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## The King's Men and His Kinsmen

### *Interrogating the Politics of Ethno-Clannish Patronage under Buhari's Civilian Administration in Nigeria*

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**ABSTRACT** Politics of patronage based on primordial identity is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria. The impact of such patterns of politicking has been obviously untoward. This study interrogates the apparent manifestation of ethno-clannish patronage in the politics of political appointments under Muhammadu Buhari's civilian administration (2015-date). Relying on a descriptive analysis of secondary data, as well as a selective application of prebendal theory, the study observes that members of Buhari's ethno-communal grouping tend to have been favored rather disproportionately in terms of the allotment of political appointments at the federal level. The study posits that such an ethno-clannish posture smacks of the politics of exclusion, which negates the spirit of national integration. The study further contends that not only had President Buhari favored his kinsmen and tribesmen in his appointments, but he has also appointed many of his family relations into strategic positions, thus entrenching nepotism in the process of statecraft. The study submits that such an approach to statecraft holds negative implications for good governance and national integration in Nigeria. **KEYWORDS** ethnicity, kinship, nepotism, patronage, prebendalism

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## INTRODUCTION

From the colonial period, through independence to the present era, ethnicity has played, and is still playing, manifest and latent roles in the political life of Nigeria. Okwudiba Nnoli has conceptualized ethnicity as a social phenomenon associated with interactions among members of different ethnic groups, which are social formations distinguished by the communal character of their boundaries.<sup>1</sup> Ethnicity has been one of the most important causes of social crises and political instability in Nigeria.<sup>2</sup> As has been observed by Akindiyo Oladiran, the multiethnic character of Nigeria and the interplay of ethno-communal forces have posed a daunting challenge to the corporate existence and unity of Nigeria as a nation.<sup>3</sup> Ethnic politics and rivalry in Nigeria can be linked to the country's colonial era when the imperial overlords adopted the strategy of "divide and rule" to further colonial penetration and consolidation. In effect, the exigent separatist politics of British imperialists was the bedrock of internecine

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1. Okwudiba Nnoli, *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1978).

2. Onigu Orite, *Ethnic Pluralism and Ethnicity in Nigeria* (Ibadan: Shaneson C.I. Ltd, 1990).

3. Akindiyo Oladiran, "Ethnic Politics and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria," *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 3, no. 12 (2013): 697–704.

ethno-communal conflagrations among the major ethnic groupings in Nigeria, even after independence.<sup>4</sup>

Ethnic politics is manifested in the unbridled support that candidates for elections receive from their ethnic constituencies, irrespective of whether such candidates are credible. In such situations, questions of competence, integrity, trustworthiness, to mention but a few, are not considered as salient as those of subjective identification based on identity politics. After successfully defeating opponents from the other groups, the “sharing of the spoils of politics” comes next, with the members of the successful kin group being unduly favored through such avenues as in budgetary allocations, citing of projects, political appointments, and employment into the public service.

Successive governments in Nigeria since independence, in one way or another, have employed this primordial sentiment in deciding who gets what, when, and how. However, it has never been as pronounced as it appears to be in the present era. In the current administration of President Muhammadu Buhari, ethnic politics tends to have been elevated to the level of a normative practice of national statecraft. Buhari’s North-centric appointments arguably fit into Judy Nadler and Miriam Schulman’s schemata of favoritism, cronyism, and nepotism. For these scholars, favoritism occurs when a person is unduly favored not because he or she is doing the best job, but rather because of extraneous considerations—membership in a favored group, personal likes and dislikes, or other factors.<sup>5</sup> Favoritism can be demonstrated in hiring, honoring, or awarding contracts. A related idea is patronage: giving public service jobs to those who may have helped elect the person who has the power of appointment. Cronyism refers to partiality toward friends and associates when dispensing patronage, while nepotism covers an unduly favorable disposition toward members of the family. To what extent have these concepts described the character of politics of ethno-clannish prebendalism under President Buhari’s administration? This constitutes the focus of this study.

The study contends that members of Muhammadu Buhari’s ethno-religious-kingship circles appear to have been favored disproportionately in terms of appointments into strategic executive political offices at the federal level. Such ethno-clannish posture smacks of politics of exclusion, which negates the spirit of national integration. The study is important against the backdrop of the widespread allegations of unbridled ethnic bias against the government of President Buhari, especially in relation to the distribution of political offices. Playing the “ethnic card” in politics in Nigeria is the major cause of cries of marginalization by those who feel they have been left out of the scheme of things. The consequence of ethno-clannish favoritism has been the rise of sundry sub-nationalist agitations in the country. National integration and cohesion have become the prime casualty of ethnic favoritism in politics, as other groups that have been politically alienated continue to drift away, thereby creating the “we versus them” feeling among the different ethnic nationalities.

4. Adele Adegbamigbi and Charles Uche, “Ethnicity and Ethnic Politics: An Impediment to Political Development in Nigeria,” *Public Administration Research* 4, no. 1 (2015): 59–67.

5. Judy Nadler and Miriam Schulman, “Favoritism, Cronyism, and Nepotism. Markkula Center for Applied Ethics,” 2006, [www.scu.edu/ethics/focus-areas/government-ethics/resources/what-is-government-ethics/favoritism-cronyism-and-nepotism](http://www.scu.edu/ethics/focus-areas/government-ethics/resources/what-is-government-ethics/favoritism-cronyism-and-nepotism). (accessed February 20, 2019).

