

**POLITICAL PARTIES AND LEADERSHIP RECRUITMENT IN NIGERIA
SINCE 1999**

Prof Uji, Wilfred Terlumun

Department of History and International Studies Federal University of Lafia
Nigeria.

***Correspondence:** Prof Uji, Wilfred Terlumun

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INTRODUCTION

Since 1999, Nigeria has practiced a multiparty system under a presidential system of government. Multiparty democracy takes its roots from western liberal democracy which believes in the idea that several parties are needed in order to broaden both political participation as well as leadership recruitment. Under this framework, that of liberal democracy, leadership recruitment is often classed based, elitist and often isolated from the ordinary people or masses. This background underpins the nature of the character of leadership recruitment in Nigeria in the sense that Nigeria as a nation state is a neo-colonial creation and so also the political class that provides leadership at all strata of society.

In Nigeria, since 1999 there has been major political parties at the national level as well as some minor political parties that controls power at the state and local government levels. The major political parties in Nigeria includes: The All Progressive Congress, People's Democratic Party, New Nigeria Party, Labour Party and African Democratic Party. These political parties have control of political offices at both national and state levels. The minor political parties include: The All Progressive Grand Alliance, Social Democratic Party

and the People's Redemption Party that have won electoral seats at state and local government levels.

This paper intends to look at political parties and leadership recruitment in Nigeria since 1999 looking at the impact and its contribution to the development of Nigeria in the last 25 years. The paper explores the nature and character of political party formations in Nigeria, the process of leadership recruitment, the challenges and pitfalls of such a leadership recruitment and its overall impact on good governance and development in Nigeria in the last 25 years.

Theoretical and Conceptual Issues

The key concepts used in this paper are the concept of political parties and that of leadership recruitment and how it impacts good governance.

What is party formation in Nigeria? Nigeria like any other African nation came under colonial rule and became an independent state other the neo-colonial arrangement of western European nations. Nigeria came under the imposition of the political ideas and practices of the west which were not basically designed to help Nigeria develop but rather, to keep Nigeria within the confines of western political ideological frameworks.

Multiparty system is a function of western liberal democracy which believes that there is need for the existence of several political parties to allow for freedom of expression, conscience, voice of opinion and for minority groups to hold contrary opinion as against majority groups. In other words, a multiparty state allows people the freedom to belong to any political association and also the platform to engage in opposition and as well as to be critical of the ruling political class. Kwame Nkrumah observed that multiparty system was not suitable for African nations in that a multiparty society often divides the ruling elites and also fragments society into factions and opposition groups. Where development is needed urgently, opposition groups and dissident groups may rather frustrate the fast progress of development in society. Marxist scholars such as Lenin, Stalin and Mao Tsetung believe that a socialist democracy under a one party state is the fastest way to mobilize society and as well as achieve development. These scholars used the illustration of China, the

Soviet Union and even Cuba to demonstrate the fact that a one-party state as opposed to multiparty system, is the most effective panacea for fast growth and development of a society or nation.

The argument has been that even countries of the West such as the United States, Britain and France at the initial stages of their development had a one-party system or at least a two party system that prevented the fractionalization of society that often divides a society in terms of development. After the French and American revolutions of the 18th century, political party formation in the West followed two ideological lines, that which is to the left which symbolizes socialism and that which is to the right which symbolizes liberal capitalism. Even in countries like the United States of America and Britain, despite the state of advancement, a two-party system along the lines of Left vs Right has continued to be the ideological foundation of political parties in the Western world.

The idea of an ideological base and foundation for a political party makes it easier to understand leadership recruitment, especially in defining the ideological direction of leadership in terms of good governance and development. Political parties have their foundations rooted in an ideology which is also often captured as the party manifesto of the political party.

Leadership recruitment involves some of the following: the selection or the choice of the kind of leadership that can rule a society. The question here is what then the criteria or the process of leadership recruitment is, what are the ideas of the belief system that defines leadership recruitment. These are fundamental questions centered around leadership recruitment. The fact is that leadership cannot function or provide development in isolation to ideology. The point is that leadership is linked to the kind of political ideology or political parties of a given society. In the Western World, United States and Western Europe, leaders are known for the kind of ideas and the value system which they stood for or were prepared even to lay down their lives. We know for instance that the republican party of United State of America stood against black slavery and was willing through the Union to wage a war against the confederate states in order to abolish slavery. We also know that Abraham Lincoln who signed the Emancipation Declaration believed in the idea that all men were

created free and equal and therefore slavery was a moral and spiritual evil. This is a kind of ideological foundation that is necessary for leadership recruitment and as well as political participation in a modern nation state. Leadership does not exist in a vacuum or in isolation to ideology and belief systems. In other words, how do u define a leader and for what purpose and vision does a leader stand for.

