

EU-NIGERIA RELATIONS AND DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Over the years, the European Union (EU) in partnership with the US has acted as the watchdog of democratization and democratic consolidations around the world. Leaders of other nations have been verbally reprimanded by EU leaders for the latter's perceived anti-democratic policies. Also, EU leaders have on many occasions joined the US in wars, preemptive strikes, regime changes, economic sanctions, travel bans and other punitive actions aimed at promoting democracy around the globe. This is generally true in Africa and particularly in Nigeria because unlike other parts of the world colonized by European powers, European influence in Africa, especially over African leaders is still overwhelming. However, unlike her attitude towards other African countries, the Europe Union has been particularly reluctant to come down hard on Nigerian leaders even when the latter are involved in flagrant violation of democratic principles. Thus, this study examined EU-Nigeria relations and democratic consolidation in Nigeria. Specifically, the paper employs the documentary method and concept analysis to investigate which between economic interest and democratic consolidation has overriding influence in EU's policy towards Nigeria. The study revealed that democratic consolidation is a significant determinant of EU's policies towards Nigeria. However, it further revealed that the logic of economic necessity and security overrides EU's democratic interests in Nigeria and that is why the Union failed to act against Nigeria in spite of the anti-democratic attitudes of the government. Based on this, the study recommended that the civil society and other private institutions in Nigeria interested in democratic consolidation should not overly rely on help from the EU but should depend more on what they can do on their own to promote democratic consolidation because EU like other players in the international arena are driven by self-interest in their policies.

Keywords: European Union, Relations, Nigeria, Democracy, Democratic Consolidation, Elections, Corruption, Economic Interest

Introduction

The consolidation of liberal Democracy according to Oluwole entails scientific advancement, economic viability, political stability, technological breakthrough, educational development and ensures life enhancing social services (Oluwole, 2003). This is because of the accountability principles, those in government under democracy are held accountable and responsible for their actions. Political officers do not have automatic security of tenure but can be challenged and even displaced in accordance with the will of the people through institutional mechanisms (Ogundiya & Baba, 2007). This mechanism makes democracy imperative as no man becomes a lord overall, but what is obtainable is the rule of law (Adeyinka & Ojo, 2014). Democratic consolidations are activities, programmes and structures aimed at enhancing the practice and enforcement of democratic ethos (Khakee, 2007). These include citizens' involvement, equality, rule of law, political broadmindedness, accountability, transparency, regular, free and fair elections, economic freedom, and containment of power abuse, human rights, and multi-party system of governance. Others include neutrality of state institutions and a culture of accepting the results of elections (Khakee, 2007). Therefore, any activity carried out by any party or actor with the aim of enhancing any of the above principles is democratic consolidation.

Throughout the history of Europe up to the period of the two World Wars, European states were dominated by monarchical governments. Then, there were very few democratic countries around the world. However, with the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the eventual triumph of the US and its Western allies in the Cold War, Western states like the US and UK, international organizations such as

the United Nations, European Union and the World Bank made democratic support their mainstream of development strategies (Tanga & Thomas, 2009). In this context, it is important to note, that support for good governance and democracy is a central element of EU's external policy towards third world countries (Peter & Michele, 2011). One of the means through which EU pursues this objective is by promoting and funding elections in those parts of the world where the Union feels elections are still fledgling. This makes the EU to stress the importance of good governance and democracy in its relations with developing countries of Africa.

European Commission began funding elections in Africa in 1994 as set out in the article 6 of the Treaty on European Union (Dimphe, 2010). Thus, in the 2000 Cotonou Agreement between the EU and the members of African, Caribbean and Pacific (APC) groups of states, democracy was given a priority (European Commission, 2005). In 2005, the EU strategy for Africa which provides comprehensive, integrated and long term framework for EU- Africa relations also stressed good governance as a central prerequisite for sustainable development (European Commission, 2005). Also in 2006, when the EU Parliament Council, Commission and Member States presented a common vision that will guide their future development actions, good governance and democracy was given prominence. They underlined that progress in the protection of human rights, good governance and democratization is fundamental for poverty reduction and sustainable development, and that, as a consequence, these issues will be mainstreamed throughout all EU development activities (European Commission, 2006). Similarly, the EU states increasingly emphasis good governance in their bilateral development cooperation with African states. Emphasis was also placed on democracy under the EU-Africa summit in Lisbon, Portugal in 2007 (Lorenzo, 2009).

