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REFLECTIONS ON POLITICS AND POLITICIANS OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

The subject matter of politics represents a significant and interesting arena among people all over the world much as it has remained a part and parcel of human societies and human relations since time immemorial. In Nigeria, politics has come to be acknowledged not just as an academic field of study but as a vocation or profession as more often than not, people that are engaged in political activities, especially at the state's realm often clad themselves as 'professional politicians'. However, an observed trend in Nigeria is that politics and politicians have acquired definite characters over the years, such as criminalisation of politics, a pathological orientation and a penchant not to abide by the rules, all of which are antithetical to the goals and aspirations of a democratic society. By examining the pattern of politics in the country and the character of politicians, this paper posits that there is an intricate relationship between the context of politics and the character of politicians in Nigeria thereby forming a circle of political manoeuvrings. Overcoming this trend requires both institutional reforms and attitudinal re orientation.

Key words: Politics, politicians, Nigeria, Rentierism, Pathology

Introduction

The subject matter of politics represents a significant and interesting arena among peoples the world over both in its disciplinary context and human relational context. As a field of study, it has been variously conceived by scholars but one fact that cannot be denied and which stresses its human relational component is the fact that Politics in the broad sense is a universal aspect of life in human societies that encompasses a broad range of situations in which people's objectives vary but in which they work together to achieve those objectives they have in common and compete where objectives differ (Tansey 1995). The process of cooperation and competition, however, involves bargaining, argument, compromise and wielding of power or influence. To this extent, politics is an activity area that involves both the exercise of power and influence. From the classical definition of Robert Dhal through David Easton and others, it has come to be realised that politics is all about attempt by man to dominate or overshadow his fellow men in order to achieve some predetermined objectives. This assertion reechoes Machiavelli's thought that 'politics is an end in itself and the end justifies the means'. But while this remains a statement of fact, what has remained elusive and which accounts for deviational tendencies among practioners is the misconception about what constitutes the end in Machiacelli's thought. Indeed, while machiavelli conceived of the end in terms of the state's interest, contemporary notion about what constitutes the interest of the state has remained

problematic. In marxian perspective, the state's interest roughly coincides with the interest of the dominant class. Thus, whatever is paraded as the overall interest of the state is nothing but a reflection of the class interest of the bourgeossie elements in the state. It was in this context that Marx sees the state as an instrument for the contineud subjugation and exploitation of the masses. To this extent, the struggle to capture state power is simply a struggle for a vantage position in the exercise of power and influence over all others. This position also finds footing in the elite theory of politics which emphasises the control of state by a small group who exercises power over the mass.

In Nigeria, politics has come to be acknowledged not just as an academic field of study but as a vocation or profession. More often than not people engaged in political activities, especially at the state's realm often clad themselves as 'professional politicians'. Equally, many others clad themselves, irrespective of their professional calling, as 'political analysts'. This is to the extent that the task of political analysis has remained an all-comers affair with profusion of writings in the print media and other channels of communication. Deriving from this, perhaps, we may assert that most Nigerians fall into either divide of being a 'professional politician' or a 'political analyst'. Notwithstanding, this scenario shows the extent to which politics is a fad among the Nigerian populace.

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political contest, especially at the state level, requires some form of decorum and comportment on the part of politicians. In other words, while the interest of the state, clearly defined, must remain paramount, it must not lose touch of the virtues of bargaining and compromise necessary for effective resolution of the competing and at times conflicting interests within the state. Also, fruitful politicking needs to eschew violence and criminalisation of politics as a norm, pursuance of personal interest as an habit as well as a culture of political brigandage. Indeed, observed trend in Nigeria have indicated a deviation from the norm as politics and politicians have acquired definite characters over the years, such as criminalisation of politics, a pathological orientation and a penchant not to abide by the rules, all of which from all intent and purpose are antithetical to the goals and aspirations of a democratic society. What then, is the character of politics in Nigeria? Why do politicians behave the way they do? That is, the psychology of politicking. What is the impact of this tendency on political and societal development? Resolving these questions demands that we proceed from examining the context of politics in Nigeria.

