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### THE FORM AND CHARACTER OF CIRCULATING GOVERNING ELITE IN NIGERIA: PAST AND PRESENT

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### ABSTRACT

This paper is basically an application of the famous elite perspective to the Nigerian government and politics to test whether it is a theory that can be confirmed or infirmed. The observable phenomenon which is similar to virtually all regions and climes of the world is the emergence of very few people circulating in the political space over time. From pre-colonial, to colonial and post-colonial Nigerian state, a number of elites from diverse sectors of the society – the military, politicians, civil society, business tycoons, religious leaders and traditional elites kept circulating in the political firmament of Nigeria. The paper is a confirmation of the elite theory paradigm or construct to the understanding of Nigerian government and politics. The paper however noted that if nothing changes the required leap from a developing status of Nigeria as a country to developed one may take time after all more so that the country needs new thinking and perspectives to be able to adapt to modern technological era. The paper infers that there is an imperatival need to opening up of the

political space to accommodate vibrant youths and new set of elites that can drive the polity to a greater height with new innovative thinking.

**Keywords:** Dominant-minority, elites, government, military-oligarchy, politicians.

## INTRODUCTION

Elite theory, paradigm or construct is undoubtedly one of the major contending approaches to the understanding and analysis of political phenomena both in developing and developed countries. *Dictionary of Political Science* (2006:101) agreed that it is an approach to studying politics that stresses the importance of decision-makers and power holders, as opposed to the mass of the population. Even in liberal democracies, there is inevitably ruling elite. These elite may incorporate economic as well as political and military leaders, though it may also be prone to splits and to opposition from counter-elites (see, Chaturvedi, 2006:101-102). In a nutshell, the term 'elite' connotes a distinctive group holding high and politically relevant positions in the community and knit together by a strong group feelings, ethos, values and style (Wilkinson, 1969:13). The elite are that group that has vocation for leadership from diverse sectors of the society. They are found within the civilian establishments and in the Armed Forces, likewise both the traditional elites and business tycoons fall into this category. Religious leaders of late are becoming more politically relevant both at the state and national levels. According to *Dictionary of Political Science*, 'elitism is a belief in rule by an elite or minority. Elite rule may be thought to be desirable, the elite possessing superior talents or skills, or inevitable, egalitarian ideas like democracy and socialism being simply impractical' (see, Chaturvedi, 2006:101).

In pre-colonial Nigeria, recruitment into the elite cadre was strictly by age when 'gerontocracy' - rule by elders - was the *fad* in virtually all parts of Africa. Even where a society is under the rule of a Chief or King, we may still find elements of *gerontocracy* combined with that of monarchical absolutism (see, Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, 1950). The elders who constituted policy formulation cum implementation hub along with the duty of maintenance of law and order body then, were the 'governing elite' in pre-colonial Nigeria. In post-colonial

Nigeria however, where coups and counter-coups became a *fad*, the military oligarchy/elite produced a lot of ruling elite within their officer corps; diverse civilians too since First Republic in 1960 till date have equally produced many circulating governing elites.

However, the primary objective of this piece is to critically examine the circulation of the governing elite thesis as applied to Nigeria's political leadership situation and selection processes since independence in 1960. The paper is divided into six major sections. With the above introductory overview, the second section dwells on methodological/theoretical considerations. Part three is a review of the modes of elite recruitment in the polity; part four is a focus at Nigeria's elite/leadership selection process since independence in 1960. The fifth part dwells on a survey of circulating elites in contemporary Nigeria's political space. Part six is a prognosis on the sources of elite recruitment. The paper infers that new set of elites are required for the desired technological leap needed by Nigeria to join the first world, elites with new ideas and innovations should be injected into the system; reason being that the current circulating elite are dysfunctional to the stability and development of the system because of their neo-colonial and conservative orientations.

## THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This segment of the paper is an explication of the theoretical framework of elite theory, in terms of its major generalizations, assumptions and the inferences as postulated by elite theorists, especially the leading lights/founding fathers. The first major generalization of the theory affirms that in every human collectivity, there 'is' and 'must' always be a minority who rule over the rest of the society. In essence, the theory divides all human collectivities into two that is, the rulers and the ruled. According to Robert Michael, 'who says organization says oligarchy' (cited in Parry, 1969:30). Hence, in all human societies, be it socialist, capitalist or traditional communities, what one finds is the ruling oligarchy dominating over the rest of the society. The second generalization states that the minority elite derive their powers invariably from coercive sources, that is, through monopoly of military apparatus. Although over time, this coercive power tends to be masked, disguised by myth, or in short what Mosca (cited in Wilkinson, 1969)

called ‘political formulae’. In a perceptive piece, Onyeoziri (1982), identified a number of the political formulae as the ways by which governing elite do win the cooperation of the masses aside from the use of force to compel their cooperation which includes: ideological persuasion, that is, influencing the political ideas of the people, moulding their political reality as part of the attempt to persuade them that the elite in government serves their interest and therefore deserves their support. This strategy is usually the most convenient and stable basis for keeping the loyalty of the citizens. And the mass media has come to be one of the most important instruments through which elites in power seek to influence the political thinking of their subjects and persuade them to see the government as legitimately serving the public interest even if it is otherwise and therefore deserving public support (Onyeoziri, 1982). This is primarily the reason why the elite also control the mass media (see, Ojo, 2003:821-840). They do this in a number of ways: (a) they deliberately distort the information they disseminate to their audience, the citizens; (b) they knowingly exclude some vital pieces of information, especially if those pieces are likely to lead the citizens to draw conclusions that the leadership does not favour (c) they can keep quiet over crucial issues when the population is thirsting for information; (d) they seek to divert the people’s attentions from very important issues by crowding the people’s minds with trivialities and (e) they can couple these with trying to prevent opposition elite groups from acquiring control of some of the mass media for fear that these media could be used to neutralize the government’s efforts at political control (cited in Ojo, 2003:829).

Meanwhile, monarchies which cleverly adopt the theory of ‘Divine Right’ did so to cajole or hoodwink the majority in an attempt to justify their rule (Benns & Peters, 1950; Pickles, 1977:57-83). Likewise, when the military junta took over power, what they normally engaged in is populist programmes and pronouncements to legitimize their rule (see, Ojo, 2006 & 2009:688-708). Thirdly, minority elite which Mosca called ‘the political class’ or ‘governing elite’ by Pareto (see, Wilkinson, 1969) composed of those who occupy the post of political command, and this elite group tends to undergo changes in its membership over a period of time. Such changes may ordinarily mean the recruitment of its membership from the lower stratum of the society. It may sometimes be by incorporation of new members with new sources of income. It may also sometimes be by complete

replacement of the established elite by a counter elite as it normally happens in military coup d'états or revolutions. Notable examples abound in France with the 1789 French Revolution, Cuba on January 1<sup>st</sup> 1959, Russia in 1927 and a host of others. This is what Mosca called 'circulation of elites' and Pareto encapsulated this by saying that 'history is the graveyard of aristocracies'. Hence, one set of elite goes and another come *ad infinitum* (see, Pareto, 1935 and Wilkinson, 1969).

The basic factors that may be alluded to while explaining replacement of one set of elites by another are: first, 'structural' while the second is 'socio-psychological'. The first postulates that structural changes in the society may bring about changes in the dominant minority (elite) in the society. The displacement of the elite occurs independently of the character and motivation of the elite. The elite are displaced as a result of some changes in the attitudes and abilities of the elite. Mosca and Pareto represent in their different ways, instances of this approach (Wilkinson, 1969). Such changes affect the structure of the society because of the existence in all social formations of a ruling minority (elite) and the ruled majority (Wilkinson, 1969). It is vital to note however, that a change in membership affects merely the form but not the structure of the society which remains 'oligarchical'.

Having gone so far to elucidate the generalizations of elite theory; it is equally fitting to also take a cursory look at its basic assumptions as could be gleaned from the extant literatures on the paradigm. The salient ones are: (a) that all men loves power; (b) that men are not all endowed alike, that there are diversities stemming from nature, physical environment and history which makes man unequal from birth; (c) that inequality rather than equality is the observable social forces everywhere; (d) that the elitist structure which divides any given society into two classes – the ruled and the rulers – merely reflects this inequality; (e) that J.J. Rousseau's notion of equality is *farce* and that democracy is also a political fraud, for government may be for the people but not of the people and will never be by the people, rather, only the selected few elite. (see, Pareto, 1935:1563). To Karl Marx, inequality being man-made can be destroyed.

