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# Military Alliance and Counter-Terrorism in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Multi-National Joint Task Force in Perspective

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**Abstract:** Understanding the formation and consequences of formal military alliances is a research area that is central to the study of international relations. Military alliances help define and shape the nature of interactions between countries, and by structuring international obligations; they help construct the nature of the international system. Over time, countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have been faced with myriads of security challenges, ranging from militancy, ethno-religious crisis, political conflict, human and drug trafficking, to trans-border crimes. In recent times however, terrorism and insurgency have become a major security threat to the sovereignty of these countries, particularly the threat of Boko Haram in the Northeast of Nigeria and countries of the Lake Chad region; hence the formation of the Multi-National Joint Task Force as a military alliance to combat terrorism. The paper is thus, an attempt to investigate the role of the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in countering Boko Haram terrorism within Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon. In interrogating the above problem, this paper scoped from secondary data and employed the Simon Walt's theory of alliance as analytical framework. It is the position of the paper that the MNJTF has made remarkable achievement in the fight against Boko Haram. In the final analysis, the paper recommends, among other things, the need for participating states in the MNJTF to be much more committed in terms of

funding and purchase of military equipment to further enhance military preparedness and capabilities.

**Keywords:** Strategic Alliance, Terrorism, Counter-Terrorism, MNJTF, National Security

## **Introduction**

Alliances play a central role in international relations because they are seen to be an integral part of statecraft. Alliances are formed between two or more countries to counter a common adversary. They have been an important research focus in the theory of international relations. This is understandable because one of the central foreign policy debates in every country centres on the issue of 'which nation to ally with and for how long'. Strong and weak nations alike feel the need to form alliances. Weak states enter into alliance when they need protection against strong states, that is, they enter into alliances to protect or defend themselves. Strong states enter into alliances to counter other strong states- they enter into alliances to maintain balance of power. States expect their allies to help militarily and diplomatically during the time of conflict (Sangit, 2012).

Much of the realist-neoliberal debates can be interpreted as an argument over whether a balance of power or collective security equilibrium is more stable or is a more appropriate characterization of contemporary affairs (Niou and Ordeshook 1991). Benson and Clinton (2014), identification of the range of alliances that exist and probing the conditions under which various types of alliances are likely to be formed along the dimensions of scope, depth, and potential military capacity of formal military alliances, are key to understanding the role of military alliances in structuring the international system.

Scholars generally agree that alliance agreements typically specify the primary obligations of alliance members, some of which require members to become involved militarily in a broad set of circumstances, while others are more limited in scope. For example, Snyder (1997) explains that offensive alliance agreements obligate alliance members in a wide range of circumstances compared to those written to secure a third party's neutrality in the case of a military conflict. This is the standard view of alliances—agreements with offensive and defensive provisions obligate members to commit military action to a broader range of circumstances than defensive agreements alone, and defensive agreements are broader in military scope than, say, consultation pacts or neutrality agreements, which do not bind signatories to commit militarily to any conflict and may even require states not to become involved militarily (Benson and Clinton, 2014). Scholars have emphasized the importance of these concepts for characterizing and understanding the formation and consequences of military alliances (Snyder 1997; Leeds et al, 2002; Schelling, 1966; Benson, 2011, 2012; and Leeds and Anac, 2005).

The emergence of the Boko Haram terrorist group in 2009 and its activities have posed a lot of security threats to Nigeria. However, the trans-national nature of this terrorist group, as it operates beyond the shores of Nigeria, reaching into other neighbouring countries such as Cameroon, Chad and Niger has qualified it to be an

international terrorist organization. Since 2013, the Boko Haram terrorist group has frequently attacked towns and villages, security outposts and schools, and has also kidnapped civilians, foreign tourists and missionaries in the border regions of Cameroon. Recently, there have been an increasing number of attacks in the Lake Chad Basin region along Nigeria's borders with Chad and Cameroon and in the northern provinces of Cameroon (AU, 2015). The international dimension of Boko Haram and its implications for sub-regional security necessitated the formation of the Multi-National Joint Task Force by Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Niger (which were complemented by Benin, Nigeria's immediate neighbor to the west) as a strategic military alliance to address and combat Boko Haram terrorism within the sub-region.

### **Conceptual and Theoretical Issues**

The dynamic nature of international relations and the need for states to pursue and promote their national interest have made alliance an important component of global politics. Alliance can manifest in different forms: it could be security alliance or defence alliance, as the case may be. What is however more important is the fact that states do form alliances either to contain perceived threats or to balance power against a stronger enemy.

The concept of alliance in the literature of international relations is ambiguous and amorphous (Edwin, 1968). Reflecting on this important role of alliances in world politics, the literature in international relations has produced quite an impressive list of interesting studies, articles and analyses in this area of research. However, it seems striking

that despite these scholarly attempts, not much thought has been given to the question, "what is a military alliance?" (Edwin, 1968). An ordinary meaning of the term "alliance" can be found in Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary, which defines it as:

- a) the state of being allied;
- b) a bond or connection between families, parties, or individuals;
- c) an association (as by treaty) of two or more nations to further their common interests;
- d) a treaty of alliance.

This meaning also corresponds to the historical development of the term "alliance". The corresponding German term, "Allianz" developed in the 17th century out of the French word "alliance", which meant "connection", "pact" or "association between states". This French term, in turn, goes back to the old French verb *aleier* (= to connect, to combine, to join), which is itself rooted in the Latin verb *alligare*. *Alligare*, finally, is a compositum of Latin "ligare" (= to bind) and could be translated as "to bind" and "to combine" (Duden, 1963).

In the realist view, "the historically most important manifestation of the balance of power ... is to be found ... in the relations between one nation or alliance and another alliance" (Morgenthau 1959:169) because "alliances and regional coalitions among the weak to defend themselves from the strong have been the typical method for preserving ... balance" (Wright 1965:773). An alliance is a collective security arrangements among states in which all members of the alliance agree to not threaten each other, to punish defectors from this agreement whenever possible, and to threaten countries outside of the

alliance whenever it is in their individual interest to do so.

Insofar as our understanding of alliances is concerned, we are aided by the fact that definitions come within striking distance of acceptability by even rigorous theoretical standards. In the view of Walt's (1987:12) : "an alliance is a formal or informal arrangement for security cooperation between two or more sovereign states;" to Snyder's (1990:104): "alliances ... are formal associations of states for the use (or non-use) of military force, intended for either the security or the aggrandizement of their members, against specific other states..."his view tallies with that of Liska (1968) whose sees alliance basically as a formal association between two or more states against the threat of a third, more powerful state. The association itself is what Liska calls an "alignment" and corresponds to the predictions of the balance of power theory. Alliances for him – although he uses the terms almost interchangeably – merely formalize these alignments. Conflicts are thus for him the primary determinant of alignments and alliances, with threat and power potential used as synonyms as usual in the balance of power literature: "Alliances are against, and only derivatively for, someone or something" (Liska (1968).

Alliance is described as a process or a technique of statecraft or a type of international organization (Fedder 1968: 68). Arnold Wolfer (1968: 268) sees an alliance as „a promise of mutual military assistance between two or more sovereign states“. Alliances are only the formal subset of a broader and more basic phenomenon, than that of „alignment“ (Snyder 1990: 105). The primary purpose of most alliances is to

combine the member's capabilities in a way that furthers their respective interests.

Holsti, Hopmann and Sullivan developed another very germane perspective on alliance. They were of the opinion that for an association to qualify as an alliance it must poses the following elements:

- i. A formal treaty – open or secret
- ii. It must be directly concerned with national security issues
- iii. The partners must be nation-states

On the basis of these three elements the authors define the concept as follows: "an alliance is a formal agreement between two or more nations to collaborate on national security issues"(Holsti, et al, 1973).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Theories are important instrument in every scientific investigation, as they serve as lenses which give insight and clarity to the researcher. For the purpose of this study, Stephen M. Walt's theory of alliance will be employed. This is not to say that there are no other theories that can be used to examine the issues under investigation. Walt's "balance-of-threat" theory of alliance formation (1988) is examined as a focus theory. An attempt to examine alliances and the factors precipitating can be better fashioned within the context of certain fundamental questions. No wonder Walt (1988) began his analysis of alliance by putting forward some germane questions such as "When will states form alliances, and what determines their choice of allies?" More specifically, do states tend to balance against strong or threatening powers by allying against them; are they more likely to "bandwagon" by allying with the most powerful or

threatening states? If states tend to balance, “aggressors will face numerous opponents and sustained efforts to expand are likely to fail.” However, if ‘bandwagoning’ is the dominant tendency, “threats and intimidation are more likely to work, and empires will both be easier to amass and more likely to fall apart. In his analysis of the factor that necessitates alliance, he critiques the balance of power theory and emphasized the role of threat in alliance formation. Walt further argued that balance-of-power theory focused on capabilities and ignores other factors that statesmen consider when making alliance choices. Threat, not power, is at the heart of security concerns. According to Walt, balance-of-power theory does not well describe the observed behavior of alliance formation in the historical record. It cannot explain why balances often fail to form. His balance-of-threat theory gives a better description. In Walt’s view, threat level is characterized by:

- i. Overall capabilities
- ii. Proximity
- iii. Offensive capability (vs. defensive)
- iv. Perceived intentions

Other things being equal, states that are nearby are more dangerous than those that are far away. States with large offensive capabilities defined as the capacity to threaten the sovereignty of other states pose a greater threat than states whose capabilities are more suitable for defense. Lastly, states with aggressive intentions are more threatening than those who seek only to preserve the status quo. If balancing behaviour is the norm, therefore, an increase in any of these Factors power, proximity, offensive capabilities,

or aggressive intentions should encourage other states to ally against the most threatening power (Walt, 1988, 281).

Walt characterizes the concepts of balancing and bandwagoning as ideal types, and that “actual state behavior will only approximate either model.” (Walt, 1988: 282) Another problem of interpreting the historical record is distinguishing between bandwagoning and détente. In Walt’s view: Bandwagoning involves unequal exchange; the vulnerable state makes asymmetrical concessions to the dominant power and accepts a subordinate role. Détente, by contrast, involves roughly equal concessions in which both sides benefit (Walt 1988, 282).

Thus Walt (1988) puts forward three types of state behavior within the context of alliance and they are:

- i. Balancing is alignment against the threatening power (rather than the most powerful one) to deter it.
- ii. Bandwagoning is alignment with a dominant power, either to appease it or in the hope of profiting from its victory. (Unequal exchange, often coerced. Dominant power may extract significant, asymmetrical concessions, High risk. Requires trust that the dominant power will be benevolent).
- iii. Détente is the voluntary development of peaceful relations to reduce tensions. (Equal exchange. Symmetrical concessions. Low risk. The dominant power’s attempt to exploit the relationship will collapse the détente. The state remains aligned with the balancing power against the threatening power)

From the foregoing, it is obvious that this theory is very germane to the topic under investigation. One basic

argument of this theory is the fact that states form alliance not to balance power but to curtail and contain threats. This is also clearly manifested in the Multi-National Joint Task Force which as establish not for the sake of balance power against a stronger state but for the purpose of containing Boko Haram terrorist group which constitute a major threat to all member states of the MNJTF. Deterrence is also an important aspect of the theory. The MNJTF also serves as deterrence to Boko Haram. Aside the utilization of coercion the states also employ diplomatic means which should eventually lead to *détente*. It is also important to note that Bandwagoning does not really apply to the MNJTF as an alliance because the relationship that exist between the LCBC and Benin is not one of unequal exchange neither is any member of the alliance coerced into the alliance. The MNJTF as an alliance is a product of collective interest for collective security and as such every ally hitherto forming the alliance knew how important this alliance will be as far as their national security and the security of the sub-region is concerned.