Context of Politics

Politics has remained a part and parcel of human societies and human relations since time immemorial. Nigeria is not an exception in this regard. Indeed, before the arrival of the colonialists and the formal establishment and launching of colonial rule and policies, the diverse peoples of Nigeria

have engaged in one form of power relation or the other. The nature and dimensions of these interactions have been well espounded on by sociologists, anthropologists as well as historians (see, Agbu, 2010; Akinwunmi, 2004; Osaghae, 1998; Ujam, 1995). However, it could be asserted that formal politicking – at an organised level – began with the establishment of the first political party in Nigeria in 1923 sequel to the entrenchment of elective principle in the Constitution of 1922. Ever since, on the one hand, politics as an activity has remained an interesting issue among many Nigerians and on the other hand, political activities by politicians in Nigeria have been informed by some peculiar circumstances bordering on the circumstances of emergence and nature of the state. These are, **the cultural context**, **the context of rentierism** and **pathological orientation** about politics. All these have subsisted till date.

The Cultural Context: Nigeria, no doubt, harbours quite a number of ethnic and religious groups which qualifies it to be a plural society per excellence. The extent of the country's ethnic diversities has been enunciated by scholars to be between 250 and over 400 (Aluko, 2005; Otite, 1990; Barbour, 1982; Kurian, 1979). What is significant for our purpose here is that these diversities often play itself out at moments of political competition – a vindication of Otite (1990) that Nigeria is a sociological aggregate consisting of diverse elements that are making claims on the resources of the wider encapsulating society.

The Nigerian state as it is known today was a product of European ambition and rivalry in Africa. As a product of colonial fiat, therefore, contemporary Nigeria's situation is deeply rooted partly in its colonial history and partly, it transcends the vestiges of colonialism. Indeed, before colonial conquest and rule, the entities that compose the present day Nigeria were mere motley of disparate territories which had little or no interaction among themselves. Their coming together as a single political entity was, therefore, a European idea meant to serve the economic exigencies of the colonizing states. Several studies have amplified on the pre colonial and colonial social, political and economic developments of Nigeria (see for instance, Zwingina, 2005; Akinwunmi, 2004; Osaghae, 1998; Ujam, 1995). What needs to be emphasized at this point is that Nigeria emerged at independence in 1960 as a plural society *par excellence* with an avalanche of ethno cultural groups co-habiting the territory. While no one is sure of the extent of its religious diversity which include among others, adherents of Islam, Christianity and African Traditional Religions (ATR), Nigeria's ethnic groups have been estimated to be between 250 and over 400 (Aluko, 2005; Otite, 1990; Barbour, 1982; Kurian, 1979). Interestingly as well, Nigeria's religious character closely corresponds to its ethnic and geographical boundaries such that the Hausas and Fulanis in the North are predominantly Muslim; Ibos in the East (including South-South) are predominantly Christians while the Yoruba in the West are partly Christians and partly

Muslims. Understandably, this near geographical coincidence of ethnic and religious groups cannot be divorced from the root of external influences to which they were differently exposed. For instance, Kurian (1979) had noted that while Islam entered the territory through the North via trade contacts with the Arabs and was spreading towards the South, Christianity came in through the coast with activities of Christian missionaries and was spreading North wards. Both, however, met in the West thus, giving the region its unique religious character partly Christian and partly Muslim. This is not to suggest that the three categories of Islam, Christianity and ATR are the only religious groups in Nigeria. Rather, several other religious groups, though not auctothonous, such as Hare Krishna, Falumgum and Eckarnka Movement among others exists, but they have not been as strong and domineering as Islam and Christianity neither can they be classified as ATR. In other words, while the ATR and the foreign inspired religions have not been able to exercise profound influence on politics, this cannot be said of Islam and Christianity which often colour peoples' perception and orientation about politics. It need to be stated as well, that the consummation of these complex diversities (ethnic and religious) within a single national entity did create unique problems for the post colonial Nigerian state to the extent that contemporary Nigerian politics have always revolved around an obsession with the difficult task of curtailing the different strands of political tendencies and problems emanating from time to time. As

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will later be revealed, politics in post independent Nigeria has also assumed the garb of ethno cultural differences which have often manifested in elections and other political processes.