This perspective to the understanding of political phenomena has been vehemently criticized by its irreverent critiques on some flaws inherent in its major postulations. Some of them are: (a) that both the

theory and its protagonists had fascist autocratic origin, hence it does not lend itself to universal applicability, (b) that it was a conscious rejoinder to Marxism, thus more polemical rather than theoretical and ideological than empirical, (c) Robert Dahl, contends that the theory assumes the qualities of self-consciousness, coherence and unity on the part of any given ruling elite. Whereas, these qualities and characteristics of any elite rule relations with other groups in the society do not often obtain, therefore, the theory is false. Reason being that they may not very often be self-conscious, coherent or in unity and in most cases they are divided and badly polarised in the face of stiff competition for power (see, Dahl, 1958).

It is pretentious to note that there is no homogenous elite, rather what we have everywhere is multiplicity of elites. This position was shared by Dahl while writing on compatibility of elites and democracy (Dahl, 1958).

### **Modes of Elite Recruitment**

In virtually all human societies, mode of recruitment into the elite cadre differs widely. In fact, form of government at any given point in time determines the size and recruitment procedure. In mediaeval era, conquest of a community by another as the case was in England in 1066 AD with the Norman rulers of Saxon and British conquest and imposition of imperial powers in African states are also very good examples of how elites could attain privilege positions in their respective societies. It should be noted that monopoly of resources of production in the society is another way by which what Mosca referred to as the “political class” and ‘governing elites’ by Pareto (see, Wilkinson, 1969). Hence, control of factor of production do determine emergence of new set of elites. As regards mode of admission into elite category in any society, it is vital to note that the strength of the elite is in many respects indicated by its ability to lay down the terms for admission to the circle of the politically influential. The terms may include: conformity to the required standard, wealth, social background, educational attainment, being blue blooded and commitment to the elites’ interests and ideological persuasion. In some cases however, the lower stratum of the elite may be the source from where the higher elite is recruited (Wilkinson, 1969).

It will be recalled that colonialism aided the emergence of new set of elites. Exposure to western education, ‘civilization’ and new mode

of governance cum public service created new set of citizens that occupied vantage positions in Africa. For Peter Ekeh, colonialism may be considered to be a social movement of epochal dimensions whose enduring significance, beyond the life-span of the colonial situation lies in the social formations of supra-individual entities and constructs (see, Ekeh, 1975:91-112 & 1980:5).

Be that as it may, elites are commonly found in urban settings. This is because the organization of urban life tends to provide some unity, the elite, and works in similar surroundings, associate with each other, attend the same social affairs, go to the same recreational clubs and share the same schedules and values (Smythe & Smythe, 1960:56). Also writing on elites, Frank Wilkson (1980:316), observed that 'as groups', elite individuals in their public life are ostensibly dedicated to rationalizing, reforming and modernizing functions, whereas, in private, they remain steeped, apparently quiet by choice in a family – and class-rooted traditionalism, heavily freighted with idealized sentimentality in personal relations and pre-occupation with external formalism, decorum and propriety as certification of family status and individual worth.

### **Nigeria's Leadership Situation and Elite Selection since Independence in 1960**

Nigeria's socio-political life is dominated by the elites who attained privileged positions through various means and manipulations. Indeed, it is these elites that have been described with various adjectives by scholars and writers as the 'power-movers', 'power-shakers', 'the-power-that-be', or simply the 'elites'. I now refer to them in this write-up as the 'Nigerian-potentates', who cut across virtually all segments of the polity. They can be classified into two broad categories viz: (i) civilian elite groups and (ii) the military oligarchy/junta. For the former, those that we have in mind here includes: (i) the intelligentsia, particularly (academics), (ii) the bureaucrats, those of (iii) businesses, and of (iv) organized labour, as well as (v) the chiefly estates (Adekanye, 1993:34), of late, (vi) religious elites are now becoming conspicuous in the scheme of things, the later however, embraces the officers' corps in the military which now has enhanced status over the other groups. The metamorphosis of these elites started before flag independence in 1960. They attained privileged heights by the 'grace' of British colonial overlords. With the division of Nigeria into three

