
Political Consciousness and Effective Participation as Desirable Aspect of Political Development: *The Predicaments of the People of Yangtu Special Development Area, Nigeria*

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Abstract

The objectives of this study are to determine the remote and immediate causes of the plight of the Yangtu Community; to investigate whether they are satisfied with their present status of not belonging to any local government Area in Taraba State; and to what extent have they exercised political consciousness and participation in decision making to change their situation for good. findings from this study reveal that (i) political consciousness and effective participation is desirable aspect of political development in Nigeria but in practice protection is given to some communities while other communities are discriminated and marginalized (ii) the creation of Yangtu Special Development Area nullified the Federal Government of Nigeria Letter of 1997 which forced the Yangtu Community from Takum to Ussa Local Government Area. The creation also marginalized the Yangtu community members from having a sense of belonging and political participation in the affairs of a local government of their choice in Taraba State, that is, Takum Local Government Area or the creation of Yangtu Local Government Area. (iii) The people of Yangtu are politically conscious and have are still making demands for a change of policy to allow them make effective political participation in a local government of their choice. (iv) There are constitutional and political factors which are blocking the realization of their demands and political development of the Area. The study recommends that since constitutional amendments have not been made to reduce the cumbersome constitutional processes for Local Government and boundary adjustment, the State Governor and other Stakeholders in the State should monster necessary political will to assist the people belong to a local government of their choice and or have elected representatives in the Special Development Area and the State House of Assembly.

Key Words: *Chiefdom, Self Determination, Political Consciousness and Participation, Local Government Area, Special Development Area*

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

Many African communities are facing problems of development. This has generated conflicts and rekindled the interest of scholars and different political thinkers about Africa's development particularly in Taraba State, Nigeria, where intergroup conflicts easily erupted and leading to loss of lives, property and towns which took centuries to establish. This has returned many communities to a state of underdevelopment and individuals feel hopeless as refugees and experiencing intensified poverty in their own country, state and local government. It is then worrisome when a people are political conscious want to politically

participate yet they don't have the chance of expressing themselves during crucial political activities like general election in Nigeria. It is also worrisome where there is no political consciousness yet the opportunities are there. Those who allied with the ruling class secure elective positions against the actual wishes of the law and the electorates. This tends to suggest that the political consciousness of the poor without the support of the ruling class makes it impossible for the poor patriots to participate in decision making that would positively shape their destiny by themselves. And where the outcome of the elections was not to the favour of the poor masses, the poor continue to be confused, disorganized and unable to confidently do that which is required.

1.2 Statement of Research Problem

The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in Section 14 speaks about the relationship between the government and the people. It declares that sovereignty belongs to the people; the security and welfare shall be the primary purpose of government as well as the government should promote a sense of belonging and ensure the participation of the diverse people in their government; section 15 is on political objectives. It encourages national integration and section 17 encourages social freedom, equality and justice. But it becomes worrisome when a people are politically conscious and want to politically participate yet they don't have the chance of exercising their right and achieving expected result during crucial political activities. It is also worrisome where there is no political consciousness yet the opportunities are there. For example section 8 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal has provision on how unity, peace and stability can be secured through staying together in one geopolitical entity. Where it is not possible to stay together there is freedom of movement, resident rights and separation using the powers of creation of new geopolities. But some local, state and federal government's agencies fail or neglect to carry out their duties most appropriately. For example whereas section 87 (1) empowers the Local Government Councils to create Development Areas within its area of jurisdiction for people in the range of 8,000 to 20,000 and such people should have common traditional ties and geographical contiguity and the Local Government shall be responsible for the funding of the development areas, the case of Yangtu, two contrary actions occurred and viz:- (i) Yangtu was neither created by Takum nor Ussa Local Government (2) The then Chairman Takum Local Government vehemently lobbied the House of Assembly not to allow Takum LGA to fund the then proposed Yangtu LGA. And it took members of the House a lot of efforts to attach development area under the office of the Executive Governor.

From the forgoing the following research questions arise.

1. What are the remote and immediate causes of marginalization politics in Takum Local government area?
2. What is responsible for the existence of this abnormality that is, having an area which does not belong to a local government area in Taraba State, Nigeria?
3. What are the constitutional and political predicaments of the Yangtu community for not belonging to a local government of their choice?
4. Are the people politically conscious and want to participate in mainstream politics?
5. What should be done to ameliorate the hardship of the Yangtu Community?

1.3 Research Methodology

The data used in compiling this report was collected from two major sources. These sources are the primary and secondary sources. The primary source provides data from the conduct of oral interview and secondary source provides data from relevant documents about the area.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Political Development

Initially development was defined from perspective of "Westernization" or "modernity". This Western development perspective according to Eckstein (1982) is the process of change which copies the types of social, economic and political systems that have developed in Western Europe and North America in the nineteenth century, which to Ake (1979), the western world "*foisted capitalist values and capitalist development on the Third World, and serve imperialist ends*" (Chris, Tuesday, 26 February 2013). The implications of Capitalism are (a) it encourage and legitimizes the dictatorship of Third World bourgeoisies." (b) it assumes that development is a uni-linear activity, with Western Europe as the model. It then requires developing countries must follow the path followed by Western Europe in order to have development (c) It made Africans believe in *cultural relativism* which asserts that European culture is superior in relation to others as Africans accept their underdevelopment as natural and feel inferior and (d) it assumes that Africa do not have or do not have enough capital to invest into productive ventures to usher in development an so Africans must continue to depend and rely on the West for everything. This believes and practices were used by the African elites to interpret intergroup, inter-ethnic and other relations in Africa to perpetuate a few in power. But because there is variety or diverse needs, forces, cultures and institutional forms, development then is a generic or general term which describes change in several activities: social, economic, cultural, political, agricultural, e.t.c. In this paper we are focusing on political development. Park's (1984) formal definition of political development is that it is "*the capacity of the political system to satisfy the changing needs of the members of the society*" In determining whether satisfaction is being achieved, it is expected that there should be change from lowest to highest sense of "survival", "belongingness", "leisure", "control", "Institution building", "regime formation," "political integration," "resource expansion," and "conflict management". This begins with positive change in individual and grows to group /institutional change. In the words of Chilton (2004) political development entails "*a shift from institutions that were moderately able to satisfy people's control needs, on the one hand, to institutions that were powerfully able to satisfy people survival needs.*" Political Development is a movement toward a better class of institutions that is those that have the capacity for satisfying high-level needs and hierarchy of needs as postulated by Maslow. While development is understood as "change and how this "change" would take place from the level of individual to group approach is entirely another difficult task for many individual and communities to peaceful achieve development, This means the mere existence of institutions cannot bring development until the individuals in the group or community remain focused and are committed to achieve genuine change. More specifically, Eckstein (1982) defines political development as the growth that occurs "in politics as such", It is the growth in both "princely domain," and the growth of all "relations that involve, expression, legitimizing power, conflict management, or the regulation of social conduct at both micro-macro levels or domain of politics in the society.

2.2 Political Consciousness

Political consciousness according to Wikipedia is the idea of being self-aware among human beings. Also from the Marxian school of thought, "consciousness" describes a person's political sense of self otherwise a person's awareness of politics and understanding of one's true position in history. And according to Hegel God is behind the workings of consciousness in people, while Marx saw the political economy as the engine of mind (wikipedia). Consequently a person or people who are politically conscious translate their mind and constitute a social movement and go into active political participation in form of getting involved in decision making, casting votes to elect representatives, protesting bad policies,

carrying out community development projects to name a few.

