

Governance, Recycled Politicians and Recycling Politics in Nigeria

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Abstract

The politics of recycling, a political system where the same set of people continue to dominate the political affairs of a given country, is one of the challenges undermining political development and good governance in Nigeria. The study, therefore, analyzes the effects of the politics of recycling on Nigeria's governance and administrative system. The qualitative study covers Nigeria's Second Republic from October 1, 1979, to Nigeria's Fourth Republic, which commenced on May 29, 1999 – 2022. The data for the study were gathered from primary and secondary sources. Primary data were gathered through interviews with a number of respondents comprising a Journalist, Engineer, Lecturer, Doctoral Student, Administrator, Lawyer, Human Rights Activist, and Businessmen. A convenience sampling technique was used to select the available and willing respondents to participate in the study. In addition, the researcher's close observations of events in Nigeria form part of the data for the study. The secondary data were gathered through official documents, textbooks, journals, and internet sources. The data collected were analyzed using the content analysis method. The study adopted the Recycling Theory of Abiku to analyze recycled politicians and their antecedents in Nigeria's political activities. According to African mythology, Abiku personifies a child who dies and is reborn repeatedly into the same family and causes pain to its hosts each time the child comes. Nigeria's political class, in a similar manner to Abiku, has continued to play recycling politics without offering anything towards the progress and development of the country, thereby repeatedly leaving a cycle that causes pain to Nigerians. The study concluded that recycling or parading the same set of politicians in the governance and administrative affairs of the country is inimical to the country's political, social, and economic development. The study recommended that the electorates must rise to crush the recycled politicians' antics and tactics and vote for new-breed politicians with impeccable character and proven integrity. Pressure should be mounted on the Independent Electoral Commission by journalists, civil society, national and international observers, as well as other stakeholders on the need to conduct free and fair elections in the country.

Keywords: *Governance, Recycled Politicians, Recycling Politics, Abiku and Development*

Introduction

One of the challenges that have continued to undermine Nigeria's political development and good governance, like many other African countries in contemporary times, is the politics of

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recycling. The politics of recycling is a political system where the same set of people continues to dominate the political affairs and activities of a given country. It is a system where the same clique continues to rotate or rule from one office to the other or, at times, stays glued to a particular office for a long time. To this extent, Msughter (2018) sees the politics of recycling as:

a game that is played by the same players without substitutes, a game without new tactics. It is a system of using and rebranding old products to suit the present market situation. It is simply a strategy of packaging old products that cannot yield any result or satisfaction to the consumers (Msughter, 2018, para. 1).

Due to their insatiable appetite for power and unrelenting political ambition, Nigeria's politicians deploy all arsenals within their influence to stay in power perpetually (Adegami & Uche, 2016). It is not surprising, therefore, that the political setting of Nigeria is filled with the same set of people who have continued to dominate and subjugate its governance and administrative activities. A thorough view of the composition of the country's managers and management in the Fourth Republic, which commenced on May 29, 1999, reveals a number of those who participated in Nigeria's Second Republic from October 1, 1979, to December 31, 1983. It also reveals a sizeable number of those involved in the aborted Third Republic, which was said to have commenced from June 12, 1993, when the general elections were conducted, to June 23, 1993, when the same elections were annulled. For example, Mr Audu Ogbe in 1979 was the deputy speaker in the Benue State House of Assembly; he was appointed in 1982 as the Federal Minister of Communications and later Minister of Steel Development. His tenure of office ended with a military *coup d'état* that brought Major-General Muhammadu Buhari to power. Mr Ogbe later became the Minister of Agriculture between 2015 and 2019. There are also a preponderant number of retired military officers who have directly or indirectly plotted a coup at one time to truncate Nigeria's constitutional government. For instance, Major-General Muhammadu Buhari served as Nigeria's military head of state between December 31, 1983, and August 27, 1985, after taking power in a military *coup d'état*. In the Fourth Republic, he was elected as President and served two terms in office from 2015 to 2019. In large number, however, are those that came to the political limelight some twenty-three years ago at the onset of the country's Fourth Republic. While some of these categories of people have continued to maintain and sustain themselves in different political posts and positions, others have continued to move from one

political office to the other. Thus, they have continued to ride on Nigeria and Nigerians like a colossus (Adegbami & Uche, 2016; Agbese, 2022).

The uniqueness of recycled politicians in Nigeria is that they may or may not have the same political inclinations; they may or may not have the same political ideology or no ideology at all. However, a common thing to most of them is “a similar mindset.” Most of these politicians engaging in the politics of recycling are interested in making a profit for themselves and their cliques because governance to them is a business venture (Adegbami & Ganiyu, 2019). It was to this extent that the Sahara Reporters affirms that:

A number of Nigerian politicians and political leaders with corruption cases hanging on their necks have found a haven in the ruling party, All Progressives Congress (APC). The defection of such political leaders to the APC has automatically stalled the prosecution of their corruption cases (Sahara Reporters, 2021, para. 1).