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: PREBENDALISM

The article adopts the theory of prebendalism as its analytical framework. Prebendalism refers to political systems where state officials use their offices to benefit themselves, their supporters, and members of their ethnic group. According to the theory, state offices can be appropriated by officeholders, who use them to generate material benefits for themselves and their constituents and local support groups.<sup>6</sup> The use of the term in academic discourses in Nigeria can be attributed to Richard Joseph, who, in several works, prominent among which is *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria: The Rise and Fall of the Second Republic*, published in 1987, used the term to describe patron-clientelism or neopatrimonialism in Nigeria. By the term, Joseph denotes a sense of abusive quest for competitive entitlement, which many ethnic or communal groups in Nigeria seek to wield in the context of national distributive politics.

Prebendalism can be perceived from two major perspectives. One, as a situation where political offices are regarded as prebends that can be appropriated by their holders and actually used to generate material benefit for them. Two, as a way of creating political clientele in which people ascend to political offices through the active support of power brokers (political godfathers), and/or ethnic or communal groups who must be rewarded in sundry ways, including abusing the perquisites of such offices. From these two perspectives, prebendalism can be taken to mean the use of political offices for direct selfish personal gains or to indirectly benefit political masters, cultural groups, or other communal groups.<sup>7</sup> It also connotes unbridled favoritism to one's primordial group in the allocation of spoils of office, against other groups who are perceived to have either lost out in the political contest, or did not contribute much to the current government. The idea is to use such allocation of positions to empower one's group. The theory helps explain how the constituent ethnicities of Nigeria's federal society are the bases for the organization, mobilization, and legitimization of power. Curiously, Nigeria's innovative principle of "federal character," according to which the country's ethno-regional diversity must be reflected in all governmental appointments and disbursements, has effectively transformed prebendalism (or the personal, factional, and communal appropriation of public offices) from an informal norm of political competition into a sort of a directive principle of state policy.<sup>8</sup> Prebendalism has weakened the formation and establishment of a viable democratic system of government that is devoid of ethnic suspicion and identity politics in Nigeria.<sup>9</sup> Even the formation of political parties is not bereft of identity politics.

The theory enlightens our understanding of the primordial sentiments that have characterized politics in Nigeria and gives us insight into the nature and character of

6. Richard Joseph, "Nigeria: Inside the Dismal Tunne," *Current History* 95, no. 601 (1996): 193–200.

7. Batholomew Ugwuanyi and Ralph Nwokedi, "Prebendalism as the Albatross to Democratic Practice and National Development in Nigeria. A Critical Discourse," *Journal of Policy and Development Studies* 9, no. 4 (2015): 18–31.

8. Rotimi Suberu, "Prebendal Politics and Federal Governance in Nigeria," in *Democracy and Prebendalism in Nigeria: Critical Interpretation*, ed. Wale Adebawo and Ebenezer Obadare (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

9. John Ojo, "Prebendalism, Socio-Linguistic and Ethnic Politics: The Bane of Nigerian Democracy," *International Journal of Politics and Good Governance* 5, no. 5.1 (2014): 1–21.

rivalry and suspicion existing between and among different ethnic groups in Nigeria. Core to the political and social behaviors that have continued to dominate Nigerian political history since independence are the prebendal tendencies among the politicians.<sup>10</sup> More specifically, prebendal theory explains the skewed complexion of President Buhari's political appointments since assuming office, as strategic positions in government tend to have been largely reserved for his kinsmen.

As observed by Joseph, Nigerians basically treat political offices as prebends and, therefore, seek or compete for them for self-aggrandizement.<sup>11</sup> I. Ogunديya, cited in Bartholomew I. Ugwuanyi and Ralph C. Nwokedi, posits that Nigeria's brand of politicking is essentially a prebendal enterprise largely engaged in for the crude appropriation of national resources.<sup>12</sup> In fact, Nigerians believe strongly that their political offices entitle them to unlimited and unbridled access to the resources of the state, of which they can plunder not only to satisfy their material desires but also to service the needs or greed of their kin groups. The most effective way to achieve this is by ensuring that the most strategic and lucrative positions in government are occupied by members of one's kin group.

In her general characterization of patronage and the benefactor-patron relationship, Carolyn Osiek has identified three types of reciprocity, viz: (a) generalized reciprocity, in which the interests of the other are primary, with undefined expectations of unspecified reciprocity, usually exercised within kinship groups; (b) balanced reciprocity, in which the mutual interests of both parties are taken into account, with an expectation of fairly even exchange, usually directed at neighbors or those with whom one has shared interests; and (c) negative reciprocity, in which self-interest is dominant (self here including one's kinship group) at the expense of the outside other, thus usually directed at the stranger or enemy.<sup>13</sup> From the nature and character of the appointments made by President Buhari, it is apparent that it was the last type of reciprocity that has guided his actions.

Occupying such strategic positions confers enormous advantage to the kin group. First, it empowers members of such group economically. Second, the trickledown effect of such positions occupied by the kin group also benefits their people. Third, when it comes to employment opportunities, because they already have members of their kin group at the helm of affairs, they stand a better chance of having an upper hand. Fourth, in the citing of amenities and projects, they still have enormous advantage over other ethnic groups since members of their kinship group are the ones who decide who gets what, how, and when.

10. Natuany Linus, *The Frozen Democracy: Godfatherism and Elite Corruption in Nigeria* (Enugu: Triumphant Creations, 2000); Mustapha Mala, "Corruption in Nigeria: Conceptual and Empirical Notes," *Journal of Information, Society and Justice* 3, no. 2 (2010).

11. Richard Joseph, *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria: The Rise and Fall of the Second Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

12. Bartholomew I. Ugwuanyi and Ralph C. Nwokedi, "Prebendalism as the Albatross to Democratic Practice and National Development in Nigeria. A Critical Discourse," *Journal of Policy and Development Studies*, vol. 9, n 4 (2015), 18–31.

