Political Elite Composition and Democracy in Nigeria[1]

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Abstract: This article analyzes the post-independence background and composition of the Nigerian core political executive elite. By analyzing changes in the national political elite, this article attempts to establish the extent to which composition of the elite reflects the democratic governance aspects of openness and inclusiveness. Liberal pluralists believe that transformation in the elite power structure depends on periodic renewals, i.e. the entrance of new persons and ideas as regimes and resources change. In post-colonial Nigeria, there have been many structural changes, especially in the political regime and economic resources. The article argues that structural changes have not been very effective in transforming the outlook of the Nigerian elite. The lack of transformation in political elite demeanor at the national executive power structure is based on the shared (common) background and preferences of members of the elite. This article applies critical elite theory to analyze the characteristics and continuity of the Nigerian political elite. The findings demonstrate how the nature of the political executive elite in Nigeria has contributed to the weakness of political institutions.

Keywords: Political elite, elite circulation, democracy, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Since political independence, achieved from Britain in 1960, political regimes and resources in Nigeria have seen many changes. There have been repeated regime ruptures with authoritarian types dominating Nigeria's half-century of post-colonial experience. During this period, democratic governments rarely outlived their second term in office. It is striking that no regime change has occurred since 1999 and that the country has apparently been successful in the consolidation of democracy. Yet, the three consecutive national elections were perceived with profound distrust by local participants and observers at both the national and international level [1]. A 2008 public perception survey covering the post-1999 period showed that approximately 78 per cent of Nigerians support democracy. Despite this positive outlook on democracy, only 42 per cent of surveyed Nigerians were satisfied with the country's democratic governance and an even lower 32 per cent could perceive democracy extensively in their respective experiences. In neighboring Ghana, the picture is more positive. Here, 83 per cent was able to perceive the extensiveness of democracy, while 78 per cent supported it and 80 per cent felt satisfied with Ghana's democratic governance [2].

This article is not concerned with regime change itself but the make-up of the political elite as regimes and resources have changed over time. The article casts doubt on the assumption that the Nigerian political elite has been

contributing to a strengthening of the country's social order since independence. Early research of the 1960s on the nature of the elite in Nigeria elite and other African countries tended to adopt a Weberian legal-rational approach to political elite change [3]. However, researchers failed to notice such symptomatic practices as ethnic manipulation, rent-seeking, patronage and corruption and their negative impact on the social order.

The main argument of this article is that despite the many structural changes in the Nigerian polity, individual members and groups of the elite are drawn from similar and exclusive backgrounds. There is a certain relationship between historically entrenched values and interests that informs the political conduct of the core political executive elite and the denial of opportunities to new groups. The greater the influence of a small number of individuals or groups in society, the more the rights of others, and the openness of the political system, inclusiveness and the rule of law may come under pressure. The result is a reproduction rather than circulation of political elites. Reproduction is the result of typical practices of particular groups of individuals with common backgrounds and social networks. This reproduction leads to a hybrid form of governance. Here, hybridism refers to incomplete liberalization and systematically curtailed inclusion, matched by quite ineffective government.

This article does not contain an evaluation of the nature of democracy in Nigeria nor does it argue that democracy would be the only possible regime for enhancing social order. Rather, the analysis seeks to understand to what extent general features, such as equality and quality of the executive are characteristic of the Nigerian political system. The major question of the article is: to what extent does the historical and current composition of the political elite reflect principles of equality and to what extent does it constrain the political system? The more specific questions are: (1) what is

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the social background of the core political executive elite in Nigeria? and (2) how does the composition of the core political executive elite limit political equality and the quality of government?

The core political executive elite is understood as the echelon of the national political power structure where major policy decisions are taken and where control lies over the treasury. Analytically, the term 'core' is used to designate the apex members of the cabinet and/or military junta. These positions range from Prime-Minister, President, Vice-President, Ministers with portfolio to Military junta chairpersons and members formally responsible for making and implementing important national decisions. Changes in the occupation of these positions over time are a major clue to understanding political power relations and the quality of government in Nigeria.

The current analysis focuses on Nigeria's post-independence political history, as political independence is usually linked to the task of nation-building. It would seem to create the momentum for consolidating political autonomy through the shaping of responsive and responsible state structures. It is felt that, at this moment in Nigeria's history, the country and especially its political leaders should recognize the country's enormous capacity for overcoming historic obstacles not by continually looking backwards but by facing up to the task.

For the purpose of this study, data collection has focused on archival sources. Post-independence history is divided up into five interrelated periods [4]. The periodization serves as guide for establishing the cumulative effects of elite rotation on Nigeria's power structure and regime type. The periods are: (1) the first civilian regime (1CR:1960-1966), (2) the first military regime (1MR:1966-1979), (3) the second civilian regime (2CR:1979-1983), (4) the second military regime (2MR:1984-1999) and (5) the third civilian regime (3CR:1999-2007).

This article contains four main sections. The second section describes the major features of the Nigerian polity, including the structural changes that have characterized it since independence. The third section discusses some relevant theories on elite roles and composition. The fourth section reports on the empirical analysis, while the fifth and final section draws some conclusions.

NIGERIA'S POLITICAL SYSTEM

With a population of approximately 140 million people, the West African country of Nigeria is the most populous country of the continent. Nigeria's population is made up of more than 250 different ethnic groups. While the Hausa-Fulani (from the north) make up 29 per cent of the population, the Yorubas (in the west) and Ibos (in the east) respectively comprise 21 and 18 per cent. Among the historically notable and politically well-known minority groups are the Ijaws (10 per cent), Kanuri (4 per cent), Ibibio (3.5 per cent), Tiv (2.5 per cent) and Edo (2.0 per cent). Religious and regional differences are notable in the Nigerian context. Roughly half of all Nigerians are recorded as Muslims, residing mostly in the north but with certain southwestern converts. 40 per cent are Christians, the large majority of whom

live in the south. The remaining 10 per cent have traditional religions.

Data from the Nigerian Institute of Statistics (NIS), the Human Development Report and the World Fact Book 2009 show that the illiteracy rate in Nigeria has been falling since the 1970s, when it was 89.7 per cent even though it has remained comparatively high (at 31 per cent in 2005). The part of the Nigerian population living below the poverty line is estimated at between 60 and 70 per cent. Similarly, the share of the population engaged in agriculture (mostly at subsistence levels) remains at 60-70 per cent. Life expectancy has currently fallen from its previous 50 to 46.5 years. Agricultural production as source of food and cash crop (export) earnings has since the 1970s been outstripped by oil production.

The three regions of East, West and South Nigeria were granted full autonomy under the federal structure introduced in 1954 by the British colonizers. The introduction of the Republic in 1963 was meant to reinforce the momentum provided by political independence. It was followed by the creation of a fourth region (the Midwest) by the Nigerian civilian elite.

The First Republic (1963-1966), which was modeled upon the Westminster form of parliamentary democracy, collapsed on 15 February 1966, giving way to authoritarian governance by military fiat. Military rule implied the unilateral abolition of civil associations, restrictions on political mobilization and power centralization. In this period, decentralization was started and the number of states was increased to thirty-six [5].