However, some of EU's policy actions and inactions in Nigeria have often left researchers wondering whether the Union's support for democratic consolidation is the dominant factor driving its policy in the country or whether there are other interest(s) which the Union prioritizes over democratic consolidation. For instance, when President Muhammadu Buhari in the run-up to the 2019 general election, sacked Chief Justice of Nigeria, Justice Walter Onnoghen, many Nigeria took issues with the action. There was widespread believe that the sack was pursued to protect Buhari and the ruling party's interest at the tribunals that would likely arise after the election. There was uproar in the country. Since a lot of Nigerians look up to the EU as the custodian of democracy in the country, many looked up to the Union to do something about Buhari's perceived anti-democratic attitude. Unfortunately, not as much as a word of condemnation came from the EU; only deafening silence!

The issue here and why many looked up to the EU to at least condemn the anti-democratic action of President Buhari is that Buhari himself is a participant in the general election and therefore any action taken by him at the dying minute to change those who could influence the outcome of the election delegitimizes his position as a contestant in the process. Nigerians cried; members of the civil society protested but Buhari's government was adamant and instead used the military to clamp down on the protesters. This tension in EU's policy towards Nigeria, where on the one hand, the Union undertakes actions that promote democracy and on the other hand, slakes from encouraging democratic consolidation is the inspiration behind undertaking this research.

Hence, although a lot of scholarship has gone into finding ways of improving Nigerian democracy, what researchers have done in the field has primarily focused on bad leadership and how finding ways to improve that can enhance democratization in the country. Thus, in spite of being the most prominent international organization supporting democratic stability in Nigeria, EU's action and inaction in strengthening Nigeria's democratic institutions has not been sufficiently addressed in extant literature. More importantly, the selective roles the EU plays in supporting democratic consolidation in Nigeria has

raised the question on what exactly takes the lead role in EU's policy towards Nigeria: economic interest or democratic consolidation?

EU's Support for Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria

From 1995 until 1998, the EU is mainly concerned with the establishment of democracy and democratic principles in Nigeria. Evidence for this is found in the interests and goals expressed in the EU's documents within this period. In 1995, for instance, the EU's main intention behind the imposing of sanctions on Nigeria is that the military regime should demonstrate "convincingly its intention to return to civilian democratic rule within a credible and rapid time-frame" (Council of the European Union, 1995).

When Nigeria returned to democratic rule in 1999, the main policy of the Union was again geared towards encouraging democratic consolidation in Nigeria. This is evident in the EU's support for Nigeria in its 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019 general elections, which included financial and technical assistances. In 2007, there was much hope for effective democratic elections in Nigeria not only amongst the Nigerian people but also within the international community, since it was the first change in presidency since Nigerian independence in 1960 (Rawlence & Albin-Lackey, 2007). Contrary to all hope, the process as well as the outcome of the elections was shocking and devastating. Already prior to the elections, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) of then-President Olusegun Obasanjo and his successor Umaru Yar'Adua tried to "use the law and law enforcement agencies, in very perverse ways, to exclude those they regarded as strong opponents from the electoral process" (Alemika & Omotosho, 2008).

During the elections, "in 95 per cent of the states, no voting took place at all. Nevertheless, the Independent National Election Commission (INEC) reported huge voters turnouts" (Rawlence & Albin-Lackey, 2007). In those places where voting took place, it was beclouded by immense electoral fraud. According to the EU Election Observer Mission (2007), "at least 200 people, including policemen, were killed in election-related violence." Regarding these events, the election according to Aduba (2008), was not much characterized by democratic principles. Even Obasanjo himself acknowledged that "the elections may not have been fair but that the nation should at least congratulate itself for having conducted the elections" (p. 324). By and large, the elections did not bring about the expected shift to democratic principles and differed only slightly from the patterns of the preceding elections in 1999 and 2003.

