

# Government and the Politics of Ruga Settlement: Implications for the Unity of Nigeria

Oluka, Nduka Lucas; Ativie, C. Ailende; Efeosa-Temple, Gladness Chinwe

Department of Political Science, Novena University, Ogume, Delta State, Nigeria

## ABSTRACT

Farmers in Nigeria have ceased to worry about the imminent dangers of climate change and field attacks from rodents, pests, and diseases on their crops in the field. They have shifted their worries to the menace of the nihilist nomads of the Fulani extraction. Following this is the concern in recent times of the imminent danger in the plan to establish for the nihilist Fulani nomads, Ruga which in Hausa is a settlement for herders and their cattle, also known as cattle colonies, throughout the nation by the Muhammadu Buhari administration. This study examines the fundamental issues surrounding the conflict between Fulani herdsmen and sedentary farmers, and the politics surrounding government's intent to establish Ruga settlements all over the country. To achieve this, the study uses qualitative and explorative research methods, while it derives relevant data from secondary sources such as books, journal articles, newspapers, official documents and Internet materials. The study adopts Chabal's (2009) twofold conflict theory and the Richard Hofstadter (2008) and Peter Knight's (2003) conspiracy theories to juxtapose the causes of the conflict between Fulani herdsmen and sedentary famers in the country, and ascertain the implications of establishing cattle colonies across the country by the Federal Government. Considering these, the study proffers useful recommendations that will benefit the sedentary farmers and herdsmen on the one hand and, the nation in general, on the other hand. Overall, the research noted that a total compliance to the doctrine of true federalism and respect for the rule of law enshrine, among others are recommended.

**KEYWORDS:** Politics, Conflict, Nigeria, Ruga Settlements, Cattle Colonies, Fulani herdsmen, sedentary farmers

## 1.1. INTRODUCTION

The resurgence of conflict between nomad Fulani herdsmen and sedentary farmers in the Middle Belt and in the Southern regions of Nigeria, over the use of farmlands for grazing of cattle or for cultivation of crops, has shifted from minor conflicts to a vicious and uncontrollable situation, with lots of casualties recorded on both sides in recent times. The ineptitude of the security agencies to curb the menace and the palpable but unacceptable silence of the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Nigerian Armed Forces, Muhammadu Buhari, over the conflict, has become an issue of concern to domestic and international observers. In spite of the declaration of the activities of the Fulani herdsmen as the fourth most deadly terrorist group in the world, according to latest reports from the Global Terrorism Index (2018), the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari is yet to declare the group as such (Orji, 2019). Also of great concern is the alleged involvement of some state governors, highly placed individuals, and security personnel, who are alleged to provide arms, ammunitions and logistics to the insurgents. Some also withhold intelligence information which is needed to address the conflict. In some quarters, the activity of the insurgents is seen as a deliberate genocidal attempt on non-Fulani people and non Muslims whom are often regarded as infidels (Ezemenaka & Ekumaoko, 2018).

The unchallenged attack orchestrated by Fulani herdsmen on their host communities escalates because there is no

concrete counter measure put in place by the government of the day to halt the menace. Rather, government engages itself in malicious confrontations and incarceration of non combatant groups, members of secessionist movements such as the Indigenous People of Biafra (IBOP), and individuals such as Ibrahim El Zalzaky, his wife, and other members of his Islamic movement, as well as Omoyele Sowore –the leader of *Revolution Now* and a host of others. This is clear evidence that the government is not bothered about the activity of the nihilist herdsmen across the country (Abdur, 2019).

