



THE ELITE THEORY AND DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA, 2011 - 2018.

Garba Andrew Yawa

Department of Political Science
Bingham University, Karu
Nasarawa State-Nigeria

Abstract

The study is an appraisal on the “Elites Theory” and democracy in Nigeria in the fourth republic with specific attention to the period 2011-2018. The elites constitute a group of privileged individuals who control the levers of power and influence in the society. The political landscape in Nigeria since independence is dominated by the elites both military and civil in the helms of affairs of the State. The period under study in the fourth republic witnessed a high level of elitism in the democratic space and peculiar nature of their conduct in the quest for power and control of State resources irrespective of political parties’ affiliations. The elite as a group interest is manifested in their State activities as it relates to other strata of the Nigerian society. The research methodology employed is the use of secondary source of data collection and analysis. The study found that the Nigerian political elite, irrespective of party affiliations, are virtually the same in character and ideological dispositions. In conclusion, the study recommends that the elites in Nigeria must ensure that democratic principles prevail both at the party level and the political system in general. Constitutionalism and the rule of law as fundamental in a democracy must prevail irrespective of the elite’s disposition if good governance and political stability is to be guaranteed.

Keywords:

INTRODUCTION

The study in Elitism provides an insight on how society is organized and run by a privileged class who control the levers of political power and the economy. The elites constitute a critical component of a political system which dispenses power and authority including patronage. The ‘Elite Theory’, as a corollary of Elitism is founded in political sociology on the notion that every society holds a ruling minority, a group that controls and disputes the most important power sources i.e. (conflict and violence). Hence, at the core of the elite theory lie the elite behavior, interaction, transformation and recruitment. These are critical issues embedded in the ‘Elite theory’ which this study sought to expatiate.

It suffices to mention at this point that the Elite theory is rooted in the classical works of Pareto (1935), Mosca (1935), and Michels (1915) who were concerned with explaining State outcomes through elite behavior. The theory essentially based its assumption on the premise that, there is a relationship between the State and Society (sociology) where the elite action has a causal effect on such a relationship. It is in this light that Nigeria at the birth of the 4th Republic (1999) witnessed

an elite implosion in the political circle with tremendous impact on State actions and outcomes. The period of the study (2011-2018) is quite germane as it cut across two phases of democratic administrations under different political parties. The character and behavior of the elites in these dispensations underscores the underlining principles behind elitism which the elite theory embraces.

The study therefore, explores the communality between the elites irrespective of political party affiliations and manifestoes during the period under evaluation. One common recurrent decimal of the character and persuasion of the Nigerian political elite in this period is the unanimity of purpose and values that finds expression in their actions and activities. Issues such as regime types, regime change, liberalization, Stateness, secularization that characterized the Nigerian polity fits within the scope of the Elite Theory.

CONCEPTUALIZATION

Elite (Elitism)

The term 'Elite' have been used to describe certain group of people in the society since time immemorial. The international encyclopedia of social science describes Elite as "a group of persons possessing certain fundamental features of life". It is used as 'choice' in the 14th century and the 'Best' in the 15th century. The term elite is used to describe standard or excellence and superior social groups such as the highly successful military units and upper ranks of aristocracy. The concept of the elites is derived from Aristotle's nobility and Plato's aristocratic rationality and shifted to superior groups of medieval period. Since the advent of liberal democratic institutions in the 20th century, the term elite has come to be associated with democratic elements and how they assert their control and dominance in the polity.

Therefore, classical Elitist literatures defined elites in terms of capacity, personality and skills. Pareto (1935) draws an analogy of typical elite as and resembling a lion or fox (Machiavelli's Philosophy) while Mosca (1939) defines the elite in terms of material conditions, intellectualism and moral superiority. In the same light, (Yamokoski, & Dubrow, 2008) described the elites as actors controlling resources. (Weber, 1922) view the elite through the prism of the concept of 'power' i.e. the capability of implementing one's will even against the will of others. Hence (Reis & Moore, 2005) sees the elites as people in possession of power- material and or symbolic resources.

