

# Political Appointments and Economic Development Of Taraba State, 1999 2021

<sup>1</sup>Henry Ishaya, <sup>2</sup>amon Rimamtanung Stephen

<sup>1</sup> Department Of Political Science And International Relations, <sup>2</sup>taraba State University, Jalingo<sup>1</sup>department Of Political Science And International Relations, Federal University Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria

**Abstract:** *The study looks at Political Appointment and how it affects economic development in Taraba State especially from 1999 to 2021. This is based on the view that Political Appointments are meant to assist a nation or state executive arm in carrying out their duties by appointing people with the required educational qualification and experience. This process in Taraba State, has been influenced by a number of factors that negate the goal of economic development. To this end, this study used questionnaires and oral interview to collect data and complemented with the use of textbooks, journals and internet sources. The study found out that factors such as religion, ethnicity, godfatherism, gender issues and zoning are factors that influenced Political Appointment in Taraba State. The study found out that Political Appointment based on these factors leads to hiring of unqualified individuals into Political/Public Offices thereby betraying or negating the goal of achieving economic development in Taraba State. To this effect the study recommended that Political Appointment should be made on the basis of merit and factors outlined above such as religion, ethnicity, godfatherism, gender issues, zoning etc. should be discarded in order to achieve the goal of economic development in Taraba.*

**Keywords:** Political Appointments, Economic Development, Prebendalism, Religion, Ethnicity, Taraba State.

## Introduction

Appointment into political offices is dependent on so many factors ranging from Party loyalty, financial contribution, ethnic group affiliation, religious affiliation to mention but a few. In most cases these appointments are not done based on competence. There are situations whereby people are appointed because of their godfathers, they are also appointed because they are candidates of top religious leaders, people are also appointed because they are candidates of top ethnic stalwart; by implication, ones loyalty to the government of the day and any other person that is highly connected to the government determines whether one get appointed or not. Be that as it may, in Taraba state, two things or two factors are mostly consider when it comes to political appointment; first, loyalty to party and second is one's ethnic group or religion or both the question of competence is secondary. It doesn't really matter whether one is qualified or have the requisite qualifications all that matters is that you belong to the party ( Babale, 2021).

Most people believe that engagement in politics with the sole aim of been appointed into government. Since Nigeria's democracy is heavily influenced by religion and ethnicity as well as sectionalism and/or regionalism gives room for people to support candidates sometimes not on the basis of what they have to offer, but on the basis of where they come from and/or where/what/who they worship (Obboh, 2017). That alone gives room for incompetent people to be in government. In other climes, people believe that government should be rotational, a turn-by-turn thing; if others have taken their turns others should be allowed to take their chance that is why if a particular person man's the seat of power nepotism will be the order of the day he will try to satisfy his kinsmen or those who are in same religion with. This trend might affect economic development at all levels because a lot of people who were appointed based on those factors other than having the requisite qualifications in most cases doesn't have anything to offer regarding to that particular offices and hence expected development might not be achieved. In some instances a lot of people were appointed based on primordial sentiments as special advisers or special assistants without assigning a particular duty to them.

The recruitment and appointment of state agents based on political patronage than meritocracy creates a major problems of poor strategic planning outputs and capacity deficit at the bureaucratic level pertaining to fiscal management and public goods provision to the populace. It also creates institutional instability and loss of institutional memory as evident in increased number of prolonged acting roles as a result of suspensions of more senior state agents by their political principals and high staff turnover (Rasak, Oye, Ake & Raji, 2017). Various successive reports in Nigeria indicate the performance of many state institutions in the country is increasingly regressing after democracy due to lack of capacity, lack of consequences for poor performance, Political patronage in Nigerian present democratic dispensation will continue to threaten the practice of popular political participation in the country if no concrete efforts are made to deal with the problem (Ibid). Nigeria has not been able to engender meaningful development in spite of her huge resources endowment due to under utilisation of such resources. This has greatly affected her quest to improved quality of life of her citizens. Poverty, unemployment and starvation still pervade the nook and cranny of the country. Development is essential and critical to growth and sustenance of any country in which Nigeria is inclusive (Oluwatoyin & Lawal, 2011).

