

FAILURE OF RANCHING POLICIES IN NIGERIA: PROPOSED CATTLE COLONY AND RUGA SETTLEMENT IN PERSPECTIVE, 1914-2018

Anene, Chidi P. Ph.D

Department of History and International Studies

Imo State University

anenechidi770@gmail.com

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Iyala, Theodore O.

Department of History and International Studies

Imo State University

iyalastone@yahoo.com

&

Nlemchukwu Vivain O.

Department of History and Strategic Studies

Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu-Alike

Abakiliki, Nigeria.

olachiokere@yahoo.com

Abstract

The study critically examined failure of ranching policies in Nigeria from the colonial to the present post-colonial era. The study delves into history to explore the political and economic motives behind the various ranching policies, as well as the most recently proposed Cattle Colony and RUGA Settlement policies. Adopting a qualitative method of data collection which involves use of archival sources, published and unpublished written texts, journal articles, conference proceedings, official documents, and news media, etc., the paper argued that beginning with the colonial administration, ranching policy is replete with political intrigues and underlying motives which often led to its failure. Furthermore, with the advent of the Nigerian independence, ranching policies had been serially subjected to political intrigues without genuine desire to making it a full-fledged commercial and profitable venture that could really transform its mode of operation or the life pattern of the herdsmen, reminiscent of the colonial ranching policy. The study concludes with nostalgia that it was the same resettlement posture of the herdsmen rather than embarking on real profitable ranching venture in the country that the Cattle Colony and RUGA Settlement could be located with all shockwaves, panic and political undertones, hence its failure and continued obsolete and conflict ridden open grazing system.

Keywords: Cattle Colony, Farmers, Proposed Ruga, Herdsmen and Ranching.

Introduction

Apart from the Boko Haram insurgency, another issue generating more heat in Nigeria at the moment is the violent clashes between farmers and herders that are usually over access to land and grazing rights. Herding in Nigeria predates colonialism. However, historically speaking, the issue of ranching is a by-product of colonial administration. In the pre-colonial era, herding of cattle has predominantly been the occupation of the itinerant Fulani herdsmen who move their cattle from place to place in search of pasture. This is regarded as traditional open grazing system, which was mainly restricted to the northern parts of the country. Traditionally, the Fulani herdsmen and their farmer counterparts usually collaborate in the appropriation of the land for herding and farming purposes. Even when there appears to be conflicts, they were resolved within the available local diplomacy.

However, all these changed with colonial administration, particularly when the North and Southern protectorates were amalgamated to form the Nigerian state. In other words, colonial administration began the policy of politicization land use by introducing grazing reserves, grazing routes and ranching. The colonial government made the movement of herdsmen southwards a lot easier having welded the north and south into one entity called Nigeria with pertinent land use laws, which tried to alienate the people from the traditional ownership of their lands and vesting it on the government. This singular act engendered and facilitated the free movement of the Fulani herdsmen who wandered from one part of the country to the other in search of pasture, besides settlement in their host communities.

Furthermore, the issue of failure of the colonial administration to restrict the free movement of herdsmen via functional ranching was transferred into the postcolonial Nigerian state. Thus, as a result of the prevailing politics of ethnicity in country, which was eminently stoked up and promoted by the same colonial government, the issue of grazing was further politicized leading to the numerous conflicts emanating from failures of subsequent policies of the postcolonial state to address the grazing challenges. Past and present attempts at regulating cattle grazing appear to be ineffective in Nigeria, hence, the various veiled political attempts to resolve the herdsmen-farmer conflicts under such suspicious

ranching projects such as cattle colony, grazing reserves, RUGA settlements programme.

This paper therefore attempts to examine the following themes: Literature Review; pre-colonial history of cattle grazing, colonial ranching policies and politics, post colonial ranching politics and policies and lastly, the consequences of the prevailing ranching policies (Cattle Colony and RUGA Settlements).

Literature Review

According to Blench (2017) the term ranching is not usually clearly defined, however, there are essentially three different types of enclosed livestock production that might fall under this term;

a) **Ranching.** A very large area of rangeland is enclosed and the livestock migrate freely within its boundaries, finding their own food.

b) **Intensive livestock production.** The animals are kept in paddocks, and graze partly on natural pasture, partly on intensive feedstock.

c) **Zero grazing.** The animals are kept in stalls and fed entirely on purchased feeds. They are subject to intensive veterinary care, and often given diet supplements to enable them to fatten quickly. In conclusion, Blench contended that at present, none of these are practiced anywhere in Sub-Saharan Africa except parts of Ethiopia, Kenya and South Africa.

The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) (2020), on its own part described ranching as a system which consists labour-extensive enterprises specializing in one or more livestock species and producing mainly live animals for slaughter (for meat, skins and hides), but also for wool and milk. In essence its management is characterized by grazing within the fixed boundaries that delimit tenure. Oyeleye (2019) description of ranching revealed that it involves the demarcation of an area of land, including various structures, given primarily to the practice of raising grazing livestock such as cattle or sheep for meat, milk or wool. The practice exposes cattle to paddock grazing with improved varieties of forages and fodders all year round and modern livestock management practices such as feedlot fattening, artificial insemination and others. This practice is an improvement over the traditional livestock management system.

Harping on the importance of ranching, Ohuabunwa (2018) adduced three main reasons which gives ranching an edge over the open grazing system. Thus:

1. It will lead to production of healthier cows that will produce more milk and better beef than the current “wakaabout” method which generations of herdsmen have used;
2. It will create jobs in the chain-grass growers, veterinary technicians, milk and meat processing plants, veterinary agricultural extension workers; and transporters who will move the cattle and the processed milk and beef to the markets – North or South, East or West;
3. It will stop or at least drastically minimize open grazing that often result in cows freely entering into farms and eating up crops and eliciting conflict between the herders and the farm owners.