Given the twenty-three years of unbroken democratic governance in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, one would have expected that the country would have witnessed a great deal of development in its core sectors of the economy. One would have also expected the dividends of democracy to reflect in the generation of employment, poverty reduction, and improvement in the standard of living. All these would have gone a long way to curb some of the challenges facing the country, such as bandits' and insurgents' activities, kidnapping/hostage takings, incessant killings, and armed robbery, among other social vices, that is shaking the country to its very foundation (Adegbami & Uche, 2015; Adegbami & Uche, 2016; Adegbami & Adepoju, 2017).

A conscientious look at the political landscape of Nigeria shows that the same crop of politicians responsible for its current precarious economic situation and the suffering of the masses are still in charge of the governance and administrative affairs of the country. The sets of politicians have refused to leave the political scenes; they have continued to oscillate among the dominant political parties, which serve as stepping stones to gain access to public offices, from where they continue with their veritable political businesses. The self-indict statement made by a two-time

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Governor, two-time Senator, and former Senate President in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, Bukola Saraki, bore eloquent testimony to this. According to him:

We have all been here since 1999 up to the recent past when things were not done right; we are all part of it. I was there, you were there, and every other political officeholder in different capacities was there as well (Saraki, cited in Premium Times, 2016, para. 5).

The fact that Bukola Saraki made this statement while in office makes the statement potent and valid and confirms that those who have been recycling themselves in the political offices in Nigeria have contributed in no small measure to the underdeveloped state of the country.

The politics of recycling and the continued application of the same old values, ideas, and ideologies to Nigeria's governance and administrative activities will produce nothing new but the same usual outcomes. Given the foregoing, the study analyzes the effects of the politics of recycling on Nigeria's governance and administrative system. This is with a view to determining factors halting Nigeria's political and socio-economic development.

Theoretical Framework: Recycling Theory of Abiku

The study adopted the Recycling Theory of Abiku. The development of the theory was necessitated by the study's setting, Africa. Appropriately applying an apt theory from the African perspective to the study informed the development, adoption, and application of the Recycling Theory of Abiku.

Abiku is a Yoruba coinage, which means Ogbanje in Igboland, Mfumfum in Efik, and Igbakhun in Edo, parts of Africa. According to African mythology, Abiku personifies a child with a mysterious power of controlling or regulating death. "An Abiku is any child who dies and is reborn several times into the same family" (Mobolade, 1973, p. 62). Abiku is also referred to as children "who are believed to cycle rapidly and repeatedly through birth and death" (Ilechukwu, 2007, p. 239). Abiku's audacious power can be better understood in the words of Soyinka: "In vain your bangles cast charmed circles at my feet, I am Abiku, calling for the first, and the repeated time" (Soyinka, 1976). In other words, Abiku retains the ability to have recurrent earthly lives to the detriment of their earthly hosts. To this extent, Clark describes Abiku as "coming and going these several seasons, do stay out on the baobab tree" (Clark, 1976).

The African mythology had it that, for a Abiku to have its first earthly life, it only needed to sight a desirable pregnant woman. Whenever a pregnant woman is sighted, an Abiku knows the best way to get to the woman's womb. Accordingly, Abiku will eject the already-formed fetus from the womb and place itself instead. Abiku is able to find an appropriate pregnant woman by hanging out in the neighborhood, including forests, market areas, bush paths, and roads. Abiku also stays inside trees, like the iroko, baobab, and silk cotton. Abiku came out during the day breaks, at night, and under hot and sunny weather, waiting for an innocent pregnant woman to make her mother.

Abiku is assumed to possess an evil spirit that allows it to die multiple times and be reborn repeatedly. Similarly, it was believed that the spirit inherent in Abiku empowered its permanent attachment to the family it taunts. According to Eze (2020), Abiku lives a life of cycle like everybody. Nonetheless, Abiku dies to come back through the same womb and family, thereby continually leaving a cycle that causes pain to the host family. In other words, with the inherent spirit in Abiku, it returns to the same family it has once tormented each time it has to return. For that reason, Abiku is considered to be a dangerous and powerful being who intentionally plagues its immediate family with misfortune, as well as constitutes a threat to anyone who dares to come its way.

Furthermore, it is said that no one can determine the life cycle of Abiku; it is Abiku itself that can do so. Put differently, every Abiku decides how long it plans or wishes to stay on earth. Therefore, an Abiku will always stand against anything or person that may want to prevent or hinder its staying up to or beyond its predetermined time. Abiku enjoys its game of comings and goings, which it likes to play with the same mother and in the same family repeatedly until such a mother can no longer bear the fruit of the womb.

In the course of their stay in the earthly world, one Abiku seeks the company of the other and relates well, although nocturnal. The Abikus usually converge as soon as the whole household sleeps off. To attend the nocturnal meeting, all infant Abiku have to transform into adults, switch back to infants, and find their way back to their different mothers' sides before dawn.

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Abiku usually puts its parents in a financial mess because every parent of Abiku offers everything they have to keep or prevent Abiku from dying. Parents spent their fortune to get their children (the Abikus) treated for the self-inflicted and incurable illnesses they placed on themselves. These parents go from one herbalist to the other to get treatment for the Abikus, during which they spend a lot of money. All the money spent on Abiku is always in vain because it cannot prevent Abiku from dying. Beyond this is the joy Abiku derives from seeing its parents crying. It is believed that tears shed to mourn Abiku are collected and sold to make money by Abiku in the spirit world. This explains why Abiku always die young so that parents and families can shed more tears for them to trade with and make money (Edoro, 2014).