In Africa, since independence, it was obvious that the founding fathers of Africa are the strong leadership recruitment drive. Julius Nyerere of Tanzania was a strong advocate of African socialism and ideological foundation that defined his values and as well as impacted on the transformation of Tanzania. Kwame Nkrumah for instance also believed in the Pan-African Unity and the sense of social justice and equity which were the basic belief system of his leadership drive and as well as recruitment. The same was also applicable to Patrice Lumumba of Zaire who believed that social emancipation and socialist democracy was the objective of development in Zaire. Abdel Nasser upheld the idea of Pan-Arabism which also influenced Mummuar Gaddafi of Libya in terms of the ideological leadership trust of their regimes. Although all these African leaders who had a dream of Pan-Africanism were toppled by military regimes sponsored by the West, nevertheless the intensification of the Cold War in Africa divided Africa along two ideological camps, that which was Soviet Socialism and that which was United States Capitalism. During the era of the cold war, ideological leadership was well defined in Africa and so also party formation and participation.

In Southern Africa for instance, without the ideological divide of the Cold War that inspired leadership recruitment, it would have been impossible for liberation struggles to have been sustained in countries such as Zimbabwe, under Robbert Mugabe, South Africa under Nelson Mandela or Mozambique under Samora Machel. The point is that there is a direct connection between ideological leadership development, good governance and social emancipation.

While the rest of Africa was strategizing on ideological leadership, in Nigeria leadership recruitment right from independence was based on the tripartite system factored in the politics of regionalism along the lines of ethnicity and religion. The tripartite system, a colonial heritage, created three regions namely: The Northern

Region, The Eastern Region and the Western Region. In the constitutional reforms of 1946 and 1953, three regional political parties emerge that were in consonance with the three major ethnic groups of Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo. Subsequently, the power sharing arrangement in Nigeria and leadership recruitment came to rotate and to revolve along these three regions. This introduced the idea of zoning leadership positions in Nigeria along these three regions and also the use of quota system in filling up leadership positions in Nigeria. The fact is that, leadership recruitment in Nigeria is deeply rooted in primordial sentiments, zoning principles and quota system more than the issues of merit, competence, development and good governance. In some quarters, the zoning system in Nigeria among the three major ethnic groups is often referred to as the sharing of the National Cake.

Upon independence in 1960, Nigerian leaders own more allegiance to the Western World especially Britain and United States of America if they must succeed as leaders in Nigeria. During the First Republic, Alhaji Tafawa Balewa had more allegiance to Britain than even Nigeria. Most of the constitutional conferences leading up to the independence of Nigeria took place in London. No wonder that even our national anthem was composed from London and given to Nigerians. This explained the nature and character of leadership recruitment in which our leaders take their bearing from the Western World. The Western World has continued to dictate the quality of leadership and even the ideological recruitment of leadership. For instance, General Olusegun Obasanjo in 1978 received the United States President Jimmy Carter in Nigeria as a necessary prerequisite of Nigeria's transition to democratic rule in the Second Republic. Alhaji Shehu Shagari the President of Nigeria during the Second Republic had to pay a visit to the White House in the United State as a proof of allegiance and loyalty to the West. In the recent campaigns in Nigeria, as from 2023, many of the Presidential candidate in Nigeria including Bola Ahmed Tinubu first launched their manifesto in Chattam House in London. This is one glaring evidence that leadership recruitment in Nigeria must be endorsed by the West. It is within this context that we should look at leadership recruitment in Nigeria in the last 25 years looking at the political formations that took place.

Richard Joseph in his book " Democracy and Prebendal Politics, the Rise and Fall of the Second Republic" deployed the concept and idea of politics in a Feudal State,

where the backbone of political power and supremacy is rooted in who best deploys Military power to outwit his opponent, share the spoils of office, through a system patron client ties, to explain the driving force of politics and power control in Nigeria. Leadership recruitment in Nigeria is fuelled by the politics of prebendalism which we shall later on discuss.

Politics in Nigeria is rooted in a system of Godfathers who often uses brute force to capture state power and share the political gains with his clients. The Godfathers may belong to different religious and ethnic persuasions, but the common denominator is the share and control of state resources by the same ruling elites. The same applies to the clients attached to the apron strings of a Godfather. They are often the foot soldiers made up of militant groups, bandits and militia groups, drawn from different ethnic and religious persuasions, with a common goal of forceful state capture under the watch and patronage of their Godfathers. The Godfathers supply all of the logistics, intelligence, Military training and equipment, while the clients, the Cannon Fodder, will recruit and mobilize political violence. It is a system of patronage in which there is division of labor, and we'll define roles with concrete material expectations and reward.

The Second Republic from 1979 to 1983 saw the Institutionalization of political thuggery and violence through the manipulation of the electoral process in Nigeria. The ruling National Party of Nigeria in the General elections of 1983 used political thugs in the harassment and intimidation of opponents as well as used thugs, snatched ballot boxes and declared unpopular candidates as winners. The institutionalization of violence also has its own impact on leadership recruitment in Nigeria which we shall discuss later on in the world.

The Shagari administration knew how to use political thuggery and violence in leadership recruitment such as the grant of pardon to Chief Odemegu Ojukwu and the use of him to destabilize the Southeast. For instance, Chief Odemegu Ojukwu, a Nigerian Civil War Valiant, was granted state pardon by the ruling party and rewarded with the fake declaration of the Governorship elections in Benue State.