Shorkri (2017) observes that the theory of political consciousness and legitimacy are integrated concepts. He then argued that a community without political consciousness is chaotic. That is the community lacks political power, political rights and order because dictators and tyrants usurp or forcefully take over power to cause subordination, humiliation and threat. To avert the use of power negatively there is need to take actions to create a balance that would produce legitimacy (that is the right to govern and that right is recognised by the governed). In essence political consciousness is mutual consciousness, observation, justification, recognition and appreciation of rights. It is reciprocal recognition of both rights of government and the people and it produces confidence in the relationships and unity the State system.

“Political conscious” thus is a path to “Political development” and Political development is one dimensions of the generic term “Development”. Political development is measured by the progress made by communities in practicing democracy efficiently and effectively to pave way for getting other dimensions of development. There are two types of democracy that is the direct and indirect democracy. Indirect democracy is the type practiced in ancient Greece. It is where every adult citizen was directly represented by himself in meetings. But that type had to give way for indirect democracy where few people represent the larger majority in government in contemporary times. Indirect democracy is facilitated by environmental factors for instance increase in population, long distance to meeting venues and inability to pay for the transport fare to the meeting places. This environmental problems notwithstanding, democratic governance requires increased political consciousness and popular participation, which is characterized by respect to rule of law; guarantee to fundamental human rights, free and fair election, respect for majority rule; transparent separation of powers and policy implementation, accountability to the people who gave ruling elites the mandate to represent the people and to allow the people to change representatives who are found wanting in exercise of the mandate given without fear of intimidation.

2.3 Political Participation

In pre-colonial times democratic friendly environment for direct representation were also available in Africa. These were found in areas outside the authoritarian/and undemocratic Hausa-Fulani community. Specifically they were found in stateless communities like that of the Igbos. Here village square meetings served as a forum for direct democracy. It was here family heads or other persons temporarily served as representatives and where necessary the entire village gathered to deliberate on the issues of the day. This was political participation in decision making. During colonial administration, the demand for increased political participation continued to grow and elected council members began to be recruited into local governments. In the modern era direct democracy was not easy with increased population. And political participation began to be given a wider scope.

Mclean and McMillan have defined Political participation as “taking part in politics”. This definition rises the question what constitutes politics? Mclean and McMillan (2003) presented an illustrative description of politics, which we quote as follows:-

We would, for example, assume that activity within a political party or an organization which regarded itself as a pressure group should count as political participation. But what about activity in other sorts of organization, such as sports association and traditional women’s organization? Although not overtly political,

these organizations set the context of politics, give their active members administrative experience and are capable of overt political action if their interest or principles are threatened. There is an opposite problem about political losers: if people act, but ineffectively, perhaps because they are part of a permanent minority in a political system, can we say they have participated in the making of decision? One implication of this doubt is that possessing power is a necessary condition or logical equivalent of true political participation. If one is merely consulted by a powerful person who wants one's view's for information, or if one is mobilized, or re-educated within the control of another, one has not participated in any significant sense.

The above definition arouses our interest to research on what and what in our area of Study fits into this definition? How many people belong to political parties and associations in category "A" (pressure groups) and category "B" (non Pressure groups); and how many do not belong to a party or an association? How many have attended meetings where there community needs are at the top of meeting agenda? And what are those community needs? Zoaka and Dauda (2010) defined the concept of political participation within the framework of: - (i) Attending public meetings and rallies (ii) Electing representatives (iii) Expressing opinions to and through these representatives (iv) Voting and other activities of this nature. Zoaka and Dauda (2010) regard participation in itself is a basic need in the development process. Therefore an increase in political participation increases their creative faculties, ingenuity for self and community transformation. Unlike programmes and projects initiated by external groups and government agents, the participation in administrative decision-making by the local people will bring about bottom-up initiated programmes and projects that the people at local level would be interested to implement maintain and sustain. Also political participation in election is useful not only as a tool for selecting a government but also to reduce the excesses of those in government. Through elections the electorate is to pass judgment on the performance of public officers without fear of likely intimidation on undue favour from politicians. The arrangement and actual voting period is also expected to provide a feeling that there would be free and fair election. The voting gives a sense of belonging as such it can be by direct or indirect method. As such universal suffrage becomes more popular in States to provide franchise in reality by way of equal opportunity for voters registration (to men and women of matured age (18years and above) in all wards). The election management activity tries to give proportionate distribution of seats and nomination of candidates; and only persons who are not employed, not criminals or not insane can stand for elections.

Ahmed-Gamgum (2016) examined the actual creation of democratic friendly environment for effective political participation in Nigeria. He mentions policy actions of Government at the State and Federal level Governments. This include:-

(i) Legislation as provided in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The Constitution gave power to the National Assembly to make further legislation e.g. Electoral Act 2010(As Amended) on election matters; while the State Assemblies makes laws in relation to local government elections.

(ii) Establishment of Electoral Commissions Viz: - Independent National Electoral Commission and State independent Electoral Commission to implement the provisions of the Constitution on electoral matters and Electoral Act 2010 such as the creation of Constituencies and Pooling Units.

Ahmed-Gamgum (2016) further observed that following the recommendation of the Political Bureau that local government Councils should have between 10 to 15 elected ward representatives local government wards were reorganized for adequate representation of the people. As from 1976 where there were up to 30 wards in a local government, some of them had to be merged and where it was not enough some had to be created. The problem however is that for religious and ethnic group interest and rivalry, **gerrymandering** instead of objectivity was used in the process of ward creation. Some ethnic and or religious communities with high population had their wards reduced and some wards with less population had their wards divided into more wards. This led to overlapping/cross jurisdictional composition of wards and still some communities have not been integrated in their self-determined local government they wish to belong to. This in turn form the bases of violent conflicts in some local governments. And such wards like the Bika, Kwambai and Jenuwa wards of Yangtu Special Development Area of Taraba State do not belong to any local government and have no elected representative in a local government council, and Taraba State House of Assembly. Other actions by the government included:-allowing multi-party system in Nigeria and the number of registered political parties and operation of the parties is regulated by INEC. Ahmed-Gamgum (2016) further asserted that Local Government Election management in Nigeria has a uniform structure through the policies made by INEC. But even with this, elections were not free and fair. This motivated disaffections and court cases after local government elections. This was because the wishes of the ruling class and their allies have always been to use every means to ensure that election result from INEC and court judgments was declared in their favour He then called for the introduction of electronic voting system supported by steady power supply, good internet connectivity and reduced sabotage of the system.

From the perception of political participation by Mclean and McMillan (2003), Zoaka and Dauda (2010) we agree that, there are three categories of people and entities that are involved in political participation: (a) The masses/electorates that express opinions and elect representatives. (b) The representatives who receive the masses opinions and take to government to bring feedback and (c) The Government who provides the actual needs of the mass. Also from the forgoing first it means there are different levels of political participation from one continuum of passive to the other continuum of active participant. Second it means those who represent the masses either as pressure official or elected public officers or both must be seen to actually represent else the masses may not get their needs provided by the government.

2.4 Pressure Group

A pressure group is also called “interest group”, “lobby groups” or “protest group“ According Anyaele (2003) pressure group is an organized economic, occupational, professional, religious, educational, social unit formed with the aim of pursuing its interest by influencing government policies to the benefits of its member’s cause or non-members as is the case with anomic (spontaneous, unorganized) groups. Their interest does not extend to controlling government machinery directly by vying for elective positions but help to in endorsing candidates, issuing campaign propaganda, raising fund and ensure smooth elections. Pressure groups thus are different from political parties. There use among others is to articulate the views of their members and express their opinion for further action by appropriate target authority.

Bone (1958) asserted that political parties and pressure groups depended upon one another. The pressure groups depend on political parties to have access to those in government while

the parties need the support of the pressure groups to win election and sustain the parties in power. And there have been efforts by both to infiltrate each other by overlapping membership. This helps in educating each side about their respective interest, cross fertilization of ideas, man power assistance and accommodation of demands of the pressure demands as government agenda.