The recycling theory of Abiku is premised on the following:

- Abiku is a child considered to recycle itself repeatedly through birth and death.
- Although Abiku appears as a child, it is ageless, too, and no one determines its life cycle. Abiku decides how long it plans or wishes to stay on earth.
- Abiku brings untold hardship and pain to its parents and repeats the agonizing process.
- Abiku seeks the company of other Abiku and relates well with them through nocturnal meetings.
- Abiku normally puts its parents and families in a financial mess, as parents spend their fortunes to get Abiku treated for self-inflicted and incurable illnesses.
- Abiku ejects the already-formed fetus from the womb and places itself instead.
- Abiku is recalcitrant, full of tricks, and challenging to deal with or handle, as it can camouflage.

The politics of hanging on or staying glued to political powers perpetually by the political class in Nigeria can be viewed from the "Recycling Theory of Abiku" lens. Like Abiku, many of the current political officeholders in Nigeria are the same set of politicians that have been hanging on and stayed glued to political powers since Nigeria's Second Republic over forty years ago. The crops of politicians are repeatedly revolving themselves in the country's political scene and ridding Nigeria and Nigerians like a colossus.

In a likely manner of Abiku, most of these politicians appear younger but are ageless. Some continue to adjust and amend their ages, and some rely on a forged certificate of birth and a fake declaration of age. Some of them are fond of using affidavits to cover up the irregularities surrounding their ages to be able to fit into political offices they are seeking or aspiring to. Moreover, as no one determines the life cycle of Abiku, so also no one decides how long a particular politician will stay on to political power and public office. Some of them, having discovered that their ages can be easily determined through their primary and secondary school certificates, claim that they have lost them. For instance, while he wanted to contest the presidential election in 2015, Muhammadu Buhari should have included his academic credentials in the documents submitted to the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC), the body in charge of conducting elections in Nigeria.

Similarly, in 2022, during the screening exercise for the 2023 general elections, Bola Tinubu, the All Progressives Congress presidential candidate, failed to present his certificates. Also, the People's Democratic Party presidential candidate, Atiku Abubakar, deposed to an affidavit that he used a different name on his school leaving certificate. At the same time, his running mate, Ifeanyi Okowa, claimed that his secondary school certificate got lost. All these claims were part of the ploy to cover up for the discrepancies in age on their different certificates (Morgan, 2022).

Thus, recycled politicians are always desperate to hang on to power by deploying all the powers in their possessions to achieve that. Recycled politicians use the money to induce gullible citizens, hijack the political party structures, and manipulate electioneering processes; all these are done in order to enjoy continued political relevance in the country (Adegami & Makinde, 2018). Apart from the strategies mentioned above, from the researcher's observations, recycled politicians use magical cum spiritual powers to cajole, coase, and intimidate the electorates, as well as political opponents. In essence, recycled politicians go the extra mile and use every available means, either by hooks or crooks, to achieve their inordinate ambitions (Adegami & Uche, 2016; Ogonnaya, 2016). Intermittent political killings in the country are likely part of the ploys to get to power by all means, as well as to retain political power.

Proper observation of Nigeria's political environment reveals that the politics of recycling the same set of politicians in Nigeria's governance and administrative affairs have continued to bring

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untold hardships to the citizenry. The continued recycling of this set of politicians is tantamount to repeatedly subjecting the populace to agony, just like Abiku does typically to its host family. The country's agonizing security challenge and its effects on the masses is another disturbing issue of lousy governance facilitated by recycled political leaders. In essence, the stagnant posture of Nigeria's political, social, and economic affairs testifies to the fact that recycled political leaders have nothing to offer again for the betterment of the country. As such, their continued staying in power signifies their determination to torment the citizenry repeatedly.

Similarly to Abiku, the politicians hold nocturnal meetings, where the country's fate is being determined. Most of the time, "serious meetings" are held at night when everyone is fast asleep. In essence, every nocturnal meeting is always for the benefit of the political class and to the detriment of the masses. In this type of meeting, they decide on who gets what, when, and how of political offices and, of course, the country's resources. Clearly, every cordial relationship among politicians is always for their interests; they unite to share powers and national resources.

Like Abiku, who normally puts its host in a financial problem, most of the political leaders who have governed and those who are currently in political offices in Nigeria could be seen as plunderers who lack the hallmarks of authentic leadership (Achebe, 1983; Ola, 2011). This set of politicians has continued to plunder the national resources, successfully put the country in a financial mess, and inflicted the country with an incurable illness. It is unsurprising that the country's debt rose to N33.11 trillion as of March 31, 2021 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021), while a more recent figure has not been made available by the National Bureau. More recent data reveals that Nigeria's debt as of the first quarter of 2022 was N41.6 trillion (Nairametrics, 2022). It is evident that most of the country's political leaders are taking advantage of their offices to enrich themselves and their cliques (Herbst & Olukoshi, 1994), while Nigerians continue to suffer excruciating economic hardship inflicted on them by the political class. Whenever there are elections, the country normally budgets a huge sum of money to conduct the elections. All the resources, both human efforts and money expended to procure elections, could be considered a waste because, at the end of it all, the recycled politicians still find themselves in public offices. In essence, all efforts and resources expended are nothing but a means to legalize the return of reprocessed politicians to office. This practice is equated to time, effort, and resource wastage.