The Context of Rentierism

It is a fact that the post colonial Nigerian state is an off shoot of the colonial state. As Osaghae (1998) has rightly pointed out, the perceptions and attitudes which attended the colonial state have subsisted in disturbing ways in the post colonial period 'despite the structural transformations that have taken place and the fact that Nigerians themselves rather than the colonisers now controlled the reigns of power'. It therefore follows that contemporary problems facing the post colonial state has its roots in the contradictions that plagued the state right from its formative years. The point is that, since the primary objective of the colonial state was to organize the society for 'capitalist exploitation' (Babawale, 2007), through repressive state practices, the state emerged as a law and order state primarily to perform regulatory and extractive roles, a situation that was transfused into the post colonial state. In the post colonial state, the situations find expression, on the one hand, in the state's excessive reliance on coercive instruments to compel obedience and sustain state power even in the face of legitimate demands by the citizens. On the other hand, it reflects in the centralization of production and distribution of national wealth. As a consequence, there is increasing alienation of the state from the citizens as well as emergence of the state as

an instrument of primitive accumulation for those who have access to control of state power. The latter in turn determines the patterns of political relations especially, among the elites of power.

As earlier adumbrated, there is continued alienation of the state from the society. While this is essentially of colonial root, it has not only continued in the post colonial period but equally reinforces the crises of accumulation at the centre. In its colonial root, a major sentiment used by the nationalists to galvanize the people was the idea that the state was alien. As a consequence,

...the society at large refused to develop any serious stake or interest in the state's well-being and sustenance, such as would have emphasized accountability, transparency, responsiveness and other aspects of a moral ethos. Rather, the state and government which animated it were approached as alien institutions which belonged to the *oyibo* (white man), was not deserving of the citizens obligations or duties, could be plundered to feather private nests, and whose survival only the few who benefit directly from it were prepared to fight for (Osaghae, 1998).

The above points find relevance in Ekeh's (1975), theoretical statement on the two publics in Africa. The first, which is the civic public, roughly coincides with the

state and government. The second, he called primordial public and consists of ethno regional groups or associations banded together by common sentiment. While the former is essentially amoral both in context and operation and is not deserving of any obligation from the citizens, the latter is guided by certain moral norms and a sense of responsibility from each individual towards the community. Yet, same actors operate in the two publics. The underlying theme here is that, the civic arena (i.e. the state) may be 'robbed' in order to satisfy the primordial interest which in the first place is to be given primacy over and above the former. Although Ekeh's thesis may not find total empirical validation in contemporary Nigerian government and politics, it nonetheless provided a basis for understanding issues such as ethno regional politics, corruption in governance and abuse of office, crises of accumulation as well as legitimacy crises all which have permeated Nigerian government and politics. In spite of efforts by successive post independent governments to defuse this negative attitudes and perceptions towards the state, the trend has largely remained unchanged as is manifesting in the idea of a 'national cake' meant to be shared among whosoever that are privy to it at any point in time. A major dimension to the process of conception of the state as an instrument of accumulation stems from the fact that at independence, the Nigerian political elites were not the owners of capital. Indeed, they were not economically productive or buoyant at the time they began the control of political power. As Onuoha (2003) has noted

therefore, when they came in control of political power, their priority was to use this to accumulate wealth (primitive accumulation) and in turn use the economic power to further consolidate their political power. This in itself had implications for the character of struggles for the control of political power in the post colonial state.

In other words, the character of contestations for political power stems from the consummation of the state as an instrument of primitive accumulation enumerated above. The contestation often involve intra elite contest or between different segments of the elite. But as Osaghae (1998) had noted in relation to the post colonial state, the military emerged as the most critical segment of all in the struggle for power because of two major advantages it has over the other elite segments. First, its internal cohesion orientation as opposed to the divisive orientation of the political class made it assume the dual role of custodian and saviour of the nation. Second was the advantage conferred on it by 'the barrel of the gun'. The military, no doubt, use these advantages not only to dominate the political class but as well, to build a comprador elite from the other elite segments (Osaghae, 1998). Recent studies have further indicated retired Nigerian military officers as emergent power elite whose influence and tentacles have continued to spread across different segments of Nigeria's politico - economic terrain (Adekanye, 1999). The implication of this for the post colonial state in Nigeria

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is the increasing struggle for the control of the state, being the centre of accumulation and disbursement of patronage. Thus, the Nigerian state is existing in a rentier context.