Moving away from description of ranching, Kachergis, Derner, Roche, Tate, Lubell, Meador, Magagna (2013) in their study on ‘Characterizing Wyoming Ranching Operations: Natural Resource Goals, Management Practices and Information Sources’ argues that Wyoming rangelands spanning 12 million hectares, produce food and provide other vital ecosystem services. The authors contend that Wyoming ranching operations are diverse, which may represent a challenge for policy makers designing programs and incentives to increase production of food and ecosystem services. However, efforts that focus on livestock and forage production and supporting ecosystem functions are likely to find synergies with ongoing management goals and strategies. A multi-pronged outreach and education approach using several different media sources may be most effective as new policies and management practices become available.

Kachergis et al’s work sees ranching as a private business with varied profitability unlike Nigeria’s type of ranching programmes in which the government is heavily involved with sinister motives of resettling certain ethnic groups in colonies rather than objectively creating enabling environment for ranching to thrive.

Corroborating Kachergis (2013), on the fact that ranches are supposed to be purely profitable venture, FAO (2020) assert that ranches are generally commercial enterprises, with generation of a cash income as the primary function of the livestock raised on them. In addition to its management and production objectives, the above organization stated that ranching differs from traditional pastoralism in such ways as:

supporting fewer people per land area, since tenure is generally individual (although not necessarily private), and providing options for intensifying water and feed supplies. Ranching may take any of the following forms: cattle ranching for meat (the most common type), dairy ranching, sheep and/or goat ranching for wool, meat and skins (e.g. the Karakul breed of sheep), and/or stud breeding.

According to Blench (2017) while explaining the demands of ranching which are non-existent in Nigeria leading to its failure pointed out that those ranching systems reflect modern economies where the transport infrastructure is well developed, so animals can be moved rapidly from remote areas to urban markets. Fencing is a high cost in a ranch operation. Blench went on to say that ranches of this type are typical of the United States, Australia and the rangelands of South America, particularly Uruguay and Argentina. They function in areas of low human population, where land tenure is secure. In other words, farmers are not usually trying to access the same land for crops. Furthermore, such ranches are mainly operative in African countries such as Botswana, Namibia and parts of South Africa, where the rainfall is so low or poorly distributed that ordinary agriculture is impossible. The situation is quite different in Nigeria where rather than individuals who have interest in ranching business opt for the project; the government has been making attempts to acquire land for building ranches for private individuals to do the business with tax payers' money, thereby generating conflicts and failures which this present study seeks to examine.

Corroborating the fact that ranching policies so far made by governments were ill suited for the country, Dunbar (1970) and Gefu (1992) asserts that the record of ranches or any type of intensive livestock production in Nigeria is not encouraging, indeed ranching has a long history of failure in Nigeria. Dunbar recounts the establishment of a large-scale ranch in Western Borno in 1914, which collapsed during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Understanding the trajectory of Nigerian ranches is not always easy, since although they were established with great fanfare, their decline and collapse is undocumented. Even when Gefu had a listing of some of these ranches, there were no serious comments made on their failure. Thus, the issue of documentation of the failures of different ranching attempts in Nigeria prompted this present study.

Iro (2019) identified the problems associated with the idea of government established ranching and not running ranching as a purely profitable venture. The author stated that ranching schemes suffer from frequent policy shifts due to changes of governments, administrators, or sources of funding. For example, the fluctuation in the annual budget for the livestock sub-head has prevented the government from establishing the required number of livestock improvement centers that sell or exchange breeds with farmers and pastoralists. A reduction in the budget for a year has triggered the neglect of the infrastructure in the few existing centers. Interruption or a reversal of government policies usually accompanies military coups in Nigeria. Since nobody is penalized or held responsible for policy or project failure, greedy staff takes advantage of any switch in policy to steal government property. In the ranching sector, the staff takes away the animals and removes hardware from the stockyard, or refuse to deposit monies raised by selling milk or livestock. Furthermore, the staff and the ranch managers use government commercial ranches as their personal belongings. The managers organize auctions to sell animals cheaply to themselves. Highly placed government officials go to the ranches and take out the best stock that are meant for breeding without paying for them. The officers also divert livestock feeds and drugs to private use.

Iro (2019) on the other hand observed that even the privately owned ranches were owned by absentee investors, who have the money but not the time to develop the ranches. The ranching enterprise in Nigeria is dominated by absentee herd-owners whose primary motif of starting ranching may not be commercial. A rancher interviewed in this research says hobby is his main interest in ranching.

The study of Iro on the failure of ranching policies in Nigeria is closely related to the present study, however the present study is an attempt to move beyond the failure of ranching policies to prove that the motives behind the setting up of ranching as well as perceptions of actors are at the centre of this failure in Nigeria.

The Pre-colonial History of Cattle Grazing

The primitive cattle industry is controlled and managed by the nomadic Fulani. It has been their way of life from the beginning. They have been in this profession for hundreds of years. The Fulanis are said to have migrated to

Nigeria about the 6th and 7th century AD (Stride and Ifeka, 1973). Iloeje (1972) is of the view that the Fulani people are nomadic herdsmen who are believed to have come to Nigeria from the north as invaders at different periods from the 13th century to the 19th. Some Fulani's are still nomadic and others live a sedentary life. However, the issue of migration from the North probably suggests that they came into the country either from Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger or even the Senegambia region. All these suggest that they are immigrants. It is postulated that the original home of the Fulani may have been the Senegal river valley and the Eastern Guinea area, and they expanded eastwards from about the 12th century (Kajubi, Lewis; Taiwo, 1974).

