

Self-defence against Fulani herders' aggression: a demand for licenced firearms in Plateau state, Nigeria

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Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to investigate the clamour by the people of Plateau State, Nigeria, for more licences to bear firearms for self-defence because of the continuous failure of the Nigerian State to defend them against the Fulani herders' aggression. More guns less crime deterrence theory served as the framework of analysis, which posits that because criminals are rational beings, they will choose not to attack when they know many people have legitimate firearms.

Design/methodology/approach – Data were collected from four purposefully selected local government areas of the state. This study's sample size was 400. Therefore, 400 copies of the Google Forms questionnaire were administered. In addition, seven key informant interviews and nine focus group discussions were also conducted.

Findings – This research results showed the following: while self-defence and issuance of more licenses were supported by 84.8% and 85.0% of respondents, respectively, they also argued that the insurgency would likely end if more people carried legally acquired firearms. Again, the study showed a positive correlation between the government's failure in security and the demand for self-defence exercises against the Fulani herders' insurgency, this study recommends more licensed firearms for the people of Plateau State.

Originality/value – This study recommends more licenced firearms for the people of Plateau State.

Keywords Fulani herders, Firearms licencing, Indigenous people, Aggression, Self-defence

Paper type Research paper

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Introduction

The inability of the Federal Government of Nigeria to end the Fulani herders' aggression in Plateau State and other parts of Nigeria has become an intolerable reality. [Table 1](#) shows the number of deaths in Plateau State by the Fulani herders' aggression from 2018 to February 2020 alone. The Government of Nigeria used several conflict resolution strategies to end the aggression but all could not achieve their desired outcome. Among these are Operation Safe Haven, Rural-Urban Grazing Reserve, Ranching, Operation Rainbow and Plateau Peace Building Agency. The leadership of the Fulani-herders, known as the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria, blamed the aggression on the Nigerian Government's failure to abide by their demands for clearly marked grazing routes and reserves, the provision of water for their animals, protection of their cattle from rustlers and their forced migration from the Sahel region to Guinea Savanna (also known as the North Central or Middle Belt) down to the Southern Nigerian rain forest ([Ekpo and Tobi, 2019](#)). On the other hand, Plateau natives and other Nigerians feel that the Government of Nigeria has not adequately addressed their conflict with Fulani herders. This is especially true when the herders destroy their farms, crops and agricultural products through open grazing ([Anaele, 2020](#)).

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Table 1 List of Fulani herders attacks in Plateau state from 2010 to February 2022

Date	Place/LGA	Deaths	Source
20/01/2018	Majiankhai/Barkin Ladi	1	International Crisis Group (2019)
24/01/2018	Bokkos/Bokkos	7	Anaele (2020)
24/01/2018	Hukke/Bassa	8	Ebeku (2018)
26/01/2018	Huke/Bassa	3	Ebeku (2018)
12/03/2018	Dundu, Kwall/Bassa	25	Ebeku (2018)
20/01/2018	Maiyanga/Bassa	1	Duke and Agbaji (2020)
26/01/2018	Hukke/Bassa	3	Anaele (2020)
28/01/2018	Miango/Bassa	2	Ebeku (2018)
08/03/2018	Miango/Bassa	5	Ebeku (2018)
08/03/2018	Gada/Riyom	6	Duke and Agbaji (2020)
08/03/2018	Izharuvo/Bassa	11	Okoro (2020)
13/03/2018	Dundu village, Kwall/Bassa	25	International Crisis Group (2019)
14/03/2018	Rafiki village/Bassa	2 Soldiers	Ebeku (2018)
14/03/2018	Miango/Bassa	4 Soldiers	Ebeku (2018)
08/04/2018	Miango/Bassa	4	International Crisis Group (2019)
18/04/2018	Jebbu-Miango/Bassa	4	Ebeku (2018)
23/06/2018	Gashish villages/Barkin Ladi	≥ 150	Anaele (2020)
25/06/2018	11 communities of Jos south, Riyom, and Barkin Ladi	≥200	Duke and Agbaji (2020)
02/10/2018	Jol Village/Barkin Ladi	14	Ebeku (2018)
03/10/2018	Ariri Miango/Bassa	19	Ebeku (2018)
27/05/2019	Dangwal/Jos South	6	Anaele (2020)
27/01/2020	Kurra-falls/Barkin Ladi	17	European Asylum Support (2021)
01/04/2020	Ancha/Bassa	3	European Asylum Support (2021)
08/04/2020	Miango	4	European Asylum Support (2021)
14/04/2020	Hura, Kwall/Bassa	9	European Asylum Support (2021)
05/05/2020	Ghana Ropp/Barkin Ladi	4	European Asylum Support (2021)
24/09/2020	Kaduna-Vom/Jos South	5	European Asylum Support (2021)
05/10/2020	Wereng/Riyom	6	European Asylum Support (2021)
06/10/2020	Ancha/Bassa	2	European Asylum Support (2021)
01/12/2020	Gwa-Pana/Jos South	3	European Asylum Support (2021)