Nevertheless, the presence of these lapses is not a sign that the EU is less committed to Nigeria democracy in comparison to other countries. A little evaluation of the Union's efforts in the last (2019) general election underlines the fact that the EU is upbeat in its effort to foster the establishment of democratic principles in Nigeria and that it understands the fact that democratic elections are a prerequisite for a functioning democracy. Thus, when Nigeria prepared to hold the 2019 general elections in an environment characterized by a struggling economy and a volatile security situation, the EU availed her of various logistics, including training of electoral personnel to enable her conduct a free and fair election (Ogugua, 2021).

Here again, the EU demonstrated its high commitment to consolidate democratic progress in Nigeria. It would be the sixth consecutive time that the EU sent an Election Observation Mission (EOM) to observe Nigeria's general elections, chaired by Maria Arena, (S&D, and Belgium). Since the return of democracy to the country in 1998, EU observers have been present at every general election held from 2007 to 2019. The European Parliament has been involved in all EU EOMs to Nigeria (Zamfir, 2019).

The EU has also provided financial and technical assistance to electoral institutions and stakeholders since 1999. As an African, Caribbean, and Pacific Group of States (ACP) country, Nigeria is a beneficiary

of the European Development Fund (EDF). According to the National Indicative Programme established with the country, 17.6 % (around €90 million) of planned EDF financing for the period 2014-2020 is reserved for rule of law, governance and democracy. The objective of EU support is to improve economic governance, consolidate the rule of law, enhance peace and security, reinforce democratic processes and help manage migration and mobility (Zamfir, 2019). In 2017, the EU established a specific programme 'Nigeria' endowed with €26.5 million from the EDF, for a five year period. It was launched at the beginning of 2018, with the stated purpose of contributing to the consolidation of democracy, while taking inspiration from the recommendations of the 2015 EU-EOM. It provides funding to ten organizations that implement various activities (trainings, seminars, capacity development, awareness raising etc.) in support of the Independent National Electoral Commission (€13 million), Nigeria's National Assembly (€3 million), political parties (€2.7 million), media (€2.6 million) and civil society organizations (€3 million).

The European Parliament is strongly committed to reinforcing electoral processes and democratic institutions and stakeholders in the country. The Parliament's Democracy Support and Election Coordination Group (DEG) oversee and manage the activities carried out with Nigerian partners. Nigeria was added to the DEG list of priority countries in 2017. Under this framework, a comprehensive programme of capacity-building activities has been developed and implemented with the National Assembly of Nigeria. These have included several joint seminars between Nigerian parliamentarians and EP Members, a fact finding mission to Abuja, as well as training for the staff of the Nigerian parliament.

In summary, EU's provision of assistance to Nigeria's electoral institutions has promoted democratic values in the country. This conclusion is corroborated by an empirical research conducted by Oluwale, (2003) to investigate the impacts of EU's support for Nigeria's electoral institution on democratic consolidation in the country. Anchoring the study on the liberal democratic theory, the target population for the research comprises all the principal officers of international organizations; government agencies; non-governmental organizations and political parties. A sample of 200 respondents was selected using the purposive sampling technique. Utilizing secondary and primary data, the study tested three hypothetical assumptions. Analysis done through simple percentages, frequency distribution tables and chi-square (χ^2) statistical test reveals that the Europeans Union has a strong collaborative effort with the Nigeria's democratic institutions. It further revealed that the collaboration between the EU and Nigeria's democratic institutions is a significant factor to be considered in consolidating Nigeria democracy.

EU's Economic Interest in Nigeria

While it is obvious that the EU has interest in democratic consolidation in Nigeria, what is however striking is that the EU in addition to pursuing democratic consolidation in Nigeria also expresses other interests especially the recognition and the overarching importance it attached to the pivotal regional and international role of this country" (Council of the European Union, 1998). What this statement indicates is that EU policies in Nigeria are at least not driven by a single factor. As expressed in the document, it shows that EU policy besides democratic normative values is driven by security political advantages, since it is especially recognizing Nigeria's "contribution to peace-keeping activities and operations especially in the West African sub-region" (Council of the European Union, 1998).