The years of Military rule from 1983 to 1998, under General Mohammad Buhari, General Ibrahim Babaginda, General Sani Abacha and General Abdulsalam

Abubakar, witnessed a water shed in understanding the political economy of violent extremism in the interface of poverty and underdeveloped and how it affects leadership recruitment process in Nigeria.

Nigeria deteriorated into a failed state where under the Neo Liberal policies of Privatization and Commercialization, the Nigerian Economy under a system of devaluation of national currency and exchange rates, declined more into the abyss of poverty and underdeveloped. The Export - import substitution strategy under a series of Structural Adjustment Programmes worsened the plights of ordinary Nigerians.

Neo liberal Economic thinking overshadowed by monumental National Corruption suffered several hiccups and convulsions that the nation's Economy could not recover from.

Nigeria became a contested landscape of ethnic and religious agitations that received the sponsorship of the national ruling class in both cash and kind.

In the Niger Delta, Militant Groups resurfaced under the control of ethnic warlords like Asari Dokubo.

In Northern Nigeria, the Boko Haram insurgency emerged under the leadership of Yusuf with the military and ideological support from political Islamic Groups and Leaders across the world.

In the North Central of Nigeria, the incessant Communal feuding between the Jukun, Alago, Tiv, Fulani witnessed the rise of Militant Mercenaries under the leadership of Terwase Agwaza, Alias Gana. Ombatse, Cephas etc. These militant leaders across the Eggon, Jukun, Tiv Alago had a network of alliance and operation that also collaborated where necessarily with Herdsmen Militia Groups to control the North Central Nigeria Geopolitical area.

The major sponsors and beneficiaries of the network of militia groups and violent extremism in Nigeria is the political ruling class whose networking transcends the boundaries of ethnicity and religion. The political ruling class have exploited all these ethno-religious conflicts as a platform of leadership recruitment as well as for their followers.

The basic motive is the control of political power and resources that ensures their class hegemonic interest.

Ethnicity and religion are vehicles of mobilizing society into violence and hate. This Opium, the use of religion and ethnicity has concealed the exploitative motives of the ruling class, blindfolded the eyes of the masses from the deplorable state of poverty and underdevelopment.

The return of Partisan politics as from 1999 to the present has witnessed several Development. On one hand, the interface between political violence used by the ruling class and how that has provided a smokescreen for the ruling class to get away with the underdevelopment of the nation, on the other hand, the interface between poverty, underdevelopment and political violence, banditry and criminality.

A critical anatomy of the Nigerian Economy will reveal the fact that the ruling class controls the economy under a system of privatization and commercialization of the power Sector, energy and telecommunication Sectors. The sectors of Education, Banking and Finance are under their control.

What is left is the Commercialization and monetization of the Public Sector to take off the burden of running the state from the shoulder of the ruling class. This includes the monetization of the electoral Institutionalization in Nigeria.

Despite these far-reaching reforms, poverty remains at over sixty percent, exchange rates at over ten percent, borrowing rates at over twelve percent, external reserves depleted, unemployment at over forty percent, and inflation at near sixteen percent. These are indices and statistics from the National Bureau for Statistics, the World Bank and the Nigeria Central Bank.

Despite the monetary policies of currency swap and redesign of the Naira, there is a widening gap between the rich and poor. All indices shows that Nigeria is a failed State. The failed state syndrome has also adversely affected leadership recruitment in Nigeria.

The History of Political Parties in Nigeria since 1999

For us to understand the formation of political parties as from 1999, there is need for us to understand the background that led to the emergence and entronement of

democracy in Nigeria as from 1999. As far back as 1992, General Ibrahim Babangida who was the military head of state of Nigeria had annulled one of the freest and most fair elections in Nigerian history. In the national elections of June 1992, Chief M.K.O Abiola of the Socialist Democratic Party is believed to have won the election as against Alhaji Bashir Tafa of the National Republican Convention. Instead of a declared winner, General Babangida annulled the elections on the grounds of national security and refused to succumb or bow down to international pressure to declare M.K.O Abiola as the winner of the election.

Subsequently, arising from the power struggle inside Aso Rock at the centre of Nigerian politics, General Sani Abacha forced Ibrahim Babangida to step aside and to form a Government of National Unity under the interim leadership of Ernest Shonekan. Initially, Chief M.K.O Abiola embraced the interim Government with the hope that he was going to be declared the winner of the June 12th election. With the passage of time, it dawns on Abiola that June 12th was a mirage and the Interim National Government had no obligation of keeping a date with the June 12th election.

What followed, amidst the confusion and the division of the nation, was the military coup of General Sani Abacha which brought him into power as the Military Head of State of Nigeria. The Interim National Government under Shonekan as well as the National Assembly together with the State Governors were dissolved by the Military Government. The 1992 Constitution was suspended, and military decrees were imposed on the nation.