Most provocative and repulsive is the Federal Government's attempts to establish Ruga settlements (which in Fulfulde, the language spoken by the Fulani, means a small settlement for herders) throughout the federation, and among non-Fulani settlements in the Middle Belt and in the South, seen as an alternative to peace and safety of lives and properties, as touted by government. Despite the opposition from civil society groups and cultural organizations such as the Ohanaeze Ndigbo, the Niger Delta Elders Forum, the Southern and Middle Belt Leaders Forum and well-meaning individuals in Nigeria, the government insisted it would establish Ruga settlements across the country. And the people saw this as a tricky move to indirectly spread and permanently settle the marauding herder Fulani people of the North among the old and existing communities in the

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South and Middle Belt regions of Nigeria. Equally undermining the peace and security of the country is the recent re-submission of an executive bill to the National Assembly (NASS) seeking to control all waterways and their banks in the country which the Middle Belt and Southern populations find also provocative. It should be recalled that during the immediate past Eight Assembly led by Senator Bukola Saraki and Honourable Yakubu Dogara respectively, Buhari brought the same bill to NASS which had been previously rejected based on the bill's prejudice. In many quarters, it was believed that the bill was an indirect avenue for the government to grab banks of rivers for cattle and nomad Fulani herdsmen. This indirect means to colonize Nigeria undermines peace, unity and security of the country. It is against this background that this study is set, to examine the implications of establishing cattle or Ruga settlements across the country, claimed as part of the efforts of the Federal Government to end the conflict between crop farmers and Fulani herdsmen.

## 1.2. Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to examine the politics of Ruga settlement and its implications on the unity of the country. While the specific objectives are to:

- A. Examine the fundamental causes of the conflict between Fulani herdsmen and host community crop farmers in Nigeria,
- B. Examine the implications of establishing ruga settlements across the country as an alternative to peace and security; and,
- C. Proffer solutions to the conflict between herdsmen and farmers in order to promote unity in Nigeria.

## 1.3. Research Questions

To give directions to this study, the following research questions were raised:

- A. What are the fundamental causes of the conflict between Fulani herdsmen and sedentary farmers in Nigeria?
- B. What are the implications of establishing cattle colonies in the non-Fulani Middle Belt and Southern areas of the country?
- C. What are the solutions to the conflict between Fulani herdsmen and sedentary farmers in the country?

## 1.4. Research Methods

This study adopts qualitative and explorative research method to extrapolate from the link between the variables raised in the study which harps on the benefits of peaceful co-existence between Fulani nomads and their host communities. Most importantly is the unity of the country. This implies that the data used in the study are collected from secondary sources such as books, journals, official documents, Internet sources, etc.

## 1.5. Theoretical Framework

The study adopts Chabal's (2009) twofold conflict theory, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the Richard Hofstadter (2008) and Peter Knight's (2003) conspiracy theories, to examine the actual causes of the conflict between Fulani nomads and sedentary farmers. As well, these theories will help to ascertain the implications of establishing cattle colonies which the government of the day considered as an alternative to peace and security of lives and properties throughout the country.

## Chabal's Twofold Theory

This theory is adopted to depict the actual situation of the conflict between sedentary farmers and Fulani nomads on the one hand, and the role of the Federal Government to resolve this conflict on the other hand, especially as it appertains to the Federal Government's intent in establishing cattle colonies across the country, seen by critics as a means to undermine the unity of the country. Chabal's twofold theory, thus, is a clear manifestation of the reality of trying to survive while suffering and smiling which is a true reflection of Bahari's prejudice over the conflict between crop farmers and Fulani nomads in the former's territory. According to Chabal (2009) cited in Ezemanaka and Ekumaoko (2018), politics of suffering and smiling explain the legitimacy of a typical African politics that manifests in the Nigeria's national politics. It also explain the fact that the ordinary people of Africa are often engaged in distinct economic activities in order to earn a living and self esteem or respect such as the nomads and farmers, although most of these activities conflict with the interests of one another.

Ezemanaka and Ekumaoko (2018:34) argued that Africans like other people throughout the world move when necessary in search of economic gains. The reason why Fulani nomads migrate is to gain access to green pasture for their cattle, a custom that increases their economic activities and gains. They argued that this activity has become more often than ever because of the development of pasture lands into permanent habitants and farmlands for the growing population, thus, pasture lands are becoming towns and extension of cities thereby creating scarcity of lands for pasture. Also of pertinence is climate change which is also one of the reasons for Fulani herdsmen migration to the southern region of the country where there is sufficient rain and green pasture for their cattle (Agbugu & Onuba, 2015; Nte, 2016).