The ganging up of recycled politicians has led to the ejection and sidetracking of leaders who have good intentions and could have piloted the country toward its greatness. Like the Abiku, this set of politicians coerces, intimidates, or kills any perceived politicians with good intentions of developing the country. Some good leaders who managed to get to one political office or the other were not given breathing space to perform their constitutional duties appropriately; they were later frustrated out of the government offices. It is to this extent that a former President of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo, reasons thus, "Good men were shunned and kept away from the government while those who should be kept away were drawn near" (Obasanjo, 1999, cited in Adegami & Adepoju, 2017, p. 7).

As a result of their moribund ideas, which have put the country in stagnation, the citizenry wanted recycled politicians to quit the political stage so that a new set of people with fresh ideas could be injected into the system. With their tricks and recalcitrant disposition, similar to that of Abiku, recycled politicians always thwart the plans of the populace. They instead prefer to stay glued to power and milk-dry the country until it becomes bankrupt. This is the stage or the situation the country is currently in, to the extent that the country is being referred to as the poverty capital of the world (Kharas et al., 2018).

It is disheartening, therefore, that the same challenges that have constituted a bane to the country's growth and advancement are persisting due to politics of comings, goings, and repeats played by Nigeria's political class. Till now, nothing has changed positively as far as the political, social, and economic affairs of the country are concerned. The masses considered to be the hosts of Abiku (the recycled politicians) remain helpless and hapless, as the political Abikus maintained their hegemonic posture on them in what could be likened to internal or domestic colonialism.

Recycling Politics in Nigeria: To Whose Benefit?

The quest for the improved economic development of a country largely depends on the quality of the leaders in charge of governance and administrative activities of such a country. The quality of leaders in terms of ideas, integrity, and exposure, among other qualities, goes a long way to assist in the development of the country. Any political system that allows varying or

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interchanging political leadership is a political system with the capacity to influence the growth and development of a country. This is because different leaders possess different characteristics, which can impact the country's development outcomes differently (Sackey, 2021). Hanging on to political powers and political offices by recycled politicians cannot positively impact the country because the same old ideas will still be applied to the country's governance system.

The problem with Nigeria's polity, as rightly observed by Agbese (2022), is the fact that the same group of politicians who put the country into its current mess are still permitted by the law of the land to aspire for political offices or remain in political offices with pretentious promises to fix the distressing country. Therefore, it is unsurprising that a set of recycled politicians is again jostling for political offices in the coming 2023 general elections.

Given the strong allegation against the politicians who have been in one political office or the other in Nigeria's Fourth Republic as being among those that have contributed to the stagnant development of the country (see Saraki cited in Premium Times, 2016), one would have expected the so alleged politicians to quit the country's political scene. Contrary to this, most of these politicians remain in public offices. Not only that, some of them are aspiring for the same offices they are currently serving, while others are desiring juicier offices in the forthcoming general elections of 2023. The set of politicians has started moving up and down to confuse, cajole, and do all sorts of manipulations in order to realize their unquenchable and inordinate ambitions.

The statement made by the incumbent President of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari, recently also bore eloquent testimony to the fact that recycled politicians have no other motives than to steal public funds. According to him:

Our society is a bundle of contradictions. People display external religiosity without fear of God; they make life difficult for others; money becomes their god; leaders abandon their oaths of office by taking money meant for the welfare of the people and diverting it to their private pockets (Buhari, 2022, cited in Premium Time, 2022, para. 5).

In his report, Kwen states, concerning the ongoing calculations, permutations, and scheming of Nigeria's politicians:

Ahead of the 2023 general election, some members of the National Assembly in both the Senate and the House of Representatives are making moves to take over the mantle of leadership in their states, especially where the governors are serving out their second terms. This practice has been in place since 2007 when many governors completed their second terms. Some National Assembly members succeeded them while other former states' chief executive officers moved to the National Assembly, especially the Senate, which some pundits described as a "retirement home" for ex-governors (Kwen, 2022, para. 1-2).

However, the situation took another dimension during the primary elections conducted by different political parties to elect the flag bearers for different elective posts in the 2023 general election. For example, some of the Senators who contested during the primary elections in their different states lost the elections, and so their hope of returning to either the Senate Chamber or becoming the Governor was dashed. Given the fact that political offices are business offices, this set of politicians felt aggrieved because the hope of recycling them to power got dimmed. To this extent, some of them dumped their previous political parties and crossed to other political parties where they hoped to contest to guarantee their continuity in the political offices.

From the above, it is evident that the struggle to stay glued to political offices by politicians is not for other things but for their selfish interests and to continue sharing the "national cake". In supporting the argument, Felter states, "Kleptocratic incumbents have even more incentives to stay in office; they could lose their wealth if they were to lose power and potentially face prosecution" (Felter, 2022, para 4). This crop of politicians sees political offices as investments that regularly need special attention and focus in order to get regular profits. Hence, they considered politics a do-or-die affair, and getting into political offices by hooks or crooks meant nothing to them. For that reason, the recycled politicians' benefits have become the masses' loss, while their gains have become the masses' pains.