It suffices to mention that, though the definition of elites may not be distant from the Marxist notion of 'ruling class' which is based on the possession of the means of productions, however, the concept of elite power is based on political assumptions and not necessarily economic assumptions as they (Elites) can emerge among dissident or dominated classes. Hence, Highly & Burton, (2006:7) argued that, "elites are persons occupying the top of powerful organizations and movements capable of affecting political out comes both substantially and regularly". Though one cannot dismiss the argument that being in control of political authority confers economic power as well since power is a means of acquiring economic patronage.

In similar vein, an American political scientist (Harold Laswell) in his book "Politics, who gets what, when, how", identifies elites on the basis of "power and influence perspective". Laswell divides the society on the basis of elites and masses. He sees elites as the power holders of a body

politic. They are the most powerful group in a society who hold highest position of power in a political system. That politics is the study of influence and the influential. The influential (elites) are those who get the most of what there is to get, while the rank and file (masses) get the least. In another dimension, C. Wright Mills (1959) in his book "power elites" adopted "institutional power approach" for the study of elites. That it is the power in an institution that determines the position, status, authority and influence of elite in a modern society. Burnham (Managerial Revolution) adopts economic approach to elitism. He agreed with Laswell that power is the parameter to identify elitism in a contemporary society. Burnham firmly believes that political power of the elite is the result of economic power he enjoys and experience in a given society.

Therefore, the term 'elite' is often used as a synonym for "political elite" given their power source and impact on the State. However, the elite and their power source comes from different organizations such as the military, media, State bureaucratic (administrative), professional bodies, business, academic and religious elites among others. This group of people controls the commanding heights of these organizations and influence State activities and outcomes. They represent a minor group of people in the polity who by their vantage and privileged positions as leaders in their professional fields control the levers of power and influence decision in the society. They are conservative in nature, united by common/shared interest and the desire to maintain the statusquo in order to remain relevant and on top of every situation in the polity. This explains why no matter which sectors they are engaged in, be it politics, economic or military etc, the elites are hands in glove in ensuring their interest prevails at all times over other group interest.

THE 'ELITES THEORY'

The assumptions of the elites theory was majorly attributed to the works of vilfredo Pareto (1842 - 1923), Gaetano Mosca (1858-1936) and Robert Michels (1876-1936). These classical elitist were influenced by the thoughts of early philosophers like Aristotle and Plato. They were concerned with man activities in the society and how it relates to Statecraft.

Pareto (1935) an Italian sociologist, contributed to the 'theory of elites, and circulation of elites', in his book, 'the mind and society'. He applied socio-psychological factors in identifying elites and their nature. In his opinion, men are born unequal everywhere and unequal physically and mentally in respect to their abilities and capacities. Stratifying the society on the basis of psychological traits such as "superior class people as elites and the inferior one as non-elites". He sees the elites as a small number of individuals who are found in the commanding heights of the society in various professions. They are the best and occupy higher positions on the basis of certain attributes and marked qualities.

On the other hand, Mosca (1939) in his work "the Ruling class" sees the elites as members of the ruling class in the society. They are differentiated with the non-elites who are the ruled class. He further opined that the elites class are always "less numerous, perform all political functions, monopolizes power and enjoys the advantage it brings". On the other hand, the non-elite class is numerous, and directed, and controlled by the elite class in a manner that is more or less legal, more arbitrary and violent. Mosca also developed 'the circulation of elite' analysis as expounded by Pareto. He argued that the elite holds and retain power in an organization on the basis of ability and aptitude to command and exercise political control. That where the elite lose the aptitude to rule, command and control, there is a possibility of replacement of elites. This assertion clearly justifies the circulation of elite's theory advocated by Pareto.