The present writer observes that organized groups are seen to have rules and regulations and written constitution that serve as the basis of regulating the behavior of members. The often operate in a tensed political environment as a result of lack of transparent state governance. Here governors and their agents often try to take the powers of the members/congress by imposing their candidates with objective to weaken pressure groups' unity, and vibrant activities. Where this control by government occurs, the expression of political consciousness and popular participation becomes a ruling elite affair.

2.5 Public Opinion

Anyaele (2003) and Akande (2014) defined public opinion as consensus opinion of private individuals or groups outside government or its agencies. It is, the collective thinking, feeling, beliefs, judgment or views held by a majority of citizens of a country about a particular public policy or action of the government as well as proposed actions. These opinions are formed through (a) using information (b) are expressed through mediums of communication and (c) it changes from time to time. As to what determines the extent of participation in expressing public opinion, they stated that the level of literacy in a country determines how many people would be interested in public issues. This means where there are few literate people there will be less number of people interested in discussing public issues. There also educated illiterate. They are conscious but are satisfied being passive and would not be critical about most government operations so long as their basic needs are not tempered with. He added that in spite of the level of illiteracy there are other factors that influence and lead to the development of public opinion. These are (i) The mass media (ii) Rumours and gossips (iii) Pressure groups (iv) Political Parties (v) Politicians (vi) Social background (vii) (Government Role (viii) Influential elites (ix) public lectures and symposia.

Public opinions are known through any or a combination of the following:-

- (a) Conduct of opinion pools using questionnaires. Its outcome helps voters to cast their votes for popular candidates or support popular policies
- (b) Election (support or protest votes) to determine the public opinion on the suitability or otherwise of competing candidates or performance of ruling political parties
- (c) Referendum by presenting a policy to concerned group of persons to secure their support, approval or disapproval on the issue at stake.
- (d) Mass Media where people voluntarily and graciously express their views
- (e) Public Protest as reaction to government action or inaction on matters the concern the protesters. Protest come in different ways such as street or open air rallies, exhibition of banners and sending letters to authorities, strikes and occupation of sensitive places protest votes and even to the extremes of violent riots.
- (f) Legislative public hearing is an avenue where the legislature gives room to members of the public to formally contribute their opinion on any aspect of particular law being made by the legislature.

All of the above actions are carried with a view to direct government attention to the protesters plights, needs and aspirations so that there can be moderation, rescinding of all or some actions by government. He then averred that a serious government and politicians

should be sensitive to know the opinion of its citizens about its policies, re-examine the policies and approaches of implementation with a view to reformulate and relate well to the best interest of the public.

As merits of public opinion are enormous, the present author is of the view that its demerits may be there such as (i) It is engineered and implemented by infinitesimal few members of the public so it may be misleading (ii) The process may delay implementation in a country with large geographical land and many categories of people (iii) The process may be expensive in time and funding. Nevertheless, it is worth using public opinion as a democratic approach with extra validating measures such as consulting the ultimate people whom the policy is directed at. This is to avoid misleading and plunging the community into violent crises.

This study would ascertain the extent to which the people of Yangtu participated before being in their present circumstances in terms of (i) Attending public meetings and rallies (ii) turnout to voting during State general election to elect representatives into government and (iii) Expressing opinions to and through these representatives

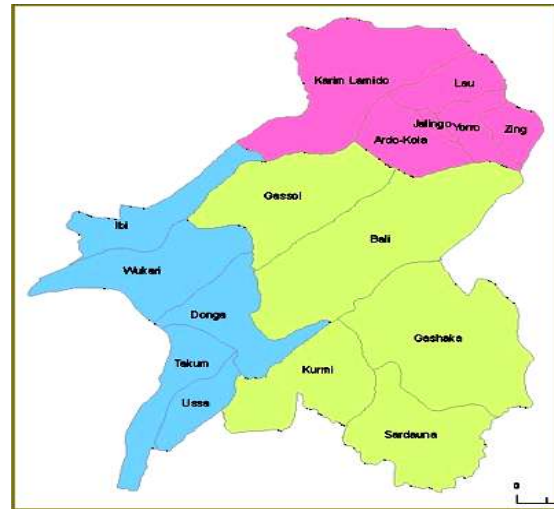
3.0 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is the “theory of post-colonial State”. Its focus is the reactions to and analysis of the cultural legacy of colonialism. That is, the set of theories formed among scholars to explain the aftermath of colonialism. Alavi (1972), Ake (1985) Elekwe (1985) Ibeanu (1988) In Tochukwu, 2013) popularized the theory of post-colonial State. The theory asserts that:-

- (i) The post-colonial State is the creation of imperialism characterized by a legacy of dependence and underdevelopment of the post-colonial State through the exploitation of local human and natural resources and inhuman treatment of man by fellow man.
- (ii) The ruling class that took over from the colonialist had a weak economic base.
- (iii) The inherited State therefore served as platform or source for improving personal economic base investment and development of the ruling class.
- (iv) The post-colonial State however continued to be weak as shown by the inability of the State to control its agents and agencies to carry out their statutory function of planning and working for a better economy. This is because of the desire for corruption and unproductiveness by the successor ruling class who failed to use their resources to develop scientific technology that would launch an industrial based economy like that of developed countries.
- (v) This situation perpetuates the State as the only fastest source of income and power to the successor ruling class. To effect this, their preoccupation is to ascend the position of leadership to be able to accumulate wealth; the strategy towards this political and economic goals is to create factions through divide and rule policy and are unwilling to mediate to bring about genuine conflict resolution and reconciliation; rather they engage in grim factional battles for the control of machinery of government which at the end provides avenue for negotiation that makes the ruling elite thrive in richness and power while the masses, and bureaucrats continue to be dependent on the rich political and economic ruling class.

The application of this theory in our case study implies that the predicament of the Yangtu community came about as a result of the practice of the legacies of colonial strategies in Takum local government where the Yangtu community initially belongs. Divide and rule policy had to be applied to enable a faction of Takum ruling elites to gain power and wealth

hence the excision of Yangtu Community out of Takum LGA without allowing the Yangtu Community be part of the meeting which led to the memoranda for their excision. And there is no negotiation and genuine reconciliation to bring them back to a local government of their choice till date because the ruling elites in Takum want to consolidate their grips to power. And since income and power is the ultimate goals, the principal elites who are to serve as the fountain of political consciousness and political participation by Yangtu community have to relax their masses oriented activism for good governance; and by their consciousness choose to become loyal, dependent, participate in State politics and be accountable to the State ruling elites. Except where pressure groups are united and vibrant, government and her agents may introduce palliative measures for some political stability to be established.



4.0 Findings and Discussion

4.1 Political Consciousness and Kuteb Population Phobia

Yangtu Special Development Area (YSDA) is a geo-political community in Taraba State that does not belong to any of the 774 local governments in Nigeria. The area was so created in the year 2008 by the Taraba State government as a temporary measure to resolve the issue of Kuteb population phobia in Takum Local Government Area of Taraba State (Fig 1) below.