Indeed, there are two classes of Fulani known after their settlement in Nigeria. These are the "cow" Fulani who still retain their tall, slim features and light complexion. Others are the "town" Fulani have since learnt to live with the Hausa and even intermarry with their neighbours. The cow Fulani live in temporary tents made of cow hides or grass easy to set up and equally easy to dismantle. This is practical in view of the fact that they are nomadic pastoralists who are always on the move. This is also a confirmation that the cattle industry in Nigeria began between the 12th and the 19th centuries, and has been heavily controlled, managed by the nomadic Fulani. In the northern parts of Nigeria they exchange their cattle and milk and cheese for instance, for agricultural products from their hosts. The Fulani in this way supply 90 per cent of Nigeria's beef and cattle hide (Kajubi, Lewis, Taiwo, 1974). However, this purely traditional phase and spatial organization of pastoral herding changed with the advent of colonialism which made an attempt to introduce modern ranching to exist side by side with traditional herding system as discussed in the next section.

Colonial Grazing Politics/Policies

Accounts of Fulani pastoralists moving southwards into Nigeria's sub-humid "Middle Belt" zone appear as early as the 1820s; however, tsetse flies and the associated trypanosomiasis disease necessitated return northwards into the semi-arid zone during the rainy season. However, this movement became prominent with the colonial policies towards grazing. First, the relative security of the British colonial period, when violence related to the trans-Saharan slave trade was curtailed. Migration was also seen as a way to avoid the hated *jangali* (cattle tax) imposed by the British with the introduction of trypanocidal drugs further

enabling pastoralist cattle herds to access the high-quality grazing land in the southern sub-humid zone (Blench, 1994).

For example, Adamu (2007) observed that colonial policies in Katsina State led to the seizure of vast tracts and farming lands and turned it into native authority forest reserve. The immediate impact of this was that it made the herders and farmers to compete over land that had shrunk as a result of colonial forest policy. The rate of the competition resulted in conflict between the groups. Modern ranching was supposed to be an improvement over traditional livestock management as well as transform the social and economic life of the Fulani. Commercial ranching was also supposed to become the focus of agro-pastoral development that would meet the minimum of twenty-five grams of mutton per cattle a day. However, when the British introduced commercial ranching in Nigeria, their aim was to boost the supply of milk, meat, butter, and hides to Europe and Anglophone countries of West Africa (Dunbar, 1970). Thus, it is not out of place to state that the foundation of ranching programme in Nigeria was laid on the altar of ulterior motive.

An evaluation of the livestock sector showed that in spite of government spending and incentives, ranching schemes had failed in Nigeria. A European who started a ranch in 1914 in Northern Nigeria folded up in 1920 in spite of establishing his ranch on the best grazing land (Niamir, 1990). This made the European to express that commercial ranching was not viable in Nigeria due to the following reasons: First, contrary to expectations, the Fulani did not embrace ranching as the alternative to traditional pastoralism. Second, ranching did not raise the output of milk and meat. In fact, traditional pastoralism continued to record higher output per unit of land than commercial ranching (Grandin, 1988). Third, the anticipated economic benefits of ranching did not materialize; rather, the prices of milk and meat from the ranch grew beyond the means of the ordinary citizens. Fourth, there was no evidence that ranching had facilitated the resettlement of the Fulani. Thus, the reality of pastoral formation in Nigeria, as in much of Africa, was that almost universally, a ranching scheme was a financial catastrophe (Galaty, 1980).

The restriction of the movement of livestock is seen by the Fulani as a sequential destruction of vegetal resources and an invitation to livestock diseases (Igbozurike 1980; and Ellis and Swift 1988). Citing the work of Cruz de Carvalho

(1971), Goldschmidt (1980) stated a case in which the ranchers broke the fences and returned to active traditional pastoralism, because the fenced territory could not provide adequate food to raise the livestock. The faulty foundation of ranching policies and programmes upon which colonial administration was hinged on dovetailed the post-colonial administrations, and became the fulcrum of the failures as discussed in the subsequent sections.

Post-colonial Ranching Politics/Policies

The policy on ranching continued after independence when the government of Nigeria tried to use ranching to resettle the nomadic Fulani (Dunbar 1970). However, rather than consolidate on existing ranching policy in order to modernize and ensure that the Fulani discard the problematic old method of cattle rearing, the Nigerian government rather passed the Nigerian Grazing Reserve Act of 1964 as an initial attempt to improve Fulani access to grazing land for their cattle, simultaneously encouraging sedentarization in order to address existing conflicts between farming and grazing communities and improve provision of essential amenities to pastoralist families. In a broader sense, it was expected that the policy would help address some of the wider constraints facing livestock development in Nigeria at the time, such as disease control and market supply (Ingawa, Tarawali, Kaufmann, 1989). Following this, the National Agricultural Policy of 1988 declared that a minimum of 10% of the national territory, equivalent to 9.8 million hectares, would be allocated for the development of grazing reserves in an attempt to protect pastoralism. However, this policy has not been enforced; as at 2012 only 2.82 million hectares has been acquired in a total of 313 reserves (Ibrahim, 2012).