Michels, a classical elite theorist repeated the organizational approach to elitism in his book "Political Parties" (1915). He believes elites as a minority group hold, influence and controls the political system by virtue of "Iron laws of oligarchy". He argued further that, the elites consists of those few person who control the 'apathetic, indolent and slavish people who are susceptible to flattering and obsequious (obedient) in the presence of strength". Michel's assertion arises from the basis of the 'supreme' power and grip the elite have in organization. He perceives organization as simply another way of spelling oligarchy. Arguing that the power in an organization is vested in the hands of leadership which is exercised by bureaucracy and other leading politicians of the party. Michel see the party hierarchy as an established career once the leaders reached the pinnacle of power and nothing can bring them down. For him the elites sustained their power because of mass-mind which is uncaredful, slavish, apathetic, ineptitude and politically neutral. Using their power, skill and oratory, the elites dominate and influence the masses to follow and obey their orders. (Agarwal, 2005) that when laws are passed to control the dominance of the leaders (elites) it is the law which gradually weaken and not the leaders (elites). Thus by this assertion Michel's elite theory proposed a conservative nature of oligarchy in modern democratic polity in a contemporary society.

Furthermore, relating the 'elite theory' within the context of a democratic framework under modern political systems, Karl Mannheim (1883-1947) argued that, elites theory proposes the rule of few and a microscopic minority which obviously is opposed to democratic form of government. He argued further that though the nature of society is democratic, the policy and decision making is in the hands of chosen elites. This is so because the people cannot take direct part in the government but can make their aspirations felt at certain interval which is sufficient for the system and government. He proposed that the gap be narrowed between the elites and the masses for stable government (political stability). This can be done through the selection of elites on the basis of merit and shortening distance between elites and masses to ensure compatibility between elite rule and government.

In the same vein, the protagonists of 'elite's theory' (western scholars) agreed in tandem that inequality is largely found in every society. In their opinion no matter the nature of the society, be it traditional or modern, monarchical of democratic, the distinction still exists between the elites and the masses (non-elite). Hence scholars like Joseph Schumpeter argued that democracy is not a government of the people or a means to give effects to the will of the people. That the role of the people is merely to choose their rulers from competing elites. He however identifies one great merit of democracy which is, it does not allow political leadership to wield absolute power. In view of the foregoing, the elite theory therefore, explains and defines the place and role of the elites in a political system. Elitists see division in society as natural, rational and functional. The theorists argue that society is divided into two categories- Elites and masses. The elites belong to the ruling class on account of specific qualities and attributes. They are small in number, organized, hold, manage secure and maintain power on account of specific qualities, cleverness, strategy and skills. In social organizations their dominance is pre-eminent and inherent. In a democratic polity even where the chances exist for circulation of the elites, it is the same elite who ultimately hold the power and position

ELITISM AND DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA'S FOURTH REPUBLIC

The Nigerian State

The Nigerian State witnessed the birth of the 4th Republic on the 29th May, 1999 with the proclamation of the 1999 constitution under a presidential system of government with Chief Olusegun Obasanjo as executive President, commander-in-chief of the Nigerian armed forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The Nigerian State no doubt is controlled by the political elites who dominate the political landscape and control the reins of power and authority. State actions and outcomes are invariably determined by this group who rule in the interest of members of the elite. It is within this context that the character of the Nigerian State can be appreciated.

It must be noted that, the control of Political power by the elites in Nigeria guarantees access to State resources which the elites use to manipulate and command loyalty and obedience from the lower class (masses). As such, the Nigerian State is regulated and controlled by the elites who occupy top positions in government and constitutional empowered to make and enforce policies and law. The State in Nigeria therefore, is an institution that protects the interest of the elites and dispenses economic patronage to the elites. The political economy of the Nigerian state is under the control of the elites whose presence are seen and felt in every sector of the polity. Hence, (Agbu, ND) in Max Weber (1964) described the State as a human community that successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force in a given territory because the State as an institution is 'suigeneris' i.e. it exists to safeguard and regulate the society as the liberal scholars argued.