Chief M.K.O Abiola hopes of ever becoming the President of Nigeria were sealed when General Sani Abacha who initially promised to actualize June 12th turned his back on M.K.O Abiola. Chief Abiola had no other alternative but to result to protest and pro-democracy movements in order to actualize his mandate. To achieve the goal of protest, Chief Abiola formed the National Democratic Coalition Forces that was known as NADECO under the leadership of Chief Abraham Adesanya. NADECO became like a shadow government that had both a radio station and as well as even a national anthem. A sustained struggle spanned over several years leading up to the death of MKO Abiola in 1998 and as well as the death of Sani Abacha in the same year.

THE MAKING OF THE PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC PARTY

The People's Democratic Party first began as a group of thirty-seven Nigerian political elites who were comprised of the military as well as the civil class. It was this group that much later metamorphosed into the People's Democratic Party that won the general elections of 1999. The key political actors who led to the formation of the People's Democratic Party were mostly military officers both serving and retired.

The event leading up to the formation of the People's Democratic Party was the coming into power of General Abubakar Abdulsalam as the Military Head of State after the sudden death of General Sani Abacha. Under General Abacha, the regime had floated five political parties that were prepared and willing to endorse General Abacha as the life President of Nigeria. However, the sudden death of General Abacha witnesses the disintegration of all the five political parties and the emergence of a new era in Nigeria's political history.

General Abubakar Abdulsalam was appointed as the Military Head of State with a basic mandate to lead Nigeria back to democratic rule by 1999. This struggle, the return of democracy in Nigeria, was a product of several activist and pro-democracy fighters who were known as the group of 34 or the G34. Among the G34 were both civilian and military officers, some who were retired and some who were still active. These pro-democracy groups or forces included the likes of Jerry Gana, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, Muhammadu Buhari, Shehu Sani, Shehu Yaradua, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, Bola Tinubu etc.

It is arising from this background that the constitutional conference of 1998 ushered in the democratic era of President Olusegun Obasanjo on May 29th of 1999. The major political parties during this period were The All-People's Party, The People Democratic Party, and The Alliance for Democracy Party. In the general elections of 1999, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo of the People's Democratic Party that was under the control of both serving and retired military generals, returned Obasanjo as the President elect of Nigeria. The All-People's Party that came second in the election had the control of some states mostly in the North while the Alliance for Democracy

Party under the leadership of Bola Ahmed Tinubu swept all of the state in the Southwest.

The People's Democratic Party held unto power for Sixteen years up to 2015 when the newly formed All Progressive Congress, an amalgamation of The Alliance for Democracy Party, The All-People's Party, Center Party Congress, came together under the All-Progressive Congress to snatch political power from the People's Democratic Party. In 2015 also, some other political parties were also registered such as The Social Democratic Party, the People's Redemption Party and the New Nigerian People's Party. These political parties were led by retired army generals or Nigerian political class who were more or less part of the ruling oligarchy in Nigeria.

This underscores one thing about political formation in Nigeria as it relates to leadership recruitment, the idea that or the fact that political parties in Nigeria irrespective of their ideologies have certain things in common that have so much hindered leadership recruitment. These are:

- The political parties are owned and controlled by few individuals or an oligarchy that dictates what happens to the political party even in terms of leadership recruitment. On the surface, membership may be open to all but however leadership recruitment at the level of national elections, states and local government elections is often skewed to the rich and powerful. The cost of picking up an expression of interest form to contest an election is often beyond the means and affordability of the ordinary person. This makes it rather difficult for the ordinary people who cannot afford to buy the expression forms not to participate in leadership recruitment.
- Lack of internal democracies within the political parties as a result of the Godfather system or outright impositions of candidates or sometimes a consensus arrangement. This is one major crisis that completely destroys the credibility of the People's Democratic Party under Chief Olusegun Obasanjo as the President. In the primary elections of 2007, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo recruited Musa Yaradua who though was very sick and was absent from campaigns and imposed him on the party and also went ahead and won the general elections of 2007, internal democracy has been one of the biggest

challenge of almost all the political parties including the All Progressive Congress that came up with Bola Ahmed Tinubu as the Presidential Candidate of the party in the 2023 primary elections.

- All the political parties lack clearly defined ideologies and the developmental blueprint inline with the national aspirations of Nigerians and as well as the National development plan of Nigeria. This has made it personal for political leadership to decamp from one political party to the other with ease. Some political elites have said that political parties in Nigeria are like low fences that one can jump from one side to the other. This shows a lack of ideology by the political parties in terms of what they represent, their value systems and belief system by which the masses can hold them accountable.

The People's Democratic Party to a large extent was a party that was controlled more by the Military than the Civilian class. It is therefore not strange that leadership recruitment from the People's Democratic Party for the seat of the Presidency was handed over to a retired military general in the person of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo. The idea of a democratic transition was not actually to enthrone democracy but was aimed at transferring power to the same military class in civil attire. The People's Democratic Party was more or less an extension of the Military through a civil means. It is important at this point to note that the People's Democratic Party had a party manifesto but the manifesto did not address or define certain issues clearly.

