

ETHNICITY, POLICY CHOICE AND IMPLEMENTATION IN NIGERIA: A DISCOURSE ON RANCH GRAZING

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Abstract

Violent clashes between Fulani herdsmen and rural farmers have become a recurring decimal in Nigeria since the return to civil rule in 1999. These have left death tolls, rendered thousands homeless and aggravated communal conflicts and insecurity in the country. Amongst a plethora of options, the establishment of ranches has been mooted as a solution to the problem. This paper is a prognosis on the proposed 'Ranch Grazing' policy. The central thesis of the paper is that, inter-ethnic rivalry over political dominance to determine who gets what and how has permeated and corrupted the policy-making arena to the extent that what becomes the prime determinant in the choice of policy and its implementation is the perceived sectional rather than national gain from such a policy. Against this policy milieu, the paper seeks to address the import of the ranch-grazing policy; the group contestations over the establishment of ranches as well as predict the outcome of the policy. Addressing these issues will bring to fore the core issues of misunderstanding that arise between various ethnic groups in the country in the quest of forging a modern state that conduces to the realization of the yearnings and aspirations of the citizens. The study which is analytical relies on secondary data sources and is anchored on the Group Theory. It recommends among other things that policy makers should be guided by national interest and the quest for development in the choice of policy rather than sectional/ethnic interest.

Key words: Ethnicity, Policy Choice, Herders / Farmers clashes, Ranches

Introduction

The fact that Nigeria is not an ethnic monolith is one of the unique characteristics of the country. The country is simply an amalgam of diverse ethnic groups that hitherto existed as chiefdoms, kingdoms and empires. Hence foremost statesman, Obafemi Awolowo, once described the country as 'a mere geographical expression'. This attests to the fact that before colonial conquest there was no entity called Nigeria until the

amalgamation in 1914 by Lord Lugard that fused diverse ethnic groups that once enjoyed their independence into a political entity that is known today as Nigeria. The lumping of disparate ethnic groups under one political authority as well as the lopsided administrative structure bequeathed by the colonial administration planted the seed of ethnic chauvinism in the country. This has been re-iterated by Emezi (in Bassey and Edet 2005: 101) that:

The politicization of ethnicity in Nigerian politics had its genesis in British colonial policies, which through the obnoxious divide and rule policy encouraged the use of different applications of colonial policies on traditional institutions and structures of the various ethnic groups in Nigeria. The impact of these colonial policies has been suspicion, mistrust, rivalry and lack of co-operation which has characterized the relationship between the three dominant groups in Nigeria. That is Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo.

The Richards Constitution of 1946 which introduced a federal structure in the country with three regions- North, East and West, with the size and population of the North almost half the population of the entire country. The uneven division of the country into three regions with the population of the North almost half of the country laid the basis for the politicization and elevation of ethnic diversity in national life. As observed by Yaquob (2002), electoral politics took ethnic and regional posturing and unlike the situation in the twenties and thirties, 'politics especially electioneering campaigns were beginning to show features of ethnic sentiments and mudslinging' (Nnadozie, 2007:49).

Political trends in the country after the introduction of a federal structure with three regions in the country were characterized by the ascendancy of ethnicity and its attendant parochialization and regionalization of issues by the emerging political class particularly the leaders of the three major ethnic groups in the country- Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo (Nnadozie, 2007). Consequently, political parties that were formed were more of tribal parties and assumed regional outlook rather than national outlook. This manifested itself in the formation of the Action Group (AG) and the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) after the introduction of the Macpherson Constitution of 1951. The AG metamorphosed from a pan Yoruba cultural group, Omo Oduduwa into a political party and it "became the first party to be inspired by, founded on and nourished by ethnic chauvinism and regional parochialism" (Nnoli in Omu,1996:179) . Similarly, the NPC also emerged from a pan Northern cultural association, Jamiyyar Mutanem Arewa into a political party.