Chabal (2009), thus, argued that understanding happenings in regional or district politics will require informal political experiences made up of a number of socio-economic and political facets or elements particularly those outside the sphere of traditional academic analytical categorizations. Chabal opines that this will help in understanding formal and informal experiences which were previously neglected, and the causalities that derive from such neglect as a result of the irrational behaviours of leaders or parties in conflict. In other words, Chabal's proposition explains the role of President Buhari in the conflict between crop farmers and Fulani herdsmen. In essence, the politics of surviving, using migration which is occasioned by climate change, explains the reason why the Fulani nomads migrate to the southern parts of the country in search of fertile grazing grounds for their cattle and the desperate search of permanent solution to these problems by the President of the Federal Republic who is also a Fulani by tribe.

President Buhari's hesitation to address the issues surrounding this conflict has been attributed to the fact that he has compassion for his kinsmen who are struggling to sustain their major means of livelihood in the face of terrible droughts and reduced pastures occasioned by climate change in their lands. The consequence of his actions or inactions is likely to undermine the unity of the country. Whether it is intentional or not, his actions have failed Nigerians.

## Conspiracy Theory

Conspiracy theory, like every other discourse in the social sciences, has definitional controversies. It will therefore require explicit explanations to provide a meaning to the concept. Conspiracy theory was said to have emerged in the wake of unsettling events such as economic shocks, mass shooting, terrorism, among others (Monica Jimenez, 2019). There are two schools of thought which harp on why the theory proliferates in our contemporary age. The first school is sustained by *individualistic* framework pioneered by Richard Hofstadter (2008) and his associates. This group argued that those who conspire to commit crime or commit any other form of offences have a paranoid personality and they use other persons as scapegoats. They also possess the “us versus them world view”. Adherents of this group also argued that conspiratorial thinking is associated with marginalized and less powerful group of people in the society. The second school which was championed by Peter Knight (2003) viewed conspiracy from a *cultural sociology* perspective, with emphasis on pervasiveness of the secrecy of the government. This theory raises the awareness about *behind the scene* information and the cynicism exhibited towards corporate and government powers (Korta, 2018: 31).

Conspiracy theorists believe that when an organization acts covertly, it tends to achieve a malevolent end. Hence, the theory explains the reasons why some events occur in our societies like the emergence of ethno-nationalism groups or the new radical Islamic groups, and such events that provoke conspiracy by some sinister state-sponsored terrorist groups, etc. This means that every event is traceable to a cause or circumstances (See Barkun, 2003: 3; Marmura, 2014 cited in Benjamin, 2017). In some circumstances, conspiracy can lead to conflict, genocide, terrorist attack and/or a full scale war. The conflict between farmers and Fulani herdsmen is perceived as a deliberate conspiracy by Islamic fundamentalists to carry out Islamic Jihad on non Muslims and moderate Muslim extractions. Weeks after the Cattle Colony bill debacle in Nigeria, the re-presentation of the self-same executive bill repackaged as Ruga Settlement bill to the National Assembly is perceived in some quarters as a deliberate attempt by the Fulani tribal president and his henchmen to re-colonize Nigeria through the establishment of the colonies or settlements for cattle across the country. The opinion is that this is the highest conspiracy in recent time which can be better imagined than experienced.

## 2.1. Empirical Review

### 2.1.1. Causes of the Conflict

Indisputably, Fulani pastoralists are the major group involved in cattle rearing business in Nigeria. According to Belo (2013) cited in Ndubuisi (2018) “they own over 90% of the country’s livestock which accounts for one-third of agricultural gross domestic product (GDP) in particular and 3.2% of the country’s GDP in general. But these have been affected by the nihilist ideologies and frequent attacks on innocent farmers and citizens by the Fulani herdsmen. The conflict has also affected the huge economic gains the nomads initially contributed to the nation’s gross national product (GNP) and affected the day-to-day relationships which exist among the trio of Fulani herdsmen, sedentary farmers, and other ethnic groups in Nigeria (Ndubuisi, 2018:1; Olayiwola, 2019: 99).

