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ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES (GADS) AND PJGD

Department of Governance and Development Studies (GaDS) is one of the pioneer departments of Jimma University established in September 2007 and functioning as a constituent unit of the College of Law and Governance since September 2014. Since its establishment, the Department of GaDS is playing a vital role in the transformation of society and empowering the government institutions by producing professionals in the area of development and governance. Currently, the Master Program of GaDS has three specializations: (i) Governance and Development; (ii) Development Management; (iii) Peace and Conflict Studies whereas two more specializations (Gender Studies and Federal Studies) yet to be introduced.

The Post-Graduate Program of the Department clearly states its vision as "The Master of Arts Program in Governance and Development Studies (GaDS) institutionalizes a dynamic and strategic vision to provide an interdisciplinary, advanced, research-based and practical education in contemporary issues of national and international governance and development". This stated vision at the same time echoes the vision of the Jimma University which "aspires to be one of the premier universities in Africa and renowned in the world by 2025".

It is in pursuance of these stated visions of GaDS and Jimma University, the Center for PanAfrican Journal of Governance and Development (PJGD) is established to offer a platform of expression of new scientific inquiries to all intellectuals/academicians/scholars of the world in general and Africa & Ethiopia, in particular, to reflect on how governance and development can be promoted, strengthened and consolidated. As the nature of the journal is multi-, inter-, and trans-disciplinary, the scope of the journal ranges from the disciplines of political science, governance, development, leadership, national and international law, globalization, human rights, economics, environmental science, public policy, international relations, international organizations, gender, peace and conflict management, international political economy, multiculturalism, civil society, and related areas.

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The Paradox of Southern Cameroons' Economic Viability Debate in Colonial Lenses: A Post-Colonial Critique of the British Underdevelopment Tactics, 1922-2022

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The idea of developing and granting political independence to the British colonial sphere of Southern Cameroons depended greatly on the country's economic potential. Although the territory inherited several German structures like colonial plantations and buildings, the British were not convinced that the territory would be economically viable and sustain itself if it were granted independence as an autonomous state. In order to exonerate the colonial government from future decisive political decisions for the future of the country, the interim southern Cameroons government, acting under the aegis of the British colonial authorities, requested for studies to be conducted on the 'economic' viability of the British colony of Southern Cameroons in the 1950s. The results of the studies were damaging, and their conclusion showed an economic 'red card' to politicians who aspired for an independent Southern Cameroons. The hypothesis of economic unviability of the Southern Cameroons appears interesting, but unfortunately, very little research has been done by Cameroonian scholars to debunk colonial assertions of unviability. The paper attempts to investigate the so-called economic viability debate in the history of Southern Cameroons using decolonial interpretations to unpack the colonial assertions. The study adopted the interdisciplinary methodology to exploit primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained from the National Archives in Buea, while a desk review of secondary sources was done at the University of Buea library in Cameroon. The sources reviewed enabled the researcher to obtain verifiable data capable of providing evidence against the negative colonial reports on the economic viability of the former British Southern Cameroons. The data obtained was critically analyzed from a decolonial perspective and presented qualitatively.

Keywords: *Cameroon, Economic Viability, British, Colonial, Archives, Plantations*

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Introduction

The colonial history of Cameroon is highly colorful in that Cameroon experienced three colonial administrations: Germany, Britain, and France from 1884 to 1961. European colonial activities in Africa were driven by deep economic and political considerations rather than social and humanitarian motives. Before the summoning of the Berlin West Africa Colonial Conference, every other aspect of European rivalries in Africa was mainly of economic interest. These long battled economic motivations propelled the Germans to scramble for and eventually colonized Cameroon in July 1884 (Ngoh, 2019; Fanso, 2017; Ngoh, 2011; 1995). German colonization of Cameroon was after she had participated in the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, paving the way for the historical partition of Africa on 'ground' and 'paper'.

Within the prism of colonialism, after having colonized the country, she took an interest in opening vast plantations, mainly in the coastal regions of Cameroon, specifically around the slopes of Mt. Cameroon and other parts of the forest regions. The construction of a plantation economy was possible after the Germans had expropriated indigenous lands and used cheap labor to cultivate and expand the plantations, which became one of their stable sources of income besides taxes. The paper traces the historical beginnings, the colonial trappings, and the origins of the British underdevelopment tactics. It also investigates the damaging British colonial reports and how these negatively affected the political decision of the administering authorities against the independence of British Southern Cameroon. Lastly, it underscores the viability thesis of Southern Cameroon, citing post-colonial economic discoveries and changes that help to debunk the colonially anchored hypothesis that dealt a severe blow to the political ambitions of Southern Cameroonians.

Statement of the Problem

The hypothesis of economic viability or unviability of the economy of Southern Cameroons appears interesting; however, very little research has been done by Cameroonian scholars to debunk or accept such a skewed conclusion that had animated discussions in the territory between 1954 and 1961. Although the colonially sponsored studies were relevant when conducted and rendered public, there was skepticism among leading political figures in the territory and some minded colonial administrators who criticized the reports for lack of objectivity and balance. Beyond this, many post-colonial writers, among whom leading

historians, have not adequately analyzed the studies to show the contrary. The central objective of writing this paper is to analyze these studies and critically provide a counter-narrative. However, addressing the research's crucial problem requires investigating the intricacies surrounding the development of this colonial hypothesis of economic viability. A pseudo-theory that has often misled many scholars to believe the contrary.

The paradoxical creed of Southern Cameroon's economic viability debate was motivated by imperfections in the private investment process of the British government's colonial policies. These imperfections temporarily changed the status of the British Southern Cameroons in the Trusteeship Agreement, which was approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) in 1946. According to Article 5 (b) of the Agreement, 'Britain was entitled to constitute the British Cameroons into a custom, fiscal or administrative union or federation with adjacent territories…to establish common services between such territories and the British Cameroons' (Colonial Office, HMSO, CMD, 6863, 1946).

The individualist-utilitarian creed made the case for self-determination for the people of Southern Cameroons, who were weak to the brink of collapse without succumbing to this capitalist prognosis (Rostow, 1959). Germany was the first colonial government to take control of what was then Kamerun from 1884 until 1916. The Germans acquired the right to administer Cameroon from the treaties signed by their agents with traditional rulers in different parts of the territory, beginning with the Germano-Duala treaty of July 1884 and from military subjugation of groups that resisted their penetration and presence. Shortly after the First World War broke out in Europe in August 1914, hostilities began in German Cameroon, under the control of the Allied forces comprising the British, the French, and Belgian forces. The war lasted in Kamerun for eighteen months and ended with the defeat and expulsion of the Germans from the territory in 1916 (Fanso, 2017; Elango, 2017; Ngoh, 2019).

A joint Anglo-French administration condominium, so to speak, was mooted. However, the colonial forces were unable to agree on how to co-administer the territory due to unbridled differences between Britain and France. Failure to establish an Anglo-French condominium resulted in the partition of the territory. Britain was prepared to pass over complete control of Cameroon to France in return for greater control in other areas of strategic interest, such as in East Africa. When France proposed to take the lion's share of territory during negotiations, Britain agreed. A line was impetuously drawn on the War Office map by François Georges-

Picot, who had very little knowledge of Africa: Georges-Picot chose a point to the east of Victoria and another to the south of Yola and 'began to join these two points in a casual way with a blue pencil.' Sir Frederick Dealtry Lugard, the Governor General of Nigeria, reportedly described the area acceded to British control as 'an insignificant little strip that it was hardly worth reserving at all.' Nevertheless, the British opted to maintain control of this strip and installed several governmental institutions such as law courts, local governmental institutions, schools, and more (Roxana et al., 2019; Elango, 2018).

The provisional boundary was reached after conferences between General Dobell and General Aymerich in Douala. The boundary line was traced by the two Generals from Lake Chad to River Mungo based on river courses, watersheds, hills, mountains, villages, and ethnic groups (Fanso, 2017; Awachwi, 1993; Aka, 2002; Nzume, 2004). The French received the lion's share of the territory, its own portion, including new Cameroon, was approximately 270 919 square miles with a population estimated at about 2 177 599. The British obtained two disconnected pieces of territory along Nigeria's eastern frontier, estimated at only one-fifth (1/5) of the original German territory. It comprised a population of about 822 441, occupying over 34 081 square miles. The British further partitioned the territory into Northern and Southern Cameroons, respectively. It must be pointed out that the Anglo-French partition of the Cameroons was not carried out under the supervision of the League of Nations. The partition of the Cameroons and Togoland had been concluded before the League of Nations was formed. After putting in place of the League of Nations in 1922, the British and French spheres of Cameroon were assigned to Britain and France as administering powers of the mandated territories in the 'B' category. The League confirmed the 1916 arbitrary partition of Cameroon, and Southern Cameroons was administratively linked to Nigeria (Aka, 2002).

The approach adopted by the British and French overtly showed the individualist-utilitarian creed that made the case for self-determination for the people of Southern Cameroons weak to the brink of collapse. When the respective administering powers were required to furnish the Trusteeship Council with regular information concerning separate records on the economic and social development of the Trust Territories, Britain categorically stated its intention to continue to administer the Southern Cameroons as an integral part of Nigeria, 'because this was the only practical method of administration.' Britain reiterated severally that the political union was in the best interest of the Southern Cameroons and that if the territory were separated from Nigeria, 'it

would deprive the people…of political, educational advancement which they derive from their integration with a large and highly developed area'. Here again, one can clearly perceive the negative intention of the British, which is reflected in their detrimental economic reports.

Britain further asserted that, for geographical and ethnic reasons, it would be impossible and undesirable for financial reasons to create a separate Region [for southern Cameroons] as an administrative unit for the country. From every indication, Britain never contemplated administering the Southern Cameroons as an autonomous territory. This is the more reason for the damaging economic reports that completely dampened hopes for an independent state. The Trusteeship Council also concluded that 'the Southern Cameroons is one of the most underdeveloped areas on the West African Coast.

According to Le Vine (1964), 'the Southern Cameroons was a backwater for the colonial office…the territory failed to reap much benefit from being either a Mandate or a Trusteeship.' Such a capitalist prognosis appears paradoxical, as it is now proven that the Southern Cameroons did not need any financial probe from Nigeria to survive. A better organization of its public revenues and resources would have made the Southern Cameroons financially viable and perhaps one of the most developed territories in West Africa at the time.

On February 11, 1961, the United Nations organized a plebiscite for the Northern Cameroons and Southern Cameroons. The option placed before the British Southern Cameroonians was: '*Do you wish to achieve independence by joining the independent Federation of Nigeria?' or 'Do you wish to achieve independence by joining the independent Republic of Cameroon.'* The plebiscite did not provide the option for a separate independent state either for the Northern or the Southern Cameroons. The results of the plebiscite in Northern Cameroons showed a vote in favor of achieving independence by remaining as a part of the independent Republic of Nigeria, which had gained independence on October 1, 1960. Conversely, the plebiscite outcome in Southern Cameroons was voting in favor of reuniting with French Cameroon, which gained independence on January 1, 1960 (Aka, 2002; Basung, 1975). Again, this vote was prompted by a British report that insisted that its former territory would not survive economically on its own. Southern Cameroonians wanted nothing more to do with Nigeria. They had suffered enormously at the hands of the domineering Igbo traders who had long settled in their territory.

In the years leading up to the plebiscite, leaders of the Southern Cameroons worked with the United Nations to determine what options should be included in the plebiscite vote. Following the encouragement of the United Nations, an All-Party Conference was held in Mamfe on August 10-11, 1959, for the Southern Cameroonian leaders to reach an agreement on the terms of the plebiscite. The most popular outcome of the Mamfe Conference was for the plebiscite to include the option of 'integration' with Nigeria or 'secession'. However, secession was denounced as economically unfeasible by Sir Sidney Phillipson, the British Acting Commissioner of the Southern Cameroons, and later dismissed by the United Nations on grounds associated with Sir Sydney's reports.

The argument against secession by Sydney, and later supported by the UN Trusteeship Council, worked against the motivation of some politicians in Southern Cameroon. This led to the removal of the secession option from the list of plebiscite questions, which was and remains a contentious issue until nowtill date among the people of the former Southern Cameroons and many Cameroonian historians. According to Ngoh (2023), the failure to achieve the 'third option' by Southern Cameroonian politicians by September – October 1959 was caused mainly by disagreement among them. For instance, the KNDP, which was led by Foncha, did not support a permanent separate political entity for southern Cameroons because Foncha was not happy with Endeley's stance. Endeley walked away from Foncha's party, and he was joined by Jua and other politicians who resented Foncha's political agenda for the territory. In June 1965, Foncha declared in Buea that the "Third Option" was rejected because it was not on the political agenda of the KNDP.

Ngoh (2023) clarified that the central goal of the KNDP was for the territory to achieve independence by reuniting with French Cameroon. However, Foncha and Endeley later changed their political stance in favor of a separate or independent state and proposed it at the UN session. However, their aspirations were short-lived as both politicians returned from the UN session without achieving the "Third Option" for the territory. Their political preferences remained stitched to reunification with French Cameroon for the KNDP or association with Nigeria, a political vision that was conspicuously drummed up by the KPP-KNC alliance. Britain also strongly supported its association with Nigeria. It is worth noting that while the CPNC and KNDP differed at various times on the plebiscite options, the question of economic viability at this time was not a major obstacle to securing the "Third Option." From every indication, one is

tempted to believe that the British and French had worked it out and that reunification or association with Nigeria was to decide the political future of Southern Cameroons.

To corroborate this claim, Dag Hammarskjold, the UN Secretary-General from 1953 to 1961, warned that 'uniting the Southern Cameroons to the Republic of Cameroon is like forcing a balloon under the sea. One day, it will come out.' Therefore, the problem that this paper seeks to uncover is why Britain denied Southern Cameroonians the opportunity to achieve political independence on the basis of its economic viability. Or was Southern Cameroon economically unfit to sustain an independent state at the time? Did the British economic studies actually reflect the true picture of the economy of southern Cameroons? In part, these and other unanswered questions are the concerns and motivations for this paper for which the following research objectives have been singled out.

Research Objectives

The study has both general and specific objectives. The general objective is to explore the historical evolution of Southern Cameroon and the notion of economic viability or unviability. From this general or main objective, the following specific objectives were suggested:

- To examine the various economic studies conducted by the British
- To analyze the validity or invalidity of the studies,
- To explore the impact of the economic viability studies on the political future of southern Cameroon and
- To show the extent to which the various economic studies that led to the unviability situation were a hypothetical paradox

Materials and Methods

Data for the study was collected from different research venues like the National Archives in Buea and public and private libraries in Cameroon. In the archives, the researcher went through some historical documents written by the British colonial authorities as well as United Nations documents on Cameroon. These documents were important to the research as they pointed out important facts implicated in the study. The data collected was critically analyzed and presented qualitatively in the study for comparative analysis to ensure historical objectivity and coherence. The sources include books, journal articles, theses, and dissertations on the subject under review.

These sources were used for the desk review of the literature for the study. From these sources, the researcher could distinguish between colonial and works by African writers and then compare their views on specific issues concerning this study.

As concerns the methodological approach, the study deplored the mixed research approach. However, in its practical application, the researcher deplored the historical methodology as the study utilized data from different fields such as history, political science, geography, and law. This trans-disciplinary approach helped to provide the researcher with the lens to critically assess the intricacies that underpin the economic viability or unviability theory in debate and how it affected the political destiny of the territory during and after the colonial period. The data was critically evaluated using documentary content analysis from literature to examine the contentious issue of southern Cameroon's unviability debate during the British colonial period in Cameroon. The findings from the literature were thematically interpreted and presented in a way that enriched the intellectual discussion on the historiography of Cameroon, with an emphasis on the decolonization process of southern Cameroon and the consequences of British economic studies on its political future.

Results and Discussion

Data for the study was drawn largely from primary and secondary sources. The National Archives in Buea, as well as the University of Buea library, proved helpful. This is because the archives contained important documents for the study, like the three economic reports on Southern Cameroon's fiscal, economic, and administrative viability. From these reports, the researcher examined the authors' perspectives and compared them with post-colonial arguments on the issues evoked in the paper. This was done in line with the main and supporting objectives of the paper, starting with uncovering the economic unviability hypothesis in the colonial situation in Southern Cameroons.

Unpacking the Economic Unviability Hypothesis in Southern Cameroons

The period between the wars in Cameroon was utterly decisive and challenging, and the political future for Southern Cameroons was uncertain. The British development or underdevelopment tactics for the Southern Cameroons showed its ugly sides between 1954 and 1961. In spite of the presence of strong economic structures that the British colonial authorities inherited from the Germans, the British overtly demonstrated without any reservation their unfriendly and reluctant

attitude to define the political future of the country. Instead, they fashioned policies that were inclined to exploit the country's economic resources with little regard for engineering their development. By designing policies that engendered further exploitation of indigenous resources, the British complicated and compromised the political destiny of Southern Cameroons in many respects.

Findings further reveal that the British colonial administration favored the derogatory policy of governing Southern Cameroons in association with Nigeria, a doctrine that favored assimilation, underdevelopment, and dependency. Moreover, while in Nigeria, southern Cameroonians went through thick and thin in the hands of Igbo traders and politicians, and this accentuated resentment among Southern Cameroonians both in Nigeria and at home. As a result of the foregoing, increased

political consciousness among the elite class in Southern Cameroons catapulted the burning zeal in the politicians contemplating the territory's political future. This was, indeed, a turning point in the historiography of colonial Cameroon.

In 1949, the United Nations Visiting Mission came to Southern Cameroons, which allowed the people under colonial domination to discuss the political, economic, and cultural challenges that besieged southern Cameroonians. Amongst other things, Southern Cameroonians expressed their reservations on the negative effects of Southern Cameroon's integration with Nigeria, the absence of a separate regional organization for the Cameroons, and the absence of a separate budget for the Southern Cameroons (Amaze, 2000; Basung, 1975; Awachwi, 1993). The study also indicates that it was, however, during the Eastern Regional Crisis in Nigeria in 1953 that Southern Cameroon politicians made unequivocal demands for self-autonomy from Nigeria. However, the politicians were undecided over their political choices. Based on some reviewed sources, it is clear that some politicians wanted independence in association with Nigeria, while others were in favor of complete self-rule within the Commonwealth of Nations. The increasing quest for independence for Southern Cameroons clashed with the inconsistent British economic, administrative, and political reports on the so-called economic viability or unviability of the Southern Cameroons.

Again, the period between 1954 and 1960 marked a historical turning point for the Cameroons because it was within this period that the British colonial government commissioned studies to

be carried out on the economic viability of the territory in order to establish if the country would in nearest possible future be economically strong to lead an independent state without external support from Britain. It was because of this that three pro-colonially engineered studies were authorized and sponsored to x-ray the economic realities of British Cameroons. The three Commissions were the Chick Fiscal Commission's Report of 1954, the Phillipson's Report of 1959, and Kenneth Beryl's Report of 1960 (Ngoh, 2019; Fanso, 2017; Mukete, 2013; Elango, 2018). A cursory look at the various studies indicates contradictions in the statistical findings espoused in the reports.

Sir Louis Chick's Fiscal Commission Report and Impact

The Chick Fiscal Commission study was the first major scientific, economic study that was authorized to be undertaken with the objective of determining the economic viability of Southern Cameroons. The Commission was formed in 1954 in response to increasing demand for a separate regional status for the Southern Cameroons by the *Kamerun* National Congress (KNC). During the London Constitutional Conference of July 30 to August 22, 1953, which was chaired by Sir Lyttleton, Southern Cameroons politicians expressed the desire for a separate political entity. In order to ascertain their contentions in favor of the economic viability or unviability of the territory, the British colonial government, through Sir Lyttleton, hired the services of an economist to conduct a study whose results were to determine if the territory was economically viable to gain independence as an autonomous state or not.

According to the study's findings, Sir Louis Chick was hired to study the economy of southern Cameroon and ascertain the extent of the territory's economic viability. Among other things, the Commission aimed to investigate whether Southern Cameroons could pay its way without financial assistance from other parts of Nigeria, assuming that none of its revenues were henceforth shared with the Northern Cameroons or with any other part of Nigeria. This report was guided by the assumption that Southern Cameroons would be constituted as a separate region within the Nigerian Federation only if "it…could pay its way without assistance from other parts of Nigeria and without sharing revenue derived from it" (Ngoh, 2011; Mukete, 2013; Aka, 2002).

Based on the facts and figures on the alleged weak economic situation of Southern Cameroons from 1953 to 1954, which tackled the economic viability question, Sir Chick averred that

Southern Cameroons had a surplus in each of the three years leading to the 1951/1952 estimates which the central government transferred to the Cameroon Development Fund (Aka, 2002; Mukete, 2013). Furthermore, Chick also alleged that the 1951/1952 surpluses rose to about £173.000, but the estimated predictions for the period 1953 to 1954 anticipated a hooping deficit of £200.000 (Ngoh, 1996; Ngoh, 2023). If the British Southern Cameroons was granted a separate regional status, Chick averred that the Southern Cameroons expenditure would rise from £825.000 (under the Eastern regional government) to 1.275.000 (if Southern Cameroons became an independent state). Here again, one can notice the intrigues of the author of the report by trying to downplay a favorable economic picture for southern Cameroon, but he tacitly conveys a negative report that betrays a favorable and sustainable economy.

In addition, the report further revealed that the growth and development of Southern Cameroons relied exclusively on the plantations of Elders and Fyffes and C.D.C, which made estimates for future revenue unreliable due to price fluctuations in plantation produce. However, the report acknowledged other sources of revenue in the territory, like revenue from the exportation of cocoa, bananas, palm products, rubber, and income tax on companies' products (Ngoh, 1996). Although Chick's report appears simplistic, it was far from being balanced and objective because it only projected figures and expenditures to be incurred by the Southern Cameroons when it became an independent state.

For example, the report paid little attention to the alternative sources of income-generating sectors like the stamp duties and capitation tax, which was paid by Southern Cameroonians. The empirical evidence favored that these were reliable sectors where the deficits could be fixed and improved on Southern Cameroons' economy by making it more resilient, realistic, and viable, but regrettably, these aspects were not included in his report. By and large, the Chick's Commission on the fiscal viability of the territory posited that:

> …a Southern Cameroons Regional Government would not in the year immediately ahead be financially stable without any external assistance. In good years, it might pay its way with a slender margin, but in lean years, it would have no reserves to fall back on if, over a period, the deficits exceed the surplus (File No. WAF 39/87/62, NAB).

Besides, other sectors like tourism, mineral, timber, and fisheries resources were ignored and excluded in such decisive economic reports that mattered a lot for the political future of Southern Cameroons. The outcome of the report left many skeptical and perplexed. As a result of this skepticism, the Commissioner of the Cameroons, Brigadier Gibbons, had to reject it because the territory's share of central expenditure was not checked on the basis of population (Ngoh, 1996). From every indication, Chick's report had a negative impact on the political future of Southern Cameroons as it revealed that the territory was not economically viable enough to sustain an independent state, except with sufficient financial/economic assistance from Nigeria or the United Kingdom. In fact, the decision of the British to argue against the independence of Southern Cameroons as an autonomous state was largely inspired and bagged by Chick's damaging fiscal report, which had far-reaching implications on the political future of the territory.

Although the Lagos Constitutional Conference, during an in-camera constitutional debate, voted to grant a "Quasi-Federal Status" to Southern Cameroons, it could be said that this was half-heartedly done since Britain did not favor the choice of independence of the territory as an autonomous state (Amazee, 2000; Lum, 2000). Consequently, Chick's report left an air of uncertainty because of dissatisfaction or lack of trust in the report; the Foncha's government in 1959 called for another study to be undertaken on the economic, financial, and administrative viability of the Southern Cameroons. The objective of the studies was to ascertain the true economic potentials of the territory in terms of its economic and fiscal viability; thus, Sir Sidney Phillipson and Kenneth Berril were recruited to undertake two complementary but separate studies with the same objective.

The Sydney Phillipson's Financial, Economic, and Administrative Study

The seemingly endless quest to arrive at a conclusive decision on the economic, fiscal, and administrative viability of Southern Cameroons precipitated the summoning of another economic study to correct the uncertainties that surrounded the shaky economic, financial, and administrative situation of Southern Cameroons as postulated by earlier studies. The Southern Cameroons government commissioned Sir Sydney Phillipson to investigate the financial, economic, and administrative feasibilities of the territory. Sir S. Phillipson was the interim Adviser to the Government of Southern Cameroons on financial matters. His report was based on

the immediate and long-term financial and administrative issues and the prospects for future developments (Phillipson, 1959).

As regards the immediate financial consequences of Southern Cameroon's separation from the Nigerian Federation, the report examined four main dimensions: the estimated additional cost of adapting the non-federal services, that is, the services that were already regionalized to separation; the estimated cost of replacing federal services operating in or for the Southern Cameroons by the Southern Cameroon services; estimates of the value of money in terms of money which was to be attached to the indirect benefits of belonging to the Federation, and lastly, estimates of the net gain of revenue which was to accrue to the Southern Cameroons as a result of the loss of some sources of revenue and the gain of others. However, the report did not evaluate the prospective capital position of Southern Cameroons in the immediate period after separation or the percentage of import duties derived from excise on imports.

Their inability to include the above duties was blamed on the extensive areas of the territory, which were supplied by road. The Cross River region of Nigeria was supplied by road, and the volume of supplies coming from these routes was unknown. The fact that the report did not consider all other possible sources of revenue in Southern Cameroons makes the findings questionable. No wonder such hasty generalization gave the economy of Southern Cameroons an unrealistic and unhealthy financial outlook in the face of heightened international debates about its proposed independence. In cognizance of the above, one is tempted to suggest that Sydney's report was built upon personal judgments rather than objective field-based realities or facts (Ngoh, 1996; Ngoh et al., 2004). Regarding the consequences of Southern Cameroon's separation from Nigeria, Phillipson maintained that:

> The revenues that will be available to a separated Southern Cameroons might just suffice to enable it to maintain existing recurrent services at their present level, but it would be a precarious, hand-to-mouth existence, necessitating a reduction of the present capital contribution from recurrent revenue, in itself a bad thing, and the postponement of the contribution to the Reserve Fund, which would also be unfortunate. The territory would lose the contribution made by the Federal Government, through its economic program, to capital development… this amounts to saying that, as a completely independent and sovereign state, the

> Southern Cameroons would not, at its present stage of development, be viable (Phillipson, 1959, p.9).

As regards his findings, Phillipson proposed that separation was to be with a continuance of the Trusteeship for a reasonable period and hence completely ruled out the independence option for Southern Cameroons because of its unviability situation. Although the report showed an economic 'red card', it nonetheless hinted that an improvement in the road network infrastructure within the foreseeable future could positively upgrade the region's economy. Lastly, although the Phillipson report painted a controversial picture of the economy of Southern Cameroons, it did not rule out the possibility of a separate Southern Cameroon from Nigeria. In spite of the fact that he had his own reservations, Phillipson went further to make insightful directives on how both the short-term and long-term deficits could be handled in a way that the functioning and sustainability of the state would be assured.

The very problem of financial quagmire that loomed over Southern Cameroons on a short-term basis was re-examined. In this regard, Phillipson contended that the financial challenges that hindered the Southern Cameroons were obvious: inadequate reserves, inadequate tax flows, lack of companies, and loss of financial revenue allocation in the event of separation from Nigeria. It was, however, possible to surmount these hindrances. He advised that, despite these hurdles, the Southern Cameroons government could expand its services, even if it was doing so on a deficit. He suggested that 37% of the Southern Cameroons' agricultural revenue could be gradually increased annually by expanding the plantation sector. This would have propelled the economy of the Southern Cameroons to the path of economic stability and viability. Given the economic factors at the time, his suggestions were realistic and achievable. This was optimistic for a separated Southern Cameroons state to thrive, against the grim picture painted by the earlier reports. By and large, focusing on the lack of infrastructure and other socio-economic assets, which could be blamed on the British neglect, Phillipson predicted a not-too-vibrant Southern Cameroons economy in the long future. It was not surprising also that the report failed to acknowledge the existence of unexploited minerals and forest resources like timber that could have positively impacted the economy of Southern Cameroons as a separate political entity.

From an analytical micro and macro perspectives, alongside global economic dynamics at the time, such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), foreign aid as well as exploring resources like land, human capital, and tourism for instance that could have impacted

positively on the economy of the country were completely excluded or undermined by Phillipson's report. Rather, his report emphasized or maintained a negative situation by insisting that Southern Cameroons could not balance its budget because of limited human and natural resources. However, this was vividly contrary to the budget speech made by the Acting Financial Secretary (Mr. A.D.H. Paterson) for Southern Cameroons in 1959 when he observed that:

> In 1959-1960, we can look forward to our revenue rising to a level more consistent with our recurrent needs than ever before… while therefore, the Federal Minister of Finance Chief Festus Okotie-Eboh has termed the Federal budget for the next year "the responsibility Budget". I would like to introduce our budget here in Southern Cameroons as "the solvency Budget" (Lum, 2000).

It is clear from the above extract Paterson's remarks in 1959-1960 that an independent Southern Cameroons would have been economically stable, viable, and progressive within the first few years without any external financial assistance from either French Cameroon or Nigeria. The alleged economic situation depicted above contradicts Phillipson's Report, which, from every intent, was tailored at defending the colonial interest of systematically undermining the option of self-rule and projecting a bleak economic situation of Southern Cameroons. Furthermore, sources reveal that the recurrent revenue for 1960 was estimated at £1.999.000 more than the current expenditure of £1.897.000, which would have allowed the Southern Cameroons government to budget for a satisfactory surplus (Lum, 2000).

The anticipated revenue was to come from taxes, licenses, internal revenue from forestry fees and royalties, and statutory payments from the federal government under the revised revenue allocation system. It indicates that these sources of revenue were undermined or suppressed in Phillipson's economic report, thereby projecting a negative economic situation for southern Cameroons at the time. It is pertinent to indicate that Philipson's report had negative implications for the Southern Cameroons because it sowed the seeds for the underdevelopment of Southern Cameroons and worked against the realization of the independence agenda for Southern Cameroons. It was against this background that Kenneth Brill was commissioned to undertake another survey of the economy of Southern Cameroons in order to provide alternatives or complementary findings on the economic and fiscal standing of Southern Cameroons.

Kenneth E. Beril's Report and the Economy of Southern Cameroons

Kenneth Beril was commissioned in December 1959 to conduct another complementary study on the economy of Southern Cameroons, and his report was submitted in August 1960 (NAB, Qb/a/1960/1). This was the third and perhaps the most detailed report of the study undertaken by the Foncha's government to examine the economic viability of the Southern Cameroons. This study focused on a range of issues concerning both the political and economic status of Southern Cameroons, like the plantations, population and transport, and infrastructural development. Apart from providing the geo-historical locale of the study area, Berill's Report (Qb/a/1960/1) also provides the outstanding features of the Southern Cameroons' economy, which he noted were in sharp contrast between plantation and peasant, grassland, and forest and the rapid development of the territory. In the domain of communication, Beril reported that:

> …A third feature (of the economy of Southern Cameroons) was the poverty of communication. By water, there is substantial canoe traffic along the coast and the creeks, mainly carrying local foodstuffs. But the rivers do not provide an important or reliable means of access to the interior .... The railway system is diminutive and consists of narrow gauge plantation tracts near the coast, which carry bananas … to the ports (Beril, Qb/a/1960/1).

In his so-called economic study of Southern Cameroons, Beril, like his predecessors, made a rough assessment of the economy of Southern Cameroons. The emphasis of his study was on the economic structures like ports, roads, and airports. He observed that port infrastructures in Southern Cameroons were poorly developed, arguing that the Victoria-Bota port was not only well developed but also that shipment and discharge were very expensive. In comparative terms, Beril's report averred that port charges were twice as high as that of the Calabar port in Nigeria, and this was also associated with inevitable damage of cargo. However, the report singled out that the bananas and timber ports were better developed and capable of dealing with ships up to 500 feet long (Beril, 1960). At the peak of the banana harvesting season, traffic was heavy, and a banana ship was loaded and cleared every two or three days. However, even at the Tiko port, the narrowness of the channel meant that ships must be maneuvered singly and carefully in and out.

Still, due to the nature of Southern Cameroons' economy, Beril furthered that there were no port facilities in Southern Cameroons that could be comparable with those in the Eastern Region of Nigeria or at Douala in the Republic of Cameroon. This shows a negative state of infrastructural development in Southern Cameroons compared with other areas in French Cameroon, like

Douala and Calabar in Nigeria, for instance. It seems glaring that both Beril's and Philipson's reports were comparatively similar in contents and obviously held negative assumptions that discouraged the idea of an autonomous state for southern Cameroons. Instead, the reports emphasized and portrayed the territory as economically vulnerable and characteristically poor, citing poor roads and lack of sea and airports, among others.

To expose the deplorable state of the roads in the territory, Beril argued that Southern Cameroons had only 633 miles of government roads and 442 miles of Native Authority (NA) roads. In terms of the tarred mileage represented, only about a tenth of the 1:100 miles were tarred; the "rest were dirt roads and the condition of some of them was atrocious" (Beril, 1960). Although the British, particularly the economic experts, described Southern Cameroons as an underdeveloped periphery, they lost sight of the fact that the development of the territory was their responsibility as stipulated in the mandate agreement. However, they did very little to improve the social and economic situation of the territory during their mandate/trusteeship periods in Cameroon, only to turn around and describe the economy as weak and backward. It was, however, after several years of inactivity, that the British reluctantly initiated a road development program in the territory with a view to improving the road infrastructural development to enhance local development in the territory. An average sum of £250.000 per annum was spent on the territory's road infrastructure. In 1958, the expenditure was stepped up sharply from £500.000 in 1959 to over £600.000 by 1960. With this initiative, some roads were tarred. For instance, the road from Victoria to Kumba was tarred, which made Kumba one of the fastest-growing economies in the territory. Generally, the improvement of the road situations in the region triggered economic growth in the area. For instance, the Bamenda ring road and the road west from Kumbo facilitated trading and peasant activities in the area. However, in spite of this, the argument of economic unviability still prevailed to the detriment of the colonized subject.

In contextualizing the importance of C.D.C. to the economy of Southern Cameroons and specifically highlighting the comparative viability advantage that banana, cocoa, or other agricultural products offered, without dismissing the economic advantage of the C.D.C., Beril, however, contemplated with dismay the challenge that was likely to affect the banana sector in particular by stating that "old enemies," that is; natural disasters, pests, and diseases were likely to affect the plantations. The report claimed that some plantations lacked wind protection and

were frequently damaged by storms. According to the report, in a "good" year, the losses incurred by the C.D.C. plantations fell below a million plants. This was, in the view of the British, a severe blow because the stem of a banana was worth 10 shillings.

In this light, natural occurrences such as hurricanes that posed a serious threat to bananas were unpredictable, and worst still, little efforts were made to minimize the impact apart from the earthing-up technique, which was even an expensive initiative. In addition, Panamá was a notorious disease that frequently attacked bananas and did not have a cure. In this regard, the Beril Report concluded that the economy of the Southern Cameroons could not be expanded with primary reliance on the banana sector. This influenced the C.D.C. to start shifting away from bananas and move towards the cultivation of rubber, oil palm, cocoa, and tea, which were less speculative and were slow-yielders as compared to bananas. The C.D.C. never accumulated reserves to earn capital and transform the banana plantations into other suitable commodities, and the Southern Cameroons' government was in no position to advance the money.

Again, one can clearly speculate the difficult position in which Southern Cameroons found itself during this era, and things were further made difficult by the British colonial administration, which did not stimulate a holistic development agenda for the territory. The colonial administration was, by and large, more concerned with the imminent challenges that faced the territory than proposing concrete solutions that could alleviate the precarious economic situation of the territory. However, the British colonial policy of *Indirect Rule* was inclined to rely on indigenous resources, which made it difficult to accelerate aggressive development initiatives or take responsibility for the improvement of the territory by pioneering alternative development projects in the social, economic, and other domains. In spite of the issues raised in his report, the findings were palatable as it concluded that the economy of the territory was relatively in a good state but needed more improvements that were hoped would propel the Southern Cameroons into more stability, hence making the territory economically viable. However, by this time, the British colonial authorities were already negotiating a possible reunification option between French Cameroon and the British Southern Cameroons. This is because, by 1960/1, another commission was called up to re-examine the economic implications that reunification would orchestrate and how best such challenges could be mitigated. Taking into account the above political gesticulations, it was obvious by this time that another study was mandated to make or mar, and this was led by Mr. Kjell Arderson, dubbed the Anderson's report.

The uncertainties surrounding the economic viability of the Southern Cameroons dragged on until 1960/1. In 1960, Mr. Kjell Anderson was commissioned by the Republic of Cameroun from December 1960 to February 1961 to examine the economic repercussions of a possible reunification of the British Southern Cameroons with the Republic of Cameroon. In practice, the report was a hypothetical survey that studied the budgetary problems that would arise in the event of reunification between the French Cameroon and Southern Cameroons (Ngoh, 1996). The central mission of the Commission was to investigate how the federal and regional budgets could be harmonized and factored into the reunified Cameroon. In brief, Anderson examined the following issues: the need for a common currency, a common external tariff, the absence of an internal tariff, and the federal budget (NAB, Anderson, Qb/a/1960). The need to reassess these aspects stemmed from the fact that the British Cameroons and the Republic of Cameroon belonged to two different monetary or fiscal zones: the Sterling and the Franc zones.

Regarding trade, incompatibility was conspicuously identified because the two entities belonged to different trade blocs; the Republic of Cameroon belonged to the Common Market, while the Southern Cameroons was associated with the Commonwealth. Owing to the differences in their fiscal policies, it was obvious that certain problems could meaningfully affect a future reunification. Anderson's report noted challenges like fiscal disparities, foreign trade, as well as possible administrative problems. Raising trade deficit and other structural differences, Anderson was to reinforce the belief that the economy of Southern Cameroons was weak and that in the event of a future reunification with the Republic of Cameroon, difficulties would undoubtedly emerge, but this would be better than granting self-rule to the territory.

In spite of all the studies, the British tactfully prepared Southern Cameroons for reunification rather than working towards granting her autonomous self-rule. In fact, according to Ngoh (2019; Ngoh, 2023), the interests of British and French colonial authorities towards Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon, which, at times, clashed conspicuously, negatively impacted the results of Southern Cameroons' choice for independence. Both colonial powers serially and tactfully opposed Southern Cameroons' independence as a separate political entity for different reasons (Mukete, 2013; Ngoh, 2023). According to Fanso (2017), Britain wanted Southern Cameroons to achieve independence in association with Nigeria and rejected the option for a separate independent Southern Cameroons, a hypothesis which, in the view of Ngoh (2023), was linked by some politicians like J. N. Foncha and P. M. Kale at various periods.

By coldshouldering the option of separate political entity for Southern Cameroons, the British Colonial Office, once again strengthened its earlier position by stating that Southern Cameroons "*would be a poor - weak country*" and, it would be "*unable to stand alone and would have to accept whatever terms were offered to them*," (Ngoh, 2023; Mukete, 2013; Elango, 2018). This certainly led Britain to reject the option of independence for Southern Cameroons. This reminds us that the British had already nurtured a complex agenda for the territory not to achieve self-rule but to either reunite with the Republic of Cameroon or in association with Nigeria. Therefore, it is clear from this perspective that the various commissioned studies on the economic viability or unviability of the territory were highly doctored and tailored to satisfy imperialistic interests.

Post-colonial scholars are today confronted with many unanswered questions that seek to uncover the true picture of the economy of the former Southern Cameroons. The findings of the study indicate that after independence and reunification in 1961, several oil deposits were discovered off the creeks of Bakassi, Cape Limbo, and Tiko. New fields for the opening of plantations in Ndian and Kupe Muanenguba have been flourishing in recent years. Besides, the region, today called the South West Region, is a haven for cocoa, palms, and other cash crops, which continue to fetch the post-colonial Republic of Cameroon huge revenue in taxes and foreign exchange earnings. During the colonial period, the C.D.C. was the sole state corporation and the second-highest employer after the state.

Available evidence shows that trends have changed drastically, and other sectors of the economy, like tourism, contribute enormously to the livelihood of nations. Tourism and exploration of minerals were among the key economic potentials that the three economic studies failed to consider as potentials for the Southern Cameroons. Taking the above into account, we assert that the colonial economic reports were paradoxical and characteristically inconsistent in nature. In comparative terms, Southern Cameroons was larger in size than many African countries like the Gambia, Zanzibar, Togo land and a host of others that got independence in the later part of the 20th century. In terms of resources, some of these countries lacked the necessary resources that were required to put a nation on its feet as an autonomous entity.

Discussion

The study's findings reveal that the former Southern Cameroons (the same area as the South West and North West Regions of Cameroon or anglophone Cameroon) have been the country's

backbone since independence. This region, especially the Southwest region, is the country's bread basket. The findings indicate that the former Southern Cameroons was endowed with lots of untapped mineral resources as well as touristic attractions, which could have made the country self-reliant, independent, and economically stable as an autonomous political entity. The paper found that the economic resources or potentials discovered, population size, and other factors should have advantaged the territory to achieve political independence of Southern Cameroons. Studies show that the British deliberately and consciously propagated the doctrine of economic unviability because they actually preferred the reunification or integration option over self-rule, which some southern Cameroonian politicians wanted at the time (Ngoh, 2023).