This shift in EU's common position is confirmed in 2001 when the union expressly stated that it considers Nigeria "a key partner in terms of political, economic, trade and development cooperation" (Council of the European Union, 2001). The EU's increasing emphasis on economic development in Nigeria is also observable with regard to the allocation of the European Development Fund, of which 220 million euros are allocated to economic - as well as state - and local institutional reform, whereas only four million euro are allocated to the promotion of human rights and 5 million to the improvement of democratic elections (Nigeria & Commission, 2001). That the EU is interested in benefits from this

economic cooperation with Nigeria is clearly expressed by the statement that the objective is to “strengthen the mutually beneficial relations” (Council of the European Union, 2001).

However, despite the observed tendency of increasing economic interests it should not be overseen that the EU still is interested in consolidating democracy in Nigeria. In general, it can be stated that the EU’s main goals toward Nigeria become more diversified, ranging from the consolidation of democracy and human rights over institutional capacity building, to poverty reduction, economic development and to the enhancement of Nigeria’s capacity to contribute to regional integration, peace, security and development in West Africa. Another aim stated is to strengthen the involvement of civil society and public authorities in the EU-Nigerian dialogue and to build civil society networks of NGOs, which promote democracy (Council of the European Union, 2001). With regard to the weighting or dominance of certain interests in this pool of diversified interests, it can be said that even though not all interests are expressed in all documents, all of them arise more than ones either in the preambles of Position or ‘key areas for future EU support’.

A new and the third EU’s policy attitude towards Nigeria started to evolve from 2007-2020. Unlike what happened in the first phase when there was much emphasis on making Nigeria a democratic state and ensuring that democracy is consolidated in the country, the emphasis in this third face shifted to economic interests and security concerns.

Hence, with regard to EU interests in Nigeria, a development is recognizable from only expressing interests in democracy promotion to also showing interest in diversified issue areas. Especially remarkable is the repeated emphasis of the EU’s recognition of Nigeria’s political and economic influence as well as its interest in strengthening mutually beneficial relations with Nigeria and the stressing of economic cooperation.

Considering this changed attitude of the EU, it seems that the EU increasingly recognizes Nigeria as a partner instead of an aid-receiver, explaining the rather deliberate promotion of European values and the increased stressing of strategic interests in mutually beneficial relations. That the relations indeed became more beneficial for the EU, in terms of economic benefits, is reflected in increased trade with Nigeria. Especially with regard to increasing amount of imports –of which the biggest share consists of oil-imports- the EU might recognize its growing dependency on Nigeria, resulting in the trend that Nigeria is increasingly regarded as a partner. This trend is true for several African states that become, even though slowly, better developed and involved in international cooperation.

A special advantage of several African states, like Nigeria, is that they possess scarce resources, especially oil and gas, which are valuable for Europe. Furthermore, many enterprising individuals, as well as organizations discovered the huge untouched investment potential of Africa, e.g. with regard to its developing infrastructure as well as its biodiversity. The consequences of this slow African awakening might imply a slightly renewed self-perception of the EU, becoming more dependent on former aid receivers. Hence, in order to make no losses with regard to its normative as well as economic influence and importance, the EU tries to protect its relationship with Nigeria by imposing positive rather than negative measures. As a consequence of this rather cautious behavior, in some instances – as the elections in 2003 and 2007 - no consequences are drawn anymore for Nigeria.

Overriding Influence of Economic Interest in EU Policy towards Nigeria

In spite of the apparent discrepancies in the trends of EU-Nigerian relationship analyzed above, economic interest seems always to be the overriding interest and driving force of EU policy in Nigeria. Even in the first phase (1998-2001) clearly underlined by the union’s documents as a period of policy driven by the

interest to democratize Nigeria, the economic interest was still unhidden. For instance, in the aftermath of the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and other Ogoni leaders in late 1995 for their protests against Shell operations in the Niger Delta, political relations with the EU came to an almost complete standstill. The EU reinforced travel restrictions, imposed an arms embargo, and suspended most development cooperation with Nigeria (European Commission, 2000). The Shell connection notwithstanding, there was no oil embargo and no freezing of Nigerian leaders' assets in Europe. EU companies, including oil companies such as Shell and Total, also continued operating in the country. The EU measures were lifted after the elections in May 1999, following the death of the military dictator Sani Abacha in 1998 (European Commission, 2000).