The major factor responsible for this strained relationship between the Fulani herdsmen and sedentary farmers across the country is climate change. When there is a change in the weather condition, there is always arid weather, followed by a prolonged drought and desertification particularly in the northern part of the country. The effect of this is the immediate migration to the southern parts of the country where there are sufficient rains during the wet season in search of green pastures for their cattle. Gleick (2010) cited in Ndubuisi (2018: 4) while attesting to this, opines that climate change has been identified as the greatest and single factor that induced migration and population displacement, evident in the case of Nigeria’s Fulani nomads who are usually pushed out of their ancestral lands to the southern regions in search of green lands for their cattle. Apart from climate change there are other natural and fundamental causes of the conflict between farmers and Fulani herdsmen. One of such causes is the shrinking of ecological space occasioned by the blossoming population who, in turn, take up some of the immediately available lands for crop farming, particularly in the Northern Nigeria. In other words, green lands that were initially available for cattle grazing are gradually being converted to farmlands and residential areas inhibited by the over blown population, leading to eco-scarcity (Okoli & Atelhe, 2013: 80). In the southern regions, it is purely a case of encroaching without notice on the people’s farmlands in the name of cattle rustling.

Ndubuisi (2018: 3) identified unauthorized encroachment into farmlands by cattle rustlers and the damages they cause to crops as one of the major causes of farmers and Fulani herdsmen conflict. Fallow lands left to replenish after a long period of use are also damaged by cows. This is also identified as one of the causes of farmers and Fulani herdsmen conflict. Also identified is lack of political will by the Government and its agencies to arrest and punish the Fulani offenders engaged in the killing of farmers and other members of the host communities across the country. Most provocative is the unwillingness of the government of President Buhari to arrest and prosecute even a single Fulani offender since he came to office. This line of argument reinforces the researchers’ suspicion that there is a foul play or conspiracy on the part of government. This has resulted into reprisal attacks for self defense from the feuding parties. In this regard, conflict is not only a matter of self defense but an egocentric drive on the part of the Fulani herdsmen since their major source of livelihood is being threatened by climate and farmers in the country.

According to Global Terrorism Index Report (2018), the Fulani ethnic militia killed over 1,700 people in the year 2018 alone. This figure was estimated to have surpassed the number of people killed by the Boko Haram terrorists in the same year! Countless attacks and killings have further been recorded in 2019. In 2014, over 1,169 deaths were recorded with majority of those killed predominantly from among the Christian populations in the North and generally in the South (Global Terrorism Index Report, 2018). Areas mostly affected are located in the Middle Belt region, particularly in the states of Benue, Nasarawa, Plateau and Taraba, and pushing up north to Kaduna State, with over 3,641 people killed in the clashes between 2015 and 2018 in those areas. The southern states of Anambra, Delta, Edo, Ebonyi, Enugu, Ekiti, Ondo, Ogun, Osun, Oyo, and Rivers state have also been affected by the Fulani herders’ onslaught (Olayiwola, 2019).

### 2.1.2. Implications of Establishing Ruga Settlements

There are a lot of controversies surround the suspended Ruga settlements for Fulani herders across the country. The amazing fact in all of the drama of the Ruga policy is the insistence of the Buhari administration to forge ahead to establish Ruga settlements in spite of oppositions from civil society groups, socio-cultural organizations, state governments of the Middle Belt and Southern regions of the country and individuals. The Buhari-led federal government alleged that establishing Ruga will be an alternative means to improve the nation's economic drive to create jobs and will give the people the opportunity to have access to credit facilities. Furthermore, the government argued that Ruga will create security for pastoral families and curtail cattle rustling, as well as provide a palliative as an alternative to peace and security of lives and properties in Nigeria (Mudashir et al., 2019). Besides the massive loss of lives and properties occasioned by the conflict between farmers and Fulani herdsmen all over the country, the major reason for opposition from this group of people in recent times is the re-submission of the executive bill to the Nigerian NASS, seeking to control all the waterways and their banks by the Federal Government. In short, this action reinforces the conspiracy inherent in the Ruga programme.