### **Multinational Joint Task Force and Counter-Terrorism in Sub-Saharan Africa**

States within the international system are beginning to realize the importance of alliances and also recognizing that alliances are not necessarily for balance of power but more importantly that alliances are strategies for addressing perceived, existing and potential threats to their security especially in contemporary times where there are galaxies of threats manifested in forms of insurgency, terrorism, ethnic militias, piracy, trans-border crimes etc. sub-Saharan Africa is faced with a lot of

security challenges among which is terrorism. Terrorism within West Africa has attracted international attention because of its catastrophic impact.

The impact and implications of Boko Haram on sub-regional security instigated the affected states to form a military alliance against terrorism. This move/step was also supported by the African Union when it specifically urged the countries of the region to take the necessary steps towards operationalizing the mechanisms agreed upon to address more effectively the threat posed by Boko Haram. Subsequently, a number of initiatives were taken by the countries of the region pursuant to the conclusions of the Paris Summit of 17 May 2014, which brought together the Heads of State of Benin, Chad, Cameroon, France, Niger, Nigeria and other stakeholders, as well as the ministerial-level meetings that took place in London and Washington on 12 June and 5 August 2014, respectively (AU, 2015).

Transnational efforts to combat crime in the region predate the emergence of the terrorist movement. The Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) between Nigeria, Chad and Niger was set up in 1998 in order to combat transnational crime in the Lake Chad region, but was mostly dormant until 2012, when it was reactivated in order to deal with Boko Haram. In order to cope with the spread of terrorism in the region, the Paris Summit of May 2014, which brought together the heads of state of Benin, Chad, Cameroon, France, Niger and Nigeria, and representatives of the US, UK and EU, decided to enhance regional cooperation in the fight against Boko Haram, by means of coordinated patrols and border surveillance, pooling

intelligence and exchanging relevant information (Zamfir, 2015).

In October 2014, the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) member-states (Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria) and Benin decided to improve their cooperation to combat Boko Haram, by pledging troops to the MNJTF, which should have become operational inside national borders by November 2014 (Zamfir, 2015).

It is important to note that the Paris Summit agreed on a number of steps aimed at enhancing regional cooperation and international action against the Boko Haram terrorist group, notably through coordinated border patrols; the establishment of an intelligence and fusion unit; the adoption of sanctions against Boko Haram, Ansaru, and their main leaders; as well as through support for marginalized areas and for their vulnerable populations. The London meeting reaffirmed the commitments made at the Paris Summit and welcomed the progress accomplished since then, particularly the signing in Yaoundé, on 9 June 2014, of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Regional Intelligence Fusion Unit (RIFU) (AU, 2015).

### **Mandate and Objectives of the Multi-National Joint Task Force**

The AU gave the green light to the MNJTF through a decision of 29 January 2015 by the African Peace and Security Council (PSC), meeting at the level of Heads of State and Government. The PSC is a standing decision-making body of the AU, competent for peace and security issues (Zamfir, 2015). While this process is underway, it is recommended that, in support of the efforts led by the LCBC Member States and Benin, Council

authorize the deployment of the MNJTF comprising up to 7500 military and non-military staff, for an initial period of twelve months renewable at the request of the LCBC Member States and Benin (AU, 2015).

In line with the overall objective set by the countries of the region during their various meetings, it is proposed that the MNJTF be mandated, within its Area of Operation (AoR) as will be determined in the concept of operation, to:

- i. create a safe and secure environment in the areas affected by the activities of Boko Haram and other terrorist groups, in order to significantly reduce violence against civilians and other abuses, including sexual- and gender-based violence, in full compliance with international law, including international humanitarian law and the UN Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (HRDDP);
- ii. facilitate the implementation of overall stabilization programmes by the LCBC Member States and Benin in the affected areas, including the full restoration of state authority and the return of IDPs and refugees; and
- iii. Facilitate, within the limit of its capabilities, humanitarian operations and the delivery of assistance to the affected populations.

Within the framework of the mandate outlined above and in its AoR, the MNJTF contingents deployed within their national territories may carry out a number of tasks. These will include the following:

- i. conducting military operations to prevent the expansion of Boko Haram and other terrorist groups activities and eliminate their presence;
- ii. facilitating operational coordination amongst the affected countries in

- the fight against Boko Haram and other terrorist groups, including on the basis of the intelligence collected by the LCBC Member States and Benin and/or availed by external partners;
- iii. encouraging and facilitate the conduct of joint/simultaneous/coordinated patrols and other types of operations at the borders of the affected countries;
  - iv. preventing all forms of transfer of arms and ammunition and other type of support to Boko Haram and other terrorist groups;
  - v. ensuring, within its capabilities, the protection of civilians under immediate threat, IDP and refugee camps, humanitarian workers and other civilian personnel;
  - vi. actively searching for, and freeing all abductees, including the young girls abducted in Chibok in April 2014;
  - vii. undertaking effective psychological operations to encourage defections from Boko Haram and other terrorist groups;
  - viii. supporting, as maybe appropriate, the initial implementation phase of strategies for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of disengaged fighters into their communities ;
  - ix. contributing to the improvement and institutionalization of civil-military coordination, including the provision, upon request, of escorts to humanitarian convoys; (AU, 2015: 6-7)

### **Achievements, Challenges and Prospects of the Multi-National Joint Task Force**

There is no doubt that since the establishment of the MNJTF, it has

recorded some degree of success in the fight against terrorism within the sub—region. However, most works on the achievements of MNJTF are not thematically stated particularly as it relates to clear data and figures, geopolitical areas where such achievements are recorded. According to Oluwadare (2016) the MNJTF, with its headquarters in Ndjamena, has been able to canalize the insurgents and restrict them within the Sambisa forest as the push against them was on all fronts. The present situation sees the fighting deescalating given the successes that the MNJTF has achieved. For instance, the cases of bombing have drastically reduced since the line of supply of the insurgents had been cut. They now lack food and ammunition, and even communication to the outside world seems to have been reduced. Other achievements of the MNJTF include an improvement of the security situation as many of the territories hitherto controlled by the insurgents have been taken back and people are returning home.

It was based on the foregoing that Feltman, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, posit that:

We commend the Lake Chad Basin countries' efforts to combat Boko Haram. The regional offensive involving Chadian, Cameroonian, Nigerien and Nigerian troops operating under the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) has recaptured 80 per cent of the areas once under Boko Haram control, freed thousands of captives and prevented terrorist attacks (Feltman, 2016:2).

In the view of Zamfir (2015), the approach adopted by the AU has raised some doubts among commentators. As

far as the timeframe is concerned, logistical difficulties, together with the attitudes of the countries involved – which have always tended to focus more on their own interests than on a regional approach – could delay the operationalization of this force. However, recent efforts suggest that the force could take shape soon. The number of troops is seen as insufficient to combat Boko Haram effectively, given its military capacity. The problem of funding has not yet been solved, and it will require the UN to set up a fund for the operations.

In relations to poor funding Feltman (2016:2) maintains that:

MNJTF's main challenge remains a severe lack of funding. The 1 February African Union donor conference aimed to mobilize \$750 million, of which only \$250 million was pledged; even less was disbursed. The success of MNJTF operations also depends on timely and actionable intelligence as well as specialized counter-terrorism skills and equipment, given the evolving tactics of Boko Haram.

Feltman further posits thus:

So far, the Lake Chad Basin countries have borne the financial responsibility of combating Boko Haram despite their own economic crises. As President Deby Itno explained to me with frustration, they have been forced to divert national spending away from basic services to security. Lake Chad Basin leaders have expressed their growing impatience over delays by international partners to support the MNJTF financially (Feltman, 2016:2)

During the period under consideration, the Boko Haram terrorist group has continued to carry out numerous attacks, targeting civilians, police, churches, mosques, and public

facilities, including schools. In early January 2015, Boko Haram overran a military base in northeastern Nigeria that was the headquarters of the MNJTF located in Baga, Borno State. The group then forced thousands of people from the region, burnt and destroyed homes and businesses, and committed mass killings. Mention should also be made of the 10 and 11 January 2015 suicide bombings in Maiduguri, Borno State, and Potiskum, Yobe State, reportedly involving children coerced by Boko Haram to act as suicide bombers (AU, 2015).

Attacks by Boko Haram continue, mainly in north-eastern Nigeria and southern Niger, and to a lesser extent in northern Cameroon and the Lac region of Chad. Terrorists persist in targeting innocent civilians, often using young children. Despite commendable regional efforts, the group continues to threaten regional stability, as illustrated by the 3 June attack on a military base in Bosso town, south-eastern Niger (Feltman, 2016).

The most recent is the abducted four persons contracted by the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) for oil exploration in the Lack Chad Basin among whom were lecturers of the University of Maiduguri on the 28th of July, 2017. This view was captured by Sahara Reporters (2017) when it they claimed that:

The so-called Islamic State faction of the sectarian terrorist group, Boko Haram, has claimed responsibility for the attack on a military-escorted convoy of oil exploration workers in the Chad Basin. Scores of soldiers and civilians died in the ambush. According to sources within the leadership of the insurgent group, the Islamist terrorists did not

immediately realize the composition of the convoy when they launched their attack. Such attacks on convoy are a common occurrence in Nigeria's beleaguered northeast zone where Boko Haram militants have been most active

This view was further confirmed by Zamfir, (2015: 6), when he claimed that:

At the beginning of 2015, the MNJTF headquarters fell into the hands of Boko Haram militants, together with the town of Baga in north-eastern Nigeria where it was sited. It appears that, by that time, only troops from Nigeria were stationed there, as Niger and Chad had withdrawn their own troops because of security risks.

It is important to note that defence is an expensive venture and defence alliances are even more expensive. Hence the inability of the UN Secretary-General to establish the Trust Fund for the sustenance of the MNJTF operations as proposed and the mobilization of the necessary international financial and logistical support constitute a major challenge to the MNJTF.

All these challenges notwithstanding, the MNJTF has a lot of prospects. For the fact that ECOWAS, African Union and the United Nations see the MNJTF as a laudable mechanism means they seriously believe that the MNJTF if well managed and operationalized has what it takes to counter Boko Haram within the Sub-region. The establishment of the UN Trust Fund for the sustenance of the MNJTF will go a long way to address the challenge of funding. For the fact that the LCBC members are presently victims of Boko Haram and Benin a potential victim will motivate them to be more committed since their collective interest is at stake.

The MNJTF, established by the Lake Chad Basin countries to combat Boko Haram, still struggles to demonstrate its effectiveness. Observers also continue to question to what extent it is operational. Yet despite the numerous political, logistical, technical and financial challenges it has been facing, the MNJTF is gradually gaining grounds.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

Military alliances are an important strategy for curbing threats and the MNJTF as a military alliance has contributed in no small way in combating Boko Haram terrorism within the Lake Chad sub-region. However, the LCBC must realize that military approach is not the only panacea to combating terrorism. Hence, there is the need to address the socio-economic and political situations that led to the emergence of terrorism in the region.