Development is a vital necessity or ingredient to the growth and sustentation of any vibrant nation. Thus, for development to be achieved, socio-political and economic stability must be guaranteed at all levels of government as this will promote citizens natural attachment to the governing process of that country (Lawal, 2011). Usually, president and governors have statutory powers to appoint people into various political posts that will help them in fulfilling their campaign promises either as ministers,

ambassadors, permanent secretaries, commissioners, special advisers, special assistants as well as members of various boards and Parastatals of government (Constitution FRN, 1999).

The impact of factors like ethnicity, religion or region on political appointments might be visible or negligible depending on how emphasis is given on ethnicity, religion or region during such appointment. Similarly, appointment based on those factors like ethnicity, religion or region other than having the requisite academic qualifications and experiences might negate some tendencies of putting round peg in a round hole. In the same vein some politicians might gain favour because of such factors while some of the politicians might be disadvantaged despite having required educational qualifications and experiences. If such factors overshadow the appointment of more qualified persons to man various political posts, it might negatively affect economic development of Taraba state. Similarly, Political Appointment based on such factors like ethnicity, religion or region might result to slow pace of economic development as well as breed disharmony among the populace due to marginalisation of some tribes or religious groups.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

#### **Concept of Political Appointments**

Piattoni (2001) reported that Political appointee exists across all nations with any type of governance system in the world. Their appointments are often seen rewards for the loyalty for the president after a successful campaign. However, scholars' advice that is should not be seen as a reward but only be seen as a chance to serve the public interests or an assignment of public duty. Political appointments exist to assert the president's political agenda by relishing maximum control of the government. The president usually appoint those seemed loyal; hence, political appointments are often used imprecisely or interchangeably with various types of political rewards, including patronage, clientelism, nepotism, or cronyism.

Hustedt & Salomonsen (2014) reported that in democratic countries, presidents are democratically elected and as such, they are expected to carry out their campaign promises by directing the executive branch of government. Thus, appointments of political appointees in executive positions to lead various portfolios or departments are necessary and legitimate. Political appointees assure responsiveness to presidential policy priorities throughout the executive branch. In addition to democratic legitimacy, political appointees bring new energy and new ideas to the government from the private sector, universities, and state and local governments. To promote and implement such policies, political appointees need assistance by qualified and experienced experts, the career executives. Career executives exist to serve any and every administration diligently and competently without regard to their own personal political beliefs. They are indispensable to the success of the political appointee(s) with whom he or she works. They serve as a link between these political appointees and the rest of the government workforce in a particular department or institution. However, one of their main challenges is presidential transitions, just like political appointees. Career executives' position can be established only in the top managerial levels of government institutions or departments, and the role is characterized by broad responsibility for policy implementation and extensive participation in policy evolution.

Political appointees perceive their roles as to strengthen political control over the administrative system in their favour and to reduce bureaucratic autonomy enjoyed and celebrated by career executives. Political appointees' perceptions are deemed "politicization" and the result is the encroachment into career executives' roles and autonomy. Politicization is possible because the ministers have the power and control and enjoy the support of the president over what they perceive to be disloyal civil servants. Career executives who are not responsive to request of ministers are often threatened with dismissal as result civil servants abandon their impartiality under pressure from political agents.

#### **Concept of Economic Development**

Economic development entails progress in providing livelihood on a sustainable basis, access to education, drinking water electricity and basic healthcare for the majority of the population (Belshaw & Livingstone, 2002). The meaning of the term "development" becomes clearer with the understanding of the term "economic growth". By economic growth, economists generally mean the increase over time in a country's real output per capita. Though other measures can be used, output is most conveniently measured by the gross national product (GNP). This implies that economic growth is measured by the increase in a country's per capita GNP. Economic growth is thus sustained expansion of production possibilities measured as an increase in the real GDP over a given period. Rapid economic growth maintained over a number of years can transform a poor nation into a rich one, as has been the experiences of Hong Kong, South Korea, Taiwan and other Asian economies (Uzoigwe, 2007). Misra and Puri (2003) define economic development to mean growth plus progressive changes in certain critical variables that determine the well-being of the people. They assert that there are qualitative dimensions in the development process which may be missing in the growth of a given economy expressed in terms of an increase in the national product or the product per capita.