regions – courtesy of Richards constitution – the Northern Region threw up its elites with Sir Ahmadu Bello and Tafawa Balewa as the front runners. In the East, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe was the leader while Chief Obafemi Awolowo and his acolytes held sway at the Western Region. The immediate post-colonial state felt their political efficacy as these three still looms large for they influenced whatever happens in the socio-political, economic and military spheres of Nigerian state. This is not unconnected with the perception right or wrongly by the elites that they are the leaders of their respective societies/Regions. Emeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu puts it succinctly thus:

*Leadership is the true vocation of elitism. When elitism loses this vocation, it ceases to be relevant and if it does not wither away and die, it is removed and replaced by more vigorous vocation exemplified by a more dynamic elite groups (Ojukwu, 1989:146).*

Without mincing words, these ‘governing elites’ dictated the tune and tempo of Nigeria’s political fortune and future. Despite the changes in elite structure and membership in Nigeria, they have been circulating or revolving around almost the same set of people or their surrogates. To buttress this assertion, we shall now take some salient examples of the governing ruling elites in Nigeria. However, it behooves on us to state that the parameter for choosing the identified elites is simply random sampling. And with this it is difficult to pin-point a single set of Ibo elite that can be classified as circulating ruling elite, most especially since 1967 when Nigeria fought an agonizing 30-month civil war. Few Ibos that came to the limelight in terms of federal appointments had ephemeral stay which does not qualify them to be tagged circulating governing elite. Thus we could easily discern both Northern and Southern elites more than we may with the Eastern potentates in immediate post-colonial Nigeria.

To start-with, Sir Ahmadu Bello was the leader of Northern People’s Congress (NPC), the party which had absolute control over the entire Northern region in the First Republic. The party was exclusively for Northern intelligentsia (see, Ige, 1994:34-77). As one of the Northern potentates and member of the core elites in Nigeria, Ahmadu Bello was reported to have single-handedly influenced the recruitment of Generals Muhammadu Buhari (current civilian president), Tunde Idiagbo, Ibrahim Babangida and Mamman Vatsa into the Army in

1962 same day! These people had and are still playing prominent roles in the affairs of Nigeria.

Undoubtedly, they were planted in the Army to safeguard class and ethnic interests which they have done glaringly. It would be recalled that the duo of Generals Buhari and Idiagbon were the military Head of State and Chief of Staff Supreme Headquarters respectively between 1983 and 1985. Same General Muhammadu Buhari also emerged as the Chairman of Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF) in 1994 to 1998. Earlier he had served as state Military Governor and Petroleum Minister before becoming Military Head of State. General Babangida emerged as the military President between 1985 till 1993 when he stepped aside, while General Vatsa was killed in 1986 for alleged aborted coup plot which emanated undoubtedly from deadly power struggle.

Amongst the circulating governing elites in Nigeria, no doubt, the names of Alhaji Abubakar Alhaji – rings bell. At the age of fifty-four years, his clumsy curriculum vitae glaringly attest to this assertion. He began his career in the Federal Civil Service in 1964 at the age of 26 years. He served first in the Federal Ministry of Industries; six years later he was promoted to the Senior Assistant Secretary cadre in the Industries Ministry. Not long, after his elevation, Alhaji was again promoted to the position of Principal Assistant Secretary. In 1971, he was posted to the Finance Ministry. While there he served as alternate Executive Director, African Development Bank (ADB) between 1972 and 1974. As a Deputy Secretary, he has a stint at the International Monetary Fund (I.M.F.) in Washington D.C., United States. One year later, he was deployed to Ministry of Trade, where he was elevated to Deputy Permanent Secretary. Between 1975 and 1977 he was back in the Ministry of National Planning. In May 1988, he became Minister of State for Budget and Planning and also Special Assistant to the President (see, *African Concord, Lagos, 6<sup>th</sup> April, 1990*). By early 1990, the bureaucrat who seemed so indispensable was a full-fledge Minister of Budget and Planning. Equally limitless are the number of Commissions, Boards and Agencies in which this astute Public Servant had served. He was Chairman of Ajaokuta Steel Company Limited, Executive Chairman, Delta Steel Company Limited, Executive Chairman, Benue Cement Company Limited, Nigerian Security and Minting Company Limited, Executive Chairman, Technical Committee on Producer Prices, Executive Chairman, Ashaka Cement Company Limited. Others are Executive Board Member, NITEL,