Specifically, the following are critical to containing the spread or popularity of the philosophy of violence advanced by the terrorist group:

- i. There is need to convey of a donors' conference to mobilize resources for the MNJTF and appeal to the international partners to support the implementation of the LCBC strategy against Boko Haram;
- ii. There is the need for the United Nations to urgently establish the Trust Fund for the sustenance of the MNJTF so as to address the challenge of funding;
- iii. The African Union also needs to go beyond condemning the activities of Boko Haram in principle, but giving practical military and financial support to the MNJTF. The AU needs to take pro-active steps to address the challenge of terrorism

before it spreads to other parts of the continent;

- iv. The MNJTF's partners should give concrete effect to their pledges of material, financial and technical

assistance in order to strengthen operational capacities (mobility, communications, intelligence) that would enable it to operate effectively

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# The Polemics between Reproductive Rights and Environmental Sustainability

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**Abstract:** Sustainability- which connotes development that benefits the present generation without impairing the future generations' ability to meet their needs- is a common term in the social sciences. However, population growth and the demand it imposes on a sustainable environment, particularly with the challenge of climate change, have been major human concerns. The linkage between population growth and global climate change has resulted in various prescriptions and propositions aimed at reducing population through family planning and abortion. The introduction of such mechanisms has led to agitation from women's groups, who argue that such approach infringes on women's reproductive rights. The growing tension and debate have exacerbated concerns about what should be most important: enforcing women's rights or sourcing alternatives for addressing climate change? Using a qualitative and descriptive approach, based on secondary data, this paper addresses the following: should protecting women's rights be at the expense of addressing climate change? Should protecting the environment be pursued even at the cost of putting women's health at risk? The study found, among other things, that women are most vulnerable to global climate change and other environmental hazards. Therefore, this paper maintains that while addressing women's rights and climate change remain fundamental, sustainability requires much more than balancing population growth and combating the challenges posed by climate change. It recommends alternative strategies that protect women's rights while addressing environmental concerns.

**Key words:** Reproductive Rights, Global Climate Change, Population, Sustainability

## **Introduction**

Climate change is the biggest global health threat of the 21st century and its impact is felt all around the world (Costello, et al. 2009). The causes and consequences of global climate change (GCC) for humanity have been the subject of intellectual discourse and global debates. Numerous causes of global climate change have been documented; however, a fundamental cause of GCC that has been of global concern is the role of an increasing population in exacerbating greenhouse emissions. While population growth and explosion remain a concern, how to handle it remains controversial, particularly in the circles of those who believe that any attempt to control population growth infringes more on the reproductive rights and health of women. Others also have argued that population control is a conspiracy of western powers to reduce the population of developing countries; and some are of the view that population control is critical to avoiding the Garret Hardin metaphor of the sinking ship (popularly called the tragedy of the commons).

It is against this background that the present study undertakes a critical appraisal of the varying views, while pointing out the loopholes in the numerous arguments and providing alternatives to environmental stability beyond population control. The first section of the paper provides a theoretical framework drawn from feminist theory; the second section offers conceptual clarification on global climate change and reproductive rights; while the third section examines the debate on population control and reproductive rights.

## **Theoretical Framework**

There is a broad variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives to climate change, including (but not limited) to realism, neoliberal institutionalism, Marxism, dependency theory, functionalism, neo-functionalism, and risk theories. While many of these paradigms have been tools for examining climate change, it is laden with numerous limitations. One such limitation is that these approaches have paid little or no attention to gender. These limitations necessitate the consideration of a complementary approach, which focuses on a vital unit of analysis that has been exempted from all theoretical discourses on climate change for decades (Preet, Nilsson, Schumann and Evenga, 2010)

There are numerous and prominent feminist scholars with each focusing on diverse aspects of gender relations, issues, experience and status. Significant amongst them are Barbara Risman, Joan Brumberg, Carol Gilligan, Patricia H. Collins, Sandra Harding, Dorothy E. Smith (Lord, et al.2009). It is pertinent to note that although feminist writers cover a wide scope, the general basis of their argument is that in international relations, as in most political and economic activities, there is patriarchal dominance (Archer, 2001).

Feminism is characterized by two distinctive features. The first is the focus on women as historical victims and men as victors. For feminists, the world is seen in a masculine way that favours the position of males in the hierarchy and devalues the contributions of women (Archer, 2001). Secondly, all feminists contend that women constitute an historically underprivileged, underrepresented and

under-recognized social group (Weber 2005:85). The scope of feminist discourse spans all facets, ranging from culture to law. Feminist activists have advocated women's legal rights (rights of contract, property rights, voting rights); women's right to bodily integrity and autonomy; abortion rights; and reproductive rights (including access to contraception and quality prenatal care).

However, as it relates to climate change, feminism is of the view that "women make up a large number of the poor in communities that are highly dependent on local natural resources for their livelihood and are disproportionately vulnerable to and affected by climate change" (Women's Environment and Development Organization, 2007). Feminists have pointed to the fact that climate change is not gender-blind. This is because of women's limited access to resources and also because women in rural areas in developing countries have the majority of the responsibility for the household water supply and energy for cooking and heating, as well as for food security, and as such they are negatively affected by drought, uncertain rainfall and deforestation (WEDO 2007, Parbring, 2009:2). Similarly, technological developments related to climate change do not take into account women's specific priorities (CSW 2008).

Fundamentally, the lack of a gender perspective on global climate change is well articulated at the 52nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women in 2008. The commission stated, among other things, that "The climate change efforts at the national, regional and international levels-including policies, strategies, action

plans and programmes- are lacking in gender perspectives. Secondly, financing mechanisms on climate change are rigid and do not reflect women's priorities and needs. Thirdly, that there is the exemption of active participation of women in the development of funding criteria and allocation of resources for climate change initiatives, particularly at local levels" (Commission on the Status of Women 2008).

In sum, the advocacy of the feminists' movement on climate change is advancing the need for a gender perspective on mitigation (a process of curbing greenhouse emission from human activities). Also, feminists advance the need to provide gender-sensitive guidance to international bodies as they further develop policies and programmes in climate change. However, in spite of the feminist concerns expressed above, Ruddick 1996 contends that feminism is overly concerned with women and that such scholarship is narrow and its research programme is therefore normatively based. Put differently, feminism is driven by the normative agenda and this, according to Ruddick, has no place in proper scholarship.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

The terms 'climate change' and 'reproductive rights' need clarification. Climate change, like every other term in the social sciences, has been defined in several ways; but the most widely used definition is the one given by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which defines climate change as "a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to

natural climate variability observed over comparable time” (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2001). Simply put, it is the change in atmospheric composition beyond normal level. Similarly, reproductive rights have been defined in several ways over the years. The UN Report of the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, in 1994, gives a comprehensive definition of reproductive rights. Reproductive rights encompass all human rights already entrenched in national laws, international laws and international human rights documents.

Reproductive rights rest on the recognition of the basic rights of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so, and the right to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health. It also includes the right to make decisions concerning reproduction free of discrimination, coercion and violence, as expressed in human rights documents (UN Report, 1994).

This all-encompassing definition sees reproductive rights as a human right, which is protected by law and violation of which infringes on the fundamental right and dignity of the people involved. Therefore, “Reproductive rights, therefore, refer to rights of men and women to be informed and to have access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of family planning of their choice, as well as other methods of their choice for regulation of fertility which are not against the law” (Weibel, 2005).

### **Global Climate Change, Population and Reproductive Rights: The Debate**

Numerous factors have been identified as a major cause of climate change, but little attention has been paid to the role of population in contributing to climate change. Increasing population places a great demand on the environment. More population will need new houses, which means more trees will be cut down to build houses and provide furniture for classrooms, more water (for food, industry and household use), carbon (for food and fuel), nitrogen (for fertilizer) and land (for crops, pastures and cities) (Irish Times, 2011). Population growth is generating an extraordinary range of negative effects from climate change and resources exhaustion to the destruction of species and habitat and the poisoning of the biosphere (Nicholson-Lord 2007: 245).

Population growth has led to increasing demands for energy and land resources. Through the burning of fossil fuels to produce energy for industrial use, transportation, and domestic power, and through land-use change for agriculture and forest products, humans have been altering the Earth’s energy balance (CCIR, NYC, 2005: 2). Put differently, over the past century meeting human needs for food, fresh water, fuel and other resources has had major negative effects on the world’s ecosystems (Easton, 2007: XXVI). There are seven billion people on the planet, and each one, on average, is responsible for the release, each year, of a bit more than four tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere (Sachs 2012).

It is significant to note that population trends have been studied by several scholars, among whom are Thomas Malthus and Paul Ehrlich. Malthus noted that the population is growing at a geometric rate, while food production is growing at an arithmetic rate. Over

time, the population will outgrow food production and as such there will be crisis. Applied to climate change, population is far outgrowing earth resources.

Furthermore, Paul Ehrlich notes in his work, *The Population Bomb* the ecological threats of a rapidly growing population; and Garret Hardin's influential essay *The Tragedy of the Commons* describes the negative implications of using self-interest alone to guide the exploitation of publicly owned resources such as air and water. In 1972, a group of people popularly called the Club of Rome published *The Limit of Growth: An Analysis of Population, Resources Use and Pollution Trends*, which predicted difficult times within the century. The study was redone as *Beyond the Limits to Growth: Confronting Global Collapse, Envisioning Sustainable Future*, which came to a similar conclusion that an increasing population is affecting climate change (Easton, 2007: XX). In the 1960's and 1970's, this was expressed as the "spaceship Earth" metaphor, which stated that given the limited supplies of energy, resources, there is need to limit population growth and industrial activity, conserve and recycle in order to avoid crucial shortages (Easton, 2007:20-21)

Similarly, the increase in population coupled with the increasing demand for transportation led to the era of Fordism, which is the period of mass production of cars which led to increase in the atmospheric concentration of carbon, with implications for climate change. Thus, there is a co-relation between population, mass production of cars and the concentration of greenhouse gas (Brand and Gorg, 2008). However, it

should be noted that Fordism was dominated by men and not women, and it was only recently that women started to be an integral part of the global economy. According to Mark Diesendorf,

Greenhouse gas emissions, peak oil, urban traffic congestion, air and water pollution, loss of soils and destruction of biodiversity are driven by three factors: population, consumption per person and technological impact. Populationists thus draw a direct co-relation between population size and environmental destruction: the more people, the more pollution and the more vulnerable humans are to effect climate change" (cited in Moore, 2009)

It is important to note that it is the threat that population and human activity pose to environment that brings the issue of sustainable development to the forefront of discourse of climate change. According to the United Nations report "Our Common Future", 'sustainable development' means development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Easton, 2007: 20-21). According to Brand and Gorg (2008: 28) sustainable development seeks to make serious fundamental changes to societal patterns of development including its power structure, modes of production, and consumption.

It is significant to note also that population growth also has implications for national and global security. For instance, McNeil (1982) observes that the 44 percent rise in population between 1715 and 1789 was responsible for the destabilization of France's old regime. Also, in the year after the French Revolution, the increasing

peasant population was responsible for the rebellion that demolished the old order and prepared the way for totalitarian regimes in Russia, China and elsewhere (cited in Orme, 1998:557). In addition, Eric Wolf's research has shown that one common thread in most revolutionary situations was the explosive growth of population leading to misery of the rural poor. According to Jake Goldstone, all of the major upheavals in modern Chinese history (the collapse of the Ming dynasty, tailing rebellion and the revolution of 1911 and 1949) were preceded by a sharp deterioration in the land to labour ratio. That is, population was outweighing available resources (Orme, 1998: 557). Population and its continued growth put at risk the social and institutional resilience needed to adapt and mitigate the impacts of climate change, ranging from sea-level rise to more extreme weather events (Engelmann, 2010).

Scholars have noted that there are lots of advantages to population control. The case for population decline includes: less pollution, less strain on natural systems, greater national self-sufficiency, reduction in fossil-fuel emissions, freeing up of land for other species and higher-order human uses, such as enjoying wilderness reserves. This final advantage is what the economist, Fred Hirsch calls "positional goods" such as an aerial view, an unspoiled beach, a piece of heritage. Applied to social and economic life, population control might reduce the awful sense of competitiveness for jobs, at school, university, or for entry to prized social institution or niches (Nicholson-Lord 2007:243). This argument in favour of population control has sparked off the debate in the

environment movement, on the role of population control in providing a solution to climate change.