During military rule in the 1970s, the unprecedented growth of oil sales and the Nigerian civil war (1967-1970) were used by the military rulers to undercut regional autonomy over resource control and centralize power at the federal government level. Since 1970s, according to Suberu, Nigeria has earned about US$500 billion from oil exploration while it continues to lavish in 'poverty' and 'infrastructural squalor' [1]. In 1979, Nigeria adopted a presidential system of government that lasted up to 1983. Expanded executive powers brought abuse through patronage and corruption. The military intervened in 1983 and introduced a highly authoritarian government that engaged in grave violations of human rights. Military rule lasted until 1999 when democracy was restored in the form of the Third Republic.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON POLITICAL ELITE COMPOSITION

Regime Types and Prospects for Elite Change

The literature on political elites is dominated by two rival perspectives. The liberal pluralist version focuses on the dispersion of power within the elite and argues that changes are likely to happen over time. In contrast, the critical elite perspective emphasizes elite power concentration and cohesiveness, leading to resistance to change and limited openness and inclusiveness [6]. This article argues that the character of the Nigerian political elite is best interpreted by adopting an analytical framework based on the critical elite approach.
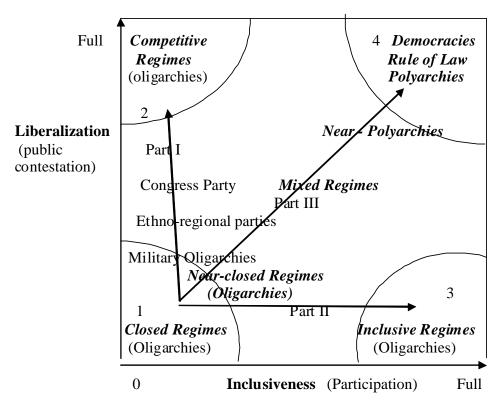
The concept of pluralism, which is core to liberal elite theories, implies that power is fragmented and dispersed

over various groups formed on the basis of cross-cutting differences of interest in society [7]. Important among pluralist assumptions is the notion that political regimes vary according to the nature of rules and resources that structure power and roles [8]. While authoritarian regimes restrict entrance to the power structure to a few, democratic regimes give access to a majority of the citizenry [9].

Robert Dahl laid the initial foundation for understanding real world political regimes in the pluralist model of so-called *polyarchies*. Just as its pluralist basis, the concept of polyarchy and its application in political analysis are not without critics. Some of these critics have pointed out that the normative dimension of polyarchy is based on the liberal pluralist requisite of value homogeneity. The latter assumption can easily give rise to 'conceptual stretching', implying that concepts such as democracy or democratic elite are applied in contexts where they, in fact, are inapplicable [10]. Value homogeneity as a precondition for social order seems to be far removed from reality in polities like Nigeria where groups have highly different social structures, and varying historical and cultural backgrounds. Yet, pluralists believe that political systems can transform through learning or adaptation. For example, consociationalism, as a form of elite co-operation or compromise, should be able to overcome the most acute problems in socially heterogeneous contexts like Nigeria [11].

Fig. (**1**) represents four major political regime configurations with an application to Nigeria. The vertical axis represents the dimension of contestation that reflects the extent to which political systems have competition between elites.

Full contestation implies the lifting of entry barriers for new groups to access the power structure [12]. The figure's horizontal axis represents political systems' degree of inclusiveness, which implies participation without discrimination [13]. Political systems may show change on one or both of the dimensions of contestation and inclusiveness, but need to reach full application before it is possible to speak of a *polyarchic* political system [14].

In the first regime type (marked as 1 in the lower left-hand corner of Fig. **1**) regime type, no competition and inclusion are allowed apart from strictly controlled mobilization or co-optation in support of the regime [15]. Military oligarchies are characterized by a junta structure strictly made-up of military personnel with authoritarian orientations [16]. Ethno-regional parties and congress party are placed above closed military oligarchies [17]. Change toward the third regime type will involve certain selective (restricted) levels of power struggle (competition) along the contestation axis with inexpressive horizontal social inclusions. Inexpressive social inclusions can translate into co-optation that implies 'transforming stakeholders from opponents to supporters' of the regime, especially through patronage exchanges reliant on state rents [18].

Where political institutions, such as political parties, are dominated by ethno-regional elite personalities, the nature of coalitions can be permeated by emotional appeals and interests. Emotional appeals and interests can be facilitated through ethno-regional and congress or national parties. Since colonial rule, analysts have pointed to the tendency of using ethnic appeals to foster political leadership interests

Fig. (1). Regime types with application to Nigeria.
Sources: [13-17].

[19]. Gunther and Diamond reviewed the experience of political parties in Africa to demonstrate the relationship between ethno-regional parties, national or congress parties and leadership. A congress party is said to be formed at the national level between different parties rooted in ethnic and regional appeal. Such a party can endure as long as no ethnic group leadership actually manifests hegemonic tendencies. In reality, ethno-regional coalition parties do disintegrate the same way they are formed, i.e. along divisive ethno-regional lines [17]. Leaders of ethno-regional parties share exclusive interests and, therefore, the parties are instrumental in such a way that their usefulness ends when the interests that tie them together fragment.

Dahl's model was not productively concerned with the multiplicity of regimes that can emerge to occupy the dense intermediary region between the near-closed oligarchies and the near-open polyarchies. His attention appeared much more focused on tendencies towards either the extreme of authoritarian or democratic systems. Indeed, his analysis was much more focused on how liberalization and inclusion lead to polyarchies. Ethnicity was considered a constraint rather than an aspect of the polyarchic model. Emotional appeals that derive from ethnic ties, among others, were believed to disappear or simply be sidelined when populations would become more literate [20]. As a Nigerian analyst noted, 'modernization theories [underscored by the liberal pluralist doctrine] do not see issues of ethnicity as a puzzle that necessarily has to be solved' but diffused [21]. It follows that certain constraining factors stand out in the analysis of political regimes since Dahl's concept of polyarchy is based on the liberal pluralist ideas.

Firstly, there is the growing complexity of regime types in the contemporary world system that have 'ambitious elites' [22]. Since the end of the Cold War, so-called hybrid regimes have increased in frequency. In some cases, political parties and independent electoral commissions are created by authoritarian regimes [23]. In Nigeria, for example, political parties cannot be formed and registered without the express permission of the state. This act, noted Nigerian political analyst Ibrahim, negates organic processes of party formation and denies freedom rights and equality. Moreover, continued Ibrahim, political party formation and development in Nigeria are beset not only by government interference, but also by ethnic political manipulation [24].

