

# Understanding the Theories of Nigerian Politics and Government: A Critique

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**Abstract:** Like many contemporary African states, Nigeria is the design of European imperialism. Flora Shaw, a British journalist, who later became the wife of colonial governor Frederick Lugard suggested its very name – after the great Niger River, the country's dominating physical feature – in the 1890s. Nigeria's colonial history showed a measured effort on the part of the imperialists to fashion contentious tendencies in the nation. The recent history of Nigeria as a political state encompassing 350 to 500 ethnic groups of extensively diverse cultures and types of political organization, started from the completion of the British subjugation in 1903 and the amalgamation of northern and southern Nigeria into the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria in 1914. This revelation highlights the measured colonisation of the colonial masters from the assault of Lagos in 1852 to the amalgamation. Prior to the emergence of the name 'Nigeria', the British had taken control of Lagos and the southern coast through the Royal Niger Company which had jurisdiction of the area around the river which was commonly denoted to as the 'Royal Niger Company Territories'. The territory that was to become Nigeria was made up of varied civilizations before the British. A shared belief is that history presents the famous past of a country which is awash with extraordinary events and incidents that provide the nation its own socio-political along with economic character, offering a remarkable indication of its glorious past. Nigeria's history in this light, signifies the remarkable events that altered and redefined the several phases of her political history. Meanwhile, this paper examined various theories attempting to explain the factors and forces driving Nigerian politics and its governments using archival cum analytical methods. The conclusion of this paper is that, each of the theoretical perspectives identified offers some degree of insight into the general patterns and dynamics of Nigeria's political history; but none could be sufficient or exhaustive in relating the realities of her politics and government from independence in 1960 till date.

**Key Words:** Colonialism, Corruption, Government, Military, Theory, Politics

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## 1. Introduction

Firstly, the spread of Islam, largely in the North but later in South-western Nigeria, started a millennium ago. The establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate in the jihad (holy war) of 1804-8 led by Usman dan Fodio (1754-1817) brought most of the northern region and

adjacent parts of Niger and Cameroon under a single Islamic government. Secondly, the slave trade, both across the Sahara Desert and the Atlantic Ocean, had a deep impact on almost all parts of Nigeria. The transatlantic trade in specific was responsible for the enforced migration of perhaps 3.5 million people between the 1650s and the 1860s. In the North, across the Sahara for a millennium, a steady stream of slaves flowed, which ended at the start of the twentieth century.

Slavery was prevalent within Nigeria. The social implications of this are still evident today. There are more slaves than any other modern country in the Sokoto Caliphate, bar the United States in 1860. Along the West African coast, slave trade was also well established. The abolition of slave trade presented the British the justification they wanted to intrude in the region. The advancement of their trading benefits was a significant motive for intervening along with pressure from the Christian missionaries in the area. The Houses of Parliament in London in 1807, passed legislation prohibiting British citizens from engaging in the slave trade. Still, the restraint was applied normally to all flags and was projected to seal off all traffic in slaves coming out of West African ports. This drive to eliminate the slave trade and substitute for it trade in other produce progressively resulted in British involvement in the internal affairs of the Nigerian area.

Direct British intrusion started in Lagos in 1851 when military might was deployed to depose Kosoko, the reigning King, who had made no thoughtful energy to stop the ongoing slave trade in the area. The hope was that replacing Kosoko with Akintoye, would bring an end to the slave trade, steady the region for the expansion of 'legitimate' trade for the growth of British interest. A bombardment of Lagos was carried out with the endorsement of the influential Lord Palmerston on the 26th of December 1851, the British Foreign Secretary, which led to the banishment of King Kosoko and his replacement by Akintoye. Akintoye and his successor, Dosunmu, regrettably, failed to usher the stability to the area that the British had hoped for and, in 1861, Lagos was annexed as a British colony under the direct political control of a British governor through the Treaty of Cession signed on 6 August. The colonization of Nigeria had officially begun. The Berlin Conference in 1845 helped to reinforce the British resolve to colonize Nigeria.

The annexation of Lagos in 1861 did not happen as a surprise. It was pre-planned by the British and it was the logical and inevitable consequences of the Lagos bombardment in 1851. Onwubiko (1973) noted that:

The explanation usually given by official British sources for the annexation is that the slave trade was being revived under King Dosunmu and that the actions had become indispensable to complete the suppression of slave trade in order to secure forever the free population of Lagos from the slave traders and kidnappers who oppressed them.

This was of course the usual British strategy of clothing the economic wolf with the dress of the humanitarian lamb. In the words of Asiwaju, (1980: 430); However relevant the slave trade argument, its significance as a factor in the establishment of European colonial rule must be related to considerations of British commercial interest and the associated hostility against the African middlemen in the area.

With the defeat and occupation of Lagos, the British systematically made inroads into the native Yoruba land. The panic of what happened in Lagos and as a result of the sequence

of inter-tribal warfare in Yoruba land in that period, the colonial master had it easy accessing into the Yoruba land. They employed every essential factor including the Liberated Africans and Missionaries to attain their success. As Asiwaju (1980) noted, from 1862 to 1893, virtually every town of the Yoruba land up to Ilorin had succumbed into the protectorate of the British. In the port cities of the Bight of Biafra, the stimulation of anti-slavery and British trading interests was a vital feature of the British rhetoric that brought about colonization. Moreover, at the Berlin Conference in 1885, the European powers tried to resolve their conflicts of interest by designating areas of exploitation in Africa. This gave rise to the creation of the Oil Rivers Protectorate by the British after the consul, Hewett, had navigated the whole coastal region from Calabar into the western delta compelling local rulers, through the influence of his office, to sign treaties of protection. In 1894 the territory was re-designated the Niger Coast Protectorate and was extended to include the region from Calabar to Lagos Colony and Protectorate, comprising the hinterland, and northward up the Niger River as far as Lokoja, the headquarters of the Royal Niger Company.