Fig 1: Location of Taraba State, Nigeria

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taraba_State012; Source: nigerianmuse.com

Over the years the various ethnic groups engage in ethnic politics as they strove to ascend political positions through local government election. The imperatives of ethnic politics resulted in the fear of Kuteb population and the search of solution that would neutralize Kuteb population. (Gerei 1977). This Kuteb population phobia continues to rise as a result of the need for effective political participation by Jukun and Chamba in Takum Local

Government Area. Socially and politically, the origin of Yangtu Special Development Area is traced to the fallout between Kuteb on one hand and Jukun and Chamba on the other in the politics within Takum Local Government Area. Ahmed (1986) said initially party politics in Takum particularly as from 1977 has been a struggle for political power between the alliance of Kuteb, Tiv and Hausa ethnic groups versus Jukun and Chamba ethnic groups. The Kuteb, Tiv and Hausa alliance were numerically stronger and often won local government election in Takum LGA. After election they restricted and shared Key political positions and office perquisite within members of this alliance. This trend made the Jukun and Chamba alliance uncomfortable. The political consciousness of the Jukun and Chamba alliance made them to plan and implement strategic measures to break the Kuteb, Tiv and Hausa alliance. The purpose of this break is to enable o that the Chamba and Jukun alliance to politically win election more often than their political opponents particularly Kuteb. Consequently in 1996, and contrary to the 1981 to 1983 composition of Ussa LGA, and as proposed in 1996 by the people of the then proposed Ussa LGA in their separate memoranda, the Chamba and Jukun elites without consultation with Kuteb, Hausa and Tiv alliance also presented a demand for the restoration of Ussa LGA. The Jukun and Chamba memoranda included Kwambai, Jenuwa and Bika in Ussa LGA. When the discovered this by December 1996, they rejected the inclusion of the three communities in the Jukun and Chamba proposed composition of Ussa LGA. And this was approved by the Federal Government vide a letter Ref No GHQ /228/PM dated 12 March 1997. This composition served as the bases for the March 1997 Local Government election in Takum and Ussa LGA. The Kuteb alliance won the election in both Takum and Ussa LGAs. This election result made the Jukun and Chamba alliance to go back to the drawing board to demand a re-composition of Takum and Ussa LGA in line with their 1996 schemed composition in their memoranda as well as demanded a fresh conduct of the Local Government elections in both Takum and Ussa LGAs.

Ahmed-Gamgum (2000) asserted that the 1996-1997 tactical and operational plans of the Jukun and Chamba in supporting the restoration of Ussa LGA with a modification of the 1981 composition became fruitful when after one month of protest, their request was granted vide a letter Ref No GHQ /228/PM April 1997, and the three electoral wards of Bika, Kwambai and Jenuwa were excised to Ussa LGA. And also through the National Electoral Commission the two other electoral wards in Ussa LGA namely Manya and Yukuben wards were merged with Takum LGA to make the map of Takum and Ussa LGA to be as in Fig 2 below.

The combined political consciousness of the Kutebs (in Takum and Ussa LGAs as well as those in Kwambai, Jenuwa and Bika) resulted in further rejection of the removal of the three electoral wards from Takum to Ussa LGA. The Kuteb advanced the following major reasons for the rejection:-

- (i) The inclusion of the three wards of Kwambai, Jenuwa and Bika in Ussa LGA will marginalize the remaining three Kuteb clans of Likam, Akente and Rucwumam in Takum LGA politics;
- (ii) That the people of three electoral wards were not allowed to exercise their right of self-determination over which local government they wish to belong.

Fig 2: Map of Takum and Ussa KGA based on 28 April 1997 composition and the 2008 creation and location of Yangtu SDA (in Red color) bisects Takum LGA



Source: Modified by the present Author to show the location of Yangtu

Fig 3: The deceptive location of Takum and Ussa LGAS in Taraba State map



(iii) That the location of the three electoral wards bisects Takum LGA land into two as such Takum LGA lack land contiguity which the Constitution of the federal Government requires that there should be land contiguity (Fig 2).

(iv) That the role of National Electoral Commission in recomposing electoral wards reduced the number of electoral wards from two to one for Tiv and from two to one for Kuteb in Takum LGA. There was a merger of Kufang Ahmadu ward with Chanchanji Ward to form the present Chanchanji ward for Tiv and merger of Fadama and Takum III ward to form the present Dutse Ward for Kuteb. As for the Jukun and Chamba alliance their electoral ward was increased by the splitting of Gahweton into two wards and jacking up their registered voters figures; and Yukuben and Many Ward in Ussa were listed under Takum. The Kuteb consider these as unfair as it is not proportionate to the population of the people in each ward.

The Jukun and Chamba on the other hand made submissions to claim that there is land contiguity between Kashimbilla District in the South of Yangtu and other parts of Takum north of Yangtu area. The portrayal that there is land contiguity Taraba State came up with a distorted map of Takum and Ussa LGAs as shown in Fig. 2. It falsely claims Takum LGA has boundary with Gashaka and Kurmi LGAs to the East. And falsely claims Ussa LGA is south of Takum LGA. And the Map in Fig. 3 is widely used by some Government Agencies till date. As a result of complaints before the National Boundary Commission Special Committee on Intra State Boundary Dispute in Taraba State, the Committee in 2001 said:-

“3. The Special Committee needs maps showing the composition /boundaries of the two local governments areas to be signed by the State Surveyor –General, as described by the letters from the GHQ of 12 March 1997 and 28th April 1997.

4 May I therefore request Your Excellency to direct the State Surveyor General to forward four (4) copies of each map duly to the National Boundary Commission? Early submission of the maps will facilitate the work of the committee”

4.2 Government Official Response

The people protested and the State and federal Government took notice of their outcry. The visible response from the Government was to set committees of inquiry to ascertain the remote and immediate causes of the problem. The Committees are as follows

A. State Government

- (i) The Hamman Misau Committee on Takum –Ussa Boundary Adjustment Conflict 1997
- (ii) Justice Adamu Aliyu High Powered Peace Committee on Kuteb –Chamba /Jukun Conflict in Takum 1997
- (iv) Senator Bala Adamu Administrative Report, May 1997
- (v) Yorom N Report of the Peace Committee on the Renewed Takum Ussa Crises submitted to His Excellency, The Executive Governor Rev Jolly T. Nyame July 1999

B. Federal Government

- (i) Justice Mohammed R. Danlami Boundary Adjustment Commission Vol II Main Report December 1997 set up by Gen Sani Abacha
- (ii) Maj. Gen B.S. Magashi Committee on Conflict flash points in Nigeria set up by Gen Abdulsalam Abubakar November 1998
- (i) Justice Oputa Human Right Violation Commission Investigation Panel Report 1999
- (ii) National Boundary Commission Special Committee 2001

(iii) Kuru Presidential Retreat Resolution January 2002

All Committees recommended that the affected communities be composed into Takum LGA. In spite of this the State Government failed to implement the Committee recommendations. This was because of elite conspiracy and the desire not to embarrass a retired Army General from Takum (one of the signatories to the Jukun and Chamba Memo of 1996 demanding the restoration of Ussa LGA) whose interest is not to have the excised Kuteb communities in Takum LGA.

Following the rejection by the Kutebs that the three electoral wards must not be of Ussa LGA, the three wards assumed the status of **disputed** and **orphan** community in official records of National Population Commission and Independent Electoral Commission. This is because they had no sense of belonging as the local Government of their choice. Consequently, from 1997, they had no chance for political participation in Takum LGA: the local government of their choice as well as no political, legislative and administrative participation in Ussa LGA where they did not want to belong but were forced into.

4.3 The Role of Taraba State Governor

4.3.1 The Origin and Creation of Yangtu Special Development Area

The moves towards the creation of Yangtu Special Development can be traced to a discussion by Pham Ifraimu Kifasi who hails from Kwambai Ward in the disputed Area when he shared his thoughts with Rev Jolly Tavoro Nyame and other Kuteb brothers sometimes between 2005 and 2006. By 2007 they idea shared with Hon. Danbaba D Suntai during his 2007 campaigns for Governorship. But it was in 2008 under the regime of His Excellency Governor Danbaba D Suntai (late) that the State Government considered the idea a government policy agenda and took pragmatic steps to overcome the plight of the people. In agreement with the people Yangtu SDA was then created by a State Order which was approved by the Taraba State House of Assembly. Today Yangtu is an agency in the Office of the Executive Governors of Taraba State. The YSDA creation Order presented the reasons for the creation of YSDA are (i) it is the interest for more balanced and State Local Government administration through the creation of more Development Areas (ii) more development Areas will assist further extension of democratization process and decentralization of power (iii) the creation of Yangtu out of the present Takum and Ussa Local Government areas will remove undue political and social tension which has given rise to the non integration of Kwambai, Jenuwa and Bika communities in neither of the two LGA, instability and frustration in various section of the communities (iv) the failure and or negligence of Takum and Ussa LGAs to use their power under section 87(1) and (2) to create development areas and fund them, hence the Governor exercised the executive powers vested in the Governor by section 5(2) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as well as all other powers enabling him in that behalf to YSDA with headquarter at Kwambai.