However, it suffices to mention that, the Marxists notion of the State is different from the position of the liberal school. The Marxists opposed the liberalists who see the State as basically neutral and stand aside to mediate the contradictions inherent in society. The Marxists rather, conceive the State as a product of the social system that is characterized by class contradictions, struggles and class domination. Hence, to the Marxists, classes (social groups) which constitute both the ruling class (elites) and the ruled (masses) differ in their interests and the State (Ake, 1985) is an instrument of class domination and exist in the interest of the ruling class who control the levers of power-economical and politically. That the State, depending on its character and manifestation (Agbu, ND) could be Capitalist, Socialist, Colonial, Neo-colonial, Welfarist, Rentier, Prebendal, etc. Hence the State is an instrument of class domination existing in the interest of the elites and conceptualized on the basis of the indices of structure, apparatus of power and their functions. It is the consequence of the character of the society, the class structure, social norms and the civil society.

Therefore, the Nigeria State constitutes elements of Statehood described above. It can be understood in terms of the genealogy of global capital accumulation and the interplay of local and global class relations. Agbu (ND: 4) captured the nature and character of the Nigerian State when he posited that:

The penetration of European merchants into the territory now known as Nigeria eventually led to the emergence of the Nation-State whose umbilical cord is strongly tied to capitalism". Hence Ibeanu (1999:8) posited that, "In spite of its transformation from being a colonial entity, the Nigerian State retained the fundamental character of not being a popular-National State that represented the interests of the people.

Accordingly, the post-colonial Nigerian State has the characteristics and vicissitudes of colonialism inherited by the local elites which is seen in their disposition towards Statehood. These indices are noticeable in the Nigerian State notwithstanding the nature of the political system whether civil or military regime. The State in Nigeria is a reflection of the interest of the elites as seen in the structures, institutions, administration and systems. A product of capitalist interest in wealth accumulation both in public & private sectors. The State is symptomatic of corruption, repression of dissents and opposition, unpopular & selfish policies, undemocratic practices and tendencies, contempt for constitutionalism & rule of law, etc. This sadly is what the Nigerian State represents.

Elitism, party politics and democracy in Nigeria, 2011-2018

Independence Nigeria saw the birth of parliamentary democracy where political power was handed over to the local political elites with the departure of colonial rule. The political elites had since then dominated the Nigerian political landscape at various periods, civil-democratic and military regimes.

The commencement of the fourth republic on 29th may, 1999 witnessed the continuation domination of the elites in power and politics. The 1999 constitution made provision for multiparty system in a presidential system of government. The outgoing military oligarchs (elite) as usual handed over power to a new set of political elites in civil robes. Nigeria's democracy is anchored on party systems and politics. Elections into power (government) are conducted by the independent national electoral commission (INEC) on the basis of political parties competing among themselves. The top echelon of the major new parties: People Democratic Party (PDP), All peoples' party (APP), Alliance for Democracy (AD), Action Congress (AC), All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA), were dominated and in control of the elites from different sectors of the polity both military and civil class. This situation has continued even where changes occur in political party formations, nomenclature, alliances, merger etc.

It is necessary to mention that, Democracy suggest a system where the people, electorates, determine who govern them through credible, free and fair elections. (Ibietan & Ajayi, 2015) Scholars are convergent in opinion that Democracy as a concept in the social sciences is nebulous and its usage can sometimes be misplaced given its immense "propaganda value" (Omeje, 2001). Oguniye & Baba (2007:245) posited that, democracy is "a government by persons freely chosen by the governed who also hold them accountable and responsible for their actions while in government".