Though agreements were signed with rulers as far North as Sokoto by 1885, definite British control was limited to the coastal area and the close vicinity of Lokoja till 1900. The Royal Niger Company established by Sir George Goldie, had access to the territory from Lokoja spreading along the Niger and Benue rivers above their confluence, but it lacked effective control, even after punitive missions against Bida and Ilorin in 1897. The pure resolved was to conquer the Sokoto Caliphate, but for that purpose the Royal Niger Company was not considered to be an adequate gadget of imperialism. Thus, on December 31, 1899, Britain dismissed the charter of the company, offering compensation and retention of valued mineral rights. According to Saad Abubakar (1980: 449):

The realization that the Royal Niger Company had failed to keep away other European rivals from the Niger-Benue territory led to the revocation of its charter by the British Government in 1900. Then a Protectorate was declared over the territory claimed by the company and Captain Lugard was appointed its High Commissioner.

In his six-year tenure as high commissioner, Lugard was busy with altering the commercial range of influence inherited from the Royal Niger Company into a worthwhile territorial division under active British political control. His goal was to overcome the entire region and to acquire recognition of the British protectorate by its native rulers, particularly the Fulani emirs of the Sokoto Caliphate. Lugard's promotion systematically quietened local resistance, deploying armed force when diplomatic methods failed. Borno succumbed without a fight, but in 1903 Lugard's RWAFF mounted attacks on Kano and Sokoto. By July 27 1903, the colossal caliphate established by Usman dan Fodio collapsed. The final act in setting the boundaries of the British Protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria was the conquest of Sokoto. With the effective direct seizure and establishment of Northern Protectorate of Nigeria by the colonial government, they decided to bring the two Regions into one umbrella. On 1st of January 1914, the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria and the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria were amalgamated together and named Nigeria, a name coined by Flora Shaw in 1900. Nigeria accordingly fell to Britain more as a product of the "diplomacy of imperialism than a matter of choice for any of the peoples that were to be enclosed within this grid that came to be organized and administered as one territorial unit called Nigeria" (Eleagu: 1988:9).

A process completed by Britain in 1914, imposed on and accepted by Nigerians. The amalgamation signalled Britain's complete and effective control of what is now Nigeria.

This unilateral colonial creation, “the artificial boundaries of the states which emerged upon the European imperial expansion have salient implications for political development in these states” (Elaigwu, 1993:1). Enunciating further, Isawa Elaigwu maintains that: These artificial boundaries created culturally diverse states as they brought together strange ethno-cultural groups into one political territory. The problems of integration arising from these have been amply demonstrated by communal instability and secessionist bid in the Sudan Rwanda, Burundi, Zaire, Ethiopia Zanzibar, Uganda, Nigeria, the Chad and Angola (1).

Ever since this merger, Brown (2013) noted that the polity has been characterized by ethno-religious politics which has being the bane to national unity. In the Nigerian case study, the reconfiguration, formation of political parties, distribution of human and material resources and even crises (coups, civil war, and religious impasse) are hinged on ethno-religious politics. Thus, providing Nigeria with a chequered history - with political transitions from civilian to military, military to military, military to civilian and civilian to civilian; through a democratic, authoritarian, a combination of both or an innovation of a process too unique to be described only in action by its proponents – the political elites. While the world celebrates the centenary anniversary (1914-2014) of Africa’s most populous country, this country’s political history is being examined with particular interest on the political system since the first republic.

## **2. Relevant Theories to the Study of Nigerian Politics**

The state is central to any analysis of politics in Nigeria. Indeed, there is virtually no subject that one considers in Nigeria devoid of stressing the role of the state (Osaghae 1988:298). This is because the state while it leads, it also symbolises the Nigeria society. One central fact to note from the beginning is that the Nigerian state, as noted previously, is an invention of colonialism. It is therefore not a wonder that many theorists of Nigerian politics locate the problem of Nigerian political system to the sin of colonial rule (Ekeh 1975, 1985; Osaghae 1988).

Among the theories of Nigerian politics that has assisted in the appreciation of Nigeria’s political system, include theory of two publics advanced by Peter Eke, Prebendalism promoted by Richard Joseph and Gurnal Myrdal’s soft state thesis. Others have expressed Africa as a rentier, Patrimonial and Neo-patrimonial state. These theories are reliable not only in the understanding of the state and its dilemmas in the African countries but also in providing significant clarifications for the ills ravaging Nigerian political system. In *Colonialism and the two Publics in Africa: A theoretical Statement*”, P.P. Ekeh contended that colonialism in Africa produced two publics reflecting the West. These two publics, private and public, are only alike with the West conceptually and ideally. This is hinged on how they interpret politics. It is the understanding of what the public is that developed to the problems of politics in Nigeria. Ekeh (1975, 1985) contended that one of the most salient effects of colonialism was the appearance of two public realms, the primordial and civic public realms which, connected inversely with the private realm in terms of morality. Ekeh categorised primordial as private and associated civic with colonial administration which is not private. Even though these two are different, politicians manoeuvre both in primordial and civic publics.