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The damaging effects that the politics of recycling had on the politics and economy of the country and the only way out of the conundrum can be inferred from Olawepo-Hashim's outburst. According to him:

What we need now is a new generation of leaders. We no longer need the cabal anymore. We cannot accept a situation where we accommodate multiple pension-receiving individuals. I mean those who have been living on government expenses for ages. It is good to retire these people, and the time to do that is now. It is time to retire them from politics and drive Nigeria on the new part of creativity (Olawepo-Hashim cited in Vanguard 2018, para. 4-7).

In essence, recycled politicians only benefit themselves, their cliques, and cronies, and later pass the remnants and crumbs from the table to hungry and helpless masses, whom they have subjected to severe pain and penury. Passing the remnants and crumbs from the table to the masses is not out of love or care but to secure their loyalty and keep them alive until when they will be used again like readymade tools to recycle themselves back to political/public offices. It is not surprising that every four years, recycled politicians would once again remember the hapless masses, induce them with pecuniary gifts, get their votes, and get back to political offices unhindered.

Politics of Recycling and Good Governance

One of the propelling forces of good governance is a political ideology. However, in Nigeria, most political parties and politicians operate without ideology. The lack of political ideology on the part of the political parties has to do with their mode or manner of formation, and this is affecting the political parties in their choice of candidates frequently presented for elections. Most of the political parties in Nigeria present candidates without integrity and with a battered image for different political offices during the process of election (Adegami & Makinde, 2018).

Ordinarily, the formation of political parties in a democratic setting is supposed to be based on ideals and ideologies, such that any member or aspiring member must key into the ideologies of the party before joining the party. Given the fact that most politicians in Nigeria are not driven by ideologies but by greed to acquire wealth and plunder the national resources, they join those parties where their inordinate desires can be easily met (Omotola, 2009; Nnamdi & Ogan 2019).

Politicians in Nigeria move from one political party to the other without restriction; as such, the operation of political parties is without guiding principles, political ideology, and philosophy (Adegbami, 2023).

Some cases of indiscriminate cross-carpeting among the Senators include that of Senator Ehigie Uzamere. He was initially representing the Edo South constituency under the People's Democratic Party (PDP) platform. Senator Uzamere later dumped the People's Democratic Party (PDP) on whose platform he got to office and decamped to the Action Congress of Nigeria shortly before the 2011 elections, where he was successively re-elected. Similarly, there were eleven PDP Senators that moved the group to another party, the All Progressives Congress (APC). They were - Mohammed Shaba Lafiaji (Kwara North), Bukola Saraki (Kwara Central), Umaru Dahiru (Sokoto South), Ibrahim Abdullahi Gobir (Sokoto East), Magnus Ngei Abe (Rivers South-East), Wilson Asinobi Ake (Rivers West); Bindawa Muhammed Jibrilla (Adamawa North); Mohammed Danjuma Goje (Gombe Central); Aisha Jummai Alhassan (Taraba North); Mohammed Ali Ndume (Borno South); and Abdullahi Adamu (Nasarawa West), (Ebere, 2014, cited in Adegbami, 2023). Some of these Senators who are unable to fulfill their ambitions have decamped to their former political parties, while others whose ambitions are met stay back in their new parties. The pattern of behavior of most politicians in Nigeria is aptly captured by George thus:

In Nigeria today, the level of maturity of our politicians can be likened to a playground of kids who, at the slightest quarrel or distortion of interests, join another group to play with sand, kick balls, or probably fiddle with insects. This is a blatant show of 'politics of reshuffling.' A case of the same old leaders blaming political parties as if the political parties weren't pioneered by human beings...The recent trend of constant defection, even on the day of the election, only shows the level of selfishness and unseriousness on the path of our so-called 'leaders' the younger generation looks up to. This is an expression of a lack of vision as well as conscience. It depicts the fact that our political parties are not bound by different ideologies, and the

members can't boast of a single political philosophy that will guide their administrations when they get into office (George, 2015, para. 4).

In essence, a country that parades such politicians so described cannot have the desired governance because the kind of politicians in question cannot offer quality governance that will affect the lives of the citizenry positively and bring about national development.

In a similar vein, the poor governance in Nigeria was due to the declining capacity of recycled political leaders to realize systemic risks of the faulty electoral process, especially election fraud, as well as to discern the damaging effects of terrorists' activities, insurgents, and banditry attacks, herder-farmer skirmish, and police brutality among others, and thereby, put every machinery of government in motion to curtail the menaces (Okoi & Iwara, 2021). The fact that they were involved in creating the groups and benefited immensely from the groups in navigating themselves to political offices makes it difficult for them to go after such groups that have once rendered useful services to them (Alemika, 2013). Therefore, to have a system of governance that caters for the security and welfare of its citizens, as well as to bring about all-around development to the country, such governance must be founded on political leadership with vision, integrity, commitment, and transparency. Since 1999, when the country returned to democratic governance, the country has not been blessed with the kind of leaders mentioned above. According to Okoi & Iwara:

Since 1999, the democratic space has been dominated by political elites who consistently violate fundamental principles associated with a liberal democratic system, such as competitive elections, the rule of law, political freedom, and respect for human rights... This challenge is an indicator of the systemic failure of Nigeria's governance system. A continuation of the current system will only accelerate the erosion of public trust and democratic institutions (Okoi & Iwara, 2021, para. 2).