The first proponent against population control argued that there is no connection between population rise and climate change. Moore (2009) observed that Japan's 21<sup>st</sup> population rose in 2004 to about 127.8 million and is now in decline. And yet in 2012, the Japanese government announced that Japan's greenhouse gas emissions hit a record high in the year 2008 than it was in 2003 when population was high. Similarly, Cuba's population rose from 1990 to 2004, the Cuban population grew by about 1 million or 8.5%. During the same period, total carbon dioxide emissions fell from 32 million tonnes to 25.8 million tonnes; so, a decline in population has no direct link to a decline in emissions. Thus, there was no correlation between population growth and an increase in carbon emissions; moreover, a decline in population does not automatically lead to a cut in emissions (Moore, 2009).

The second proponents are of the view that there is a correlation between population and climate change and that to address this imbalance (between population and earth resources) there must be a reduction in what we consume and the number of people consuming it (Addison 2009). Thus, the best way to balance the sustainability equation is to stop population growth since rapid population growth and fossil fuel emissions are two major causes of climate change. For instance, statistics show that since 1800, the world population has grown sevenfold, while per capita of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions have increased 150 times (Seager, 2012).

The need to reduce population growth has led to the need to introduce family

planning, birth control pills and other population control strategy such as the one child policy in China. However, there is a concern that policies to slow growth will violate the right of couples to determine their own family size. Also, population is associated with sensitive issues including sexuality, contraception, abortion, migration, and religion (Engelmann, 2010). It is significant to note that one major drawback in numerous literatures on the correlation between climate change and population is the lack of gender sensitivity in analyses of the effect of birth control on women. Most literatures do not acknowledge that women bear most of the burden on the implications of birth control. Similarly, there is an agenda to constantly prevent the publication of data on the implication of birth control for women's health. For instance, despite the fact that 18 scientific studies in

domestic and foreign medical journals have proven that there is a direct relationship between first-trimester abortions and breast cancer, all efforts to publicize that information in the United States have been consistently obstructed by those favoring abortion and population control (Monteith, 2003).

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

Having examined the debate on climate change and its implication for the reproductive rights of women, it is important to note that although climate change and population are linked, the solution to climate change rests not in controlling population, as it has been argued by some scholars; rather it lies in other alternative methods which have been advanced such as the use of less polluting technology, alternative energy sources such as solar, wind, and hydro power, and eco-friendly products and energy-saving devices.

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# Old Allies and New Friends in Nigeria's External Relations

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**Abstract:** Nigeria's external relations could be categorized into three eras viz, the colonial era, post-colonial period (when military rule dominated the political scene) and the period from 1999 to date, when democratic governance begins to take roots. During each era, the country's external relations were premised on various factors, such as the form and structure of government, concurrent international political and economic dispensation, idiosyncrasies of the political class, and the economic prowess of the country at the material time. These patterns have determined the friends or allies or otherwise for Nigeria since the colonial times. In essence, the country has tended to develop closer relationships with one country than the other within the international system. In the light of the foregoing submissions, this paper examines the basic trends in Nigeria's external relations and observes that such factors as inconsistent policies, undemocratic practices, mono-economy, and insecurity, among others have continued to affect Nigeria's status among the comity of nations. While adopting a qualitative research methodology, the paper concludes that Nigeria needs to re-energize her national interests in order to gain her rightful place among the comity of nations.

**Keywords:** Allies, Alliance, Bilateralism, Multilateralism, National Interest

## Introduction

Inter-state relations could be traced to the early times of political organization. Ever since the Treaty of Westphalia of the 17th century that berthed modern nation-state system, the practice of

international relations has continued to evolve. This evolution, as correctly demonstrated by Palmer and Perkins (2004: 17), includes the growth of representative government, industrial and technological advancements that

have continued to enhance the globalization process, population increases, increased international economic interconnectedness, the evolution and development of international law, the growth of normative diplomatic practices, new dimensions in international conflict and conflict management, and a host of other international activities.

In summary, international relations encompass the political, economic, and socio-cultural interactions/affiliations among international actors (Adeniran, 1983: 11). These interactions have been dynamic over the centuries. In the same vein, Nigeria's international relations have not been static. From the colonial to the post-colonial periods, the nature of the country's international relations has continued to be dynamic based on her interactions with other countries of the world. The pace of the country's international relations was specifically determined by the British during colonial rule, but at independence, Nigerian political leaders began to determine the foreign policy or external relations of the sovereign state. In order to examine the trends in the country's external relations, this paper is structured into six sections-introduction, conceptual clarification, the country's international relations during the colonial era and the period between 1960 and 1999, the period from 1999 to date and conclusion.

### **Conceptual Clarification: Allies, Bilateralism, and Multilateralism**

The word "allies" is a derivative of the word "alliance", which in the context of International Relations connotes the formulation of closer and enduring socio-economic and political affiliations, particularly among states, usually based on an agreement of

mutual assistance or/benefits. Alliance formation is a common phenomenon of international relations throughout ages. Allies in international relations are therefore the actors that engage in alliance almost on a permanent basis. In the opinion of Liska (1968: 12), "alliance is a formal association between two or more states against the threat of a third". Nigeria's external relations since 1914 were no exception to the general practice of alliance formation because she has entered into different bilateral and multilateral alliances. However, the country has traditional allies and new friends within the international system. The traditional allies of the country are the states with which the country has continued to maintain closer and persistent relations for a very long period such as Britain and the United States.

Bilateralism is one of the major features of the international system. It is a form of political, economic, and socio-cultural collaborations between two sovereign states, in most cases for mutual interests. Usually, the recognition of the sovereignty and autonomy of a particular state guarantees the development of her diplomatic relations with other states. A cursory look at contemporary international relations would demonstrate that bilateral relations between states are dominated by economic relations. In the same vein, Nigeria had established diplomatic relations and had made economic and security agreements, treaties, and pacts with various nations across the globe on bilateral bases.

Multilateralism is one of the major instruments of international relations. It involves the establishment of diplomatic and economic

interconnections among three or more sovereign states through consummation of agreements and treaties. In modern multilateralism, institutional frameworks are established to guarantee the management and supervision of the objectives of the multinational agreements. Multinational organizations such as United Nations, World Trade Organization and others are the dominant of contemporary multilateralism. Nigeria has engaged in much multilateralism, particularly after independence, by belonging to such organizations as United Nations, African Union, ECOWAS and the Commonwealth of Nations.

### **Nigeria's External Relations during the Colonial Era**

Administratively, the amalgamation of the Southern and Northern protectorates in 1914 was the precursor to what is now called Nigeria, the largest of all the countries that were so created by the colonialists (Crowder, 1968:118). Colonialism could simply be defined as the occupation and control of an area by a foreign power. Colonial rule reigned in Nigeria for a century beginning with the annexation of Lagos in 1914 till independence in 1960. During this period, the pace of the country's external relations and foreign policies was solely the business of the colonial government. However, it must be stressed that economic interactions with Britain and some other countries had been established before colonial rule. Between 1850 and 1900, trade in agricultural produce, which was paramount to the industrial development in Europe dominated Nigeria's external relations with Britain, France and Germany. During this period, there were no formal diplomatic relations with these

countries, majorly because the various parts of the country were yet to be woven together as one nation.

Between 1900 and 1960, the socio-political and economic landscape of Nigeria was subjected to the British economic interests. Colonial economic policies were formulated to ensure that the country and its people were integrated into the British international economy. During this period, it was a master-servant relationship and the Nigeria's human, natural, and mineral resources were maintained for the benefits of the colonial power, Britain. Nigeria thus existed as an appendage of the British government where an imbalance trade relationship was created with the entire capitalist world. This submission has been corroborated by Claude Ake (1981:52) who emphasizes that the colonial administration only promoted the cultivation and export of commodities that were only profitable to it.

Although it is not controvertible that Britain dominated the major space of Nigeria's external relations during this period, other countries such as Germany, United States and Japan also had some stakes in the country's external relations, particularly in the area of trade and commerce. For instance, Okuntola (2005: 19) asserts that some German trading firms were major buyers of the Nigerian kernels. Ukaogo (2003: 361) also averred that a German company pioneered oil exploration in Lagos in 1908. However during the World Wars, Nigeria's external economic relations with these countries took another dimension in order to protect the British economic interests. For example, all German trading firms were banned from trading with Nigeria. The aim of the British

was to cripple the German economy; this is without minding the effect on Nigeria's economy. Apart from Germany, the United States also was active in economic interactions with Nigeria. Between 1922 and 1927, United States' importations into Nigeria consistently increased and became more solidified after the Second World War (Okuntola: 2005).

Another country that also had a meaningful economic tie with Nigeria during the colonial era was Japan. Nigeria-Japan trade relations began as early as 1914 when it imported goods worth 131 pounds to Nigeria (Ogunremi, 2004: 8). Japan's earliest exports consisted of almost wholly agricultural, fishing, and mineral products. As from 1920, textiles, boots and shoes dominated Japan's importation to Nigeria. Although the economic relations between the two countries continued to increase during the colonial period, it must be noted that the trade relations was a one-sided situation. However, Nigeria-Japan trade relations had to be sacrificed for the expansion of British economy during the Great Depression. The Imperial Preference System thus imposed quota on Japanese textiles between 1932 and 1937. Import duties were also imposed on some other Japanese goods such as galvanized iron sheets, paints, shirts, and singlets to reduce their competitiveness with British manufactured items.

In a nutshell, the dimension of Nigeria's external relations during the colonial period was majorly on economic activities. This was because the sole aim of colonial rule was economic exploitation (Olashore, 1991:5). Also, there was absence of political autonomy to establish formal socio-political and

diplomatic relations with other countries except Britain.

### **Nigeria's International Friends and Allies, 1960 – 1999**

By October 1960, Nigeria had become politically independent. The direction of the country's international relations during the period after independence was influenced by such factors as the quest for a world free of colonization, the bipolarity of the international system, the Nigerian Civil War, military intervention in politics, the economic prowess of the country, the international economic relations, and other factors. Majorly, the external relations of the country were influenced by the foreign policy framework of successive administrations.

The foundation of the post-independence external relations of Nigeria was laid during the closing period of colonial rule under the supervision of the British. The Prime Minister, Tafawa Balewa was reported to have articulated the decision of the country to maintain friendly ties with all nations across the globe and participate in the activities of the United Nations and the Commonwealth of Nations. Also, Nigeria decided not to form alliance with any power bloc and was a leading crusader of the non-alignment principle. Africa was projected as the fulcrum of Nigeria foreign policy and she was committed to the decolonization process and solving problems of African countries. Except for the Civil War and military interventions in the politics of the country, these factors dominated the direction of the country's external relations.

Nigeria took some very decisive international relations stance during the early years of independence. Her

engagements in bilateral and multilateral relations were noticeable as she became member of such organizations as the United Nations, Organization of African Unity (now African Union), the Non-Alignment Movement, and others. She sustained relations with her colonial master by becoming a member of the Commonwealth of Nations. Also, she established some relations with the European Economic Commission. Also, Nigeria established correspondent diplomatic missions with various countries across the globe. However, it must be emphasized that her foreign relations during this early period was preponderantly pro-West.