Post-Coloniality of Economic Potentials and the Paradox of Economic Viability in Anglophone Cameroon

Contemporary decolonial studies have authoritatively proven that the area previously described as the Southern Cameroons (Now known as South West and North West Regions or simply as Anglophone Cameroon) is endowed with stupendous cultural, natural and human resources capable of sustaining the other 8 regions that constitute present-day Republic of Cameroon. A recently published 2018 Extractive Industries Transparency International (EITI) Report on natural resources like oil reveals that crude oil represents the bulk of production and export of the extractive sector in Cameroon, followed by gas and gold. During the period under review, the country recorded significant revenues generated by the extractive sector, amounting to 763.95 billion FCFA, and those included in the state budget amounted to 568 billion FCFA, compared to 2017 with 441.97 billion FCFA.

Another source claims that Cameroon now has an estimated 200m barrels of oil reserves. The offshore Rio del Rey Basin, located mostly in Ndian Divisions in Southwest Region and close to the border with Nigeria's oil-rich Niger Delta, is home to 89% percent of the deposits. The remaining 11% is spread across the Douala, Kribi-Campo, Mamfe, and Logone-Birni basins (EITI Report, 2018). The above statistics reveal that the former Southern Cameroons had the resources that, if exploited gainfully, could have contributed to economic development and, therefore, a sustainable economy for the territory. However, the study further reveals that despite the availability of such celebrated oil-rich deposits in the Southwest, the region has continued to experience marginalization and gruesome injustice in the hydrocarbon sector which is still heavily controlled by the central government in Yaounde which is several miles from the capital

town of the South West Region or its oil peripheral zones of Bakassi peninsular and Ndian for example. This also reinforces the idea that the French and British may have had their backstage negotiations against the wishes and aspirations of the colonized people of Southern Cameroons, who were virtually sacrificed due to colonial politicking.

To further elaborate on the economic potentials of the territory, the findings also indicate that the former Southern Cameroons after 1972 were further divided into the Northwest and Southwest provinces (now regions). These regions host the biggest agro-companies in Cameroon, like the Cameroon Tea Estate (CTE) in Tole in Buea sub-division, the Upper Nun Valley Development Authority, Delmonte Bananas and the C.D.C., and PAMOL. In addition, some of Cameroon's major economic export commodities like banana, palm oil, tea, cocoa, coffee, timber, sand, and rice for example come from these regions. The Upper Nun Valley Development Authority is in charge of developing the agricultural sector in the Upper Nun Valley of the North West Region, particularly with rice production, processing, and marketing; including provision of subsidies to the farmers. About 75% of Cameroon's Arabica coffee comes from the North West Region. Unfortunately, these sectors were either left out or undervalued by the colonial reports occasioned by Beril, Sydney and Philipson, but post-colonial investigations have re-positioned these sectors as the most crucial and reliable sectors for the economic prosperity of the state of Cameroon today. In fact, one can not talk about agriculture in Cameroon after reunification without citing the C.D.C. or PALMOL.

The Agro-pastoral production capacities are accompanied by many forest resources, especially non-timber forest products, which are great sources of income for the country. Revenue also comes from the sales of labor associated with market gardening, fishing, tourism, and timber sales.

Conclusion

The political and economic history of the former Southern Cameroons would be incomplete without mentioning the salient issues of the territory's struggles to stand on its own as an independent entity or in association with Nigeria. A cursory look at the history of the territory suggests a complicated evolution of the territory, and the impacts of this complication have sadly survived the post-colonial era. This, therefore, suggests that the foundations upon which the territory concluded its future by reunifying with the Republic of Cameroon were shaky. The

British colonial experience gave birth to three decisive economic studies that sealed the fate of the territory through the prism of economic unviability.

Admittedly, the colonial hypothesis of economic viability or unviability of the economy of Southern Cameroons, therefore, appears naïve as findings suggest since it was dominated by imperfections and wrong judgments in the private investment process of the British government's colonial policies. It was driven by the competitive self-interest protecting British and French self-assertive interests, which they domesticated throughout the mandate and Trusteeship periods in Cameroon. Within that period, they looted Cameroonian resources such as land, labor, and valuable artifacts only to turn around to castigate the economic viability of the economy as weak, limping, and derogatorily called it a 'banana republic.'

Barely less than 11 years after the independence and reunification of Cameroons, the erstwhile colonially doctored hypothesis of the economic unviability of Southern Cameroons has been vigorously and systematically debunked by post-colonial de-constructivist scholars who believe that the colonial assertions articulated in the already discussed economic studies were no accident. They deliberately justified the colonial agenda by saying Southern Cameroons could not stand alone as an independent state. Britain either wanted the territory to associate with Nigeria or reunify with the Republic of Cameroon. The "Third Option" was not given to the territory, nor did the politicians agree with it.

Today, it is more than obvious that the present-day South West and North West Regions of Cameroon, to an extent, can support countries of the CEMAC zone like Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, and the other eight regions of Cameroon by virtue of its natural resources like foodstuffs of various kinds as well as cash crops which the British underlooked and often placed little or no importance to them. In addition, recent studies suggest that large deposits of pozzolana sand and gravel have been discovered in volcanic areas of the Southwest and Northwest Regions. Not only are there industrial quantities of sand used as building materials and servicing but there are also very fine sand materials that could be exploited to produce glass and other commodities of high commercial market value. In fact, much of the sand used in Equatorial Guinea, a border maritime country, is imported from Cameroon's Southwest region, particularly from the Mungo River. Other resources exported to Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, and the Central Africa Republic are varieties of foodstuffs, vegetables, and timber, most of which originate from the Anglophone regions of Cameroon (Awachi, 1993; Basung, 1975; Bederman, 1968; Aloangamo, 2002).

In addition to agricultural resources, other mineral resources like diamond deposits, gold, ore, etc., have been discovered in Mamfe, while new gold deposits have been found in Misaje in the Northwest Region. The former Victoria (Limbe) has the finest natural deep seaport in the whole of West Africa. If well harnessed, this seaport could serve more than five countries in the African sub-region alongside its CEMAC members. Unfortunately, the British never wanted to consider those resources that could have been genuinely evaluated on the basis of economic viability; rather, the studies they commissioned intentionally watered down all these by hyperbolically describing the economy of Southern Cameroons as a 'banana state' that could perish after a heavy storm.

By way of conclusion, it can be asserted that although Southern Cameroons, like many entities that were still under colonial occupation, had its challenges, which ranged from human to natural setbacks, the territory, however, evolved politically, culturally, and economically along the paths predetermined by the colonial authorities and the politicians. Despite the efforts made by the politicians, the colonial administration succeeded in putting a 'knife' between them, hence derailing them from achieving a common political objective for the territory. The Premier of Southern Cameroons, Foncha, and the other politicians of Southern Cameroons, like E.M. Endeley, P.M. Kale, and Jua, for instance, failed to agree on a common political framework. The result was that the "Third Option," which could have advocated independence without association or reunification, was categorically rejected by Britain, France, and the United Nations.

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The Post-2018 Ethiopian Foreign Policy towards the Horn and Ethio-Sudan Relationships Dynamics

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Foreign policy is dynamic and constantly changes in response to major domestic, regional, or global developments. The political reform that brought Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed to office in 2018 exhibited an 'inside out foreign policy approach.' Domestic issues and Ethiopian citizens were prioritized under the policy, followed by neighboring states, the continent, and the world. This article analyzes Ethiopian foreign policy towards the region and the factors shaping the post-2018 Ethio-Sudan relations. The study utilized a qualitative approach involving key informant interviews, archival materials, and an in-depth investigation of published documents and sources. Even though Ethiopia pursued an appealing foreign policy towards Sudan under the 'Horn First' ethos, factors such as border issues, domestic instabilities, the reinstatement of the mutual destabilization policy, Egypt's interest, and mutual misunderstandings concerning UAE- made their relationships dynamic, alternating between mutual suspicion and peaceful cooperation. Resolving domestic security and political crises while exploiting natural and organic bridges such as borders, shared peoples, and transboundary resources as opportunities for their integration and mutual development rather than security threats can cure the diplomatic ailment.

Keywords: *Ethiopia, Ethio-Sudan Relationships, Ethiopian Foreign Policy, Inside-out Approach, Sudan*

Introduction

Ethiopia Ethiopia and Sudan are situated in the Horn of Africa[i], the continent's easternmost triangle, facing the Red Sea to the east, the Indian Ocean to the southeast, and the Nile Basin to the west (Roba & Berouk, 2011). Because of its strategic location, the region is extremely

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significant geopolitically. To begin with, the region is located at a critical geostrategic crossroads connecting Europe, Asia, and Africa and is bounded by the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the Indian Ocean, with the Suez Canal at the northern end and the strait of Bab el Mandeb (approximately 30 km wide from Djibouti to Yemen), a choke point linking the Indian Ocean to the Red Sea at the southern end. Besides, the region is rich in commodities (crude oil, potash, lithium, and diamonds) and natural resources (transboundary rivers). It has enormous market potential due to its high population, vast geographical area, and promising economic performance that can attract significant investment (Yirga, 2021). Furthermore, the region is the most important worldwide commercial line, transporting approximately $700 billion in commodities and more than 40% of the world's oil each year, and is adjacent to the oil-rich Arab states (Mabera, 2020). This caused the region to become the hub of intense geopolitical competition among regional and global powers vying to establish their military bases to preserve their political, economic, and security interests.

Despite its global significance and some positive developments in the areas of security, economy, and regional integration, the Horn has been perceived as one of the most volatile geographical spaces for internal dissidence and interstate conflict (Roba & Berouk, 2011). Some of the region's primary traits include the absence of democracy and long-serving rulers, starvation and drought, interstate and intrastate warfare, and secessionists achieving de jure or de facto independence [Eritrea and Somaliland, respectively] (Clapham, 2017).

The countries in the Horn of Africa have an interconnected regional security complex[ii], wherein any development in one of them has an impact on all the others either directly or indirectly (Tafesse, 2009). Historical connections, political ties, traditional economic ties, and cultural and religious practices are all shared across the region. According to Markakis (1998,p.5), the Horn is not simply a geographical name but also a cultural and socioeconomic entity that might set it apart from nearby locations. This physically, culturally, and economically integrated group of nations is referred to as "a cultural and economic zone" by Tafesse (2009).

Ethiopia, the region's lynchpin and heartland, maintained long-standing foreign relations with several countries, including its neighbors. Its relationship with Sudan has continued to be exemplary and dynamic. Since Ethiopia established its Laison Office in Sudan in 1941 (Belete, 2012,p.460), and formal Ethio-Sudan bilateral relationships began following Sudan's independence from Anglo-Egyptian condominium colonial rule in 1956, Sudan-Ethiopian

political relations have fluctuated between cordial friendship and mutual mistrust or suspicion. Changes in governments, as well as changes in foreign policy, domestic politics, national interests, regional dynamics, and global influences, have all contributed to the dynamics of bilateral relationships. In 2018 and 2019, Ethiopia and Sudan saw the termination of governments that had been in place for almost three decades and were exposed to a new environment. Since then, the bilateral relationship dynamics have been maintained. Thus, this article analyzes the post-2018 Ethiopian foreign policy towards Sudan and the factors behind the dynamics between Ethiopia and Sudan's bilateral relationships.

Statement of the Problem

The Republic of Sudan is Ethiopia's biggest neighbor. The country, which gained independence from Anglo-Egyptian condominium colonial power in 1956, is crucial in the region due to its wealth of natural resources (oil, gold, arable land, and Nile water) and its geographical placement on the Red Sea, a vital global economic corridor (Belmadi & Hichem, 2024). Sudan and Ethiopia share long-standing political, social, economic, and geographical relations. Throughout history, this connection has seen ups and downs, making it dynamic.

Following the 2018 and 2019 changes of government in Ethiopia and Sudan, the bilateral ties between Ethiopia and Sudan became much more dynamic. Because of the region's security complex, events in Ethiopia have an impact on Sudan and vice versa. After the change of governments, both countries experienced deadly civil wars, and domestic insecurity persisted. The ongoing security crisis in both countries has been impacting their relationships as well as the security of the Horn of Africa. Despite this, scholars and academicians have not given adequate focus to the post-2018 Ethiopian foreign policy towards the region and Sudan, the post-2018 Ethio-Sudan relationship dynamics, and the variables generating these dynamics. Thus, this study attempted to fill the lacuna appraising the post-2018 Ethiopian foreign policy, the dynamics of the bilateral relationships, and internal and external factors influencing the dynamics of Ethiopia-Sudan relations.

Methodology

Methodologically, the study is designed to employ a qualitative research method, which relies on the description of data in words and observations. With regard to the source of data, the study

draws on both primary and secondary sources. From *primary sources of data*, the semi-structured interview has been used. Under this, the data are collected from purposively and carefully selected respondents of key informants from the officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, Ambassadors, diplomats, researchers, and experts. The informants include five active ambassadors or diplomats, two Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials, two Ethiopian Institute of Foreign Affairs scholars, and one academician and foreign affairs analyst. These five active ambassadors or diplomats represent their countries in Sudan, South Sudan, and the United Arab Emirates. The two researchers and two officials are important figures in their respective institutions. High-ranking Ethiopian academics and foreign affairs experts have written a variety of documents/papers on security, foreign policy, and international relations.

Key informants with direct knowledge and experience of the issues were chosen using the purposive sample technique, and they were questioned using semi-structured interview questions that the researcher had prepared. Despite submitting a cooperation letter from Addis Ababa University to the Sudanese embassy in Addis Ababa, the researcher was unable to obtain permission for an interview. Thus, the gap in that line was attempted to be filled by a thorough analysis of secondary and archival sources.

With regard to the *secondary sources,* materials such as books, journal articles, published and unpublished data collected from the archives of different institutions [mainly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs], media reports, electronic sources, official documents, research papers, newspapers, magazines, reports, web sources, and others; and an in-depth analysis of respected scholarly works or documents have been used.

The study employed the qualitative data analysis technique. Accordingly, a *general inductive approach to data analysis* and *thematic analysis* methods were adopted for this article. In these approaches, the process of analysis began with gathering (raw) data and subsequently organizing and preparing data for analysis. Then, reading through all data, segmenting, and categorizing (coding) data in order to interrelate themes/issues were followed. Finally, the analysis was concluded by interpreting the meaning of the interrelated themes/issues or deriving meanings from the information (Creswell, 2009).

An Overview of the Pre-2018 Ethio-Sudan Relationships

Ethiopia shares a 744-kilometer border with Sudan in the Northeast (World Fact Book, 2024, p. 2). Both nations have long-standing political, social, economic, and geographic ties. Conflict and cooperation have been defining their relationships for a long time. For instance, Sudanese Mahadist groups engaged in war with Emperor Yohannis IV (r.1872-1889) of Ethiopia at the battle of Mattama in 1889. Conversely, Sudan played a significant role in Ethiopia's liberation from Italian occupation (1936 - 1941). In addition to providing a safe haven for Ethiopia's Emperor Haile Selassie I (r.1930-1974) to regroup and plan the liberation struggle, Sudan's army also participated in the liberation struggle under the leadership of their colonial masters, the British (Carlos, 2016).

Ethiopia and Sudan established formal diplomatic relations in 1956, shortly after Sudan gained independence (Kinfe, 2006). During the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie I (r.1930-73), the political relationships between Sudan and Ethiopia have been fluctuating between cordial friendship and mutual suspicion. While border disputes, religious differences, and ideological conflicts were at the heart of mutual hostility during that time, the emperor's attempts to mediate disagreements between the rebel group in South Sudan and the Sudanese government served as the foundation for cooperation.

According to an interviewee, Ethiopian Ambassador to Sudan, Yibeltal Aemero (2024), *during the Ethiopian Socialist militarist Derg regime (1974-1991), Ethiopia-Sudan relations were primarily marked by mutual antagonism. During this time, he added, both engaged in mutual subversive and mutual destabilization activities, with the Khartoum government providing material and psychological assistance to anti-Ethiopian government rebel groups and the Addis Ababa government doing the same for anti-Khartoum regime rebel groups.* Another interviewee of the study, the researcher of the Ethiopian Institute of Foreign Affairs, Befkadu Bogale(2024), added that *such 'subversion or mutual destabilization' practices, such as training, hosting, or arming anti-government political and armed forces against one other, are a common foreign approach in the region in general, and in Ethio-Sudanese ties in particular.* During this period, domestic politics, religious issues, border issues, the Cold War, ideologies, and other regional and global variables influenced their ties.

The political transition in Ethiopia in 1991 and the subsequent change in foreign policy dramatically altered Ethiopia's approach to interacting with neighboring countries. An

interviewee of the study, an official at the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sebsibe Bade (2023), said that *the 1991 foreign policy change is a complete break from the past or a major shift in the country's foreign policy dimension because it ended the siege mentality, and regarded neighboring countries as friends or partners, not as threats. The pre-1991 Ethiopian Foreign policy, according to him, had been mainly characterized by a siege mentality and the resulting suspicious bilateral and multilateral relations of the country with neighboring states and others. Instead of opting for cooperation and working towards achieving mutual benefit with neighboring states, Ethiopia's foreign policy resorted to building the military capacity in order to effectively address perceived adversities from near and far.* Hence, the previous mutually suspicious environment between Ethiopia and its neighbors was shifted to mutual cooperation in 1991. Consequently, the Horn of African States began to enjoy top priority concern in Ethiopia's foreign policy after the rise of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (hereinafter EPRDF) (1991-2018) to power.

From 1991 to 2018, Ethiopia's international relations with its neighbors were generally guided by the principles of good neighborliness, non-interference, mutual respect, win-win negotiations, collective security, and accountability. Economic integration, avoiding unnecessary conflict, prioritizing people's interests, and lowering tension-ridden situations were also cited as strategies.

Regarding Sudan specifically, the government's foreign policy document, the Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy and Strategy (hereinafter FANSPS) document, states that "*from the perspective of our own economic development agenda, for regional stability and peace-in short, in light of our fundamental national interest framed by development and security-utmost priority should be given to the relations between Ethiopia and [t]he Sudan"* (2002, p. 46). The importance of Sudan to Ethiopia's market due to its sizeable population, abundance of natural resources, potential for growth, investment, Nile issue, and implications for its peace and security justifies the allocation of top priority.

Practically, when the militarist-socialist Derg (r.1974-991) was overthrown, and the new EPRDF force took control and entered Addis Ababa on May 28, 1991, Ethio-Sudan friendship and cooperation ties were established. Relations between the two had already developed before the coalition of rebel factions led by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (hereinafter TPLF), the EPPRD, came to power in 1991. Before 1991, the regime in Khartoum had been providing

material and psychological support to the TPLF rebel forces, even enabling them to use Sudanese soil as a base to destabilize and topple the Ethiopian Derg government.

An interviewee who is a senior Ethiopian Diplomat to Sudan (2024) said that *from 1991-1995 the Ethiopian government attempted to forge strong ties with Sudan by removing visa requirements, forbidding all opposition groups from using Ethiopia as a base, visiting Sudan and welcoming Sudan's leaders on reciprocal visits to Ethiopia, signing a number of agreements for cooperation, showing excessive patience with Sudan's Islamic fundamentalist regime [National Islamic Front's] wrongdoings, and playing a significant role in resolving Sudan's conflict with Eritrea*

On June 26, 1995, the event that strained the relations and altered the trajectory of the political relations between Ethiopia and Sudan happened in Addis Ababa when Islamic terrorists attempted to assassinate Egyptian President Husni Mubarak, who stayed unharmed, owing to the bulletproof quality of the car and the efforts of Ethiopian security agents (MoFA, 2024:KI3[iii], 2024). Five Al-Gama'a Al-Islamiya members were murdered in this incident; three were captured, and one escaped and fled to Sudan, where he joined the strategists and directors (CDRC, 2017). Despite its apparent understanding that Khartoum's NIF was solely responsible, Egypt wrongly accused Ethiopian security services of complicity in the incident, which strained Ethiopian-Egyptian relations. During this mutual suspicion and hostility period, Sudan became isolated both regionally and internationally.

An interviewee of the study, Deputy Head of the Ethiopian Mission to South Sudan, Markos Tekle (Ph.D), said *the animosity of 1995 between Ethiopia and Sudan ended, and a new era of cooperation and collaboration started after three years with the deterioration of Ethio-Eritrean friendly relations.* This is mainly due to the move of Ethiopia and Eritrea towards the Ethio-Eritrean war (1998-2000) war, and Ethiopia's plan to minimize the number of its opponents in the region, as well as to use Sudan ports instead of Eritrean ports. Sudan also welcomed the rapprochement because it wanted Ethiopia to stop financing the rebel force of the anti-Khartoum regime (the Sudan People's Liberation Movement) and required Ethiopia's assistance to break free from its isolation. Finally, the drying up of Islamic fundamentalists from the Khartoum administration and the purpose of restricting Eritrea's [their mutual enemy's] ambition brought Ethiopia and Sudan together.

From 1998 to 2018, their bilateral political relationship confirmed the long-standing, genuine cooperation for several reasons. To begin with, the post-Ethio-Eritrean War (1998-2000) continued the 'no peace, no war' situation between Ethiopia and Eritrea on the one hand, and the resumption of deteriorated relationships between Eritrea and Sudan since 1994, when Eritrea culminated diplomatic relationships with Sudan for supporting anti-Asmara governments rebel groups, on the other hand, strengthened their ties. In addition, the two countries leaders' friendship and their compatible economic interests made Ethiopia extensively use Sudan Port as a way to import oil (KI4[iv], 2023). Moreover, the Sudanese government's progressive shift towards the Ethiopian side rather than Egypt in the Ethio-Egyptian controversy on the Ethiopian construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam enhanced the ties. Furthermore, Ethiopia's pivotal role in mediating the Sudan and South Sudan issue and its middle-of-the-road approach between the two parties sustained the relationships between Ethiopia and Sudan (KI3[v], 2024).

The Post-2018 Ethiopian Foreign Policy Towards the Region and Ethio-Sudan Ties

The Post-2018 Foreign Policy Towards the Horn of Africa

Foreign policy and foreign relations of a given state typically change when the regime in that state changes, whether peacefully (via a democratic election) or violently (via a coup d'état), though there can also be continuity, particularly in terms of foreign policy goals (Keller, 1987). After four years of street protests, Ethiopia's ruling party, the EPRDF, underwent internal leadership and political reform, with Dr. Abiy Ahmed being elevated to Premiership on April 2, 2018, succeeding Hailemariam Dessalegn. The new Prime Minister has put in place a number of political, economic, and social reform initiatives.

With regards to Ethiopian foreign relations, there were two big vivid developments in the post-2018 Ethiopian foreign policy: the book written and publicized by the new premier as a guideline to his government, the *'Medemer*[vi]*Book's (2019)',* and *'The 2019 Foreign Policy Document'.*

In the *Medemer* book, [an author] Prime Minister Abiy stated that too much cooperation leads to laziness, and too much competition leads to tension and conflict. Thus, *Medemer* tries to accept a balanced approach between the ideals of Liberalist 'cooperation 'and Realist 'competition'. With regard to the Horn of Africa, the book advocates for harmonious coexistence, equal partnership, and fair sharing of rewards and obligations with the neighboring countries. The new policy has recognized the political science saying that 'every nation has the freedom to choose its allies. Nobody, on the other hand, gets to choose their neighbors. Given this rationale, the new

approach contends that expanding diplomatic connections with neighboring nations in the Horn of Africa will be prioritized in foreign relationships. According to the book, this may be realized by revitalizing and strengthening the IGAD and injecting new life into bilateral diplomatic relations with neighboring governments (Abiy, 2019, p. 259).

The second most important development in the post-2018 foreign policy is *'The 2019 Ethiopian Foreign Policy Draft'*, which has been quietly implemented since its inception. The revision was needed because the 2002 FANSPS had been unrevised for a long time, and changes were witnessed in domestic, regional, and global settings.

The 2019 document reaffirmed an 'inside out prioritization' strategy, whereby domestic matters are given priority and are followed by neighboring countries, Africa, and ultimately the world. According to the document, peace diplomacy, economic diplomacy, citizen-oriented diplomacy, and public diplomacy are Ethiopia's four foreign policy pillars (The 2019 Ethiopian Foreign Policy Document Draft, 2019, p. 13-23). In general, it focuses on national prosperity, regional integration, citizens' safety and dignity, strategic partnerships and shuttle diplomacy, professionalism, building sustainable institutions, and peace, cyber, and citizen-oriented diplomacy. Balancing cooperation and competition, multilateralism, striving for African fraternity and integration, amicably resolving differences, and neutralism are additional distinguishing features of the approach.

In terms of the Horn of Africa, the document states that it is a relatively close region that shares commonalities with Ethiopia in terms of history, culture, language, geography, and population. These countries' fates are intertwined with Ethiopia's. As a result, foreign policy devotes special attention to neighboring countries (The 2019 Ethiopian Foreign Policy Document Draft, 2019, p. 29). Unlike the 2002 document, which details policies and strategies towards all separately, treated neighboring countries separately, and divided them into allies and foes, the new document treats them generally and as possible partners. The new policy also avoided labeling neighbors as enemies or allies, as well as us-versus-them and allies-versus-foes orientations. The policy revised the previous premise, which reduced the importance of neighboring states to security issues, saw neighbors from a security perspective, and emphasized their importance in economy and security.

The new strategy treats adjacent countries as brothers and sisters with whom there are unbreakable blood links rather than friends/allies who can be changed and replaced and accords special attention to them under its 'horn first' premise. Redwan Hussein (2022), the Premier's National Security Affairs Advisor, expressed this by saying, "We give top priority to our neighboring countries next to our domestic issues because they are naturally next to us and we share not only borders, peoples, cultures, and languages but also threats, challenges, and opportunities." Therefore, he added, "we make efforts to ensure that our development and progress benefit our neighbors". In fact, creating a peaceful climate with neighboring governments and making them believe Ethiopia's growth and security are equally theirs will eliminate not only regional security threats but also faraway adversaries because enemies might use the neighbors as a bridge to strike Ethiopia.

Generally, it appears that there has been a modest shift in foreign policy about the Horn. An interviewee of the study, Ethiopian Ambassador to Djibouti, Birhanu Tsegaye (2024), said that *in terms of the port issue, rather than renting, striving to realize the state's vision of having access to the sea, naval base, and port that Ethiopia governs or administers has emerged as a key foreign policy goal*. Being on international waters is also linked to the intention of having a naval presence and projecting power. With regards to how to approach neighboring countries, the book '*Medemer'* brought up the idea that *it would be better and preferable if our diplomatic contacts with neighboring countries were handled by leaders since it allows us to communicate directly with the state's top decision-makers* (MoFA, 2024, p. 300). This was evident when the premier personally visited all neighbors and took a direct role in every crucial regional issue. A new direction on the side of the government to encourage Ethiopian nationals to invest in neighboring countries in order to increase capital and develop bilateral economic and people-to-people contacts was also adopted (MoFA, 2024, p. 300).

According to an interviewee, a researcher at the Institute of Foreign Affairs Befkadu (2024), the most significant change of 2018 was a shift in perspective. The previously gradually dissolving Ethiopian exceptionalism [as a Christian island], which had led to a siege mindset, was buried in 2018. The view that Ethiopia is not exceptional but one state with multiple difficulties coexisting with neighbors with multiple problems in a troublesome region was adopted. The new leadership accepted Ethiopia's fate as connected and determined by its neighbors. Therefore, Ethiopia needs to utilize its resources and potential in the region. By sharing what it has and taking what its

neighbors have, development could be achieved for the benefit of all. Hence, an inward-looking approach, horn-first ethos, diversification of partners, regional integration, mutual benefit, access to the sea, and non-intervention were embraced as pillars of post-2018 foreign policy.

The Post-2018 Ethio-Sudan Relationships

The new leadership maintained the prior friendly ties with the Khartoum government. On April 21 and 22, 2018, President Omer al-Bashir of Sudan and Premier Abiy Ahmed Ali met for the first time at the Tana Forum in the Ethiopian city of Bahir Dar. On the sidelines of the forum, both parties agreed to make every effort to develop their bilateral ties and raise them to the greatest levels possible in Africa. At the time, the two leaders emphasized the importance of strengthening Ethiopia-Sudan cooperation and partnership in regional and international forums (Sudan Tribune, 2018).

Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's visit to Sudan on May 2, 2018, was the first formal move in promoting the long-standing political bilateral relations between Ethiopia and Sudan following the ascent of Ethiopia's new leadership to office. During his two-day official visit, he met with his counterpart, President al Bashir, to discuss economic, security, political, border, and GERD issues, as well as regional matters. President Al-Bashir stated during the discussion, *"We will work with Ethiopia in efforts to bring peace to the Horn of Africa and in Africa, as well as anti-terror and anti-human trafficking activities"* (MoFA, 2018, p. 1). Sudan, he noted, wants to work more closely with Ethiopia on commerce, investment, and infrastructure development. On his part, the Prime Minister of Ethiopia stated that *"Ethiopians and Sudanese are one people; they are the children of the Nile. The border between the two countries is on the ground and not in their hearts" (ibid).* Ethiopia agreed to collaborate with Sudan on Port Sudan's renovation, even going so far as to consider seeking a share of ownership (The Maritime Executive, 2018). Ethiopia has restated its intention to export energy generated by the GERD to Sudan. The tour came to an end when Ethiopia and Sudan agreed to form a joint army to protect the GERD (Middle East Monitor, 2018).

Despite the suspicion that forging brotherhood between Prime Minister Dr. Abiy and the Khartoum government would be difficult, the two leaders forged cordial bilateral relationships until a months-long civilian protest demanding President Omar al-Bashir's departure resulted in the military's ouster of him in April 2019. The suspicion was due to President al Beshir's already

developed close relations with the TPLF, a group that dominated Ethiopia's security, economic, and political power until 2018.

Sudan's thirty-year autocratic rule came to an end with the April 2019 movement. This Sudan People's movement was inspired by the positive spillover effects of Ethiopia's political transition in 2018 and the country's subsequent political and economic developments. However, the two major actors in overthrowing the al-Beshir's government - the military under the Transitional Military Council (TMC) and the civilian opposition group under the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC)- disagreed on who would have ultimate decision-making authority during the transitional period, posing a challenge to the coup (Peace Research Facility, 2022).

On June 8, 2019, Premier Abiy Ahmed headed to Sudan to negotiate and bridge the gap between Sudanese military and opposition civilian leaders. He had separate discussions with the leaders of the two bodies. Finally, *on the sticking point related to the chairmanship and the composition of the Sovereign Council, he proposed a rotating presidency composed of eight civilians and seven militaries* (Sudan Tribune, 2019a, p.1). The two bodies agree to share power for three years, with complete civilian governance to follow, thanks to his mediation and the AU's involvement and suspension of Sudan's membership. Finally, the joint council applauded Ethiopia's Prime Minister for his generous initiative and willingness to bring different points of view closer together (KI4, 2023[vii]). After completing his mission in Sudan, Abiy returned home with 78 Ethiopians who had been held there, though some believe this was a charm offensive strategy.

The Sudanese were grateful for Premier Abiy's mediating efforts, which resulted in the inauguration of a civilian-led transitional administration in Sudan in August 2019 and the continuation of cordial relations. To improve bilateral ties between the two nations, Prime Minister Abiy and his delegation traveled to Sudan in August 2019. Abdalla Hamdok, the Prime Minister of the transitional administration, and Premier Abiy committed to maintaining strong ties between their respective nations while promoting regional stability and economic integration. They agreed that Ethiopia and Sudan, which share a single people and family, are intertwined and have strong historical and strategic ties (Ethiopian Press Agency/ The Ethiopian Herald, 2020). In the post-2018 Ethio-Sudan bilateral relations, the following factors have been major influencing factors.

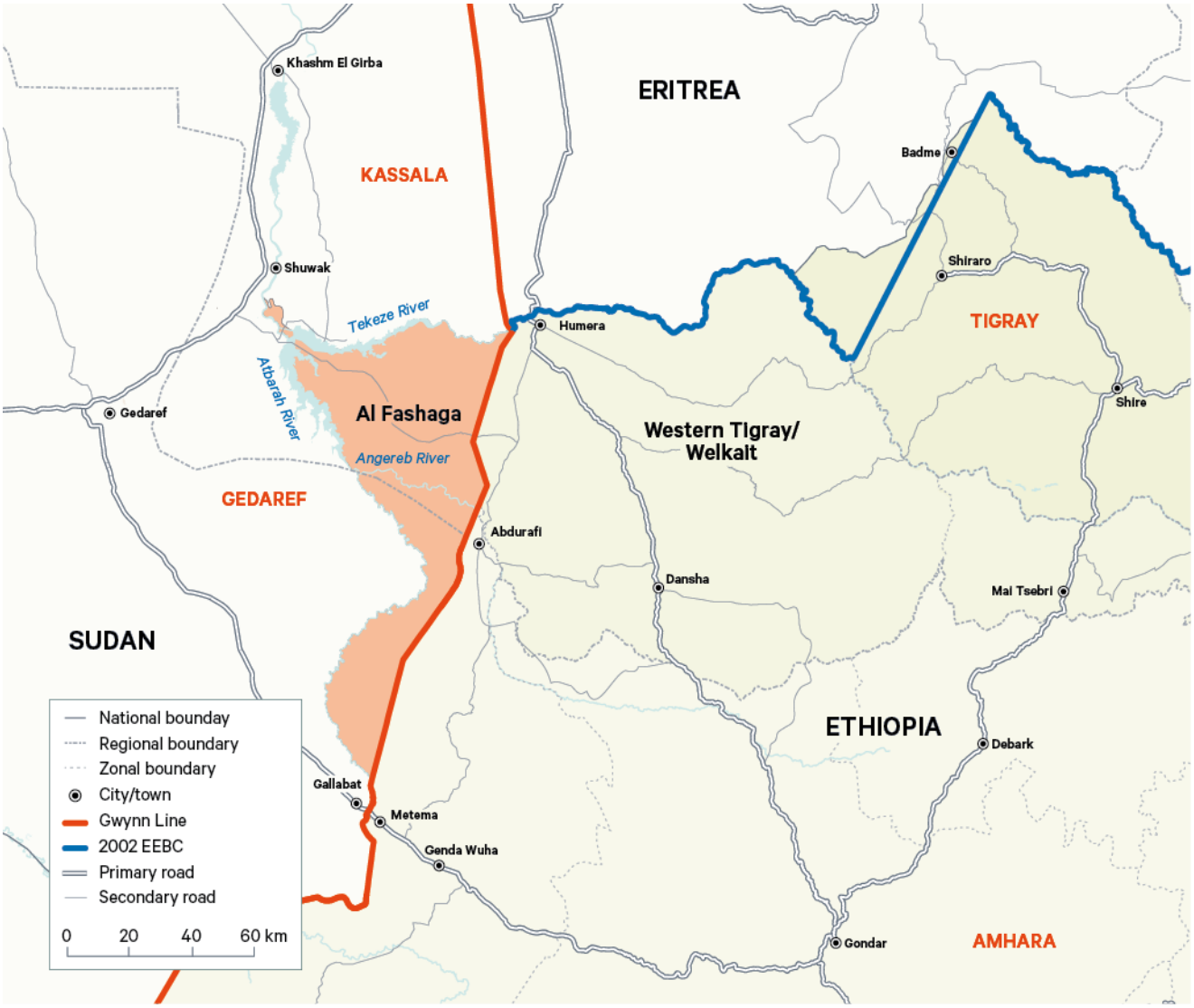
Internal Factors

The Border Issue

The Sudan government used its displeasure with Prime Minister Abiy's rejection of Sudan's Premier Hamdok's proposal to mediate peace talks between the government and the TPLF over the Tigrai conflict (2020-2022) as a reason to make the anti-Ethiopian move quite bold by invading the borderland of Al-Fashaga (Peace Research Facility, 2022). Ethiopian government later stated that it rejected the plan solely because the conflict was an inter-issue that it could handle on its own, and the war appeared to be ending in favor of the federal government.

Mid-December 2020 saw Sudan seize control of the Al Fashaga borderland, forcing thousands of Ethiopian farmers to flee while burning and looting their properties. This took place a month and a half after the Tigrai conflict broke out, and the Ethiopian National Defence Force was dispatched to Northern Ethiopia to fight the TPLF.

Border territory claims and counter-claims have long been a source of friction between the two, stemming from arguments over colonial delimitation in 1902–03. However, the current aggression, which disregarded the previous relatively peaceful land-use arrangement in the area, was committed, anticipating that the emerging civil turmoil would make the Ethiopian army "weak and distracted" (KI3, 2024[viii]). Asserting this in his address to the legislature, Ethiopian Foreign Affairs Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen stated, "*When we changed our face to the northern part [of Ethiopia] in relation to the war, Sudan, violating the* status quo, *we respected and agreed to abide by until a sustainable solution is set, invaded Ethiopia*" (Addis Standard, 2022.p.1). Furthermore, the invasion was the result of a 'self-magnifying contest' in which the military wing invaded Ethiopia to gain domestic political legitimacy, primarily by claiming that it reclaimed the land handed over to Ethiopia by the previous regime. *Moreover, according to an interviewee of the study, a Horn Affairs analyst (2023), the deployment of Sudan troops in the Al-fashaga area was based on an incorrect calculation that the core Ethiopian military had been destroyed in the Tigrai war and that the [military wing] Khartoum regime wanted to assist the TPLF, with whom it had good relations because several Tigreans during different famine periods migrated to Sudan and settled there, intermarried with them, and some of their children have now reached the position of military general.*



Map of Ethio-Sudan border. Sources: Ahmed and Abel (2024:17)

In history, Emperor Menelik II of Ethiopia, who was expanding his territory, and Britain, who planned to reoccupy and colonize Sudan, agreed in the first 1902 agreement that a Joint Boundary Commission made up of representatives from both countries would determine their shared border. Nevertheless, Gwynn [a British surveyor] took on this responsibility in 1903 and unilaterally drew the boundary, notwithstanding their agreement to have a commission established by the two governments complete the job (CRDC, 2021). Sudan's forceful invasion was precipitated by the claim made on the area after the arbitrarily determined boundary between the countries by Major Charles Gwynn, a British surveyor, in 1903, who placed Al Fashaga

[nearly 600 KM^2 of fertile borderland] in Sudan and has considered it a part of Gedaref state, its major breadbasket (International Crisis Group, 2021). Since then, the Sudanese assert that Ethiopian farmers have been cultivating our land since the 1940s illegally because they lack legal ownership and are not paying taxes to the Sudanese government.

On the other hand, Ethiopian governments believed that not only does the Gwayn delineation require both sides' participation as of 1902, or that it is an arbitrary delineated line from the colonial era, but that Ethiopia was not consulted or asked for permission to conduct the boundary demarcation exercise at all. Aside from these differences, factors such as the lack of clarity over the exact location of Gwynn's boundary line because it ran at the base rather than the crest points, significant discrepancies between the text and the map, and, most notably, Gwynn's modifications and readjustments of the boundary in favor of Sudan made it difficult for the two countries to reach an agreement (CRDC, 2021).

After a long period of calmness, Sudan invaded Al Fashaga borderland, forcing thousands of Ethiopian farmers to flee while burning and looting their properties in Mid-December 2020. The invasion was motivated not only by the nature of Ethiopia at the time but also by Sudan's domestic political problems and external influence. Regardless of the preceding developments and efforts, the recent military incursion not only violates the international standards notion of pacific conflict resolution enshrined in the UN Charter, but it also undermines the progress made thus far by various bodies and joint military procedures to re-demarcate the boundary. Above all, sisterly countries and close neighbours like Ethiopia and Sudan need to help each other at the time of internal crisis.

Ethiopia has been trying its best to resolve border-related differences peacefully. Sudan has been in a particularly devastating civil war since April 15, 2023, and the Sudan Army has left Al Fashaga for the epicenter of the fight. Despite several internal and external pressures on the Ethiopian government to use force to reclaim seized land, the government remains committed to a peaceful resolution of the border and demarcation issues. According to the Ethiopian Ambassador to Sudan (2024), Ethiopia's position has been clear since the invasion: Sudan's army must leave the border territory that it has forcefully captured and resolve it amicably, as stated by the 1972 exchange of notes. Ethiopia also prefers that the border dispute be resolved through

negotiations between Ethiopia and Sudan rather than taking it to international courts to be adjudicated under international law.

An interviewee of the study, a Horn affair analyst (2023), said that *Sudan is being heavily influenced by outside forces, including pressure from Gulf and Middle Eastern nations that want to sway Sudanese political elites in their favor; Russia's desire to establish a naval base there; the USA's desire to influence developments in the region and the Middle East; China's desire to defend and sustain her economic interests in the area; and Egypt's support for Sudan's military and desire to get Sudan on her side on the GERD issue.* The problem should be solved non-violently without any pressure from the third party. Since third parties have their own national interests, involving them could not solve the issue amicably. The best indication was UAE's proposal about the contesting Al Fashaga region land in which the country called for the land to be divided among Sudan (25% of the Al-Fashaga, and full ownership according to the Gweynn line), Ethiopia (a small percent share, limited to the opportunity to work there), and the UAE (a large percent for 99 years lease to its agricultural company) (CRDC, 2021). Thus, avoiding any third party, when the two negotiate, the claims from Ethiopia based on an 1891 circular letter from Emperor Minilik II that reach all the way up to Khartoum, where the white and blue Niles meet, and from Sudan based on the 1902/3 Gweynn's line must both be reexamined.