4.3.2 Functions of Development Areas

Development Areas have delegated function from Local Governments. The delegated functions of a Development Area according to the Taraba State Local Government Law 2000 are:- *The Provision of (a) roads; (b) water; (c) environmental sanitation (d) markets (e) motor parks (f) community development; (g) registration of persons including births marriages and deaths; (h)revenue collection; (i) cemeteries and burial grounds; (j) agricultural and veterinary extension services including the distribution of fertilizers and seedlings; (k) slaughter slabs ; and (l) distribution of essential commodities.*

4.3.3 Appointment of the Management team of Yangtu SDA Administration

Following the creation of Yangtu Special Development Area the people now have a government body of persons / structure as platform to enable them participate in decision-making at the development area level. The Management team of the Special Development Area comprises a Coordinator, a Deputy Coordinator and Directors of functional Departments supplied by the State Government. Whereas the Coordinator and Deputy Coordinator are appointed by the Governor from among the ruling party members from the area the administrative staffs are mainly appointed from the State Civil Service.

Table 1: Government appointed Yangtu SDA Political leaders since 2008

S/No	Coordinator	Period	Deputy Coordinator	Secretary	Appointed By Governor
1	Mr. Rimamnde Bitrus	2008 - 2012	Mrs. Bethsheba Luka Sambo	Mr. Joshua Tabki	Danbaba D Suntai
2	Mr. Kefas Kifen	16/5/2012 – 28/11/2014	Mrs. Charity Nehemiah Andetur	Rimamsikwe Bulus	Danbaba D Suntai
3	Hon Apura Polycarp	13/5/2014- 21/11/ 2014	Mrs. Abigail Sam Bulus Ukwen	Tanko Maiyaki	Garba Umar
4	Mr. Kefas Kifen	2014 - 2016	Mrs. Charity Nehemiah Andetur	Samuel Ahmed	Abubakar Danladi
5	Mr. Nuhu Tsuki	19 th Nov 2016 to date	Tanimu Mamman	Micah Yamusa	Arch Darius Dickson Ishaku

Source: Present Author

From Table 3 S/No. 2 and 3 seem to have dates overlap. This is the contagious effect of statewide politics of later years. Historically it is a fact that the two leaders served as coordinators at different periods. But legally following court decided judgment against the tenure of Alhaji Garba Umar as Governor of Taraba State, the ruling party in Taraba State no longer recognize the service of Alhaji Garba Umar as Governor of Taraba State. By implication his political appointees are also now denied recognition, hence the overlap in dates. As to what extent the people and the management team regimes carried out their functions to enable the people enjoy the special Area development goals is a subject for another research.

4.3.4 Political Party membership and Party Office Appointments

The indigenes of the YSDA are also members of the various political parties. Those in the ruling People Democratic Party undoubtedly are political more influential as they coordinate other categories of the people and can easily table the peoples demands to the State Government.

4.3.5 Direct Channel of Communication

Yangtu SDA administration processes it matters to the office of His Excellency the Governor of Taraba State and or the Bureau for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs.

4.3.6 Funding

Since the area does not belong to any local Government area it officially exists as an appendage of the office of the Executive Governor. It thus gets its funds directly from the Governors office. They also have to produce their annual budget and forward same to the State Government for approval.

4.3.7 Creation of Yangtu Traditional Council

On the 21st February 2018 the State, under Governor Darius Dickson Ishaku secured approval of the State House of which among others constituted the Yangtu Special Development Area as Yangtu Chiefdom. The Chiefdom will now have a head chief of a 3rd class staff of office. This upgrading qualifies the head chief of Yangtu to serve as member of Takum Traditional Council and Member of Taraba State Council of Chiefs and Emirs.

4.4 Yangtu Community Political consciousness and Participation in Decision Making

4.4.1 Attending Public Meetings and Rallies

Socially, the people of Yangtu are organized into three clans out of the twelve Kuteb clans. At the level of ethnic group activities the institution that coordinates meetings that bring the Kuteb clans together is the Kuteb Yatso of Nigeria which is the umbrella Social and cultural union of Kuteb people. At the clans level the three clans in Yangtu have their respective clan meetings under their auspices of Kwambai Development Association for Kwambai clan/Ward Kutebs, Bika Development Association for Bika clan/Ward Kutebs and Rubur Development Association for Rubur clan/ Ward Kutebs. The three development associations networked to discuss and decide on matters of common interest to Yangtu Community. With the emergence of the Civilian administration in Nigeria from 1999, there are also meetings along political party lines. The dominant party in the three clans /wards has been the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), and the next party to the PDP is the All Progressive Congress (APC) party. Often the associations and political parties in the three electoral wards hold their joint meetings to discuss issues of common interest before a meeting of the entire Kuteb people.

Their major predicaments agenda and demands of the people has been that the Government should recognize their right of self determination. Where a hearing ear is given they demand that the Government should take necessary steps to give them a sense of belonging in Takum Local Government Area. Other predicaments includes, lack of employment and admission into schools for their children, lack of social amenities and the need to delist the three electoral wards from Ussa LGA.

4.4.2 Yangtu and Participation in Voters Registration in Nigeria

There are 1,340,652 registered voters in Taraba State. These voters are distributed into 2,762 voting points A comparative analysis of the people's attitude towards voter's registration exercises for 2011 and 2015 general election YSDA reveal that there was decreases in the number of registered voters in most pooling units and electoral wards. And there were increases in not more than three electoral wards (Table 2 below).

4.4.2.1 Wards with Decreases in registered Voters

Based on the 2011 and 2015 data of registered voters (Table 1 below), we found that in Takum LGA 8 out of 11 electoral wards witnessed decrease in the number of their registered voters. In Ussa LGA there was also a decrease in the number of registered voters in 7 out its 8 electoral wards. Similarly in Yangtu there was decrease in number of registered voters in 2 out of its three electoral wards in Yangtu SDA.

4.4.2.2 Wards with Increases in Registered Voters

Based on the 2011 and 2015 data (Table 1 below) of registered voters, we found that in the wards with increased registered voters in Takum Local Government area are two. These are Chanchanji and Rogo/Maje wards. Chanchanji has an increase of 6,970 registered voters above the 2011 registered voters. The next is Rogo/Maje ward. It has an increase of 1,421 registered voters above the 2011 figure. In Ussa only one ward (Fikyu) has increases in its registered voters. In Yangtu SDA there was an increase of 402 votes in one ward (Jenuwa ward)

Table 2: The existing Electoral Wards in Takum Chiefdom based on Letter Ref No GHQ/228/PM 28 April 1997