In the realm of bilateral relations, Nigeria did not hesitate to break diplomatic ties with France in 1961 when France tested an atomic bomb in the Sahara Desert. The action was against the firm warning by Nigeria having observed that the test was going to be injurious to Nigeria and some other African countries. Thus, Nigeria imposed stern economic measures on France, first banning all ship movements of French origins from navigating the coastal areas of Nigeria. However, these stringent decisions were reversed because of the negative impacts on many neighbouring countries like Senegal, Togo, Benin and others which had massive economic dependencies on France. Also during this period, Nigeria maintained unfriendly posture towards Portugal because of her colonial activities in Angola. Nigeria led other African countries out of a General Assembly meeting of the United Nations because of this issue, until Portugal was asked to leave the meeting.

In the case of apartheid South Africa, Nigeria along with 25 other African states drafted and sponsored a strongly worded resolution which sort to impose sanctions on the apartheid regime but the Western Powers opposed this and supported a resolution that was weak and incapable of dismantling apartheid immediately. For Nigeria, the first step was for the apartheid government of South Africa to withdraw from the Commonwealth of Nations. In June 1961, the Nigerian Minister of Labour moved a resolution to compel South Africa to quit the ILO. The motion was carried and South Africa had to leave the ILO meeting. In order to quicken the dismantling of racism and colonialism in the continent, Nigeria also supported the South-Western African People Organization (SWAPO).

The Nigerian Civil War had a huge impact on the country's external relations, particularly at that material time. As a result of the Civil War, Nigeria broke diplomatic relations with countries like Ivory Coast, Gabon, Tanzania, and Zambia. This was because all of these countries supported and recognized Biafra. President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia supported the Biafra because they had their own fundamental problems with Britain on the Rhodesia question. Both Gabon and Ivory Coast provided the channels through which French military assistance were supplied to Biafra. Though Britain maintained a pro-federal government posture during the period of hostilities, public opinions in England were anti-federal government. British support for the federal government was majorly influenced by factors such as her foreign investments in Nigeria,

particularly her economic interest in the Nigerian oil (William, 1978:39). However, it must be added that Britain displayed some questionable posture towards Nigeria during the War; example was its embargo on arms sales to Nigeria in 1968 (Aworawo: 2003). The United States maintained a pro-federal government posture, though she later raised alarm about genocide (Achebe: 2012). Though the United Nations espoused a neutral position during the war, its decision was in the long run pro-federal government.

As for France, it maintained the balance by supporting Biafra, relying on the logistics provided by both Ivory Coast and Gabon. However, it must be stated that despite her support for the Biafra, France did not pronounce a formal recognition for Biafra. French support for the Biafra is understandable; one Nigeria (because of her large size and economic potentials) remained a constraint to France political and economic dominance in West Africa. Secondly, the stringent policies that were imposed on France after the atomic test were regarded as an affront on French status as a Superpower. Portugal also supported the balkanization of Nigeria because she felt that this would diminish Nigeria's influence in Africa and enhance her (Portugal's) colonial interest on the continent. On the other hand, the Civil War consolidated the nascent external relations between Nigeria and the Soviet Union (William, 1978:36). This relationship was particularly engendered by the lackadaisical attitude of the "West" towards the federal government in the cause of the Civil War. In 1967, a "Cultural Cooperation Agreement" was signed between both countries. The Soviet Union did sold

sophisticated military weapons and provided technical training to the Nigerian troops.

The Organization of African Unity (now African Union) supported the federal government. At a Conference in Kinshasa in 1967, the organization resolved that the territorial integrity of Nigeria remained sacrosanct and gave recognition to only the federal government. However, some neighbouring countries such as the Republic of Benin were used by pro-Biafra governments for the shipment of war implements. Nigeria was accused of neglecting her neighbouring states' problems for more distant international issues like apartheid in South Africa. Arising from this, attempts were made to normalize relations with these states immediately after the war. Nigeria embarked on joint economic ventures with some of these states, especially Benin, Togo, and Serra Leone on bilateral basis, to improve her inter-state relations with them. Nigeria's road to economic buoyancy began close to the end of hostilities and this has a lot of influence on her external relations. The end of the Civil War was followed by a boom in the Nigerian Petroleum Industry (Fawole, 2003: 2). At that point, Nigeria emerged as the leading producer of petroleum in the African continent. The new economic status actually influenced the dimensions of Nigeria's foreign relations. First, Nigeria became a member of OPEC, which paved way for cordial diplomatic and economic relations with member-countries. Also, Nigeria was able to sever diplomatic relations with Israel in 1973, when other African nations were still foot-dragging on Israel's complexity in the murder of President Anwar Sadat of Egypt. The relation was

not restored until in the 1980's. In addition, Nigeria was able to give a lump sum of N19 Million to the Commonwealth Technical Cooperation and also decided to pay salaries of Civil Servants in Grenada. These steps help to enhance Nigeria's international image.

In 1975, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was formed to foster the inter-state economic relations across the West African sub-region. This sub-regional organization was supposed to become a melting point for development and Nigeria provided the most generous financial support, at a point paying about one-third of the annual budget of the organization. Apart from the pure economic consideration for the formation of ECOWAS, the forum was meant to provide a leeway for the eradication of the Anglophone/Francophone dichotomy in the West African sub-region, which underscored the political considerations for the formation (Edosie and Osagie, 1982: 41). In 1977, Nigeria hosted FESTAC 77, which made nations around the world begin to see Nigeria as an emerging force, both economically and politically. It was assumed that for a nation to have invested in such venture her economic prowess is not in doubt.

The increasing economic relations coupled with the decision to adopt the American model of presidential system of government promoted Nigeria's diplomatic ties with the United States in the late 1970's. The Nigerian Head of State at this period, Olusegun Obasanjo developed a personal relationship with President Jimmy Carter. An enduring economic and socio-political friendship was therefore promoted between both

countries and gradually Nigeria and United States became a sort of allies. The dictum, "no permanent friend, but permanent interest" manifested in the Nigeria-British relations. The Liberation struggle and emancipation of Africa caused a great deal of dissatisfaction between Nigeria and her erstwhile colonial master, Britain and also the United States. The British refusal to co-operate with Nigeria and Africa in general on the Rhodesian issue affected relations between the two countries for almost a decade. The British intransigent in Southern Africa led to the introduction of the indigenization policy of 1976 by the Obasanjo regime. Through this policy, Britain lost two vital companies to the Nigerian government; Barclay Bank and African Petroleum (Aworawo: 2003).

By 1979, Nigeria had been integrated into the capitalist structure of the international economy. Her dependency on oil revenue was increasingly massive and her focus on agriculture was overturned. The glut of the early 1980s in the petroleum market led to a substantial decrease in revenue for the country which impacted her external relations. The dimension of the country's external relations became nebulous during this period. On one hand, the country complained about the massive and illegal incursion of Ghanaians into her territory. On the other hand, she was committed to the emancipation of Southern Africa. Another good example was when Angola was raided in 1981; Nigeria and other African states sponsored a resolution condemning the raid on the floor of the United Nations General Assembly. The motion was carried but United States vetoed the resolution,

which earned the United States criticisms from many African States. But it must be stressed that economic cooperation and assistance from the United States was more paramount to Nigeria than the criticism. In 1982 the Nigeria Economy had been so battered to the extent that it took the intervention of Saudi Arabia and OPEC to put pressure on oil companies to keep buying Nigerian oil. As a result, stringent economic measures were introduced and many aliens from the member countries of ECOWAS were repatriated against ECOWAS principles. These have a lot of impact on Nigeria's external relations.

The military coup of December 31, 1983 ushered in the regime of Major-General Muhammad Buhari. The administration made efforts to use foreign policy as an effective instrument for rebuilding the economy and address the issue of internal security. Unlike the Gowon and Obasanjo era, when Nigeria sacrificed some of her economic interests on the altar of African unity, solidarity and emancipation, it was clear in Buhari's foreign policy posture that where the national interest of Nigeria conflicted with those of her neighbouring states in particular and Africa in general, there would be no automatic yielding to the later (Fawole: 2003).

Within the West African sub-region, the administration tried to maintain good neighbourliness through the principle of reciprocity. The administration entered into different bilateral dialogues with Benin, Cameroun, Chad and Niger. The essence was to assure these countries that the new administration was committed to a policy of good neighbourliness and expected that they would in turn assist Nigeria to cushion

security threats, smuggling and other hostile activities. However, when nefarious criminal/economic activities were persistent at a magnitude that was crippling the country's economy, the administration ordered the closure of its borders and ordered illegal aliens out of the country. These acts deepened the existing strained relationship between Nigeria and other ECOWAS states. Ghana, Senegal and Guinea expressed displeasure against this posture. Nigeria under Buhari did not make much impact on the South Africa situation. While other regime saw the issue of Liberation from the point of identifying with the oppressed black nations, Buhari saw it from the angle of national interest and security (Fawole, 2003: 36).

Nigeria's external relations during the rule of General Ibrahim Babangida also were constrained by the terrible economic conditions which the country was facing until the beginning of the oil price windfall arising from the Gulf crisis. During this period, such ideas and multilateral diplomatic instruments as the Concert of Medium Powers, the Technical Aid Corps Scheme (TACS) and the controversial Black Bomb were conceived. For example, the Concert was to bring together medium powers such as Switzerland, Austria, Yugoslavia, Brazil, India, and Nigeria in a forum to promote greater international relations. Through the TACS, Nigeria was able to provide manpower to countries like Cape Verde, Equatorial Guinea, Gambia, Jamaica, Kenya, Lesotho, Mozambique, Sierra Leone and others (Obi and Okwecheme, 2000: 77). The programme boosted the bilateral relations between Nigeria and these countries; for example, it made for the

establishment of the Jamaican High Commission in Lagos (Bamgbose, 2007: 85). Also, Nigeria was able to enter into financial agreements with Benin, Britain, Japan, India, Iran, Australia, Ghana, Angola and others.

In Africa, Nigeria maintained very active international relations as a "Big Brother". For example, she mediated in the border disputes between Mali and Burkina Faso in 1986. Also in the same 1986, Nigeria and some other member states of the Commonwealth boycotted the Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh, Scotland. This was as a result of the British opposition to sanctions against the apartheid regime in South Africa. The regime promoted good neighbourliness by re-opening the country's land borders. In recognition of this brotherly decision, ECOWAS gave Nigeria its chairmanship position in three consecutive years. In 1986, Nigeria championed the idea for a Non-Aligned Fund to assist the Southern African states which had been victims of destabilization by racist government. Also, Nigeria established the Namibia Solidarity Fund in June 1989, which had the financial and material contributions of Nigerians worldwide. Also during this era, both General Joseph Garba and Chief Emeka Anyaoku were appointed President of the 44th Session of UN General Assembly and Secretary-General of Commonwealth respectively (Bamgbose, 2007: 87).

The annulment of June 12, 1993 presidential elections marked a watershed in the annals of the country's foreign relations. Many of her allies and friends imposed a plethora of sanctions on the country. Her traditional allies like the United States and Great Britain severed relations with Nigeria

because of the annulment. This phase in the development of the country's external relations was compounded by the emergence of the General Sani Abacha regime, which engaged in human rights abuses on a massive scale, particularly the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and the other eight Ogoni activists. Nigeria's bilateral and multilateral relations suffered a setback. The Commonwealth of Nations suspended the country for two years, while Britain, United States, South Africa and all members of the European Union recalled their ambassadors from Nigeria (Ogaba, 1999: 67).

As a result of this international isolation, Nigeria began to develop closer ties with new friends such as Libya, Sudan, Gambia, Niger Republic, Iran, Iraq, Indonesia, North Korea, Malaysia, Turkey and China. General Abacha, while delivering an address at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA), emphasized that the policy shift from the traditional allies was a move towards developing closer relations with nations across the world. Ogaba (1993: 73) reasons that this policy shift was a confirmation of Nigeria's sovereignty in the international system. A prominent feature of this paradigm shift was the economic and political relations with China, which became more consolidated from this period onward. Areas of interconnections include oil production, railway development, seaports, mass-housing projects, and diplomatic collaborations. At the multilateral level, the Developing-8 (D-8) was formed to foster economic relations among member-states and counteract the activities of the G-7. Members of this body included Turkey, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Indonesia,

Malaysia, Iran, Egypt, and Nigeria (Ogaba, 1999: 68).