A 'hybrid regime' or 'regime-hybridity' is defined by Zinecker as the regime type in which 'partial regimes within the political regime are democratic, while others are non-democratic, though not necessarily authoritarian' [23(e)]. To avoid the earlier mentioned problem of 'conceptual stretching', 'conceptual adaptation', as defined by Collier and Mahon, can be used to describe the Nigerian political situation in relation to the nature of the core political executive elite. Collier and Mahon argue that the problem of new democracies, in which competitive elections are used without the adequate 'institutions and practices' of democracy to select leaders, should be addressed differently. They formulate 'the more modest claim' that these democracies are 'electoral democracies' rather than 'true democracies' [10].

Secondly, as the third wave of democratization seems to be waning, the concern with the composition of the political elite and its impact on the political regime is being rein-

forced by the emphasis on 'effective democracy' bound by the 'rule of law'. Apart from open contestation, inclusiveness and legal system, the political elite are supposed to be 'answerable' before the law [25]. In post-colonial Nigeria, successive changes from one political system to another seem to reflect 'political adventure' more than a serious quest for an acceptable social order based on the rule of law [26]. In theoretical terms, the moral role of protecting human rights is directly associated with political elite 'responsibility' or 'accountability', defined by O'Donnell as 'controls over the lawfulness of acts' engaged by state agents [25]. In the case of Nigeria, responsibility can imply looking into such invidious political elite practices as rent-seeking, patronage, corruption, coercion and personalization of political power through, for example, the presence of military strongmen [26].

Equality and the Political Elite

Equality has been described as a 'political ideal' developed to counteract inequality through the opening of 'participatory opportunities' [27]. Verba defines political equality as 'the extent to which citizens has [*sic!*] equal voice over governmental decisions'. Verba believes that the 'political systems' potential to turn weaker or stronger depends less on who participates in terms of the amount than the representation of interests' [28]. Although equality refers to equal participation across the social spectrum and under institutionally guaranteed rights, it does not necessarily demand direct mass engagement in government decision making. While mass participation in complex societies is possible through voting, social inclusions in political office are controlled for efficiency purposes.

In Nigeria, equality assumes various forms. One of the major forms is the Federal Character Principle (FCP). This principle, which was conceived by political elites and eventually institutionalized as a means for attenuating inequality in the political sphere, entails the promotion of inclusion across the socio-cultural spectrum through, for example, the political executive elite and political party initiatives [29]. The application of the principle is, however, limited due to elite struggle for political power and status.

Generally, the debate about equality, argues Crompton, centers on the choice between 'formal or legal equalities' (based on institutional rights) and 'equality of outcomes' (through affirmative action) [30]. Crompton notes that 'neo-liberals' argue against the latter notion of equality because it conflicts with the former. In Nigeria, both standards operate variably but their application relies on the whim of the political elite. For example, the current 1999 Federal Constitution that derived from the 1979 version instituted formal market and democratic processes but also inserted some personalized procedures. Under the Constitution, the chief national executive, i.e. the President, as Head of State and Government and the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, has great influence on the appointment and dismissal of political functionaries, including federal ministers. While the FCP was designed and instituted with a view to affirmative action claims to abate various types of inequalities including 'political inequalities', the need for quality based on achievement and government actions were maintained [31]. However, as Graf has pointed out, presidential powers be-

came much greater enlarged in the 1979 Constitution and have contributed to the personalization instead of the dispersion of power [5b].

The existing reward and punishment device based on voting for or against incumbents [32] is insufficient for dealing with the growing interest in social participation and political elite circulation. Nigerians expect that enhanced social participation would contribute towards change in both elite composition and government actions.

The extent to which equality principles apply to the composition of the core political executive elite – especially in relation to the main cabinet positions – may have different impacts on the political system. The degree to which recruitment for first order cabinet positions would *truly* cut across the social spectrum by age, gender, ethnic, religious, regional, professional and political attributes, could play a crucial role in enhancing legitimacy, both of the political elite and of the political system. Political legitimacy is often associated with the political system's capacity 'to engender and maintain' the belief in the appropriateness of existing political institutions [33]. Liberal pluralists consider legitimacy as stemming from electoral democracy [34]. Nevertheless, Rothstein recently argued that 'legitimacy depends at least as much on the quality of government than on the capacity of the electoral system to create effective representation' through the legal system [35]. In Nigeria, social distrust appears to be associated more with the conduct of the political elite instead of the potential of the political system to enhance social order [36]. This lack of trust in government decision makers makes the equality and quality of political executive elite composition a crucial dimension of Nigerian social order.

It seems fair to conclude that political legitimacy is based, to an important extent, on social support for government. This implies that enhanced inclusiveness can have a positive impact on the political system. Political analysts assert that the longevity of political systems will increase when more people from lower classes or status groups acquire the opportunity not only in terms of formal but also substantive equality to participate in the political system and acquire positions in political offices [27]. In particular, 'effective democracy' is currently used to denote necessary changes *inter alia* in the composition of government elites through the participation of marginalized social groups such as minorities and women and the prevention of elite corruption [37]. One pertinent implication is that a political system deficient of these social characteristics or lacking moral impetus through abusive elite practices can decay and eventually break down. In Nigeria, decay and breakdown of the political system have repeatedly gone together.

Seen from the perspective of an open system, the political executive elite is supposed to have the characteristics of individuals or groups that are truly representative of the people's preferences rather than of the elite's interests [38]. Verba's insight about the quality rather than amount of interest representation is instructive because it shows the difference between social inclusion and inclusiveness [28]. Most observers criticize inclusion policies in Nigeria on the basis of their limited degree of participation. However, these observers overlook inclusiveness that implies the true representation and fulfillment of interests not just by voting but re-

sponsible government behavior. Moreover, government actions for correcting unexpected outcomes are an important aspect in the promotion of equality and quality.

Therefore, it is, at least, theoretically, clear that changes in political elite background and value are important in the process of representing and fulfilling social expectations through government actions. The effective protection of political rights by incumbent elites should not be confused with symbolic representations that temporarily appease the masses but in the long run contribute to inequality.

The Critical Elite Perspective

The issues of personal interests and informal interferences with state institutions in Nigeria make the critical elite approach best suited for understanding the nature of political executive elite composition since independence. Founded on the ideas of classical elitists (such as Vilfredo Pareto, Gaetano Mosca and Robert Michels), the elite are usually defined as those groups with excellent access to resources or capacities, a characteristic that sets them apart from other (non-elite) members of society [39]. The interpretations of superiority based on the access to valuable resources leads to the justification of elite dominance and social inequality. Unlike class concepts that see inequality as a reflection of the ownership of economic resources, the elite concept considers 'inequality as the outcome of power distribution, which in turn reposes on other resources such as economic and organizational assets' [40]. Political power in this case derives not just from the ownership of economic resources but also an array of other resources that promote access to and retention of state power. Resources can vary from social background like gender, educational qualifications, professional features, communal attributes (ethnic, religious and regional memberships) to political party affiliations, all of which, according to Weber, determine life chances [41].