- What is Nigeria, in terms of the values and the principles of the nation and as well as the belief system that holds us together as a nation. What is it that all Nigerians are prepared to live for and as well as to lay down their lives.
- What will happen to job creation and wealth creation as it affects all Nigerians especially the youthful population of the country.
- What is education or the standard of education that will help train the population of the nation and as well as help the nation achieve development.
- What will be the foreign policy trust of the People's Democratic Party with other countries of the world.
- What will happen to national security in terms of addressing issues of insecurity, ethnic and religious crisis.

- What will happen to industrialization and free economic enterprise.
- What will happen to democratic freedom and minority rights.

For the avoidance of doubt, a manifesto of the People's Democratic Party has been attached as Appendix 1, in order to bring out the fact that the People's Democratic Party did not have a clear defined manifesto ideology from the development of Nigeria in these critical areas. The party manifesto also did not clearly define the process of leadership recruitment at the national, state and local government levels. In the developed polity of the world, a political party is as good as the nation or the country and represents both the vision and aspiration of the nations, which are all encapsulated in the manifesto agenda of the party. Political parties do not just exist in a vacuum or for the sake of periodic elections or just for the sake of the transfer of political power but on how to deal with the critical issues and challenges of development. The manifesto of the party shouldn't reflect the yearnings of the people. As a matter of fact, it is the people from the grassroot through popular uprisings that formed political parties. The point we are making here is that the People's Democratic Party from its very origin and formation was a party of the oligarchy and aristocrats who were both military and civilian. The formation of the party itself did not take into cognizance the wishes and aspirations of the common people at the grassroots. This is one fundamental defect of not just the People's Democratic Party but also that of the All-Progressive Congress that emerged as from 2015.

THE FORMATION OF THE ALL PROGRESSIVE CONGRESS

Before the formation of the All Progressive Congress, there were several political parties as mentioned before that came together to form what was known as the All Progressive Congress in 2015. These political parties majorly were The Alliance for Democratic Congress, some factions of the People's Democratic Party, the All Progressive Grand Alliance and the All People's Party. These political parties has earlier on discussed were controlled and as well as owned by Bourgeoisies forces who were both military and civil. Writing on this subject matter, Uji and Uhywembe pointed out that the All Progressive Congress was a metamorphosis of bourgeoisies political formation. The political party just like the People's Democratic Party had no

strong ideological definitions or manifesto to some extent, both the People's Democratic Party and the All Progressive Congress were two side of the same coin.

Under the leadership of General Muhammadu Buhari and other northern political elites such as Atiku Abubakar, Olushola Saraki, Sule Lamido, Kashim Shettima and several others. These Nigerian elites were mostly recycled from the People's Democratic Party to form the All Progressive Congress. A manifesto of the All Progressive Congress is attached in Appendix 2. The All Progressive Congress just like the People's Democratic Party has no clear defined vision that is in consonance with the wishes and aspirations of the Nigerian people. Being a Bourgeoisies political party, it assumes that power capture and control is the ultimate political agenda and not necessarily the need to provide good governance and development.

LEADERSHIP RECRUITMENT IN NIGERIA

Leadership recruitment in Nigeria is largely influenced by the nature and character of Nigerian politics which is prebendalistic and primordial in nature. Since independence, the Nigerian states has been liken to a feudal state that has come under the capture of how political elites both military and civil. Leadership recruitment therefore is often not aimed at providing the best leadership in terms of ideology and merit that can provide a sense of good governance and development. Rather primitive accumulation and primordialism have continued to fuel and influence leadership recruitment in Nigeria.

Richard Joseph in his book *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria: The Rise and the Fall of the Second Republic* highlighted some basic principles of leadership recruitment in Nigeria that:

- Leadership recruitment is often centred and revolves around the Godfather syndrome under a system of patron-client ties. Under this system, there are the godfathers of the state made up of diverse ethnic groups and scattered all over the country, but connected by class interests to fuel accumulation and to sustain power, law and order. Therefore leadership recruitment is often based on the relationship between a patron and a client where the most valuable

principles are that of loyalty, submission, slavish mentality, more than the values of merit, excellence and credibility.

- That under the tripartite system, Nigeria has been defined as an exclusive reserve of leadership among the three ethnic groups in Nigeria namely: Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. Leadership rotates strictly between these three ethnic major ethnic groups. Although there are exceptions to this rule as in the case of Goodluck Jonathan and Yakubu Gowon during the military era. The zoning principle and the use of quota system has given birth to the idea of make you chop, make I chop. In the recent concluded presidential elections, Bola Ahmed Tinubu could not control his emotions when he shouted out that it is my turn (emilokan). Some journalists in Abuja have described this kind of leadership recruitment as the turn by turn democracy. Its often not surprising therefore when Nigerian leaders, mostly retired military men and civilians unleashed terror on Nigeria in order to capture political power at the centre. We shall look at this in the next segment.
- Leadership recruitment in Nigeria is all about who knows how to use force and military violence to unleash terror on the Nigerian society in such a manner to capture political power. This ranges from the use of thuggery and violent extremism as a means of leadership recruitment in that in Nigeria most of the leaders have risen on the tide of ethno religious crisis to assume leadership command. Political leaders in Nigeria have exploited militant organizations such as the Boko Haram, the Niger Delta militants, The Movement of the Sovereign State of Biafra, the Herdsmen Militia Force as a platform of gaining political power and authority in Nigeria. Muhammadu Buhari, Lamido Sanusi, Atiku Abubakar are Nigerian leaders who are also wealthy patrons of Miyetti Allah and have used the herdsmen crisis as a platform into leadership recruitment. These leaders have been described as the chief herders, the force behind the herdsmen militia expansion in Nigeria with the attending political consequences.

