

The Federal Government of Nigeria's Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) Policy: The Demystification of the Elite's Theory?

Maina Williams Apikins

Nigerian Institute of Transport Technology (NITT)

An Affiliate of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Kaduna State, Nigeria

Abstract

In some African Countries, notably Burkina-Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, Guinea, Mali and Nigeria, herders of predominantly Fulbe extraction are embroiled in a murderous conflict with African Pastoral Farmers that is often leveraged into an apocalyptic power struggle by their more politically sophisticated and de-nomadized Kinsmen. The Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) Policy, proposed as panacea to the recurring conflicts between nomadic herders and farmers has incited outrage in Nigeria. The policy is seen by majority of Nigerians as the crudest assault on inclusivity in a multi-ethnic Nigeria. Thus, more than 70% of the population rejected the policy in view of its existential threats to crop farmers, secularism and for national security. In response to the widespread condemnation of the policy, the Nigerian Government suspended its implementation. This paradigm shift negates the fundamental thrust of the Elite's theory, which presupposes that the Elites determines “who does or gets what, when, where and how”, hence the Problem atique. The Elite theory is adopted for theoretical analysis. The Data used is qualitative. The paper revealed that the RUGA policy saga shows how a nation can compromise her future through sheer accumulation of ethnic grievances vide Elite manipulations and deceptions; and how the citizens can mobilize to demystify unpopular and anti-people policies of government. It recommends that a viable path to resolving the farmers-herdsmen incessant conflicts is to modernize cattle breeding and rearing in Nigeria in tandem with global best practices.

Keywords: *Demystification, Elites, Farmers' Conflicts, Policy, RUGA*

Corresponding Author:

Maina Williams Apikins

Background to the Study

In most social formations in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Fulbes popularly known as Fulani herdsmen engage in seasonal destructive conflicts with the crop farmers over the rights of land, occasioned by the Open Grazing System (OGS). The consequences of these conflicts are enormously preponderant on citizens' rights, lives, properties, safety, national integration, peaceful co-existence and developments. Hence, according to scholars it touches on the critical survival or existential fibers of these Nations and captures/arrests the significant areas of sub-national, national and global concerns/worries. These deficiency syndromes are epitomized by pervading contour of social dislocation and deleterious clash of faith, values, norms and cultures engineered effectively and efficiently to preserve, sustain and perpetuate the primordial interests of the elites in and outside corridors of governments.

In Nigeria, the escalating conflicts between these Farmers gets worse, in the first half of 2018, more than 35,325 deaths have been aggressively occasioned. According to a report by the International Crisis Group (ICG) 2019, the crisis is now claiming about six times more civilian lives than the dreaded Boko-Haram insurgency. Since the violence escalated in January 2018, an estimated 300,000 people have fled their ancestral homes, and there have been large scale displacement and insecurity in the frontline States of Adamawa, Benue, Nasarawa, Plateau and Taraba States; this has hindered crop-farming and animal husbandry, and drive up food prices. The violence exacts a heavy burden on the Army, Air-force, Police and other security services, distracting them from other important missions, such as countering arm banditry and the Boko-Haram insurgency (ICG, 2019). Similarly, a report by Global Index (GI (2019) revealed that the Crop-Farmers-Herdsmen crisis which has escalated in recent years has led to a 500 percent increase in deaths. Over the years, varied political solutions have been advanced for the resolution of the Crop-Farmers-Herdsmen conflicts; however, enriching conversations and fresh insights on RUGA is topical.

The Federal Government of Nigeria in July, 2018 announced plans to implement the Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) settlement programme as an extant panacea to the incessant Crop-Farmers-Herdsmen conflicts; it certainly never envisaged the tumultuous reactions the proposal will generate from Nigerians across all works of life. The herdsmen have become a serious menace; they have inflicted maximum harm or collateral damage on various communities. The fundamental essence of law and order has lost its meaning in the country as these marauders have somehow proved to be above the law. The standard of living has gone down drastically for majority of our citizens to the point that it appears poverty has become the new weapon of social engineering in the country. Consequently, Nigeria is now the global headquarters and/or capital of poverty. Lately, herdsmen have taken their nefarious activities to the next level as they now kidnap citizens for ransom across the country and in the process making many roads unsafe for many road users.