The Revival of Subversive or Mutual Destabilization Policy

The military wing's upper hand following the overthrow of President Al-Beshir, as well as the subsequent ascension of Al-Burhan (a close friend of General Al Sisi), rekindled the proxy war. An interviewee of the study, an Ethiopian senior diplomat to Sudan (2024), said that *despite certain rumors and allegations from Sudan, Ethiopia has not sponsored any anti-Sudan government forces, although Sudan has helped several groups such as the TPLF, the Benishangul-Gumuz opposition force, the Oromo Liberation Army, and the Kimant People [in their struggle for recognition]*.

Even before the Tigrai conflict, Ethiopia's Foreign Minister, Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu, was accusing the Sudanese government of failing to monitor the flow of weapons into Ethiopia, primarily for various groups in the Oromia and Amhara regions attempting to destabilize the nation (Sudan Tribune, 2019b). However, no publications associated with the government address this issue, meaning that either security personnel or the Sudanese government were

responsible for the transit of these weapons. Once again, the new government refrained from openly expressing its displeasure with the covert interaction between the TPLF and Khartoum in order to preserve the good relations. Specifically, when Salah Gosh, the head of Sudan's National Intelligence and Security Service, met with Getachew Assefa, the former security chief of Ethiopia, and a senior TPLF official, as well as when Osman el-Sayid, a former Sudanese ambassador, secretly met with dismissed and expelled TPLF officials in Khartoum (Young, 2020,p.13). Later, however, Sudan took the initiative of accusing Ethiopia of backing anti-Sudan government rebel groups in the Blue Nile region, mainly the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North, which operates in the Blue Nile and South Kordofan (CRDC, 2021,p.20; Peace Research Facility, 2022,p.7).

Sudan's assistance to Tigrean forces (who were fighting against the Federal government in the North) and the Benishangul-Gumuz opposition force (who are fighting against the government and attacking deliveries of GERD construction materials to slow its completion along the Ethio-Sudanese border) further strained relations between Ethiopia and Sudan. Sudan assisted Tigrean and Benishanul-Gumuz forces in a variety of ways, including permitting both forces to operate from Eastern Sudan and facilitating the flow of supplies to both factions. Specifically, while it helped Tigrayan forces with training, material help, and facilitating the way hundreds of Tigreans who fled to Sudan to leave the refugee camp and join Tigrai Defence Force units operating along Sudan's borderland, it supported Benishanul-Gumuz militants by housing them in its Blue Nile state, allowing them to use the area as a staging point for attacks on convoys delivering building supplies to the Dam in Ethiopia's Benishangul-Gumu (Horner & Ahmed, 2023).

Mutual Mis-understanding with Regard to the UAE

In October 2021, Sudan saw another military coup that foiled a civilian-led transition to democracy and stalled progress towards an inclusive and responsible governance system. This coup saw the military faction of Sudan, commanded by General Abdul Fettah al Burhan, seize control, imprison Premier Abdalla Hamdok, and sever the power-sharing agreement between the civilian and military factions (Horner & Ahmed, 2023).

Despite the internal political issues in Sudan, Ethiopia continued to pursue a strategy meant to ease tensions between the two nations. However, in June 2022, an event happened that caused

Sudan to recall its Ambassador to Ethiopia for consultations. This was in response to the Sudanese army's charge that the Ethiopian army had kidnapped seven Sudanese troops and a citizen near the Al Fashaga border area and executed them while transferring them to Ethiopia, in a violation of all international law and war conventions. Addressing the issue at the UN, Ethiopia's representative, Ambassador Taye Enkusellasie, informed the Organisation that since June 2022, Sudan soldiers have opened fire on civilians in Ethiopia's Armachio district and entered Ethiopia's Gelal Wuha town, where they were met with resistance from the town's militia and pushed back. He made it known that the dead bodies of the Sudan army in that fight, as Sudan said, were not murdered by the Ethiopian National Army (MoFA, 2024, p.295).

Burhan and Abiy met on the sidelines of an IGAD conference in July 2022 to discuss bilateral issues. They resolved to form a joint committee to peacefully address a boundary dispute. Ethiopia announced on August 24, 2022, that its Air Force shot down a plane that flew from Sudan, violating Ethiopian airspace, to Tigray via the northern section of Humera to transfer weapons to the TPLF (Sudan Tribune, 2022). According to reports, the plane belongs to Ethiopia's historical foes, who seek Ethiopia's weakness and have always supported the TPLF.

Al Burhan visited Addis Ababa in October 2022, attempting to reassure the Ethiopian federal government that his administration was not aiding the TPLF forces (Horner & Ahmed, 2023). Premier Dr. Abiy reciprocated by visiting Sudan in January 2023 and discussing ways to deepen the mutual partnership. This visit occurred following the resolution of the Tigrai conflict with the AU-mediated Pretoria Agreement, which was signed on November 2, 2022, in Pretoria, South Africa, by the Ethiopian federal government and the TPLF (Horner & Ahmed, 2023). *In the midst of this, news that Ethiopia had earned 32.61 million dollars by exporting 580 kilowatts of power to Sudan and Djibouti in a single year echoed, signaling the continuing relationships in other sectors* (MoFA, 2024, p. 294)

On April 15, 2023, a more dangerous phenomenon for Sudan's and the region's stability occurred when a civil war erupted in Khartoum between the Sudanese army, under the command of Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the head of the Transitional Sovereignty Council of Sudan, and the Rapid Support Forces, under the command of Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo (also known as Hemetti). The battle persisted despite numerous attempts to end it because, in this region, two parties could start a war but could not end it when they needed to because of opposing external actors' interests. As mentioned earlier, Sudan's government has pushed its forces from the Ethio-

Sudanese border at Al Fashaga to the heart of the fighting. Though the contested land is currently free due to the withdrawal of the Sudanese army, Ethiopia has not yet sent armed forces to control it. This contradicted Al-Burhan's allegation that after Ethiopia completes its homework (end internal security problem), it will turn its face to Sudan and send its military to Al Fashaga. In accordance with its traditional foreign policy principle of peaceful conflict resolution, Ethiopia has urged the two warring parties to settle their disagreements amicably so that the new administration may talk with Ethiopia and re-demarcate the border in a mutually agreed manner.

Both military generals paid visits to Ethiopia after the civil war began. Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan traveled to Nairobi and Addis Ababa in mid-November 2023, where in Addis Ababa, he met with Ethiopian Prime Minister Dr. Abiy to discuss bilateral relations as well as the recent situation in Sudan and the region (Sudan Tribune, 2023a). While Dr. Abiy emphasized the necessity of collaborative efforts to stop the bloodshed in Sudan, al-Burhan reiterated his government's support for any activities aimed at restoring peace to Sudan. Al-Burhan also met with AU Commission Chairman Moussa Faki Mahamat, discussing the situation in Sudan and efforts to settle the crisis (Sudan Tribune, 2023a).

A month later, Gen. Hemetti traveled to Uganda and Ethiopia aboard an aircraft owned by his important partner, a United Arab Emirates carrier. Despite the fact that his visit was in response to the IGAD invitation for a face-to-face meeting with al-Burhan on December 28, 2023 [which was postponed], he met with Premier Abiy in Addis Ababa to discuss securing peace and security in Sudan. At the end of the discussion, Hemetti made it apparent that they discussed the necessity of bringing an end to the war and easing the hardships of the Sudanese people (Sudan Tribune, 2023b).

As it is evident from the above descriptions, Ethiopia's approach to Sudan's current civil conflict is based on the principle of non-intervention. Because its leader visited Ethiopia, the conclusion that Ethiopia supports the Rapid Support Forces, led by Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo (also known as Hemetti), stems from a failure to understand that Ethiopia is Africa's capital, where different actors can come, as well as the location of the AU headquarters. Furthermore, given Ethiopia's efforts to mediate the conflict between Sudanese forces, inviting them to Addis Ababa and engaging with both major parties in the Sudan civil war is essential to resolve the situation.

Ethiopia supports Sudan's resolution of its problems not only for the sake of Sudan but also for Ethiopia, which benefits from Sudan's peace. An interviewee of the study, Ethiopian Ambassador to Sudan Yibeltal Aemero, said *Ethiopians living in Sudan are suffering greatly. Bilateral economic relations have deteriorated, Ethiopian Airlines [which used to fly three times a day] has ceased operations, there is no overflight, and, conversely, illegal trade, illegal arms smuggling, contraband, and kidnapping have increased*.

What is at stake is that General Al-Burhan has convinced himself that Ethiopia [along with the UAE] supports Hemetti, despite Ethiopia remaining neutral and claiming that the two actors should resolve the problem and opposing third-party intervention to dissolve the country. This Al-Burhan's assertion stemmed not only from Hemetti's numerous visits to Addis Ababa but also from Hemetti's belief that the forceful invasion of Al-Fashaga was wrong and that the issue should be settled peacefully (KI3[ix], 2024). Ethiopia is collaborating with numerous entities [like IGAD and AU] to help Sudan's civil war end, in addition to housing civil-war refugees and easing the way those with passports fly to other countries (MoFA, 2024).

The UAE issue should be viewed in a broader context, from the fact that Gulf and Middle Eastern countries are influencing regional political developments after identifying regional government weaknesses and political fault lines despite their earlier intention of exploiting the region's natural resources, particularly land and water. Interviewee of the study, a senior researcher of the Ethiopian Institute of Foreign Affairs on Africa Affairs, Henok Getachew (Ph.D.) (2024), stated *that Gulf and Middle Eastern countries have an important role in the Horn's domestic politics, control the ports on the Horn side of the Red Sea, and have a spillover impact of problems from their region to the Horn and vice versa*.

On the UAE's growing role in the region, the subsequent growing ties between Ethiopia and the UAE, and the rumor of alliances among Ethiopia-the UAE-Hemetti [of Sudan]-and-Somaliland, interviewee of the study, the Ethiopian Ambassador to the UAE, Omer Hussein (Ph.D.) (2024) said that *the relationships have no hidden agenda, but rather are formed as a result of the compatibility of the UAE's national interests with those of these Horn of Africa actors*. Recently, oil-dependent economies have faced challenges as a result of shifts to renewable energy sources [the development of electric vehicles, solar power, and wind power], growing concern about environmental sustainability, and technological advancements [that simplify oil extraction and increase domestic oil production while also improving oil use efficiency]. The decline in the

global importance of oil exports pushed the UAE to diversify its oil-based economy, focusing on agriculture and investment in the Horn (KI7[x], 2024).

Ethiopia has adopted an economic program aimed at transforming the mostly agrarian low-income country into an industrialized middle-income country. The country has resources and workforce, and it is seeking foreign investors (KI6[xi], 2024). The UAE has capital (money and industries) and is interested in investing in Ethiopia. This compatibility has prompted the two to collaborate on regional peace and economic development. The UAE learned a lesson from the impact of Covid 19, which caused food shortages in the country and forced it to reconsider the situation and adopt a plan to ensure food security, connecting the state to the Horn. The alignment of interests between Ethiopia and the UAE has also transformed the partnerships into 'Strategic alliances', with a stronger probability of continuing in this manner in the future (KI7[xii], 2024).

External factors

The 'Egypt factor'

The rivalry over resources, long-standing grudges, and shifting geopolitical allegiances are the main causes of Egypt's hostility towards Ethiopia. Ethiopia's construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (hereinafter GERD) on the Blue Nile is the most pressing modern issue. Egypt sees this Dam as a potential threat to its water supplies. Furthermore, Ethiopia's expanding influence and energy superiority in the region call into question Egypt's long-held authority over the Nile. Thus, Egypt began to take steps to restrict Ethiopia. One of these steps has been to utilize Sudan, its former colony, to exert influence over Ethiopia.

Egypt's influence on Sudan has been a major determining element in Ethio-Sudan bilateral relationships. Belete (2024) stated that a threat from Sudan is considerably indirect, coming through a third party, primarily Egypt. The Anglo-Egyptian condominium rule over Sudan; Egypt's unforgettable struggle for Sudan's independence; their cultural, border, and religious relations; and, above all, Egypt's policy that considers Sudan (including South Sudan) to be a security, political, and strategic area part (Strategic depth) [or as an extension of territory/extra territory that can be used to carry out national interests] grew its influence on Sudan. According to an interviewee of the study, an Ethiopian senior diplomat to Sudan (2024*), Sudan has never*

undertaken an anti-Ethiopian foreign policy unless pushed by Egypt, which wants Sudan to remain unstable, weak, and undemocratic (militarist). He added that *Egypt requires a weak, unstable, and destitute Sudan to influence the Khartoum government and prevent Sudan from using the Nile River for irrigation and other uses, despite Sudan's lush irrigable land's potential for huge water consumption from the Nile.* This is part of Egypt's overarching policy towards the higher riparian states [especially Sudan and Ethiopia]: to control [the source of] the river [or establish hegemony over the river], and/or keep these countries unstable and weak so that they do not use the river. Egypt also requires an undemocratic Sudan due to Khartoum's military regimes' predisposition towards Cairo and the concern that Egyptians may question the undemocratic government in Cairo for democracy being inspired by Sudan.

The strong pressure from President Al Sisi of Egypt (who learned and grew with Khartoum's military government's leader, General Al-Burhan*)* made Sudan take several measures that transformed Ethio-Sudanese amicable interactions into mutual mistrust. To begin with, it invaded the Ethio-Sudanese borderland of the Al-Fashaga region. As can be seen in the next section of the paper, Sudan's measure was taken looking at the fact that Ethiopia is unstable due to the Tigrai conflict (2020-2022), which was fought between the Ethiopian federal government and the government of Ethiopia's northern province of Tigrai. Besides, the relationships were also further impacted by Ethiopia's displeasure with Sudan's shifting position on the GERD issue and siding with Egypt, as well as Sudan's signing of a defense treaty with Egypt, promising to support one another in an emergency (CRDC, 2021). Furthermore, Sudan asked the UN to evacuate Ethiopian peacekeeping personnel from Abyei, which it considered a security danger on its border with South Sudan in 2021 (Peace Research Facility, 2022, p.7).

An interviewee of the study, an Ethiopian senior diplomat to Sudan (2024), said *that until the military government is completely free of Egyptian influence, the military wing (mostly the higher - and middle-ranked military groupings trained in Egypt, married in Egypt, and earned huge amounts of money in Egypt) could continue to be influenced by Egypt and adopt policies that favor Egypt to the detriment of Ethiopia. This was evident recently when the military wing supported anti-Ethiopian stances on GERD and border issues.*

Conclusion

Ethiopia plays a crucial role in the relations between countries in the Horn of Africa, owing to its large population and land area, central location, strong military, growing economy, and natural resources. Its long history of statehood, diplomatic endeavors, regional leadership expertise, and widespread acceptance worldwide have also increased its importance in the region. Ethiopia's foreign policy and patterns of interactions with its neighbors have been shifting in the Horn of Africa, the region where enemies and allies, opportunities, and problems change very quickly.

The 1991 regime change in Ethiopia, as well as the adoption of new, more idealist and optimist foreign policy pillars such as the inside-out approach, Horn first, diversifying partners, ending the siege mentality, and good neighborliness, marked the start of a new chapter of friendly relations between Ethiopia and Sudan. This era ended in 1995 as a result of the Khartoum regime's Islamist ideology and an attempted assassination in Addis Ababa. This event not only shifted Ethio-Sudanese ties towards mutual animosity but also prompted the Ethiopian government to reconsider its 'open door policy' towards the region. Eritrea's invasion of Ethiopia in 1998 reinforced earlier suspicions, reignited the siege mentality and shifted policy towards a more realist perspective, in which hard power began to support soft power. The outbreak of the Ethio-Eritrean conflict, the end of fundamentalist rule in Sudan, a shift in Ethiopia's foreign policy posture, and the subsequent alignment of both nations' interests rekindled another chapter of cooperation in 1998.

In 2018, Ethiopia's political reform brought pillars such as Horn first, regional integration, emphasizing both the economic and security importance of neighboring states, ensuring Ethiopian access to the sea, non-interventionism, and other idealist principles to the forefront. Ethio-Sudan relations have also resumed smoothly, and in 2019, the Ethiopian Prime Minister played an important role in mediating negotiations between Sudan's civilian and military wings.

However, the patterns of bilateral relations shifted when Sudan invaded Al Fashaga in 2020, while Ethiopia was involved in the Tigria Conflict. This demonstrated how significantly neighboring nations' policies and actions towards Ethiopia shape bilateral relations and impact the Ethiopian government's broader vision of the region, which is more optimistic.

Since 2018, internal and external factors like the Egyptian pressure on the military wing, the resurgence of a proxy war, domestic security issues in both nations, the border issue, and [Sudan] leaders' perceptions have all played a significant role in affecting Ethio-Sudan relationships.

Ethiopia and Sudan are the region's two largest countries, and there is a security complex in the region. Thus, their irregular relationship could have an impact on regional stability in the Horn of Africa, especially if border conflicts or other crises escalate. On the other hand, the success or failure of actions aimed at strengthening economic integration between the two countries would have an impact on regional economic development and integration.

Addressing their domestic security and political issues is a top priority for both, and then resolving the border issue bilaterally, bringing in a paradigm shift in which their border no longer serves as a barrier or source of conflict but instead as a bridge that unites the populace, encourages collaboration, and strengthens interstate integration. Thus, opening diplomatic channels for discussion, establishing a bilateral commission with local population representatives, and encouraging community dialogue and reconciliation are critical in addressing the problem and the tensions in a win-win manner and instilling a sense of shared ownership over the region's future.

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List of Key Informants (KI)

No	Name	Position	Month/Year
KI1	Yibeltal Aemero	Ethiopian Ambassador to Sudan	January, 2024
KI2.	Markos Tekle(Ph.D)	Ethiopian deputy head of mission to South Sudan	January, 2024
KI3.	Anonymous	Senior Ethiopian diplomat to Sudan	January, 2024
KI4.	Anonymous (Ph. D)	Horn Affairs Analyst, and Academician	July, 2023
KI5.	Befkadu Bogale	Ethiopian Institute of Foreign Affairs researcher	August, 2024
KI6.	Oumer Hussein (Ph.D).	Ethiopian Ambassador to the UAE	January, 2024
KI7	Anonymous	Ethiopian Diplomat to the UAE	February, 2024
KI8	Subscribe Bade	Ministry of Foreign Affairs official at the	February, 2023

		position of Director of IGAD Affairs	
KI9	Anonymous	Official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the African department	February 2024
KI10	Henok Getachew(PhD)	Ethiopian Institute of Foreign Affairs researcher	August 2024

[i]Horn of Africa: While there are disagreements among academics on which nations belong in the Horn of Africa, most of them concur that Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia (including the unofficial state of Somaliland), Sudan, and South Sudan are (Lenco, 2004; Kinfe, 2009).

[ii] Security Complex is a group of countries whose primary security concerns are so closely interlinked together sufficiently that their securities cannot realistically be considered apart from one another or their national securities extracted or addressed independently of each other (Buzan, 1991, p.190). He added that security interdependence, in which what happens in one country affects the rest of the region, is a critical factor in the creation of regionally based grouping or cluster.

[iii]KI3 Senior Ethiopian diplomat to Sudan

[iv] KI4 Horn Affairs Analyst and Academician

[v] KI3 Senior Ethiopian diplomat to Sudan

[vi]Medemer [Amharic word for ‘synergy’ (collaboration for a common goal) or ‘coming together’ (Mokaddem, 2019) is a new 'homegrown philosophy' of Prime Minister Dr. Abiy that was announced by a book titled 'Medemer' to be the state's new domestic and foreign policy path. Medemer is supported by the following codependent pillars: building a robust democracy by advancing the state's young democracy, eradicating economic backwardness by achieving economic energy, and fostering regional integration and openness to the outside world (ibid).

[vii] Horn Affairs Analyst and Academician

[viii] Senior Ethiopian diplomat to Sudan

[ix]KI3 Senior Ethiopian diplomat to Sudan

[x] KI7 Ethiopian Diplomat to the UAE

[xi] KI6 Ethiopian Ambassador to the UAE

[xii] KI7 Ethiopian Diplomat to the UAE

Emerging Dynamics in Long-Standing Challenges in Local Governance Participation in Ghana: A Case of the Ahafo-Ano South-East District

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Notions and associated practices of political decentralization have gained prominence in lieu of the Huntingtonian Third Wave of Democratization. In Africa, many countries have experimented with decentralization and recorded mixed results. However, the assumed advantages of decentralization, such as political participation, accountability, and development, are stifled by important challenges, including partisanship, misappropriation, and the lack of resources, which negatively affect grassroots participation. In a case study of the Ahafo-Ano Southeast District-Ghana, this article presents long-standing and emerging empirical evidence on crucial challenges to grassroots participation in decentralization. Through surveys and semi-structured interviews, we found that the mode and frequency of engagements at the local assembly promote old and new hindrances to citizen participation, namely unidirectional communication channels and political interference, which impede meaningful participation. It was also found that partisan influence in local government setups leads to elite capture of political participation at the local level, weakening meaningful participation. This contributes to the literature on decentralization and local governance in Ghana, where such hindrances are not offered significant empirical analysis, especially concerning emerging dynamics.

Keywords: *Decentralization, Grassroots Participation, Local Government, District Assemblies, Ghana*

Introduction

he transfer of authority and responsibility (decentralization) from central entity to regional or local regional levels has become a prominent paradigm of governance in many countries, particularly the global South (Smoke, 2020). Decentralization has become the buzzword for political administration and socioeconomic development, with the broad objectives to provide

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better public services through improved public administration and governance, leadership, accountability, and transparency. Consequently, decentralization is now universally praised as a crucial element of global good governance and economic advancement (Smoke, 2015a). The potential benefits of decentralization can range from improving service delivery to enhancing citizen participation and ensuring accountability (OECD, 2019). Furthermore, decentralization can promote economic development by fostering local entrepreneurship and innovation (UN-Habitat, 2022).

The concept of decentralization is, however, not without challenges. Some scholars have raised important concerns that often characterize decentralized governance. A key broad critique is that in most decentralized systems, grassroots citizens are hardly involved in local governance as their views usually have a marginal influence on development interventions at the local level. Besides, this batch of scholars is also concerned about the challenges of efficiency, equity, and other context-specific hindrances to decentralized development interventions (Bardhan, 2002; Blair, 2000; Ribot, 1999). If not adequately coordinated, decentralized governance can lead to fragmentation and duplication of efforts (Rodriguez-Pose & Gill, 2020). Lack of capacity at the local level can hamper the effectiveness of decentralized governance. Besides, it can exacerbate inequalities if not accompanied by appropriate redistributive mechanisms (Swaminathan, 2019).

Ghana and other African countries have experimented with decentralized governance practices for decades. Such decentralized initiatives have opened up possibilities for greater citizens' participation, improved service delivery, and more tailored policy solutions to address specific regional needs (Mohammed, 2016b). However, the decentralization process in Ghana and across Africa is mainly widespread but not deep, as it faces several challenges. Weak institutional capacity at the local level, limited financial resources, and political interference from the central government hinder effective decentralization in these contexts (Mohammed, 2016a). Moreover, ethnic and regional divisions may exacerbate inequalities and complicate decision-making processes, posing further obstacles to successful decentralization efforts (Asante & Debrah, 2019). Despite these challenges, decentralization remains essential for empowering local communities, promoting inclusive governance, and fostering sustainable development in Ghana and the broader African context (African Union's Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want).

This article contributes to the discourses on contextualizing the understanding and practice of decentralization to address the one-size-fits-all model in analyzing the challenges of bottom-up governance (see Falleti, 2021). The article employs a case study design involving the Ahafo-Ano South District of the Ashanti region of Ghana to examine the apparent limited positive impact of decentralization, especially in terms of participation. The Ahafo-Ano South district is one of the forty-three districts in the Ashanti region, carved out of the former Ahafo-Ano district, one of the oldest creations of the local government system in Ghana. The district, among the newly created ones, would provide a deeper understanding of how decentralization policies are implemented and their impact at the local level in Ghana. Moreover, the district provides an opportunity to analyze the interplay between decentralization and the area's unique socioeconomic and political dynamics since it is ranked 243 out of 261 districts across the country, according to the UNICEF District League Table report of 2021. Besides academic nuance, this study also has practical implications for policymakers on effective decentralized governance and strategies for local development.

In particular, the focus is on understanding why, despite the awareness and closeness of local government units in these areas, grassroots citizens have limited participation and minimal impact in local governance programs. This leads us to pay particular attention to the channels and nature of communication, bureaucracies, and other context-determined factors that hinder effective participation and input of citizens at the local level of decision-making and development. As the data reveals, *the mode and frequency of engagement recreate old and expose new challenges in three factors: unidirectional communication channels, poor accountability, and political interference. While these challenges are partly reflected in the literature (*Ayee, J. R. A., & Ninsin, K. A. (2015*),* Amanor, K. S. (2009), *the context of this study introduces two new dimensions: (i) an empirical, nuanced contribution from the district and (ii) an added knowledge which concerns the challenge with new technologies and participation in local governance, as will be seen.* The article demonstrates an empirical case of how the language of participation is rather both hijacked and instrumentalized by influential local actors and suffers ineffectiveness due to citizens' passive attitude to be fully involved, as well as the emerging challenge of new technologies in traditional settings of communication and participation.

The rest of the article is structured as follows: The first section presents the theoretical background of decentralization through the prism of democratic participation. In the second section, the research methodology is presented, followed by the data on the challenges of participation in local governance in the Ahafo-Ano Southeast district. The conclusion reiterates the predominant view of decentralization as a means to enhance local participation, yet deep-seated and emerging dilemmas weaken the practical possibility of boosting grassroots participation through decentralization in Ghana.

A Brief Scholarly Background on Decentralization

Decentralization is broadly rooted within the Participatory Governance Theory (PGT). The participatory theory emphasizes the importance of the active involvement of citizens in decision-making processes, particularly at the local level, to ensure democratic governance and development. The theory claims that an inclusive and collaborative decision-making process that actively involves all members, including actively involved citizens, stakeholders, and marginalized groups, leads to more democratic, equitable, and effective governance (Fisher, 2012). Participatory theory is highly appropriate for the study of local governance because it aligns with the principles of democracy, inclusivity, and effectiveness. However, its success depends on addressing practical challenges such as ensuring equitable participation, providing adequate resources, and fostering genuine engagement. It can transform local governance into a more responsive, accountable, and people-centered system when implemented effectively.

In addition, empowering individuals and communities to participate in policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation helps governance become more transparent, accountable, adaptive, and responsive to citizens' needs. This indicates that ordinary citizens are expected to participate by involving themselves in organizations/groups representing their political interests. Thus, the local governance system of Ghana incorporates institutions, mechanisms, and processes through which citizens and their groups can articulate their interests at the local level (Jengre & Kpnpuo, 2019). Evidently, citizens have shared their discontent with government services, indicating their noninvolvement in decision-making. The participatory governance theory and local governance embrace inclusiveness, indicating the need for open participation in the decision-making process, planning, and budgeting. The goal is to have a responsive and accountable governance system. The inclusivity of citizens in decision-making will promote

consensus building and generate trust and satisfaction with service delivery on public needs. Although scholars such as Quick and Bryson (2016) point to the fundamental challenges in participation as ensuring that various interests are engaged in the process, including those normally excluded from decision-making by institutionalized inequities, resistance from entrenched power structures, and the risk of tokenistic participation, the theory provides an opportunity to foster greater inclusivity and accountability as it builds a more resilient and responsive institution.

As indicated, decentralization emerged from the notion of participatory governance. It refers to the transfer of responsibility for planning, management, resource mobilization, and allocation from the central government and its agencies to subsidiary units and sections of a state or territory (Rondinelli, 1981). This is reflected in the ceding of power and authority to subordinate units or levels of government, semi-autonomous public authorities or area-wide cooperation, regional or functional authorities, or non-governmental private or voluntary organizations to manage resources by planning and ensuring effective allocation at the lower levels of government. According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), decentralization is a method to reform the public sector, which improves public service efficiency, ensures accountability and transparency, reduces corruption, increases political participation, and fosters policy innovation (OECD, 2019). The definitions point to decentralization as a system allowing subnational governance targeted at efficiency, participation, and sustained economic growth.

Decentralized governance is portrayed in a variety of ways and dimensions. According to Olatona and Olomola (2015), there are three main types of decentralization. The first is deconcentration, which entails assigning duties to local authorities under the tight supervision of the central government. It is the redistribution of administrative functions or decision-making authority from a central government to regional or local offices while maintaining overall control and accountability at the central level. It aims to improve efficiency and responsiveness by bringing governance closer to the people without transferring full autonomy to local entities. It is viewed as the weakest form of decentralization (Olatona & Olomola, 2015), as local offices often lack real decision-making power, as ultimate authority remains with the central government and can create additional layers of bureaucracy, leading to delays and inefficiencies. The second is

delegation, which involves giving decision-making and administration powers to institutions/agencies with some autonomy, like public corporations. It is the process of assigning authority and responsibility to another person (typically a subordinate) to carry out specific tasks or make decisions. It is a key management skill that allows leaders to focus on higher-level responsibilities while empowering others to handle operational tasks. Poor communication during delegation can lead to misunderstandings, errors, or misaligned expectations. Devolution is the third and final type, and it is the strongest because it involves the transfer of political and administrative authority from the highest to the lowest levels of government. In a devolved system, sub-states and local governments have the power to choose their own leaders, generate their own money, and decide how to allocate their investments (Olatona & Olomola, 2015). Similarly, the World Bank indicates that decentralization can take various forms. While political decentralization involves transferring decision-making power to elected local governments, administrative decentralization focuses on delegating authority to lower levels of the bureaucracy, fiscal decentralization entails transferring financial resources and responsibilities to local governments, and market decentralization involves promoting private sector participation in service delivery (World Bank, 2021). Ultimately, providing effective and efficient local service delivery for human development is the primary goal of decentralization, irrespective of the motivations for it or the decentralization mechanism used (devolution, delegation, or deconcentration) (Tshukudu, 2014).

Broadly speaking, administrative, political, and fiscal decentralization are the three main aspects of every decentralized system. Fiscal decentralization is the devolution of financial resources and revenue-generating authority, whereas administrative decentralization involves the transfer of civil servants and public activities to a lower level, and political decentralization denotes the devolution of decision-making authority (Muriu, 2012; Pastory, 2014). As Wagana *et al.* (2017) point out, political decentralization depends on whether sub-national governments are subject to direct elections and hence participate in political governance. Political decentralization is frequently seen in current discourse and practice as the sole genuine method of decentralizing governance, carrying advantages like local democracy, involvement in local matters, and grassroots accountability (Wagana *et al.*, 2017).

Decentralization is universally praised as a crucial element of good governance and economic advancement across the globe (Smoke, 2015a). Over the past twenty-five years, at least seventy-five nations have tried to decentralize power to lower levels of government (Shen & Zou, 2015). Decentralization is crucial for developing countries to address issues of growing inequality and poor governance, which are mainly consequences of power concentration (Ekpo, 2007). The major debates about the rationale of decentralization are particularly linked to the theoretical view of democratic participation.

As the central stance of decentralization, participation denotes 'taking part', 'involvement', 'consultation', and 'empowerment', giving citizens a significant role in government (Blair, 2000). According to Devas and Grant (2003), participation involves people exercising influence and control over choices that impact them. This indicates that participation deals with people's active involvement in decision-making and activities within their jurisdiction that ensure development (Holum, 2022). Extracted from Arnold S. Kaufman's 'participatory politics' democratic participation has often been the most substantial theoretical basis for decentralization (see Stoyan & Niedzwiecki 2018; Hyden, 2017), as also defended by many great thinkers, including John Dewey, Wright Mills, Alexis de Tocqueville, Mikhail Bakunin, Stuart Mills, and Robert Dahl (Houdret & Harnisch, 2019; Hilmer, 2010). Most advocates draw close similarity and intricate relations between decentralization and democracy because participatory democratic theory envisions maximum citizen participation in governance, particularly in sections of society other than those with access to political power. According to the World Bank reports from 2001 and 2004, decentralization gives local people a voice and creates an environment conducive to participation. This is in synch with Manor (2011) and Azfar *et al.* (1999) that decentralization improves participation.

The literature thus establishes a positive relationship between decentralization and economic development through improved service delivery and bottom-up participation. The rapid economic growth in countries such as China, Nepal, and Chile has been largely attributed to decentralization (Balunywa*et al.*, 2014). Similarly, the consistent economic development in the US and most European countries is credited to the decentralization of revenue performance, which brings government services closer to the people through structures such as federal systems and local councils (Clegg & Greg, 2010). The government system across the 50 states in the US

is very decentralized, with approximately 85,000 municipal governments. Both federal/state and decentralized government bodies are autonomous, with the power to levy taxes, and they frequently enjoy high-level autonomy. As a global trend, there are also approximately 15,000 local governments in Africa, 26,000 in Asia, and over 17,000 local administrations in Latin America (Rosenbaum, 2013, p. 12). Rosenbaum (2013) thus asserts that decentralization is the current trend in global governance.

In the last two decades, most African countries have witnessed significant progress in decentralization to address inefficiencies in the public sector (Amusa & Mabugu, 2016). Some of the key examples of fast-decentralizing states in Africa include Ghana, South Africa, Botswana, Kenya, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Mali, Nigeria, Tanzania, Burkina Faso, and Uganda (Riedl & Dickovick, 2010). The central governments have launched or intensified procedures in these polities to delegate control, authority, responsibility, and resources to regional and local levels. The empirical literature suggests that decentralization has boosted economic development in Africa, enabling policy transition to solve local problems (Hope, 2000), fostering inter-territorial comparisons and competitiveness (Mackinnon, 2015), creating autonomous and efficient administration away from the central government (Julius, 2021), and enhancing quality service delivery (Saavedra, 2009; Sujarwoto, 2017).

However, other empirical studies have discovered mixed, mostly disappointing results about the link between decentralization and participation. Evidence is partly seen in the work of Devas and Grant (2003), which discovers no clear evidence of a link between decentralization and citizen participation and improved economic development in Uganda. In Ghana, Mohammed (2016a) observes a weak link between decentralization and participation, which suggests that the link between decentralization and effective local-level participation has received less research attention. Thus, while decentralization has received massive support for effective, people-centered development, critical challenges may limit the practical potential of effective decentralization and vary based on context and related factors. Nonetheless, the discourses of decentralization only keep growing in various dimensions with increasing nuance and complexity, especially in the African context.

Decentralization and Participation in Ghana

The governance of local communities has a long history in Ghana, dating back to periods even before European colonialism on the Gold Coast. Communities and societies had their own systems of governance, which involved the chiefs as leaders with the support of their elders. However, the arrival of the Europeans created a local government system through the Indirect Rule, where the chiefs represented the interest of the British Government at the local level (Ahwoi, 2010). Dzakaklo et al. (2023) examined the failures of decentralization in promoting popular participation at the local level. The article highlights issues such as limited citizen engagement, inadequate resources for local governments, and the influence of traditional authorities. The period between 1957 and 1987 witnessed some reforms within Ghana's local government system, which is seen as the foundation upon which the current local government thrives. At independence, Ghana's constitution divided the country into five administrative regions, which were headed by the regional house of chiefs. Following this, further administrative regions were added in 1961 and 1971. However, in 1974, a new local government system was created, which was a four-tier structure that distinguished the central government from the local government. The new system created 58 districts and 273 Municipal, regional, area, and urban councils. This reorganized the process of development within the country. In spite of the new structure, it was observed that it excluded traditional rulers, hence its moderation in 1980, which created space to reintroduce the chiefs and redefined the membership of the local government unit as the government amended the 1971 Act 359. The amendments were the last major reform done on the local government system. The present local government system takes its root from the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC), which introduced decentralization in November 1988. The new system established a new local government system based on PNDC Law 207, which was passed in 1988. The new reform re-demarcated the country and served as the framework of the new decentralized system under Law 207, which was inculcated into the Fourth Republican Constitution to promote grassroots involvement (Alam & Koranteng, 2015; Ayee, 1996).

The decentralization policy in Ghana seeks to transfer power, resources, and responsibilities from the central government to local authorities, including Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDAs). Ghana's decentralization framework is enshrined in the 1992 Constitution and the Local Governance Act (Act 936) of 2016. The framework establishes MMDAs as the primary institutions responsible for local governance, with mandates to plan,

implement, and monitor development projects at the grassroots level (Ayee & Ninsin, 2015). The system also includes structures such as Unit Committees and Area Councils, which are designed to facilitate community participation in governance. The aim of decentralization in Ghana is to bring governance closer to the local people by empowering local authorities and communities to take ownership of their development processes (Ayee, 2008). For instance, Ayee and Ninsin (2015) indicated that the District Assemblies Common Fund (DACF) has enabled MMDAs to undertake development projects that address local priorities.

Additionally, the involvement of traditional authorities in local governance has strengthened community ownership of development initiatives (Amanor, 2009). These achievements demonstrate the potential of decentralization to promote inclusive governance and sustainable development. Thus, participation is a critical component of decentralization, as it ensures that local communities have a voice in decision-making processes. In Ghana, participation is facilitated through mechanisms such as town hall meetings, community durbars, and the election of assembly members. These platforms provide opportunities for citizens to engage with local authorities, express their needs, and contribute to the formulation of development plans (Bob-Milliar, 2012; Be-ere, 2022). If well-resourced, decentralization in Ghana has the potential to transform local governance by promoting participation and inclusive development. However, studies have shown that participation in Ghana's local governance system is often limited by factors such as low literacy levels, lack of awareness, and unidirectional communication channels (Ninsin, 2010). Research has, for instance, shown that a lack of financial resources and technical expertise at the local level has constrained the ability of MMDAs to implement participatory development plans (Howlett, 2011). O'Flynn & Wanna (2008) identify the lack of trust in citizens' participation, while Kumar (2002) is concerned about limited collaboration in communication and information sharing, transparency and accountability processes, and a lack of sustained conflict resolution and management. Besides, the issue of non-proportional representation of groups at Ghana's grassroots governance level has also been raised (Alumu & Hassan, 2019). An important gap here is that while the issue of limited participation is observed, little empirical discussion is being undertaken, especially concerning some of the least developed districts in Ghana, where participation is crucially required for sustained development within the logic of decentralization. This is critical because the success of decentralization largely depends on the extent to which local communities are actively involved in decision-making processes.

Research Design and Methodology

This article forms part of a broader project that aims to analyze the state of decentralization in deprived districts in Ghana using the case study of the Ahafo-Ano Southeast district of the Ashanti region, Ghana. The Ahafo-Ano Southeast district was carved out of the Ahafo-Ano North district, which has existed since the start of decentralization in Ghana. The Ahafo-Ano-South East District was selected because it was one of the poorly ranked in 2021, 243 out of 261 districts, in terms of the overall performance of all districts in Ghana from the areas of governance, health, education, information and communication technology, and water and sanitation, by NDPC and UNICEF (2021). The district is situated in the North-Western part of the Ashanti region, about 42 km away from Kumasi, with geographical coordination of a longitude of -1.87 and a latitude of 6.88. Its land size covers 520.4 km2, representing 2.2% of the surface area of the region, which is 24,370.5 km2. Demographically, according to the 2021 Population and Housing Census, the district has a population of 63,468 people, with 32,071 (50.5%) men and 31,397 (49.5%) women. Predominantly, the district is agrarian, as farmers engage in subsistence farming. The agricultural sector employs about 76% of the Land Forces, and it is estimated that 75% of the income of the people in the district comes from agriculture as they are engaged in food and cash crop cultivation such as rice, maize, tomatoes, plantain, cocoa, citrus, palm fruit, etc.

This study adopts the mixed-methods approach to data collection and analysis. The mixed methods offer a powerful approach to studying decentralization in a less literate society. The mixed-method approach is particularly suited to studying local governance in developing countries because it addresses the complexity, context-specificity, and power dynamics inherent in these settings. By combining the strengths of quantitative and qualitative methods, researchers can capture both the breadth and depth of governance challenges and generate comprehensive, actionable insights essential for improving governance and development outcomes. The approach helps to generate rich, nuanced data to contribute important scholarly nuance, inform policy decisions, and improve the effectiveness of decentralization initiatives. This approach also allows for a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics at play. While the quantitative methods (through surveys) help to measure the extent of participation, the qualitative methods (including interviews) help explore in-depth perspectives and lived

experiences behind participation or non-participation, the quality of participation, and the diverse experiences of different groups. Besides, the qualitative methods provide rich contextual information about the socio-cultural, political, and economic factors that influence local participation in decentralization. This is crucial in Ghana, where diverse local contexts can significantly shape how decentralization policies are implemented and experienced. The findings from a mixed methods study can provide valuable insights for policymakers and practitioners seeking to improve local participation in decentralization in Ghana. The combination of quantitative and qualitative evidence can lead to more robust and contextually relevant recommendations. In short, while the qualitative methods, such as interviews and case studies, would offer insights into the lived experiences, cultural norms, and power dynamics that influence local governance, the quantitative aspects, such as surveys and statistical analysis, provide generalizable data on governance indicators like service delivery, or public participation.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, including local government officials, traditional leaders, community members, and civil society representatives. The study was based on a one-on-one interview with 12 district functionaries and a 370-questionnaires administered to both the assembly functionaries and the ordinary grassroots citizens. The sample for the quantitative data was based on the random sampling method. A list of households from the Ghana Statistical Service was derived to form the sample frame for selecting communities and households in the district. Guided by saturation, the qualitative sample consisted of 12 respondents purposively selected from the district assemblies and ordinary citizens with knowledge of decentralization in Ghana and the functions of the district assembly as the liaison between the district and the citizens. Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring themes and patterns from interviews and document reviews. Questionnaire responses were coded using SPSS and presented through descriptive statistics, while qualitative interviews were analyzed through manual thematic coding and content analysis. Policy documents, local government records, and historical data were reviewed to identify institutional and structural barriers to participation. The chosen research design and methodology would provide a robust framework for studying the complexities of local governance participation in Ghana, offering actionable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and communities.