The critical elite approach assumes that power struggle is limited to intra-elite instead of inter-class relationships. Pluralists also see power struggle as an inter-class affair but argue that the composition of the political elite may change as a consequence of autonomous group action and periodic renewal [42]. From the 1950s and 1960s onwards, the power elite and power structure approach added various dynamics to the class dimension espoused by the critical elitists. Although C. Wright Mills based his propositions on the North American reality, his idea that power is rooted in the interests of few individuals drawn from the upper class and the triumvirate of 'political, economic and military institutions' has more general applicability [43]. An important conclusion is that change in social order depends on the few who have certain characteristics in common. As argued by Hunter, while the 'maintenance of order falls to the lot of almost all in the community, the establishment of changes in the old order falls to the lot of the relatively few' [44].

So, if the relatively few have the power to make changes in the polity, the direction of change is very likely to depend on the relatively few. Critical elite analysts insist that the political elite, despite their nominally divergent nature, stem from common backgrounds, which explains their similar political socialization, formation of attitudes and interest cohesion [42]. Applied to Nigeria, this means that the political elite at the core national executive offices contain indi-

viduals from different origins with common interests. Bell attributes to the critical elitists the idea that 'interest implies the selection of values by a group, or part of a group, over and against others', and in ways that lead to 'privileges' [45]. To liberal pluralists, interest is not just synonymous with preference but is assumed to be equally represented in the polity [13]. The relevance of the elitist view on interest commonality is the expectation of a continuing centralization rather than decentralization of political power.

Yet, it is doubtful if Mill's observations about the American elite's orientation towards the capitalist state are fully applicable to the Nigerian situation. The easy access of Nigerian elites to oil revenues and rents complicates the interpretation of the political elite that is driven by interests linked to capitalist production [23(e)]. Moreover, class divisions in Nigeria are not the only salient features of society on which elite interests are based. As Weber has asserted, not always does 'economic power condition social honor' and 'very frequently the striving for power is also conditioned by the social honor it entails'. Hence, 'classes, status groups, and parties are phenomena of the distribution of power within a community' [46]. In a social context like Nigeria, Weber's interpretation implies that analysis of the elite needs to take account of not merely the distribution of productive means but also the use of status symbols. In relation to the latter, resources such as education and ethnic, religious and regional structures can serve as a basis for enhancing an individual's or a group's position in the social structure and patterns of domination [47]. In Nigeria, common social background is an important characteristic of the power and authority structure because large numbers of elite members share socio-cultural, economic, military and political backgrounds and also have similar interests.

In the context that has been described above, one would expect a practice where the elite eventually settle for the selection rather than election of candidates based on common background and interests. The lack of open competition and inclusiveness can lead to an authority structure where coercion, co-optation, patronage and corruption are common practices. The resultant institutional order may accommodate independent electoral commissions that are not truly autonomous and responsible to the people, but controlled by incumbent government elites who use them to block-off opposition [22]. As Davenport has argued, 'states may look like democracies (with elections, parties and judiciary) but do not actually act like one in their interactions with citizens' [23(b)].

Although there are certain similarities between pluralist and elitist perspectives, the difference between them prevail. Both pluralist and elitist accounts admit that political power is founded on access to resources. In contrast to pluralists, who believe in elite circulation based on periodic popular choices, the elitists emphasize power structures that restrict elite membership to a small group [42]. The pluralist-based argument is emphatic that the complexity of the modern state leads to a dispersion of power through the expertise of the various elites in different policy spheres [48]. Conversely, the elitist contention is that the power structure is cohesive and subjected to centralized, oligarchic control [49]. While the elitists perceive power struggles as an intra-class phenomenon, pluralists visualize an inter-class struggle between autonomous groups free from state power and intervention [50]. An intra-class struggle for political power at the state level implies elite replacement, while an inter-class competition or co-operation leads to elite renewal. The pluralists base their argument on equality of opportunities with education and professionalism designed to reinforce individual chances and elite circulation. The elitists on the other hand consider the insidious effects of continued social inequality on the distribution of political power resources, accessibility and circulation [42].

The Core Political Executive Elite and the Meaning of Circulation

As was indicated above, the term core political executive elite refers to the key formal and most visible participants in the decision making process of the Nigerian government. The elite are the occupants of 'top' or 'apex' [38(b)] positions that include the commanding political offices located at the executive branch of government.

Political elite circulation has been defined by Zartman as 'the continual interaction between incumbent elites and contextual situation in generating and absorbing new elites or elite aspirants in varying degrees' [51]. In this article, circulation is understood as the outcome of processes of contestation and social inclusion that impact on the composition of the political elite, in relation to certain determining variables, such as differences in social structure, values and interests. The ensuing empirical analysis aims to ascertain the sequence of interaction and renewal of various elite categories. These interactive sequences are referred to as circularity or what Dogan termed 'elite configuration' through the 'constellation' of elite types [38(b)].

Elite circulation and circularity are contradictory to elite reproduction, which is the recurrence of elite members drawn from the same or similar social groups. If new elite members are brought into the political elite circle at the national executive level without significant changes in values and interests, the term reproduction applies [52]. Reproduction is equivalent to continuity or simply dynamics without change. Hence, changes in the office positions of the Nigerian core political executive elite reflect the extent to which different or similar individuals have occupied over time the positions of Head of State, Head of Government, President, Vice-President, first order Minister and Military Junta member.

The argument about elite continuity, i.e. lack of circulation, implies the (re-)appearance in political executive positions of individuals or groups from similar social backgrounds. Based on the critical elite perspectives, it is expected that the pattern of elite reproduction leads to the centralization and concentration of political power and roles in the hands of a few dominant and unresponsive individuals or groups.

The marginalization of weaker social groups in political processes and outcomes may result in a declining application of equity principles. Put differently, the various elite groups can coalesce at the national executive offices and convert their differences into common interests, while wilfully curtailing social participation in political processes. Such colliding may lead to the isolation of other social groups, espe-
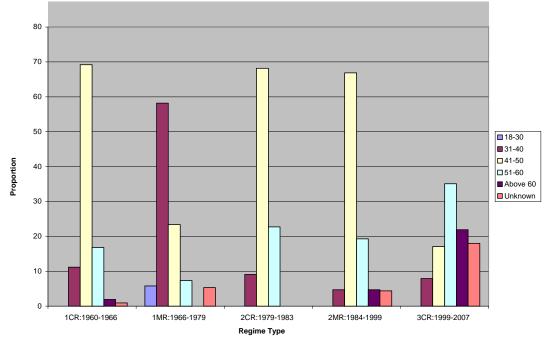
Fig. (2). Core Political Executive Elite Composition by Age Group and Regime Type.
Source: Various editions of Nigeria Year Books, Who's Who in Nigeria and Africa South of the Sahara.

cially weaker classes and status groups in the society. Such marginalized social groups may resort to alternative strategies for claiming their rights.

EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

Social Attributes

Social attributes relate to age, sex, educational and professional categories. Data related to the generational gap (see Fig. **2**) reveal an overall historically and dynamically positive relationship between the presence of age cohorts and regime type. Independent of regime changes, an upward movement in age cohort is observed. This result contradicts the conventional theory that considers opening of the regime (in particular, through contestation and inclusion) as favorable to elite circulation through membership renewal, especially based on the generational gap [53]. In this particular case, public contestation and inclusion appear restricted to similar age cohorts that simply adapted and 'migrated' from one to another regime.