The governable space in Nigeria is shrinking and we are now looking like a failed state. Thus, in Nigeria, one of the epic-center of public conversations now is around the recycled and protracted farmers–herdsmen conflicts, which have been infested by multivariate virus of ethnic discontent, tribalism, deepening mutual suspicion, religious bigotry and/or extremism, and inflamed identity politics orchestrated by the elites. Manipulatively, several solutions have been proposed for the resolution of the farmers-herdsmen conflicts, from establishment of grazing reserves, to cattle colonies, to ranches and recently to RUGA. The RUGA Policy has polarized the country and made and it has removed faith in corporate Nigeria; it has made the country more divided/segmented than it was before amalgamation. The brazen audacity of introducing a project in Hausa, for the vantage of a specific ethnic group is the crudest assault on inclusivity in a multi ethnic country like Nigeria. RUGA has therefore become the height of the impunity that has been carried on for many years now; it showed clearly the absence of sensitivity on the part of the leadership/elites to introduce such policy a federal system of government. No matter how RUGA is dressed, it connotes no other thing than a measure in ethnic domination and conquest as it seeks to establish territories for Fulani herdsmen all over the country.

The popular view is that the RUGA policy smacks only a desire for land-grabbing, domination and conquest. However, some scholars viewed these proposals as deliberate policies activated and/or tailored towards the empowerment of one ethnic group over others, or one type of farming, cattle rearing over crop farming. Thus, there can therefore be no convincing reason why the Federal G would make cattle business a national affair the way it was done through the RUGA Initiatives Government if there was no hidden agenda.

It is a monumental tragedy for Nigeria that our conversations in the last four decades have mostly been about barbarism. At a time when some African countries are making advancement in different spheres of human endeavour, we have been seriously bogged down with Miyetti Allah's brags on cattle routes, grazing reserves, cattle colonies and RUGA. If there is still some sense of patriotism and care for the well-being of Nigerian as a polity, the administration must quickly perish this thought, and allow those in the cattle business to run their affairs; the Ruga Policy overheated the nation and created un-measurable tensions. It was obvious that the RUGA settlement controversy pushed divisions in the country to a near breaking point. Prominent Nigerians like OBJ, Theophilus Danjuma, and Wole Soyinka to mention but a few advised against the implementation of the RUGA policy. This laid credence to the public outcry on the unfolding conundrum/debacle called RUGA. It is within this narrative that the paper examines the RUGA Policy of the Nigerian government, its rejection by majority of Citizens/Nigerians and the ultimate consequences.

Conceptualization of Concepts

Farmer

A farmer is also called an Agriculturalist, is a person engaged in agriculture, raising living organisms for food or raw materials. Universally, this is a generic term usually applied to people who do some combination of raising field crops, orchards, vineyards, poultry, or other livestock. A farmer may own the farmed land or may work as a labourer on land owned by others. Farming dates back as far as the Neolithic, being one of the defining characteristics of that era. By the BRONZE AGE, 5000-4000 BC, the Samaritans had an agriculture-specialized workforce, and heavily depended on irrigation to grow crops. The ancient Egypt farmers farmed and relied on irrigated water from the Nile River (Lexicon Dictionary). On the other hand, Animal husbandry is the practice of rearing animals specifically for farming purpose; it has existed for thousand years. The earliest evidence of the domestication of Dogs, Goats, Sheep, Pigs, Horses were between 8000 BC to around 4000 BC (WIKIPEDIA, 2019). In this paper, the farmers in reference are the Crop farmers and the Fulani Herdsmen.

Elites in Nigeria

The elites are heterogeneous group, thus for virtually every activity and every corresponding sphere of social life, there is an elite, for instance, there is elite of soldiers, elite of lawyers, elite of academics, elite of industrialists, elite of Gamblers, elite of kidnappers, elite of militants, elite of armed robbers as well as elite of prostitutes to mentioned but a few. According to the Elite theory, they are the leading members of the society; they lead while others follow. They decide who gets what, where and how, any time any day (Roberto, 1978). In the context of this paper, they are majorly in the Executive and the Legislative arms of government.