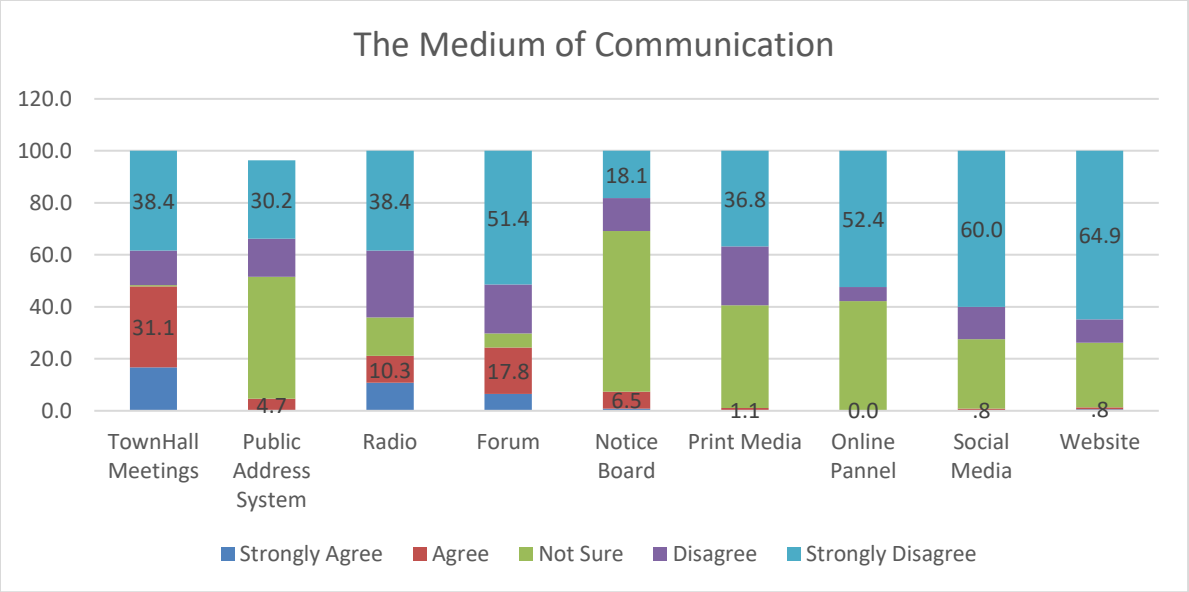
Old and Emerging Challenges to Local Governance Participation

By law, the local government is mandated to engage citizens to clearly ascertain their needs, which helps find the appropriate development approaches in each locality. Ghana's 1992 Constitution establishes a unitary state with a decentralized system of governance. It mandates the creation of local government structures to promote grassroots participation and development. The constitution provides for Regional Coordinating Councils (RCCs), Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDAs), and Unit Committees as key decentralized entities. The Local Governance Act 939 specifies various methods for the local government to interact with citizens in Ghana. The assembly members, as the direct representatives of the local people within the assembly, are charged with the responsibility of keeping the people well informed about decisions and actions taken by the assembly in addressing their needs. The assembly members are, by law, instructed to use various means to collate and present the views of the citizens to the assembly. These mechanisms also help relay decisions to the people regarding actions taken in response to their demands. This allows people to participate in decision-making processes that address their needs. Members of the assembly's performance in terms of keeping the local people informed through various mechanisms was measured using various means that reached the people and relayed information for both sides.

The data suggests that decentralization has provided a promising platform for citizens' participation in governance, as broadly captured in the literature. As Jengre & Kpnpuo (2019) rightly indicated, the local governance system of Ghana incorporates institutions, mechanisms, and processes through which citizens and their groups can articulate their interests at the local level. In Ahafo-Ano Southeast, this study found that Ghana's decentralization system created the structure for local participation in governance. However, as Quick and Bryson (2016) reflected, there are real challenges in the empirical manifestation of citizens' participation in the local governance processes in the area. These hindrances to meaningful local governance participation are seen through the mode and frequency of engagements at the local assembly, which promotes old and new hindrances to citizen participation. It will be seen that the mode and frequency of participation are hampered by unidirectional communication channels, which breeds poor accountability and political interference, which impedes representation and accountability.

Before delving into the challenges of participation, it is important to understand the various strategies for engagement and communication at the district assembly, especially in the context

of this study. Like most other districts in Ghana, the channels of engagement and participation in the decentralized levels take various forms, such as town hall meetings and related fora, print media, online and mass media, or social media and websites, among others. Through these channels, citizens are informed about issues in their communities, as represented in the following figure.



Source: Field Worksheet, 2022

The table above shows that various platforms provide potential opportunities for the local government structure to address pressing needs ranging from infrastructure to human resource development. The local assembly engagements are done within the broader framework of the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD) in accordance with Section 18 of the Local Government Act of 1992 (Act 462), which usually covers four kinds of meetings, including the inaugural meeting, the ordinary meeting (standing order 1), requested meetings (standing order 2.1 and 4), and special meetings (standing order 4c). We see from the table that town hall, public address system, radio, and open forums provide the most patronized spaces for locals' participation in policy and development in the Ahafo-Ano Southeast district, where survey participants 'strongly agreed' about their existence and utility in serving as great platforms for grassroots decision-making. Yet, it is interesting to note that contrary to the growing penetration of digital space and e-governance, survey respondents rated online platforms such as social media and websites as the least promoted or patronized platforms for

engaging citizens in the district. For instance, when participants were asked about the medium of communication that was common to them as a means of communication within the assembly, 31.1% indicated that the most common medium of communication used was the town hall meetings. This has implications for the broader concern of participation and the challenge of embracing technology and modern practices in grassroots political processes, especially in the era of post-pandemic proliferation of virtual engagements and e-governance.

As the data suggests, the potential of these channels to enhance meaningful communication and participation in local governance is immensely hampered through limited participation, resulting into what the Participatory Theory referred to as the tokenistic participation, largely caused by the unidirectional mode of communication and political interference in the local governance processes, as one interviewee indicated:

> *[…] citizens' participation contribution is very low… The zeal that initially drives citizens to participate is no more there. Even within my community, there exists a lack of concern about government decisions and policies and even maintenance of old infrastructure. So, you see, the local people's contributions are generally not there* (Interview, Ex Presiding Member, Adugyama, September 2022).

The analysis shows that while there are laid down rules and regulations to ensure participation, certain factors act as impediments to the processes and procedures, and this has not yielded the increased participation level of the citizens in the decisions that the idea of decentralized has promised. The level of grassroots participation was tested on a range of indicators, including the medium of communication between the functionaries and the local people, the frequency of meetings held by the assembly itself and also with the citizens, bureaucratic responsiveness, policies and programs of genuine interest to the people, and the relations between the functionaries and the citizens.

Low participation reflected throughout the communication channels used by the district assembly. For instance, while only 13.5% claimed that the assembly does conduct meetings to engage constituents and collate their views and concerns on policy and development, 35.1% of the respondents had no knowledge of or ever participated in town hall meetings. Similarly, like the physical channels, the online platforms also faced the same challenge of low-level participation. For instance, whiles 57.8% of the respondents had no knowledge about the

existence of online channels for engaging constituents, only 0.3% exhibited knowledge of the existence of such platforms. Even though social media has gained massive penetration across most settings in Ghana, the data revealed that citizens' participation was still low, with only 0.8% aware that the assembly is active on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. This limited social media usage suggests that the potential of new technologies enhancing participation could be hampered.

The findings indicate that low-level participation in the local governance processes in the study area is caused by the unidirectional nature of communication between the assembly and the citizens and a lack of awareness of the assembly's existing communication channels, which impede meaningful representation, participation, service delivery, and the accountability promised under the idea of decentralization.

In terms of political interference, the study gathered that the local assembly governance processes are often dominated by political parties' interests, especially the dominant National Democratic Congress and New Patriotic Party. This study found that while Ghana's Local Government Act (939. 8) mandates neutrality of assembly members in local-level development, this remains a distant reality. Political interference in Ghana's local governance system poses significant threats to effective participation, transparency, and accountability. It thus interferes with the principles of decentralization and community engagement, which are critical for sustainable development. This survey revealed that 72.2% of the respondents strongly agree with the influence of political parties on the participation of citizens. Only 20% believes that partisanship does not influence local government participation while 7.8% were unsure if partisanship affects the level of participation in grassroots policy decisions. Such political interference often undercuts the autonomy of local government structures, such as District Assemblies, by centralizing decision-making power at the national level. This restricts the ability of local communities to participate in governance and development processes. For instance, the appointment of Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Chief Executives (MMDCEs) by the central government often leads to loyalty to political parties rather than local communities (Ayee, 2013). It leads to prioritization of the interests of political elites or national agendas over the needs and aspirations of local communities. This marginalizes local voices and undermines the principles of inclusivity and equity that are central to Participatory Theory. When local people

feel their input is ignored, they are less likely to participate in governance processes. This weakens the representation of local interests and negatively affects community trust in governance structures. Related to weak representation, political interference often introduces partisan politics into local governance, marginalizing non-partisan or opposition-aligned members of the same community. This exclusionary practice discourages broad-based participation and creates a sense of alienation among citizens who do not align with the ruling party. Bob-Milliar (2012) found that the politicization of local governance in Ghana has led to the exclusion of certain groups, particularly women and marginalized communities, from decision-making processes. Thus, political interference creates an environment of mistrust and apathy among citizens, leading to limited civic engagement. When communities perceive that their voices are not heard or that decisions are made based on political considerations, they are less likely to participate in local governance processes such as town hall meetings, elections, and community development initiatives (Ayee, 2013). This means that when political interference leads to a perception that local participation has little impact on decision-making, citizens may become apathetic or disillusioned. This disincentive for civic engagement contradicts the core principles of Participatory Theory, which rely on citizens' active and meaningful involvement in shaping their communities.

According to most of the respondents, especially the general citizenry, while the incumbent party usually tries to propagate its interest by politicizing local government interventions, the opposition parties, also intending to gain political points, oppose some important local government developments from the incumbent party. Political interference is expected, given that the actions of the local government are mostly influenced by the central government's ideas and political parties rather than the people dictating the dynamics of development in the local government setup. Partisanship is consolidated by the fact that the political heads of the local government level, the District/Municipal/Metropolitan Chief Executives (MMDCEs), are by constitution chosen by the president and, for that matter, the party in power. According to some assembly respondents, this sets the tone of reactions and directions of cooperation among members of the assembly and citizens from different parties or non-partisan actors. Some of the key areas where partisanship affects the otherwise non-partisan setup at the assembly include the

election of a Presiding Member (PM)* and the disbursement of the MP Common Fund. Meanwhile, the Participatory Theory highlights the importance of social capital (including trust, networks, and collaboration) in fostering effective local participation. Political interference can disrupt these social ties by creating divisions within communities along political lines. This polarization weakens collective action and reduces the willingness of citizens to engage in local development initiatives. Below are the words of a respondent who agrees with the participatory theory:

> […] *Yes, there exists political division within the district assembly. All the assembled members belong to one or the other political party. This becomes more evident when voting for the presiding member. The members get divided on party lines and even begin calling each other names. In fact, I can say that this contributes to poor accountability in the assemblies (*Participant 12, 2022*).*

Another respondent added:

> […] *We came here for another election to elect the PM. However, it is unfortunate that the same results are observed after more than three rounds of elections. Even before the commencement of the election, the district coordinator met various party members of the assembly privately to help smoothen the processes and elect a PM for the district. Where party-line divisions exist in the assemblies, accountability becomes a serious challenge (*Participant 10, 2022).

The above responses agree with Amanor (2009), who opined that politicization of local governance undermines accountability mechanisms in local governance. For example, when MMDCEs are appointed based on political loyalty rather than merit, they may prioritize the interests of the central government or ruling party over the needs of local communities. This absence of accountability shrinks citizens' preparedness to participate in governance processes, as they perceive their contributions as having little impact. This

*The Presiding Member is a member of a principal council that has been designated to carry out functions related to chairing its meetings and proceedings at the district assembly.

contradicts the tenets of Participatory Theory, which stresses the importance of accountability in governance. However, political interference can weaken accountability mechanisms by shielding local officials from scrutiny if they are aligned with powerful political actors. This lack of accountability discourages citizens from engaging in governance, as they perceive their efforts to hold leaders accountable as futile.

Other respondents opined that although one cannot take partisan politics completely out of governance at any level, the excessive partisan participation at the Ahafo-Ano Southeast district affects service delivery because intervention policies get stuck along partisan lines in ways that it is mainly the assembly members of the incumbent party that are able to attract development projects to their communities within the district. Political interference often leads to the unequal distribution of resources, with development projects and funds being allocated based on political considerations rather than community needs. This patronage system discourages active participation from communities that feel marginalized or excluded from development opportunities (Ninsin, 2010). For instance, communities that do not support the ruling party may receive fewer resources, further entrenching political divisions. As if to agree with Nisin, a participant captured it better in the following words:

> *Yes, the nature of politics within the district makes even service delivery a political affair. Mostly, even service delivery is influenced by party politics. Those 'whose' government is in power are the ones who are able to secure projects and services for their communities for the success of their aligned political party (Participant 8, 2022).*

Apart from the challenge of broader distribution of resources and development, partisanship also breeds silence and mediocrity from members of the party in government based at the local assembly. That is, while opposition party members could sabotage local government development through various forms of opposition, the respondents indicated that incumbent party members also fail to hold the government representatives to account for fear of being tagged as exhibiting anti-party behavior, which has consequences including being victimized or expelled from the party. As one respondent stressed:

> *They are party sympathizers, so whenever there is something that is going to ruin my government, I am not going to say anything bad about it. Also, even when*

> *opposition policies are good, I will not credit them so that they won't gain praise but rather criticize them (Participant 6, 2022).*

A respondent raised an important angle on the issue when he emphasized the role of traditional leaders. He indicated that:

> *Traditional authorities, who play a significant role in local governance in Ghana, are often sidelined due to political interference. The central government's dominance in decision-making processes reduces the influence of traditional leaders* (Participant 9, 2022).

Meanwhile, Bob-Milliar (2012) has stated that traditional leaders are seen as key mediators between local communities and government institutions. Therefore, marginalizing traditional authorities undermines their ability to mobilize community participation and foster inclusive governance.

As if to criticize the role of traditional leaders, a participant argued in the following words:

> *Mostly, traditional cultural norms emphasize hierarchical social structures, where authority is concentrated in the hands of elders, leaders, or elites. This can discourage ordinary citizens, especially women, youth, and marginalized groups, from actively participating in governance, as they may feel their voices are less valued or respected. This may result in a belief that societal outcomes are predetermined or that individuals have little power to effect change. This can lead to apathy and disengagement from governance processes* (An interview with a civil society representative, 2022).

Besides, the politicization of local-level governance unreasonably affects women and marginalized groups, who are often excluded from decision-making processes due to ingrained patriarchal and political structures. For example, women's participation in local governance is often hindered by political patronage systems that favor male candidates (Tripp, 2010). This exclusion limits the diversity of perspectives in governance and undermines inclusive development.

Most of the respondents, therefore, agreed that partisan influence in local government setups leads to elite capture of political participation at the local level, weakening meaningful

participation and resource allocation, as partly reflected in the literature (see Cheema, 2007; Crook & Severrison, 2001; Be-ere, 2022).

In addition to partisan interference, there is the challenge of unidirectional channels of communication. Unidirectional communication undermines the principles of decentralization by limiting grassroots participation, reducing accountability, marginalizing vulnerable groups, and narrowing the nature of engagements in the assembly. Unidirectional communication, where information flows only from authorities to citizens without feedback mechanisms, can have several practical implications. Thus, the nature of communication between local authorities and citizens plays a significant role in determining the success of decentralization efforts. It often reflects a top-down approach, where local authorities dictate policies and decisions without actively seeking input from grassroots communities. This can lead to a lack of ownership and engagement among citizens. Grassroots participation becomes passive, as citizens are reduced to mere recipients of information rather than active contributors to decision-making processes. Policies and programs designed without grassroots input may not address local communities' actual needs or priorities, leading to ineffective or irrelevant interventions. This is so because when citizens feel excluded from decision-making, they may resist or undermine local government initiatives, reducing the overall success of decentralization efforts. Again, unidirectional communication often overlooks the voices of marginalized groups, such as women, youth, and persons with disabilities, who may already face barriers to participation. The lack of inclusive communication can exacerbate existing inequalities, as the needs of the most vulnerable are not adequately represented in local governance. Finally, Grassroots communities possess valuable local knowledge and insights that could enhance the effectiveness of policies and programs. Unidirectional communication fails to leverage this potential. The absence of effective channels of dialogue between local authorities and citizens stifles opportunities for collaborative problem-solving and innovation.

A participant has this to say regarding how unidirectional communication disconnects citizens from government:

> *Unidirectional communication creates a disconnect between governments and citizens, stifling grassroots participation and perpetuating governance challenges, particularly in our part of the globe. Why do I say so? I say so*

> *because when communication is one-way, citizens may not fully understand policies, programs, or their rights due to insufficient explanation or context. Without opportunities for clarification or dialogue, misinformation or apathy can spread, leading to disengagement from governance* (Participant 2, 2022).

Touching on the multicultural and linguistic aspects, a participant said the following:

> *Diverse cultures and languages exist in Ghana and, in fact, many African countries. Unidirectional communication often fails to account for these differences, leading to messages that are inaccessible or irrelevant to certain groups. This exclusion limits the ability of grassroots communities to engage meaningfully in governance* (Participant 4, 2022).

Explaining why sometimes the district assemblies spend money to provide infrastructural projects such as markets and yet abandoned by the citizens indicated that:

> *Policies designed without grassroots input are often hardly suitable to local needs, leading to resistance or failure in implementation. When citizens are not consulted, they are less likely to support or comply with government initiatives, undermining governance outcomes* (Participant 9, 2022)

This explains the low levels of participation associated with the various channels of communication in the assembly. From the functionaries' point of view, meetings are usually organized, but not specifically to collate the views of the public but rather to inform them of some decisions taken by a few members either linked to the highest political authority or with some kind of influence. According to most of the assembly member participants, the low level and skewed participation run through all the mechanisms of engagements, where party or elite members are either present or whose views are being considered. This points to tokenism, with grave implications for broad participation, accountability, and transparency within the district, which was earlier observed in some parts of Ghana (see Ayee, 2013).

This means that while the long-standing partisan interferences hamper the functioning of the local government system, emerging dynamics are intricately related to the old challenges. While the assembly fails to utilize growing technology to increase participation, the citizens also indicate their inability to acquire smartphones and/ or other electronic devices and internet

bundles to participate in e-deliberations. This has a great implication for the growing digitization of governance, especially in the post-pandemic era. It also suggests that Ghana's digitization drive has the potential to be impeded by existing partisan structures and also exclude the meaningful participation of great numbers of the Ghanaian populace.

Conclusion

The article aimed to examine how political decentralization has contributed to citizen participation in local governance in Ghana, focusing on the Ahafo-Ano Southeast district of the Ashanti region. The study reveals that political interference and unidirectional communication remain significant barriers to grassroots participation in local governance. Notwithstanding efforts to promote decentralization and community involvement, these challenges persist, undermining the effectiveness of participatory governance structures. Political interference often skews decision-making processes in favor of partisan interests, marginalizing the voices of ordinary citizens. Similarly, unidirectional communication, where information flows only from local authorities to the community without adequate feedback mechanisms, limits the ability of citizens to engage meaningfully in governance. These findings underscore the need for systemic reforms to address these entrenched issues and foster inclusive, transparent, and participatory local governance.

For decades, decentralization has gained enormous attention in the literature on political science and development studies. Most of the debates establish a positive relationship between decentralization and economic development, claiming that effective local governance guarantees grassroots participation, accountability, and efficient service delivery. However, other related bodies of literature have called attention to important challenges affecting the promise of decentralization, some of which include non-representative participation, partisan interference, and the lack of resources and influence to participate in local governance processes in some settings.

In most of the related debates, participation has been the recurrent theme because it is linked to emancipatory development and legitimate governance processes, through which citizens determine the path for their development, aided by the structural and resource support of the central government. This aligns decentralization with democratic participation. This article engaged the literature on decentralization in Ghana and found that participation is also important

in Ghana's decentralized governance structure. However, the literature suggests that decentralization in Ghana is hampered by partisan control of the processes of engagements and distribution of resources at the local level.

Contributing nuance to the existing debates, this article provides three-tier empirical knowledge of the challenges of participation in decentralization in Ghana through the case of the Ahafo-Ano Southeast district. First, the study has established the proportions (in terms of percentages) depicting the low-level participation across all the mechanisms of participation at the local government level, which is lacking in previous studies. Second, the article has pointed out new dimensions of the local challenge of partisanship in decentralization, helping to know how old problems are reproduced. Third, the article has added a new voice to the issue of low-level participation in Ghana's decentralization in the contemporary governance era by drawing attention to the limited use of technology to engage citizens and assembly staff. Broadly, therefore, this study extends the conversation on the challenge of participation in local governance by adding new dimensions to old problems and revealing important emerging dynamics with implications for centralized governance in Ghana and the Third World.

The state needs to establish clear legal and policy frameworks to minimize political interference in local governance. This could include stricter enforcement of anti-interference laws and the creation of independent oversight bodies to monitor and address partisan influence in decision-making processes. Empower local governance structures like District Assemblies to operate autonomously and prioritize community interests over political agendas. Implement bidirectional communication strategies that encourage active dialogue between local authorities and community members. This could involve using digital platforms to facilitate real-time feedback and engagement. Finally, train local government officials in effective communication and community engagement techniques to ensure citizens feel heard and valued.

There is a need for stakeholders to make a conscious effort to improve information flow from district assemblies to citizens and vice versa. As the data indicated, town hall meetings are still very popular with the citizens. Frequent hall-meeting interactions would not only improve awareness of the day-to-day activities of the local government but also serve as an important loop for feedback. This way, the tokenism system, where decisions are only made to inform citizens of what actions have been taken without their involvement, can be changed. Access to

information will make local citizens active in accessing the district assemblies' activities to ensure local development aimed at citizens' wants.

In short, the emerging dynamics in long-standing challenges in local governance participation in Ghana's local governance system create significant barriers to participation by eroding local autonomy, fostering exclusion, undermining accountability, and perpetuating resource inequality. Addressing these challenges requires strengthening decentralization, promoting transparency, and ensuring that local governance structures are inclusive and representative of all community members. Specifically, it is critical to address the challenges posed by unidirectional communication and enhance grassroots participation in decentralization by promoting Two-Way Communication by establishing platforms for dialogue, such as participatory budgeting sessions, where citizens can voice their opinions and contribute to decision-making. Furthermore, feedback mechanisms should be strengthened by creating accessible channels for citizens to provide feedback, report grievances, and hold local authorities accountable, such as hotlines and suggestion boxes. Educate grassroots communities about their rights and responsibilities in local governance, empowering them to participate actively in decision-making processes. Ensure that inclusive communication strategies reach marginalized groups using culturally appropriate and accessible methods.

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Corruption in Nigeria's Oil and Gas Industry: Measure and Extent

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This study aims to develop a measure and ascertain the extent of corruption in Nigeria's oil and gas industry. The opacity index approach to measuring corruption, as well as a conceptual framework that clarifies the concept of corruption and the context of a corruption analysis in Nigeria's oil and gas industry, is used in developing the measure of corruption. The extent of corruption is measured by looking at the upstream, downstream, and aggregate sectors. The main findings of the study show that there is a persistence and enlargement in the scope of corruption in the oil and gas industry in Nigeria. The study also found that the oil and gas industry is highly vulnerable to large-scale corruption. The study concludes that corruption, in general and in the oil and gas industry, in particular, will thrive where there is opacity and unaccountability. It recommends, among other things, keeping accurate data on the activities of the industry, arrest, and prosecution of those involved in oil stealing, and entrenchment of institutional quality.

Keywords: *Oil and Gas Industry, Corruption, Opacity, Unaccountability, Measures, Nigeria*

Introduction

Oil dominates the Nigerian economy and generates the bulk of government revenue. However, this has not translated into an improved standard of living for the citizens due to corruption and mismanagement (Asobie, 2009). The preceding argument is woven around the 'rentier state' concept, which contends that nation-states like Nigeria, which depend heavily on rent from their natural resources (rather than taxes), tend to be corrupt and poor (Hahdavy, 1970). Asobie (2009) attributes this to three main reasons. First, resource rent is much more easily appropriable than revenue from taxation because its source is concentrated (oil is a "point resource"), not dispersed.

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Secondly, it is easier for political leaders to ignore public demand for accountability in a rentier state because they do not depend on taxes from citizens for the national income. Therefore, they can acquire, retain, and use state power without bothering about legitimacy. Third, rent-seeking has a magnetic effect as it tends to suck all and sundry into its seductive loop, including entrepreneurs who could have invested in manufacturing and agriculture. Consequently, diversification of the economy is difficult to achieve in a rentier state.

The stylized facts of the oil and gas industry and the Nigerian economy in the last two decades suggest persistence and enlargement in the scope of corruption in the oil and gas industry (allAfrica.com, 2013). In addition, all the probe panels and recent reports indicate that the oil and gas industry is highly vulnerable to large-scale corruption.[i] So, rather than test the hypothesis, it is more important to quantify the extent of corruption in the Nigerian oil and gas industry. Given the size and the opportunities for corruption in the oil and gas industry because of its 'rentier' nature, minimizing corruption is an important national goal. More importantly, estimating the extent of corruption is critical because, without concrete data to back up the presence of corruption, it is just an accusation that runs the risk of being deemed politically motivated. With data, a hunch becomes a fact. With factual information on corruption, a country is better equipped to understand the extent of the problem and target its specific responses to corruption problems. Measuring and ascertaining the extent of corruption is critical to academic discourse, policy debate, and advocacy. This study covers the period from 1999 to 2014 and seeks to develop a measure and examine the extent of corruption in Nigeria's oil and gas industry. The focus is on the Oil and Gas industry of the economy because of the susceptibility of the sector to corruption. The paper is structured into five sections: introduction, literature review, research methodology, results and discussion, conclusion, and policy recommendation.

Concept and Measure of Corruption: A Review of the Literature

There is no single, comprehensive, universally accepted definition of corruption. An attempt to develop such a definition will invariably encounter legal, criminological, and political problems in many countries. The conceptualization of the term corruption has long been ideologically, morally, culturally, politically, and intellectually elusive to the point of losing sight of its detrimental and parasitic symbiosis with many nations, including Nigeria, and their citizens worldwide. Although the systematic study of corruption is hampered by the almost non-existence

of an adequate definition, virtually everyone who writes about it attempts, first, to define it, and almost all recognize that it is difficult to do so given the broad range of activities that could be included in the rubric of corruption. Jain (1998) reports that the definitions range from generic (narrow) to specific economic, political, social, and ethical definitions.

The narrow or generic definitions of corruption have ranged from defining it by a particular type of action peculiar to public office, such as using public or official positions in ways that contradict the public interests, abnormal behaviors that encourage private gains at public expense, unacceptable behaviors that openly violate the norms and expectations that is legitimate and acceptable to the society. In some instances, it is conceptualized as behaviors that are not only rotten and spoiled but unethically polluted and, as such, deviate from the formal and expected role the society expects from every member (Fatale et al., 2013). Also, Encyclopedia Americana[ii] defines corruption as a general term for misusing a public position of trust for private gain. This is the definition that many authors followed, though it does not capture corruption in the private sector. However, the word "misuse" also makes it appropriate for the private sector as well; hence, any misuse of a position anywhere amounts to corruption in this sense. The Encyclopedia Americana further admits that the definition of corruption in areas outside politics is not specific, not minding the fact that corruption in large, quasi-public enterprises and in private enterprises may be injurious to society and to the economy. Palmier's (1983) view of corruption aligns with the foregoing.

McMullan (1961) sees corruption as a situation whereby a public official accepts money or money's worth for doing something that he/she is under a duty to do or that he/she is under a duty not to do or exercise a legitimate discretion for improper reasons, also supported this narrow conceptualization of corruption. However, Friedrich (2017) sees corruption as the use of public office for private advantage. Abusing a privileged position in this way has not always been widely perceived as corruption in a given society, particularly if he/she is also making a positive contribution to the society. There is no necessary contradiction between private advantages and contributing to the general good, as many citizens will see such actions as at least acceptable and sometimes even just as a reward. Leff (1964) sees corruption as an extra-legal institution used by individuals or groups to gain influence over the actions of the bureaucracy. As such, the existence of corruption only indicates that these groups participate in the decision-making

process to a greater extent than would otherwise be the case. Heidenheimer (1970) identifies three basic categories of corruption, viz: 'black', 'white' and 'gray'. This categorization depends on the level of commonality of perception of a given act by public officials and citizens. 'White' acts are more or less accepted by both groups, whereas 'Grey' acts are those about which both officials and citizens disagree. 'Black' acts are perceived as wrong by both officials and citizens. This further shows that there is a wide range of definitions of corruption.

Considering the conflict that can arise between an abstract definition of corruption and its application to a complex real world, some writers have distinguished between what can crudely be called good, bad, and ambiguous corruption. For example, Katsenelinboigen (1983) identifies two basic types of corruption: (i) Actions whose harmful effects on society are questionable. According to him, this form of corruption involves redesigning the system and legalizing the appropriate actions of people in it. (ii) Actions that unambiguously harm society. Such acts should be treated as corrupt and criminal. Alatas (1991), while elaborating on corruption (so as to capture it in its entirety), divided it into seven distinct types: autogenic, defensive, extortive, investive, nepotistic, supportive, and transactive. Autogenic corruption is self-generating and typically involves only the perpetrator.[iii] Defensive corruption involves situations where a person needing a critical service is compelled to bribe to prevent unpleasant consequences on his interests. Extortive corruption is the behavior of a person demanding personal compensation in exchange for services. Investive corruption entails the offer of goods or services without a direct link to any particular favor at present but in anticipation of future situations when the favor may be required. Nepotistic corruption refers to the preferential treatment of or unjustified appointment of friends or relations to public office in violation of the accepted guidelines. The supportive type usually does not involve money or immediate gains but involves actions taken to protect or strengthen the existing corruption.[iv] Finally, transactive corruption refers to situations where the two parties are mutual and willing participants in the corrupt practice to the advantage of both parties.[v] The most prominent of all these in our circumstance is defensive corruption, not only because it appears to be at the core of the corruption phenomenon but also because the other forms appear to be offshoots of this fundamental type. There would be no corruption if the people were protected against the uncertainty in society.

Going through all the above definitions, it could be reasonably argued that none of it is without problems. It should be noted, however, that these problems vary in the contents and scope that each of them covers. However, the problems notwithstanding, a critical look at the various definitions of the concept of corruption in the literature reveals that corruption is doing the wrong things instead of the right things. It is also believed that wrong things cannot bring forth good things; hence, the effect of corruption is assumed to be negative in most discussions in the economic literature. The present state of many public goods, such as schools, roads, railways, airports, hospitals, and the like, attests to the effects of what corruption can do to any economy. This explains why the (World Bank, 2000) identified corruption as the single greatest obstacle to economic and social development, as it distorts the rule of law and weakens the institutional foundations upon which economic growth depends.

To guide against conflicting conceptualization of corruption so as to be able to forge ahead in proffering solutions to it, negotiators of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UN, 2004) considered not defining corruption at all but listing specific types or acts of corruption that is of interest to the particular circumstances and situation. For the purpose of this article, however, corruption will be conceptualized in line with the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy[vi] and used in Garba & Okeshola (2009), which submits that the scope of corrupt acts is wide and the concept of corruption is intricate and connected in nature; hence, it is not feasible to arrive at a watertight and comprehensive definition of corruption. Therefore, the following simplified and extremely common and general definition should suffice:

A particular act performed by certain agent is an act of institutional corruption if and only if:

1. The act has a specific effect of sabotaging or contributing to the sabotaging of some institutional process and/or purpose of some institution; by this, the act also produced the effect of contributing to the debasement of the moral character of some actors of the institution;

2. In view of the above definition, at least one of (a) or (b) below is true:

a) an o[vii]fficial of an institution in performing an act of corruption envisaged or anticipated a particular result or should have predicted it;

b) that the officer of an institution and the agent attempting to corrupt could have avoided the consequences of this act if they had chosen to do so.

The analysis of the concept of corruption above revealed two scenarios. Firstly, it holds two parties liable, the corrupter and the corrupted, and secondly, the actions of the two parties obstruct some institutional process that was hitherto unhindered. In explaining corrupt behavior, therefore, it is pertinent to recognize (i) the moral recklessness and irresponsibility of the corrupter and the corrupted, (ii) the unwholesome behaviors/actions/choices, and (iii) the resultant effects on institutions, processes, and performances. The significance of this conceptual analysis is two-fold. First, it assists ab initio in identifying that the offenses at the base of corrupt actions are multifaceted; hence, second, an equally divergent range of anticorruption measures are needed to tackle corruption in its multi-dimensional forms and very different scenarios. Therefore, it is imperative that the conceptualization of corruption is comprehensive enough to cover as much of its occurrences as possible, as defined in Article 15-22 of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UN, 2004). Examples of these occurrences include bribery, embezzlement, misappropriation, diversion of public property, illicit enrichment, abuse of functions/office (whether in the public or private sector), as well as the stages and methods of laundering the proceeds thereof (Garba & Okeshola, 2009). Corruption is a classic example of an observable phenomenon that is not easy to quantify because its very nature is concealed. In an attempt to measure corruption, four approaches have been identified in the literature.

The Corruption Perception-Based Approach

First, the Corruption Perception-Based Approach is a perception-based corruption index that draws upon opinion surveys and expert estimates of how corrupt various countries are. The Corruption Perception Index (CPI) is a league table of international corruption, with the least corrupt countries at the top and the most corrupt at the bottom. It has been published annually by the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Transparency International since 1995.

Although the CPI has received wide publicity and fulfills Transparency International's aim of raising public and political awareness of corruption, its assumptions, and methodological limitations indicate that the results of the CPI should be regarded with caution. While the database has expanded and the statistical methods have become more sophisticated, critics claim the CPI still has important weaknesses, part of which is that constructing a league table on the basis of perception assumes that the perceptions of survey respondents are both accurate and representative. Using different surveys for different countries raises the issue of whether like is

being compared to like. Another major shortcoming of this approach is that Transparency International assumes corruption is a one-dimensional phenomenon varying along a single continuum. However, this is not always the case as it has so many facets, including embezzlement, bribery, and extortion, and the CPI does not distinguish among these types of behavior. Also, there is wide variation in the way corruption is organized, how the income from corruption is spent, and so on. These variations are likely to produce different economic outcomes. The CPI does not clearly show the difference between grand and petty corruption, knowing its effects are more devastating than those of other corruption. The index shows how systemic corruption is perceived by the chosen informants (Transparency International, 2011).

Owing to all these, some critics of the CPI have pointed out that the CPI has failed to take into account the supply side of bribery, which often originates from the developed world (De Maria, 2008). In the Nigerian context, the person who steals is not as guilty as the accomplishers. The inability of the organization to look at the other side of the coin in their rating has not been taken lightly by the critics of recent, as most of the countries that were rated as less corrupt serve as an avenue where looted funds are being kept. The equation for calculating the corruption perception index is given as:

$$CPI^{j} = 1\sum_{i=1}^{Nj} S_{j}^{i} \quad \ldots\ldots 1$$

Where Nj is the number of different corruption ratings sources of a country j (Transparency International, 2011)

The Bribe Payer Index Approach

Partly in response to the CPI criticism, Transparency International created the Bribe Payers Index (BPI) in 1998. BPI, on its own, is a league table of bribery in international trade, which ranks countries in terms of their perceived willingness to offer bribes. The BPI rankings are limited to bribes between leading exporting countries and senior public officials in a specified group of key emerging economies. It measures the supply side of bribery by identifying the country of origin of bribe givers, whereas the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) focuses on bribe recipients. Transparency International produces both indices, and the BPI was first published in 1999. The BPI is a useful way of showing how leading export countries help create and aggravate the incidence of corruption in developing countries. As such, it helps share the

'blame' for corruption between the developed and developing worlds. Although presented in a similar 10-0 numerical scale, the BPI differs from the CPI on the following grounds: (a) it is highly selective and biased, and (b) it is based on only one data source. Because it is based on the perceptions of business people, accountants, bankers, and lawyers, it is vulnerable to objections based on accuracy, representativeness, and reliability. Identifying countries rather than companies may give the potentially misleading impression that countries promote bribe-giving, but Transparency International claims there are too many multinational companies to rank. Finally, the BPI is a useful complement to the CPI but has serious methodological limitations (Hardoon & Heinrich, 2011).

The bribe-payer index is calculated as

CRR (country x) = 0.5 (PR + FR + ER)…….… 2

Where: CRR = Corporate Risk Rating

PR = Political Risk Rating

FR = Financial Risk Rating

ER = Economic Risk Rating

Schlessinger and Meir's Approach

Another approach to measuring corruption was that of Schlesinger and Meier (2002). They made comparisons based on arrest and conviction data for corruption offenses. This would have been better or rather superior to that of perception, but it is not without its shortcomings. The approach relied heavily on information about the corruption in court cases. In a country with an honest judiciary, the most reliable information about corruption is found in court cases. Courts are spending huge resources on establishing which transactions have, in fact, taken place and to judge whether they have actually been corrupt. The problem with court cases is that they were so few, compared to the underlying number of corrupt acts, that they cannot be used either as indicators of social occurrences or of general frequency. For the same reason, court data are difficult to use for cross-country comparisons. Apart from this, the judiciary must be honest in all senses of the word, but this was assumed in the analysis of Schlesinger and Meier (2002), which in most cases is not true globally.

The Opacity Index Approach

Furthermore, Barth, Hall, Kurtzman, Wei, & Yago (2001), in a bid to simplify the measurement problem, provide a hybrid approach known as the "Opacity Index," which incorporates multi-component indices and perceptual ratings of nations with transparency problems. Opacity is the lack of clear, accurate, formal, easily discernible, and widely accepted practices in the broad arena where business, finance, and governments meet. As the globalization of economic life advances, all participants recognize that the relative opacity or transparency of a country's capital markets varies enormously. There emerged a view that greater opacity raises greater obstacles to the economic progress of countries and their citizens. Similarly, there is the belief that greater transparency across many dimensions of capital markets encourages investor confidence and keeps the costs of doing business under control. The Opacity Index, first introduced in January 2001, identifies the causes and measures the costs and effects of large-scale and small-scale risks associated with the lack of transparency in countries' legal, economic, regulatory, and governance structures that can confound global investment and commerce.

The opacity index uses the O-factor in the computation of corruption.

$$Oi = \frac{1}{5} * \left[Ci + Li + Ei + Ai + Ri \right] \qquad \ldots\ldots 3$$

Where: O refers to the composite factors

C refers to the impact of corrupt practice

L refers to the effect of legal and judicial opacity (including shareholder rights)

E refers to economic/policy opacity

A refers to accounting/corporate governance opacity

R refers to the impact of regulatory opacity and uncertainty/arbitrariness

It is, however, important to point out that the opacity index is not without its adverse effects. Opacity can adversely impact the cost and availability of capital in several different ways. Domestic capital markets may suffer from relative underdevelopment if proper disclosure of information is not made to investors who are deciding where to place their funds. International investors may be reluctant to fund projects if they are uncertain that funds will be allocated to

their purported uses. In addition, the lack of clear, consistent, and reliable practices in the realms of legal disputes, regulation, and national economic policy may negatively impact the quantity of funds available for investment in countries. Similarly, awareness of unofficial (and often illegal) payments required by bureaucrats may dissuade investors from purchasing securities or investing in physical plants in the countries.

While these perceptual scales have helped in understanding the cause and effects of corruption and put pressure on governments and society to address the corruption problem, they are obviously imperfect owing to their subjective nature. Perception data are just estimates of how corrupt a society is thought to be and are thus open to influence and distortion from the full range of factors affecting any human judgments. The more obvious limitation of these approaches is that they treat whole societies as units of analysis, and thus, they are far removed from analyses that focus on specific countries or provinces.