The sudden demise of Abacha marked another turning point in Nigeria's international relations. The country was in need of some ventilation against the huge amount of sanctions that were imposed by the West. It also needed to get out of the diplomatic isolation to which the Abacha regime had been confined. As such, a substantial part of the General Abubakar regime, which succeeded it was devoted to improving the country's battered image. General Abubakar engaged in many international trips to South Africa, France, United States, Britain and others in order to open the locked doors against the country. After a satisfactory transition programme to democracy, many countries (old friends and new allies) began to reestablish diplomatic ties with the country.

### **Nigeria's International Relations since 1999**

The military relinquished power to a democratically elected administration in May 1999. However, it must be emphasized that the change to democracy did not immediately translate to positive international inclinations towards the country. The new regime was expected to take the redemption crusade from where the General Abubakar administration stopped and ensure that Nigeria was re-integrated in the international system. It was this desire that culminated in the array of international trips during the first term of the Olusegun Obasanjo civilian administration. In order to achieve the re-integration, Nigeria opened new missions in Singapore, Mexico, Greece, Ukraine, Lebanon, Thailand, Turkey, and Bangladesh. Within a short space of time, the

country's international reputation was redeemed and her activeness in international engagements was immediately visible again. It should however be stressed that, as efforts were made to mend relations with her old allies, relations with the News Friends were also sustained.

As a result of her renewed international posture, Nigeria resumed her international activities. She was able to broker peace in distressed nations such as Sierra-Leone and Liberia. In 1999, President Obasanjo and Omar Bongo of Gabon launched the Gulf of Guinea Commission (CGC) on peace, stability and management of oil resources and to further economic integration. Members of the Commission were Angola, Cameroun, Congo Brazzaville, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Nigeria, and Sao Tome and Principe. The Gulf of Guinea is strategic in international relations because it harbours one of the biggest reserves of oil in the continent of Africa (Bamgbose, 2007: 146). Also, Nigeria entered into a bilateral treaty with Sao Tome and Principe in 2001. This treaty was a far-reaching co-operation between the two countries. It was aimed at promoting development and preventing conflict. Nigeria assisted Sao Tome and Principe to restore its ousted president in 2003. Also, when the government of President Kumba Yala of Guinea was toppled in 2003, Nigeria condemned the action as being completely against democracy. In Liberia, Nigeria was committed to ensuring peaceful atmosphere and deployed 2000 Nigerian Armies to Liberia. Nigeria also consolidated on Abacha regime's negotiation and resolution of the conflict in Sudan. In Togo, Nigeria's efforts at democratic transition after the demise of President

Gnassingbe Eyadema were significant. Also, Nigeria provided a huge financial assistance to the Republic of Niger, when the country was facing famine challenges in 2005. Again, Nigeria was very instrumental in the formation of New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) and transformation of OAU to AU (Bamgbose, 2007: 147).

Nigeria's relations with the United States were immediately regularized. Apart from the increase in the consumption of the Nigerian crude oil by the United States, the Open Skies Agreement was entered into with the United States. The essence was to enhance travel and trade, productivity, high quality job opportunities, and economic growth. Also, Nigeria was encouraged to tap into the AGOA policy of the US. However, it must be added that US-Nigeria relations had become tense at a point because of such issues as Nigeria's stance against same-sex marriages/intercourse, US's weak military assistance against Boko Haram, and US's drastic withdrawals from purchase of Nigeria's crude oil.

In the spirit of sportsmanship, Nigeria regularized its cordial relations with her traditional allies, particularly Britain. The British Prime Minister, Tony Blair visited Nigeria in 2002, to boost trade relations between the two countries. However, relations became a little frosty in 2005 when Britain pronounced a ban on Nigerian first timers between the ages of 18 and 30 from entering the United Kingdom. Nigeria and Britain signed NIGERSAT-2 on November 6, 2006. The bilateral agreement was with the British Satellite Specialist Survey Technology Limited (SSTL). The pact was to supply Nigeria with ground infrastructure to further establish a national indigenous space capability.

To her new friends, the democratic government also promoted bilateral and multilateral economic and diplomatic relations. International relations were developed with the Middle East and Asia. Relations between Nigeria and Iran became cordial and a Memoranda of Understanding were consummated between the two countries which focused on grants to Nigeria for a feasibility study on the establishment of a transformer-manufacturing plant, and on cooperation between the then National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) and the Iranian Power Company (Bamgbose, 2007: 148).

The bilateral relations with the People's Republic of China became more concrete since the emergence of democracy in Nigeria. There were correspondent visitations between former Presidents Hu Jintao and Obasanjo, at which several agreements were signed on the areas of trade relations, railway assistance, financial grants, oil block grants, military cooperation and other bilateral relations. The Chinese private sector also had huge investment in various sectors of the Nigerian economy. During the period of insurgency in the oil-rich Niger Delta in the mid-2000's, the Nigerian government developed military cooperation with China for supply of arms and training of personnel.

Nigerian-German trade relations dated back to the colonial period as was illustrated in the third section of this paper. German products have been part of the Nigerian life before and since independence. The relations have increased since 1999; German Private Sector is heavily represented in the Nigeria economy judging by the fact that they are one of the most important trading partners of Nigeria particularly

in the areas of construction and automobiles. As part of efforts to consolidate these economic ties, the Jonathan administration partnered with the German Government to boost industrial skills development and improve access to finance for the Small and Medium Scale Enterprises across the country. Also, leading German companies like Julius Berger, a giant construction company in Nigeria, have added to economic relations between the two countries (Bamgbose, 2007: 146).

Mention must be made of the economic relations with Japan which had also existed since the colonial era. A formal diplomatic tie between the two countries began in 1964 with the establishment of the Japanese embassy in Lagos. Since this time, bilateral co-operations have been growing steadily until the 1990s when there was a downturn in the trade and commercial exchanges between Nigeria and Japan. Democracy and the economic reforms in the financial and investment sectors have recently led to an upsurge in the number of Japanese businessmen in the Nigeria. This is manifested in the pattern of the balance of trade which tilted towards Nigeria between 2002 and 2006 especially with the increase in the purchase of Nigeria's crude oil and petroleum products by Japan. Nigeria and Japan also collaborated in the area of educational development through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), which had sponsored educational exchange programmes, build schools and offer grants to scholars for specific studies in Japan. JICA also assisted Nigeria in the area of rural electrification and agricultural projects, such as rice production and milling in Edo and Imo States. In addition, Marubeni Corporation of

Japan is involved in the development of the country's energy sector. The corporation rehabilitated the Egbin Thermal Station in Ikorodu, Lagos. Other companies like Mitsubishi Company of Japan are also involved in power projects in Nigeria (Bamgbose, 2007: 149).

### **Conclusion**

Nigeria has interacted with many countries of the world on bilateral and/or multilateral basis. These interactions have been in the areas of trade and economic relations, security and alliance formations, diplomatic and political collaborations, and socio-cultural interconnections. The country's traditional allies outside Africa have been the United Kingdom, the United States, and member-countries of the European Union. But as a result of diplomatic isolation at some points, Nigeria made new allies and developed relations with them. These include China, Malaysia, Indonesia and some mid-east countries. Such factors as immense natural resources deposit, a rich cultural diversity, foreign direct investment opportunities, and population strength encouraged a fair number of countries around the world to move into bilateral relationships with Nigeria. Furtherance to this, the number of diplomatic missions of Nigeria, popularly acclaimed as the "giant of Africa" and "the most populous country in Africa" increased geometrically. However, it is observed that the country's external relations have been influenced in some ways by the dictum of "no permanent friend, but permanent interest". This is to illustrate that the template of the country has kept changing according to the dictates of her national interest.

In her century-long external relations, some factors have affected her status in the international system. One of these is over-reliance on one source of revenue-oil. This has continued to dictate the direction of her foreign relations because she has been friendlier with top buyers of her crude oil and countries that have huge foreign direct investment with her. Sometimes, her interests had been sacrificed on the altar of maintaining relations with these economic allies. Internal insecurity such as incessant religious violence, terrorism and insurgency have also been determinants of the country's international economic and political relations. In the face of these security challenges, the drive for foreign investment has been affected. Also the bid by the country to procure armaments and military support to cushion security challenges has really affected her relations with allies. The United States has drastically reduced her purchase of Nigerian crude oil, while South Africa once accused Nigeria of shady financial practices in the purchase of arms to counter terrorist acts. These positions have had negative impact on the country's international image.

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The issues of corruption and human rights abuses have been constraints to the place of the country in the international arena. The country has been rated low within the comity of nations because of these practices and these practices scare away genuine investors from Nigeria. A good example of this was during the era of the Abacha regime, which was notorious for gross human right abuses. For Nigeria to manifest her true status in the international system she must be able to harness her numerous potentials for sustainable development and stability. It is believed that no country would be able to call the shot in international relations without a solid national economy which must also be diversified. Apart from this, the foreign policy of the country must be definite and proactive enough to enhance her status within the globe. Contemporary international relations demand normative democratic practices for recognition in the global system. Nigeria needs to augment her democratic practices in order to boost her image within the comity of nations. This should be done without compromising her sovereignty and potentials as a regional political and economic power.

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# Critical Reflections on the Local Government System and Rural Development in Nigeria

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**Abstract:** The essence of local government system as one of the tiers of governments in Nigeria is predicated on the need to bring government closer to the populace at the grassroots, so as to promote their participation in governance and ensure rural development. However, the study critically reflects on the impact of local government in service delivery as well as addressing the pitfalls that have, over the years, shrunk the ability to achieve rural development among the rural dwellers. In holistic terms, it exposes the challenges that negate the attainment of rural development in various local governments in Nigeria. The study adopts secondary data, which were presented in textual form. Thus, descriptive and deductive logic was used as method of data analysis. Using System theory as a framework of analysis, the study discovered the factors that hinder the optimal performance of local government system towards attainment of rural development, namely: corruption, lack of autonomy, paucity of fund, non-periodic elections; conflict of inter-governmental relations, over-bloated workforce, high levels of partisanship, and joint-account syndrome. In addressing these pitfalls in local government system in Nigeria, the study recommends strong institutional building to fight corrupt practices in the local government system; granting of full financial autonomy; adequate funding as well as increment in the IGR's baseline of local government system; periodic elections as democratic principle; non-determination of the structure, finance, composition and function of local government by the state governments; right-sizing of

redundant staff; insulation of the local government system from partisanship, among others.

**Keywords:** Governance, Local Government System, Populace, Rural Development

## **Introduction**

The existence of local government system, among other tiers of government, is predicated on the need to bring government closer to the people at the grassroots, with a view to enhancing their participation in governance. It also tends to facilitate rural development at that level of government. Across national frontiers, local government system is practiced and patterned on the basis of external and internal inclinations. The former is historical, based on colonial influence, while the latter is based on geographical, economic, sociological and institutional factors prevalent in that country. In Nigeria, the development of local government system spans the era of the pre-colonization (a system that existed in a rudimentary order as the people administered and provided for themselves); the colonial era (an indirect rule system, which existed first in Northern Nigeria before its extension to Southern Nigeria); and the liberal democratic stage (a system introduced consequent upon the failure of colonial patterns and the demand for the people's greater participation (Enyi, 2014, p. 147 & 148).