Attempts to encourage ranching in the post-colonial Nigeria were also subjected to the whims and caprices of politics rather than effective policy for improving livestock and encourage modern cattle rearing methods of restricting open and itinerant grazing. When ranching was introduced, the economic contribution of the livestock was the major consideration. This consideration relegated the multiple functions and non-economic uses of livestock, which might be more important to the Fulani. Ranching capitalized on enhanced production output, but overlooked the potential use of animals as self-reproducing wealth, symbol of prestige, medium of social exchange, and insurance policy (Cisse, 1980;

Schneider, 1981). A major policy mistake was that of failing to understand that traditional pastoralism was an important source of food and employment on a continuous basis to most of the household members (Sandford, 1982; Cossins, 1983).

The Fulani are reluctant to enter the ranching enterprise because they worry that they will face problems similar to those of raising livestock in sedentary camps ranching conflicts with communal land use. Some of the limitations to the ranching enterprise include situating them in populated areas and using poor quality stock. Government ranches are being used as private property by ranch staff. Lack of qualified, experienced and dedicated staff is a part of the predicaments of successful commercial ranching in Nigeria. Herd-owners see ranching schemes as an obstruction of freedom and as a forceful imposition of the advice of young men sent to work as technicians and livestock assistants (Grayzel, 1986). Extension staff consists of young technicians who are dispatched to pastoral areas to train and deliver services under specific state ordinances and by-laws. The Fulani see these young men as inexperienced intruders with little or nothing to offer (Sandford, 1982; Gryzel, 1986, p.159). Since ranching requires some degree of sedentariness, the mere mention of ranching raises suspicions that the authorities are planning for resettlement or disruption of communal land tenure system. The high cost of land discourages many pastoral Fulani from starting commercial ranching. The Fulani do not have the skill or the financial propensity to building the fences, grain stores, feed lots, and watering places. The emphasis on land conservation and improvement, requiring some monetary outlay, prevent even the most enterprising Fulani from raising their animals in a ranch-like setting (Iro, 2019).

The defunct Allied Ranch near Kaduna epitomizes the problems of institutionalized livestock schemes in Nigeria. The ranch imported cattle and horses from Australia and Argentina. The animals were housed in artificially ventilated rooms, supplied with food, water, and vitamins. Each heifer cost about \$1,000-\$2,000 by the time it arrived on the ranch. In spite of eating a lot of food, the animals started losing weight, apparently emaciated from heat exhaustion and intercurrent diseases. The animals could not produce the expected amount of milk and red meat. Three years after inception, nearly all the animals except the race horses had been sold or slaughtered (Iro, 2019).

Ranching schemes suffer from frequent policy shifts due to changes of governments, administrators, or sources of funding. For example, the fluctuation in the annual budget for the livestock sub-head has prevented the government from establishing the required number of livestock improvement centers that sell or exchange breeds with farmers and pastoralists. A reduction in the budget for a year has triggered the neglect of the infrastructure in the few existing centers. Interruption or a reversal of government policies usually accompanies military coups in Nigeria. Since nobody is penalized or held responsible for policy or project failure, greedy staff takes advantage of any switch in policy to steal government property. In the ranching sector, the staff takes away the animals and removes hardware from the stockyard, or refuse to deposit monies raised by selling milk or livestock. After decades of waste and inactivity in the state ranches, the government of Nigeria has decided to include ranches and dairy plants among the numerous ventures it intends to sell under its privatization policy (Iro, 2019).

The staff and the ranch managers use government commercial ranches as their personal belongings. The managers organize auctions to sell animals cheaply to themselves. Highly placed government officials go to the ranches and take out the best stock that are meant for breeding without paying for them. The officers also divert livestock feeds and drugs to private use. Studies show that many ranches are owned by absentee investors, who have the money but not the time to develop the ranches. Studies show that the most successful ranches are those supervised directly by their owners. The more time the owners spend on the ranch the more they reduce the chances of theft, loss of man hours, and workers' neglect. The ranching enterprise in Nigeria is dominated by absentee herd-owners whose primary motif of starting ranching may not be commercial. A rancher interviewed in this research says hobby is his main interest in ranching (Iro, 2019). The International Livestock Centre for Africa sought the reasons for its failure. The answer came from a Fulani man in the adjoining camp. Responding to the questionnaire survey, the man gave a simple but valid answer. The I.L.C.A. should not expect good herd management from a hired Fulani man having no cattle of his own. Not having cattle suggested weak management skills among the Fulani. If a man had the skill, he would tend his own flocks not someone else's.

Manchok Cattle Ranch demonstrated some of the causes of the failures of ranching schemes in Nigeria. With the American aids, the Kaduna State Ministry of Animal and Forest Resources established the Manchok Cattle Ranch in 1964. Increase milk output as a raw material for the local dairy companies was the purpose of the ranch. Like most ranches, the phasing of the scheme started with the building of basic infrastructure: sheds, fences, paddocks, offices, storage spaces, staff quarters, access roads, and a clinic. Stocked in 1980 by 156 imported Francaise Fisanne, the ranch also provided scales, electricity, water pumps, and farm yards. Then in 1980, dermatophiliasis hit, causing the ranch to sell or slaughter most of the animals. In 1984, the ranch replaced the imported cattle with 785 local breed. The same year, however, the rinderpest struck. Again, the ranch sold or butchered most of the animals. The few remaining animals that survived the epidemic were transferred to the Kaduna-Karaduwa River Basin and Rural Development Authority. All that remained on the barnyard were broken fences, dilapidated buildings, and rusting implements buried in the growing grass (Ezeomah, 1987).