There are no obvious answers to these problems, yet finding valuable ways to compare the level of corruption over time remains necessary for an empirical-focused study. Of all the approaches, the most suitable one for this study is the opacity index. The industry under consideration is shrouded in secrecy, as not much is known about its activities, which invariably erodes transparency and accountability.

In line with this, a corruption equation can be set out as follows, following Klitgaard (1988):

$$C = R + D - A \quad \text{……...……..……4}$$

In the above equation, C stands for corruption, R for economic rent, D for discretionary powers, and A for accountability. Put differently, it can, therefore, be established that corruption is an increasing function of rent, and it is also an increasing function of discretion.

$$C = f(R), \frac{\partial R}{\partial C} > 0, \frac{\partial^2 R}{\partial C^2} > 1 \quad \text{……...…..……...5}$$

$$C = f(D), \frac{\partial D}{\partial C} > 0, \frac{\partial^2 D}{\partial C^2} > 1 \quad \text{…….……6}$$

The equations state that the more opportunities for economic rent (R) exist in a country, the larger the corruption will be. Similarly, the greater the discretionary powers (D) granted to administrators, the greater will be the corruption. However, the more administrators are held

accountable (A) for their actions, the less corruption there will be, and hence, a minus sign in front of A. (Mathematically speaking, we can say C varies directly with R and D and inversely with A).

Research Methodology

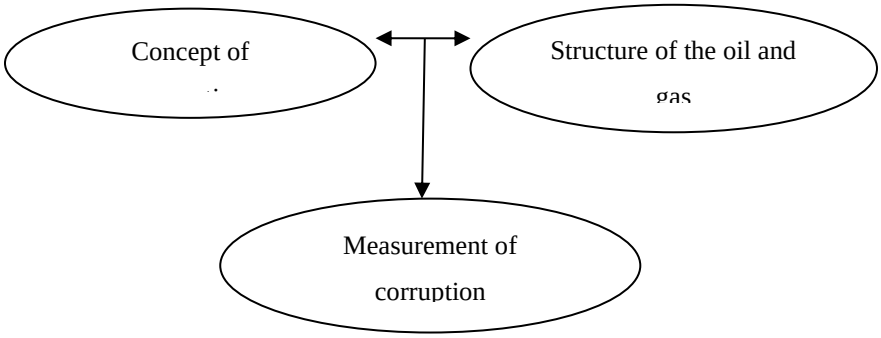
The research methodology begins with a conceptual framework that clarifies the concept of corruption and the context of a corruption analysis in the Nigerian oil and gas industry. Afterward, we present the empirical framework that explains how corruption is measured. Therefore, following the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, the following conceptual analysis of corruption is adopted that is a particular act performed by any agent is an act of institutional corruption if and only if;

i) the act has a specific effect of sabotaging or contributing to the sabotaging of some institutional processes and /or purpose of some institutions and
ii) the act contributes to the debasement of the moral character of some actors in the institution.

The study considers acts that sabotage or contribute to sabotaging economic processes and economic targets of the oil and gas industry to be corruption. Such acts include weakening institutions, compromising strategies and policies, and leading to inefficient management of oil and gas resources and delays in remittances of oil and gas revenue to the federation account.

The study's objectives require measuring corruption in the oil and gas industry. Figure 1 shows how the study conceptualized the problem. The concept of corruption and the structure of the oil and gas industry guide the measurement of corruption.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



The oil and gas industry is classified into upstream and downstream. The study thus identified potential points of corruption in the upstream and downstream and quantified those that could be quantified. Various reports have been produced about corruption in the oil and gas industry. Table 1 shows a summary.

Table 1: Summary of the Findings of the Various Committee/Probe Panels

S/N	Reporting Committee/Probe Panel	Nature of Findings/Remarks	The Extent of Loss
1.	The Audit Report on NNPC (1999-2000)	Overshooting of production target amounting to 375.45 million barrels	$9.4 billion or ₦1.05 trillion
2.	Senate Joint Committee on Downstream (2011), backed by PPRA figure	Shoddy subsidy regime	$9 billion ₦1.4 trillion back by PPRA ₦1.348 trillion
3.	Sanusi Lamido Sanusi Allegation	Non—remittance of Oil Revenue	$20 billion
4.	Bern declaration	Denial of tax earnings.	$6.8 billion
5.	AigImokhuede Presidential Committee Report	From the indicted 21 companies	₦382 billion
6.	Ribadu Taskforce	Collection/remittance problem	₦843 billion
		- sales of domestic crude oil in 2011 (revenue due to government)	₦137.572 billion
		- proceed from gas sales from the Bonga oil field	($946.878) million
		- poor business plan resulting in the loss-making of 16 subsidiaries (2009)	₦298 billion
		- signature bonus losses	₦566 million

Source: Bayo Ajagunna (2012), unraveling the fuel subsidy scandal, The SUN (April 19, 2012) the fuel subsidy probe.

The reports in Table 1 suggest key points of corruption in the upstream. These include overshooting of production (OP), non-remittance of oil revenue by NNPC (NR), non-payment of taxes and royalties by oil companies (URT), oil theft(CT), and the non-accounting of crude allocated for domestic consumption (NADC). These suggest that the corruption in the upstream (CORU) can be computed as;

CORU = OP + NR + NADC + CT + OT…….....……..7

Over-production is measured as;

$OP = Q_N - Q^*_N$; $OP \geq 0$ ..……8

When OP >0, it implies that there is overproduction, and where it is equal to zero, there is no overproduction.

Non-remittance by NNPC is measured in equation 8 as the difference between expected revenue from the sales of crude allocated to NNPC (ER) and the actual remittance (AR); That is;

NR = ER – AR.……..……..9

Under-payment of royalties and taxes (URT) is given by expected royalties and taxes (ERT) less actual royalties and taxes paid (ART):

URT = ERT- ART ……...…….10

Crude oil theft (COT) is measured by expected daily losses (EDL) to the crude thieves announced by the government

COT = EDL……..…11

The non-accounting of crude allocated to domestic refineries could be measured as:

NADC = DCAL *CP……12

Where DCAL = domestic crude allocation losses

CP = crude price

Equation 6 could be re-written as:

CORU = OP + NR + NADC + CT……13

This assumes that the losses due to corruption are additive. It is possible that the various sources may not be independent. This would cause CORU to either under or overshoot the true extent of corruption. For the purpose of this study, the components are assumed to be independent.

Table 1 also highlights some of the key points of corruption downstream, among which are the losses from refining inefficiencies (RI), revenue losses from excess product import (EPM), and losses to subsidy (LS). It is clear from the reports that the loss from the subsidy deals is significant. The indictment of some marketers and prominent members of the society gives credence to the position of the report. From the reports, the measure of corruption in the downstream (CORD) could be estimated as;

CORD = RI + EPM + LS……..14

In calculating the losses from refining inefficiencies, the study compared the Nigerian design yield to the California design yield, which reflects an international standard, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: The Global Standard for Refining Petroleum Products

Product	Percent of Total (Cafn) %	Percent of Total (NIG) Actual yield	Percent of Total (NIG) Design yield
PMS	51.4	30.81	32.28
Distillate Fuel Oil	15.3%	22.41	23.72
Jet Fuel /DPK	12.3%	15.98	14.28
Still Gas	5.4%		
Marketable Coke	5.0%		
Residual Fuel Oil	3.3%	16.84	17.5
Liquefied Refinery Gas	2.8%	0.98	2.27
Asphalt and Road Oil	1.7%		
Other Refined Products	1.5%	2.17	3.5

Lubricants	0.9%

Source: California Energy Commission, Fuels Office, PIIRA database.
*Calculate output as –yield X 158 X 445,000 (E.g. 0.514 X 158 X 445,000 = 36.1) {For Nigeria RI, (0.318 X 158 X 445000 = 22.4) and 36.1-22.4 =13.7}

From Table 2, it was observed that both the design and actual yield fall short of the global standard for the PMS and higher than the global standard for other products. The performance gap for each barrel of crude in terms of the PMS is 32.5322 liters [(0.514-30.81) x 158] for each barrel. This implies that for 445,000 barrels allocated for domestic consumption, about 14.48 million liters (32.5322x445000) are lost to poor design, production wastages, and inefficiencies. Had Nigeria the global standard design, it would produce 36.14 million liters of PMS daily. This would have considerably reduced, if not eliminated, the import demand for petroleum products, which is taking up to about 15% of annual forex allocation (Garba, 2015).

While Nigeria's OPEC allies (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Libya, Algeria, and Venezuela) continue to expand their National Oil Companies to develop their economies and meet their national product needs, Nigeria keeps on importing the products that she can domestically refine. The refining inefficiencies give rise to excess imports, which in turn fuel corrupt subsidy regimes, which several investigative reports have shown to be highly inflated and wasteful.

The aggregate corruption in the industry (CORT) is the sum of (CORU) and (CORD). Thus, the aggregate effects are the sum of upstream (CORU) and downstream (CORD) effects. Equations 3.1- 3.8 will guide the measurement of the sizes of corruption. Some areas where corruption becomes an issue are measurable, while some are not. This study used measurable ones and, therefore, relied more on secondary data.

Also, the data used to estimate corruption in the upstream and downstream was sourced from the Annual Statistical Bulletin of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) website, International Financial Statistics (IFS), publications of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank, as well as the reports of the various probe panels.

Results and Discussion

The areas where corruption became an issue in the oil and gas industry were the upstream and downstream subsectors. The documentary evidence presented in Table 1 identified the key points of corruption in the upstream and downstream sectors.

In the upstream (CORU), overshooting of crude oil production (OP) beyond the OPEC-approved quotas and crude oil theft were identified and quantified as measures of corruption in that subsector. Therefore, CORU = OP + CT.

Overproduction (OP) Over-production is measured as;

$OP = Q_N - Q^*_N$; $OP \geq 0$, where Q_N is the NNPC Crude Production, and Q^*_N is the OPEC-approved quotas. When OP >0, then it implies that there is overproduction, and where it is equal to zero, there is no overproduction. The detail of this calculation is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Overproduction Value (Naira)

YEAR	OPEC QUOTAS (000B/D)	OPEC QUOTAS (000B/A)	NIGERIA CRUDE OIL PRODUCTION (000B/A)	OVERPRODUCTION (000B/A)	CRUDE OIL PRICE ($)	EXCHANGE RATE (N)	OVERPRODUCTION (BILLION$)	OVERPRODUCTION (BILLION N)
1999	1885	688025	774703	86678.00	22.3	94.9	1.93	183.4
2000	2157	787305	828198	40893.00	35.76	102.48	1.46	150.0
2001	1911	697515	859627	162112	29.23	111.6	4.74	529.0
2002	1778	648970	725860	76890.00	28.5	126.56	219	277.2
2003	2092	763580	844100	80520.00	33.86	129.79	272	353.0
2004	2142	781830	911045	129215.0	44.81	132.86	579	769.3
2005	2265	8265	918973	92248.00	57.57	130.84	531	694.8
2006	2306	841690	869197	27507.00	65.03	128.28	179	229.6
2007	2406	878190	803001	-75189.00	69.51	124.28	-522	-648.7
2008	2519	919435	768746	-150689	95.25	117.72	-1435	-1689.3
2009	2519	919435	780348	-139087	55.96	149.36	-778	-1162.0
2010	2519	919435	896043	-23392	73.44	152.67	-172	-262.6
2011	2519	919435	866245	-53190	107.5	153.9	-572	-880.3
2012	2519	919435	852777	-66658	109.5	157.5	-730	-1149.8
2013	2519	919435	800488	-118947	105.7	157.3	-1259	-1980.4

2014	2519	919435	798542	-120893	96.29	158.55	-1164	-1845.6

Source: Annual Statistical Bulletin OPEC 1999, 2014; 2015; and NNPC 1999, 2014.

Crude oil theft (COT) is measured by expected daily losses (EDL) to the crude thieves announced by government agencies. The calculation of crude oil theft is based on the estimate of the former naval chief that Nigeria loses 100,000 barrels of crude oil to oil thieves daily. From here, the annual values were computed and multiplied by the price of crude oil converted into naira equivalent. The result is presented in the table 4 below:

Table 4: Crude Theft

YEAR	Crude Theft(MILLION BARRELS)	CRUDE OIL PRICE($/BARREL)	LOSSES TO CRUDE THEFT(MILLION $)	EXCHANGE RATE(N)	LOSSES TO CRUDE THEFT(BILLION N)
1999	36.5	22.3	813.95	94.9	77.2
2000	36.5	35.76	1305.24	102.48	133.8
2001	36.5	29.23	1066.895	111.6	119.1
2002	36.5	28.5	1040.25	126.56	131.7
2003	36.5	33.86	1235.89	129.79	160.4
2004	36.5	44.81	1635.565	132.86	217.3
2005	36.5	57.57	2101.305	130.84	274.9
2006	36.5	65.03	2373.595	128.28	304.45
2007	36.5	69.51	2537.115	124.28	315.3
2008	36.5	95.25	3476.625	117.72	409.3
2009	36.5	55.96	2042.54	149.36	305.1
2010	36.5	73.44	2680.56	152.67	409.2
2011	36.5	107.5	3923.75	153.9	603.9

2012	36.5	109.5	3996.75	157.5	629.5
2013	36.5	105.87	3864.255	157.3	607.9
2014	36.5	96.29	3514.585	158.55	557.2

Source: Annual Statistical Bulletin OPEC 1999, 2014; NNPC 1999, 2014; CBN 1999, 2014 and Leadership Newspaper (March 4, 2015 naval chief comment).

Table 5: Measurement of Corruption in the Upstream (Billion Naira)

Year	Over Production (Billion N)	Crude Theft (Billion N)	CORU (Billion N)
1999	183.4	77.2	260.6
2000	150.0	133.8	283.8
2001	529.0	119.1	648.1
2002	277.2	131.7	408.9
2003	353.0	160.4	513.4
2004	769.3	217.3	986.6
2005	694.8	274.9	969.7
2006	229.6	304.45	534.05
2007	-648.7	315.3	-333.4
2008	-1689.3	409.3	-1280
2009	-1162.0	305.1	-856.9
2010	-262.6	409.2	146.6
2011	-880.3	603.9	-276.4
2012	-1149.8	629.5	-520.3
2013	-1980.4	607.9	-1372.5
2014	-1845.6	557.2	-1288.4

Source: Extract from Tables 3 and 4

In the downstream (CORD), the measure is the summation of refining inefficiency (RI) and excess product import (EPM). It is important to point out that refining inefficiency arises from two sources: design inefficiency and capacity underutilization. In calculating refining inefficiency and capacity underutilization, the following assumptions were made:

i. The standard yield is 51.4%
ii. The design yield is 32.28%, while the actual yield is 30.81%
iii. Daily crude allocation is 445,000 barrels
iv. 1 barrel is equal to 158 liters
v. 1 gallon is equal to 3.785 Liters
vi. Design in efficiency = Standard yield –Design yield
vii. Yearly allocation of crude 445,000 x 365 (barrels)
viii. Yearly loss = Design inefficiency x yearly allocation

Following the above assumption, the design inefficiency and capacity underutilization were computed and presented in the table 6, 7, and 8.

Table 6: Design Inefficiency (From the Actual Yield)

Year	Annual Capacity(Million/barrels)	Standard yield(million/barrels)	Actual yield	Design Inefficiency (million/br)	Design Inefficiency (billion'ltrs)	NNPC Price /liters(n)	Value of design ineff (billion'n)
1999	162.4	84.1	50	34.1	5.4	20	107.7
2000	162.4	84.1	50	34.1	5.4	22	118.5
2001	162.4	84.1	50	34.1	5.4	22	118.5
2002	162.4	84.1	50	34.1	5.4	26	140.1
2003	162.4	84.1	50	34.1	5.4	40	215.5
2004	162.4	84.1	50	34.1	5.4	40	215.5
2005	162.4	84.1	50	34.1	5.4	40	215.5
2006	162.4	84.1	50	34.1	5.4	40	215.5
2007	162.4	84.1	50	34.1	5.4	40	215.5
2008	162.4	84.1	50	34.1	5.4	40	215.5
2009	162.4	84.1	50	34.1	5.4	65	350.1

2010	162.4	84.1	50	34.1	5.4	65	350.1
2011	162.4	84.1	50	34.1	5.4	65	350.1
2012	162.4	84.1	50	34.1	5.4	97	522.5
2013	162.4	84.1	50	34.1	5.4	97	522.5
2014	162.4	84.1	50	34.1	5.4	87	468.6

Source: Annual Statistical Bulletin OPEC (1999, 2014) and (NNPC 1999, 2014).

Note. Annual Capacity (AC) is obtained by multiplying the daily crude allocation by the number of days a year. The standard yield is calculated by multiplying the annual capacity with the global standard for PMS (0.514). The design yield (from the actual yield) is obtained by multiplying the annual capacity with the actual capacity of the refineries (0.3081). The design inefficiency is therefore obtained by subtracting the design yield from the standard yield. To get the design inefficiency in liters, the design inefficiency in barrels is multiplied by 158, which is the number of liters in a barrel. Finally, the value of design in efficiency in Naira is obtained by multiplying the design inefficiency by the depot price of the product.

Table 7: Design Inefficiency (From the Design Yield)

YEAR	ANNUAL CAPACITY (MILLION BARRELS)	STANDARD YIELD (MILLION BARRELS)	DESIGN YIELD (MILLION BARRELS)	DESIGN INEFICIENCYF (MILLION BARRELS)	DESIGN INEFFICIENCY (MILLION LTRS)	PRICE/ LTR	VALUE OF DESIGN INEFFICIENCY (BILLION N)
1999	162.4	84.1	52.5	31.6	50.0	20	100.1
2000	162.4	84.1	52.5	31.6	50.0	22	110.1
2001	162.4	84.1	52.5	31.6	50.0	22	110.1
2002	162.4	84.1	52.5	31.6	50.0	26	130.1
2003	162.4	84.1	52.5	31.6	50.0	40	200.2
2004	162.4	84.1	52.5	31.6	50.0	40	200.2
2005	162.4	84.1	52.5	31.6	50.0	40	200.2
2006	162.4	84.1	52.5	31.6	50.0	40	200.2
2007	162.4	84.1	52.5	31.6	50.0	40	200.2
2008	162.4	84.1	52.5	31.6	50.0	40	200.2

2009	162.4	84.1	52.5	31.6	50.0	65	325.3
2010	162.4	84.1	52.5	31.6	50.0	65	325.3
2011	162.4	84.1	52.5	31.6	50.0	65	325.3
2012	162.4	84.1	52.5	31.6	50.0	97	485.4
2013	162.4	84.1	52.5	31.6	50.0	97	485.4
2014	162.4	84.1	52.5	31.6	50.0	87	435.4

Source: Annual Statistical Bulletin OPEC 1999, 2014; NNPC 1999, 2014

Table 8: Capacity Underutilization

YEAR	ANNUAL CAPACITY (MILLION BARRELS)	PROCESSED CRUDE (MILLION BARRELS)	CAPACITY UNDERUTILIZED (MILLION BARRELS)	CAPACITY UNDERUTILIZED (%)	PMS LOSSES (MILLION BARRELS)	PMS LOSSES (BILLION LTRS)	PRICE /LTR	PMS LOSSVALUE (BILLION N)
1999	162.4	66.4	96.0	59	29.6	4.7	20	94
2000	162.4	36.2	126.1	78	38.9	6.1	22	134.2
2001	162.4	81.5	80.91	50	25.0	3.9	22	85.8
2002	162.4	79.5	82.98	51	25.5	4.0	26	104
2003	162.4	44.8	117.6	72	36.2	5.7	40	228
2004	162.4	38.0	124.3	77	38.3	6.1	40	244
2005	162.4	70.6	91.78	56	28.3	4.5	40	180
2006	162.4	43.5	119.9	73	36.7	5.8	40	232
2007	162.4	19.1	143.4	88	44.2	7.0	40	280
2008	162.4	39.3	123.1	76	38.0	6.0	40	240
2009	162.4	17.8	144.7	89	44.6	7.0	65	455
2010	162.4	34.9	127.6	78	39.3	6.2	65	403
2011	162.4	39.4	123.0	75	37.9	6.0	65	390
2012	162.4	33.6	128.8	79	39.7	6.3	97	611.1
2013	162.4	35.2	127.2	78	39.2	6.2	97	601.4
2014	162.4	23.34	139.1	86	42.9	6.8	87	591.6

Source: Annual Statistical Bulletin OPEC 1999, 2014; NNPC 1999, 2014.

NOTE. Annual capacity (AC) is obtained by multiplying the daily crude allocation by the number of days in a year. The crude processed by the refineries in the year is subtracted from the annual capacity to arrive at the capacity underutilization in barrels. The percentages of capacity underutilization are computed by dividing the capacity underutilization by the annual capacity and multiplying the result by 100. To get the value for the PMS losses in barrels, the capacity underutilized (barrels) is multiplied by 0.3081, and to get the losses of PMS in liters, the value in barrels is multiplied by 158 in line with the earlier assumptions. The PMS losses in Naira value are obtained by multiplying the PMS losses in liters with the depot price of PMS per liter.

Table 9: Refining Inefficiency (Design Inefficiency + Capacity Underutilization)

YEAR	DESIGN INEFFICIENCY (BILLIONS N)	CAPACITY UNDERUTILIZATION (BILLION N)	REFINING INEFFICIENCY (BILLION N)
1999	107.7	94	201.7
2000	118.5	134.2	252.7
2001	118.5	85.8	204.3
2002	140.1	104	244.1
2003	215.5	228	443.5
2004	215.5	244	459.5
2005	215.5	180	395.5
2006	215.5	232	447.5
2007	215.5	280	495.5
2008	215.5	240	455.5
2009	350.1	455	805.1
2010	350.1	403	753.1
2011	350.1	390	740.1
2012	522.5	611.1	1133.6

2013	522.5	601.4	1123.9
2014	468.6	591.6	1060.2

Source: Extract from Tables 7 and 8

Table 10: Measures of Excess Import

YEAR	PMS LOSSES(B'LTRS)	RETAIL PRICE OF PMS(GALON/$)	RETAIL PRICE OF PMS (LTS/$)	LOSSES TO EXCESS IMPORT(B'$)	ERN	LOSSES TO EXCESS IMPORT(B'N)
1999	4.7	1.14	0.30	1.4	94.9	132.86
2000	6.1	1.48	0.40	2.4	102.48	245.952
2001	3.9	1.42	0.38	1.4	111.6	156.24
2002	4.0	1.35	0.36	1.4	126.56	177.184
2003	5.7	1.56	0.41	2.4	129.79	311.496
2004	6.1	1.85	0.49	3.0	132.86	398.58
2005	4.5	2.27	0.60	2.7	130.84	353.268
2006	5.8	2.57	0.68	3.9	128.28	500.292
2007	7.0	2.8	0.74	5.2	124.28	646.256
2008	6.0	3.25	0.86	5.2	117.72	612.144
2009	7.0	2.35	0.62	4.4	149.36	657.184
2010	6.2	2.78	0.73	4.6	152.67	702.282
2011	6.0	3.52	0.93	5.6	153.9	861.84
2012	6.3	3.62	0.96	6.0	157.5	945
2013	6.2	3.51	0.93	5.8	157.3	912.34
2014	6.8	3.36	0.89	6.1	158.55	967.155

Source: Annual Statistical Bulletin OPEC (1999, 2014) and (NNPC 1999, 2014).

Table 11: Measures of Corruption in the Downstream

YEAR	Refinery Inefficiency (Billion N)	Excess Import (Billion N)	CORD
1999	201.7	132.86	334.56
2000	252.7	245.952	498.652
2001	204.3	156.24	360.54
2002	244.1	177.184	421.284
2003	443.5	311.496	754.996
2004	459.5	398.58	858.08
2005	395.5	353.268	748.768
2006	447.5	500.292	947.792
2007	495.5	646.256	1141.756
2008	455.5	612.144	1067.644
2009	805.1	657.184	1462.284
2010	753.1	702.282	1455.382
2011	740.1	861.84	1601.94
2012	1133.6	945	2078.6
2013	1123.9	912.34	2036.24
2014	1060.2	967.155	2027.355

Source: Extract from Tables 9 and 10

Table 12: Measures of Aggregate Corruption

YEAR	CORU(Billion N)	CORD (Billion N)	CORT (Billion N)
1999	260.6	334.56	595.16
2000	283.8	498.652	782.452
2001	648.1	360.54	1008.64
2002	408.9	421.284	830.184

2003	513.4	754.996	1268.396
2004	986.6	858.08	1844.68
2005	969.7	748.768	1718.468
2006	534.05	947.792	1481.842
2007	-333.4	1141.756	808.356
2008	-1280	1067.644	-212.356
2009	-856.9	1462.284	605.384
2010	146.6	1455.382	1601.982
2011	-276.4	1601.94	1325.54
2012	-520.3	2078.6	1558.3
2013	-1372.5	2036.24	663.74
2014	-1288.4	2027.355	738.955

Source: Extract from Tables 10 and 11

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study found that there is a persistence and enlargement in the scope of corruption in Nigeria's oil and gas industry. The study also found that the oil and gas industry is highly vulnerable to large-scale corruption. From the evidence gathered in the research, it was observed that a fertile ground for the growth of a corrupt system would emerge and continue to be sustained in a country if it satisfied the following three conditions:

i) If there is an existence of a large number of laws, rules, regulations, and administrative orders that restrict business and economic activities, thereby creating a huge opportunity for generating economic rent.
ii) When the administrators are granted large discretionary power with respect to interpreting rules and are given a lot of functions to decide on how rules are to be applied and;
iii) When there are no effective mechanisms and institutional arrangements in the country to hold administrators accountable for their actions.

These conditions are prevalent in the Nigerian economy, and they need to be urgently addressed as they breed and sustain corruption. Therefore, corruption in general and in the oil and gas industry in particular will thrive where there is opacity and unaccountability. To come out of this situation, therefore, requires openness in transactions and accountability at all levels.

Putting an end to the corruption in the Nigerian oil and gas industry can only be achieved through concerted, coordinated, and sustained action by the government. This has to be with discernible proof by its actions that it sincerely wishes to address it. To clearly demonstrate this, it is recommended that the government should take the following actions:

- **Provision of perfect information on the activities in the industry.** The Nigerian oil industry is shrouded in secrecy, and the Nigerians have the right to know exactly what is going on in the industry under citizens' right to information. The corporation's website should contain the following information: the state of the refineries in terms of their capacity installation and utilization. This will enable the industry players to know firsthand what is going on in the industry.

- **Arrest and prosecute those involved in oil stealing**. Since those who are involved in this act of corruption are not ghosts, and they live among us, the government should consider the state governors' appeal to prosecute and punish the numerous oil thieves that have been caught, no matter how highly placed. Once this is done, to forestall future occurrences, as part of its action, the government should extend its fight against oil thieves by criminalizing the buying of stolen crude by the international community. Furthermore, local traditional leaders should be engaged in providing security for petroleum facilities within their domain instead of outside contractors who are not familiar with the local terrain.

- **Entrenchment of Institutional quality.** One of the sure ways of achieving the above recommendations is to ensure that the leadership of various institutions, such as the Police, Armed Forces, and other security agencies, is above board in terms of integrity. By strengthening these institutions, the level of corruption in the oil and gas industry will be drastically reduced.

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[iii] A good example would be what happens in cases of insider trading. A person learns of some vital information that may influence the price of goods in the market and either quickly buys or gets rid of large amounts of goods before the consequences arising from this information come to pass.

[iv] For example, a corrupt regime or official may try to prevent the election or appointment of an honest person or government for fear that the individual or the regime might be probed by the successor(s).

[v] For example, a corrupt businessperson may willingly bribe a corrupt government official in order to win a tender for a certain contract.

[vi] Miller, Seumas, "Corruption", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (fall 2008 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/corruption/>.

[vii] 2022, for example, the oil and gas sector contributed 36.87% to total government revenue and 78.74% to total government export revenue (NEiTi, 2024).

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An Appraisal of Primary Health Care Policy Implementation in Nigerian Rural and Semi-Urban Sector after Four Decades

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PHC remains the foundation and functional background for public health services accessibility. However, implementing the policy in Nigeria has raised unanswered questions over four decades, which the study seeks to answer. The study's objectives are to investigate the implementation of the policy and analyze the conditions of Primary Health Care Centers (PHCCs) in Nigeria. The research adopted a literature review methodology to portray and discuss the dilapidated status of PHCCs in selected rural and semi-urban communities across geopolitical zones. Relevant literature and data were used to analyze how the policy implementation was manipulated to the advantage of the elite class. The pictorials in the appendixes revealed the state of PHC infrastructures in Nigeria. The results revealed that there is no provision of efficient health care services, poverty and poor maintenance of infrastructure and facilities, poor political will in policy implementation, monitoring, and evaluation, low human resources, poor funding and management, and community apathy. Based on the results, it is concluded that decisive implementation of PHC policy remains the only avenue for the inhabitants of the rural sector to obtain standard and affordable health care services. The framework engendered social equity and availability. The study demonstrated the 'Urban Bias Theory', which no known study on PHC has adopted to appraise and analyze the sad situation of PHC policy and PHCC structures in Nigeria. Therefore, the study recommends the revival and resuscitation of the decayed infrastructures and facilities; regular maintenance of all the available PHCCs across Nigeria; deliberate initiation of workable Public-Private-Partnership plan for the enhancement of Community Development Associations/Based Organisations [CDAs, CBOs, and NGOs] in the provision and management of funds for strategy and sustainability of PHCCs to put an end to apathy and non-ownership posture.

Keywords: *Primary Health Care, International Policy, Health Infrastructure, Community Health, Rural and Semi-urban Sector, Urban Bias*

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Introduction

The 1978 Declaration of Alma-Ata founded the movement for Primary Health Care, which emphasized "health for all," healthcare accessibility as a fundamental human right, and economic and individual development (WHO, 2019).

For instance, SDG 3 aspires to ensure health and well-being for all, including a bold commitment to end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, and other communicable diseases, universal health coverage, and accessibility to safe and effective medicines and vaccines for all by 2030. Furthermore, international development and donor agencies globally have been bedeviled with the major challenges of security and safety issues for vulnerable citizens, health care services, financial security, and social justice. Thus, Nnebue *et al*. (2014) asserted that Nigeria moved into adopting and domesticating PHC global healthcare policy in 1988 under Gen. Babangida's administration as Head of State and Prof. Olukoye Ransonse-Kuti as Health Minister. The development was aimed at ensuring "health for all by the year 2000 and beyond" through PHC as the foundation for development. It is crystal clear that developing nations have been overwhelmed by the hydra-headed menace of healthcare poverty and worsening conditions of living conditions, which some scholars attributed to colonialism and unequal partnership in international relationships. This is consequent upon the suspension and replacement of the 'bottom-top' methodology, 'home-grown' model, and 'all-round' growth approach in the administration of development projects as the fundamental solutions to various underdevelopment concerns.

Nevertheless, it can be ascertained that Nigerian healthcare delivery architecture has witnessed several revolutions over the years, which aimed at dealing with the crisis in public health management (Aregbeshola, 2019). Scott-Emuakpor (2010), Asakitikpi (2019), and Marques & Ferreira (2020) list them include the "National Immunisation Coverage Scheme (NICS), Midwives Service Scheme (MSS), National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), and Nigerian Pay for Performance Scheme." In the healthcare sector, PHC, or "health by the people" is considered the pivotal driver of healthcare services.

Consequently, the nation's Health Department, referred to as the Federal Ministry of Health, has the mandate of meeting the World Health Organisation (WHO) targets with regard to eliminating and eradicating diseases, reducing mortality and morbidity rates arising from communicable and terminal diseases, upturning the increment and prevalence of non-communicable diseases, and significantly increase life expectancy and quality of the citizenry. From the foregoing, the domestication, development, and implementation of the health policy of PHC in the years after the Alma Ata Declaration and the undertaking of additional fundamental actions were aimed at strengthening and improving the nation's health care for affordability, efficiency, and effectiveness in services that invigorate the provision of health care. This is because healthcare remains the thrust of accelerated social, economic, and sustainable development (Nagar, 2021). Notwithstanding, it is posited that;

> We had health for some, but not for all. Progress had been uneven and unfair between and within countries, with a 31-year disparity between those countries with the shortest and longest life expectancy. At least half of the world's population lacked access to essential services, while the cost of paying for care out of pocket pushed people into extreme poverty. Too great a focus has been placed on fighting individual diseases at the expense of strengthening health systems and promoting health (WHO, 2019).

PHC has provided an enabling health care development opportunity to nations like Argentina, Kazakhstan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ukraine, Nepal, Indonesia, etc., to accomplish a significant level in the health care delivery system, thereby leading to a great reduction in the extent of infant and maternal mortality rate. This is connected to the fact that the PHC structure and design are rural and semi-urban inclined and considered to be rapid in nature and affordably oriented.

In Nigeria, for example, the tale of the policy implementation is diverse. PHCCs, which are majorly in the domains of the countryside, are identified by inadequate personnel in all facets, ramshackle buildings and infrastructural facilities, and above all, a dearth of drugs and other medical aid supplies (Obansa & Orimisan, 2013; Croke & Ogbuoji, 2024). The centers face

environmental cleanliness challenges due to indiscriminate defecation and invasion by insects and rodents. Moreover, since the policy implementation suffers on the altar of politics and elite compensation, many of the PHCCs are wrongly sited outside the community centers and are mostly uncompleted with a lack of necessary facilities (Reerink & Sauerborn, 1996). These deficits always forced patients and workers alike to adopt the nearby bush as a 'restroom.' As Adetiba (2021) noted, it has been observed that since the targeted population and consumers of the policy were not involved in conceptualizing the program, unrealistic attainment of its objectives and complaints remain the bane, particularly in developing countries. It is perceived that PHC, a rural and semi-urban-based health care modality to achieve "health for all by the year 2000," was idealistic and not feasible, attesting to the continuous marginalization of the rural semi-urban poor in their affairs. As a corollary, this paper is meant to demonstrate the challenges bedeviling PHC policy implementation in the rural and semi-urban areas after "the Alma Ata Conference in 1978" in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

> There have been many improvements in the decades since Alma-Ata, most notably in child and maternal mortality and longevity, but a number of challenges remain. In reality, many people in resource-poor settings still do not have equitable access to even essential services. This gap is widening in many places [like Nigeria] (Hall & Taylor, 2003; WHO, 2019).

According to Okonofua (2013), the primary objective of "Health for All by the Year 2000" is directed at salvaging the difficulties in accessing adequate and qualitative health care by the rural semi-urban dwellers and the vulnerable whose sole medical opportunity is dependent on foreign medical aids and technology. Therefore, the establishment of Colleges of Health and Sciences and Technology (CHST) across the Regional States in the country in the early 1980s was meant to aid the localization of PHC through the training of Community Health Extension Workers (CHEWs) and Technicians between two to three years period. This is a sound foundation for the distribution and development approach that will enable healthcare service delivery to close the wide gap between rural and semi-urban dwellers in Nigeria.

Notwithstanding, the monitoring and evaluation strategy of the health givers is inadequate. Consequently, "there is a serious knowledge gap among the rural and community health extension workers and technicians in responding satisfactorily to identified problems and challenges in health care" (Abdulraheem, Olapipo & Amodu, 2012:7). Therefore, the modus operandi of CHEWs' services in the rural semi-urban settings are discouraging as they always attempt to handle symptoms of patients contrary to their training of preventive and first-aid health care activities. They classified and acclaimed themselves as medical doctors, consultants, and authorities in medical sciences. The resultant effect of this situation is the continuous high rate of maternal and infant mortality rate in semi-urban and rural centers. They are hasty and superficial in their activities. For example, one of the author's wife died following this development in 2014. This glaring failure is not unconnected to poor training and supervision by the officers saddled with the said responsibility. It is observed that all the community health extension workers and technicians are preoccupied with managing their own clinics and maternity homes instead of the PHCCs in which they were employed to work.

The problem is compounded more by the Local Government Council (LGC) system, which is constitutionally empowered to oversee the activities of PHC. For instance, the LGC Supervisory for Health, Head of Department (HOD), and ward coordinators of health rarely visit PHCCs in rural semi-urban areas. This supervision and leadership problem has demoralized health personnel posted to these areas to render health services. In addition, there is no prompt payment of salaries and allowances for CHEWs and technicians due to the existence of "Joint Local Government Accounts" at the state government level. This ugly development has made the system a 'burden-bearer' of diverted and mismanaged funds. This can be supported by the study of Odutolu *et al*. (2016), who said, "The issue of fragmentation with respect to the provision of health services and management of staff, funds, and other resources remained a major problem for the management of PHC, prompting the need for yet another reform."

In a nutshell, poor management, decay of infrastructural facilities, unprofessional practices, and poor financial aid have all been identified as the bane in the implementation and delivery of PHC. In addition, "despite the fact that several PHCCs were established across the country, the

approach still did not impact effectively to improve the health status of the predominantly rural community in the nation" (Okonofua, 2013, p. 2352013, p. 235).

Perhaps it can be stated that the explanation of PHC policy implementation attainment remains an illusion, though politicians emptily publicize its development in Nigeria. The argument for and against it "was heard in the debates on selective versus comprehensive, and vertical versus horizontal PHC." In the recent period, over 40 years, the PHCCs have been on retrogression instead of progression and are a definite threat. Although the WHO and development partners are worried about the spate of implementation of the PHC by the developing nations, it also calls for individual concern in Nigeria. Worthy of is the fact that the policy failed as a result of the implementation strategy that is elitist in nature (leading to marginalization of the immediate policy beneficiaries) rather than collectivity, preventive health care services was relegated to curative care, poverty of management resulting in wastage of resources, wrong location of the facility, data and health information paucity, lack of research and development in all facet, critical infrastructural deficit and logistics; scarcity of finances, and poor critical infrastructural facilities. From the foregoing, a question arises: What are the challenges impeding PHC policy implementation in the rural and semi-urban areas after “the Alma Ata Conference in 1978” in Nigeria?

The Methodology

The research adopted literature review method data to portray and discuss the dilapidated status of PHCCs in selected rural and semi-urban centers across Nigerian geopolitical zones. Relevant literature and secondary data were equally used to analyze how the implementation of the policy was manipulated to the advantage of the elite class. Primary pictures in the appendixes revealed the sorry state of PHC infrastructures in Nigeria. The pictographic presentation provided “the opportunity for the understanding of the variables and issues associated with the subject matter” (Nassaji, 2020; Maxwell, 2021; Pandey & Pandey, 2021; Gambo *et al*., 2021). The description is used as the design of the study.

The gathered data was qualitatively assessed to robustly describe the sad remains of PHCCs, particularly in Nigeria and developing countries at large. All research materials cited were referenced.

Theoretical Framework and Application

The theoretical fulcrum of this research is "Urban Bias Theory," which is popular in development studies. To this end, Varshney (1993), Bezemer & Headey (2008), Jones & Corbridge (2010), Varshney (2014), Shearmur (2017) subscribed to the fact that Lipton (1977), Lipton (1984) and Robert Bates (1981) works were the early associated research to the theory. The theory reposited the 'naked' situations that appertain to the formulation and implementation of rural-urban development programs in developing countries, a disposition of the elite, and resource allocation. The essentials of the theory are that; "the growth and development circle in the developing countries is systemically biased against the rural semi-urban setting; and that this bias is extremely entrenched in the politico-cultural alchemy of these nations, subjugated as they are by the membership of the urban sectors."

Major national health programs and projects, which are primarily tertiary health care, are always carefully planned with the inputs of the consumers (the elite) and overemphasize the above PHC, which is rural, semi-urban, and community-based. For example, National Hospital Abuja, Teaching Hospitals, Specialist Hospitals, Federal Medical Centres, Cottage Hospitals, and General Hospitals are preferentially allocated huge budgets because they are urban-centred and elite-inclined. However, these modalities are not applicable to PHC programs and projects. They are not consultatively planned. Community-based Organisations (CBOs), rural health-related Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs), and Community Development Associations (CDAs) input are not always requested.

Again, an unfathomable degree of inequalities exists in the amount of resources and funds allocated to National Hospital Abuja, Teaching Hospitals, Specialist Hospitals, Federal Medical Centres (FMCs), Cottage and Comprehensive Hospitals, and General Hospitals. This is contrary to that of the CHEW's training institution, known as the State Colleges of Health Science and Technology (CHSTs). Urban bias manifests in "unmerited public spending on goods and services

in urban areas compared to rural regions. It also deals with the view that the concentration of some goods and services in urban areas is necessarily an indication of bias or predation" (Jones & Corbridge, 2010). Thus, "there has been too much concentration of medical personnel at the urban (centers) to the neglect of the rural areas" (Abdulraheem, Olapipo & Amodu, 2012, p. 7).