The Pathological Context

The pathological context of politics in Nigeria partly derives from the rentier context of the state and partly from the perceptions of the use of political power. It has been mentioned earlier, that the state is seen as an instrument of accumulation by the political class. This coupled with the fact that political elites tend to capture political power in order to consolidate their economic interests made the perception of politics as an instrument or an investment more persuasive for the political class and to this extent greatly condition their behaviours. As noted elsewhere (Muhammad, 2008), there is the tendency for politicians to conceive of politics in terms of end-means relationship. That is, politics is seen as a means to achieve some predetermined ends. To this extent, politics becomes monetized while the average politician sees what he/she has spent in the process as an investment that must be recouped with interest. This perspective was underscored by former Senate President, Adolphus Waraba, when he pointedly argued that:

Most of us came into the National Assembly with high expectations. It is an investment really to come to the National Assembly. When we go about campaigning and asking for votes, we don't get these votes free. You spend some money. Most of us

even sold houses. (cited from Muhammad, 2008).

To a large extent, these contexts, though wittingly and unwittingly created, have constituted major influences on the psychology of Nigerian politicians. As mentioned earlier, it has led to tendencies such as criminalisation of politics, money politics and corruption, political vagrancy and flagrant violation of due process all of which constitutes the character of politics and politicians in Nigeria.

Character of Nigerian Politics and Politicians

The criminalisation of politics in Nigeria stems from the activities of political parties and politicians. Evidence of this criminalisation include high spate of political assassinations, arson, maiming and killing of innocent citizens through different forms of political violence among others (International Crisis Group, 2007; Moses, 2007). Indeed, central to expansion of the political space and deepening of the democratisation process is the existence of viable political parties. With few exceptions, conventional wisdom has always assumed that the greater the number of parties, the more expansion of political space. While this may be a good development, the Nigerian experience has proved otherwise largely because of the negative impacts of its political parties on the political process such as unbridled rivalry, lack of internal democracy which negatively affect partisan politics and subversion of due process among others.. Although Nigeria have always operated a

multi party democracy, the current democratic experience which began in 1999 have witnessed an unprecedented large number of political parties which also tend to be the oldest set of political parties in the post colonial Nigeria. For instance, the current democratic experience started with only three political parties in 1999 but has presently graduated to over sixty political parties. Equally, political parties of the First Republic only lasted barely six years while those of the Second Republic existed for just about four years. In the aborted third Republic, hardly did any of the parties have a life span that exceeded two years. In the current Fourth Republic, while some have been existing since 1998, majority came into being from 2002 and afterwards. Unfortunately, this rising number of parties or their longevity has not positively impact on the country's political processes.

A cursory look at Nigeria's political history and party issues in particular would reveal a close link between political dynamics and the socio cultural context of politics in Nigeria. While parties in the pre independence period emerged within the context of nationalist struggle for independence and as such were able to mobilise Nigerians against the colonial overlords to achieve self rule, parties in the post independent era were deeply rooted in ethno cultural considerations. This was true of parties such as the Action Group (AG) and the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) which were products of regional socio-cultural organisations – *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* and *Jama Mutanee Arewa*