Executive Governor, African Institute of Economic Development and Planning (IDEP), and Member of Commonwealth Secretary-General Drafting Committee on Third World Debt. His last appointment after that of Finance Minister is Ambassador Plenipotentiary for Nigeria in Britain. Above all, he held well over twenty-two prominent posts in Nigeria. It is imperative to note further that Alhaji is on record to have held more administrative and political positions than any other Nigerian living or dead! (*Sunday Tribune, Ibadan, November 14, 1991*).

Circulating governing elites in Nigeria also included Professor Jibril Aminu. Since his days as the Secretary to the National Universities Commission, he has served as the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Maiduguri before moving to government circle – first as Ministers of Education, later as Petroleum Resources Minister – until he resigned.

Brigadier Samuel Ogbemudia (rtd) is also a testimonial to the omnipotence of the elites. He was a Governor under Gowon administration. He subsequently earned dismissal from the Army and stripped of his military rank but got it restored by presidential benevolence of Alhaji Sheu Shagari – Second Republic President – he later became Governor of the defunct Bendel State during the Second Republic. During President Babangida's regime, Ogbemudia had served as Chairman of the National Sports Commission (NSC) and later Sole Administrator of the Nigeria Railway Corporation (NRC) (see, *Sunday Tribune, September 22, 1991:5*).

*Alhaji Sheu Musa also attracts the attention of this paper. He has occupied an enviable position in decision-making machinery for too long. He is one elite who had served as a Permanent Secretary in many key ministries including Finance, Defence and Health. He was once the Director of Customs and Excise Department. To cap it all, he was the Chairman of National Population Commission (NPC) that conducted the 1991 population census.*

Joe Garba a retired General presents another gloomy picture of elitist minority domination. He was part of the conspiracy that overthrew Gowon's administration and installed General Murtala Muhammed. His efforts earned him the post of Foreign Minister despite the fact that

he has no experience in diplomatic service. He has been in the fore of the nation's diplomatic circle since then. He capped it all with a stint at the United Nations as the Nigeria's Permanent Representative. He subsequently became the President of the body's General Assembly in 1989 (see, *Sunday Tribune*, September 22, 1991:5). Another elite worth consideration is Lt. General T. Y. Danjuma (rtd), he is successfully established in the private shipping industry as well as he combines it with multiple board memberships in the public sector, while also serving on the directorships of the subsidiaries of a number of foreign-based companies. An edition of WHO IS WHO IN NIGERIA, published by the Bibliographical Centre of Nigeria in 1985 listed Lt. General Danjuma's positions to have included: Chairman, Nigerian-American Line Limited, Director, Ideal Flour Mills Limited, Director, Eastern Bulcem Company Limited, S.C.O.A (Nigeria) Limited. Two other companies on whose Board of directorship Danjuma is known to be are the Medafrica Group Limited. In the shipping trade as earlier remarked, and Sea Trucks (Nigeria) Limited, a Marine Oil field service company where the General is among the three major shareholders (cited in Adekanye, 1993:30).

For close to a decade, Chief Ernest Shonekan has been catapulted into the rank of the core elites in Nigeria from his obscure position of the Chairman of United African Company (UAC). He was appointed, Chairman, Transition Implementation Committee during the administration of President Babangida. With the annulment of the June 12, 1993 Presidential poll, and the attendant imbroglio that followed, he became the Head of the Interim National Government (ING) after the stepping aside of President Babangida in 1993 occasioned by the attendant political logjam that accompanied annulment of the election his government superintended over (Ojo, 2004:60-82). With the eventual collapse of the interim contraption, Shonekan went back on the national scene as the Chairman of Vision 2010 Committee. So far, we have demonstrated that there is 'circulating governing elites' in Nigeria's colonial and post-colonial state which has made the elite theory a truism in Nigeria.