13. Carolyn Osiek, "The Politics of Patronage and the Politics of Kinship: The Meeting of the Ways," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 39, no. 3 (2009): 143–52.

## OF KINSHIP AND ETHNICITY: SITUATING POLITICS OF ETHNO-CLANNISH PATRONAGE IN NIGERIA

Though the exact meaning of the term *kinship* is hugely contested as Dwight Read has explained, due to its many connotations, the term is construed as the web of social relationships that form an important element of the lives of most humans in most societies.<sup>14</sup> In its stricter sense, it connotes blood or family relationship, connection by heredity, marriage, or adoption. Broadly, it involves a close connection marked by community of interests or similarity in nature or character; that is, the state of having common characteristics or a common origin. In this case, it equates with ethnicity. Eugene Hammel has posited that kin forms important political groups, and each political actor is a member of a kin group. According to him, kin are the main source of political support and action in societies of human history, and still predominate in many societies. Kinship solidarities give political actors opportunity to consolidate their positions. The larger the kinship solidarity, the more the political actor has greater advantage over his or her competitors.<sup>15</sup>

In Nigeria, kinship politics, or what could be termed ethnic politics, is not a recent phenomenon. It started way back before independence. It was during this period that the seed of ethnic politics was sown, germinated in the First Republic and the products started spreading during the Third and Fourth Republics.<sup>16</sup> The rivalry then, as of now, was among the three dominant ethnic nationalities in the country: the Hausa/Fulani of the north, the Igbo of the eastern part of the country, and the Yoruba of the western part. Ethnic sentiments spawned ethnic nationalists who saw themselves in constant struggle for state power and domination against each other, in order to protect, enhance, and strengthen their political and economic interests, and by extension, those of their kinsmen and regions. Thus, the political class that developed after independence had their allegiance to their regions instead of to the country as a whole. Apart from Nnamdi “Zik” Azikiwe’s National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (later renamed National Council of Nigerian Citizens, NCNC), which initially had a national spread, the other two major parties, the Northern People’s Congress (NPC) led by Ahmadu Bello and the Action Group led by Obafemi Awolowo, were entrenched in the northern and the western regions, respectively. In fact, the NPC never made attempts to recruit membership from outside the North. However, after Azikiwe’s NCNC failed in its bid to win a majority of seats and form a government after the western regional elections of 1951, Zik came back to eastern Nigeria to become the Premier instead of becoming the Leader of Opposition in the Western Region. Thus, NCNC was also forced to become a regional party. Consequently, the seed of ethnic-based politics was sown in Nigeria. From then on,

14. Dwight Read, “What Is Kinship?” in *The Cultural Analysis of Kinship: The Legacy of David Schneider and Its Implications for Anthropological Relativism*, ed. R. Feinberg and M. Ottenheimer (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001).

15. Eugene Hammel, “Kinship-Based Politics and the Optimal Size of Kin Groups,” in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 102(33), 2005, 11951–56.

16. Oladiran, “Ethnic Politics and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria.” 679.

the ethnic nationalities have continued to engage in constant struggle through their political elites to gain political power at the national level.<sup>17</sup>

The 1979 Constitution ushered in the Second Republic, and as Ademola Azeez noted, the Constitution made regulations that were intended to make political parties national in outlook, including their operations.<sup>18</sup> But, party politics and formation, defying all hindrance, followed ethnic dimensions, in line with their operations in the First Republic. Thus, the new political parties that were registered had their leaders replicated as during the First Republic. Hence, Shehu Shagari led the National Party of Nigeria, which arose from the ashes of the NPC, to the 1979 polls. Obafemi Awolowo retained the leadership of the Unity Party of Nigeria, an off-shoot of AG, and Nnamdi Azikiwe maintained the control of the Nigerian Peoples Party, which replaced NCNC. The Peoples Redemption Party led by Balarabe Musa was Hausa speaking, while the Great Nigeria Peoples Party led by Ibrahim Waziri controlled the Kanuri-speaking area. Thus, each of the parties was again dominated by a particular ethnic group.

Political parties' formation had a different dimension in the Third Republic, which was midwived by President Ibrahim Babangida's government. The parties were the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention (NRC). Even though these parties were established by government, ethno-religious cleavages were visible in the membership and composition of the two parties. While the SDP was dominated by southerners, NRC was a party for the Hausa-Fulani North.<sup>19</sup> However, Bashiru Salawu and A. O. Hassan believe ethnic politics was downplayed significantly in that republic owing to the fact that the process of formation of the two political parties did not give room to ethnic influence. The parties were military creations and the two-party system prevented ethnic dominance over any of the political parties. Nevertheless, southerners had more sympathy for the SDP, just as the northerners showed more support to the NRC, probably because the two parties had their presidential candidates from the opposite divides.<sup>20</sup>

In the present Fourth Republic, which started in 1999, three parties were initially registered. They are the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP); the All People's Party (APP), later known as All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP); and the Alliance for Democracy (AD). The ethnic coloration of the past experiments is still manifest in the present. Thus, the ANPP was considered as a party predominantly comprised of the Hausa and Fulani. The AD, as the direct successor to Chief Obafemi Awolowo's Action Group and Unity Party of Nigeria, dominated the six Yoruba speaking states of Lagos, Ekiti, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, and Oyo until 2003 when it lost all the states except Lagos. The PDP was seen to have deviated a bit from the usual ethno-religious dominated party politics of the

17. Emeka Iloh, "Administration of 2015 General Elections and Voting Rights of Internally Displaced Persons" (University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 2016).