Associated with the ranching schemes are livestock improvement centers that focus on beef and lacteal improvement. The purpose of the centers is to manage the rangeland, develop fodder banks, and provide seeds, fences, and salt licks. Set up within a livestock improvement center are schools and veterinary centers. Each livestock service center has drivers, laborers, storekeepers, range guards, and motor mechanics. Project officers and livestock assistants offer extension services to the Fulani settlers. Management and grazing control assistants work with the Fulani on inter-cropping and range-fire control. Veterinary officers and livestock superintendents treat and vaccinate the herds (N.L.P.D. record, 1992). Like the ranching schemes, livestock improvement centers have failed miserably in Nigeria. The livestock improvement centers neither enhance the quality nor the quantity of the animals. Range use has not improved either. Services at the centers benefit a few mixed-farmers rather than the targeted pastoral Fulani. As a result of the disappointing performance of the centers, the government has converted them into research centers. Two cases, the Butura Livestock Improvement Breeding Center and the Pambegua Sheep Improvement Sub-sector show the extent of the failure in livestock improvement centers in Nigeria. The Butura Livestock Improvement Breeding Center started in 1967 as an experimental farm for cross-breeding of local cows with Friesian breeds. The center was located twenty-six kilometers west of Barikin Ladi, near Jos, in

Plateau State. The goal of the Center was to demonstrate to the local herdsmen the advantages of mixed stocking. On the five hundred acre center, the government spent large sums to build fences, paddocks, garages, spray races, grain stores, veterinary centers, staff quarters, and office buildings. The government also provided seeds, imported grass, and farm-land for growing grains and livestock feeds. In 1970, the center imported sixteen Friesian cattle to be bred and used as the center's foundation stock. One after another, all the imported cattle died of dermatophiliasis before the experiment could be completed. Five years later, the center imported another forty Friesian stock and cross-bred them with the local Zebu. Dermatophiliasis struck again and all the forty foreign stock died. By early 1980s, the experimental farm had taken a clear path to failure. In 1985 the Plateau State had to convert the center into a ranch, using local breeds.

The government expected the ranch to succeed since it was on a flat land, supplied with abundant grass, farm residues, perennial rivers and streams, and mining depressions that served as artificial ponds. The absence of tsetse and the presence of a teeming work-force from the mining camps were expected to provide the market boost for livestock products. The Butura ranch, however, started showing signs of failure. The pens were broken, so were the paddocks. The fences were torn, most animals were sold or taken away, and the few animals left on the ranch were herded by hired pastoralists (Ezeomah, 1987).

The Pambegua Sheep Improvement Sub-Center was another disaster. It began in 1970 from an attempt by the then North-Central State to boost livestock production, particularly the ruminant population. Using imported Balouchie sheep from Iran, the state established a cross-breeding center in Katsina. With identical weather as Iran, Katsina appeared a suitable location for raising the Balouchie sheep. The initial success of the Balouchie encouraged the government to replicate its efforts in other parts of the state. Created in 1976 on 388.6 acres, the Pambegua Sub-Center took advantage of the quick maturation and high-quality mutton of the Balouchie breed. Located about three hundred kilometers southeast of Katsina, Pambegua was thought to provide an excellent breeding environment. The government built fences, offices, and staff quarters. It provided electricity, tap water, and land clearing equipment for growing livestock feed. The experimental breed was brought from Katsina, but many of them died because of the humid weather in Pambegua, despite de-ticking and the shearing

of their wool to prevent deaths (Iro, 2019). The disappointing performance of the livestock improvement centers necessitated government's investigation into the causes of the failures. The problems were the flaws in the design of the schemes, which differed markedly from the traditional system of livestock management. Many centers were based on Western models and used extension staff who literally knew less than the Fulani about raising livestock in Nigeria (Iro, 2019).

The failure of the government to sincerely modernize the cattle grazing methods of the Fulani by carrying them along in the ranching project and processes coupled with the avowed Fulani resistance to the so-called change from open grazing sustained mobile grazing method. Thus, the inability to sustain the grazing routes due to population and development, the Fulani herdsmen stray into farmlands and destroy crops leading to herdsmen-farmer conflicts, violent attacks, counter violence, reprisal attacks and vicious cycle of violence, crimes of armed robbery, rapes, killings etc. These started gradually until it rose to a crisis levels. The escalation of the conflict arising from the inability of the government to contain the herdsmen-farmer conflict, and the persistent environmental and climate change due to desertification, drought in the Sahel and the shrinking of Lake Chad, which used to be a buffer for the migrant herdsmen, led to the massive movement of the Fulani herdsmen into the middle-belt and further southern Nigeria for sustainable pasture, settlement and livelihood thereby putting more pressure on the land persistent clashes with the farmers and locals in their host communities.

For instance, the gradual desertification in the north, due to climate change and other factors has rendered massive tracts of land unusable for agriculture or cattle herding; currently, 11 out of 19 states in the north are severely threatened by soil erosion. All this has not only shrunk the amount of land available for farming and pastures but has also pushed cattle herders further south. Besides, in the past, farmers and herders were able to manage disputes, primarily through the community justice system that employs dialogue and small peace talks in village squares. But that inter-community conflict resolution process no longer works because grievances have increased in number and dimension. Individual resentment transformed over time into large-scale violence. The issue eventually assumed an ethnic dimension and has been presented as a problem between the north and the south (Orji, 2019).