In essence, for good governance to take place in Nigeria, those at the helm of the affairs of the governance system in the country must be willing to offer it in the case they fail to offer good governance, which they have done and continue doing, the onus lies on Nigerians to demand it.

This is because most of the politicians involved in the game and politics of recycling are political profiteers who generate profits from being in public offices where they have access to public resources. As far as this set of politicians continues to hang on to power, good governance cannot take place. Their continued hanging on to power is to continue to make a profit from public offices, enjoy a sort of privileges, and save themselves from being exposed for the various atrocities they have perpetrated while in office. Some of them, thus, prefer to die while in office than to be out of the office and be exposed and questioned for any misdeed. The excerpt from Peterside, while reviewing the last presidential primary elections in Nigeria, further sheds light on why it will be difficult to have good governance in Nigeria while parading the same crops of politicians in power. According to him:

At the end of my review, these past conventions or presidential nomination processes revealed everything wrong with our politics – the weak ideological foundation of the parties, the attitude of our people to a democratic culture, the influence of poverty or the lack of economic empowerment on political choices, the absence of citizenship rights and responsibilities in our politics, the vanishing moral values and desperation of the elite to hang on to power as the only means of survival and wealth in an economy that is very hard to create wealth privately within (Peterside, 2022, para. 12).

From the foregoing, it is obvious that any nation that is yearning for political, social, and economic development will not rely on recycled ideas but inject new ideas into its polity. For any country to make positive or meaningful changes in its political, social, and economic affairs, such a country will have to conduct its affairs in a new and different way. As such, Nigeria as a nation undoubtedly needs fresh hands with fresh ideas to pilot its governance system to achieve a better political, social, and economic system. A better system that will usher in political stability, social services delivery, generation of employment, poverty reduction, and improved standard of living for the citizenry. And a better system that will maintain adequate security of people's lives and their properties, as well as enhance unity and corporate existence of the country, which the crops of politicians playing politics of recycling appear incapable of doing.

Recycling Politics: Implications for Governance and Administrative Affairs of Nigeria

Recycling and parading the same set of politicians in the governance and administrative affairs of Nigeria without mincing words has continued to have far-reaching implications on the country's political development and social and economic growth. To this extent, the Nobel laureate, Professor Wole Soyinka maintains that the political setting of Nigeria depicts a political system that is under siege as a result of the actions, inactions, and reactions of the recycled political drivers, which has continued to tell on the quality of policy formulation and its corresponding implementation (Soyinka, cited in Adeyemi, 2021). When the quality of the policy is low, it can cause contradictions within the organization, thereby affecting its purpose and strategic direction. It can also cause restrictions in the framework for quality objectives and the commitment to meet people's basic needs (Huckabone, 2020). In essence, a low-quality policy is tantamount to no policy, and a government without policy is a government without direction; a government without direction is a failing and dangerous government.

Soyinka's assertions regarding the activities of the recycled politicians brought to the fore the dangerous dimension the politics of recycling is taking in Nigeria. In his lecture delivered to commemorate the 80th posthumous birthday of Chief Gani Fawehinmi (SAN), a lawyer and human rights activist, themed, "Democracy for the masses through proper and effective governance," held in Lagos, Nigeria, Soyinka refers to recycled politicians as those that took part in destroying the country, and now portraying themselves as messiah. For this reason, Soyinka warns Nigerians thus:

Do not allow yourself to plunge into a zone of amnesia in which you conveniently forget unpleasant realities. We've had a President who actually supervised the sacking of a democratic government...in another instance, thugs actually entered the House of Assembly, sacked the legislators and installed their candidates. And they call themselves the God-designated watchmen over the fortunes of this nation. And suddenly, here they are, and I see Nigerians flocking to them and asking them once again to lead...Even if they do not individually put themselves back in the position of power, they are already smoothening the way for their surrogates, their stooges, so

that they can continue to misrule from their cozy farmsteads. So, all I'm urging is to be very vigilant (Soyinka cited in Ramon, 2018, para. 9-11).

Some of those interviewed for this study were of the same view as Soyinka on the adverse effects recycled politicians had on Nigeria and Nigerians. For instance, one of the interviewees ⁸:

Recycling, to me, is tantamount to repeating. It is when you fail that you repeat. When you fail again, you repeat. When you pass and succeed, you don't need to repeat. Our politicians have continued to fail and, as such, fail us as a nation. They are repeating because they have failed; they are repeating in order to cover up their misdeeds in public office. Keeping themselves in Nigeria's public offices continually has been a bad omen for the country. Until serious, selfless, and committed politicians come on board, the omen will remain; this is not good for the country.