Source: Researcher's compilation

The unabated Fulani herders' aggression brought the demand for licenced firearms for self-defence, considering the firearms violence the aggressors unleashed on the people of Plateau State. Consequently, the people of Plateau State crave to know whether the Nigerian Government could end the aggression, whether Nigerians are satisfied with the existing government mechanisms for ending the aggression. Whether Nigerians support self-defence using legitimate firearms, and whether a relationship exists between the government's ability to end the aggression and the people of Plateau State's call for self-defence.

Literature review

The Fulani migrated into the region today called Nigeria, especially the Hausa land from Sene-Gambia, in a trickle from the mid-70th century (Anaele, 2020). They are pastoralists known to be hostile to their host communities and very resistant to change, especially from the traditional to modern methods of cattle rearing (Sangare, 2019). Fulani's aggression trajectories include the Jihad against the crusaders in the 11th to 14th centuries and the Sori and Karonke Ali in Guinea (the 1720s); the jihad of Usman Danfodio in Northern Nigeria (1804), and Seku Ahmadu in Mali (1818) (Enor *et al.*, 2019). In addition, Anugwom (2018) posited that the Fulani are not indigenous to Nigeria.

In Nigeria today, an indigene is a native or a son of the "soil" in a particular locality who claims a historical and ancestral right to a place (Mang and Ehrhardt, 2018). Mang and Ehrhardt also argued that the indigenous people's concept contrasts with the settler, meaning a person from elsewhere. This concept in Nigeria predates that of indigeneity.

Interestingly, the idea of indigeneship is recognized by the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which states that “the President shall appoint at least one Minister from each State, who shall be an indigene of such State” ([Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999](#), S 147, SS 3). [Higazi \(2011\)](#) and Umar (2004) state the following as some of the many indigenous ethnic groups of Plateau State, Berom, Anaguta, Afizere, Irigwe, Ngas, Mwaghavul, Goemai, Mupun, Fier, etc.

As the Fulani herders' aggression remains intractable, most Nigerians, especially Plateau State inhabitants, became dissatisfied with the Nigerian Government's conflict resolution mechanisms to end the aggression. They requested to rescind their social contract with the government for their protection by demanding to take their security into their own hands ([International Crisis Group, 2012](#); [Ogbette et al., 2018](#); [Oli et al., 2018](#)). Furthermore, it is argued that even where there is no express law permitting the use of (fire)arms for self-defence, the right of self-defence is a tacit right to bear arms for self-defence, as it is natural. When a right is given, the means of exercising it is another right, whether stated or not ([Kopel and Greenlee, 2019](#)). [Morris \(2019\)](#) asserts that the right to self-defence is inextricably intertwined with the right to bear (fire)arms. Some countries that permit their citizens to carry firearms for self-defence include the USA ([Palomo, 2018](#); [Halbrook, 2020](#)), Canada ([Kopel et al., 2007](#)), Japan ([Liff, 2018](#)), Israel ([Parens, 2018](#)) and Mexico ([Halbrook, 2020](#)). The right to defend oneself using deadly force is not different in Nigerian jurisprudence ([Tanimu, 2020](#)). Tanimu stated that although the term “self-defence” is used differently and occasionally synonymously with other terms, it has the same meaning across the board: In the Northern part of Nigeria, the term “private defence” has the same connotations as “self-defence” does in the Southern part of Nigeria ([Penal Code Act of Nigeria Cap 345, 1963](#); [Criminal Code Act, 2009](#)).