18. Ademola Azeez, "Ethnicity, Party Politics and Democracy in Nigeria: Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) as Agent of Consolidation?" *Studies of Tribes and Tribals* 7, no. 1 (2009): 1–9.

19. Oladiran, "Ethnic Politics and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria."

20. Beshiru Salawu and A.O. Hassan, "Ethnic Politics and Its Implications for the Survival of Democracy in Nigeria," *Journal of Public Administration and Policy Research* 3, no. 2 (2011): 28–33.

past, however, with their membership and formation cutting across the clime of Nigeria.<sup>21</sup> When the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) and the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) later emerged, they were mainly domiciled in the Igbo-speaking South East and Hausa-Fulani-speaking North, respectively. Even the metamorphosis AD underwent to become Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) did not change its perception as a Yoruba party. The ACN's eventual merger with the CPC and the ANPP, with a faction of APGA led by Governor Rochas Okorochoa of Imo State, to form the All Progressives Congress, still did not give it a national spread, as it is now seen as Hausa-Fulani-Yoruba party, especially by the Igbos of South East and the Niger Delta people of Nigeria. Thus, it is still only the PDP that is acceptable across ethnic divides in the country.

### BUHARI'S ADMINISTRATION AND THE RISING ETHNO-CLANNISH PATRONAGE

Kehinde Olayode has argued that Nigerian electoral choice is largely based on ethnic considerations as successive elections from the colonial era through the post-independence period to the current Fourth Republican election have been seriously undermined by ethno-regional cleavages.<sup>22</sup> Thus, there is no gainsaying the fact that President Muhammadu Buhari rode to power on the basis of ethnic and religious sentiments. The campaigns that preceded the 2015 presidential election were deeply immersed in ethnicity and religion to the extent that the country was sharply polarized into two. As the campaigns were raging and the polls were drawing nearer, some northern elements were already issuing threats of violence should their preferred candidate lose in the presidential poll.<sup>23</sup> Thus, while the core Northern Muslims hugely populated by the Hausa and Fulani and the Yorubas of the South West voted massively for Mohammadu Buhari of the APC and his running mate, Yemi Osinbajo who is Yoruba, the ethnic nationalities of the Niger Delta and South South and the Igbo of the South East gave their votes to one of their own, then incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan, and his deputy, Namadi Sambo. The North felt cheated when former President Umaru Yar'adua died in office in 2010 and his then deputy, Jonathan, from the South took power. They viewed the 2015 elections as the time to take back what "rightly belonged to them." Therefore, as the 2015 elections drew nearer, there was a realignment of forces that subsequently culminated in the North and South West, with their numerical strength, voting massively for the APC candidate.

According to Abdulrahman Adamu and Danladi Ocheni, the result of the 2015 elections shows clearly that the voting pattern was based on ethnic and regional

21. Azeez, "Ethnicity, Party Politics and Democracy in Nigeria: Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) as Agent of Consolidation?" 9.

22. Kehinde Olayode, "Ethno-Regional Cleavages and Voting Behaviour in the 2015 General Elections: Issues and Challenges for Democratization and Nation Building," in *Paper Presented at a Two-Day National Conference on "The 2015 General Elections in Nigeria: The Real Issues," Organized by The Electoral Institute, Abuja, June, 2015*, 24.

23. Iloh, "Administration of 2015 General Elections and Voting Rights of Internally Displaced Persons." 18.

sentiments.<sup>24</sup> For instance, the APC presidential candidate for the 2015 general elections, Gen. Muhammadu Buhari, and his Vice, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo, came from northern and western regions respectively while PDP's presidential candidate and his Vice, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan and Arc. Namadi Sambo, came from southern and northern regions, as well. APC lost in all the states in the South-South and South-East zones with the exception of Edo state, while PDP won in only one state of the South-West zone and three other states in the northern region including the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) regardless of the population PDP had across every state in the North.

Joseph Ebegbulem has argued that ethnic consciousness motivated the majority ethnic groups to develop regional political parties, which stimulated inter-ethnic tensions, and ethnic politics inevitably became the main deterrent to Nigerian nationalism. Citing relevant scholarly authorities, he noted that in each region, a party dominated by members of the majority ethnic group obtained office and provided services and patronage for the group.<sup>25</sup> In other words, ethnic groups align themselves with a particular political party, and on that basis, struggle for power at the national level with the sole aim of dispensing favors and patronages to the members of that ethnic or kin group, if they eventually emerge victorious at the polls. Thus, as the elections approached, the respective ethnic nationalities saw it as an ethnic battle. In fact, to ensure that power returned to the North, many PDP stalwarts from the North had to “cross-carpet” to the then opposition APC to help in actualizing the northern agenda. It was no longer a matter of party affiliation or loyalty; it was a supremacy battle between and among the different ethnic groups and religions. The Yoruba of the South West, who historically have always preferred to forge political alliances with the Hausa-Fulani North than with the South, also queued behind Buhari (except for Ekiti State), who incidentally picked his running mate from the geopolitical zone. Table 1 shows the results of the 2015 presidential election by state, showing states' geopolitical zones and ethnic origins.

From Table 1, it is apparent that ethnic and religious sentiments played a crucial role in the 2015 presidential election. Whereas Goodluck Jonathan's support base was mostly the Christian South East and South South, Muhammadu Buhari's main support base was the predominantly Muslim North, and the South West because of the political alliance between the two regions.

## THE ETHNO-CLANNISH TRAJECTORY OF POLITICAL APPOINTMENTS IN BUHARI'S REGIME

Are all the king's men his kinsmen? Or as Okechukwu Ibeanu would ask, to what extent are the king's men his kinsmen?<sup>26</sup> Though the cry of marginalization in political

24. Abdulrahman Adamu and Danladi Ocheni, “Ethnic Politics and the Challenges of National Integration in Nigeria,” *International Journal of Politics and Good Governance* 7, no. 2 (2016): 1–20.