A remarkable feature of electoral politics after the formation of the NPC and the AG is that political parties were regionalized. The NPC had its hegemony in the North. The National Council for Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) was predominantly an Ibo party with the Eastern Region as its base. In the Western Region, the AG held sway. An interesting trend during this time as noted by Eliagwu (2005:27) 'was the appeal to ethnic loyalty and the

crystallization of ethnic identity around the regions throughout the colonial period'. At independence in 1960, the AG emerged as a Yoruba party with its hegemony in the West, the NPC dominated the North and the NCNC secured its base in the East. This scenario at independence in 1960 pitched the three major ethnic groups against each other as each jostled for pre-eminence. The aftermath of this is that it aggravated division, competition and unstable ethnic coalitions at the federal level which has triggered the regionalization of politics and the politicization of ethnicity that has become a feature of Nigerian politics today.

As part of social and political engineering to wane the influence of regionalism and ethnicity in national politics, constitutional provisions have been entrenched to ensure national spread and detach political parties from ethnic, regional and religious inclinations such as the provision that political parties should have offices in two thirds of the 36 states and Abuja. Also the logo of the political party should not carry the emblem of an ethnic group or religion .But in spite of these measures, ethnicity, regionalism and religion have become mobilization tools used by leaders from the three major ethnic groups to gain control of political power at the centre and exercise distributional control over a rentier economy in which oil accounts for over 80% of government revenue. Thus ethnic militia groups are pervasive such as Oodua Peoples' Congress (OPC), Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta(MEND) , Movement for the (MASSOP) that are purported to redress the perceived injustice against their people by the state.

The mobilization of ethnic sentiments in the bitter contestation over control of state power by the ethnic nationalities has a debilitating impact on the policy –making arena as “each ethnic group organized themselves in the contest for the state booties, and saw public policies largely from the prism of their ethnic or sectional interest” (Ikpeze, Soludo & Elekwa 2009:3). Hence, public officials and those in appointive positions see themselves as representatives of their ethnic groups and their positions as an opportunity for their people/ethnic group and inevitably, who benefits from a particular policy becomes a prime consideration in the choice of policy and its implementation.

The aftermath is that the policy environment has become a contested terrain by the dominant ethnic nationalities to protect their interest. This essay which is a focus on the proposed ranch-grazing policy did not only analyze the public policy milieu in Nigeria, but it brings out the core issues of misunderstanding that arose between ethnic nationalities in the country over the proposed establishment of ranches by the federal government.

Contextual and Theoretical Discourses

Like most social science concepts, ethnicity defies a precise definition. Omu (1996:170) defines ethnicity as ‘the consciousness of belonging to, identifying with, and being loyal to a social group distinguished by shared cultural traditions, a language, in-group sentiments and self- identity’. It connotes ‘the manipulation of base socio-cultural sentiments and

primordial filiations in order to promote one's ethnic group in the process of resource and value acquisition, allocation and distribution in a multi-ethnic environment' (Pine,2016:125). Ethnicity is often an inherited status based on the society in which one lives. Thus membership of an ethnic group tends to be defined by a shared cultural heritage, ancestry, origin, history, homeland, language or dialect as well as symbolic systems such as religion, mythology and ritual, cuisine, dressing style, art and physical appearance.

Ethnicity it has been noted tends to acquire passionate and aggressive attributes when elements such as socio-economic and political competition, fear of domination and closer group interaction occasioned by urbanization and internal migration set in (Omu, 1996). With over 250 linguistic groups, political competition and rivalry seems to be the major precursor of ethnic aggression in Nigeria. The political elite manipulate and propagate ethnic consciousness to achieve their political goals and this has witnessed the encroachment of ethnicity on Nigerian politics. Ethnic consciousness is deliberately propagated to achieve selfish and narrow objectives. Hence we have divisions such as North, West and East and those of the North and South.