Moreover, the reproduction of age groups or, more specifically, political office longevity reveals an interesting

characteristic as changes in regime, through military coups and interventions in politics [54] or by electoral impasse [1] seem to reflect intra-elite struggles for political power and control of the state. Replacements have occurred in an almost alternating pattern, replacing the military by civilian elites and vice versa in response to legitimacy crises.

The changes suggest an inter-generational elite struggle. For example, in 1966, young military officers mostly from southern Nigeria ousted the pioneer civilian elites on charges of corruption and nepotism. These younger officers, on their part, were actually stopped by senior military officers before they could take major decisions. In quick twists of events, power rotated several times between different age groups, rank orders and regional groups during the first military regime (1MR:1966-1979). The dark red bar (age cohort 31-40, 1MR:1966-1979) in Fig. (**2**) represents the ascendant age groups in the power structure. In later periods, older elite groups appear to have grown in power to the detriment of others.

Data in Table **1** about gender composition confirm male dominance despite regime changes. Since independence, the number of women in the core political executive has ranged

Table 1.   Gender Composition of the Core Political Executive

Sex	Regime Type				
	1CR: 1960-1966	**1MR:1966-1979**	**2CR:1979-1983**	**2MR: 1984-1999**	**3CR:1999-2007**
Male	100	100	97.0	99.6	94.3
Female	0	0	3.0	0.4	5.7
Total (%)	100	100	100	100	100
Total (n)	(107)	(521)	(132)	(698)	(228)

Source: Various editions of Nigeria Year Books, Who's Who in Nigeria and Europa Year Book (Africa South of the Sahara).

Table 2.   Professional Profile of Core Political Elite (1960-2007)

Professions	196 0-66 (Civilian)		196 6-79 (Military)		19 79-83 (Civilian)		1984-98 (Military)		1999-0 7 (Civilian)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Non-Univ Teachers	47	43.9	30	5.7	14	10.6	0	0.0	0	0.0
Univ. Teachers	09	8.4	39	7.5	12	9.1	57	8.2	42	18.4
Lawyers	31	29.0	27	5.2	26	19.7	24	3.4	22	9.6
Bureaucrats	11	10.3	18	3.5	33	25.0	26	3.7	15	6.6
Technocrats	3	2.8	39	7.5	29	22.0	63	9.0	45	19.7
Diplomats	0	0.0	00	0.0	2	1.5	0	0.0	10	4.4
Trader	1	0.9	00	0.0	0	0.0	3	0.5	0	0.0
Military Officers	0	0.0	345	66.2	0	0.0	450	64.5	40	17.5
Business	4	3.7	10	1.9	12	9.1	30	4.3	30	13.1
Not Known	1	0.9	13	2.5	4	3.0	45	6.4	24	10.5
Total	107	100	521	100	132	100	698	100	228	100

Source: Various editions of the Europa Year Book (Africa South of the Sahara), Nigerian Year Book and Who's Who in Nigeria.

between 0 and 5.7 per cent, despite the fact that women represent a significant proportion (currently 49 per cent) of the total population. Patriarchal patterns of dominance and unequal access to political power resources, such as finance for campaign activities, underscore the limited circularity and under-representation of women in elective and appointed political positions in Nigerian politics. This pattern not only reveals the overwhelming appearance and dominance of the male voice, but also indicates the almost complete absence of special institutions for dealing with female concerns in influential political offices [55].

Professional and educational attributes reflect the presence of individuals from different social backgrounds in the Nigerian core political executive elite. Not only does the professional elite appear to be heterogeneous, it also seems to conform to the pluralist expectation of elite power composition. Table **2** shows that since the first period of civil rule (1CR: 1960-1966), low skilled professionals, like primary and secondary school teachers, ceded place to university educated or military trained professionals, such as professors, lawyers, bureaucrats, technocrats and military officers.

The changing professional composition is associated with improved educational qualifications of political executive office-holders, mostly obtained at university levels and military training academies as depicted in Fig. (**3**). Education to the liberal pluralists is a crucial source of socialization and qualitative changes in the political system [56]. Fig. (**3**) shows that people with lower levels of education were replaced by highly qualified (vocational, graduate and post-graduate) individuals most of whom rose from techno-bureaucratic backgrounds to political executive offices at the national level. However, there seems to be a weak correlation between elite higher qualifications and responsibility, which may be due to the emergence of a highly structured techno-bureaucracy.

Table **2** and Fig. (**3**) show that as the level of education increased, more bureaucrats and technocrats were recruited into ministerial positions. For example, under military regimes, bureaucrats and technocrats respectively represented 7.5 and 3.5 per cent (1966-1979) and 9.0 and 3.7 per cent (1984-1999). Civilian regimes numbered 25 per cent of bureaucrats and 22 per cent of technocrats between 1979 and 1983 and, respectively, 6.6 and 19.7 per cent between 1999 and 2007. Table **2** reveals a growth in the proportion of military officers as members of the political elite to 17.5 per cent in the current period. Most of these may have retired from active service but remain closely attached to the armed forces and so have leverage over the use of force and military tactics as means of political action and power consolidation

The reappearance of militarily trained professionals in the civilian regime could impact on the respect for human rights [57]. It could be a sign that past authoritarian values are looming or assuming a new form by adapting to civilian regimes.

Political influence and positions at the national executive echelon rotated among those individuals and families that took advantage of the changing contexts (reflected in regime changes and increased state resources, among other things) to protect their personal interests. Many teachers and civil servants gradually shifted positions from being active public servants to assuming political executive offices. Since decolonization, some became bureaucrats and technocrats while others went through university education before assuming influential political offices [5b].

Various analysts have demonstrated that the colonial period was propitious for commercial activities, and as a result business owners managed to assume offices in the core political executive offices [58]. Although the presence of low skilled professionals in the political executive elite was very much limited after the military intervention of January 1966,
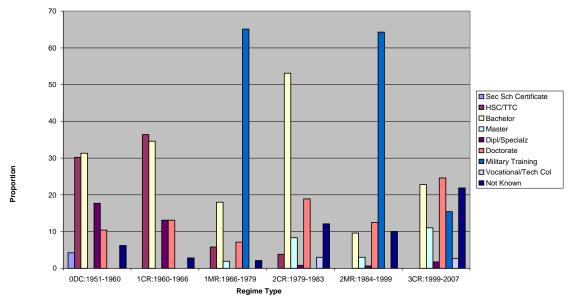
Fig. (3). Educational Qualification and Regime Type.

Source: Various editions of Year Books, Who is Who in Nigeria and Europa Year Book (Africa South of the Sahara).

these persons reappeared afterwards as a result of the transfer of power to family members, people from the same region or friends. With military interventions, many civilians were required to leave office for charges varying from ineptitude to improbity and corruption [59]. Ironically, these allegations aided the public's acceptance of military rule. The lesson with regard to the social attributes of the elite in core political executive offices is that common background facilitates communication and the exclusion of others with different identities.