25. Joseph Ebegbulem, “Ethnic Politics and Conflicts in Nigeria: Theoretical Perspective,” *Khazar Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, n.d., 76–91.

26. Okechukwu Ibeanu, “All the King's Men, All His Kinsmen: Ethnicity and Politics in Nigeria Under Abacha,” *Nigerian Forum* 20, no. 1&2 (1999), 18–35.

TABLE 1. Candidate Voted For by the Major Ethnic Groups and Religions per State

S/N	Geopolitical Zone	State	Major Ethnic Group	Dominant Religion	Candidate Voted
1		Jigawa	Hausa, Fulani	Islam	Buhari
2		Kaduna	Hausa, Fulani	Islam	Buhari
3		Kano	Hausa, Fulani	Islam	Buhari
4	North West	Katsina	Hausa, Fulani	Islam	Buhari
5		Kebbi	Hausa, Fulani	Islam	Buhari
6		Sokoto	Hausa, Fulani	Islam	Buhari
7		Zamfara	Hausa, Fulani	Islam	Buhari
8		Adamawa	Fulani	Islam	Buhari
9		Bauchi	Hausa, Fulani	Islam	Buhari
10		Bornu	Kanuri	Islam	Buhari
11	North East	Gombe	Fulani	Islam	Buhari
12		Taraba	Jukun, Tiv, Hausa	Christianity, Islam	Jonathan
13		Yobe	Kanuri	Islam	Buhari
14		Benue	Tiv, Idoma	Christianity	Buhari
15		Kogi	Igala, Ebira, Okun	Islam, Christianity	Buhari
16		Kwara	Yoruba, Nupe, Fulani	Islam, Christianity	Buhari
17	North Central	Nasarawa	Agatu, Eggon, Hausa	Islam, Christianity	Jonathan
18		Niger	Nupe/Gbagyi, Hausa	Islam	Buhari
19		Plateau	Berom, Afizere	Christianity	Buhari
20		Ekiti	Yoruba	Christianity	Jonathan
21		Lagos	Yoruba	Christianity, Islam	Buhari
22		Ogun	Yoruba	Christianity	Buhari
23	South West	Ondo	Yoruba	Christianity	Buhari
24		Osun	Yoruba	Islam, Christianity	Buhari
25		Oyo	Yoruba	Islam, Christianity	Buhari
26		Abia	Igbo	Christianity	Jonathan
27		Anambra	Igbo	Christianity	Jonathan
28	South East	Ebonyi	Igbo	Christianity	Jonathan
29		Enugu	Igbo	Christianity	Jonathan
30		Imo	Igbo	Christianity	Jonathan
31		Akwa Ibom	Ibibio, Annang	Christianity	Jonathan
32		Bayelsa	Ijaw	Christianity	Jonathan
33		Cross River	Efik	Christianity	Jonathan
34		Delta	Anioma (Igbo), Ijaw, Itsekiri, Urhobo	Christianity	Jonathan
35	South South	Edo	Edo, Igarra	Christianity	Jonathan
36		Rivers	Ikwerre, Opobo, Kalabari	Christianity	Jonathan

**Source:** Compiled by the authors from several sources.

TABLE 2. States of Origin/Geopolitical Zones of President Buhari's Early Appointees

S/N	Name of Appointee	State of Origin	Geopolitical Zone	Position
1	Lt. Col Abubakar Lawal	Kano	North West	ADC to the President
2	Femi Adesina	Osun	South West	SA, Media & Publicity
3	Garba Shehu	Kano	North West	SSA, Media & Publicity
4	Lawal Abdullahi Kazaure	Jigawa	North West	State Chief of Protocol
5	Ahmed Idris	Kano	North West	Accountant General of the Federation
6	Babagana Monguno	Borno	North East	National Security Adviser
7	Abayomi Olonishakin	Ekiti	South West	Chief of Defense Staff
8	Tukur Buratai	Borno	North East	Chief of Army Staff
9	Ibok-Ete Ekwe Ibas	Cross River	South South	Chief of Naval Staff
10	Sadique Abubakar	Bauchi	North East	Chief of Air Staff
11	Lawal Daura	Katsina	North West	DG, DSS
12	Mahmood Yakubu	Bauchi	North East	Chairman, INEC
13	Babachir David Lawal	Adamawa	North East	SGF
14	Abba Kyari	Borno	North East	Chief of Staff to the President
15	Hameed Ibrahim Ali	Kaduna	North West	Comptroller General, Customs
16	Mohammed Babandede	Jigawa	North West	Comptroller General, Immigration

Source: Compiled by the authors from different sources.

appointments did not start with the government of President Buhari, it has become more pronounced under his administration as other geopolitical zones and ethnic nationalities, especially the Igbo nation of the South East, have continued to insist that all political appointments so far dished out by President Buhari were unduly favorable to people from the North, and from his religious leaning: Islam. Initially, the government, through its spokespersons, Femi Adesina and Garba Shehu, condemned the criticisms and insisted that the president still had hundreds of other appointments to make. Therefore, it was still early for any section of the country to start talking of marginalization. However, as weeks rolled into months and more appointments were announced, they still followed the pattern of earlier ones. Thus, the president's kinsmen were still highly favored. Table 2 shows the states of origin/geopolitical zones of the first set of appointments made by President Buhari after his inauguration on May 23, 2015.