Following these perspectives, the stunted growth and underdevelopment of PHCCs in rural and semi-urban communities of developing countries at large and Nigeria, in particular, cannot be divorced from the marginalization tendency and resource diversionary attitude of elite groups in the urban sector. Scholars like De Maeseneer *et al*. (2007, p.4) maintained that "in developing countries, there is a shift of manpower from the local primary health care system towards vertical disease-oriented programs. Moreover, there is a shift from rural semi-urban areas and townships towards more affluent areas in cities. On a global scale, there is an increasing emigration of health care providers from developing countries to higher-income countries." As Pimmer *et al*. (2017), Witter *et al*. (2017), and Janse van Rensburg (2019) posited, although the training of many CHEWs and Technicians specializing in different fields of PHC administration carried out by CHST across the country and deployed to PHCCs in rural and semi-urban communities notwithstanding, they lack depth and 'jump ship' to handling symptoms which they should ordinarily refer to secondary and tertiary health centers. These, together with weak supervision, have rendered their performance ineffective, unimpressive, and disappointing. Therefore, Olalubi, Sebutu, and Bello (2020) alluded to the fact that the failure and swift developmental relegation of PHCCs as public health institutions are largely due to the aforementioned factors. Essentially, there is a great disparity between the rural semi-urban health care centers and the urban ones that policy initiators and implementers will permanently relegate to the background. Kipton (1977, p.1) believed that the big difference dwells in a situation where;

> The rural sector contains most of the poverty and most of the low-cost sources of potential advancement, but the urban sector contains most of the articulateness, organization, and power. So, the urban classes have been able to "win" most of the rounds of the struggle with the countryside, but in doing so, they have made the development process slow and unfair.'

This illustrates the degree of development witnessed by the city health care centers and PHCCs, which are on the outskirts of the urban areas. To this end, Gebre and Gebremedhin (2019) asserted that rural semi-urban areas had suffered severe marginalization, neglect, and relegation. There were excuses that because PHCCs are remotely located, supervision and observation are difficult, and as such, they are capacity-wise deficient in service rendering, inadequate equipment and provision of drugs, and uneven distribution of CHEWs (Chinawa, 2015; Aregbeshola & Khan, 2017). From the foregoing, the marginalization of rural semi-urban areas is primarily characterized by a lack of standard schools, motorable roads, simple and standardized health care centers, power supply, portable water, financial institutions, security posts, agricultural extension workers, and development institutions. Generally, the absence of these facilities has made life difficult for rural semi-urban dwellers and has resulted in high rural-urban migration, thereby putting unnecessary pressure on the facilities in urban areas.

The Nigerian Health Care Structural Review and Development Perspective

Since the modality of Nigerian health care structure was not specific, it was dependent on traditional birth attendants, native doctors, and herbalists, who provided health services in the pre-independence period. According to Isola (2013), spiritual health-giving, African traditional medicine, and orthodox or Western medicine are categories of healthcare services from the independence period to the contemporary period. On the other hand, there were medical officers who treated colonial masters and their family members.

The colonial masters handed over the responsibility and administration of national health care delivery policies immediately after the independence in 1960, and this brought another dimension into the formulation and implementation through the National Development Plans (NDPs) and the Rolling Plans (RP). The first NDP was initiated between 1962 and 1968 by the Nigeria Basic Health Service Scheme (NBHSS) in the post-independence with the assistance of WHO from 1975 to 1980. According to Uzochukwu, Onwujekwe, Mbachu (2015), and Odutolu *et al*. (2016), the chief aim of the scheme was to;

i. increase the percentage number of beneficiaries of health care services from 25 – 60% and restore the inequity in the creation and localization of health institutions,

ii. Provision of infrastructural facilities to assist the facilitation of all health care preventive programs, which are family and reproductive health, environmental health, control of communicable disease, and nutrition.

iii. Establishment of health care structure that can be easily localized.

After the NBHSS, PHC was inaugurated in 1987 as an offshoot of the National Health Policy (NHP) instituted on the ideology of "social justice and equity to achieve health for all Nigerians by the year 2000 and beyond." The PHC resonated with the need for collaboration among all stakeholders in healthcare promotion. The development resulted in partnerships between religious and non-governmental organizations, CBOs and CDAs, and other development partners to step down and democratize health care delivery among the rural, semi-urban populace. Though this was the main target for the domestication of PHC in 1987, Nwama (2021) argued that the policy implementers hijacked the program on the excuse of inadequate human resources and poor road and transportation networks.

In another development, Odutolu *et al*. (2016) stated that the structural healthcare system was multifaceted in the dimension of Nigerian federalism in Federal, State, and Local Governments. In this way, the federal government oversees tertiary health care; the state government manages secondary health care, such as general and cottage hospitals, whereas the local government handles the PHCCs and health care outposts, respectively. Precisely, Basch (2011), Odutolu *et al*. (2016), Okebukola & Brieger (2016), WHO (2017), and Eboreime (2019) summed the responsibility of the federal government in the following:

i. Policy development, technical assistance, directive, and implementation.

ii. Harmonization of State-level implementation of health care policy directives,

iii. Creation of Health Management Information Systems (HMIS),

iv. Disease reconnaissance, drug regulation, and vaccine management, and

v. Medical personnel's education and training, including the administration of health care institutions like the teaching, orthopedics, psychiatric hospitals, and the FMCs.

In another development, the state government is responsible for managing secondary hospitals and providing technical support for PHCCs, CHEWs, hygiene, and community environmental

sanitation (Odutolu *et al*., 2016). The following table depicts the structural framework of the operations of PHC in Nigeria.

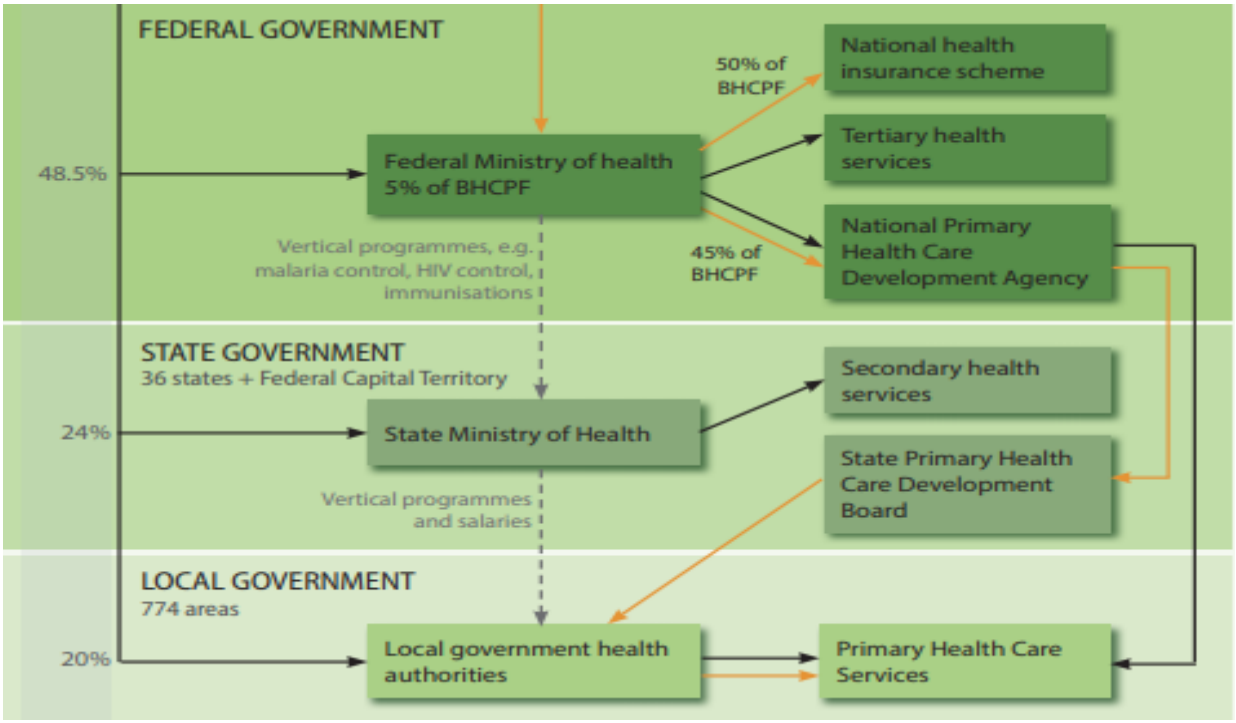
Table 1: The Management of PHC in Nigeria

Old system of health facility classification	New system of health facility classification	Levels of administrative management	Expected numbers / density of health facilities
Teaching/Tertiary hospitals	Teaching/Tertiary hospitals	Federal and state governments	Minimum of 1 per state.
General hospitals	General hospitals	State government	1 per LGA thus minimum expected in the country is 774
Comprehensive health centre, model PHC centre	Primary health centres	Local government	1 per ward. With an average of 10 wards per LGA; 7,740 expected
Maternity centre, basic health centre	Primary health clinics	Local government and ward development committee (WDC)	1 per group of villages/neighbourhoods with about 2,000 to 5,000 people
Dispensary	Health posts	Village development committee (VDC)/ Community development committee (CDC)	1 per village or neighbourhood with about 500 people. Density is as many as the number of villages

Source: NPHCDA (2014).

From the table 1 above, the administration of PHC is divided into three segments. It is observed that the running PHC is the responsibility of the Local Government Council (LGC) through "the Ward Development Committee, Committee, Village Development Committee, and Community Development Committee." In the table, an average of 7,740 health centers are expected initially to be built in each ward across the 774 LGCs in Nigeria and a village with the least population of 2,000 to 5,000 maximum. According to Okonofua (2014), NPHCDA responded in 2007 under President Umar Musa Yar'Adua 2007 by immediately building 774 PHCCs across the country, with each located in the headquarters of the LGCs in Nigeria. However, the projects were abandoned due to litigation from the State governments over the constitutional control of the LGCs.

Figure 1: Flows of Health Services



Source: Health Policy Research Group Brief (2015).

As noted in Figure 1, the federal government is 45% in charge of tertiary health delivery, NHIS, and NPHCDA. The figure also shows that the state governments control 24% of secondary health care services and state PHC development, while the LGAs are 20% responsible for the conditions of PHC in the rural and semi-rural sectors.

The Primary Health Care: A Treatise

Accordingly, PHC is a fundamental health care system that is universally, scientifically, practically, technologically, and socially sound and accessible to 'all' at an affordable rate and with the complete participation and development of the community members in the sense of health care determination and self-reliance. Ultimately, Whiteford & Branch (2008), Okonofua (2013), and Macdonald (2013) defined the approach to be the essential health care "value reorientation of affordability that focuses on people closest to the places where they reside so as to engender social equity and to increase access to health care to the poorest and most vulnerable people in any given community." Roemer (1986) typically asserted that the PHC emerged as a structure that will assist in achieving significant healthcare delivery in developing nations

through the condensed capacity building of CHEWs and technicians (see Table 1 and Figure 1). The abridged trained personnel, who are midwives, nurses, community health officers, environmental health officers, medical laboratory technicians, community health information officers, and visiting medical doctors, are those who ensure the operations of the PHCCs in Nigeria.

The services rendered by these personnel at PHCCs are not far-fetched. They include public health education, maternal and child health services, environmental health, family planning, prevention and treatment of communicable diseases, immunization, and data collection on health-related matters.

Although the conceptualization of PHC is not recent, it assumed prominence in 1978 with the WHO's discovery that developing countries are devastated by healthcare delivery challenges (Chukwuani *et al*., 2006; Adebimpe & Bamidele, 2009; Kruk Freedman, 2008; de Leeuw, 2017; Adafin *et al*., 2018; Adafin, 2018; Gambo *et al*., 2021). The WHO conceptualized the model with an attempt to localize the uneven and urban-based distribution of health care structure. Hence, Okonofua *et al*. (2018) argued that the adoption of PHC, for instance, transformed healthcare matters in Nigeria. Historically, Okonufua (2013) said;

> PHC received a considerable boost in Nigeria in the mid-80s when one of the participants in the Alma Ata Declaration of the concept in 1978 (Professor Olikoye Ransome-Kuti) became the nation's Minister of Health. Ransome-Kuti provided the ideal template for the institutionalization of PHC in Nigeria, acting as an advocate, key policy proponent, and implementer on all aspects of PHC.

Therefore, "the Declaration of Alma-Ata was the first document to set out a holistic view of health and put an emphasis on the contribution of health to economic and individual development" (WHO, 2019). It, therefore, implies that the health care approach of PHC is an amendment to the success recorded by medicine to the economic situation of the affected countries.

The Management of PHC resides with the LGC Chief executive through the Supervising Councillor for Health, who is from the political side of the administration, and the Head of Department (HOD) Health, who is a civil servant who gives professional reports, advice, and guidance to the Supervisor. They are both answerable to the Finance and General-Purpose Committee (F&GPC) (Adeyemo, 2005; Federal Ministry of Health, 2004; Abdulraheem, Olapipo & Amodu, 2012).

In order to bring health care delivery closer to the people, PHC was conceived and domesticated to ensure a continuous process and health care liberalization to prevent the spread of communicable diseases and the infant and maternal mortality rate.

Findings and Discussion

The necessity of PHCCs surfaced in the event of various pandemics that rocked humanity without exception in the 21st century. The viral ones like HIV/AIDS, Lasser Fever, Ebola Virus, and contemporary COVID-19, among others, reaffirmed the need to prioritize the proper implementation of the PHC program the world over. Thus, a careful survey of the present state of the PHCCs reveals apathy, dilapidation, non-functionality, and abandonment by "the powers that be." This is happening amidst the WHO (2021) statement of facts that "about 930 million people worldwide are at risk of falling into poverty due to out-of-pocket health spending by 10 percent or more of their household budget, and scaling PHC interventions across low and middle-income countries could save 60 million lives and increase average life expectancy by 3.7 years by 2030."

It has been discovered that Nigeria has found it difficult to properly implement the PHC program as articulated by the WHO in the 1978 Declaration of Alma-Ata. Scholars like Aliyu, Alabi, Adeowu (2018), Ogunlana (2019), Eregha, Olusegun, and Osuji (2019) identified corrupt practices in government, elite-centered policy implementation technique, and policy summersault as factors predicting the failure and unproductivity of both home-grown and foreign policy success in Nigeria. The healthcare sector in Nigeria has suffered a lot from this situation, partly because of the prevalent medical tourism phenomenon among the elite class, which is the policy implementers. Subsequently, the remote meaning, conceptualization, and intention of PHC with PHCCs as a grass-root health care model in accordance with "the first level contact of

individual and the first step to accessing basic health care facilities in a rural semi-urban community with the national health care system" became eroded and moribund respectively (Agarwal *et al*., 2017; Li *et al*., 2017; Dassah *et al*., 2018; NeJhaddadgar *et al*., 2020).

From the foregoing, the apparent dilapidated status of PHCCs drew the attention of the then Military government of General Ibrahim Babangida (retired) to enact Decree No. 29 of 1992, which created the NPHCDA to develop and provide "leadership that supports the promotion and implementation of high quality and sustainable PHC for all through resource mobilization, partnerships, collaboration, development of community-based systems and functional infrastructure" (NPHCDA, 2014). As Onyeji (2017) reiterated, the NPHCDA structure posited that:

> …a PHC will have one or more doctors, a pharmacist, a staff nurse, and other paramedical support staff to provide outreach services such as immunizations, preventive and basic curative care, monitoring and evaluation services, as well as maternal and child health services.

Conversely, Nigeria's rural and semi-urban communities are now living with tattered and dilapidated, ill-equipped PHCCs without any appropriate substitute (Dioka, 2017; Ojoye, 2018; Makinde *et al*., 2021). For instance, Ogbonna, Okpella, and Ekosodin are communities that have PHCCs that represent extreme abandonment in the Etsako and Esan-speaking areas of Edo Northern and Central zones of Edo State. The PHCC, located in Odot, Nsit Atai Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State (South-south Region), is an eyesore as well (see Appendix I).

From the middle belt, we considered the sorry states of PHCCs in Okenya-Ajaka and Ayeke-Ibaji in the Igala-speaking area of Kogi State (see Appendix II and III). The Kogi State situation is tragic because PHCCs have been closed since 2015 because of hazardous manpower audits and non-payment of local government personnel, which led to the sacking and resignation of 60% of CHEWs, CHOs, EHOs, and HIOs. As Edoka (2021) noted, the LGCs in the state have no statutory allocation that will enable them to meet their financial obligation for themselves since Yahaya Bello assumed duty as the governor. In another

development, the PHCCs in the rural semi-urban setting of Abuja were not spared. For example, PHCC in Dutse-Makaranta in the Bwari Area Council works on a rise-and-sunset basis due to the absence of a power supply to the Clinic (see Appendix V). The center was established to work on 24 24-hour basis, but the reverse has been the case since its inauguration in 2017.

In the Southwestern Region, an assessment revealed the same poor situation of PHCCs. Ajuwon and Ogungbade in the Ifo Area of Ogun and Okinnin-Egbedore in Osun States, respectively, are semi-urban centers with poorly maintained PHCCs (see Appendix VI and VII). The clinics are wrongly situated. The Ajuwon PHCC is at the main Bus Stop and is a hub for commercial, social, and religious activities of different types. The Clinic is in the middle of shopping malls, central mosques, and Christian worship centers. The Okinnin PHCC is acutely short of capacity to the extent that it has a day-in-a-week visit of a medical doctor from far away Oshogbo, the State capital. It is the only known medical facility for the poor and vulnerable in the area who cannot afford international and local medical tourism like the privileged few.

PHCCs in Efon-Ekiti presented a different position of a sorry story of the facilities. One of the major centers has turned into a semi-military base that guards the major highway. In another development, the second PHCC in the community is located in the middle of the bush, and worst of all, it was named after the former governor of the state, Dr. Kayode Fayemi (see Appendix VIII).

In the same way, PHCC in Umuokanne, Ohaji-Egbema, an area in Imo in South Eastern Nigeria, is characterized by falling and leaking roofs and ceilings (see Appendix IX). The structure was built over twenty years through community development efforts and donated to the LGC to ease access to health care services for the citizens of the community whose economic mainstay is agriculture. Apart from the worsened nature of the structure, the environment is bushy, and there is no medical equipment in the laboratory, maternity, accident and emergency, or children's wards. Umuokkanne community is a semi-urban center

that is densely populated, and the PHCC in the area is grossly short of medical personnel in comparison to her population and the prevailing health challenges that it handles on a daily basis.

In North Eastern Nigeria is Shokwari PHCC within the Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (MMC) in Borno, where health care services are administered under the canopy and tree (Appendix X). To this end, Okech (2019), cited by ICRC (2019) description of northeastern Nigeria's healthcare delivery condition thus:

> "Treatable illnesses such as malaria become deadly as people simply cannot get medical care due to the hostilities. Childbirth has also become a dangerous undertaking. North-East Nigeria has the worst maternal mortality rate in the country, with more than 1,500 deaths for every 100,000 live births. The health centers are much overstretched, and it is difficult for them to recruit medical staff."

As WHO found in 2019, "40% of health facilities are either fully destroyed in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe states where nearly two million women are of reproductive age and 1.6 million men are sexually active." Consequently, the citizens of the northern, eastern region who need more medical attention and health care services are women and children who undergo preventable and curable diseases and are not well served. The WHO (2021) study further revealed that "the North Eastern region of Nigeria showcases the worst indicators of maternal and child health in that endemic malaria is still responsible for more than 50% of infant mortality and morbidity rates with severe respiratory tract infection, serious malnutrition, and watery diarrhea as remote causes of illness."

We can succinctly posit that the PHC policy will continue to remain properly unimplemented since it is domiciled with the LGC, which is considered the lowest tier in all ramifications of the federal structure in Nigeria. Therefore, it can be submitted that the interference in the affairs of the LGC, particularly finance, is excessively alarming. Perhaps Idagbon in Otu (2001), cited by Odo (2014:108), observed that there is too much control of the local governments in Nigeria "by the state governments to such an extent that there [are] no more local governments but local administrations or more precisely, local arms of the state administrations." The LGCs are the

'cash cow' of the State governments in Nigeria. They empty the purse of the council on a monthly basis through what is called "the joint allocation committee," thereby famishing the system of essential services rendering, including PHC, which is an impactful and democratized health care model (Odo, 2014, p. 108). Besides the LGC's inability to financially muscle the PHC program, Okonofua (2013) recognized a lack of technical support and institutional capacity programs to carefully embark on monitoring and evaluation of the activities of PHCCs. Thus far, a vacuum exists in the continuous "serious commitment to the right to health care or any other substantive socio-economic right" (Nnamuchi, 2008, p. 2).

The foregoing analysis of data represents the ill-domestication of PHC policy in Nigeria, which is contrary to the health care accessibility hope, yearning, and aspiration of the targeted population and the outlined initiative of the WHO at "The Declaration of Alma-Ata" in 1978. Hence, the following are major identifiable hurdles facing the PHCCs in Nigeria:

i. Lack of decisive political will for program implementation, monitoring, and assessment.
ii. Lack of infrastructural facility maintenance.
iii. Poor and inefficient operation.
iv. Absence of required quality and quantity of skilled human resources.
v. The paucity and misappropriation of funds and community apathy.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Nonetheless, PHC is the sure qualitative alternative and democratized framework for accessibility and affordability of health care services by the rural and semi-urban dwellers in developing countries at large and Nigeria in particular. Through the program, healthcare delivery approachability and social equity are stimulated. From the foregoing, we can conclude by deducing that the challenges facing the proper implementation of PHC in Nigeria will linger if the LGCs remain the continuous driver of PHC, there is the persistence of elite dominance, dictate and directive of the policy, absence of service delivery, monitoring, and evaluation mechanism are absent, community apathy and lack of ownership is not addressed, and there is lack of institutional capacity and technical support programs. Therefore, the following recommendations are being forwarded.

i. The 10th National Assembly and Houses of Assembly across the States of the Federation should prioritize constitutional amendment to grant the LGC financial autonomy and enable her to administer social responsibilities in health care delivery and other ancillary services.

ii. The efficiency of operation should be emphasized to avoid the rendering of epileptic services by PHCCs.

iii. The relevant government agencies and development partners should revitalize and regularly maintain PHCC infrastructures.

iv. CSHT should be equipped with the necessary training infrastructures to continuously assist the PHCCs in producing the qualitative and quantitative skilled manpower they need.

v. A decisive and determined political will is required for the continuous implementation of PHC programs and projects.

vi. CDAs, CBOs, and NGOs should be involved in providing and managing funds for the strategy and sustainability of PHCCs. This will end the community's apathy and non-ownership posture.

Contribution to Knowledge

i. The study demonstrated the 'Urban Bias Theory, ' which no known study on PHC has adopted to appraise and analyze the sad situation of PHC policy and PHCC structures in Nigeria.

Policy Implication

i. The study urges all stakeholders to urgently address the development and management of PHCCs, the only major public healthcare institutions in the rural and semi-urban sectors. This implies that though there is a huge and superior emphasis on tertiary health care, it should not detriment PHCCs' development programs and projects.

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APPENDIXES I – X

Appendix I: Ekosodin PHCC in Edo Central Area of Edo State.



Source: The Researchers (2021).

Appendix II: Okenya Health Centre In old NRC Building, Kogi State.



Source: The Researcher (2021**).**

Appendix III: PHCC Ayeke, Ibaji



Source: The Researchers (2021).

Appendix IV: PHCC Kabba Junction Obajana, Nigeria





Source: The Researchers (2021).

Appendix V: PHCC Dutse Makaranta, Abuja



Source: The Researchers (2021).

Appendix VI: PHCC, Ajuwon, Ifo, Ogun State



Source: The Researchers (2021).

Appendix VII: Interior and Exterior of PHCC Okinnin, Osun State



Source: The Researchers (2021).

Appendix VIII: PHC, Efon in Ekiti State



Source: The Researchers (2021).

Appendix IX: PHCC in Umuokanne in the Ohaji/Egbema, Imo State



Source: The Researchers (2021).

Appendix X: The Shokwari PHCC in Maiduguri, Borno State



Source: ICRC (2019).

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The 2022 Multidimensional Poverty Index of Nigeria: A Sociological Review

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Nigeria, home to over 200 million people and the most populous Black nation in the world has approximately 133 million individuals trapped in a multidimensional poverty trajectory. This crisis has been worsened by socioeconomic challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic and its lasting impacts. The 2022 Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) report provides a holistic framework for understanding poverty through four key dimensions—health, education, living standards, and work and shocks—each comprising 15 critical indicators that measure deprivation across various aspects of life. The study reveals that employment, years of schooling, and child school attendance represent the most significant contributors to poverty, reinforcing the cycle of deprivation. Additionally, indicators under health and living standards—including child mortality, malnutrition, lack of access to clean water, poor sanitation, inadequate housing, limited access to electricity, and reliance on unsafe cooking fuels—account for 10% of the poverty burden. This study employed a qualitative research methodology, utilizing secondary data sources such as the 2022 MPI report, government publications, and scholarly articles. The Structural Theory of Poverty was adopted as the theoretical framework, emphasizing that poverty is not merely a result of individual shortcomings but a systemic issue driven by factors such as unemployment, underemployment, poor education, and inadequate living conditions. The theory argues that poverty persists due to structural deficiencies in governance, economic policies, and social welfare systems, which hinder individuals from accessing opportunities for upward mobility. The findings indicate that poverty in Nigeria is deeply entrenched, with rural areas disproportionately affected. While the government has introduced several initiatives—such as the Community-Based Vocational Rehabilitation (CBVR), National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE), and school feeding programs—poor

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implementation and lack of sustainability have limited their impact. The study recommends a multi-sectoral approach to poverty reduction, including strengthening education policies, improving healthcare services, investing in rural infrastructure, and promoting inclusive governance. Child poverty reduction should be a top national priority, with increased funding for early childhood development programs, nutrition initiatives, and school enrollment incentives. Additionally, state governments must integrate MPI data into budget planning to ensure targeted interventions. Ultimately, addressing multidimensional poverty in Nigeria requires collaborative efforts between the government, civil society organizations (CSOs), faith-based organizations (FBOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and local communities to create sustainable and inclusive development policies that break the cycle of poverty.

Keywords: *Multidimensional Poverty, Sociological Implications, Structural Poverty, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Policy Interventions*

Introduction

Nigeria is the most populous country on the African continent and the seventh largest in the world. The United Nations forecasts that the population will double by 2050, making it the third largest country in the world. Given Nigeria's size and growth potential, the pressure to safeguard and improve the lives of its citizens is significant. Nigeria was still recovering from its 2016 economic recession when another recession hit in 2020 due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, further derailing its economic recovery. While the COVID-19 regulatory measures implemented in Nigeria helped to control the spread of the virus, many of these necessary and lifesaving measures had deleterious effects on livelihoods, health, human wellbeing, state-society relations, and social harmony (The MPI Report, 2022). The lingering impact of the 2020 recession has undermined household welfare and exacerbated poverty and vulnerability. In August 2019, the former President of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari, pledged commitment to empowering an additional 100 million people to escape extreme poverty by 2030 (UNDP, 2022). That meant that, on average, 10 million people were supposed to be out of poverty each year, starting from 2020. However, with the adverse impact of COVID-19 on livelihoods,

unemployment, and the economy, this challenge has become even more complicated. It is within this prism that the Nigeria MPI (2022) elaborate survey was conducted across the 109 senatorial districts, establishing a baseline for the Local Government Area (LGA) survey due in 2023 and future two-yearly national surveys. The extent to which this MPI has stressed the implication on the livelihood of everyday Nigerians and the need for policy change towards the eradication of poverty is not fully known. This is because, quite recently, millions of Nigerians keep getting swallowed within the multidimensional poverty trajectory. According to the World Bank (2022), Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, grapples with a complex web of challenges, and multidimensional poverty stands out as a pervasive issue. While economic indicators like gross domestic product (GDP) growth are often used to gauge a country's progress, they may not capture the full extent of poverty. This paper examines the 2022 Multidimensional Poverty Index of Nigeria in four dimensions: health, education, living standards, and work and shocks, with the motivation to lay bare its sociological implication on the country and its people.

Statement of the Problem

The 2022 Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) of Nigeria reveals a troubling reality where 133 million people experience poverty, which poses significant challenges to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. This issue cuts across four critical dimensions: health, education, living standards, and work and shocks. The health dimension is defined by high child mortality and malnutrition rates, limited access to health care, which undermines SDG 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing), and increasing vulnerabilities, especially among children and aged citizens. Inadequate years of schooling and low child school attendance hinder SDG 4 (Quality Education), limiting human capital development and future economic mobility. Poor living standards, characterized by lack of clean water, inadequate sanitation, and reliance on unclean cooking fuels, directly impact SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) and SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), worsening the daily hardships of millions.

Additionally, widespread unemployment and underemployment not only perpetuate economic instability but also threaten SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), trapping individuals in cycles of deprivation. The persistent rise in multidimensional poverty creates critical gaps in understanding how health, education, living standards, and work-related shocks contribute to systemic deprivation. An in-depth sociological examination of these dimensions is needed to

uncover the structural barriers that sustain poverty and hinder progress toward the 2030 SDG agenda in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to critically examine Nigeria's 2022 Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) to provide a comprehensive understanding of poverty dynamics in the country. Specifically, the study analyzes four key dimensions - health, education, living standards, and work and shocks - to explore their sociological implications for the Nigerian population.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, utilizing document analysis as the primary method to critically examine the 2022 Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) report of Nigeria. The study relies on secondary data sources, including official publications from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and the World Bank, to explore poverty across four dimensions: health, education, living standards, and work and shocks. By employing content analysis, the study systematically interprets the data to identify patterns, trends, and sociological implications of multidimensional poverty in Nigeria. The Structural Theory of Poverty serves as the theoretical framework, providing a lens through which systemic factors influencing poverty are analyzed.

Literature Review

Concept of Multidimensional Poverty

Multidimensional poverty is the condition of experiencing multiple deprivations, including inadequate access to clean water, poor sanitation, malnutrition, lack of electricity, limited education, and household unemployment (Alkire & Foster, 2011). According to Rippin (2016), multidimensional poverty provides a holistic assessment of poverty by considering the interconnections between different dimensions of deprivation and their simultaneous impact on individuals and communities. This concept extends beyond traditional income-based poverty measures to incorporate various aspects of wellbeing, such as limited educational attainment, inadequate living standards, poor health, lack of empowerment, and exposure to environmental hazards. The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), developed by Alkire and Santos (2010),

offers a comprehensive tool for measuring poverty by capturing multiple deprivations across households and populations. The MPI framework enables the disaggregation of poverty data across different regions, age groups, and socioeconomic categories, providing a more nuanced understanding of poverty patterns (United Nations Development Program [UNDP], 2022). By integrating a diverse set of indicators, multidimensional poverty measurement offers policymakers and development practitioners a more robust foundation for designing targeted poverty alleviation programs (World Bank, 2023). The MPI is currently used to compare poverty levels in over 100 countries, allowing for cross-national assessments and informed policy interventions. It is calculated by evaluating both the incidence (headcount) and intensity (severity) of multidimensional poverty, making it a valuable tool for understanding and addressing poverty in its various dimensions (Alkire, Roche, Santos, & Seth, 2015).

Overview of Nigeria's 2022 Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)

Nigeria published its first national MPI in 2018, which was constructed by the National Bureau of Statistics in the Human Development Report (UNDP, 2018). From there, further consultations with stakeholder groups concluded that additional indicators were needed to accurately reflect poverty following the pandemic – including among children (MPI Report, 2022). The Nigeria Multidimensional Poverty Index (2022) report uses data from the Multidimensional Poverty Index Survey 2021/2022, the most extensive multidimensional poverty survey to date, designed to provide nationally representative results from all 36 states, FCT Abuja and 109 Senatorial Districts. The MPI survey was carried out between November 2021 and February 2022. The Nigeria MPI (2022) includes a linked Child MPI, which analyses poverty for children under the age of 5 by adding a fifth dimension of child survival and development. This additional dimension contains eight vital aspects of early childhood development in physical and cognitive domains—including severe undernutrition, immunization, intellectually stimulating activities, and preschool. While it does not offer individual-level data, it uncovers additional children who, according to the extra dimension, should qualify as multidimensionally poor (MPI, 2022).

Generally, the MPI report uses 15 indicators grouped under four dimensions: ***health, education, living standards, and work and shocks.*** According to UNDP (2022), the number of indicators and their ambition have increased; security shocks were raised in consultations and have been added to the work dimension, which also now includes underemployment. Food security and time to healthcare have been added to the health dimension. School lag has been added to the

education dimension as a proxy for quality, and water reliability has been added to living standards. The report includes a linked Child MPI, which analyses poverty for children under the age of five. It also provides insightful information at national and state levels, placing at the disposal of actors and policymakers a tool to pinpoint levels of deprivations and the kind of policy changes required for the reforms needed (UNDP, 2022).

More so, the Nigeria MPI (2022) survey questionnaire, therefore, included additional variables that were relevant given the new context and national priorities – such as food security, water reliability, underemployment, security shocks, school lag, and child deprivations (MPI Report, 2022). The survey was a collaborative effort between the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the National Social Safety-Nets Coordinating Office (NASSCO), the UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the European Union, Global Affairs Canada, the UK Government's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI), (UNDP, 2022).

NBS (2023) reported that the Nigeria Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) Survey was conducted between November 2021 and February 2022, and the results were launched in November 2022 (UNDP, 2022). The survey sampled over 56,000 households across the 36 states of the Federation and the FCT and provides multidimensional poverty estimates at the senatorial district level. According to the survey, 63% of people in Nigeria are multidimensionally poor, and 33.0% of the population in Nigeria (70,516 thousand people in 2021) is multidimensionally poor, while an additional 16.6% are vulnerable to multidimensional poverty, UNDP, (2022). The National MPI is 0.257, indicating that poor people in Nigeria experience just over one-quarter of all possible deprivations (Nigerianstat.gov.ng). The Nigeria MPI (2022) is the first multidimensional poverty survey for Nigeria to be representative at the senatorial district level. According to the 2022 Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI), almost 51% of Nigerians (roughly 103 million people) were multidimensionally poor in 2020. This translates to 1 in 2 Nigerians facing multifaceted deprivations impacting their wellbeing and opportunities. This means they experienced deprivations in at least 33.6% of the weighted indicators across the five dimensions mentioned above (OPHI, 2023).

The Main Indicators Used in Measuring the MPI Report

The Nigeria MPI (2022) report uses 15 indicators grouped under four dimensions to calculate the multidimensional poverty index. The four dimensions are health, education, living standards, and work and shocks. The indicators used to measure poverty in the Nigeria MPI report are equally weighted within their respective dimensions. In other words, the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) uses 15 indicators grouped under four dimensions to calculate a summary poverty figure for a given population. The 15 indicators are as follows:

Table 1: Indicators Used in Measuring Multidimensional Poverty

S/N	Dimension	Indicators	Condition of Deprivation
1.	**Health Dimensions**	Child Mortality	If a child under the age of 18 years has died in the family in the five years preceding the survey
		Nutrition	If any adult or child for whom there is nutritional information is undernourished.
2.	**Education Dimension**	Years of Schooling	If no household member has completed six years of schooling
		School Attendance	If no household member aged 7-12 years has completed six years of schooling
3.	**Living Standards Dimension**	Cooking Fuel	If the household cooks with dung, straw, or wood
		Sanitation	If the household uses unimproved sanitation facilities
		Drinking Water	If the household uses unimproved drinking water sources
		Electricity	If the household has no electricity
		Floor	If the floor of the household dwelling is made of natural materials
4.	**Work and Shocks Dimension**	Employment	If no adult is employed.
		Assets	If the household does not own more than one of the following assets: radio, TV, telephone, bike, or refrigerator
		Child Labor	If any school-aged child is working
		Child Schooling	If no school-aged child is attending school
		Child Birth Registration	If no child under the age of 5 has their birth registered

Source: Multidimensional Poverty Index of Nigeria 2022 Report

These indicators are used to capture the deprivations in non-monetary factors that contribute to wellbeing, providing a more comprehensive assessment of the nature of poverty in the people. These dimensions and indicators were used as pointers for sociological analysis.

Sociological Review of the 2022 MPI Report of Nigeria

Before delving into the sociological implications of the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) 2022, it is essential first to understand what sociological implications entail. Sociological implications refer to the broader social consequences or impacts of a particular phenomenon, action, or concept within society. Sociologists analyze not only the immediate effects of social structures, institutions, and human behavior but also their more profound ramifications for societal functioning and dynamics. These implications provide insight into social patterns, inequalities, and structural changes resulting from specific circumstances (Laurenson, 1969).

With the MPI 2022 in focus, beyond the statistical representation of people trapped within multidimensional poverty are untold stories of hardship and deprivation. The implications extend across social, economic, physical, and psychological dimensions, affecting individuals and communities in profound ways. The MPI 2022 report reveals that 63% of Nigerians, approximately 133 million people, are multidimensionally poor. However, this poverty is not uniformly distributed; somewhat, it varies across socio-demographic groups and regional dynamics. For instance, children, rural dwellers, women, and persons with disabilities (PWDs) face higher levels of deprivation across multiple indicators, widening social inequalities. Rural populations are particularly vulnerable due to limited access to quality education, healthcare, and infrastructure, while urban poor communities struggle with overcrowded housing, inadequate sanitation, and employment instability.

Furthermore, the regional disparities observed in the report show significant differences in poverty levels across Northern and Southern Nigeria, emphasizing the structural factors perpetuating deprivation in certain regions. Thus, it is necessary to consider how different social factors, such as education, employment, healthcare access, and regional inequalities, shape multidimensional poverty. By doing so, the MPI 2022 report not only quantifies poverty but also provides critical insights into the realities of those affected. Accordingly, the following are highlighted as some of the implications driven by the 2022 MPI:

The Health Dimensions

Health is critical to every society. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” This definition emphasizes that health extends beyond the mere absence of illness to include overall wellbeing, access to quality healthcare, and social determinants of health. A

healthy population is crucial for economic growth, social stability, and political development. However, the health status of Nigerians is characterized by severe disparities and structural challenges. The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) 2022 has included food security and time to healthcare in the health dimension to reflect these challenges. The report highlights that approximately 47% of Nigerians (over 99 million people) experience health-related deprivations, indicating a lack of access to essential health services, medication, and sanitation facilities. Moreover, rural populations suffer more from health deprivation (54%) than urban populations (35%), underscoring the uneven distribution of healthcare infrastructure in the country (UNDP, 2022).

One of the significant sociological implications of this health crisis is the high child mortality rate, particularly in rural areas. According to UNICEF (2022), Nigeria has one of the highest child mortality rates in the world, with approximately 117 deaths per 1,000 live births. The MPI 2022 report indicates that 49% of children under five experience health deprivation, making them the most vulnerable demographic group. This high mortality rate contributes to psychological distress and social instability, as families who lose children often experience emotional trauma, economic hardship, and even social exclusion. Additionally, it erodes trust in healthcare institutions, as communities witnessing frequent child deaths may resort to traditional or alternative medicine, further worsening health outcomes (WHO, 2022).

Another significant implication is malnutrition, which has long-term consequences for education, economic participation, and intergenerational poverty. The Global Nutrition Report (2022) states that over 35% of Nigerian children under five suffer from stunting due to malnutrition, with the rates being significantly higher in the North compared to the South. In the Northwest and Northeast, where poverty levels are the highest, malnutrition affects over 50% of children (NBS, 2022). Malnourished children are more likely to suffer cognitive impairments, leading to low academic performance, high dropout rates, and limited employment opportunities later in life. This creates a vicious cycle where poverty is transmitted across generations, making it difficult for affected populations to escape deprivation (FAO, 2022).

The healthcare infrastructure crisis further exacerbates the problem. Nigeria's doctor-to-patient ratio stands at 1:10,000, which is far below the WHO recommendation of 1:600 (WHO, 2022). Additionally, the country has only 35,000 registered doctors but needs at least 237,000 to meet its healthcare demands (UNDP, 2022). Many healthcare workers migrate overseas due to poor

working conditions, low wages, and lack of professional opportunities, leaving the sector understaffed. As a result, patients in both rural and urban areas face long wait times, limited access to specialist care, and overcrowded hospitals. The delay in receiving timely healthcare services often leads to avoidable deaths, especially among pregnant women and children (NBS, 2022). This situation widens health inequalities between the wealthy, who can afford private healthcare, and the poor, who rely on the failing public health system.

Additionally, infectious diseases remain a significant health burden, disproportionately affecting rural and low-income populations. WHO (2022) reports that malaria, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, cholera, and Lassa fever are still major causes of morbidity and mortality in Nigeria. Malaria alone accounts for 23% of child deaths in the country, while the maternal mortality rate stands at 512 deaths per 100,000 live births, one of the highest globally (WHO, 2022). Immunization coverage remains a concern, with outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases such as polio and measles occurring frequently. The MPI 2022 findings suggest that the lack of access to clean water, sanitation, and basic medical supplies exacerbates these health challenges, particularly in the North and rural areas, where over 70% of households lack improved sanitation facilities (NBS, 2022).

The health dimension of the MPI 2022 highlights the far-reaching sociological implications of Nigeria's healthcare crisis. High child mortality rates contribute to psychological distress, weakened trust in healthcare, and social instability, while malnutrition perpetuates educational disadvantages and economic stagnation. The shortage of medical personnel and inadequate healthcare infrastructure further deepens health inequalities and reduces life expectancy. Moreover, the persistent burden of infectious diseases and lack of sanitation facilities continue to endanger millions of lives. These issues require significant investments in healthcare, improved maternal and child health services, nutrition programs, and policies aimed at retaining medical professionals. Without urgent intervention, the health-related deprivations outlined in the MPI 2022 will continue to undermine Nigeria's social and economic progress.