From the colonial era, local government system in Nigeria has undergone various forms of transformation. The reform is geared towards actualizing the essence of its establishment through the stimulation of democratic self-government, encouragement of initiative and leadership potential, and mobilization of human and material resources for development at the local

level (Enyi, p. 172). The nature of changes differed among the component regions. In Southern Nigeria, reformations were made due to the criticisms of the elites against Native Authority but in northern Nigeria, the Native Authority survived and remained very strong until the collapse of the first Republic in 1966. The 1966 military coup and subsequent collapsing of the then three regions to twelve (12) states in 1967 made the system to be controlled by the federal and state governments.

The 1979 Constitution made provisions for democratization and devolution of powers or functions for local government administration in the country. The devolution of political authority in local government as prescribed by law though with controlled autonomy, guarantees democratic participation and the provision of local services and needs of the rural populace (Akpan, 1984, p. 28). The autonomy and democratic participation provided in the 1979 constitution has been shortchanged in the 1999 constitution which make the council an appendage to state government pursuant to Sections 7 & 8 of the 1999 Constitution (as amended). The local government system in Nigeria has been battling on how to enhance rural development; but, the interferences of state governments mitigate such effort. Most Local Government Areas in the country are plagued by state governments' interferences in governance and administration. These occur in ways like delay in the issuance of receipts,

approval of bye-laws, and approval of annual estimates, remittance of statutory allocation among others. It is against this backdrop that this study is carried out with a view to critically reflect on the justification of the existence, class character, challenges, and plausible ways to enhance local government system on rural development in Nigeria. In justification of this, the paper is divided into seven parts among which are: the introduction; problem statement; conceptual expositions; methodology and theoretical framework; the nexus between local government and rural development; challenges of local government on rural development; and conclusion and recommendations.

### **Analysis of the Problem**

Generally, the local government system exists to promote rural development within the arrays of its administrative governance. However, these expected roles in the provision of social amenities to improve the living standard of the rural dwellers in Nigeria have a cosmetic and symbolic outlook and as such, has not actually address or/and advance development in the scheme of governance for the rural populace. Due to the fact that local government establishment is of the essence for rural development, various reforms have been made by successive regimes/government with a view to finding lasting solution to sustainable development in the local government system. In spite of these reforms, a cursory look at this tier of government in Nigeria shows that they have performed abysmally low in developmental drives in recent times; particularly, in the Fourth Republic.

Ezeani (2005, p. 258) affirms that one of the reasons of establishing local

government system is to complement the state and central government in the provision of services to grassroots population in their respective areas of authority. However, the rural people who ought to benefit from local government system as a government that is closer to them and exists to meet their needs are bereft of developmental fortunes. Why this unpleasant scenario? Is it that there are no ways to enhance optimal performance of local government system so as to leverage development in the rural areas or that the class character of the local government is the bane to rural development in Nigeria?

The rural dwellers with about 70% of the population of the country are faced with depressingly meager annual per-capita income, poor houses, and various forms of social and political isolation in their respective local governments. This punctuates the justification for the creation of local government system in Nigeria. The existing analyses on local government system and rural development in extant literature have suffered from important shortcoming because the link between local government system and rural development in Nigeria is yet to be accorded systematic scrutiny. It is based on this knowledge gap that this study seeks to critically reflect on the impact of local government system on rural development in Nigeria. Consequently, it equally evaluates the extent local government system contributes to the well-being of rural dwellers; the character of local government system as well as how these challenges inhibit its optimal performance for effective service delivery in Nigeria amongst others.

### Conceptual Clarifications

In this study, an attempt is made to define the two basic concepts/variables that guide the work. These are local government system and rural development. **Local Government System**

Most concepts in social science are fluid and nebulous and thus do not have single definition. Various scholars have offered different viewpoints but in spite of these definitions, the point of congruency shows that the local government system exist to promote rural development within the arrays of its administrative governance. This is underpinned by the philosophical principle of democratic participation in governance at the grassroots level.

Local government system is a government by the grassroots level of administration that exists to meeting the peculiar needs of the grassroots people. By this, it guarantees development at the third tier levels regardless of the fact that other tiers of government exist. Unlike other tiers (state and federal), it is closer to the grassroots dwellers. The local government system accords the rural people the platform of administration since they are in tune with their community needs. They do everything possible within the resources at their disposals to develop the area (Agagu, 1997; Dagana, 2013).

Orewa and Adewumi (1992) opine that local government is a system that consists of local communities which are organized to maintain law and order, provides some limited range of social services, and exists to cooperate with the inhabitants in joint endeavors. This is geared towards improving the people's condition of living. They further assert that local government provides the community with a formal

organizational or institutional framework which enhances the conduct of their affairs effectively and regulate the actions of the members for general public. Obi (1995, cited in Ezeani, 2005, p. 260) sees the institutional framework with which the local government exists as the structure which presupposes the unit or tier system, the organizational component, population and geographical size. This could be all-purpose single-tier or multi-tier arrangement.

Local government system is the administrative cornerstone of people-centre democracy everywhere in the world. This people oriented governance is supposed to be in constant touch with the grassroots populations and may enhance or denote their aspirations. This presupposes the electing or otherwise selecting of its governing body as an entity in governance. In democratic governance, the views of the grassroots' people are of utmost interest in determining the policy choice or action of government. It focuses on the transfer of political powers to local areas, where the inhabitants are saddled with the responsibility of providing the basic needs of their respective communities. It is vital to note that these responsibilities are done according to the political interests and policy related agenda (Uya, 2002; Kyenge, 2013). This people oriented governance and the provision of the basic needs within a democratic political system, make local government system to be the cornerstone for enhancing rural development in the country.

Section 7(1) of the 1999 Constitution observes that local government is run by democratically elected officials as guaranteed by the constitution and

accordingly, the Government of every state through Section 8 of this constitution ensure its existence under a law which provides for the establishment, structure, composition, finances and functions of such councils. Supporting this position, Lawal (2000, p. 60) opines that local government is that tier of government closest to the people with vested powers to exercise control over the affairs of people in its domain. As a tier of government, its vested powers are backed by law which exists to entrench development at the local level due to its closeness to people.

Barber (cited in Zoaka and Dauda (1998, p. 3) define Local government as: "authority to determine and execute matters within a restricted area inside and smaller than the whole state. Local Government involves the administering of services on a local basis by local bodies." From this viewpoint, it is clear that the purpose of establishing local government is to ensure appropriate services and development activities responsible to local wishes and initiatives. Even when the other tiers of government interfere with the affairs of local government which operates at the lowest level of society, it is imperative to take into cognizance of their peculiar needs.

The existence of local government is predicated on the services of local importance being run by the local bodies in the provision of citizenship education, training ground for political leadership, documentation of information and data for the central government in meeting the needs of the localities, and minimization of concentration of political power in governance. Its functions seek to decongest government at the centre

thereby freeing national leaders from various details and unnecessary involvement in local issues (Gboyega, 1987; Egonmwan, 2002). This implies that without the establishment of local government, there would be high level of political apathy in the country. When local matters are run by the local people, it augments the stimulus for local participation of the people; giving room for rapid development at the rural level. Also, other tiers of government would be relieved of the hectic nature of governance since the rural people with over 70% population handle local matter themselves.

From the foregoing, the concept can be viewed as a political organization aimed at uplifting the standard of living and advancement of the political, economic, socio-cultural and democratic participation of the rural populace. By this, though the local government council with relative autonomy is expected to provide needed necessary machineries that would actualized the above four component that had been capture at the grass root level, being the lowest unit of political organization that is nearer to the people.

### ***Rural Development***

The concept of rural development has generated much debate and little agreement on the meaning. Its definition varies from one point of view to the other. Some view the concept from the economic, political or sociological template in addressing the problem of rural poverty. For instance, from the sociological stance, it is the concept in which the rural poor represents a reservoir of untapped talent; a target group that should be given the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of development through improved education, health and

nutrition that could provide the catalyst for rural areas' transformation.

Rural development is any effort that is geared towards the improvement and/or enhancement rural livelihoods in the social and economic domains. It involves both the transformation of lives and landscape to ensure a significant improvement in the quality of life of the rural folk. The rural poor (who represent a latent productive potential) need to be provided with an appropriate policy and institutional framework, resource and technology support, and an enabling market environment that can guarantee their productivity on land, and raise their income without necessarily depending on farm income generating activities (Eyong, 2007; Thorbecke et al, 1992). Exploring of other avenues and other activities is of essence for rural development.

Olatunbosun (1976) submits that rural development is based on the need to balance the pattern and direction of government for the benefit of both the urban and rural sectors and provide technical requirements for speeding up economic growth in the development. Implicit in this is that governments are stakeholders in the provision of technical know-how geared towards economic development. This should not be limited to the rural people but, to the urban dwellers as well.

Mabogunje (1980, p. 30) succinctly puts it:

Rural development is concerned with the improvement of the living rural standards of the low-income people living in the rural area on a self-sustaining basis through transforming the socio-spatial structures of their productive activities. It implies a broad based reorganization and

mobilization of the rural masses and resources, so as to enhance the capacity of the rural populace to cope effectively with the daily tasks of their lives and with the changes consequent upon this.

The inference drawn from the above position is that rural development improves living conditions of the populace on subsistence basis through mobilization and allocation of resources to achieve desirable welfare and productive services available to the rural people. This implies that investment in basic infrastructure and social services, justice, equity and security among others would go a long way in enhancing their capacity.

Okoli and Onah, (2002, p. 162) posit that rural development borders or concerns with the improvement and transformation of social, mental, economic, institutional and environmental conditions of the low income rural dwellers. They further assert that by mobilizing and rational utilizing of human, natural and institutional resources at the rural areas, it would enhance their capacities to cope with the daily tasks of life and the demands of contemporary times. By this, rural communities cannot be said to be developed in absence of human capacity building.

Denga (2003, p. 95) posits that rural development in essence involves programmes that are capable of eliminating the problems of poverty, ignorance, disease, and the provision of a conducive environment for people. This would able the rural populace to earn a living that can sustain their standard of living in a reasonable manner. Eyong (op: cit) support this position by saying that rural development is the ability of the local government or any agency to give a

better lease of life to the local population who may be remote to political decisions but are affected by the decisions. By this, whenever people's living condition capacity is improved, rural development is said to be effective.

Rural development can be seen as the strategic efforts committed to improving the standard of living of the rural dwellers. The areas of improvement cut across social, cultural, political, religious, and economic development. When the touchline of development tows along these aspects, the rural populace lives' would appreciate and the issue of rural-urban migration would reduce.

### **Methodology and Theoretical Framework of Analysis**

This research employs qualitative approach; using descriptive and deductive logic method of data analysis. Data are generated from the secondary sources to include: textbooks, journals, and internet materials among other sources. This helps in generating relevant information in addressing the subject matter. Analysis is made from the inferences drawn from the extant literature. The mode of analytical presentation appears in themes which are designed to address the objectives of this paper.

The paper adopts the system theoretical framework of analysis in justifying the link between local government system and rural development. This is so germane in understanding the political matrix of local government system in Nigeria. Popularized by David Easton in 1965, the systems models relies on concepts of information theory like feedback, input, output and conceives as being essentially cyclical. Easton (1965a) sees a political system as a

system of interaction in any society through which binding and authoritative allocations are made. He analyzed political activity by employing the paradigm of the biological system. This is also replicated in the social and political system where local government system exist with causal effect on the rural populace which exist alongside the system as an organized whole with identifiable and interrelated structures.