Policy

A plan of action, statement of ideas, proposed, introduced and/or adopted by a government or corporate entities for the purpose of guidance or governance concerning the well-being of the people. A policy can be private or public. In the content of this conversation, the RUGA policy is a public policy.

RUGA

RUGA is a Hausa term that means "Cow Settlement", it also an acronym for an English phrase, Rural Grazing Area (RUGA). Historically, the RUGA was initiated in 1956 in Nigeria during the colonial era. Senator Ita Enang, senior special Assistant to the President on National Assembly Matters 1918). Enang cited the 2019 FGN Budget, volume 1 of the Federal Ministry of Agric and Rural Development (FMA & RD), item number ERGP 5208, where according to him the sum of N2.258 billion was budgeted for the project. Enang maintained that the NASS members were not against the RUGA Policy because they were fully aware of the significant of the project and they have graciously approved funds for its implementation,

adding that other additive value, dividends and/or objective of the budget for RUGA was to promote cattle breeding and meet production in the country for self-sufficiency. He further said the RUGA Policy was not intended to conquer, Islamize, Fulanized or colonize anybody as insinuated. Spokesman for the proponents of RUGA (Ogbe, 2018) claimed the policy was conceived as an intervention in the violent frequent contestations between the herdsmen and crop-farmers. He said the RUGA settlement policy was discussed and agreed at the National Economic Council, (NEC). The RUGA Policy encompasses the establishment of ranches but in gazette grazing reserves. The plan also seeks to acquire 15000 hectares of land in each state of the federation for the implementation of the policy; each state is also expected to co-fund the RUGA Project, indicating that the limited State fund will be diverted into the programme. Pastoralists with emphasis on migrant non-resident Fulani will be the primary beneficiaries, indicating that there will be an increase of the Fulani population in all the States of the Federation when the RUGA Policy is fully implemented (Yusufu, 2019). However, considering the socio-economic and political implications of the policy, it became very controversial and it was disowned. Many State Governors denied knowledge of the decision on RUGA. This was corroborated by a statement from Laolu (2019), the spokesman of the Vice president, Yemi Osinbajo who is the chairman of NEC that there was no time the issue of RUGA was discussed at the NEC. Some governors who are members of NEC have also said there was no time RUGA was discussed during their meetings and wondered very seriously how the Federal Government came about the policy.

However, the National Livestock Transformation Programme (NLTP) (2019-2028) is a programme to be implemented in seven pilot states of Adamawa, Benue, Kaduna, Plateau, Nassarawa, Taraba and Zamfara, being the States in the frontlines of the Farmers-Herdsmen crises, this was as approved by the National Executive Council (NEC) in January, 2019. Afterwards, six other States also indicated readiness to implement the plan before it was suspended. They were Katsina, Kano, Kogi, Kwara, Ondo and Edo States (Johnbosco, 2019).

Theoretical Perspective

Theories are fundamental aspect of scholarship because they help explain phenomenon. Critical aspect that further reinforced the significance of theory is the field of Political-Economy. The theoretical framework of the study is anchored on the Elite theory. The theory originated from Central and Western European countries as a critique of democracy and socialism (Roberto, 1978). It was adopted in the USA by a number of political theorists, particularly Harold Lasswell, Schumpeter and C. Wrights Mills in the 1950s to explain political processes as existed. The proponents of the theory are Vilfredo Pareto, Gaetano Mosca, Roberto Michele and Jose Ortega Y. Gusset. The theory is used to describe the group or class whose values predominate in the society. The theory is based on the paradigm that every social formation irrespective of time and geographical space consists of two broad

categories, a minority, elite, that possesses that qualities necessary for its accession to full social and political power; and the non-elite, that is the vast masses of people who are destined to be ruled (Roberto, 1978). The applicability of the theory is viewed from the angle/perspective that the elites determines who gets what, when, where and how wide the enunciation of policies for governance. The repudiation of the RUGA Policy by the majority of citizens which eventually led to its suspension may be seen as a draw-back vis-à-vis the major thrust of the elite theory and/or elitism.

Methodology

The paper adopted Exploratory Research Design; qualitative data were sourced through documentary method which was descriptively analysed; and for easy comprehension, the paper was divided into eight sections.