Furthermore, the use of police and courts to resolve conflicts between Fulbe cattle herders and farmers by government has been ineffective. This has contributed to the frequency of the clashes especially since the 1980s sequel to the democratic dispensation, introduction of modern weapons in the conflict and communication devices as well as the use of bandits in terrorists' activities. All these have exacerbated chronic insecurity that has encouraged the conflicting parties to take responsibility for their own security and to defend themselves, which is a threat to the sustainability of the federation (Abbas, 2009). As the state cannot regulate the mutual coexistence of its citizens in the harmonious sharing of the competed resources, the parties now resolve to struggle among themselves with no retreat, no surrender and for the survival of the fittest. The failure of the state, for example to resolve the "settler/indigene" identity and the inherent struggles over resources can be adduced to have brought dangerous dimensions of economic and political elements in the Fulani cattle herders and farmers conflicts (Abbas, 2009).

It appears that government and security agencies have taken sides in the herder/farmer conflict which has claimed numerous lives and property in virtually all the states in the North-central and Southern Nigeria. The sympathy shown to the Fulani herdsmen has resulted in persistent killings and wanton destruction of lives and property. Thus, rather than apprehend and disarm the marauding Fulani herdsmen who have come out openly to claim responsibility for these heinous crimes inflicted on their host communities, for instance, about 40 persons were killed in Enugu, while the blood let in Agatu (Benue State) accounted for about 500 deaths; the government came up with the idea of settlement of the Fulani herdsmen across the country with different code names such as cattle colony; ranch; and RUGA as a panacea to the incessant herdsmen attacks on their host communities (Orebe, 2018). This brings us to the discussion on the politics of cattle colony, grazing reserves and RUGA settlement ranching policy of the President Buhari administration in the next section.

Implications of Politics and Policy of Cattle Colony, Grazing Reserve and RUGA Settlement Ranching of President Buhari Administration

For a very long time, the Nigerian government did not offer a concrete plan to solve the problem of herdsmen-farmer conflict, as it does little more than giving cliché political sermons, condemning the killings and issuing palliatives. But after the latest killing spree in early January, 2017, the government

announced that they have finally found a solution that would end these clashes once and for all: this is located in "cattle colonies" as announced by then Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Chief Audu Ogbeh (Orji, 2019).

According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the "cattle colony" policy is going to solve the ongoing problems between herdsmen and farmers by designating vast tracts of lands in each state as herding grounds. Herdsmen will use these designated herding grounds, or "cattle colonies" to feed their livestock, and as a result will not feel the need to disturb the fertile agricultural lands that belong to farming communities.

Following this announcement, the Nigerian public's initial reaction to the announcement was one of disinterest and confusion, as no one seemed to understand what a "cattle colony" was. Eventually, many communities realized that implementing this policy could lead to a disaster and outrightly rejected it. In their rejection of the policy, some Nigerians resorted to sarcasm. "What is cattle colony? We have been colonized by the colonial masters, and now we will be colonized by cows?" quipped Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice of Taraba State Yusufu Akirikwen (Orji, 2019). It is also perceived that the proposed grazing colonies is akin to expropriation of land from states as ranches for the Fulani herdsmen.

Given the spate of criticisms leveled against the creation of cattle colony policy, in spite of the assurance that the discretion was given to the states to decline or donate land to the project; and the government's response that 16 of Nigeria's 36 states had already agreed to host cattle colonies, the project was totally rejected by majority of the states, mostly from the south. The outright rejection of the cattle colony project prompted the Federal Government to switch to ranching proposal in the 36 states of the federation.

National Ranching Project

What appears to be a clearer understanding by the Buhari administration in its effort to tackle the escalating herdsmen/farmers clashes and the resultant bloodbath across the country is the Federal Government plans to set up cattle ranches in some states. This effectively cancels the earlier proposal by the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Chief Audu Ogbeh, which proposed to establish cattle colonies in 16 states. Under this programme, the

Federal Government and states have agreed to set up cattle ranches in 10 states – Adamawa, Benue, Ebonyi, Edo, Kaduna, Nasarawa, Oyo, Plateau, Taraba and Zamfara to end herders, farmers’ crisis in the country. The 10 states are in the first phase of the national ranching project. The disclosure was made in Abuja at the unveiling of the National Economic Council’s National Livestock Transformation Plan as part of efforts to end clashes between farmers and herdsmen. While presenting the plan, the Secretary of the NEC Sub-Committee, Dr. Andrew Kwasari, said the Federal Government and states would spend N70 billion in the first three years of the pilot phase of the programme. He also said that N179 billion would be spent over a period of 10 years on the national livestock implementation. NEC, had in January, set up a committee headed by the Vice-President, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo, to look into herdsmen and farmers’ clashes. The sudden U-turn by government shows that there was no thinking through before Ogbah’s announcement (Onyekakeyah, 2018). It appears that government have seen reason why ranching instead of cattle colony is the way to go and that ranching is the globally accepted and modern method of beef cattle production.

Much as ranching rather than open, criminal, willful and reckless grazing of cattle on people’s farms appears to be a veritable solution to Fulani herdsmen’s murderous onslaught against law abiding, innocent farmers; however, it appears to be a politics of favouritism in favour of the herdsmen, particularly where cattle rearing is a private enterprise, with profits accruable to private entrepreneurs. Ploughing in public funds into private business of the Fulani without collateral, amounts to favouritism, simply because a Fulani is the current President, or to appease the Fulani over and above other private enterprises such as rice, cocoa, oil palms, rubber, groundnuts, cassava, etc, who are only supported with repayable loans with collateral (Akiri, 2018). Akiri (2018) while stressing the political undertone of the pilot ranching project stated that with historical evidence, it is not out of place to adduce that these so-called pilot ranches are designed to be future Fulani Emirates, who in the near future may not be dis-entitled of the expanse of grazing territories acquired from state/local governments by the Federal Government of Nigeria, on their behalf.