respectively. Even the NCNC which started somewhat as a national party later receded to become an eastern region party probably due to the ethnic affiliation of its leader, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe. The socio- cultural influence and sentiments within which they emerged continued to have profound influence on their operations and activities even when they reincarnated under different banners during Nigeria's Second Republic. For example, both the NPN, PRP, UPN and NPP of the Second Republic were similar in their leadership and orientation to the NPC, NEPU, AG and NCNC of the First Republic respectively. In the aborted Third Republic, initial manoeuvrings for partisan advantage within and between the National Republican Convention (NRC) and Social Democratic Party (SDP) reflected complex and shifting patterns of alignments that do not directly reinforce or revolve around any religious divide (Suberu, 1997) or show ethnic consideration, however, the role of some religious organizations in fraternizing with some candidates leaves much to be said (see, Akinyele, 2002; Birai, 1996; Suleiman and Muhammad, 2006). Perhaps, if the Republic had lasted longer, some definite ethno cultural pattern of politics would have been noticed. The Fourth Republic (1999 – date) started on a promising note with less saliency of ethnic politics although religion was still a factor (see, Maranatha Christian Journal, 2003; Suleiman and Muhammad, 2006) at least between 1999 and 2007. However, recent trend from 2007 have witnessed a combined influence of ethno regional and religious considerations on the country's

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politics. No thanks to emergence of the agitations for power shift from one region to another. In this scenario emerged intense struggles for control of the centre, a struggle for relevance, regional hegemony and over bearing control by individuals within the parties. Thus, party politics have always assumed a volatile dimension leading in some cases to clashes between rival political groups, killing and maiming, destruction of properties and assassinations in the name of politics and a do or die orientation. In other words, the ethno cultural context of politics in Nigeria has remained a considerable influence on the political process much as it define some of the tendencies exhibited by political actors in the process of seeking political power and or relevance. For example, ethno-regional and religious consideration among others has been advanced as a major factor that led to failure of the constitutional amendment attempt in 2005 (Muhammad, 2015). While the need to avoid tenure elongation for the President and Governors may appear plausible at the facial level for failure of Constitution amendment attempt, deeper insight reveals the influence of ethnic and religious considerations for power shift to the North as major factor.

Also, there seems to be a pathological orientation to politics in Nigeria by political elites. Political actors often see their involvement in politics as an investment which must yield some material benefits. To a large extent, this explains the complacency displayed by political elites when it comes to formulating masses

oriented decisions. It also explains the mis-governance that often spur truncation of democratic politics. Owing to the rentier character of the state, the elites thus see the state as an arena from which such profits must be recouped. This orientation of means – end relationship about politics often determines the behaviours which they exhibit at moments of electoral competition and even in the process of governance. Such behaviours include vote buying and money politics, corruption, abuse of office and perversion of due process. It may thus be argued that:

In order to achieve control, political elites go to any extent to ensure their objective is realized including manipulation of the masses and party foot soldiers, manipulating the electoral process and promotion of divisive tendencies among others (Muhammad, *forthcoming*)

There is no doubt that the influence of money in Nigeria's political process is perverse. This pervasiveness is also reflected in scholars attempt in understanding its ramifications (see, NDI, 2005; Adetula, 2008; Ovwasa, 2013). Moses (2007) notes that money has played a central role in recent Nigerian elections in 1999, 2003 and 2007 to the extent that it was used to manipulate the political process through its influence of everyone involved in the election process, from INEC officials to party agents, security agents, and the electorate. Unfortunately, the pervasiveness of money politics has led to

the emergence of political godfathers who use their monetary power to influence decisions within the parties and in some cases, the polity. Related to the issue of money politics is the emergence of corruption in governance. While corruption in governance is not a new phenomenon, its rising pervasiveness cannot be divorced from the pathological orientation to politics. Virtually all military intervention in politics has been justified on the need to stamp out endemic corruption in the polity. Ironically, even the so-called military corrective regimes have been indicted to be involved in the perpetration of corrupt practices. Owing to the gargantuan amount of wealth they possess due to their corrupt enrichment while in office, a recent study has shown retired military officers as an emerging power class in Nigerian government and politics (Adekanye, 1999). Our major point of contention here is that, Nigeria since its independence in 1960 has been a country riddled by corruption and gross economic mismanagement. According to Gashinbaki (2004), studies on Nigeria have revealed a close link between "natural resources wealth" and "corruption". The thrust of his argument is that the abundance of oil wealth and other natural resources in Nigeria makes more money available to the Government. Consequently, in the context of a rentier state, a culture of rent seeking easily develops which makes the government to become an automatic instrument for instant acquisition of wealth with the attendant result that the fight for public office became a matter of life and death and corruption became a cultural

symbol. Although there are currently, legislative and institutional measures against corruption, but the pervasive influence of politics on these measures makes them sterile.