The RUGA Policy Conundrum and its Demystification/Failure

Over the past few years, there have been a deluge of issues and controversies in the Nigerian polity, apart from the very real and present danger that the Boko Haram, banditry, and commercial kidnapping etc poses to the country every day, equally grave security concerns have been at the head of many of the controversies. Of interest for this paper is the exacerbating violence in the communal clashes between nomadic-herdsmen and the rural communities across the country, which has been a subject of perpetual concern. Considering this background, it is worrisome to see the policy misdirection that characterized the RUGA Policy initiative of the Federal Government (Agekameh, 2019). The controversial policy issues arising from the proposed attempted implementation of the initiative are numerous.

- i. Poor communication. From the government gazetting of lands in all the sub-national spaces (36 states of the federation) for the RUGA Policy, to the said approval of funds for the project, the public seems to have been caught by surprise. Words only got out after contract award letters went public at the same time as some state governors cried foul over the usurpation of their constitutional powers by the Federal Government. This confusion lingers, even after the suspension of the policy.
- ii. There is the issue about the relationship of the RUGA initiative with the National Livestock Transformation Plan (NLTP). The NLTP according to government sources, is a result of wide consultations and collaborations with communities, state governments and representatives of cattle herders since as far back as 2017, culminating in the National Economic Council (NEC), adopting the plan in January, 2019. The NEC-approved NLTP is a broad programme that involves conflict resolution, humanitarian relief for victims of communal conflicts and elaborate schemes to transform the practices in the livestock industry to reduce friction and

- conflicts. Part of the programme includes an option for ranching. However, for reasons unknown to the public the FEC is said to have approved funding for the RUGA initiative, which supposedly involves allocation of lands for settlements for cattle herders. The initiative is also said to include parallel programmes for education and other measures to heighten productivity in the livestock industry. The initiative bears remarkable similarities with the part of the NLTP that deals with ranching. The Spearhead of the NLTP, Vice President made a statement dissociating the RUGA Policy/initiative from the NLTP.
- iii. Before we talk about the crux of the public dissatisfaction with the RUGA initiatives, it may be imperative or important to note the policy shortcomings of the move. As an initiative arising from the Presidency, it is remarkably questionable and/or suspects that a carbon copy of parts of a separate programme was launched, almost out of thin air (...). What's more worrisome, is the claims by the spokesmen of Meyetti Allah, a Pan-umbrella group for herdsmen, that the initiative was being driven by the vice-president, which has since been debunked, is a testament that the group has no knowledge of the NLTP and must have misconstrued that the RUGA is an implementation of that section of the NLTP. The question then is there a deliberate effort to misrepresent the RUGA initiative? If so, who is responsible? And why? In the reckoning of most of the general public, the answers to these questions are lucid; especially when one marries the impact of a misapplied RUGA policy with the already raging inferno of ethno-religious sentimentalism, the outcome is the wild speculation of an invasion in the South and ultimatums made by some representatives of the northern elites.
- iv. Also worrisome is the issue of “Fulani/Muslim Agenda”, even if the allegation was untrue, it is enough that large sections of the members of the public are concerned enough to be discussing it and/or acting against it. Poor management of public sentiments in this matter justifies the fears of the public figures that have been advising against it. In a country with long memory, as far as ethnic/religious bias is concerned, valid fears are raised about possible government-backed mass resettlement of herders from all over the country and beyond, in places where their numbers have been minimal. True, we are all Nigerians and are very free to reside where we choose in our country, but in the context of the recent conflicts and violence between Fulani-herders and host communities and the government admission of compromised entry points and infiltration of Fulani-herdsmen from beyond our borders, the fears are very rational.