More guns, less crime theory

More guns less crime theory is a deterrence theory propounded by John Richard Lott. Lott, in his study of 1997, analysed how violent crimes are reduced in the USA, and he concluded that when licences to bear arms are more granted to many people, the result will be more legal arms and, invariably, more potential for self-defence. As a result, the would-be aggressor would become afraid of attacking armed victims, resulting in less crime ([Shughart, 1999](#); [Mauser, 2002](#); [Berg, Lott and Mauser, 2019](#)). Lott outlined five propositions that made up his deterrence theory: Firstly, Lott argued that would-be criminals are motivated by self-preservation. Secondly, if more gun licences or permits are issued, a more significant percentage of the population will be armed. Thirdly, criminals who want to survive would choose not to commit crimes for fear of coming across armed victims. Fourthly, concealed handguns are particularly effective in this regard because criminals would be unable to determine whether the potential victims are armed before striking. Fifthly, these effects will extend to unarmed people in what Lott refers to as “third-party effects” – the gun-wielding citizens' “halo” will protect those around them ([Shughart, 1999](#); [Cypher, 2019](#)). Critics of Lott's deterrence theory argued that the idea did not address the problem of gun violence. However, they admitted that in the USA, the law permitting carrying concealed firearms may still be responsible for a decrease in violent crime. However, the number of people carrying concealed weapons did not change significantly because the law's publicity alerts criminals to the possibility of having weapons by the citizens ([Snyder, 1997](#)).

Methodology

The study's population includes indigenous people, the Fulani and other settlers in Plateau State as of September 2021. Four local government areas (LGAs) – out of the 17 LGAs in Plateau State – Barkin Ladi, Bassa, Jos South and Riyom, with a population of 1,059,500 ([Plateau State, 2016](#)), were purposively selected for the study because they are the

epicentre of the Fulani herders' aggression in the state. The indigenous people of the selected LGAs (Berom and Irigwe) are primarily into subsistent farming, quarrying and mining. As the area is blessed with vast arable land, a large deposit of granite and a massive quantity of solid minerals such as tin, columbite, tantalite and kaolin, the Fulani aggressors quest to grab the land (Abioro, 2016). Using Yamane Taro's formula for sample size calculation, a sample size of 400 was arrived at and a sample of 100 was assigned to each LGA under study.

The data were gathered using a combination of quantitative (survey questionnaire) and qualitative (key informants interviews [KII] and focus group discussions [FGDs]) methods. The quantitative data were sourced through the google forms questionnaire (available at this link: <https://forms.gle/tu96ZDwP85e8JsGu8>), where 400 respondents were directly interviewed. A Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.956 was obtained, which indicated an excellent internal consistency of respondents of the questionnaire and shows that the questionnaire is reliable, as it was statistically more significant than the 0.70 benchmarks.

A total of seven KII were conducted thus: two key informants each from Berom, Irigwe and Fulani (traditional and youth organization leaders), and one security professional were interviewed. Nine FGDs were conducted in Plateau State's four designated LGAs (communities and IDPs). The participants were taken from victims of the Fulani herders' aggression from the Berom, Irigwe and Fulani ethnic groups, with ages ranging from 20 to 29 (males only), 30 to 39 (5 males and 5 females, to moderate the exclusively male and female FDG categories) and 40 to 49 (women only). The quantitative data were analysed and presented in simple frequencies, percentages and cross-tabulations. Relationships were tested using the correlation and chi-square test of independence because the questions were formulated in binary and range (Likert-scale) using the International Business Machine Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 25. While the qualitative data were analyzed using Nvivo (March 2020 version), a qualitative data analysis software, the data were summarized in themes, and some responses were quoted verbatim to complement the quantitative data.