From Table 2, it is inferable that the first set of appointments made by President Buhari was highly skewed in favor of the North. Of the sixteen positions above, thirteen (81.25%) were from the northern part of the country, while only three (18.75%) were from the South. All thirteen in the North went to the core Muslim North while none was allocated to the North Central, which has a sizable Christian population. Also in the South, while two of the positions went to the South West, one went to the South South, with the South East having no representation at all.

TABLE 3. Heads of Military and Paramilitary Organizations Appointed by Buhari by 2015

S/N	Name of Appointee	State of Origin	Geopolitical Zone	Position
1	Abayomi Olonishakin	Ekiti	South West	Chief of Defense Staff
2	Tukur Buratai	Borno	North East	Chief of Army Staff
3	Ibok-Ete Ekwe Ibas	Cross River	South South	Chief of Naval Staff
4	Sadique Abubakar	Bauchi	North East	Chief of Air Staff
5	Ibrahim Idris	Niger	North Central	Inspector General of Police
6	Babagana Monguno	Borno	North East	National Security Adviser
7	Lawal Daura	Katsina	North West	DG, DSS
8	Hameed Ibrahim Ali	Kaduna	North West	Comptroller General, Customs
9	Mohammed Babandede	Jigawa	North West	Comptroller General, Immigration
10	Ja'afaru Ahmed	Kebbi	North West	Comptroller General, Prisons
11	Boboye Oyeyemi*	Kwara	North Central	Corps Marshal, FRSC
12	Abdullahi Gana Muhammadu	Niger	North Central	Commandant General, NSCDC
13	Joseph Garba	Plateau	North Central	Comptroller General, Fire Service
14	Mansur Dan Ali	Zamfara	North West	Minister of Defense
15	Abdulrahman Dambazau**	Kano	North West	Minister of Interior

**Source:** Compiled by the authors from different sources.

\*Appointed by the previous administration of Goodluck Jonathan

\*\*Minister in charge of the Nigerian Police, Immigration, Prisons, NSCDC, and Fire Service

Appointments into the military and paramilitary establishments also followed a similar pattern, as the North was unduly favored against the South. Table 3 depicts this apparent divisive tendency.

Table 3, among other things, indicates that apart from Chief of Defense Staff (South West) and Chief of Naval Staff (South South) (13.33%), northerners occupy the other thirteen (86.66%) heads of strategic military and paramilitary organizations. Also, the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Defense, Danjuma Sheni; Commander, Brigade of Guards, Musa Yusuf; Chief of Defense Intelligence, Saliu Usman; and Director of Military Intelligence, Abubakar Sa'ad, which are all sensitive positions in the security establishment of the country, are all northerners. Again, the South East was entirely not represented. This is in total disregard of the Federal Character Principle that guides appointment into federal establishments. This principle, which has been enshrined in Nigeria's Constitution since 1979, seeks to ensure that appointments to public service institutions fairly reflect the linguistic, ethnic, religious, and geographic diversity of the country.<sup>27</sup> Making reference to the provisions of the Third Schedule, Part I-C paragraph 8(1) of the 1999 Constitution, which gives effect to section 14 (3) and (4) of the Constitution, Orebe states the following:

27. Ladipo Erero Adamolekun and Basil John and Oshionebo, "Federal Character' and Management of the Federal Civil Service and the Military," *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 21, no. 4 (1991): 75-88.

The composition of the government of the federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the Federal Character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity, and also to command national loyalty thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that government or in any of its agencies.<sup>28</sup>

However, it is obvious that President Buhari has serially abused and neglected these provisions in his appointments into federal establishments. During a trip to the United States after his inauguration, the president, in apparent defense of his actions, made this alleged statement:

Constituencies that gave me 97% cannot in all honesty be treated equally, on some issues, with constituencies that gave me 5%. I think these are political realities. While certainly there will be justice for everybody, everybody will get his constitutional rights, but while the party in constituencies that by their sheer hard work they made sure that they got their people to vote and to ensure their votes count, they must feel that the government has appreciated the effort they put in putting the government in place. I see this as really fair.<sup>29</sup>

This seems to be the president's defense for the hugely lopsided appointments. From the records, 80% of the votes he garnered during the March 2015 presidential elections came from the North, while 15.8%, 2.7%, and 1.3% came from the South West, South South, and South East geopolitical zones, respectively.<sup>30</sup> This also lends credence to a statement credited to the Chairman of the Northern Elders Council, Tanko Yakassai, who, while condemning the lopsided appointments, said, "If you look at the voting pattern, zone by zone, you will see that Buhari is compensating the zones that favoured him."<sup>31</sup> Buhari himself has further defended his appointments by stating that he only appointed those he could trust.<sup>32</sup> Table 4 shows the family members of President Buhari who are in his government, an indication of nepotistic statecraft.

Table 4 indicates that as many as ten members of President Buhari's extended family are presently occupying sensitive positions in his government. No one has captured the import of this unbridled manifestation of nepotism more vividly than Junaid Mohammed in an interview with the Punch Newspapers on July 23, 2016:

28. Femi Orebe, "President Buhari's Appointments and the Federal Character Concept," *The Nation*, 3 July 2016.

29. Point Blank News, "Buhari's 95%, 5% Comment: President Denies, Says It Is a Social Media Creation," *Point Blank News*, 2015, [www.pointblanknews.com/pbn/exclusive/buhari-95-5-comment-president-denies-says-it-is-a-social-media-creation](http://www.pointblanknews.com/pbn/exclusive/buhari-95-5-comment-president-denies-says-it-is-a-social-media-creation), 9. (Accessed January 15, 2018)