Registration Area/ Electoral Wards	CODE	Number of Polling Units	2011 Registered Voters	2015 Registere d Voters	Difference between 2011 and 2015
TAKUM LOCAL GOVERNMENT CODE 12					
1.Bete	LG/001/TR	9	6,495	3,904	-2,591 (39.8%)
2.Chanchanji	LG/002/TR	20	17,108	23,078	5,970 (34%)
3.Dutse	LG/003/TR	20	17,006	11,884	-5,122 (30.12%)
4.Fete	LG/004/TR	8	8,810	5,541	-3,269 (37.11%)
5.Gahweton	LG/005/TR	6	6,566	7,238	672 (10.23%)
6.Kashimbilla	LG/006/TR	10	6,022	4,488	-1,534 (25.47%)
7.Manya	LG/007/TR	6	7,379	4,471	-2908 (39.41%)
8.Rogo/Maje	LG/008/TR	11	10,070	11,491	1,421 (14.11%)
9.Shibong	LG/009/TR	6	5,755	3,645	-2,110 (36.66%)
10. Tikari	LG/010/TR	7	7,684	7,109	-575 (7.48%)
11. Yukuben	LG/011/TR		5,760	3,879	-1,881 (32.27%)
Total				86,728	
USSA LOCAL GOVERNMENT CODE 13					
1.Fikyu	LG/002/TR	4	3,989	4,670	681 (17.07%)
2.Kpambo	LG/004/TR	7	8,231	6,521	-1710 (20.55%)

3.Kpambo-Puri	LG/005/TR	6	8,894	5,636	-5258 (36.63%)
4.Kwesati	LG/007/TR	3	8,327	6,188	-2139 (25.088%)
5.Lissam I	LG/008/TR	9	7,298	5,289	-2009 (27.53%)
6.Lissam II/Kuru	LG/009/TR	3	7,000	4,448	-2552 (36.46%)
7.Lumbu	LG/010/TR	4	3,754	3,307	-447 (11.91%)
8.Rufu	LG/011/TR	4	5,580	3,994	-1586 (28.42%)
Total				56,057	
YANGTU SPECIAL DEVELOPMENT AREA					
1.Kwambai	LG/SA/TR	11	8,078	5,579	-2499 (30.94%)
2.Jenuwa Gida	LG/SA/TR	9	6,893	7,295	402 (428%)
3.Bika	LG/SA/TR	4	3,558	3,130	-428 (12.03%)
Total			18,529	16,001	

Source: Ahmed-Gangum (2017); INEC Updated Registered Voters and Voting Point in Taraba State 2015 General Elections

The overall implication of the decrease and increase is that, Yangtu as a block lost 2,528 registered voters. At the moment there is continuous voter's registration in Nigeria. And with the growing awareness on the importance of participation in election to choose representatives in government known as political leaders, there is a tendency for large turnout of the people to register as potential voters in order to get more involved in political activities and decision making process. The onus to achieve better registration of voters lies on the current political leaders representing the area as well as other stakeholders, to engage in result oriented mobilization of the people.

4.4.2.3 The Turn out of Yangtu Registered Voters at the 2015 General Election in Nigeria

Haven seen that the people are politically conscious of the need to participate in voters registration for the purpose of voting to decide who leads them in government, This study found that there was a low turnout for participation in actual election. This is indicated by the low number of accredited voters where compared with the high number of registered voters (Table 2 Below).

Table 3: Registered Voters 2015 and 2015 election accreditation to participate in one of the election

JENUWA WARD					
CODE TR/LGA/RA/UNIT	WARD REGISTRATION AREA - 03	Pooling Unit	Voters on the Register 2015	Accredited Voters	Difference between Registered Voters and Accredited voters
34/13/03/001	Jenuwa	Baku	816	NA	
34/13/03/002	Jenuwa	Nyicwu	1,184	350	834 (70.4%)
34/13/03/003	Jenuwa	Nyifiye	487	292	195 (40%)
34/13/03/004	Jenuwa	Nyifeye II	9 18	300	618 (67.3)
34/13/03/005	Jenuwa	RikwennYakwen	420	230	190 (45%)
34/13/03/006	Jenuwa	Rikwenmboi	831	703	128 (15%)
34/13/03/007	Jenuwa	Ruwa	526	502	24 (4.56%)
34/13/03/008	Jenuwa	Tswankya	1024	405	619 (60.4%)
34/13/03/009	Jenuwa	Ukok	677	227	450 (66.5 %)
Total			6,883	3009	
KWAMBAL WARD					
CODE TR/LGA/RA/UNIT	WARD REGISTRATION AREA	Pooling Unit	Voters on the Register 2015	Accredited Voters	Difference between Registered Voters and Accredited voters
34/13/06/001	Kwambai	Jenuwa Kogi	450	237	213 (47.3%)
34/13/06/002	Kwambai	K/Gban Kisaba	672	441	231 (34.4%)
34/13/06/003	Kwambai	Kofar Kwe Kwambai	390	255	135 (34.4%)
34/13/06/004	Kwambai	Kofar Maiangwa Kwambai	631	307	324 (51.3%)
34/13/06/005	Kwambai	Kofar Sarki	490	206	284 (58%)
34/13/06/006	Kwambai	Kofar Usman	540	235	305 (56.5%)
34/13/06/007	Kwambai	Kwendo	180	88	92 (51.1%)
34/13/06/008	Kwambai	Limpa	199	71	128 (64.3%)
34/13/06/009	Kwambai	Nzunyi	450	210	240 (53.3%)
34/13/06/010	Kwambai	Rubur Kyapya	439	242	197 (44.9%)
34/13/06/011	Kwambai	Waeyi	690	278	412 (59.7%)
Total			5,131	2,570	
BIKA WARD					

CODE TR/LGA/RA/UNIT	WARD REGISTRATION AREA - 03	Pooling Unit	Voters on the Register	Accredited Voters	Difference between Registered Voters and Accredited voters
34/13/06/001	Bika	Kofar Andetur	830	389	441 (53.1%)
34/13/06/002	Bika	Kofar Kwe Bika	527	342	185 (
34/13/06/003	Bika	Kwendak	609	354	255 (35.1%)
34/13/06/004	Bika	Kofar Shiaki	857	512	345 (40.3%)
Total			2,823	1,597	
Grand Tootal			14,837	7,176	7,661

Source: INEC 2015 Presidential Election accreditation result sheets

We note from Table 3 that

- (i) The figure of registered voters as contained in “INEC Updated Registered Voters and Voting Point in Taraba State 2015 General Elections” Table 2 above did not tally with the total registered and voter and accredited voters Table 3.
- (ii) From the score sheet for the Presidential election the total number of registered voters (in Jenuwa, Kwambai and Bika) Table 3 above is 14,837 which is 74% of 20,000 people being the 2006 projected population of the Special Development Area.
- (iii) Out of the total, registered voters of 14,837 about 7,176 accredited voters came out to cast their Votes. This represents 48.34% of total registered voters.

From this, we assert that the people of Yangtu are politically conscious and do participate in political activities. But from other records at our disposal Yangtu Community did not even vote at local government and Taraba State House of Assembly elections. Consequently, unlike other Local Government Areas that have elected representatives of their people, the YSDA have:-

- (i) No Ward Councilors
- (ii) No Legislative Council members
- (iii) No Elected Chairman
- (iv) No elected House of Assembly Member
- (v) No appointed Local Government supervisory Councilors

As a demonstration of their continuous political consciousness and exercise of their right to participate in decision making and peaceful protest, the Yangtu Community refused to participate in choosing who becomes Ussa LGA Chairman even where INEC decided to list their wards in Ussa LGA contrary to the intent and purposes the Order creating YSDA. And they did not vote during the State House of Assembly Election because they don't belong to any local government /state constituency.

With the foregoing “No”... and “No”..., the desire to have Yangtu Special Development Area to assist in extending the frontiers of democratization process and decentralization of power is yet to be achieved.

4.4.2.4 Post Election Expression of Opinions to and through representatives

Out of the several development needs / demands of the people of Yangtu Special Development area, the prominent, *ab initio* which till date has not been provided is the right to decide through “referendum” the LGA they wish to belong. For now they have been voting with other Nigerians for the election of

- (i) The President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria
- (ii) The Senator Representing Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State
- (iii) The Member Representing Takum, Donga, Ussa and Yangtu Special Development Area, Federal House of Representative
- (iv) The Executive Governor Taraba State

Of all these four positions, the major responsibility for a direct solving of the Yangtu community problems lies with the State Executive Governor whom section 7 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria requires to coordinate activities and resolve the problems of the people at the grassroots.