Another dimension to the economic driving force for political actions by Nigerian political elites is incessant cross carpeting or what Simbine (2005) called political vagrancy. Political vagrancy refers to the tendency by political party members to change party affiliations in response to perceived personal advantages rather than on principles. According to Simbine (2005), political vagrancy is informed by ideological emptiness of the parties. It is important to note that, the ideological emptiness of Nigerian political parties is great to the extent that one is not a viable alternative to the other. Rather, party members are merely playing the survival game by 'changing affiliation in response to perceived fortunes or electoral advantage' (Aina, 2002). This practice which has been on since independence is usually in favour of the ruling party. For instance, in spite of public criticisms of the ruling PDP when it was in power (1999 to 2011), many defections have been from another party to the ruling party. Insight into this state of affair was provided by a former Minister of External Affairs, Chief Tom Ikime in an interview. According to Ikime, people decamp to PDP because they have found out that;

only in the PDP, can they find free money, those in the PDP do no

work, they are just in charge of the nation's treasury dishing out money to themselves and to their friends. Most Nigerians feel, why fight these people; perhaps it is better for us to join them (Ikime, 2010).

Ikime, recently, joined the PDP. Prior to Ikime's statement, former president of the Nigerian Senate, Ken Nnamani, also maintained that one of the problems of democracy in Nigeria is that the opposition has no stamina. Therefore, everyone wants to join the ruling party because politics boils down to bread and butter. Unfortunately when you are outside the ruling party formation, there will be no bread and butter (Nnamani, 2009). What these statements boil down to is that increasing perception of the state as an arena for accumulation has continued to determine the behaviour of political actors. Therefore, politics is nothing but pathology for realization of individual's self interests. After the 2015 general elections and in direct reference to the apparent vagrancy of the Nigerian politician informed by economic motive, the nation Newspaper alluded that no fewer than 20 prominent PDP members have openly and shamelessly rushed over to the party in vogue today. That is the APC. Commenting further it said:

It is said that adversity brings the best out of man but this certainly

does not seem to apply to that man called the Nigerian politician. He abhors adversity and lean times. In fact he has no such discernment to appreciate the imports of turning points and watersheds in the rise and tide of man. (The Nationonline, 2015)

In furtherance of the desire to remain in power at all cost, political elites have embarked on what may be termed, political recirculation. This is a situation where they want to remain politically relevant by seeking nominations to some other posts as they leave one or sponsor their close relatives to occupy political posts. Evidences of this abound in the current democratic practice. For instance, while Governor Bukola Saraki of Kwara State was leaving office as Governor in 2011, his sister Gbemisola Saraki was launched (though unsuccessful) under another party to take over from him as Governor while he contested and won the Senatorial seat. Also, several former Governors sought election and were actually elected into the National Legislature with some former lawmakers also becoming elected state governors. There are also former military leaders who are currently holding or seeking to hold different political offices. This factor pointedly vindicates elite theorists' proposition on elite circulation in the political system.

Table 1: Some Political Office Holders Recirculating different Posts between 1999 and 2015