The fact that the dominant driver of EU's policy in Nigeria is driven by economic interest is further demonstrated by the Union's response to the 2007 general election which was condemned as fraudulent by both local and international observers. What is remarkable is that even though the EU Council Presidency expressed concern and disappointment about the elections, it did not urge Nigerian authorities to bring about serious changes. Even though, in a case of unfulfilled obligations or violations of democratic standards, Art. 96 of the Cotonou Agreement of 2000 allows for the possibility to examine the situation and to find an acceptable solution as well as remedy for it. This instrument was never applied.

This is particularly striking when one observed the stringent measures the EU has taken against other countries in Africa who the union accused as going against democratic principles. A clear example of this is the sanction and other punitive measures levied by the Union on the government of Laurent Gbagbo, the otherwise president of Ivory Coast when his regime was accused of pursuing anti-democratic policies in the northern part of the country. Other instances include the sanctions against Russia and Belarus who the Union accused of suppressing oppositions voices. The sanctions against Russia are more extensive and started in 2014 following the annexation of Crimea when the Union accused Moscow of meddling in the internal affair of Ukraine (BBC News, 2020).

However, this is not peculiar to Nigeria alone. It appears to be the fundamental determinant of EU's policies towards other nations. For instance, after the economic sanctions levied against Russia for annexing Crimea, efforts were made by the EU to ensure that supplies of gas from Russia to Union's member countries were not affected by the embargo (Ogugua, 2021). This again indicates that the union prioritizes its economic interest over democratization, even when it mattered most like the annexation of Crimea which undermines a major pillar of international law (territorial integrity).

Over the past two years, the EU has sent EOMs to 20 countries around the world (and contributed to Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) missions in Eastern Europe) mostly headed by a member of the European Parliament. It also has provided technical assistance to more countries. The EU implements these missions upon request from the governments of the countries where elections are taking place, but they can be canceled if the EU deems the situation not conducive to monitoring or when conditions do not allow for a "free and fair" electoral process. Such was the case in Bangladesh, where the EU canceled its EOM in December 2013.

However, in May 2014 the EU monitored the uncontested electoral process in Egypt, which was marked by repression of the opposition by the caretaker government that had assumed power after the forcible removal of President Mohamed Morsi in July 2013. The EU justified its decision to move forward with election monitoring on the grounds that the EOM would allow it to continue engagement with Cairo and press for the improvement of basic political conditions before upcoming parliamentary elections. The decision was seen as legitimizing the new regime and abandoning the liberal opposition that the EU had earlier supported (Hellyer, 2014). Meanwhile, despite the moderate criticism made by the preliminary EOM report, national European leaders reacted with varying degrees of acceptance of the election of Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. In short, whatever the original intentions of the mission, the result was a de facto

legitimization of the new regime in Egypt notwithstanding its repression of the opposition. Another noteworthy case is Azerbaijan in 2013, when President Ilham Aliyev was reelected with over 80 percent of the vote. The praise that members of the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe offered to the electoral process was in stark contrast to the assessment of the long-term mission of the OSCE. This undermined the credibility of the European Parliament mission, which some claimed was manipulated, while legitimizing a fraudulent election (http://www.esiweb.org/pdf/esi_document_id_145.pdf).

Indeed, what is obvious here is that where major trade partners are concerned, the EU tends to prioritize economic interests over democratic consolidation. Whereas, where a smaller or a country with less economic clout is involved, the EU seems to pursue the policy of democratic consolidation. For example, in Bangladesh, the EU was able to improve labor standards by making use of its role as Bangladesh's largest trading partner. Following the 2013 collapse of an illegally constructed building in which over 1,000 factory workers died, High Representative Catherine Ashton and Trade Commissioner Karel De Gucht issued a joint statement criticizing labor, health, and safety standards. The threat of suspension from the Generalized System of Preferences (a program allowing developing countries preferential access to the EU market through reduced tariffs) led the Bangladeshi government to make commitments toward improving its labor rights and factory conditions (Khakee, 2017).