Roegen (1971) cited in Panth (2021) posited that, economic development has greatly improved living conditions and incomes across the world. However, an alarming and inevitable consequence of modern economic development is the massive negative impact on the natural environment. Modern technology is highly resource dependent, needing enormous inputs of minerals, metals, power, fuel, timber, water, etc. At the same time, production and consumption do not "use" up all these materials, they are let off into the environment in the form of pollution and wastes.

But the capacity of the Earth to absorb and recycle wastes and pollution is limited, leading to many environmental disasters as pollution chokes land, air, and water adversely affecting living systems on Earth. For example, the phenomenon of climate change due to accumulation of Greenhouse gases in the atmosphere is one such danger. There is sufficient proof to show that it is threatening the very climatic structure of the Earth, impacting precipitation and agriculture, shrinking snow covers on mountains and tundra

regions, increasing sea levels, drowning low level areas and islands, destroying marine life, and with a whole lot of still unknown disasters in the offing. If the natural environment is completely devastated, it threatens the existence of life itself on this Earth. So, there is an urgent need to review the type of economic development that is taking place and to ensure that the process and fruits of economic development are not environmentally destructive. Hence, there is the need for sustainable development – i.e., economic development that does not pose a threat to the natural environment or limit future development. Sustainable development is usually defined as “development that meets the needs of the present generation, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” (Brundtland, 1987 cited in Panth, 2021).

Misra and Puri (2003) identify one major approach to the concept of economic development, referred to as the traditional approach. The *traditional approach* defines development strictly in economic terms. According to the traditional approach, economic development implies a sustained annual increase in Gross National Product (GNP) at rates varying from 5 to 7 percent or more, together with such alteration in the structure of production and employment that decreases the shares of agriculture in production and employment and increases those of manufacturing and services sectors. Policy measures suggested in this case are those which induce industrialisation at the expense of agricultural development. Such objectives as poverty elimination, reduction of economic inequalities, and generation of employment are mentioned in passing reference only, and in most cases, it is assumed that rapid gains in overall growth in GNP or per capita domestic product would trickle down to people in one form or the other. Malizia and Feser (2000) cited in Uzoigwe, (2007) reported that growth and development is complementary, because one makes the other possible. They are also alternating processes that occur sequentially. Growth is an increase in output; development is a structural change, for example technological or legal. Growth expands the economy, while development must lead to more equal distribution of income and wealth. Overall, growth and development lead to a greater range of economic choices.

A common alternative for measuring economic development has been using the rate of growth of income per capita or per capita GNP, which expresses the ability of a country to expand its output at a rate faster than the growth rate of its population (monetary growth of GNP per capita minus the rate of inflation). The GNP per capita is used to measure the overall economic well-being of the population, expressing the amount of real goods and services that is available to the average citizen of the country for consumption and investment (Todaro & Smith, 2003). Uzoigwe, (2007) further revealed that economic development is defined in terms of the quality of life of the majority of the population. Todaro and Smith (2003) cited in Uzoigwe, (2007), revealed that the experience of the 1950s and 1960s when many developing nations failed to realise their economic growth targets and the quality of life of the majority of their people remained for the most part unchanged, signaled that something was very wrong with this narrow definition of development. Notwithstanding the debate for and against the efficacy of using economic growth, GNP per capita as an index for economic development, there is considerable evidence in developmental literature. It has shown that this index of economic growth is characterised by many deficiencies when related to welfare. Most specifically, the economic growth index fails to reflect the distribution of income or wealth between the rich and the poor, and can also not show what sections of the population are favoured by the growth; or the level of welfare derived from the consumption of goods and services involved. Using GNP per capita as an index, thus requires a range of problems to be resolved. Such as capturing unrecorded economic transactions from the informal sector and externalities (pollution, congestion and noise)

Hall (1983) cited in Uzoigwe (2007) says that belief in the trickle-down effect is one reason why the GNP per capita measure has become deeply entrenched. However, the fact that the benefits of growth have not always trickled down from all sectors as expected, is an argument neither for nor against growth as such, since a faster growth might after all be what is needed. Belshaw & Livingstone (2002) in their submissions revealed that while GNP per capita figures are the traditional measurement of economic growth and development, a better indicator of well-being is now available, namely the Human Development Index (HDI). The HDI defines well-being in terms of combinations of a measure of income, a health indicator and an access to knowledge indicator. The process of development should at least create a conducive environment for people, individually and collectively, to develop their full potential and to have a reasonable chance of leading a productive and creative life according to their needs and interests (UNDP, 1992).