In a political environment where the ideology of ethnicity rules the roost, Pine (2016:125) argues ' the fuel of the furnace of public discourse is almost always ethnocentric in context' and for ethnic jingoists, considerations of ethnic membership and ethno-ancillary factors in public policy gain ascendancy over issues of merit, public interest, national interest and national development. The term public policy lacks definitional exactitude; some scholars see it as actions and inactions of government while others see it as intentions or decisions of the government. Thus no consensus has been reached on the exact meaning of the term and there are dissenting views on the concept. Dye (1975:1) defines public policy as 'whatever government chooses to do or not to do'. While Ikelegbe (1996:94) defines public policy as ' the integrated course and programme of action that government has set and the framework or guide it has designed to direct actions and practice in certain problem areas'.

The above dissenting views highlight that public policy could be viewed as the actions and inactions of the government on one hand and it could at the same time refer to the intentions or decisions of the government on the other hand. These two positions bring out the fundamental disagreement by scholars over the definition of public policy. However in this study, public policy refers to the intentions or decision of the government. Public policy is a product of governmental process and it impinges on wide issues and sectors of the society which government has something to do with such as health, economy, education, environment, housing, defense etc. In public policy making, both state actors and non- state actors play a crucial role in the policy making process. State actors in the policy making process are the legislature, executive and the judiciary; while non-state actors are political parties, civil society groups, organized private sector, media,

think tank and ethno-political and cultural organizations. They use varying tools to advance their aims such as advocating their position publicly, attempting to educate supporters and opponents and mobilizing collaborators. Public policies it need not be overemphasized confer advantages, cause pleasure, irritation and pain which collectively have important consequences for the well-being of the people (Anderson, 1975).

In plural societies, there exists a nexus between ethnic group membership and public policy choice. In a recent survey of 18 Sub-Saharan African countries (Lieberman & McClendon n.d) found out that ethnicity is strongly associated with policy preferences. Citizens from different ethnic groups most often hold different views about what they want from government as well as how they evaluate policy allocation decisions. This variation is not just an expression of cultural differences or individual-level socio-economic differences but rather people use ethnicity as a group heuristic for evaluating policies in a few predictable ways (Lieberman and McClendon: n.d.). Thus, there tends to be significant disagreement about public policies among individuals from different politically relevant ethnic groups especially where group disparities of wealth are very high.

But why is it that different ethnic groups have distinctive preferences over policy choices? Scholars contributing to Social Identity Theory (SIT) have attempted to provide the theoretical and empirical basis to justify why policy preferences vary across different ethnic groups in the society. Hogg and Abrams (1999), Akerl of Cranton (2008) for instance aver that individuals derive at least two benefits from group categorization that are relevant for the formation of policy preferences. One, when individuals are able to easily identify with a group, they can make choices and form preferences more easily by assessing the group and its interest. Two, group identity affects individual utility functions as individuals identify their positions and needs as members of a group.

In the American society for instance, it has been observed by Dawson (cited in Lieberman & McClendon, nd: 3) that ethnicity serves as a cognitive heuristic for interpreting problems and policies. African –Americans for instance, are often influenced by a perception of ‘linked fate’ and hence individuals take into consideration the needs of the group as well as the implications to the group rather than personal interest. While in Africa, the continent with the highest level of ethnic diversity, Lieberman and McClendon (n.d) have established that there is a strong relationship between ethnic group membership and policy priorities in all the countries. They further point out that conventional wisdom does not only reveal that different ethnic groups have distinct tastes but most social psychological literature has shown how group differences, including ethnic differences routinely structure cognitions and preferences with respect to distributional concerns. But persuasive as this argument is, some analysts though with scant or little evidence point out that policy choice preference do not vary across ethnic groups. Bates (cited in Lieberman & McClendon,n.d:2) for instance argues that ethnic political

competition is more of a struggle over who gets to benefit from public policies rather than over what those public policy priorities should be.