- v. There is also the worry based on historical precedents, that creating settlements that would most likely be dominated by the ethnic group that are traditional herdsmen could lead to an eroding of local cultures in the host communities in the long run. The emergence of emirates in parts in Kwara state is a reality/ is a ready example of this, with other examples and attempts of the same model in many other places. Such an occurrence may be a natural, innocent; eventuality and not part of an elaborate design/plot to erase/erode local norms and folklores, however, Uwabueze (1991) observed that it could be possible. It has been argued that without proper dialogue, institutional measures to address concerns and safeguards to the culture and way of life of host communities, some people will continue to assume the worst and rebel/kick against any insinuation of government coordinated settlements for herders, be it through RUGA or the NLTP issuing award letters for RUGA contract in Benue and Nassarawa States for example, without appropriate consultations of major stakeholders (local people) carrying the governors along, can be likened to the government fanning the embers of discord and/or /pouring fuel to the fire it is trying to put out.
- vi. Administratively, the RUGA/NLTP confusion exposes yet again, the dysfunction/gaps/lacuna in communication, motives and coordination within the elites and/or policy makers and implementers, whichever way one views the issue of RUGA/Ranching or cattle colonies/settlements, as a policy direction or as a conspiracy, one is bound to identify problems with its reception in host communities in the context of the violence that triggered the idea in the first place. The government needs to be able to assume all the different views, no matter how outlandish, for any lasting political solutions to be found to this issue. The first attempt at implementing RUGA Policy does not suggest that it does.
- vii. Another anomaly in the RUGA Policy conundrum is the Ultimatum of Abdul-Azeez Suleiman, he was sponsored on a national television to issue a 30-day ultimatum to the authorities to implement the controversial cattle settlement project, which is popularly known by a more disputative name, RUGA, or face the wrath of his Coalition of Northern Groups. In his words, “while we warn all state governments that stand against the implementation of the RUGA initiative to desist and give peace a chance, we place President Buhari and the Federal Government on notice that they must completely stop this raging madness within 30 days beginning from today, Wednesday, July 10, 2019”. It was not lucid what the Group would have done if the ultimatum was ignored; but what seemed to be very clear was that Abdul-Azeez Suleiman was neither questioned, arrested nor detained either by security agents or religious and traditional leaders or better still elderly elites who may have seen his vituperations as obscene and

inimical to national security and unity. However, it is to be noted that some eminent citizens, including senior Lawyers and Activists have dismissed the ultimatum as mere bragging. No group, they said has the power to threaten the Government with an ultimatum. Besides, the Presidency has sneered at the ultimatum and its issuers. Many believe that members of Suleiman's group may have been exercising their right to freedom of speech. But this according to Critics, this has reignited the unending debate on free speech, hate speech, fake news and national security. Was Suleiman just exercising his right to speak without hindrance? Was he merely joking? Who are the people beating the drum to which Suleiman was dancing? Who are those behind the groups for which he claimed to have been speaking so audaciously and/or authoritatively? Was the Television Station right within the context of national integration televised such hate speech, all for free speech?

- viii. The Ohanaeze Ndigbo Youth Council (ONYC) reacted angrily to Suleiman's threat and ultimatum, describing it as 'drumbeats of war'. That it is capable of causing unrest across the land, adding that it is in fact, targeted at the Igbos. It denied the rumour that it has received the sum of N6.2bn from the President for the facilitation of the RUGA Policy in the South East (Yusufu, 2019). There are others who claim that something must have been wrong somewhere, to this school thought/thinkers belong the view that our desperate search for sanity in a disunited country such as ours should not be jeopardized by seemingly insane display of insensitivity. Enough of sycophants, tribalists, bigotries and anarchists, they said.
- ix. The outcry against RUGA/NLTP attracted local and international attention, and the government suspended its implementation because some unnamed elites in the Ministry of Agric and Rural Development and other elites hijacked it and twisted it to achieve a different aim. The RUGA policy /project, it was learnt, was not integrated with the NLTP agreed upon by the 36 governors at the Vice President Yemi Osinbajo-chaired National Economic Council (NEC). Besides, it was learnt that contracts were heavily inflated, with solar panels estimated to cost tens of millions of naira. Boreholes suddenly became oil wells to be dug with big rigs. One was to cost at least N20 million. Many stakeholders, including the Niger Delta Elders Forum (NDEF) and some governors have opposed the impropriety of the RUGA Policy.
- x. Lending his voice to discredit the initiative, Soyinka (2019) said if not well handled, the RUGA Policy could cause serious trouble in the country. He said the FG's approach is not in tandem with global best practices. In words, why do we not take our policies from good models? This is not the way people and countries deal with issues of cattle. It has to be handled in a way that is logical, comprehensible to the