5.0 Legal Framework for resolving geopolitical issues in Nigeria

5.1 Constitutional Provision for a Permanent Solution for the people of YSDA

5.1.1 Local Government Creation

Based on the powers granted the State Governments by Section 7 on the subject “*Local Government system*” it is the responsibility of the State Government to resolve problems affecting the people at the grassroots so as to give all categories of people a sense of belonging in a local government of their choice. Accordingly the Section 7 (1) States:

“The system of local government by democratically elected local government councils is under this Constitution guaranteed; and accordingly the Government of every State shall, subject to section 8 of this Constitution ensure their existence under a Law which provides for the establishment, structure, composition, finance and functions of such councils “

(2) The person authorized by law to prescribe the area over which a local Government council may exercise authority shall (a) define such area as clearly as practicable; and (b) ensure to the extent to which it may be reasonably justified , that in defining such area regard is paid to-

(i) the common interest of the community in the area, (ii) traditional association of the community and (iii) administrative convenience. (4) The Government of a State shall ensure that every person who is entitled to vote or be voted for at an election to a Houses of Assembly shall have the right to vote or be voted for at an election to a local Government Council.” (Underline mine for emphasis)

From the constitutional provisions at section 7 (4) it can be said that while the people of Yangtu Special Development Area by virtue of their voters registration are qualified to vote and by virtue of being Nigerian citizens can be voted for under a political party of their choice but this chance of participating in local government and State constituency has been technically blocked by the State Government: the very tier of government that is supposed to enhance this right of voting and being voted for. But the fact that they don't have Local Government Councilors, as well as no State House of Assembly constituency and by implication no member representing them in the State House Assembly, they find it impossible to get the constitutionally required legislative members to endorse a memorandum in respect of demand for local Government creation or boundary adjustment as required by section 8 (3) and (4) of the 1999 Constitution. Section 8 (3) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria requires that:

(3) A bill for a law of a House of Assembly for the purpose of creating a new local government area shall be passed if:- (a) a request supported by at least two third majority of members (representing the area demanding the creation of the new local government area) in each of the following

(i) the house of Assembly in respect of the area and

(ii) The local government Councils in respect of the area

(a) A proposal for the creation of local government area is thereafter approved in a referendum by at least two-thirds majority of the people of the local government area where the demand for the proposed local government area originated.

(b) The result of the referendum is then approved by a simple majority of the members in each local government Councils in a majority of all the local government councils in the state; and

(c) The result of the referendum is approved by a resolution passed by two thirds majority of members of the House of Assembly;

5.1.2 Boundary Adjustment

As for a boundary adjustment, the 1999 Constitution provides that:-

(4) A bill for a law of a House of Assembly for the purpose of boundary adjustment of any existing local government area shall only be passed if:-

(a) a request for the boundary adjustment in each of the following namely – (i) House of Assembly is supported by two-thirds majority of members (representing the area demanding and the area affected by the boundary adjustment) in each of the following (i) House of Assembly in respect of the area; and (ii) the local government council in respect of the area is received by the House of Assembly.

(b) a proposal for the boundary adjustment is approved by a simple –majority of members of the House of Assembly in respect of the area concerned

In respect to creation of local government the Constitution requires the National Assembly to begin action after the States has completed the real act of Local Government creation. And section 5 States this as follows:-

(5) An act of the National Assembly passed in accordance with this section shall make consequential provisions with respect to the names and headquarters of states or local governments areas as provided in section 3 of this constitution and in Part I and II of the First Schedule to this constitution.

(6) For the purpose of enabling the national Assembly exercise the powers conferred upon it by subsection (5) of this section each House of Assembly shall after the creation of more local government areas pursuant to subsection (3) of this section, make adequate returns to each House of the National Assembly”

5.1.3 Taraba State Laws for resolving geopolitical conflicts

Based on Section 7 (1) of the Constitutional of the Federal Republic of Nigeria that States should make laws, for the *establishment, structure, composition of Local Government Councils*, Consequently, there is a Taraba State Local Government Law 2000 and Taraba State Boundary Commission law CAP 19 of 1994 which provides avenue to resolve geopolitical predicaments of communities in Taraba State.

5.1.4. Taraba State Local Government Law 2000

This Law in Section 3 (1) in the first instance adopts the existing 16 local government Areas in Taraba State as contained in the Third schedule of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. And as required by Section 7 (1) of the 1999 Constitution, the State In year 2000 made an attempt to act in compliance. Section 3(1) of the Local Government Law

States:- *There is hereby established by the State Government, Local Governments to be known by names in column A the respective areas which shall be as prescribed in column B and the headquarters of which shall be those named in column C of the Schedule to this law.*” The State being conscious of its constitutional powers to create additional Local Governments went further to State in subsection of Taraba State Local government thus “(2) *The power of the State Government to establish Local Government under this law shall be exercised by means of a law of the House of Assembly*” On the principles to be used by the State, section 9 of the Local Government Law States:- “*Notwithstanding the provisions of section 3 of this law the House of Assembly shall create a new Local Government Area in the exercise of its powers under the provisions of section 8(3) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999.*”

And at its section 10 a fertile ground for the finding legal solution states:-

10 The House of Assembly in exercise of the powers under section 3 and 10 of this law, shall give consideration to the principle that a Local Government shall so far as practicable serve a total of not less than 40,000 or such minimum limits as may be prescribed in this section provided that the limits prescribed herein may not be so observed where exceptional geographical, historical, cultural facts or such other factors as may appear exceptional to the House of Assembly in a particular circumstances of the case , other require non observance of this.

Based on this the Yangtu Community who are over 20,000 people but less than 40,000 people, and are suffering discrimination in Takum LGA deserves respect of their right of self determination, as their appeal for a local government they would peaceful belong deserves a hearing ear

5.1.5 Taraba State Boundary Commission

This Commission as established by Taraba state Boundary Commission Law CAP 19 of 1994 is vested with the following functions “7-(1) *The functions of the Commission shall be (a) to inquire into and determine the boundaries set out in section 10*” which is “10...*(a) between the areas of two or more districts within a local government (b) between the areas of two or more village areas of a district, within a local Government; (c) between the areas of two or more wards or a village in a district within a Local Government*” And in doing so the Commission is to *have regard to both the administrative convenience and the proprietary interest of a local area or , in case of the area of jurisdiction of a chief , the jurisdictional interest of that chief by reference to which the boundary is defined*” The State Boundary Commission in collaboration with National Boundary commission (2001) organized a summit in Taraba State to resolve the conflict. But to no avail. This is the Yangtu Special Development goes beyond the issues of boundary between districts, villages or wards. It is an issue with complex dimensions.

From the facts presented in 4.9.1.1 to 4.9.2.2 first there is in existence legal framework for resolving the geopolitical predicament of the Yangtu Community. Second, except indirectly to keep the National Assembly prepared to receive returns from the State, it is not proper for any community to directly approach the National Assembly to demand for local government creation by an amendment of the Constitution without the preliminary processes. And until a community makes a formal request to the State House of Assembly, action may not commence and be completed as required by section 8 (3) of the 1999 Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria.

However, in Taraba State there is a Taraba State Local Government Law 2000, which requires the State Government to define the composition of each local Government Area

which may or may not include activating the constitutional process for boundary adjustment. It means apart from the provisions of the Constitution there is a political option to solving problems that may arise in respect to defining the composition of local government areas. And in doing this it is expected that it should not be inconsistent with the provisions of the Constitution. By all intents and purposes of the Nigeria Constitution all towns and villages must belong to a constitutionally recognised LGA. The implication is that it may be unconstitutional to have a community that does not belong to a local government in Taraba State but for how long that should be? It must not be long since the State has been given the power to compose and carry out boundary adjustments. Like failure of Takum and Donga LGAs it also amounts to negligence of duty and there is therefore no justifiable reason for a State to create a Development Area that does not belong to a local government. When there are processes for creating local governments which can still be funded by the State.