The use of colonialism by Ekeh in shaping of Nigerian politicians led him to describe the two publics in terms of native sector and westernize sector. The native became a primordial. In this one, morality is extremely held. The westernized became the civic public where morality is not extremely considered. It was an amoral public realm in which cheating the system was considered a patriotic duty (Ifidon 1996:102). As Ekeh noted, the primordial public has no economic benefit. It is only used to secure respect and security while the civic public is for economic attainment and one is not obliged to give back. Thus, morality is lowly regarded. The result is that as the same actors operate in the two realms, the state apparatus is employed to fatten the nest of the primordial public, thereby making corruption, nepotism and ethnicity to mention a few the hallmark of the civic public (Osaghae 1988: 303). In Ekeh's example of Nigeria, educated Nigerians are members of the two publics. His submission is that educated Nigerians use civic public to earn financially in such a way that they satisfy their communities. This action helps them stimulate their primordial public. Thus, it is valid to be corrupt in order for one to reinforce the primordial public. One thing, Lino (2015) discovers interesting is Ekeh's assessment of the amount of work Nigerian politicians put into the two publics. They work hard to stimulate their primordial public and less on their civic public. This loyalty to primordial public is impeding Nigerian politics.

Most scholars are unlikely to contradict Richard Joseph's linking of the ills of the political system and for instance, the fall of the Nigerian Second Republic to the prebendalisation of state power. Joseph, in what appear to be a re-characterization of Ekeh's theory, holds that "The politics of competition over allocation of resources, or what in Nigeria is called 'the national cake', has its most grim imports, transforming the offices of the state into prebends..." The theory of prebendalism contend that state offices are viewed as prebends that can be appropriated by office holders. These individual use state resources to generate material profits for themselves, their constituents and ethnic groups. Indeed, prebendalism has developed into the overriding and defining features of the Nigerian State and her politics (Ugwuami and Nwokedi, 2015). Undeniably, the political and social behaviours that have continued to direct Nigerian polity and politics from independence is the prebendal inclinations among the politicians (Linus, 2006; Mala, 2010) Nigerians, fundamentally as noted by Joseph, (1987) view political offices as prebends and thus strive or contest for them for prebendal purposes. In truth, most Nigerians that compete to hold political office are not driven by true devotion to serve the nation, rather are motivated by greed and uncontrolled impulse to loot in order to boost their narrow selfish interests. Ogundiya (2010) validates this as he declares that Nigeria's brand of politicking is fundamentally a prebendal enterprise involved in, mostly, for the simple appropriation of national resources. Nigerians believe intensely that their political offices permit them to unrestrained and unbridled access to the funds of the state with which they can loot not only to fulfil their material cravings but also to service the desires or needs of their kin groups. Joseph (1987) submits that prebendalism is very much widely spread in Nigeria and looks to have become the established political culture. Truly, as Egbo (2003) notes too greed, primitive acquisition and unending propensity to amass wealth have become a dominant aspect of the mental process of the average political office holder in Nigeria. In the context of prebendalism as it seen in Nigeria, political office holders grant contracts for white elephant projects and absolute disregard of due process, approve furniture and travel allowances for themselves, purchase fantastic car, make huge returns to political godfathers or mentors from public purse, budget huge sums of money on security votes

for which account is not rendered, inflate contract sums, employ and payroll ghost workers, corrupt electoral processes, and procedure to guarantee victory at polls, divert workers' salaries, sell government property fraudulently, spend reasonable time considering motions and passing bills presumably intended to enrich their selfish corporate benefit at the expense of the communal interest etc (Ugwuani and Nwokedi, 2015).

Clientelism and prebendalism may be mutually reinforcing. However, these conceptions have distinct meanings. Clientelism describes the nature of individual and group relationships within the wider social and political space, however, prebendalism are fundamentally a function of the struggle for, and appropriation of the offices of the state (Seteolu 2005). "Clientelism helps to comprehend the contrivance of how class control validates the skewed distribution of resources among social groups and enriches the prominence of the political elite" (Seteolu 2005: 36). Thus, Nigerian political culture is based on clientelism and prebendal politics which further improve our understanding of the pervasiveness of political corruption. The quest of politics is planned to appropriate the political space and resources among elements of the political elite (Post and Vickers cited in Seteolu 2005:36).

During the 1998 – 1999 transition, after the passing of General Sani Abacha in 1998, political entrepreneurs involving ex-military officers and their civilian business associates successfully snatched control of the Nigeria political scene and have dominated it as an enterprise (Silas, 2013). While retired military officers have participated in Nigeria's politics since the second Republic in the 1980's, the fifteen (15) years of military tyranny from 1984 – 1999 reduced and ruined nearly every independent sector or institution in Nigeria, including the trade unions, the ivory tower and the private sector, precisely the military regimes led by General Ibrahim Babangida (1985 – 1993), Sani Abacha (1993 – 1998) and Abdulsalami Abubakar (1998 – 1999). These regimes were generally observed as the most corrupt and autocratic in all Nigeria's military history. Under these military regimes, Nigeria, was regularly labelled by scholars of African political economy as a prebendal or patrimonial state (Joseph 1991:193-200). Public office and government patronage developed into the only game in town (Lewis 1996: 79-103). Retiring military personnel deployed the enormous fortune made from the proceeds of grand corruption to building and financing the political links that formed the cores of numerous of the political associations that pursued registration as political parties. The 1999 electoral campaign which brought the administration led by President Olusegun Obasanjo to power in May 1999 was mostly financed by the former military officers cum political entrepreneurs. Using their enormous financial resources, they were able to install ex-military officers and their civilian business cronies in control of the largest political parties and in high federal and state public offices (Silas, 2013).