Right from the inception of the modern state of Nigeria, leadership recruitment is often controlled by the Western World either by the United States of America or that of Western European nations. Nigeria has never gotten the kind of leadership that

completely rooted in the people as well as controlled by the people. In other words, the leadership recruitment in Nigeria is more answerable to the west than being responsive to the Nigerian people. This is one fundamental challenge of leadership recruitment in Nigeria since 1999.

Olusegun Obasanjo who was the President of Nigeria from 1999 to 2007 was a product of the New Partnership for Africa's Development which was the brain child of the New World Order and the new Economic Order that began after the collapse of the Soviet Union or the end of the Cold War. The aspirations of Chief Obasanjo alongside with other African leaders such as Thabo Mbeki of South Africa were more or less subscribed by the Neo-liberal economic ideas of the world bank and the international monetary fund. All of the policies of the Obasanjo era under the National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS) were the products of the Neo-Liberal West that were designed to entrench Western capitalism in Nigeria. Most of the programmes of the Obasanjo's regime, from that of privatization and commercialization to that of downsizing the civil service by cutting down the cost of government were all dictated by the Western World at the detriment of the Nigerian people. Under the Obasanjo's era, even matters of National Defence and Security came under the subscription of the United States of America, one country that exported military facilities to Nigeria and as well as even supervised the security architecture of Nigeria. General Victor Malu who was the Army Chief of Staff during the Obasanjo era have resigned his appointment in protest with the growing United States Military imperialism in Nigeria.

The President Muhammadu Buhari era 2015-2023 and that of the contemporary President Bola Ahmed Tinubu era have also witnessed the same leadership recruitment trend in terms of policies that are unfriendly to the Nigerian people. The sudden and dramatic removal of oil subsidy without the necessary prerequisite infrastructure came as a product of the influence of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The leadership in Nigeria decided to subscribe to this western economic policies at the detriment and underdevelopment of the Nigerian people. The point is this, leadership recruitment in Nigeria is externally controlled by the Western World. It is difficult if not impossible for any Nigerian to emerge as the

Head of State or the President without the endorsement and as well as the support of the West. This in itself is exclusive in terms of the recruitment of leadership in Nigeria. What it means is that not every Nigerian is free to become the leader of the Nigerian state.

The patron-client tie Godfather system also has made it nearly impossible for the ordinary person in Nigeria to emerge as a leader at both the National, State and Local Government level. In Nigeria, examples have shown clearly that it is the patrons and the Godfathers of the Nigerian states who recruits leaderships at all levels of society. These also includes appointment into public offices. We have cited before that Chief Olusegun Obasanjo was the endorsement of the retired military generals in Nigeria who founded the People's Democratic Party. In doing so, the selection of Obasanjo, the retired military leaders did not consult with the Nigerian people or even that of the South West where Chief Obasanjo came from. No wonder that it is not surprising that the entire South West remained in opposition under the Alliance of Democratic Congress led by Bola Ahmed Tinubu. This was a clear sign and manifestation that the South West did not endorse Chief Olusegun Obasanjo as the leader and President of Nigeria. During the Obasanjo's era, the South West remained under this opposition that also have adverse consequences on the South West in terms of the elimination and assassination of some of the key leaders of the Yoruba Afenifere movement such as Chief Bola Ige. Obasanjo was simply chosen and imposed on the democratic structure of his period.

The zoning and rotation of leadership in Nigeria through the framework of regionalism dictated by the tripartite system has been also one of the major challenges of leadership recruitment in Nigeria. This challenge dates back to the foundations of Nigeria as an independent nation in the 1960s. Although it is not a written constitution, but Nigeria believes that power and leadership recruitment must rotate between the Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo and any default in that process can lead to a civil war or unrest. The nation witnessed this contradiction of leadership recruitment in the military coup that toppled Aguiyi Ironsi as the Military Head of State in 1966. The fear by the north was that Aguiyi Ironsi being an Igbo man was told to enforce a Southern agenda on Nigeria through the Unitary Decree of 1966.