However, in Nigeria, this is hardly the case as 'elections' take place periodically (since 1999) with successive governments demonstrating propensity for elite's dominance and control in entrenching class interests. Hence (Ibietan & Ajayi, 2015) argued that, a close scrutiny of the political process in Nigeria's fourth republic reveals that the governing elite have made caricature of these basic tenets of democracy (participation and accountability). The political class (elites) whether elected or appointed owes a duty to the citizenry to uphold the socio-economic objectives/directive principles of State (The 1999 constitution) and maintain rectitude in governance. Unfortunately, most of these are not seen since the inception of the fourth republic. Election which is part of the electioneering process has been reduced to a charade, making mockery of the democratic process/practice in Nigeria. The political party system in the fourth republic (Ibietan & Ajayi 2015) has failed to chart a course that entrenches genuine democracy.

Arguing further, Ikeanyibe, (2009:70) posited that, political parties in Nigeria's fourth republic are "lacking in organization, discipline, focus or souls. Their membership is filled by corrupt, unpatriotic and undisciplined political elite that sees election more as an investment than a call to serve people". It is therefore, within this context that the desperation by politicians to grab or capture State power at all cost, irrespective of party affiliation, can better be appreciated.

Furthermore, Onyishi (2007:199) was pungent in his affirmation that, the inordinate quest to acquire and retain State power by the political class implies the deployment of "resources of the State in the struggle to retain it". Submitting further that, the elites "block every democratic tendency...and. Continue to use all kinds of means to capture State power in order to protect themselves against the vagaries of politics".

Therefore, the period, 2011-2018 in Nigeria's fourth republic clearly demonstrates elitist quest for power in Nigeria and the interest they represent. The PDP since 1999, had control of the reins of power and affairs of Nigeria. In 2011, Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan was elected President of Nigeria in an election that followed wide spread violence in some parts of Nigeria especially in the northern region. His reign witnessed high level political shenanigans in party politics following his declaration to contest the 2015 Presidential elections. Former Vice President Atiku Abubakar leading five serving Governors and some elected lawmakers (senators and members of Reps) defected from the ruling PDP and pitched camp with the newly formed Action Congress Party (APC) owing to disagreements and disaffections within the rung of the PDP. The reason for the defection was not ideological or poor performance in governance, but the inordinate political ambition of the defectors. Alhaji Atiku Abubakar for long has nursed the ambition to be president of Nigeria where he had always contest elections as president under different political parties. President Jonathan's decision to contest the 2015 presidential elections was viewed as a hindrance to realize his ambition. Also a notable PDP party member, Senator Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso, former governor of Kano State, was also nursing a presidential ambition. The inordinate ambition and conflicting interests of these politicians was the major reason for their defection to the 'newly' formed Action People's Congress (APC). This group of defectors worked hard against the re-election of President Goodluck Jonathan who eventually loss the 2015 Presidential election. Although, 'Conspiracy theory' has it that, some members of the PDP from certain region of the country wanted power to shift. Hence factors like, ethnicity, religion, regional interest all played decisive roles in the outcome of the presidential election of 2015.

However, the outcome of the 2015 general elections was the enthronement of a 'new elite circulation/recruitment processes in the political circle. What indeed 'changed' was a change of baton from a set of one political elites to another of the same ruling class, character and political disposition. The inter-Party politics and ideological dispositions of the two major political parties, the PDP and APC remained virtually the same given the cross-carpeting of the political elites from one party to the other as witnessed before the 2015 general elections. On assuming the reins of power, the APC controlled government gave strategic appointments to some defectors from the PDP.

Furthermore, this same attitude of 'elite circulation' in Nigeria was replicated in the build-up to the 2019 election where the same group of political elites who left the PDP for the APC in 2014 were again led by former Vice President Atiku Abubakar back to the PDP to pursue their inordinate presidential ambition. Atiku Abubakar, Musa Rabi'u Kwankwaso, Bukola Saraki, Waziri Tambuwal, who were part of the defectors from the PDP to the APC in 2014, all contested at the PDP presidential primaries in portharcourt in the run up to the 2019 presidential election.