Findings

Government's capacity to end the Fulani herders' aggression and the support for self-defence exercise

The overall result shows that the majority (91.8%) of the respondents signified that the government could end the aggression in Nigeria. However, they are dissatisfied – at varying levels – with the government's response to ending the aggression. The satisfaction level of the government's conflict resolution strategies was raised using a five-Likert scale response, as shown in Table 2. The result within Berom ethnicity revealed that more than three quarters (77.4%) were highly dissatisfied, and about a quarter (22.1%) were dissatisfied with the government's intervention in stopping the attack. However, 3.0% of them were not sure. Again, more than three-quarters of the Irigwe (76.0%) were highly-dissatisfied, and 18.0% were dissatisfied with the government's conflict resolution strategies. On the contrary, more than half of the Fulani (60.0%) are pleased with the government's conflict resolution strategies against aggression. Of other ethnicities in Plateau State, half (50.0%) of them and about half (42.9%) were highly-dissatisfied and dissatisfied with the government's conflict resolution strategies against the Fulani herders aggression, respectively.

Support for licenced firearms in ending the Fulani herders' aggression

The result revealed that over 84.8% supported licenced firearms self-defence to be exercised against the Fulani herders (Table 3). When the respondents' support or

Table 2 Government's capacity to end the Fulani herders' aggression

<i>Capacity to end aggression</i>		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>		
Yes		367	91.8		
No		33	8.2		
Total		400	100.0		
<i>Satisfaction with the government conflict resolution strategies</i>					
Highly dissatisfied		259	64.8		
Dissatisfied		85	21.2		
Not sure		12	3.0		
Satisfied		44	11.0		
Very satisfied		0	0.0		
Total		400	100.0		
<i>Level of satisfaction with the government's conflict resolution strategies by ethnicity</i>					
Ethnicity	Highly dissatisfied %	Dissatisfied %	Not sure %	Satisfied %	Total %
Berom	175 (77.4)	50 (22.1)	1 (0.40)	0 (0.0)	226 (100)
Irigwe	76 (76.0)	18 (18.0)	3 (3.0)	2 (2.0)	100 (100)
Fulani/Hausa	1 (1.7)	11 (18.3)	7 (11.7)	36 (60.0)	60 (100)
Others	7 (50.0)	6 (42.9)	1 (7.1)	0 (0.0)	14 (100)

Table 3 Support for self-defence using licenced firearms

<i>Response</i>	<i>Support for self-defence using licenced firearms</i>		<i>%</i>
	<i>Frequency</i>		
Yes	340		85.0
No	60		15.0
Total	400		100.0
<i>Support for self-defence using firearms by ethnicity</i>			
Ethnicity	Yes	No	Total
Berom	224 (99.1)	2 (0.9)	226 (100)
Irigwe	99 (99.0)	1 (1.0)	100 (100)
Fulani/Hausa	3 (5.0)	57 (95.0)	60 (100)
Other Ethnicities	13 (92.9)	1 (7.1)	14 (100)

opposition to licenced firearms was analysed, it became clear that the indigenous people of Plateau State and the Fulani have different views on the issue. Berom (99.1%), Irigwe (99.0%) and other ethnicities (92.9%) all supported self-preservation rights in Plateau State. Contrary to this, 95.0% of the Fulani respondents did not endorse the rights of Plateau State's people to self-preservation.

Responses from the KII and FGD in the support for the exercise of self-defence rights were presented thus:

The call for self-defence is becoming a new normal, it is becoming an everyday language, and this thing is beginning to sink into the minds of our people, and our people are beginning to take cognizance of the fact that it is high time we did this. We do not even need to be told to defend ourselves. (KII, indigenous youth leader-2, 2021)

There should be legislation, and I keep saying there should be legislation expressly providing for the rights of self-defence through the acquisition of firearms for people to defend themselves. (KII, indigenous youth leader, 2021)

If you fail to defend yourself, you will die because government will not do it for you. They promised and failed. (Indigenous FGDs participant, mixed, 30 – 39, 2021)

Relationship between the government's capacity to end the Fulani herders aggression and the support for licenced firearms

An analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between the government's capacity to end aggression and the demand for licenced firearms for self-defence (Table 4). Of the respondents who supported self-defence using licenced firearms, 93.2% agreed that the government could end the Fulani herders aggression in Plateau State. Only a negligible percentage (6.8%) of them argued the contrary. Of those that rejected the use of licenced firearms for self-defence in Plateau State, 83.6% also agreed that the Government of Nigeria could end the aggression. The correlation statistics reflect a very weak – or no – relationship ($r = 0.126$) between the government's capacity to bring to an end the Fulani herders' aggression and the support for licenced firearms for self-defence in Plateau State. Both the majority of proponents and opponents of legally possessing firearms for self-defence concurred that Nigeria's Government could put an end to the aggression. The chi-square value ($\chi^2 = 6.306$) is greater than the chi-square critical value of 3.84, which further signified a no-relationship between the government's capacity to end the Fulani herders' aggression and the support for licenced firearms for self-defence. However, the associate p -value of 0.012 suggests a statistically significant relationship between the variables tested (Table 5).

The study further sought to ascertain whether Fulani herders would continue to attack Plateau State if they knew their victims possessed licenced firearms. The majority (47.0%) of respondents believe that continuous aggression is very unlikely, more than a quarter (35.0%) believe it is unlikely, and only 2.2% are unsure whether or not the Fulani attacks will continue.

To observe the nature of the arguments based on ethnicity, responses were also subjected to more analysis. Of the Berom respondents, 44.2% argued that the Fulani herders' attacks

Table 4 Relationship between the government capacity to end the aggression and support for firearms' self-defence

Support for firearms self-defence	Government's capacity to end the Fulani herders' aggression			Chi-square (χ^2) and correlation (r)
	Yes %	No %	Total %	
Yes	316 (93.2)	23 (6.8)	339 (100)	$\chi^2 = 6.306, p = 0.012, r = 0.126$
No	51 (83.6)	10 (16.4)	61 (100)	
Total	367 (91.8)	33 (8.2)	400 (100)	

Table 5 Likelihood of the insurgent's attacks in Plateau state when the right of firearms' self-defence is granted

		The likelihood of continuous attacks			
		Frequency	%		
Very-unlikely		188	47.0		
Unlikely		140	35.0		
Not Sure		9	2.2		
Likely		33	8.3		
Very-likely		30	7.5		
Total		400	100		
<i>The likelihood of continuous attacks by ethnicity</i>					
Ethnicity	Very unlikely %	Unlikely %	Not sure %	Likely %	Total %
Berom	100 (44.2)	87 (38.5)	7 (3.1)	33 (14.2)	226 (100)
Irigwe	74 (74.0)	15 (15.0)	1 (1.0)	10 (10.0)	100 (100)
Fulani/Hausa	11 (18.3)	29 (48.3)	1 (1.7)	19 (31.7)	60 (100)
Others	3 (21.4)	9 (64.3)	0 (0.0)	2 (14.3)	14 (100)

are very-unlikely to continue if the government issued more firearms licences to the people of Plateau State. More than half (38.5%) of them opined that the attacks would be unlikely. As for the Irigwe ethnicity, about three-quarters (74.0%) argued that the attacks would be very-unlikely and 15.0% said the attacks would be unlikely. Among the Fulani respondents, 18.3% held that the attacks would be very-unlikely, and about half (48.3%) of them assert that when the government grants more licences, the attacks would be unlikely. An aberrance to this trend was observed within the Fulani respondents. More than a quarter (31.7%) of them argued that the aggression would continue even when Plateau people have licenced firearms to defend themselves. The other ethnicities agreed on the same line, more than one-fifth (21.4%) opined the very-unlikelihood of the attacks, and more than a half (64.3%) of them said it would be unlikely.