Theoretically, this study adopts the Group theory as its theoretical frame of analysis. Group theory evolved out of pluralism which was developed in the early 20th Century by some English writer such as Figgs, Maitland and Cole (Obi, Nwachukwu & Obiora, 2008). The basic assumption of the theory is that public policy is the product of group struggle. A group is a collection of individuals which 'on the basis of one or more shared attitudes makes certain claims upon other groups in the society for the establishment, maintenance, enhancement of forms of behavior that are implied in the shared attitudes... the shared attitude constitutes the interest' Truman (cited in Obi et al ,2008:34). It is through these groups that individuals seek to secure their political preferences; and the individual is significant in politics only when he is a participant in or a representative of a group (Ezeanya, 2009). Individuals with common interests band together formally or informally to press their demands upon governments. Hence a society is an amalgam of different groups who may interact peacefully or antagonize each other.

According to group theorists, public policy at any given period will reflect the interest of dominant groups (Dye and Zeigler, 1981). It is amenable to the ebb and flow of group influence, as the group gain and loses power and influence; public policy will be altered in favour of the influential group. Thus, changes in the relative influence of any interest group can be expected to result in changes in public policy. The import of this is that policy will move in the direction desired by groups gaining influence and away from groups that lose influence. The groups' influence is determined by their numerical strength, wealth, organizational skills, leadership, proximity to decision-makers and internal cohesion (Dye, 1981). According to group theorists, politics becomes a struggle among groups to influence public policy and policy-makers are viewed as constantly responding to group pressures, bargaining, negotiating and compromising among competing groups.

Nigeria with a population of over 140 million (2006 Census) is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world with over 350 ethnic groups (Otite, 1990). A striking feature of this diversity is that right from independence in 1960 every issue has been viewed through partisan, religious and ethnic lenses (Ukiwo, 2003). More striking is the fact that, policy makers view themselves as representatives of their respective ethnic groups and consider the expected sectional rather than the national impact of the policy as a determinant in the choice, design and implementation of the policy. The net effect is that, 'no matter the merit of particular policies or their potential 'national impact', if they are not perceived to favour the specific interests of the dominant power groups, such policies will not be adopted or implemented(Ikpeze, Soludo and Elekwa 2009:3). This is evident in the industrial sector where the conflicting interests of ethnic groups and the structure of control of power at the centre' rather than economic rationality played a significant role in the location of industries in the country. This accounts for why major

industries are located in Lagos, Kano, Ibadan and Port Harcourt which are the centres of political power of the ruling elites, Ademolekun-Turton (in Ikpeze 2009: 1).

In the foreign policy domain, conflicting group interest and lack of national cohesion oftentimes affect the pursuit and realization of Nigeria's foreign policy goals in the First Republic (Fafowora, 1990). The three regions, the North, East and West 'were ethnocentrically constructed; and suffused with ethno-regional proclivities and biases' and each region pursued its own foreign policy that was parallel with the position of the federal government (Pine, 2016:126). This accounts for the inability of the Balewa administration to adopt a common Middle East policy in the First Republic. The cancellation in 2002 of Nigeria's plan to host the Miss World Beauty Pageant in Kaduna which some Hausa/Fulani Muslims in the North considered offensive to their religion (Ukiwo, 2003) buttresses the influence of ethnicity and religion on public policies and their implementation in Nigeria. In as much as the group theory has tried to focus attention on one of the major dynamic element in policy formulation in plural societies, it should be applied with caution as it seems to over- state the importance of groups and to under-state the independence and creative role that public officials play in the policy process.

Herders-farmers Clash, Ethnicity and Proposed Ranch Grazing in Nigeria

Persistent clashes between Fulani herdsmen and settled farming communities have assumed a worrisome dimension in the country. The conflicts have not only exacerbated insecurity in the country but have the tendency to aggravate food crisis in the country. States most affected are those in the middle belt region of the country particularly, Benue, Kaduna, Nasarawa, Plateau and Taraba state. Statistics from Nigeria Watch data base indicate that between 2006 and 2014, the country recorded a total of 615 violent deaths related to cattle grazing, out of 61,314 violent fatalities in Nigeria between June 2006 and May, 2014 (Olayoku, 2014).