Nevertheless, as the EU's action was triggered by an especially dramatic episode, it may not represent a change in the EU's otherwise weak record in this area. EU-China relations are a case in point. On paper, the EU has continued its diplomatic activity in support of human rights in China: in multilateral institutions and bilaterally, through statements and declarations, through a long-standing human rights dialogue (in which it is very hard to address the broad range of human rights and democracy shortcomings in the country), and through a September 2013 visit by Lambrinidis, who was granted unprecedented access both in the Tibetan areas and in Beijing. At the end of 2013, however, the EU and China marked the 10th anniversary of their strategic partnership with the EU-China 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation. The agenda calls for greater cooperation on global peace and security, intensified and expanded trade cooperation, sustainable development, and increased people-to-people contacts—while barely mentioning human rights issues, despite a lack of change in Chinese conditions.

China is the EU's second-largest trading partner after the United States. Intense commercial contacts flourish particularly with Germany—which since the economic crisis has become China's biggest trading partner among the EU member states—and the United Kingdom. Bilateral visits of German and UK leaders have led to deals that are expected to give an extraordinary boost to trade. Accompanying a new focus on business has been a sharp toning down of criticism of China's human rights conditions and conditions in Tibet. For example, while European leaders had previously maintained diplomatic contacts with the Dalai Lama, they have not provided support when it might in any way jeopardize economic interests with China (Smith, 2012 & Watt, 2013).

In the case of Nigeria, these interests ought not to be neglected as “West Africa is accounting for about 40% of all EU-African Caribbean and Pacific Group of States(ACP) trade” (European Commission, 2007) and Nigeria constitutes for the biggest share of West Africa in terms of GDP and population (European Commission, 2007). What makes Nigeria especially important to the EU in an economic sense is that it ranks seventh among the EU's oil-providers (Directorate-General for Energy, 2011). Thus, Zamfir, Ionel. (2019) has stated that Democracy promotion is not a top priority in EU Nigerian relations. According to him oil is widely regarded as paramount, followed by trade relations. Concerns over migration, Nigeria's role as a regional power, its fragile internal balance, and attainment of the Millennium Development Goals fill out the list. Also, many EU countries have strong and long-standing commercial and economic ties to Nigeria. Oil and gas extraction form the backbone of this relationship, but other industries, such as infrastructure and services, are also present in the country. The UK is one of the largest investors. Over

more than half a century, Shell has invested several billion euros in the Nigerian oil and gas sector. Other large British companies with activities in Nigeria include British Airways, British- American Tobacco, Cadbury, GlaxoSmithKline, Guinness, Unilever, and Virgin Atlantic.

Similarly, the French presence is strong: cumulated French investments in Nigeria are as large as those made in all other West African countries taken together. This is especially noteworthy given France's traditionally strong ties to francophone West Africa. Again, the oil and gas sector dominates (Total, Technip), but other sectors such as manufacturing (Air Liquide, Lafarge, and Michelin), services (Accor, Air France, SDVBolloré, and Sodexo), and infrastructure (Alstom, Areva, Bouygues, GroupeEiffage, and Schneider) are also represented. 41 Italian companies, mainly in the energy sector, construction, and shipping, are also present. Italy has been involved in the Nigerian petroleum industry since 1965, through The Nigeria Agip Oil Company (NAOC) of the Eni group. The main Italian construction companies operating in Nigeria are the Impregilo Group, CappaD'Alberto, Salini, Gitto Construction, BoriniProno, AG Ferrero, Eagles Construction, and Stabilini. Italian shipping companies such as Ignazio Messina, Grimaldi Shipping Company, Lloyd Triestino, Comet Shipping Line, and the Mediterranean Shipping Company handle more than 30 per cent of the entire Nigerian maritime traffic. About fifty German companies operate in Nigeria, with offices or production facilities. The largest construction company in Nigeria, Julius Berger, is partly German owned and directed. Other large German firms include Siemens and Deutsche Bank (Zamfir, 2019).