### **A Survey of Circulating Elites in Contemporary Nigeria – 1999 To 2021**

For the past twenty-two years that democracy was inaugurated in 1999 after long years of military interregnum, a number of Nigerians

from diverse sectors has equally remained in the political cum governance circles like a recurring decimal moving from one position to another either elective or appointive. Over the years, huge amounts of resources have been expended on them and their families by the government at different times and levels. Some of them were part of the 16-year reign of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and now they are part of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) due to the opportunity of defections from one party to the other at will. The survey revealed plethora of names but we shall highlight twenty-two of them (Ismail Mudashir et al., 2021).

Top on the list is Senate President Ahmad Lawan, who has been in the National Assembly since 1999 when the country returned to democratic rule. Starting from being a member of the House of Representatives in 1999, Lawan is currently the number one lawmaker and number three citizen of the country. So far, he has been at the federal parliament for 22 years! For eight years, he was at the House of Representatives, where he represented the Bade/Jakusko federal constituency of Yobe State. From 2007 till date, Lawan has been representing Yobe North senatorial district. He was Senate Leader in the last Assembly and presently, the Senate President. Danjuma Goje is another influential politician in Gombe State. He has been in government like Lawan since 1999. But unlike Lawan, Goje started in 1999 as Minister of State for Power under former President Olusegun Obasanjo, before stepping up to become the governor of Gombe State in 2003. He was governor for eight years – 2003-2011. On expiration of his tenure in 2011, Goje moved from the executive to the legislature as senator, representing Gombe Central. Recently, stakeholders from his senatorial district reportedly rejected his decision not to contest for an elective position in 2023!

For Ike Ekweremadu, his foray into government positions started before 1999 when he was the Chairman of Aninri Local Government in 1997. Between 1999 and 2001, he was Chief of Staff to the then governor of Enugu State. He was later appointed secretary to the Enugu State Government in 2001 and served till 2002. In 2003, he crossed over to the Senate, and since then, he has been at the Upper Chamber. For 12 years, he was the Deputy Senate President. He deputized Senator David Mark (2007-2015) and he did same when Senator Bukola Saraki was the Senate President – 2015-2019, making him the longest serving Deputy Senate President in the country. Raji

Fashola was part of the administration of Bola Ahmed Tinubu in Lagos State from 1999 to 2007, where he served as Chief of Staff. On expiration of Tinubu's tenure, Fashola was made the governor of the state, a position he manned for eight years. As a key player in the formation of the APC, Fashola was made a super minister by President Muhammadu Buhari in 2015, manning three ministries – Works, Power and Housing. At the moment, Fashola is the Minister of Works and Housing (see, Ojo, 2022:393). Adamu Aliero was the governor of Kebbi State from 1999 to 2007. In 2007, he moved to the Senate and left in 2008 when the late President Umar Musa Yar'adua appointed him the minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). He currently represents the Kebbi Central Senatorial district in the National Assembly. Aliyu Wamakko was deputy to former Governor Attahiru Bafarawa of Sokoto State. He succeeded Bafarawa in 2007 and reigned in the state for eight years. Wamakko, who was one of the governors that dumped the PDP to form the APC in 2015, is a second timer in the Senate.