Part of the politics of favouritism exhibited by the Federal Government on behalf of the Fulani could be noticed by the biased mode of handling the herdsmen killings. Whereas Miyetti Allah had come out openly to claim that the killer

herdsmen killed and are killing farmers, their wives and children to avenge the theft of their cattle by rustlers, and they have not been arrested or prosecuted according to the extant criminal codes of Nigeria clearly shows that there is government's complicity in the conflict in favour of the Fulani herdsmen. Again, whereas Section 319 of the Criminal Code Act (cap.77 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 1990) provides that, any person who commits murder shall be sentenced to death and be hanged by neck until he is dead, Section 390 (3) of the same Act, which is tangentially on all fours with Section 287 of the Penal Code Act, stipulates that any of the following, that is to say, "a horse, bull, cow, ox, ram, ewe, whether goat or pig or the young of any such animal", shall be liable on conviction, to pay a fine of two hundred naira (₦200.00) or to imprisonment for two years (Akiri, 2018). The pertinent question is, how can 300 cows allegedly rustled by unidentified persons be an excuse (in law, morality or religion), for Fulani herdsmen butchering of over 200 human beings in Plateau State or elsewhere; while the security agencies, as "though afflicted with selective amnesia and aural impairment", pretend not to have heard the boasts, confessions, and threats of Miyetti Allah, whose leader once publicly enthused about Nigeria being Allah's biggest gift to the Fulani ethnic nationality.

What appears to serve as an example of government's complicity on the issue of grazing/ranching in Nigeria is a case in Adamawa, where, while killers of human beings are rendered immune to arrest, let alone trial, for their heinous crimes; five young men in Adamawa State were promptly apprehended by the police, tried, convicted and sentenced to death by hanging for allegedly killing one Fulani herdsman. Further example could be drawn from Mr. Mansur Dan-Ali, Minister of Defence appeal to Benue State House of Assembly and the Benue State Governor to suspend the Anti-Open-Grazing Law, passed by the State House of Assembly and assented by the Governor, as a condition precedent for the effective performance of the functions of his office. It therefore appears that the plan to establish "pilot ranches; akin to grazing colonies in 94 locations in ten states of the federation is designed to reward the killer herdsmen for their murderous proclivities (Akiri, 2018).

It is not a hidden truth that cattle herding or rearing is essentially a private business like cassava, yam or millet; trading textiles, cola nuts or motor-spare parts. It is a traditional forte of the Fulani ethnic group, just as trading in spare parts has become the forte of the Igbo; farming of cocoa and kola nuts the forte of

the Yoruba and fishing and fish selling a major occupation of the Ijaw etc. Every ethnic group in Nigeria has its main occupation. Therefore, it will be unjust to single out one ethnic group's occupation or trade and directly budget national resources for its development like building ranches or colonies and choosing where to locate them. If we allow this to go, then the next President may follow suit and this will be creating more tension and division instead of uniting the country.

The best thing the government should do to support cattle ranching as it is supporting other crop agriculture is to direct the herders to the banks, including the development banks like the Bank of Agriculture and Bank of Industry. They should design a programme for cattle ranches like the Central bank (CBN) anchor programme. Thus, supporting private business, otherwise getting government to directly build ranches for herdsmen will amount to using public funds for private gain and that will spell corruption and nepotism (Oluabunwa, 2018). It is rightly perceived that the essence of government's direct involvement in building ranches is because the real owners of the cattle to be ranches are very rich Nigerians, which include: Presidents (military and civilian, past and present), governors (past and present), legislators (serving and past), ministers (living and dead), senior public servants (serving and retired). Given that these classes of people can afford to build ranches to promote their businesses, thus, it will be highly unethical for them to use public funds to further their private interests (Oluabunwa, 2018).

The outcry and condemnation that greeted the proposed National Ranching Programme led to its suspension by the Federal Government and came out with yet another brand of politically motivated ranching policy known as Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) Settlement aimed at pacifying the Fulani herdsmen, as discussed below.

The Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) Settlement

The RUGA settlement, the latest plan by the President Buhari-led administration was approved on May 21, 2019. According to a statement released by the presidency on June 30, the objective of implementing the RUGA Settlements include, to:-

1. Curb open grazing of animals that continue to pose security threats to farmers and herdsmen;

2. The settlement will house herders and animal farmers. By this, the herdsman will be settled and water would be provided for their animals, pasture, schools for their children, security, agro-rangers, veterinary clinics, markets and manufacturing entities that will process and add value to meats animal products;
3. The Federal Government believes that RUGA Settlements will be of benefit to everyone in terms of putting an end to the nomadic lifestyle of herdsman, put an end of herdsman having to transport their herds on foot; avoid conflict with local farming communities, provide at least 2000 jobs and will be a major attraction to foreign investors; increase the quality and hygiene of livestock in terms of beef and milk production, increased quality of feeding and access to animal care and private sector participation in commercial pasture production by way of investments; access to credit facilities, security for pastoral families and containment of cattle rustling (Toromade, 2019).