This is a confirmation that the political elites in Nigeria are driven by inordinate selfish ambition and lack the minimum decorum in political ideology that is expected to guide the recruitment of persons into elective and appointive offices in Nigeria. This is the political situation in Nigeria today where the same circle of political elites dominate the political landscape and remain in government and power with the country hibernating in major sectors of the polity. This is the bane of the crisis of leadership experienced in Nigeria today as represented by the ruling political elites.

Sadly the APC government since 2015 at given opportunity not failed to remind Nigerians of the sixteen (16) years of PDP "misrule". What they failed to acknowledge was the role and support they got from the same PDP members (political elites) now in their fold whom they disparaged and described with all sought of negative adjectives for 'ruining' Nigeria in the sixteen (16) years of PDP in power. Some of these former PDP so called 'rogues' were Ministers in the last APC led government of president Muhammadu Buhari's (2015-2019) and are 'cleared' by the 9th Senate as Ministers-designate to be part of the Cabinet of Buhari's second term presidency. Notable former PDP members now in APC government include: Govs. Ahmed El-rufai and , ex-gov Rotimi Ameachi, Presidential liason officer, Sen Ita Ennang, Sen Godswill Akpabio, Sen Chris Ngige, former PDP National Chairmen, Audu Ogebe and Barnabas Gemade, Sen George Akume, etc.

The fluidity in which party members cross-carpet from one party to the other demonstrates that ideology or the desire to serve, are not the driving force but political survival and patronage are the motivation. The political elites in Nigeria are not altruistic or driven by patriotism and nationalism. The former PDP and present APC led government demonstrates traits of favoritism in appointments to the exclusivity of the political elites, regional interest and party patronage. Perhaps more than any regime before, the APC Muhammadu Buhari's administration has promoted States craft to a level low where patronage and appointments to high public offices and strategic places are the preserve of certain ethnic or regional groups. Even at that, those favored mostly are the elites who held offices in past administrations and re-circled in a nepotistic fashion. Nepotism and favoritism noticeably have assumed "official policy" in State bureaucracy. The federal character commission (FCC), the regulatory body in charge of appointments into the civil service seems to have lost bearing and not in control of performing its functions and mandate. The elites corner the plumb and choice jobs in the public service (NNPC, CBN, NEXIM, PPPRA, NPA, NCAA, EFCC, NCS, NIS, DSS, NIA) to mention a few. Allegations are rife where secret employments were undertaken in plumb public parastatals with names of relations of prominent politicians and well placed persons in government and the private sectors mentioned as beneficiaries. This perhaps explained the discontentment amongst the youth and the restiveness in the polity where insecurity is pervasive. The few employment opportunity available in strategic government ministries, departments and agencies are the preserves of the children and relations of the elites. The disconnect with the mass of the people has further created economic hardship and dissatisfaction with the system with calls coming across the polity for restructuring of the Nigerian State. The basic responsibility of government which is the 'welfare and security' of the citizenry seem to have eroded the State with vices ranging from kidnappings, banditry, armed robbery, insurgency, terrorism, herdsman-farmers conflict seem to be in the increase. Added to these challenges is the crisis of development, both human and physical. The economy is nose diving, with the country going into recession at a point and adjudged the 'world capital of poverty'. Bad governance and ill-thought policies have created disaffection and crisis including conflicts between groups, communities and herders/farmers. Insecurity is alarming and pervasive with the Nigerian State increasingly becoming militaristic

with the armed forces taken over internal security. The political elites are arguably fingered in these crises and accused of benefitting from it.

Another major activity where the elites are complicit is the conduct of the 2019 elections. The desperation by the political elites to remain in power or capture same, left in its wake, violence, destruction and death. The excessive militarization of the polity and alleged use of security forces during the elections is an eloquent testimony of the 'do-or-die' nature of politics and elections in Nigeria. The character of the political elites came to bear in their activities and conduct during the elections irrespective of party affiliation. This confirmed the obsession by the political elites to obtain power at all cost in their selfish interest. Election is merely an instruments to realize there ambition and not necessary as a means to serve the generality of the people.