Akinyosoye (2010) revealed that infrastructure contributes immensely to the economic development of any nation by increasing productivity and providing amenities which enhances the quality of life of its citizens. A solid and adequate infrastructure base will translate into an increased aggregate output and flourishing economy. Infrastructure is the bedrock of development of any human society. Foster & Briceno-Garmendia (2010) cited in Gwilliam (2011) revealed the development of infrastructure in Africa and agreed that there is an urgent need for transformation and infrastructural development in Africa to enhance quality of life.

### Theoretical Framework

This research work adopted Prebendal Theory as its theoretical Frameworks. This is a theory that is majorly associated with an American scholar, Richard Joseph, and which he deployed in a seminal study he did in 1987 to analyze the Patron-Client relationship that has been the hallmark of Nigerian Politics. The word prebend is originally associated with the church. It is the right of a member of a chapter to his share in the revenues of a cathedral. (Catholic Encyclopedia cited in Abada & Onyi, 2020 )According to the theory, state offices are regarded as prebends that can be appropriated by office holders who use them to generate material benefits for themselves and their constituents and kin groups. Joseph used the term to describe the sense of entitlement that many people feel

they have over the revenues of the Nigerian state. Elected officials, government workers, and members of the ethnic and religious groups to which they belong, feel they have a right to a share of government revenues (Joseph, 1987).

In relating to this research work, it is pertinent to emphasize that Nigeria is a peripheral capitalist state and Taraba state is part of Nigeria. And in such a society, state power is used for primitive accumulation of wealth. Since access to state power guarantees access to state resources there is serious competition for political offices with little regard for the statutory purposes for which such offices were created. Thus political appointees who occupy positions in government, see it as an opportunity to appropriate state resources, first for themselves and secondly for their kin groups like religious, ethnic or region. While they are holding such positions, their kinsmen utilised every means available to remind them that their position is a once in a lifetime opportunity that must be utilised for the benefit of their people to the total exclusion of other groups to the detriment of expected development.

In this instances, public office holders were encourage to adopt nepotism and other parochial tendencies instead of encouraging them to do the needful for the entire state that can bring about meaningful economic development. Also sometimes those political appointees have godfathers whom they are using state resources to keep their patron-client agreement with to the detriment of developmental projects. However, some of the weaknesses of the prebendal theory are: the theory concentrates more on how state resources are being shared among people of same religion or ethnic groups occupying government offices and Patron-Client relationship. Without explaining how people without requisite qualifications and experiences are being elected or appointed to occupy some important offices which they don't have anything to offer in that office just because of other factors like religion, ethnicity, zoning, political patronage, godfatherism or gender.

Nevertheless, the theory helps in understanding how political appointment is done based on primordial sentiments using factors like religion, ethnicity, zoning, political patronage, godfatherism or gender. It also explained how public officers share government revenue to their religious or ethnic groups to the exclusion of other religious or ethnic groups which in turn affects economic development of the state negatively. Similarly, the theory helps in explaining how elected or appointed officials of government mostly violate the rule of law in appointments and discharging of official's functions.

A critical point Joseph makes and which is key to understanding prebendalism is that the office holder is able to appropriate the office, meaning that he converts it into his or her piece of the state. Joseph described the essence of prebendalism as "authority stealing". According to him, it is the authority entrusted to state offices that is stolen by those appointed or elected to fill them. An individual is given a public office in order for him or her to gain personal access over state resources. It entails practices in which important state agents unambiguously subvert the rule of law for personal gain (Abada & Onyi, 2020).

### **Methodology**

Survey research design was used in the study for data collection and for the purpose of describing, interpreting, evaluating and analysing the data that was obtained. The data for the research was generated from both former and present political appointees and other political stake holders in Taraba state. This comprises of all former and present Commissioners, Special Advisers, Senior Special Assistants, Special Assistants and board members from 1999 to 2021, a purposive sampling technique was used to identify both former and present political appointees in the state who were the respondents. Both quantitative and qualitative method of data collection was used for this study; the quantitative method was through the use of structured research questionnaire and oral interview while the qualitative method was through textbooks, journals, periodicals and research papers.