5.2 Political Approach in Resolving the Predicament

Omonia, (2012 August) said “Activities for the next Round of Constitution Amendment seem to be ongoing with over 120 memorandums. This number of memoranda includes the Yangtu people’s memoranda. This was when Hon. Barr A.T. Sam Tsokwa was a Member Federal House of Representatives (2007-2015). Through Sam-Tsokwa the plight of the Yangtu Community received media publicity with the aim to invite the attention of the Government to solve the problem of the people. Omonia (2012) observed that there were protests from various communities over their respective plights. But the role of Sam-Tsokwa when compared with that of other legislators with similar problem is most applauded. The Yangtu memorandum which was submitted at the National Assembly called on the National Assembly to make an “*Amendment of section 3(6) and Part I of Schedule I to 1999 Constitution as amended to reflect the recognition of Yangtu Special Development Area.*” It was so recommended with the hope that it would bring quick relief to the pains of the Yangtu Community. But this is not so till date.

The present author is of the opinion the following options would have applied (1) a constitutional amendment of section 8 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria would have been sought by the Member Federal House of Representative. The aim was to simplify the expensive and cumbersome processes that lead to the creation of new Local Government and Boundary adjustment. If this had succeeded it becomes easier for the people to forward to the State or federal Government as the case would have been, a memoranda with or without the endorsement of councilors, House of Assembly members and other local governments in the State. The provision as it is in the Constitution is not only stringent but expensive when it comes to moving around to lobby. It only becomes easy where the State Governor has interest and willing to assist the people in fulfilling the express and implied requirements. Following the inability to amend the relevant section of the 1999 Constitution (2) the Representative then as the Chairman of Takum local government Stake holder in the then ruling party both at the Federal and State levels would have dialogued other Takum LGA stakeholders to endorse a memo on either Local Government creation or Boundary Adjustment to the State Government as required by the Constitution or (3) encouraged the State government to use Taraba State local Government law to clearly define the composition of each local government and in accordance with the outcome of the dialogue and signed (Memoranda of Understanding (MOU)). But none of this occurred. And according to Omonia (2012 August) Hon A.T. Sam-Tsokwa the representative of the people in the House of Representative then held the view that it is not a state matter. It is a matter that also needs the intervention of the Federal Government. Or as an alternative he had averred that INEC “*be called upon to go and conduct a referendum for them to do what is called self determination*

to decide where they want to go to. And either way the solution will be easy”

But recalling that the existence of constitutional and other Statutes for resolving geopolitical conflicts as discussed above, it can be said that then State Governor had **no political will** to constitutionally and politically assist the people by starting the constitutional process before the people approached the National Assembly. So the thinking that “if it were not because of the Constitutional issue, the Taraba State Government would have resolved the issue” is not the true underlying reason for inaction by the State government.

6.0 Implication of the Creation of Yangtu Special Development Area

Whereas the Federal Government created more local government areas in Nigeria in 1996, the government also attempted to define the composition of the new local government areas. In the case of Takum and Ussa LGAs it was through a Federal Government circular letter of April 1997. But when the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 was introduced the Constitution did not describe the precise component areas of each local Government. However the 1999 Constitution in section 8 gave States the power to clearly define the composition of each Local Government Area. Pursuant to this section 8, when the Taraba State Local Government Law 2000 was being enacted, the Schedule of the Law which requires the composition of each local government to be clearly defined was left blank for political reasons. This entails that the April 1997 composition of Takum and Ussa local governments was still valid. But with the enactment of an Order in the year 2008 creating Yangtu Special Development Area (a) the hitherto name describing the area that is “Orphan Community” or the “Disputed Area had to be dropped.(b) the location of YSDA as a component of Ussa is now cancelled (c) administratively, the Government and people of Nigeria are expected **to make special provisions** to accommodate the needs and demands of the people of Yangtu until the issue of the local government they would eventually belong to is resolved.

7.0 Conclusion

Our findings have shown that the Kwambai, Bika, and Jenuwa communities are in a journey of political development. From a people discriminated into orphan district, disputed area to an institutional set called Yangtu Special Development Area. This was spurred by their growing political consciousness and desire for effective political participation. Yangtu SDA land shares boundary with Benue State west of Yangtu. And to the east is Ussa LGA. This results in having one portion of Takum local Governor north of YSDA and another portion of Takum Local Government is to the south of Yangtu SDA. Politically the Jukun and Chamba deny this. This denial has the potential of creating land dispute in border land area where the Jukun and Chamba want to take it by force. The background ethnic politics in Takum and eventual forceful excision of Yangtu from Takum LGA created a feeling of discrimination along ethnic lines and to protect the political interest of the Jukun and Chamba who are fewer than Kuteb. Because of lack of political will on the part of the ruling elite to assist the Kuteb people all illegal and unconstitutional approaches were swept under the carpet. This brought the political predicaments of the Yangtu Community. They cannot belong to the self determined local of their choice they cannot vote and be voted for in local government and State House of Assembly position. And so have no effective participation in governance.

8.0 Recommendations

In view of the predicaments of the Yangtu community and the emergence of YSDA based on the constitutional powers conferred on the State to determine the composition of Local governments, and pursuant to the YSDA Order legislated in 2008, **which supersedes** the Federal Government letter Ref No GHQ /228/PM April 1997 which concerned them to Ussa

LGA

- (i) INEC and other Federal agencies should recognize the independence of YSDA from both Takum and Ussa LGAs. Consequently, INEC programs and record should not lump YSDA under Ussa LGA pending when the local government of their choice would be determined.
- (ii) INEC should create Yangtu State Constituency to enable the people of the area have representative In the Taraba State House of Assembly.
- (iii) INEC therefore need to increase the number of data capture machines, fuel for generators for quick processing of temporary voters cards in the rural areas, and quick production of permanent voters card,
- (iv) The Coordinator YSDA should initiate memoranda to the State Government to amend the Yangtu SDA Order to make provision for the people to have elected Chairman and elected councilors.
- (v) The current political leaders/ representing the area and other politicians with resources being the ultimate benefactors should provide logistics for the mobilization of necessary material and qualified prospective voters to come, register and vote.
- (vi) More electoral wards and pooling units should be created in the SDA to encourage effective participation in INEC programs.
- (vii) Since some communities in Takum Local Government may not want the area back to Takum LGA it is morally appropriate and politically expedient for the State Government to monster the political will, by giving support and facilitates the constitutional process of upgrading the SDA to the Status of a Local Government Area.
- (viii) The people of YSDA should formally present a special memorandum endorsed by their special representatives and well-wishers to the State Government to begin the process for the creation of Yangtu Local Government Area.
- (ix) The State Government after passing a law creating “Yangtu Local Government Area”, should make returns to the National Assembly and carry out continues follow up at the National Assembly to make a **special consideration** of the need to amend section 3(6) of the Constitution of the federal Republic of Nigeria to update the number of local Governments in Nigeria.
- (x) In alternative to the creation of the proposed Yangtu LGA, the social and political party stakeholders of Takum LGA and Yangtu Special Development should meet to put together a Memoranda of Understanding for a smooth political relationship and re-integrate the SDA into Takum Local Government. This should be coordinated by the State Governor who hails from Takum Local Government or the members of the National Assembly representing the YSDA.
- (xi) Meanwhile, the Coordinator YSDA should formally communicate all Federal and Taraba State Government Ministries/Department and Agencies by forwarding the YSDA Order 2008 to them to make special arrangements for the people of YSDA when they are carrying out their program that affect and is to the benefit of grassroots geopolities.

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