Rauf Aregbesola, like Fashola, he was a Commissioner under the Tinubu administration in Lagos State. From Lagos, he moved to his home state. Osun state, where he governed for eight years – 2010 to 2018. In 2019, Buhari named him as minister of Interior. Chris Ngige too, in 1999, he was an Assistant National Secretary and Zonal Secretary of the PDP in the South East. Elected governor in 2003, Ngige was removed in controversial circumstances. He represented Anambra Central Senatorial District between 2011 and 2015 in the Senate. In 2015, President Buhari named him as a minister. He was returned in 2019. George Akume was the governor of Benue State between 1999 and 2007. On completion of his tenure, he moved to the Senate, where he represented the Benue North-West thrice – 2007 to 2019. He was appointed minister in 2019. Rotimi Amaechi was Speaker of the Rivers State House of Assembly for eight years – 1999 to 2007. It was after that that he governed the state for another eight years. In 2015, Amaechi, who was the director-general of the Buhari Campaign Organisation, was made a minister. Orji Uzor Kalu served as the governor of Abia State from 1999 to 2007. At the moment, he is in the Senate and one of the chieftains of the APC in the South-East. Eyinnaya Abaribe became a deputy governor of Abia State after the 1999 election. In 2007, he was elected to the Senate on a PDP ticket. He is still in the Upper Chamber. Gabriel Suswam, in 1999 contested for a seat in the House of Representatives for the Katsina-

Ala/Ukum/Logo federal constituency and was elected on the platform of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). Between 2007 and 2015, he was governor of Benue State at the moment, he is a Senator. James Manager was elected to the Senate on the PDP ticket to represent Delta South in 2003. He has been representing the zone since then. Before going to the Senate, he was the chairman of the Delta State PDP from 1998 to 1999. Sam Egwu was elected the governor of Ebonyi State in 1999, after which he was appointed a minister on completion of his second term by the late President Umaru Yar'adua in 2008. At the moment, he is in the Senate. Rochas Okorocha was a commissioner of the Federal Character Commission when democracy was restored in 1999. A two-term governor of Imo State, he is at the moment a senator and he is said to be nursing presidential ambition. Abdullahi Adamu, regarded as the father of Nasarawa State, was the governor of the state from 1999 to 2007. He has been in the Senate since 2011. He is seen as one of the core Buhari loyalists in the parliament.

Ibikunle Amosun was elected to the senatorial seat of Ogun Central in April 2003. He was a two-term governor of Ogun State till 2019 and returned to the Senate now. Ibrahim Geidam rose to become a permanent secretary in the civil service before he was elected deputy governor of Yobe state in 2007. Geidam became governor in January 2009 when Mamman Ali died. He was governor until 2009. At the moment, he is in the Senate. Umaru Ganduje was deputy to former Governor Rabiu Kwankwaso between 1999 and 2003. From 2003 to 2007 he served as the special adviser (political) to the then Minister of Defence, Kwankwaso. Between 2011 and 2015, he was deputy governor when Kwankwaso was reelected governor. Since 2015, he has been the governor of Kano State. Pauline Tallen was minister under former President Olusegun Obasanjo. She was deputy governor in Plateau State at the moment; she is a minister in Buhari's administration (Ojo, 2002:323). Ali Modu Sheriff was in the Senate from 1999-2003 and Borno State governor for eight years (2003 to 2011). He was the chairman of the PDP (Ismail Mudashir et al., 2021).

### **A Prognosis on the Sources of Elite Recruitment**

One observable phenomenon in virtually all human societies be they democratic or otherwise is the fact that there are a number of sources where these governing elites are molded and recruited. What several extant literatures seem to have lost sight of is the basic source(s) of

recruitment for the governing elites. What we know quite alright is that there are people and institutions usually behind the scene that considerably influence the ruling elites. Not many could attain that status without unalloyed backing of the potentates that belong to one caucus or *Mafia*. Notably among the *Mafias*, in Nigeria is the much dreaded '*Kaduna Mafia*' followed closely by the *Ikene* caucus or '*Mafia*'. Though, the activities of the Kaduna Mafia is perhaps the most pervasive and very much 'respected' and feared, pockets of other '*Mafias*' also exist and matters in the matrix of power game in Nigeria. *Ab initio* the concept of *mafia* in Nigerian political lexicon was regarded as being derogatory, yet one which is not repudiated by those to whom it is alleged to apply. It regularly occurs in the opinion column of Nigerian national dailies and news magazines and its popularity has perhaps pre-empted more careful categorization by social scientists. Who or what is the '*Kaduna Mafia*'? In a nutshell, it refers to members of the Northern intelligentsia who assumed positions of political and social influence during the decades of military rule shortly after the civil war. These individuals are on the whole better educated than their predecessors in the Emirate North who held similar positions in the first decade of after independence. They can also be distinguished from the latter by the fact that they were less dependent on the patronage of the traditional rulers to advance in their careers. A more appropriate but less colourful term for this group would be an '*embryonic state class*', to emphasize the political base of its members within the expanding institutions of the Nigerian state (see, Joseph, 1991:133-134). The Kaduna Mafia as a clique is a very powerful elite body who could make or mar rulers. It is a major recruitment centre for leaders from the North both in military and civilian eras.