The data from KII and FGDs on support and otherwise for issuance of more firearms licences cuts across all the indigenous and the Fulani informants in Plateau State. The responses are presented below:

I will instruct my people to immediately avail themselves if there is an opportunity to be licenced and purchase firearms. (KII, traditional indigenous leader-2, 2021)

Some of the other informants supported the idea of the issuance of licences for bearing firearms on the premise that the extant Nigerian law has the legal framework that provides that Nigerians at 17 years have the privilege of carrying the on-prohibited/non-lethal guns ([Firearms Act of Nigeria, 1959](#)), thus:

To me, we are supposed to acquire firearms licences. The reason is that there are processes that you are supposed to follow granting a licence that will reduce the risk of giving a licence to the wrong person. (Indigenous FGDs participant, Males only, 20 – 29, 2021)

It is beneficial to have a licenced weapon; however, anyone who is not licenced is illegal, and this is what is causing all of these attack problems. (Indigenous FGDs participant, Mixed, 30 – 39, 2021)

Other informants argued that possessing a licence to bear arms is essential because those who do so are less likely to use those weapons in other crimes, as is argued below:

If you have a licenced gun, your conscience will tell you to use it correctly because your weapon is registered. (Indigenous FGDs participant, Mixed, 30 – 39, 2021)

Since there is a law on licencing firearms in Nigeria, it's good to go and register and obtain the right to have guns in your possession for self-defence. When your house is attacked, you can protect yourself and your family. (Indigenous FGDs participant, men only, 20 – 29, 2021)

Some of the Fulani FGDs participants argued in favour of the issuance of more firearms licences; however, to the hunters, herders and wealthy only:

In my opinion of licencing, it is not out of place when it is issued out to a hunter, or to a herder who will want to protect his cattle. (Fulani FGDs participant, men only, 20 – 29, 2021)

Another argued thus:

I support the issuance of the firearm licence for pistols, however, to the affluent of the society only to enable them to protect their wealth. (Fulani FGDs participant, men only, 40 – 49, 2021)

Contrary to those in support of the issuing more firearms licences to the people of Plateau State, one Fulani key informant and one indigenous FGDs participant did not support the idea. These are their excerpts:

It will make no sense to access any firearms as a civilian; only the security should be entitled to weapons. (Fulani FGDs participant, men only, 20 – 29, 2021)

Individuals' firearms licences should be revoked because more weapons in civilians' hands will lead to genocide. Let the warring parties come together and fight injustice, their common enemy. (KII, Fulani leader, 2021)

Discussion of findings

Other research also bolstered the findings in this paper, [Igbokwe and Iwuoha \(2019\)](#) posited that Nigerians are not satisfied with the Nigerian Government's efforts in ending the Fulani herders aggressors and also in restoring peace and order in the aggression-prone communities. Because of that, the victims of the aggression started taking their protection into their own hands ([International Crisis Group, 2012](#); [Ogbette et al., 2018](#); [Oli et al., 2018](#)). [Igbokwe and Iwuoha \(2019\)](#) added that the government strategies, especially the use of the military to restore peace and order amidst the rising herders' aggression are not yielding the intended result.

The theoretical framework for this discussion is that there would be less crime with more licenced guns. The findings of this study have a positive link with the theory that many Plateau State residents argue that the Fulani herders' aggression would likely end when they have legitimate firearms for self-defence. [Akinyetun \(2016\)](#) further emboldens the argument for granting more firearms licencing that if the Nigerian government decides to issue gun-wielding licences to more Nigerians, the Fulani herders aggressors would be afraid to attack armed Plateau State people (victims). For instance, [Israel \(2021\)](#) cited Governor Ishaku Darius of Taraba State that you cannot keep committing the same mistake repeatedly. Darius asked the government to allow all citizens to buy a firearm if it cannot ensure security for its citizens. Nobody will come to your house if everyone is licenced to bear firearms.

Other studies bolstered the result of this study on support for licenced firearms for self-defence, [Gaggioli \(2017\)](#) underscored the importance of wielding guns for self-defence because self-defence law permits a person to use commensurate or proportionate force to repel an aggressor. As a result, our fundamental right to self-defence is the right to bear propositional firearms wielded by the aggressor because humans are rational beings with an inborn ability to defend themselves. Thus, Cicero – one of the great Roman lawyers and orators – consequently proclaimed that Civilized people are taught by logic, barbarians through necessity, communities through tradition and even wild beasts through nature. They learn that they must defend their bodies, persons and lives from all forms of violence using whatever measures at their disposal ([Sarat et al., 2019](#)).