Another striking feature of the Nigerian political elite in the fourth republic was the propensity to use their position in government to legislate for pension for them (political office holders) even though some of them as retirees from the public sector enjoy pension from government. Against extant laws, the political elites both in the executive and legislature pass obnoxious pension laws to take care of themselves and lifestyle after their tenure of political office. This has increased the recurrent expenditure of government with a few benefitting so much from the public treasury at the expense of the overwhelming majority of Nigerians. This situation explains why the recurrent expenditure in the annual budget is always higher than the capital expenditure. Annual budget performance often reflects higher percentages in execution of recurrent items (personnel & over head cost) than capital component (provision of infrastructures). This profligacy at a time of low revenue generation contributes to the economic recession the country experienced not long after the APC government came to power. Though the government accused the past PDP administrations as setting the foundation for the recession through its profligate spending and financial reckless.

In the same vein, the Sahara Reporter in a report on 23rd January, 2017 titled "21 States spend ₦37.4 billion on pension for 47 Ex-governors" ...provided how former governors are exerting pressure on the finances of State governments with pension payment and other entitlements. Monies that otherwise could have been channeled towards developmental projects are used in servicing 47 former governors from 21 states. The pensions include provision of house, staff, and vehicles replaceable between three and four year. Bauchi, Rivers, Akwa-Ibom and Lagos State are top will former governors drawing "₦23.18 billion, ₦2.795 billion, ₦2.043 billion and ₦1.606 billion respectively over four years", the report said. Other States are, Zamfara, Osun, Abia, Edo, Gombe, Kwara, Delta, Yobe, Jigawa, Niger, Bayelsa, Katsina, Ondo, Borno, Ebonyi, Sokoto. The payments in many cases are besides medical expenses which run into hundreds of millions per ex-Chief executive. The pension payment are irrespective of prescription of the Revenue Mobilization, Allocation, and Fiscal Commission, RMAFC, providing 300 % severance for the governors as stated in the certain Political Office Holders and Judicial Officers Remuneration Act. Under the Act as reported by Sahara Reporters, former governors like lawmakers, are entitled to 300% of their basic salary of ₦2, 223, 705 amounts to ₦6, 671, 115 as severance pay. Accordingly, Chief Emeka Wogu, a former Minister who represented Abia State in the RMAFC was short of declaring that the payments to the former governors as illegal, when he said.

Anything outside the law that was recommended by the Revenue Mobilization, Allocation, and Fiscal Commission, and not in consonance with the law, and where it is already prescribed by States

houses of assembly, that means that such laws are in conflict with the federal laws.

Therefore, it suffice to mention that, ahead of the 2015 presidential election, General Muhammadu Buhari, the candidate of the All Progressive Congress, APC, did promised to use moral suasion to compel the governors to amend the provisions of the Pension Law on the ground that there were unsustainable. Unfortunately this has not been so since he assumed office as President.

Furthermore, on the political elites propensity for accumulation using State instruments, the Sahara Reporters in May, 2019 reported that the Kano State House of Assembly passed into law the pensions rights of Speaker and Deputy Law 2019 which enable the two presiding officers earn life pension after leaving office. It includes the enjoyment of foreign medical leave and brand new vehicles every four years. In Bayelsa State, 'The Guardian' on 29th April, 2019 reported that the House of Assembly hurriedly passed the bill approving the pension for all past and current members of the legislature. While the bill was pending for the governor's assent, the conduct of the lawmakers generated anger amongst the indigenes who accused them and the Governor, Seriake Dickson, for supporting the Bill without conducting public hearing. A civil society and anti-Corruption crusader, The Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) wrote to the Bayelsa State governor to reject the proposed life bill for the law makers. They argued that:

The Bill amounts to incorrect and improper performance of public functions. It's clearly an abuse of legislative functions by the law makers. Rather than sponsoring bills that would improve access of children in Bayelsa to quality education, the law makers are taking advantage of their entrusted public position to propose a Bill to collect large severance benefits.