In the same perspective, '*Ikene Mafia*' is also believed to be a very potent force to be reckoned with in analyzing power matrix and attainment in Nigeria's body politic at least in South Western part of the country. The late Chief Obafemi Awolowo known as a sage by his admirers and his surrogates and cohorts of '*Awoists*' are generally regarded as powerful in the political fortunes of politicians depending largely on what is decided at *Ikene*, (the home town of Chief Obafemi Awolowo), who was also the Premier of the defunct Western Region of Nigeria between 1954 and 1959. Because of his cult-like followers, the Mafia was so powerful in the West to the extent that whosoever was politically ostracized by the mafia is generally regarded to be

politically annihilated if not physically too! (see, Ojo, 2016:93-112; Ojo, 2021:189-210). Meanwhile, with the demise of their leader (Chief Awolowo), the Ikene Mafia is no more coherent and potent. No doubt with the absence of a charismatic leader of his status, the mafia is no more cohesive, potent and perhaps moribund. Unlike Kaduna mafia which keeps on replenishing itself, Ikene Mafia seems to have faded away.

One observable phenomenon is that in the Eastern part of the country despite the father-figure of the late Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe as a contemporary of the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo in the West, and Ahmadu Bello in the North, he was unable to assume the status of a political demagogue to warrant evolving into a mafia in the East. This is not unconnected with the fact that the Easterners were and still remains Republican in nature. Till date no individual is so strong in the East to become a rallying point. At a lesser level, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, former governor of Lagos State, has been mentoring and nominating people to prominent strategic positions in government. No doubt, he has become a phenomenon beyond his Lagos State. Aside from the 'Mafias' and power brokers behind the scene, one cannot lose sight of the fact that social and cultural clubs have become so strong that they have become ladder usually mounted by people to attain elite status both in military and civilian dispensations.

## **CONCLUSION**

Elitism and 'Mafia'/Caucus influences are indelible in the socio-political setting of Nigeria. Despite the aforementioned criticisms of elite theory, it helps tremendously at explaining Nigerian government and politics vis-à-vis recruitment into the public service/limelight. But the theory does not say it all. For instance, there are few isolated cases in which people just emerged from nowhere to become part of the 'circulating ruling elites'. It is necessary to note however, that elite dominated society like Nigeria has only helped to alienate the large chunk of the civil society from the corridors of power and influence with the consequential effect of making mass mobilization for both national development and integration problematic. Public perception of government is that of 'theirs' and not 'ours'. The masses of the people look unto the elites not only as opportunists but also with disdain. The reason for this is not far-fetched the problem of ineptitude

of the elite which has become a national malaise derives from the fact that most of them are essentially neo-colonialists in character and disposition to national development.

In the context of Nigeria, the country has failed to develop elite cadre that will be national in outlook. What we have are a mass of pretensions and pretenders. In the country, even the professed Marxists wear the toga of elitism. For all their concerns for the common man, the Nigerian Marxists have little bearing with the aspirations of the masses that they tolerate with an avuncular hauteur. This arrogance manifest in talking to impoverished students in university campuses which they take for having communion with the masses. Whereas, university students, no matter, how impecunious they may be are not the masses of the people; when they graduate they join the middle class and not long top elites in the society too. In fact, university undergraduates/post graduate students are fledgling bourgeoisie, a class-peer of the Nigerian pseudo-marxists.

Conclusively, Nigeria needs to create national elite rather than mere competing ethnic cliques (Odumegwu-Ojukwu, 1989:146). This can better be achieved by giving opportunities to younger generation of Nigerians from all parts of the country to evolve and drive the country with new ideas. The circulating elites hitherto are getting exhausted with new innovations that can catapult the country to the next level.

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