For the purpose of this research, primary source of data was generated from respondents who were former and present political appointees in Taraba state while secondary source of data was used in Conceptual Clarifications.. The reason for using primary data was because the primary data is regarded as the most authentic source of data that can be collected from the variable of interest in two principal modes: Ask respondents questions about the subject of interest and observe the behaviour of the research variable (Akpa, 2011). In order to ensure validity and reliability of the data collected for this research, research questionnaire and interview checklist was carefully designed and was checked and validated by other research experts to ensure that the questionnaire and the interview checklist can provide suitable responses to answer the set research questions.

### **Discussion of Major Findings**

From the objectives of this research set in the beginning of the work, the following findings were arrived at based on the three set objectives:-

Based on the first objective, which is to examine the factors that determine political appointments in Taraba State. It was found out that religion, ethnicity, godfatherism and party loyalty, gender, zoning arrangement, financial contribution during political activities relationship with those in power and political thuggery are intertwined with politics in Nigeria as a whole and Taraba State in particular. The political process in Nigeria is heavily laced with religious, ethnic, sectionalism, party affiliation and/or loyalty. Competency in most cases is thrown to the wind leading to having a situation of people who have no business in governance found themselves there. It has gone to the point, and it is on record that these factors as earlier enumerated are the determinants of political appointments in Taraba State.

The findings of this research work revealed also that religion affiliations of individuals were very significant in election and political appointments in Taraba State and Nigeria at large. This can be confirmed by researches carried out by Mohammed (2016) and Alazua (2009).



The findings also revealed that even within the same religion, ethnicity also plays a vital role in political appointments because most ethnic group were not favoured because their tribe man is not in position of authority. It was also revealed that apart from religion and tribe, factors like political Party affiliations, sectionalism, personal relationships and gender plays a role in influencing political appointments in Taraba State from 1999 to 2021 and competency was not considered in most cases. The issue of lopsided political appointments is common in Nigeria as confirmed by Tudu (2005) and Muhammed (2016).

In Taraba State, the 'political godfathers' assemble a retinue of loyalists around them and use their clout, which is often based on monetary considerations, to dominate the rest of society. Political godfathers use their power to prevent anyone from participating in Nigerian politics. They function as political gatekeepers, determining who is allowed to engage in politics and under what conditions. The position of such individuals is extremely detrimental to the progress and development of the state. Most times is the bidding of the god father that is being done.

Based on second objective which is to assess the impact of those political appointments on development in Taraba state, it was also revealed the impact of those factors mentioned above on political appointments in Taraba state is counterproductive as it led to disunity among different tribes and religions and slow pace of development below expectations compared to other states that were created together with Taraba State in 1991 or other states that were created in 1996 like Gombe state, this is confirmed by Dike (2011).

Also appointment of unqualified people to man various appointive positions hinders development of Nigeria and Taraba state in particular. It was also discovered that religion, ethnicity, godfatherism and party loyalty impacts negatively on politics and political processes on both sides, that is positively and negatively. Positively it appeals to the conscience of appointees to be faithful in their doings. But these factors impacts negatively the more, there cases that people who are unfit for a job get themselves on the job without having the while wither of doing the job which negatively affects their performances and hence low level of development.

It was also found out that Godfatherism politics has a major impact on physical, economic and political development. This is due to the political godfather's dominance and the godson's allegiance in political movements. The study discovered that godfatherism politics had a significant impact on the state's political life and socioeconomic development. Because of their power and influence, it has become almost unthinkable for a person to hold political power, whether by election or appointment, without patronizing his or her political godfather. In this scenario, all of the godson's actions must be in line with the godfather's interests in order to maintain the godfather-godson political relationship. Godfatherism is still a major political force in Nigeria

Also, findings based on the third objective which is to determine the challenges posed by factors affecting political appointments and economic development in Taraba state, revealed that unqualified persons with lower educational qualifications were mostly appointed into various political post in Taraba state in the fourth republic, the level of physical, political and economic development is far below expectation because in most cases round peck are not usually put in round holes hence led to ineffective service delivery. in some cases, the development projects are being spread unevenly or some projects being diverted to other communities because of some negative influences which at the end resulted to uneven development in Taraba State.