Education Dimension

The health dimension of multidimensional poverty includes key indicators such as years of schooling and school attendance, both of which are crucial to national development. The 2022 Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) reported that 29% of all school-aged children in Nigeria

are not attending school. This is closely linked to multidimensional poverty, as 94% of all out-of-school children are poor, and 27% of them are both poor and out of school. According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2022), net primary school enrollment in rural areas is 72%, compared to 88% in urban areas. The implication is that living conditions for out-of-school children in Nigeria are deplorable, requiring urgent intervention. A high number of out-of-school children threatens national development and undermines sustainable development goals. The COVID-19 pandemic has further worsened school attendance issues and years of schooling, with data collection frequency influencing the ability to track changes in these indicators (UNESCO, 2022). The UNESCO Institute for Statistics and the Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report estimated that Nigeria had about 20 million out-of-school children and youth in 2021.

Access to education is a fundamental necessity for children, enabling them to chart a new course for their future, dream big, and achieve their aspirations. A nation with a failing education sector is in crisis, as a significant portion of its population remains uneducated. Adult literacy in Nigeria is also critically low. The MPI (2022) reports that adult literacy in rural areas stands at 57%, compared to 76% in urban areas. This equates to 39 million illiterate adults in rural Nigeria, hindering their ability to access information, participate in civic life, and secure better-paying jobs. The overall literacy rate in Nigeria is low, with 31% of Nigerians (approximately 65 million people) found to be deprived in the education dimension, with rural areas experiencing significantly higher deprivation. Education deprivation negatively affects national development, economic productivity, and political engagement. When a nation has a high percentage of illiterates, infrastructure development, such as schools and libraries, is stifled. Illiterate individuals are more vulnerable to exploitation, manipulation, and misinformation, which affects their participation in labor markets and financial transactions (MPI, 2022).

Several factors can be attributed to the low literacy rate and the large number of out-of-school children in Nigeria. These include economic constraints, inadequate educational infrastructure, cultural norms, child labor, and insecurity. Economic hardship forces many families to prioritize survival over education, pushing children into labor. Inadequate school facilities, especially in rural areas, make education inaccessible. Cultural beliefs, especially regarding female education, also contribute to high dropout rates. Additionally, insecurity caused by insurgencies and banditry discourages school attendance, leaving many children vulnerable to poverty.

The effects of illiteracy extend beyond individuals to communities and the nation. According to the United Nations (2019), illiteracy hinders national development by preventing the growth of a skilled workforce, stifling innovation, and reducing global competitiveness. Illiterate individuals struggle to find well-paying jobs, perpetuating poverty cycles. Illiteracy also leads to social marginalization and exclusion, limiting individuals' ability to understand their legal rights, participate in community activities, and engage in meaningful social interactions. This isolation contributes to a cycle of poverty and stagnation (United Nations, 2019). A study by Okonna (2019) on child abuse in Eastern Nigeria revealed that child labor is prevalent, with many parents sending their children into domestic servitude in wealthy homes for financial gain. These children often face abuse and exploitation, with many cases going unreported. The widespread prevalence of child labor has a direct negative impact on children's physical and mental health, education, and future economic opportunities.

Living Standards Dimension

The living standard dimension is a crucial aspect of the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), as it encompasses various indicators that measure the quality of life of individuals and households. These indicators include cooking fuel, sanitation, drinking water, electricity, and housing quality, among others. The disparities in living standards in Nigeria are vast and influenced by socioeconomic, political, and geographical factors.

Cooking Fuel and Socioeconomic Disparities

Cooking fuel remains a critical determinant of household health, environmental sustainability, and economic wellbeing in Nigeria. The reliance on biomass fuels such as firewood, charcoal, and dung by approximately 78% of Nigerian households (World Bank, 2022) underlined the deep-rooted inequalities in energy access. Despite Nigeria's vast natural gas reserves and electricity generation capacity, affordability and accessibility challenges persist. The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) of 2022 reported that 94% of Nigerians lack access to clean cooking fuels, a stark contrast to other developing nations with similar energy resources. The high cost of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) due to subsidy removal and inflation has worsened the situation. The price of a 12.5kg LPG cylinder, which was about ₦4,500 in early 2021, has surged to over ₦12,500 in 2023, making it unaffordable for most low-income households (NBS, 2022).

Beyond economic constraints, gender and health inequalities emerge from this deprivation. Women and children, traditionally responsible for cooking in many Nigerian households, are disproportionately exposed to indoor air pollution, leading to severe respiratory infections. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2022), household air pollution from solid fuels causes over 98,000 premature deaths in Nigeria annually. Moreover, the deforestation crisis in states like Taraba, Cross River, and Kaduna can be linked to the over-reliance on firewood, exacerbating climate change and desertification. The government's inability to provide a reliable electricity supply further pushes low-income households to adopt unsafe alternatives, entrenching energy poverty and environmental degradation.

Sanitation and Public Health Crisis

Sanitation remains a significant public health challenge in Nigeria, with only 44% of the population having access to improved sanitation facilities (United Nations, 2019). The lack of proper sanitation infrastructure disproportionately affects rural communities, where open defecation is still prevalent. According to UNICEF (2021), approximately 48 million Nigerians practice open defecation, making Nigeria the country with the highest number of people engaged in this practice worldwide. This situation has far-reaching implications for public health, particularly in states like Benue, Ekiti, and Kogi, where the prevalence of waterborne diseases such as cholera, typhoid, and dysentery remains high.

Urban slums and informal settlements in Lagos, Kano, and Port Harcourt further illustrate the crisis. The lack of sewage systems forces residents to rely on pit latrines and poorly maintained public toilets, increasing the risk of disease outbreaks. The cholera epidemic of 2021, which recorded over 3,600 deaths nationwide (Nigeria Centre for Disease Control, 2021), is a clear example of the deadly consequences of poor sanitation. Despite government efforts such as the "Clean Nigeria: Use the Toilet" campaign, progress remains slow due to inadequate funding, corruption, and public indifference. Without a comprehensive sanitation policy and large-scale investments in waste management, millions of Nigerians will continue to suffer from preventable diseases.

Drinking Water and the Urban-Rural Divide

Access to clean drinking water is a fundamental human right, yet over 70 million Nigerians lack safe water sources (UNESCO, 2019). The disparities between urban and rural areas are glaring,

with cities like Abuja and Lagos benefiting from government investments in water infrastructure while rural communities rely on rivers, ponds, and unprotected wells. The National Bureau of Statistics (2022) reported that only 26.5% of Nigerian households have access to safely managed drinking water, indicating that the majority of the population remains vulnerable to waterborne diseases.

Recent cholera outbreaks in states like Bauchi, Kano, and Sokoto have been linked to contaminated water sources, further emphasizing the urgency of addressing this crisis. In conflict-affected regions like Borno and Zamfara, insurgency has worsened the situation, with displaced populations struggling to access clean water. The destruction of water facilities by Boko Haram has forced many communities to depend on stagnant water, increasing disease risks. Moreover, the climate crisis has exacerbated water scarcity, with desertification in northern Nigeria reducing groundwater levels and making borehole drilling more expensive. The government's failure to implement sustainable water management policies has deepened inequalities, leaving millions in dire conditions (DailyPost, 2023).

Electricity and Energy Poverty

Electricity access is a key determinant of socioeconomic development, yet Nigeria remains the country with the most significant electricity access deficit in the world. According to the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC, 2023), over 85 million Nigerians are not connected to the national grid, while those with access experience frequent blackouts. The rural-urban divide is stark, with states like Borno, Yobe, and Jigawa having the lowest electrification rates due to insurgency, poor infrastructure, and government neglect. The Multidimensional Poverty Index (2022) states that 39% of Nigerians lack access to electricity, affecting education, healthcare, and economic activities. Furthermore, small businesses, particularly in states like Kaduna and Enugu, struggle with erratic power supply, forcing them to rely on expensive diesel generators. The recent removal of fuel subsidies has further increased operational costs, pushing many businesses into closure. Healthcare delivery has also been significantly affected, with rural clinics unable to store vaccines or operate essential medical equipment due to power outages. The lack of electricity also hinders educational opportunities, as students in many public schools are forced to study without proper lighting. Despite government initiatives such as the Rural Electrification Agency's solar power projects, progress remains slow due to bureaucratic

inefficiencies and corruption. The failure of the power sector privatization, coupled with issues of gas shortages and transmission losses, continues to trap millions of Nigerians in energy poverty.

Housing Quality and the Urban Slum Crisis

Housing remains one of Nigeria's most pressing socioeconomic challenges, with poor housing conditions exacerbating poverty and health risks. The Federal Ministry of Works and Housing (2022) estimates that Nigeria's housing deficit stands at over 20 million units, with rapid urbanization worsening the crisis. The reliance on substandard materials such as mud, sand, and thatch in many rural areas underscores the structural inequalities in housing. The Multidimensional Poverty Index (2022) highlights that a significant proportion of Nigerians live in overcrowded slums, particularly in urban centers like Lagos, Ibadan, and Kano.

Makoko, a floating slum in Lagos, exemplifies the dire housing conditions faced by millions. With little to no access to sanitation, electricity, or clean water, residents suffer from frequent disease outbreaks. Similarly, internally displaced persons (IDP) camps in the Northeast lack basic housing infrastructure, forcing families to live in makeshift shelters vulnerable to harsh weather conditions. The rising cost of building materials due to inflation has made home ownership unattainable for most Nigerians, pushing more people into informal settlements. Despite efforts such as the National Housing Fund (NHF) and various state housing schemes, corruption and poor implementation continue to hinder progress. Without urgent interventions in affordable housing policies, millions will remain trapped in substandard living conditions.

The living standards crisis in Nigeria is deeply rooted in socioeconomic inequalities, poor governance, and infrastructural deficits. The lack of access to clean cooking fuels, sanitation, drinking water, electricity, and quality housing not only affects health and economic opportunities but also perpetuates generational poverty. The regional disparities in access highlight the need for targeted policy interventions that address the unique challenges faced by both urban and rural populations. Investments in energy, water supply, sanitation, and housing must be prioritized to bridge the gap between the privileged and the marginalized. Furthermore, corruption and mismanagement must be tackled to ensure that government initiatives translate into real improvements in people's lives. Without urgent and sustainable reforms, Nigeria risks

deepening its poverty crisis, further marginalizing millions, and exacerbating socio-political instability.

Work and Shocks Dimension

The fourth dimension of multidimensional poverty, known as Work and Shocks, encompasses five key indicators: Employment, Assets, Child Labor, Child Schooling, and Child Birth Registration. This dimension is critical as it captures the ability of individuals and households to secure stable livelihoods while assessing their vulnerability to economic, environmental, and health-related shocks. Work refers to labor market participation beyond mere income generation, incorporating job security, working conditions, and employment benefits. Shocks, on the other hand, signify unforeseen events such as economic downturns, conflicts, and health emergencies that negatively impact household stability (UNDP, 2022). The work and shocks dimension as a critical part of the MPI 2022 report on Nigeria, can be sociologically analyzed under its five essential indicators:

Employment and Its Implications

Employment is a major driver of economic growth and poverty reduction. The 2022 Nigeria Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) Report highlights that 14.1% of Nigerians, approximately 30 million people, experience deprivation in employment. This includes underemployment, job insecurity, and vulnerability to external shocks like displacement due to conflict. Employment deprivation is notably higher in rural areas (19.2%) than in urban areas (7.1%). Additionally, a gender disparity exists, with men facing slightly higher deprivation rates (14.5%) compared to women (13.7%). Unemployment and underemployment have far-reaching consequences. They limit access to essential resources such as healthcare, decent housing, and nutrition. The 2022 unemployment rate in Nigeria stood at 33.3%, disproportionately affecting youth (World Bank, 2023). The lack of employment opportunities has resulted in a high dependency ratio and economic stagnation. Many sectors, particularly manufacturing and agriculture, cannot absorb the growing labor force, exacerbating poverty. Moreover, employment deprivation significantly impacts life expectancy, which stands at 61.79 years in Nigeria, with marked regional disparities from 52.1 years in Borno to 69.9 years in Lagos (UNFPA, 2021).

Child Labor and Its Implications

Child labor in Nigeria remains a pressing issue, depriving children of their right to education and exposing them to various forms of exploitation. The 2022 Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) reveals that 67.5% of children aged 0-17 live in poverty, with six out of ten girls aged 12-17 classified as poor. Child marriage further exacerbates poverty, as married girls have a higher MPI score (0.338) than unmarried ones (0.256), highlighting the link between early marriage and economic deprivation. UNICEF (2022) reports that 15 million Nigerian children aged 5-14 engage in child labor, working in hazardous environments such as mining, farming, domestic servitude, and street hawking. The worst forms of child labor include human trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and forced recruitment into armed conflicts. These exploitative conditions not only threaten children's physical and psychological wellbeing but also reinforce cycles of poverty by limiting access to education and future employment opportunities. For example, in rural parts of Kano and Katsina states, children as young as six are forced to work in quarries and mines, inhaling toxic dust and risking life-threatening injuries. Similarly, young girls are often sent into domestic servitude in cities like Lagos and Abuja, where they are vulnerable to abuse and maltreatment.

The prevalence of child labor is closely tied to broader socioeconomic issues, including poverty, lack of education, and weak law enforcement. The MPI shows that 91% to 99% of children under five are poor, and two-thirds of children aged 0-17 experience poverty compared to 58.7% of adults. This disparity underscores the vulnerability of children, especially girls, who suffer higher poverty rates when married—approximately 8 out of 10 married girls live in extreme poverty. Economic hardship drives many families to push their children into labor, often under dangerous conditions. In cities like Port Harcourt and Onitsha, young boys work in mechanic workshops and open markets, carrying heavy loads beyond their physical capacity. Street hawking among teenage girls is also rampant, exposing them to exploitation and trafficking. According to Okonna (2019), in Eastern Nigeria, parents frequently send their children into domestic servitude in wealthy homes, seeking financial returns without considering the risks of abuse and exploitation. Many reports of child abuse in such situations go unrecorded, making it difficult to address the full extent of the problem. The continued existence of child labor despite laws prohibiting it is an indication of the failure of enforcement mechanisms, with many perpetrators escaping legal consequences.

The consequences of child labor extend beyond individual children to families and society at large. It exposes children to hazardous working conditions, increasing their risk of injuries, toxic exposure, and chronic health problems. Psychologically, children engaged in labor suffer from anxiety, depression, and trauma due to harsh treatment and excessive workloads. The educational impact is severe, as many are forced to drop out of school, limiting their ability to secure better opportunities in adulthood. UNICEF (2019) reports that children involved in labor often experience wage theft, long working hours, and physical abuse. The long-term effect on society includes a cycle of poverty, increased crime rates, and a poorly educated workforce that hinders national development.

Child Schooling and Educational Deprivation

Educational deprivation remains a critical challenge in Nigeria, contributing to persistent multidimensional poverty. According to the 2022 Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) Report, 47.3% of children aged 6-17 experience educational deprivation, with disparities between rural and urban areas—62.8% in rural areas compared to 22.5% in urban centers (Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative [OPHI], 2022). The lack of access to quality education stems from inadequate infrastructure, teacher shortages, and high poverty rates that prevent families from affording school expenses. For example, in states such as Borno and Zamfara, where insurgency and insecurity are rampant, thousands of schools have been shut down, worsening the crisis (UNICEF, 2022). This disruption limits children's ability to acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills, which are essential for future economic opportunities.

Girls face even greater barriers to education due to sociocultural and economic constraints. Early marriage, domestic responsibilities, and financial limitations force many girls to drop out of school. In northern Nigeria, over 50% of girls do not complete primary education, reducing their future earning potential and reinforcing gender inequality (UNICEF, 2022). Religious and traditional beliefs in some regions discourage female education, prioritizing marriage and domestic roles over schooling (Mbah & Igbokwe, 2021). A notable example is in Kano State, where many adolescent girls are withdrawn from school to be married off, limiting their ability to attain economic independence (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2021). Moreover, families struggling with poverty often prioritize boys' education over girls', viewing male

children as future breadwinners (Ogundele, 2020). These patterns perpetuate generational cycles of poverty and reduce the overall development potential of affected communities.

Sociologically, the implications of educational deprivation are profound, affecting both individual and societal progress. A poorly educated population leads to a weak labor force, higher unemployment rates, and increased crime due to limited economic opportunities (Gambo & Musa, 2021). Additionally, low literacy rates contribute to misinformation and poor health outcomes, as uneducated individuals may lack access to critical information on healthcare and family planning (World Bank, 2022). The cycle of educational deprivation further widens social inequality as children from disadvantaged backgrounds struggle to compete in an increasingly knowledge-based economy.

Child Birth Registration and Legal Identity

Birth registration is a critical foundation for ensuring children's legal identity, granting them access to essential services such as healthcare, education, and social protection. It serves as the first step in securing nationality, preventing statelessness, and safeguarding children's rights under international conventions like the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Despite its importance, birth registration rates in Nigeria remain low, with significant disparities between urban and rural areas. According to UNICEF (2022), only 57% of Nigerian children under the age of five have their births registered, with rural areas recording a much lower registration rate of 42% compared to 75% in urban regions. This gap is largely attributed to limited access to registration centers, lack of awareness, and cultural barriers, which prevent many parents, especially in remote areas, from registering their children's births. For instance, in the North-East and Northwest regions, where poverty and conflict have disrupted social services, birth registration rates are even lower, leaving millions of children undocumented and unprotected (UNICEF, 2022).

The absence of birth registration exposes children to significant vulnerabilities, including child trafficking, forced labor, early marriage, and exclusion from education and healthcare services. Without legal identity, children may be denied enrollment in schools, medical treatment, or government assistance programs. In Nigeria, unregistered children are more likely to miss out on immunization programs, which are essential for reducing child mortality rates. The lack of

documentation also increases the risk of children being exploited, as they cannot prove their age or nationality, making them more susceptible to illegal adoption and human trafficking networks.

Additionally, the MPI 2022 of Nigeria reveals that individuals with disabilities are disproportionately affected by multidimensional poverty. Approximately 71% of individuals in households with at least one disabled person live in poverty, compared to 62% in households without a disabled member. These individuals face significant deprivations in healthcare, education, and employment. Many disabilities could be prevented with better healthcare access, yet systemic inadequacies leave affected individuals and their families in deepening deprivation (UNDP, 2023). Persons with disabilities often struggle to access quality education due to inadequate infrastructure and social stigma. Their families bear additional financial burdens, increasing the overall household deprivation levels. Limited employment opportunities further marginalize persons with disabilities, leading to economic insecurity and social exclusion. This group is also more vulnerable to violence and exploitation, contributing to security-related deprivations within the MPI framework.

Regionally, the MPI 2022 provides a comprehensive analysis of poverty across different Nigerian regions. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) estimates that 63% of Nigerians - approximately 133 million people - were classified as multidimensionally poor in 2022. Poverty levels are starkly higher in rural areas (72%) than in urban centers (42%). The regional disparities are driven by differences in employment opportunities, healthcare access, education, and basic infrastructure. Northern Nigeria, particularly states like Borno and Yobe, records the highest poverty levels due to persistent conflict, displacement, and economic instability. In contrast, southern states, particularly Lagos, record lower multidimensional poverty levels due to better infrastructure and economic opportunities. However, even in relatively prosperous regions, pockets of deprivation exist, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to address poverty at a localized level.

Theoretical Framework

There are many theories propounded by scholars about the phenomenon of poverty, including behavioral theory, structural theory, political theory, cultural theory, individual deficiency theory, and neoclassical theory. However, this paper adopts the Structural Theory of Poverty.

The Structural Theory of Poverty, rooted in Karl Marx's Structural Conflict Theory, provides a robust framework for understanding the multidimensional nature of poverty as captured by Nigeria's 2022 Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI). The theory, advanced by scholars like Oscar Lewis, Michael Harrington, and Peter Townsend, asserts that poverty is not merely an outcome of individual deficiencies but is primarily caused by structural and systemic factors embedded within social, economic, and political institutions. The fundamental assumption of this theory is that poverty results from macro-level inequalities, including labor market disparities, inadequate public services, and economic structures that reinforce deprivation. The four dimensions of MPI, health, education, living standards, and work and shocks, are direct reflections of these systemic failures, demonstrating that poverty is sustained by institutional shortcomings rather than personal inadequacies.

The health dimension, which includes child mortality, nutrition, and access to healthcare, highlights the structural inequities in Nigeria's healthcare system. High child mortality rates and malnutrition persist due to inadequate healthcare infrastructure, poor maternal and child health services, and economic barriers that limit access to nutritious food and essential medical care. According to UNICEF (2022), 35% of Nigerian children under five suffer from stunted growth due to malnutrition. The Structural Theory of Poverty emphasizes that these disparities are shaped by policies that fail to ensure equitable access to healthcare. Karl Marx's perspective on structural inequalities aligns with this view, arguing that health disparities arise from economic systems that prioritize profit over social welfare.

Similarly, the education dimension, measured through years of schooling and school attendance, illustrates the impact of structural barriers on human capital development. The theory posits that limited educational access is not due to a lack of individual effort but rather systemic neglect and underinvestment in public education. In Nigeria, approximately 10.5 million children are out of school, with higher dropout rates in rural and conflict-affected areas (UNESCO, 2022). Structural theorists like Peter Townsend argue that poverty is relative, meaning that deprivation occurs when individuals lack access to resources necessary for full participation in society. Poor educational opportunities perpetuate intergenerational poverty, limiting future economic mobility. Policy-driven interventions such as compulsory and free primary education, improved teacher training, and increased investment in educational infrastructure are necessary to dismantle these systemic barriers.

The living standards dimension further validates the structural approach to poverty by highlighting disparities in access to electricity, clean water, sanitation, and housing. In Nigeria, 43% of the population lacks access to electricity, while 60 million people do not have access to clean water (World Bank, 2022). These deprivations stem from governance failures and economic inequalities, reinforcing the Structural Theory of Poverty's argument that institutional inefficiencies perpetuate poverty. Likewise, inadequate housing and sanitation contribute to poor health outcomes, exacerbating the cycle of deprivation.

The work and shocks dimension underscores the vulnerability of impoverished populations to economic instability, unemployment, and child labor. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2022), Nigeria's unemployment rate stands at 33%, with youth unemployment exceeding 40%. Additionally, child labor remains prevalent, with 39% of children aged 5–17 engaged in economic activities due to household poverty (ILO, 2022). These issues align with Michael Harrington's concept of absolute poverty, which posits that structural deficiencies create persistent deprivation, making upward mobility nearly impossible through individual effort alone. Systemic labor market reforms, social protection programs, and policies promoting decent employment opportunities are critical for breaking the cycle of poverty and ensuring economic inclusion. This theory, therefore, provides a crucial lens for interpreting Nigeria's MPI.

Results and Discussion

The health dimension of the MPI, which includes indicators such as child mortality and nutrition, reveals significant structural inequities in Nigeria's healthcare system. The high prevalence of child mortality, particularly in rural areas, is largely due to inadequate healthcare infrastructure, insufficient maternal and child health services, and economic barriers that limit access to medical care. Malnutrition remains a pressing issue, with 35% of Nigerian children under five suffering from stunted growth due to poor nutrition and food insecurity (UNICEF, 2022). According to Amzat and Razum (2018), structural poverty within the health sector is exacerbated by a lack of investment in primary healthcare, inequitable resource distribution, and governance inefficiencies, leading to preventable health crises. The Structural Theory of Poverty asserts that these deprivations are not incidental but rather the result of systemic failures embedded in economic and political institutions.

The education dimension, measured by school attendance and years of schooling, reflects systemic barriers that hinder human capital development and perpetuate intergenerational poverty. The findings indicate that approximately 10.5 million Nigerian children are out of school, with higher dropout rates in rural and conflict-affected areas due to economic hardships, inadequate school facilities, and insecurity (UNESCO, 2022). Structural theorists like Peter Townsend (1979) argue that poverty is relative, meaning that deprivation occurs when individuals are denied access to essential resources necessary for full participation in society, such as quality education. The lack of proper educational access limits future employment prospects, thereby reinforcing the cycle of poverty. The Structural Theory of Poverty underscores that underfunding of public education, lack of teacher training, and ineffective policy implementation contribute to this crisis. Bridging this educational gap requires strategic reforms such as free and compulsory basic education, school feeding programs to encourage attendance, and investments in digital learning infrastructures to support remote and conflict-affected regions.

The living standards dimension encompasses access to electricity, clean water, sanitation, and housing conditions, all of which remain significantly deficient for many Nigerians. Findings reveal that 43% of the population lacks access to electricity, and over 60 million people do not have access to clean water (World Bank, 2022). Poor sanitation facilities further exacerbate public health risks, contributing to waterborne diseases and higher mortality rates. According to Sachs (2005), inadequate infrastructure and poor living conditions are direct consequences of systemic governance failures and economic inequalities, which reinforce structural poverty. The Structural Theory of Poverty posits that institutional inefficiencies, corruption, and policy neglect contribute to these poor living conditions, making it nearly impossible for affected populations to escape deprivation through individual effort alone.

The work and shocks dimension assesses employment stability, asset ownership, and exposure to economic vulnerabilities such as unemployment and child labor. Results show that Nigeria's unemployment rate stands at 33%, with youth unemployment exceeding 40%, while 39% of children aged 5–17 engage in child labor due to economic necessity (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022; ILO, 2022). These statistics align with Michael Harrington's (1962) concept of absolute poverty, which argues that structural deficiencies create persistent deprivation, making economic mobility unattainable through individual effort alone. The Structural Theory of

Poverty stresses how weak labor market policies, economic instability, and lack of social protection mechanisms keep individuals trapped in low-income cycles.

Conclusion

Nigeria, recently branded the poverty capital of the world, exemplifies a country plagued with multidimensional poverty. This is due to the surge in the number to the tune of 133 million poor people occasioned by the prevalence of hunger, poor nutrition, low living standards, deprivation, illiteracy, poor electricity, poor sanitation, and restricted access to potable water, particularly in rural areas, and the lack of access to the health care system. The Nigeria MPI (2022) was designed to reflect and monitor policy priorities in order to reduce the multidimensional poverty nature of the country. The MPI also comprehensively shows the dynamics of poverty in the country through four dimensions, which are health, education, living standards, and work and shocks, which further have 15 indicators. These areas vividly show the index poverty variations across sex, geographical space, physical traits, food and nutrition, and health, amongst others. The MPI, however, provides relevant information at the governance level, where political decisions can be made as a matter of urgency for a prosperous and progressive nation. The Structural Theory of Poverty provides a critical lens for interpreting Nigeria's MPI, reinforcing the argument that poverty is not merely an individual shortcoming but a systemic issue entrenched in institutional inefficiencies, economic inequalities, and policy neglect. The results show the structural barriers that perpetuate deprivation across the four dimensions, necessitating immediate and evidence-based interventions. The MPI serves as a crucial tool in guiding policy formulation, ensuring that governance structures prioritize poverty alleviation as a fundamental national goal. Without systemic reforms aimed at dismantling these structural inequities, the cycle of poverty will persist, further exacerbating socioeconomic disparities. Therefore, a deliberate and inclusive policy framework is essential to drive sustainable development, promote economic opportunities, and create a society where basic human needs are accessible to all.

The Way Forward

Addressing Multidimensional Poverty (MDP) in Nigeria requires a practical, actionable, and community-driven approach that tackles the four major dimensions to ensure that policies and programs directly impact the daily lives of every ordinary Nigerian. The goal is not just to create policies on paper but to see real change in the wellbeing of people across rural villages, urban slums, and underserved communities. Social inclusion, as emphasized by Atkinson (2019), must be at the heart of this approach, ensuring that no individual is left behind and that poverty reduction efforts go beyond handouts to empowering people with the tools they need to improve their lives.

One of the most urgent dimensions of MDP that requires intervention is healthcare. In many rural communities, access to basic healthcare remains a significant challenge. A practical way forward is to strengthen primary healthcare by deploying mobile health clinics that can serve hard-to-reach areas. The federal and state governments should work closely with NGOs like Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) and the Nigerian Red Cross to provide emergency medical assistance to rural communities. Additionally, health insurance schemes such as the National Health Insurance Authority (NHIA) should be expanded to include low-income families so that people do not have to choose between buying food and getting medical care. The government's National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA) must ensure that each ward in Nigeria has at least one fully equipped primary healthcare center with trained personnel.

Another critical dimension is education, which remains the most effective tool for breaking the cycle of poverty. In northern Nigeria, where millions of children are out of school, education must be prioritized. Programs such as the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) need to be fully implemented to ensure that Almajiri children receive proper education beyond just religious instruction. Practical steps include reviving and expanding the school feeding program in states like Kebbi, Sokoto, and Zamfara, where food insecurity keeps children away from school. When children are guaranteed at least one nutritious meal per day at school, attendance rates increase significantly. Additionally, technical and vocational education must be incorporated into secondary school curricula nationwide, especially in commercial hubs like Lagos and Kano, so that young people can graduate with skills in carpentry, mechanics, tailoring, and ICT instead of relying solely on white-collar jobs. NGOs like Teach for Nigeria can also be

mobilized to deploy trained teachers to underserved schools, ensuring that quality education is accessible to all.

The third dimension, living standards**,** requires a hands-on approach to infrastructure development. In areas like Makoko in Lagos, where families live in shanties on stilts above the water, access to clean drinking water and sanitation is almost nonexistent. A practical solution would be to install water purification systems and public boreholes in such communities through government partnerships with organizations like WaterAid. Furthermore, electricity remains a significant problem across Nigeria, with frequent blackouts stifling productivity. The Rural Electrification Agency (REA) must speed up the deployment of solar mini-grids in off-grid communities, allowing small businesses and households to have reliable power. For example, the solar mini-grid project in Gbamu-Gbamu, Ogun State, has provided over 2,500 people with steady electricity and could serve as a model for other communities. Housing policies should also be reviewed to encourage the development of low-cost housing estates that provide affordable rent for low-income earners rather than allowing developers to build luxury apartments that remain unoccupied due to high costs.

Lastly, the work and shocks dimension requires a deliberate strategy to create jobs and provide social protection. Many Nigerian youths, despite being educated, remain unemployed because they lack the necessary skills to fit into the labor market. A practical way forward is to replicate initiatives like the "Lagos State Employability Support Project," which provides job-specific training for unemployed youths in partnership with private companies. More so, small businesses must be supported with microfinance schemes that offer low-interest loans. The Bank of Industry (BOI) and the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) must ensure that intervention funds reach actual small-scale entrepreneurs rather than being captured by political elites. For example, in Aba, Abia State, where thousands of young people engage in shoe and leather production, access to soft loans and modern equipment would help them scale up their businesses and create more jobs. Additionally, social protection programs such as conditional cash transfers should be expanded to support the poorest households, particularly widows, the elderly, and persons with disabilities.

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Unpacking the Merits and Demerits of Electoral Coalitions in South African Metro-Municipalities from 2016-2019

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The collapse of colonialism and apartheid marked the emergence of a new political culture of pluralism and democratic political participation in South Africa, which heralded a shift in political attitudes, voter behavior, and political socialization trends in post-1994 South Africa. This has seen polyarchy/pluralism playing a pivotal role in creating politically conducive grounds for coalitions in South African municipalities. In light of this, the study examined the municipal electoral coalition trajectory and unpacked the merits and demerits of electoral coalitions in South African metro municipalities from 2016 to 2019. The study relied on the qualitative research paradigm where purposively selected written documents such as journal articles, council meeting minutes, party manifestoes, and local government reports, among others, were used to collect data. The data were then analyzed using thematic analysis and cross-case analysis. The study alluded to the collapse of the African National Congress (ANC) political hegemony, the fading liberation nostalgia, the rise of new smaller parties, the emergence of popular parties, the disintegration of the liberation movement, power struggles in the liberation movement, and bad governance as catalytic factors for the emergence of coalitions in the South African Metro-municipality elections. The study concluded that coalitions bring opportunities by creating a large resource base for coalition partners, promoting democratic consolidation and state governability. However, coalition partners generally feel compromised by changes in the principles to accommodate other parties with different ideologies. To improve coalition stability and effectiveness, the study recommends that political parties should create explicit coalition agreements, organized dispute resolution procedures, and policy alignment plans.

Keywords: *Coalitions, Governance, Political Instability, Electoral Dynamics, Local Authorities, Metropolitan-municipalities, South Africa*

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Introduction

South Africa experienced colonialism and apartheid in all spheres of government before the 1994 general elections. South Africa was divided politically and ruled along racial lines; hence, the establishment of the four provinces, black homelands usually referred to as the TBVC states (Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda, and Ciskei), and self-governing territories such as KwaZulu, KaNgwane, Lebowa, QwaQwa, Gazankulu, and KwaNdebele. Local government politics were also influenced by racial policies. According to Karume (2003), a non-democratic political culture existed during the apartheid colonial epoch in South Africa before 1994. After 1994, a new democratic political culture began to develop in the South African municipalities. The African National Congress (ANC), which has dominated South African local government elections since 1994, encountered bad governance challenges and lost popularity in most urban metros of South Africa since 2010. Similarly, the ANC began experiencing a notable decline in popularity at the municipal level during the 2021 local government elections (Buhlungu, 2018).

Opposition parties formed coalitions after the 2016 elections in a bid to defeat the ANC and take control of metro councils. In 2016, after the local government elections, no single party in Nelson Mandela Bay Metro won an outright majority. A coalition was formed between the Democratic Alliance (DA), United Democratic Movement (UDM), Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), and smaller parties like the Patriotic Alliance (PA). The coalition formed in Nelson Mandela Bay was a minimal winning coalition (Msimang, 2020). The DA, despite being the largest party, needed the support of smaller parties, including the EFF, to secure a majority in the metro council. The focus here was on the efficient formation of a coalition, where each party added just enough power to ensure governance. The DA's alignment with the smaller parties was not necessarily based on shared ideological goals but on mutual political interest and the goal of ousting the ANC from power (Kolstad & Wiig, 2016).

In Johannesburg, the DA led another coalition government after the 2021 local elections. This coalition included the Freedom Front Plus (FF+), Cope, the ACDP, and ActionSA, among others. Unlike the Nelson Mandela Bay coalition, which had ideological differences, the Johannesburg coalition featured parties with more closely aligned conservative values. The Freedom Front Plus (FF+) and ACDP shared a similar right-wing and socially conservative ideology, making this a more ideologically cohesive coalition (Lerotholi, 2025; Mofokeng,

Ramalobe, and Bogopa, 2024). This alignment helped ensure policy coherence, especially around issues like fiscal responsibility and social issues. In light of this, Lerotholi (2025) argued that the DA and its coalition partners entered this alliance not just to share political power but also to influence local policies. The FF+ and ActionSA were able to secure certain portfolio positions, increasing their political influence, particularly in areas such as economic development and social issues.

It is critical to note that coalition metros have experienced a plethora of votes of no-confidence attempts, such as the City of Tshwane (Pretoria) in 2018 and 2019, the City of Johannesburg in 2017 and 2019, and also the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality in 2018. Power struggles among coalition partners' leadership have debilitated coalitions at the expense of efficient, effective, productive, and competitive service deliveries at the municipal level. In Metros, in which the dominant party obtained an outright majority, coalitions were not an option. This speaks volumes about the factors that propelled the rise of coalitions in South African metro municipalities (Bradshaw & Breakfast, 2019). For example, in the Cape Town Metro, the Democratic Alliance (DA) secured an outright majority and reigns without any partner. The target of most coalition formations was the former liberation movement called the ANC. For instance, in the Cape Town Metro, the ANC lost conspicuously to the DA. The former liberation movement was lost to the DA. Table 1 shows the 2016 local government election results for the Cape Town Metro. The DA won 66.7%, the ANC obtained 24.7%, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) secured 3.0%, and the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) obtained 1.3%. The former liberation movement, which used to dominate local elections before 2016, failed to secure 50% of the elections countrywide.

The problems of the ANC range from alleged corruption, poor service delivery, and the failure to pursue a complete decolonization agenda, like most liberation movements in Southern Africa (Good Governance Africa, 2023). In general, ANC support has dwindled over the years (see Table 1) as South Africa's political culture has evolved. While the ANC has enjoyed political dominance for the past 22 years, shifting political attitudes among South Africans have contributed to its declining support. Citizens are no longer attached to the "we liberated you' gospel, but more pertinent governance issues centered around the distributive and allocative capacity of the ruling party are critical. Bad governance at the municipal level has affected the credibility, integrity, and reputation of the ANC; hence, parties enter into coalitions to prevent

the ANC from perpetuating bad governance. The political trend depicted in Table 1 below has been influenced by several factors, including ANC's loss of popularity in local municipalities and nationally. The dwindling support base for ANC was also witnessed in the 2024 General Elections. With just 40% of the national vote, the African National Congress (ANC) lost its majority in Parliament in the May 2024 national and provincial elections (Peyton, 2024). Compared to its prior supremacy, this was a dramatic drop. In June 2024, President Cyril Ramaphosa responded by forming the Government of National Unity (GNU), which excluded two significant minority parties and included nine other political groups, most of them smaller.

Table 1: ANC Countrywide Local Government Election Results Since 1994

Year	%Votes	No. of Votes	No of Seats
1994	62.65	12 237 655	252
1999	66.35	10 601 330	266
2004	69.69	10 880 915	279
2009	65.90	11 650 748	264
2014	62.15	11 436 921	249
2016	53.90		

Source: Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) of South Africa (2016).

In the Cape Town Metro, liberation nostalgia has faded away. As a result, it does not have the same level of respect and popularity as most liberation movements in Africa, even though it is the oldest liberation movement in Africa (Bradshaw & Breakfast, 2019; Ndaetyana & Nomarwayi, 2016). Looking at the results below, the ANC, which is the common enemy of opposition parties, lost, and the DA won overwhelmingly, and therefore, the need for the coalition diminished. The DA rules in the City of Cape Town, Nelson Mandela Bay, the City of Johannesburg, and the City of Tshwane metros with a clear majority. It can be deduced that in Metros, where a dominant party draws majority votes against the former liberation movement, the ANC dissipates the need for a coalition. The critical question that arises is whether coalitions are formed to enhance efficiency, effectiveness, and productivity in service delivery or to defeat the former liberation movement and create a new political and governance architecture in the local government sphere. Small parties obtained very few wards and, therefore, emerged as

insignificant in the Cape Town Metro (See Table 2 below) as compared to other metros where small parties became kingmakers. They fought for administrative reforms such as the in-sourcing of staff in exchange for their involvement in the coalition. EFF, *inter alia*, entered the coalition in Tshwane and Johannesburg metro on the basis that the new administration would influence human resource administrative reforms, mainly the in-sourcing of staff who fell into the non-core business categories of the councils.

Table 2: 2016 Cape Town Metro Elections Results

	Ward	**Proportional Representation List**	**Total**	**Percentage**
Democratic Alliance	81	73	154	66.7%
ANC	35	22	57	24.7%
EFF	0	7	7	3.0%
African Christian Democratic Party	0	3	3	1.3%
Al Jama–ah	0	2	2	0.9%
African independent Congress	0	1	1	0.4%
Congress of the people	0	1	1	0.4%
Cape Muslim Congress	0	11	1	0.4%
Democratic Independent Party	0	1	1	0.4%
Freedom Front plus	0	1	1	0.4%
Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC)	0	1	1	0.4%
Patriotic Alliance	0	1	1	0.4%
United Democratic Movement (UDM)	0	1	1	0.4%
Total	**116**	**115**	**231**	**100.0%**

Source: Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) of South Africa (2016).

Given the foregoing, it can be deduced from Table 2 above that coalitions in metros in South Africa during 2016 were mainly centered on the idea of ousting ANC dominance in the local sphere of government, as it can be observed that other metros where the ANC obtained more votes than other political parties (opposition parties formed coalitions against it). The DA in the Cape Town metro is the dominant party and won with a vast majority, such that even if the ANC wanted to make a coalition with any of the minor parties or all of them, they would still not vanquish it. According to Kapa (2008), coalition parties have a common enemy in that they scientifically identify and set a plan to remove or defeat local government elections or remove

them from the reins of power at the municipal level. In light of this, it is important to note that most municipalities became much politicized administratively because of the uninterrupted dominance and rule of the ANC (Jeffrelot, 2014; Kadima, 2014). This erstwhile dominance and municipal administrative politicization bred inefficiency, ineffectiveness, and lack of productivity in service delivery in the local sphere of government in South Africa. Municipal politicization affects the operational efficiency, financial effectiveness, and distributive capability of metro municipalities. These administrative shortcomings were experienced in local municipalities because, as a consequence, those metro municipalities were unable to fulfill their developmental mandates. It is important to understand the concept of coalitions.

A coalition is a united front formulated by different political formations, which are conversant with each other's electoral merits and demerits, ideological persuasions, ethnic and socio-economic strengths and weaknesses, political visions, and missions, even if they are at variance with each other. According to Law and Calland (2018), coalition partners are united by the common goal of securing the reins of power and ousting a common political enemy at all costs in any sphere of government. In racially and ethnically diverse countries such as South Africa at their formation stage, coalitions transcend beyond race and ethnicity. However, the problem only emerges when it comes to the leadership of the coalition government, especially after ousting the historically dominant political party. The apartheid and colonial history of South Africa, with its apartheid polarizations, impacts coalition leadership choices.