The Nigerian state also has a patrimonial and neo-patrimonial character. Patrimonialism means that the peculiarities between the public and the private realms have become unclear and power, which has become a key source of wealth, has become personalized. Patrimonialism was advanced by Max Weber to define a system of personal rule in which the ruler allots offices and benefits to subordinates in return for loyalty, support and services (Weber, 1968:1031). It is a political system in which 'elected officers' of the state use their offices for personal benefits and those of their supporters (Theobald, 1982: 248).

Within this context of analysis, the conduct of political elite in Nigeria is connected to traditional value system. The patriarchal nature of the Nigerian society leads to personalization of political power, and leadership is enduring in the context of self-recruited oligarchy (Seteolu 2005). According to Seteolu,

These socially imbibed values are replicated in the political terrain where contending coalitions accumulate resources to offset side payments required to retain or expand followership in the context of power politics. The fierce struggle in the public space is linked to conflicts that characterize leadership succession in traditional political systems and the attractions of political control where party politics guarantee access to wealth and economic power.

Consequently, the political elite employ social characteristics such as ethnicity for parochial motive. The ethnic uniqueness becomes a rallying tool to access political power, consolidate authority and economic supremacy (Dudley 1973; Osaghae 1995). Accordingly, it is possible for power to be used for personal or group aggrandizements. In patrimonial societies, corruption seems to be intrinsically part and parcel of the political culture. It is used to describe patrons using state resources in order to secure the loyalty of clients in the general population, and is indicative of informal patron-client relationships that can reach from the very high up in state structures down to individuals in the lower levels (like in the small villages).

A related term to prebendalism is neo-patrimonialism. It is a new form of Patrimonialism and use to define and describe state failures in Africa. The general interests of patron and the client are served in neo-patrimonialism (Omotuyi, 2016). The electoral democracy in Nigeria has further extended the range and dimension of neo-patrimonialism. Access to political power like every developing country, guarantees wealth and luxury in an environment of utter poverty. Accordingly, from the start, elections were perceived by power holders as excessively essential to permit them to function correctly (Kew: 2010). Political power in a neo-patrimonial system is not held on behalf of the people in trust, but on behalf of the power merchants commonly in local as 'God fathers in local parlance. Political godfathers are a strategic benefit and significant in mustering both financial resources and thuggery in aid of their clients (voted representatives) for winning elections. It is unsure to proclaim that neo-patrimonial network is a construction of the military government or a modern political development. Power is concentrated and personalised in these regimes. Leaders have wide discretion over virtually all facets of public life including democratic elections, which are either downright rigged or whose results are determined by inducing the electorates. Intermittently, we can see changes in voting behaviour and patterns, as we saw during the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria (Okeke, Nnamani and Johnpaul, 2018). Thus, neo-patrimonialism, clientelism and prebendalism create same significance in any political system where they flourish. The personal entitlements of rulers supersede the rule of law and associations in Nigeria and this results to weak and unstable institutions. In addition to other idiosyncrasies of military rule there are excessive propensities for neo-patrimonialism, clientelism and prebendalism to degenerate under it.

Gurnal Myrdal soft state thesis has also been used to understand Nigeria's political system. In Gurnal Myrdal's soft state thesis, propounded in the light of the Asian experience, we come to grips with the paradox of the post-colonial state and its predicaments, most especially as it relates to the challenge of Nigeria's political system. Myrdal argued that



at its base, softness refers to a condition in which civil society is weakly developed and state institutions lack autonomy (Myrdal, 1968) and 'the soft state is marked by corruption, racketeering, bribery, black market, arbitrariness, and political expediency in the enforcement of laws, and the abuse of power' (William, 2015). Goldthorpe (1996) went further to argue that 'the soft state and corruption were linked in turn with an elitist conspiracy in which ... higher officials, legislators ... acted together to hinder reforms, manipulate them in their favours and obstruct their implementation'. Soft states are characterised by citizens who have a weak or a diffuse sense of national interest and who do not have a commitment to public service (Mbaku, 2010). Mbaku argues that corruption persists in 'soft states' like Nigeria as a result of the 'inability or failure to ... secure, efficient, professional and "modern" bureaucracies with competent, well -trained, honest and highly skilled civil servants' (Mbaku, 2010). To this end, Kandeh submits that 'the failure of those who wield state power is a failure to promote the development of their societies and articulate a vision for the future is a failure to optimise the ruling class functionality of their states ... it is precisely this narrow, immediate formative, preoccupation of the state bourgeoisie that deprives the soft state of any real reproductive dominant class functionality' (Kandeh, 1992).

A soft state whether democratic or undemocratic is bedeviled with the inability to institute reforms or enforce social discipline (Ogundiya, 2009). Rather than working towards constructive change, the Nigerian state has shown that it is unable to fulfil the expectation attendant upon participation. Performance has been severely reduced as the resource base of the state has shrunk dramatically. Because there are serious doubts about the effectiveness and efficiency of the state power apparatus, its ability to control production and exchange, its relationship with the world economy, and the concentration of power that it can actually maintain, the state is unable to command, in many instances, even a modicum of legitimacy (Sangmpam, 1993). The outcome of this decline in state capabilities is the disengagement of citizens from the state as they form autonomous groups and survival mechanisms that compete with the state, including suffer-manage (an array of activities aimed to adapt to a declining standard of living); escape via exile, labour migration, and brain drain; parallel systems (such as the black market); and self-enclosure (that is, moving back from export to subsistence crops and from urban to rural habitation) (Chazan 1982, 3-15; Azarya and Chazan 1987, 109-29; Chazan and Rothchild 1988).