Just like the previous brands of ranching proposals, the RUGA Settlements project was met with considerable outrage from Nigerians, particularly the Benue State Government and several notable Southern and Middle Belt socio-political groups. Many of these groups slammed RUGA Settlement as further confirmation of the President Buhari's plan to Islamize the country (Toromade, 2019). Benue State Government publicly denounced RUGA Settlements after the Federal Government appeared to ignore its objections and tried to implement the plan in the state, in spite of the renouncement by the Federal Government that it will not force RUGA Settlements on any state. Furthermore, in spite of the denials by the Federal Government that RUGA was not covered in the National Livestock Transformation Plan (NLTP), yet the RUGA Settlements initiative share significant similarities. Just like NLTP, RUGA promotes ranching as the way forward for cattle rearing in the country. Herders that hope to benefit from RUGA Settlements are expected to be registered with cooperatives for the purpose of the ranching scheme. It is only the cooperatives that will then be able to get rental agreements for land from state governments and also benefit from ranch resources on several terms. These are similar conditions stipulated under the NLTP.

Following the outcry of the people and their accusation that the Federal government was bent on using the RUGA settlements as an undercover for

settling the Fulani in fulfillment of the Islamic agenda that was envisaged by the late Sadauna of Sokoto, Sultan Ahmadu Bello, coupled with allegation of the President's penchant of enriching his Fulani kinsmen from the national funds through the RUGA settlement initiative, the Federal Government succumbed to these pressures and announced the suspension of the RUGA scheme.

On the whole, it is not out of place to state that the underlying political and ethnic motives of the Nigerian government for setting up its own brand of ranching, which is quite different from the pure objective of raising the product of livestock production and improve performance is the reason for the failure of ranching projects in country. Hence, other ethnic groups had resisted the foisting of skewed ranching system which tends to favour or put differently suit the interest of a section of the country over the others. This resistance and rejection of the tainted ranching programmes have ended up leaving the country with the traditional roving herding system of cattle breeding with its manifold incessant lethal violent clashes between the herders and farmers in the some parts of Northeast Zone, North Central Zone, South-South and South East zones of Nigeria.

Conclusion

The study has been able to critically examine the political intrigues and history of herding and ranching programmes in Nigeria. It traced the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial cattle grazing systems, and the motivations of north-south movement of cattle by the Fulani herdsman. The study discovered that in the pre-colonial period, the herdsman predominantly carried out their open grazing business in the northern part of the country until the advent of colonial administration when the southern and northern protectorates were amalgamated coupled with series of colonial land policies which favoured the free movement of cattle from one part of the country to the other. The policies aimed at ranching were poorly implemented and ineffective thereby giving fillip to the open grazing. This poor ranching policy and lack luster appeal continued with the post-colonial government while migratory open grazing continued on a wider scale over and above ranching. Over time, due to climate change, population growth and competition for

land resources, the southward movement of cattle became pervasive leading to violent clashes between the herdsmen and farmers, which reached its crescendo in the new millennium until it became a security threat to the point of assuming terrorist dimension where villages are torched and sacked with reckless abandon, while the security agencies seemed helpless due to their subtle, covert and overt political, ethnic and religious sentiments over time. Thus, under the pretext that it wants to resolve the lingering herdsmen-farmer violent clashes, the Federal Government surreptitiously decided to introduce the much politicized ranching systems such as cattle colony, national ranching settlements, and finally the botched RUGA Settlements scheme. These ranching schemes were rejected due to presumed political, economic and religious undertones which favoured the Fulani herdsmen over and above farmers and indigenous land owners.

It is therefore concluded that for there to be a proper, acceptable and successful ranching system in Nigeria, ranching should be run as a commercial enterprise through various incentivization schemes and must not be forced on the people by the Federal Government. It must not be seen solely as a means of settling the Fulani herdsmen on host communities that are not Fulani origin due to the volatile political and religious identity question in Nigeria. It will be very difficult to settle the Fulani in the same communities they have clashed with the host farmers and in some cases communities they had once displaced through violence and rendered homeless as internally displaced people (IDPs) and refugees in their own land. Therefore, the Federal government could encourage ranching through support schemes through repayable and revolving loans like any other small and medium scale business and not construct ranches and settlements for the Fulani with national wealth given its political and religious undertones.

Practically speaking, cattle ranching can just be a business of its own that should attract investors even if they have to be incentivized. They should design business plans and provide collaterals to enable them secure loans and they can approach land owners to buy land in any part of the country of their choice as long as the land is available and can be negotiated. That is the way Igbo traders go to build their market places all over Nigeria - Idumota, Ladipo, and Aspanda in Lagos, Onitsha Main Market, Kano Central Market and Ariaria Market in Aba. For example, when market stalls are built by local

councils or developers, they pay rents or buy up the stalls. Thus, to treat cattle ranching differently will be discriminatory against other business groups (traditional or modern). On the whole, given prominence to the Fulani herdsmen by using national funds to set up ranches all over the country would rather than solve the herdsmen-farmer conflicts, create new ones in terms of land acquisition and usurpation as well as agitations by other ethnic groups to fund their own trade mark occupation like fishing and farming as that of cattle rearing of the Fulani.

This, notwithstanding, any attempt to solve the problem from the prism of politics rather than the globally accepted way of handling cattle farming vis-à-vis the intervening factors of people, land, etc, would be counterproductive. It will not work. This is why government should first thoroughly examine all the issues pertaining to ranching in a manner that is devoid of sentiments and emotions, except there is a hidden agenda. There are global best practices pertaining to ranching that should be adhered to for it to be sustainable. Otherwise, if government cuts corners to establish ranches by executive fiat, they may not be sustainable. In the United States and South America from where the idea of ranching originated, there are ranches that have been in existence for hundreds of years and still running. There should be thorough feasibility study including impact assessment before setting up any ranch.

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