Communal (Ethnic, Religious and Regional) Origin

Unaffected by the current administrative organization of the country, ethnicity and religion have been practically synonymous with region since colonial rule in Nigeria. The breakdown by ethnic origin in Fig. (**4**) reveals the dominance of the three major ethnic groups in the core political executive. Since the first period of civil rule (1CR:1960-1966), the Hausa-Fulani ethnic group of the Northern region (see Fig. **5**), making up 29 per cent of the total population, has maintained a sort of 'pecking-order leadership authority' in the Nigerian polity. Specifically, their share in executive leadership varied between, roughly, 46 and 35 per cent before 1999. This group's status is not only linked to being in power, but also to being 'king makers'. Ibelema recounts that the nomination by party caucus and the installation of Obasanjo in 1999 as a 'democratically elected' President and Head of State is a concession from the Hausa-Fulani who had been exercising 'power throughout much of the colonial rule' [60].

After the executive leadership role had been assumed by Obasanjo (1999-2007), a Yoruba, the Hausa-Fulani group's presence in the political executive decreased from approximately 37 to 30.5 per cent, practically equal to the 29 per cent of the Yoruba presence that had grown from an earlier 17 per cent (Fig. **4**). The federal arrangement that survived colonial rule did not result in a balanced regional power structure [61]. The political elite affiliated to the largest eth-

nic, religious and regional groups 'co-opted' other regional, ethnic and religious group leaders to enhance their personal power at the political level.

Based on the coincidence between identities (ethnic, regional and religious), it suggests that Muslims, mostly from the North and Hausa-Fulani ethnic group, share the highest proportion of memberships in the core political executive offices since the post-colonial period. The religious bars show in figure 6 that across all regime types since colonial rule Muslim proportion has been highest, attaining in some periods more than 50 per cent. Similarly, the proportion of Christian members mostly from the South (Yoruba and Igbo plus inexpressive minority members) has been high but below 50 per cent across all regime types. Other religious affiliates do not appear significantly. The coincidence of elite communal identities (regional, ethnic and religious) with interests thus facilitates intra-elite (within regions) and inter-elite (across regions) interactions.

In this respect, Vaughan has referred to a 'national movement' that arose from 'an alliance of powerful emirs with the younger generation of influential northern civil servants and businessmen' who used regional platforms since the first period of military rule (1MR:1966-1979) to 'co-opt' other ethno-regional and religious groups in support of Northerner Shehu Shagari's election during the second civilian regime (2CR:1979-1983) [62]. This suggests not only the existence and persistence of regional but also cross-regional power networks, which rely on rents and patronage for sustaining political power and benefiting the most powerful network leaders. While the Hausa-Fulani and by extension the Northern region with predominantly Muslim population have occupied most apex political executive positions, the second and third positions have constantly been disputed by Yoruba and Ibo leaders, who are mainly Christians.

The underrepresentation of minority groups implies a lack of influence in the political process. The Niger Delta crisis with its perennial violence is a classic case in point.
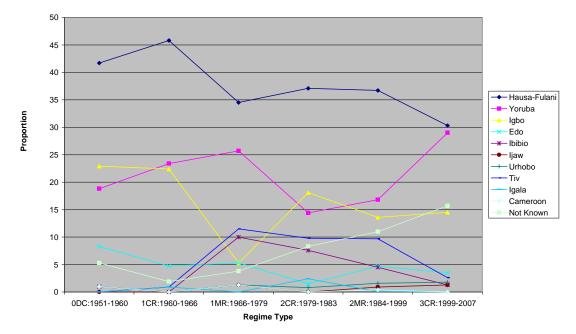
Fig. (4). Ethnic Origin and Regime Type.

Source: Various editions of Year Books, Who is Who in Nigeria and Africa South of the Sahara.
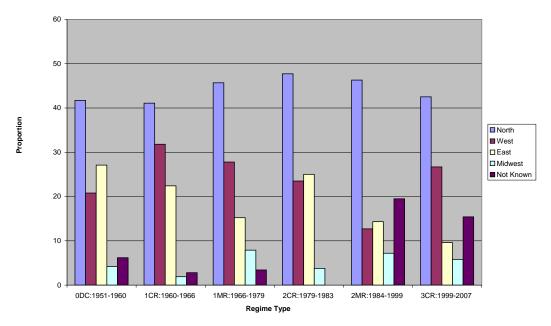

Fig. (5). Regional Origin and Regime Type.

Source: Various editions of Year Books, Who is Who in Nigeria and Africa South of the Sahara.

This conflict results from the (unmet) demand for boundary adjustment and autonomy, which gave the leadership of the largest ethnic group more political and economic leverage within the framework of the federal structure since decolonization [63].

Fig. (**4**) reveals that the recruitment of the political elite from ethnic groups is ultimately dependent on the institutional power and resources of the chief executive, which stems from both formal and informal sources. First, institutionalized forms of patronage lead to the recruitment of individuals from one's own ethnic group. As the Hausa-Fulani have traditionally, since independence, dominated the chief

executive, as either Prime Minister, Head of State, President or Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Northern presence in the core political executive elite has been notably high.

Of the fourteen chief executives since independence, nine (or almost 65 per cent) have come from the Northern region (Table **3**). In spite of expansion of the federal structure and power devolution and decentralization, no minority group member (outside the northern region) has ever received the support of the Nigerian elite to occupy the chief executive's position (see Table **3**). Except for the recent case of the much troubled nomination of the minority group leader,
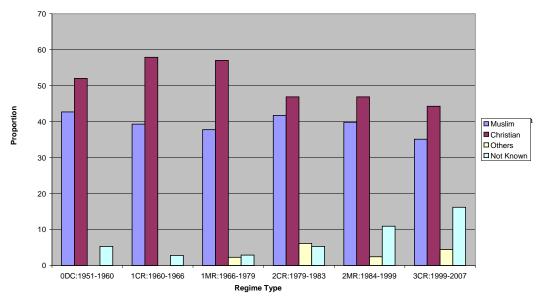
Fig. (6). Religious Affiliation.

Source: Various editions of Year Books, *Who is Who* in Nigeria and Africa South of the Sahara

Goodluck Jonathan, to the vice-presidential position, and his current election as national executive President (eventually followed by violent outbreaks in the North), there has been historically and dynamically no clear elite support for the leadership aspirations of minority groups to the highest national executive government position.

Regional dominance is reflected in what Weber calls 'status monopoly' [41] and Kalu refers to as 'status honor' held mostly by Northern ethnic and regional leaders 'to the detriment of national unity' [21]. Nigerian political power remains based on limited access rather than openness to contestation, as is often stressed by political analysts [64], and this continues to impair democratic governance in the Nigerian polity.