More recently the country has witnessed more gruesome violence between pastoralists and sedentary farming communities in the country. In the North central part of the country particularly in Benue state for instance in May, 2015 before the 2015 general elections, over 100 farmers and their family members were reportedly massacred in villages and refugee camps located in the Ukura, Per, Gafa and Tse-Gusa areas of the state. And in December, 2016 six persons were killed at Idele village in the Oju local government area, while a reprisal attack by youths in the community saw three Fulani herdsmen killed and beheaded (Adetula, 2016). These attacks by Fulani herdsmen are not limited to the middle belt region of the country but cut across the length and breadth of the country. In Yobe state for instance a total of 38 clashes were recorded between Fulani herdsmen- farmers in ten local government areas across the state, Alhassan (cited in Luka and Erunke, 2016:328). And in Jigawa State, Fulani herdsmen have had clashes with farmers in places like Miga, Kangama, Birnin Kudu, Garki and Maigatari Local government areas with a lot of losses in

human and material goods. Other major attacks by Fulani herdsmen on farmers across the country chronicled by Eyekpemi (2016) include.

- i. September, 30, 2012: A Fulani herdsman had been accused of murdering one Benjamin Chegue on his farm, the director of Personnel Management in the Isoko North Local government Council in Delta State.
- ii. April 5th, 2014: Assailants opened fire on community leaders and residents that were meeting in Galadima village. At least 200 people were killed and unknown number were injured in the attack. Sources attributed the attacks to Fulani assailants.
- iii. February 18th, 2016: Five persons were killed by Fulani herdsmen at Okoloko in Agatu Local Government Area of Benue state.
- iv. March 5th 2016: About 500 persons were killed by the rampaging hwerdsmen following a siege on Agatu local government area of Benue state. These communities include; Aila, Akwu, Adagbo, Okoloko, Ugboju, Odugbeho, Ogbaulu, Egba and Obagaji.
- v. April 12th, 2016: Fulani herdsmen attacked two villages in Gashaka Local Government Area of Taraba state and killed 15 people.
- vi. April 19th, 2016: Twenty- five local government areas in Delta State grounded activities on the Benin-Asaba expressway. They reported that the herdsmen allegedly killed over 23 persons. Interestingly, the police recovered 20 AK-47 rifles, 70 dane guns, 30 double-barrel guns and over1, 000 live ammunition, mostly from Fulani herdsmen during this period.
- vii. April 21st, 2016: Farmers in Lagun, Iyana Offa, Atagbo, Lakpata and their surrounding communities in Lagelu Local Council Area of Ibadan, Oyo State, alleged that a group of Fulani armed men attacked their communities at night, injured a guard and carted away valuables
- viii. April 25th, 2016: Fulani herdsmen attack seven villages in Nimbo in Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area of Enugu State. About 40 persons were reportedly killed.
- ix. June 16th, 2016: A 45 year-old renowned farmer was shot by gunmen suspected to be Fulani herdsmen in Ossissa community in Ndokwa East Local government Area of Delta State
- x. June 20th, 2016: At least 59 deaths have been recorded following recent attacks on Benue communities such as Ugondo, Turan, Gabo Nenzev in Logo Local Government Area by suspected Fulani herdsmen

But what is responsible for the frequent clashes between Fulani herdsmen and farming communities? Key among the explanations been proffered by analysts is the impact of

climate change which has escalated desertification in the far northern part of the country; the Boko Haram insurgency in the North East and the growing cattle population in the country (Luka & Erunke, 2016; Fabiyi & Otunuga, 2016). Fabiyi and Otunuga (2016) have pointed out dwindling pasture due to the impact of climate change have necessitated the movement of the Fulani herdsmen across the country to seek greener pasture in other parts of the country particularly in the Middle Belt region; and in the course of this, the Fulani cattle trespass on farmlands owned by sedentary farming communities destroying their commodities and other valuables. Attempts by farmers to prevent the herdsmen from destroying their farms- their source of survival are often met with violent resistance by the herdsmen. In most cases, the farmers are overpowered, injured and killed, while others are displaced or evicted from their houses. Not only that, sometimes the herdsmen are accused of taking advantage over this to steal, rape, raze houses and kill innocent members of the communities they traverse.