Leaders from households of settler origin have a lesser chance of leading the coalition government than those from formerly colonized households because of the political sentiments attached to the colonial and apartheid political past. Small opportunistic yet popular parties from formerly colonized households have an enormous influence on who becomes the mayor and leader of the government. For example, in August 2018, in the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality, the DA mayor, Athol Trollip, was ousted in favor of the UDM Mayor, Mongameli Bobani. The EFF, UDM, and Patriotic Alliance worked together to ensure the replacement of a white mayor by a black mayor (Peyton, 2024). Race will always play a key role in South African local government politics because of the failure of the decolonization project by the ANC and mainly because of the effects of colonialism and apartheid policies. The

ANC failed to sufficiently and adequately decolonize many aspects of South Africa after apartheid and colonialism.

Smaller parties influence decisions on political leadership and executive management structures in municipalities (Law & Calland, 2018). The EFF and UDM in the Nelson Mandela Bay metropolitan municipality significantly influence the council. The DA obtained 46.7%, and the ANC received 40.9%, as shown in Table 3 below. Neither ANC nor DA received an outright majority. Smaller parties have become critical in creating a coalition local government. A coalition of opposition parties prevailed. Smaller parties that obtained very few votes joined the coalition government with the DA. The seemingly insignificant votes from smaller parties became critical in the formation of the coalition government in Nelson Mandela Bay Metro municipality.

Table 3: 2016 Nelson Mandela Bay Metro Election Results

Party	**Votes**				**Seats**		
	Ward	**List**	**Total**	**%**	**Ward**	**List**	**Total**
Democratic Alliance	**177,920**	**177,551**	**355,471**	**46.7**	**24**	**33**	**57**
ANC	**153,496**	**157,920**	**311,416**	**40.9**	**35**	**15**	**50**
EFF	**19,819**	**19,132**	**38,951**	**5.1**	**1**	**5**	**6**
UDM	**7,600**	**6,969**	**14,569**	**1.9**	**0**	**2**	**2**
African Independent Congress	**1,078**	**6,144**	**7,222**	**1.0**	**0**	**1**	**1**
United Front of the Eastern Cape	**4,133**	**3,048**	**7,181**	**0.9**	**0**	**1**	**1**
Independent	**7,142**	**-**	**7,142**	**0.9**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Congress of the people	**2,929**	**2,658**	**5,587**	**0.7**	**0**	**1**	**1**
African Christian Democratic Party	**1,399**	**1,313**	**2,712**	**0.4**	**0**	**1**	**1**
Patriotic Alliance	**930**	**1,110**	**2,040**	**0.3**	**0**	**1**	**1**
Freedom Front plus	**976**	**941**	**1,917**	**0.3**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Christian Democratic Party	**1,254**	**133**	**1,386**	**0.2**	**0**	**0**	**0**
PAC	**447**	**862**	**1,309**	**0.2**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Alternative Democrats	**287**	**942**	**1,229**	**0.2**	**0**	**0**	**0**

African peoples Convention	**142**	**591**	**733**	**0.1**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Independent Civic Organization	**256**	**467**	**723**	**0.1**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Azanian People Organization	**303**	**358**	**661**	**0.1**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Ubuntu Party	**165**	**143**	**308**	**0.0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
African Power Movement	**150**	**96**	**246**	**0.0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Building a Cohesive Society	**123**	**111**	**234**	**0.0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
380,548	**380,489**	**761,037**	**100.0**	**60**	**60**	**120**	
6,954	**6,569**	**13,523**					

Source: IEC (2016).

The EFF and UDM in the Nelson Mandela Bay metro municipality have significantly influenced the council. Political infighting impacts service delivery in the local government sphere. The DA obtained 46.7%, and the ANC received 40.9%, as shown in Table 4 below. Neither ANC nor DA received an outright majority. Smaller parties have become critical in creating a coalition local government. The coalition of opposition parties prevailed. Smaller parties that obtained very few votes joined the coalition government with the DA. The seemingly insignificant votes from smaller parties became critical in the formation of the post-election coalition government in Nelson Mandela Bay Metro municipality. Some coalitions were formed during the pre-election era, and others after the elections. Political parties may choose to campaign, prepare for elections on their own, and use their own identity. They sponsor their election, preach their manifesto, and sell it to the electorate (Lerotholi, 2025; Capa, 2018; Matlosa & Karume, 2004; Frideman, 1999). They only join other parties to form a government after the elections when they are aware of their results and how these results, together with the results of others, can make a difference in a new government. Such coalitions are called post-electoral coalitions (Chigora & Chilunjika, 2016; Kadima, 2014).

Even if it was very rarer for former liberation movements to enter coalitions, the ANC had to do so in the Ekurhuleni metro. On this metro, no party won an outright majority. The ANC failed to obtain an outright majority, as shown in Table 4 below. The main option was to enter a coalition to govern the metro and control resources. Thus, the once-powerful liberation movement did the unusual act of entering into a coalition to gain power and rule the metro. The main contest was

between the DA and ANC. However, the role of EFF cannot be underestimated or overstated in the Ekurhuleni Metro.

Table 4: 2016 Ekurhuleni-Metro Election Results

Party	Votes				Seats		
	Ward	List	Total	%	Ward	List	Total
ANC	**436,190**	438,961	875,151	48,6	76	33	109
Democratic Alliance	**307,664**	306,709	614,373	34,2	35	42	77
EFF	**102,242**	99,770	202,012	11,2	1	24	25
African Independent Congress	**14,709**	14810	29,519	1.6	0	4	4
IFP	**8,940**	9,345	18,285	1.0	0	2	2
Freedom Front plus	**7,991**	8,059	16,050	0.9	0	2	2
African Christian Democratic Party	**3,908**	3,754	7,662	0.4	0	1	1
PAC	**3,836**	3,743	7,579	0.4	0	1	1
Patriotic Alliance	**2,272**	2,499	4,771	0.3	0	1	1
Congress of the people	**2,209**	2,504	4,713	0.3	0	1	1
Independent Ratepayers Association of SA	**3,067**	2,109	3,544	0.2	0	0	0
Independent	**3,675**	-	3,675	0.2	0	-	0
UDM	**1,435**	2,109	3,544	0.2	0	0	0
Others	**2,283**	5,298	7,581	0.4	0	0	0
Total	**900,421**	**898,780**	**1,799,201**	**100.00**	**112**	**112**	**224**
Spilt Votes	**16,086**	15,783	31,869				

Source: IEC, (2016).

It can thus be noted that a single-party majority was not present in several metropolises, such as Johannesburg, Tshwane, and Ekurhuleni; hence coalitions were in charge. To build these coalitions, the Democratic Alliance (DA) worked with organizations such as the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP), Cope, ActionSA, and the Freedom Front Plus. A growing number of political parties' youth wings are actively promoting policies that deal with social

justice, education, and unemployment. Due to their involvement, policy discussions have been affected, and concerns about youth have gained prominence in political agendas. As a result of their increased importance in coalition governments, minority parties are now able to influence governance and policy decisions. These coalitions did, however, experience instability due to conflicting policies and frequent leadership changes, underscoring the difficulties of coalition governance. It is against this background that the study seeks to explore the merits and demits of electoral coalitions in South African Metropolitan Municipalities. To achieve that, the study also explores the different dynamics, trends, patterns, drivers, and nuances underpinning electoral coalitions in the South African Metropolitan Municipalities from 2016 to 2019.

Materials and Methods

The study relied on qualitative methods, which were embedded in interpretivist research philosophy. Purposively selected documents that were pertinent to the study were used to gather data. These included local government reports, coalition agreements, party leaders' public declarations, journal papers, book chapters, books, newspaper stories, party manifestos, public speeches and press releases, coalition agreements, and minutes of council meetings. The selection of these documents was based on how well they addressed the main coalition topics in the study. Additionally, historical research was done in municipal archives to look at the political history of important metro areas and previous coalition agreements. This aided in placing the current political climate in a more comprehensive historical context. The collected data were analyzed using thematic and cross-case analysis techniques to help unpack the discussion on the pros and cons of electoral coalitions in South African Metro-Municipalities from 2016 to 2019. The themes concerning the research questions were interpreted by exploring how coalition partners navigated ideological differences, how power was shared within the coalition, and how these dynamics influenced governance outcomes. A cross-case analysis was conducted to identify similarities and differences in coalition formation, political alignments, and policy outcomes.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the research findings and discusses the merits and demerits of electoral coalitions in South African metropolitan municipalities.

Advantages of Coalitions

Greater Participation and Transparency in Decision-Making/ Municipal By-Laws

Democratic elections have taken place periodically at the local government level since the collapse of apartheid and colonialism in South Africa. In most municipal elections prior to 2016, municipalities experienced single-party domination and control. According to the African National Congress, most of the municipalities are in both urban and rural areas of South Africa, with the exception of some rural districts of KwaZulu Natal and the Western Cape (Ndletyana & Nomarwayi, 2014). The problem with this was that a single party allows the by-laws it formulates to pass through the council, and these are formulated and implemented with insufficient and inadequate debate. Coalitions in local municipalities can overcome this problem because the views of different political parties are considered when municipal decision-making takes place or when by-laws are formulated. The coalition government in the municipalities of South Africa creates a wider public opinion platform than single-majority party views. A coalition allows for the possibility of thorough and robust debates in decision-making rather than domination by a dominant party.

Investors' Inflow to Local Municipalities

Coalition governments have higher levels of investor confidence in their municipal areas. Single-majority parties are scarce investors. When investor confidence is high, the inflow of foreign direct investment (FDI) increases, thereby improving the economy and local economic development (LED) (Gumede, Uwizeyimana & Chilunjika, 2023). Thus, coalitions have a greater chance of attracting investors than single-party-dominated municipalities. One party-dominated municipality in South Africa had problems with distributive efficiency, allocative efficiency, and redistributive efficiency (Capa, 2018). The economic impact of this scenario is low investment and economic growth. According to the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) (2019), coalitions at the municipal level attract greater investor confidence and higher FDI in their geographical areas. Economics and commerce occur in the local municipalities. Investors come to municipalities to physically establish their businesses; therefore, it is important to have an investor-friendly apolitical environment at the municipal level (Gumede *et al*., 2023). Coalitions at the local government level can attract greater levels of economic growth and investment than a single-party municipality.

According to Kadima (2014), the weakening of single-party dominance is accompanied by the strengthening of LED, owing to the interplay of diversity of opinion and harmonization of various economic policy views instead of one perspective from a single party. South African municipalities are dominated by a single party, namely the ANC and its alliance partners. Municipal by-law decisions reflected the views of the ANC because of its dominance. As a liberation movement, the views of the ANC were mostly political rather than economic, with the consequence that most municipalities suffered economically (Matlosa & Karume, 2004; Brooks, 2004). One-party dominance in a municipality cripples the accommodation of diverse political and economic views in terms of municipality-by-law formulation and implementation. The decision-making process and municipal decisions are stiffened by a single party in a one-party-dominated municipality. A coalition is a viable panacea for all these political and administrative shortcomings. A coalition municipality is more democratic and transparent in terms of various legislative and administrative views. A coalition represents a much broader spectrum of public opinion. Therefore, municipal decisions or by-laws can reflect the view of the majority of citizens represented by many parties in government rather than one party.

Good Governance and Risk Management

According to Peyton (2024), coalitions foster good governance at the local government level because their decisions are formulated in the interests of municipal majorities rather than single-party leadership. Coalitions provide an excellent platform for political engagement and robust debate. The municipal decisions were thoroughly debated before implementation. Coalitions are a very important key to controlling all forms of corruption, namely systematic, systemic, embezzlement, and nepotism at the local government level (Chilunjika, 2021; Friedman, 1999; DeSwaan, 1997; Bazazel & Deemen, 1989). Coalitions monitor the levels of economic and administrative corruption in the implementation of municipal IDPs (integrated development plans) (Gumede *et al*., 2023). Municipalities implement development through IDPs. Municipal corrupt officials usually exercise corruption in the allocation of municipal tenders or employment with the presence of coalitions, most of which are minimized because of the greater involvement of a wider spectrum of political officials from different political persuasions and parties (Chilunjika, Chilunjika & Uwizeyimana 2023; Bradshaw & Breakfast, 2019; Jeffrelot, 2014; Kadima, 2014; Shale & Kapa, 2011). The ANC dominated most of the municipalities before the

2016 elections, and as a result, municipal corruption levels rose to astronomic proportions; however, with the current existence of coalitions, effective monitoring can minimize it.

Greater Public Accountability

According to Chilunjika (2024), coalitions enhance the accountability of municipal officials. Under the one-party rule, municipal officials are deployed cadres of the dominant party and, therefore, are more likely to account for their party officials than municipal citizens or the majority of people in that municipal geography. Before the 2016 elections, ANC cadres and officials suffered from and are still enduring the Liberation Struggle (WFLS) syndrome (De Vos, 2021). The WFLS syndrome has entitled ANC cadres and officials to account for their liberation movement officials compared with municipal citizens. This WFLS syndrome has made it difficult for most officials from non-liberation-movement origins (NLMO) to work in the municipalities, and consequently, they resigned and left the positions to the ANC cadres (Law & Calland, 2018; Ndletyana & Nomarwayi, 2016). The result is the proliferation of municipal service delivery failures that strike most municipalities in the country. Coalitions allow greater public accountability and responsibility from municipal officials and councilors, while single-party dominance prevents greater openness and transparency at the municipal level (Chilunjika, Mutema & Dube, 2020).

Greater Monitoring and Evaluation of IDPs

The coalition municipal government creates a conducive environment for greater monitoring and evaluation of municipal projects. When an IDP passes, the next stage is its implementation by municipal executives. A coalition is very important in terms of the conceptualization, formulation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of municipal IDPs**.** A coalition brings about a greater diversity of opinions and views when formulating IDPs (Kadima, 2014; Shale & Kapa, 2011). Thus, from political and administrative perspectives, coalitions are critical for the effective monitoring and evaluation of IDPs. Single-party-dominated municipalities tend to follow myopic party perspectives on IDPs more than coalition governments. IDPs must represent the views of a wider community across all racial divides, especially in South Africa, where the population is mixed (Chilunjika & Chilunjika, 2021). It is advantageous to have a mayoral committee responsible for monitoring and evaluation, which is comprised of members of different political parties, rather than having officials from one dominant party only. A coalition

government provides a fresh perspective on the monitoring and evaluation of municipal IDPs (Mofokeng, Ramalobe, & Bogopa, 2024).

Controlling Corruption in Local Governments

Coalition governments can help regulate and control corruption that has become so prevalent in South African local governments. Corruption has historically been perpetuated and cultivated because the dominant party, in this case, the ANC, was used to control both central and local government authorities (Kolstad & Wiig, 2016). The political will to curb the ongoing escalation of corruption in local government institutions has weakened as a result of the ANC brotherhood syndrome. Instead, because local government institutions were staffed only by ANC affiliates, there has always been an act of mutual protection in the aftermath of corruption scandals (Chilunjika, 2024). In contrast, the rise of coalitions is likely to change the political culture of how local governments are managed, as diverse political affiliations reinvigorate political will to combat corruption. Accordingly, Morrison (2023) asserts that the presentation of opposing viewpoints through coalition governments will create an ideal environment for political parties in power to demonstrate that they are the best alternative for fighting corruption and delivering services to citizens efficiently and effectively.

Increases Youth Participation

In South Africa, young people are now more involved in local government activities than they were a few years ago, particularly under the coalition governments that were formed following the 2016 local elections (Msimang, 2020; Klopper, 2019). More chances for young people to participate in political and governance processes have been made possible by the DA-led coalition administrations, especially in major cities like Johannesburg and Nelson Mandela Bay. According to Mthembu (2020), there are several reasons for the increase in youth participation, including disenchantment with the ANC's and other revolutionary political parties' long-standing dominance, a desire for change, and the opportunity for leadership positions and increased visibility provided by smaller parties like the DA, UDM, and EFF. Following the 2016 elections, the Nelson Mandela Bay coalition government implemented a number of programs that increased young participation. One important component was the youth-oriented policies that coalition allies like the DA and UDM supported, emphasizing youth political inclusion, employment creation, and education. Young people were able to participate in local decision-

making processes after the ANC was ousted from office and coalition governance took over (Buhlungu, 2018). Similarly, young people were allowed to interact actively with politics through political parties such as the EFF and UDM. These parties provided an alternative to the young people who felt marginalized by the ANC's leadership by advocating for youth empowerment and a break from the ANC's domination (Msimang, 2020).

Provides Checks and Balances for Meritocratic Recruitment and Functioning of Local Government Leaders

According to Morrison (2023), South Africa's coalition government ensures the meritocratic recruitment of local government leaders. In the establishment of a coalition government, a diverse group of people with varying levels of skills and capabilities are brought together, creating the luxury of having an array of capable and skilled leaders who can occupy various leadership roles in the local government. Unlike a single dominant party, a coalition government fundamentally provides the local government leaders with some checks and balances that make it easier to select progressive minds that are meritocratically equipped to drive development in local government jurisdictions. Rather than re-electing the same ANC leaders, some of whom have a track record of failing to deliver public goods, a coalition government can be a panacea by bringing in a pool of skilled and capable cadres to steer local government advancement in South Africa. Additionally, Anghel (2018) asserts that the creation of a centralized recruitment tracking system for senior positions in municipalities is feasible under a coalition government. Previously, due to one political party's dominance, the recruitment of senior municipality officials was marred with partisanship rather than competency and meritocracy. Most of the senior positions were occupied based on the ‘who do you know’ incline and ANC affiliation lines. Conversely, the coalition government, since it is the creation of a potpourri of affiliations, will create an opportunity to provide a centralized recruitment system for senior positions in municipalities and ultimately bring transparency to the implemented recruitment procedures.

Disadvantages of Coalitions

Differences in Political Ideology

In South African municipalities, the critical problem is the diversity of party political ideologies, origins, and the constituent populations they represent. Some parties are black popular socialist-inclined parties, and others are dominated by HOSOs (Households of Settler Origins) in their

leadership and voter-members. According to Ndletyana and Nomarwayi (2016), EFF in South Africa is a new political party with a policy inclination toward nationalization of the economy and economic liberation; on the other hand, the DA is a party dominated in its national and local leadership with leaders that oppose nationalization. By its very nature, the DA does not subscribe to economic wholesale nationalization. It does not subscribe to land expropriation without compensation, and most of its members belong to a particular economic class in South Africa. Thus, the DA and the EFF can engage in a coalition together, but the above factors constrain the viability of the coalition in terms of ideology and policy. This diversity in policy orientation and ideology cripples collective political functioning in the coalition municipality, where DA and EFF are involved**.**

The ANC received 48.6%, and the DA obtained 34.2% in the 2016 local government elections in the Tshwane Metro, as shown in the Table below. This meant that no party won with a clear outright majority. The ANC was also rocked by leadership infighting and fielding external candidates for Tshwane's mayoral position. Table 5 below noted that the EFF obtained 11.2% of the votes, while the other parties could not make significant strides in the elections, as shown in the Table below. To prevent the ANC from governing the Tshwane metro municipality, a coalition of opposition parties succeeded in gaining the reigns (IEC, 2016). The DA has a different political ideology from the rest of its coalition partners, but for the sake of removing the common enemy, a coalition was formed successfully. The EFF managed to influence administrative reforms regarding the sourcing of staff who were contract employees and employed privately. The employees were also insourced. This post-electoral coalition influenced administrative reforms in the metro as far as human resource management was concerned.

Table 5: 2016 Tshwane-Metro Election Results

Party	Votes				Seats		
	Ward	List	Total	%	Ward	List	Total
ANC	436,190	438,961	875,151	48,6	76	33	109
Democratic Alliance	307,664	306,709	614,373	34,2	35	42	77
EFF	102,242	99,770	202,012	11,2	1	24	25

Freedom Front plus	14,709	14810	29,519	1.6	0	4	4
African Christian Democratic Party	8,940	9,345	18,285	1.0	0	2	2
Independent	7,991	8,059	16,050	0.9	0	2	2
Congress of the people	3,908	3,754	7,662	0.4	0	1	1
PAC	3,836	3,743	7,579	0.4	0	1	1
Others	5,026	8,619	13,645	0.8	0	0	0
Total	**882,274**	**884,093**	**1,766,367**	**100.0**	**107**	**107**	**214**
Spoilt Votes	10,193	10,224	20,417				

Source: IEC (2016).

Policy and ideological differences have a negative impact on how the two parties and coalition are viewed by the public in South Africa.

Political Party Opportunism

Questions regarding political party opportunism have also been raised. The other disadvantage is how these parties can have collective responsibility for administrative and political decision-making. Council decisions are based on the political demands of local citizens (Chilunjika, Mutema & Dube, 2020; Zhou & Chilunjika, 2013). Traditionally, the DA has served as a limited constituency compared to its current mandate. The problem is that the public image is accustomed to the DA. Citizens in rural and urban areas have not managed to disassociate it from their pre-2016 political image. According to Schaefer (2018), it is very difficult for two political parties with completely different ideologies to work together in the interest of the public in the local areas of South Africa, particularly in the metropolitan areas where the EFF/DA and other smaller parties are involved. The DA was opportunistic in its approach to remove the ANC from the reigns of the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro. The EFF was also opportunistic in joining the coalitions. These two parties saw a great opportunity to be in power and remove their foes. The most important issue at the local government level is effective and efficient service delivery.

Mayoral Political and Administrative Role and Interference

Mayoral political and administrative responsibilities are handicapped by coalition governments at the local level. The mayor of a coalition municipality is very vulnerable and unable to implement or formulate decisions without political interference from coalition partners. The mayor's role is politically and administratively corroded. The powers of the mayor are weakened by the coalition partners. They may demand immediate political and radical reforms at the expense of political stability and power consolidation, with the coalition government collapsing or its leadership. A good example of this phenomenon is what happened to the Nelson Mandela Bay municipality, in which DA/EFF/UDM/PA involvement in a coalition succeeded in unseating the ruling ANC but later had serious power struggles in the mayoral position (Bradshaw & Breakfast, 2019; Ndletyana & Nomarwayi, 2016). This caused political and administrative instability in the NMB Metro. The mayor of the first coalition suffered serious challenges propelled by the EFF in favor of a UDM mayor. Political instability crept into the coalition because of the political differences between the two main coalition partners. The Nelson Mandela metro saga indicates that coalitions have a political disadvantage for mixed-race communities. Coalitions between political parties of different racial origins are difficult and problematic for service delivery. In a post-colonial apartheid country such as South Africa, the assumption that racial differences have completely faded away is misleading. Race, class, and gender differences played a role in the leadership struggle of the coalition of the Nelson Mandela metro municipality.

Dominant Party Influence and Small Party Manipulation

According to Bazazel and Deemen (1989), the larger party in the coalition exercises political preponderance in coalition decision-making. This automatically creates resistance from smaller partners within the coalition. This lack of trust sparks leadership struggles that debilitate the coalition administratively and politically, and as such, the DA, as a bigger coalition partner, has a greater propensity to dominate its smaller coalition partners. However, it faces resistance from the EFF and UDM, which results in leadership fragmentation and weakening, as shown in the NMB metro. Smaller partners spend time warding off greater party domination than concentrating on municipal service delivery issues. Internal coalition democracy is threatened by the domination-inclination of larger partners. Small parties can blackmail and compromise other

coalition partners by demanding political reforms that favor their ideology and push for political concessions. Even if such demanded concessions are not in the interest of big partners, small parties succeed in getting them because it is a game of numbers, and no one wants to lose anyone. Thus, smaller parties can impose their own political agenda and reforms through political blackmail. EFF has managed to be the kingmaker and to influence short-term political reforms through this process, which is opportunistic. Given the foregoing, it suffices to say that coalitions in most metros in South Africa have more disadvantages than advantages. In short, political coalitions face many political and administrative challenges.

Limited Visions and Lukewarm Councils

Coalition in municipalities is disadvantageous because the absence of majority party domination creates a political platform conducive to councils with limited visions, missions, and lukewarm policy measures. Coalition governments are usually unsure and confident of their stay in power because they depend on each other's views and acceptability. Lukewarm councils are not municipal governments that have long-term views of themselves or long-term policy plans because of the political uncertainty coalitions present (Schaefer, 2018). Most parties usually have a long-term vision and long-term plans for the municipality because they won with a clear majority and have a clear 5-year mandate and term to actualize their political manifesto. Coalitions do the opposite: they engender lukewarm council syndrome (LCS). Municipal councils of this nature are unable to enact municipal by-laws effectively because the struggles in the debates when formulating municipal by-laws are very severe and critical.

Councilors want to be safe for the next term of office; therefore, no one wants to make any decision on council matters lest they make a mistake that can cost the party some seats or a term of office. This is probably the greatest undoing of coalition governments because citizens suffer when indecision occurs. Given the above, the Tshwane Metro, Johannesburg Metro, Ekurhuleni Metro, and Nelson Mandela Metro have symptoms of lukewarm councils. According to Law and Calland (2018), lukewarm councils are weak in terms of enacting municipal by-laws or repealing or amending them because councilors do not want to make any mistakes in decision-making. From an incrementalism paradigm, councilors prefer a muddling-through approach or a mixed scanning method so that they are very safe from blunders in decision-making. Failure to make decisions on critical issues, such as service delivery or IDPs, weakens municipalities' administrative function.

Interdependence, Compromise, and Opportunism

A coalition in municipalities is disadvantageous because coalition partners depend on each other for survival, even if this means compromising their standard values and norms to accommodate each other. Accordingly, Bradshaw and Breakfast (2019) state that larger coalition partners in the local council cannot afford to lose smaller partners because of the need to have greater numbers of councilors and constituencies and, consequently, a greater voice and control of the council. However, this does not translate automatically into better service delivery. Coalitions reflect political opportunism in defeating the dominant parties. Every party joins a group of partners with certain promises and alignments, and when these are not realized, coalition councils easily falter and disintegrate. The EFF agreed to be part of the coalition in the Johannesburg Metro based on certain demands, which included the protection of jobs for metro citizens. The DA had to compromise on its plans to restructure the job market to allow for the employment creation that the EFF demanded. What happens when this opportunism and compromise end? The coalition government disintegrated at the expense of local citizens. Parties must compromise with their ideologies and ethics to accommodate each other and survive. Compromises weaken the coalition councils because they cannot formulate long-term plans and do not have a unifying philosophy or political manifesto other than the desire to dislodge the former dominant party like the ANC. Coalitions are mostly concerned with formulating popular short-and long-term decisions. Some scholars have summarized and highlighted the opportunities and challenges presented by coalitions, as depicted in Table 6.

Table 6: Opportunities and Challenges of Party Coalitions

Opportunities	Challenges
• By combining forces and resources with others, parties can increase their influence and accomplish goals they could not achieve on their own	• To find common ground with partners, each party must to some extent compromise on its priorities, principles, and ideology
• Parties can broaden their appeal and increase their vote share by combining forces with others. This may create an opportunity to secure legislative seats to form a government and achieve their specific political goals.	• Parties may lose some control over decision-making and may find it difficult to maintain a distinct profile that distinguishes them from their coalition partners

• The Public may see coalition-building as an admirable effort to consider other points of view and seek compromise	• The need to consult and reach agreement among coalition partners can make government decision-making complex and slower
• Coalition parties can learn from each other and thus strengthen their parties based on those experiences.	• Poor communication between individual parties on coalition goals, objectives, and benefits can sometimes fuel tensions and cause divisions.
• The coalition can provide opportunities to broaden participation in government.	• The public may feel that party leader have abandoned their principles by coalescing with other parties.

Source: The National Democratic Institute (NDI) (2015).

According to Jeffrelot (2014), coalitions enhance the level of citizen participation in decision-making in the local government sphere. Coalition partners have the opportunity to learn from one another about various aspects of politics at both the leadership and operational levels of engagement. New parties can learn from old parties with experience in the political and administrative environments of South Africa. The DA's experience of managing the Western Cape efficiently, effectively, and competitively is a great lesson to various political parties in the coalition with the DA in various metros in South Africa. To mention DA as an example is not to say that it does not have its shortcomings, despite some notable positive political and administrative achievements being attained in the Western Cape under the DA administration. Coalitions operate based on accommodating other views, and therefore, tolerance of divergent views is exercised to the benefit of service delivery and citizens (Schaefer, 2018; Kadima, 2014). The most obvious opportunity is that the coalition gets more seats on the council and is, therefore, able to unseat their common enemy. Most coalitions in metro cities have managed to remove the ANC from power. This is the objective that they successfully achieved.

Coalitions provide opportunities to create a large resource base for coalition partners. Financially or otherwise, the coalition partners can work together to attain their common goal. The critical challenge of coalitions is that supporters generally feel compromised by changes in principles to accommodate other parties with different ideologies. Communication is difficult because there are different political leaders and members. Decision-making is stifled by bureaucracy in the coalition. In short, coalition partners have to exercise compromise and accommodate each other in decision-making, which negatively impacts service delivery.

Conclusion

Local authorities in South Africa have adopted coalitions to increase their competitiveness against a political foe. The study observed that metro municipalities have since resorted to political party alliances and coalitions during election times, which has paved the way for state governability, democratic consolidation, and national cohesion. The different metro-municipality electoral dynamics in South Africa from 2016 onwards have been explored. In this scenario, the study identifies the advantages of coalition municipalities as transparency, good governance, greater accountability, effective monitoring and evaluation, and wider consultation. Additionally, some disadvantages and or challenges ranging from ideological clashes, small-part manipulation, and the creation of lukewarm municipalities to political and administrative failures in service delivery were noted.

The study, therefore, emphasizes that coalition administrations are still a structural and political reality in South African urban governance despite these challenges. Coalition agreements are likely to endure as electoral support becomes more dispersed. Strengthening the institutional structures and governance frameworks that direct coalition relationships will be essential to their success. To improve coalition stability and effectiveness, the study advises political parties to create explicit coalition agreements, organized dispute resolution procedures, and policy alignment plans.

To sum up, although electoral coalitions in South Africa's urban municipalities from 2016 to 2019 have demonstrated both democratic benefits and governance difficulties, they are nevertheless an unavoidable aspect of the nation's changing political scenario. Reforming institutions, fostering greater political collaboration, and putting service delivery ahead of political competition are all necessary to address the shortcomings of coalition governance. A more organized and open coalition-building process will be necessary to guarantee efficient, responsible and long-lasting urban governance as South Africa undergoes more electoral changes.

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Balancing National Priorities: Ethiopia's Ankara Declaration and Its Implications for Diplomatic Success - A Commentary

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The Ankara Declaration, signed between Ethiopia and Somalia on December 11, 2024, with Turkish mediation, represents a pivotal step in addressing longstanding regional disputes in the Horn of Africa. Rooted in the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and cooperative security, the declaration aims to foster stability through multilateralism, intelligence-sharing, and joint economic initiatives. Turkey's strategic mediation, leveraging economic investments and cultural ties, underscores its growing influence in regional conflict resolution. While the declaration offers Ethiopia a platform to bolster its diplomatic standing and economic recovery, challenges such as territorial disputes, extremist threats, and external geopolitical pressures persist. Therefore, sustained commitment and inclusive governance are crucial to translate the accord's aspirations into lasting peace and collaboration.

Keywords: *Ankara Declaration, Ethiopia-Somalia Relations, Horn of Africa Diplomacy, Regional Stability, Turkey Mediation*

Introduction

The Horn of Africa, encompassing countries such as Ethiopia, Somalia, Eritrea, and Djibouti, has long been a region marked by complex conflicts and shifting alliances. These dynamics have been influenced by historical territorial disputes, ethnic tensions, and competition over resources. Nowadays, the recent political tensions and disagreements between Ethiopia and Somalia due to Ethiopia's quest to access the sea routes and signing the Memorandum of Understanding with the Republic of Somaliland boomed the political rivalry in the region and beyond.

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On January 1, 2024, Ethiopia signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the de facto state of Somaliland to get direct access to the sea in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (Chanie, 2024; Kalkidan Yibeltal & Damian Zane, 2024; Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, 2024; Yusuf, 2005). This maritime deal with Somaliland granted Ethiopia access to 20 kilometers of Somaliland's coastline for 50 years, facilitating the establishment of an Ethiopian naval base and enhancing trade through the Berbera port. The MoU significantly altered the geopolitical landscape of the Horn of Africa. Since Eritrea's secession in 1993, Ethiopia has been a landlocked nation; the agreement provided Ethiopia a strategic maritime outlet to the Gulf of Aden, bolstering its naval capabilities and expanding trade opportunities (IISS, 2024; Maxwell Webb, 2024). This development was viewed as a means to counterbalance regional rivals and enhance Ethiopia's influence in maritime affairs. This maritime deal immediately ignited regional tensions in the Horn of Africa (HoA), where the HoA is characterized by its continual geopolitical tensions and instability.

Thus, Somalia perceived Ethiopia's engagement with Somaliland as an infringement upon its sovereignty and a potential threat to its territorial integrity. This tension threatened to disrupt their cooperation against common security threats, notably the extremist group al-Shabaab. The friction also risked destabilizing broader regional security dynamics, as both nations are pivotal players in the Horn of Africa. In response to the MoU, the Somalia government sought diplomatic support from regional allies, notably from Eritrea, Egypt, Djibouti, and Turkey, to reinforce its position against the agreement (Chanie, 2024). Besides, Somalia also threatened to expel Ethiopian troops who played a great role in both the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), a move that could have significant implications for regional security and the fight against al-Shabaab. Furthermore, Somalia has also ignited its position to ban the Ethiopian troops from participating in the new active African Union-led mission in Somalia- the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM).

The situation has further complicated regional dynamics, as Somalia has sought support from Egypt and Eritrea, both of which have historical disputes with Ethiopia (Chanie, 2024; Yusuf, 2005). Egypt's apprehensions are deeply rooted in the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) project on the Abay River (Blue Nile). Cairo fears that the dam could significantly

reduce its vital water supply, leading to heightened tensions with Addis Ababa. By aligning with Eritrea and Somalia, Egypt seeks to bolster its strategic position against Ethiopia's upstream control over the Nile waters. On the other side, Eritrea's alliance with Egypt and Somalia is influenced by its historical adversarial relationship with Ethiopia. The longstanding border disputes and regional power dynamics have led Asmara to view Ethiopia's ambitions with suspicion. Due to this ambition, collaborating with Egypt and Somalia could offer Eritrea an opportunity to counterbalance Ethiopia's regional power dominance in the HoA.

Consequently, to implicitly influence Ethiopia's quest for direct access to the sea route, the Tripartite Anti-Ethiopian Axis, consisting of Egypt, Eritrea, and Somalia, was formed on October 10, 2024, at the Capital of Eritrea (Tyson & Liam, 2024; Teklemariam, 2024). Egypt, Somalia, and Eritrea viewed Ethiopia's economic and military developments, including its naval ambitions, as potential threats to their national security. This Cairo-Asmara-Mogadishu Axis against Ethiopia's double-track diplomatic power in the region has been reversed by the Ankara Declaration, Turkey, on December 11, 2024. After a year-long diplomatic rift, Somalia and Ethiopia agreed to restore their historical diplomatic ties. This reconciliation effort was facilitated by Turkish mediation, leading to the Ankara Declaration, in which both nations committed to resolving disputes through peaceful communication and dialogue. Ethiopia's engagement in the Ankara-mediated agreement was a strategic response to diplomatic isolation, economic imperatives, and the need to mitigate regional tensions in the Horn of Africa.

The signing of the Ankara Declaration, which was facilitated by Türkiye and signed between Ethiopia and Somalia on December 11, 2024, in Ankara has great implications for Ethiopia's diplomacy within the region of the Horn of Africa as it reaffirms principles such as respect for state sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-interference, and Ethiopia's right to direct access to the sea (Addis Standard, 2024; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, 2024; Ragip Soylu, 2024). The declaration demonstrates how – multilateralism can be seen as the best strategy for resolving historical grievances and constructing cooperation frameworks premised on state sovereignty and territorial integrity. It also specifies activities, including intelligence exchange for anti-terrorism purposes and the joint development of cross-border trade centers and transport corridors, which will lead to increased investment, security collaboration, and trade (Esra Tekin, 2024; Fatih, 2024; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024).

Last but not least, the accord further defines the structures necessary for collaborative surveillance and dispute management, including the composition of a joint supervisory board and the reconvening of periodic review conferences. It highlights the changing realities in the Horn of Africa, where longstanding animosities and intricate international relations define interaction. Still, certain issues like territorial disputes, extremist violence, and external geopolitical competition may serve as hindrances to achieving what the declaration sets out to achieve. Hence, the dedication of the parties to the contract, together with all relevant participants, will be direly needed to attain the intended purpose for which the contract was initiated.

A Strategic Shift in Regional Diplomacy

Turkey has significantly expanded its influence in the Horn of Africa through its proactive and strategic mediation efforts. Under this context, the Ankara Declaration exemplifies an increasing phenomenon of Turkey's involvement in a broader trend of conflict resolution in the Horn through leader-to-leader summit diplomacy. Ethiopia and Somalia have set a precedent for addressing longstanding disputes by prioritizing mutual respect and dialogue (Blinken (press statement), 2024; EEAS Press Team, 2024; Esra Tekin, 2024b; Fatih, 2024; UN Press Release, 2024). The agreement's emphasis on sovereignty, territorial integrity, and cooperative security frameworks signals a pragmatic approach of both countries to foster stability in a historically volatile region of the Horn of Africa.

Moreover, in the recent Ethiopia-Somalia negotiations, Türkiye adopted a comprehensive approach, leveraging its economic investments and cultural ties to foster trust between the two nations. Hosting the talks in Ankara provided a neutral venue conducive to open dialogue. Türkiye's impartiality was reinforced by initiatives such as offering technical expertise for infrastructure development and proposing monitoring and conflict-resolution mechanisms. These measures not only alleviated immediate tensions but also laid the groundwork for sustainable cooperation.

By integrating economic partnerships with diplomatic mediation (The Republic of Türkiye Directorate of Communications, 2024), Türkiye exemplified its ability to address sensitive issues tactfully and promote sustained negotiations between the two nations. Its strategic use of investments in trade, infrastructure, and cultural diplomacy helped build trust and strengthen relations between Ethiopia and Somalia. The Ankara Declaration, a product of these efforts,

exemplifies Türkiye's growing role as a regional mediator. Moreover, this aligns with broader international goals, including U.S. interests, by demonstrating the impact of coordinated diplomatic and economic strategies in resolving complex regional disputes (Ragip Soylu, 2024).

Implications for Ethiopia's Diplomatic Trajectory

For Ethiopia, the declaration offers an opportunity to strengthen its regional standing (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, 2024), but this potential hinges on how effectively the nation addresses its domestic challenges, such as political fragmentation, which undermines cohesive governance, and economic instability marked by inflation and high unemployment (Addis Standard, 2024; EEAS Press Team, 2024; Fatih Yurtsever, 2024). These issues are compounded by the lingering effects of internal conflicts, including the aftermath of the Tigray War, which have strained national resources and disrupted social cohesion. Addressing these challenges is essential for Ethiopia to align its domestic policies with the declaration's goals and emerge as a stabilizing force in the Horn of Africa. Issues such as political fragmentation, economic instability, and the lingering effects of internal conflicts could either bolster or undermine Ethiopia's ability to capitalize on this diplomatic opening (Ayele, 2024; Bionda, 2024). By aligning its domestic policies with the goals of the Ankara Declaration, such as fostering inclusive governance and accelerating post-conflict reconstruction, Ethiopia can position itself as a stabilizing force in the Horn of Africa. The agreement allows Addis Ababa to focus on internal challenges, such as post-conflict recovery and economic reforms, while maintaining constructive relationships with its neighbors. It also positions Ethiopia as a cooperative player in the Horn of Africa, potentially attracting greater international support and investment.

Challenges and Future Prospects

Despite its promise, the declaration's success depends on sustained commitment from Ethiopia and Somalia, supported by clear mechanisms such as joint monitoring committees, periodic reviews of progress, and sustained international engagement to ensure accountability and adaptability to emerging challenges in the volatile region of the Horn. As a result, issues such as border disputes and the presence of extremist groups remain potential flashpoints for the two nations and the region. Besides, the involvement of external actors, including Gulf states, continues to *vie* for regional influence, which could complicate the path to long-term stability of the Horn region in general and the two nations in particular. Therefore, a solid commitment from

the two nations and a collaborative governance grand strategy are very important for implementing the Ankara Declaration based on the non-zero-sum game perspective.

Conclusion

The Ankara Declaration exemplifies a step forward in balancing the national priorities of Ethiopia for peace and development in the Horn of Africa. By fostering mutual respect and emphasizing cooperative security, it offers a model for resolving regional disputes. The accord describes Ethiopia's potential to enhance its diplomatic influence *via* achieving double-track diplomacy while reinforcing the importance of Türkiye's mediatory role and the strategic backing of international actors, such as the United States. The combination of these factors underscores the declaration's broader implications for regional and global diplomacy, which paves the way for a more stable and collaborative Horn of Africa region. Thus, Ethiopia's diplomatic capacity to leverage this momentum could re-exemplify its role in regional diplomacy while setting down a solid foundation for sustaining peace and stability in the Horn of Africa region.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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