Nigerians believe in regionalism, ethnicity and religion as leadership prerequisite in the recruitment process. Every leader is a regional leader who also sometimes doubles up as an ethnic leader. We see this controversy between Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe. During the 1940s and the 1950s, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe under the National Council of Nigerian Citizens had a widespread popularity in the West. He was however opposed by Chief Obafemi Awolowo of the Action Group who drove Dr. Azikiwe out of the South West. Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe retreated to the South East and became the leader of the Igbos. According to some scholars, this was the beginning of the politics of ethnicity and religion that has come to dictate leadership recruitment in Nigeria up to the contemporary era.

Since 1999, the battle in leadership recruitment has been how leadership in Nigeria can rotate from the North to the South and possibly how leadership recruitment can rotate or can be zoned from the North to the East or from the East to the West. The zoning and rotation of leadership in Nigeria has been one of the thornier issue in the recruitment of leadership in Nigeria since 1999. It has also been the fundamental basis, as noted before, for the emergence of nationalists movements in Nigeria as well as irredentist movements in Nigeria all in clamour of resource control and power shift. It is largely this background that led to the emergence of the Boko Haram, the Niger Delta Movement and the Independence People of the Sovereign State of Biafra. The basic thrust of these movements was aimed at power sharing in Nigeria between the Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo.

There is no gain saying the fact that President Muhammadu Buhari exploited the vehicle of the Boko Haram Movement and that of Herdsmen militia to actualize his ambition to become President in Nigeria. The reason and the evidence is that, in the aftermath of the 2011 General Elections, in which Buhari lost to President Goodluck Jonathan, Buhari vowed that there will be bloodshed and that the monkeys and the baboons will meet on the battlefield. Whether intentional or non-intentional, the outbreak of violent extremism by the Boko Haram and the Herdsmen militia under the Goodluck administration is traceable to the Buhari's threat. The outcome of the power struggle using ethnic and religious militias was the concession of political leadership to Muhammadu Buhari in the general elections of 2015. In his acceptance

speech of loosing the election to Buhari, President Goodluck Jonathan made a press statement in which he said that his Presidential ambition was not worth the blood of the Nigerian people. This was a typical demonstration and manifestation of prebendal politics liken to feudal state. Nigeria indeed in terms of leadership recruitment is a feudal state where political warlords battle out for leadership and control. This was summed up in the words of the former President candidate who said:

*“power does not come on a platter of Gold, you
either grab it, take it, force it and get it by any means”.*

President Olusegun Obasanjo did not hide his feelings when he said in the election of 2007 that was to return President Musa Yaradua as President that,

“elections in Nigeria is war, it is either do or die”

These statements underscores the fact that leadership recruitment in Nigeria that is often by force, violence, war or even uprisings using ethnic and religious militias. This also has had far reaching impact on the electoral process in Nigeria in that in Nigeria elections are far from being peaceful, free and fair. For instance, how can one explain that someone serving a jail term as a prisoner was declared a winner of the senatorial election from prison.

The point so far is, zoning principles affects leadership recruitment in Nigeria but what exacerbate it most is the state of force and violence through the recruitment of ethnic and religious militias as a leadership recruitment platform. In a country like Nigeria, leadership recruitment is by war, is not by any peaceful means. A political leader in Nigeria is first and foremost an ethnic and religious warlord who uses the instrument of violence to unleash on the helpless masses to achieve leadership control and dominance.

The use of quota system, zoning principles and application of force is the same thing that is applicable in leadership recruitment at the state and local government levels. At the state and local government levels, there has been countless examples of leadership tussle between majority and minority ethnic groups that makes up a state or local government. It is no longer news in Nigeria or anything strange to know that

State Governors have often manipulated the state electoral commissions to declare local government chairman candidates of their own not leaving a single sit to the opposition. This practice and attitude has grossly undermined the autonomy of local governments both in terms of leadership recruitment and as well as financial autonomy. Under President Muhammadu Buhari, his administration drive Governors to the supreme court to determine the autonomy of local governments. The same thing has been repeated by the President Bola Ahmed Tinubu who is at the supreme court seeking a declaration of autonomy of local governments. Leadership recruitment at the local government is often dictated and dominated by governors of states in line with the ethnic and religious prejudices.

One major issue about leadership recruitment in Nigeria is the electoral system itself at both national and state levels. The major fact is that leadership recruitment under the electoral system in Nigeria can never be free and fair in that the electoral system itself is under the control of the Presidency at the national level and state governors at the local government levels. The lack of independence and autonomy by the electoral bodies both at the national and states undermines a leadership recruitment that is free and fair. This is often compounded by the fact that in all the political parties in Nigeria, there is poor internal democracy that allowed a free and fair leadership recruitment that is open to all citizens irrespective of their material status. This has produced the adverse consequence of legal suits and litigations of contestants in Nigerian courts of law. The issues arising from the litigations have clearly shown that the Nigerian judiciary has become a major agent and platform for leadership recruitment where leaders are declared winners and returned by the courts . this is a serious negation of democracy and electoral franchise in that the power to choose leaders or to recruit them lies in the ballot, that is the people, not the courts of law.