Another interviewee has this to say⁹:

The damaging effect of parading the same old politicians in Nigerian politics is incalculable. It has brought about mass corruption to the extent that corruption has been institutionalized in Nigeria. It has also led to infrastructure decay and social vices. Recycling the old political class has created what can be called a "Political Monarchy." Unchecked recycling of the old political class without integrity has resulted in the country's woefully economic failure. It has discouraged foreign investors and has cost the country its reputation before the international community. Recycling of the old political class has led to security challenges and the underdeveloped nature of the country.

⁸ - a journalist from Nigeria's newspapers based in Lagos states

⁹ An Engineer with the Nigerian Ports Authority, Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

Furthermore, another interviewee unequivocally states thus:¹⁰

Recycling the same set of politicians prevents the injection of new ideas, the effect of which is the inhibition of new policies for the improvement and development of the state. Regarding income redistribution, the same politicians connote the same set of people usurping the state's patrimony to themselves and their cronies. Regarding the deepening of institutions, as evidence from the Nigerian state has suggested, the same politicians maintain the same rules of engagement, i.e., doing things outside of the laid down rules. If there were a new set of people, the public officials would understand it is not as business as usual. Recycled politicians have cunningly banned new blood from coming to politics. They have barred new hands from politics with financial difficulty to contest elections. Recycled politicians have monetized the whole political process, and with their exclusive financial ability, they have made the political offices theirs. This reduces the choices available to the electorates to choose from. This whole charade has continued to force a lot of citizens who could have assisted in building the nation's economy out of the country. Yes, the best brains are leaving the shore of the country daily. This is too bad.

In a similar vein, another interviewee states¹¹:

Recycled politicians have instituted injustice and maladministration in Nigerian society. The country is currently permeated with unemployment, poverty, insecurity, and economic degeneration. This shows that Nigeria's economy has been left in the hands of scavengers who fed fat on the country's resources and are hell-bent on continuing in the business. They are bereft of ideas, put in place obnoxious

¹⁰ A Lecturer and doctoral student of the Department of Political Science, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria.

¹¹ A Deputy Registrar, Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Nigeria.

economic policies, and created a hostile economic environment that has kept away foreign investors. The dollars have continued to appreciate to the detriment of the naira. How can one explain the hostile social environment of Nigeria, where kidnapping has become incessant, ritual killings occur daily, armed robbery becomes the order of the day, and other social vices continue unabated? When they have no capacity to govern, why are they hell-bent to remain in public offices? Nigeria needs a new set of political leaders with the ideas, visions, and capacities to turn its economy around and improve the people's standard of living.

Another interviewee stressed as¹²:

The current trend of recycling old politicians to elective positions in the country poses a roadblock to young Nigerians' chance to exhibit themselves. As a result of the recycling of politicians, we have endured the drop in the standard of education, the subjugation and emasculation of the power and dignity of the traditional institution, the crass high-handedness, and brazen financial recklessness on the part of executives. We have witnessed a sustained retrogression in all spheres of activities in the country — an unprecedented capital flight occasioned by a lack of security and the very deplorable state of our infrastructure, especially roads. The people we elect now use hunger and hardship as tools of control. They keep the masses in perpetual lack so that they are worshipped whenever they dole out crumbs to the people they have deliberately kept hungry. It has put the country in dire need of a paradigm shift in education and other Human Development Index capable of putting it on the road to greatness. The explanation here is that the recycled politicians have been doing the

¹² A journalist based in Lagos, Nigeria.

same thing, expecting different results. The whole world is tilting towards progress and development, which is demonstrated by voting for young, vibrant visionaries. France, Austria, Ethiopia, and, lately, El Salvador's 37-year-old Nayib Bukele are all examples of this trend. Nigeria's recycling of old money bags is off track with modern trends. People might refer to the United States, but Nigeria's political culture and stage of development are not the same as that of the United States.

Another interviewee stressed as¹³:

There is no way Nigeria can get out of its present socio-economic challenges and underdevelopment with the same set of politicians in its governance and administrative affairs. Parading the same set of old politicians in the country's governance and administrative affairs has resulted in poor governance, leading to a high incidence of resistance in social crises like insurgence, civil disobedience, kidnapping, lack of patriotism, etc. Recycling the same set of politicians in the country's administrative affairs will continue to give these leaders opportunities to enrich themselves at the expense of the masses. It has made Nigeria a place where the rich are getting richer, and the masses are getting poorer. Beyond this, the political system has foreclosed the benefits of enjoying an alternative set of leadership in the young ones, who are described as leaders of tomorrow. Such an act of recycling is a catalyst for national crises in not far time.

Another interviewee informed as¹⁴:

For decades, many of the political officeholders in Nigeria have been in power with little or nothing to show for it. We cannot continue to do things the same way over and over again and expect different results. People are wallowing in poverty; they have no access to basic

¹³ A Lawyer and human rights activist based in Abuja, Nigeria.

¹⁴ A doctoral student at the Department of Public Administration, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

needs, yet we keep repeating the same set of politicians. Repeating these people is repeating problems and hardships. Good and inclusive governance will continue to elude us as much as these sets of politicians remain in power.