environment. He said when a cow eats up peoples' plant seedlings, crops and so on, and you expect people to be silent? People have been killed in hundreds just because of the failure of leadership at a critical time. And the cattle herders have been given a sense of impunity. They kill without any compunction; they drive away the farmers who have been contributing to the food solutions in the country, and then you come up with RUGA. He concluded that there is going to be trouble in Nigeria if the RUGA Policy is not handled imaginatively and with humanity as priority. Any country where cattle take priority over human life is definitely at an elementary stage” (Nasir, 2019). The Yoruba Council of Elders (YCE) also kicked against the RUGA Policy Settlements; it said it would not allow the establishment of RUGA in the Southwest States.

- xi. The YCE described the move by the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) as “dead on arrival”, in a statement by its President Dansaaki (2019). He wondered how a group of people seen as threats to peace and security of others would own settlements in places outside their domains. According to him, to now think that the FG that should be concerned and worried about the untoward activities of such people is the sponsor of RUGA is worrisome. He noted that such a project is not at all in the best interest of this country; that virtually all the states in outside the domain of the Fulani herders are against the project. That the recent experience of the people in the hands of herders leaves much to be desired with the spirit and openness and accommodation being eroded. He said, we can't fold our arms and allow our land to be overrun by strangers. He charged Governors of the South West to be on guard and to let the FG know the stance of their people on the matter. He said this is not about politics or political party affiliation; it is about patriotism and responsibility to the people that elected them into office. As the highest body of Yoruba socio-cultural group, we are saying an emphatic NO to the construction of Fulani settlements in any of the states in the speaking area of the country. In his concluding remarks, he said, Our lands are for the establishment of industries and for farming; and not for cattle grazing, we are expressing our vehement opposition to the RUGA Project, which to us is nothing but an expansionist agenda (Yinka, 2019).
- xii. The natives of Plateau State under the auspices of Plateau Initiatives for Development and Advancement of the Natives (PIDAN) have explained why they joined other well-meaning citizens to oppose the implementation of RUGA and the National Livestock Transformation Plan NLTP in Plateau State. the body warned government at federal and state level not to enforce the implementation of any of the policies anywhere in the state to avoid drawing the wrath of the people. To ensure that no piece of land is gotten in the state for RUGA, the group put in place a committee to monitor and

report for prompt action. This position was made lucid in a Communique after the first National Council Meeting for the year 2019 in Jos. The group comprising of 58 Community Development Associations (CDAs) noted that the FG may have genuine concern in the intent of the RUGA Policy, but the its design only addresses rearing of cows to the exclusion of other farmers (Yusufu, 2019)

Imperative Deductions

It was observed that the RUGA settlement policy was a brain child of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture & Rural Development aimed principally at reducing and/or stopping the incessant clashes between crop-farmers and Fulani-herdsmen in Nigeria. It was uncovered that all States in Nigeria are expected to provided 15000 hectres of land for the implementation of the RUGA Project, and will actively co-fund the project with the Federal Government, this meant that the scarce and/or limited funds of the States will be diverted for the project at the expense of other developmental plans that will alleviate poverty and transform the living conditions of the generality of the people. Thus, according to Okolie, (2019)major stakeholders were not carried along/consulted, hence the seemingly unilateral policy presented the FG and the Political Elites as an “Un-commanded Commander”, determined to inter-alia, oppress, repress, suppress and appropriate ancestral lands. It was therefore the reasoned opinion of the majority of citizens that the RUGA settlement policy must not be imposed, hence its failure. The automatic alacrity/speed with which the RUGA Policy was to be implemented across the country juxtaposed to the Chameleonic speed at which other government policies are implemented raised matters of suspicion and serious worry, hence the agitations all over the country for its suspension.

In aligning government policies to our realities within the context of the controversies generated by RUGA, the following germane narratives have also been deduced:

- i. The RUGA policy has no respect for geo-political boundaries,
- ii. The policy is discriminative against other resident farmers,
- iii. There was no due consultation with stakeholders,
- iv. More than 70per cent of Nigerians rejected the policy,
- v. The policy favours a particular ethnic group (Fulani), v. Nigeria has zero competitive advantage in Africa for meat production, as Botswana has the largest cattle husbandry in Africa. It was noted that the government of Botswana has more cattle than Botswana people.