S/N	Name	State	Posts between 1999 and 2015
1	Muhammad Danjuma Goje	Gombe	Governor (2003 – 2011, Senator (2011 - date)
2	Sam Egwu	Ebonyi	Governor (1999 – 2007) Minister 2008 – 2010
3	Adamu Aliero	Kebbi	Governor (1999 – 2007), Senator (2007 - 2008), Minister (2008 – 2010)
4	Bukola Saraki	Kwara	Geovernor (2003 - 2011), Senator (2007 - date)
5	George Akume	Benue	Geovernor (1999 - 2007), Senator (2007 - date)
6	Ahmad Sani Yarima	Zamfara	Governor 1999 – 2007, Senator, 2007 – date
7	Chimaroke Nnamani	Enugu	Governor 1999 – 2007, Senator, 2007 - 2011
8	Abilola Ajimobi	Oyo	Senator 2003 – 2007, Governor 2011 to date
9	Ibikunle Amosun	Ogun	Senator 2003 – 2007, Governor 2011 to date
10	Abdullahi Adamu	Nassarawa	Governor 1999 – 2007, Senator, 2011 – date
11	Aminu Bello Masari	Kano	Member HoR (2003 - 2011) Governor (2015)
12	Nyesom Wike	Rivers	Minister 2011 – 2014, Governor 2015
13	Aminu Waziri Tambuwal	Sokoto	Lawmaker 2003 – 2015, Governor 2015
14	Theodor Orji	Abia	Governor 2007 – 2015, Senator, 2015
15	Godswill Akpabio	Akwa Ibom	Governor 2007 – 2015, Senator, 2015
16	Stella Odua	Anambra	Minister 2011 – 2014, Senator 2015
17	Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso	Kano	Governor 2003 – 2007 and 2011 – 2015, Senator 2015
18	Joshua Dariye	Plateau	Governor 1999 – 2006, Senator, 2011 – dare
19	Jonah Jang	Plateau	Governor 2007 – 2015, Senator, 2015
20	Aliyu Wamakko	Sokoto	Deputy Governor 1999 – 2006, Governor, 2007 – 2015, Senator, 2015
21	Bukar Abba Ibrahim	Yobe	Governor 1999 – 2007, Senator, 2007 – date
22	Nenadi Esther Usman	Kaduna	Commissioner 2000 – 2003. Minister 2006 = 2007, Senator 2011 – 2015
23	Ahmed Makarfi	Kaduna	Governor 1999 – 2007, Senator, 2007 – 2011
24	Muhammed Namadi Sambo	Kaduna	Governor 2007 – 2010, Vice President 2010 – 2015
25	Nasir Ahmad El rufai	Kaduna	Minister 2003 – 2007, Governor 2015

Source: Author's Compilation

Related to this is what Mazrui (2008) described as emergence of 'political dynasties in Africa'. According to him,

Political dynasties are families that have exerted disproportionate influence on the politics of their societies. If they are successful, they may produce more than one Head of State or Head of Government. But at the very minimum, political dynasties have produced political leaders in varied ranks of the political process.

Taking a global view of the trend, Mazrui recognised the Bush and Kennedy families of the US, the Kenyattas of Kenya, Laurent Kabila of Congo and Gnassingbe Eyadema of Togo among others. In Nigeria, although dynasties have not produced two Heads of State, but they have produced political leaders in varying degrees. For example, former Heads of State like late Aguiyi-Iroji and Sheu Shagari have their sons holding one political post or the other. It is axiomatic to note that this, perhaps what may have informed this scenario is an underlying economic security accruable from remaining in the corridors of power.

Character of Politicians and Nigeria's Political Development

Development is a multi-dimensional process that encompasses positive changes

in the social, political and economic aspects of the society. Political development, therefore, is about achieving overall improvement in political institutions and processes. This entails standardisation in political practice as well as actors playing by the rules for the attainment of overall interest of the masses. Political development will, therefore, be affected where the interest of the people is not paramount to political actor in other words, since personal interests inform their political decisions, national interests will be downplayed and to this extent, there will be increasing alienation of the state from the society. This is one of the likely consequences of the character of politics and politicians in Nigeria. More often than not, politicians in Nigeria are involved in stiff competition to actualise their personal desires. The resultant effect is that the interests of the larger citizens are downplayed thereby resulting in some cases in political apathy on the part of the citizens. That is, a situation of disenchantment to political institutions and processes against the background of knowledge that their preference occupy the least in the scale of preferences of political actors. For instance, there has been a declining turnout of voters in general elections since 1999. This is graphic in the table below.