Indeed, most critics perceived the Ruga plan to be a grand conspiracy, coming from President Buhari and his allies of the Fulani and Muslim extractions in the North. The critics saw the ruga conspiracy as a ploy by government to acquire ancestral lands which belonged to the Middle-Belt and Southern peoples, to accommodate and settle their age-long roving Fulani nomads and kinsmen from the West African and Central African regions of the continent in Nigeria. The overall aim, they argued, is to spread Islam to the Middle-Belt and Southern regions of Nigeria which are predominantly Christians; and thereby, colonize the space. This line of thought was strongly supported by the Middle-Belt Leaders Forum, as well as a handful civil society groups and state governors of the regions of the Middle-Belt and the South when they described the intended cattle settlement as a plot to dethrone ancestral communities for the Fulani tribe. Virtually all state governors in the South of Nigeria condemned the planned Ruga programme, including members of the ruling All Progressive Congress party who were bipartisan on the Ruga issue, and came to the conclusion that the Federal Government had fallen short of being sincere with the Ruga settlement programme. And, they vowed not to cede even a portion of their lands to the Federal Government for the Ruga settlement programme. Instead, they advised anyone willing to do the business of cattle rearing, to approach the government of the state concerned, and buy lands to establish ranches under the prevailing regulations in the state, as affirmed by the Supreme Court. This is because land in any state is vested in the governor and not in the Federal Government (see Olusegun, 2019; Makinde & Okechukwu, 2019).

The Director of the Center for Social Justice, Eze Onyekpere, in an interview with the *Sunday Punch*, cited in Makinde and Okechukwu (2019), argued that it was not quite clear why the Buhari administration was determined to commit huge resources of the nation's into developing the private business of herders living in Nigeria whom he had once categorically declared as mostly foreigners from neighbouring North African countries and who were

certainly NOT Nigerians! Eze, thus, argued that under the Land Use Act, land can only be acquired for overriding public interests or purposes. The question as to what is the public purpose in cattle rearing is yet to be answered by the Buhari-led Federal Government. It, therefore, means that the Federal Government, by the Ruga settlement plan, is justifying violence and crimes such as the Fulani cattle herders in the Nigerian space have been involved. Therefore, the implication is that when people commit murder, arson and undue violence, like the Fulani cattle breeders in Nigeria, they should be compensated with community or state land instead of being subjected to criminal charges and prosecuted accordingly (See Makinde & Okechukwu, 2019).

By this singular act, Buhari has created the impression that the Federal Government is only interested in altering the demographics and population dynamics of states with the influx of individuals of doubtful countries of origins. There is no doubt President Buhari's action is intended to undermine the country's internal security and rattle its collective unity. Buhari's refusal to consult with state governors, civil society groups, socio-cultural organizations and representatives of nationality groups on this issue, created a suspicion as to what his intentions really were.

The Middle Belt Forum and Southern Leaders came up with a communiqué after its meeting reaffirmed its suspicion of a conspiracy by the Buhari government to colonize the entire nation, under the guise of Ruga settlement, and thereby set his tribes men over and above every other tribe in Nigeria so as to be able to execute his well-thought out agenda to Islamize the country. The forum argued that the insistence of the Federal Government to establish Ruga settlements around the country, in spite of its total rejection by the general public, can only come from a government that is irresponsible, and one that is not interested in the unity of the country, in the consideration of the menace orchestrated all over the country by Fulani herdsmen, none of whom the government of the day had deemed it fit to prosecute nor call to order. It stated also that the Fulani herdsmen in the last four years of President Buhari's ascension to power have turned non-Fulani communities in the country into killing fields with the government turning a blind eye to all their crimes while using state instruments to defend themselves from prosecution. Since the government is yet to try and convict any one of the herdsmen for murder and arson, to establish Ruga settlements in non-Fulani areas would give the herdsmen more effrontery to attack and kill the people. The group, therefore, challenged the Federal Government to tell Nigerians and the world in general, the court of law where any of the criminal herdsmen have been tried for all the kidnappings, raping, banditry and the brutal killing of men, women and children, and the willful destruction of farmlands in and around the country since Buhari came to power (See *Sahara Reporters*, New York, 2019). The pertinent question that needs an urgent answer is, if the herdsmen as wonderers can perpetrate untold hardship and crimes against host communities what would happen when the government forces the herdsmen on the communities as land owners?