In many cases, Max Weber's notion of patrimonialism buttresses the literature on the soft state (Callaghy 1984; Sandbrook 1985). The patrimonial character of Babangida's rule has been the basis of state decay. This decay has been characterized by the state's declining capacity to rule or to maintain the conditions for the operation of its eroding productive infrastructures. Three areas of decline are specified: 1) the increasing inability of the state to relate national means to policy ends, as seen in the inefficiency of public administration, security forces, economic policies, and so forth; 2) the shrinkage in credibility expressed by "a loss of belief by the citizenry in the capacity of the state to perform its accustomed functions"; and 3) the decline in probity, manifest in the systematization of corruption. The response of society to the decline of the state's capabilities has been withdrawal into survival activities, of which parallel markets are the most noticeable (Young and Turner 1985; Chazan and Rothchild 1988).



### 3. Critique of Theories of Nigerian Politics

#### *Ekeh's Theory of Two publics*

Ekeh wrote about events that occurred prior to independence when the primordial public still preserve strong moral standards, post-colonial Nigeria looks to have been tangled in a grim breakdown of values owing to social and political changes after independence. As Olurode (2005) argues: "Social change is part of human existence. Where social change takes place slowly or on the fringes of the society, it may be unnoticed or unproblematic but where it is rapid or occurs at the core, it becomes noticeable. Every society must admit social change as a fact of life, but where this is destructive of established social pattern of behaviour, the change process becomes a source of concern..." (p.1).

Frazier (1957) notes that since the "culture "contact" with Europeans, a lot has passed undetected about changes in African. Nigeria's political and social background has experienced significant changes from military rule, state creation, civil service reforms, local government reforms, the decisive effect of money in politics and so on since Ekeh wrote the thesis more than 4 decades ago, have their varying effects on erosion of the value system. Onoja has claimed that an academic paper written in 1975 cannot stay valid in all its claims presently. For Onuoha (2014). Ekeh's binary – the civic and the primordial public- has even shrunk under the weight of Nigerian capitalism. For him, the moral firmness in the primordial public has similarly endured the same fate as in civic republic.

Onuoha (2014) noted that fundamental changes have occurred in Nigeria since Ekeh wrote in 1975, which render his study no longer adequate in an attempt to engage in critical discourse of African studies, in particular in analysing Nigerian society. The changes in Nigeria emerged from the following socio-economic, political and historical processes: military intervention in Nigerian politics, 1966–1999; the Nigerian civil war 1967– 1970; and the exploitation of mineral oil in large commercial quantity (oil boom in Nigeria from 1970 to present). The blend of these three critical agents has brought about equal if not more important social change in Nigeria than colonialism, precisely since the end of the civil war in 1970. The 1967 Nigerian civil war which ended in 1970 brought about major social change. In any history of society, the moral and decline resulting from any war are as follows: internal migration and displacements, mass movement, anomie, social mayhem, collapse of law and order, moral decay, armed robbery, impunity by military men, loss of breadwinners, famine and hunger, poverty and diseases, the creation of widows and orphans, prostitution and the contests of de-mobilised military service men. All these erode the moral fabric of the society.

The military ruled Nigeria for 28 years (1966–1979 and 1984–1999). The impact of the abnormality of military rule on Nigerian politics sapped the use of "two publics" for inquiry particularly from 1975 when General Yakubu Gowon was ousted. By 1975, the destructive impressions of the military on the society were unquestionably becoming manifest (Panter-Brick 1978; Adekanye 1999). The military had come to be marked by corruption, impunity, waste, contempt for rule of law and the military even lacks the capacity to govern (Onuoha and Fadakinte, 2002). The damaging values of the military, particularly the culture of lawlessness and impunity, started to infiltrate the primordial public as well, fairly because of the military's authoritarian rule. The military indulged itself in traditional institutions, removing and installing traditional rulers. It made use of some sections of the primordial institutions against others; a system of "divide and rule" politics in the local communities

in several areas of Nigeria. Also, the military employed financial bait and other patronages to support certain individuals against others; chunk of these stimulated corruption and amorality in the primordial public. Besides, certain members of traditional institutions went requesting for government appointments and other benefits either for themselves or for members of their families. This end result is that members of the traditional institutions had to compromise in one form or another. These also impacted values of the primordial public under the guardianship of the traditional institutions.

Oil boom for Nigeria just after the civil war in 1970 improved excessively the oil revenue accruing to her. Government's failure to manage the enormous resources led to unique waste and corruption, and to a form of what Onuoha (2014) labeled "oil psychology" which swayed values, norms, and attitudes, not only of the rulers but also of the people. "Oil psychology" was linked with profligacy, absurdity, primitive accumulation and unparalleled corruption in all divisions of government. It led to uncommon mishandling of government affairs, bloated government which consequently brought about inefficiency and ineffectiveness, and consequently poverty in the midst of plenty. The fundamental corruption in the mishandling of oil resources corroded values both at the civil and primordial public, and so released social and moral decay. A blend of the three socio-historical events, military in politics, Nigerian civil war and "oil boom," changed the Nigerian society in a way that damaged both the pre-colonial Nigerian (African) social and traditional code, as well as the colonial forced "civilising" values selected from colonial law and order, political responsibility and other methods of civic responsibility.