One of the interviewees, who is a businessman, stresses that¹⁵:

The bulk of politicians in modern-day politics are self-centered; they do not have the capacity to develop the country. They do not have what it takes to be a leader, nor do they know what leadership entails. Parading or recycling these same politicians can only compound the problems of the masses because of their poor economic policies and other obnoxious policies that have continued to discourage investments in the Nigerian economy. Their continuing stay in power encourages corruption and does not give room for innovations as things are being done in the same routine.

From the responses gathered it can be inferred that recycling the same set of politicians to govern Nigeria is tantamount to operating the governance and administrative affairs of the country under siege. This is because recycling is synonymous with failure; it is when one fails that he or she repeats while those who pass progress. By implication, Nigeria is not progressing because it handed over its affairs into the hands of failed politicians who hang on to power without any good things to offer for the country.

From the response, it is evident that recycled politicians perpetrated all sorts of irregularities and atrocities in public offices, including institutionalization of corruption. This has cost the country its much-needed development, and as such, the country's infrastructure is declining steadily. The recycled politicians have no capacity and capability to transform the nation's economy. They are bereft of economic ideas, so they put in place obnoxious economic policies and created a hostile economic environment that has kept foreign investors away. For that reason, the country is

¹⁵ A businessman based in Lagos, Nigeria.

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facing a significant challenge of a high unemployment rate; the poverty level continues to rise while the standard of living continues to fall. All these challenges further induce social vices such as kidnapping, ritual killings, bandits and insurgents' activities, as well as other security challenges.

Recycled politicians are hell-bent on remaining in power in order to continue to make a business from Nigeria's public offices. The politics of recycling the same set of politicians in Nigeria's public offices is preventing and hindering the injection of new ideas and innovations into the country's governance. This also has an effect on income/wealth redistribution as the same set of politicians continues to sit tight on the state's "commonwealth." Recycled politicians have monetized the whole political process, and with their exclusive financial ability, they have made the political offices theirs, thus reducing the choices available to the electorates to choose from. In essence, the effects that recycling or parading the same set of politicians had on the governance and administrative affairs of the country are innumerable.

The results of the general election 2023 in the country showed that most of those vying or aspiring mainly for the executive position, that is, presidential and gubernatorial posts, are recycled politicians, and so are those aspiring for legislative posts. They have already secured the tickets of their various political parties to run during general elections. Going by the antecedents of the recycled politicians, it is easily predictable that Nigeria's future, in terms of political, social, and economic advancement, is bleak.

Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendations

Hanging on, or staying glued to political powers perpetually by the political class in Nigeria in a similar manner to Abiku, who dies to come back and continually leaves a cycle that causes pain to the host family, is a problem Nigeria is contending with recurrently. The same set of politicians who have been hanging on to political powers since Nigeria's Second Republic, over forty years ago, without offering anything towards progress and development of the country, are still desperate to cling on to power and deploy all the powers in their possessions to achieve that. They have continued to bring untold hardships to the citizenry. As a result, the citizenry is not only facing an excruciating economic situation but also an agonizing security challenge. Therefore, their continued recycling is tantamount to repeatedly subjecting the populace to agony.

The general election of 2023 is the testimony of recycled politicians. They had secured the tickets of their various political parties to run during general elections. Going by their antecedents, it is predictable that Nigeria has a bleak future concerning its political, social, and economic advancement. This is because the challenges that have constituted a bane to the country's growth and advancement in the past decades persist. In other words, nothing has changed positively as far as the political, social, and economic affairs of the country are concerned. The masses, who are the hosts of the recycled politicians, remain helpless and hapless as the 'political Abikus' maintain their hegemonic posture in what could be likened to internal colonialism.

The study, therefore, concluded that recycling or parading the same set of politicians in the governance and administrative affairs of the country is inimical to the country's political, social, and economic development. The study recommended that the electorates must rise to the challenge, crush the recycled politicians' antics and tactics, reject their money, and vote massively against them in the next general election. They should vote for new-breed politicians with impeccable character and proven integrity. Pressure should be mounted on the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) to be neutral, independent, and accountable in the conduct of elections. To this extent, journalists, civil society, national and international observers, as well as other stakeholders, should be up and doing at monitoring the electioneering process under the watch of the INEC. They should be bold to expose any irregularity noticed in the electioneering process. This is the only way a new set of leaders can be injected into the governance and administrative affairs of the country.

Key Informants Interviewees (KIIs) Checklist

- Interview: A Journalist with one of Nigeria's newspapers based in Lagos state, Nigeria, January 6, 2022.
- Interview: An Engineer with the Nigerian Ports Authority, Port Harcourt, Nigeria, January 17, 2022.
- Interview: A Lecturer and doctoral student of the Department of Political Science, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria, January 5, 2022.
- Interview: A Deputy Registrar, Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Nigeria, January 5, 2022.
- Interview: A Journalist based in Lagos, Nigeria, January 6, 2022.

- Interview: A Lawyer and Human Rights Activist based in Abuja, Nigeria, January 22, 2022.
- Interview: A Doctoral Student at the Department of Public Administration, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria January 8, 2022.
- Interview: A Businessman based in Lagos, Nigeria, January 6, 2022.

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