It was found out that contract awarded to political godfathers are either abandoned or done in low quality because nobody can challenge them because of the money they spent during election campaign. Also there is religious and tribal intolerance in Taraba state especially among two dominant religious groups in the state that is Islam and Christianity. Religion and ethnicity remains a highly sensitive matter that is very volatile and if not handled very well it may heighten the tension and overheat the polity. Because of its sensitivity not too many people will want to raise eyebrow when things are going wrong because it will be interpreted from the religious or ethnic stand point. Because even the adherents of these two major religions cares less on the effectiveness and suitability of appointees, all they care is the number of their religious group members who had been appointed.

It was also found out that there is looting and embezzlement of public funds meant for developmental projects and the state is still in the state of underdevelopment as a result of appointment of many people who cannot add value to the state and ending in bad governance in Taraba state. Similarly, result from the chi-square analysis resulting from the test of Hypothesis one revealed that there is significance relationship between political appointments and economic development in Taraba State from 1999 to 2021 this result shows that caliber of people appointed into various appointive positions had a direct effects on economic development of Taraba state. Also result from the chi-square analysis arising from the test of Hypotheses two revealed that there is significant challenge faced as a result of political appointments in relations to economic development of Taraba state from 1999 to 2021, this shows that nature of Political appointment was always associated with some challenges in the period under study.

### Conclusion

In view of the findings of this research, it is concluded that in order to achieve the much-anticipated national growth, democracy cannot thrive without the presence of good governance. It is in this light that electoral malpractices and corruption have been described as the two major obstacles to the realization of democracy as a tool for national growth in Nigeria. it is also concluded that competency and technical know-how is relegated to the background in areas of governance, hence political appointment depends on the following factors:- Religion affiliation, ethnicity, political party loyalty, political godfathers, gender, financial contribution, level of thuggery, personal relationship and zoning arrangement. Also that, appointment of unqualified persons as well as diversion of public funds to personal use had hindered some developmental projects to be carried out in Taraba state. This is simply because primordial sentiments is the major criteria for the appointments, sentiments is being displayed in governance and allocation of developmental projects because some areas without powerful appointees are mostly not consider for execution of such projects

Finally, the study also conclude that some of the challenges posed by political appointments based on the aforementioned factors include: appointment of people with lower educational qualifications, political crisis as a result of lopsided political appointments, uneven distribution of developmental projects, religious/tribal intolerance, ineffective service delivery, bad governance, underdevelopment, diversion of projects by political godfathers as well as non-completion of developmental projects by elites who sponsors political campaigns.

This particular trend is a manifestation of sentiments in governance which might result in misplacement of priorities in allocation and executions of projects as well as incompetency of such appointees also affects their initiatives to offer good suggestions to the governor that can bring meaningful changes in the state. The study also conclude that there is significant relationship between political appointments and economic development of Taraba state and there is also a level of challenge faced as a result of political appointments in relations to economic development of Taraba state from 1999 to 2021. The test of the hypotheses equally affirmed that incompetency of such appointees affects their performances in office which also reduces reduced their ability to think ahead of the governor and advise accordingly. Similarly the second hypotheses confirmed that such appointment based on primordial sentiments negates the tenets of good governance and breeds intolerance and low morale by other group that are relegated to the background.

### Recommendations

In view of the foregoing conclusion, it is recommended as follows:

- Political appointments should be based on merit rather than on religious affiliations, ethnicity, or Zoning arrangement which may lead to appointment of unqualified persons into any political Post and can retard development.
- Election of persons into various elective positions should be based on merit rather than on primordial sentiments like religion, ethnicity, regionalism, or zoning arrangement that can lead to putting a round peck in a square hole.
- Political office holders should always use public funds for public project rather that diverting the funds to settle political godfathers or their kinsmen.
- Public office holders should always supervise their contractors and ensure completion of the project irrespective of the support received from such contractors during political campaign.
- Development projects should be distributed to communities equally without any form of bias.
- Political godfathers should not interfere with awarding and execution of contracts.
- Godfatherism should be discouraged in the political arena.
- Political appointment should not be based on religion/ethnicity of individual which can lead to religious/tribal disunity

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