Furthermore, SERAP, in the same letter viewed the action of the lawmakers as constituting, "conflict of Interest, as well as perceptions of such conflicts would undermine public confidence in the integrity and honesty of not only the Bayelsa State House of Assembly but also your government if urgent action is not taken to prevail upon the House to drop the outrageous bill". SERAP threatened to "challenge the legality of the legislation and ensure full compliance will constitutional provisions and Nigeria's international anti-corruption obligations". This attitude coming from the ruling elites is self-serving and an act of insensitivity to the plight of the people whom they swore to serve, defend and uphold their welfare/interest.

In view of the foregoing, it is quite clear that the Nigeria political elites irrespective of party affiliations constitute a group interest whose common objective and goal is to exploit the resources of the country to their advantage using public office as a conduit. Such corruptive tendencies as, 'budget padding', 'constituency projects', bogus allowances and privileges (vehicles, accommodation, imprest) etc., are means of 'legitimizing corruption' under official cover. Wastages and boogey projects are initiated without actual implementation. Hence 'rituals' like 'review of budget performance' often indicates 70% recurrent expenditure as against 30% capital expenditure in previous years. Political Slogans like "change" or "transformation" hardly change or transform anything spectacular. This demonstrates that, with the political elites, no matter the political party in power, it is business as usual. Their counterpart elites in other sectors: the Judiciary, elected official, civil/public service, the security service (military/police/security/Para-military), exhibits the same character and disposition in the

polity that is, maintaining the statusquo at all cost. This is the reality of the Nigerian State today under the control of the elites.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion the Study appraised the "Elite Theory" and its linkage with democracy in Nigeria. Democracy as a system of governance guarantees popular participation in the affairs of the State. However, leadership in a democratic system and the nature of Society placed responsibility for governance on the elites who by virtue of their privileged social status control the economy and levers of power. These factors are determinants in the control of the State. As such, Party politics in Nigeria's democracy has always being an elitist affair with the ordinary people occupying the back seat and only used as foot soldiers during campaigns and elections. Since ascension to power is through party politics and elections, the elites tend to gain the upper hand. Their control of the party apparatchik determines "who gets what, when and how". In addition, Political patronage and access to political office are determined by the elites who have the wherewithal (economic & power resources) to play the role of godfathers who determine who gets what position in government and the society at large.

Therefore, Elitism in Nigeria's democracy has ensured a system where the majority of the people are left at the benevolence of the political elites who operate across party lines in the quest for power and control of State resources. As it where, these resources are unevenly or haphazardly distributed with certain groups feeling discontented, marginalized and disgruntled thus creating anxiety and tension in the polity with sectarian and criminal groups rising against the State threatening its corporate existence.

RECOMMENDATION

In view of the foregoing, the following recommendations are made.

1. Though the 'Elites theory' promotes Elitism, however, democracy as a system of governance ensures popular participation of citizens in their affairs without restriction to social status, class or gender. The Nigerian State must ensure citizens participation in its affairs on a level playing ground to guarantee equity, fairness and stability of the polity.
2. The Elites in Nigeria must submit to the rule of law and constitutionalism and ensure institutions are strengthened and positioned to perform constitutional roles irrespective of the party or leader in power.
3. Equitable distribution of power and economic resources in Nigeria must be such that it promotes unity, national cohesion and interconnectivity to enhance inclusive growth and national development. These the power elites must do to remove wide spread discontentment and mistrust from the people with the system.
4. Elected officials (political elite) are enjoined to act as Statesmen and be guided by the spirit of patriotism and nationalism in service to the people whose mandate they hold.
5. For stability and progress in Nigeria's democracy, the political elites must ensure and promote 'internal democracy' in party administration and politics as this is the fulcrum of multi-party democracy and its sustainability.

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