As the eleventh largest producer in the world, the Nigerian economy is dominated by oil. Oil accounted for nine tenths of government revenue and 99 per cent of its exports in 2005. In its shadow, other previously important industries such as agriculture (cash crops and staple foodstuffs alike) and manufacturing have either shrunk or disappeared outright. Oil exports are set to grow, as the rate of new discoveries is high and production is growing faster than in other regions of the world. Oil extraction is technically easy in Nigeria, and the quality of the crude oil is high. Hardly surprising, energy accounts for the bulk of EU Nigerian merchandise trade: in 2006 close to 95 per cent of EU imports from Nigeria derived from the energy sector. Europe plays an important role nevertheless, as European companies are very active in oil and gas extraction in Nigeria. As noted above, Shell, Total, and Agip, together with US-based Exxon Mobil and Chevron Texaco, dominate the Nigerian energy industry.

Although technically easy, oil production in Nigeria has become increasingly difficult at the societal and political levels. Oil revenues have helped fuel massive corruption while ordinary Nigerians continue living in the deepest misery. According to World Bank sources, approximately 80 per cent of oil revenues are concentrated in the hands of 1 per cent of the population (World Bank, 2019). This, in turn, has created deep resentment and a breeding ground for both political contestation and violence, in particular in the Niger Delta. As political protest has been unsuccessful and violence has often proved to pay, the insurgency (often targeting oil installations) has escalated in recent years. Inequalities, environmental degradation (due to oil spills, the flaring of gas when extracting oil, etc.), political alienation, and the destruction of the social fabric have also helped fuel small-scale oil thefts, arms dealing, protection rackets, and kidnappings. Large scale oil thefts, in contrast, are undertaken with the help of high-ranking military officials, politicians, and businessmen. Insecurity has led to important disruptions of production.

According to Alhaji Baba GanaKingibe, a high-level government official, Nigeria lost about US \$40 million daily when 500,000 barrels of crude oil was shut in the Niger Delta, and cost escalations ranged from 30 to 40 per cent. The response of federal politicians has been to send in the security forces. Local politicians have turned to armed gangs - which are often involved in criminal activities - for protection. Hence, as in many other countries living off extractive industries, oil has drastically worsened governance problems in Nigeria. As a consequence, analysts and people from the donor community alike stress the importance of working in the Delta region, as instability there is a threat to the stability of Nigeria as a

whole. Although the links between (bad) governance and extractive industries have been clear for a number of years, the policy community has only started to address the issue in earnest relatively recently. Hence, an EU official said that it was in 2004 that they “discovered” it was impossible to separate the Delta communities and the oil companies, and that no solution can be found without the involvement of all stakeholders (Zamfir, 2019).

Over the years, the Nigerian government has created a number of different mechanisms to return some of the oil money to the Delta region. As a rule, these have not been very effective, and have often even been counterproductive: very little money has reached the poor, and corruption at the state level has remained as widespread as ever. The same is true for the “community outreach” activities of the multilateral oil companies. Internationally, perhaps the most important collaborative effort to “secure” the Delta for oil production came in 2005, when Nigeria, the United States and the UK set up the Gulf of Guinea Energy Security Strategy (GGESS) to coordinate efforts to stamp out oil theft, illegal small arms dealings and money laundering. Since then, Canada, France, Netherlands, Norway, and Switzerland have joined. For Nigeria, this has meant that it now receives assistance to equip and upgrade its amphibious capacity, and that a tagging mechanism, preventing stolen oil from being easily sold internationally, has been developed. Although GGESS has recently set up a working group on sustainable development, there is no governance dimension to this initiative. With its strong focus on energy security, there is disagreement as to the value of GGESS. As one European Commission official put it: “this is not the right way forward” (Zamfir, 2019).

The deductive evidence here is clear, namely that EU’s places more value on its businesses in Nigeria than the latter’s democratic consolidation. This seems the only possible explanation why the union still maintained its business tie with murderous regime indicted by the highest commission of the union as unjustly murdering its people. Thus, while EU’s interest in democratic consolidation in Nigeria cannot be denied, evidence points more on economic interest as the overriding driver of the union’s policy towards Nigeria. Thus, the answer to the research question is that the EU’s prioritization of her economic interests in Nigeria is the reason Nigeria is not sanctioned for her anti-democratic practice.