- vi. It was founded that as the Niger-Delta Development Commission (NDDC) is for the Niger-Deltans, the North East Development Commission (NEDC) is for the North Easterners, the RUGA is for the nomadic Fulani herdsmen, no wonder that the Igbos are agitating for the establishment of the South East Development Commission (SEDC) for parity of the expansion of bureaucracy along geographical divide.
- vii. The policy is an existential threat to crop farmers, Agro-density and to the five crop processing zones in Nigeria that are left undeveloped.
- viii. There is an obvious agenda for Occupation and seizing of lands for the Fulanis,
- ix. That it is not in consonance with global best practices for the Federal Government to unilaterally hijack, dispossess and displace people from their ancestral land and to give it to the Fulanis,
- x. That this is against the letter, spirit and soul of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria,
- xi. Many Citizens objected to the proposed financing of the RUGA settlement policy entirely on public funds/ tax payers' resources since, it is a private business. Thus, this is one of the major outrages/ outcries/condemnations for the N2.258bn earmarked by the FGN for RUGA in the 2019 budget.
- xii. Thus considering/ arising from the serious controversies the RUGA policy generated all over the country, the President hid to the popular wishes of the people and/or voices of the citizens and directed that the RUGA policy in its entirety be suspended because it is not the best approach to resolving the farmers/herdsmen crisis.

The Suspension of the Ruga Policy

Pen-ultimate 3rd July, 2019 President Muhammadu Buhari suspended the implantation of the RUGA Settlements project under the National Livestock Transformation Plan (NLTP) Okogba, the paper affirmed that with the suspension of the RUGA Policy by government2019). The suspension came after the Vice President; Prof. Yemi Osinbajo's meeting with representatives of governors from the six geo-political zones. The suspension of the scheme and the crucial meeting was not unconnected to the controversy generated by the implementation of the RUGA programme in the country.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is lucid that an ill-thought RUGA Cattle Settlement Policy that has generated so much controversy and ethnic tensions is not the answer to the escalating conflicts between the Farmers, Crop-farmers and Herders. The paper authoritatively affirmed that the suspension of the RUGA Policy by the FGN, it's a clear demonstration of the demystification on the Elite's theory. In this context, it is not a truism that the Elites determines who “Does or Gets What, When, Where, and How”, as provided by the major thrust of the Elite theory.

A better and long termed solution is for the FG to legislate on compulsory ranching for cattle breeders; what this means is that cattle have to be raised and fed on private premises and lands owned by cattle breeders. These cattle will not be allowed to move around freely except on these private lands. Such legislation must factor in the dynamics and modern realities of cattle ranching using international best practices (Maina, 2018). However, it should be noted that for Nigeria at this time, legislation for compulsory cattle ranching will have to ensure the importation or produce of fodder locally. This is in addition to consistent rotational grazing practices in ranches.

The government in partnership with private businesses can develop the cattle fodder industry. It is a big lucrative business on its on, and farmers across the country can be incentivized to grow this industry. This will be a win-win for all stakeholders on both sides. A good African example is Sudan which grows alfalfa hay, for livestock in commercial quantities for export to other parts of the World, especially the Middle East. This is a challenge that comes with the regulated ranching system that eventually ensures that only those who can really afford to do the business venture into it. Some will however be quick to argue that in the past, this was not

the case, as local Fulani cattle herders could easily herd their cattle freely across the length and breadth of the country in tandem with the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movements by Member States without the concerns that comes with land acquisition for cattle ranching. But the obvious reality is, in the past, climate change is not an issue as we know of it today. Grazing lands are disappearing amid rising ethnic conflicts which have forced the Fulani Herdsmen and their families to migrate across the Sahel away from their ancestral home countries. This was not the case in the past. As the world changes, we must change with it and adjust to its prevailing dynamics. Anything outside this is unsustainable and an open invitation to the chaos and bloodshed we have witnessed in recent times which is a monumental tragedy for the Nigeria State.

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