The horrifying tales of the gruesome attacks perpetrated by Fulani herdsmen around the country has answered this pertinent question. Such gruesome attacks are still very fresh in the minds of Nigerians; particularly on the minds of

those people in the affected communities. Yet, the President Buhari-led administration did virtually nothing to bring the situation under control. Instead, the government was bent on forging ahead with its planned programme of establishing Ruga settlements for Fulani herdsmen in non-Fulani areas of the country. Okere (2019) argued that the announcement in the month of May 2019, by the Federal Government of Nigeria, that it had acquired a government funded Amplitude Modulation (AM) Radio Broadcast license to educate herdsmen, and to foster peace and harmony between the group and crop farmers wherever they were in collision, is a confirmation of an alleged conspiracy. This is so because, in the first instance, the radio station is purely a Fulani one whereas, the various groups that the Fulani comes into conflict with are not Fulani! This is besides the hue and cry in the nation of the alleged advancement to the group of a whopping N100 billion (about \$365 million) by the Buhari-government, to establish cattle ranches all around the country and/or to halt the purported criminality among the cattle rustlers. Okere, thus, argued that the June 25, 2019 announcement by the Federal Government reiterating its stand to establish Ruga settlements for herdsmen in the thirty-six states in the country did also aggravated the stand of the anti-Ruga groups across Nigeria. Most provocative and insulting to the sensibilities of Nigerians was the position of the Federal Government through its Senior Special Assistant on Media and Publicity, Mr. Garba Shehu, that the Ruga settlement program which is optional to state governments would find advantage in providing economic benefits to all Nigerian citizens (Okere, 2019).

The socio-economic and cultural group, *Miyetti Allah Kauta Hore*, generally referred to as Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN), the umbrella body under which the marauding Fulani pastoralists and herders operate, reaffirmed its unalloyed support for the Ruga settlement programme, and insisted that government must continue with the project no matter whose ox was gored. The association's General Secretary, Baba Uthman Ngelzarma's utterances also provoked counter-responses from anti-Ruga groups all over the country. For instance, the Afenifere, a pan-Yoruba group alleged that Ruga settlement programme was a deliberate ploy by the Federal Government to turn such settlements into local government areas for Fulani ethnic group in the future since the Federal Government was planning to give local governments autonomy. Ohanaeze Ndigbo, an apex Igbo socio-cultural organization, also conceived the planned Ruga settlement as a conspiracy to impose the Fulani ethnic group on the other ethnic nationalities in Nigeria. Wole Soyinka, the 1996 prize winner of the Nobel Laureate for literature, while speaking at the inauguration of the United Nations Solutions 17 SDG programme in Lagos, argued that the planned Ruga settlement programme would become an explosion in the future if not carefully handled now by Nigerians. At this critical stage, he argued that the Federal Government failed to address the fundamental issues affecting the unity of the country, but instead, provided the cattle herders a sense of impunity. Reiterating the position of the Nobel Laureate, Idada Ikponmwen, a retired military General and former Provost Marshal of the Nigerian Army, argued that the Ruga settlement policy of the Federal Government was a wrong measure, considering the issue of Fulani herdsmen and their banditry activities in the Middle-Belt, South-East, South-South, and South-West of Nigeria, with abundant proofs that

they were heavily armed militants (Olusegun, 2019; Okere, 2019).

Dr. Agharese Osife, an agricultural economist at the Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Edo State, argued that the Ruga settlement programme was a deliberate attempt to acquire lands in the 36 states of the federation by the Federal Government for the Fulani herders and never a part of the National Livestock Grazing programme found in states like Kaduna, Bauchi, Borno, Sokoto and Kano (Okere, 2019). According to Garba Shehu, the presidential spokesperson, in justifying the need for establishing Ruga settlements, he argued that Ruga settlement is not just a settlement but an organized large expanse of land that will settle migrant pastoral families, animal farmers and herders with adequate basic amenities such as schools, hospitals, road networks, veterinary clinic, markets, and manufacturing entities that will process and add value to meats and animal products. By this, Garba Shehu tried to allay the suspicion of Nigerians that the Ruga program is nothing else but only a means to resolve the farmers and herdsmen conflict and never to indirectly colonize the country for the Fulani ethnic group (Mudashir et al., 2019). These researchers, thus, concur with the position of the anti-Ruga protesters i.e., that the Ruga program was in disguise a conspiracy to conceal the intentions of the Federal Government to acquire community lands and colonize Nigeria for the Fulani tribe.