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

This study investigates the nexus of EU’s economic interest and democratic consolidation in Nigeria. The findings of the research revealed that the EU has special interest in Nigerian democracy and has from 2007-2023 and beyond worked towards the consolidation of that democracy. Thus, from the findings of this study, it is obvious that EU’s democratic support for Nigeria has significant positive effect on the country’s democratization process. The sum of 35 million euro was provided for INEC to run electoral demands in the rule up to the 2019 election. Prior to this, the EU donated USD 25 million which is the highest given to the DGD project for 2012-2015. Various training for electoral officials was supported by the EU through the supply of training kits for the participants. The EU supported the capacity of CSOs to monitor Nigeria’s electoral process. The effect is the increase in the number of CSOs that monitored the 2015 and 2019 elections compared to the 2011 general elections.

In the country’s democratic experience the 2011 was marked a success compared to the previous general elections. However, the 2015 general election was the first successful democratic challenge of incumbent president in the country’s history. President Goodluck Jonathan’s concession to president-elect Muhammadu Buhari, prior to the official announcement of the result will be remembered as a signature moment in the consolidation of Nigeria’s democracy. This milestone in Nigeria’s democratization process has improved the quality of relation with the rest of the world. Thus, the stability of Nigeria’s democratic terrain has propelled the EU in furthering its support for Nigeria’s political system in other areas such as poverty reduction, conflict management initiative and anti-corruption initiatives.

However, this research has also revealed that democratic consolidation is not the dominant factor that determines EU's policy in Nigeria. Accordingly, the work discovered that there are two major factors that drive EU's policy toward Nigeria, namely economic and democratic ethos. As the study illustrates, there is compelling evidence that each time democratic concerns on the one hand, and economic interest on the other hand come into conflict in its policy towards Nigeria, that the EU prioritizes its economic concerns over consolidation of democracy. This attitude was evident in the 2007 presidential election when in spite of accepting that the election was fraudulent and didn't meet international standard, the Union still did not condemn the process but continue its business as usual with the seemingly illegal regime.

Also, it is remarkable that in spite of all the human rights abuses committed by the Nigeria military, especially the use of excessive force, torture and extra-judicial killing in the Niger Delta, the EU all the while still maintained arms sales and other military corporation with the Nigerian military. Most importantly, the fact that most of these atrocities were committed in the Niger Delta and that the EU member states did not see any reason to suspend their oil explorations in the region underlines strongly where the interest of the Union lies in its relation with Nigeria.

Above all, the study also clearly demonstrates that the EU prioritizes its security over democratic consolidation using an in-depth analysis of the military corporation policies the Union has pursued over the years with Nigeria. Particularly, the EU in order to maintain stability in Nigeria has kept partnership with the country's army. These policies have not only undermined the protection of human rights which the EU claims to promote but have especially legitimized the repressive attitudes of many Nigerian governments. This remarkably shows that though the EU has a serious stake in promoting democracy, the Union does not hesitate to abandon this interest when its economic and security concerns are at stake. Thus, this work has shown that unlike what is widely circulated in EU documents and what is generally represented in mainstream local and international media about how the EU prioritizes human rights and other democratic principles, that the major motivation of EU's policy in Nigeria is its economic and security interests. In other words, the EU pays as much interest to democratic consolidation in Nigeria as it favours its economic and security interest.

Based on these findings, this study would like to make the following recommendations:

1. There is need for the EU to reassess its policy in Nigeria and try to strike a balance between her efforts to protect her economic and security interests' democratic consolidation. Nigerian populace is increasingly getting enlightened and the double-standard the EU plays may eventually backfire and end-up in the destabilization and violent revolution which the EU fears and tries to avoid.
2. Also, pro-democracy activists in Nigeria who have been trying to navigate Nigeria to the path of democracy need to change their overreliance on the EU and concentrate more on what they can achieve on their own. This is important as this study has revealed that the dominant interest EU has in Nigeria is not democratic consolidation but its economic and security interests.

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