In Nigeria, the demand for firearms self-defence exercises is recurring: a retired Nigerian Chief of Army Staff, General TY Danjuma, accused the military of collaboration with the aggressors and called on all Nigerians to defend themselves; if not, they would die one by one ([Tukur, 2018](#)). Other prominent Governors – of Taraba and Benue States – called for self-defence as a strategy of self-defence to end the Fulani herders' aggression in Nigeria ([Channels TV, 2020, 2021](#); [Israel, 2021](#)). Governor Ortom Samuel of Benue State alleged the Nigerian Government's complicity in the aggression to the refusal to designate the Fulani herders aggressors as terrorists despite the Global Terrorism Index (2015) ranking them the fourth most lethal terrorist group in the world ([Anaele, 2020](#)). Between 2019 and June 2020, the Federal House of Representatives and many Nigerians ask for a constitutional amendment to enable Nigerians to defend themselves ([Nwakanma, 2018](#); [Salem, 2019](#); [ChannelsTV, 2020](#)).

Granting individuals the licences to possess firearms has minimum requirements, including age restrictions, the absence of any criminal convictions, the type of firearm that may be carried and a history of mental illness ([Firearms Act of Nigeria, 1959](#); [Shughart, 1999](#); [Smith and Spiegler, 2020](#); [Kruis et al., 2021](#)). Lott posits that granting citizens to bear arms permits would increase the criminals' expected cost of confronting armed prey, thereby

reducing violent crimes (Shughart, 1999). Although possessing firearms has unintended consequences: licenced holders' furtherance of their interests incites conflict, suicide and exact vengeance on rivals (Dirkx, 2017; Crummett and Swenson, 2019). Dirkx (2017) cited the 2015 Taliban revival as an illustration of the unintended consequences of gun ownership when the armed men the USA supported became the cause of unrest in Northern Afghanistan. Even though Beccaria (1778) asserts that the intended effects outweigh the unintended ones, Beccaria argued that false utility concepts are a significant cause of mistakes and injustice. For instance, the legislator's erroneous notions of utility prioritize specific conveniences over general conveniences, prefers to control human sentiment to elicit it and dares to assert that reason. "Be thou a slave"; who would forgo a thousand real benefits out of fear of a single, insignificant inconvenience; who would forbid men from using fire or water out of fear of burning or drowning; and who does not know any preventative measures (Kopel, 2009).

Conclusion and recommendations

The exercise of the right to more licenced firearms is highly supported by more than three-quarters (85.0%) of respondents, as it would preclude the continuous annihilation of the people of Plateau State. The support for self-defence based on ethnicity reveals that the indigenous people (Berom 99.1%, Irigwe 99.0% and other settlers 92.9%) supported self-defence using firearms. On the contrary, 95% of Fulani rejected the idea of more licenced firearms; to them, it could lead to genocide and ethnic cleansing. Very striking is the respondents' position on whether or not the aggressors will continue their attacks when they know that their intended victims' have firearms. Almost all the attributes in the study population (Berom, Irigwe, Fulani and other settlers in Plateau State) subscribed that the herders attacks would either be highly unlikely or unlikely to persist when the attackers become cognizant that their intended victims are wielded. It is revealed in this study that both the Fulani and the indigenous people of Plateau State agreed that it would be doubtful for the aggressors to attack when they know that their intended victims are armed. This finding, in conjunction with the right to self-defence being innate in man and also in consideration of the extant Nigerian laws that provide that Nigerians can be licenced at the age of 17 to bear firearms provided the person does not have any criminal records. Therefore, more firearms licences should be provided to qualified Nigerians in communities vulnerable to the herders' aggression in Plateau State in accordance to the extant Nigerian laws. Further research should also be done because there is polarization between Plateau State residents and Fulani regarding the satisfaction with the government's conflict resolution methods and support for more licenced firearms for self-defence.

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