Table 2: Voters Turnout in Presidential Elections since 1999

Election Year	Voting Age Population (VAP)	Registered Voters	Actual Voters	% of VAP that Voted
2015	91,669,312	67,422,005	29,432,083	32.11
2011	81,691,751	73,528,040	39,469,484	48.32
2007	71,004,507	61,567,036	35,397,517	49.85
2003	64,319,246	60,823,022	42,018,735	65.33
1999	52,792,781	57,938,945	30,280,052	57.36

Source: Compiled by author from International Idea, Voters Turnout Data for Nigeria. Available at: <http://www.idea.int/vt/countryview.cfm?CountryCode=NG> accessed on 16th June, 2015

From the table, there was an initial increase between 1999 and 2003. However, this trend began to reduce drastically from 2007 elections. The implication of this is that despite the longevity of the practice of democracy, there is continued apathy on the part of the citizens which may be linked to their declining trust in political actors. Even where political actors tend to act in national interest, such is tied to their own interests such that, there is a symbiotic relation between the two. This has often played out in the economic realm where state machineries are deployed to foster personal advancement under the camouflage of national interests. The wave of series of buy overs of state owned enterprises by top political actors under the privatisation programme amplify this personal interest further.

Declining citizen's confidence in the political system is another impact which the character of politicians in Nigeria has on its political development. It is true that for myriad of reasons, politicians move from

one party to another. But such movement have not been accompanied by change in orientation or ideological belief by the actors. Their movement is nothing short of an old wine in new bottle. This is because, politicians remain the same while emblem changes. The implication of this is that citizens' confidence in the ability of their leaders to make positive impact in their lives will remain permanently at low ebb. Table 2 above shows this declining confidence as revealed in turnout for presidential elections since 1999. This is further worsened by the crisis of corruption in governance. There are two dimensions to this in line with the pathological orientation of politics and the context of rentierism within which the state exists. First is that there is the outright embezzlement of developmental funds by political office holders and second, the race for accumulation leads to what may be termed 'competitive corruption' among political actors. That is, a situation where political actors try to outdo each other in the race for embezzlement of public funds.

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There is no doubt, that the character exhibited by politicians in Nigeria is equally a factor in the heightening of sentimental politics in Nigeria. An observer of Nigerian politics will easily discern that ethno – cultural influence hovers over its government and politics. This trend becomes exacerbated by the kind of political contestations that often take place among the political class. Indeed, the political class in the process of political contest whip up sentiments around ethnic and or cultural considerations. In the First and Second Republics for example, ethno cultural influence has been advanced as one of the factors that led to collapse of the Republics. This is because, parties were not only formed along ethno cultural lines, but the pattern of political campaigns by the major parties and even governance was marred by ethno cultural considerations. Even the aborted Third Republic and the current Fourth Republic are not spared of these ethno cultural influences. Although this trend may not be surprising given the fact that since parties are institutions in the society competing for spheres of influence in the politico-economic configuration of the society (Suleiman and Muhammad, 2006). But the tendency for their activities to become intertwined with the socio-political sentiments prevailing in the society calls for concerns. Little surprise, therefore, that scholars (Davies 1995; Birai, 1996; Falola, 1988; Akinwunmi, 2004) have concluded that such ethno cultural sentiments are not only destructive or colour

citizen's perception of state policies but also, ignoring their analysis can only be done to the detriment of grasping the substance of some of the issues that have arisen in the history of the country's political development.

Conclusion

This paper examined the relationship that exists between the context of politics and the character and behaviours of political actors in Nigeria. By examining the context of politics, it is realised that Nigerian politics and politicians have acquired definite characters over the years. These include, criminalisation of politics, political vagrancy, means – end relationship in politics manifesting in corruption and mis-governance among other manipulative activities. It is also realised that these tendencies of politicians are due to nature of the Nigerian state and the context in which politics is played. The fundamental basis of such manipulation has been to satisfy ethnic or religious sentiments which define Nigeria's plurality and possible economic benefits. It is axiomatic to note that in order to perpetuate in their act, political actors tend to reinforce existing character and context of the state thereby forming a circle of self-sustenance for the two. While institutional reforms may be helpful in arresting this trend, a lot depends on ability of the state or individuals involved to engender attitudinal change and to be guided, in their actions, by consideration of national rather than parochial interests.

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