30. O. Ofili, "Is Buhari Making Appointments Based on Election Results?" 2015, [www.ofilispeaks.com/is-buhari-making-appointments-based-on-election-results](http://www.ofilispeaks.com/is-buhari-making-appointments-based-on-election-results). (Accessed January 21, 2018)

31. Ofili.

32. Wale Odunsi, "Why I Appointed More Northerners' – Buhari Finally Opens Up," *Daily Post*, 9 September 2015, [www.dailypost.ng/2015/09/09/why-i-appointed-more-northerners-buhari-finally-opens-up](http://www.dailypost.ng/2015/09/09/why-i-appointed-more-northerners-buhari-finally-opens-up). (Accessed January 28, 2018)

TABLE 4. President Buhari's Relatives in Government by 2015

S/N	Name of Appointee	Position	Nature of Relationship
1	Mamman Daura	Principal Adviser	Son of Buhari's Elder Brother
2	Abba Kyari	Chief of Staff	Adopted Son of Buhari's Nephew
3	Hadi Sirika	Minister of State, Aviation	Son of Buhari's Elder Sister
4	Amina Zakari	INEC Commissioner	Daughter of Buhari's Elder Sister
5	Lawal Abubakar	ADC to the President	Married to Buhari's Niece
6	Aishar Abubakar	Minister of State, Trade & Industry	In-law to Buhari's Nephew
7	Kabir Daura	Personal Assistant	Son of Buhari's Nephew
8	Sabiu Yusuf	Personal Assistant	Grandson of Buhari's Sister
9	Lawal Abdullahi Kazaure	State Chief of Protocol	Son In-law to Buhari's Nephew
10	Suleiman Adamu	Minister of Water Resources	Son of Buhari's Elder Sister

**Source:** Compiled by the authors from different sources.

First, the most influential person in the Presidency today is one Mamman Daura whom as you know, is a nephew of the President. His father was Buhari's elder brother. In addition, Mamman Daura was the one who single handedly brought up Abba Kyari, the current Chief of Staff to the President. In fact, Abba Kyari knows Mamman Daura more than he knows his own father. Next, the Personal Assistant to Buhari himself is the son of Mamman Daura, next is what they call SCOP, State Chief of Protocol, and is also a son-in-law to Mamman Daura because he is married to Mamman Daura's daughter. Next, the Minister they unilaterally chose, against the interest of the party and against the wishes of Sokoto people, happens to be the daughter of the younger sister of Mamman Daura's wife. . . . We have the Aide De Camp to Buhari himself, Colonel Abubakar. He is married to the granddaughter of one of Buhari's elder sisters.<sup>33</sup>

The above observations are significant, considering the fact that they were made by a Muslim northerner who, by his ethno-religious identity, is in a position to rationalize, or sympathize with, Buhari's unbridled ethnocentrism. More elaborately, Mohammed continued:

There is a young man called Sabiu Yusuf. . . . He is another PA [personal assistant] to President Buhari. He is also a grandson of another sister of Buhari. . . . Amina Zakari, who was and still is a national commissioner in the Independent National Electoral Commission representing the entire seven states in the North-West. . . . (is) his own niece, the daughter of his elder sister. . . . When Jega left, Buhari was determined to make her chairman, it was because of the massive backlash that he dropped the idea like hot potatoes. As we are talking today, that woman is a national commissioner which means she is one of the principal election umpires. Throughout my reading of history, political science and social sciences generally, I have never heard of any dictator or any

33. Junaid Mohammed, "Nepotism in Buhari's Government: The Worst in Nigeria's History," *The Punch*, 2016, [www.punchng.com/nepotism-buharis-govt-worst-nigerias-history-junaid-mohammed](http://www.punchng.com/nepotism-buharis-govt-worst-nigerias-history-junaid-mohammed). (Accessed January 28, 2018)

tyrant under any system of government whether totalitarian or fascist, appointing his own niece to conduct elections in which he was either a party or going to be a party to; Buhari has done that. The immediate younger brother to Amina Zakari is currently the Minister for Water Resources representing Jigawa State in the same Buhari government. In addition . . . the eldest sister of both of them is now the Commissioner for Education in the All Progressives Congress government in Jigawa State. If this is not nepotism, then I don't know what is nepotism and anybody who has the guts, the brutal arrogance to appoint these relations not bothering about public opinion, about the sense of justice, about competence, then you can see that he has a very serious question to answer.<sup>34</sup>

Furthermore, Mohammed contended that the claim that Buhari knows nothing about Amina Zakari's appointment (since she was appointed by former President Jonathan) was not true. He equally revealed that when President Goodluck Jonathan was reorganizing the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and was bringing in Prof. Attahiru Jega, he reached out to Buhari and asked him to nominate somebody from the North-West so that that person would be a national commissioner. Curiously, of all the people in the North-West, Buhari decided to nominate his own niece. Mohammed also alleged that the Minister for the Federal Capital Territory, Musa Bello's only qualification to be FCT minister was the fact that his father has been Buhari's friend over the years, and that the woman who represents Kaduna in the Federal Executive Council is a cousin to Kaduna State governor, Nasir el-Rufai, one of the closest cronies of Muhammadu Buhari.

#### **BUHARI'S ADMINISTRATION AND ETHNO-CLANNISH PATRONIZING: SUNDRY IMPLICATIONS**

No doubt, ethnic or kinship politics comes with its consequences, especially in governance. In the present regime of President Muhammadu Buhari, the devastating effects of ethnic politics are already manifesting in several ways. First, mediocrity is being promoted at the expense of competence and merit. As Felicia Ayatse and Isaac Akuva have observed, ethnic sentiments are used to replace merit and skills, such that round pegs are no longer found in round holes. This affects efficiency and productivity in Nigeria.<sup>35</sup> In the public sphere, it undermines the common good. When someone is granted a position because of connections rather than because he or she has the best credentials and experience, the service that person renders to the public may be inferior.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, kinship politics undermines competence. Qualification for the job is sacrificed on the altar of one's relationship to the appointing authority. Thus, positions are filled by people whose only qualification for appointment is their ethnic or religious relationship with the president,

34. Mohammed.

35. Felicia Ayatse and Isaac Akuva, "The Origin and Development of Ethnic Politics and Its Impacts on Post Colonial Governance in Nigeria," *European Scientific Journal* 9, no. 17 (2013): 178–189.