The ideological underpinning of this theory is that every system including political system, has subsystems which makes up the entire system and public policy is the output of the political system. Forces generated in the environment which affect the political system is seen as the inputs. The environment in any condition is defined as external to the boundary of the political system. On the other hand, outputs of the political system are authoritative value allocation of the system, and then allocations constitute public policy.

The input and output analysis of any political system is of the essence. Therefore, a political system is said to obtain its inputs (demands, supports, liberty or autonomy, cooperation, criticisms, resources, information, direct labour, et cetera) from the environment. These inputs are what the subsystems employ to discharge their responsibilities, so that the political system can send out its outputs into the environment and obtain further inputs for its operations. Going by the concept of the feedback mechanism, Anderson (1975) maintains that public policies (outputs) can sometimes alter the environment and the demand generated therein as well as the character of the political system itself.

In applying this theory, the local government system being the third tier of government in the country constitutes the sub-system with environmental influences and owes a lot on rural development in Nigeria, particularly in the Fourth Republic that has been eluded of development fortunes. This framework presupposes proper handling of local government system in terms of being fed with adequate inputs, so that they can contribute meaningfully to the entire political system. The political system consists of two elements: input (made up of demand support) and output (made up of authoritative decisions) the input constitutes the factors that emanate from the environment and go into decision making. They are those demands that emanate from societal pressure. Outputs are results that emanates from the demand and support made at the level of input.

The local government system performs these functions by receiving inputs from the people for onward conversion to output. The citizens' demands on the system comes through appeal to the council authority for the provision of basic amenities such as accessible road network, portable water, health facilities, schools, etc. On the other hand, support could be the people's participation in decision making process in local government so as to have effect in their lives. Consequent upon this, the environment of the system is influenced and continues to generate demand which with the in-built feedback and the whole process continues recycling.

### **Local Government System and Rural Development: The Nexus**

There is a correlation between these concepts or variables- local government

system and rural development. As a result of this link, there is a critical discourse in government among the three tiers of governments—local, state, and federal government. Among these tiers of governments, local government is at the bottom of a pyramid of government institution; with the central government at the top, and the state governments occupying the middle range.

For being the government nearest to the rural populace, it has been one of the best institutions that contribute to rural development through wider participation of the people. Most elected or appointed officials of the local government are residents of the rural settlements. The rural populace (officials and non-officials) in their collective decisions determines the policy actions of the council.

Local government is a developmental tool for good governance and without mincing words, when the culture of probity and accountability are fully entrenched and adhere to in a holistic manner, the leadership at this level of governance would leave indelible marks in the annals of history. This is underscored on the premise that probity and accountability is the brain child of good governance. And as developmental tool for good governance, this would translate to rural development.

### **Challenges of Local Government System on Rural Development**

The composition of democratically elected local government councils which is guaranteed under the 1999 Nigerian Constitution, section 7, makes provisions for the functions of this council under its Fourth Schedule. In carrying out these functions, Local government system is recognized as an

important institution that promotes development at the grassroots levels. Like any other institution, it is not insulated from challenges that affect its operations. These inhibiting factors against rural development are discussed below. They include:

### ***Corrupt Practices in Governance***

Corruption is a phenomenal development of global concern and has remained one of the fundamental problems of contemporary Nigerian state. Corruption is considered as pervasion or change from good to bad, in terms of human conduct. It is a behavioural attitude that deviates from the norm actually prevalent in a given context where private gain is secured at public expense (Friedrich, 1989, p. 15). Corruption has thrived in the Nigerian local government system and has become institutionalized to the point of being synonymous to the system. This has inhibited development and good governance at the third tier level of government in Nigeria. At the grassroots level, corrupt individuals are celebrated and given prestigious title at will by the traditional institutions. The manifestations of this cancerous phenomenon are: inflation of prices of bought items; over estimation of cost of projects; the ghost worker syndrome; award of contracts that are executed half-way or subsequent abandonment; patron-client syndrome; and misappropriation of funds among others.

### ***Lack of Autonomy in the Scheme Governance***

The concept of autonomy refers to freedom, independent, and being free from external influence. Local government system in Nigeria cannot be said to be autonomous. This is underscored on the premise that the

federal and state governments stifles the finances of the local government and the state in particular, is not willing to devolve authority to the grassroots level. The 1999 constitution section 7 (1) that:

The system of local government by democratically elected local government councils is under this constitution guaranteed, and accordingly the government of every state ensures their existence under the law which provides for the establishment, structure, composition, finance and functions of such councils.

This interaction would always make the local government an appendage of state governments. This has equally affected local government administration and rural development overtime in terms of financial relationship of local government and other tiers of government. The state government often dominates the council through the offices of local government affairs, the ministry of local government, and the local government service commission. The state government's encroachment on the legitimate revenue sources of local government limits its powers and responsibilities (Davey, 1983 cited in Enyi, 2014, p. 100).

### ***Paucity of Funds for Administrative Convenience***

With the monthly allocation from the Federation Account (20.6%) and Statutory (10%) and Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) contribution by the state governments, the local government system is faced with a gamut of problems. With state governments being in charge of the allocation from the Federation Account (20.6%) and with the 10% of the IGR for the local government, the local government's financial challenges

remain unsolved. This has been problematic to the local government system in the discharge its duties or realization of its objective. Ostrom (1988 cited in Enyi,2014, p. 89) advocated on the need for the local government not to rely more on external sources or revenue generation; but, to rely on their own sources of revenue—taxes and user charges which would accord greater incentives to elected officials in balancing service benefits to the people. The strong financial base is plausible for proper functioning of local government. This nourished and bolstered strong financial base offers high executive capacity and effective leadership with a high sense of mission (Ogunna, 1996, p. 277).

#### ***Non-Periodic Conduct of Council Election***

The syndrome of unwillingness to conduct the council election by state governors in various local government systems in Nigeria has gradually come to stay. Many state governors in Nigeria have converted the conduct of local council election into their personal belonging. Instead of conducting the council elections and allowing the local government to carry out their constitutional responsibilities accordingly, they resort to the appointment of caretaker committee which they use to reward their political allies and the loyalists thereby, perpetuating patron-clientism in governance. For instance, the past administrations of Dr. Chris Nwabueze Ngige and Mr. Peter Obi refused to conduct local government elections. They rather resorted to the appointment of caretaker committee, which they can manipulate easily to their personal advantage. This has really hampered the attainment of rural development among

the rural dwellers in local governments in Nigeria.

#### ***Conflicts of Inter-Governmental Relations among Tiers of Government***

The incessant cases of states' interference in local governments' affairs through the Ministry of Local Government affect inter-governmental relations between state and local government in Nigeria. Inter-governmental relations are a planned system where complex relationships are managed among layers of government in any given state whether in a federal or unitary state (Nwosu, 1980). The local government ought to be on its own under real federal arrangement but in Nigeria, this arrangement is more of unitary state where local government is under the beck and call of state governments which determine its structure, finance, composition, function as encapsulated in Nigerian 1999 constitution (Section 7 & 8). The federal and state governments from time to time display the attitude of superiority over local government council in many aspects like delay in the issuance of receipts, approval of bye-laws, and approval of annual estimates among others. State governments' attitude in its various policy circulars and regulations and the behaviour of its field staff towards local government determines to a large extent local-central relations in world (Oladosu, 1980, p. 142).

#### ***Over-bloated Workforce in Local Government System***

Without recourse to its budgetary provisions, most local governments have more workforce than they can carry in its administrative capacity. In terms of personnel development at the council levels, much money have spent in this regard due to surplus staff whose

their services are duplicated. It is ideal to recruit or promote staff in line with felt need of government and budgetary provisions to the council. Contrary to this, staff are recruited or promoted not necessarily as result of the need but, to settle political thugs that worked for the emergence of some council chairmen in elections. This has equally affected the payment of staff salaries as at when due. The Handbook on Local Government Administration (1992) provides among others that "recruitment in Local Government shall only be undertaken into critical areas after necessary due process must have been observed." This rule has been flawed severally.

### ***High Level of Politicization in the Councils***

Local government system is marred with preponderant cases of partisanship. This is a situation where politicians or political elites interfere and control bureaucratic process of the council through the manipulation of recruitment, education, training and promotions to imbue bureaucracies with overt commitments to the political goals of the government of the day (Charlton, 1985, p. 147). Aside from these, postings are highly politicized especially, in local government top management level where Directors/Permanent secretaries, Head of Service, or Head of Personnel Management are posted on the basis of clear loyalty to the government in power. This trend portends a great danger to the civil service rule since civil servants are mandated on partisanship which makes them to be card carrying members of political party that controls the seat of power in order to elicit patronage. The elites in controlling government machineries

play to the gallery in their own interest against the populace.

### ***Joint Account Syndrome***

This practice has made local government to remain an appendage to the state hence, suffers the paucity of fund for rural development in Nigeria. Most state governments make local government to receive inadequate fund from the so-called joint account through the deliberate cut-offs of budgetary allocation. Poor budgetary allocation affects development fortunes in most of the critical areas in the rural areas. This can be either for political reasons or absolute corruption tendencies by state governors. The inability of the rural people of making ends meet due to the abused joint account system also contribute to high mortality rate, criminality, and rural-urban drift among others in the rural communities. This has great implication for rural development in Nigeria.

From the challenges observed above, the roles of local government have been undermined; considering the essence of its establishment. A wide gap exists between the political leadership and the followership and that is why today, most rural areas are eluded with development fortunes.

### ***Conclusion and Recommendation***

The creation of local government system is supposedly for the purpose of bringing government closer to the people, with a view to enhancing their participation in governance for rural development. However, there have been cases of underdevelopment pervading most communities due to inherent challenges. After a critical reflection on local government system and rural development in Nigeria, this paper posits that the importance of the local government system in service delivery

to rural communities cannot be underestimated. As a government that is closer to the grassroots level of governance, it tends to attend to the immediate need(s) of the rural dwellers. In spite of all this, development has been elusive in the rural communities in Nigeria. This is not unconnected to the factors that explicitly manifest in the form of corruption, lack of autonomy, paucity of fund, conflicts of inter-governmental relations, irregular conduct of council elections, over-bloated workforce, high level of politicization, among other problems identified.

It suffices to say that there would be no rural development in Nigeria's political landscape if the inhibiting factors are not contained. There would be no development in all ramifications if the local government system as a sub-unit of the society (based on Easton's thesis) is bereft of political resilience to promote developmental fortunes within the socio-cultural, political, and economic matrix of the system. It is on this premise that the following recommendations are made:

- i. Corruption inhibits development and good governance at the third-tier level of government in Nigeria and so, strong institution building to fight corrupt practices in the local government system is advocated;
- ii. The federal and state governments stifle the finances of the local government and deprive them full financial autonomy. The local governments should be granted full financial autonomy to enhance its optimal performance;

- iii. There should be adequate funding as well as increment in the IGR's baseline of local government system as a grassroots government;
- iv. The conduct of local council elections in Nigeria should be institutionalized and ingrained in the constitution, so that it will no longer be left at the mercy of state governors; rather it should be a periodic and mandatory issue for elections to be conducted at every local government level at the expiration each tenure in line with democratic ethos;
- v. In terms of inter-governmental relations, the local government as third-tier of government should not be under the beck and call of state governments in the determination of its structure, finance, composition, and function;
- vi. Right-sizing of local government's workforce is advocated to reduce redundant staff;
- vii. Local government system is marred by preponderant cases of partisanship which mars or interferes with bureaucratic process of the council. Therefore, appointment, recruitment, training, and promotions of career or tenured staff should be devoid of political patronage; and
- viii. The joint account practice has perpetuated underdevelopment in local government system in Nigeria as they remain appendages to the state. Therefore, local government should be insulated from a joint account system in which the state government is the senior and ultimate shareholder.

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