Political Party Affiliation

Nigerian political parties have been instrumental in shaping political institutions and, in this way, also the values and interests of political actors. Fig. (7) captures the range of political parties from which the core political executive elite members have been drawn since the first civilian regime (1CR:1960-1966). This overview confirms the 'ethnic morphology' of the Nigerian political system, described by Scarritt as the use of ethnic structure (size, religion, language, natural resources, et cetera) for political ends [65]. It implies that political party formation and development since independence have been based on ethnic leadership and support. The first major political parties – the National Party of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC-East), the National People's Congress (NPC-North) and the Action Group (AG-West) – emerged and grew from the three major ethnic groups (Ibo, Hausa-Fulani and Yoruba) since decolonization (1951-1960).

Since 1960, about ten parties were officially formed, three of which were exclusively rooted in the major ethnic groups that were mentioned earlier. The dominant party, however, remained the Northern People's Congress based in

the Northern region which was known for its relatively high support among the population and its grounding in Islam. A powerful coalition government emerged that was based on an alliance between the NPC that won the 1959 independence elections and the NCNC that ended second. Intra- and inter-party power rivalries pushed the AG into a tight opposition corner until the 1965 elections when schisms and defections were organized to change the power equation [19]. Thirteen parties emerged and alliances were reestablished between and within the bigger parties. Military intervention, in the end, was inevitable as corruption and nepotism devalued the governance system, inspired by elites who used political institutions such as parties and government for particular interests.

As of the first period of civilian rule, the linkage between ethnicity, elitism and political party became more evident. Political parties were transformed into self-serving instruments of ethno-regional elites who seized available opportunities to stifle competition. Kurfi has noted that elites at the regional level overruled competitive standards to handpick likeminded local representatives without adequately consulting with the people [66]. The Nigerian polity started to exhibit the centralizing oligarchic tendencies that have been emphasized by critical elitists [41]. Contrary to the hypothesis on the resource curse, which claims that Nigeria's troubles started with the oil boom and bust cycles [67], historically fixed and narrow interests have been the hallmark of the Nigerian political elite since well before the revolutionary oil sales of the 1970s that accentuated it.

During the second period of civilian rule (2CR:1979-1983), only five parties were registered and took part in the elections. Once the ethnic foundations of political parties had been laid, the Nigerian political class simply used ethnicity for electoral purposes. Soon after the ban on political parties was lifted (1978), parties reemerged with similar identities and practices based on the manipulation of ethnic symbols. Izah rightly observed the impact of the context and argued that 'the political parties that emerged were reincarnations of

Table 3.   Ethno-Regional Origin of Chief Political Executives (1960-2008)

Ethno-Regional Nature	Majority Ethnic Size (per cent)	Frequency Leadership		Frequency Religious Affiliations			Frequency Regime Types	
		N	per cent	Muslim	Christian	Others	Civilian	Military
Hausa-Fulani-Majority North	29	9	64.3	9	0	0	3	6
Yoruba - Majority West	21	3	21.4	0	3	0	2*	1
Igbo - Majority East	18	2	14.3	0	2	0	1	1
Minority Combined	32	0**	0.0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	100	14	100	9	5	0	6	8

Source: *Whos's Who in Nigeria,* Africa South of the Sahara and Government Gazettes since Independence (1960).
Notes: * One served in both military and civilian regime. **The current President, who belongs to one of the minority groups, is serving more by default, and on the basis of public and constitutional pressures than by elite consent or elections.
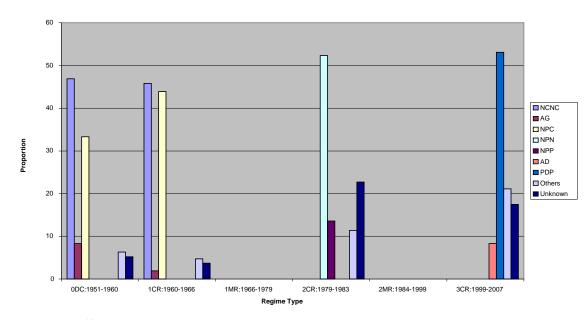

Fig. (7). Political Party Affiliation and Regime Type.

Source: Various editions of Year Books, Who is Who in Nigeria and Africa South of the Sahara

the old political parties of the first republic' [68]. The old political parties reappeared with the leadership that originated at political independence, tied to the major ethnic and regional groups. The previous military government (1975-1979) had stimulated party formation to cut across ethnic and regional lines, but the elections were won by the political party that consisted mainly of members of the majority ethnic group. Fig. (**7**) shows that more than 50 per cent of the political elite stem from a single party – the National Party of Nigeria (NPN).

The NPN was based on a grand ethno-regional alliance, integrated by the techno-bureaucracy, legal professionals and powerful business stalwarts that supported the party's electoral victory through frauds and counterclaims in 1979 [69]. This imposing political alliance led many to think initially that Nigeria had ultimately discovered the source of national unity under civilian rule. Yet, ethno-regional rivalry and powerful interest group pressure led to the coalition's disintegration [70]. Most importantly, the inclusion of powerful

groups linked to entrenched interests and cross-cutting memberships among the 'old-guard' civilian and military politicians became the characteristic of the second phase of civilian rule (2CR:1979-1983).

The emphasis on self-interest draws attention to the relationship between electoral mandates at the presidential level and social order in Nigeria. Elections in Nigeria are historically held and officially backed more by the threat of physical and legal force than the rule of law. The high volatility of alliances indicates the weakness of political elite composition driven by dominant elite interests and fraudulent elections. Elections have clear characteristics of hybridism – that is the prevalence of political parties, operated and manipulated by civilian and military elite strongmen rather than decisions by the people's will.

The Nigerian context shows a hybrid system based on political institutions that are formally necessary but manipulated by the elite to shape succession. They are mainly ethno-regionally based political parties aided by electoral

commissions that sanction candidacies, and authorize, conduct and endorse party conventions before expediently legitimating successions. From an institutional and organizational purview, these agencies are responsible for the restrictive nature of public contestation wittingly maintained at the left hand side of Fig. (**1**), i.e., in ways that avoid inclusion. In no period were political parties and electoral commissions manipulated institutionally and selfishly by agents at the central state authority than in the second period of military rule (2MR:1984-1999). Especially in the 1990s, that witnessed the most brutal military dictatorship, the particularistic ambitions and political scheming of military rulers aided the transformation of political parties and their leadership into instruments of power [71].

The death in 1998 of General Abacha, the most notorious military dictator that Nigeria ever produced, confirmed the critical elitist maxim of elite decadence and replacement without significant change in values and interests. Despite the transition to a democratic regime in 1999, the extent of elite reproduction was remarkable. The transition brought Obasanjo to power, a former military strongman and Head of State and Government. The number of political parties has since 1999 expanded to more than thirty. Despite the increase, one political party, the People's Democratic Party (PDP), has been dominating the core political executive since 1999, as shown in Fig. (**7**).