In 2023, President Muhammadu Buhari signed into law the electoral act as amended. The law among many things promised a free and fair election based on the digitalization of the electoral process in the declaration of results as well as the compilation of results. Digital electronic gadgets were introduced such as the card reader and the BVAS but despite these reforms, leadership recruited in Nigeria is still

not open to the grassroots to the access of the common man. For instance, if not until recently, young people in Nigeria below certain ages were not allowed to be part of the leadership recruitment at the national level. However President Muhammadu Buhari signed into law the Not Too Young To Run Bill that will enable young people also to be part of the leadership recruitment in Nigeria. Before this law, young people in Nigeria with the greatest population of over 100 million youths were excluded from leadership recruitment at the national particularly that of the Presidency.

In Nigeria, there is still a struggle that Women Affirmative Groups to ensure that women are recruited into the leadership of Nigeria at all strata of the Nigerian society. Affirmative action along the lines of the Beijing Declaration has insisted that at least thirty percent of electoral seats at both state and national level in both executive and parliamentary be reserved for women to ensure equality, equity and fairness. Despite these reforms, women leadership recruitment in Nigeria still hindered by cultural and material forces.

Leadership recruitment in Nigeria has been all about the recycling of corrupt politicians who were in the past were indicted by the courts or by the Economic Financial Crime Commission. Beginning from the Obasanjo era, the war on corruption was politicized aimed at the destruction and elimination of political opponents. It was clear that President Obasanjo using the EFCC and other anti-graft agencies waged a war on corruption that was both selective and punitive. Several of his cabinet members were indicted of corruption but continued to hold key leadership positions under his administration.

Under President Muhammadu Buhari many of his key cabinets were indicted of corruption such as the Director General of Pension Board, Mallam Maina who was indicted to have siphoned pensions funds amounting to billions of naira. The minister of humanitarian affairs also was accused of the embezzlement of billions of naira just as the Governor of the Central Bank Mr. Emefiele was also accused of embezzlement of trillions of naira. The former Governor of Central Bank, Lamido Sanusi was also accused of the embezzlement of billions of naira under the President Goodluck administration. The fact is that the catalogue of corruption is unending in Nigeria and

it is mostly comprising of the leadership structured in Nigeria at both state and national level.

Under the President Bola Ahmed Tinubu administration, almost all of the his key political appointees were indicted by the EFCC in the past such as Mallam Nuhu Ribadu who is the Minister of Defence, Sen. Godswill Akpabio the Senate President, Femi Gbajamila the Chief of Staff, Dr. Mrs. Beta the Minister of Humanitarian Affairs etc. Despite the past records of corruption, these leaders have been recycled again under the leadership recruitment scheme in Nigeria. Nigeria unlike other nations like China endorses the recruitment of leaders who were once indicted of public corruption. The attendant consequence of the leadership recruitment of corrupt leaders is that it provides a negative example for the teeming youthful population of Nigeria who believe that leadership is corruption and fraud. Many of the Nigerian youthful population do not even know what is it that Nigeria stands for in terms of values and principles and what is it that our leadership represents in terms of morality and good governance. These and many more have continued to be the critical issues and questions raised about leadership recruitment in Nigeria. What is the criteria of leadership recruitment, is it a corrupt leadership, or a leadership fuelled by ethnicity and religion or a leadership that mobilizes primordial factors for violence.

CONCLUSION

There can never be leadership recruitment in a country or nation where that country or nation have failed to define what is the nation. The fundamental question is, what is Nigeria, how do we define Nigeria, and who are Nigerians. Nigeria has taken off as a nation state without a proper definition and structure that will guarantee the hopes and aspirations of all Nigerians so also the political parties that lack ideology and the sense of national development. The political parties are formed for the sole purpose of contesting periodic elections and providing representative leadership. This is the kind of leadership that is not people-oriented or grassroots based on the fundamental definition of democracy as a government of the people, by the people and for the people. In a democracy, leadership recruitment stems out from the people and its of the people and for the people. It is not a representative leadership that is

selective and isolated from the yearnings and aspirations of the masses. This is the fundamental thing about leadership recruitment in Nigeria, it does not reflect the collective thinking and aspiration of the Nigerian people, rather it oppresses the very essence and yearnings of the people.

How can we explain that in Nigeria, there is a leadership that takes economic decisions that impoverishes the people and deepens poverty among the masses. Even when there are public protests against such leadership like the harsh end SARS movement, the leadership uses military force to pull down and destroy the people. How can you explain leadership in Nigeria where on a daily basis the Boko Haram and herdsmen militia, bandits and assassins kill and displace people as well as disarticulate economic activities and yet the leadership remains indifferent and helpless. This is an indication of a leadership collapse or the near state collapse of Nigeria as expressed by Chinua Achebe in his book "There was a country". Indeed Achebe went on to point out in his book "the trouble with Nigeria" that the challenge of Nigeria is leadership. There is no gain saying the fact that leadership in Nigeria in the last 25 years under the People's Democratic Party and the All Progressive Congress has been a recycling of corrupt leadership that uses ethnicity and religion to fuel violence and conceal their class interest.

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