36. Nadler and Schulman, "Favoritism, Cronyism, and Nepotism. Markkula Center for Applied Ethics," (Accessed online December 18, 2018)

or support for his party or candidacy during elections. It further weakens morale in government service, as well as erodes public faith in the integrity of government.

There is a general feeling of despondence among Nigerians about the capability of the present crop of President Buhari's appointees to make any meaningful impact in the different sectors they have been assigned to oversee. This is because there is the belief that most of them are round pegs in square holes. The apparent lull and inactivity that pervade most of the government ministries, departments, and agencies seem to lend credence to this standpoint.

Second, kinship politics in the present regime has greatly eroded national integration and cohesion. Other ethnic groups feel alienated, and, as such, believe they no longer have a stake in the Nigerian project. There is no ethnic group or region where this feeling of alienation has been so pervasive than among the Igbos of South East and the Niger Delta people of South South. Consequently, the agitation for self-determination has never been so loud and serious since after the civil war as now. Despite the clamp-down on them by state forces, the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra have been so vehement and undeterred in their agitation for a sovereign state–Biafra. Also, the Niger Delta freedom fighters under different platforms have graduated from agitating for resource control to agitating for a sovereign state. In fact, in the first year of President Buhari's administration, the activities (destruction of oil facilities) of the Niger Delta Avengers (NDF) in the Niger Delta region brought the government to its knees. They almost crippled the Nigerian economy. According to Adamu and Ocheni, this incessant agitation and struggle to have control of the nation's resources remain the bone of contention and sources of threat to peaceful co-existence, national unity, and national integration in the country.<sup>37</sup>

Third, the practice of kinship politics in the present administration has brought about mutual distrust among the different ethnic groups in Nigeria. Everyone views the other with suspicion. No one seems to trust the other even when such persons have good intentions. For instance, in most communities in the South East and South South, Hausa and Fulani people are seen as enemies. In fact, even the president himself has been declared *persona non grata* in the two geopolitical zones. This has manifested in two occasions. In June 2016, he was billed to flag off the cleanup of Ogoni land in Rivers State, polluted by years of oil exploration and production. The Niger Delta Avengers warned that he was not welcome in the Niger Delta, and in fact, he would be assassinated if he ventured into the region. The trip was cancelled at the last minute and the vice president was sent to represent him. In December 2016, the president was scheduled to visit Enugu, for the South East Economic and Security Summit. IPOB organized a massive protest against his visit and warned of grave dangers if he visited any "Biafran" land. Eventually, he did not visit, and the president gave some spurious reasons for cancelling the trip. Such is the level of distrust in the polity, a consequence of ethnic politics being perpetrated by the administration.

37. Adamu and Ocheni, "Ethnic Politics and the Challenges of National Integration in Nigeria." 17.

Fourth, playing politics along ethnic or kinship lines has denied Nigeria the patriotic flavor necessary for national development. Because of the open display of ethnic chauvinism shown by the president and his kinsmen, many national patriots have been forced to either go back into their shells or become ethnic champions. Thus, patriotism to the Nigerian state has been replaced by individualism, personalism, sectionalism, nepotism, and parochialism.<sup>38</sup> These days, it is hard to find patriotism or loyalty to a cause in an average Nigerian. The highest levels of patriotism are expressed at the sub-national levels. Ethnic solidarity among other ethnic groups has, therefore, overtaken national patriotism. What is more, primordial nationalism is negotiating civic nationalism out of relevance.

## CONCLUSION

Politics of patronage based on ethnicity or kinship in Nigeria is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria. It has been part of the country's political experience since the colonial era, through independence and into the post-colonial period. Almost all political parties that have contested elections in Nigeria have their roots with one ethnic group or another. Politicians always capitalize on this to whip up parochial sentiments in order to win the support of their ethnic base.

Though previous administrations in Nigeria have had their fair share of the ethnic badge planted on them, the accusation of ethnic chauvinism, favoritism, cronyism, and nepotism has never been as pronounced in the country as in the present administration led by Muhammadu Buhari. Aside the core Muslim North, all the other sections of the country have been crying of marginalization in respect to the distribution of federal political appointments. The cry has been loudest among the Igbos of the South East and the Niger Delta people of the South-South geopolitical zones, which have been agitating for a "fairer deal" within the country's federalist framework in the light of perceived relative deprivation.

The crux of the agitation currently is to the effect that the North in general, and Buhari's ethno-communal cohorts, have been unduly represented in such appointments. The implication of this is that other sections of the country feel a sense of exclusion from government at the center and this brings about antipathies that negate the spirit of national integration. More importantly, while facets of identity politics cannot be completely vitiated in polities such as Nigeria, care must be taken toward ensuring that such pattern of politicking is not raised to the height of statecraft. The trajectory of Buhari's executive political appointments has so far adumbrated the logic of ethno-clannish patronage. This is a threat to national unity and integration in Nigeria. ■

38. Peters Kalu, "Political Parties and Ethnic Politics in Nigeria," *NG-Journal of Social Development* 5, no. 2 (2016): 140–52.

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