Since the second civilian regime (2CR:1979-1983), political party alliances have changed from a more localized to a trans-regional pattern. The current issue as to democratization is not limited to structural changes in party composition, but rather to value transformation. In other words, as long as rent-seeking, patronage and corruption continue to link state and personal power resources, the historically entrenched ethno-regional approach to politics will continue to provide the dynamics of political parties and political power. Despite

the increase in the number of political parties and the establishment of coalitions that transcend parochial boundaries, the stifling of opposition parties has continued. Indeed, since the end of colonial rule, no opposition party has ever won an election. This characteristic further confirms how conservative the core political executive elite is; this feature is more in line with a closed oligarchy rather than a polyarchy guided by the rule of law. Also, the marginal role of the opposition reveals the slanted pattern of power coalitions, which offer very limited scope for consociational democracy.

Political Elite Composition

Fig. (**8**) shows the changes in core political executive positions since the final period of colonial rule (1951-1960). This period marked the appointment by colonial administrators of the first indigenous Prime Minister from the North and Governor-General from the East. Despite the ceremonial status of the latter, the occupant of this position was recruited from one of the major ethnic groups. In 1963, the position of Governor-General was replaced by that of President in a semi-presidential system; the position was assumed by the incumbent Governor-General.

The number of office-holders at the level of the core political executive varied with regime type. As would be expected, the percentage of civilian ministers (i.e. apart from the Head of State and Government and his Deputy) was the highest in each period (see Fig. **8**). During military periods, the absence of an elected legislature linked to political parties plus the subordination of the judiciary reinforced the concentration of political power in junta and cabinet positions. The weakening of the system of checks and balances leads to concentration of political power and dominance of political elites in Nigeria.

Very important to the understanding of the dynamics of political power and roles is the use of patronage and co-
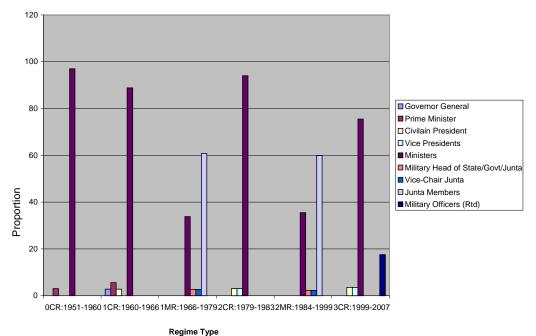

Fig. (8). Major Cabinet and Junta Positions.

Source: Various editions of Year Books, Who is Who in Nigeria and Africa South of the Sahara

optation. A sign of personalized political power, patronage and co-optation explain how cabinet posts have changed over time. Table **4** shows that in each of the periods observed, the appointment of second order cabinet members (ministers without portfolio or ministers of state) has increased considerably. Three elite-related factors appear to be responsible for these changes: (1) the closeness of elections, (2) the need to boost government leadership and (3) the pressure to consolidate elite leadership positions in times of political troubles. A first example of this can be seen at the time of independence elections (1960), when ministerial appointments at the second order level were made by the chief executive. The same pattern can be observed at the time of the first presidential election (1979) and the presidential campaign of 1982 during the second civilian regime that was eventually terminated by the military coup of December 1983.

In 1977 and 2001, when the position of Head of State and Government was occupied by Obasanjo from the southwestern region, the number of cabinet posts was increased on two important occasions: the First International Festival of Black Arts and Culture (FESTAC) and the launching of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD). The number of second order appointments increased sharply during the second military regime, in 1987. This year saw the implementation crisis of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP). During this period (mainly between 1985 and 1989), many individuals were co-opted into the core political executive elite to serve special interests, for instance of wealthy local entrepreneurs and foreign borrowers.

The second-order cabinet appointments during several regimes reveal patronage exchange between the incumbent chief executive and certain social groups in the form of a major political market. As postulated by elite theorists, the involvement of likeminded persons in organizations such as political parties and the state is likely to guarantee continuity [72].

Table 4.   Highest Number of Second-Order Ministerial Positions Per Regime Type (1951-2007)

Chief Exec	Regime	Number
Balewa	0DC:1951-60	7 (1960)
Balewa	1CR:1960-66	23 (1965)
Obasanjo	1MR: 1966-79	19M 25C (1977)*
Shagari	2CR:1979-83	17 (1979) 20 (1982)
Babangida	2MR:1984-99	27M 30C (1987)*
Obasanjo	3CR:1999-07	19 (2001)

Source: Various editions of *Who is Who* and Africa South of the Sahara.
Note: **M** = Military junta; **C** = Cabinet.

CONCLUSION

This article has analyzed the composition of the core political executive elite of Nigeria since independence in 1960 by focusing on various elite categories. The research strategy involved tracing the background of the office holders and using a longitudinal design to identify their characteristics during the post-independence period. Elite theory served to understand the characteristics of the Nigerian elite through time. A major finding is that members of the Nigerian core political executive elite since independence stem from similar social, communal and political party backgrounds. Apart from the replacement of low-skilled professionals in the early post-independence period, no major shifts have occurred in social class and status composition of the core political executive elite since Nigeria's independence (1960).

The composition of the core political executive elite reflects the interests of the few who benefit from the exclusion of the majority of the population. This situation is at odds with the democratic spirit of liberal pluralist assumptions, which reflect equality of participation. The Nigerian political system has therefore not been able to move away significantly from its oligarchic past since independence. This oligarchic past does not reflect only the colonial legacy but also the unholy alliance between civilian and military rulers tied to typical networks. The elite benefit from market-generated rents, patronage and corrupt practices and thereby deny Nigeria the chance to use its major economic resources for economic and social development. These malpractices have become so entrenched that they strengthen the power of the political elite but weaken the very fabric of democratic governance, by excluding the masses from political and economic processes.

The Nigerian political regime is characterized by a typical hybrid pattern of incomplete liberalization, lack of inclusiveness and deficient application of the rule of law. First, many groups have no voice in the authority structure despite the existence of a range of political institutions (such as political parties and periodic elections managed by a government-sponsored electoral commission) designed to stimulate contestation, co-operation and representation. Second, violent and fraudulent acts of political succession during elections signal authoritarian styles.

The Nigerian core political executive composition appears unaffected by the middle class. The middle class as major political game-changer is compressed between the powerful politico-military oligarchies and the immobile lower classes. About 60 to 70 per cent of the Nigerian population living below the poverty line in both rural and urban areas can be considered as economically and politically disempowered. This disempowerment continues despite the robust flow of oil revenue into government coffers plus important constitutional and institutional changes.

Kaufman's caveat about the ominous effect of inequality on the democratic system tends to apply in Nigeria. That is, 'in highly unequal societies, the chances of democracy are slim' (…) 'because the median voter is poor, redistributive pressures are severe, and wealth holders are likely to opt to repress these demands through authoritarian rule' [73]. In Nigeria, not only are the median voter poor but voting rights tend to be violated during elections and under inept institutions that stoop a great deal in favor of the elite. Political and economic factors together with status are likely to remain a forceful combination for stifling equality, as well as the quality and growth of the political system. In all, it is pertinent to

recommend the transformation of elite values and the redirection of interests towards social demands in ways that result to significant social changes in the Nigerian polity.

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