These violent clashes between farmers and herdsmen are a struggle to safeguard the source of livelihood and should therefore be seen as a concatenation of eco-survival. This fact has been adumbrated by Chukwuma and Atelhe (2014) that the Fulani's survival is hinged on their cattle and any threat to their cattle is viewed as a threat to their life as life without their cattle is worthless. In the same vein, sedentary farming communities also attach much importance to land for their survival and it is sacrosanct. Hence, they tend to fight whoever threatens their food security (Hembe, 2005). These clashes have social, economic, security and political implication for the country. In the first place, they have led to loss of lives and displacement of communities which has exacerbated the refugee problem in the country. The clashes appear to have affected agricultural production in the country and pose a challenge to food security. Mercy Corps, a global humanitarian organization funded by the British Department for International Development (BFID) carried out a research between 2013 and 2016 and found out that the crisis has caused an estimated loss to the country of \$14 billion in three years. Also, states affected by Herdsmen-Farmers conflicts lost an average of 47% of taxes (Internally Generated Revenue) during these attacks. The clashes also have led to arms proliferation in the country which has heightened insecurity and threatened the unity and stability of the country. Against these violent clashes, the government has proposed to establish ranches; but what role has ethnicity played to influence the decision of the government?

As part of measures aimed at boosting livestock farming in the country as well as mitigating the frequent clashes between herdsmen and farmers in the country, the Federal government proposed the establishment of ranches in the country. The Minister of State for Agriculture, Hieneken Lokpobori, had recently told the Senate Public hearing on perennial clashes between herdsmen and farmers that

We have consulted widely and we have realized that the best way to solve the problem is to create ranches. The herdsmen can keep their cattle, feed them and be more productive. The ranches will have all modern amenities so that families of the herdsmen can also have the same opportunities like going to school, hospitals and others (Ojiabor, 2006:2).

The minister further stated that about nine states have donated five hectares of land each to the government to establish ranches and the government intends to import rich grasses that would be grown to feed the cattle for improved production. But in reaction to this proposal, the Miyetti Alla Cattle Breeders Association (MACBAN) which is the umbrella body of Fulani cattle breeders submitted a memorandum that rather than ranches, grazing reserves should be created for Fulani cattle breeders. The association maintained that there are about 417 grazing reserves in the country and almost all the states in the North have grazing routes. These grazing routes and reserves date back to the First Republic when the Federal Government through the Nigerian Government Grazing Reserve Act of 1964 established grazing reserves in order to protect grazing lands from crop farming and provide easier access to pastoralists so as to encourage the sedentarization of nomadic pastoralists through legally secure title to grazing water as a means of promoting livestock development, Olayoku (2014). The Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association therefore prefers the grazing reserves and livestock routes rather than ranches as a panacea to the incessant conflicts between pastoralists and farming communities (Ojiabor, 2016).

These two diverse positions have elicited emotional reactions from socio-cultural organizations that purport to protect and defend the interest of their ethnic groups in the country. The Ohaneze Ndi-Igbo, the umbrella Igbo cultural group association through its spokesman Paddy Njoku has come out loud and clear against the establishment of grazing reserves and grazing routes. The group completely opposed the establishment of grazing reserves and grazing routes in the country and pointed out that cattle-rearing is a form of business and the government has no right to seize land and give to cattle rearers as grazing reserves or routes. Similarly the Mdzough U Tiv, the umbrella socio-cultural organization of the Tiv nation through its President General, Chief Edward Ujege opposed the creation of grazing reserves and routes. According to him, 'the people of Benue State reject the creation of grazing areas. We reject the creation of grazing routes. We support the creation of ranches (Ojiabor, 2016:3). Also, the people of Southern Kaduna through their representative have opposed to the creation of grazing reserves and routes. They pointed out that, they have borne the brutality of Fulani herdsmen for some time and vowed never to allow their land to be given to cattle rearers who are into private business.