#### ***Joseph's Prebendalism***

In a notable critique of the concept of prebendalism, Iweriebor (1997: 70- 71) denounces Joseph's (1991) viewpoint, contending that it does not essentially vary from the established Western approaches to the study of African (Nigerian) social processes. Prebendalism, in the first place, as a concept is derived from the sale and purchase of offices in feudal Europe, and it is, thus, a historically foreign conception whose application to African (Nigeria) politics is an academic imposition. Iweriebor similarly notes that the intellectually and historically apt places to seek the exercise of prebendal politics are the Western industrial successor states of feudal Europe. Moreover, Iweriebor argues that there is nothing exclusively African or Nigerian about the struggle for and use of political office for the improvement of personal and ethnic, business or military interests. Certainly, what Joseph (1991) defines as prebendalism, and seeks to describe as uniquely Nigerian and African, is likewise a custom in American politics as American politicians use their positions to promote their own interests and those of their districts, clients and sponsors.

#### ***Patrimonialism***

Patrimonialism have been respectively and relentlessly condemned by scholars and analysts alike because of its harmful impact on good governance but not many have tried a causal examination into the phenomenon and the influences nourishing it regardless of its sinking effect on peace, political security and the development of the nation (Olaiya, 2015). The researches that have been done, specifically on the occurrence in Oyo-State (Ibadan) and Anambra States, have paid substantial attention to the principal figures involved and the influence on the society without equal consideration to the variables that sustain it. Though the questions that constitute bothers for consolidation are many, the

subjects of godfatherism, violence and political insecurity have been obvious in the Nigerian state since the beginning of the Fourth Republic, (Omobowale and Olutayo, 2007) particularly in Ibadan, the socio-economic and political centre of Oyo state. Therefore, the need to attempt a conceptual clarification for the concept as practiced by late Chief Lamidi Adedibu, the acclaimed godfather of Oyo-State politics (Simbine, 2004).

### ***Neo-patrimonialism***

The application of the theory of neo-patrimonialism in Nigerian affairs has been criticised for its cycle of doom embedded in the theoretical perpetuation of the Nigeria and by extension, Africa, in eternal servitude (Olukoshi, 2005).

The theory adopts a unilinear logic that compares the actual functioning of Nigerian state with a western-style rational-legal state, either in the form of its Weberian ideal-type or European experience. The neo-patrimonial approach views the Weberian ideal type, in which individuals access the public sector on the basis of meritocracy and impersonalisation and there is a clear dividing line between public and private spheres, as the only possible intellectual basis for a state. In doing so, it denies the opportunity to re-examine the Nigerian state forms from any other perspective than that provided by mainstream development discourse. Further, much literature concludes that, because many Nigerian state does not conform to this ideal type or to the legal frameworks bequeathed to them by colonialism, it must be deficient.

The notion that Nigerian (African) culture and pre-colonial history are dominant influences over contemporary behaviour has also led to the criticism of the neo-patrimonial theory. The contemporary Nigerian state is not largely conditioned by pre-colonial experience. The colonial period and process of decolonisation were critical ruptures in the history of the Nigerian state and have conditioned her contemporary character. These processes created a path dependence that has seen patterns that emerged during colonialism endure and intensify in the independence era. Other post-colonial phenomena, notably the oil boom, structural adjustment and military rule, have further contributed to contemporary. Furthermore, the neo-patrimonial paradigm fails to understand the importance of local morality because of its attention on the political system rather than the actors who make up the system. At the core of the engagements of Nigerians in relation to their state is morality. The awareness these actions, necessitates analysis of the ethical decisions sustaining them. These choices are based on a number of concerns: whether the perpetrator is an 'typical' member of society trying to eke a living or from the elite; whether the individual is looking to assist a member of their community, kin or other network or is looking for financial gain; linked to the previous dichotomy, whether the proceeds of the corruption are divided with the community or client group or kept for oneself; and finally, whether the person stands to profit or lost out from the action.

### ***Soft State Theory***

The "soft state theory" is not without critics. For example, the theory fails to embrace a detailed comparison between Nigeria (Africa) and other third world states as a major weakness (Sangmpam, 1993). The theory focuses on the decline or softness of the state in Nigeria, and that Nigeria shares most of its socio-economic features with other Third World countries that are not characterized by the softness of their states, and concludes that the theoretical issue of the state is the underlying pitfall of the soft state paradigm (Sangmpam, 1993). In his criticism of the "soft state", Fatton (1989) points out that the thesis is mistaken because it refutes the reality of an authoritarian, interventionist, and

class-based state. Fatton (1992) also insists that the state is never soft; it is always an organ of dominance; to characterise the state as being soft is to miss class relationships and class struggles. Besides, other scholars have also opined that the challenge inherent in Nigeria political system has moved from prebendalism to predation in which office holders and public officials try to repay their supporters, family members, cronies and ethnic group members with sums of money, contracts and jobs (Lewis, 1996).

