiscence of the 1966 civil war. The writer sees this present crisis as worse as the 1966 civil war and also forecasts the eventual consequence of the present crisis if not urgently addressed.

## 5. Conclusion

The paper has discussed the ideological issues in the newspaper reports of the clashes between Fulani herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria. Data are drawn from *The Punch* and *The Guardian newspapers*. The analysis reveals that such devices as naming, representing event and process, equating and contrasting, presenting others' speech, prioritizing among others, feature in the texts, and that these strategies sometimes overlap. It is observed that the device of equivalence and opposition occurs more than other devices, followed by naming and describing. Almost all the triggers of equivalence/opposition creation are exploited in the texts. The reason for this choice may be due to the writers' desire to equate Fulani herders with their various nefarious activities. The picture that emerges from the analysis is that the Fulani herdsmen are peripatetic killers, professional gunmen, and intransigent destroyers. The Fulani killers, the analysis further reveals, enjoy support from powerful people, including the cattle breeders association. In addition, the writers act as 'prophets', predicting that the conflicts may snowball into something catastrophic.

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