These diverse positions, that is, the establishment of ranches and the creation of grazing reserves have also been inundated with criticisms by public analysts, commentators and interest groups. (Fabiya&Otunuga, 2016) have pointed out that the

creation of grazing reserves cannot address the root cause of the problem between herdsmen and sedentary farmers which is pressure on water and foliage resources due to the burgeoning cattle population, the effect of climate change and increased level of insecurity caused by the Boko Haram insurgency. They also point out that the appropriated lands will have to be proximate to water resources to ensure that water needs of the cows are met. Hence communities that the lands are taken from will be cut off from critical water resources and this will exacerbate pressure on already strained water resources. Also the promotion of reserves entails admission that all efforts towards peaceful co-existence of farmers and herders have failed.

The establishment of ranches too has been faulted by the Fulani. The Fulani have argued that ranch grazing is alien to them because their culture is nomadic and no one can stop the government from acquiring land anywhere as grazing lands for them as nomadism is their philosophy of life. To demonstrate their tenacity for grazing reserves, a law maker, Zainab Kure in 2008 sponsored a bill in the Senate known as the Land Grazing bill which is aimed at securing grazing areas for the Fulani herdsmen across the federation and for mapping out of grazing routes as well as the establishment of a National grazing Reserve Establishment and Development Commission as a regulatory body. So far the Federal Government has vacillated over the issue and it has not taken a clear stand on the issue to resolve the lingering crises between herdsmen and sedentary farming communities. However, states like Benue, Ekiti and Taraba have gone ahead and passed anti-grazing bills in their states.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The foregoing discourse has shown that diversity increases the problem of collective action and it becomes difficult to reach co-operative solution on issues. Plural societies rather waste resources on distributional struggles (Collier, 2000). In Nigeria where politics is more of a struggle by different groups that are guided by their narrow self-interest; it is always difficult to arrive at a consensus decision. The contestations by socio-cultural organizations in the country on the proposed ranch grazing policy illuminate the sharp disagreement that arise between various ethnic groups in the country over the choice of policy in the country.

The sharp disagreement between MACBAN on one hand and the Ohaneze Ndi-Igbo, the Mdzough u Tiv and the Southern Kaduna people on the other hand over the establishment of ranches by the federal government has shown that the issue has been dragged into the country's politics which frequently breaks down along ethnic lines. Politics, especially Nigerian politics is a struggle among the major ethnic groups, Hausa / Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo to have hegemonic control of political power in order to influence public policy. Since public policies flow in the direction desired by the groups gaining influence and away from the desires of those losing influence, it is most likely the position

of the Hausa/Fulani ethnic group canvassed by MACBAN may force the federal government to be reticent over the issue considering the population, organizational strength and access to decision-makers by this group under the Buhari dispensation.

In a policy environment where ethnicity thrives over rationality, there is the likelihood that federal government under the leadership of Muhammadu Buhari a Fulani, would likely yield to the pressure of his Hausa/Fulani ethnic nationality who are vehemently opposed to the establishment of ranches in the country. In fact, the evasive attitude of President Buhari over this lingering crisis is an indication that he is cautious not to step on the toes of his Hausa/Fulani ethnic group who have hegemonic control of political power under his regime. In short, his inaction serves as a silhouette in understanding the influence of this ethnic group in the country.

Strategically too, President Buhari being a Fulani may consider it as a political miscalculation and committing electoral suicide to sanction the establishment of ranches which MACBAN interpret as a threat to the economic survival of the Fulani ethnic group who are traditionally cattle rearers and consider nomadism as their philosophy of life. Even if the President bows to national dictates arising from pressure from the other ethnic groups and approves the establishment of ranches in the country; there is the likelihood that the programme would be haphazardly implemented and poorly funded to frustrate its sustainability by the federal government under Hausa/Fulani hegemonic control.

So what is to be done? As a panacea, it is recommended that policy makers should be guided by national interest and the quest for development rather than regional, sectional, tribal and clannish interest. Civil society groups should be actively involved in policy advocacy to enlighten the public on the benefits of proposed government policies.

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