### Conclusion

This essay has examined the thorny issue concerning the attempt made by President Muhammadu Buhari to create Ruga settlements for Fulani tribesmen across Nigeria, and government's complicity in the policy which has not seen the light of day due to criticisms and outright rejection of the project from various quarters. Rather than try to force the Ruga plan down the throats of Nigerians, and by extension, impose Fulani tribesmen on the old and existing non-Fulani tribal communities in other regions of the country and grab lands in the South, the government show neutrality and encourage individuals across the country to go into cattle ranching in their various states and regions. Obviously, the government of the day, it is believed, covertly sides with, and indirectly encourages, the Fulani herders because, indeed, President Muhammadu Buhari is a grand patron of the MACBAN socio-economic umbrella group under which the herders operate. The leader of the government, like the herders group, has always considered that the business of cattle breeding and its sales is the exclusive preserve of the Fulani tribesmen who must continue to dominate that sector of the agriculture business in the country. However, a number of measures need to be taken to avoid future occurrences of clash between herders and the local community crop farmers.

One great illustration which must be cited here is the China model. Patryk Utulu (2014) noted that several years ago, the government of China, with a sense of bipartisanship, decided that nomadic cattle grazing as a concept had outlived its essence and had no more place in the modern nation. The Chinese leadership, therefore, reached a decision to do a nationwide research study which concluded that nomadic cattle grazing creates and sustains generational illiteracy among the children of nomads. Furthermore, the research concluded that cattle rustling creates and increases crime rates by the herders, including rape and assassination. It

leads to endless communal violence between bands of cattle herders and communities whose crops are endlessly destroyed by cattle without compensation. Verily, it was concluded that cattle rustling leads to rampant disease and epidemic transmitted by cattle through pollution of rivers and rural water sources. The Chinese research pointed out that it creates traffic congestion in the cities and road accidents on highways. Finally, the research concluded that open grazing of cattle creates a general atmosphere of backwardness to see cattle roaming around a modern nation. For this reason, the Chinese government restricted herders to their local communities, as well as restricted them to meet the requirements of the number of cattle that the herders could cater for in their specific new locations. In the alternative, they were to buy grasses from other communities to feed their cattle, if they lacked enough in their own regions. A few years after the policy was adopted and was in implementation, statistics which were taken showed that 10% of the children of the ex-herders gained literacy. Subsequently, this rose to 58% a few years afterwards, and continued. Besides this, the new policy led to cooperation between cattle grazing communities and the neighboring communities who then cultivated grass which they sold to the cattle grazing communities. Overall, local crime rate reduced in China while the herders who previously lived as nomads began to build and acquire permanent homes as they settled and accumulated wealth and communal violence had reduced to the barest minimum. According to Utulu, it is on record that the nation of Mongolia was replicating China in this direction, and they are succeeding as it were!

So, what to do in Nigeria is Simple, first and foremost, the Federal government must eschew nepotism and favouritism in dealing with its citizens alike and at all levels of national endeavor. It must be above board in matters of ethnicity and religion, and must not be seen siding with one particular religious or ethnic group for one reason or another. Following this, the government must adopt the China approach. And, without bias, encourage all Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria to return to their regions and ranch their cattle, while government provides the basic necessities of life to make living more abundant for them in their locations. Again, government of the day must encourage other non-Fulani tribes also to engage in the business of cattle rearing, and create the enabling atmosphere for business growth for those in this sector because of the importance of this sector to the economy and for the overall reason of the lucrative nature of the cattle breeding and sales industry.

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