#### **4. Conclusion**

In essence, this paper adopted an eclectic framework. It integrates insightful explanations of the impacts of the colonial beginning of Nigeria, leadership failure across the civil-military political cycles, the politicisation of ethnicity, the exploitation of the dark sides of governmental powers by people entrusted with the performance of the simple functions of government and fickle followership. The paper also centres on the influence of certain cultural components, chiefly in the traditional patrimonial system and on the manipulation of the culture of gift giving among virtually all ethnic and tribal groups in Nigeria. This framework also stresses the innate risks in the possible trivialisation of 'amala' politics or politics of the belly or politics of stomach infrastructure. There prominent deceased Nigerians are famous for this. Alhaji Lamidi Adedibu and Dr Abubakar Olusola Saraki are believed to have used the bat of feeding their supporters to win votes. Oyo state was where Adedibu held sway and he was denoted as the strongman of Ibadan politics and advocate of 'Amala' politics. Saraki was the strongman of Kwara politics. These two comrades were kingmakers in their own rights. They played significant roles in the emergence of governors and other political office holders in Oyo and Kwara states respectively. Their conduct of feeding the hungry, enabled them to buy unflinching allegiance and use their influence to win elections for their disciples. Following Adedibu's death in 2008, many people wept and groaned for many days which in the estimation of Agosu, (2014) was not due to the love they had for him but because free food would no longer be available for them after his death. Also, several people have lost their lives while many others suffered injuries two different times at late Saraki's home in Kwara State, in a stampede that followed when they attempted to collect their portion of free food given out during Salah celebrations. Former Nigeria's military ruler, Ibrahim Babangida, understood this awareness of stomach infrastructure remarkably. He is famed for his generosity and people skills qualities which kept him significant in Nigeria's power play. The electorates perceive stomach infrastructure not essentially as an act of help or food security as asserted by the candidates as the only mode they can get a share of national cake and make contenders squeeze out perks and rewards if they need to win elections.

Many Nigerians maintain that there is nothing immoral with it, as in the eye of the constitution, it is not a crime. In the 2014 Ekiti state governorship election, ex-Governor Ayodele Fayose was elected to the office he first occupied in 2003. Fayose seemed to revitalise and embrace the populist agenda of the late Adegoke Adelabu and Lamidi Adedibu, both indigenes of Ibadan, Oyo State. While the polite personal qualities of the then incumbent, Kayode Fayemi, and the better-than-average performance of his administration in respect of road and the physical infrastructural development in addition to some social security services were viewed as adequate for his re-election in some quarters, numerous other dynamics possibly accounted for his loss. Some of these were the stated unreachability of Fayemi to a big section of the downtrodden people, and his cat-and-mouse relationship with the State's Workers' Union and a few other important

socio-political groups. Clearly, this was an influence in favour of Ayo Fayose, whose populist plan fundamentally accommodated the direct needs and desires of local artisans, drivers, labourers and other classes of transporters, as well as public servants in the lower cadre. All these groups formed the majority of the voters in a rural state of Ekiti. To Adindu (2014), the philosophy of Ekiti people is that Fayemi improved physical infrastructure at the disadvantage of stomach infrastructure. He was assured that he accomplished and delivered his promises of providing dividends of democracy. However, the people differed because they could appreciate the huge infrastructure when their stomachs were writhing with hunger pangs. It is about appreciating the bottom-top, gradual methodologies in developmental progresses. Such politics were promoted in Ekiti State in the 2014 gubernatorial election, and seem to have enjoyed extensive acceptability within a year. Adedayo (2015), advances that this kind of politics is termed in some quarters as jejune, un-intellectual and basic. Given voting pattern in the 2014 gubernatorial elections, the Ekiti people appear to state it is what they desire.

Nearly all the elections that have been organised in the country, regardless of the level, were won and lost due to stomach infrastructure. For example, the generally celebrated presidential election success of Moshood Abiola of the Social Democratic Party in 1993 was won through stomach infrastructure. M.K.O Abiola gained the love of Nigerians and massively harvest their votes, not because of the policies he pledged to initiate and put in place when elected into office, but because of his large-heartedness which charmed the masses. The people needed it since he was once in like them. Abiola went around the nation campaigning and distributing bags of branded rice and other foods to cheer Nigerians (Abegunrin, 2006). Nigerians were enthralled by his seemingly bottomless pockets that he was ever keen to liberally dish out the goodies that streamed to the long-suffering and economically deprived plebeians (George, 2014).

Another framework that could also be used to explain the nature of Nigeria's political system is state captured. State captured could best explain the continue importance of James Ibori, the former governor of Delta State, in spite of his conviction for corruptly enriching himself while serving as governor of the state. Ibori, who ruled the state from May 29, 1999 to May 29, 2007, is seen as the political godfather of the state. As such, whatever he says, politicians in the state have never turned down his advice. For all the days he was in jail, he was the one actually making certain political decisions for the state and his decisions have never been rebuffed. That he has vowed to remain in politics until he dies as conveyed in the interview with Reuters correspondent, attests to the fact that Ibori might have been knocked down by virtue of his long prison sojourn, but he is not out, because his spirit is not broken or his enthusiasm for politics dampened. In fact, as a demonstration of their solidarity towards Ibori, his legion of supporters nationwide, who believe that Ibori is a victim of political machinations, regard the period he spent in the penitentiary as a learning experience in the university of life.

The excessive centralisation of power, authoritarianism, and the pervasiveness of patronage and rent-seeking cultures have developed a political or ruling class. Oil resources have given this class the incentive to control the state apparatus (and thus the income), and the means to retain control of the state. The main beneficiaries, and thus the main constituent components of the oil-rich elite, are the "big men" (the inner circle of the ruling elite), the military and state governors (Amundsen, 2012). It is true that politics is primarily about being in the position to influence the state's answers to resource

allocation questions. As governor of Delta State, Ibori used the state agencies as personal businesses that did not even have to deal with the market system and turn a profit, while creating millionaires and billionaires. Again, the promulgated of Nigeria's Land Use Act 1978, as a decree by the then military government is still in use today. The Act vests every land in all Nigerian states in the Governor of that state. Nigeria handed over control of this most significant economic resource through the instrument of the Land Use Act to anybody that could attain the office of governor of a state. The influences of the governor over land are practically unrestricted. Any exchange of land among citizens can only be completed with the approval of the Governor. A Governor allocate land to himself or his family members and close business associates as there are no clear rules against that. Corruption is punishable but abuse of power is not (Abah, 2019).

Thus, state capture in this sense is very physical in nature. For anyone that is able to attain the position of a Governor, it affords access to direct affluence and control over the financial lives of every citizen. The military basically subjugated property rights over land to the barrel of the gun with the Land Use Act. Given the nature of land, any disposition of ownership brings economic gain to the land owner. In turn, economic power offers access to political owner (Abah, 2019). The appropriation of wealth that follows from this control over landed property can be preserved for generations, particularly when the legal system is ineffectual and the judiciary is inadequately independent to restrain state predation (Besley, 2006).

It is therefore not a surprise that all politicians who have emerged in almost all the major positions, had consulted him even in jail and his decisions have always prevailed on the parties concerned in the race. The major political players have always bowed to his decisions. Hence, he is a demigod to the politicians and those at the corridor of power. From the emergence of former governor Emmanuel Uduaghan to the present governor Ifeanyi Okowa, Ibori has been at the centre of decision making. In the run up to the 2015 general elections, almost all the governorship contestants paid visit to Ibori while he was in London prison. Their visit was to seek his political blessings with the belief that anybody he anointed would eventually be accepted as governor by the power players. State capture theory can also be used to explain the continuous influence of Bola Ahmed Tinubu, who was the Governor of Lagos State, Nigeria's richest state in GDP terms, from 1999 to 2007. Since he left office, Tinubu has turn out to the sole kingmaker in Lagos, with the apparent exclusive power to define who becomes Governor and who doesn't, representatives of Lagos State in the National Assembly and who is appointed into public office in Lagos State, as well as the Governor's cabinet (Abah, 2019). He similarly relishes the complete loyalty of the State House of Assembly, given that he handpicked every member of the house, which grants him the authority to simplify the impeachment of any Lagos Governor if and when he desires to.

Tinubu once stated that he was personally richer than a neighbouring state of 3.4 million people with a GDP of \$7.28 billion. Using his total power over Lagos politics and his stunning wealth, Tinubu has kept succeeding Lagos Governors on a very tight restraint. He was even tough enough to decide that the then incumbent Governor of Lagos State, Akinwunmi Ambode, would not seek a second term in office in 2019, on the ground that he "departed from the masterplan" that he, Tinubu, created for the state. The initial resistance of Ambode came to nothing, facing instant impeachment, he yielded in and surrendered the party's governorship's ticket for 2019 to Tinubu's preferred candidate, Babajide Sanwolu, the current governor of the state. Tinubu influences who represent

Lagos State at the National Assembly at federal level. Regardless of some murmurings, he was able to get the voters in Lagos to vote in his wife, Oluremi, as one of Lagos State's Senators at the national level. Having seized Lagos State, Tinubu's power spreads to all the 6 states in south-western Nigeria, therefore his notable role in the elections of Osun state during which he utters the assertion about being richer than the state.

Outside the southwest, Tinubu's coalition became the All-Progressives Congress. The party was able to seize power from the People's Democratic Party which had been in control at the national level in Nigeria for 16 years. He fruitfully plotted the conditions that led to the then President, Goodluck Jonathan, losing at the elections in 2015. It is the first time that a sitting President and ruling party would lose power at the national level in the country. Lagos as the commercial capital of Nigeria, generates 55% of Nigeria's Value Added Tax. The main sea ports in Nigeria are located in Lagos. While sea ports are constitutionally the sphere of the Federal government, the essential economic action that accommodating them produces is however significant. Practically, all Nigerian banks are headquartered in Lagos and following the Niger Delta crisis in the early 2000s, the oil industry moved most of its headquarters to Lagos. It is also Nigeria's core industrial and manufacturing centre. What all these indicate is that there are excellent openings for the Lagos State Government to gather taxes. Identifying this opportunity, Tinubu selected Alpha Beta Consulting as revenue consultants for Lagos State. A former Chief Executive of the company, now a whistle-blower, said that the company collects 10% of all revenue accruing to Lagos State and has been doing so since 1999. According to Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics, Lagos generated revenues of N334 billion in 2017, more than \$1 billion using official exchange rates. 10% of that is \$100 million in 2017 alone. Alpha Beta Consulting has been Lagos State's revenue consultants for 19 consecutive years. The influence of Alpha Beta Consulting is so pervasive in Lagos (Abah, 2019)

By using control over states' land for an 8-year period, continuous control over the politics of the states (both Executive and Legislature), control over 'jobs for the boys' and a refined patronage system, and ostensibly recycling the state, Bola Ahmed Tinubu just like Ibori, was able to step out of office into real power. Their ability to do so stem primarily from having been Governor of Lagos State and Delta State respectively and using the legitimate powers and institutions attached to that status.

In conclusion, it is not improper to x-ray Nigeria's political system through the prisms of prebendalism, clientelism, patrimonialism, neopatrimonialism, soft state thesis and the theory of two publics. However, the point of departure is the argument that all these theories, on their own, have failed to capture the present reality of politics such as amala politics of Adedibu, the continued popularity of James Ibori in Delta politics despite conviction for wanton corruption in Nigeria.

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